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TCHAIKOVSKY

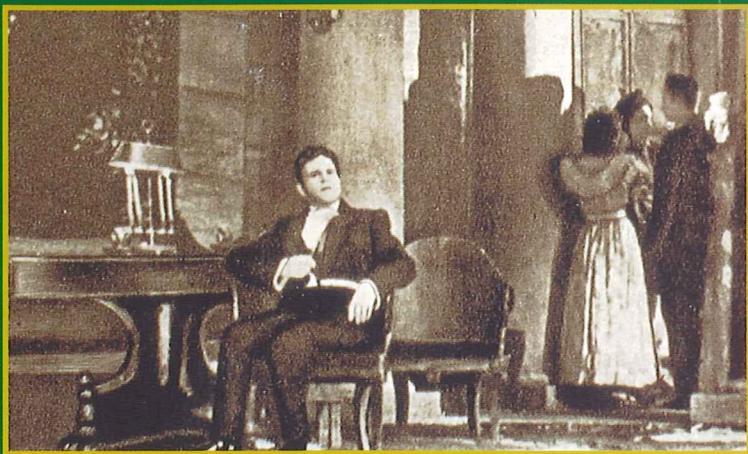
2 CDs

Eugene Onegin

Nortsov • Kruglikova • Antonova • Kozlovsky

**Chorus and Orchestra of the Bolshoi Opera
Alexander Melik-Pashaev and Alexander Orlov**

(Recorded in 1937)



Great Opera Recordings

Pyotr Il'yich
TCHAIKOVSKY
(1840-1893)

Eugene Onegin

Lyrical Scenes in Three Acts

Libretto by the composer

After Alexander Pushkin

Panteleimon Nortsov Eugene Onegin
Elena Kruglikova Tatiana
Elizaveta Antonova Olga
Ivan Kozlovsky Lensky
Maxim Mikhailov Prince Gremin
Vera Makarova Nurse
Liudmila Rudnitskaya Larina
Sergei Ostroumov Triquet
Maxim Mikhailov Zaretsky
Anatoli Mineev Captain

Chorus and Orchestra of the Bolshoi Opera

Chorus Master: M. Kuper

Sides 1-11, 15-19, 21-36 conducted by Alexander Melik-Pashaev

Sides 12-14, 20, 37-40 conducted by Alexander Orlov

Recorded 1937 in the Soviet Union on 40 sides

Matrices: 4555/57, 4576, 4583/84, 4875/77, 4903/10, 4940, 4944/49,
4972/75, 4984/85, 5990, 6429, 6430, 6484/88, 6985/86, 8328

CD 1	65:32		
Act I	65:32		
Scene 1	29:30	Scene 2	25:39
[1] Introduction	2:25	[9] <i>Nu, zaboltalas ya!</i> Nurse, Tatiana	7:33
[2] <i>Slikhali l vi za roschei glas nochnoi</i> Tatiana, Olga, Larina, Nurse	5:12	[10] <i>Puskai pogibnu ya, no pryvezhde</i> (Letter Scene) Tatiana	12:13
[3] <i>Bolyat moyi skori nozhenki so pokhodushki...</i> <i>Uzh kak po mostu, mostochku</i> Chorus of peasants, Larina	4:35	[11] <i>Akh, noch minula</i> Tatiana, Nurse	5:53
[4] <i>Kak ya lyublyu pod zvuki pesen etikh...</i> <i>Uzh kak po mostu, mostochku</i> Tatiana, Olga	3:17	Scene 3	10:23
[5] <i>Nu ti, moya vostrushka</i> Larina, Nurse, Tatiana, Chorus, Olga	2:47	[12] <i>Dyevitsi, krasavitsi</i> Chorus	2:42
[6] <i>Mesdames! Ya na sebya vzyal smyelost...</i> <i>Skazhi, kotoraya Tatyana</i> Lensky, Onegin, Larina, Tatiana, Olga	3:05	[13] <i>Zdyes on, zdyes on, Yevgeni!...</i> <i>Kogda bi zhizn domashnim krugom</i> Tatiana, Onegin	7:41
[7] <i>Kak shchastliv, kak shchastliv ya!...</i> <i>Ya lyublyu vas</i> Lensky, Olga, Onegin, Tatiana	5:36		
[8] <i>A, vot i vi!</i> Larina, Nurse, Lensky, Onegin	2:33		

