

Ruslan and Lyudmila

1995-1996

Saturday, September 9, 1995 7:00 PM
Thursday, September 14, 1995 7:30 PM
Sunday, September 17, 1995 1:30 PM
Tuesday, September 19, 1995 7:30 PM
Friday, September 22, 1995 7:30 PM
Tuesday, September 26, 1995 7:30 PM
Friday, September 29, 1995 7:30 PM

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

1995 SEASON

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA



Stagebill



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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MAGAZINE

Ruslan and Lyudmila

1995 Season
Vol. 73, No. 4

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- 42** **Re-creating *Ruslan*** by Timothy Pfaff
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Ruslan and Lyudmila plate
Copy of the Palekh lacquer original by Gleb Lyubimov
Pigment and gold on hard-fire porcelain
1988 Vinogradov Porcelain, "Russian Legends" collection

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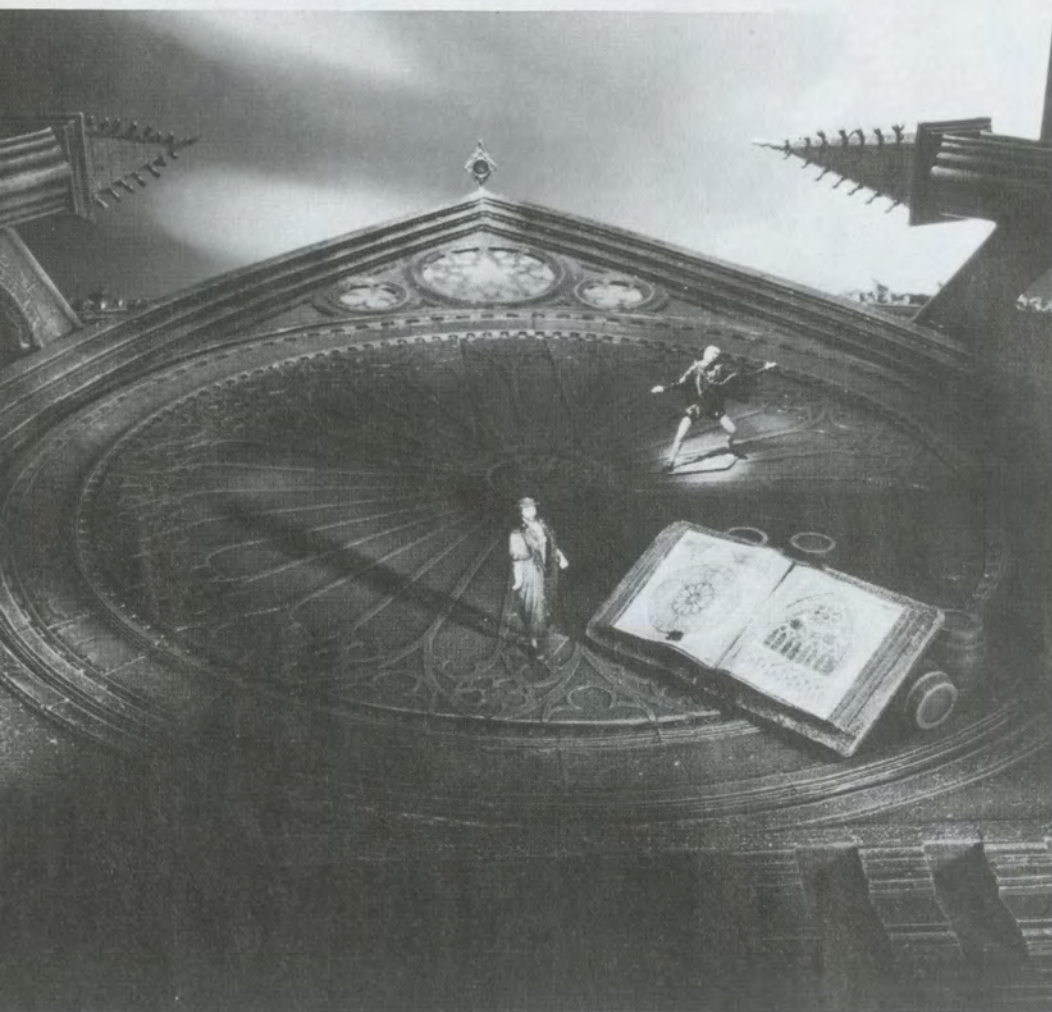


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Performance HIGHLIGHTS



Devilish design: A set model for San Francisco Opera's new production of *Faust*.

Tragedy, comedy, mystery—and transport: **The San Francisco Opera** has it all. First, get out your handkerchief for *Madama Butterfly*, which alights on the SFO stage October 3. Puccini's masterpiece about the ever-devoted Cio-Cio-San returns to the repertoire after a six-year absence. On October 13, *La Cenerentola*, Rossini's witty, glittering treatment of the Cinderella fairy tale, comes to the SFO in a magical production by director Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. Then on October 26, the tone shifts, as an unholy deal is made on the Opera House stage. The dark star of French Grand Opera, Charles Gounod's *Faust* is a classic tale of temptation and redemption, retold in a new production designed by Gerard Howland. Finally, on October 28, the SFO Guild holds its annual dinner and auction, **Opera Festiva**. Watch opera patrons lose their decorum as the bidding gets boisterous on such treasures as fabulous forays to Spain, Hawaii, and other lavish locations; your own private opera ball for fifty friends; his and hers Arabian horses; and a Harley-Davidson motorcycle—with sidecar!

* * * * *

The city by the bay scores another coup as Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* makes its West Coast premiere October 18 at the American Conservatory Theater. Stoppard's whipsnap confab whirls the audience through a crash course in history, Newtonian physics, and landscape architecture, linking past and present, science and sex, history and love. Exhilarating as a thrill ride and mysterious as a monograph, *Arcadia* is set at an elegant English estate in the present day, where an academic is exploring a shadowy scandal involving the Romantic poet Lord Byron. In flashback we see what really happened at the estate in 1809, ultimately discovering that—in life's Big Picture—Chaos is bliss. The play was nominated for the 1995 Tony Award for Best Play and captured London's Olivier Award. A.C.T. artistic director Carey Perloff directs.

—Peter Cieply

Presented by CHRYSLER 

FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



Welcome to the 1995 Fall Season and the beginning of a challenging three-year period. Following this season, the Company will need to vacate the War Memorial Opera House to clear the way for seismic work. Although we will miss our home while we are out for 18 months, we will be presented with an ideal opportunity to implement much needed improvements.

The Opera, Ballet and the War Memorial have formed the Committee to Restore the Opera House (CROH), with a goal of raising \$24 million for improvements not paid by the city. These will include: spot air conditioning and improved ventilation, upgraded electrical and lighting systems, and expanded storage and backstage facilities.

San Francisco Opera's own artistic plans include the use of two historic San Francisco venues: the Civic Auditorium and the Orpheum Theatre. Reconfiguring these theaters to make them suitable for opera, plus the new productions needed will result in extraordinary costs beyond our normal budget.

To do the job for 1995, 1996 and 1997—that is, to stay in the black operationally and fulfill our commitment to the Opera House renovation—San Francisco Opera has launched a single, three-year campaign to raise \$20 million above and beyond our annual fundraising goals. It is an ambitious program, but we feel optimistic because two years of successful Board fundraising efforts and cost reductions implemented by management have resulted in a greatly improved financial position for the Company. These goals and successes are made possible by you, the members of our generous family. And it is to you that we turn once again, to make it possible to carry forth the important legacy this Company has built over 73 years.

We want to extend a special thank you to Lexus for its ongoing support of San Francisco Opera. We also wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by the San Francisco Opera Guild, as well as the efforts of the BRAVO! CLUB.

We also wish to thank our generous production sponsors for the 1995 Fall Season. The production of *Anna Bolena*, originated by the Canadian Opera Company, is made possible by a gift from The Gramma Fisher Foundation, through the auspices of the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is made possible by Mr. and Mrs. Reid W. Dennis and Mr. and Mrs. John R. Hamilton; *Madama Butterfly* by The Franklin/Templeton Group of Funds; *La Cenerentola* by The Herman J. Miller and Edward J. Clarke Foundation; the new production of *Don Giovanni* by gifts from Mr. George M. Bowles and the estate of Edith Bentley Bailey Cook; and *Rusalka* by The L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation and the Carol Franc Buck Foundation.

Additionally, we gratefully acknowledge government funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Grants for the Arts program of the San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. Our sincere gratitude also goes out to Mayor Frank Jordan and Chief Administrative Officer William Lee for their invaluable support; and to the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their ongoing support and assistance.

Reid W. Dennis
Chairman

William W. Godward
President

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



San Francisco Opera's 73rd season is a time to cherish for all opera lovers. Not only is our 1995 Fall Season overflowing with the artistic elements that make opera the most exciting of art forms, but at the conclusion of this season, we will vacate the War Memorial Opera House for 18 months. This is the kickoff for a tremendous adventure outside of our beautiful home until we return in time for a gala 1997 Fall Season—San Francisco Opera's 75th anniversary.

During the 18-month closure of the Opera House our home will undergo major seismic upgrading. This period also presents a golden opportunity to perform restorations and improvements that will add significantly to your comfort and enjoyment. Bear in mind that this will be the first opportunity for any significant work to be performed on the Opera House since the building was opened in 1932—more than 60 years ago! It's time to give this, one of the finest opera houses in the world, the loving attention that it deserves.

While we're out of the Opera House, we will present a season of opera in a dynamic and unique way at Civic Auditorium and the Orpheum Theatre. There will be new productions, exciting stars and a variety of repertoire, including *Carmen*, *Aida* and the West Coast premiere of *Harvey Milk* (co-commissioned by San Francisco Opera). From September 19 through October 1 this season, members of the Opera's staff will present a series of informative pre-performance lectures about our plans for the Opera House and for the new venues. We have also created a special video to illustrate our plans for Civic Auditorium.

During the 1995 Fall Season, from September 8 to December 10, you will see a marvelous array of operas at the War Memorial Opera House, including two Company premieres and two new productions. We are pleased to present an artistic roster that boasts some of the world's finest singers, with outstanding directors, beautiful productions and internationally acclaimed conductors leading the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. Our fine music director, Donald Runnicles, will lead three operas this fall, and we welcome back our principal guest conductor, Sir Charles Mackerras, who will lead two productions. We are also proud to honor Sir Charles on his 70th birthday with a special concert on November 17.

It is an exciting time, like no other in our Company's history. Stay with us, it's going to be an incredible adventure!

Lotfi Mansouri
General Director

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

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Vienna and Opera at Christmas

December 14th to 26th with Peter Bessol

... full day to Salzburg in the most beautiful Christmas town of Europe ... afternoon old town Bratislava with performance of Rigoletto at the historic Slovak Opera. In Vienna, special excursions to Vienna Woods and Danube Valley. At the Staatsopera: early Verdi Jerusalem, Wozzeck, Le Nozze di Figaro, Die Zauberflöte ... at the Volksopera: Pearl Fishers, Carmen, Hansel & Gretel.

Metropolitan Opera Debut of Cecilia Bartoli

February 25th to March 2nd

... lectures and private MMA tour with Dale Harris. The operas: La Forza del Destino (Domingo), Così fan Tutte (Carol Vaness, Susanne Metzger, Cecilia Bartoli, Jerry Hadley), Madama Butterfly, Aida.

Spring and Opera Extravaganza in New York at the Metropolitan Opera with Levine Gala

April 21st to 28th with Sherwin Sloan

... the final spectacular week at the Met. The Operas: Die Walküre (Domingo), La Bohème (Gheorghiu, Mattila), Andrea Chenier (Pavarotti), Romeo & Juliette (Swenson, Araiza). NY Philharmonic: Mendelssohn Violin Concerto & Bruckner Symphony No. 6. Private Lectures & tour of MMA with Dale Harris. Met Opera Gala with James Levine.

Der Ring des Nibelungen at the Lyric Opera of Chicago

March 10th to 17th with Sherwin Sloan

... Zubin Mehta conducts, Eva Marton, James Morris and Siegfried Jerusalem sing. Many Ring events, hotel with deluxe rooms with sitting areas, special functions and parties with Sherwin and artists. Private tours of the Art Institute.

The Arizona Ring in Flagstaff

June 2nd to 9th with Sherwin Sloan

... we went to Flagstaff to select the seating in orchestra center and the resort hotel. There will be private dinners and lunches and a wonderful atmosphere in this ponderosa pine covered mountainous setting. A wonderful vacation with the Ring and great optional sightseeing to the south Rim of the Grand Canyon and Sedona.

The Third Annual Grand Tour of Italian Opera Houses

May 2nd to 20th with Peter Bessol

... without a doubt the greatest program we have done with best seating at La Fenice in Venice, La Scala in Milan, Teatro Regio in Parma, La Comunale in Florence and Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. Includes two nights at beautiful Cernobbio on Lake Como, tours of Roman Verona and Bologna, trip to Siena, San Gimignano. Superb lunches and dinners. Walking tours in each town.

Spring in Renaissance & Baroque Prague

June 2nd to 14th with Herb Rowan

... join Herb for the magnificent old town of Prague with walking tours each day to the Loretto, the Hradcany Castle, the Sternberg Museum, the Wallenstein Palace, the Jewish quarter, the old town and guided tours of the museums. The operas: Rigoletto, Katya Kabanova, La Forza del Destino, Otello, Le Nozze di Figaro, Il Trovatore, Rusalka, Don Giovanni, Libuse (Smetana), Boris Godounov, Die Zauberflöte.

St. Petersburg, The Hermitage & the Savonlinna Summer Opera Festival on a Lake in a 14th Century Castle in Finland

July 15th to 29th with Sherwin Sloan

(May be combined with the Verona Festival & La Scala from July 4th to 16th)

... join Sherwin for 2 days touring the Hermitage, private tours and ballet and opera in St. Petersburg, then opera in a 14th century castle on a lake in Finland. The Operas at Olavinlinna Castle: Macbeth, Tannhäuser, The Palace (Sallinen). Also, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Carefully selected sightseeing. Private candlelight dinner in the great hall of the castle in a splendid lake setting.

