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DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 101

Tchaikovsky: The Oprichnik

Orlov, Moscow Radio Soloists, Choir & Orchestra

Pristine
XR

THE OPRICHNIK - Set in the time of Tsar Ivan the Terrible

ACT I

Moscow. Boyar Zhemchuzhny's garden. Zhemchuzhny wants to marry his daughter to the old Boyar Mitkov but Natalia loves Andrey Morozov to whom she has been betrothed since childhood days. Slandered by Zhemchuzhny, Andrey's father was executed at the orders of Ivan the Terrible and Andrey was deprived of his inheritance. To take vengeance against Zhemchuzhny and help Natalia escape from home, Andrey, on the advice of his friend, the Oprichnik Fyodor Basmanov, decides to join the Oprichnina.

ACT II

Scene 1. A cottage to which Andrey and his mother moved after their ruin. The proud Boyar loves her son as much as she hates the Oprichnina. Andrey comes home, bringing some money which Basmanov has given him. His mother refuses to accept help from an Oprichnik. Afraid to distress her Andrey tells her nothing of his intention to join the Oprichnina.

Scene 2. The Alexandrov Sloboda where the tsar has his abode. Andrei Morozov is being initiated into the Oprichnina. He pronounces the formidable vow of loyalty, renouncing his friends and family, his beloved mother. Among those present is the tsar's favourite, cruel Prince Vyazemsky, who has always hated the Morozov family and who now intends to take advantage of Andrey's hesitance to bring about his doom.

ACT III

The city square. Natalia who has fled her father's house came to beg Andrey's mother for asylum and protection. But the Boyar refuses. Natalia's father overtakes her and orders his servants to tie her hand and foot. A group of Oprichniks, Morozov and Basmanov among them, come up and free the girl. Andrey's mother now understands that her son has joined the Oprichnina. She curses him. Andrey decides to ask the tsar's permission to leave the Oprichnina.

ACT IV

The Alexandrov Sloboda. The Oprichniks are celebrating Andrey's wedding with Natalia. Natalia is filled with alarm. The tsar has allowed Andrey to leave the Oprichnina, but the young man is bound by his oath until midnight. Before the expiration of the term, however, Prince Vyazemsky arrives stating that the tsar bids Natalia to come to him. In vain does Basmanov persuade Andrey that this is a test of loyalty to the tsar. Andrey refuses to let Natalia go and thus violates his oath.

The guests disperse. Triumphant, Vyazemsky brings in Andrey's mother and asks her to look out of the window. Outside a scaffold is being set up. The mother sees her beloved son, whom she has cursed, being led to his death. She drops to the floor in a deadly swoon.

A gloomy, solemn chorus of the Oprichniks sings glory to the terrible tsar.

Synopsis from Melodiya LP issue

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

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TCHAIKOVSKY The Oprichnik

An Opera in 4 Acts



Moscow Radio Soloists
Choir and Orchestra

Aleksandr Orlov, conductor

CDs 1 & 2: Acts 1-3

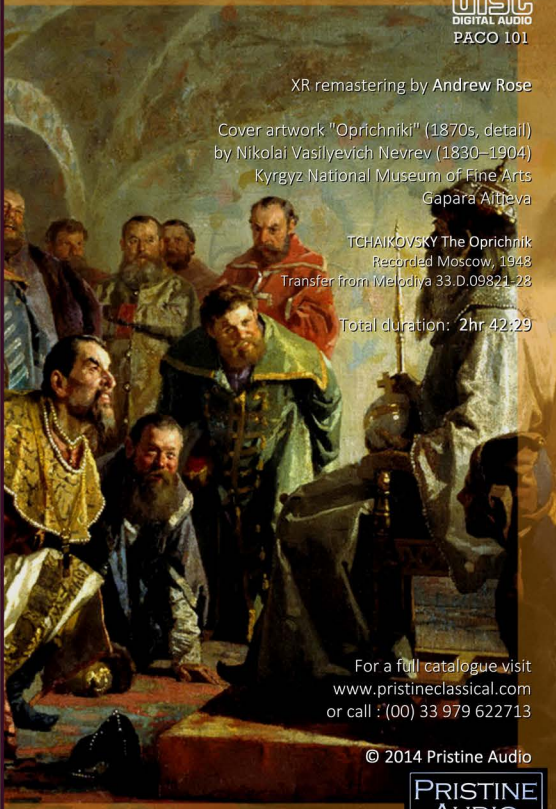
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Melodiya studio recording, 1948

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TCHAIKOVSKY The Oprichnik (CD1 & 2)
Orlov, Moscow Radio Soloists, Choir and Orchestra



TCHAIKOVSKY *The Oprichnik*

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork "Oprichniki" (1870s, detail)
by Nikolai Vasilyevich Nevrev (1830–1904)
Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts
Gapara Altieva

TCHAIKOVSKY The Oprichnik
Recorded Moscow, 1948
Transfer from Melodiya 33 D.09821-28