CD 2	70:53		
Act II	38:07	Act III	32:46
Scene 1	22:36	Scene 1	18:57
[1] <i>Vot tak syurpriz!</i> 7:28 Chorus, Captain, Onegin, Lensky		[7] Polonaise 4:17	
[2] <i>Uzhel ya zaslužil ot vas nasmyeshku etu?... 6:29</i> <i>A cette fête conviés</i> Lensky, Olga, Onegin, Chorus, Triquet		[8] <i>I zdyes mnye skuchno!...</i> 6:00 <i>Knyaginya Gremina! Smotrite!</i> Onegin, Chorus, Tatiana, Prince Gremin	
[3] <i>Messieurs, mesdames, mesta zanyat izvolte... 4:19</i> <i>Ti ne tantsuyesh, Lensky?</i> Captain, Onegin, Lensky, Chorus, Larina		[9] <i>Lyubvi vsye vozrasti pokorni</i> 5:35 Prince Gremin	
[4] <i>V vashem dome! V vashem dome! 4:21</i> Lensky, Onegin, Tatiana, Chorus, Larina, Olga		[10] <i>Itak, poidyom, tebya predstavlyu ya...</i> 3:06 <i>Uzhel ta samaya Tatyana</i> Prince Gremin, Tatiana, Onegin	
Scene 2	15:31	Scene 2	13:48
[5] <i>Nu, shto zhe?...Kuda, kuda, kuda vi udalilis 9:40</i> Zaretsky, Lensky		[11] <i>O! Kak mnye tyazhelo!...</i> 13:48 <i>Onegin! Ya togda molozhe</i> Tatiana, Onegin	
[6] <i>A, vot oni! 5:51</i> Zaretsky, Onegin, Lensky			

Pyotr Il'yich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Eugene Onegin

Cultural resonances are strange phenomena. To Russian audiences, Pyotr Tchaikovsky's great opera *Eugene Onegin* must be redolent of all those nineteenth-century Russian novels and plays replete with country estates, marriageable girls and bored young men of good family. For any Russian, there must be the added tension of knowing that the story's originator Pushkin met the same fate as the poet Lensky, being killed in a duel. For English-speaking audiences, on the other hand, the tale cannot escape being refracted through the equally ironic and satirical but irresistibly comic vision of Jane Austen, with Tatiana, Olga, Onegin and Lensky as tragic counterparts to Elizabeth, Jane, Darcy and Bingley. Which just goes to show what a universal work of art Pushkin's verse novel is – and opera lovers are urged to read it.

As for the musical treatment, subject and composer were here perfectly matched; and Tchaikovsky prepared his own libretto, with a little help from his friend Konstantin Shilovsky. The work was composed in less than a year. Although Tchaikovsky was a little taken aback when the singer Elizaveta Lavrovskaya suggested the subject to him in May 1877, his innate feeling for the stage and his lyrical impulses were in tune with Pushkin's bitter-sweet story from the start; and he managed to write a 'number' opera with plenty of telling moments for individual singers, while, like Verdi in *La Traviata*, creating an almost symphonic framework for the action. Another parallel with *La Traviata* is that *Eugene Onegin* is really a chamber opera, set on a large stage only for the sake of the party scenes, which provide ironic backdrops for climactic moments. This being Tchaikovsky, the spirit of the dance is never far away; but there are also authentic folk elements in the country scenes to offset the

sophistication of the town scenes. The orchestra has much to do, both supporting and commenting on the stage action, and the writing for woodwind and solo horn shows all Tchaikovsky's mastery.

