

Khovanshchina

1990

Saturday, November 17, 1990 8:00 PM

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Saturday, November 24, 1990 8:00 PM

Thursday, November 29, 1990 8:00 PM

Sunday, December 2, 1990 2:00 PM

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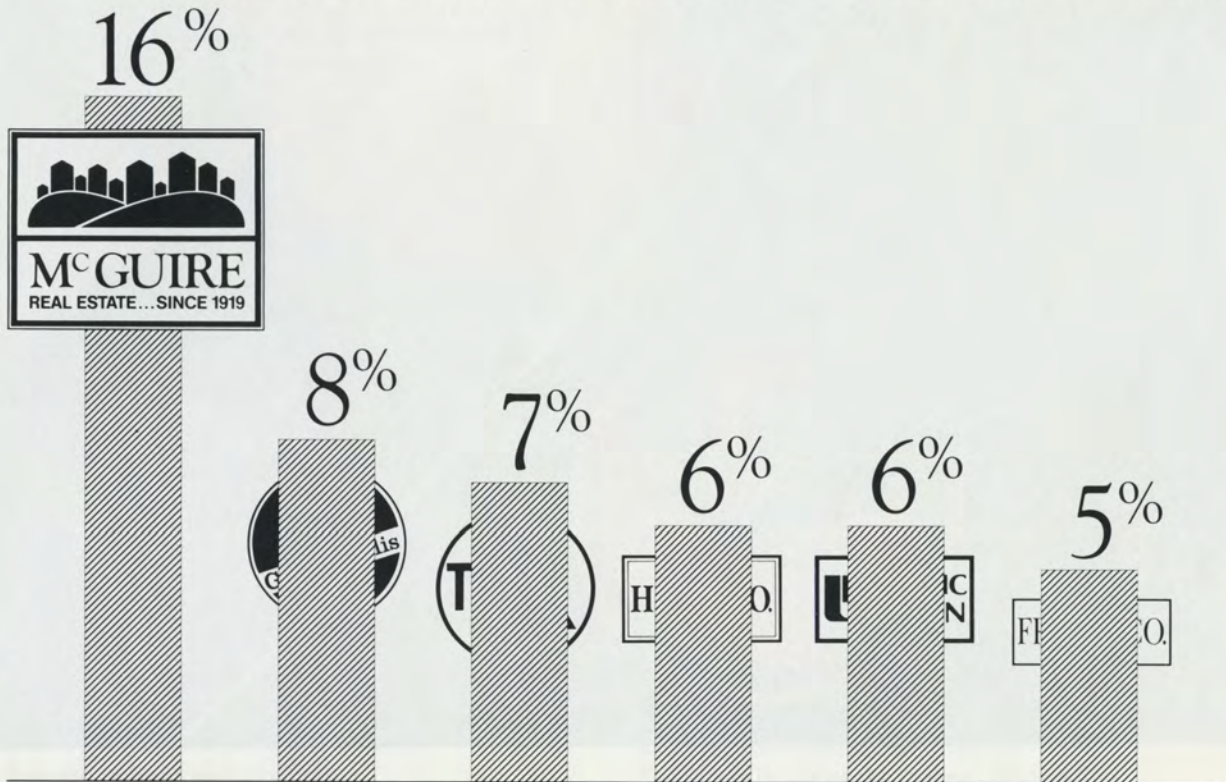
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San Francisco Opera

Lotfi Mansouri, *General Director*

Khovanshchina

1990 SEASON
Vol. 68, No. 11

FEATURES

- 26 **The Power of the Black Earth** by Richard Taruskin
The complex genesis of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* in a wide-ranging, informative analysis.
- 52 **Intrigue, Rebellion, and Heresy: Russia of 1682-1689**
by Malcolm Mosher, Jr.
Overview of the 17th-century events which form the background to Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*.

DEPARTMENTS

- 10 Administration
- 15 1990 Season Repertoire
- 21 Artist Roster
- 24 Orchestra
- 35 Artist Profiles
- 39 Cast
- 40 Synopsis
- 66 Box Holders
- 67 Donor Categories
- 68 Corporate Council
- 69 Medallion Society
- 73 Supporting San Francisco Opera
- 81 Services
- 82 S.F. Opera Center Supporters



COVER

Savrasov, Alexei, 1830-1897

The Crows are Back, 1871

Oil on canvas, 24¾ x 19¾ in.

State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

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SOHL

From the President and the Chairman of the Board

Welcome to the 68th Fall Season of San Francisco Opera. Our first season of opera in the 1990s offers much that is new, including a new president of the Opera Association Board of Directors. Both of us have served on the board for a number of years, and it is most exciting to be involved as this great Company reassesses its past and prepares for a promising future.

We on the board are not always highly visible to our audiences. What appears on our stage, however, is; and this year, there is an unusually high number of productions new to San Francisco Opera audiences: seven of our eleven fall season productions have not been seen here before. The economics of opera production being what they are, we could never have such an abundance of new productions without some very creative planning on the part of our administration. Opera is the most labor-intensive, and therefore expensive, of all the performing arts; no American opera company could possibly afford to build seven new productions in one year in today's fiscal climate.

We have built three new productions in our San Francisco Opera shops this year, which in itself is an impressive

figure, and two of them have been made possible through deeply appreciated donations. Our new production of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was underwritten by a generous grant from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, and San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges the generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Gorham B. Knowles and The Edward E. Hills Fund to underwrite our new *Die Fledermaus*.

Opera companies can save considerable amounts of money by creating a new production together, and that is what we have done with Berg's *Wozzeck*, in tandem with the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto. For helping us cover our end of the costs of this joint venture, San Francisco Opera extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.

Even our own productions that we revive do not come free; the costs in refurbishing a production are surprisingly high, and San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous gift from Maria Manetti Farrow to underwrite our revival of *Pagliacci*. Our other revived productions owe their original creation to the generosity of previous donations: *Rigoletto* was made possible by

a gift from James D. Robertson, *Khovanshchina* by a gift from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, and *Un Ballo in Maschera* by a gift from an anonymous friend of San Francisco Opera. To all of the benefactors whose generosity made this bright new season possible, our deepest and warmest thanks!

In addition, we acknowledge our governmental funding sources, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. We also extend our appreciation to the Grants for the Arts of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. The continued support of Mayor Art Agnos and Chief Administrative Officer Rudolf Nothenberg has been extremely gratifying. And of course, we extend our appreciation to the San Francisco Opera Guild and the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their ongoing support.

With the continuing support of the above-mentioned individuals, foundations, corporations and governmental agencies, we anticipate an exciting operatic experience as we explore the treasures of our repertoire in the 1990s.

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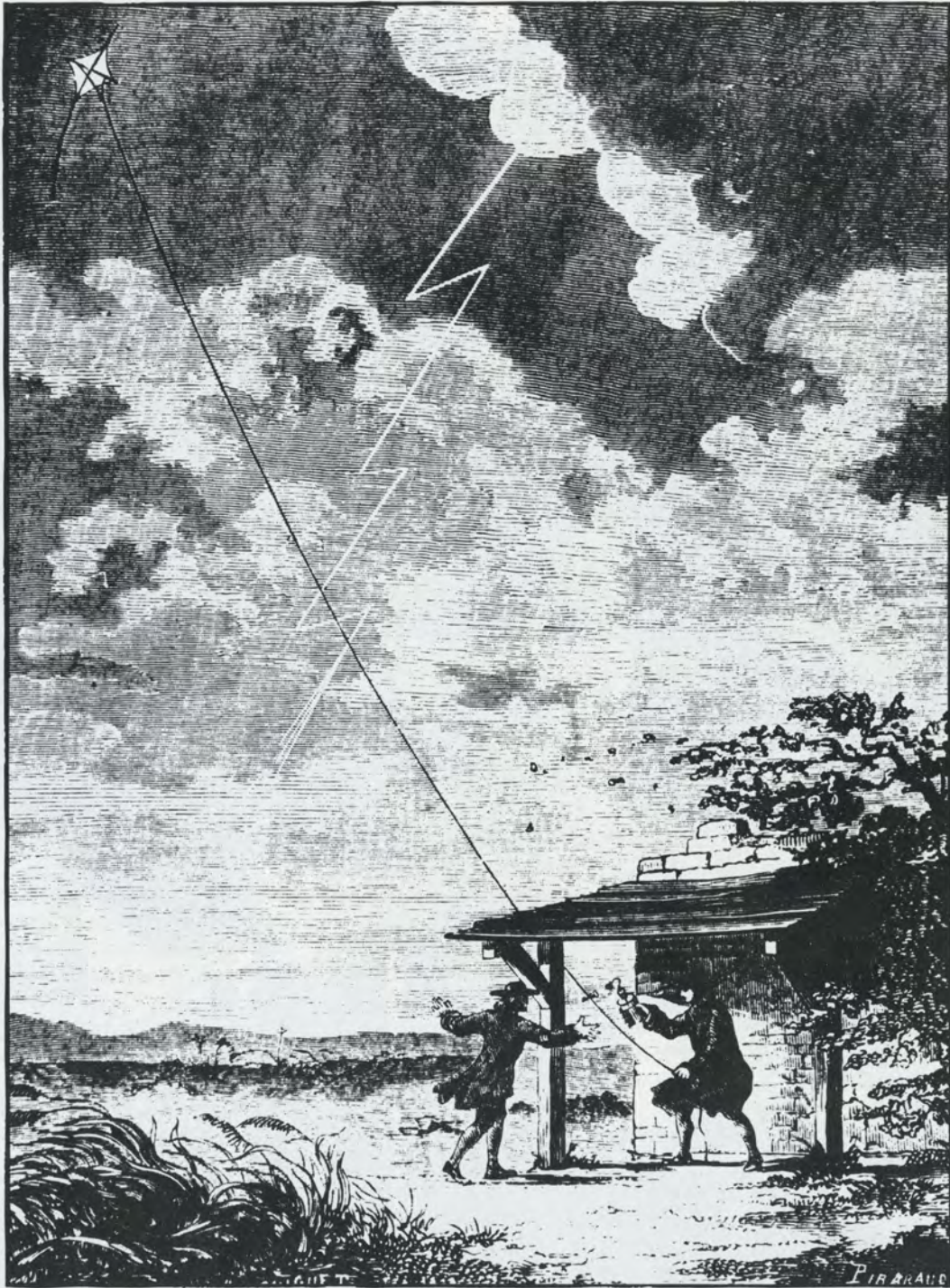


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General Director's Message

Another fall season is upon us, and once again I take delight in welcoming you back to San Francisco Opera. There are many new elements to this fall season, many more than usual, and our regular subscribers as well as our new audience members will find themselves on an adventurous exploration of new repertoire, new productions of familiar repertoire, and exciting debuts by a number of artists.

To begin with, an amazing seven of our eleven productions are new to San Francisco. Three of them represent Company premieres: Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (previously staged by Spring Opera, but never before a part of our regular fall season), Mas-

senet's *Don Quichotte* and Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulysses to his Homeland*. Another opera receiving a new production, *Suor Angelica*, hasn't been performed in the War Memorial Opera House since 1952, while *Capriccio*, also new, has been part of only one previous fall season, in 1963. *Khovanshchina* has also been seen only once before, when the current production was unveiled in 1984.

The number of artists joining us for the first time this season is also impressive—so much so that it would be impossible to list everyone here: five conductors, two directors, five designers and nearly 20 singers will be making their San Francisco Opera debuts this fall,

while several returning artists will be undertaking new roles for the first time.

In short, there are many wonderful discoveries to be made this season, and I am extremely pleased that you will be here to make them along with us. The art form we call opera is nearly 400 years young, and it grows fresher, more vital and exciting every year. San Francisco Opera welcomes you as together we celebrate the liveliest of the performing arts.

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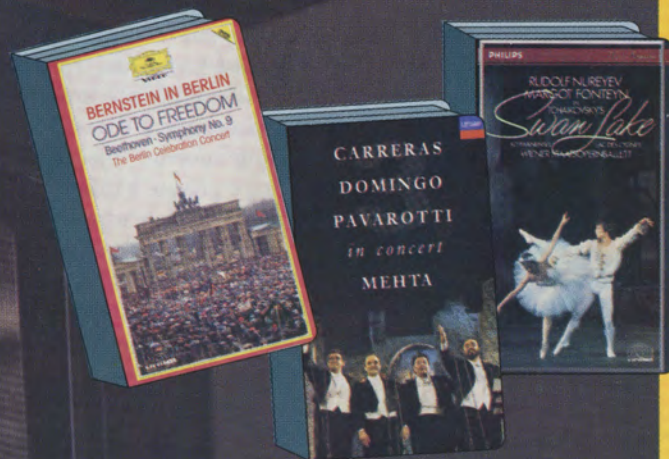
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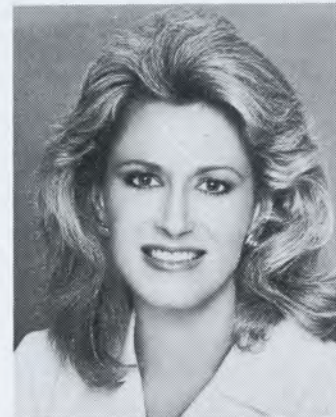
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1990 Season

Opening Night (CANCELLED) Friday, September 7, 7:30 <i>New Production</i> Suor Angelica Puccini Mitchell, Obraztsova, Begg, Petersen, Keen, Williams, Racette, Randell*, Jepson*, Fortuna, Guo*, Claycomb*, Mills, Mavrovitis* Santi*/Copley/Perdziola*/Munn and Pagliacci Leoncavallo Mims*; Atlantov**, Manuguerra, G. Quilico, Gordon Santi/Calábria/Ponnelle/Munn <i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous gift from Maria Manetti Farrow to underwrite the revival of this production of Pagliacci.</i>	Tuesday, Sept. 18, 8:00 (CANCELLED) Wozzeck Berg	Wednesday, September 19, 7:30 Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo	Wednesday, October 3, 7:30 Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart
Saturday, Sept. 8, 8 p.m. (CANCELLED) <i>New production, co-produced with the Canadian Opera Company</i> Wozzeck Berg Forst, Golden; Monk, Ellsworth, Kale**, Vogel, De Haan, Travis, Ledbetter, Frank Layer/Mansouri/Levine/Whitfield <i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous grant from the Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation to underwrite this production.</i>	Tuesday, September 25, 8:00 Rigoletto Verdi	Thursday, September 20, 8:00 Rigoletto Verdi	Tuesday, October 9, 8:00 Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart
Wednesday, Sept. 12, 7:30 (CANCELLED) Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo	Wednesday, September 26, 7:30 Wozzeck Berg	Friday, September 21, 8:00† Wozzeck Berg	Wednesday, October 10, 7:30 Rigoletto Verdi
Friday, Sept. 14, 8:00 (CANCELLED) Wozzeck Berg	Thursday, September 27, 7:30 <i>New Production</i> Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart Patterson, Parrish, Fortuna, Guo; Moll, Streit*, Magnusson*, Hoffmann*, Li, Graber Michael*/Wadsworth*/Lynch*/Long*/ Arhelger <i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous grant from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation to underwrite this production.</i>	Saturday, September 22, 8:00 Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo	Thursday, October 11, 8:00 <i>San Francisco Opera Premiere</i> Don Quichotte Massenet Ciesinski, Mills, Cowdrick; Ramey, Tremont, Petersen, Wilborn*, Travis Rudel/Roubaud**/Morgan/Arhelger <i>This production is owned by the Lyric Opera of Chicago.</i>
Saturday, September 15, 8:00 Rigoletto Verdi Swenson, Powell**, Petersen, Fortuna, Mills; Fondary, Leech* Langan, Skinner, Estep, Villanueva, Ledbetter, Graber* Fiore/Asagaroff/Ponnelle/Munn <i>This production was originally made possible by a gift from James D. Robertson.</i>	Friday, September 28, 8:00 Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo	Sunday, September 23, 2:00 Wozzeck Berg	Friday, October 12, 7:30 Rigoletto Verdi
Sunday, September 16, 2:00 Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo	Saturday, September 29, 2:00 Wozzeck Berg	Tuesday, September 25, 8:00 Rigoletto Verdi	Saturday, October 13, 8:00 Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart
	Sunday, September 30, 2:00 Rigoletto Verdi	Wednesday, September 26, 7:30 Wozzeck Berg	Sunday, October 14, 2:00 Don Quichotte Massenet
	Tuesday, October 2, 8:00 Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo (Tonio: Timothy Noble)	Thursday, September 27, 7:30 <i>New Production</i> Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart Patterson, Parrish, Fortuna, Guo; Moll, Streit*, Magnusson*, Hoffmann*, Li, Graber Michael*/Wadsworth*/Lynch*/Long*/ Arhelger <i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous grant from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation to underwrite this production.</i>	Tuesday, October 16, 8:00 Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart
	†ADDED PERFORMANCE	Friday, September 21, 8:00† Wozzeck Berg	Thursday, October 18, 7:30 Don Quichotte Massenet
		Saturday, September 22, 8:00 Suor Angelica Puccini and Pagliacci Leoncavallo	Friday, October 19, 8:00 Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart
		Sunday, September 23, 2:00 Wozzeck Berg	Saturday, October 20, 8:00 Don Quichotte Massenet
		Thursday, September 27, 7:30 <i>New Production</i> Die Entführung aus dem Serail Mozart Patterson, Parrish, Fortuna, Guo; Moll, Streit*, Magnusson*, Hoffmann*, Li, Graber Michael*/Wadsworth*/Lynch*/Long*/ Arhelger <i>San Francisco Opera gratefully acknowledges a generous grant from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation to underwrite this production.</i>	Sunday, October 21, 2:00 <i>Production new to San Francisco Co-produced with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden</i> Capriccio R. Strauss Te Kanawa, Schwarz, Grist; Olsen*, Shimell, Hagegård, Braun, Sénéchal, Estep, Travis Barlow**/Cox/Pagano/Versace**/ Caniparoli/Munn <i>Sets from Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels</i>

