

SERBIAN LITURGY



KURT SANDER



**HOLY RESURRECTION SERBIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
AND
SOCIETY OF SAINT ROMANOS THE MELODIST**

present

SERBIAN LITURGY

**Composed by Kurt Sander & Based on Serbian Chant—
A World Premiere Sung in Divine Worship
by the Saint Romanos Choir**

**Hierarchical Divine Liturgy Celebrated by His Grace,
The Right Reverend Bishop SERAFIM**

**Celebrative Luncheon in the Social Hall Following Divine Liturgy
Hosted by S.S.S. Branko Radichevich**

Commissioned by the Society of Saint Romanos the Melodist and made possible by a grant from the Hilandar Foundation in Honor of the Serbian Singing Society Branko Radichevich at the Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago, Illinois, United States of America, for preserving Serbian Orthodox singing traditions and promoting beauty in Divine Worship since 1906.

**Sunday, October 18, 2026, 10:30 AM
Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral
5701 North Redwood Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60631**

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Composer Kurt Sander creates music that bridges the sacred and the contemporary, drawing inspiration from the profound spirituality of the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition and its centuries-old artistic heritage. His compositions have reached audiences in 19 countries across five continents, earning international recognition from critics and audiences for their expressive depth, distinctive voice, and rich musical imagination.

Sander's sacred choral music has been performed and recorded by leading ensembles around the world, including Cappella Romana, the Kastalsky Choir (Russia), the Cincinnati Camerata, the Cantata Singers of Ottawa, the St. Romanos Cappella, the Clarion Choir, Archangel Voices, the Patriarch Tikhon Choir, the Orthodox Singers (Russia), and the PaTRAM Institute Singers.

A landmark in Sander's career came in 2017, when the Patriarch Tikhon Russian-American Music Institute (PaTRAM) commissioned him to compose a new English-language setting of the *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*. This expansive, 90-minute work was recorded by the PaTRAM Institute Singers under the direction of Peter Jermihov and released as a two-disc album by Reference Recordings in 2019. In 2020, the recording received a Grammy nomination for Best Choral Album, bringing Sander's music to an even wider international audience.

Sander has also contributed to ambitious collaborative projects exploring the intersection of sacred tradition and contemporary composition. He was one of five featured composers for *Heaven and Earth*, commissioned by the St. John of Damascus Society and recorded by Cappella Romana under the direction of Michael Boyer for international release on the Cappella Recordings label.

Beyond the choral world, Sander has established a strong presence as a composer of chamber and orchestral music. His song cycle *Ella's Song*, inspired by the life of St. Elizabeth, Grand Duchess of Russia, was named a finalist for The American Prize. His instrumental works have been performed by distinguished ensembles and orchestras, including the Transylvania State Philharmonic Orchestra, the Kentucky Symphony Orchestra, the Braşov Philharmonic in Romania, the Pleven Philharmonic in Bulgaria, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Synchronia, the Corbett Trio, the Solaris Wind Quintet, and the St. Petersburg Quartet.

Sander currently serves as Professor of Music and Coordinator of Music Theory and Composition at Northern Kentucky University. He holds composition degrees from Northwestern University, the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and Cleveland State University. His principal composition teachers included Bain Murray, Alan Stout, Rudolph Bubalo, and Andrew Imbrie.

His music is published by Psallo Music Press, Musica Russica, Zhivonosny Istochnik (Life-Giving Spring), and Media Press, Inc.



FROM THE COMPOSER

Serbian chant holds a special place among the world's Orthodox choral traditions. When I was asked to compose a Divine Liturgy based on Serbian chant melodies, I knew that I needed to begin with careful study. I wanted to understand these melodies and how they are used in different settings, both as unison chant and in harmonized versions influenced by Western approaches to harmony and voice leading. I looked at many composers, but two were particularly influential in my studies.

The first was Kornelije Stanković who transcribed much of the Serbian church music repertoire into written notation, making it more accessible to composers and choirs throughout the region. His work encouraged new harmonizations of traditional melodies and opened up new possibilities for choral performance.