A Private Walking Tour of Venice & Florence with Dale Harris May, 1996

... join a true Renaissance lecturer and art historian and focus on the museums, paintings, cathedrals, & architecture of these two Renaissance cities. Dale Harris, renowned lecturer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Stops in Padua and Roman Verona. Some wonderful dining.

The Verona Festival and La Scala

July 4th to 16th, 1996 with Sherwin Sloan

(May be combined with St. Petersburg and Savonlinna Summer Opera Festival in Finland, July 16th to 29th).

... two wonderful days at lovely Cernobbio on Lake Como, a performance at La Scala and at the famed Verona Arena: Nabucco, Il Barbiere di Siviglia & Carmen in best seating. Walking tours and carefully selected sightseeing. Of course, wonderful dining.

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The San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum is honoring the legendary artist Kirsten Flagstad with an exhibit, running September 14 to December 28, 1995. The exhibit will draw on S.F. PALM's extensive collection of Flagstad memorabilia and will include photographs, her personal opera scores, correspondence, and numerous personal items.

On November 4, at the San Francisco Ballet Building, *Wall Street Journal* music critic and lecturer Dale Harris will talk about Flagstad's life and career. The lecture, sponsored by PALM and the Wagner Society of Northern California, starts at 11 a.m.

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RUSLAN & LYUDMILA — PHOTO: VALENTINE BARANOVSKY

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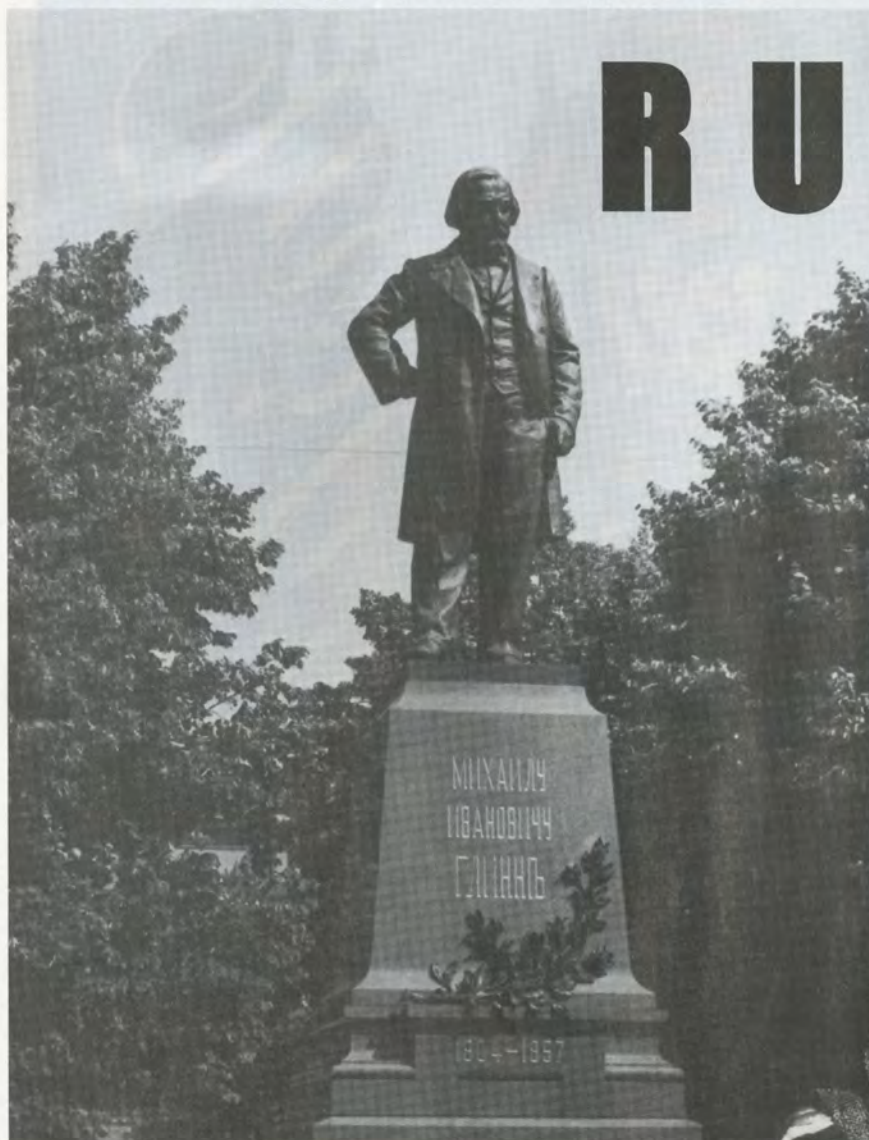


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"...not only Glinka's best opera, but simply the best opera, an opera of operas, so to speak, the tsar of operas."

By RICHARD TARUSKIN

That is what Tchaikovsky wrote about it, his tongue a little in his cheek because of the way the opera was often, rather defensively, overpraised in his time. But he believed it a little, too. And, if we can enter its world sufficiently—the kind of gorgeous staging the Imperial Theaters used to give it helps, of course—so can we. *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is at the very least a musical feast. And for people who like to think about opera, it is magnificent food for thought, because it crystallizes in practice the classic dilemma of oper-

atic theory: the best possible music seemingly wedded to the worst possible libretto. And yet, that libretto was not just Glinka's impediment. It was his vehicle. Thanks to it, all that magnificent music got written.

So what was wrong with the libretto? The story, after all, was by the great Pushkin himself. But the libretto, the words Glinka actually set, was the work of a committee. And that was the predicament. We all know what a

camel is, right? A horse designed by a committee. And an opera designed by a committee? Well, *Ruslan*. The most dramatically inept opera in the world. The opera in which, the better you know the story, the less you'll understand. And yet, (as any Russian who is old enough to remember what an opera is will tell you) one of the great operas of all time.

Glinka conceived the plan for *Ruslan*, his second opera, shortly after the premiere of his first, the legendary *Life for the Tsar*, the opera that had at last laid the cornerstone (as everyone recognized at the time) for a viable Russian operatic school. The original suggestion came from the poet Alexander Shakhonskoy, the Intendant of the Imperial Theaters, who

had written a dramatic trilogy, *Finn*, based in part on Pushkin's delicious mock-epic of 1820, and saw himself as the natural librettist for the piece. In the end, though, not a word by Shakhonskoy went into the opera. Glinka had a better idea.

That idea, naturally, was to collaborate with Pushkin directly. And a tantalizing notion it is: a joint work by Russia's two most gifted creative artists then living. In his memoirs, Glinka claimed that Pushkin had agreed to his proposal. But before they could start work, the poet was killed in a duel (on January 29th 1837, according to the old Rus-

sian calendar; Pushkin was only 37 years old) and Glinka began composing without any libretto at all. Early in 1838, a writer acquaintance of Glinka's, to whom he had played some excerpts from the score, wrote to the composer Alexei Verstovsky (with some exaggeration) that "the opera is almost finished, but as yet there is no text. A strange way of writing!"



MARYINSKY THEATER

Richard Taruskin is Professor of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. He has contributed more than 160 articles on Russian subjects to the New Grove Dictionary of Opera and his book, *Mussorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue*, has been published by the Princeton University Press.

Strange or not, it was Glinka's preferred way, one that had served him well enough in the early stages of *A Life for the Tsar*. The earliest written document of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* to survive is quite in character. It is a detailed scenario that the composer wrote down in November of 1837 at the request of the poet Nestor Kukolnik, a friend of Glinka's who had agreed to step in as librettist. Several numbers

who finally found time for the project, and by Mikhail Gedeonov, Shakhovskoy's successor as Intendant (and both father and grandfather of future Intendants).

Gedeonov wrote the duet for Ruslan and Finn in Act II and also patched the end of the second act. Kukolnik rather messily rewrote the scene for Ratmir and Finn in Act V so as to exclude Farlaf's murder of Ruslan, forget-

Glinka's "friend," who cut the opera to ribbons for the premiere), Glinka's masterpiece was caught in a crossfire of taste.

Performances in Russia during the composer's lifetime were never complete. The first complete production was given not in Russia but in Prague (under the composer Miliy Balakirev, Glinka's disciple and founder of the "Mighty Five") in 1867, and there have been few since. As early as 1859, the indefatigable arts publicist Vladimir Stasov lamented it—in the title (borrowed from the poet Lermontov) of an article written in the aftermath of a fire that destroyed all the

LYUDMILA

are already notated in considerable musical detail. A few—both of Lyudmila's arias, the second part of Ruslan's great apostrophe to the battlefield in Act II, Ratmir's cavatina in Act III, the trance induction in Act IV, the duet in Act V—are quite close to their finished form. But in place of text there are only scansion marks to aid Kukolnik in concocting verses, plus some indications of where Glinka planned to use Pushkin's original words.

The man who eventually wrote the greater part of the words, a Kharkov landowner and amateur poetaster named Valerian Shirkov, entered the picture in the spring of 1838, when Glinka requested from him on trial a text for "Mikolika's" (that is, Gorislava's) cavatina in Act III, and also had him "underlay words," as he put it, to the music of Lyudmila's Act I cavatina, already sketched. Other numbers completed in 1838 were mainly incidental ones: the Persian chorus in Act III (on a theme Glinka overheard a secretary singing one day in the Persian embassy in St. Petersburg), Chernomor's orchestral march from Act IV, and Finn's ballad in Act II, for which the words were adapted by yet another hand, one Nikolai Markevich.

Then followed eighteen months during which domestic trials and the demands of his post as head of the court chapel choir sapped Glinka's energies and forced neglect of the project. It was upon resumption late in 1840 that Glinka composed the greatest music in the score—the inspired Introduction to Act I, the finale to Act V (source of most of the popular Overture), and the long first part of Ruslan's Act II aria—and found the uniquely exalted and contemplative "epic" tone that made the opera a masterpiece. Shirkov having left St. Petersburg for his estate in 1841, finishing touches to the text were made by Kukolnik,

ting in his play-doctor's haste to either depict or narrate Ratmir's delivery of the ring he receives from Finn to Ruslan. (When Ruslan enters with it in the last scene, those who have been paying attention to the action—by now there are usually not many—will wonder how he got it.) The composer himself seems to have been responsible for the text of Farlaf's scene with Naina in Act II and his rondo. Thus the committee.

The opera was submitted to the Imperial Theaters in March of 1842 and was first performed on what must have seemed an auspicious night, November 27th, the sixth anniversary of the rapturous premiere of *A Life for the Tsar*. Despite the coincidence of the dates, the times were not auspicious. The very next year Giovanni Battista Rubini's Italian opera troupe set itself up in St. Petersburg and Russian opera was almost immediately squeezed out of the Russian capital. In its first season, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* played 31 times; in its second, twelve; in 1844-45, six; in 1845-46, two; the next season only once. In 1848 the opera was given only in Moscow and then was dropped until after the embittered composer's death.

Glinka drew his last breath in Berlin in February of 1857, after vowing never to return to Russia. According to his sister (yes, her name was Lyudmila), the great Russian nationalist (as dimwitted history remembers him) spat on the ground as he crossed the Russian border and cursed his homeland. It was the failure of *Ruslan*, unfairly eclipsed by the Tsar-supported Italians, that disillusioned the composer, drained his creative strength and left him operatically impotent in his last years.

Since Glinka's death the opera has only fitfully held the stage in Russia, and has never succeeded abroad. Denigrated by narrow-minded proponents of opera-as-drama (ever since Alexander Serov, Russia's greatest music critic, called it "not a drama, not a play, hence not an opera, but a randomly assembled gallery of musical scenes") and cursed with a blessedly complicated score that prevented easy popularity ("not every operagoer has studied counterpoint," said Count Mateusz Wielhorski,

scenic and musical materials of the first production, including the autograph full score—as "A Martyr of Our Time."

More commonly it was referred to as Glinka's *chose manquée*—his "blunder" or "abortion"—after an early influential review by a theatrical critic named Rafayil Zlotov. For most, especially in the West, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* has never meant more than a pops overture (plus, for record collectors, Farlaf's rondo as performed, with incredible virtuosity, by Chaliapin). But for epicures of the Russian musical stage—and especially for the generations of later composers who mined it tirelessly—it has always been (to quote one of the miners again) "the Tsar of operas." The present production gives a Western audience a rare opportunity to see why.

It was possibly in response to his swarm of captious critics that Glinka, in his memoirs, had Pushkin vow that he would change a great deal in his youthful poem when it came to transposing it to the musical stage. The aesthetic gulf between the poet's lively, laconic *jeu d'esprit* and Glinka's opulent, slow-moving opera is extreme, going far beyond the oft-reported (and oft-decried) modifications in the plot: characters, including another rival suitor, Rodgai, were removed wholesale; Gorislava was added; most of Pushkin's motley anecdotal content, including a vast battle scene, was pruned away; in compensation, practically the whole *ruses d'amour* intrigue in Act III was freshly invented.

Pushkin's racy parody of Lodovico Ariosto, the Italian Renaissance poet, and his *Orlando Furioso*, was taken seriously. On the one hand it was treated "universally," as metaphor: the "Slavonic liturgy of Eros," in Boris Asafyev's inspired phrase, symbolizing the life of the heart. On the other it was treated "Ossianically," as a national treasure: specifically, as an operatic *bylina*, a song of ancient bards such as were just then being avidly collected and published by folklorists. The result was the quintessential Russian Romantic opera, and the only Romantic opera by a

Opposite: Monument to Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka in St. Petersburg.

Inset: Vladimir Ivanovich Kastorsky, considered one of the best interpreters of the role of Ruslan from the more distant past. He portrayed the role in the celebrated 1904 Glinka centenary Maryinsky production as well as the 1917 revival.

Russian worthy of comparison with the European masterpieces of the genre.

