

VAR Goes to Russia with the Gita

[from *American Vedantist*, Vol. 7, No. 2—Summer 2001]

Vedantic Arts Recordings' composer / producer John Schlenck and conductor Timothy Mount made a second trip to Moscow earlier this spring to record two of Schlenck's cantatas with chorus, orchestra and baritone soloist. Both works have texts from the Bhagavad Gita. The longer of the two works, *Raise the Self by the Self*, uses the Gita's own dialogue form, with a baritone soloist singing the words of Arjuna and the chorus singing the words of Krishna. The text, adapted mainly from the first six chapters by William A. Conrad, Erik Johns and John Schlenck, begins with the dramatic setting on the battlefield (both internal and external), and proceeds through Arjuna's anguished refusal to fight, Krishna's profound response and exhortation, with teachings of jnana yoga, karma yoga and raja yoga interspersed with Arjuna's questions. The second work, *Life of All Lives*, is based on selected verses from chapters seven and nine on the themes of bhakti yoga and God's all-pervading presence.

While in Moscow, John was very happy to meet Swami Jyotirupananda and Russian Vedanta devotees at the swami's apartment. The swami is doing well and now has permanent resident status in Russia, renewable annually. John was given a copy of the Gita in Russian translation, bound and printed by one of the local devotees in the form of a diary, with two verses, in Sanskrit and Russian, for each day of the year. He recalled an incident which had occurred on the completion of last year's recording. The first hornist called out, as John and Tim were leaving the studio, "Bhagavad Gita."