

POWER PLAYERS

Russian Arias for Bass

ILDAR ABDRAZAKOV

CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN, CONDUCTOR
KAUNAS CITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
KAUNAS STATE CHOIR



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Russian Arias for Bass

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Arias from:

Rachmaninov: Aleko

Glinka: Ruslan & Ludmila, A Life for the Tsar

Borodin: Prince Igor

Mussorgsky: Boris Godunov

Rubinstein: The Demon

Tchaikovsky: Eugene Onegin, Iolanthe

Prokofiev: War and Peace

Rimsky-Korsakov: Sadko

Total Time: 66:49

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The dynamics of power in
Russian opera and its most
iconic characters



POWER PLAYERS

Russian Arias for Bass

ILDAR ABDRAZAKOV

1. Sergei Rachmaninov: *Aleko* – “Ves tabor spit” (All the camp is asleep) (6:19)
2. Mikhail Glinka: *Ruslan & Ludmila* – “Farlaf’s Rondo” (3:34)
3. Glinka: *Ruslan & Ludmila* – “O pole, pole” (Oh, field, field) (11:47)
4. Alexander Borodin: *Prince Igor* – “Ne sna ne otdykha” (There’s no sleep, no repose) (7:38)
5. Modest Mussorgsky: *Boris Godunov* – “Kak vo gorode bylo vo Kazani” (At Kazan, where long ago I fought) (2:11)
6. Anton Rubinstein: *The Demon* – “Na Vozdushnom Okeane” (In the ocean of the sky) (5:05)
7. Piotr Tchaikovsky: *Eugene Onegin* – “Liubvi vsem vozrasty pokorny” (Love has nothing to do with age) (5:37)
8. Tchaikovsky: *Iolanthe* – “Gospod moi, yesli greshin ya” (Oh Lord, have pity on me!) (4:31)
9. Glinka: *A Life for the Tsar* – “Chuyut pravdu” (They suspect the truth!) (5:56)
10. Sergei Prokofiev: *War and Peace* – “Velichavaya v solnechnykh luchakh” (Majestic, flashing in the sunshine) (4:31)
11. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov: *Sadko* – “Viking Song” (2:53)
12. Mussorgsky: *Boris Godunov* – “Coronation Scene” (8:18)

Total Time: 66:49

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The world-renowned basso Ildar Abdrazakov first gained international acclaim – not in Russian music, as expected of a singer who was born and educated in Russia – but in Italian and French repertoire. His stunning victory at the Maria Callas International Television Competition in Parma at the age of 24 led to his debut at La Scala as Count Rodolfo in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* and numerous successful appearances in works by Mozart, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi, Berlioz, Bizet, Gounod, Offenbach, and Boito on major opera and concert stages around the world.

The forays into Russian repertoire were surprisingly rare -- until now. While preparing to appear in the title role in a new production of Borodin's *Prince Igor* at the Metropolitan Opera, Abdrazakov began working on his first exclusively Russian solo album, which coincidentally is the first solo aria album of his career.

In fact he wanted to present this album as the companion to his first Prince Igor. "It will give people a chance to hear me in Russian operatic repertoire and to prepare for my interpretation of this major

role – one of the most pivotal in Russian music," says Abdrazakov. In addition to Igor's famous recitative and aria "Ni sna, ni otdykha..." the album includes virtually all of the greatest hits of Russian basso repertoire.

Mr. Abdrazakov first learned some of these pieces while studying singing in Ufa, his hometown, where he graduated from Ufa State Institute of Arts. He performed a few of the roles at the Bashkirian Opera and Ballet Theatre. But his voice — silky, smooth, elegant and sexy basso-cantabile, almost baritone in quality – then sounded too young for Russian operas, which demand heavier and more mature basso timbre.

Now at the age of 37, as his voice is gradually becoming deeper, darker and denser, the singer is ready to tackle them, taking music lovers on an enchanted journey through Russian opera. He is doing this with the help of such an experienced conductor as Constantine Orbelian, who is well known for his numerous collaborations with Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Renée Fleming, Anna Netrebko and Sondra Radvanovsky to name just a few.

Russian opera is uniquely rich with great bass roles. The basso voice, associated with depth and power, was first cultivated in Russian church music, which hugely influenced Russian operatic language. The country has produced many great basses, from Glinka's contemporary Ossip Petrov to Feodor Chaliapin – and later, Reizen, Pirogov, Gmyria, and Mikhailov, to name a few.

Russian composers loved the bass voice and often assigned leading roles to it, like Susanin, Ruslan, Boris Godunov, and Prince Igor. There is no shortage of other important and colorful bass roles. *Boris Godunov* has several: the title role, Pimen, Varlaam, Jesuit Rangoni and a few lesser ones. *Khovanshchina* has two major bass roles: Dosifey, the leader of the old believers, and the powerful, unruly Prince Khovanski. *Prince Igor* demands four differently colored bass voices, including the lead; and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Sadko" also has four.

It should be noted that Russian opera, which had a late start and rapid development (mostly during the 19th century), was concerned not as much with romantic

love stories – traditional tenor territory – but mostly with historical or fantastic plots with didactic and heroic content, where the personages are old and wise; or brave, mighty and powerful; or tragic and noble; or all of the above. The bass voice seemed perfectly suited for that – as well as for purposes of comic relief, which is also an important feature of Russian opera.

At this point of his flourishing career, two time Grammy-Award winner Ildar Abdrazakov – the "... sensational bass... who has just about everything – imposing sound, beautiful legato, oodles of finesse ..." (*The Independent*) is capable of doing rich justice to all these aspects.

Take for example **Ruslan**, the young protagonist of Glinka's second opera, *Ruslan and Ludmila* (1842), based on Pushkin's tale. Losing his beloved Ludmila on their wedding night to the evil dwarf Chernomor, he goes on a heroic journey to find and save her. In the scene "O, pole, pole..." he is at the very beginning of his perilous adventure. Looking at a silent battlefield, he contemplates the unknown future, dreams about his girl and asks the gods for a sword suitable for his mighty

hand. The mood of the scene shifts from sadness and thoughtfulness to valor and resolve, which alternate with tenderness and longing.

One of Ludmila's potential suitors – and therefore Ruslan's rival – is the coward, Farlaff. Glinka, who lived in Italy and studied the bel canto style at the time of Donizetti and Rossini, writes for him a typical basso-buffo aria in rondo form. Hoping for an easy victory (after receiving a promise of help from the sorceress Naina), Farlaff jumps from paralyzing fear into a fast and breathless blur of words and notes.

Glinka's earlier opera, *A Life for the Tsar* (1834-36) – proclaimed the first Russian national opera because of its patriotic plot – was based on actual historical events, and offers much musical sophistication. This opera has another bass protagonist, **Ivan Susanin**, a simple peasant, who sacrifices his life to save the young Russian tsar. His farewell aria is sung in the darkness of an impassable winter forest, where he has led the enemy's vanguard. It is a portrait of a man facing inevitable death; a meditation, suffused

with patriotic pride, anguish, grief and fatherly love. A dark and pensive recitative gives way to an expressive cantilena with remarkably long phrases.

In some ways, the hero of Borodin's unfinished *Prince Igor* (the composer worked on it for about 20 years until his death in 1887) is a close relative to Glinka's noble characters. The opera was based on one of the earliest masterpieces of Russian literature: the 12th century epic "The Word on the Regiment of Igor" (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*), about an ill-fated military campaign initiated by the Russian prince Igor against the nomadic tribe of Polovtsy. Captured by the enemy, Igor thinks of his shameful defeat, his wife and homeland, and cries out passionately for freedom.

