

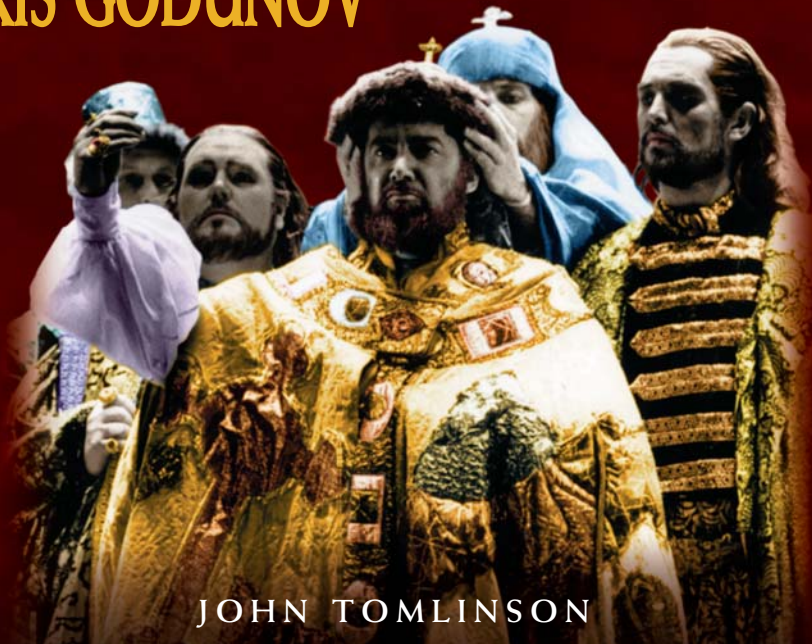
MUSSORGSKY

Highlights

BORIS GODUNOV

CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH



JOHN TOMLINSON

CHORUS OF OPERA NORTH • ENGLISH NORTHERN PHILHARMONIA
PAUL DANIEL

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



AKG

Modest Mussorgsky

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)

Boris Godunov (based on the initial version of 1869)

Libretto by the composer, based on Pushkin's historical tragedy of the same name
and Karamzin's *History of the Russian State*

English translation by David Lloyd-Jones

Prince Shuisky	Stuart Kale <i>tenor</i>
Boris, Tsar of Russia	John Tomlinson <i>bass</i>
Varlaam, a vagabond monk	Clive Bayley <i>bass</i>
Xenia, Boris's daughter	Joan Rodgers <i>soprano</i>
Feodor, Tsarevich	Susan Parry <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
The old Nurse	Yvonne Howard <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Simpleton	Mark Curtis <i>tenor</i>
Pimen, monk and chronicler	Matthew Best <i>bass</i>
Boyar	Brian Cookson <i>tenor</i>
Mitiukha	Edward Thornton <i>baritone</i>
Shchelkalov	Stephen Dawson <i>baritone</i>

Chorus of Opera North

Martin Fitzpatrick chorus master

Choristers of Leeds Parish Church

Simon Lindley chorus master

English Northern Philharmonia

David Greed leader

Paul Daniel

	Coronation Scene [page 36]	8:04
1	Shuisky 'Long life to our Tsar Boris Feodorovich!'	4:05
2	Boris 'My soul is sad'	3:59
	Varlaam's Song [page 37]	
3	Varlaam 'By the walls of Kazan the mighty fortress'	2:30
	Apartments Scene [page 38]	27:59
4	Xenia 'Ah, my dear betrothed'	7:26
5	Boris 'I stand supreme in power'	5:14
6	Boris 'What is it?'	11:53
7	Boris 'Ugh! Give me air!'	3:26
	St Basil Scene [page 42]	11:16
8	Men 'What, has the service finished?'	6:12
9	Women 'Merciful, gracious Tsar'	5:04
	Death Scene [page 44]	24:20
10	Boyars 'Sad, Shuisky is not with us'	6:39
11	Pimen 'A humble hermit'	7:10
12	Boris 'Farewell, my son'	10:31
	TT	74:43

The excerpts featured on this disc are taken from Opera North's highly successful production of *Boris Godunov*, first performed in 1989.

Modest Mussorgsky: Boris Godunov

Few operas have had such a remarkable history as Mussorgsky's masterpiece *Boris Godunov*. It exists in no less than three complete versions by the composer himself, as well as posthumous editions and orchestrations by Rimsky-Korsakov, Shostakovich and others. In Mussorgsky's own lifetime (i.e. until 1881) the opera was staged just twenty-one times, and then for more than a decade it languished almost totally neglected, despite a notable revival at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1888 with the then-celebrated bass Bogomir Korsov in the title role. The opera's meteoric rise to fame began with the publication of Rimsky-Korsakov's edition of the opera in 1896, followed two years later by a production given at the Moscow Private Opera with the young Fyodor Shalyapin. From this moment onwards, the tragic figure of the tormented tsar became inextricably linked with the name of the legendary bass, and the opera scored a resounding success in the opera theatres of Russia, and then at the Grand Opéra in Paris during Diaghilev's *Saison Russe* in 1908. Perhaps even Mussorgsky himself would have been surprised at the triumph of his work

(arguably the most Russian of operas) on the French stage.

The work on which Mussorgsky based his *Boris Godunov* was the drama (1825) of the same name by the great Russian national poet Alexander Pushkin. For six years, publication of the play was forbidden by the censor, and the first staging had to wait until 1870, i.e. the very time that Mussorgsky had just completed the first draft of his opera; in fact, some of the sets originally designed for the play were later re-used for the opera. Pushkin had set out to write a realistic drama on Shakespearean lines: the three unities of French classical drama were abandoned entirely, so too was the lofty tone of Racine and Corneille, and the usual lines of Alexandrine verse were replaced by blank verse. Many contemporaries believed that Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* was a bold experiment – a dramatic work not actually intended for the stage.

The radical aspects of Pushkin's work almost certainly attracted Mussorgsky, but in a Russia just emerging from the strictly authoritarian era of Nicholas I, the subject was still something of a political 'hot potato'.

Mussorgsky composed the first draft of *Boris Godunov* (consisting of seven scenes) in 1868–69, but it was rejected by the Directorate of Imperial Theatres. He made radical changes, but the opera was turned down a second time in 1871. Only in January 1874 did the opera finally see the footlights of the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, where it received a mixed reception and bitterly divided Russian musical opinion.

The appearance of the opera coincided with a wave of nationalism, which became apparent in populist literature and, above all in the music of the ‘Mighty Handful’. For Mussorgsky and the other nationalist composers Russian history became a kind of irresistible magnet. Through it they were able to express Russian traditions and values, and above all, the uniqueness of their perception of the world and their place in it. In particular, they were drawn to one of the most dramatic and bloody periods in Russian history – the late sixteenth century, covering a period roughly from the reign of Ivan the Terrible to the so-called Time of Troubles.

No full appreciation of the opera is possible without a proper understanding of the events which led up to the accession of Boris Godunov in 1598. In order to do this we have

to go back in time to the reign of Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible), who had sought to consolidate the power of the throne by ruthlessly curbing the influence of the boyars. When Ivan died in 1584 he was succeeded by his feeble-minded son Fyodor, who had married Irina Godunova (the sister of Boris). As Fyodor was childless, conspiracies among the boyars to secure the succession were rife, but the real power was already concentrated in the hands of Boris, who effectively ruled as regent. The death of Fyodor in 1598 cleared the way for Boris to lay a legitimate claim to the throne of Muscovy, for the only other possible claimant, Prince Dmitry, had died in mysterious circumstances in May 1591. The principal historical source for Pushkin’s play had been Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State*. In this work, Karamzin had chosen to ignore contemporary reports concerning the death of the young prince Dmitry (the official report stated that he had accidentally cut his own throat during an epileptic fit) and makes Boris the instigator of his murder. In following this version of events Mussorgsky created a charismatic character both strong and ruthless on one hand, yet human and guilt-ridden on the other.

The opera charts the rise to power and the death of Boris against a background rich in

historical events. The action unfolds in a series of loosely assembled scenes, which take us from Moscow to the Lithuanian frontier. One of Mussorgsky's greatest achievements in this opera is that he created a realistic drama: it is peopled not merely by the great and the famous, but also by ordinary folk, vagabond monks and Jesuits. This gives the work a feeling of breadth and panoramic inclusiveness, but more importantly, through the quality of the music and a striving for psychological truth, Mussorgsky creates for us characters who come to life, and have the capacity to move and fascinate us.

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Synopsis

Scene 1

A courtyard of the Novodyevichy Monastery outside Moscow. February 1598

Boris is in retreat in the monastery. The apathetic people are exhorted to beg him to assume the throne, first by the police and then by the Boyar Shchelkalov, who prays that God may bring guidance to the troubled land. A procession of pilgrims enters the monastery. The people comment cynically on developments.

Scene 2

The square of the Moscow Kremlin, between the two Cathedrals of the Assumption and the Archangel Michael.

Six months later

Boris is crowned and makes his first appearance as Tsar. He acknowledges the people's acclamation, but his soul is filled with foreboding. (Tracks [1] - [2])

Scene 3

A cell in the Chudov Monastery in the Kremlin. Six years later

Russia has suffered famine and intrigue during Boris's reign. An old monk, Pimen, is completing his chronicle of Russian history. His novice, Grigory, is tormented with dreams of greatness. Pimen recalls his eventful past, the battles and the tsars he has known, and tells how the Tsarevich Dimitri was murdered. Grigory discovers that Dimitri would have been his own age, had he lived.

Scene 4

An inn on the Lithuanian border. A few days later

Grigory has fled from the monastery and is making for the border, intending to set himself up as the Tsarevich Dimitri and lead a rising against Boris. With two vagabond monks,

Varlaam and Missail, he arrives at a lonely inn close to the frontier. Varlaam sings the song of Ivan the Terrible's conquest of the Tartar's at the battle of Kazan (track [3]). Soldiers arrive with a warrant for Grigory's arrest. He reads out the order, substituting Varlaam's description for his own. As the deceit is discovered Grigory escapes through the window.

Scene 5

The Tsar's apartments in the Moscow Kremlin. A few months later

Boris's daughter, Xenia, mourns the death of her betrothed. Her brother Feodor and her old nurse try to console her. Boris enters. He is tender towards Xenia, and proud of Feodor's knowledge of his future kingdom. He meditates on his crime and on the sufferings of his family and of Russia, which have poisoned his enjoyment of the power he has attained. Prince Shuisky is announced. He brings news that a pretender to the throne has risen in Lithuania, calling himself Dimitri, the resurrected Tsarevich. Boris forces from Shuisky a description of Dimitri as he lay in state in the cathedral of Uglich, his features corrupted by death. Boris breaks down, haunted by the vision of the murdered child. (Tracks [4] - [7])

Scene 6

Outside the Cathedral of St Basil in Moscow. A year later

Boris is praying within the Cathedral. Outside some children taunt a simpleton and steal his kopek. Boris pities the simpleton and asks for his prayers, which are denied. (Tracks [8] - [9])

Scene 7

The Granovitaya Palace in the Moscow Kremlin. 14 April 1605

An emergency meeting of the Council of Boyars is in progress to decide on action against the pretender. Shuisky interrupts with a description of the frenzied Boris, who himself follows, driving away his vision of the dead Dimitri. Shuisky brings in Pimen, who tells the story of the miraculous cure effected at the tomb of Dimitri. Boris collapses and demands to be left alone with his son. He advises Feodor on the government of Russia, and prays for God's protection for his innocent son. As the funeral bell tolls and monks intone his last rites, Boris dies, begging forgiveness for his crimes. (Tracks [10] - [12])

Stuart Kale has long since established himself as one of the most accomplished and versatile singing actors currently appearing in opera anywhere in the world. His intelligent and

witty characterizations of a host of diverse roles have been unanimously acclaimed throughout the world.

He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and the London Opera Centre. On graduating he joined Welsh National Opera and then English National Opera, where he remained for eight years singing such roles as Don Ottavio, Michael (*Giulietta*) and Nanki-Poo. Since leaving English National Opera he has performed at the Royal Opera House, the Châtelet, State Opera of South Australia, Canadian Opera Company, and in Drottningholm, Cologne, San Francisco and Karlsruhe. Recordings include Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*, Dr Suda (*Osud*) and Mr Upfold (*Albert Herring*).

