

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Eugene Onegin

CONDUCTOR
Valery Gergiev

PRODUCTION
Robert Carsen

SET AND COSTUME
DESIGNER
Michael Levine

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Jean Kalman

CHOREOGRAPHER
Serge Bennathan

STAGE DIRECTOR
Peter McClintock

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR
James Levine

Opera in three acts

Based on the poem by Alexander Pushkin

Saturday, February 24, 2007, 1:30–4:35pm

The production of *Eugene Onegin* is made possible by a generous gift from the Lila Acheson and DeWitt Wallace Fund, established by the founders of The Reader's Digest Association, Inc.

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The Metropolitan Opera

2006-07 Season

The 126th Metropolitan Opera performance of

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's

Eugene Onegin

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Conductor
Valery Gergiev

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Tatiana
Renée Fleming

A captain
Keith Miller

Olga, her sister
Elena Zaremba

Triquet
Jean-Paul Fouchécourt

Madame Larina, their
mother
Svetlana Volkova

Zaretski
Richard Bernstein

Filippyevna, Tatiana's
nurse
Larisa Shevchenko

Prince Gremin
Sergei Aleksashkin

Lenski, Olga's fiancé
Ramón Vargas

Dancers:
Linda Gelinás
Sam Meredith

Eugene Onegin
Dmitri Hvorostovsky

Saturday, February 24, 2007 1:30–4:35pm



Kim Howard/Metropolitan Opera

Dmitri Hvorostovsky and Renée Fleming as Eugene Onegin and Tatiana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

Chorus Master **Raymond Hughes**
Musical Preparation **Jane Klaviter, Linda Hall, Paul Nadler, and Yelena Kurdina**
Assistant Stage Directors **Gregory Keller and Paula Suozzi**
Prompter **Jane Klaviter**
Met Titles **Cori Ellison**
Russian Coach **Yelena Kurdina**
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Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Eugene Onegin

Premiere: Maly Theater, Moscow, 1879, with students from the Moscow Conservatory. Professional premiere: Bolshoi Theater, 1881

Tchaikovsky's many moods—tender, grand, melancholy—are all given free rein in *Eugene Onegin*, the composer's lush adaptation of Alexander Pushkin's iconic text of Russian literature. The great poet re-imagined the Byronic model of the restless romantic anti-hero as the definitive bored Russian aristocrat caught between convention and ennui; Tchaikovsky, similarly, took Western European operatic forms and transformed them into an authentic and undeniably Russian work. At the core of the opera is the young girl Tatiana, who grows from a sentimental adolescent into a complete woman in one of the operatic stage's most convincing character developments. Always popular in Russia, *Eugene Onegin* stands at the heart of the international repertory and commands as much admiration among experts as affection among newcomers.

The Creator

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) enjoyed tremendous fame during his lifetime as a composer of symphonic music and ballets. His operas have achieved a steadily growing popularity outside of Russia. The libretto for *Eugene Onegin* was largely put together by the composer himself, with help from his brother Modest (1850–1916) and others. The source of the libretto is the mock-epic poem of the same name by Pushkin (1799–1837), whose position in Russian literature can be compared only to that of Shakespeare in English. Pushkin's body of work is marked by a wide range of tone and style, and his writings have been the source of many other Russian operas of note (such as *Boris Godunov* and *Le Coq d'Or*). Tchaikovsky specifically chose the most emotional and dramatic moments from Pushkin's poem and called his work "lyric scenes," emphasizing the episodic, rather than the strictly narrative, nature of his libretto.

The Setting

Pushkin's poem presented a vast overview of old Russian society around 1820, which Tchaikovsky's original score neatly divides into each of its three acts: from the timeless rituals of country life to the rural gentry with its troubles and pleasures and, finally, to the glittering imperial aristocracy of St. Petersburg.

The Music

Tchaikovsky's universally beloved lyric gifts are at their most powerful and multi-layered in this opera. Rich ensembles punctuate the work, including a quartet for women near the beginning, an elaborate choral ensemble that concludes the first scene of Act II, and a haunting fugue for tenor and baritone in Act II, Scene 2. The vocal solos are among the most striking in the repertory: anyone who can remember the first stirrings of love will be moved by Tatiana's 12-minute "Letter Scene" in Act I, in which she rhapsodically composes a letter to Onegin in an outpouring of gorgeous melody. This is rivaled in popularity by the tenor's moving farewell to his young life in Act II, while the title role's Act III narrative on the pointlessness of life borders on the Wagnerian. Interspersed among these great solos are finely honed character pieces, such as the French tutor's charming birthday serenade to Tatiana (in French) and the bass Prince Gremin's moving ode to the surprise of finding love late in life. Throughout the opera, Tchaikovsky's unique mastery of dance music provides episodes of ballet that reflect and augment the drama.

