

„Kreek has solemnly, religiously submerged into his art with ecstatic renunciation from tumult. /.../ He is a musical desert inhabitant, ascetic, who devotes himself to supreme happiness in his aesthetic solitude”, Mart Saar wrote in 1929 on his colleague **Cyrillus Kreek's** (1889-1962) 40th birthday. Now that more than 110 years have passed from composer's birth, we are slowly beginning to discover musical treasures of this “desert inhabitant”. The present edition of the „**PSALMS OF DAVID**” is yet another step in publishing enormous heritage of Kreek.

Seven Psalms of David do not represent an independent cycle in composer's work but have been collected into the present collection only because their text originates from the collection of Psalms from the Bible. What is the place Psalms of David hold in Kreek's sacred compositions? Long-time and thorough work in composer's life was connected with collecting, systemising and arranging sacred folk songs. Kreek wrote down the first examples of sacred folk songs – popular versions of church chorales – in Western Estonia on 1914. Further on he submerged into these “hooked, ribbon-like and twirling” songs (as he himself has said) during many decades, arranging almost 450 songs for three and few hundreds for four parts. In addition to that Kreek composed canons for 500 tunes from Punschel's chorale book. Nevertheless composer's sacred heritage is not limited to above-mentioned works. In 1927 he completed "Requiem", first of its genre in Estonian music. One cannot pass Eduard Tubin's comments on "Requiem", which captures well the essence of Kreek's sacred compositions. Tubin, comparing Kreek's work to other works written in the same genre in the world, writes after its premiere: “... one cannot find a piece that has been cognised more deeply, with greater inner warmth and reverence, and still written in a rigid balance than Kreek's “Requiem””.

Psalms of David by Cyrillus Kreek is a kind of bridge between the large-scale “Requiem” and fine arrangements of sacred folk songs. These chorale-like male choir sections reflect the depth and peace of the requiem (see especially 121th and 141th Psalm of David); at the same time many of those configurations seem to be inspired from the agility and spirit of sacred folk songs (see e. g. ornamental melody line of women parts in “Õnnis on inimene / Blessed is the man”).

Regarding the time of composition, Psalms of David can be divided into three groups. The earliest group includes Psalm 22 “Mu Jumal! Mu Jumal! Mispärast oled sa mind maha jätnud / My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, and Psalm 84 “Kui armsad on su hooned / How amiable are thy tabernacles” composed in 1914. The text of those pieces differs from the rest of Kreek's songs with a bigger sensitivity and pathos. The composer has left out the hopeful final section of the Bible psalm 22 (“I want to announce your name to my brothers”) and used only the suffering and dramatic verses of the opening part. Kreek also choose especially emotional excerpts from Psalm 84. In the music of Psalms 22 and 84 of David one could notice (uncharacteristic to Kreek's later works) almost unbalanced dramatics: great dynamic contrasts – *fff-pp-ff* within three bars; unstable keys, sudden harmonic transitions. One could claim that the music composed to early psalms reflects a young and searching spirit. Indeed – the author's composition studies in St. Petersburg Conservatory had started only few years earlier, in 1912.

“Õnnis on inimene / Blessed is the man”, Psalm 104 “Kiida, mu hing Issandat / Bless the Lord, O my soul”, Psalm 121 “Päeval ei pea päikene... / The sun shall not smite thee by day...” and Psalm 141 “Issand, ma hüüan su poole / O Lord, I cry unto thee”, composed in 1923, form a separate, stylistically integral group within the composer's works. Instrumental arrangements of the psalms form an integrated cycle in an orchestral work under a title “Musica sacra”, composed in 1943. Apart from these the cycle also contains orchestral arrangements of Psalms 137 “By the rivers of Babylon” and “O Virgin, Mother of our Lord”. All those four psalms share similar emotional balance, which nevertheless does not become too dull. The songs are also close regarding the sound: chorale-like parts of both Psalm 121 and 141 have been juxtaposed with the part where the melody runs in the foreground in either unison or octave. The expressiveness of the sound bow is stressed by thin accompaniment – long-held pedal fifth. All Psalms of David share a text, which is written almost precisely into music (“Ma tõstan oma silmad mägede poole / I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills”, the highest note of the melody line lies on the word “hills”, etc.). The text of the Psalms of David written in 1923 is much more poetic compared to earlier songs. The most beautiful is Psalm 121, song of pilgrims. Text of “Õnnis on inimene / Blessed is the man” is compiled from the psalms 1, 2 and 3, a liturgical formula “Au olgu Isale, Pojale ja Pühale Vaimule. Amen / Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.” has been added to the end (also to the end of Psalm 104 of David).

An independent chapter in Cyrillus Kreek's composition is formed by music connected to singing traditions, style and melodies of Orthodox Church. Psalm 137 of David “Paabeli jõgede kaldail / By the rivers of Babylon” is based on the recitative *znamennyi raspev*, which the composer has developed mostly through thick sound texture and dynamic contrasts. At first in 1938 a version for male choir was completed; the version for mixed choir originates from 1944.

“He has clarity of thought, elegant, compact form of expression /.../ He has impeccable, pure, sound language and peace in the fire of inspiration /.../ He has intellectual moderation, composure”, says Mart Saar. This characterisation also applies to the Songs of David, published in the present collection.