John Tomlinson was born in Lancashire, and studied Civil Engineering at Manchester University before winning a scholarship to the Royal Manchester College of Music. He has sung regularly with English National Opera since 1974, and with the Royal Opera since 1976. He has also appeared with Opera North, both Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas and Kent Opera. He has sung at the Bayreuth Festival every year since 1988, where he has been heard as Wotan (*Das Rheingold* und *Die Walküre*), the Wanderer

(*Siegfried*), Titirel and Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*) and as King Mark (*Tristan und Isolde*). He has also sung at the Festivals of Aix-en-Provence and Salzburg, and the Maggio Musicale, and in Geneva, Lisbon, San Francisco, San Diego, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich and Vienna.

John Tomlinson has a large concert repertoire and has sung with all the leading British orchestras and in Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland, France, Spain, Denmark and the USA, working with such conductors as Daniel Barenboim and Bernard Haitink. He has taken part in many recordings including Talbot (*Mary Stuart*) and Achilles (*Julius Caesar*) (both of which were supported by the Peter Moores Foundation), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), the title roles in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Bluebeard's Castle*, Beethoven's Choral Symphony, *Messiah* and Verdi's Requiem.

Clive Bayley sang the role of Claggart (*Billy Budd*) whilst still a student at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he was a Peter Moores Scholar. He is already well established with the major opera companies throughout this country and he regularly sings in concert. He made his debut with the Royal Opera in 1991 in the premiere of Birtwistle's

Gawain, and has also had notable successes with Opera North (Verdi's *Jerusalem*), English National Opera (*Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck* and *Dr Faust*) and Opera Factory (*Don Giovanni*). He also appears with Netherlands Opera. Appearances with Opera North include Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), the Referee (*Playing Away*), and the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Recordings include Michael Berkeley's *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, Landi's *Il Sant'Alessio*, *Candide* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

Joan Rodgers in one of Britain's best-loved singers and is equally established in opera, concert and as a recitalist. She studied with Joseph Ward at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she won a Peter Moores Scholarship, and with Audrey Langford. In 1981 she won the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. In the UK Joan Rodgers sings regularly for all the principal opera companies including English National Opera (the Countess and Ginevra (*Ariodante*)), the Royal Opera (Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*), Glyndebourne Festival Opera (Susanna, and the title role in *Theodora*), Opera North (title role in *Iolanta*), Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera. Recordings include *Das klagende Lied* and Rachmaninov songs for Chandos, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don*

Giovanni, Beethoven's Choral Symphony and Haydn's *Creation*.

Susan Parry studied at Birmingham University and the Royal Academy of Music and is now a member of English National Opera where her roles have included Nicklausse (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), Brangäne (*Tristan and Isolde*), Octavian, the Composer and the Fox (*The Cunning Little Vixen*). Other appearances include debuts in 1996 with the Royal Opera in the Covent Garden Verdi Festival, and at the Proms. With the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment she has sung the title role in a concert performance of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Susan Parry has appeared with Welsh National Opera, with the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Yvonne Howard began her busy and versatile concert career whilst studying at the Royal Northern College of Music and early roles included appearances with English Touring Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas and City of Birmingham Touring Opera. In 1991 she made her debut with the Royal Opera as Mercedes (*Carmen*). Since then she has appeared there regularly in roles such as Karolka (*Jenůfa*), Marcellina and

Suzuki. She also appears as a guest artist with Opera North and has appeared in São Paulo, Paris, Nantes and Tel Aviv. Her recordings include Handel's *Messiah*, Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* and Verdi's Requiem.

Born in Hertfordshire, **Mark Curtis** studied at the Royal Northern College of Music under Frederic Cox and then at the National Opera Studio with a scholarship from the Friends of Covent Garden and the Arts Council.

Appearances include Fenton (*Falstaff*) and Jacquino (*Fidelio*) for Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Beppe (*Pagliacci*) for the Royal Opera, Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*) for Kent Opera, and Steersman (*The Flying Dutchman*), Rector (*Peter Grimes*), Arv (*Maskarade*), Hermes (*King Priam*) and Vašek (*The Bartered Bride*) for Opera North. Recordings include *The Merry Widow*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut* and *The Force of Destiny*.

Matthew Best pursues a dual career as a conductor and singer. Educated as a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge and at the National Opera Studio, in 1982 he won the Decca–Kathleen Ferrier Prize. He was a pupil of the late Otakar Kraus and of Robert Lloyd and currently studies with Patrick McGuigan.

From 1980–86 he was a principal with The Royal Opera and he has also worked extensively with Opera North, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera and Netherlands Opera. In 1997 he made his debut with English National Opera as the Dutchman (*The Flying Dutchman*). Matthew Best also appears on the concert platform throughout Europe, working with many of the world's leading orchestras and conductors. As a conductor he is artistic director of the Corydon Orchestra and Corydon Singers.

Since its formation in 1978 the **Chorus of Opera North** has established a reputation which puts it at the forefront of the world's opera choruses. As well as regular opera performances the Chorus gives a wide range of concerts, both with the English Northern Philharmonia and independently, including in 1990 the world premiere of Takemitsu's *My Way of Life* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Simon Rattle. Overseas performances have been many and various, including performances at La Fenice, Venice, at the Wiesbaden May Festival, in Dortmund, Rotterdam and at the world premiere in Munich of Benedict Mason's *Playing Away*.

The **English Northern Philharmonia** is the resident orchestra of Opera North, and since its formation in 1978 has established itself as one of the country's leading operatic orchestras. In addition to playing for all the Company's performances in Leeds and on tour, the English Northern Philharmonia enjoys an independent existence as a symphony orchestra, giving concerts throughout Yorkshire and the surrounding area. The orchestra has appeared with numerous international guest conductors and soloists, as well as with David Lloyd-Jones, its Founder Conductor, and Paul Daniel, who was Opera North's Music Director and Principal Conductor from 1990 to 1997. Apart from its full-scale symphonic concerts the English Northern Philharmonia gives chamber concerts, accompanies the region's choral societies and has also gained considerable acclaim for its operatic gala concerts with singers on international status.

Paul Daniel is widely regarded as one of the most exciting and talented conductors of his

generation and is in great demand with both opera companies and orchestras worldwide. In September 1997 he took up his new appointment as Music Director of English National Opera and in his first season he has conducted Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* and Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*. From 1990 to 1997 he held the post of Music Director at Opera North where he attracted critical acclaim for his exciting and fresh performances of Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, Tippett's *King Priam*, Shreker's *Der ferne Klang*, *Boris Godunov* (with which Opera North made its Proms debut in 1992) and Britten's *Gloriana* amongst others.

As Principal Conductor of the English Northern Philharmonia Paul Daniel has conducted concerts throughout the UK and has taken the orchestra to many festivals. Other opera engagements have included Opera Factory (where he was Music Director from 1987 to 1990), Opera de Nancy, the Royal Opera House, Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels and the Bayerische Staatsoper.



Stephen Vaughan

John Tomlinson as Boris in
Opera North's production of
Boris Godunov.

The Peter Moores Foundation and Peter Moores CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire in 1932, the second son of Sir John Moores CBE, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group – Britain's largest private company.

He was educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford, where he studied Italian and German.

Furthering his interest in opera, he went to Glyndebourne in 1952 to work as a behind-the-scenes administrator. He later went on to study at the Vienna Academy of Music where he produced the Viennese premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. He was a production student with the Vienna State Opera for three years and assistant producer of performances by Viennese artists at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and the Rome Opera where he also made his stage debut in a spoken role.



Christina Burton/PMF

Peter Moores, CBE, DL.

From 1981 to 1983 Peter Moores was a Governor of the BBC. In May 1992, he became a Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire.

He was made a CBE in the 1991 New Years Honours List for his charitable services to the Arts.

Peter Moores established the Peter Moores Foundation in 1964 to carry on and extend his personal work in the cultural and arts field. Initially, the emphasis was on opera, but the Foundation's objectives have since widened and today cover five broad categories: The Arts – subdivided into Music and Visual Art; Youth, Race Relations; Social/Health/Environment; and one-off Projects. Since 1964 the Foundation has dispersed £33 million in today's money.

It has supported the recordings of thirty-nine operas. A number of these are of nineteenth-century *bel canto* works which have since become unfashionable. Other recordings are of popular operas, in the repertoire of most of today's companies, but here recorded in English translation. The aim is to provide the opportunity for English-speaking people who are interested in opera but who may not understand the original language and would like to know what is going on.

The Peter Moores Foundation also awards scholarships to promising young opera singers through the Royal Northern College of Music. These scholarships have helped the careers of many talented singers in their studies there. Grants are also awarded to students to study abroad and to work on particular roles with established singers.

The Foundation has also financed opera productions at UK opera companies, including the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, The Almeida Opera Festival, Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

Modest Mussorgski: Boris Godunow

Nur wenige Opern hatten eine so bemerkenswerte Vorgeschichte wie Modest Mussorgskis Meisterwerk *Boris Godunow*. Es liegt in nicht weniger als drei vom Komponisten selbst verfassten vollständigen Versionen vor, außerdem in postumen Bearbeitungen und Neuorchestrierungen von Rimski-Korsakow, Schostakowitsch und anderen. Zu Mussorgskis Lebzeiten (also bis 1881) wurde die Oper nur 21 mal aufgeführt und blieb dann über ein Jahrzehnt lang fast völlig unbeachtet. Daran änderte auch eine denkwürdige Wiederaufnahme 1888 am Bolschoitheater in Moskau mit dem damals berühmten Bass Bogomir Korsow in der Titelrolle nichts. Der meteorhafte Aufstieg der Oper begann mit der Herausgabe von Rimski-Korsakows Bearbeitung im Jahre 1896, der zwei Jahre später eine Inszenierung an der Moskauer Privatoper mit dem jungen Fjodor Schaljapin folgte. Von diesem Augenblick an war die tragische Figur des gepeinigten Zaren untrennbar mit dem Namen des legendären Basses verbunden, und die Oper feierte erst an den Theatern Rußlands und dann an der Grand Opéra in Paris im Rahmen von

Diaghilews *Saison Russe* 1908 rauschende Erfolge. Möglich, daß Mussorgski selbst über den Triumph seines Werks (der wohl russischsten aller Opern) auf der französischen Bühne überrascht gewesen wäre.

Das Werk, auf das Mussorgski seinen *Boris Godunow* gründete, war die gleichnamige dramatische Chronik (1825) des großen russischen Nationaldichters Alexander Puschkin. Sechs Jahre lang war die Veröffentlichung des Stücks von der Zensur verboten, und die Erstaufführung mußte bis 1870 warten, also genau bis zu dem Zeitpunkt, an dem Mussorgski den ersten Entwurf seiner Oper fertiggestellt hatte; einige der Kulissen, die man für das Stück gebaut hatte, wurden sogar später für die Oper wiederverwendet. Puschkin hatte es darauf abgesehen, ein realistisches Drama nach dem Vorbild von Shakespeare zu schreiben: Die drei Einheiten des klassischen französischen Dramas wurden ganz aufgegeben, ebenso der hochtrabende Tonfall von Racine und Corneille, und die üblichen Alexandriner wurden durch Blankverse ersetzt. Viele seiner Zeitgenossen empfanden Puschkins *Boris*

Godunow als kühnes Experiment – als ein Drama, das eigentlich nicht für die Bühne gedacht war.

Es waren höchstwahrscheinlich die radikalen Aspekte von Puschkins Werk, die Mussorgski interessierten, doch in einem Rußland, das soeben die streng diktatorische Ära Nikolaus' I. hinter sich gelassen hatte, war der Stoff in politischer Hinsicht immer noch eine "heiße Kartoffel". Mussorgski komponierte den (aus sieben Bildern bestehenden) ersten Entwurf zu *Boris Godunow* 1868/69, doch er wurde vom Direktorium der Kaiserlichen Theater abgelehnt. Er nahm radikale Änderungen vor, doch die Oper wurde 1871 erneut abgewiesen. Erst im Januar 1874 erblickte die Oper das Rampenlicht des Marinski-Theaters in St. Petersburg, wo sie mit gemischten Gefühlen aufgenommen wurde und in den maßgeblichen Kreisen der russischen Musik bittere Kontroversen auslöste.