Eugene Onegin at the Met

Eugene Onegin premiered at the Met in 1920, sung in Italian by a cast headed by baritone Giuseppe DeLuca and soprano Claudia Muzio. After a total of eight performances in two consecutive seasons, the opera disappeared from the Met until 1957, when it was presented in English with George London, Lucine Amara, and Richard Tucker with Peter Brook directing. *Onegin* appeared in Russian in 1977 with Sherrill Milnes in the title role, conducted by James Levine. Other notable stars to have appeared in the opera include Leontyne Price, Mirella Freni, Raina Kabaivanska, Thomas Hampson, Leo Nucci, Nicolai Gedda, Marcello Giordani, Giorgio Tozzi, and Nicolai Ghiaurov.

Synopsis

Russia, 19th century

Act I

SCENE 1 The garden of Madame Larina's country estate

SCENE 2 Tatiana's room

SCENE 3 Another part of the garden

Intermission

Act II

SCENE 1 The main room of the Larina house

SCENE 2 The open country, in the early morning

Act III

SCENE 1 The Gremin Palace in St. Petersburg

SCENE 2 A room in the Gremin Palace the next day

Act I, Scene 1

The widowed Madame Larina and her servant Filippyevna listen as the Larin daughters, Olga and Tatiana, sing. The peasants come from the fields celebrating the completion of the harvest with songs and dances. Olga teases Tatiana for avoiding the festivities; pensive Tatiana prefers her romance novels. When the peasants leave, Olga's suitor, the poet Lenski, arrives with his worldly friend Eugene Onegin. Lenski pours out his love for Olga ("Ya lyublyu vas"). Onegin strolls with Tatiana and asks how she doesn't get bored with country life. Unnerved by the handsome stranger, Tatiana answers with difficulty. The two couples go inside for dinner as night falls.

Scene 2

In her bedroom, Tatiana persuades the reluctant Filippyevna to tell her of her first love and marriage. Tatiana admits she is in love and asks to be left alone. She sits up the entire night writing a passionate letter to Onegin. When day breaks, she gives the letter to Filippyevna for her grandson to deliver.

Scene 3

A group of women sing as they work in the Larins' garden. They leave, and Tatiana appears, nervous, followed by Onegin. He asks that she hear him out patiently. He admits that the letter was touching, but adds that he would quickly grow bored with marriage and can only offer her friendship. He coldly advises more emotional control in the future, lest another man take advantage of her innocence.

Act II, Scene 1

Some months later, a party is underway in the Larins' house for Tatiana's name day. Young couples dance while older guests comment and gossip. Onegin

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well sung — even **sexy**” – Mike Silverman, *Associated Press*

“The **inventive, breezy** new production...boasts
a winning cast...” – Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*

“Sher’s cast never fails to hit the **bull’s-eye...**
Rossini himself would have cheered.” – Robert Hofler, *Variety*

Rossini

Il Barbiere di Siviglia

(The Barber of Seville)



Pictured from left to right: Peter Mattei, Diana Damrau, Juan Diego Flórez

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dances with Tatiana but he is bored by these country people and their provincial ways. Annoyed with Lenski for having dragged him there, Onegin dances with Olga, who is momentarily distracted by the charming man. Monsieur Triquet, the elderly French tutor, serenades Tatiana with a song he has written in her honor (“A cette fête conviée”). When the dancing resumes, Lenski jealously confronts Onegin. Madame Larina begs the men not to quarrel in her house, but Lenski cannot be placated and Onegin accepts his challenge to a duel.

Scene 2

Lenski waits for Onegin at the appointed spot at dawn. Lenski reflects on the folly of his brief life and imagines Olga visiting his grave (“Kuda, kuda”). Onegin finally arrives. He and Lenski admit to themselves that the duel is pointless and they would prefer to laugh together than to fight, but honor must be satisfied. The duel is marked off and Onegin shoots Lenski dead.

