

NAXOS

# RUSSIAN SONGS AND ARIAS

**Rachmaninov**

**Tchaikovsky**

**Rimsky-Korsakov**

**Dinara Alieva, Soprano**

**New Russia State  
Symphony Orchestra**

**Dmitry Yablonsky**



## Russian Songs and Arias

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky retains his position as the most popular of all Russian composers. Born in 1840, he had his early education, in music as in everything else, at home, under the care of his mother and of a beloved governess. From the age of ten he was a pupil at the School of Jurisprudence in St Petersburg, going on to take employment in the Ministry of Justice. During these years he developed his abilities as a musician and the foundation of the new Conservatory of Music in St Petersburg under Anton Rubinstein enabled him to study there as a full-time student from 1863. In 1865 he moved to Moscow as a member of the staff of the new Conservatory established there by Anton Rubinstein's brother Nikolay. For over ten years he continued in Moscow, before financial assistance from a rich widow, Nadezhda von Meck, enabled him to leave the Conservatory and devote himself entirely to composition. The same period in his life brought an unfortunate marriage and immediate separation, events that could only add further to his problems of character and inclination. His homosexuality was a torment to him, and he remained subject to morbid sensitivity and diffidence. He nevertheless enjoyed considerable success as a composer both in Russia and abroad. His sudden death in St Petersburg in 1893 gave rise to contemporary speculation and to various posthumous rumours. Officially his death was attributed to cholera, contracted after drinking undistilled water. Whether the victim of cholera, of his own carelessness or reckless despair or of death deliberately courted, Tchaikovsky was widely mourned.

During the course of his life Tchaikovsky wrote a hundred or so songs, the first before his entry to the Conservatory and the last in 1893, the year of his death. He wrote the seven songs of *Opus 47* in the summer of 1880 at his sister's house at Kamenka and at Brailov, the Ukraine estate of Nadezhda von Meck. He dedicated them to the soprano Alexandra Panayeva, on whom his brother Anatoly had unsuccessfully set his heart. The first song, *Kabi znala ya* (Had I known) ㉔, sets a poem by Alexey Konstantinovich Tolstoy and tells of the girl whose

lover rides by to the hunt and how she might have awaited him in the evening, by the well. *Ya li v pole da ne travushka bila?* (Was I not a blade of grass in the field?) ㉕, the seventh song, takes a version of Shevchenko's Ukrainian song by Ivan Zakharovich Surikov and treats it in a very Russian manner. The words express the sad despair of a young girl, married off by her parents to an old man for whom she has no love.

In the opera house only two of Tchaikovsky's operas are in regular international repertoire, *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades*, both based on Pushkin. The second of these, first staged at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg in 1890, has a libretto devised by the composer and his brother Modest. It is, in essence, a horror story, in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe, a tale of monomania, leading to murder and suicide. It is spring and in a square in the Summer Garden, where children play and nursemaids take care of their charges, two officers discuss the strange behaviour of Hermann, who watches them gambling but never plays. Hermann has fallen in love with a girl whose name, even, he does not know, but she is Lisa, betrothed to Yeletsky and granddaughter of the old Countess who, as a young woman in Paris, had been saved from gambling losses by the revelation of the winning three cards, to be used to restore her fortunes, provided she never played again. It is said that the Countess, who has revealed the secret twice, will die by the hand of the third person, who will force the secret from her. In the second scene Lisa, at the country house of the Countess, has mixed feelings about Yeletsky, expressed in her aria *Otkuda eti slyozhi* (Why do you flow, my tears?) ㉖, her musings interrupted by the appearance of Hermann, below. He seeks her forgiveness, interrupted by the voice of the Countess telling Lisa to go to bed. This turns Hermann's thoughts again to the story of the three cards. This obsession leads Hermann to cause the death of the Countess, when he enters her bedroom, threatening her with a revolver.

At his barracks Hermann, now conscience-stricken, receives a note from Lisa, offering forgiveness and

seeking a midnight meeting. The ghost of the Countess appears and unwillingly reveals the secret of the three cards, Three, Seven and Ace, bidding him marry Lisa. She waits anxiously for Hermann by the river embankment, her feelings expressed in her *Uzh polnoch' blizitsya... Akh, istomilas' ya* (Midnight is near... I am tired) 7, comforted by his declaration of love, when he eventually arrives, but distraught when he leaves her for the gaming-house. Left alone, she throws herself into the river and drowns. In the gaming-house Hermann plays against Yeletsy, winning on his first two cards, the three and the seven. At his final stake, however, he is confronted, now in clear madness, not by the winning ace but by the Queen of Spades, seeming to regard him with the face of the Countess. Frantic, he stabs himself and dies.

Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, its libretto by the composer and Shilovsky, based on Pushkin, had its first student performance at the Mal'iy Theatre in Moscow in 1879, followed by staging at the Bolshoy two years later. In the garden of the Larin country estate the daughters of the house, Olga and Tatyana, are greeted by Lensky and his friend Onegin. Tatyana, attracted to him, walks off with Onegin, while Lensky sings of his love for Olga. Alone in her bedroom that night Tatyana writes a letter to Onegin, telling him that she loves him, *Puskay pogibnu ya* (Even if it means I perish), the *Letter Scene* 10. In the morning she asks her nurse to see that it is given to him. She waits in the garden for his reply, but when he comes he tells her that he can only feel brotherly love for her, an answer that leaves her silent. In a brightly lit room in the Larins' house Tatyana's name-day is being celebrated. There is a waltz, and Onegin, in boredom, dances with Olga, provoking Lensky's jealousy and challenge to a duel. Insultingly Onegin appears with his valet as his second and in the duel kills Lensky, an outcome that brings immediate remorse. Years later Onegin returns from self-imposed exile and sees Tatyana again, now married to his old friend Prince Gremin. There is a ball, at which the Prince tells Onegin of his great love for Tatyana, and now Onegin realises that he too is in love with her. Later he confronts her, forcing her to admit her love for him. She refuses,

however, to desert her husband and rushes from the room, leaving Onegin in solitary desolation.

Sergey Rachmaninov had won a firm reputation in Russia before the changes of 1917. Thereafter he chose exile, obliged to support himself rather as a pianist than composer, relying on his phenomenal technique as a player. The earlier years were spent in Europe, but eventually he took refuge in the United States, which had always proved a profitable source of income during his concert tours. It was there that he died in 1943.

Among Rachmaninov's most popular compositions is the *Vocalise* 11, a wordless vocal piece, which has been much arranged, but originally formed part of a set of songs published in 1916. The six songs that make up *Op. 4* are earlier works. The fourth of the set, *Ne poy krasavitsa* (Do not sing to me, my beauty) 12, to words by Pushkin, was written in 1893 and dedicated to the composer's future wife, Natalya Satina. The poet asks a young girl not to sing songs from Georgia, as they remind him of past sorrows.

In the first decade of the new century Rachmaninov became increasingly occupied with opera, both as a conductor and as a composer. It was during his first years as conductor at the Bolshoy in Moscow that he set *Francesca da Rimini*, based on Dante's *Inferno*, completed in 1905 with his setting of Pushkin's *The Miserly Knight*. Both were given their première under his direction the following year.

*Francesca da Rimini*, an opera in one act, with a prologue and an epilogue, had first occupied Rachmaninov in 1900. The libretto, by Tchaikovsky's brother, Modest, is based on an episode at the end of Canto V of Dante's *Inferno* that had served as a source of inspiration for Tchaikovsky's orchestral fantasia of the same name. The second scene of the opera takes place in a room in the palace of Francesca's husband Lancelotto Malatesta, Paolo's brother. Paolo is reading, with Francesca, the story of Launcelot and Guinevere and their illicit love. Francesca begs Paolo not to look at her so, but he asks how he can read of the lovers' happiness unmoved. He falls down on his knees before her. Francesca comforts him in *O, ne riday, moy Paolo*,

*ne nado* (Oh, do not weep, my Paolo) ⑥, telling him that they may be united in a future life in Heaven. Amid a storm, Lanceotto enters, behind the lovers, and comes forward to kill them both, their spirits seen finally in the *Epilogue*, buffeted by the winds of Hell.

Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov belonged to the group of five pioneer nationalist composers originally led by Balakirev, four of them, at least, initially amateurs. His fifteen operas have fared indifferently in theatres outside Russia, where they remain novelties rather than standard repertoire. *Tsarskaya Nevesta* (The Tsar's Bride), was first staged at the Solodovnikov Theatre in Moscow in 1899. The nobleman Gryaznoy, a member of Tsar Ivan's special retinue, the *oprichniki*, wants to marry Marfa, daughter of the Novgorod merchant Vasily Stepanovich Sobakin, who is already promised to Ivan Sergeyeich Likov, a young nobleman. In the second act

Marfa sings of her life in Novgorod, *V Novgorode* (In Novgorod) ⑦. Gryaznoy seeks a love potion from his mistress, Lyubasha, who determines on revenge, providing a potion she acquires from Bomelius, the Tsar's physician, that will destroy her rival's beauty. The Tsar Ivan seeks a bride and chooses Marfa, who is now ill. Gryaznoy blames Likov, whom he kills, but eventually admits what he has done. Lyubasha now confesses how she has provided a different potion, and Gryaznoy kills her. Marfa is now out of her mind, and in her final, mad scene identifies Gryaznoy with her beloved Likov, calling him to join her in the garden in *Ivan Sergeich* (Ivan Sergeyeich) ⑧. *The Tsar's Bride* is a thoroughly Russian work, both in its pseudo-historical setting and in its occasional recourse to folk-melodies.