Die Premiere der Oper fiel mit einer Welle des Nationalismus zusammen, die sich in populistischer Literatur und vor allem in der Musik des Mächtigen Häufleins äußerte. Für Mussorgski und die übrigen nationalbewußten Komponisten wurde die russische Geschichte eine Art unwiderstehlicher Magnet. Über sie vermochten sie russische Traditionen und

Werte zu vermitteln, speziell die Einzigartigkeit ihrer Wahrnehmung der Welt und des Standorts, den sie darin einnahmen. Insbesondere fühlten sie sich zu einer der dramatischsten und blutigsten Epochen russischer Geschichte hingezogen – dem ausgehenden 16. Jahrhundert, dem ungefähren Zeitraum zwischen der Herrschaft Iwans des Schrecklichen und der sogenannten Zeit der Wirren.

Keine volle Würdigung der Oper ist möglich ohne rechtes Verständnis für die Ereignisse im Vorfeld der Thronbesteigung Boris Godunows im Jahre 1598. Dazu müssen wir uns in die Zeit Iwans IV. (des Schrecklichen) zurückversetzen, der sich bemüht hatte, die Macht des Throns zu festigen, indem er rücksichtslos den Einfluss der Bojaren beschnitt. Als Iwan 1584 starb, trat sein schwachsinniger Sohn Fjodor, der Irina Godunowa (Boris' Schwester) geheiratet hatte, seine Nachfolge an. Da Fjodor kinderlos blieb, grassierten von den Bojaren angezettelte Verschwörungen zur Sicherung der Thronfolge, doch die wahre Macht war bereits in den Händen von Boris Godunow konzentriert, der als Reichsverweser praktisch allein regierte. Fjodors Tod im Jahre 1598 machte für Boris den Weg frei, rechtmäßigen Anspruch auf den russischen Thron zu

erheben, denn Fürst Dimitri, der einzige andere Anwärter, war unter ungeklärten Umständen im Mai 1591 ums Leben gekommen. Die wichtigste historische Quelle für Puschkins Chronik war Nikolai Karamsins *Geschichte des russischen Reiches*. In diesem Werk hat Karamsin zeitgenössische Berichte über den Tod des jungen Prinzen Dimitri bewußt außer Acht gelassen (offiziell hieß es, er habe sich während eines epileptischen Anfalls selbst die Kehle durchgeschnitten) und macht Boris zum Anstifter seiner Ermordung. Indem er diese Version des Geschehens übernahm, hat Mussorgski eine charismatische Figur ins Leben gerufen, die einerseits stark und unbarmherzig, andererseits aber human und von Schuldgefühlen geplagt ist.

Die Oper zeichnet Boris Godunows Aufstieg zur Macht und seinen Tod vor einem Hintergrund nach, der reich an historischen Ereignissen ist. Die Handlung schreitet in einer Folge locker zusammengestellter Szenen voran, die uns von Moskau an die litauische Grenze führt. Eine von Mussorgskis größten Leistungen in Bezug auf diese Oper besteht darin, dass er ein realistisches Drama geschaffen hat: Sie wird nicht nur von den Großen und Mächtigen bevölkert, sondern auch von gewöhnlichem Volk, vagabundierenden Mönchen und Jesuiten. Das

verleiht dem Werk den Eindruck von epischer Breite und einem allumfassenden Panorama. Noch wichtiger ist jedoch, daß Mussorgski durch die Beschaffenheit der Musik und das Streben nach psychologischer Genauigkeit für uns Figuren erstehen lässt, die zum Leben erwachen und die Fähigkeit haben, uns zu bewegen und zu faszinieren.

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Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Inhaltsangabe

1. Bild

Auf einem Innenhof des Klosters

Nowodewitschi bei Moskau, Februar 1598

Boris hat sich in die Abgeschiedenheit des Klosters zurückgezogen. Das apathische Volk wird ermahnt, ihn um die Thronübernahme zu bitten, erst von der Polizei und dann von dem Bojaren Schtschelkalow, der darum betet, daß Gott die Geschicke des geplagten Landes lenken möge. Eine Pilgerschar hält Einzug ins Kloster. Das Volk äußert sich zynisch über die Ereignisse.

2. Bild

Auf einem Platz im Moskauer Kreml zwischen der Himmelfahrts- und der

Erzengel-Michael-Kathedrale, sechs Monate später

Boris wird gekrönt und zeigt sich zum ersten Mal als Zar. Er nimmt den Jubel des Volkes entgegen, doch seine Seele ist von bösen Vorahnungen erfüllt. (Spuren [1] - [2])

3. Bild

In einer Zelle des Tschudow-Klosters im Kreml, sechs Jahre später

Rußland hat unter Boris' Herrschaft Hungersnot und Unfrieden erlitten. Ein alter Mönch namens Pimen legt letzte Hand an seine Chronik der russischen Geschichte. Sein Novize Grigori wird im Traum von Machtphantasien geplagt. Pimen gedenkt seiner ereignisreichen Vergangenheit, an die Schlachten und die Zaren, die er gekannt hat, und berichtet von der Ermordung des Zarensohns Dimitri. Grigori stellt fest, daß Dimitri, hätte er überlebt, so alt wäre wie er.

4. Bild

Eine Schenke an der litauischen Grenze, wenige Tage später

Grigori ist aus dem Kloster entlaufen und auf dem Weg zur Grenze. Er hat vor, sich als Zarensohn Dimitri auszugeben und einen Aufstand gegen Boris anzuzetteln. Zusammen mit zwei vagabundierenden Mönchen namens

Warlaam und Missail trifft er auf eine einsame Schenke in der Nähe der Grenze. Warlaam singt das Lied vom Sieg Iwans des Schrecklichen über die Tataren in der Schlacht um Kasan (Spur [3]). Soldaten erscheinen mit einem Haftbefehl für Grigori. Er liest das Dokument vor, ersetzt jedoch die Beschreibung seiner Person durch die Warlaams. Als sein Täuschungsmanöver entdeckt wird, ergreift er durchs Fenster die Flucht.

5. Bild

In den Gemächern des Zaren im Moskauer Kreml, einige Monate später

Boris' Tochter Xenia beklagt den Tod ihres Bräutigams. Ihr Bruder Fjodor und ihre alte Amme versuchen sie zu trösten. Boris tritt auf. Er gibt sich Xenia gegenüber liebevoll und ist stolz auf Fjodors Kenntnisse über sein künftiges Königreich. Er denkt über sein Verbrechen, über das Leid seiner Familie und Rußlands nach, das ihm den Genuß der errungenen Macht verdorben hat. Das Erscheinen des Fürst Schuiski wird angekündigt. Er überbringt die Nachricht, daß sich in Litauen ein Thronbewerber erhoben habe, der von sich behauptete, Dimitri zu sein, der wiederauferstandene Zarewitsch. Boris zwingt Schuiski, Dimitri zu beschreiben,

wie er in der Kathedrale von Uglitsch aufgebahrt war, mit vom Tode entstellten Gesichtszügen. Boris bricht zusammen, gepeinigt von der Vision des ermordeten Kindes. (Spuren [4] - [7])

6. Bild

Vor der Basilius-Kathedrale in Moskau, ein Jahr später

Boris ist zum Gebet in der Kathedrale. Eine Kinderschar hänselt einen Einfältigen und raubt ihm seine einzige Kopeke. Boris erbarmt sich des Einfältigen und bittet, er möge für ihn beten, wird jedoch zurückgewiesen. (Spuren [8] - [9])

7. Bild

Im Facettenpalast des Moskauer Kreml, 14. April 1605

Der Rat der Bojaren hält eine Sondersitzung ab, um über sein Vorgehen gegen den Thronprätendenten zu beschließen. Schuiski unterbricht die Sitzung mit der Nachricht, daß Boris von Sinnen sei. Boris folgt, immer noch bemüht, die Spukgestalt des toten Dimitri zu vertreiben. Schuiski holt Pimen hinzu, der von der wundersamen Heilung am Grabe Dimitris erzählt. Boris bricht zusammen und verlangt, mit seinem Sohn alleingelassen zu werden. Er erteilt Fjodor Ratschläge, wie er Rußland

regieren solle, und bittet Gott, seinen unschuldigen Sohn zu beschützen. Als die Totenglocke läutet und die Mönche die Sterbesakramente intonieren, stirbt Boris, nachdem er ein letztes Mal Vergebung für seine Verbrechen erfleht hat. (Spuren [10] - [12])

Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Stuart Kale hat sich seit längerem als einer der weltweit vollendetsten und vielseitigsten singenden Schauspieler durchgesetzt, die derzeit in Opern auftreten. Seine intelligente, geistreiche Darstellung einer Vielzahl unterschiedlicher Rollen hat weltweit einmütigen Beifall gefunden.

Er wurde an der Guildhall School of Music und am London Opera Centre ausgebildet. Nach seinem Studienabschluß trat er dem Ensemble der Welsh National Opera und der English National Opera bei, wo er acht Jahre blieb und Rollen wie Don Ottavio, Michael (*Giulietta*) und Nanki-Poo sang. Seit er die English National Opera verlassen hat, war er am Royal Opera House, am Théâtre du Châtelet, an der State Opera of South Australia und der Canadian Opera Company zu sehen, in Drottningholm, Köln, San Francisco und Karlsruhe. Auf Tonträger

hat er unter anderem Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), Weills Sieben Todsünden, Dr. Suda (*Osud*) und Mr. Upfold (*Albert Herring*) aufgenommen.

John Tomlinson wurde in der nordenglischen Grafschaft Lancashire geboren und hat an der Universität Manchester Hoch- und Tiefbau studiert, ehe er ein Stipendium zum Besuch des Royal Manchester College of Music errang. Er singt seit 1974 regelmäßig an der English National Opera, seit 1976 auch an der Royal Opera. Außerdem hat er bei der Opera North gastiert, beim Glyndebourne Festival und der Glyndebourne Touring Opera sowie an der Kent Opera. Er ist ab 1988 jedes Jahr bei den Bayreuther Festspielen aufgetreten und war dort als Wotan (*Rheingold* und *Walküre*), der Wanderer (*Siegfried*), Titulel und Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*) und König Marke (*Tristan und Isolde*) zu hören. Des weiteren hat er bei den Festspielen in Aix-en-Provence und Salzburg sowie beim Maggio Musicale gesungen, in Genf, Lissabon, San Francisco, San Diego, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, München und Wien.

John Tomlinson verfügt über ein großes Konzertrepertoire, hat mit allen führenden Orchestern in Großbritannien, Deutschland, Italien, Belgien, den Niederlanden, Frankreich,

Spanien, Dänemark und den USA gesungen und dabei mit Dirigenten wie Daniel Barenboim und Bernard Haitink zusammengearbeitet. Er war an vielen Aufzeichnungen beteiligt, beispielsweise als Talbot (*Maria Stuarda*) und als Achilles (*Giulio Cesare*) – beide wurden mit Unterstützung der Peter Moores Foundation vorgenommen. Er hat Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*) aufgenommen, die Titelpartien von *Le nozze di Figaro* und *König Blaubarts Schloß*, Beethovens Neunte Sinfonie, den *Messias* und Verdis Requiem.

Clive Bayley hat die Rolle des Claggart (*Billy Budd*) gegeben, als er noch als Peter-Moores-Stipendiat am Royal Northern College of Music studierte. Inzwischen ist er an allen wesentlichen Opernhäusern in Großbritannien bekannt und tritt außerdem regelmäßig in Konzerten auf. Er debütierte 1991 bei der Uraufführung von Birtwistles *Gawain* an der Royal Opera und hat außerdem beachtliche Erfolge an der Opera North (Verdis *Jerusalem*), der English National Opera (*Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck* und *Dr. Faust*) und der Opera Factory (*Don Giovanni*) verzeichnet. Er singt an der Nederlandse Opera und hat an der Opera North außerdem als Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), der Schiedsrichter (*Playing Away*)

und in der Titelrolle von *Le nozze di Figaro* gastiert. Zu seinen Aufnahmen auf Tonträgern gehören Michael Berkeley's *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, Landis *Il Sant' Alessio*, *Candide* und Waltons *Troilus and Cressida*.

Joan Rodgers ist eine der beliebtesten Sängerinnen Großbritanniens und auf der Opernbühne, im Konzert und als Recitalkünstlerin gleichermaßen etabliert. Sie wurde von Joseph Ward am Royal Northern College of Music ausgebildet, wo sie ein Peter-Moores-Stipendium errang, sowie von Audrey Langford. 1981 wurde ihr ein Kathleen-Ferrier-Gedenkstipendium zuerkannt. In Großbritannien gastiert Joan Rodgers regelmäßig bei allen führenden Opernensembles, zum Beispiel bei der English National Oper (die Gräfin und Ginevra in *Ariodante*), der Royal Opera (die Gouvernante in *The Turn of the Screw*), der Glyndebourne Festival Opera (Susanna und die Titelrolle in *Theodora*), der Opera North (die Titelrolle in *Iolanta*), der Scottish Opera und der Welsh National Opera. Zu ihren Aufnahmen auf Tonträger gehören *Das klagende Lied* und Rachmaninow-Lieder für Chandos, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, Beethovens Neunte Sinfonie und Haydns *Schöpfung*.