Act III, Scene 1

Several years later, a magnificent ball is being given in the Gremin Palace in St. Petersburg. Onegin appears, reflecting bitterly on the fact that he has traveled the world seeking excitement and some meaning in life, and all his efforts have led him to yet another dull social event. Suddenly, he recognizes Tatiana across the ballroom. She is no longer a naïve country girl but is sumptuously gowned and bearing herself with great dignity. Questioning his cousin, Prince Gremin, he learns that Tatiana is now Gremin’s wife. The older man explains that he married Tatiana two years previously and describes Tatiana as his life’s salvation. When Gremin introduces Onegin, Tatiana maintains her composure but excuses herself after a few words of polite conversation. Onegin is surprised to realize he himself is in love with Tatiana.

Scene 2

The next day Tatiana is distressed when she receives an impassioned letter from Onegin. He rushes in and falls at her feet, but she maintains her control. Does he desire her only for her wealth and position? She recalls the days when they might have been happy, but that time has passed. Onegin repeats his love for her. Faltering for a moment, she admits that she still loves him, but she will not allow him to ruin her. She leaves him regretting his bitter destiny.

Notes on Eugene Onegin

"Sometimes it seems to me that Providence, so blind and unjust in the choice of its protégés, has deigned to care for me," Tchaikovsky confessed to his brother Modest on May 23, 1877. "Really, I begin at times to perceive in certain coincidences of circumstances not mere chance." By this, Tchaikovsky was referring to the fact that as soon as he resolved to marry in order to stem gossip concerning his homosexuality, a certain young woman appeared in his life. It so happened that at the end of March 1877, a former Conservatory student, Antonina Milyukova, whom Tchaikovsky had met briefly five years earlier, sent the composer a written declaration of her love for him. Both Antonina and Tchaikovsky testify that they "began a correspondence," in result of which he received her offer "of hand and heart" by early May.

By an irony of fate, a further coincidence was a catalyst in the unfolding drama. About two weeks later during an evening party at the home of Elizaveta Lavrovskaya, a singer with the Bolshoi Theater, the conversation turned to possible subjects on which Tchaikovsky might base an opera. The hostess suddenly suggested Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, which the composer at first thought an absurd idea. But the more he considered it, the more intrigued he became. "I rushed off to look for [a volume of] Pushkin," he wrote to Modest a few days later, "and finding one with difficulty, I went home, reread it enraptured, and spent an absolutely sleepless night, the result of which has been the scenario of a charming opera based on Pushkin's text."

Tchaikovsky's growing concern with Antonina must have certainly affected his involvement with Pushkin's text, even though the composer used to claim that it was the other way around. In later years and with an eye to posterity, Tchaikovsky insisted that the main reason for their rapid intimacy and marriage was his fascination with the plot of Pushkin's novel and his sympathy for its heroine, as if he sought to avoid emulating its male protagonist by cruelly rejecting a young woman in love. Tchaikovsky probably himself initiated their personal meeting. It is, however, unlikely that he acted under the threat of suicide that is found in one of Antonina's letters to him, since in that letter's context it strikes one as nothing more than a device in the tradition of sentimental models from so-called "letter books," popular at the time and containing samples of fictional correspondence for all occasions. Their first encounter occurred on May 20 in Moscow, and at the next such occasion, three days later, Tchaikovsky made a formal proposal, promising his bride only his "brotherly" love, to which she readily acquiesced.

About the same time Tchaikovsky suggested to his friend, actor Konstantin Shilovsky, that they should collaborate on the libretto for his *Onegin* opera. The resulting text utilized much of Pushkin's original verse, especially direct and indirect speech, but also included a considerable amount of new text,

which is to be expected in the dramatic adaptation of a largely narrative work. Shilovsky's contribution in compiling the libretto remains unclear and he later asked that his name be omitted from its printed text. In 1885 he even declared that, although he originally wrote the libretto, he did not wish to claim it as his work because of the changes made by Tchaikovsky.

After Tchaikovsky's engagement to Antonina on May 23 and upon the end of classes at the Conservatory, Tchaikovsky proceeded to Shilovsky's estate near Moscow, where he fully immersed himself in the creation of the opera. Not surprisingly, given his recent experiences, his special preoccupation became the scene in which Tatiana writes a letter to Onegin confessing her love. The composer shared his excitement about his current project with his future benefactress, Nadezhda von Meck, in a letter dated May 27: "The opera will have no strong dramatic action, but the portrayal of everyday life will be interesting, and how full of poetry it all is! The scene between Tatiana and her nurse is marvelous! If only I can attain that calm state of mind essential for composition, I am sure that Pushkin's text will be an absolute inspiration to me." A week later, writing to his brother Modest, he voiced the same concerns and the same enthusiasm: "Maybe there will be little action, but I'm in love with the image of Tatiana. I'm enchanted by Pushkin's verses and I'm setting them to music because I'm being drawn to do this.... I've already written all of the second scene of Act I (Tatiana with her nurse), and I'm very satisfied how it turned out. The greater part of the first scene is also already written." Before the end of June he had composed all three scenes of the first act and completed nearly two-thirds of the entire work.