I also studied the work of Stevan Mokranjac, often regarded as the father of Serbian liturgical music. Traveling throughout Serbia, Mokranjac collected and documented regional versions of these melodies, compiling them in his *Osmoglasnik* (*Book of the Eight Tones*), published in 1908. By preserving these melodies in staff notation, he helped establish a more consistent repertoire that could serve as a foundation for increasingly complex polyphonic settings. His own harmonizations, shaped by nineteenth-century tonal practices, played an important role in defining the sound of modern Serbian Orthodox choral music.

Although I wanted to become familiar with the famous settings of these two composers, I deliberately avoided extensive study of their scores, at first, so that their individual harmonic choices would not overly influence my own work. A single chant melody can take on many forms, and the composer's task is to find creative ways to bring these melodies to life in unique settings, whether through harmony or unison passages supported only by a sustained *ison*.

As I worked with these melodies, I sometimes chose to emphasize the chant in ways that traditional Western approaches to harmony might discourage. One example is my frequent use of parallel octaves between voices, allowing the familiar melodies to remain clear and recognizable to the worshipper instead of being hidden amid a rich harmonic pallet.

Although most of this Liturgy is based on existing chant melodies, some hymns are freely composed in a style that fits the character of the work as a whole. This approach reflects a long-standing Orthodox tradition of building upon the musical heritage passed down to its heirs.

My fundamental hope with this Liturgy is that it will speak directly to the hearts and souls of the Serbian people, who have remained courageous and steadfast defenders of the Orthodox faith and culture despite a long and often difficult history. May it strengthen their faith and enhance their prayers!

I am deeply grateful to Professor Dr. Bogdan Djakovic for his guidance, and especially to Serbian-American composer Nicola Resanovic, who devoted much of his career to adapting Serbian chant melodies into English.

SOCIETY OF SAINT ROMANOS THE MELODIST

Society of Saint Romanos the Melodist is a non-jurisdictional, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation endorsed by Members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North & Central America. Founded in 2001 by Peter Jermihov with the Blessing of Metropolitan IAKOVOS+, its mission is to bring the beauty and depth of Eastern Orthodox culture, in all its varied and ethnic forms, to the American public through world-class, transformational events, such as concerts, pilgrimages, theological seminars, and workshops. The Society sponsors two choral ensembles: St. Romanos Cappella – a Chicago-based, professional chamber choir consisting of accomplished vocal artists and devoted to the performance of sacred music, and the St. Romanos Choir – an amateur chamber choir consisting of Chicago-area singers devoted to liturgical singing from all Orthodox jurisdictions.

The Society's main focus over the past decade has been the promotion of creativity in the Church, particularly with regard to liturgical singing and composition. Looking at Orthodox liturgical composition in America in the 20th and 21st Centuries, one must consider the unique paths of development of each respective ethnic branch. Within the Greek community, we see a remarkable burst of notable composers, such as Theodore Bogdanos, Steven Cardiasmenos, Anna Gallos, Christopher Kypros, John Revezoulis, Nicholas Roubanis, and Tikey Zes, to name but a few. Russians in the US and diaspora, riding on the inertia of the prolific Moscow Synodal School of composers in Pre-1917-Revolution Russia, receded into a kind of bubble of self-preservation, regurgitating works of masters from the past but generating nearly nothing new or of major significance; Boris Ledkovsky's works can be viewed as exceptional in some regards. American Serbs, too, reveling in the works of their beloved masters, such as Kornelije Stankovich, Josif Marinkovic, Stevan Mokranjac, Stevan Hristic, and Marko Tajcevic, have not shown evidence of significant creativity with regard to liturgical composition; Nicola Resanovic is an exceptional standout. The work of Antiochian, Bulgarian, Georgian, OCA, Ukrainian, etc. composers in the US merits separate analyses. But the overall trend is clear: we see a conspicuous absence of creativity in liturgical composition.

The Society's focused response to this apparent decline has been to commission two new Liturgies: one from British composer Ivan Moody, whose *Greek Liturgy* was premiered and recorded by the St. Romanos Cappella in 2017, and the other from American composer Kurt Sander, whose *Serbian Liturgy* is now being premiered. In addition, in the Spring of 2027, the Society is organizing and producing a seminar entitled *Creativity in the Church: Composing for Divine Worship*. Theologians, scholars, and composers will present lectures and discussions on means for progress.

