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Dmitri Shostakovich's "KATERINA IZMAILOVA"

English titles

CAST

Katerina Izmailova.....GALINA VISHNEVSKAYA
Sergei.....A. INOTEMTSEV
(sung by V. Tretyak)
Zinovy Borisovich.....N. BOYARSKY
(sung by V. Radziyevsky)
Boris Timofeyevich.....A. SOKOLOV
(sung by A. Vedernikov)
Seedy lout.....R. TKACHUK
(sung by S. Strezhnev)
Sonetka.....T. GAVRILOVA
(sung by V. Reka)
Chorus and Orchestra of the Shevchenko Opera and
Ballet Theatre, Kiev, conducted by

KONSTANTION SIMEONOV

CREDITS

Libretto: DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
after the novel "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk"
by Nikolai Leskov

Director: MIKHAIL SHAPIRO

Color photography: R. DAVIDOV & V. PONOMARYOV

Sets: Y. YENEI Sound: I. VOLK

A LENFILM PRODUCTION RELEASED BY ARTKINO PICTURES

Running time: 118 minutes

AMERICAN PREMIERE: April 26, 1969 at the Regency Theatre

National Release: September

ABOUT THE OPERA

"Katerina Izmailova" is Dmitri Shostakovich's second opera (preceded by "The Nose" - Leningrad, 1930) and was hailed as the finest achievement of Soviet operatic art after its premiere, also in Leningrad, on Jan. 22, 1934. The composer, born in the same city (then St. Petersburg), was not yet 28 years old.

The opera was introduced to America by Arthur Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra, with singers of Art of Musical Russia, at the Metropolitan Opera House on Feb. 5, 1935. A Moscow performance the following year incited official criticism. The composer, denounced for "a thoroughly non-political concoction," "formalism," and "aesthetic snobbism," withdrew the opera and later revised it. In recent years, a more liberal cultural policy has brought about new status for the work. It is now considered a Russian classic and is produced with some frequency throughout the world. On these shores, both the San Francisco Opera and the New York City Opera have been adventurous enough to give it. The film version was the Soviet's official entry at the 1967 Cannes Film Festival.

Shostakovich wrote his own libretto after Nikolai Leskov's story "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" (1864). It has been produced occasionally under this title. "In the first version," according to Howard Klein (New York Times, March 26, 1967), "Katerina was a self-willed creature who brings about her own destruction largely through calculation. In the revised version, the heroine is a victim of society, and her selfish acts are seen as the blameless reactions of a deprived being struggling against a vicious system."

World-famous Bolshoi soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, who plays and sings the title role in the film version, has commented: "The Katerina of the opera and screenplay (written by Shostakovich himself) bears little resemblance to Leskov's Katerina. Shostakovich takes an entirely different view of the heroine. According to Leskov, she was an evil woman who sacrificed everyone to satisfy her selfish ends. With cold calculation she got what she wanted over the dead bodies of those who stood in her way. The author holds her up to us to be judged, and we condemn her without (more)

hesitation. This is not true of the opera. It is not selfishness but a deep and irresistible attachment that moves Katerina. She is the victim of a passion Shakespearian in its force. All her powers seem to have been directed into a single channel. Blinded by her love for Sergei, she is unaware of what she is doing. One murder, a second, a third...When she comes to her senses, there is only one way out for her: death." (from Soviet Film magazine, March 1967).

"KATERINA IZMAILOVA" IN STEREO

"Katerina Izmailova" is available in stereo on the Melodiya/Angel label (3 disks, RCL-4100). This was the first opera to be recorded and distributed under the 1966 agreement between Capitol Records and the Soviet state recording agency.

GALINA VISHNEVSKAYA

Galina Vishnevskaya, leading soprano of the Bolshoi Opera Company, was born in Leningrad on October 25, 1926. She has appeared with many opera companies outside her native country. The first Russian diva to perform at the Metropolitan Opera, her debut took place on Nov. 6, 1961 singing the title role in Verdi's "Aida." She is regularly heard also throughout the world in concert recitals, often accompanied on the piano by her husband, the internationally renowned cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. Both artists will return to Carnegie Hall on May 4, 1969, while "Katerina Izmailova" will be showing at the Regency theatre in its American premiere engagement. Miss Vishnevskaya's program on this occasion will include the American premiere of Shostakovich's Seven Songs to Poems of Alexander Blok. Her recital accompanists will be Alexander Dedukhin, piano; Jaime Laredo, violin; and Mstislav Rostropovich, cello.

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RUSSIAN OPERA IN 1969-70

1969-70 may be a banner season for Russian opera, especially in America. Along with the national release of the color film version of Shostakovich's "Katerina Izmailova," there are several other operas scheduled throughout the country.

Borodin's "Prince Igor" (in English), brought into the New York City Opera's
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repertory this spring, will be repeated here in the fall and then performed in Los Angeles. Chicago Lyric Opera will mount Mussorgsky's "Khovantchina" (in Russian). The same composer's "Boris Godunov" (in Russian) and Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin" (in English) return to the Metropolitan Opera, the former in a new production.

Santa Fe Opera, during its 1969 summer season, will offer a new production of Stravinsky's "Le Rossignol" (The Nightingale), to be sung in Russian by an all-American cast. The company first introduced this opera to its audiences in 1962 in celebration of the composer's eightieth birthday, with his "Mavra" and "Renard" sharing a triple bill. Santa Fe, three years later, gave the American premiere of Shostakovich's "The Nose."

Europe will have its share of Russian opera also. Currently newsworthy is the Hamburg State Opera's production of Glinka's "Russlan and Ludmilla" (in German), not heard outside of the Soviet Union in many years.

The Bolshoi Opera has already visited North America during Montreal's Expo '67. There is promise of a visit to New York in the near future, perhaps in 1970.

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