Though Abdrazakov had not yet performed it on stage at the time of this recording, he definitely had his eyes on the great role of **Boris Godunov** (from Musorgsky's historical opera of the same title, 1872-74). The aria "Skorbit dusha..." marks the beginning of the tsar's reign. It begins with dark premonitions, changes into prayer and finally becomes a call for celebration.

Nothing could be farther from this recitative-like dramatic scene than the ferocious folk-dance-like song of the vagrant drunkard **Varlaam**, the very embodiment of the wild, mighty and dangerous side of the Russian soul. “Kak vo gorode bylo vo Kazani” tells the dramatic story of Ivan the Terrible’s victory over the tatars in their own city of Kazan.

One of the most famous scenes of Rimsky-Korsakov’s epic fantasy “*Sadko*” (1894-96) takes place on the market square of the ancient Russian city of Novgorod, where foreign guests offer their merchandise and sing about their native lands. The Song of **Variag Guest** powerfully captures the severity and grandeur of the northern sea and land (ancient Russians often identified variags as people from behind the Baltic sea).

Anton Rubinstein’s *The Demon* (1871 – based on the popular romantic poem by Lermontov) is the most famous work of the composer’s prolific career, which includes 20 operas, six symphonies, five piano concertos and many other works that are largely forgotten today. Although better known as a great pianist

and educator, Rubinstein possessed a solid compositional technique and great melodic talent. He had studied in Berlin with Siegfried Dehn (also Glinka’s teacher 12 years earlier) and been influenced by Schumann and Mendelssohn. Both qualities are apparent in **The Demon’s Aria**, an impressive musical portrait of the lonely and mysterious hero wandering in the cold heavens and searching for human love. The part was written for bass-baritone, and is often performed by baritones.

Piotr Tchaikovsky, the most famous of Rubinstein’s students, inherited and surpassed his teacher’s lyrical talent, in particular when it comes to bass roles. The characters **Prince Gremin** in *Eugene Onegin* (1879) and **King Rene** in *Iolanta* (1892) are elderly, noble, thoughtful, even philosophical, and deeply affected by love. Gremin’s aria exudes stability and contentment, overflowing with heartfelt praise for his wife: a touching portrait of the woman who brought him new life and happiness. King Rene’s aria (a favorite of Abdrazakov’s from childhood) is different: an anxious plea to God to save his blind daughter. In both

arias Tchaikovsky achieves a remarkable synthesis of speech-like declamation and cantilena. He is not concerned, however, with the singer's comfort, which makes the performer's task especially difficult.

Sergei Rachmaninoff was considered a musical heir to Tchaikovsky (he studied with former Tchaikovsky pupils, Taneev and Arensky) and followed in his footsteps in both opera and the romance (Russian art songs). The opera *Aleko* (1892), after Pushkin's romantic poem *The Gypsies*, was Rachmaninoff's graduation piece at the Moscow conservatory. It received the highest possible grade from Tchaikovsky, who headed the exam committee. The opera was later reworked, and became a staple in Russian opera houses. **Aleko** leaves society for the simplicity and spontaneity of life among the gypsies, falls in love with Zemfira, and is devastated by her change of heart. His cavatina (*The Whole Camp Sleeps*) is more like a dramatic scene where the protagonist meditates on his life and fate in the darkness of the night, not unlike Ivan Susanin and Prince Igor in their arias.

Sergei Prokofiev had no doubts that the

part of the 67-year old Field Marshal **Kutuzov** in the operatic interpretation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* should be written for a bass. In the 10th scene of this gigantic opera (1942-1953) Kutuzov, the commander-in-chief of Russian Army, faces the most important and difficult decision of his career: to leave Moscow to the French army in hope of saving the Russian army and eventually winning the war. The music, which recycles the theme written by Prokofiev for Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*, is a potent combination of soulfulness and drama; it is heroic, yet beautiful. The aria was to become one of the most popular moments of the opera. Its theme reappears in the chorus's majestic hymn-like conclusion.

– Maya Pritsker

1. Rachmaninov: *Aleko*
Aleko's cavatina: Ves tabor spit

Vyes' tabor spit. Luna nad nim
Polnochnoy krasotoyu blyeshchet.
Shto zh serdtse byednoye trepeshchet?
Kakoyu grust'yu ya tomim?

Ya byez zabot, byez sozhalen'ya
Vyedu kochuyushchiye dni.
Prezryev okovi prosveshchen'ya,
Ya volyen tak zhe, kak oni.
Ya zhil, nye priznavaya vlasti
Sud'bi kovarnoy i slepoy.
No, Bozhe, kak igrayut strasti
Moyey poslushnoyu dushoy!
Zemfira! Kak ona lyubila!
Kak nyezchno priklonyas' ko mnye
V pustinoy tishinye chasi
Nochniye provodila!
Kak chasto milim lepetan'yem,
Upoitel'nim lobzan'yem
Zadumchivost' moyu v minutu
Razognat' umyela!
Ya pomnyu: s nyegoy, polnoy strasti
Sheptala mnye ona togda:
"Lyublyu tebya! V tvoyey ya vlasti!
Tvoya, Aleko, navsegda!"
I vsyo togda ya zabival,
Kogda recham yeyo vnimal
I, kak byezumniy, tseloval yeyo
Charuyushchiye ochi,
Cos chudnikh pryad'?
Temnyeye nochi?
Usta Zemfiri ...
A ona, vsya nyegoy, strast'yu polna,
Pril'nuv ko mnye, v glaza glyadyela...
I shto zh? I shto zh?

Zemfira nyevyerna!
Zemfira nyevyerna!
Moya Zemfira okhladyela!

All the camp is asleep.
The moon's midnight beauty
Shines overhead.
Why does my wretched heart tremble?
What sadness do I suffer?
Without care, regretting nothing,
I spend my days as a wandering nomad.
I scorn the shackles of civilization;
Like them, I am free.
I have never acknowledged
The authority
Of a blind and treacherous fate.
But, my God, how the passions
Play with my faithful soul!
Zemfira! How she loved me!
She came to me with such tenderness
Alone in the silence,
And passed there the hours of the night!
How often – with her sweet banter
And enchanting kisses –
She was quickly able
To banish my melancholy!
I remember how,
With sensual passion,
She would whisper to me,
"I love you! You have me in your power!"

I am forever yours, Aleko!”
And, as I heard her words,
She brought me forgetfulness
As if possessed, I kissed her
Enchanting eyes,
And her wondrous locks,
Darker even than the night –
And Zemfira’s lips,
Whilst she, full of sensual passion,
Clung to me, gazing into my eyes...
But what now?
What has happened?
Zemfira is untrue!
Zemfira is unfaithful!
My Zemfira has become
Cold towards me!

2. Glinka: *Ruslan and Ludmila*
Farlaf’s Rondo

O radost! Ya znal, ya chustvoval zarane,
Shto mne lish suzhdeno svershit stol
slavnyi podvik!
Blizok uzh chas torzhestva maevo:
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiet daleko ot
nas!
Vitiaz, naprasno ty ishchesh knizhnu,
Do niyo ne dopustit volshebnitsy vlast
tebya!