Little wonder, then, that for more than a century *Eugene Onegin* has been the most popular Russian opera. Tchaikovsky himself saw his assembly of 'lyrical scenes' as an ensemble piece. He made a point of entrusting the première on 29th March 1879 to the students of Moscow Conservatory, but like all great music it needs the attention of the best professionals. Despite its reliance on soloists with big reputations and voices to match, the Bolshoi Opera in Moscow has always been the ensemble company par excellence. Admittedly its first staging of *Eugene Onegin* in 1881 was not the success everyone had hoped for – not until the opera was mounted by the Imperial Opera of St Petersburg in 1884 did it break through to popularity – and subsequent Bolshoi productions have tended to be passed down from revival to revival as if graven on stone. Even so, the work has constantly been refreshed by new generations of singers. *Eugene Onegin* has been given more Bolshoi recordings than any other work, with a relatively small number of singers involved, as certain soloists have recorded their rôles twice (some of them three times, if you include film soundtracks). The present recording is of immense historical interest, as it is almost the earliest. In the 1930s the Bolshoi was particularly rich in lyric tenors, with Ivan Jadan, Sergei Lemeshev and Ivan Kozlovsky on the roster. Jadan defected during World War II, ending up in America; but for several decades Lemeshev and Kozlovsky divided Russian audiences into camps of devotees, just as Smirnov and Sobinov had done earlier in the century. To Lemeshev and the soprano Glafira Zhukovskaya

went the honour of taking part in the first recording of *Eugene Onegin*, in 1936, but Kozlovsky followed suit the next year with Elena Kruglikova singing Tatiana. The title rôle was taken by Panteleimon Nortsov on both occasions. The 1937 recording is credited to the conductor Alexander Melik-Pashaev but in fact eight of the forty sides were directed by that great all-rounder Alexander Orlov (although not a Bolshoi conductor, he was rewarded in 1948, just before his death, with the next complete *Eugene Onegin* recording, in which Kozlovsky and Kruglikova repeated their rôles). The two conductors keep Tchaikovsky's music light and airy, without the occasional over-excitement shown by Vassili Nebolsin in the earlier recording, or the ponderousness of Mstislav Rostropovich's much later effort.

Alexander Melik-Pashaev (1905-64) was born in what is now Tbilisi and studied at the conservatories there and in Leningrad. He began his career as a pianist in 1921 and the following year joined the opera house in Tbilisi as a repetiteur. Having studied conducting in Leningrad with Alexander Gauk, he made his Bolshoi début in 1931 with *Aida* and from then on was associated with that theatre, giving countless performances and making many recordings from the 78rpm era through to stereo. He was the house's chief conductor from 1953-62.

Alexander Orlov (1873-1948) was born in St Petersburg and educated there and in Berlin, where he studied composition under Paul Juon. He had a varied career, taking in both opera and symphonic work, before being made chief conductor of the Moscow Radio Orchestra in 1930. He left a number of recordings.

Elena Kruglikova (1907-82) was from Podolsk.

She studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Xenia Dorliak (mother of the concert singer Nina Dorliak), graduating with distinction in 1932 and almost immediately joining the Bolshoi, where she sang until 1956. Best known as an opera soloist, she was also in demand for concerts. From 1958 she taught singing at her alma mater. Her repertoire took in a number of the more lyrical Russian opera rôles, as well as Matilde in *Guillaume Tell* and the lighter Wagnerian parts. She recorded several other complete operas.

Elizaveta Antonova (1904-?), from St Petersburg, studied there and from 1924-29 sang in the Bolshoi Chorus. After a few years concentrating on concert work and becoming known as one of Russia's foremost contraltos, she returned to the Bolshoi as a soloist in 1934, remaining there for twenty years. She sang mainly Russian repertoire but also appeared as Fricka in *The Ring* and even as Leonore in *Fidelio*. She made several other complete opera recordings.