Tuesday, October 23, 8:00
Don Quichotte Massenet

Wednesday, October 24, 7:30
Capriccio R. Strauss

Friday, October 26, 8:00
Don Quichotte Massenet

Saturday, October 27, 8:00
Capriccio R. Strauss

Sunday, October 28, 2:00
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi
Dunn*, Dahl, Curry*; Mauro, Fondary,
Storojev*, Skinner, Ledbetter, Petersen
Arena/Ewers/Conklin/Morgan/Munn
*This production was originally made
possible by a gift from an anonymous
friend.*

Tuesday, October 30, 8:00
Capriccio R. Strauss

Wednesday, October 31, 7:30
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Friday, November 2, 8:00
Capriccio R. Strauss

Saturday, November 3, 8:00
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Sunday, November 4, 2:00
New Production
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.
Holleque* (November 4, 8, 10, 16),
Gustafson (November 24, 25, 27, 30),
Kilduff, TBA, Mills; Lopez-Yañez*,
Hagegård (November 4, 8, 25, 27),
Baerg (November 10, 16, 24, 30), Nolen,
Adams*, Rideout, TBA
Rudel (November 4, 8, 10, 16)/
Summers (November 24, 25, 27, 30)/
Mansouri/Skalicki/Bosquet*/
Tomasson*/Munn
*San Francisco Opera gratefully
acknowledges the generous gifts from Mr.
and Mrs. Gorham B. Knowles and The
Edward E. Hills Fund to underwrite this
production.*

Tuesday, November 6, 8:00
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Wednesday, November 7, 8:00
Capriccio R. Strauss

Thursday, November 8, 7:30
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Friday, November 9, 8:00
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Saturday, November 10, 1:00
Family Matinee
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.
Racette, Williams, Keen, Mills; Estep,
McNeil, Villanueva, Travis, Rideout
Summers*/Mansouri/Skalicki/Bosquet/
Tomasson/Munn
*San Francisco Opera gratefully
acknowledges a generous gift from the
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Matinee performance.*

Saturday, November 10, 8:00
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Sunday, November 11, 2:00
Capriccio R. Strauss

Wednesday, November 14, 7:30
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Friday, November 16, 8:00
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Saturday, November 17, 8:00
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky
Zajick, Fortuna; Ghiaurov, Myers,
Treleaven*, Howell, Noble, S. Cole,
Ledbetter, Skinner, Villanueva
Simonov*/Frisell/Benois/Carvajal/Munn
*This production was originally made
possible by a gift from the L.J. and Mary
C. Skaggs Foundation.*

Sunday, November 18, 2:00
Un Ballo in Maschera Verdi

Tuesday, November 20, 8:00
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Friday, November 23, 8:00
San Francisco Opera Premiere
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi
von Stade, Graham*, Bower*,
Cowdrick, Williams, Mills; Hampson*,
V. Cole, Lewis, Patterson, Cox, Estep,
Rayam*, West*, Wilborn, Petersen
Bernardi/Hampe/Pagano/Munn
*This production is owned by the
Cologne Opera.*

Saturday, November 24, 1:00
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Saturday, November 24, 8:00
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Sunday, November 25, 1:00
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi

Sunday, November 25, 8:00
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Tuesday, November 27, 8:00
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Wednesday, November 28, 7:30
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi

Thursday, November 29, 8:00
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Friday, November 30, 7:30
Die Fledermaus J. Strauss, Jr.

Saturday, December 1, 1:00
Rigoletto Verdi
Hong*, Keen, Petersen, Fortuna, Mills;
Pons, Li, Doss*, Skinner, Estep,
Villanueva, Ledbetter, Graber
Robertson/Asagaroff/Ponnelle/Munn

Saturday, December 1, 8:00
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi

Sunday, December 2, 2:00
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Tuesday, December 4, 8:00
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi

Wednesday, December 5, 7:30
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Thursday, December 6, 7:30
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi

Friday, December 7, 7:30
Rigoletto Verdi
(Same cast as December 1)

Saturday, December 8, 8:00
Khovanshchina Mussorgsky

Sunday, December 9, 1:00
Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria Monteverdi

**United States opera debut
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Friday, November 16 at 1:00



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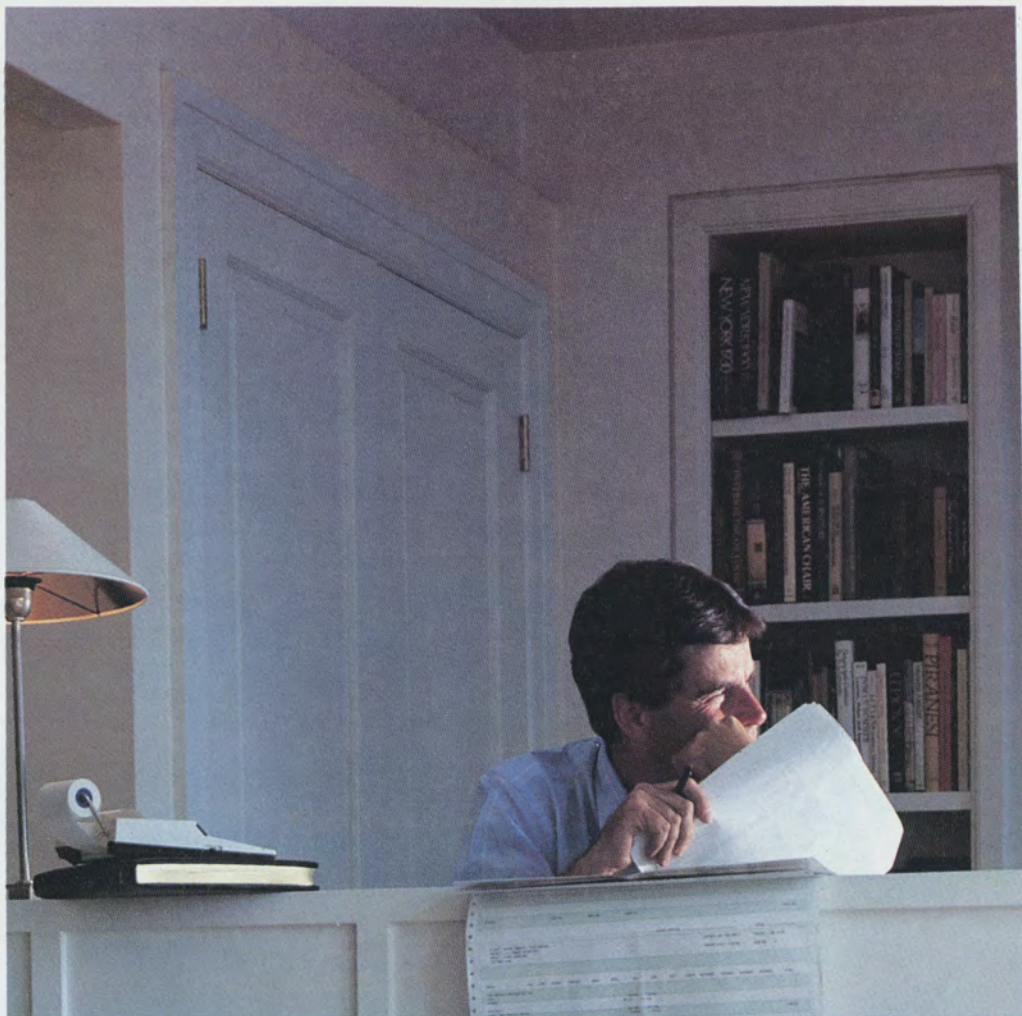


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**Friday, February 8, 8 pm,
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**Cecilia Bartoli,
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**Sunday, February 24,
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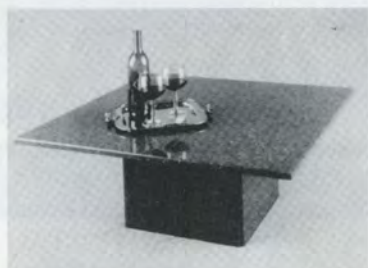
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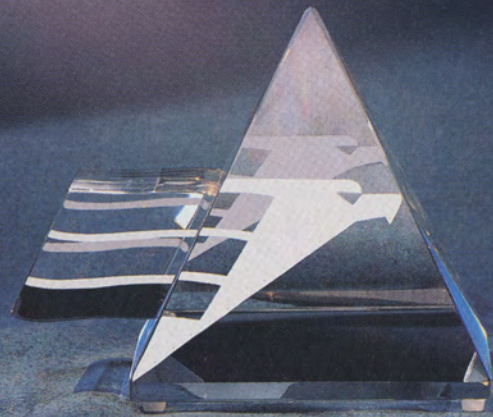
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By RICHARD TARUSKIN

San Francisco Opera Chorus in the Streltsy Scene of the Company's 1984 staging of Khovanshchina. (Inset) Matti Salminen as Ivan Khovansky.



Imagine, if you will, that Nicolae Ceausescu, the former dictator of Romania, had lived three hundred years ago, and that his plan of construction and forced resettlement known as "systematization" had succeeded. The modern map of Romania, as well as the country's present-day demographics, would date from the upheaval he set in motion. He would now loom as the one-man boundary separating the modern era of Romanian history from the ancient, and the human costs would have long since ceased being (officially) reckoned. His successors would exploit him as a demiurge and derive their legitimacy from his legacy. His person would be so ineluctably bound up with the national identity that taking a stand on the one would inevitably mean taking a stand on the other.

You have just imagined Tsar Peter I of Russia, his accomplishment, his image, and some of the reasons why he has been such a focus of moral controversy. The reforms through which "Peter the Great" created the modern Russian imperial state after Western European bureaucratic mod-

els around the turn of the 18th century have been regarded by a divided posterity as either the very best thing that ever happened to Russia or the very worst. "With the autocratic hand/He daringly sowed enlightenment," wrote the poet Pushkin, at one extreme. "Peter the Great killed our native Russian life," wrote the composer Balakirev, at the other. To the conservative religious communities of his day, above all, Peter was an unmitigated evil, the very Antichrist, because he co-opted a schism among the Russian Orthodox, commandeered the established church, and made it, even more than it had traditionally been, an arm of the state bureaucracy. The "Old-Believers"—descendants of the recusants or schismatics of Peter's time, persecuted under all his successors down to the time of Stalin and beyond—revile his memory to this day.

Richard Taruskin, a widely-published musicologist, is on the Music Faculty at U.C. Berkeley. His specialties include 19th-century Russian opera and the music of Stravinsky.



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Official veneration of the first Russian emperor reached a peak in June of 1872, the bicentenary of his birth. Vast celebrations were organized in the Russian capital, St. Petersburg, the Italianate city Peter had built on the Neva marshes at the cost of untold thousands of indentured Russian lives and named after his patron saint. Not only politicians but academics joined their voices in praise of "The Enlightener of Russia" and in acclaiming "the great state aim [that] could serve as the justification of the forced perishing of whole masses of people." Two weeks into this orgy of affirmation of national progress and historical optimism, an obscure 33-year-old St. Petersburg composer, whose one completed opera had yet to be performed, wrote the following extraordinary passage in a letter to his closest friend:

The power of the black earth will make itself manifest when you plow it to the very bottom. It is possible to plow the black earth with tools wrought of alien materials. And at the end of the seventeenth century they plowed Mother Russia with just *such* tools, so that she did not immediately realize what they were plowing with, and, like the black earth, she *opened up* and began to *breathe*. And she, our beloved, received the various state bureaucrats, who never gave her, the long-suffering one, time to collect herself and to think: "*Where are you pushing me?*" The ignorant and confused were executed: *force!* . . . But the times are out of joint: the state bureaucrats are not letting the black earth *breathe*.

"*We've gone forward!*"—you lie, "*We haven't moved!*" Paper, books have gone forward—we *haven't moved*. So long as the people cannot verify *with their own eyes* what is being cooked out of them, as long as they do not *themselves* will what is or is not to be *cooked out of them*—till then, *we haven't moved!* Public benefactors of every kind will seek to glorify themselves, will buttress their glory with documents, but the people groan, and so as not to groan they drink like the devil, and groan worse than ever: *haven't moved!*

The composer was Mussorgsky, who prefaced the letter with the cryptic remark that "I'm pregnant with something, I'm giving birth." It was the first inkling of *Khovanshchina*. The recipient of

the letter was Vladimir Vassilievich Stasov. Before long, the two of them would be up to their ears in the unprecedented task of fashioning an opera directly out of historical documents. For this was to be no mere "historical opera"; it would be nothing less than an operatic meditation on history. Motivated by protest, it would be a contribution in its own right to the most pressing historiographical disputes of the day, disputes

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky, 1839-1881.
The photo was taken in 1870.



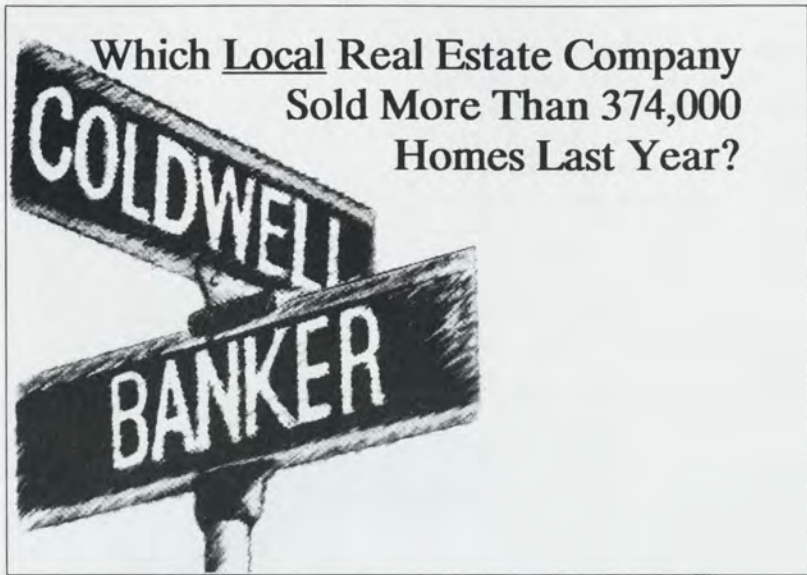
LORENS

that had an enormous contemporary significance in a country that brooked no open political dissent. "The past in the present—that's my task," wrote Mussorgsky in the same letter. The phrase became his slogan.