Keith Anderson

## New Russia State Symphony Orchestra



Photo: Oleg Nachinkin

The Novaya Rossiya (New Russia) State Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1990. In 2002 Yuri Bashmet became its director, opening a new chapter in its history and bringing his own inimitable manner of interpretation, whereby each concert evokes the feeling that the music is being created anew. Appearing with the orchestra have been soloists and conductors of the highest international distinction. Novaya Rossiya is a frequent guest at festivals in Russia and abroad, including the Moscow Easter Festival, the Alfred Schnittke Festival in Moscow, the Besançon Festival in France, the Elba Isola Musicale d'Europa in Italy, the Athens Festival in Greece and the Festival of Russian Art in Essen, Germany. Since 2008 the orchestra takes part in the annual Bashmet Winter Music Festival in Sochi, and the International Yuri Bashmet Music Festival in Yaroslavl and Minsk.

## Dmitry Yablonsky



Photo: Lluís Costa

Dmitry Yablonsky was born in Moscow into a musical family. His mother is the distinguished pianist Oxana Yablonskaya, and his father Albert Zaionz has for thirty years been principal oboist in the Moscow Radio Orchestra. Dmitry began playing the cello when he was five and was immediately accepted by the Central Music School for gifted children. When he was nine he made his orchestral debut as cellist and conductor with Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*. In Russia he studied with Stefan Kalianov, Rostropovich's assistant, and Isaak Buravsky, for many years solo cello of the Bolshoy Theatre Orchestra. Before immigrating to the United States he performed on many occasions in Moscow and many cities of the former Soviet Union. He was finally able, in 1977, to obtain a visa that allowed him and his mother to move to New York, where he became a pupil of Lorne Munroe at The Juilliard School of Music. In 1979, at the age of sixteen, he participated in the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, the youngest to do so that summer. In 1980 he met Aldo Parisot, distinguished cellist and professor at Yale University, where he spent four years, at the same time furthering his interest in conducting. After graduating from Yale, he spent two years in the artist diploma programme at The Juilliard School with Zara Nelsova. Dmitry Yablonsky made his debut as a conductor in Italy at the age of 26, when he stepped in to replace another conductor at the last minute. As a cellist he has played in major concert halls throughout the world, and in chamber music has collaborated with distinguished colleagues. For four years he has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and has conducted many other orchestras,

including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, collaborating with leading soloists. He is also Principal Guest Conductor of the New Russia State Symphony Orchestra. Dmitry Yablonsky has made more than seventy recordings, many of them prize-winning, as conductor and cellist for Naxos, Erato-Warner, Chandos, Belair Music, Sonora, and Connoisseur Society. He has organized international festivals, including the Wandering Stars Festival, which takes place in different countries each year. He is Co-Artistic Director of Qabala Music Festival in Azerbaijan. In 2009 he became an academician of the Independent Academy of Aesthetics and Liberal Arts in Moscow, and also professor of cello at the Baku Academy of Music.