Ivan Kozlovsky (1900-93) had perhaps the most glorious career of any lyric tenor in the twentieth century. Born in a village in the Poltava area of the Ukraine, he studied at the Kiev Conservatory and made his début in Poltava in 1920 in Gounod's *Faust*. He came to the Bolshoi in 1926 after stints in Kharkov and Sverdlovsk, making his bow as Alfredo in *La Traviata*, and last sang there on his ninetieth birthday, contributing Monsieur Triquet's couplets from *Eugene Onegin* to a gala concert in his honour. His wide repertoire encompassed many of the lyric tenor leads in Russian, French and Italian opera, but also Lohengrin and such character rôles as the Idiot in *Boris Godunov*. He made countless recordings, ranging as far afield as Benjamin Britten's *Serenade*. His plangent, immediately recognisable voice was ideal for the rôle of Lensky.

Panteleimon Nortsov (1900-93) was Kozlovsky's exact contemporary, came from the same part of the Ukraine and also studied in Kiev, starting as a tenor but soon realising he was actually a baritone. He started his career in Kiev in 1924 and sang in Kharkov and at the Bolshoi before joining the regular Bolshoi company in 1925. Older opera-goers who could remember Battistini compared him with that paragon. In almost thirty years at the house, he sang Onegin some 600 times but shone in other Russian rôles too, as well as Mozart and the great French and Italian baritone parts. He had a wide repertoire of art songs, especially those by Russian composers. From 1951 he taught at the Gnesin Institute and later also at the Moscow Conservatory. He left other complete opera recordings as well as song recitals. On this recording we are deprived of his excellent stage presence but can almost see it, so vivid is his characterization.

Maxim Mikhailov (1893-1971), who sings Zaretsky as well as his usual rôle of Gremin, was one of

the great Russian basses, from a legendary generation which also included Mark Reisen and the Pirogov brothers. Born into a peasant family in the province of Kazan, he sang in his village church choir and as a teenager moved to Kazan itself, where he worked as a labourer before being accepted into a monastery. He was deeply impressed by hearing Chaliapin as Ivan Susanin, the rôle with which he himself would be most closely identified; but he made his name as a church and cathedral singer, with the rank of deacon. In 1930 he began to be heard on the radio and in 1932 joined the Bolshoi, singing all the major bass rôles over the next 24 years – his favourite Ivan Susanin more than 400 times. He made many recordings, ranging from complete operas to folk-songs, and appeared in films including Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*.

Tully Potter

Thanks to Juris Grinevics

Synopsis

CD 1

Act I

[1] The *Introduction* establishes Tatiana as the principal character in the following opera, based on a leitmotif associated with her.

Scene 1

[2] The first scene is set in the garden of the Larin's country estate. The voices of Tatiana and her sister Olga are heard from the house, singing together. Mme Larina, their mother, recalls with the old family nurse Filipievna her own courtship and her marriage. [3] Peasants returning from the fields sing and dance, celebrating the harvest. [4] The two sisters, Tatiana and Olga, appear in contrast, the former bookish and the latter more outgoing, as she herself claims in her aria. [5] As the peasants leave, Mme Larina comments on Tatiana's tendency to immerse herself in reading. The nurse announces the approach of Lensky and an unknown companion. [6] Lensky appears, greeting the women, and the men weigh the girls up, while Tatiana sees in Onegin the man that she has long awaited. [7] Tatiana and Onegin walk away together, leaving Lensky with Olga, to whom he again declares his devotion. [8] Mme Larina sends the nurse to find Tatiana and Onegin, who return, she now obviously in love with him, to the reservations of the nurse, who goes out shaking her head.