Susan Parry hat an der Universität Birmingham und an der Royal Academy of Music studiert und gehört heute dem Ensemble der English National Opera an, wo sie unter anderem Nicklausse (*Hoffmanns Erzählungen*), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*), Oktavian, den Komponisten und den Fuchs (*Das schlaue Fuchslein*) gesungen hat. 1996 debütierte sie anlässlich des Covent Garden Festivals an der Royal Opera und trat bei den BBC-Promenadenkonzerten auf. Mit dem Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment hat sie die Titelrolle einer konzertanten Aufführung von Glucks *Iphigénie en Tauride* gesungen. Susan Parry hat an der Welsh National Opera gastiert, beim BBC Philharmonic und Royal Philharmonic Orchestra sowie beim BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Yvonne Howard begann ihre arbeitsreiche und vielseitige Karriere noch während ihres Studiums am Royal Northern College of Music, und zu ihren frühen Verpflichtungen zählten Auftritte mit der English Touring Opera, beim Glyndebourne Festival und dessen Tournée-truppe, und mit der City of Birmingham Touring Opera. 1991 gab sie ihr Debüt an der Royal Opera als Mercédès (*Carmen*). Seither ist sie dort regelmäßig aufgetreten, in Rollen wie Karolka (*Jenůfa*),

Marcellina und Suzuki. Sie singt außerdem als Gastsolistin mit der Opera North, und hat in São Paulo, Paris, Nantes und Tel Aviv gastiert. Zu ihren Einspielungen auf Tonträger zählen Händels *Messias*, Waltons *Troilus and Cressida* und Verdis Requiem.

Mark Curtis, der in der englischen Grafschaft Hertfordshire geboren wurde, hat erst am Royal Northern College of Music bei Frederic Cox studiert, und dann mit einem Stipendium der Friends of Covent Garden und des Arts Council am National Opera Studio. Er ist unter anderem als Fenton (*Falstaff*) und Jaquino (*Fidelio*) bei der Glyndebourne Touring Opera aufgetreten, als Beppo (*Pagliacci*) an der Royal Opera, als Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*) an der Kent Opera sowie als Steuermann Daland (*Der fliegende Holländer*), der Pfarrer (*Peter Grimes*), Arv (*Maskarade*), Hermes (*King Priam*) und Vašek (*Die verkaufte Braut*) an der Opera North. Zu seinen Aufnahmen auf Tonträger gehören *Die lustige Witwe*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut* und *La forza del destino*.

Matthew Best ist als Dirigent und als Sänger tätig. Er wurde als Chorschüler am King's College in Cambridge und am National Opera Studio ausgebildet und gewann 1982 den

Decca–Kathleen Ferrier Prize. Er war Schüler bei dem verstorbenen Otakar Kraus und bei Robert Lloyd und nimmt zur Zeit Unterricht bei Patrick McGuigan.

Von 1980 bis 1986 war er Solist an der Royal Opera und hat außerdem häufig an der Opera North, der Scottish Opera, der Welsh National Opera und der Nederlandse Opera gastiert. 1997 gab er als der Holländer (*Der fliegende Holländer*) sein Debüt an der English National Opera. Matthew Best tritt in ganz Europa auf dem Konzertpodium auf und arbeitet mit vielen führenden Orchestern und Dirigenten der Welt. Als Dirigent ist er künstlerischer Leiter des Corydon Orchestra und der Corydon Singers.

Seit seiner Gründung 1978 hat sich der **Chorus of Opera North** einen Ruf erworben, der ihn in den ersten Rang der Opernchöre der Welt erhebt. Neben regelmäßigen Opernaufführungen gibt der Chor vielfältige Konzerte, sowohl mit der English Northern Philharmonia als auch unabhängig davon, zum Beispiel 1990 die Uraufführung von Toru Takemitsus *May Way of Life* mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra unter Simon Rattle. Zu seinen zahlreichen Gastspielen in Kontinentaleuropa zählen Aufführungen am Teatro La Fenice in

Venedig, bei den Wiesbadener Maifestspielen, in Dortmund, Rotterdam und bei der Uraufführung von Benedict Masons *Playing Away* in München.

Die **English Northern Philharmonia** ist das Hausorchester der Opera North und hat sich seit ihrer Gründung 1978 als eines der führenden Opernorchester des Landes etabliert. Die English Northern Philharmonia spielt nicht nur bei allen Vorstellungen der Operntruppe in Leeds und auf Tournee, sondern wirkt unabhängig davon als Sinfonieorchester, das Konzerte in ganz Yorkshire und den umliegenden Regionen gibt. Das Orchester hat nicht nur mit David Lloyd-Jones, seinem Gründungsdirigenten, und Paul Daniel gespielt, der von 1990 bis 1997 sein Erster Dirigent und Musikdirektor der Opera North war, sondern auch mit zahlreichen internationalen Gastdirigenten und -solisten. Neben ihren großangelegten Sinfoniekonzerten gibt die English Northern Philharmonia auch Kammerkonzerte, begleitet die Chorvereinigungen der Region und hat sich für seine Operngalas mit Sängern von internationalem Rang einen hervorragenden Ruf erworben.

Paul Daniel gilt weithin als einer der interessantesten und begabtesten Dirigenten seiner Generation und ist auf der ganzen Welt an Opernhäusern und bei Orchestern sehr gefragt. Im September 1997 trat er sein neues Amt als Musikdirektor der English National Opera an und dirigierte in seiner ersten Saison den *Fliegenden Holländer*, Janáček's *Aus einem Totenhaus* und *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* von Jacques Offenbach. Von 1990 bis 1997 war er Musikdirektor der Opera North, wo er die Kritik mit seinen spannenden und erfrischenden Darbietungen unter anderem von Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, Tippett's *King Priam* und Schrekers *Der ferne Klang* beeindruckte, mit *Boris Godunow* (dem Debüt der Opera North 1992 bei den Londoner Proms) und Britten's *Gloriana*.

Als Chefdirigent der English Northern Philharmonia hat Paul Daniel in ganz Großbritannien Konzerte geleitet und ist mit dem Orchester zu vielen Festspielen gereist. Weitere Opernverpflichtungen hat er unter anderem an der Opera Factory erfüllt (wo er von 1987 bis 1990 Musikdirektor war), an der Opéra de Nancy, am Royal Opera House, am Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brüssel und an der Bayerischen Staatsoper.

Modest Moussorgski: Boris Godounov

Rares sont les opéras dont l'histoire est aussi remarquable que celle du chef-d'œuvre de Moussorgski *Boris Godounov*. Il en existe au moins trois versions complètes de la main du compositeur lui-même, ainsi que des éditions et orchestrations posthumes de Rimski-Korsakov, Chostakovitch et d'autres compositeurs. Du vivant de Moussorgski (c'est-à-dire jusqu'en 1881), l'opéra n'a été monté que vingt-et-un fois, puis, pendant plus d'une décennie, il a été presque totalement négligé, malgré une reprise importante au Théâtre Bolchoï de Moscou en 1888 avec la célèbre basse de l'époque Bogomir Korsov dans le rôle titre. L'ascension fulgurante de l'ouvrage vers la renommée a commencé avec la publication de la version de cet opéra réalisée par Rimski-Korsakov en 1896, suivie deux ans plus tard d'une production donnée à l'Opéra privé de Moscou avec le jeune Feodor Chaliapine. Dès lors, le personnage tragique du tsar tourmenté est resté lié de façon inextricable au nom de la basse légendaire et l'ouvrage a remporté un succès retentissant dans les théâtres lyriques de Russie, puis à l'Opéra de Paris durant la

Saison russe de Diaghilev en 1908. Moussorgski aurait peut-être lui-même été surpris du triomphe de son œuvre (sans doute le plus russe de tous les opéras) sur la scène française.

L'œuvre sur laquelle Moussorgski a basé son *Boris Godounov* est le drama homonyme (1825) du grand poète national russe Alexandre Pouchkine. Pendant six ans, la publication de la pièce a été interdite par la censure et il a fallu attendre jusqu'en 1870 pour qu'elle soit montée pour la première fois, c'est-à-dire l'année même où Moussorgski venait de terminer la première esquisse de son opéra; en fait, certains décors conçus à l'origine pour la pièce ont été réutilisés plus tard pour l'opéra. Pouchkine avait commencé à écrire un drame réaliste suivant des lignes shakespeariennes: les trois unités du drame classique français étaient entièrement abandonnées, tout comme le ton élevé de Racine et de Corneille; les vers habituels en alexandrins étaient remplacés par des vers blancs, non rimés. Beaucoup de contemporains croyaient que le *Boris Godounov* de Pouchkine était une expérience

audacieuse – une œuvre dramatique pas réellement destinée à la scène.

Les aspects radicaux de l'œuvre de Pouchkine ont certainement attiré Moussorgski, mais dans une Russie qui émergeait à peine de l'ère strictement autoritaire de Nicholas Ier, le sujet était encore politique et brûlant. Moussorgski a composé la première version de *Boris Godounov* (qui se compose de sept scènes) en 1868–1869, mais elle a été rejetée par la Direction des Théâtres impériaux. Il a opéré des changements radicaux, mais l'opéra a été rejeté une seconde fois en 1871. Ce n'est qu'en janvier 1874 que l'opéra a finalement essuyé les feux de la rampe du Théâtre Mariïnski de Saint-Pétersbourg, où il a reçu un accueil mitigé et a sévèrement divisé l'opinion musicale russe.

L'apparition de cet opéra a coïncidé avec une vague de nationalisme, qui s'est manifestée dans la littérature populiste et surtout dans la musique du Groupe des Cinq. Pour Moussorgski et les autres compositeurs nationalistes, l'histoire russe était devenue une sorte d'aimant irrésistible. Au travers de cette histoire, ils ont pu exprimer des traditions et des valeurs russes et, par dessus tout, le caractère unique de leur perception du monde ainsi que leur place dans ce monde. Ils ont été

particulièrement attirés par l'une des périodes les plus dramatiques et sanglantes de l'histoire de la Russie – la fin du XVI^e siècle, couvrant une période qui s'étend à peu près du règne d'Ivan le Terrible au Temps des troubles.

Il est impossible d'apprécier pleinement cet opéra sans bien comprendre les événements qui ont abouti à l'accession au trône de Boris Godounov en 1598. Pour ce faire, il faut remonter dans le temps au règne d'Ivan IV (Ivan le Terrible), qui avait cherché à consolider la puissance du trône en bridant impitoyablement l'influence des boyards. A la mort d'Ivan IV en 1584, son fils Feodor, simple d'esprit qui avait épousé Irina Godounova (la sœur de Boris), lui a succédé. Comme Feodor n'avait pas d'enfant, les conspirations se sont multipliées parmi les boyards pour assurer la succession, mais le véritable pouvoir était déjà concentré entre les mains de Boris, qui gouvernait en réalité comme régent. La mort de Feodor en 1598 a laissé la voie libre à Boris pour prétendre légitimement au trône de Moscovie, car le seul autre prétendant possible, le prince Dimitri, était mort dans des circonstances mystérieuses en mai 1591. La principale source historique de la pièce de Pouchkine est *L'histoire de l'Etat russe* de Karamzine. Dans cet ouvrage, Karamzine ignore délibérément les comptes-

rendus contemporains sur la mort du jeune prince Dimitri (selon le rapport officiel, il se serait accidentellement tranché la gorge au cours d'une crise d'épilepsie et fait de Boris l'instigateur de son meurtre. En suivant cette version des événements, Moussorgski a créé un personnage charismatique à la fois fort et cruel d'une part, mais humain et hanté par sa culpabilité d'une autre.