The dilatory, seemingly cluttered action, which has caused so much critical impatience, is actually a magnificently calculated embodiment of what the great Soviet critic Mikhail Bakhtin would later call the "epic chronotope," the epic time-scheme: "closed like a circle, with everything in it totally finished and complete." On all levels, time is rounded: the outer acts, set in Kiev, frame the magic quest with a single action (a wedding feast interrupted and resumed), in which the music resonates thematically with the bard Bayan's opening incantation of Pushkin's immortal first couplet that every literate Russian knows by heart:

Dela davno minuvshikh dney
(Deeds of long since vanished days)
Predanya stariny glubokoy
(Tales of distant yore...)

The Overture (written last, during rehearsals) foreshadows the music of the Act V finale and thus provides a musical frame. This cyclic effect is replicated in later acts by the use of entr'actes that quote the respective act finales. The resulting spacious, enclosed, quasi-palindromic structure became a hallmark of Russian opera, applying even to works, like Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, that on the surface seem far less formal and more conventionally dramatic. The resemblance between *Ruslan* and such avowedly "epic" operas like Borodin's *Prince Igor* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko* is of course self-evident.

"Epic time" applies on the level of single numbers as well: Glinka's forms are extremely ample, yet rarely goal-directed on the symphonic model. (*Ruslan*'s heroic aria in Act II is the chief exception.) The preferred *modus operandi* is that of "ostinato variations" ("Glinka variations," as they are called in Russia), in which a melody is repeated with little essential change, while harmony, tonality and tone color conspire to work a series of "magic transformations" around it (as in Finn's ballad, the Head's narrative, the Persian chorus and the Act V finale). The marvelous suitability of such a technique to an opera all about sorcery is obvious.

Sorcery of a harmonic kind was perhaps the opera's most enduring legacy. Glinka established a convention in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* that lasted at least up to the time of Stravinsky's early ballets, *Firebird* and *Petrushka*, whereby human characters are represented by diatonic, often folk-like music, and supernatural ones by chromatic effects. The nature of Glinka's chromaticism, including what is now called the whole-tone scale (and which musicians and music lovers who do not know Glinka usually associate with Debussy, half a century later), remained a potent stimulus on the Russian harmonic imagination for generations to come (again, up to early Stravinsky).

Glinka's open-voiced, primary-hued orchestration, a miracle of bright transparency, was, through Rimsky-Korsakov, equally influential. Some of his textures and combinations were routinely appropriated by later composers and thus became generically "Russian." A piquant case in point is the unprecedented



In 1917, the Maryinsky Theater production of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* received new choreography by Michel Fokine, featuring the legendary Tamar Karsavina, shown here in her "Lezhinka" costume.

use of piano and harp in tandem to represent the bard's psalter (gusli, in Russian) in the Introduction, the last echo of which was heard exactly a century later in Stravinsky's Symphony in Three Movements (1942-45).

Finally, no inventory of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* as a quarry can omit its abundance of vivid national colors, particularly "oriental" ones that were a veritable craze during the brief Russian Romantic period—a craze that was an immediate consequence of Russia's early nineteenth-century military expansion into the Caucasus and "Central Asia." Glinka's Ratmir is the very embodiment of oriental *nega* (erotic bliss—which, once established, could be as aptly expressed in a waltz as in any more authentic eastern genre), and the archetype for a host of copies culminating in Borodin's Konchakovna (*Prince Igor*), Rimsky-Korsakov's Queen of Shemakha (*The Golden Cockerel*) and Stravinsky's *Nightingale*.

But like harmonic and orchestral color, national color in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is prodigally variegated: besides the colors of the "Russian Orient," the score luxuriates in tunes of Persian, Turkish and Finnish extraction. And there are also powerful residual whiffs of the Italianate: *opera buffa* in the case of Farlaf's rondo, serious in the numbers for the noble characters with their elaborate sequences of tempos—and of course in Lyudmila's col-oratura, the summit of virtuosity in the Russian operatic repertory.

In sum, *Ruslan* could be called not a "Russian" opera but a "trilingual" one, pitting a neutral Italo-Russian idiom against two exotic ones, "oriental" and "fantastic." These served to symbolize a quintessentially Romantic triumph of virile heroism over sensuality, embodied in the knight Ruslan's successful quest to win back his abducted bride by defeating a pair of evil sorcerers. What is lacking in conventional dramatics is more than made up for by the symbolic musical dramaturgy. Behind the gaudy Romantic façade, moreover, there lay another model, little suspected by those who only see "nationalism" in Russian music, but one that put Glinka in the noblest line of operatic succession.

That model was Mozart. Echoes of *The Magic Flute*, another great quest opera, abound in *Ruslan*. They are easiest to spot, perhaps, in the glockenspiel and glass-harmonica colors in the magic music, but they reach their peak (and a lofty peak it is) in the Act III finale, in which Finn intervenes like a Sarastro to break the spells woven by Naina, then stands in as a tenor to round out the vocal complement for a concluding quartet ("Now Lyudmila awaits from us salvation") that reflects something of the serene radiance of the *Magic Flute* ensembles. This limpidly scored, loftily diatonic ensemble, too often overlooked in the welter of blinding exotica for which *Ruslan* is justly famed, marks Glinka as Russia's one-and-only "high classic."

Thus, to look only for a "nationalist" in him, for all that it grants him an unassailable niche in history and assures him a specious immortality, is to imprison him in a cage not of his making. The cage was manufactured, in the first instance, by the committed nationalists of a younger generation, beginning with Stasov and Balakirev, who claimed his legitimating mantle. Later, the insular view of Glinka as father to a national school founded on folklore passed into folklore itself. Reappraisal has begun in Russia, but hardly as yet in the West, where such studies of him as exist still adamantly insist upon his Russianness as sole measure of his worth, and where he is still apt to be chided for showing those sides of his talent he himself tended to value most highly.

Glinka's greatest significance lay not in having been the first "truly Russian" composer (if folkishness is the measure, he was hardly that), but in having been the first composer from Russia to establish a European reputation (as witness Berlioz's admiring reviews and Liszt's arrangements of his work). Through Glinka Russia did not retreat or withdraw from the West, but rather the opposite. His achievement made it possible for Russian music, and Russian opera in particular, to become a true participant in the classical Western tradition. ■



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Magic Opera in five acts by MIKHAIL IVANOVICH GLINKA
Based on the poem by ALEXANDER SERGEYEVICH PUSHKIN
Libretto by the composer with K. Bakhturin, A. Shakhovskoi,
V. Shirkov, M. Gedeonov, N. Kukolnik and N. Markevich

Руслан и Людмила

Ruslan and Lyudmila (in Russian)

CAST (in order of appearance)

<i>Bayan, a minstrel</i>	Yuri Marusin
<i>Ratmir, Prince of Khazar</i>	Elena Zarembo
<i>Farlaf, a Northern knight</i>	Vladimir Ognovenko (9/9, 14, 19, 26, 29) Gennadi Bezubenkov (9/17, 22)
<i>Svetozar, Grand Duke of Kiev</i>	Gabor Andrasy*
<i>Ruslan, a knight of Kiev, Lyudmila's fiancé</i>	Jeffrey Wells (9/9, 14, 19, 26, 29) Vladimir Ognovenko (9/17, 22)
<i>Lyudmila, Svetozar's daughter</i>	Anna Netrebko**
<i>Finn, a good-hearted wizard</i>	Vladimir Atlantov
<i>Naina, an evil sorceress</i>	Catherine Cook
<i>Voice of the Giant Head</i>	Gennadi Bezubenkov
<i>Gorislava, Ratmir's rejected lover</i>	Valentina Tsidipova* (9/9, 14, 17, 19, 22) Zvetelina Vassileva (9/26, 29)
<i>Chernomor, an evil dwarf</i>	Michael Lee Gogin

Courtiers, knights, servants, guards, commoners, Chernomor's slaves, nymphs

Ballet soloists (Courtesy of the Kirov Ballet):

Tatiana Bessarabova, Olga Volobueva, Marina Chirkova,
Galina Yablonskaya, Fyodor Lopukhov, Vladimir Ivantsov
Corps de ballet

**U.S. opera debut

*San Francisco Opera debut

TIME AND PLACE: Legendary Kiev

ACT I		Svetozar's palace
		INTERMISSION
ACT II	Scene 1	Finn's cave
	Scene 2	A forest
	Scene 3	A deserted battlefield
ACT III	Scene 1	Naina's garden
	Scene 2	Naina's castle
		INTERMISSION
ACT IV	Scene 1	Chernomor's garden
	Scene 2	Chernomor's castle
ACT V	Scene 1	An encampment
	Scene 2	Svetozar's palace

Supertitles by Christopher Bergen, San Francisco Opera.

Latecomers will not be seated during the performance 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 four hours.

SYNOPSIS

Ruslan and Lyudmila

ACT I

Svetozar is hosting a wedding celebration for his daughter, Lyudmila, who is to marry the knight Ruslan. Guests praise Svetozar and the young couple. The only sad guests are Farlaf and Ratmir, Lyudmila's rejected suitors. The celebrants ask Bayan to sing, but his song foretells ill fortune for the newlyweds. He adds, however, that after all the suffering, true love and happiness will prevail. Lyudmila, saddened by the thoughts of leaving her father and her city, consoles Farlaf and Ratmir, then declares her love for Ruslan. Svetozar blesses the couple as the guests call upon Lel, the god of love, to protect them. A thunderclap followed by sudden darkness interrupts the festivities. Light returns, revealing that Lyudmila has mysteriously disappeared. Svetozar, afraid that she has fallen under an evil spell, promises his daughter to the man who rescues her. Farlaf, Ratmir and Ruslan promise never to rest until she is found.

ACT II

Scene 1—Ruslan encounters the wise magician Finn, who tells him that Lyudmila was abducted by the evil dwarf Chernomor, whom Ruslan has to defeat. Finn also warns him against the interference of the witch Naina, caster of evil spells.

Scene 2—Farlaf is about to abandon his search for Lyudmila when he encounters Naina. She offers her help in finding Lyudmila, telling him she will destroy all his enemies and deliver the girl to him.

Scene 3—In his search for Chernomor, Ruslan comes across a deserted battlefield, despondent because he has lost his sword and shield. As the fog lifts, he suddenly discovers the enormous head of a sleeping giant. The head awakens and tries to blow Ruslan away. With his remaining weapon, a spear, Ruslan angrily strikes the head, which has been guarding a magic sword. Giving up the sword to Ruslan, the head reveals its story: the head's brother is none other than the evil Chernomor, whose strength is in his beard. The sword he now holds is Chernomor's own, the only weapon that can defeat him. Ruslan vows to avenge the giant and to put an end to all evil.

ACT III

Scene 1—To help Farlaf, Naina uses her wiles to divert and entice Ratmir by having her attendants try to seduce him.

Scene 2—Gorislava, Ratmir's rejected lover who has been trying to find him ever since he went in search of Lyudmila, approaches. But Ratmir is under Naina's spell and only pays attention to her beautiful maidens. Ruslan enters and is about to fall under the same spell and forget Lyudmila when Finn appears and saves him from temptation.

ACT IV

Scene 1—The imprisoned Lyudmila contemplates suicide, preferring death to the attentions of the evil dwarf. Refusing to be consoled by the distractions from Chernomor's attendants, she falls asleep, only to be awakened by the arrival of Chernomor and his followers.

Scene 2—In order to seduce Lyudmila, the dwarf has arranged a series of dances to amuse her. Ruslan comes to save his beloved and challenges Chernomor to a duel. The dwarf casts a sleeping spell on Lyudmila and hurries off to meet Ruslan. Ruslan defeats Chernomor with his magic sword by cutting off his beard. Ruslan, accompanied by Ratmir and Gorislava, eagerly approaches Lyudmila, but finds her motionless, still under the magic sleeping spell. Ruslan decides to take Lyudmila home, where, with the help of physicians, he will free her from the spell.

ACT V

Scene 1—Ruslan's party camps overnight while on their way back to Kiev. Ratmir stands watch over the caravan, but is made to fall asleep by Naina. Lyudmila is abducted again, this time by Farlaf, who wants to claim her for himself. Finn, who came to Ratmir's aid, gives him a magic ring that will awaken Lyudmila and tells him to follow Ruslan on his way to Kiev and give him the ring.

Scene 2—Farlaf has brought the sleeping Lyudmila to her father's palace, but is unable to rouse her. Svetozar and his court are mourning over her. Ruslan, Ratmir and Gorislava arrive as Farlaf hides himself. Ruslan awakens Lyudmila with the ring. The hall resounds with rejoicing and the wedding feast is resumed. The people glorify Ruslan, Lyudmila, their gods and their motherland.