But he never managed to make his point. He died before the opera was finished, and without asserting a point of view on the events he had portrayed. That was left to others.

*

Like the reign of Nikolai I, the strongman Tsar of Mussorgsky's youth, the reign of Peter the Great had begun amid uprisings and executions. A crisis of succession was created in 1682 by the death of Tsar Fyodor Alexeyevich at age 20, leaving a sickly and halfwitted 16-year-old brother Ivan, and also a half-brother Peter, not quite ten. The families of the two royal mothers competed



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viciously for the throne. After a Church-supported attempt to set the more promising Peter on the throne with his mother as regent, the rival family, partly as a result of the Streltsy Revolt, secured the installation of the two young heirs as joint sovereigns, with Ivan's sister Sophia as regent. Peter and his mother were settled in the monastery at Preobrazhenskoe near Moscow, but not before Peter had seen his near relations killed by the Streltsy; in later years the Tsar would give the name of the village to the personal regiment he organized. (Musorgsky, a former Preobrazhensky Guards officer himself, would jump at the chance to introduce a regimental march into his opera.)

The new commander of the Streltsy was Prince Ivan Khovansky, head of an old noble family and probably, like many of the Streltsy, an Old Believer himself. After leading the successful coup he tried to use his troops to force the new regime to abrogate the recent church reforms; some thought he coveted the throne either for himself or for his son Andrei. This threatened mutiny was the "Khovansky Affair" (*Khovanshchina*). Sophia, formerly the Streltsy's protégée, now turned around and had both Khovansky and his son beheaded. Her agent in this was a boyar named Fyodor Shaklovity, who lured Khovansky into a trap and denounced him. Sophia then appointed him the Streltsy's head.

For the next seven years Sophia reigned as autocrat, supported by the Streltsy under their new and loyal chief, and assisted by her chief minister, the urbane if superstitious Prince Vassily Golitsyn, scion of a westernized noble house well known to music lovers since a later Prince Golitsyn, keeping up family traditions, became Beethoven's patron. He was an eager reformer who envisioned the abolition of serfdom and mass educational programs.

Eventually, Sophia was sent off to a convent, Shaklovity was executed, and Golitsyn was exiled. Effective power reverted once more to Peter's mother; but after her death in 1694, followed two years later by that of his feeble half-brother, Peter I assumed his full responsibilities as head of the Russian church and state.

There was one more Streltsy Revolt to be weathered. In the fall of 1698, Peter was summoned back from one of his fact-finding tours of the West to quell a rebellion that would have reinstated his

old rival on the throne. This time the sovereign showed no mercy to the conspirators or their army. Sophia was forced to become a nun along with Peter's first wife, who had sympathized with the revolts. The Streltsy were punished with unprecedented severity: after an inquest involving prolonged torture, close to a thousand of them were executed, their bodies gruesomely displayed in Red Square as an admonition. The survivors were disbanded.

Meanwhile, the Old Believers, persecuted from the time of Peter's father Alexei, and even more intensely under Sophia as a result of the *Khovanshchina*, responded to the events herein recounted with an epidemic of mass suicides, chiefly by burning. Between 1672 and 1690 some twenty thousand souls are reported to have gathered in churches and chapels in various far-northern localities and immolated themselves by igniting their shelters.

*

In writing an opera that would contain a judgment of Peter, it was inevitable that Mussorgsky would have concentrated on the period of the Streltsy Revolts, the convulsions out of which the modern Russian state emerged. It was in any case inconceivable to base a libretto on the life and actions of the Tsar himself; the Russian censorship prohibited the representation of any member of the Romanov dynasty on the dramatic stage. He had to remain an offstage presence. His opponents (excepting Sophia) could be shown in action, however, and it was on them that Mussorgsky fastened.

The composer began his work as librettist by assembling a notebook of citations culled from historical documents, chiefly memoirs of the Petrine period, but also the autobiography of the Archpriest Avvakum (1621-81), the great preacher of Old Belief, who had been burned at the stake by Fyodor's government. From this material he and Stasov pieced together an epic or panoramic scenario that compressed episodes from the Streltsy revolts into one somewhat ill-defined sequence of events, ostensibly set around 1689, when Peter was of an age to act independently (and Khovansky—historically seven years dead—could refer to him as "formidable"), even though the actual "*Khovanshchina*" pertained to the events of 1682.

The composer's chief concern seems not to have been narration but portrayal. Each of the contending factions in the

chaotic period preceding the consolidation of Petrine power is given a chief representative in the libretto. The Streltsy, of course, are represented by their chief, Prince Khovansky. Sophia and her entourage are represented by Prince Golitsyn, who at the beginning of Act II sings an actual historical document testifying to his intimacy with the regent. For the Old Believers, who did not have an organized clergy, a representative had to be invented. This was Dosifei, whom Stasov and Mussorgsky somewhat ironically named after Dositheus, the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem (1669-1707), who authored the last official doctrinal letters of the united Orthodox Church. The libretto identifies Dosifei with Prince Myshetsky, an Old Believer of noble birth whose narrative "The Depths" explicitly identified Peter as Antichrist. The character's apocalyptic rhetoric was compounded out of that source, as well as the writings of the martyrs Avvakum and Nikita the Lipsverer.

The historical Shaklovity, though deprived of his historical office as post-Khovansky head of the Streltsy, is nonetheless recognizable in the opera as the one who engineers Khovansky's downfall, first through denunciation (here Mussorgsky again condensed the relevant historical document) and then through actual murder. In the opera, this is true to the overriding epic theme, since the murder (as well as Shaklovity's superficially puzzling Act III aria) underscores the violent passing of the old order on the eve of Peter's ascendancy.

Two major characters remain to be accounted for, one quasi-historical, the other invented. In order to make their assemblage of historical portraits jell into some semblance of a plot, Stasov and Mussorgsky fell back on romantic love—the most conventional, and in this case blatantly anachronistic, sort of operatic glue. Andrei Khovansky exists in the opera only as a skirt-chaser. His main love interest (though he is chiefly seen betraying her with an unwilling Lutheran girl) is his fiancée Marfa, a figment of the libretto, but one of its most important props. She is an Old Believer, a specially favored member of Dosifei's spiritual community (like him, she was originally conceived as a renegade noble—in one letter Mussorgsky refers to her as the "Princess Sitskaya"); she is linked by amorous bonds to the doomed Streltsy (Andrei finally plights his troth in the end when he follows her onto the

pyre); and she is a soothsayer with a fatal influence on Prince Golitsyn (fatal, that is, to her, for he tries to have her killed) to whom she foretells Sophia's downfall, and his own. She alone, in other words, inhabits all the worlds of the opera, and links them. Her constant tone of keening lamentation symbolizes the doom that overhangs everything and everyone, the doom that is the core and essential message of this most pessimistic of operas.

*

Conceived in the summer of 1872, *Khovanshchina* was left a torso at Mussorgsky's untimely death from alcoholism in March of 1881. Not until very late was there even a semblance of a libretto, strictly speaking. Scenes gradually accumulated in piano-vocal score in a



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, 1844-1908.

seemingly random order. Only two tiny excerpts of what eventually became Act III—Marfa's folk song and the waking-up chorus of the Streltsy—were ever orchestrated by the composer. When the scenes he left were finally assembled in order after the composer's death, making use of the draft libretto he had finally written out two years earlier to guide him toward completion, it was found that two acts remained unfinished: Act II lacked a conclusion, and Act V (though Mussorgsky had described parts of it in detail very early on in letters to Stasov and others) was little more than a sheaf of sketches.

No wonder the action seemed to exude

Title page of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, written by the composer in 1872, and dedicated to Stasov.

Union), which casts with one fine optimistic gesture all of the variously contending political and social factions portrayed in the opera—the Regency, the Streltsy, the Old Believers—into the dustbin of history. All of them, but particularly Old Believers, were to be viewed as the symbol of everything that was outmoded and antiquated—everything, in short, that was wrong with Russia. They were Moscow, forced to make way for the new

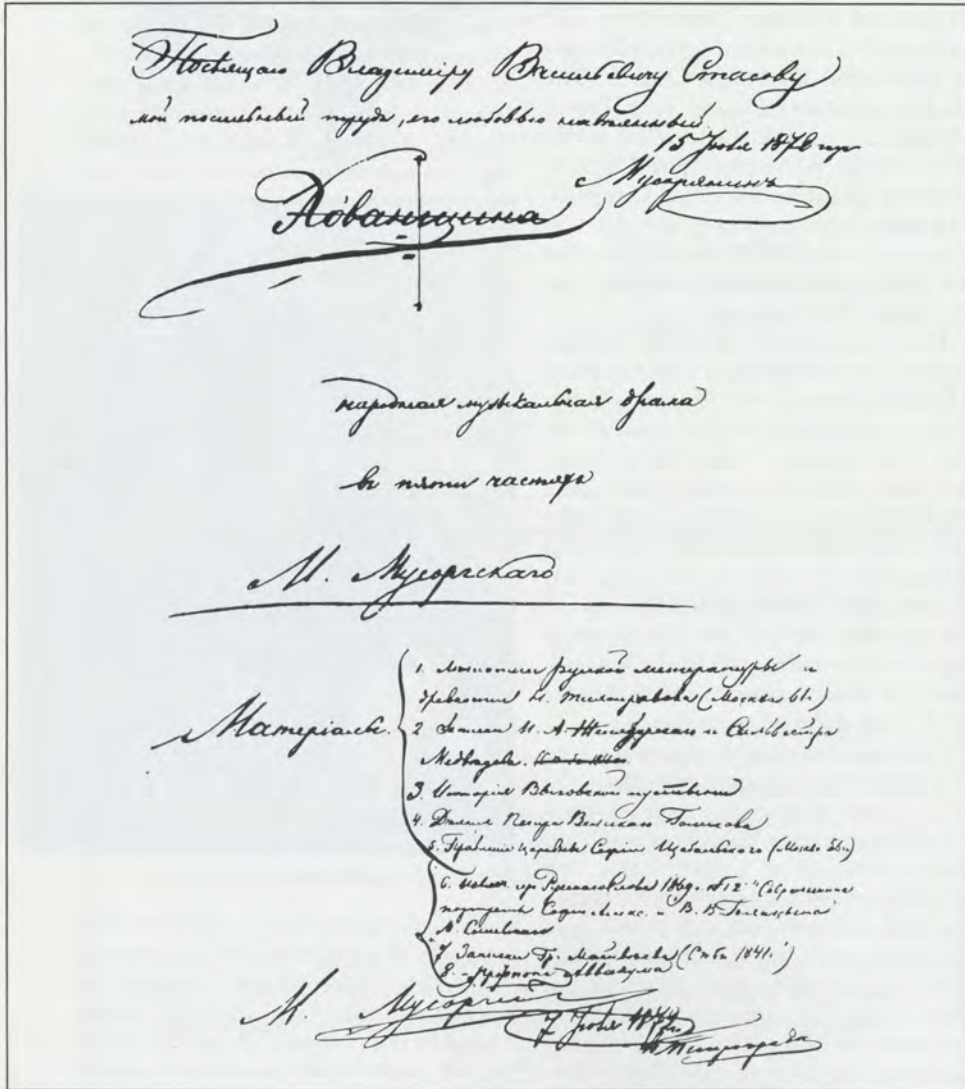
not a religious group at all, only a superstitious foil to the forces of Petrine modernization.

(That made them palatable to the state censorship, too, which stringently prohibited the portrayal of Orthodox clergy on the secular stage. From the vantage point of the established church, the Old Believers were not Orthodox, nor did they possess any organized clerical hierarchy. Their ecclesiastical opponents, with the Patriarch Nikon at their head, were inevitably excluded from the libretto, for the same reason that the young Tsar Peter and the regent Sophia also had to be kept offstage. But whereas the temporal authorities could be represented by stand-ins—Golitsyn, Shaklovity—the Old Believers had to function as a historically disembodied force.)

Now, owing to the two critical lacunae in the score as he left it, we'll never know for sure whether this interpretation, and the melioristic view of Russian history it implies, represented Mussorgsky's attitude; though one cannot help having doubts in view of the sentiments expressed in the original letter to Stasov proposing the project, as quoted above. We do know that the "standard interpretation" was Stasov's, enthusiastic anticlericalist that he was. Much of what we know of Stasov's attitudes toward the events of the libretto comes from his letters to Mussorgsky, in which he carped constantly at the composer's muddled treatment of themes Stasov saw as clear-cut. He tried to get Mussorgsky to expand the role of the Old Believer crone Susanna in Act III, [omitted in this production, as is frequently done] for one thing, so that the Old Believers would be unmistakably identified with that "side of ancient Russia" that was "petty, wretched, dull-brained, envious, evil and malicious."

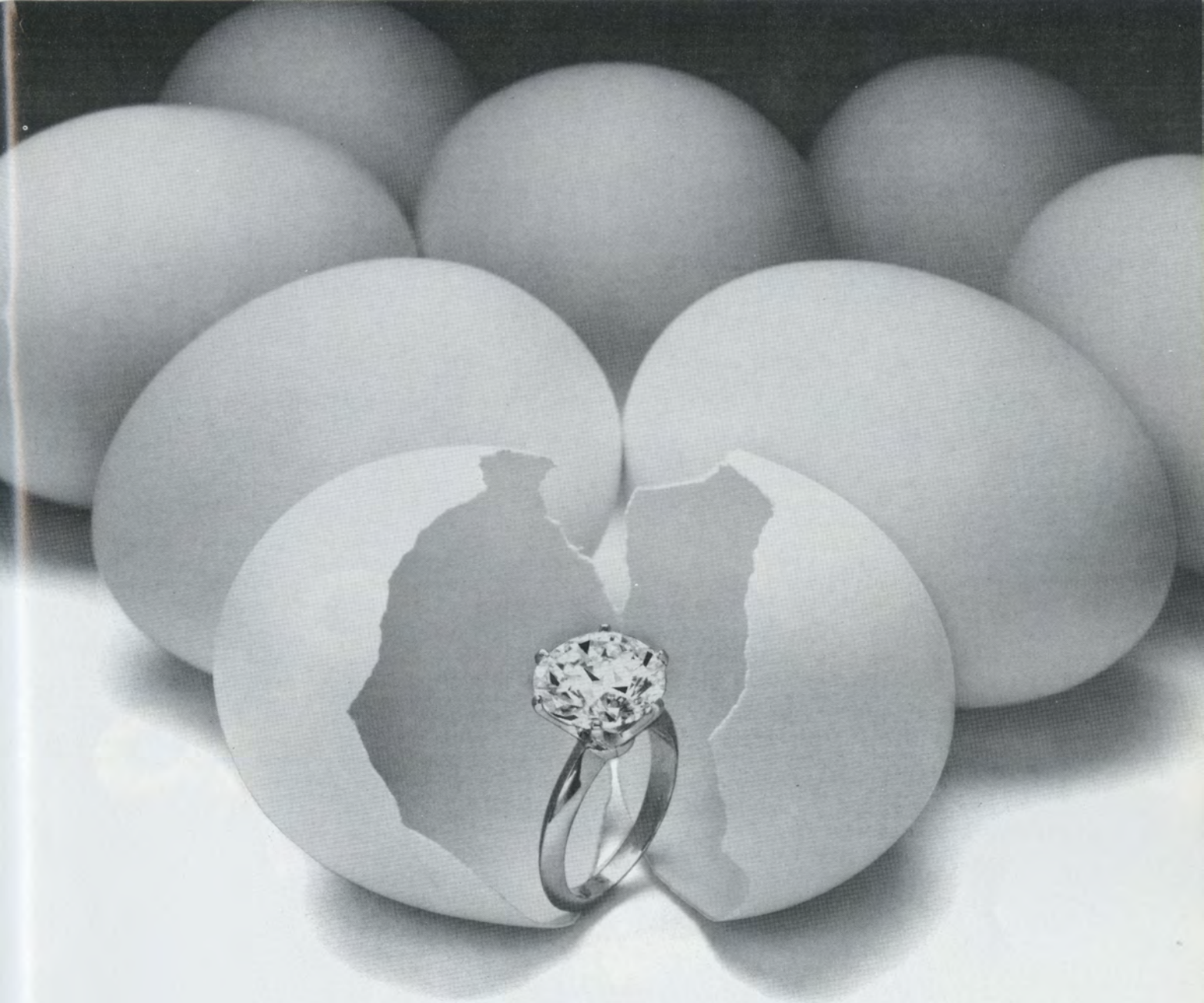
The melioristic view was fixed once and for all by Rimsky-Korsakov, who had to fill the gaps in *Khovanshchina* as well as orchestrate (and "correct," and cut) it. Act II, as Mussorgsky left it, ends with Shaklovity bursting in on a heated political conference at Golitsyn's, in which representatives of all three contending forces—the Regency, the Streltsy, the Old Believers—exchange self-interested notions about the future of Russia. When Shaklovity announces that a denunciation (his own) against the Khovanskys has been received and that it has aroused Tsar Peter's wrath, Dosifei exclaims,