L'opéra dépeint la montée au pouvoir et la mort de Boris sur un arrière-plan riche en événements historiques. L'action se déroule dans une série de scènes vaguement reliées entre elles, qui nous emmènent de Moscou à la frontière lituanienne. L'une des très grandes réussites de Moussorgski dans cet opéra est d'avoir créé un drame réaliste: il est non seulement peuplé de personnages grands et célèbres, mais également de gens ordinaires, de moines errants et de jésuites. Ceci donne à l'ouvrage un souffle et un coup d'œil panoramique, mais, ce qui est plus important encore, Moussorgski crée pour nous, par la qualité de la musique et la recherche de la vérité psychologique, des personnages qui prennent vie et qui sont capables de nous émouvoir et de nous fasciner.

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Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

L'argument

Premier tableau

Une cour du monastère de Novodievitchi près de Moscou. Février 1598

Boris s'est retiré au monastère. La police, puis le boyard Tchelkalov qui prie pour que Dieu guide ce pays troublé, harangent le peuple apathique pour qu'il supplie Boris de monter sur le trône. Une procession de pèlerins entre dans le monastère. La foule commente les événements avec cynisme.

Deuxième tableau

La place du Kremlin à Moscou, entre la cathédrale de l'Assomption et la cathédrale de l'Archange Michel. Six mois plus tard

Boris est couronné et fait sa première apparition de tsar. Il répond aux acclamations du peuple, mais l'esprit lourd d'appréhension. (Plages [1] - [2])

Troisième tableau

Une cellule du monastère de Choudov au Kremlin. Six ans plus tard

Pendant le règne de Boris, la Russie a enduré famine et complots. Un vieux moine, Pimène, met la dernière main à sa chronique de l'histoire russe. Son novice, Grigori, est tourmenté par des rêves de grandeur. Pimène

se remémore son passé mouvementé, les batailles auxquelles il a assistées et les tsars qu'il a connus, et raconte le meurtre du tsarévitch Dimitri. Grigori découvre que, s'il vivait encore, Dimitri aurait le même âge que lui.

Quatrième tableau

Une auberge à la frontière lituanienne.

Quelques jours plus tard

Grigori qui s'est enfui du monastère se dirige vers la frontière, avec l'intention de se faire passer pour le tsarévitch Dimitri et de mener l'insurrection contre Boris. Il arrive en compagnie de deux moines vagabonds, Varlaam et Missail, dans une auberge isolée, proche de la frontière. Varlaam chante une chanson racontant la victoire remportée par Ivan le Terrible sur les Tartares à la bataille de Kazan (page [3]). Des soldats arrivent avec un mandat pour l'arrestation de Grigori. Celui-ci lit à voix haute le document, substituant la description de Varlaam à la sienne. Comme la supercherie est découverte, Grigori s'enfuit par la fenêtre.

Cinquième tableau

Les appartements du tsar au Kremlin de Moscou. Quelques mois plus tard

La fille de Boris, Xenia, pleure la mort de son fiancé. Son frère Feodor et sa vieille nourrice

essaient de la consoler. Boris entre. Il se montre tendre envers sa fille et fier de la connaissance qu'a son fils de son futur royaume. Il médite sur son crime et sur les souffrances endurées par sa famille et la Russie: son plaisir d'être arrivé au pouvoir en a été complètement gâté. On annonce l'arrivée du prince Chouiski. Il apporte la nouvelle qu'un prétendant au trône est apparu en Lituanie, se faisant passer pour Dimitri, le tsarévitch ressuscité. Boris force Chouiski à faire la description du corps de Dimitri exposé dans la cathédrale d'Ouglitch, les traits décomposés par la mort. Boris s'effondre, hanté par la vision de l'enfant assassiné. (Plages [4] - [7])

Sixième tableau

Devant la cathédrale Saint-Basile à Moscou.

Un an plus tard

Boris prie dans la cathédrale. Dehors des enfants se moquent d'un innocent et lui volent son kopeck. Boris prend pitié de l'innocent et lui demande de prier pour lui, mais l'innocent refuse. (Plages [8] - [9])

Septième tableau

Le palais Granatovitaya au Kremlin de Moscou, le 14 avril 1605

Le conseil des Boyards est en séance: il s'est réuni d'urgence pour décider des mesures à

prendre contre le prétendant. Chouiski prend la parole pour décrire l'état de délire dans lequel Boris se trouve. Celui-ci arrive sur ces entrefaites, chassant la vision du défunt Dimitri. Chouiski fait entrer Pimène. Le vieux moine raconte l'histoire de la guérison miraculeuse qui s'est opérée près de la tombe de Dimitri. Boris s'effondre et demande à ce qu'on le laisse seul avec son fils. Il donne des conseils à Feodor pour gouverner la Russie, et prie Dieu de protéger son fils qui est innocent. Tandis que le glas sonne et que les moines psalmodient les derniers sacrements, Boris meurt, implorant que ses crimes lui soient pardonnés. (Plages ^[10] - ^[12])

Traduction: Marianne Fernée

Stuart Kale est depuis longtemps reconnu comme étant l'un des chanteurs-acteurs les plus accomplis et aux talents les plus divers se produisant actuellement sur les scènes d'opéra internationales. Ses interprétations vives et pleines d'intelligence d'un grand nombre de rôles ont été unanimement acclamées dans le monde entier.

Il a fait ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres et au London Opera Centre. Après avoir obtenu son diplôme de fin d'études, il devint membre du

Welsh National Opera, puis de l'English National Opera où il resta pendant huit ans. Là, il chanta des rôles tels que ceux de Don Ottavio, Michael (*Giulietta*) et Nanki-Poo. Depuis qu'il a quitté l'English National Opera, Stuart Kale s'est produit au Covent Garden de Londres, au Théâtre du Châtelet à Paris, au State Opera of South Australia, avec la Canadian Opera Company, et à Drottningholm, Cologne, San Francisco et Karlsruhe. Parmi ses enregistrements figurent Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*), *Les sept péchés capitaux* de Kurt Weill, Dr Suda (*Osud*) et Mr Upfold (*Albert Herring*).

John Tomlinson est né dans le Lancashire. Il fit d'abord des études d'ingénieur à l'Université de Manchester avant de remporter une bourse pour étudier la musique au Royal Manchester College of Music. Depuis 1974, il chante régulièrement à l'English National Opera, et depuis 1976 à Covent Garden. Il s'est également produit à l'Opera North, au festival de Glyndebourne et avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera, et au Kent Opera. Depuis 1988, il chante chaque année au festival de Bayreuth où il s'est fait entendre dans les rôles suivants: Wotan (*Das Rheingold* et *Die Walküre*), le Voyageur errant (*Siegfried*), Titirel et Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*), et le roi Mark

(*Tristan und Isolde*). Il s'est également produit dans les festivals d'Aix-en-Provence et de Salzbourg, au Maggio Musicale, et à Genève, Lisbonne, San Francisco, San Diego, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich et Vienne.

John Tomlinson maîtrise un vaste répertoire de pièces de concert, et s'est produit avec tous les grands orchestres anglais, ainsi qu'en Allemagne, en Italie, en Belgique, aux Pays-Bas, en France, en Espagne, au Danemark et aux Etats-Unis, chantant sous la direction de chefs aussi éminents que Daniel Barenboim et Bernard Haitink. Il a participé à de nombreux enregistrements, notamment dans les rôles de Talbot (*Mary Stuart*) et Achilles (*Julius Caesar*) (ces deux enregistrements ont été sponsorisés par la Peter Moores Foundation), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), dans les rôles titres des Noces de Figaro et du *Château de Barbe-Bleue*, dans la Neuvième symphonie de Beethoven, le *Messie* de Haendel et le Requiem de Verdi.

Clive Bayley chanta le rôle de Claggart (*Billy Budd*) tandis qu'il était encore étudiant au Royal Northern College of Music où il avait obtenu une bourse (Peter Moores Scholar). Sa réputation est déjà fermement établie auprès des grandes compagnies d'opéra en Grande-Bretagne. Par ailleurs, il se produit régulièrement en concert. Il a fait ses débuts

au Covent Garden de Londres en 1991 dans la création mondiale de *Gawain* de Harrison Birtwistle. Il a remporté d'importants succès avec l'Opera North (dans *Jerusalem* de Verdi), l'English National Opera (dans *Billy Budd*, *Wozzeck* et *Doktor Faust*) et l'Opera Factory (dans *Don Giovanni*). Il se produit également au Netherlands Opera. Parmi ses prestations avec l'Opera North, on peut noter *Sparafucile (Rigoletto)*, le Referee (*Playing Away*), et le rôle titre dans *Les Noces de Figaro*. Parmi ses enregistrements figurent *Baa Baa Black Sheep* de Michael Berkeley, *Il Sant'Alessio* de Landi, *Candide* de Leonard Bernstein, et *Troilus and Cressida* de William Walton.

Joan Rodgers est l'une des chanteuses anglaises les plus appréciées, et jouit d'une importante réputation à l'opéra, au concert et en récital. Elle a fait ses études avec Joseph Ward au Royal Northern College of Music, où elle obtint une bourse d'étude (Peter Moores Scholarship), et avec Audrey Langford. En 1981, elle remporta le Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. En Grande-Bretagne, Joan Rodgers se produit régulièrement avec les principales compagnies d'opéra, notamment l'English National Opera (dans la Comtesse et Ginevra (*Ariodante*)), le Covent Garden de Londres (la Gouvernante dans *The Turn of the*

Screw), le Glyndebourne Festival Opera (Susanna et le rôle titre de *Theodora*), l'Opera North (dans le rôle titre de *Iolanta*), le Scottish Opera et le Welsh National Opera. Ses enregistrements comprennent *Das klagende Lied* et des mélodies de Rachmaninov pour Chandos, *Le nozze di Figaro* et *Don Giovanni*, la Neuvième symphonie de Beethoven et *La création* de Haydn.

Susan Parry a étudié à l'Université de Birmingham et à la Royal Academy of Music de Londres. Elle est aujourd'hui membre de l'English National Opera où elle a chanté Nicklausse (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*), Octavian, le Compositeur et le Renard (*Le petit renard rusé*). En 1996, elle fit ses débuts au Covent Garden de Londres dans le cadre du Festival Verdi, et aux Proms. Elle a chanté le rôle titre d'*Iphigénie en Tauride* de Gluck en version de concert avec l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Susan Parry s'est produite avec le Welsh National Opera, le BBC Philharmonic, le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra et le BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Yvonne Howard commença une carrière très active et multiple à l'époque où elle était encore étudiante au Royal Northern College of

Music. Elle chanta ses premiers rôles avec l'English Touring Opera, le festival de Glyndebourne, le Glyndebourne Touring Opera et le City of Birmingham Touring Opera. En 1991, elle fit ses débuts au Covent Garden de Londres dans le rôle de Mercedes (*Carmen*). Depuis cette date, elle s'est produite régulièrement dans des rôles tels que ceux de Karolka (*Jenůfa*), Marcellina et Suzuki. Elle est également régulièrement invitée par l'Opera North, et a chanté à São Paulo, Paris, Nantes et Tel Aviv. Parmi ses enregistrements figurent le *Messie* de Haendel, *Troilus and Cressida* de William Walton et le Requiem de Verdi.

Né dans le Hertfordshire, **Mark Curtis** a fait ses études au Royal Northern College of Music sous la direction de Frederic Cox, puis au National Opera Studio grâce à une bourse offerte par les Amis de Covent Garden et par l'Arts Council. Il s'est produit avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera dans les rôles de Fenton (*Falstaff*) et de Jacquino (*Fidelio*), avec le Royal Opera dans celui de Beppe (*Pagliacci*), et avec le Kent Opera dans celui de Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*). Avec l'Opera North, il a chanté les rôles suivants: le Pilote (*Le vaisseau fantôme*), Rector (*Peter Grimes*), Arv (*Maskarade*), Hermes (*King Priam*) et Vašek (*La fiancée vendue*). Ses enregistrements

comportent *La veuve joyeuse*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut* et *La forza del destino*.

Matthew Best mène une double carrière de chef d'orchestre et de chanteur. Il a fait ses études au King's College de Cambridge et au National Opera Studio. En 1982, il remporta le Decca–Kathleen Ferrier Prize. Il a été l'élève de Otakar Kraus et de Robert Lloyd. Il poursuit actuellement ses études avec Patrick McGuigan.

De 1980 à 1986, il fut soliste au Covent Garden de Londres, et travailla également avec l'Opera North, le Scottish Opera, le Welsh National Opera, et le Netherlands Opera. En 1997, il fit ses débuts avec l'English National Opera dans le rôle du Hollandais (*Le vaisseau fantôme*). Matthew Best se produit également en concert à travers toute l'Europe, et chante avec la plupart des grands orchestres et des chefs du monde entier. En tant que chef d'orchestre, il est le directeur du Corydon Orchestra et des Corydon Singers.

