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The Sretensky Monastery Choir at Adelaide Festival.

FESTIVAL

Adelaide Festival 2019 review: Sretensky Monastery Choir

Stephen Whittington, The Advertiser

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Sretensky Monastery Choir

Music / Russia

Adelaide Town Hall

Until March 4

Lovely, brothers, lovely.

These are the words of a Cossack song sung by Moscow's Sretensky Monastery Choir.

And indeed "lovely 'tis to live" — if you are fortunate enough to listen to the thrilling singing of this band of brothers.

The choir produces a vibrant sound that sends shivers up the spine.

The singers who stepped forward to take solos possessed some of the most beautiful voices you could hope to hear.

Under the direction of the choir's regent, Nikon Zhila, the choir delivered a program of religious music, traditional folk songs and Soviet era patriotic songs, all performed with the highest level of artistry.

Russia has a rich choral tradition, and its choirs are famous for their basso profundo voices that provide a resonant foundation for higher voices.

While that is certainly a characteristic of this choir, it is the perfect balance achieved by the choir that is really striking.

With perfect dynamic control, their singing is highly expressive.

Nobody really expects Russian songs to be happy, and the program was heavy with Slavic melancholy.

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But it was far from tedious, as it was impossible not to be swept up in the waves of emotion — yearning, sadness, nostalgia — so beautifully and powerfully projected.

There were even a few moments of humour in a series of encores that the choir delivered in response to a tumultuous ovation.

— **Stephen Whittington**