Continued on page 62



an air of pointless confusion and ambiguity, and the composer's purpose proved so susceptible to contradictory readings—though our interpretation has been gradually built into *Khovanshchina* by its various editors. This standard interpretation is the one prevalent in 19th-century Russia (and in the Soviet

spirit of Russia that would be born in St. Petersburg. They were Asia, withering away in the wake of triumphant Europe. In short, they were *Rus'*, the ancient Russian insular state, perishing in flames out of which modern *Rossiya*, the modern cosmopolitan empire, would take wing. They were for dramaturgical purposes



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DOLORA ZAJICK

Dramatic mezzo-soprano **Dolora Zajick** returns to San Francisco Opera to sing for the first time the role of Marfa in *Khovanshchina*. A Merola Opera Program participant in 1983, and an Adler Fellow with the Opera Center in 1984 and '85, she made her Company debut as the High Priestess in *Aida* in 1984, and has sung a number of roles here, most notably Azucena in *Il Trovatore* in 1986, and Amneris in *Aida* last fall. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Azucena in 1988, performing the role in an international telecast. The same part served as her debut at the Bilbao Opera in Spain and with the Vienna State Opera. Amneris was the role she sang to critical acclaim at the opening of the Met's 1989-90 season (which was seen on a "Live from the Met" telecast), and which she also performed at the Houston Grand Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and in Italy at the Rome Caracalla Festival and the Verona Arena. She has appeared as soloist in Verdi's Requiem with the World Choir Festival at Verona led by Lorin Maazel, with the American Symphony at Carnegie Hall and in the same work in London, in a televised concert led by the late John Pritchard; in Mahler's Second Symphony under the baton of Maazel at the Paris Opera; in Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the National Symphony led by Mstislav Rostropovich; and in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* conducted by James Conlon at the Cincinnati May Festival. Most recently, she returned to the Met as Azucena, and sang the title role of Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* with the Nevada Opera Association, and with the Opera Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall. Miss Zajick's young career already has two discs to her credit: a full-length recording of *La Forza del Destino* and the Verdi Requiem, both under the baton of Riccardo Muti. In preparation are recordings of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada* under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas, and *Alexander Nevsky* led by Maestro Rostropovich.



MARIA FORTUNA

Born in Oregon, she graduated from the University of Nevada with a Master of Music degree and moved to New York to continue her studies at the Manhattan School of Music. Among her numerous awards are a Bronze Medal at the Seventh International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1982, and the 1986 Richard Tucker Award, the first mezzo-soprano so honored. New roles in her immediate future include Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Eboli in *Don Carlo*.

Soprano **Maria Fortuna**, who made her San Francisco Opera debut last fall in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, sings the First Alms Sister in *Suor Angelica*, Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, a Turkish Woman in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and Emma in *Khovanshchina*. She was a 1989 member of the Merola Opera Program and is currently an Adler Fellow with the Opera Center. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Marcia Baldwin and Jan DeGaetani. The Niagara Falls native received her Master of Music Degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, where she began her studies with her present teacher, Marlena Malas. Roles she has performed include Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress*, *Amelia Goes to the Ball*, *Il Segreto di Susanna*, Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She made her debut with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis as the Mermaid in Weber's *Oberon*, and sang with Arkansas Opera Theatre in Argento's *Postcard from Morocco*. Miss Fortuna has been a soloist with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra in Bruckner's *Te Deum* and Verdi's *Quattro Pezzi Sacri*. Recent appearances include Anna in *Nabucco* and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Long Beach Opera, and The Young Lady in the Opera Center's 1990 production of Reimann's *The Ghost Sonata*.



NICOLAI GHIAUROV

One of the outstanding singers of our time, Bulgarian basso **Nicolai Ghiaurov** returns to San Francisco Opera as Prince Ivan Khovansky in *Khovanshchina*. Most recently seen here as Colline in *La Bohème* in 1988, he made his Company debut in 1967 as Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*, and returned in 1983 to recreate one of his most celebrated portrayals, the title role of *Boris Godunov*. He also sang Prince Gremin in the 1986 *Eugene Onegin* and Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* in 1987. He began his career in 1955 and by 1958 was performing with the Bolshoi Opera. The following year he made his La Scala debut as Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*, and now holds the distinction of performing with that company for 29 consecutive years. Ghiaurov appears in all of the major opera houses of the world, and has been lauded for his many and varied portrayals, including King Philip in *Don Carlo*, Padre Guardiano in *La Forza del Destino*, Zaccaria in *Nabucco*, Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* and the title roles of *Don Quichotte*, *Don Giovanni* and Boito's *Mefistofele*. Recent engagements include *Macbeth* and *Turandot* in Munich, *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Vienna, *Eugene Onegin* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and at the Metropolitan Opera, a new production of *Khovanshchina* in Vienna, in which he scored a major success as Khovansky under the baton of Claudio Abbado, *Don Carlos* in Bologna, *Boris Godunov* and *Rigoletto* at the Met, as well as concerts in Paris. He has an extensive discography encompassing complete recordings of operas by Bellini, Donizetti, Gounod, Massenet, Tchaikovsky and Verdi, as well as recent recordings of *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*.



GWYNNE HOWELL

British bass **Gwynne Howell** returns to San Francisco Opera as Dosifei in *Khovanshchina*, a role he portrayed here in 1984. His Company debut took place in 1978, when he appeared as King Henry in *Lohengrin* and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, and was most recently here in 1987 singing Crespel in *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Friar Laurence in *Roméo et Juliette*. Born in Wales, he made his professional operatic debut as Montecarlo in *Rigoletto* with the Sadler's Wells (now English National) Opera in 1968. He made his Royal Opera, Covent Garden debut during the 1970-71 season, appearing in *Salome* under Georg Solti and made his first appearance at Milan's La Scala during a visit by London's Royal Opera, with whom he performed in *Peter Grimes*. A regular member of the Royal Opera, Howell has appeared at Covent Garden in such productions as *Luisa Miller*, *Rigoletto*, *Don Carlos*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Bohème*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Aida*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Tannhäuser* and *Don Giovanni*, among others. In 1977, he made his U.S. opera debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Pogner in *Die Meistersinger*, a role he repeated along with that of Lodovico in *Otello* for his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1985. He has also appeared at the Met in *Das Rheingold*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *La Bohème*. Highlights from recent seasons include his debut with the Canadian Opera Company in the title role of *Boris Godunov* (a role he also sang with the Minnesota Orchestra); Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* with the COC; Gurnemanz in *Parsifal*, the title role of *Bluebeard's Castle*, and his first Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger* with the English National Opera; a return to Covent Garden for *The Magic Flute*, *Boris Godunov*, *Otello*, *Fidelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Samson et Dalila* and *Salome*; and appearances in London, Cologne and Marseilles in *Simon Boccanegra*. In addition to his numerous performances in opera and concert, Howell has a number of recordings to his



TIMOTHY NOBLE

credit, including Rossini's *William Tell* and *Stabat Mater*, Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux*, Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, Bach's *St. John Passion*, Elgar's *Coronation Ode*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, Mozart's *Kyrie*, *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* and *Requiem*, Haydn's *Creation*, as well as Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West*.

American baritone **Timothy Noble** appears this fall as Tonio in *Pagliacci* and Shaklovity in *Khovanshchina*, a role he sang here in 1984 and which served as the vehicle of his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1988. He made his Spring Opera Theater debut in 1981 as Agamemnon in John Eaton's *The Cry of Clytemnestra*, the role he created for the work's world premiere with the Brooklyn Philharmonia. He made his San Francisco Opera debut as the Duke of Albany in the Company's 1981 American premiere production of Reimann's *Lear* (repeating the assignment in 1985) and has since sung numerous roles here, including the title role of *Macbeth*, Count Tomsy in *The Queen of Spades* and, last fall, the title role in the family performance of *Falstaff* and Amonasro in *Aida*. The Indiana native created roles in the premieres of two additional Eaton operas: Robespierre in *Danton and Robespierre* and Prospero in *The Tempest* with Santa Fe Opera. He made his 1982 European debut as Miller in *Luisa Miller* at Nancy, and has returned to Europe for appearances with Frankfurt Opera, the Vienna Festival and the Opéra-Comique in Paris. He made his Glyndebourne Festival debut in the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* in 1986, a part he also performed in concert in 1988 under Solti in Frankfurt and Stuttgart, and made his Italian debut that same year in *Stiffelio* at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Noble has also sung in numerous oratorio performances and has appeared in concert with a number of U.S. orchestras. Recent engagements include Michele in *Il Tabarro* at the Met, Giorgio



MICHAEL MYERS

Germont in *La Traviata* with Opera Pacific and at Michigan Opera Theatre, and a just-concluded debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Jack Rance in *La Fanciulla del West*. Last year, to celebrate the centennial of the Woodstock Opera House in Woodstock, Illinois, he made his directorial debut and sang the role of Tonio in a new production of *Pagliacci*.

After his San Francisco Opera debut last fall as the Painter and Black Man in *Lulu*, tenor **Michael Myers** returns to sing Prince Andrei Khovansky in *Khovanshchina*. He participated in the 1979 Merola Opera Program and was first-prize winner in that year's Grand Finals before making his European debut during the 1980-81 season in the title role of *Werther* at the Grand Théâtre de Nancy in France. The following season he bowed in Ottawa as Belmonte in a production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* that was telecast on the CBC. Important debuts during the 1982-83 season included Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at New York City Opera; Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* with Santa Fe Opera; the title role of *The Tales of Hoffmann* with Edmonton Opera; and Nerone in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with the Canadian Opera Company. He made his 1983 Scottish Opera debut in the title role of *Idomeneo*, following performances in that year's Edinburgh Festival as Nick in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, a role he created in the work's 1982 world premiere with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Since then, Myers has been applauded in the title role of *Faust* at Seattle Opera, as Dimitri in *Boris Godunov* at the COC, the Painter in *Lulu* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Boris in *Katya Kabanova* at the Glyndebourne Festival, Percy in *Anna Bolena* in Nice, Huon in *Oberon* for the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Radio France, the title role of *The Damnation of Faust* in Darmstadt and Lyons, the Duke in *Rigoletto* and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* for Pittsburgh



JOHN TRELEAVEN

Opera, and Podestà in *La Finta Giardiniera* with the Cologne Opera. Most recently, the American artist appeared as Faust in the Berlioz work at the Châtelet in Paris, and in Gounod's opera in Santiago, Chile. Later this season he is scheduled for *The Saint of Bleeker Street* in Washington, D.C., *Peter Grimes* in France, *Die Fledermaus* in Pittsburgh, *Lulu* in Toronto and *La Bohème* in Pretoria, South Africa. A popular concert artist, Myers has sung with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Mostly Mozart Festival, and Cincinnati May Festival. Recordings include *La Damnation de Faust* and Scriabin's First Symphony.

British tenor **John Treleven** makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Prince Vassily Golitsin in *Khovanshchina*. Born in Cornwall, he completed his musical studies in London and Naples, soon joining the Welsh National Opera where his roles included Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*, Nadir in *The Pearl Fishers*, and Mark in *The Midsummer Marriage*. He subsequently enjoyed a long association with the English National Opera where he has appeared as Don José in *Carmen*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, The Prince in *Rusalka* (filmed for television and video-cassette), Erik in *The Flying Dutchman*, the Drum Major in *Wozzeck*, and in the title roles of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *The Damnation of Faust*, and *Don Carlos*. He made his debut at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden in a new production of *Die Zauberflöte* and returned there as Froh in *Das Rheingold* and in the title role of *Peter Grimes*. Additional engagements in the United Kingdom include Florestan in *Fidelio*, Radames in *Aida*, the title role of *Werther*, as well as Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West*. During the 1987-88 season he sang the role of Cavaradossi for Opera North and returned to that company last year for *Aida* and *Peter Grimes*. Recent engagements include



STEVEN COLE

Calaf in *Turandot* in Hawaii and Sicily, *The Damnation of Faust* for the Adelaide Festival and for the Bologna Opera, Pylade in *Iphigénie en Tauride* for the Paris Opera, a concert performance of Verdi's *Attila* at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Dick Johnson at Artpark in New York, as well as Radames in *Aida* and the title role of *Peter Grimes* at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Treleven's active concert career includes performances of the Verdi Requiem at the Festival Mediterranéen, and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in Madrid.

Tenor **Steven Cole** appears as The Scriverener in *Khovanshchina*. Following performances as Absalom in *Lost in the Stars* with Spring Opera Theater in 1980, he made his San Francisco Opera debut that fall as Monostatos in *The Magic Flute*. He made his professional debut on 48-hours' notice with the Boston Symphony conducted by Seiji Ozawa as Monsieur Triquet in a concert version of *Eugene Onegin*. The versatile artist, a specialist in character roles, has emerged as an acclaimed singer-actor as a result of successful engagements that have included Goro in the Ken Russell production of *Madama Butterfly* at the Spoleto Festivals in the U.S. and Italy, as well as at Melbourne, Australia; the Dancing Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival and the Opéra de Nice; the world premiere of *Medea* by Robert Wilson and Gavin Bryars for the Paris Opera; Père Lilaque in Hans Werner Henze's *Boulevard Solitude* at the Avignon Festival; and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* for the Lausanne Opera. The native of Maryland won plaudits for his Metropolitan Opera debut during the 1987-88 season as the Dancing Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and also appeared that season in *Falstaff* in Nice, *Turandot* in Cincinnati, and *Madama Butterfly* at the Victoria State Opera in Melbourne, Australia. In

Continued on page 45

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Libretto by the composer and VLADIMIR VASSILIEVICH STASOV

Version edited and orchestrated by DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

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Khovanshchina

(in Russian)

Conductor

Yuri Simonov*

Production

Sonja Frisell

Designer

Nicola Benois

Lighting Designer

Thomas J. Munn

Sound Designer

Roger Gans

Choreographer

Carlos Carvajal

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

Musical Preparation

Susanna Lemberskaya

Robert Morrison

Ian Robertson

Ernest Fredric Knell

Christopher Larkin

Svetlana Gorzhevskaya

Prompter

Jonathan Khuner

Assistant Stage Director

Paula Williams

Stage Manager

Gretchen Mueller

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Kuzka, a Streltsy sentry</i>	Victor Ledbetter
<i>First Strelets</i>	Mark Moliterno
<i>Second Strelets</i>	Micah Graber
<i>The Scrivener</i>	Steven Cole
<i>Boyar Feodor Shaklovity</i>	Timothy Noble
<i>Prince Ivan Khovansky, leader of the Streltsy</i>	Nicolai Ghiurov
<i>Emma, a young girl from the German Quarter</i>	Maria Fortuna
<i>Prince Andrei Khovansky, Prince Ivan's son</i>	Michael Myers
<i>Marfa</i>	Dolora Zajick
<i>Dosifei, spiritual head of the Old Believers</i>	Gwynne Howell
<i>Prince Vassily Golitsin, Keeper of the Great Seal</i>	John Treleven*
<i>Golitsin's servant</i>	Daniel Pociernicki
<i>Varsonofiev</i>	Philip Skinner
<i>Streshnev, a herald</i>	LeRoy Villanueva
<i>Peter the Great</i>	Winthrop Marcinak
<i>Streltsy, their wives, Old Believers, serving maids, the populace, soldiers of Peter the Great, Persian dancers</i>	
<i>Solo Dancer:</i>	Kathleen Mitchell*†

*San Francisco Opera debut

†Courtesy of the San Francisco Ballet

TIME AND PLACE: Russia; 1682-1689

ACT I The Great Square, Moscow

INTERMISSION

ACT II *Scene 1* Prince Golitsin's study
Scene 2 The Streltsy Quarter, Moscow

INTERMISSION

ACT III *Scene 1* A room in Prince Khovansky's palace
Scene 2 The Great Square
Scene 3 A forest near Moscow

Supertitles by Jerry Sherk and Francesca Zambello,
San Francisco Opera.