Depuis sa fondation en 1978, le **Chœur de l'Opera North** s'est fait une réputation qui le place à la tête des chœurs d'opéra internationaux. Outre ses prestations régulières à l'opéra, le Chœur donne un grand nombre

de concerts avec l'English Northern Philharmonia et indépendamment, notamment en 1990 quand il créa *My Way of Life* de Toru Takemitsu avec le City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra sous la direction de Simon Rattle. Le Chœur de l'Opera North a donné de nombreux concerts à l'étranger, notamment à La Fenice de Venise, au Festival de Mai de Wiesbaden, à Dortmund, Rotterdam, ainsi qu'à Munich lors de la première mondiale de *Playing Away* de Benedict Mason.

L'**English Northern Philharmonia** est l'orchestre résident de l'Opéra North, et depuis sa fondation en 1978, il s'est imposé comme l'un des meilleurs orchestres d'opéra d'Angleterre. L'English Northern Philharmonia accompagne non seulement la compagnie dans toutes ses représentations à Leeds et en tournées, mais mène également une activité indépendante d'orchestre symphonique, donnant des concerts dans le Yorkshire et dans les alentours. Il s'est produit avec de nombreux solistes et chefs de réputation internationale, ainsi qu'avec David Lloyd-Jones, son chef fondateur, et Paul Daniel qui a été le directeur musical et le chef principal de l'Opera North de 1990 à 1997. Parallèlement à ses concerts symphoniques, l'English Northern

Philharmonia donne des concerts de musique de chambre, accompagne les sociétés chorales de la région, et s'est également attiré des louanges pour ses concerts de gala avec des chanteurs de notoriété internationale.

Paul Daniel est considéré comme l'un des chefs d'orchestre les plus passionnants et les plus talentueux de sa génération, et mène une intense activité à travers le monde dans le domaine de l'opéra et à la tête des grands orchestres symphoniques. En 1997, il a été nommé directeur musical de l'English National Opera, et au cours de sa première saison, il a dirigé *Le Vaisseau fantôme* de Wagner, *La maison des morts* de Janacek, et *Les contes d'Hoffmann* d'Offenbach. De 1990 à 1997, il fut le directeur musical de l'Opera

North où il reçut les louanges de la critique pour ses interprétations passionnantes et originales, notamment *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* de Dukas, *King Priam* de Tippett, *Der ferne Klang* de Schreker, *Boris Godounov* (œuvre avec laquelle l'Opera North fit ses débuts aux Proms de Londres en 1992) et *Gloriana* de Britten.

En sa qualité de chef principal de l'English Northern Philharmonia, Paul Daniel a dirigé des concerts dans toute la Grande-Bretagne, et dans de nombreux festivals. Dans le domaine de l'opéra, il a travaillé également avec l'Opera Factory (dont il fut le directeur musical de 1987 à 1990), l'Opéra de Nancy, le Covent Garden de Londres, le Théâtre de la Monnaie de Bruxelles, et le Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich.

Stephen Vaughan



John Tomlinson as Boris in
Opera North's production of
Boris Godunov.



John Tomlinson as Boris in Opera North's production of *Boris Godunov*.

Coronation Scene

A square in Moscow Kremlin. Facing the audience, up-stage, the Great Staircase of the Imperial Palace. Right, downstage, the crowd is kneeling in the space between the Cathedral of the Assumption (right), and the Cathedral of the Archangels, (left, distant). The porches of both cathedrals are visible. Solemn peals of bells. Loud chimes on the stage. From the Great Staircase boyars in solemn procession start towards the Cathedral of the Assumption; in front are guards, Streltsy, and boyar children; then comes Shuisky, carrying the crown of Monomach on a cushion. Behind him boyars, Shchelkalov carrying the Imperial sceptre; then more Streltsy, the chief boyars, the secretaries etc. The procession passes among the crowd and enters the Cathedral of the Assumption. The Streltsy stand in files on both sides of the steps.

Shuisky (*appearing in the porch of the Cathedral of the Assumption; to the crowd*)

[1] Long life to our Tsar Boris Feodorovich!

(The crowd stands up.)

Crowd

Long live our sovereign, Tsar of Russia.

(The chimes cease.)

Shuisky (*re-enters the Cathedral*)

Hail Him!

Crowd

Like the sun in the skies, supreme in its glory,
Over Russia our Tsar Boris now reigns in glory!

(The Tsar's procession comes out of the Cathedral of the Assumption. The Police Officers marshal the people into rows.)

(Trumpeters take places facing the audience, in front of the crowd.) Long live our sovereign! Tsar, our guardian! Lift your voices, people! Now exult and rejoice, people! Faithful Christian people! Let all hail our Tsar Boris and rejoice!

Boyars (*from the Cathedral porch, to the crowd*)
All hail to thee, Tsar Boris Feodorovich! *(They come down the steps.)*

Crowd (*bowing deeply to the boyars*)
All hail to thee! *(Schelkalov and the boyars follow the procession and form a semi-circle line extending from the Cathedral of the Archangels to the Cathedral of the Assumption.)* Over Russia Tsar Boris now reigns in glory! Praise him!

(Boris appears in the Cathedral porch. Shuisky, behind the Tsar's back, signals to the people to keep silence, and with Vorotinsky takes his place behind Boris. The chimes cease.)

Boris (*from the porch; his children, Feodor and Xenia, are behind him.*)

[2] My soul is sad. A secret terror haunts me; with evil presentiments my heart is stifled. *(in a mood of exaltation)* O Lord above, O Thou Almighty Father! From Heaven's throne behold my contrite tears, and with Thy blessing grant me holiness and strength, that they may guide me. *(with humility)* O make me just and merciful as Thou; in glory let me rule my land... *(Bows his*

head in prayer. Raising his head sternly) Now let us kneel and pay our homage at the tombs of Russia's monarchs. (*majestically*) And then our people all shall feast, yea, ev'ry man, from boyar down to serf; all shall we greet, all gladly shall we welcome!

(Boris, accompanied by Shuisky and Vorotinsky, comes down the steps. The boyars and Streltsy follow. The procession proceeds towards the Cathedral of the Archangels.)

Crowd

Glory, glory, glory! Long live our sovereign, Tsar of Russia! (*The people rush towards the Cathedral. The police maintain order.*) Honour and glory to you our Father! As the sun shines supreme in its glory! Over Russia Tsar Boris now reigns in glory, and long may he prosper! (*Tumult. The police struggle with the crowd. Boris comes out of the Cathedral of the Archangels and proceeds towards the Palace.*) Glory, glory, glory!

Varlaam's Song

Varlaam (*bottle in hand*)

- 3 By the walls of Kazan the mighty fortress,
Tsar Ivan made a celebrated conquest.
There the Tartars took a beating,
There began their long retreating.
Russia was free once more!

(drinks)

Tsar Ivan advanced his army to the town of
Kazan;

There he tunnell'd out a trench beneath the
broad river bed.

All the time the wicked Tartars felt as safe as
before.

Little did they know that Tsar Ivan had in
store;

How they'd shout and roar!

(drinks)

Now Ivan puts on his well-known frown.
Head on shoulder, our Tsar is busy working out
a plan.

All at once he calls his gunner boys,
And he bids them stand with fuse in hand,
Stand with fuse in hand!

Now the fuses of candle-wax are set alight.
One young gunner goes up and gives the casks a
push.

See the barrels full of powder start to roll and roll.
Hoy! down the tunnel see them tumbling to
their goal,
With a bang explode!

(drinks)

How they howl, those wicked Tartars as they're
blown on high!

How they shriek and yell with all their might!
Tartar bodies strew the fortress far and wide.
Corpses numbered twenty hundred score,
And three thousand more!

Such was the fate of Kazan the mighty fortress!
Yeh!

Apartments Scene

The Imperial apartments in the Moscow Kremlin. The sumptuous decorations of the Moscow Tsars. Up-stage, on the audience's left, a terrestrial globe and a small table at which Feodor is studying an atlas. Right, mid-stage, a carved table at which Xenia is sitting. Near the table, on a stool, the Nurse sits, sewing. Right, down-stage, an armchair.

Xenia (*at a little table, gazing at the picture of the Danish Prince, her betrothed. She kisses the picture, weeps and laments.*)

- 4 Ah, my dear betrothed, sweet prince, my well-beloved, you left me for ever, you forsook your bride to be, and you lie forsaken in your cold grave, in your cold grave so far away.

Feodor (*studying a map*)

Volga, its affluent, Oka... Kliazma, (here is Vladimir on Kliazma), and here's Kama, Sheksna, Mologa, affluents of the Volga. Now the towns: Tver, Yaroslavl, Uglich, Kostroma, Nizhny. Here is Astrakhan. Here's the Volga's estuary. Goodness, how broad it all is! What a lot of islands!

Xenia (*overcome by grief*)

Where are you my beloved, have you left me alone for ever? To mourn in sadness, to pine in anguish, for your sake my darling Ivan, you my prince of princes, my joy, my heart's desire. (*weeps*)

Feodor (*drawing*)

Caspian sea here, Volga's estuary. Right at the

mouth the width is seven versts. The distance that it covers is two thousand versts, and maybe it's even longer...

The Nurse (*gets up*)

Stop this, Tsarevna, my dearest one! Weep no longer, your grief will kill you!

Xenia

I'm wretched, nanny dear, so wretched!

The Nurse

Come now! Think no more of him! Maiden's tears are dew upon the grass; once the sun shines it soon is dry again! There's all the world to choose from! We'll find another prince, such a handsome one, such a wonderful one. You'll soon forget Ivan and live in happiness.

Xenia

Oh! no, no, nanny dear! I'll be true to him even though he's dead. Where are you my beloved? My sweetheart hear me calling... Where are you Ivanushka, where?

Boris

My Xenia, don't weep beloved child, though left before your wedding as a widow, your weeping and distress are all in vain.

Xenia

O my good lord, don't let these foolish tears of mine distress you. A maiden's grief is surely but a trifle compared with your great burden.

Boris (*caresses Xenia*)

My Xenia, beloved daughter! Go to your

chamber now and talk with your companions,
and so forget this deep affliction. (*He kisses her.*)
Now go, my child! (*watches her as she goes.*)
Exeunt Xenia and Nurse. Boris goes to his son.)
And you, my son, still working? (*seeing the map*)
What's this I see?

Feodor

The map of great Moscovia, our dominion from
end to end. (*pointing*) I'll show you: here is
Moscow, here's Novgorod, and here's Kazan,
Astrakhan, the Caspian, yes, the Caspian, and
here's the endless forest-land of Perm, and here's
Siberia.

Boris

How well explained, my son! As from on high
with all before you're able to survey our
kingdom: its frontiers, rivers, cities. Work hard,
Feodor! A time will come (who knows, it may be
soon) when you, you shall inherit this realm of
ours... Work hard, my son! (*Feodor goes up-stage
and resumes his work. Boris sits at the table and
ponders, examining the rolls of paper and
parchments.*)

- 5 I stand supreme in power. Five years and more
my reign has been unchallenged.
And yet I grieve, within my sad, tormented soul!
In vain the wise astrologers foretell long life and
years of glory free from turmoil.
Nor life, nor power, nor transient lure of glory,
nor praise from the crowds can cheer my aching
heart. My children might have brought me
consolation. I planned a feast to greet my

daughter as a bride, my sweet Tsarevna, my
cherished angel. Like lightning, death has struck
the one she loved.
(*lost in thought*) How fearful is the wrath of God
on high, how merciless a doom awaits the guilty!
Eternal gloom and darkness surround me, O
could one ray of hope but cheer me! My heart is
sick with anguish, my spirit is torn and wracked
with suffering. (*in a whisper*) A secret terror
haunts me; some dread consumes me... In
contrite prayer I implore saints and angels to
bring me release from all my torment. Though
seated in royal splendour, Tsar of Russia, I kneel
before them, and in tears appeal for consolation.
But God condemns and sends rebellion, plots
and intrigues, conspiracies in Poland. Death,
disease, and villainy surround me; pestilence and
famine have ravaged my kingdom.
Impoverished, destitute, Russia groans. And all
who suffer this vengeance of heaven believe in
their hearts I am guilty. They lay the blame on
me for their sorrows, the name of Tsar Boris
rouses their hatred. And even sleep has fled for
now every nighttime a child appears, his face
congealed with blood. Sobbing in anguish,
clenching his fists, he begs me for mercy, (*dully*)
but mercy was denied him! Freshly his wound is
gaping, loudly he cries as death enshrouds
him... (*He rises abruptly and sinks down again
heavily.*) O God above, pity me! (*Enter the Boyar
in attendance, who makes a deep obeisance with
arms extended.*)

- 6 What is it? Where's your tongue? Speak!