The performance of September 22nd is sponsored by Meyer Sound Laboratories

ADDITIONAL DANCERS

Celia Fushilile Burke
Jill Cassimatis
Kara Davis
Krista Kastner
Corinne Larsen

Jessica Radetsky
Lee Bell
Harlan Bengal
Duncan Cooper
Mikhail Tchoupakov
Charles Torres
Eric Wolfram

CHILDREN DANCERS

Reona Morimune
Stephanie Orza
Malachi Rose
Vladimir Vlad

MIMES

Marc Bauman
Brian Chung
Rousdem Djoraev
Serge Morel

Louis Schilling
Mike Smith
Eric Wilcox
Daniel Wilson

STUNT DOUBLES—*Ruslan*: Marc Bauman • *Chernomor*: Michael Lipsky

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Mary Freeman
Kristina Kling
Andrea Kohlruess
Lisa Lorea
Susan Mead
Jan Moody
Dorothy Papo
Stephanie Salter
Valentina Simi

Mimi Timberlake
Laurel Winzler
Bob Acker
John Atkinson
Jordan Berner
Mark Burstein
Peter Cannon
Dante Cecchini
Aloysius V. Cummings
Jim Dyvad
Milko N. Encinas

Peter Felleman
Angelo Festa
Eugenio Gamez
Eddy J. Gordillo
Todd Jones
Frank Jorgensen
M.T. Kildow
Albert Malkin
Wayne McCord
Charles G. McGee
Ivan R. Munoz

Thomas Newman
David Norton
William F. Perasso
Oliver Pollard
Patrick Presto
Michael Lucas Rebston
Will Sanderson
Geoff Skidmore
Frank Sommers
Michael Strickland
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Rick Weil
Ron Wizelman
Kit Wynkoop

Ruslan and Lyudmila

Photos taken in rehearsal by Marty Sohl

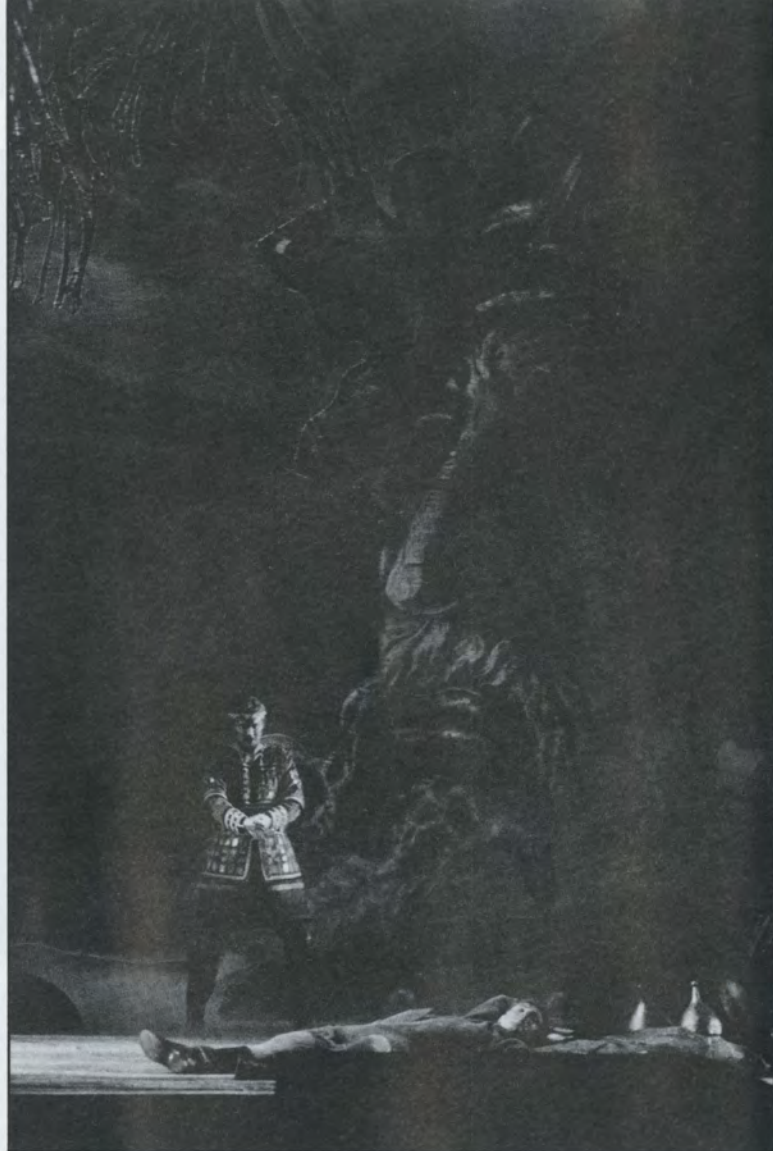


Jeffrey Wells, Anna Netrebko



Yuri Marusin

Elena Zarembo



Jeffrey Wells

*Anna Netrebko,
Michael Lee Gogin,
Members of the San
Francisco Opera
Chorus*



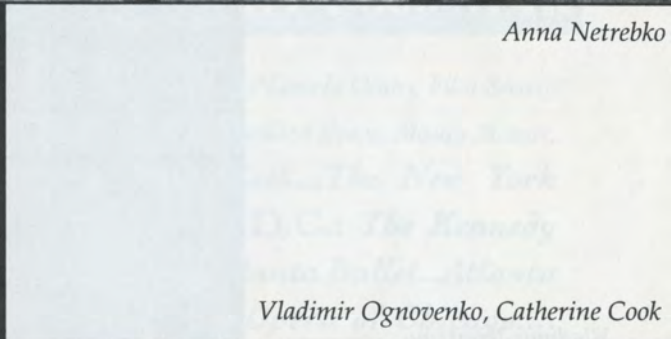


Vladimir Atlantov

*Valentina Tsidipova,
Women of the San Francisco Opera Chorus*



Anna Netrebko



Vladimir Ognovenko, Catherine Cook

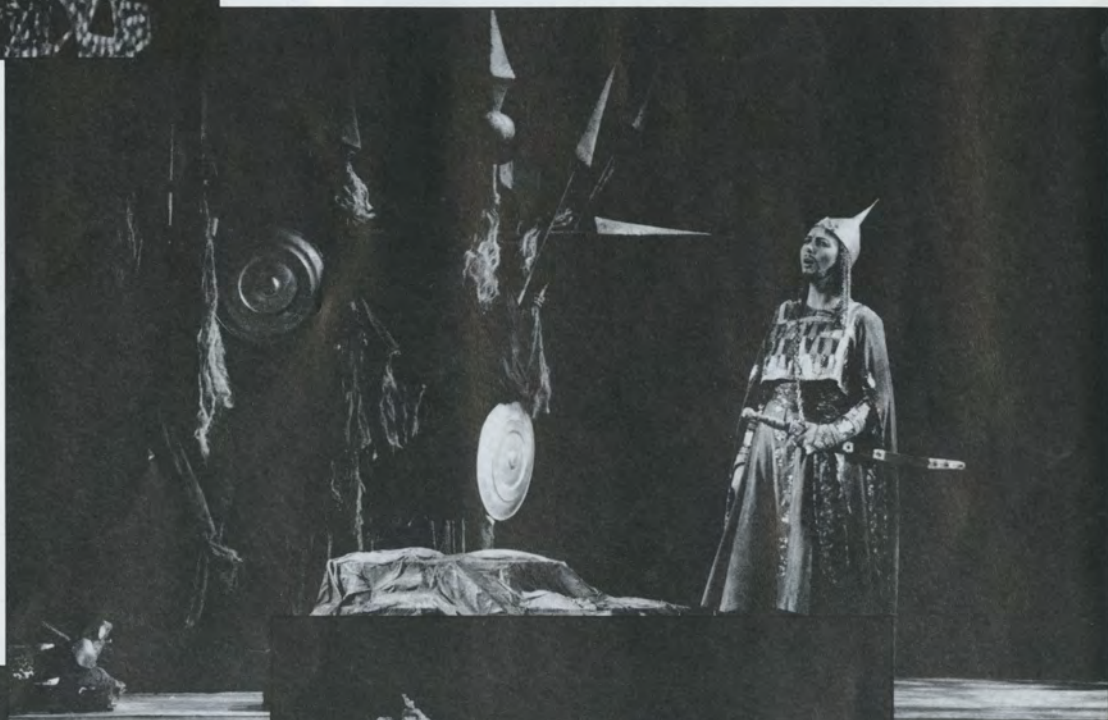




Anna Netrebko



Vladimir Ognovenko



Vladimir Ivantsov



Elena Zarembo



*Galina
Yablonskaya,
Fyodor
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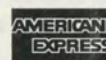
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San Francisco Opera Premiere

RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA Glinka

Netrebko*, Tsidipova*/Vassileva
(9/26, 29), Zarembo, Cook; Atlantov,
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Bezubenkov, Andrasy*, Gogin

Gergiev/Titov**; Mansouri/Golovin/
Korovin/Bosquet/Fokine/Shavrov**/
Munn

Sept. 9, 14, 17, 19, 22, 26, 29

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LA TRAVIATA Verdi

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Aronica, Yurisch*, Portilla†,
Okerlund†*, Knežević*, Wilde

Mercurio*; Copley/Conklin/
Walker/Clara/Munn

Sept. 16, 20, 23, 28

Oct. 1, 4, 7, 12

MADAMA BUTTERFLY Puccini

Malfitano*/Watanabe*,
Keen/Bishop, Foland†*;
Leech/Margison/Portilla†,
Ledbetter/Baerg, Petersen/
Sénéchal, Barrett*, Skinner

Runnicles/Mackerras (Dec.);
Bernhard/Businger

Oct. 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 22

Dec. 2, 4, 9

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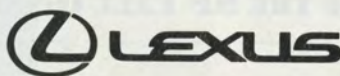
Borodina*, Claytont, Bishop†, Streit,
Alaimo, Gallo, Travis
Rizzi*, Ponnelle/Alden/
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Oct. 13, 15, 18, 21, 25, 28
Nov. 2

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Oct. 26, 29, 31

Nov. 3, 8, 11, 16

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Wagner

Schnaut, A. Evans, Lipovšek*,
Foland†, Waiter†, Claytont, Keen,
Cook, Bishop†, Cao†, Bean; Elming*,
Morris/White, Von Halem

Runnicles; Lehnhoff/Feldman/
Conklin/Munn

Nov. 4, 7, 12, 15, 21, 25, 29

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Ainsley*/Olsen*, Antoniozzi,
Patriarco, Von Halem

Runnicles; Mansouri/Howland/
Bosquet/Whitfield

Nov. 14, 18, 20, 24, 28

Dec. 1, 3, 7

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San Francisco Opera Premiere

RUSALKA Dvořák

Fleming, Sundine, Palmer, Claytont,
Foland†, Dillard, Cao†; Larin,
Skinner, Sénéchal, Knežević†

Mackerras; Feldman/
Schneider-Siemssen/Solt*/Arhelger
Nov. 26, 30, Dec. 2, 6, 8, 10

Production made possible, in part, by grants from the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation and the Carol Franc Buck Foundation.

**U.S. opera debut

* San Francisco Opera debut
† 1995 Adler Fellow

*All performances are in the original
language with English Supertitles.*

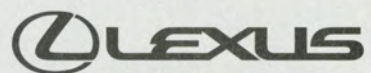
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Zheng Cao*†
Kristin Claytont
Catherine Cook
Daniela Dessi*
Pamela Dillard
Anne Evans
Rebecca Evans*
Renée Fleming
Nicolle Foland*†
Nancy Gustafson
Catherine Keen
Marjana Lipovšek*
Catherine Malfitano*
Susanne Mentzer
Anna Netrebko**
Felicity Palmer
Donna Petersen
Susan Quittmeyer
Deborah Riedel*
Gabriele Schnaut
Mika Shigematsu
Stephanie Sundine
Valentina Tsidipova*
Carol Vaness
Zvetelina Vassileva

Verónica Villarroel
Claudia Waiter
Yoko Watanabe*
Elena Zarembo
John Mark Ainsley*
Simone Alaimo
Gabor Andrásy*
Alfonso Antoniozzi
Roberto Aronica
Vladimir Atlantov
Theodore Baerg
Thomas Barrett*
Gennadi Bezubenkov
Poul Elming*
Lucio Gallo
Rodney Gilfry*
Michael Lee Gogin
Bojan Knežević*†
Sergei Larin
Victor Ledbetter
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Richard Margison
Yuri Marusin
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Vladimir Ognovenko
David Okerlund*†
Stanford Olsen*

Earle Patriarco
Chester Patton†
Dennis Petersen
Alfredo Portilla†
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Giuseppe Sabbatini*
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William Shimell
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Dale Travis
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** U.S. opera debut

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Elayne Jones

PERCUSSION

Richard Kvistad *Principal/Associate Timpani*
Patricia Niemi*

HARP

Olga Rakitchenkov

LIBRARIAN

Lauré Campbell
Richard McHenry *Assistant*

* Principal for one or more operas of the season

ARTIST PROFILES



ANNA NETREBKO

Anna Netrebko makes her United States operatic debut as Lyudmila in the Company premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Born in Krasnodar, the young soprano received her vocal training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where she appeared as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Violetta in *La Traviata*. After winning first prize in Moscow's 1993 National Glinka Competition, she was invited by the famed mezzo-soprano Irina Arkhipova to take part in a concert at the Bolshoi Opera. Since making her 1994 Kirov Opera debut as Susanna, she has repeated that role on the Kirov tours to Finland (Mikkeli Festival) and Germany (Schleswig-Holstein Festival), and was seen as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Riga Opera Theatre. Earlier this year, Miss Netrebko's performance as Lyudmila was recorded (on video and audio) in the current Kirov/San Francisco Opera production of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.

Elena Zarembo, who sings the role of Ratmir in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, made her 1991 San Francisco Opera debut as Hélène Bezukhova in the Company premiere of *War and Peace*. Born in Moscow, she attended the Gneissin State Music Institute and, while still a student, was invited to be a soloist at the Bolshoi Theater, where she appeared in such operas as *Boris Godunov*, *Prince Igor*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Iolanta*, *A Life for the Tsar*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Das Rheingold*. She has also performed with the Bolshoi company abroad in Paris, Japan, South Korea, Germany, at La Scala in Milan and New York's Metropolitan Opera. Since her highly acclaimed 1990 debut at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, as Konchakovna in *Prince Igor*, the mezzo-soprano has been applauded at the Paris Opera, Vienna State Opera, Salzburg Easter and Summer Festivals, and the Arena di Verona. She has been particularly praised for her appearances in the title role of *Carmen*, which she has performed at the Bregenz Festival, Bavarian State Opera, Arena di Verona, Royal Opera, and in Birmingham, Dortmund and Gothenburg. Miss Zarembo's 1994-95 season included *Un Ballo*



ELENA ZAREMBA

in *Maschera* in Munich and Brussels, *Boris Godunov* in Vienna and Salzburg, *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* in Vienna, as well as *Carmen* in Munich, London, Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, and at the Arena di Verona. Her artistry has been documented on videocassettes or audio recordings of *Prince Igor*, *A Life for the Tsar*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Boris Godunov*, *Das Rheingold*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and Mussorgsky's *Joshua*.