Ludmila, naprasno ty plachesh I stonesh,
I milova sertsu naprasno ty zhdiosh:
Ni vopli, ni sliozy – nishto ne pomozhet!
Smirishsya pred vlastiu Nainy, knizhna!
Blizok uzh chas torzhestva maevo:
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiet daleko ot
nas!
Vitiaz, naprasno ty ishchesh knizhnu,
Do niyo ne dopustit volshebnitsy vlast
tebya!
Ruslan, zabud ty o Ludmile!
Ludmila, zhenikha zabud!
Pri mysli obladat knizhnoi
Sertse radost oshchushchaet
I zaranee vkushaet
Sladost mesti i liubvi.
Blizok uzh chas torzhestva maevo:
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiet daleko ot nas!
Vitiaz, naprasno ty ishchesh knizhnu,
Do niyo ne dopustit volshebnitsy vlast
tebya!
V zabolakh, trevoze, dosade i grusti
Skitsaiya po svety, moi khrabryi sopernik!
Beisya s vragami, vlezai na tverdnyi!
Ne trudias i ne zabolias
Ya namerenii dostignu,
V zamke dedov ozhidaya
Poveleniya Nainy.
Nedaliok zhelannyy den,
Den vostorga i liubvi!

Ludmila, naprasno ty plachesh I stonesh,
I milova sertsu naprasno ty zhdiosh:
Ni vopli, ni sliozy – nishto ne pomozhet!
Smirishsya pred vlastyu Nainy, knizhna!
Blizok uzh chas torzhestva maevo:
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiot daleko ot
nas!

Vitiaz, naprasno ty ishchesh knizhnu,
Do niyo ne dopustit volshebnitsy vlast
tebya!

V zabotakh, trevoge, dosade i grusti
Skitaisya po svety, moi khrabryi soper-
nik!

Beisya s vragami, vlezai na tverdnyi!
V trevoge, dosade i grusti
Skitaisya po svety, moi khrabryi soper-
nik!

Beisya s vragami, vlezai na tverdnyi!
Ne trudias i ne zabortias
Ya namerenii dostignu,
V zamke dedov ozhidaya

Poveleniya Nainy,
Poveleniya Nainy.

Blizok chas torzhestva maevo!
Blizok chas torzhestva maevo:
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiot daleko ot
nas,
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiot daleko,
daleko ot nas!
Blizok chas torzhestva maevo!

Blizok chas torzhestva maevo:
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiot daleko ot
nas,
Nenavisnyi sopernik uydiot daleko,
daleko ot nas,
Uydiot daleko, daleko ot nas!

Oh, joy! Somehow I felt, I sensed
That it was my destiny to perform
This glorious deed!
The hour of my victory draws nigh;
My hated rival
Will meet his doom far from home,
Leaving no trace.
Knight, you seek your princess in vain,
For a witch's spells
Will never bring you to her.
Ludmila, your weeping and laments are
for naught,
You await in vain he whom your heart
has chosen.
Neither sighs nor tears will avail you,
For you must submit to the will of Naina!
The hour of my victory is nigh;
My detested rival will perish far from
home,
Leaving no trace.
Knight, in vain you seek your princess
For a witch's spells
Will never bring you to her.

Ruslan, forget Ludmila;
Ludmila, forget your chosen one.
My heart fills with joy
At the thought of possessing her;
It relishes the prospect of sweet revenge,
And of delightful love.
The hour of my victory is coming soon!
Ah, accursed rival, wander across the land
In the grip of despair, disappointment
and torment.
You may struggle against your enemies;
And besiege fortresses.
But I will remain safely in the castle
Of my forbears, awaiting Naina's com-
mands,
I will triumph effortlessly!
The long-awaited day is near, the day of
joy and love.
Ludmila, your weeping and laments are
in vain, etc.

3. Glinka: *Ruslan and Ludmila*
Ruslan's aria and cabaletta: O pole,
pole

O, pole, pole,
Kto tebya useyal myortvymi kostyami?
Chei borzyi kon tebya toptal
V poslednii chas krovavoi bitvy?

Kto na tebe so slavoi pal?
Chyi nebo slyshalo molitvi?
Zachem zhe, pole, smolklo ty
I poroslo travois zabvenia?...
Vremyon ot vechnoi temnoty,
Byt mozhet, nyet I mne spasenia!
Vremyon ot vechnoi temnoty,
Byt mozhet, nyet I mne spasenia!
Byt mozhet, na kholme nemom
Postavyat tikhii grob Ruslanov,
I struny gromkie Bayanov
Ne budut govorit o nyom.
No dobryi mech I shchit mne nuzhen:
Na trudnyi put ya bezoruzhen,
I pal moi kon, ditya voiny,
I shchit, I mech pazdrobleny.
Dai, Perun, bulatnyi mech mne po ruke,
Bogatyrskiy, zakalyonnyi v bitvakh
mech,
V rokovuyu buriu gromom skovannyi!
Shob vragam v glaza on grozoi blistal,
Shtob ikh uzhas gnal s polya ratnova,
Shtob vragam on grozoi blistal!
O Ludmila, Lel sulil nam radost;
Sertse verit, shto proidyot nenastie,
Shto smigchonnyi rok otdast mne
I liubov tvaiu, I laski,
I useyet zhizn mayu tsvetami.
Nyet, nedolgo likovat vragu!
Dai, Perun, bulatnyi mech mne po ruke,

Bogatyrskiy, zakalyonnyi v bitvakh mech,
V rokovuyu buriu gromom skovannyi!
Shob vragam v glaza on grozoi blistal,
Shtob ikh uzhas gnal s polya ratnova!
Kak letuchiy prakh ya rasseyu ikh!
Bashni mednye – ne zashchita im.
Pomogi, Perun, porazit vragov!
Chary strashnye ne smutiat, ne smutiat
menya.
Dai, Perun, bulatnyi mech mne po ruke,
Bogatyrskiy, zakalyonnyi v bitvakh mech,
V rokovuyu buriu gromom skovannyi!
Shob vragam v glaza on grozoi blistal,
Shtob ikh uzhas gnal s polya ratnova,
O Ludmila, Lel sulil mne radost;
Sertse verit, shto proidyot nenastie,
Shto smigchonnyi rok otdast mne
I liubov tvaiu, I laski,
I useyet zhizn mayu tsvetami.
Nyet, nedolgo likovat vragu!
Tshchetno volshebnaya sila
Tuchi sdvigaet nan as;
Mozhet, uzhe blizok, Ludmila,
Sladkiy svidaniya chas!
V sertse, liubimom toboyu,
Mesta ne dam ya toske.
Vsio sokrushu predo mnoyu,
Lish by mne mech, po ruke!

Oh, field, field!
Who has strewn these bones across you?
Whose steed has trampled you
At the battle's end?
And who died honorably?
Whose prayers did heaven answer?
Oh, field! Why are you now silent?
Why does the grass of forgetfulness now
cover you?
Perhaps eternal darkness will also claim
me.
Perhaps, on some quiet hill,
Someone quietly digs Ruslan's grave;
Perhaps the bards' harp-strings
Will never resound to his name.
For I need a sure sword and shield.
For along danger's path,
I have lost my weapons.
My trusty charger, raised in combat, has
perished.
My sword and shield are shattered.
Grant me, Perun, a sword made to my
measure;
A champion's sword, tempered in battle's
fury,
A sword that will, like lightning,
Flash in the eyes of my enemy;
So that the mere sight of it
Will drive him from the battlefield!
Oh, Ludmila! Lel has promised me victory;

There is no doubt in my heart
That the forces of evil will be van-
quished;
That benevolent fate will return
Your love and caresses to me;
That flowers will festoon my days.
No, the enemy's rejoicing will not last!
Grant me, Perun, a sword made to my
measure;
A champion's sword, tempered battle's fury,
A sword that will, like lightning,
Flash in the eyes of my enemy;
So that the mere sight of it
Will drive him from the battlefield!
Help me, Perun, to defeat my enemies.
Like ashes I will scatter them.
A bronze fortress will not protect them.
No spells can hold back my arm.