Tchaikovsky's marriage to Antonina Milyukova took place on July 6, 1877, temporarily disrupting his work on the opera. From the very beginning of his married life, the composer took a painful view of his new predicament. Soon he realized that he had made a grievous mistake: he found himself unable to accept the personality and character of his wife, as well as her family and her circle of friends. After 20 days of cohabitation they still had not consummated their marriage. It remains uncertain whether Tchaikovsky had avoided revealing his homosexuality to his wife at the outset, or whether she simply disregarded his admission of it. On July 27 the composer left Antonina for one-and-a-half months, staying with his sister at her estate in the Ukraine, where he continued to work on the opera. After his return to Moscow in September, Tchaikovsky spent only 12 days with his wife before leaving her for good. He went abroad for a long period of time under the pretext of a nervous breakdown that, according to archival documents, was fabricated in order to win over some sympathy from his colleagues and the general public. There hardly remains any doubt that his psychosexual problems coupled with emotional incompatibility between himself and his wife (as he insisted in his correspondence) proved the ultimate cause of this matrimonial fiasco.

Tchaikovsky went first to Switzerland, where he settled and resumed scoring the music for Act I of *Onegin*, which he completed within three days. During his Italian stay, in January of 1878 in Venice and San Remo, the entire work was finished and fully scored. The composition of the opera *Eugene Onegin* undoubtedly constituted Tchaikovsky's most profound creative engagement. "If ever music was written with sincere passion," he wrote to fellow composer Sergey Taneyev in January of 1878, "with love for the story and the characters in it, it is the music for *Onegin*. I trembled and melted with inexpressible delight while writing it. If the listener feels even the smallest part of what I experienced when I was composing this opera, I shall be utterly content and ask for nothing more."

From the very beginning, Tchaikovsky saw this work as fundamentally different in form from most contemporary operas; he even called it "Lyrical Scenes," thus narrowing the scope of Pushkin's original novel in verse. Although the opera preserves the substance of Pushkin's design, the composer came up with several changes in the plot, particularly in the opera's last scene, the climactic meeting between Onegin and Tatiana. In Tchaikovsky's first version, Tatiana, while trying to resist Onegin's entreaties, finally falls into his arms only to be discovered by her husband, Prince Gremin, who, as Tatiana begins to faint, signals Onegin to withdraw. Onegin was supposed to rush out with the cry: "Oh death, Oh death! I go to seek thee out!" In 1880, however, during the preparation for the opera's professional premiere at the Bolshoi, Tchaikovsky changed Tatiana's text and the final stage directions, while leaving the music unaltered. The composer also found it necessary to alter the final lines of the opera, this time making Onegin leave the scene with the words: "Disgrace! Anguish! How pitiable is my fate!"

Tchaikovsky's treatment of the three main protagonists markedly differs from Pushkin's occasional condescension toward Tatiana, ironic portrayal of Lenski, and highbrow sympathy for Onegin—attitudes characteristic of Russian society in the 1830s. For Tchaikovsky, a man of the 1870s, Tatiana turned into a symbol of unfulfilled love and a heroine as vulnerable as a Juliet, whose innocence is shattered before the audience's very eyes. Lenski the poet became the epitome of creative talent with whom the composer, to a certain extent, must have identified. The operatic Onegin cuts a disagreeable figure: he responds nastily to a young woman in love with him, behaves rudely at the ball, wantonly kills his best friend in a duel, and wanders around without any purpose until his final meeting with Tatiana, when he is finally forced to recognize the drama of life. Tchaikovsky conveys this particular perspective on the characters and their relationships through the musical material—melodic and rhythmic patterns of harmony, tonality, and even texture. He described his understanding of the essential dramatic content of Pushkin's novel in terms of Onegin's unforgivable crime, pointing out "that a bored society lion, out

of boredom, out of petty irritation, against his will, as the result of a fateful coincidence of circumstances, takes the life of a young man whom, in essence, he loves!" The conclusion of the opera, dominated by the musical material that is associated with Lenski, makes the ghost of the poet a very tangible presence.