First performance (amateur):
St. Petersburg, February 21, 1886

First professional performance
Kiev, November 7, 1892

First San Francisco Opera performance:
November 11, 1984

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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20 AT 8:00
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24 AT 8:00
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29 AT 8:00
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2 AT 2:00
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5 AT 7:30
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8 AT 8:00

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after the lights have dimmed.*

*The use of cameras, cellular phones and any kind of recording equipment
is strictly forbidden.*

The performance will last approximately three and one-half hours.

Khovanshchina/Synopsis

ACT I

The drowsy strelets (musketeer) Kuzka hums an old marching song and falls asleep. He is awakened by companions who deride him for his diligence as a sentry. A scrivener arrives and is promptly engaged by the Boyar Shaklovity, who orders him to write an anonymous letter to the Tsar denouncing Prince Ivan Khovansky and his son Andrei for plotting against the throne. The terrified scrivener obeys; but as soon as Shaklovity has gone, he congratulates himself for imitating the handwriting of a dead colleague and thus avoiding possible reprisals.

Ivan Khovansky leads his men, the Streltsy, into the Great Square, where he is hailed as the "White Swan" by the populace. He tells the crowd that he is determined to crush the enemies of the throne and to suppress treason. He orders his men to patrol the city and leaves. Emma, a young Lutheran girl from the German quarter, runs in, pursued by Prince Andrei Khovansky who is determined to force his love on her despite her unwillingness. But Marfa, a young widow and a member of the Old Believers' sect, who is also Prince Andrei's discarded mistress, comes to Emma's aid. Furiously, the young prince turns on her with drawn dagger, but Marfa manages to parry his attempt on her life. The return of Prince Ivan and the Streltsy ends the quarrel. The elder Khovansky is also attracted to Emma and orders his men to take charge of her. Rather than leave Emma in his father's hands, Andrei is ready to kill her. Dosifei, the leader of the Old Believers, intervenes and entrusts Emma to Marfa. He exhorts the Khovanskys to fight for the preservation of the Orthodox religion. Prince Ivan orders his men to guard the city. Dosifei, along with his followers, prays for the preservation of his religion.

ACT II

In his study, Prince Golitsin reads a love letter from the Tsarevna Sophia; he wonders if he can still trust her. His servant Varsonofiev announces Marfa, whom Golitsin has summoned to tell his fortune. Gazing into a bowl of water, the prophetess sees him surrounded by false friends and foretells his imminent disgrace, poverty, and banishment. Terrified, Golitsin dismisses Marfa and whispers to Varsonofiev that the woman must be drowned. Alone, Golitsin muses on the present state of his country and wonders if Marfa's prediction will indeed be his reward for a lifetime of distinguished service to the royal family. Ivan Khovansky bursts in and accuses the Tsarevna's adviser of using his influence to abolish the boyars' rights of hereditary precedence. The two men argue angrily but are interrupted by the arrival of Dosifei. Golitsin advises the monk not to interfere in the affairs of princes, but Dosifei reminds him that he, too, had been a prince, Prince Myshetsky, though he has renounced his title and his princely rights to become a monk. Dosifei persuades the two princes to join him in council on Russia's future, proposing an alliance between them leading to a return to the old principles of government based on traditional practices and the old faith, which Golitsin cannot accept. Outside, the hymns of a passing group of Old Believers rekindle Golitsin's anger, while Khovansky sees in them the saviors of Russia. Marfa reappears to tell how an attempt on her life by a servant of Golitsin was thwarted by a group of Peter the Great's bodyguards. The men are alarmed to learn of the presence of

Peter's troops in the vicinity. Shaklovity enters to deliver a proclamation from the Regent accusing the Khovanskys of treason. Dosifei asks Shaklovity, "What was Tsar Peter's reaction to the proclamation?" "He called it a 'Khovanshchina' (a Khovansky intrigue) and ordered an investigation," replies Shaklovity.

In the Streltsy quarter of Moscow, Marfa gives way to lamentations over her lost love and thoughts of future vengeance. Dosifei enters, counseling Marfa to devote all her love and energies towards the dangerous affairs ahead of their sect. As they leave, Shaklovity appears and offers a prayer for his troubled native land. A group of Streltsy enter singing a drinking song which elicits violent rebukes from their disapproving wives. The quarreling is silenced by the scrivener who rushes in to report that foreign troops aided by the Tsar's guards have attacked the outskirts of the Streltsy quarter. Kuzka and the Streltsy call upon Prince Ivan to lead them against the attackers, but he tells them to submit to the will of the Tsar.

ACT III

In a hall in his palace outside Moscow, Prince Ivan Khovansky awaits the outcome of the Tsar's investigation of the charges of treason against him. His servant girls sing for him, but he finds their song too sad and requests a lively ballad. Varsonofiev interrupts with a message from Golitsin warning the Prince that his life is in danger. Khovansky ignores the warning and orders his Persian slaves to dance for him. Shaklovity arrives with a request from the Tsarevna for Khovansky's presence at a meeting of the Grand Council. Khovansky refuses until Shaklovity tells him that the Tsarevna has asked for him first and that there will be no meeting without him. The servant girls sing a song of praise to "The White Swan" as Prince Khovansky dons his robes of state. As the two men are about to leave, Shaklovity stabs the Prince; the servant girls scatter in terror, and Shaklovity stands over his victim, repeating with grim irony the final words of the interrupted song: "Praise and glory, my snow-white swan."

The people assemble in the square to watch the departure of Prince Golitsin into exile. Dosifei laments the fall of Golitsin and Khovansky and expresses fear for the young Andrei. From Marfa he learns that the Grand Council has decided upon the annihilation of the Old Believers. Prince Andrei enters and angrily demands news of Emma. When Marfa tells him she is safely beyond the frontier, he curses her and calls for the Streltsy. They appear, but not in answer to Andrei's call. Instead, they are carrying blocks for their own execution. The terrified Prince accepts Marfa's offer of a refuge and they flee. The Tsar's troops appear and announce that Peter has pardoned the Streltsy, and that he will appear before the crowd.

Dosifei meditates on his struggle to defend the old religion and his decision to lead his followers to self-immolation. Intoning a chant of renunciation, the Old Believers prepare for death. Marfa tries to sustain Andrei's courage, and as trumpets announce the approach of the soldiers, and Dosifei calls his followers to the sacrifice, she gently leads Andrei into the church. The Tsar's soldiers arrive and stand horrified before the blazing pyre.

Khovanshchina

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl



Nicolai Ghiaurov



(above) Steven Cole

(right) LeRoy Villanueva

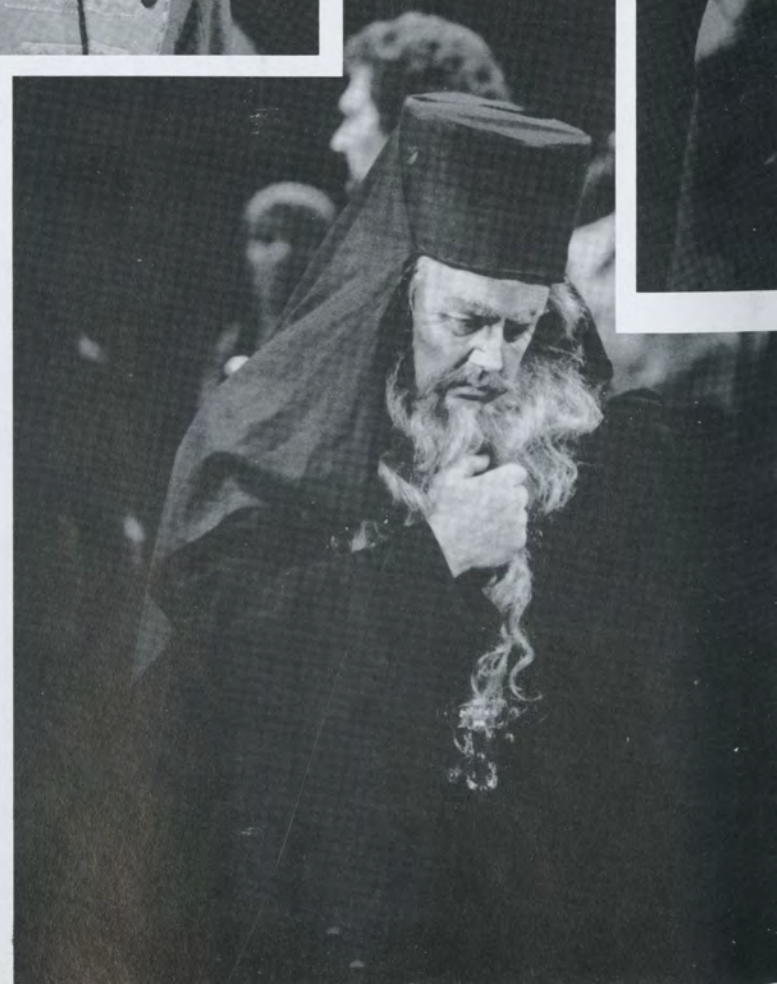
(below) Michael Myers, Maria Fortuna



Nicolai Ghiaurov, San Francisco Opera Chorus and Supernumeraries

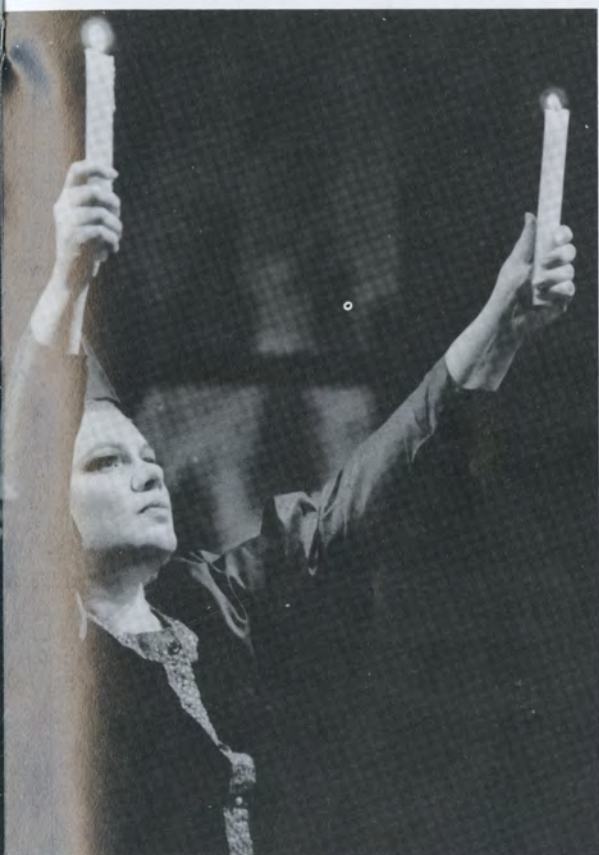


Gwynne Howell





John Treleaven



Dolora Zajick



Timothy Noble, Nicolai Ghiaurov

San Francisco Opera Chorus



Dolora Zajick, Gwynne Howell



Nicolai Ghiaurov, Women of the San Francisco Opera Chorus



Kathleen Mitchell with members of the Chorus and Corps de Ballet



PHILIP SKINNER

Continued from page 37

the 1988/89 season Cole made his debut in Seattle in *Madama Butterfly*, and in Europe he performed in *La Fanciulla del West* and *A Night in Venice* in Nice, *Lulu* in Nantes, *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Lyons, and *Die Zauberflöte* in Aix-en-Provence. Most recently, he appeared in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* in Lausanne and in the world premiere of *Triste Noche* at Nancy. During the 1989/90 season in the U.S., he was heard in Seattle in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *War and Peace*. Future engagements include *Die Zauberflöte* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago (debut), as well as in Monte Carlo, and Nice; *Il Trittico* in Nice; *Falstaff* in Miami; *Manon* in Seattle; and *Platée* at the Flanders Opera. Cole returns to San Francisco Opera for the 1991 Mozart Festival as Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*.

Bass-baritone **Philip Skinner** sings Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Count Horn (Samuele) in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and Varsonofiev in *Khovanshchina*. He made his San Francisco Opera debut as Quinault in the 1985 production of *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and has since appeared here in over 15 different operas in such roles as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, Méphistophélès in the student/family performances of *Faust*, Colline in the family performance of *La Bohème*, Parsi Rustomji in *Satyagraha* and, last fall, Montano in *Otello*, the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, and the One-Armed Man in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. He participated in the 1985 Merola Opera Program and went on to tour with Western Opera Theater in the title role of *Don Giovanni*. He was appointed an Adler Fellow in 1986, and appeared in the Opera Center's Showcase performances of Hindemith's *There and Back* and *The Long Christmas Dinner*, and in 1987 he portrayed the Colonel in the Showcase production of *Le Plumet du Colonel*. A graduate of Northwestern University, Skinner received his master's degree from Indiana University, where he per-



LeROY VILLANUEVA

formed in several productions. He has sung with Kentucky Opera, Edmonton Opera, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Columbus Symphony, San Jose Symphony, Sacramento Symphony, Savannah Symphony and at the Spoleto and San Antonio festivals. In 1988 he sang Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* with the New York City Opera National Company, Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* with Kentucky and Nashville operas, and appeared with the Atlanta Opera. Last year, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in the Verdi Requiem and his Hollywood Bowl debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Additional debuts include the Canadian Opera Company, Arkansas Opera Theater, and the San Francisco Symphony. Recent engagements include a Schwabacher Debut Recital, his Honolulu Symphony debut in Handel's *Messiah*, the four villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann* with Baton Rouge Opera, and a debut with Seattle Opera in *War and Peace*.

A 1989-90 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, baritone **LeRoy Villanueva** appears this fall as Marullo in *Rigoletto*, a Servant in *Capriccio*, Dr. Falke in the family performance of *Die Fledermaus*, and Streshnev in *Khovanshchina*. He made his Company debut last year as Prince Arjuna in Glass' *Satyagraha*, sang Polidarte in the Opera Center's production of Handel's *Giustino*, and appeared in four roles during the 1989 fall season. He was a member of the Merola Opera Program in 1988, performing Taddeo in *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, and he won the Schwabacher Memorial First Prize Award at the Program's Grand Finals. He sang Sharpless in Western Opera Theater's 1988-89 tour of *Madama Butterfly*, and completed a trip to Japan with the Opera Center Singers. Earlier this year he traveled with the Opera Center Singers to China where he appeared as Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* at the



VICTOR LEDBETTER

Shanghai Music Festival. In 1987 he took part in Italy's Festa Musicale Stiana, where he performed in Antonio Sacchini's *Amor Soldato*, and in the world premiere of Delia Robotti's *La Pentola*. Additional credits include a joint performance with Ned Rorem in the composer's *War Scenes*, a solo role in the West Coast premiere of Harbison's *Flight into Egypt* at the Ojai Festival, and appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, and the S.F. Symphony Pops Series. He was a Schwabacher Debut Recitalist this year, and most recently performed Director Hummel in the Opera Center's production of Reimann's *The Ghost Sonata*. A native of Southern California, Villanueva is a national winner of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, first place winner of the National Opera Association Auditions, and the recipient of a 1988 Robert M. Jacobson Study Grant, funded by the Astral Foundation, and bestowed by the Richard Tucker Music Foundation. He is scheduled to make his debut next year at Carnegie Recital Hall.