4. Borodin: *Prince Igor*
Prince Igor's aria: Ne sna ne
otdykha

Ni sna, ni otdykha izmuchennoi dushe,
Mne noch ne shlyot otrady I zabvenya,
Vsio proshloe ya vnov perezhivayu
Odin v tishi nochei:
I bozhia znamenya ugrozu,
I brannoi slavy pir vesyolyi,

Mayu pobedu nad vragom,
I brannoi slavy goresnyi konets,
Pogrom, i ranu, i moi plen,
I gibel vsekh maikh polkov,
Chesno za rodinu golovu slozhifshikh.
Pogiblo vsio: i chest maya, i slava,
Pozorom stal ya zemli rodnoi:
Plen, postydnyi plen!
Vot udel otnyne moi,
Da mysl, shto vse vinyat menya.
O daite, daite mne svabodu!
Ya moi pazor sumeyu iskupit.
Spasu ya chest svayu i slavu,
Ya Rus ot nedruga spasu.
Ty odna, golubka lada,
Ty odna vinit ne stanesh,
Sertsem chutkim vsio paimyosh ty,
Vsio ty mne prostish.
V teremu tvayom vysokom
V dal glaza ty progliadela,
Druga zhdiosh ty dni i nochi,
Gorka sliozy liosh!
Uzheli den za dniom
Vlachit v plenu besplodno
I znat, shto vrak terzayet Rus?
Vrak – liutyi bars!
Stonet Rus v kogtiakh maguchikh,
I v tom vinit ona menya.
O daite, daite mne svabodu!
Ya svoi pazor sumeyu iskupit.

Ya Rus ot nedrugy spasu!
Ni sna, ni otdykha izmuchenoi dushe,
Mne noch ne shliot nadezhdy na spasenie:
Lish proshloe ya vnov perezhivayu
Odin v tishi nochei.
I net iskhoda mne!
Okh, tiashko, tiashko mne!
Tiashko soznanie bessilia maevo!

There's no sleep, no repose
For my tortured soul.
Even the night
Brings no peace or comfort,
And alone, in night's silence,
I relive the past.
Heaven's warning,
At my joyful feast of vanity;
But then, the bitter disaster:
I am wounded and a prisoner;
My army is destroyed,
Fallen, with honor, for our country.
My own honor and glory are gone;
I am now my nation's curse.
Captivity, wretched captivity,
Is now my fate!
And, to think, that all now blame me.
Oh, just grant me my freedom,
And I will sweep my shame away;
I will regain all glory and honor,
I will deliver our Russia!

My dove, my gentle wife,
You alone do not blame me,
For your adoring heart
Understands and forgives.
You see far from your palace heights;
You wait, with wounded eyes
Dripping tears, day and night.
Must I endure my existence
Day after day, as a captive – knowing
That Russia's enemies torment her?
An enemy without mercy; in its grip,
Russia struggles, and blames me!
Oh, just grant me my freedom,
And I will sweep my shame away;
I will save our Russia from the enemy.
There's no sleep, no repose
For my tortured soul.
Even the night brings no peace or comfort,
And alone, in endless night's silence,
I relive the past.
I suffer helplessly, Oh Lord – I suffer,
Knowing that I can do nothing!

5. Mussorgsky: *Boris Godunov*
Varlaam's aria: Kak vo gorode
bylo vo Kazani

Kak vo gorode bylo, vo Kazani.
Groznyi tsar piroval da veselilsya.

On tatarei bil neshchadno,
Shtop im bylo nipavadno
Vdol po Rusi guliat.
Tsar podkhodom podkhodil
Da pod Kazan-gorodok;
On podkopy podkapal
Da pod Kazanku pod reku.
Kak tatare-ti po gorodu pokhazhivaiut,
Na tsaria Ivana-ti poglyadivaiut
Zli tatarove!
Groznyi tsar- ot zakruchinilsya,
On pavesil golovushku na pravoe plecho.
Uzh kak stal tsar pushkarei szyvat,
Pushkarei vsio zazhigalshchikov,
Zazhigalshchikov!
Zadymilasya svechka vosku yarova,
Podkhodil molodoi pushkar - ot k boch
echke.
A I s porokhom-to bochka zakruchilasya.
Oi, po podkopam pokatilasya,
Da i grokhnula.
Zavopili, zagalldeli zli tatarove,
Blagim matom zalivalisya.
Poleglo tatarovei tma-tmushchaya,
Poleglo ikh sorok tysyachei da tri tysia-
chi.
Tak-to vo gorode bylo vo Kazani... E!

At Kazan, where long ago I fought,
Tsar Ivan and his lieutenants sat feasting.

There he ravaged the Tatar horde,
Sparing no man, leaving no maid un-
touched.
Russia then knew glorious days!
Ivan, drawing ever closer
Around Kazan's walls,
Thrust his mines ever further
Beneath the city's gates.
The Tatars there watched our distant
camp,
Their eyes ever fixed upon our merciless
Tsar.
Tatars sly and savage!
Tsar Ivan, dark and brooding,
Bent his head over his right shoulder,
Thus he gave his men the order,
Before he made an end to it.
The fusiliers held their fuses ready –
Steady, fusiliers!
With their tapes of purest wax, burning
bright,
They take their stand by the powder
barrels;
Soon the barrels are rolling fast.
Ho! Make the lines sure and stout,
Then set the train afire!
The vicious Tatar horde yelled aloud;
By my soul, how their cries tore the air.
The despised enemy lay strewn every-
where.

We blew forty thousand Tatars
To hell, on that glorious day!
Long ago, when I fought at Kazan – Ho!

6. Rubinstein: *The Demon*
Demon's aria: Na Vozdushnom
Okeane

Na Vozdushnom Okeane
Bez rulia I bez vetril,
Tikho plavaiut v tuname
Khorì stroinye svetil;
Sred polei neobazrimykh
V nebe khodiat bez sleda
Oblakov niulovimykh
Voloknistye stada.
Chas razluki, chas svidaniya
Im ni radost, ni pichal;
Im v griadushchem net zhelanya,
Im proshedsheva ne zhal.
V den tomitelnyi neshchastya
Ty o nikh lish vspominai;
Bud k zemnomy nez uchastya,
I bespechna, kak oni.
Lish tolko noch svaim pakrovom
Verkhi Kavkaza osenit,
Lish tolko mir, volshebnyim slovom
Zavorozhyonnyi, zamolchit;
Lish tolko mesyats zolotoi

Iz-za gory tikhonko vstanet
I na tebya ulibkoi vzglianet,-
K tibe ya stanu priletat!
Gostit ya budu do dennitsy,
I na shelkovye resnitsy
Sny zolotye navevat.

In the ocean of the sky,
With neither rudder nor sails.
The stars' harmonious choirs
Drift gently in the mist.
Mysterious flocks of fleecy sheep
Traverse heaven's endless fields,
Leaving no trail.
The moment of meeting,
Like the moment of parting,
Bring them neither joy nor sadness.
They neither yearn for the future,
Nor rue the past.
Think of them in days of grief and pain;
Forget everything earthly –
Like them, be serene.
And as soon as night's darkness covers
The Caucasus's peaks with its veil,
As soon as the world is calmed –
As if a magic word has stilled it –
I will pay you a visit;
I will stay by you till dawn,
And upon your closed eyes,
I will scatter dreams of gold.