VALENTINA TSIDIPOVA

Valentina Tsidipova makes her initial San Francisco Opera appearance as Gorislava in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Born in the Buriat area of the former Soviet Union, she graduated from the Novosibirsk Conservatory and went on to sing at the Ulan-Ude Opera Theater for six years. From 1989-91, the soprano performed as soloist with the Novosibirsk Opera Theatre and became a member of St. Petersburg's Kirov Opera in 1992. While on tour with that company's ensemble, she has performed in the U.S., Italy, Israel, Spain, France, Finland and Germany, singing such parts as Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, Maria in *Mazeppa*, Elisabetta in *Don*



ZVETELINA VASSILEVA

Carlo, Yaroslavna in *Prince Igor*, Volkhova in *Sadko*, and the title role of *Iolanta*. Also in her repertoire are Desdemona in *Otello*, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Odabella in *Attila*, and the title roles of *Tosca* and *Aida*. Successes in recent seasons include Sofia in a contemporary Japanese opera, *Koduyi*, in Tokyo; Giorgetta in *Il Tabarro* at Genoa; and Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* in Hamburg, Genoa, and at the Bastille Opera in Paris. Also a popular concert and recital artist, her Wigmore Hall debut was given enthusiastic critical acclaim. Miss Tsidipova can be heard on numerous recordings with the Kirov Opera, among them *Sadko* and the forthcoming *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.

Zvetelina Vassileva, who made her North American operatic debut with the Company last fall as Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, returns to sing the role of Gorislava in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. A native of Bulgaria, she received her diploma from the Sofia Musical Academy, where she majored in vocal interpretation. Her studies continued in Italy, where she became a winner of the 1992 International "Tito Schipa" Competition and the International "Francesco Cilea" Competition. She most recently won a scholarship from the Friends of La Scala, which entitled her to study with celebrated tenor and Verdi specialist Carlo Bergonzi. She made her opera debut at the Sofia Opera in the role of Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, subsequently singing Leonora in *Il Trovatore* and Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* in the Bulgarian capital city. Additional portrayals include Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* and the Princess in Zeller's *Der Vogelhändler*. The most recent additions to her repertoire are the roles of Micaëla in *Carmen* and Desdemona in *Otello*, both performed with the Sofia Opera. Outside of Bulgaria, Miss Vassileva was heard as Vitellia in *La Clemenza di Tito*, presented by the Netherlands Opera Forum and in the title role of *Manon Lescaut* at Lecce. She recently made her debut at the Varna International Festival as Liù in *Turandot* and is scheduled to return there next season as Desdemona. In addition to her operatic activity, the soprano has been



Anna Netrebko, Gabor Andras, Jeffrey Wells



Jeffrey Wells



*Anna Netrebko
with Mimes*



*(Top) Gabor Andras, Anna Netrebko, Jeffrey Wells;
(Seated) Vladimir Ognovenko, Michael Lee Gogin; Members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus*

ARTIST PROFILES



CATHERINE COOK

heard in concert in Russia, Poland, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. Three of her recordings are awaiting release: Yaroslava in *Prince Igor*, as well as two albums of operatic arias and duets.

Catherine Cook returns to San Francisco Opera for her fourth season to sing Naina in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Marthe Schwerlein in *Faust*, and Rossweisse in *Die Walküre*. The mezzo-soprano made her 1991 Company debut in *War and Peace* and *Elektra*, and subsequently performed here in *Boris Godunov* and *Christophe Colomb* (1992), as well as in *The Makropulos Case* and the student matinee presentation of *La Fille du Régiment* (1993). A 1990 Merola Opera Program participant and 1991-92 Adler Fellow, her Opera Center credits include the title role of *Ariodante*, Meg Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, performances in the Micronesian Islands of Guam, Saipan and Pohnpei, and a highly acclaimed 1994 Schwabacher Debut Recital. A native of Chicago, the young artist made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut last season as the Innkeeper in *Boris Godunov* followed by Berta in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, a role which was the vehicle for her recent Portland Opera debut as well. Future engagements include Rossweisse at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Portland Opera.

Jeffrey Wells sings his first *Ruslan* in the Company premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. The American artist's debut season with San Francisco Opera was during the 1992 Rossini Festival when he sang the roles of Walter Fürst in *Guillaume Tell* and Fenicio in *Ermione*. He was seen with the Company last fall as Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, the role which served as his 1988 Metropolitan Opera debut. The bass-baritone has sung virtually all of the major bel canto roles of Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini throughout Europe and North America. His recordings include Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht*, the role of Antony in the award-winning recording of Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Baldassarre in the original French version of *La Favorite*. He recently scored successes with roles new to his



JEFFREY WELLS

repertoire: Claggart in *Billy Budd* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Méphistophélès in *Faust* at Opera Pacific, and Escamillo in *Carmen* at the Bonn Opera. Additional recent highlights include debuts with the Opéra de Paris Bastille and with Opéra de Genève in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, the title role of *Don Giovanni* in Detroit, Méphistophélès in Washington, D.C., Timur in concert performances of *Turandot* with the Cleveland Orchestra, as well as a return to the Metropolitan Opera for his sixth season as Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* and as Escamillo.



VLADIMIR ATLANTOV

Dramatic tenor Vladimir Atlantov, one of the legendary members of Moscow's Bolshoi Opera, sings the role of Finn in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* for the first time in his career. The renowned artist made his U.S. opera debut as Canio in San Francisco Opera's 1990 production of *Pagliacci*, and returned here in 1993 for one of his signature roles, Gherman in *The Queen of Spades*. Atlantov came to international attention in 1970 when the Bolshoi toured throughout France and Austria, and



VLADIMIR OGNOVENKO

in 1975 when that company toured the U.S. He was acclaimed for his portrayals of Gherman, Dimitri in *Boris Godunov*, and Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*. Since then, he has appeared in virtually every major opera house throughout the world, where he has often portrayed Canio, Gherman, Don José in *Carmen*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, Samson in *Samson et Dalila*, Riccardo in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, as well as the title roles of *Don Carlo* and *Otello*. The roles of *Otello*, Gherman and Canio have been documented on audio and/or video recording; his *Otello*, partnered by Kiri Te Kanawa, appears on video with the forces of the Verona Arena, and both *Pagliacci* and *The Queen of Spades* are available on compact disc. His most recent assignments include *Khovanshchina* and a new staging of *The Queen of Spades* at the Vienna State Opera (where he is a permanent guest member and the recipient of the title of Kammersänger), a new production of *The Queen of Spades* led by Valery Gergiev at St. Petersburg's Kirov Opera, *Pagliacci* at the Metropolitan Opera, as well as *Otello* at the Verona Arena, Royal Opera at Covent Garden, and in Naples and Orange. Atlantov was born in Leningrad and studied there at the State Choir School and the Leningrad Conservatory Opera Studio. Study at Milan's La Scala and membership in the Kirov Opera preceded the contract he won in 1967 as a leading artist with the Bolshoi Opera.

Vladimir Ognovenko portrays the roles of Farlaf and *Ruslan* in the Company premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. The bass made his U.S. opera debut as Old Prince Nicolai Bolonsky and Matveyev in San Francisco Opera's 1991 production of *War and Peace*, and returned to the Company the following season to sing Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*. A graduate of the Ural Conservatory, the artist was engaged at the opera theaters of Krasnoyarsk and Sverdlovsk between 1970 and 1984. He joined Leningrad's Maly Theater in 1984 and, in 1989, became a soloist with the Kirov Opera. His repertoire encompasses Boris and Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*, Méphistophélès in *Faust*, Ivan the Terrible in *The*

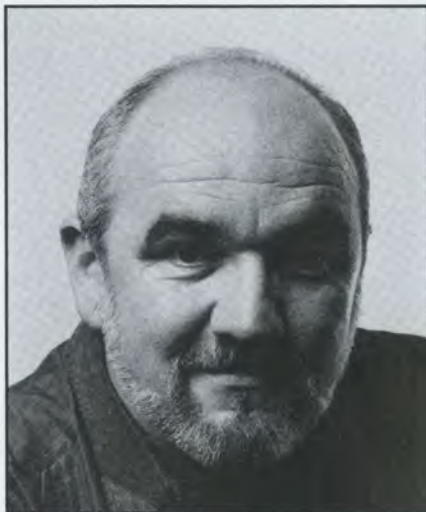
ARTIST PROFILES



GENNADI BEZUBENKOV

Maid of Pskov, The Viking Guest and Duda in *Sadko*, Burundai in *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*, Don Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Galitzki in *Prince Igor*, The General in *The Gambler*, Philip II in *Don Carlo*, and Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin*. During the 1993-94 season, he made debuts at the Chicago Lyric Opera (*Boris Godunov*) and the Metropolitan Opera (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*). His recordings include *Boris Godunov* (Varlaam), *The Fiery Angel* (the Inquisitor), and *Sadko* (Viking Guest). Ognovenko has made guest appearances in Bulgaria, Italy, Scotland, Germany, Israel, France and Greece. He was awarded the title of "Artist of Merit" by the former Soviet Union's Russian Republic.

Bass Gennadi Bezubenkov, who appears as Farlaf (Sept. 17, 22) in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, made his first U.S. appearance singing three roles in San Francisco Opera's 1991 presentation of *War and Peace*. A member and subsequently soloist with the Leningrad Capella, the Russian artist graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory in 1979 and has been a soloist with the Kirov Opera since 1989. His repertoire includes the roles of Dosifei and Ivan Khovansky in *Khovanshchina*, Pimen and Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*, Konchak in *Prince Igor*, the title role of *Ivan Susanin*, and the King in *Aida*. He has also sung in a wide variety of oratorios and concert performances, including the Requiem masses of Mozart and Verdi. He has performed with the Kirov on tour in the U.S., Japan, Spain, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and the Netherlands, and holds the title "Artist of Merit" from the former Soviet Union. Bezubenkov's recent appearances include Prince Yuri in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* in St. Petersburg, Bertrand in concert performances of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, the Sea King in *Sadko* in Palermo and St. Petersburg, and Farlaf in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* in Palermo. He can be heard with the Kirov forces on recordings of *The Maid of Pskov*, *Sadko*, *War and Peace*, the soon-to-be-released *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, and *The Queen of Spades*.



GABOR ANDRASY

Bass Gabor Andrasy makes his San Francisco Opera debut as Svetozar in the Company premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. He made his operatic debut in his native Rumania and by 1979 was appearing throughout Switzerland and Germany. Acclaimed for his performances in Wagner's Ring cycle (Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, Hunding in *Die Walküre*, and Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*), Andrasy sang his first Hunding in Flanders in 1987, the year in which he made his U.S. debut with Seattle Opera as both Hunding and Hagen. He was soon re-engaged in Seattle for multiple appearances, including the 1991 Ring cycle for which he added the role of Fafner, singing in every performance of the tetralogy. He has also been applauded in Seattle as Daland in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Pogner in *Die Meistersinger*, Rocco in *Fidelio*, the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, and both the Grand Inquisitor and Philip II in *Don Carlo*. Performances elsewhere include Dikoy in *Katya Kabanova* in Geneva and Marseilles; King Marke in *Tristan und Isolde* in Nantes; the title role of *Boris Godunov* and Dosifei in *Khovanshchina* in Strasbourg; *Samson et Dalila* and *La Wally* in Amsterdam; Sobakin in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride* for his Washington Opera debut; Sparafucile for Houston Grand Opera; and Méphistophélès in *Faust* for Michigan Opera Theatre.

Yuri Marusin, who portrays Bayan in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, made his 1991 San Francisco Opera debut as Anatol Kuragin in the Company premiere of *War and Peace*. While still a student, the tenor joined the Leningrad Maly Theater where he sang such varied roles as Levko in Rimsky-Korsakov's *May Night*, the Water Sprite in Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, the title role of *Don Carlo*, Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. Having become a member of Milan's La Scala in 1977, his successes there included receiving the gold medal as the best foreign singer of the 1981 season for his portrayal of Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra*. Since 1982 he has appeared as soloist with the Kirov Opera, where his portrayal of Lensky in a new staging of *Eugene*



YURI MARUSIN

Onegin gained him the State Prize of the USSR. In the last few seasons, his repertoire has grown to include Gherman in *The Queen of Spades*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, the title role of *Faust*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Alvaro in *La Forza del Destino*, Dimitri in *Boris Godunov*, Alfredo in *La Traviata*, and Gritzko in Mussorgsky's *Fair at Sorochinsk*. Roles sung for the Kirov Opera during the 1993-94 season have been Bayan in the Kirov presentation of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* in Palermo, the title part of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*, and Vsevolod in *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*. A guest artist in the U.S., Germany, Austria and Italy, Marusin was given the title of "Peoples' Artist" in the former USSR.



MICHAEL LEE GOGIN

In his third season with San Francisco Opera, Michael Lee Gogin portrays Chernomor in the Company's first performances of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. He was previously seen here in the 1977 presentation of *Turandot* (his first professional engagement) and in the new staging of *Lulu* in 1989. The San Francisco actor and composer, a veteran of numerous films, television shows and stage productions,

ARTIST PROFILES



VALERY GERGIEV

has most recently made guest TV appearances on *Bay Watch*, *Chicago Hope*, *Living Single* and *Vanishing Son*. He has also performed with the Rockettes in a Christmas Spectacular at New York's Radio City Music Hall. Gogin, a lifetime member of the Little People of America, is a strong advocate for disability issues and rights, and is also a motivational speaker for those causes.

Artistic Director of the Kirov Opera, **Valery Gergiev** is on the podium for the Company premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, a production he led with the Kirov in St. Petersburg and Palermo last year. His previous conducting assignments here were the acclaimed 1991 presentation of *War and Peace* and last fall's productions of *The Fiery Angel* and *Hérodiade*. Born in Moscow, he studied conducting at the Leningrad Conservatory with the noted teacher Ilya Musin. Now, as one of the world's busiest and most sought-after conductors, he is applauded at the podiums of the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, most major European houses, as well as the world's top orchestras. At St. Petersburg, Gergiev has, since his 1988 appointment as artistic director and principal conductor, raised the standards of the company to unprecedented heights, so that it is now the reigning opera company of Russia. So far, he has organized three festivals devoted to a single composer (Mussorgsky in 1989, Prokofiev in 1992, and Rimsky-Korsakov in 1994), launched the Mikkeli Festival in Finland, initiated cooperative performances with the San Francisco Opera, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Covent Garden, and made a large number of audio and video recordings. These include *Khovanshchina*, *War and Peace*, *Prince Igor*, *Sadko*, *The Queen of Spades*, several orchestral albums and recitals, the complete ballets *Romeo and Juliet* and *Sleeping Beauty*, and the soon-to-be-released *Fiery Angel*, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, and *The Gambler*.