Eugene Onegin is Tchaikovsky's fifth opera and the first based on the writings of Alexander Pushkin. In 1881 and 1890 he again used Pushkin's poetry and prose for the libretto of the operas *Mazeppa* and *The Queen of Spades*. The premiere of *Eugene Onegin* took place on March 29, 1879, in a student production by the Moscow Conservatory at the Maly Theatre, with Maryia Klimentova-Muromtseva as Tatiana, Sergey Giloyov as Onegin, Mikhail Medvedev as Lenski, and Nikolai Rubinstein conducting. It seemed to have been received enthusiastically, especially by students, but its reception proved much cooler among the public and the critics, who were not appreciative of student singers with little experience and were bewildered by the very choice of Pushkin's masterful "society novel." The first professional performance at the Bolshoi Theater on January 23, 1881, was conducted by Enrico Bevignani, with a cast including Augusta Verni (Tatiana), Pavel Khokhlov (Onegin), and Dimitri Usatov (Lenski), and yielded more favorable reviews. But the real rise of *Onegin* began on October 19, 1884, with a performance at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg under the baton of Eduard Nápravník. It took a while for *Eugene Onegin* to appear in Western European opera houses; in the end, it was splendidly performed—both times in Tchaikovsky's presence—first on December 6, 1888, in Prague; and next on January 16, 1892, in Hamburg under the baton of Gustav Mahler.

The first performance of *Onegin* in the United States was a concert reading conducted by Walter Damrosch at Carnegie Hall, in English, on February 1, 1908. At the Metropolitan Opera, *Eugene Onegin* was first staged on March 24, 1920; Artur Bodanzky conducted a cast including Claudia Muzio (Tatiana), Giovanni Martinelli (Lenski), and Giuseppe DeLuca (Onegin), singing in Italian. The Met first used the Russian text during the 1977–78 revival.

The current production received its premiere on March 13, 1997, with Antonio Pappano making his Met debut conducting Galina Gorchakova as Tatiana, Vladimir Chernov as Onegin, Neil Shicoff as Lenski, Vladimir Ognovenko as Prince Gremin, and Marianna Tarassova in her company debut as Olga.

—Alexander Poznansky

The Cast



Valery Gergiev
CONDUCTOR

BIRTHPLACE Moscow, Russia

THIS SEASON *Eugene Onegin* at the Met, Wagner's *Ring* cycle with the Mariinsky Theatre at the Metropolitan Opera House as part of the Lincoln Center Festival, *Lohengrin* with the Paris Opera, *Falstaff* in Tel Aviv, *Boris Godunov* in Rome, *Semyon Kotko* in Madrid, and *La Bohème*, *Turandot*, and *Madama Butterfly* at the Baden-Baden Festival.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES *Otello* (debut, 1994), *Parsifal*, *Die Walküre*, *Salome*, *The Queen of Spades*, *The Gambler*, *Don Carlo*, *La Traviata*, *War and Peace*, *Khovanshchina*, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Boris Godunov*, *Mazeppa*, and the Stravinsky triple bill.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Artistic and general director of St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre (where he oversees the Kirov Orchestra, Ballet, and Opera) and principal guest conductor of the Metropolitan Opera, Rotterdam Philharmonic, and London Symphony Orchestra. He is also the founder and artistic director of the Gergiev Rotterdam Festival, Finland's Mikkeli International Festival, the Moscow Easter Festival, and the "Stars of the White Nights" Festival in St. Petersburg. The Ossetian conductor was the 2006 winner of Germany's Karajan Prize and Sweden's Polar Prize. He tours worldwide with the Mariinsky Theatre and celebrated his 25th anniversary with that company in 2003.



Renée Fleming
SOPRANO

BIRTHPLACE Indiana, Pennsylvania

THIS SEASON Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin* at the Met, Violetta in *La Traviata* with the Los Angeles Opera, the title role of *Arabella* with the Zurich Opera, and concert performances of *Thaïs* at Covent Garden, Vienna Konzerthaus, Barcelona's Liceu, and at Paris's Châtelet. She also appears with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, and Los Angeles Philharmonic, among others.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES Title roles of *Manon*, *Rodelinda*, *Arabella*, *Rusalka*, and *Susannah*, the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (debut, 1991), Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Rosina in the world premiere of *The Ghosts of Versailles*, Imogene in *Il Pirata*, Violetta, the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, and Marguerite in *Faust*.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Appearances in all the world's leading opera houses, recipient of two Grammy Awards, and has been honored by the French government in 2005 as "Chevalier de la légion d'honneur" and in 2002 when she was awarded the "Commandeur de l'ordre des arts et des lettres." She was a winner of the Met's 1988 National Council Auditions.