## Dinara Alieva

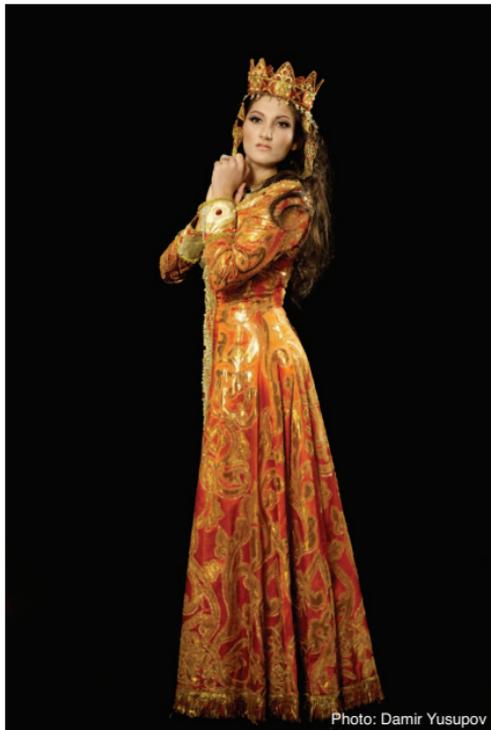


Photo: Damir Yusupov

Dinara Alieva was born in Baku, Azerbaijan, and graduated at the Music Academy there. She is a laureate of international competitions, including the Operalia Competition (Milan, La Scala, 2010), the Francesco Viñas Competition (Barcelona, 2010), the Maria Callas Competition (Athens) and the Elena Obraztsova Competition (St Petersburg). In 2010 she gave a joint concert with Plácido Domingo in Baku, and she was awarded the title of Honorary Artist of Azerbaijan. In the 2012 season she made her début at the Vienna State Opera as Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), and at the Frankfurt Opera as Violetta (*La Traviata*), and was immediately asked back for new productions in the following seasons in both theatres. Dinara Alieva is a soloist of the Bolshoy Theatre, where she performs the principal rôles in leading productions. It was here that she made her début as Liù in *Turandot*. Other rôles include Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), of Leonora (*Il Trovatore*), Mimi (*La Bohème*), Violetta (*La Traviata*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*), Michaela (*Carmen*) and Marfa (*The Tsar's Bride*). Before joining the Bolshoy, Dinara Alieva was a soloist of the Baku Opera and Ballet Theatre Company. She also sang Violetta at the Mikhailovsky Theatre in St Petersburg, and again in a memorial concert performance dedicated to Maria Callas at the Thessaloniki Concert Hall and in the Megaron concert hall in Athens. She participated in the Elena Obraztsova jubilee gala at the Bolshoy Theatre and at the Mikhailovsky Theatre. Recent engagements have included the part of Leonora (*Il Trovatore*) at Klagenfurt, and Donna Elvira and Violetta, both at the National Opera Riga. Dinara Alieva has worked with leading conductors, including Yuri Temirkanov, with whom she performs specially tailored programmes, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Yuri Bashmet, Vladimir Spivakov, Dmitry Yurovsky, Plácido Domingo, Fabio Mastrangelo, Giuseppe Sabbatini, Marcello Rota and José Cura, and with leading Russian orchestras, including the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra and the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra. She regularly appears in prestigious concert halls such as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Salle Gaveau in Paris and the Smetana Hall in Prague. Under the baton of Dmitry Yurovsky she sang at the Russian Seasons festival in the opera theatre in Monte Carlo. She has also performed in Japan. 2013 sees her début at the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Violetta, returning the following year as Donna Elvira and in 2015 as Magda (*La Rondine*). She returns to the Vienna State Opera as Violetta in 2013, and will also perform there the rôle of Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*) in 2014.

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Filled with beauty, passion and drama, these Russian songs and arias go straight to the heart of the nation's 19th century musical soul. Rachmaninov's popular *Vocalise* is part of a line which includes songs of love and sadness such as Tchaikovsky's *Op. 47*, two of which are included here, while yearning melodies, high drama and vivid orchestral colour are to be found in the operas of all three featured composers. Montserrat Caballé has described soprano Dinara Alieva's rare talent as 'the gift of Heaven'.

## RUSSIAN SONGS AND ARIAS

**Sergey Vasil'yevich**

**Rachmaninov (1873-1943):**

① *Vocaliz (Vocalise), Op. 34, No. 14* 7:07

**Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-93):**

② **The Queen of Spades:**  
Otkuda eti slyozhi (Why do you flow,  
my tears?) (Act 1, Scene 2) 4:22

**Nikolay Andreyevich**

**Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908):**

③ **The Tsar's Bride:**  
V Novgorode (In Novgorod) (Act 2) 6:07

④ **The Tsar's Bride: Ivan Sergeich**  
(Ivan Sergeyevich) (Act 4) 5:37

**Rachmaninov:**

⑤ **Ne poy krasavitsa (Do not sing**  
**to me, my beauty), Op. 4, No. 4**  
(orch. Ruben Stepanyan) 4:24

⑥ **Francesca da Rimini: O, ne riday,**  
**moy Paolo, ne nado (Oh, do not weep,**  
**my Paolo) (Scene 2) 2:45**

**Tchaikovsky:**

⑦ **The Queen of Spades: Uzh polnoch'**  
**blizitsya... Akh, istomilas' ya (Midnight**  
**is near... I am tired) (Act 3, Scene 2) 4:54**

⑧ **Kabi znala ya (Had I known), Op. 47,**  
**No. 1 (orch. Odysseus Dimitriadi) 5:53**

⑨ **Ya li v pole da ne travushka bila?**  
**(Was I not a blade of grass in the field?),**  
**Op. 47, No. 7 6:27**

⑩ **Eugene Onegin: Letter Scene:**  
**Puskay pogibnu ya (Even if it means**  
**I perish) (Act 1, Scene 2) 12:27**

**Dinara Alieva, Soprano**

**New Russia State Symphony Orchestra • Dmitry Yablonsky**

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The arrangements recorded on tracks 5 and 8 are unpublished

The Russian texts and English translations can be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/572893.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/572893.htm)

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