Scene 2

[9] Tatiana, ready to retire for the night, is sitting in her room in her night dress. She cannot sleep and asks her

nurse about her own courtship and marriage, a far more prosaic affair than Tatiana could imagine from her reading. Tatiana is distracted, however, and asks for a pen and paper. [10] She sets about writing a letter to Onegin, a declaration of her love for him. Dawn breaks and a shepherd's pipe is heard. [11] Her nurse, coming to waken Tatiana, is surprised to find that she is still up. Tatiana gives her the letter she has written, telling her to have her grandson deliver it to Onegin.

Scene 3

[12] In the garden peasant girls are heard singing at their work. [13] Tatiana has awaited the coming of Onegin with trepidation, but when he appears he addresses her coolly, explaining why he cannot marry her and suggesting that she learn to exercise greater self-control. The voices of the girls are heard again, as he offers Tatiana his arm and they leave together.

CD 2

Act II

Scene 1

[1] The Larins are celebrating Tatiana's name-day. The room in the house is brightly lit and couples are dancing, Tatiana with Onegin, on whom some of the guests comment unfavourably among themselves, and Olga with Lensky. Onegin finds the whole provincial entertainment tedious and decides to provoke Lensky by dancing with Olga. [2] Lensky, upset at her behaviour, reproaches Olga, who passes the matter off, exciting his further jealousy. The elderly French tutor, Monsieur Triquet, offers his fulsome tribute to Tatiana, presenting her with a copy of his homage, to her

embarrassment. [3] The dancing resumes with a mazurka. Tatiana dances with the local Company Commander, whose band provides the music for the occasion, while Onegin dances for a time with Olga, before sitting down again with her, pretending to notice Lensky, who has been standing behind them. [4] The two men quarrel. Onegin tries to pacify his friend, but Lensky insists on satisfaction, to the consternation of the whole company. Tatiana is in tears and Lensky bids Olga farewell for ever, as he rushes out, leaving Olga fainting.

Scene 2

[5] It is early morning on a river-bank near a water-mill. Lensky and his second Zaretsky are waiting for Onegin. Lensky remembers the happiness he has now lost, meditating on his possible fate in the duel to come. [6] Onegin appears, accompanied by his valet Guillot as his second, an insulting breach of etiquette. The combatants each muse on the unavoidable conflict in which they are now implicated. Matters are arranged by Zaretsky, pistols are loaded and the duellists approach each other and fire. Onegin falls dead, to Onegin's horror.

Act III

Scene 1

[7] A polonaise is heard at the reception in the richly decorated house of Prince Gremin in St Petersburg. [8] Onegin watches, still bored at the proceeding and haunted, during years abroad, by the death of Lensky. The approach of Princess Gremina is announced, and Tatiana comes in, with her husband, the Prince. Onegin recognises her at once, and Prince Gremin goes to speak to him, while Tatiana asks who the stranger is, trying to hide her feelings when she learns his identity. [9] Prince Gremin tells his old friend Onegin about his marriage and the happiness it has brought him during the last two years. [10] Tatiana and the Prince leave, while Onegin realises that he is in love with her, as dancing resumes.

Scene 2

[11] In the drawing-room of the Gremin mansion Tatiana holds a letter. She has been upset by Onegin's return. Onegin rushes in and kneels at her feet, avowing his love, but she reminds him of his former rejection of her. Once happiness had been near, but now she will be faithful to her husband. She tells him to go, but is forced to admit that she still loves him. He seeks to embrace her, but she draws back, declaring her fidelity to her husband and rejecting him for ever. She rushes out, leaving him distraught.

Producer's Note

This, the first commercial recording of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, is today almost totally unknown. It is difficult to understand why such a vibrant and well sung performance could for so long go unheralded. Perhaps, it can be explained by the fact that the original 78rpm discs were never widely available outside the Soviet sphere. During the LP era, Melodya reissued both the 1948 recording of the opera and the 1936 film sound track but never this recording. It did appear, during the 1950s, on the small American label, Period, albeit in such poor sound as to make the performance practically unlistenable. The present reissue marks this recording's compact disc début.