Boyar

Most mighty lord and Tsar, outside Prince Vassily Shuisky craves audience.

Boris

Shuisky? All right! Go say we're glad to see his highness and wait to hear his tidings.

Boyar (*rises and whispers in the Tsar's ear*)

Last night one of Pushkin's serfs informed against him, and testified that Shuisky and his master, with other noblemen, sat in secret conversation half the night; at dawn a messenger from Krakov brought them news...

Boris (*angrily*)

Arrest the man! (*Shuisky enters.*) Aha, Prince Shuisky!

Shuisky

Most mighty Lord and Tsar, my homage!

Boris (*with a start*)

Ah, the demagogue himself, the worthy one to lead the brainless rabble, the spokesman of my sly, seditious boyars, wiliest of traitors to your Tsar! Brazen liar, thrice foresworn and ever lying, hypocrite and knave, adulator, you Judas, you rogue disguised as boyar, impostor, snake!

Shuisky

Under Tsar Ivan, (may God Almighty grant him mercy!) Prince Vassily Shuisky was esteemed according to his lineage.

Boris

What? Why, Tsar Ivan Vassilich the Terrible

would cheerfully have burnt you at the stake for less! Yes, and stretching out his royal sceptre, have fanned the leaping flames, stirred the glowing embers, and sung in thanks a holy anthem... But we are kinder, and suffer patiently your arrogance and treason...

Shuisky (*angrily*)

Tsar!

Boris (*derisively*)

Yes? What is it, worthy Prince?

Shuisky (*submissively*)

Tsar! (*coming close to Boris*) I bring... tidings, and most important ones relating to your throne...

Boris

Which only yesterday, a secret messenger conveyed to you at Pushkin's from your accomplices, the traitorous boyars?

Shuisky (*boldly*)

Yes, mighty Tsar! From Poland comes news of a pretender. The king, the lords, and Pope support his claim!

Boris (*anxiously*)

Say what name it is with which he dares to march against me. (*rising*) Come, say what name this wretch usurps... What name?...

Shuisky (*insinuatingly*)

Believe me Tsar, your throne is free from danger. (*Boris paces the room restlessly.*) Your charity, your kindness and your mercy have made you loved

by all throughout your realm, and every subject is devoted to your throne, But though it pains me, mighty Tsar, to voice my thoughts, although it rends my loyal heart to have to say it, yet am I bound in truth to tell you (*Boris stands still.*) that if this wretch who now proclaims himself against you (*Feodor listens in awe to Shuisky's speech.*) should raise a force and cross into our land, the people may well rally to his name: Dimitri, the Tsarevich killed at Uglich!

Boris (*jumping up*)

Dimitri... (*to his son*) Tsarevich, wait outside!

Feodor

O, my good lord, consent that I may stay beside you, that I may know the danger that is threat'ning Russia's throne.

Boris (*paces the room in deep perturbation*)

No, no!... you cannot stay! (*angrily*) Tsarevich! Tsarevich! Be obedient! (*Exit Feodor. Boris follows Feodor, behind whom he carefully closes the door, then goes briskly towards Shuisky.*) Take measures straightaway, so that the frontier between Poland is garrisoned, so that not a living soul may cross to violate this land... Now go! (*suddenly detaining him*) No... remain,... remain Shuisky! Whoever heard at any time, of buried children who rise up from their coffins to march against the Tsar, the Tsar anointed, elected by the people and crowned in the cathedral by the Patriarch... (*laughing wildly, and grasping Shuisky by the collar*) Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha... What? You frown? Why aren't you laughing, eh?

Shuisky

Have mercy, most mighty lord and Tsar!

Boris

Listen, prince! (*blundering*) Twelve years ago when that atrocious crime was ordered... (*correcting himself*) when that poor child, the royal Prince, met his death, his body lay unburied in the square, befouled with blood stains, striking pity and wrath in the hearts of those who'd witness'd it in Uglich and rousing them to vengeance... Was he who died... that infant not... Dimitri?

Shuisky

Yes!

Boris

Vassily Ivanich! By God and by the Cross I now beseech you: be frank with me! Come, let me know the truth; you know me, I'm merciful. Your many lies, your former acts of treason, I can forgive. But if you try deceit, I swear to you, I'll order such a fearful death, yes, such a death that Tsar Ivan the Terrible will shudder in his coffin!... Now answer me!

Shuisky

You don't believe me, Tsar. You treat me with mistrust and, doubting still my loyalty, you threaten punishment and torture. I fear no death, but only your displeasure! (*He draws near to Boris and speaks in a low tone, observing him. There is twilight on stage.*) In the church at Uglich, before the people, five days and more, I

viewed the body of the child. And by his side were thirteen other corpses, disfigured terribly, their clothing fouled with bloodstains, and their flesh already showing traces of corruption. But all the while the royal child looked peaceful, pure and radiant. Glistening hideously, the wound was gaping. Yet on his lips, so chaste and so guiltless, (*Boris mops his face and returns to his seat.*) I saw how wondrously he smiled still; it seemed as if he lay there in his cradle sound asleep. His arms were folded and in one hand he grasped a childish toy of his...

Boris (*hoarsely*)

Enough, Prince!... Ah! (*Boris grips the arms of his chair and waves Shuisky away. Exit Shuisky, watching Boris, who drops back into his seat.*)

- [7] Ugh! Give me air! I suffocate in here... I felt as if the blood had rushed into my brain and slowly then subsided. Oh, cruel conscience, how savagely you punish. (*The stage is in darkness: the clock starts working. Dully*) Now I know if you are stained, then nothing can preserve you from damnation; your soul will burn, your heart is filled with poison, it throbs and throbs within you, (*dully*) and hammer-strokes ring in your ears with curses and revilement... You're choked by something... stifled... you feel your head is splitting... and then... in blood... the murdered child appears!... (*The clock strikes eight. A pale ray of moonlight illuminates the dial and the moving figures.*) There... just there!... What is it?... See, it moves!... It's quivering... it grows...

it comes to me... I hear it groaning... Go... Go... (*as if driving away a ghost*) Not I... the others were to blame... Go, leave me, child! Not I... not I... it was the people! Leave me, child!... Ugh! (*In terror he hides his face in his hands and falls to his knees by the chair.*) God above, who desireth not a sinner's death, have mercy on me, on the soul of guilty Tsar Boris!

St Basil scene

A square in front of the Cathedral of St Basil the Blessed in Moscow. A crowd of poor people roving. Women are seated up-stage, sideways, in the direction of the side door of the Cathedral. Police officers appear now and then among the people. Enter, headed by Mitiukha, a group of men, coming out of the Cathedral.

Men

- [8] What, has the service finished? Yes! and he was cursed once again. Who is he though? That Grishka boy, Grishka Otrepiev. Fancy!

Mitiukha

Out among them comes the deacon, that great big one, that fat one, and he shouted: 'Grishka Otrepiev, anathema!'

Men

That's nonsense! You're just joking! Or else you've lost your senses. It's true we tell you! That's exactly what he said: 'Grishka Otrepiev, he declared, anathema! Ha ha ha, well, let him. If Grishka now is cursed; what's that to our Tsarevich! Can he be Grishka? It's certain.

Mitiukha

But they sang for the Tsarevich: 'May his soul rest in heaven.'

Men

Really? It's all a bit confusing. Is he living then? Why of course he is, you idiots! Dimitri's alive all right! You'll soon find out he is! Boris will live to know it! For they say his army's not far off. He comes to claim his rightful throne. He'll quickly put to flight the troops of Tsar Boris. And soon we shall see him upon his ancestors' throne, the Tsar whom we long for. He'll save us all. To death with traitors, and to death with Tsar Boris!

Old Men

Quiet, quiet, are you crazy? You'll only end up swinging on the gallows.

(They scratch their heads, look round, and start again pacing the stage.)

Urchins *(behind the scenes)*

Tirr, trrr, trrr, trrr! Your hat's made of tin! La, la, la, Tirr!

(Enter the Simpleton, in fetters, and after him the urchins. Some of the people drive away the urchins, who scatter. The Simpleton sits on a stone, starts mending his footwear, and sings, swinging his body. After a time the Urchins start creeping around him.)

Simpleton

Moonlight's shining, the kitten's whining;

Ivanushka arise, pray to God Almighty.
Pray to Christ in heaven: Christ our Saviour.
Send us sunlight, send us moonlight,
Send us sunlight... moonlight...

Urchins

Greetings, greetings good simpleton Ivanich!
Rise and salute us, show how deeply you can bow, then take off your hat. What a heavy hat! *(They tap his metal hat.)* Ting, ting, ting. Make it ring!

Simpleton

I found a shiny kopek today.

Urchins

Nonsense! If you've got one let us see!

Simpleton *(looks for his kopek)*
(showing it) Look!

Urchins

Whisht! *(They snatch the coin from him and run away towards the women.)*

Simpleton *(weeping)*

Ah, ah! Ah! Ivanushka's new kopek has gone! Ah, ah! Come and give it back to him! Ah, ah!

(From the Cathedral the Imperial retinue comes out. Boyars distribute alms.)

People *(Women and children on the Cathedral steps, men on the stage.)*

- 9 Merciful, gracious Tsar give alms for Our Lord's sake; kind father, give us alms for Our Lord's sake. *(Boris appears, followed by Shuisky and*

boyers.) Look, there's the Tsar. (*kneeling*) Tsar, gracious Tsar, give alms for Our Lord's sake! Merciful Tsar, give alms and bread to your children who starve, for Our Lord's sake!

(*The women and children follow Boris down-stage.*)

People

Mighty Tsar, give us alms for Our Lord's sake!
Most mighty Tsar, have pity! (*kneeling*) Feed us!
Feed us! We are starving! Feed us! Feed us! Pity
your children; give us bread, for Our Lord's sake!
(*They bow to the ground.*)

Simpleton

Ah, ah! (*catching sight of Boris*) Boris! hey Boris!
They've taken my new kopek away! Ah, ah!

Boris (*stopping in front of him*)
What makes him cry so?

Simpleton

The boys have stolen and run off with it.
Command that they be murdered, just as you
murdered Dimitri, the young Tsarevich.

Shuisky

Keep quiet, you fool! Seize hold of him at once!
(*A commanding gesture from Boris stops him.*)

Boris

Don't touch him! You holy man, pray for me.
(*Exit Boris. The Simpleton springs up. The people,
appalled, scatter, still watching the Tsar and his
suite.*)

Simpleton

No, Boris, I can't, I can't Boris! I must not pray
for a Tsar Herod. The blessed Virgin won't allow
it. (*He looks round, perplexed, and sits on the stone
and resumes his mending.*)

Tears are flowing, tears of blood flowing;
Weep, weep O soul, soul of poor Russia.
Soon the foe will come and the darkness nears.
Shadows hide the light; dark as darkest night.
Sorrow, sorrow on earth;
Weep, weep, Russian folk, poor starving folk.
(*He looks round and reverts to his mending.*)

Death Scene

Boyers (*aside, in a low voice*)

¹⁰ Sad, Shuisky is not with us. Though he's a
schemer. We cannot ratify our verdict in his
absence.

Shuisky (*bowing*)

Forgive me, noble boyars.

Boyers (*aside*)

Well, talk of the devil.

Shuisky

I fear I've kept you somewhat, but could not
come a single moment sooner... Affairs of
weight and urgency detained my coming.

Boyers

Fie, shame on you Vassil Ivanich; how can you
deal in treacherous disloyalty at your age! The
people of our land rebel. You claim Dimitri is
alive...