7. Tchaikovsky: *Eugene Onegin*
Gremin's aria: Liubvi vsem
vozhasty pokorny

Liubvi vsem vozhasty pokorny,
Eio paryvi blagatvorny
I unoshe v rastsvete let
Edva uvidevshemu svet
I zakalennamu sudboi
Baitsu s sedou golovoi.
Onegin, ya skryvat ne stanu
Bezumno ya liublu Tatianu!
Tosklyvo zhizn maya tekla...
Ana yavilas I zazhgla
Kak solntsa luch sredi nenastya,
Mne zhizn, I molodost,
Da, molodost I shchastie.
Sredi lukavykh, malodushnykh,
Shalnykh, balovannykh detei,
Zladeev i smeshnykh i skushnykh,
Tupikh, priviaschivnykh sudei,
Sredi koketok bogomolnykh,
Sredi khlopiev dobrovolnykh,
Sredi vsednevnykh modnykh stsen,
Uchivnykh, laskovykh izmen
Sredi kholodnykh prigovorov
Zhestokoserdnoi suety,
Sredi dosadnoi pustoty
Raschotov, dum i razgovorov, -
Ana blistaet kak zvezda vo mrake nochi,

V nebe chistom,
I mne yavliaetsa vseгда
V siyanie angela,
V siyanie angela luchistom!...
Liubvi vse vozhasty pokorny,
Eio paryvi blagatvorny
I unoshe v rastsvete let
Edva uvidevshemu svet
I zakalennamu sudboi
Baitsu s sedou golovoi.
Onegin, ya skryvat ne stanu
Bezumno ya liublu Tatianu!
Tosklyvo zhizn maya tekla...
Ana yavilas I zazhgla
Kak solntsa luch sredi nenastya,
I zhizn, i molodost,
Da, molodost i shchastie.
I zhizn, i molodost, i shchastie.

Love has nothing to do with age,
Its passionate joys bless both
Those in youth's bloom,
Still unwise in ways of the world;
Also the grey-headed warrior
Guided by experience!
Onegin, I won't hide from you
That I love Tatyana insanely!
My existence was a dreary routine;
But she appeared and brightened it
Like a sunbeam out of a stormy sky,

Bringing me new life and youth:
 Indeed, youth and happiness!
 Among such foolish, mean-spirited,
 Spoiled and deceitful children;
 Those silly and dim-witted scoundrels –
 Stupid and reckless judges;
 Among the self-righteous coquettes
 And slavish sycophants;
 Amid friendly, but faddish hypocrites
 And courteous, smiling faithlessness;
 Amid the cold condemnation
 Of hard-hearted vanity;
 Amid the irritating emptiness
 Of scheming thought and discourse ...
 She illuminates night's darkest hour
 Like stars in a clear, clean sky;
 To me, she always appears
 With the glowing halo of an angel!
 Love has nothing to do with age,
 Its passionate joys bless both
 Those in youth's bloom,
 Still unwise in ways of the world;
 Also the grey-headed warrior
 Guided by experience!
 Onegin, I won't hide from you
 That I love Tatyana insanely!
 My existence was a dreary routine;
 But she appeared and brightened it
 Like a sunbeam out of a stormy sky,
 Bringing me new life and youth:

Indeed, youth and joy!
 Love, youth and happiness!

8. Tchaikovsky: *Iolanthe*
 King Rene's aria: Gospod moi,
 yesli greshin ya

Shto skazhet on?
 Kakoi obet proiznesyot yevo nauka?
 Uvidit Iolanta svet, il suzhdena mne
 vechno muka...
 Znat doch mayu, obyatoi tmoyu?...
 O Bozhe, szhalsya nado mnoyu!
 Gospod moi, yesli greshin ya,
 Za shto stradaet angel chistyi?
 Za shto poverg iz-za menya
 Vo tmu Ty vzor iyo luchistyi?
 Podai mne radosnuyu vest,
 Utesh nadezhdoi itselenya!
 Ya za niyo gotov prinest
 Koronu, vlast, moi vladenya...
 Lishi menya vsevo – pokoya, shchastya.
 Ya vsio smirenno preterplu,
 Za vsio Tebya blagoslovliu!
 Smotri, gotov vo prakhe past ya,
 Vsevo lishitsya, vsio otdat,
 No tolko dai mne ne vidat
 Mayo ditya, obyatim tmoyu!
 O Bozhe, szhalsya nado mnoi,

Pered Toboi gotov vo prakhe past ya,
O Bozhe, Bozhe moi, szhalsya,
Szhalsya nado mnoyu!

What will he tell me?
What will science decide?
Will Iolanthe ever see again?
Or is it my fate to suffer forever
Knowing my daughter
Languishes in darkness?
Oh Lord, have pity on me!
Lord, if I have sinned,
Why must an innocent angel pay the
price?
Why have you quenched
Iolanthe's glowing gaze
With eternal darkness?
Offer me the welcome hope for a cure.
For that, I'll gladly give up everything:
My crown, my scepter, my entire kingdom.
Take it all: even my peace and happiness;
I will humbly accept it all,
And bless you for it!
See, I am ready to renounce everything;
To turn myself into dust,
If only to know that my daughter
Is freed from her sentence of darkness.
My Lord, take pity on me;
I will gladly fall into dust before you –
Have mercy on me, oh Lord!

9. Glinka: *A Life for the Tsar*
Susanin's aria: "Chuyut pravdu"

Chuyut pravdu!
Smert blizka!
Mne ne strashna ona...
Svoi dolg ispolnil ya...
Primi moi prakh, mat-zemlya.
Ty vzaidyosh, maya zarya!
Nad mirom svet prolyosh,
Pasledniyi ras vzaidyosh,
Luchom privetnym garya.
Gospod, v nuzhde maei
Ty ne ostav menya.
Gorka maya sudba!
Tyazhka maya pechal!
Zakralas v grud toska,
Legla na sertse skorb...
Mne tyashko umirat,
No dolg moi chist I svyat...
Ty vzaidi, vzaidi zarya!
Nad mirom svet prolei,
Vzgliani na Rus mayu,
Luchom yiyo ty sogrei!
Moi chas nastal!
Moi smertnyi chas!
Dai sily mne,
Rodnaya mat maya zemlya!
V paslednii raz dai sily mne!
Moi chas nastal!

Primi moi prakh, zemlya!
Moi chas nastal!
Primi moi prakh, zemlya!

They suspect the truth!
Come swiftly, Dawn,
And let me know
That my Tsar is secure!
When you break, dawn –
My last dawn –
I will see your light
And I will know
That my time has come.
Lord, don't abandon me
In my time of travail.
How callous is my destiny!
Dreadful despair
Fills my soul,
And seizes my heart.
How awful to die
Under such torment.
When you break, dawn –
My last dawn –
I will see your light
And I will know
That my time has come.
Strengthen me
At the hour of my doom;
Lord, strengthen me
In this terrible moment!

10. Prokofiev: *War and Peace*
Kutuzov's aria: Velichavaya v
solnichnih luchax.

Velichavaya, v solnechnykh luchakh
Mater russkikh gorodov,
Ty raskinulas pered nami, Moskva!
Uzhli blizitsya skorbnyi, tyazhkii chas,
Voisko russkoe dolzhno
Ot svyashchennykh sten bez boyov
otoiti?
Derznul kovarnyi vrag
Vstupit na nashu zemliu
I skoro on vosplachet.
Liubov k otechestvu,
I khrabrost voiska,
I molitvy nashi
Nam dadut pobedu.
Potvorstvovat Rossia ne privykla,
V boyakh svobodu otstoit narod.
Otechestvu my vernyom spokoistvie,
I mir drugim narodam.
V belokamennoi matushke-Moskve
Ne vozmozhnet vrag vo vek
Podchinit sertsya khrabrykh, volnykh
ludei.
Vsia useitsa Russkaya zemlya
Nepriyatelya kostmi,
Pobedit vraga
Nash velikyi narod!