In his United States opera debut, **Alexander Titov** is on the podium for the final two performances of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. A graduate of the conducting program at the Rimsky-



ALEXANDER TITOV

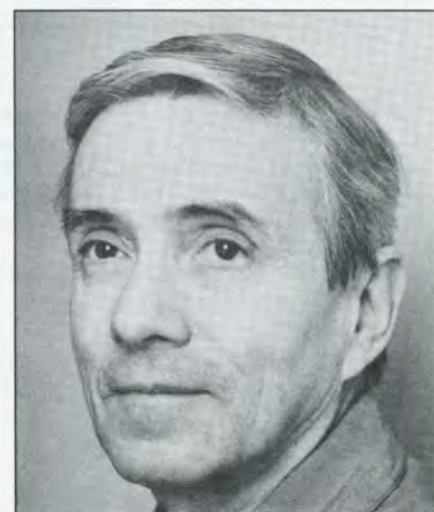
Korsakov State Conservatory of St. Petersburg, he has been on the faculty of the Conservatory's opera and symphony department since 1981 and currently serves as Professor. Appointed Guest Conductor of the Kirov Opera and Ballet in 1991, he has led performances at the Kirov, as well as the major concert halls of Moscow, Finland, England, Switzerland, Japan, Colombia and the U.S. He has assisted such renowned conductors as Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Mstislav Rostropovich and Valery Gergiev as well. With over 40 CD recordings to his credit, the maestro's discography includes all of Tchaikovsky's symphonic works; discs devoted to the music of Rachmaninoff, Grieg, Handel and Mozart; the operas *La Traviata*, *Love for Three Oranges*, *Katerina Ismailova*, *Le Rossignol*, *Kashchey the Immortal* and *Rita*; the ballets *Swan Lake*, *Nutcracker*, *Firebird*, *Les Sylphides* and *Sheherazade*; and an album of Russian sacred music with the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory Chorus.

With productions seen at opera houses throughout the world, **Lotfi Mansouri** is at the forefront of international opera directors and administrators. San Francisco Opera's fourth general director (appointed in 1988), his professional association with the Company dates back to 1963, when he directed six productions. At the conclusion of the 1994 Fall Season, the number of Mansouri productions at San Francisco Opera reached 55—and this fall, that number grows to 57 when he directs the Company premiere of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and the new production of *Don Giovanni*. Born in Iran, Mansouri attended college at UCLA and received U.S. citizenship before serving as resident stage director at Zurich Opera from 1960 to 1966. In 1965, he started working simultaneously at the Geneva Opera, where he became head stage director in 1966 and stayed until 1976. During this period, he began fulfilling engagements as guest director at various houses throughout Italy and North America, including Chicago, Houston, Santa Fe, Philadelphia, Tulsa, San Diego, Dallas and both the Metropolitan and New York City Opera companies. In 1976, he



LOTFI MANSOURI

was named general director of the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, where he directed 30 new productions, 12 of them Canadian premieres, including *Wozzeck*, *Lulu*, *Death in Venice*, *Die Meistersinger* and Thomas's *Hamlet* (featuring the only Ophelia ever sung on stage by Joan Sutherland). During his tenure at San Francisco Opera, numerous international artists have made their U.S. operatic debuts here, and four productions have been taped for telecast or videocassette (*Mefistofele*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot* and *The Dangerous Liaisons*). Mansouri's 1979 production of *La Gioconda* was the Company's first to receive a live international telecast. He has also worked to establish the highly successful exchange with the Kirov Opera that has resulted in productions of *War and Peace* (1991), *Boris Godunov* (1992), *The Fiery Angel* (1994) and *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, which Mansouri directed in St. Petersburg in April of 1994.



ALEXANDER SHAVROV

In his first San Francisco Opera assignment, **Alexander Shavrov** makes his United States opera debut as choreographer for *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Born to a family of ballet dancers in

ARTIST PROFILES

St. Petersburg, he graduated from that city's Vaganova Ballet Academy and was immediately invited to join the Kirov Ballet where he danced principal character roles. After simultaneously performing with the Kirov and serving as a Professor of Dance at the Vaganova Academy, Shavrov was appointed ballet coach and choreographer at the Kirov Theater, where, since 1980, he has concentrated on the classical repertoire. He has been responsible for the choreography for a great number of productions at the Kirov, among them the operas *Sadko* and *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, as well as the ballets *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *La Bayadère*, *La Fille Mal Gardée*, and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.



THIERRY BOSQUET

The sets and costumes for *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, originally designed by Alexander Golovin and Konstantin Korovin for the 1904 Glinka Centennial production, were realized

by Thierry Bosquet for the Kirov Opera at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. Bosquet, who also designs the costumes for this season's *Don Giovanni*, made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1990 with the costumes for *Die Fledermaus*, and created the sets (from the original Alfred Roller designs) for *Der Rosenkavalier* and the costumes for *Capriccio*, two productions which were presented during the Company's 1993 Strauss Festival. The Belgian designer received his training and diploma at the National School of Architecture, Art and Design in Brussels. Since 1959, he has created the sets and costumes for over 75 operas and ballets at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels. He has also designed the sets and costumes for over 50 operas, ballets and dramas produced in France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, South America, Australia and the United States. Works recently designed include *Rigoletto* and *Otello* in Liège, *La Belle Hélène* for the Canadian Opera Company, as well as *Werther*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *The Mikado* for the New York City Opera. In addition to his work in the theater, he was the designer of the Belgian film *La Chambre Rouge*, and is the subject of a film by Jean Antoine for Belgian television.

Lighting Director and Design Consultant for San Francisco Opera since 1976, Thomas J. Munn created the lighting and special effects for *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, in addition to the lighting for *La Traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Cenerentola*, *Faust* and *Die Walküre*. He has designed the lighting and special effects for over 155 productions for the Company, including the highly acclaimed presentations of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. As scenic adviser, he has designed scenery for SFO productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Billy Budd*, *Nabucco*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Christophe Colomb*. In addition to his work for the San Francisco Opera, Munn has designed scenery and lighting for Broadway,



THOMAS J. MUNN

Off-Broadway, regional theater, ballet, industrial and films. His television and video credits include San Francisco Opera's Emmy-winning telecast of *La Gioconda*, also *Samson et Dalila*, *Aida*, *L'Africaine*, *La Bohème*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Mefistofele*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot* and *The Dangerous Liaisons*. Credits for other companies include work for the Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera and the Netherlands Opera, as well as scenery and lighting for Hartford Ballet's *Nutcracker*. Recent credits include lighting for the Dallas Opera's production of *La Cenerentola*, scenery and lighting for Ballet Arizona's staging of *Coppélia*, as well as art direction and lighting for the video "The Universe Story." In the future, Munn will design the lighting for Dallas Opera's production of *Il Trovatore*, and will also serve as consultant/designer of the War Memorial's new renovated and computerized lighting system.

Pre-performance Lecture Series

San Francisco Opera's pre-performance lecture series (Sept. 9-Dec. 9) will take place in the War Memorial Opera House one hour prior to curtain times at 50 of the season's 69 performances. Each lecture will last approximately one-half hour. Lectures feature noted scholars and artists and are presented free of charge to patrons with tickets to the corresponding performance. Eleven of the lectures (Sept. 19-Oct. 1) will be devoted to introducing audiences to San Francisco Opera's artistic plans for the 1996-97 season. Watch for lecture dates in S.F. Opera newspaper advertisements. The lecture schedule for September follows:

Sept. 9	6 p.m.	<i>Ruslan and Lyudmila</i>
Sept. 12	7 p.m.	<i>Anna Bolena</i>
Sept. 15	7 p.m.	<i>Anna Bolena</i>
Sept. 16	7 p.m.	<i>La Traviata</i>
Sept. 19	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 20	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 21	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 22	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 23	7:00 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 26	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 27	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 28	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 29	6:30 p.m.	Artistic Plans
Sept. 30	7:00 p.m.	Artistic Plans

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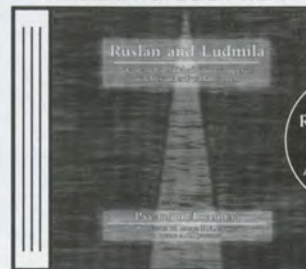
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ANNA BOLENA



RUSLAN & LUDMILA

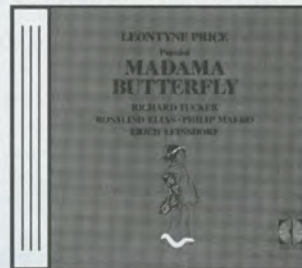


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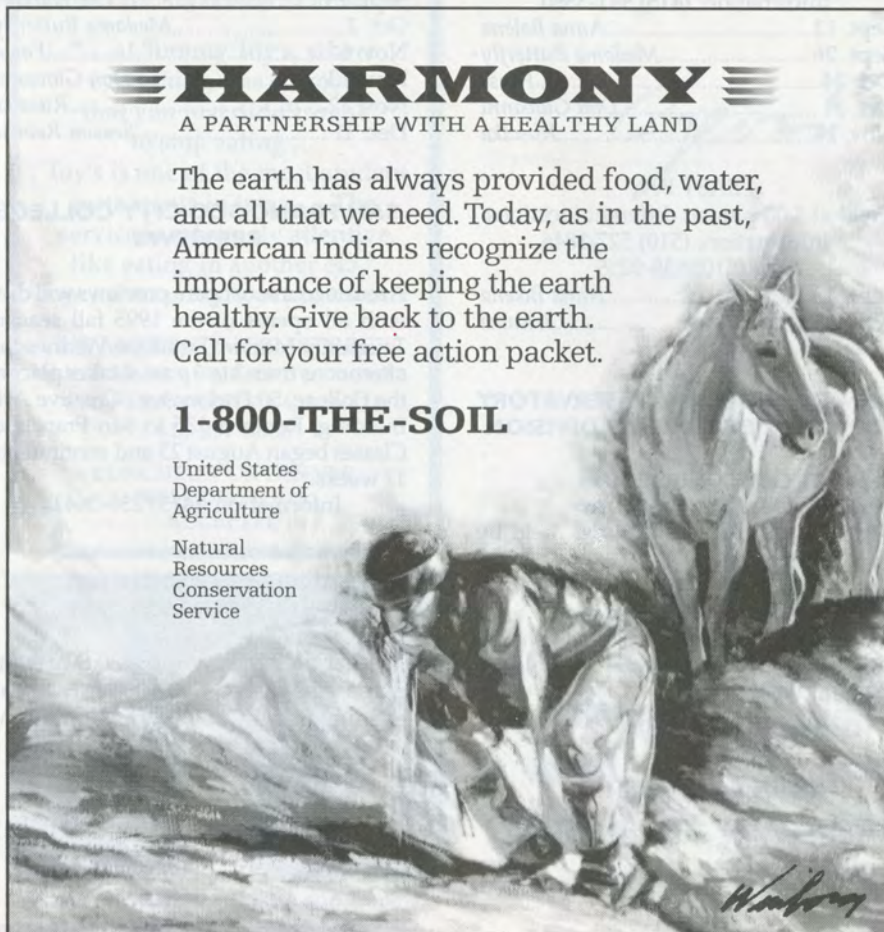
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1995 OPERA PREVIEWES

The following list of lectures and previews includes those that are currently available to the public

PRE-OPERA TALKS

Our popular Pre-Opera Talks, which are held in the Orchestra section one hour prior to curtain, will include a special lecture describing SF Opera's plans for the 1996 performances out of the Opera House. These 1996 previews will run between Sept. 19 and Oct. 1. After Oct. 1, the traditional Pre-Opera Talks will continue throughout the 1995 Fall Season. Lectures are free with your ticket for the performance and are held on most performance dates. Watch for talk dates in S.F. Opera newspaper advertisements.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — INSIGHTS

Renowned artists and personalities from the world of opera in informal interviews. Held from 6 to 7 p.m. in Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness, in San Francisco. Complimentary to Guild members, \$5 at the door.

Information: (415) 565-6432

Oct. 11 *La Cenerentola*
Nov. 20 *Rusalka*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD — PREVIEWS

Speakers: *Ruslan and Lyudmila*: Richard Taruskin; *Anna Bolena*: William Ashbrook; *Madama Butterfly*: James Keolker; *Faust*: Perry Lorenzo; *Don Giovanni*: Robert Glick; *Rusalka*: Michael Beckerman

MARIN

Held at 8 p.m. at Mt. Tamalpais United Methodist Church, 410 Sycamore Avenue, Mill Valley.

Information: (415) 388-6789

Sept. 11 *Anna Bolena*
Sept. 25 *Madama Butterfly*
Oct. 23 *Faust*
Oct. 30 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 13 *Rusalka*

SAN FRANCISCO

Held at 12:00 noon, The Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin St., San Francisco.

Information: (415) 565-6432

Sept. 13 *Anna Bolena*
Sept. 27 *Madama Butterfly*
Oct. 23 *Faust*
Nov. 1 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 15 *Rusalka*

SAN JOSE

Held at 10:00 a.m. at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Blvd., Los Gatos.

Information: (408) 741-1331, or (408) 354-7525

Sept. 12 *Anna Bolena*
Sept. 26 *Madama Butterfly*
Oct. 24 *Faust*
Oct. 31 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 14 *Rusalka*

SONOMA COUNTY

Held at various locations and times.