Total duration: 2hr 42:29

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Disc One

- 1 Introduction (5:45)
- 2 **Act 1: 1. Entertainment Scene** (4:40)
- 3 2. Chorus of Maidens (6:58)
- 4 2a. Natalya's Song (4:40)
- 5 3. Scene (4:08)
- 6 4. Scene - Chorus of Oprichniks (1:49)
- 7 5. Recitatives - Basmanov's Arioso (5:56)
- 8 6. Natalya's Arioso (5:00)
- 9 6a. Round Dance (2:13)
- 10 **Act 2: Entr'acte** (3:47)
- 11 Scene 1: 7. Scene (2:22)
- 12 7a. Morozova's Aria (cut) (3:09)
- 13 8. Scene (3:37)
- 14 8a. Duet for Andrey and Morozova (11:03)

Disc Two

- 1 9. Scene 2: Prelude (2:08)
- 2 9a. Scene (10:53)
- 3 9b. Andrey's Arioso (2:05)
- 4 9c. Oath Scene (10:10)
- 5 9d. Finale (1:52)
- 6 **Act 3: Entr'acte** (4:16)
- 7 10. Chorus of People (4:27)
- 8 11. Recitatives (Boys chorus cut) (2:41)
- 9 11a. Duet for Natalya and Morozova (5:45)
- 10 12. Scene (1:18)
- 11 12a. Natalya's Arioso (4:50)
- 12 13. Finale (6:34)
- 13 13a. Quartet (5:30)
- 14 13b. Final Chorus (1:40)

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The premiere of *The Oprichnik* took place in St Petersburg in April 1874. Its reception was rapturous, and the opera was swiftly taken up by other houses: by Odessa in August, Kiev in December, and by Moscow the following May. It was Tchaikovsky's first great success, and he might have been expected to revel in it. He did not. A fortnight after the opening night he wrote to [his brother] Modest:

The Oprichnik torments me. This opera is so bad that I fled from all the rehearsals (especially those of Acts 3 and 4) so that I shouldn't bear a single sound, and at the performance I would willingly have vanished. Isn't it strange that when I had written it, it seemed to me initially such a delight. But from the very first rehearsal, what disenchantment! There's no movement, no style, no inspiration.

Tchaikovsky was too hard on himself and on the opera. But in recognizing that its subject was contrived - no more than a shock-horror tale whose characters were caught up in extreme predicaments, and whose consequent tensions and torments were designed simply to manipulate audiences - he was pointing the way to his own future. How much better in an opera to uncover the misfortunes, pains and sorrows such as may arise in everyday life and afflict any one of us, real people. Though some of his operas to come would contain tough, sometimes harrowing situations, the ones that are most precious are those that expose the sorrows (and joys) that we, as ordinary mortals, can understand from our own observation and experiences. It is no wonder that the Tchaikovsky opera that draws audiences again and again is *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin's tale of an innocent teenage girl who is ultimately denied, by the chain of real-life circumstances and experiences into which she is caught, the love that would have given her fulfilment and happiness.

From *Tchaikovsky: The Man and his Music*, by David Brown (Faber & Faber, 2006)

Producer's Note

This was the first of only a very small number of recordings of Tchaikovsky's third opera, one of his least-known, to have been made. Even today, *The Oprichnik* remains an elusive work, and despite a small number of relatively minor cuts (mainly in the fourth act) it's largely intact and can thus be seen as a definitive interpretation by performers and, in particular, Aleksander Orlov, a conductor seeped in the history of Russian opera.

Technically it's remarkably successful for its day. The Russians, like their western counterparts, were quickly adapting the magnetic tape technology they found at the end of the war in Germany for their own uses, at a time when full-length operas of this magnitude (especially forgotten ones) were few and far between in the recorded canon and the standard issue would have been (at a guess) some 40 or more 78rpm sides.

The microphones used, particularly for the soloists, appear suspect at times, with a tendency to peak distortion and a somewhat thin sound for the male voices against the fuller orchestra and choir. This is less apparent later in the opera, and overall it's a very commendable production. XR remastering and a very light touch of convolution reverberation has worked wonders with this occasionally difficult raw material. **A.R.**

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CD 3: Act 4

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TCHAIKOVSKY *The Oprichnik*

Disc Three

- 1 14. Act 4: Wedding Chorus (4:10)
- 2 15. Dances of Oprichniks and Women (4:35)
- 3 16. Recitatives (some cuts) (2:33)
- 4 16a. Chorus (2:34)
- 5 16b. Duet for Andrey and Natalya (5:20)
- 6 17a. Scene (this has cuts, preceding chorus cut) (1:26)
- 7 18. Scene (2:06)
- 8 18a. Quartet with Chorus (5:20)
- 9 19. Closing scene (5:11)

CAST

Prince Zhemchuzhny - *Alexei Korolyov*
Natalia - *Nataliya Rozhdestvenskaya*
Molchan Mitkov - *Vsevolod Tyutyunnik*
Boyarina Morozova - *Lyudmila Ivanovna Legostayeva*
Andrei Morozov - *Boris Tarkhov*
Basmanov - *Zara Dolukhanova*
Prince Vyazminsky - *Konstantin Polyakov*
Zakharyevna - *Antonina Kleschtschova*

Moscow Radio Choir and Orchestra
conductor - *Aleksandr Ivanovich Orlov*

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