Majestic, flashing in the sunshine,
 The mother of Russian cities,
 You stretch before us, Moscow!
 Are sad, hard times coming?
 Will the Russian army abandon
 These sacred walls without a fight?
 A sinister enemy has invaded our
 country,
 But he will soon regret it.
 The love we bear for our native land,
 Our troops' bravery,
 And our prayers will win us the victory.
 Russia does not pander to its foes;
 Our people will fight to defend their
 freedom.
 They will restore calm living to our
 Fatherland
 And bring peace to other nations.
 Amid the white stones of mother Moscow,
 The enemy can never conquer
 The hearts of our valiant, free people.
 All of Russia will be strewn
 With the bones of our enemy;
 Our great nation will vanquish the foe!

11. Rimsky-Korsakov: *Sadko*
 Viking Song: *Pesnya*
Voryazskovo gostya

O skaly groznye drobyatsa s ryovom
 volny
 I, s beloï penoyu krutias, begut nazad.
 No tviordo serye utiosy vynosyat voln
 napor
 Nad morem stoya.
 Ot skal tekhn kamenykh u nas, varyagov,
 kosti,
 Ot toi volny morskoi v nas krov-ruda
 poshla.
 A mysli tainy ot tumanov,
 My v more radilis umryom na more.
 Mechi bulatny, strely ostry u variagov,
 Nanosyat smert oni bez promakha
 vragu.
 Otvazhny liudi stran polnochnnykh,
 Velik ikh Odin-bokh, ugriumo more.

Thundering waves break against loom-
 ing cliffs,
 Then roll back in foamy white swirls.
 But the rocks never give way
 To the waves' assault,
 Still standing high above the sea.
 We Vikings' bones are like those rocks;
 Our blood is like those ocean waves,
 And our minds, like the mists, are
 mysterious.
 We are born at sea, and we die at sea!
 Vikings' swords pierce like sharp arrow-

heads,
Bringing certain death to the foe.
Brave are the men from the midnight
lands ...
Their god, Odin, is great ... their sea is
dark.

12. Mussorgsky: Boris Godunov
Coronation scene, with Boris's
aria: Skorbit dusha

(Editor's note: The solo and ensemble
roles of Prince Shuyski and the Boyars
are sung in this performance by multiple
voices from the chorus)

PRINCE SHUYSKI:

Da zdravstvuet Tsar Boris Feodorovich!

CROWD:

Zhivi i zdravstvui, tsar nash batyushka!

SHUYSKI:

Slavte!

CROWD:

Uzh kak na nebe solntsu krasnomu
slava, slava!

Uzh i kak na Rusi tsaryu Borisu, slava!
Slava!

Zhivi i zdravstvuy! Tsar nash batyushka,

Tsar zdravstvui! Tsar nash batyushka,
batyushka tsar!

Tsar ty batyushka nash, zhivi i zdravst-
vuite!

Raduisya, lyud! Raduisya, veselisya,
lyud!

Pravoslavni lyud! Velichai tsarya Borisa
i slav!

BOYARS:

Da zdravstvuet tsar Boris Feodorovich!

CROWD:

Slava! Slava! Slava!

Tsar ty batyushka nash!

Tsar ty batyushka nash!

Tsar yi nash!

BOYARS:

Da zdravstvuet tsar Boris Feodorovich!

CROWD:

Da zdravstvuet!

Uzh kak na nebe solntsu krasnomu
slava, slava!

Uzh kak na Rusi tsariu Borisu slava,
slava tsariu,

Slava! Slava! Slava! Slava!

BORIS:

Skorbit dusha!

Kakoi-to strakh nevolnyi

Zloveshchim pridchus-

tviem skaval mne sertse.

O pravednik, o moi otets derzhavnyi!

Vozzri s nebes na sliozy vernykh slug

I nisposhli ty mne sviashchennoe

Na vlast blagoslovenie:

Da budu blag i praveden, kak ty;

Da k slave pravlu svoi narod...

Tiper poklonimsya

Pochiyushchim vlastitelyam Rusii.

A tam szyvat narod na pir,

Vsekh, ot bayar do nishchevo sleptsya,

Vsem volnyi vhot,

Vse – gosti dorie!

CROWD:

Slava! Slava! Slava!

Zhivi zdravstvui,

Tsar nash batyushka!

Uzh kak na nebe solnytsku krasnomu
slava, slava!

Uzh i slava na Rusi tsariu Borisu, slava!

Slava i mnogaya leta!

Slava! Slava! Slava!

PRINCE SHUISKY:

Long live our Tsar Boris Feodorovich!

CROWD:

Long life to our sovereign, Tsar of Russia!

SHUISKY:

Hail him!

CROWD:

Like the Sun in the heavens,
Supreme in its radiance,
Our Tsar Boris now reigns
In glory over Russia!

Long live our sovereign!
Tsar, our guardian!
O people, give voice to your joy!
Faithful Christian people!
Let us all now hail Boris, our Tsar,
And rejoice!

BOYARS:

All hail to thee, Tsar Boris Feodorovich!

CROWD:

All hail to thee!
Boris now reigns in glory
Over Russia!
Glory! Glory!

BORIS:

Sadness afflicts my soul!
Against my will,
Strange tremblings and evil forebodings
Afflict my spirit!
O you, my noble father – O saint long
dead –
You see from Heaven your faithful
servant's tears!
Look down upon me; send your blessing
From on high upon my kingdom.
May I be as true and merciful as you,
Deserving of my peoples' praise.

Now let us go to kneel in prayer
At the tombs of Russia's kings.
Then shall all the people feast,
Yes, every man from noble down to serf.
There will be room for everyone;
All will be my honored guests.

CROWD:

Glory! Glory! Glory!
Long life to our sovereign,
Tsar of Russia!
Honor and glory to you, our father!
As the sun shines supreme in heaven,
Boris now reigns over Russia in glory,
And long may he prosper!
Glory! Glory! Glory!

Ildar Abdrazakov [ahb-drah-ZAH-koff]
has quickly established himself as one of
opera's most sought-after basses. Since
making his La Scala debut in 2001 at only
25, the Russian singer has become a main-
stay at leading houses worldwide, including
New York's Metropolitan Opera, the Vi-
enna State Opera, and Munich's Bavarian
State Opera. His powerful yet refined voice
coupled with his compelling stage presence
have prompted critics to shower him with
rave reviews. Also an active concert artist,

he has performed at London's BBC Proms and at Carnegie Hall, as well as with leading international orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony and Vienna Philharmonic. Abdrazakov launched his 2013-14 season with his staged role debut as the eponymous anti-hero of Boito's *Mefistofele*, in which he opened the San Francisco Opera's new season. Upcoming highlights also include headlining Borodin's *Prince Igor*, in the Met's first new production of the opera since 1917; undertaking the four villains in Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* at the Vienna State Opera; and singing Banquo in Verdi's *Macbeth* alongside Anna Netrebko, Simon Keenlyside, and Joseph Calleja at the Munich Opera Festival. On the concert stage, the new season sees Abdrazakov join the London Symphony Orchestra under Valery Gergiev for Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* in London and Paris; take part in Berlioz's *Missa solennis* with Riccardo Muti and the Vienna Philharmonic; and reunite with Muti at the Chicago Symphony to celebrate the Verdi bicentennial with a reprise of the Italian composer's *Requiem* (the bass's 2010 live recording of the work with Muti and the CSO garnered two

Grammy Awards). In addition, Abdrazakov teams up with tenor Ramón Vargas for a recital program at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

Since making his Met debut in 2004 in *Don Giovanni* under James Levine, Abdrazakov has appeared there regularly: in 2008-09 he headlined a new production of Verdi's *Attila*, and in 2011-12 he made his role debuts as King Henry VIII in the Met's season-opening production of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* and as Dosiifei in Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*. At La Scala, he joined Muti in concert for the reopening of the theater in 2004-05, and that same season he sang Moses in a production of Rossini's *Moses and Pharaoh* that was recorded and released on CD and DVD. It was in the same role – in a new production led by Muti – that the Russian bass made his Salzburg Festival debut in 2009, a role that he has also sung with the Italian maestro in Rome. Abdrazakov first appeared at London's Royal Opera House in 2009, performing Verdi's *Requiem* in concert with Antonio Pappano, and he has since returned there to sing Don Basilio in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*.