Information: (707) 938-2432

Sept. 15 *Anna Bolena*
Sept. 25 *Madama Butterfly*
Oct. 25 *Faust*
Oct. 30 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 13 *Rusalka*

SOUTH PENINSULA

Held at 8:00 p.m. at the Palo Alto Senior Center, 450 Bryant St., Palo Alto.

Information: (415) 941-3890

Sept. 12 *Anna Bolena*
Sept. 26 *Madama Butterfly*
Oct. 24 *Faust*
Oct. 31 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 14 *Rusalka*

EAST BAY

Held at 8:00 p.m. at different locations.

Information: (510) 527-1846

or (510) 838-9255

Sept. 13 *Anna Bolena*
Nov. 15 *Rusalka*

SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC EXTENSION DIVISION

Sept. 18 - Oct. 9, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Verdi: *The Master at Mid-Career*

Series of four Monday classes, held by Paul Thomason.

Oct. 16 - Nov. 6, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Puccini: *Heir to the Verdian Tradition*

Series of four Monday classes, held by William Wellborn.

Information: (415) 759-3446

MERRITT COLLEGE OPERA LECTURE SERIES

Held on Tuesday evenings in Building R, Room 130, 7 to 10 p.m., *Introduction to Opera* (Music 13A) is based on the operas of the 1995 fall season. The College is at 12500 Campus Drive (off Redwood Road in the Oakland Hills).

Information: (510) 436-2430

OPERA EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW SERIES

Given by Michael Barclay, director of OEI. Lectures start at 7:15 p.m. at 400 Yale Ave. (at Vassar) in the Kensington part of the Berkeley hills. Series began on September 5; lectures are \$15 at the door.

Information: (510) 526-5244

Sept. 11 *La Traviata*
Sept. 18 *La Cenerentola*
Sept. 25 *Die Walküre*
Oct. 2 *Madama Butterfly*
Nov. 6 *Faust*
Nov. 13 *Don Giovanni*
Nov. 22 *Rusalka*
Dec. 11 *Season Review*

SAN FRANCISCO CITY COLLEGE PREVIEWS

A music course of opera previews will deal with all operas of the 1995 fall season. Taught by Marvin Tartak on Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 6 p.m., it takes place at the College, 50 Phelan Ave., Creative Arts Building, Room A-135 in San Francisco. Classes began August 23 and continue for 17 weeks.

Information: (415) 239-3641

ROBERT GOODHUE'S FALL OPERA COURSE

Held at the Holiday Inn, 480 Sutter St., San Francisco, mostly Monday evenings, 6:15-8:30 p.m. Remaining dates: Oct. 2, 9, 23, 30; Nov. 6, 11.

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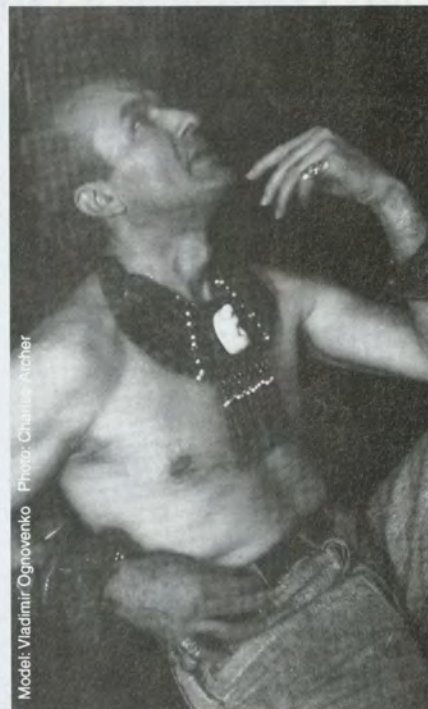
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RE-CREATING *RUSLAN*

BY
TIMOTHY
PFAFF

Even with San Francisco Opera's distinguished record with Russian opera productions, the Company is sure to break new ground bringing a timely and otherwise momentous staging of Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* into its repertoire by way of a co-production with St. Petersburg's Kirov Opera. Since its 1842 premiere, *Ruslan*—albeit a cornerstone of the Slavic operatic tradition—has had a sufficiently uneven production history which makes virtually any serious staging of it momentous. This new *Ruslan*, the first staging ever to reach American shores in the original Russian, also brings with it a treasure trove of cultural history so rich that, for comparisons, one turns to such important recreations as that of the original *Rite of Spring*. But even judged by those terms, the comparative rarity of *Ruslan*, and its manifestly vaster scope (it is, after all, an opera containing major ballets rather than simply a dance piece, however great), this new *Ruslan*—which had its premiere at the Kirov on May 2, 1994—is in every respect a fairy tale come true.

Although co-productions have become an increasingly familiar feature of the contemporary opera landscape,

not all of them are mere manifestations of insistent fiscal realities. The best capitalize on the respective strengths and specializations of the participating companies. Company General Director Lotfi Mansouri—no stranger to co-productions in his capacities as both stage director and opera-company director—calls this *Ruslan and Lyudmila* “unique in my experience. It was a wonderful partnership and full collaboration in every way. The artists and artisans of both companies grew to love one another in the process of producing this magical work, proving, once again, that art is the universal language.”

Like many another such project, this already acclaimed new *Ruslan* began—this time unwittingly—over lunch. Midway through the run of the Company's 1991 *War and Peace*—itself legendary for its uncanny timing, being in rehearsal during the fall of the former Soviet Union—Mansouri lunched with Valery Gergiev, the Kirov director making his U.S. opera debut conducting that *War and Peace* (and in doing so metamorphosing from a “Soviet conductor to watch” to one of the hottest properties in the wide world of opera). Mansouri got Gergiev's astonished but undivided attention simply by bespeaking his love for Glinka's problem-child opera. This new *Ruslan* was conceived in the gleam that sparked in their respective eyes.

In addition to responding that he had long wanted to stage *Ruslan*, Gergiev reported that the Kirov had in its storerooms an important production of 1904, the year of the Glinka birth centenary. Sitting alone in the Kirov mere months later, Mansouri recalls “feeling like King Ludwig of Bavaria,” watching in mute wonder as scene after vividly hand-painted scene of that venerable production was mounted for his private viewing. (Such things really happen in the intermittently whimsical world of the Kirov. When, during the *Ruslan* preparations, Mansouri expressed an interest in the Kirov's famous production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*, Gergiev added a performance to the company schedule just to accommodate him.) Mansouri was amazed at the production's splendor and color—and charmed with the innocence with which it approached its folk/fairy-tale subject, and the tone and flavor of “his” *Ruslan* became clear.

The two directors determined to recreate the 1904 production, whose designs were by the legendary artists Konstantin Korovin and Alexander Golovin, and to restore the Michel Fokine choreography that was grafted onto that production for a 1917 revival. As others have noted, *Ruslan* is suffused with themes and symbols from *The Magic Flute*. Mansouri turned to the Belgian artist Thierry Bosquet—with whom he had created a *Magic Flute* that still is on the boards at the New York City Opera, and whom he retained for the far more ambitious project of recreating Alfred Roller's original designs for *Der Rosenkavalier* for San Francisco Opera's 1993 Strauss Festival—to recreate the Korovin-Golovin designs. “It takes an artist to recreate another artist's vision,” Mansouri says, with the acclaim attracted by that *Rosenkavalier* to back him up. “You don't want a copy, you want a re-creation.”

Having the original painted drops to copy made the work of the Kirov's scenery painters clear enough. Throughout the long technical-rehearsal preparation period, the original 1904 drops were hung until, one by one, their new replacements were ready. Only then were the originals returned to what Glenn Plott, the Company's Director of



BARANOVSKY

Vladimir Ognovenko (*Ruslan*) and Tatiana Vorozhtsova (*Lyudmila*) in the opening scene of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, as seen at the Kirov Opera on May 2, 1994.

Timothy Pfaff is a Bay-Area-based freelance writer on the arts.

Production, refers to as the "catacombs" beneath the Maryinsky Theater. The costumes, of which few originals remained, proved another matter altogether.

For a host of reasons, it was decided that the shared part of the physical production would be the costume building—at 600-plus pieces a massive enough undertaking. But it was the combination of the Company's cutting-edge costume-building knowhow and the special resources of traditional decorative arts available through the Kirov's skilled artisans that made their particular collaboration seem as promising as it eventually turned out to be. It's subsequently clear to everyone involved that the eye-popping costumes that are a principal delight in this production simply could not have been produced by either costume shop alone. "Well, we *might* have been able to do it ourselves," allows the Company's Costume Director, Jenny Green, in words as elongated as they are, deliciously, accented. "But they would have come in at \$700,000 at the very least."

Although a few of the original costumes survived, most had to be re-created from the Korovin-Golovin designs housed in the Russian Museum. "Beautiful as they were," Green explains, "they needed interpretation to be useful as working designs. Because the Kirov has such clout in Russia, we were allowed to photograph the museum's designs, an otherwise impossible thing to do. But it still took Thierry Bosquet, a man of great vision, to translate those designs into reality."

Green explains that the reason most Russian opera productions have such an earthy, solid feel is that the Russians have only five fabrics from which to work. (She is voiceless at the word "five," so great is her incredulity.) "They have a cotton, a cotton-backed satin, a chiffon, a china silk, and a rough wool," she reports. "So what gives their costumes their legendary beauty are their incredible painting and embroidery."

When it became clear that "more magical fabrics" would be a most welcome contribution by the West, Green dispatched her assistant, Daniele Edwards, to Europe to procure the fabrics, in consultation with the Brussels-based Bosquet. Edwards bought a full range of appropriate fabrics in London's garment district, marking the last event to resemble a normal way of doing business in the West.

"The main problem in getting these fabrics to the Kirov was simply that it had never been done before. And it certainly didn't help that most of these fabrics were otherwise entirely unavailable in Russia," bestowing on them a certain black-market value. "We had empty paper bags arriving at the airport and pilots telling us that they were empty when they

inspected the plane for takeoff. Then there was the matter of getting the goods through Russian customs. You quickly learn that if you want things to happen in Russia, you have to be prepared to open your pockets and bribe people. I spent quaking moments at airport customs offices wondering whether the person I was about to give money to was going to give me the goods or put me in jail—and all I could think of was, how am I going to explain this to [Company controller] Keith Spindle? 'I just gave this guy money....' "

In the costume-building period of January 1994 through the May 2 opening, five members of the Company's costume team—supervisor Lorraine Forman, cutters Michael Sloan and Michelle Jacobs, Edwards and Green—were in virtual residence at the Kirov. "Basically, we showed them how to work with materials with which they were unfamiliar," Green continues. "They found some of the backing fabrics incredible, so we had to explain how certain fabrics need certain kinds of backing just to last—and overall to clarify our way of marking fabrics, so they understood exactly which fabric was meant for exactly which sleeve or bodice or whatever. And we had to train them to work with materials like our plastic boning. After we provided them with the fabrics and some basic knowledge about how to utilize them, they did all the things *they* know how to do with these fabrics and created these incredible costumes."

"On top of our wonderful materials they added their appliques, embroidery and truly amazing hand-painting. They hand-tooled metal pieces to attach as ornaments—something we could never do. And, because these are such practiced skills, they did it all amazingly quickly; three painters painted 500 costumes. And the footwear! Because of the great availability of leather, they made all their own boots, hundreds of pairs of fine Russian boots. Every one of these costumes is a work of art."

Promenading through the racks of costumes in the Company's South-of-Market shop, Green points to piece after piece to bear out that assertion. Long racks of highly individual, exquisitely hand-painted gowns make one wonder what prominent fairy princess they are for—only to learn that these are for choristers and supers! The extremely complicated, finely wrought costumes for the likes of Ruslan, Lyudmila and Chernomor simply draw gasps.

The work is in fact so fine one wonders how it could possibly read over footlights and an orchestra pit and out into an auditorium. Green fields the question with nonprofessional color photographs of individual characters and the stage, taking during the St. Petersburg rehearsals, and, amazingly, the

level of detail *does* tell. "What makes it across the lights is the boldness," Green contends. "It's amazing how much you see. You don't have just color differences, you have differences of texture. There is very little loss of definition, even from a distance."

Amazed as she was by the artistry of Kirov costumers, Green was often taking aback by working conditions vastly inferior to those in her San Francisco shop. "When I went into the dye shop, my heart sank," she reports. "It wouldn't even begin to pass the health and safety regulations we have. They were still using aniline dyes, which we haven't used in years. They clearly didn't know that this stuff is killing them. Added to that, one of the dyers had a very serious drinking problem."

"We're so used to being economy-driven. For us, artistic decision A determines practical decision B—and that determines everything that follows, with no room for mistakes. By comparison, in Russia there seem to be endless time and labor resources—labor is cheap and people work very long hours—and there's lots of 'maybe we will and maybe we won't' and trial and error. The public and government money is clearly not what it once was, but the attitude about resources and labor is different."

Other Company officials involved later, during the rehearsal period at the Kirov, found corresponding differences in m.o.'s. Lighting Director Thomas Munn, who was there both to study the Kirov's lighting scheme and to assist Mansouri in other artistic matters, was startled at the differences in pace. "In most respects, they have lots of time there. Sure, there is a tight schedule between the performances of the Kirov Opera and the Ballet, but they also have an administration—and a public—that will accept major changes on a moment's notice: changes of performance times and even performance dates, on very short notice."

"But what stood out immediately were the lengthy rehearsal periods: sessions that went five or six straight hours, once with the first break at more than two and a half hours. And this with a fully assembled orchestra, chorus and ballet, with the onstage performers in full costume. Even in the technical and lighting rehearsals, the use of 'light walkers' was restricted to very early rehearsals. As it came closer to performance, the artists themselves once again showed up—in full costume—just to be lit."

What offset the benefits of such extensive rehearsal periods came in the area Munn calls "repeatability. Things like lighting cues, and comparable artistic decisions in other areas, often are not written down, or otherwise recorded, during a rehearsal, and there's a large crew that gets rotated through

RE-CREATING RUSLAN

rehearsals—the sum of which is that, until the show is actually up and playing, there's no guarantee that the same thing will happen rehearsal to rehearsal, or even that the same people will be on hand to perform the various functions."

