

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♭ 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 *Symponia 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, *Symponiae: 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♭) 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*

Adagio ♩ = ca. 64

p

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

Organ ad lib.

≡

S. 6 cu-is 5 ti com pre-hen-den-do om -

Org.

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

Org.

≡

S. 10 ni-a, O vir-tus sa -

A. *mp* sa - pi-en - ti-ae, quae cir -

Org.

S. -

A. -

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

26

S. com - - - pre -

A. pi - en - ti -

T. 8 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. 8 com - pre-hen-den-do om - - -

B.

Org.

33

S.

A. is - ti, cir - cui - ens_ cir - cu - i - sti

T. ni - a, om - - - ni-a

B.

Org.

5



38

S. ni - a

A. quae_ cir - cui - ens_ cir -

T. quae_ cir - - - cui - ens

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

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, que_ ha - bet, ha - bet_ vi ⁵ tam,

A.

T.

B. in u - na_ vi - a que_ ha - bet_ vi - tam,

Org.

57

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

A. - - - -

T. 8 - - - -

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

Org. - - - -

61

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

A. - - - -

T. 8 - - - -

B. - na_ vi _ a quae_ ha _ bet vi - - - -

Org. - - - -

66

Sop. solo

(solo) *mp*

S.

A.

T.

B.

Org.

in u -

- tam,

in u - na

tam, _____ quea ha - bet vi - - tam,

solo

3

70

Sop. solo

na vi - a, in u - na, in

S.

A.

vi - - - a, quea_ ha - bet, ha - bet_ vi - tam,

T.

3

B.

in u - na_ vi - - - a,

Org.

5

74

Sop. solo
S.
A.
T.
B.
Org.

u - na vi - a que ha -
in u - na, in u - na vi - a que ha -
in u - na vi - a que ha -
in u - na vi - a que ha -
in u - na vi - a que ha -

78

Sop. solo
S.
A.
T.
B.
Org.

bet vi - tam,
tres a -
ha - bet vi - tam, tres a -
tres a -
bet vi - tam, tres a -
tutti
(+ 4')

81

S. las ha - bens, qua - rum

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

T. 8 las ha - 5 bens,

B. las ha - 5 bens,

Org.

=

85

S. u - na in al

A. in al - tum vo

T. 8 qua - rum u - na in al

B.

Org.

(- 4')

89

S. A. T. B.

lat, tum vo

Org.

5



94

S. A. T. B.

lat,

lat, et al - te-ra de ter ra su

Org.

5

99

S.

A.

T.

B.

poco rit.

dat, su dat, u na in

Org.

poco rit.

16' ad lib.



104 a tempo

S.

A.

T.

B.

u na in al

dat,

u na in

al tum vo

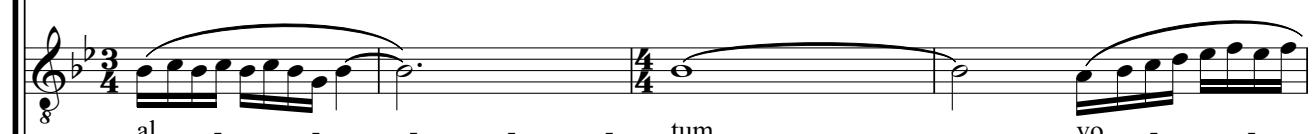
a tempo

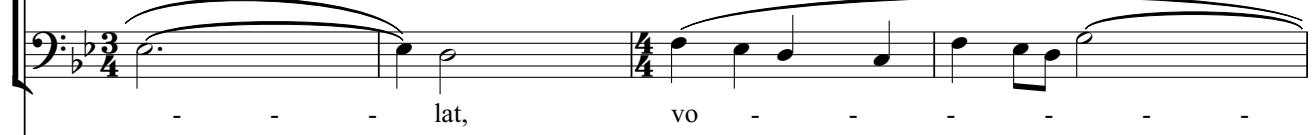
Org.

109

S. 

A. 

T. 

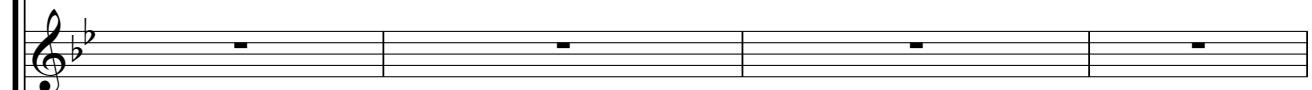
B. 

Org. 

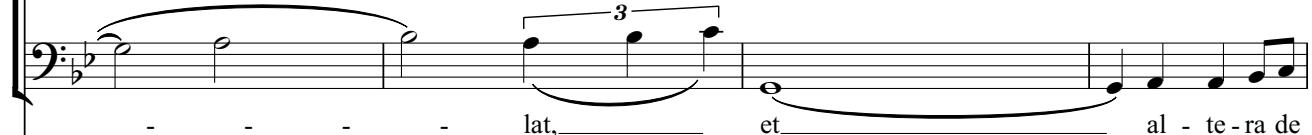


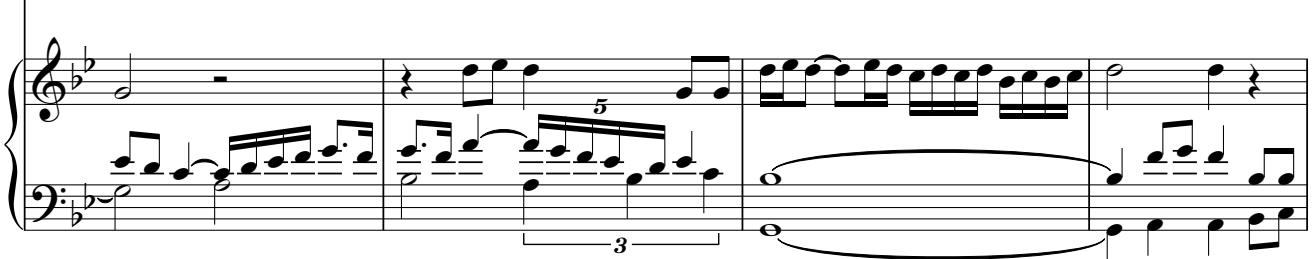
113

S. 

A. 

T. 

B. 

Org. 

117

S.

A.

T. 8 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. lat, et__

A. 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. $\frac{8}{8}$

B. di-que vo - - - lat,

Org.



135

S. di que_ vo - - -

A. - - -

T. $\frac{8}{8}$

B. - - -

Org.

poco rit. a tempo

138

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 *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**



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