The title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* was the vehicle for Abdrazakov's 1998 house debut at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. Among his other signature roles are both the title character and Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust* and Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*; Oroveso in Bellini's *Norma*; Selim in Rossini's *Turk in Italy*, and Assur in his *Semiramide*. The Russian bass is noted for Verdi roles including Walter in *Luisa Miller* and the title character in *Oberto*, as well as Attila and Banquo.

Abdrazakov has appeared with virtually every major opera company in the United States and Europe. In addition to those already mentioned, he has graced the major stages in Barcelona, Madrid, Paris, San Francisco, Washington DC, and Los Angeles. On the concert stage, he has given recitals in Russia, Italy, Japan, and the United States, and performed with major orchestras in Chicago, Vienna, Leipzig, Munich, Rotterdam, Paris, Milan, and Rome. Other noted conductors with whom he has collaborated are Valery Gergiev, Gianandrea Noseda, Bernard de Billy, Riccardo Frizza, and Riccardo Chailly.

In addition to his Grammy Award-winning recording of Verdi's *Requiem* with Muti in Chicago, Abdrazakov has recorded unpublished arias by Rossini with Chailly in Milan for Decca and Cherubini's Mass with Muti in Munich for EMI Classics. For Chandos, he has recorded Shostakovich's *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo* and Rachmaninoff's *The Miserly Knight*, both with Noseda and the BBC Philharmonic. The bass's DVD releases include *Oberto* from Bilbao, *Norma* from Parma, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* from the Met. Marking the Verdi bicentennial, May 2013 saw Abdrazakov's star turn in the title role of *Attila* immortalized on the Mariinsky label's first DVD/Blu-ray release.

Born in 1976 in the city of Ufa, then the capital of the Soviet republic of Bashkiria, Ildar Abdrazakov traces his lineage back to Genghis Kahn. The son of artists, his mother was a painter and his father was a director. Childhood acting experience in his father's stage and film productions inspired him to pursue a career in the arts. On graduating from the Ufa State Institute of Arts, he joined the Bashkirian Opera and Ballet Theatre. In the late 1990s, he won a string of prestigious interna-

tional vocal competitions: the Moscow Grand Prix named after Irina Arkhipova as well as the Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Obraztsova competitions. His 2000 win at the Maria Callas Competition in Parma thrust him into the international spotlight and led to his debut at La Scala the following year.

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“Constantine Orbelian stands astride two great societies, and finds and promotes synergistic harmony from the best of each.” (*Fanfare*) For over 20 years the brilliant American pianist /conductor has been a central figure in Russia’s musical life — as Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia of Russia, and as frequent guest conductor with other illustrious Russian orchestras. In 2013 he also became Chief Conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra. He tours with American stars in Russian and European music centers, and with Russian stars in North American music centers, and extends these splendid collaborations to tours in Eu-

rope, UK, Japan, Korea, and other music capitals throughout the world.

Orbelian’s appointment in 1991 as Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra was a breakthrough event: he is the first American ever to become music director of an ensemble in Russia. This “American in Moscow” is well known as a tireless champion of Russian-American cultural exchange and international ambassadorship through his worldwide tours. In January 2004, President Putin awarded Orbelian the coveted title “Honored Artist of Russia,” a title never before bestowed on a non-Russian citizen. In May 2010, Orbelian led the opening Ceremonial Concert for the Cultural Olympics in Sochi, Russia — the first event setting the stage for Russia’s hosting of the Olympic Games in 2014.

“Orbelian has star quality, and his orchestra plays with passion and precision,” *The Audio Critic* wrote of his acclaimed series of over 30 recordings on Delos. Among his recent concert and televised appearances are collaborations with stars Renée Fleming and Dmitri Hvorostovsky, and with Van Cliburn in Cliburn’s

sentimental return to Moscow, the great pianist's last performance. *Opera News* calls Orbelian "the singer's dream collaborator," and commented that he conducts vocal repertoire "with the sensitivity of a lieder pianist." Orbelian's frequent collaborations with Hovorostovsky include repertoire from their Delos recordings "Where Are You, My Brothers?" and "Moscow Nights," featured on many tours and telecasts. On several occasions he has conducted historic live telecasts from Moscow's Red Square, the latest of which took place on June 19, 2013, with Hovorostovsky and Anna Netrebko.

Recently Orbelian has turned to film to create more of his unique American/Russian collaborations. His first film production, "Renée Fleming and Dmitri Hovorostovsky: *An Odyssey in St. Petersburg*," was filmed in St. Petersburg's most glorious palaces, and stars Renée Fleming and Dmitri Hovorostovsky in opera scenes and arias. The film is in some ways a culmination of Orbelian's efforts in St. Petersburg, since he is founder and Music Director of the annual Palaces of St. Petersburg International Music Festival.

Born in San Francisco to Russian and Armenian emigré parents, Constantine Orbelian made his debut as a piano prodigy with the San Francisco Symphony at the age of 11. After graduating from Juilliard in New York, he embarked on a career as a piano virtuoso that included appearances with major symphony orchestras throughout the U.S., U.K., Europe, and Russia. His recording of the Khachaturian piano concerto with conductor Neeme Järvi won "Best Concerto Recording of the Year" award in the United Kingdom.

From his 1995 performance at the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the United Nations in San Francisco, to his 2004 performance at the U.S. State Department commemorating 70 years of diplomatic relations between Washington and Moscow, and a repeat State Department appearance in 2007, all with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Orbelian continues to use his artistic eminence in the cause of international goodwill. He and his orchestras also participate in cultural enrichment programs for young people, both in Russia and the U.S. In 2001 Orbelian was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, an award given to immigrants, or children

of immigrants, who have made outstanding contributions to the United States.

The **Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra** grew from the Kaunas Chamber Orchestra, which was founded in 1988 and since 2000 has been managed by Algimantas Treikauskas. Its previous principal conductors were Pavel Berman, Modestas Pitrenas and Imants Resnis; the position now belongs to American maestro Constantine Orbelian.

The Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra gives concerts at home in Lithuania and abroad – including Latvia, Estonia, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Finland, and Italy. It appears regularly at various international festivals, presents special concert projects and gives theme-oriented concerts. Many famous Lithuanian as well as foreign soloists and conductors have collaborated with the orchestra – which organizes and appears in around 50 concerts per year. A highly versatile ensemble, the orchestra specializes in various genres of classical and contemporary music, including crossover projects with such groups as The Scorpions, Smokie, and the Electric Light Orchestra, to name a few.