Baritone **Victor Ledbetter** sings five roles for the Company this fall: the Second Workman in *Wozzeck*, Count Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, a Servant in *Capriccio*, Christian (Silvano) in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and Kuzka in *Khovanshchina*. A 1988-89 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he made his Company debut in the 1987 season as Baron Douphol in the family performances of *La Traviata*, and as Paris in *Roméo et Juliette*. He returned the following year as an Esquire in *Parsifal* and as Marcello in the student/family performances of *La Bohème*, and appeared here last fall as Ford in the Family Performance of *Falstaff*, a Trojan Man in *Idomeneo*, and the One-Eyed Man in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. For the Opera Center's 1988 Showcase series, he sang Count Almaviva in the West Coast premiere of Hiram Titus's *Rosina*, and was seen here as Mr. Kal-

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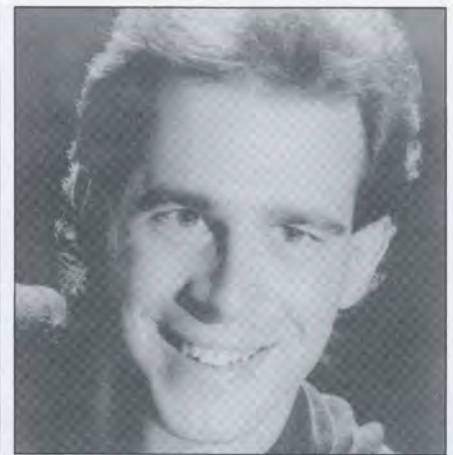
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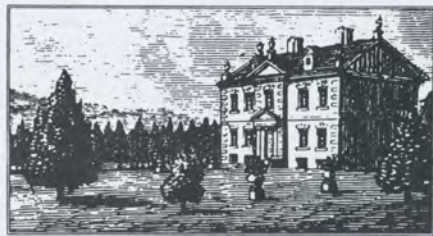
MARK MOLITERNO

lenbach in Glass' *Satyagraha*. A participant in the 1986 Merola Opera Program, he sang Marcello at Villa Montalvo, repeating the role on Western Opera Theater's 1986-87 tour which included performances in China. In April of 1988, Ledbetter returned to Shanghai as Scarpia in China's first *Tosca*, and for a joint concert with the Shanghai Opera and Conservatory. He was a Schwabacher Debut recitalist last year, and has performed with the Vancouver Opera in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and the San Diego Opera in *Don Pasquale*. Ledbetter's recent engagements include Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* for the Dublin Grand Opera, and Valentin in *Faust* for the Cincinnati Opera. Future assignments include Falke in *Die Fledermaus* for San Diego Opera, and Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Washington Opera.

Mark Moliterno makes his San Francisco Opera debut in two roles: a Servant in *Capriccio* and the First Strelets in *Khovanshchina*. He recently sang the role of Escamillo in Western Opera Theater's national touring production of *Carmen*. The American baritone has performed a variety of operatic roles throughout the U.S., Canada and Great Britain. He toured with the New York City Opera National Company in their productions of *La Traviata* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and has appeared as Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Philharmonia Orchestra of New York and as Figaro in Rossini's *Barbiere* with the Tri-County Regional Opera. He also sang the title role of *Falstaff* to critical acclaim, as well as the Shoe Salesman in *Postcard from Morocco*, at the Banff Festival of the Arts. In past seasons, he has been heard as Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* and as the Vicar in *Albert Herring*, both at England's Aldeburgh Festival; as Lockit in *The Beggar's Opera* for Opera Theatre of St. Louis; and as Marcello in *La Bohème*, Dandini in *La Cenerentola*, and Figaro in *Le*

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MICAH GRABER

Nozze di Figaro with the Los Angeles Opera Theater Company. Moliterno is a frequent soloist on the concert stage and in recital, and has appeared with the Masterworks Chorus at Avery Fisher Hall and Carnegie Hall in Handel's *Messiah*, and with the St. Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra in the Brahms Requiem at Carnegie Hall. He sang in an all-Mozart concert in Aldeburgh, and performed Ned Rorem's *War Scenes* in recital with the composer at the piano. The recipient of numerous awards and grants, he received both his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and has furthered his studies at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, and at the Britten-Pears School in England.

Bass **Micah Graber** sings four roles in his first appearance with the Company: an Usher in *Rigoletto*, a Turkish Man in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a Servant in *Capriccio*, and the Second Strelets in *Khovanshchina*. A 1990 Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera Center, he was a 1989 Merola Opera Program participant and portrayed Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* and Zuniga in *Carmen*, the latter a role he repeated during the 1989-90 Western Opera Theater national tour. He recently appeared as Falstaff in the Merola Opera Program's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and was a soloist in the San Francisco Symphony Pops Series under the baton of Victor Borge. Graber holds a bachelor's degree in vocal performance/opera from Bowling Green State University, where he performed nine operatic roles and was named Outstanding Vocalist in 1988. A



KATHLEEN MITCHELL

former apprentice with Des Moines Metro Opera in 1986 and Santa Fe Opera in 1987, he has appeared with the Ohio Light Opera as Old Adam in *Ruddigore*, Massakroff in *The Chocolate Soldier*, and Matteo in *Fra Diavolo*, and recently made his debut with Toledo Opera in *The Magic Flute* and *Madame Butterfly*. Graber will make his debut with Skylight Opera next year as Osmin in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.

Kathleen Mitchell makes her first appearance with San Francisco Opera as a solo dancer in *Khovanshchina*. The native of Seattle, Washington, received her training at the Cornish Institute for the Arts, the School of American Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, and the San Francisco Ballet School. She was an apprentice with San Francisco Ballet in 1982, joined the company as a member of the corps de ballet in 1983, and was promoted to Soloist in 1988. With the San Francisco Ballet, Miss Mitchell has performed leading roles in *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* (Tomasson); *In The Middle Somewhat Elevated* and *New Sleep* (Forsythe); *La Fille mal gardée* (Ashton); *La Sylphide* (Bournonville/Martins); *Vivaldi Concerto Grosso*, *Jinx*, *Scarlatti Portfolio* and *Sinfonia* (Christensen); *The Concert* (Robbins); *The Nutcracker* (Christensen/Tomasson); *Stars and Stripes*, *Symphony in C*, *Rubies* and *Agon* (Balanchine); as well as in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella* (Smuin).

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YURI SIMONOV

Acclaimed conductor **Yuri Simonov** makes his first appearance with San Francisco Opera leading performances of *Khovanshchina*. Born in Saratov, USSR, he studied at the Leningrad Conservatory and, early in his career, was an assistant to the legendary conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky of the Leningrad Philharmonic. He made his debut in 1963 at the Conservatory conducting Dargomizhsky's *The Mermaid*. Following success in the Santa Cecilia Conductors' Competition in Rome in 1968, he was invited to make his debut at the Bolshoi Opera in 1969, conducting *Aida*, and was immediately appointed Chief Conductor—the youngest in that company's history and, with his appointment ending in 1985, also the longest-serving. Highlights of his period with the Bolshoi Opera were the reintroduction of Wagner into the repertoire after a 50-year absence, and several successful tours which he led to Paris, Tokyo, Vienna, New York, Milan and Washington, D.C. In 1982, he made his debut with a western opera company, conducting *Eugene Onegin* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and also made his British concert debut with the London Symphony Orchestra. Since then, he has led numerous additional concerts with the LSO in London and on tour, and has conducted a Tchaikovsky cycle with them at the Barbican Hall. In 1986, he opened the season at the Royal Opera, conducting *La Traviata*. He made his debut with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London in 1988, and with the Royal Philharmonic last year in concerts in

Paris and London. Additional debuts in 1989 were with the London Philharmonic at London's Royal Festival Hall, the Belgian Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Maestro Simonov's recent engagements include concerts with the London Philharmonic, a tour of Hong Kong and Australia with the Philharmonia Orchestra, and new productions of *Tannhäuser* in Budapest and *Don Carlo* for the Los Angeles Music Center Opera. Future plans include his debut with the Florence Opera conducting *Salome*, as well as concerts with symphony orchestras around the world. He has made numerous recordings with the Bolshoi Opera, the London Symphony, London Philharmonic and Philharmonia, and with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

In her twelfth season with San Francisco Opera, **Sonja Frisell** directs the production of *Khovanshchina* that she conceived and staged here to critical acclaim in 1984. She has directed over a dozen different productions for the Company, including *Aida*, *Norma*, *Don Carlo*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Simon Boccanegra* and, most recently in 1988, the SFO premiere of *Maometto II*. She was on the staff of Milan's La Scala for 15 years; in 1968 she



SONJA FRISELL

became staff producer (director) there and from 1972 through 1979 was director of production. Miss Frisell has directed at many major opera houses in Europe, Canada and the United States including the Paris Opera, Bregenz Festival, La Fenice in Venice, Teatro Regio in Torino, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro, Edmonton Opera, National Arts Centre Festival in Ottawa, Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Dallas Opera, Tulsa Opera, Miami Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera. Her production of *Il Trovatore* opened the 1987 season at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and her San Francisco Opera production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* was selected for a telecast by Luciano Pavarotti, who appeared in it with the prize-winning young singers of the Lyric Opera of Philadelphia's Pavarotti Vocal Competition. Directing highlights from recent seasons include *Rigoletto* for Seattle Opera, *Otello* in Barcelona, *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Bologna, *La Forza del Destino* at the Washington Opera, an internationally televised production of *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Don Carlo* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, *The Daughter of the Regiment* at Calgary Opera, and the opening of the Donizetti Festival in Bergamo with the first performance in over 150 years of *The Siege of Calais*. Future engagements include *The Magic Flute* in Washington, D.C., *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Seattle, and her first *Don Giovanni*.



NICOLA BENOIS

The late **Nicola Benois** designed the sets and costumes for *Khovanshchina*, a production which received its San Francisco Opera premiere in 1984. One of the most revered names in theatrical design in our century, he also designed the sets for *Ernani* (1984), and the costumes and sets for the Company premiere of *Maometto II* (1988). A native of St. Petersburg, Benois began his studies under the supervision of his father, Alexandre, and made his debut with the set and costume designs for a production of *Khovanshchina* at La Scala in Milan in 1925. His work so impressed La Scala's director, Arturo Toscanini, that Benois was engaged the following year for the now historic Scala production of *Boris Godunov*. In 1927 he became head of production at the newly formed Rome Opera, where he stayed for five years. He assumed the position of chief set and costume designer for La Scala in 1937, a post he held for over 30 years. During his long and distinguished career, Benois has created designs for more than 350 opera and ballet productions around the world. His work has been praised at the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Paris Opera, the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, the Verona Arena, the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad and Bolshoi Opera and Ballet in Moscow, and the companies of Santiago, Buenos Aires, Hamburg, Munich, Dresden, Florence, Naples, Trieste, Venice, Monte Carlo, Barcelona, Stockholm, Geneva and Zurich. In this country, he has designed productions for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Metropolitan Opera and the Greater Miami Opera, where he designed a three-year Verdi/Shakespeare cycle that included *Macbeth*, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. In addition to operatic projects, Benois has also designed extensively for theater and television and was an accomplished lighting designer, stage director, painter, illustrator and architect.

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CARLOS CARVAJAL


Carlos Carvajal recreates the dances for *Khovanshchina* which he originally choreographed for San Francisco Opera in 1984. The native San Franciscan's first assignment for the Company was the 1970 production of *Carmen*, followed during the 1971 season by *Eugene Onegin* and *Carmina Burana*. His most recent assignment here was *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1985. Carvajal was a dancer with San Francisco Opera before joining the San Francisco Ballet in 1952 and, in Europe, the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas. He appeared as premier danseur étoile with the Bremen Opera, the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux and the National Ballet de Venezuela. In Bordeaux and Caracas he was also choreographer and created dances for over 78 ballet, opera and television productions. Returning to the U.S. in 1965, he rejoined the S.F. Ballet as ballet master and associate choreographer, producing 18 new works in five years. In 1970 he founded the acclaimed San Francisco Dance Spectrum, for which he created over 50 works—including three full-length pieces—during its 12 years of existence. As a guest choreographer, he has worked with the Berlin Ballet, Dance Theater of Harlem, Oakland Ballet, Dallas Ballet, Colombian National Ballet, and Rosella Hightower's Centre de Danse Interna-

tional, among others. Among his most significant original works are *Voyage Interdit* (1967), *Totentanz* (1969), *Genesis '70* (1970), *Wintermas* (1973), *The Crystal Slipper* (1976), and *Synergies* (1984). This year, Carvajal has choreographed new works for the Ballet Nuevo Mundo de Caracas, Festival 2000, Dance Through Time, Khadra Folk Ballet, and the Oakland Ballet. Recipient of over a dozen awards, he was the first to receive the S.F. Art Commission's Award of Honor for outstanding work in Choreography and Dance in 1981, and in 1986 won the S.F. Dance Coalition's Isadora Duncan Award as choreographer for a lifetime of significant work. This year he was awarded the Bay Area Critics Circle Award for dances in the Berkeley Repertory Theater's production of *Le Misanthrope*.



THOMAS J. MUNN

Lighting Director and Design Consultant for San Francisco Opera, **Thomas J. Munn** created the lighting for *Suor Angelica/Pagliacci*, *Rigoletto*, *Capriccio*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Khovanshchina*, and *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*. In his 15th season with the Company, he has lighted over 130 productions for here and most recently created the lighting and special effects for this summer's *Ring* cycle. He also serves as scenic adviser for the Company, and has designed scenery for *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Billy Budd* and *Nabucco*. In addition to his numerous design credits for the War Memorial stage, Munn has designed scenery and lighting for Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional theater, ballet, industrials and films. His television credits include San Francisco Opera productions of *La Gioconda* (for which he received a 1979 Emmy Award), *Samson et Dalila*, *Aida*, *L'Africaine* and *La Bohème*. Recent credits include lighting and projection designs for *Madama Butterfly* for the Netherlands Opera; scenery and lighting for Hartford Ballet's production of *Coppélia* and *The Nutcracker*; and lighting designs for the Hartford Opera and Pittsburgh Opera productions of *Hansel and Gretel*. His most notable achievement as a lighting consultant is the new Muziektheater in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

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**INTRIGUE, REBELLION,
AND HERESY:
RUSSIA OF 1682-1689**

Khovanshchina is the second historical opera of Modest Mussorgsky, and it consists of a conflation of events that occurred in the Russian composer's country between 1682-1689, and an event of 1698. Mussorgsky spent considerable time researching the era and had accumulated far more material than could ever be effectively worked into the scope of a single opera, with the result that Rimsky-Korsakov, who completed the work, was forced to cut several scenes and to condense several others. The result may at first appear somewhat murky, but the more one knows of the actual historical events, the more the opera succeeds in portraying the clash of ideals between the Muscovy of old and the new westernized Russia of Peter the Great.

In the 17th century, Muscovy was the designation for that area of Europe and Asia that comprises most of modern Russia, and its capital was Moscow. In relation to the rest of Europe, its society was significantly backward, a situation perhaps due to the fact that the country was virtually landlocked, preventing European contact by sea. Overland contact was prevented by the Poles to the east, the Swedes and Turks to the south-east, and the Tartars to the south, all of whom were hostile. As a result, Muscovites were ignorant of such significant events as the Renaissance and the Reformation.