Larisa Shevchenko

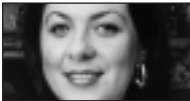
MEZZO-SOPRANO

BIRTHPLACE Lvov, Russia

THIS SEASON Filippyevna in *Eugene Onegin* at the Met.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES Mme. Akhrosimova in *War and Peace* (debut, 2002).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Joined the Mariinsky Theatre in 1976. Has won numerous international prizes including the Grand Prix in Holland (1978), the Gold Medal in Belgium (1979), and the Glinka All Union Competition (1975), and has also been given the title People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. and the Russian State Award. Her repertoire includes Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, Aida, Leonora in both *Il Trovatore* and *La Forza del Destino*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Yaroslavna in *Prince Igor*, Olga in *The Maid of Pskov*, Maria in *Mazeppa*, and Katerina Ismailova in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (a role she sang with the Mariinsky Theatre at London's Barbican Theatre in 1999).



Elena Zarembo

MEZZO-SOPRANO

BIRTHPLACE Moscow, Russia

THIS SEASON Olga in *Eugene Onegin* at the Met, Anna in *Les Troyens* with Paris's Bastille Opera, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Hamburg, Fricka in *Die Walküre*, Marfa in *Khovanshchina*, and Carmen with Deutsche Oper Berlin.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (debut, 1999), Pauline in *The Queen of Spades*, Erda in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, Anna, and Ulrica.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Carmen at Paris's Bastille Opera, Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, and in Munich, Berlin Verona, Bologna, and Tokyo; Marfa in Brussels; Erda in Vienna, San Francisco, Madrid, and Washington; Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* in Paris; and productions of *La Gioconda* in Barcelona and *Falstaff* in Florence. Appeared for the first time at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1991 as Olga in *Eugene Onegin* with the Bolshoi Opera.



Sergei Aleksashkin

BASS

BIRTHPLACE Saratov, Russia

THIS SEASON Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* at the Met and the General in *The Gambler* in Vienna.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES The General (debut, 2001).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Joined the Mariinsky Theatre in 1989 and has appeared with that company in a number of roles both in St. Petersburg and on the company's frequent international tours. (He first appeared at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1992 with the Mariinsky as Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*.) Repertory includes title roles of *Ivan Susanin* and *Boris Godunov*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Konchak in *Prince Igor*, Ramfis in *Aida*, King Philip in *Don Carlo*, and Méphistophélès in *Faust*. Has sung Boris Godunov at the Salzburg Festival, the Baron in Rachmaninoff's *Miserly Knight* in Palermo, Dresden, and Venice, and appeared as a guest artist at La Scala and Covent Garden, among many theaters.



Dmitri Hvorostovsky

BARITONE

BIRTHPLACE Krasnoyarsk, Russia

THIS SEASON Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* and the title role of *Eugene Onegin* at the Met and Simon Boccanegra with Houston Grand Opera and Paris Opera.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES Prince Yeletsky in *The Queen of Spades* (debut, 1995), Prince Andrei in *War and Peace*, Rodrigo, Germont in *La Traviata*, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Valentin in *Faust*, and Don Giovanni.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Appears regularly at major opera houses throughout the world including Covent Garden, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, Buenos Aires's Teatro Colon, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Kirov Opera. His most notable roles include Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Francesco in *I Masnadieri*, Eugene Onegin, Don Giovanni, Rodrigo, Germont, and Rigoletto. He has also been heard in concert with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and Rotterdam Philharmonic, among others. Future plans include a performance of Russian war songs with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra at Paris's Châtelet, followed by a North American tour with performances at the Los Angeles Opera, Kennedy Center, and Lincoln Center.



Ramón Vargas

TENOR

BIRTHPLACE Mexico City, Mexico

THIS SEASON Title role of *Faust* and Lenski in *Eugene Onegin* at the Met, new productions of *Idomeneo* (title role) in Paris and *Luisa Miller* (Rodolfo) in Munich, the title role of *Don Carlo* in Vienna, Alfredo in *La Traviata* at La Scala, and Rossini's *Otello* (title role) at Carnegie Hall.

PREVIOUS MET APPEARANCES Edgardo in a new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* (debut, 1992), Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Alfredo, and new productions of *Roméo et Juliette* (Roméo) and *La Cenerentola* (Prince Ramiro).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Has recently sung *Idomeneo* at La Scala, Edgardo at La Scala, Riccardo in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Vienna, and *Don Carlo* in Berlin.