Discographic information for Soviet recordings of the 1930s is generally unavailable and always unreliable. Therefore, the year 1937 will have to suffice in dating this recording. Judging by the gaps in matrix numbers, one can only assume that it took many sessions to complete the forty sides comprising the recording. This might explain why there is such tremendous sonic variation from one side to another and why two conductors were employed for the project.

The recording was first issued in 1937 but inexplicably, six sides from various parts of act one were omitted. Incidentally, one of the missing portions is Lensky's lovely act one aria. Shortly after the war, the recording was re-released, this time including all forty sides. A careful inspection of both sets shows, however, that three of the original thirty-four sides were replaced in the second edition by alternate matrices with the same soloists and presumably the same conductor.

Like most Soviet recordings from the 78rpm era, this recording is, in every way, a remastering engineer's nightmare. There is simply no consistency from one side to another either in the recorded sound or in the quality of the shellac. In remastering this recording, I was able to work from three sets of pressings. Among these, there were, perhaps, six or seven discs pressed on good shellac and the rest were very noisy. By using a variety of styli and drastic degrees of equalization, I hope to have eliminated much of the extraneous noise without compromising the integrity of the music.

Ward Marston

Ward Marston

In 1997 Ward Marston was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy Award for his production work on BMG's Fritz Kreisler collection. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Marston's name is 'synonymous with tender loving care to collectors of historical CDs'. *Opera News* calls his work 'revelatory', and *Fanfare* deems him 'miraculous'. In 1996 Ward Marston received the *Gramophone* award for Historical Vocal Recording of the Year, honouring his production and engineering work on Romophone's complete recordings of Lucrezia Bori. He also served as re-recording engineer for the Franklin Mint's Arturo Toscanini issue and BMG's Sergei Rachmaninov recordings, both winners of the Best Historical Album Grammy. Born blind in 1952, Ward Marston has amassed tens of thousands of opera classical records over the past four decades. Following a stint in radio while a student at Williams College, he became well-known as a reissue producer in 1979, when he restored the earliest known stereo recording made by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1932. In the past, Ward Marston has produced records for a number of major and specialist record companies. Now he is bringing his distinctive sonic vision to bear on recordings released on the Naxos Historical label. Ultimately his goal is to make the music he remasters sound as natural as possible and true to life by 'lifting the voices' off his old 78rpm recordings. His aim is to promote the importance of preserving old recordings and make available the works of great musicians who need to be heard.

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

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2 CDs

Pyotr Il'yich
TCHAIKOVSKY
(1840-1893)
Eugene Onegin

ADD

Playing
Time
2:16:25

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Panteleimon Nortsov Eugene Onegin
Elena Kruglikova Tatiana
Elizaveta Antonova Olga
Ivan Kozlovsky Lensky
Maxim Mikhailov Prince Gremin
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This, the first commercial recording of *Eugene Onegin*, is distinguished by the outstanding singing of the principals, and the sensitive conducting of Melik-Pashaev and Orlov. Leading the cast, Nortsov is outstanding with his psychologically acute portrayal of Onegin, while one of the Soviet era's greatest tenors, Ivan Kozlovsky takes the rôle of Lensky. Two conductors share the performance, Melik-Pashaev, later chief conductor at the Bolshoi, and Orlov, who in 1948 conducted a complete recording of the same opera.

CD 1	65:32	CD 2	70:53
1-13 Act I	65:32	1-6 Act II	38:07
		7-11 Act III	32:46

MADE IN
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Archivist & Restoration Producer: Ward Marston
Special thanks to Dennis Brew, Donald Hodgman and Jacob Rubinchek

www.naxos.com



A detailed track list can be found in the booklet
Cover Image: Bolshoi Theatre artist, Panteleimon M. Nortsov as 'Onegin',
(Lebrecht Collection)

