

*Moussorgsky*

# COLLECTION OF SONGS

— INCLUDING —

**Songs and Dances of Death  
To The Little Star  
Revery of The Young Peasant  
The Banks of the Don  
The Forgotten One**

— (SUNG IN RUSSIAN) —

IGOR GORIN

(BARITONE)

WITH MAX RABINOWITCH

AT THE PIANO



MUSICAL MASTERPIECE SERIES

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# Moussorgsky's Songs

ALTHOUGH many composers can truthfully boast with Moussorgsky that they rejected firmly and contemptuously the temptations of an aristocratic dilettantism which in every age has perverted a section of the artistic intelligensia, few composers in the history of the art of music can claim to have reflected in their music as genuine and democratic a love for the broadest masses of humanity as has Moussorgsky. There have been periods when composers, novelists and painters have found it rather stylish to indulge in a little intellectual slumming among the proletariat, but to a composer as profoundly honest as Moussorgsky, the inspiration he derived from the people became the very heart of his creative impulse. "To feed upon humanity" he wrote to Stasov, "as upon a healthy diet which has been neglected . . . there lies the whole problem of art."

"His songs," writes Rosa Newmarch "are the finest expression of his artistic intentions." Indeed, it needs only one hearing of the songs presented in this album, and a cursory survey of the texts to which they are set, to realize how profoundly moving an identification existed between Moussorgsky and the vast army of 'the humiliated and the offended.' His songs reveal to us the sense, deeper than the mere utilization of authentic folk melodies, in which Moussorgsky must be regarded as a genuine folk composer. "A large number of Moussorgsky's vocal pieces" writes Calvocoressi, "are of a popular character, in the real sense of the word. That is to say, the artist locates the scene and causes the humble moujiks (peasants) whom he considers 'such true types of humanity' to speak there. The people in the mass is likewise the essential personage in all Moussorgsky's works, this inspiring force of his art remaining instinctive, rough, simple, just as it is in the folk-art itself."

The *Songs and Dances of Death* were composed during Moussorgsky's last years of poverty and suffering and are indeed (as Rosa Newmarch writes) the cries of one 'who departeth in darkness.' The text for these songs and for *The Forgotten One*, Moussorgsky drew from the poems of Golenistchev-Koutouzov.

A. Veinus.

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## SONGS AND DANCES OF DEATH TREPAK

Forest and fields, not a soul around;  
Snow storm rages wickedly, as if burying some one.  
Look! So it is!

And Death in the darkness embraces,  
And caresses the drunken moujick (peasant);  
She dances a trepak with him.

She whispers, in his ear,  
"Oh, my poor old man;  
You got drunk and staggered home.  
The storm arose and drove you into the dense forest,  
You are exhausted by sorrow and want;  
Lie down, sleep, my dear one,  
While I cover you with the warm snow,  
And play joyful games around you."

You, the storm! Prepare a soft bed!  
Sing us a story that will last the night through.  
Then the poor drunk will sleep soundly.  
Hey! you forests, skies and clouds,  
You wind and flying snow!  
Form a soft blanket, with which I will cover him.

Sleep, my friend, happy peasant.  
The summer arrives in bloom!  
The sun smiles over the fields,  
Where the sickles play;  
A song is heard,  
And doves are flying.

## DEATH'S LULLABY

Faintly the child sighs.  
The lamp flickers dimly,  
Sheds but a phantom of light;  
Rocking the cradle the pale, weary mother  
Waits through the long, sleepless night.  
Early at break of day, softly knocking,  
Comes compassionate Death.  
Trembling, she starts, gazing anxiously around her.  
"Mother! Fear not the dark!  
See, now the pale dawn looks in at the window;  
Many the tears thou hast shed,  
Weary thy vigils.  
So rest, I pray thee,  
I will keep watch in thy stead.  
Thou seekest vainly to quiet thy dear one;  
Softer and sweeter sing I!"  
"Silence! In fever my little one tosses,  
My heart is torn with his cry!"  
"Nay, but with me he will soon cease to suffer.  
Lullaby, lullaby."  
"His cheeks are white, his breast falters faintly,  
Be still, and stand not so nigh!"  
"Good is the token; his struggles are ending.  
Lullaby, lullaby-bye."  
"Go thou accursed one!  
Foul thy caresses!  
Touch not my child, Lest he die!"  
"No! 'Tis a comforting dream I shall bring him;  
Lullaby, lullaby-bye."  
"Cease thy terrible song now! Grant me mercy!  
Canst thou my pleading deny?"  
"Look ye! My singing has lulled him to sleep.  
Lullaby, lullaby-bye."