European visitors regarded Muscovy as little better than barbaric. To western eyes, Moscow, while impressive from the distance with its many churches of golden domes and crosses, consisted almost entirely of "miserable wooden huts." The streets were muddy ruts. As for the people, the peasants as well as the majority of the nobility were completely illiterate, with documentation of any sort dependent upon a small class of professional scribes. Drunkenness was condoned and encouraged by both the state and the church. The former encouraged consumption because alcohol was a monopoly controlled exclusively by the state, resulting in significant annual revenue. The church fostered the belief that the saints were honored best by getting drunk on their feast days! Hence, the drunken priests in *Boris Godunov*



were not an uncommon sight. Indeed, the greatest excesses occurred during major religious festivals. Dr. Samuel Collins, an English physician who served Tsar Alexei, reported that each year, during the week before Lent, the populace would drink as if it was their last, resulting in the annual deaths of several hundred men and women who would pass out in the snow after a night of drunken revelry and then freeze to death. Westerners reported excessive immorality among men and women, and occasionally bestiality, while under the influence.

Perhaps inebriation among women was a result of their wretched position in a male-dominated society, where one was allowed to beat one's wife for the slightest offense, particularly if magnified by intoxication. Dr. Collins reported that "some of these barbarians will tie up their wives by the hair and whip them stark naked." Where death resulted from such beatings, the man was rarely faulted, because it occurred while "administering correction." If the woman retaliated by murdering her husband, she

A Streltsy drummer, enlistment officer (above), captain and musketeer (opposite page), as seen in 17th-century drawings.

would be subjected to the most severe punishment. The lot of upper-class women appears to have been even worse, for they were relegated to *terems* or women's quarters. Apart from child-bearing, they were rarely let out of the *terem*, and contact with other men was rare. Even in church they were allowed only in specific areas.



STATE HISTORICAL MUSEUM, MOSCOW

The clash of religions, portrayed in a contemporary caricature; Peter I (the Great) is on the right.

A side effect of Muscovy's isolation from the outside world was the development of nationalistic traditionalism, in which Muscovites eschewed any change and viewed western influence, of any degree, as corruption. Steeped in xenophobia, mobs would occasionally take to the streets, murdering any foreigners who crossed their paths. Nevertheless, some interest in the West occurred during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, when disastrous wars with the Poles led to the recognition that the old mounted militia, called up only for specific occasions, would need to be replaced by a regular force organized along the lines of the western military. Out of this came the *Streltsy*, a standing army consisting of a number of regiments. In the realm of education, a small trickle of western

influence came in through Kiev, a city that had fallen to Poland and had thereby come into direct contact with the West. While the Polish influence of Roman Catholicism had failed to garner adherents in this city, an important academy of Orthodoxy was founded in 1633, in which Latin was of fundamental importance. This academy led to another one near Moscow, also with emphasis on Latin. To counter this perceived association with Roman Catholicism, a rival academy was established near Moscow, in which Greek was emphasized, the original language of Russian Orthodoxy. The latter academy would eventually lead to a profound reformation of the Orthodoxy in 1656.

Perhaps the most important contact with the West came through the Foreign



Tsar Peter I supervising the construction of St. Petersburg in 1703; specifically, the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Quarter of Moscow, commonly called the German Quarter, because the word for foreigner was originally an epithet used for Germans. For a time after Ivan the Terrible, Muscovy had relied heavily on western mercenaries, who lived in the Foreign Quarter. When these proved unreliable, the need to manufacture arms locally for native troops resulted in a large influx of western craftsmen, traders, and merchants who resided in the Quarter. This enclave was thoroughly westernized, and the inhabitants were free to practice whatever religion they chose. Roman Catholicism, however, was completely forbidden. Lutheranism, with three different churches in the Quarter, was predominant.

The clearest indication of western influence can be observed during the

reign of Alexei (1645-1676), for in his early years he issued an edict prohibiting theatrical events, calling them "pernicious and lawless," although by the end of his reign, he had a theater built for dramatic presentations. Still, by the latter part of the 17th century, western influence touched only a minor percentage of the nobility.

In religion, the Russian church had acknowledged the primacy of the Patriarch in Constantinople since the 12th century, although it remained strongly nationalistic. Greek prelates were few, as native Muscovites formed the main body of the clergy, and liturgical texts were translated into Russian. With the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, Muscovites touted Moscow as the "Rome of the East" and viewed Russian Ortho-

doxy as the last bastion of the pure faith. In 1589, the Orthodoxy severed all ties with the church of Constantinople by formally declaring its own Patriarch, who would reside in Moscow. With its nationalistic and sacrosanct attitude, the Orthodoxy regarded the church of Constantinople to be as corrupt as that of Rome.

Illiteracy was just as rampant among the clergy as among the rest of Muscovite society. As the liturgical texts had been translated into Russian from Greek sources during the 14th-15th centuries, numerous errors had crept into the Russian texts. When the latter were subsequently copied, further errors were introduced, so that by the mid-17th century many of the liturgical texts had evolved significantly from the old Greek

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originals, along with some of the corresponding ritual. In 1656, Nikon, the 6th Patriarch of Moscow, seeking to counteract the influence of the Catholic West, sided with scholars from the Greek academies and issued an edict calling for the complete revision of texts and ritual, based on Greek Orthodoxy. Such revisions included the spelling of Jesus as "Jissus" rather than "Issus," and crossing oneself with three fingers instead of two. Additionally, a number of new and popular ikons were prohibited. This reformation led to a major schism by an opposing group subsequently known as the Old Believers, who felt that Latin and Greek texts were equally corrupt, and that the current Russian texts and rituals were correct. Political overtones were also embedded in the schismatic movement, as its adherents resented the intrusion of the state and the Patriarch in personal matters of worship. While Nikon himself was eventually deposed, his reforms were upheld and the Old Believers were subject to excommunication and persecution. Faced with what they perceived as heresy, some 3,500 immolated themselves in their wooden churches rather than reform. Others fled into the forests and wilderness, where they could practice their beliefs beyond the control of the state. As head of church and state, and the enforcer of these reforms, the schismatics called Alexei the "Anti-Christ," an epithet that would later be given to Peter for the same reason. The conflict between the schismatics and the Orthodoxy smoldered on throughout the reign of Alexei and his successor, reaching a high point in 1681, when the schismatic monk Avvákum was burned at the stake.

The actual political events of 1682 stem from the fact that Tsar Alexei had married twice, and the families of his wives, along with their respective allies, struggled against each other for positions of power and influence. From the first marriage to Maria Miloslavskaya, 13 children were born: five boys and eight girls. Of the boys, however, three had predeceased Alexei and the surviving two, Fyodor and Ivan, were sickly. His eldest daughter was Sophia. After the death of Maria, he married Natalia Naryshkina, who subsequently bore Peter and whose family rose to prominence. Capitalizing on their position, the Naryshkin party attempted to persuade Alexei to appoint Peter as his successor, instead of the

eldest surviving son of Maria Miloslavskaya.

Fyodor did succeed Alexei, but his reign was brief (1676-1682). A Miloslavsky by birth, that party again returned to power upon his accession. Toward the end of the reign, however, Fyodor married a woman allied with the Naryshkin party, who then engineered the re-emergence of that party. In 1682, with the death of Fyodor clearly approaching, both parties struggled again for dominance. The Miloslavsky hope lay with Ivan (age 16), the eldest son of Alexei, while that of the Naryshkin party lay with the younger Peter (age 10).

When Fyodor died on April 27, 1682, the Naryshkin party appeared to have the edge because Peter's robust health, contrasted with that of the sickly Ivan, had given him widespread appeal among the masses, and the party had the support of the leading *boyars* (nobles of the first order), as well as that of the current Patriarch, Joachim. Indeed, within hours of Fyodor's death, the Naryshkin party met in secret with Joachim and the boyars, and the Patriarch subsequently proclaimed Peter as the new tsar, with his mother Natalia acting as Regent. Ivan was excluded altogether.

The Miloslavskys were taken by surprise, but they had not been idle. During Fyodor's final weeks, the tsarevna Sophia undermined the influence of his wife by coming regularly to his bedside to comfort him, and won not only his affection and gratitude, but also the support of the lesser nobles. When Joachim proclaimed Peter tsar, she demanded that Ivan be named tsar instead, or at least that both boys share the throne. When Joachim refused, she appeared to accept the decision until Fyodor's funeral. Instead of keeping her place as a woman, she accompanied the casket, openly lamenting. Later, during the service, she addressed the assembly, stating that Fyodor had been poisoned and that Ivan, the rightful heir, was denied the throne. Alarmed at the implication, Natalia immediately left the cathedral with Peter, an act that was perceived as an insult to the funeral service and an admission of guilt to Sophia's accusation.

By all accounts, Sophia was an extraordinary woman. While the woeful fate of women in general has been cited above, that of a *tsarevna* (daughter of the tsar) was even more grim. Royal propriety

dictated that a tsarevna could never marry, because no suitor could ever be deemed worthy. Instead, her fate would be confinement in a convent upon reaching maturity, where she would be completely shut off from the world. Sophia, however, had taken advantage of the growing western influence at her father's court. While somewhat restricted to the terem, she was nevertheless allowed to study with several prominent male tutors, one of whom called her a "maid of great intelligence, and the most delicate penetration, with more of an accomplished masculine mind"—a noteworthy compliment in that age. In addition to monks and scholars, she also came into contact with men of state, such as Vassily Golitsyn, with whom she had fallen in love. Thus, in the late spring of 1682, she was undoubtedly the most educated woman in Muscovy and unwilling to spend her adult life in a convent.

In spite of the outcry against them after Fyodor's funeral, the Naryshkin party could have maintained control, if it were not for the decisive involvement of the Streltsy, who were guided by Prince

Ivan Khovansky. In the late 17th century, the Streltsy were organized into a number of regiments, each under the complete control of a colonel, and all regiments under the overall control of a single boyar. Most of the regiments were stationed in Moscow, where they not only formed the garrison, but also served as police and firefighters. In terms of class makeup, the rank and file were drawn almost entirely from the peasant class, while the officers were drawn from the aristocracy. Pay was low and each soldier was required to supply and maintain his own equipment. This was not problematic for the officers, but it was for the Streltsy regulars. In order to help make ends meet, the state allowed the latter to conduct trade, tax-free. Each colonel and his officers had complete control over the regulars in the regiment, exercising not only military control, but civil and judicial as well. They also administered the wages. Under such circumstances, conditions were ripe for officers to abuse their privileges.

Early in 1682, the Streltsy had filed petitions against various officers, alleg-

ing extortion and other crimes, but Tsar Fyodor simply turned the petitions over to the boyar with overall control of the Streltsy, Boris Dolgoruki. Without an investigation, Dolgoruki sided with the officers and had the petitioners severely beaten. Shortly before Fyodor's death, a new petition was submitted. Once again, no investigation was conducted and the offending officers received only the mild penalty of a single day in jail, thereby seriously eroding Streltsy confidence in the government. On April 29th, two days after Peter had been proclaimed Tsar, a new position was submitted to the court. Fearing rebellion and seeking to placate the Streltsy, Natalia and her advisers turned the offending officers over to the regulars to administer punishment themselves. For three days these officers were brutally beaten and tortured. The taste of blood, however, did little to appease the troops. Rather, it only served to give them a feel of real power and to whet their appetites for more revenge. Additionally, many were either schismatics or sympathized with that cause, and the execution of Avvakum, along with the

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Princes Ivan and Peter (later, the Great) in a 1683 engraving by L'Armessin.

growing westernization under Alexei and Fyodor, had already placed them in a rebellious mood. Looming over this unrest was Khovansky, who, in spite of his noble blood, had won their trust and who is thought to have authored many of their preceding and subsequent petitions.

It was to the Streltsy that Sophia now turned for support, and Khovansky rallied them to her side. One regiment had already refused to swear allegiance to Peter for what they had perceived as irregularities in the selection of Peter as successor. Over the course of the next twelve days, both parties conspired towards the demise of the other.

On the fateful morning of May 15th,

rebellion erupted. This date was already ominous in Russian history, for on that date in 1606 Dmitri the Pretender (*Boris Godunov*) was assassinated. At dawn (in 1682), a message came to the Streltsy quarter stating that the rightful heir Ivan had been strangled. Marching in force to the Kremlin, they were met by Natalia, who brought forth both Ivan and Peter. Joachim addressed them and appeared to have resolved the crisis, but then Dolgoruki stepped forward. This man, whom the Streltsy already hated, so inflamed


them with threats and intimidation that they threw him over the balustrade to his death and then proceeded on a murderous rampage throughout the city, killing anyone against whom they had any grievance. To this end, Khovansky gave them a death-list that consisted of the most prominent members of the Naryshkin party. Mutilated bodies filled the streets all over the city for several days. Eventually, through the influence of Khovansky, the Streltsy demanded that both Ivan and Peter be named joint tsars, with Ivan holding seniority, and that Sophia replace Natalia as regent. Joachim and the surviving boyars had no choice but to acquiesce.

Within weeks, the alliance between Sophia and Khovansky ended. The latter continued to file outrageous petitions on behalf of the Streltsy, including the demand that a pillar be erected in Red Square to commemorate their deeds of May 15th. Later in July, Khovansky instigated a near revolt by the schismatics and the Streltsy against the new regent. This potential uprising was narrowly averted by the sheer resolve of Sophia, who turned the tables on the schismatics and browbeat the Streltsy into feeling guilt for supporting that group. When new rumors of Streltsy revolt under Khovansky surfaced, she and her court fled Moscow. Several days later, a mysterious letter appeared in her camp, purporting that Khovansky planned evil for both Ivan and Peter, that he would name himself tsar, that all leading boyars would be killed, and that a new patriarch would be elected from the Old Believers. Sophia appealed to the nobility and the masses, and succeeded in raising an army to deal with the Streltsy. Through a ruse, Khovansky and his son Andrei were eventually drawn out of Moscow, seized and beheaded, following a brief trial presided over by Sophia's agent Fyodor Shaklovity. Without a leader and in fear of reprisals, the Streltsy humbly submitted to Sophia, who pardoned them and placed them under the control of Shaklovity.

As for the schismatics, they continued to be a constant source of dissension and unrest. To deal with this problem, Sophia chose to enforce the Nikonian reforms, thereby seeking to eliminate the problem at the source. Between 1684 and 1685, she issued several edicts outlawing the Old Believers, under penalty of flogging and execution for heresy. While self-immolation had happened earlier under Alexei, it did not approach the scale in which it was practiced between 1685-1689, when over 16,000 perished in flames rather than accept the reformed Orthodoxy. Persecution and mass suicides also continued throughout the reign of Peter.

In foreign affairs, Sophia's foreign policies foreshadowed those of Peter. She appointed Golitsyn to the highest office, and both supported greater ties with the West. More importantly, Golitsyn negotiated a lasting peace with Poland, by which that country relinquished Kiev in return for a Russian

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Peter I (the Great), 1672-1725.

declaration of war against the Turks and the Crimean Tartars, common enemies of both countries. Two subsequent campaigns against the Tartars ended disastrously, although they were officially heralded as successes.

Internally, her regency was beset with unrest, not only from the schismatics, but from the continuing intrigues of the Naryshkin party. Because of this, very little was achieved. Golitsyn did, however, propose an extraordinary reform: to free the serfs and give them land to cultivate, from which the state would profit by moderate taxation. Although this proposal did not progress beyond the

planning stage, had Sophia's regency lasted longer, in a more tranquil environment, perhaps freedom for the serfs might have been achieved then, instead of several centuries later.

During the regency, Peter matured from a boy to a young adult. For much of the time he occupied himself with training two private regiments of soldiers that were at first only intended for the large-scale war games of a boy. By 1687, however, the ranks of these regiments had become swollen with real soldiers who had defected to his camp. Eventually, these regiments, the Preobrazhensky and Semyonovsky, would indi-

rectly play a key role in the showdown between Sophia and Peter.