Mansouri and his assistant stage director, the Company's Paula Williams, experienced the same problems. As the poster of the St. Petersburg premiere makes plain, the Russian *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, in sharp contrast to its San Francisco counterpart, was cast with as many as five singers sharing principal roles. "I got very frustrated over not having the same singer rehearsing a part over the course of a whole week. I finally made it clear that I could not direct everybody, because we would never make it to the end of the opera. So I decided I would prepare two casts, and someone else would have to take care of the other singers. For all that, at one of the final dress rehearsals, suddenly there was a Lyudmila, in full costume, that neither Paula nor I had ever seen. But she knew and performed all the staging, and was really quite good.

"In general, the Russians are not used to working with the same rigidities that are a necessary part of our system here. They compensate by giving their all in everything they do—there was no marking by the singers, ever, and the dancers and the orchestra players performed rehearsals as though their lives depended on it. But I learned that, when anything I said backstage was answered with, 'No problem,' that meant trouble."

Not just the preparation but the production itself will in important respects be different in San Francisco. The lighting, for one thing, will have to be completely redesigned to accommodate differences in the two systems. Munn notes that the Kirov's foot- and track-lighting system, which he notes must have been state of the art in the 1950s and '60s, still serves that company well, given the preponderance of its "soft goods" (read: hanging drop) productions. Plott adds that the officials at the Kirov, who are as artistically sophisticated as their counterparts anywhere else in the world and have traveled extensively, are perfectly aware of the new systems that are available. But financial constraints leave them dependent on the technology they already have in place.

And even though the two stages are very close in size, in San Francisco the production will have to be newly rehung, to maintain the proper perspectives in our necessarily different rigging system, and thereafter relit. Munn and Plott predict that the Company's facilities will allow for faster and smoother scene changes than those that were possible in St. Petersburg, and should help reduce the run-

ning time (five hours in Russia) by the elimination of an entire intermission.

Mansouri plans to restage the two important flying scenes since in San Francisco he will be able to fly Chernomor (in the person of a double, of course) in a harness instead of in a stage gondola. The aerial battle between Chernomor and Ruslan in the final act—a cut-out pantomime in St. Petersburg—will take place with real players in air here. Although Mansouri insists that the other magic and "special effects" (people and props appearing and disappearing through traps) remain completely transparent, to enforce the feeling of "naïveté" he seeks for the production as a whole, he is confident that they will be more reliable—if every bit as straightforward and conspicuous—on the War Memorial Opera House stage. Mansouri's sense is that the production will, in a general way, be more "cinematic" here.

The single most important constant between the two productions, beyond the costumes and flats, will be Glinka's rapturous score. The physical production, while in some senses big (only the David Hockney *Magic Flute* competes with it in terms of numbers of flying flats), is in many other respects quite modest. The whole of it arrived in San Francisco in one 40-foot and one 20-foot shipping container—as contrasted with, say, the eight 40-foot containers required to ship *Mefistofele*. There is general agreement that in San Francisco the principal challenge will be musical: the attempt to simulate the Kirov sound that has become, for all the world, the sound of Russian opera.

Offsetting that challenge is the certainty that this new *Ruslan and Lyudmila* will provide once-in-a-lifetime musical rewards. Every member of the Company's forces on hand for the St. Petersburg premiere recounts being simply overwhelmed by the musical event. "The character Bayan has an aria in the first act that reduced me to tears on opening night," recounts Green, adding, "and that was just Act I." "It was the music that surprised me," Munn recalls. "I honestly expected it to be long and tedious, and from the start I found it exciting—and terribly moving. And the orchestra is so strong, and colorful."

Mansouri adds that, after weeks of production problems and rehearsal fatigue, what made the entire enterprise worth it was "the moment when Valery [Gergiev] stepped into the pit. 'Now I remember why I'm here,' I reminded myself. From Valery's downbeat, I heard sounds to die for. This was what I always imagined Russian opera to be, to sound like—this sound, this richness, this coming from the guts. Valery is a magician, and, in his hands, this *Ruslan* really is Russian opera." ■

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- V.I.P. ticket privileges with highest priority seating for all opera performances and special events
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- Information on international opera schedules, upon request
- All privileges and benefits which follow:

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In order to increase the enjoyment of opera for hearing-impaired members of the audience, the War Memorial Opera House is equipped with a Sennheiser Listening System. Headphones and induction devices (adaptable to hearing aids) are available in the coat checkroom at the south end of the main lobby. There is no charge, but an ID deposit, such as a driver's license or major credit card, is required.

Opera House Tours

Sponsored by the San Francisco Opera Guild, house and backstage tours of the War Memorial Opera House will be conducted every half hour from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on weekdays and on Saturday; and every 15 minutes from 10 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Sundays on the following dates:

Saturday, September 16
Thursday, October 5
Sunday, October 8
Saturday, October 14
Tuesday, October 24
Saturday, November 4
Saturday, November 25
Sunday, December 3
Wednesday, December 6

Tickets for Guild members, \$2; non-members, \$5. Reservations required. Information: (415) 565-6433.

If You Drive to the Opera ...

... and park in the Performing Arts Garage, remember that you can avoid some of the congestion by using the Gough Street entrance to the facility (between Fulton and Grove).

Performing Arts Center Tours

Tours of the San Francisco Performing Arts Center include the Opera House, Davies Symphony Hall and Herbst Theatre and take place as follows: Mondays, every half-hour between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Special tours of Davies Hall only may be scheduled on Wednesdays and Saturdays by request. All tours leave from the Grove Street entrance of Davies Symphony Hall. There are no tours on holidays. General \$3; Seniors and students, \$2.

Information: (415) 552-8338.

OPERA HOUSE PATRON ENTRY/ EXIT:

During all 1995 San Francisco Opera performances, patron entry and exit will be via Van Ness and Grove Street doors ONLY. The door that opens one and one-half hours prior to curtain time will be on Grove Street. Three doors on the north (carriage) side of the Opera House will be available during performances for **EMERGENCY EXIT ONLY** via ramps over the basement excavation.

Special service for San Francisco Opera patrons: Many operagoers who live in the northern section of San Francisco are regular patrons of the Municipal Railway special "Opera Bus." This bus is added to Muni's north-bound 47 line following all evening performances of the Opera and all Sunday matinees. Look for the "47 Special" after each performance in the bus zone at Van Ness Avenue and Grove Street—across Van Ness from the Opera House. Its route is: North on Van Ness to Chestnut, left to Divisadero and left to Union. It continues on Union over Russian Hill to Columbus, then left to Powell—then right to the end of the line at North Point.

Food Service. The Opera House lower lounge is open one and one-half hours prior to curtain time for hot buffet service. Patrons arriving before the front doors open will be admitted at the taxi entrance on Grove Street. Refreshments are served in the box tier on the mezzanine floor, the grand tier and dress circle levels during all performances.

Emergency Telephone. The telephone number (415) 431-4370 may be used by patrons for emergencies only during performances. Before the performance, patrons anticipating possible emergencies should leave their seat number at the nurse's station in the lower lounge, where the emergency telephone is located.

Digital Watches. Patrons are reminded to please check that their digital watch alarms are switched to OFF before the performance begins.

For **Lost and Found** information, inquire at checkroom #3 or call (415) 621-6600, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday.

Ticket Information. San Francisco Opera's Ticket and Patron Services Center, 199 Grove at Van Ness, open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Opera House Box Office: open 2 hours before each performance through the first intermission on performance days only. Phone charge: (415) 864-3330, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday (VISA, American Express, MasterCard). Tickets are also available on a limited basis through BASS and STBS outlets.

Make a valued contribution to San Francisco Opera. You can make an important contribution to San Francisco Opera by returning any tickets you cannot use to the Box Office for resale. These ticket returns are of great value to S.F. Opera and to other patrons who may be unable to obtain tickets to sold-out performances. If you are unable to use your tickets or exchange them for another performance of the same opera, you may make a full-value, tax-deductible contribution of your tickets. To make a donation, simply return your tickets to the Box Office or call (415) 864-3330, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You may also call (415) 565-6485 from 6 p.m. to 10 minutes before curtain. Unfortunately, we are unable to apply the donations towards membership benefits.

Taxi Service. Patrons needing a cab at the end of the performance should reserve one with the doorman at the taxi entrance before the end of the last intermission.

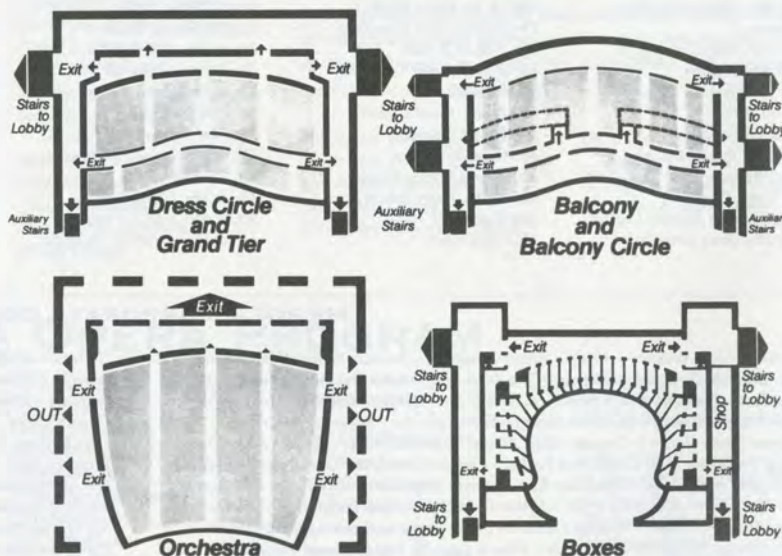
Wheelchair accessible restrooms are located in the lower lounge and on the dress circle level (north). Wheelchair accessible public telephones including "TDD" are located in the northeast corner of the lobby. Accessible drinking fountains are on orchestra and dress circle levels.

For the safety and comfort of our audience, all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc., must be checked at Opera House cloak-rooms.

Opera glasses are available in the lobby. No cameras, tape recorders or cellular phones are permitted in the Opera House. Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket.

Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.

San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center War Memorial Opera House



Patrons, Attention Please! Fire Notice: There are sufficient exits in this building to accommodate the entire audience. The exit indicated by the lighted "EXIT" sign nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. (Refer to Diagrams.) In case of fire please do not run—**walk** through that exit.

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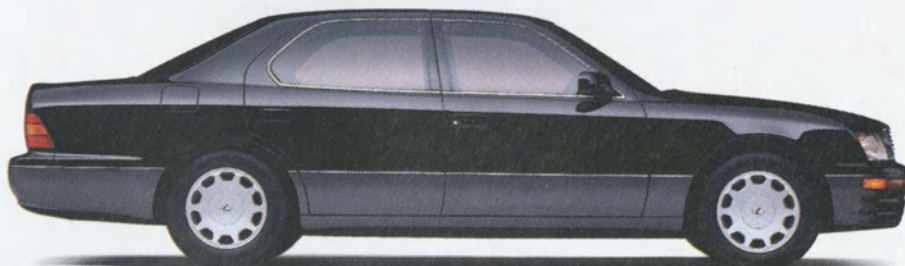
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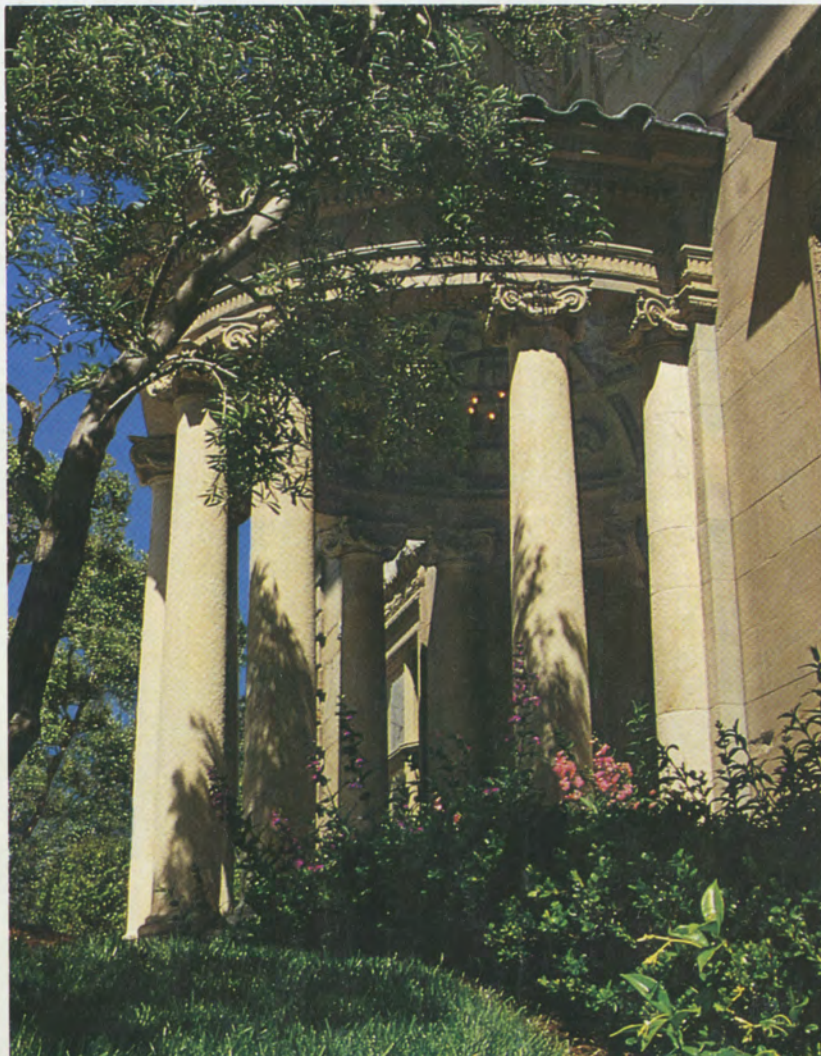
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