## DEATH'S SERENADE

Sweet and scented, soft and caressing,  
It is June . . . A trembling light. . . .  
Her head on her bosom, the maiden listens  
To the gentle voice of the Night.  
Sleep will not come, her eyes bright with fever;  
Life pleads in vain for the maid;  
Under her window, in silence, in darkness  
Death sings a grim serenade;  
Lonely and fetter'd, in darkness, in bondage,  
Youth is fading from thee;  
I roam as knight errant vested with magic,  
I come thy soul to set free.  
Raise thee and see in thy mirror  
The beauty that glows in thy face!  
Rosy thy cheeks; thy shimmering tresses,  
Cloud like, thy body embrace.  
Clear is the gleam of thine eyes,  
Blue and bright as the sky;  
Thy breath is fragrant, warm as the noon tide,  
Magic, thy charms draw me nigh.  
Soon must thou yield to the spell of my singing,  
For now thy true gallant is near;  
Heeding thy call, he is coming to claim thee,  
Lo! the supreme hour is here!  
Dainty thy form, thy trembling enchants me;  
Under my kisses, shalt swoon and recline  
Dost hear what I whisper?  
Listen! Lie still! Thou art mine!

## FIELD MARSHAL DEATH

In the din of battle, the bellow of cannon, horses steaming, men take flight through the blood and the mire. The battle rages in the intense glare of noon. The sun is sinking and in the twilight the bitter fighting goes on.

Now night is fallen; all is ended. The armies have been driven asunder. Silence. From the unbefriended arise unheeded groans to heaven. Then white and stark in the light of the moon rides the captain of the fallen hosts: Death.

Lo, in the dark he listens to the weeping and the prayers until his pride is satiated. Over the scene of the slaughter he walks with a solemn pride. He stands on a little hill, looking around him in the dim light, smiling grimly. He speaks.

"Mine is the battle! All wrongs are righted; friend and foe alike now pay homage only to me. Those who were enemies I have now united. Arise! march solemnly before me in the review of the dead and greet your commander. I shall account for you all, friend and foe alike. The ground is cool. The darkness beckons. You shall have rest from life. Years will invisibly pass into ages; your memory shall perish from the earth. I shall recall you when no longer war rages, bid you to march at midnight in a solemn review. I shall dance with a heavy step until I grow weary; I shall stamp upon the earth so that your bones will be bound down forever in this dreary graveyard, so that you can never rise up from the earth."

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## TO THE LITTLE STAR

Little star so bright,  
Where dost hide thy light?  
A storm cloud overcast thy ray,  
In the black of night?  
  
Where art thou maiden fair,  
Thy lovely golden hair?  
Forsaken thy love, so true, so brave,  
And left him in despair?  
  
The star is laid in a dark cloud deep;  
In her lonely grave lies the maid asleep.

## REVERY OF THE YOUNG PEASANT

My heart, why do you weep? Can I comfort your sorrow? Like me, you grieve that fate no longer smiles upon you; and the road to happiness barred. Be silent, my weeping heart. Sorrow! forsake me. Despair! I bid thee go. All that I want is the love of Parasha. My Parasha, my little dove, my fairest little queen, only your wicked foster mother wants to harm us. And yet all that I want is the love of my Parasha. My heart, why do you weep? Can I comfort your sorrow, my heart?

## THE BANKS OF THE DON

By the Don a flowery lane  
Passes thro' my garden green;  
Often, from my lattice window,  
I have looked upon the scene.  
  
There at eve fair Masha pass'd me,  
From the well returning,  
Smiling up with bashful glances,  
Cheeks with blushes burning.  
Shyly she'd return my greeting  
In our simple sunset meeting.  
  
Once she tipped her water jar,  
The water over flowing;  
By the Don a flowery lane  
Is thro' my garden growing.

## THE FORGOTTEN ONE

(A Ballad)

He came upon death in a foreign land,  
In bitter fighting, hand to hand;  
His friends have won the victory,  
And now they celebrate. But he?  
Forgotten underneath the skies,  
Alone he lies.

Down there sweeps a greedy crow  
To drink his blood that still doth flow,  
He picks his eyes that still do gleam  
In death's own hour, yet living seem.  
He drinks his fill, he leaves his prey  
And flies away.

And far at home across the wild  
One lonely mother rocks her child;  
Be still, be still! ah! shed no tear,  
For soon your father will be here,  
And then we shall have a pie and cake,  
That I shall bake.

Underneath the skies  
Alone he lies

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