That conflict came to a head in the summer of 1689. Rumors had been circulating for several months that each side intended to do in the other. In August, word surfaced that Sophia would be attacked and killed while making a pilgrimage to a nearby monastery by Peter's Preobrazhensky troops. Having no choice but to accept the authenticity of the report, Shaklovity ordered the Kremlin gates shut and mobilized several regiments for her protection.¹

One regiment, however, had secretly shifted allegiance to Peter. In ignorance

of the reason behind Shaklovity's mobilization, they feared he intended an outright attack on Peter. Therefore, on the night of August 7th, a rider slipped away and rode to the Preobrazhenskoe village where Peter was staying, warning him of an impending attack that very evening. Peter fled immediately into the woods, eventually organizing his forces at the Troitsa Monastery.

Sophia, trying to defuse the situation, first asked Peter to come to Moscow. When he refused, she sent the Patriarch Joachim on her behalf, but upon reaching Troitsa, he defected. She then tried to go to Troitsa herself, but was refused entrance. Meanwhile, a major exodus of other defectors moved daily from Moscow to Troitsa, including some Streltsy regiments who believed that Peter would prevail. Back in Moscow, her support lay principally with Shaklovity and a few wavering Streltsy regiments. Her former lover Golitsyn fled to a country estate to await the outcome.

On August 27th, with the overwhelming support of the boyars and peasants, Peter issued an ultimatum that Shaklovity be surrendered. A woman with strength of purpose, Sophia refused and the few loyal Streltsy regiments renewed their support. Several days later, however, faced with attack and fear of reprisals, these regiments also defected, leaving her defenseless. She had no choice now but to surrender Shaklovity and submit to her own fate.

With swift justice, Peter had Shaklovity beheaded. He was lucky. Several other allies of Sophia were brutally tortured for several days, in an effort to extort confessions of treason, and then executed. Golitsyn received the lightest sentence—loss of boyar rank, loss of all property, and exile to the Arctic. Sophia was confined in the Novodevichi convent for the remainder of her life.

As for the troublesome Streltsy, they escaped punishment on this occasion, but were accused of planning a revolt in 1698 to place Sophia back on the throne. While he lacked material proof at first, Peter wrung information and confessions from the Streltsy by means of ten specially constructed torture chambers, in which hundreds of these men were inhumanly tormented for days with the standard accoutrements of medieval torture. In the end, some 800 were executed, not a few with brutally slow lingering deaths.

Try as he did, he never could prove that Sophia had instigated the planned revolt. To make her existence more miserable, however, he dangled several corpses outside her cell at the convent. Her death five years later may well indicate privation dictated by Peter.

With respect to *Khovanshchina*, Mussorgsky wove most of the cultural and political issues and events discussed above into the opera, either by stage action or by reference. Because his intention was to portray the climactic struggle between the old and new Russia, and because the scope of the opera was limited by length, he moved the events of 1682 into the final days of Sophia's regency in 1689. By doing this, he could portray the conflict between Sophia (represented by Golitsyn and Shaklovity) and Peter (represented by his Preobrazhensky Guards). The work would then end with the triumph of the latter, who is historically credited with leading Russia out of its dark age.² More importantly, however, Mussorgsky could also include the Streltsy revolt that had put Sophia on the throne and that was closely tied to the schismatic movement, which above all symbolizes the very essence of old Muscovy. Indeed, the title *Khovanshchina* ("The Khovansky Affair") underscores the fact that the Sophia-Peter conflict is secondary to the real crisis that Mussorgsky sought to depict, the old Russia of the schismatics vs. the new Russia of Peter. Khovansky's name is used in the title, for it was he who escalated the unrest of the Old Believers to its highest level while seeking to place himself on the throne. Their near rebellion in July of 1682 was what led to increased persecutions under Sophia and thereby to mass suicides by zealots who preferred self-immolation to sacrificing their age-old traditions. Finally, to complete the demise of the old, it was also necessary to work in elements of the final Streltsy rebellion of 1698, in which that force was completely eliminated. Unlike the actual events, however, the Streltsy are pardoned in the opera, to present the emergence of Peter and the new order in a more favorable light.

In conclusion, with an understanding of the history of the era, the plot of the opera is not so murky after all. Rather, it is a brilliant attempt to portray events and issues of the most significant period in Russian history prior to 1917. ■

¹Some historians have suggested that Sophia, Golitsyn, and Shaklovity prefabricated this report in order to justify an intended attack on Peter, although this notion is based on inference, not on direct evidence.

²This conflict is unseen on stage, but is directly alluded to by the arrival of Peter's Guards, the exile of Golitsyn, and the thematic march associated with Peter's troops that concludes the work. That Sophia is in control prior to Golitsyn's exile is clearly evident in Golitsyn's letter scene and in the scene where Khovansky has been summoned by Sophia to explain his actions and is then dispatched by her agent Shaklovity.

seems inconceivable, then, that Rimsky-Korsakov would not have known of this intention. Yet, when it fell to him to complete the scene, in the course of preparing *Khovanshchina* for publication, the first edition followed neither of the composer's plans, but substituted an idea of his own.

Possibly taking a cue from a line of Marfa's—"Thank God, Peter's people arrived in the nick of time"—which she sings shortly before the end of the act to a fleeting reminiscence of the opera's

represented the unseen Peter in the Act IV finale.

That this was Mussorgsky's plan may be doubted, interested though he may have been (according to one of his letters to Stasov, where he probably had the second scene of Act IV in mind) in exploiting musical contrasts between the "archaic" singing of the Old Believers and the "European" marching tunes associated with Peter. All these reprises, however, were entirely consistent with the progressive, "statist" historiography associated with the name of Sergei Solovoy, an influential liberal historian whose point of view Rimsky himself had previously embodied in his only historical opera, *The Maid of Pskov* (1872).

Dmitri Shostakovich, brought up to accept the Soviet view of Russian history, in which Peter's reforms were portrayed even more unambiguously as positive than they had been by the 19th-century "statists" on whom Stasov and Rimsky-Korsakov relied for their ideology, saw no reason, when it came his turn to revise *Khovanshchina* in 1958-59, to reject Rimsky's final chorus, even though he worked ostensibly from Mussorgsky's original vocal score as recovered by the Soviet musicologist Pavel Lamm. In addition, he replaced Rimsky's ending for Act II with a foreshadowing of the Act IV Preobrazhensky March—although unauthorized, this does make sense, since Marfa mentions that Peter's entourage is in the vicinity—but then transferred Rimsky's reprise of the "Dawn" theme to the very end of the opera, where it casts an even more conclusive judgment on the whole of the opera's action, and completes the equation of the Old Believers with Ivan Khovansky's Streltsy as representatives of benightedness.

Without all these reprises, first of Peter's March and then of the Dawn, the Old Believers would have the fifth act of *Khovanshchina* all to themselves; and, as they trudge off to their mass suicide, accompanied by the sober strains of their psalm, the opera would end on a note of quiet pessimism, a sense of loss. Loss of what? Of the only characters in the drama who have displayed any redeeming humane characteristics whatever; who have not engaged in denunciations, betrayals, acts of violence or depravity; who have on occasion shown forgiveness, tolerance, resignation, selfless love; who have acted, in short, like Christians.

The fifth act, as Mussorgsky evidently

Dmitri Shostakovich in 1958.



SCHAAL

The Power of the Black Earth

Continued from page 32

"Leave off your idle scheming!" In an early letter to Stasov, Mussorgsky indicated an intention to follow this brusque turn with only a single menacing chord, *pianissimo*. Later, prompted by his friends, he decided that such a moment needed capping with an ensemble in which each character on stage could react to the electrifying news; he even vowed (in another letter to Stasov) to get Rimsky-Korsakov's advice on handling the "mischievous" distribution of parts (three basses, tenor and contralto). It

Prelude ("Dawn over the Moskva River"), Rimsky decided to reprise the Prelude melody again and develop it into an impressive postlude. At a stroke, all ambiguities were resolved: Peter is "day"; the Muscovite opposition, in all its manifestations, is "night." This simplified view is driven home again at the very end of the opera. The final chorus—composed on a melismatic Old Believers' melody Mussorgsky had taken down from the singing of a friend and designated for the conclusion of the opera—is followed and trumped by a brassy reprise of the Preobrazhensky March that had

intended it (and as realized uniquely in the version of the opera Sergei Diaghilev presented to Paris in 1913 with the help of Ravel and Stravinsky), acts as a gloss on the rest of the drama—a Christian judgment that calls the necessity of the political events portrayed in the other four acts severely into question. More than that, it implies that what for some may have been a dawn was for others the veritable end of the world.

To say this much is by no means to impute a Christian viewpoint to Musorgsky himself. He had his own reasons for a pessimistic, skeptical view of Russian history. It was a view already quite explicitly embodied in the final scene of the revised *Boris Godunov*, which ends with the lonely Simpleton keening a dirge for his unhappy motherland on a stage littered with destruction. And it is a view that is entirely glossed over in our conventional image of the composer, deriving ultimately from Stasov, which casts him, very questionably, in the role of a musical *narodnik*, a radical populist.

*

The Russian word *Narodni* or *narodnaya* [f. ending], (from *narod*, literally “folk” or “people”) has undergone a considerable restriction in meaning since the Revolution. Nowadays it is commonly used in such connections as “folk song” (*narodnaya pesnya*) or “people’s republic” (*narodnaya respublika*), and is distinguished from the loan word *natsionalnaya*, which refers to nations as political entities. In the 19th century the distinction was by no means so finely drawn. The word *narodnost*, for example, rather than the then-rare *natsionalnost*, was used to denote “nationality” (as in the patriotic trinity to which Russians were expected to subscribe under Nikolai I: Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality). So when Mussorgsky subtitled *Khovanshchina* a “*Narodnaya muzykalnaya drama*,” he did not necessarily mean a “musical folk drama” as most sources now translate it. It is more likely that he meant, simply, a “national drama,” or better, a “drama of the national history.”

The distinction is worth insisting upon, because otherwise it is hard to understand either the composer’s treatment of the chorus (which is in no sense



Fyodor Chaliapin as Dosifei in *Khovanshchina*, a role he first assumed in 1897. This photo was taken in 1912.

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a "protagonist," the way it is said to be in *Boris Godunov*), or his insistence on drawing his *dramatis personae* almost entirely from the ranks of the nobility. The latter point is one that greatly disturbed Stasov at the time. "A chronicle of princely spawn!" he raged in one letter. "What is this finally to be, an opera of princes, while I thought you were planning an opera of the people. After all, who among your characters will not be a prince or an aristocrat, who will come directly from the people?"

The answer, excluding the minor roles, is nobody. And the "real people from the soil" in *Khovanshchina* (to use another phrase of Stasov's) are treated with unremitting contempt. The choristers representing the rank and file Streltsy do nothing but carouse and sleep it off (at noonday); their wives are so exasperated with them that they actually plead with Peter *not* to pardon their husbands! The behavior of the mixed chorus representing the "crowd" (*narod!*) in the first act is worst of all. Like the crowd in *Boris Godunov* it looks on uncomprehendingly; but unlike its predecessor it takes violent and wantonly destructive action, brutalizing the poor scribe and smashing his booth.

No, *Khovanshchina* is an aristocratic tragedy; and this is reflected, too, in the musical style, full of "noble" melody in place of the radically realistic speechsong one finds in Mussorgsky's songs or in the earlier version of *Boris*. In part, this is a continuation of a tendency, already noticeable in the revised *Boris*, toward a more heroic scale and a more authentically tragic tone—in short, toward a more traditionally operatic style. But Mussorgsky refused to call it a retrenchment; on the contrary, in one of his late letters to Stasov he pointed with pride to his *advancement* toward what he called "thought-through and justified melody," meaning a kind of melody that would embody all the expressive potential of speech. "If I achieve this I will consider it a conquest for art," he wrote, and pointed with pride to certain scenes in *Khovanshchina* in which he felt he had come close to his new ideal. Yet these sinuous melodies, unlike the idiosyncratic recitatives of his earlier manner, are curiously impersonal. The characters who sing them (Marfa throughout, Shaklovity in Act III, Dosifei in Acts III and V) do not speak, it seems; rather, something is speaking through them. And this is perhaps the central message of an opera

in which personal volition is everywhere set at nought; in which everyone plots and strives and everyone loses; in which the final stage picture is one in which the last survivors of the old order, the opera's only morally undefiled characters, are seen resolutely stepping out of history and into eternity, where Peter cannot touch them.

What is speaking? Tolstoy knew. *War and Peace*, another aristocratic tragedy, was a new book when Mussorgsky embarked on *Khovanshchina*. The composer must have read it, along with all the rest of educated Russia. And when at length he came to the very end of the whole 1500-page narrative, he encountered this famous (and amply foreshadowed) peroration in which the novelist stepped out of his role to lecture the reader directly on the impassive shaping forces of history—what Mussorgsky called “the power of the black earth”:

As, with astronomy, the difficulty of recognizing the motion of the earth lay in renouncing the immediate sensation of a stationary earth and moving planets, so in history the difficulty of recognizing the subjection of the

individual to the laws of space, time and cause lies in renouncing the spontaneous feeling of independence of one's own personality.

But as in astronomy the new view said: “It is true that we do not feel the motion of the earth, but by admitting its immobility we arrive at an absurdity, while by admitting its motion (which we do not feel) we arrive at laws,” so in history the new view says: “It is true that we do not feel our dependence, but by admitting our free will we arrive at an absurdity, while by admitting our dependence on the external world, on time, on [unfathomable] cause, we arrive at laws.”

In the first case it was necessary to renounce the consciousness of an unreal immobility in space and to recognize a motion we did not feel; in the present case it is similarly necessary to renounce a freedom that does not exist, and to recognize a dependence of which we are not conscious.

Perhaps it is a mark of the advantage a writer of music enjoys over a writer of words that Mussorgsky could “say” all this without intruding his person. ■

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The Medallion Society, the premier support group of the San Francisco Opera family, and the Corporate Council play a vital role in maintaining the company's stature as one of the world's leading opera companies. The generosity of these members help to ensure the fiscal stability necessary for the production of first-rate opera, season after season.

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- Increased ticket priority, subject to availability

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The San Francisco Opera Corporate Council includes Bay Area businesses and corporations that play an active role in the Opera. San Francisco Opera seeks to add new members to the Corporate Council so that it reflects the varied Bay Area business community. Council activities include participation in members-only dress rehearsals, numerous Council evenings at the Opera, and special behind-the-scenes glimpses into the world of opera. These benefits can be enjoyed by your business clients and employees.

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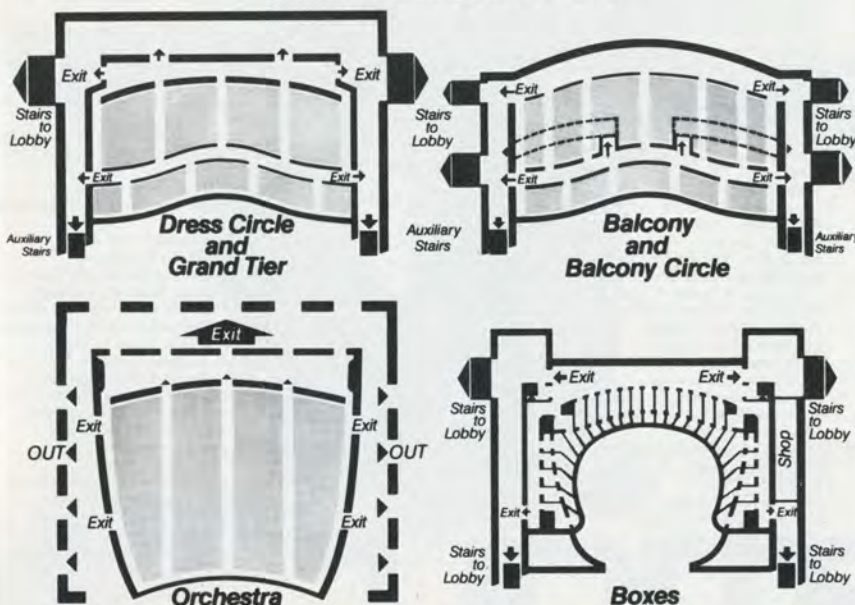
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