The orchestra also appeared at the opera contest show *Arc of Triumph* for two years on Lithuanian National Television. Among the group's prominent highlights in the 2012/2013 season are its collaboration with famous baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky and Maestro Orbelian, as well as its appearance at the Murten Classics festival in Switzerland under the baton of Kaspar Zehnder. The orchestra's discography includes several CDs. A number of recent projects were recorded for Delos with several of today's most famous voices, conducted by Maestro Orbelian. In addition to the present album, tenor Lawrence Brownlee stars in a Delos March 2014 release showcasing some of the most demanding bel canto repertoire (DE 3455). There is also a new recording of Giuseppe Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* starring Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Barbara Frittoli and Stefano Secco (DE 3457). The latter will be released in September 2014.

The **Kaunas State Choir** (KSC) has been directed by professor Petras Bingelis – a recipient of the Lithuanian National Award – ever since its founding in 1969.

Since then, the Choir has performed more than 150 major classical vocal-instrumental works ranging from the Middle Ages to modern times. Following Lithuania's restoration of independence – and particularly after the choir began its collaboration with the legendary 20th-Century violinist and conductor Sir Yehudi Menuhin – the choir's concert life became extremely active and purposeful. The European press once referred to the KSC as "...the greatest musical discovery of the year." The choir also collaborated closely with the distinguished German pianist and conductor Justus Frantz. The KSC also developed an especially meaningful creative friendship with master cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, who had a very high opinion of the choir's professional mastery – calling it one of the finest musical ensembles he had worked with anywhere in the world. At the turn of the century, the choir became closely associated with the Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki and his music.

The KSC has given more than 3000 performances, both in Lithuania and abroad; often far beyond its borders, and its geo-

graphic reach continues to expand. The choir has delivered concerts in many of the world's most famous concert venues – to include the Academy of Saint Cecilia in Rome, Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, and the Great Hall of Moscow – as well as the opera houses of Warsaw, Cairo and other capitals. The ensemble's excellent reputation has prompted invitations to perform with many of the finest symphony orchestras: The State Symphony Orchestra of the Russian Federation, the Moscow and Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Orchestra of Paris, and the Philharmonia of the Nations – among others. Together with the latter orchestra, the KSC took part in a gala concert celebrating the UNESCO decision to include the manuscript of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* in the catalogue of documentary heritage, *Memory of the World*. The choir is a regular participant in events and concerts celebrating the national holidays of Lithuania as well as other festive occasions. The choir often performs in honor of distinguished visitors to Lithuania. Such occasions include Pope John Paul II's apostolic visit and the opening ceremony of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, where

the choir sang for the gathering of monarchs and political leaders of nations across Europe.

The choir's discography is broad and diverse, to include Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Creation*, Beethoven's *Sympho-*

ny No. 9, Schubert's *Masses in C and A-flat* (under Menuhin), V. Artiomov's *Requiem*, and Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony (No. 2). Their opera recordings include Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Verdi's *Otello*.

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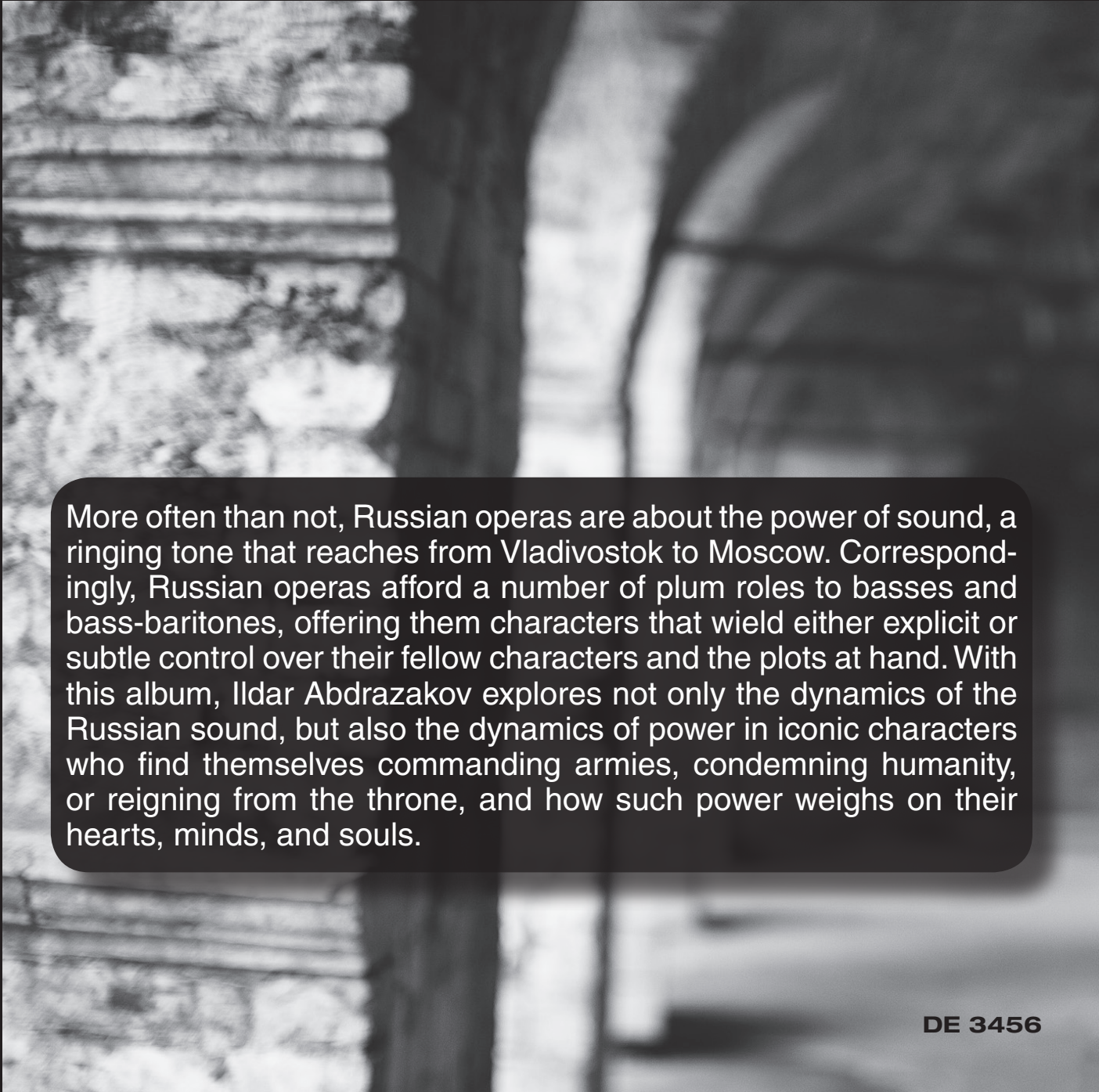
Equipment: Neumann, Schoeps and DPA microphones; Mogami cables; RME pre-amplifiers and A/D converters; Sequoia workstation; Dynaudio AIR loudspeakers; Sennheiser headphones.

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More often than not, Russian operas are about the power of sound, a ringing tone that reaches from Vladivostok to Moscow. Correspondingly, Russian operas afford a number of plum roles to basses and bass-baritones, offering them characters that wield either explicit or subtle control over their fellow characters and the plots at hand. With this album, Ildar Abdrazakov explores not only the dynamics of the Russian sound, but also the dynamics of power in iconic characters who find themselves commanding armies, condemning humanity, or reigning from the throne, and how such power weighs on their hearts, minds, and souls.

DE 3456