



Profile: International Opera Star Vladimir Chernov Brings Lifetime of Experience to Signature Role of *Eugene Onegin*
Dream Orchestra Concert on May 20 Is Rare Chance for Los Angeles Audiences to Hear Him Sing Selections from Tchaikovsky Opera

SANTA MONICA (April 27, 2016) – On May 20, Los Angeles audiences will enjoy a rare opportunity to hear world-renowned Russian baritone Vladimir Chernov sing selections from his signature leading role of the Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*.

He has performed the role more than 100 times and will join the Dream Orchestra for its "Russian Dreams" performance on Friday, May 20, at St. Monica Catholic Church in Santa Monica. The concert includes Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*.

Russian tenor Vladimir Dmitruk will sing the role of Onegin's best friend Lensky and award-winning teen soprano Golda Berkman will sing the role of the love-struck Tatiana.

As Chernov grew up in a village near the city of Krasnodar in southern Russia, Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, became an important part of his education.

"All children grew up reading this poem. In school you couldn't miss it, the poem about Tatiana and Onegin was the most, most important for our school time," he recalled.

Little did young Vladimir suspect how the character Eugene Onegin would take him around the world singing the lead role in Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*.

Knowing from a very young age that he would dedicate his life to music, Chernov first trained with Mikhail Chugenov in Stavropol before being admitted to the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. In 1981 he joined the Kirov Opera in St. Petersburg as a soloist. In 1982 the Kirov sent him to the prestigious Accademia della Scala.

The lead character of *Eugene Onegin* (pronounced Yev-GEH-nii ah-NYEH-gin) is one of the more challenging roles in opera. Chernov first sang the role in 1987 when the Kirov Opera visited Covent Garden and has gone on to perform the role with the Metropolitan Opera, Opera National du Paris, Teatro Villamarte, Jerez; Seattle Opera, and the Paris Opera.

"Opera directors say playing Onegin by young people is impossible, because they are not ready, they are not able to pick up his intonation, his philosophy," Chernov said.

"The singer must be well educated and have good enough experience to understand the differences to sing Onegin with less operatic 'sound.' We need to get into our brains the capability to create with our vocal chords the resonance suitable to Onegin."

On the other hand, "if you're a smart experienced singer, you're already too old to perform it. You cannot look 50, 55 when you're performing a person of age 24. It's impossible, but I know people who do that," he continued.

Onegin has been incorrectly considered one of literature's original "bad boys" for

breaking a young girl's heart when she professes her love for him. Rather than taking advantage of this situation, Onegin straightforwardly tells Tatiana he is unsuited for a married life and is unworthy of her love, but too late realizes she could have been the love of his life.

Some audiences misunderstand Onegin, Chernov says. "They don't like him because they ask why do you ignore such a beautiful girl. They should feel sorry for him. It's different to perform it in Russia because the Russian public understands the role."

Audiences also misinterpret a tragic event closing Act 2. Onegin's best friend Lensky challenges him to a duel in a jealous rage after he thinks Onegin has flirted with his fiancé at a party. Onegin arrives to the duel site late, hoping his friend has reconsidered. He pleads passionately with Lensky to change his mind, that the challenge was made in the heat of a moment. Lensky declines, Onegin reluctantly proceeds with the duel and shoots his friend dead. The death haunts Onegin for the rest of his life.

Though Chernov loves the work of Russian composers, he says his repertory is "Verdi, Verdi, Verdi" despite being told, "When I was at La Scala school my teacher told me 'Chernov, you must never sing in Italian because you are Russian.' Actually it turned out the opposite!"

"For me, with my whole experience after 40 years, I say to myself my best rep (repertory) is Russian, because I start to understand that I am more expressive in Russian than in other languages."

He made his Los Angeles Opera debut in Verdi's *Don Carlo* in 1990 and next performed in an LA Opera 1995 concert of Verdi music with Carol Vaness and Plácido Domingo. Other LA Opera performances:

- 1995, Verdi's *Stiffelio*,
- 2001, Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*,
- 2003, "A Concert of Passion and Poetry," Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, "Plácido Domingo & Friends Concert & Gala"
- 2006 and 2008, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*
- 2010, world premiere of Catán's *Il Postino* (as Giorgio, the postman)
- 2011, Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*

He has sung more than 40 leading roles at nearly every major international theater including the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, La Scala, Teatro Colon, Paris Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera and Vienna State Opera, under many of today's great conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Valery Gergiev, James Levine and Seiji Ozawa.

Chernov has been a professor of vocal studies at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music since 2006.

For more information, visit www.dreamorchestra.org.

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