The Society will continue to realize its mission by seeking out and promoting outstanding talent within the realm of liturgical music through new commissions and performances, both in liturgical and concert formats. But the joyful encounter with Kurt Sander's *Serbian Liturgy* is just a beginning. Today's premiere in Divine Worship is the launch of a new and remarkable liturgical composition. The next phase of this "birthing" is a planned tour of Serbia, combining the St. Romanos Choir with a Serbian counterpart to sing the *Serbian Liturgy* in the Holy Churches of Serbia; American and Serbian Orthodox singers will come together to celebrate the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in worship in such famed Holy Places as the Gracanica Monastery in Kosovo, Studenica Monastery in Brezova, Zica Monastery, the Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade, and many other monuments of Serbian Orthodox Worship. The final phase of the *Serbian Liturgy* "launch" will be a professional recording aimed at preserving a model of performance for future generations.

WITH GOD'S HELP AND YOUR SUPPORT!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- His Eminence, Metropolitan LONGIN, Serbian Orthodox Diocese of New Gracanica, Midwestern America
- Grace, Bishop SERAFIM, Serbian Orthodox Diocese of New Gracanica, Midwestern America
- V. Rev. Darko Spasojevic, Ph.D., Dean, Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago
- V. Rev. Dobrivoje Milunovic, Priest, Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago
- Rev. Nikolaj Kostur, Priest, Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago
- Protodeacon Jovan Anicic, Director of Youth Ministry, S. O. Diocese of New Gracanica, Midwestern America
- Parish & Board of Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago
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We are grateful to our volunteer staff:

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Remembering our founding members:

His Eminence, Metropolitan IAKOVOS, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago; Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral & Archbishop JOB of Chicago & the Midwest, Fr. Sergey Garklavs, and Sts. Martha & Mary Sisterhood; All Saints Antiochian Church in Chicago & Fr. Patrick Reardon; St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church & Fr. John Kutulas; St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church & Fr. Nicholas Dahdal; St. George Orthodox Church in Chicago & Fr. Vladimir Wendling; St. Joseph Orthodox Church in Wheaton & Fr. John Matusiak; St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Joliet & Fr. John Kuchta; Gene Adameczyk; Dr. Anatoly & Marilyn Bezkorovainy; Lillian & John Bogdalik; Michael & Nina Bowan; James & Suzanne Campbell; Olga Dalmatov; Mary Ellen Donaghy; Robert Easton & Lory Barsdate, Esq.; Jane Hebel; Drs. Peter & Irina Jermihov; Henry, J. Klemchuk; Anna Karina; Robert & Dorothy Koncel; Ed Lazo; Raina Milosheff; Marlo Orlovich; Victor Owczaruk; Annette Pawlukowsky; Fran Presley; Lisa Ridolfi; Dr. Kurt & Larissa Sander; Olga Schidlowsky; Nina Schmitt; Dr. Alexis & Olga Shukin; Julia Sobarnia; Anna Sofus; Joan Stroner; and John & Alice Sutko.

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Peter Jermihov, Conductor

Sopranos: Katya Kostur, Ally Lewkowski, Slavica Melnychuk, Gabriela Radovic,
Sofia Radovic, Sonja Radovic, Olena Solodka & Jelena Stojakovic

Altos: Olha Fitza, Svjetlana Glisic, Nancy Mazurowski, Aleksandra Radovic,
Alexandra Rascia & Sladjana Todorovich

Basses: Sergey Furmanov, Andrij Fitza, Volodymyr Lymar, Peter Morgan,
Aleksandr Radovic, Kurt Sander, David Sekicky & Teodor Zajler

Tenors: Joseph Cloonan, Mike Minkel, Peder Reiff & Ricardo Rivera

SOCIETY ADMINISTRATION

Hierarchical Blessings

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Metropolitan NICOLAE, *Romanian Archdiocese*

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STREET ADDRESS: 5649 North Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60660

E-MAIL ADDRESS: societystromanos@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.societyromanos.org

EIN: 36-4453248