

## Svyati

Looped in the Abbey's waterside  
we try to warm and spread our voices  
chorally in conversation  
bending to its meditative space  
with windows opening on green  
and blue.

Waking had been punched  
with the staccato pulse of war  
on air waves, frayed chords  
dragged through stirring sense,  
mind and movement  
jarred with dissonance.

Now we are here, are handed scores  
to translate and lift together,  
turn to song.

We open pages to long notes  
and cadences above a Slavic script,  
at first our stiff tongues catching  
on Cyrillic consonants, uncurling  
slowly to unfold a theme  
of Crossing to another state,  
another tune and time,  
a nearer time, a present hurt,  
a now.

And as we try to float the fuller chords,  
'Imagine there is a butterfly  
poised on your wrist', he said.  
'Hold and swell the wings of breath  
then let it go to build  
and fall again, let go:  
you'll find the rhythm there.'  
And so we try to rise and fall and let it go  
before the throat constricts,  
before that catching of the breath  
as we remember things  
and build to 'Strong and pleading',  
finally subside to 'Still, serene'.

At day's end in the chancel seats  
before masked faces in the nave  
we all released and held notes  
while the cellist dipped and bowed  
and rowed a passage  
through the heart,  
watched by high windows piercing stone,  
the vigil lights.