Shuisky (*startled*)

Oh! really, your lordships! May God forgive you! How could I, Prince Vassil Ivanich Shuisky, whose only care is that for Russia's welfare, be thought of as a traitor to my country? It's calumny to say so, and slanderous! (*aside*) And for that they hate me! (*coming closer to the boyars*) Why, even now, in token of the love I bear you, I come to bring you news. (*All the boyars surround him.*) Last night when I had left the royal presence, concerned, and saddened at seeing how distress'd the Tsar was, I found a door half open, I look'd in. O what I saw I scarce can tell you! Haggard, all bathed in sweat and racked with terror, his body trembling, he mutter'd as if mad some incoherent words and noises. Rolling his eyes bright with frenzy, as if some secret torment possessed him, our sovereign lord, the Tsar was weeping. Then turning pale, and staring t'wards a corner, he uttered a fearful cry of anguish;

Boyars

Lies! Lies, Prince!

Shuisky

Recoiling from the ghost of the Tsarevich...

Boyars (*appalled*)

What!...

Shuisky

...begged it begone and helplessly repeated: 'Go... (*enter Boris, as if trying to drive away a ghost; in deep perturbation, he staggers down stage.*)... leave me child...

Boris

Go, go!

Shuisky

...leave me child!

Shchelkalov (*seeing Boris*)

Silence! Look... the Tsar!

Boyars

God above! (*They step back, watching Boris.*)

Boris

Leave me, child!

Boyars

O God above, Lord of mercy, protect us!

Boris (*coming near the footlights*)

Go... go! Who says the child was murdered?

It can't be true! He lives, I tell you... But Shuisky has proclaimed this evil slander, so he shall hang!

Shuisky (*appalled, and as if asking a blessing on Boris*)

May the Lord have mercy on your soul!

Boris (*listens*)

Ah? (*recovering his composure*) I summoned you, my boyars. (*He goes towards the throne.*) I need the wisdom of your counsel. (*He sits down.*) In times of woe and bitter tribulation, 'tis you, my boyars, who can guide me.

Shuisky (*comes forward and makes a deep obeisance*)

Most mighty lord and Tsar, permit your most

unworthy slave and councillor to beg a favour of you... Here, awaiting at the door, Pimen the hermit humbly craves permission to gain admittance to your majesty. He's virtuous and holy, all know him and revere him; he wishes to disclose some great secret to you.

Boris

So be it; go summon him. Perhaps his message will bring me consolation and calm the suffering of my weary tortured soul!...

(Shuisky re-enters, followed by Pimen. Pimen appears, observes the assembly, remains standing at the door, watches Boris closely and then goes towards him.)

Pimen

¹¹ A humble hermit, who has no thoughts for secular concerns, is bold enough to crave a hearing...

Boris *(perturbed)*

Speak freely, holy man, all are waiting... tell your story.

Pimen

My story will be short and simple and tells the wond'rous tidings of Heaven's providence and mercy... One evening, when all was still, there came to me a shepherd, already old and wizen'd, who told me of a wond'rous revelation. From early childhood, he told me, he'd been blind, and since that time, had not known light from darkness, both seem'd alike. No remedy could cure him; in vain he tried all herbs and

incantations, in vain he bathed his eyes in hope of sight with waters brought from holy fountains... all vainly! And thus he grew so used to dark, that in his dreams at night the sights he once had known appear'd no longer: his dreaming was but hearing... Once, while deep in sleep a voice spoke... yes, a child's voice call'd out to him, how clearly it call'd: *(Boris shudders, listens in deep perturbation, and grows more and more restless.)* 'Rise, grandfather, rise and go to Uglich town and visit there the great cathedral. *(Boris rises in his seat and mops his brow.)* Kneel down and pray beside my little tombstone; for, grandfather, I am Dimitri, Tsarevich. The Lord has chosen me to dwell among his angels and henceforth to work great miracles for Russia'... *(Boris sinks back into his seat.)* He roused himself... and pondered, then he called his grandson and started on the journey. No sooner had he knelt beside the tombstone, *(Boris, in deepest agitation, listens intently.)* than he was heal'd of blindness, his eyes were filled with tears, with silent, freely flowing tears, for all was clear now: he saw the light, his grandson and the grave...

Boris *(With a loud shriek he carries his hand to his heart. The boyars rush to his assistance. Exit Pimen quickly.)*

Ah! Help me! Help me! I stifle! Ah! *(He falls swooning, held in their arms.)*

(The boyars talk in whispers. A few rush out for help. General confusion)

Boris (*coming to*)

My son must come at once! Oh! death is near:
shroud me!

(The boyars sit Boris in a chair. Shuisky rushes out to fetch the Tsarevich; others to fetch the Patriarch at the Chudov Monastery. Only five of them remain around Boris. Feodor rushes in and falls into the arms of Boris.)

Boris (*clasping his son*)

Now leave us here, let all withdraw! (*Exeunt all*)

¹² Farewell, my son. I am dying... This day you'll reign here in my place. Don't ask of me by what dark path I came to Russia's throne... that's past... you need not know. (*solemnly*) You'll reign henceforth as lawful ruler, you are my first-born, my son, and true successor. Feodor! my well-belov'd Tsarevich! Our kingdom is in danger; see that you defend it. Beware! Fear the pretender! The name he took strikes terror in my heart. You must contend with treach'rous subjects, rebellious armies... famine, plague... (*clutching his heart*) Listen, Feodor! Put no trust in the cunning advice of boyars; keep careful watch upon their secret intrigues with Lithuania; condemn hateful treason severely, be merciless and strong; study the thoughts of your people, use their simple wisdom. Be the guardian and prop of Russia's holy faith; hold in awe God's blessed saints and his angels. (*warmly*) Keep your conscience pure and innocent, Feodor; the strength it gives you will guide you and carry you onward to salvation. (*carries his hand to his*

heart) Protect your gentle sister, guard her well, my son; she has but you to give her help and guidance, dearest Xenia, our cherished angel.

(very solemnly, in rapt prayer, his voice gradually weakening) God above! God above, behold I pray, a sinful father's humble tears! I pray not selfishly, not for myself, O Father!... (*placing both hands on Feodor's head*) Saviour, Lord of mercy, from on high send down Thy saving grace and love on those innocents, my children, young and helpless... Angels and Cherubim! You who guard o'er the Deity... (*clasping his son as if to protect him*) I beg you, spread your wings to shield my children, protect my son and daughter from harm and sin and from temptation... (*draws him close to his breast and kisses him. Behind the scenes, long-sustained bell strokes and death knell*) Hark! 'tis the knell of death!...

Choir of Monks (*behind the scenes*)

Weep ye, weep ye, sons of men, for his course is run, his eyes are forever closed, and his lips are silent. Weep ye, Alleluia!

Boris

The fun'ral dirge! Clothe me... a robe of sack-cloth... as monk I meet my end...

Feodor

O my lord, take comfort for God will help us...

Boris

No, no, Feodor: death's knell has struck...

Choir of Monks (*drawing nearer*)

I see a little child who breathes his last, I stand

weeping, I mourn, he struggles, he writhes and sobs, in vain imploring, praying: but there is no salvation...

Boris (*in deep agitation*)

Mercy! Mercy! Mercy, Lord! with prayer I'll expiate my sin! O cruel death, your agony torments me! (*The boyars and choir of monks enter by the main door.*) Await my orders... your Tsar commands (*Clutching his breast he falls into his*

seat.) Your Tsar commands... Mercy! Death! (*spoken very weakly*) Forgive me, Lord! (*to the boyars, pointing to his son*) There, there's your Tsar, Tsar... Forgive me... (*in a whisper*) forgive me...

(*Boris collapses and dies. Deep silence. The boyars stand as if stunned, heads down, hands crossed, struck motionless during the Tsar's last words.*)

Boyars (*in a whisper*)

He's dead.

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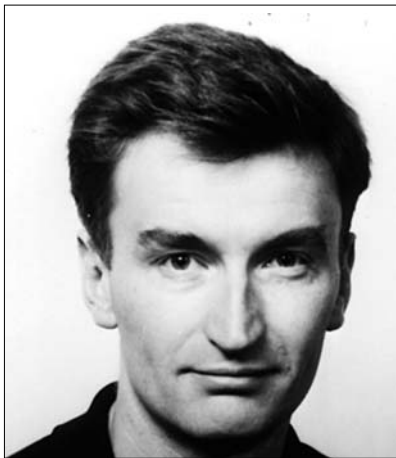
John Tomlinson as Boris and Mark Curtis as the Simpleton in Opera North's production of *Boris Godunov*.



John Tomlinson



Stuart Kale



Clive Bayley



Joan Rodgers

Mark Ellidge



Susan Parry

Sue Adler



Yvonne Howard

Clive Barta



Mark Curtis

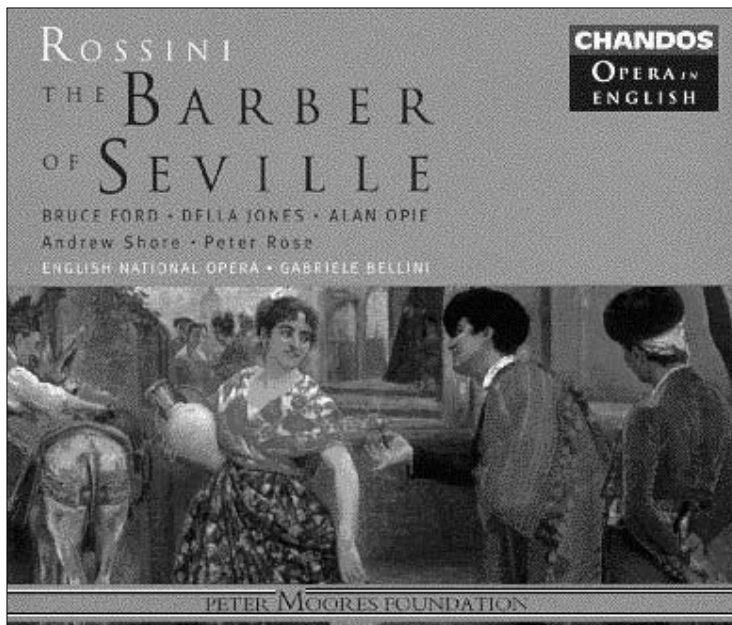


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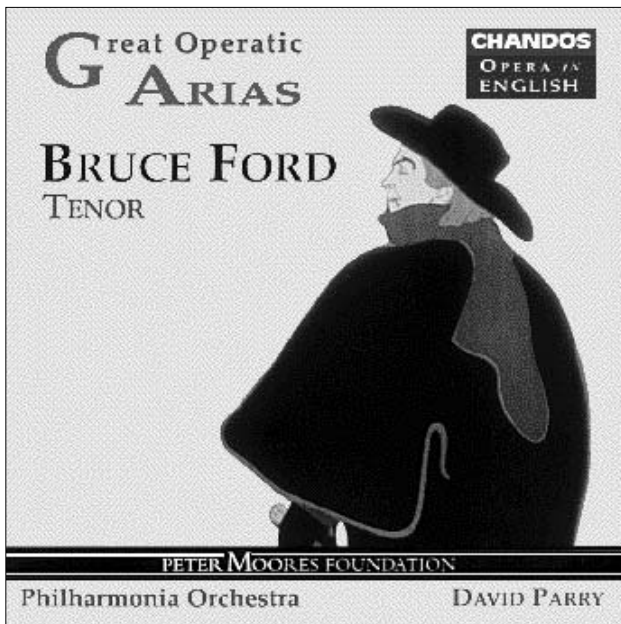
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Front cover John Tomlinson in Opera North's production of *Boris Godunov*. Photo by Stephen Vaughan

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Clive Bartha

Paul Daniel

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)

Highlights

Boris Godunov (based on the initial version of 1869)

Libretto by the composer, based on Pushkin's historical tragedy of the same name and Karamzin's *History of the Russian State*

English translation by David Lloyd-Jones

- Prince Shuisky Stuart Kale *tenor*
- Boris, Tsar of Russia John Tomlinson *bass*
- Varlaam, a vagabond monk Clive Bayley *bass*
- Xenia, Boris's daughter Joan Rodgers *soprano*
- Feodor, Tsarevich Susan Parry *mezzo-soprano*
- The old Nurse Yvonne Howard *mezzo-soprano*
- Simpleton Mark Curtis *tenor*
- Pimen, monk and chronicler Matthew Best *bass*
- Boyar Brian Cookson *tenor*
- Mitiukha Edward Thornton *baritone*
- Shchelkalov Stephen Dawson *baritone*

1 - 2	Coronation Scene	8:04
3	Varlaam's Song	2:30
4 - 7	Apartments Scene	27:59
8 - 9	St Basil Scene	11:16
10 - 12	Death Scene	24:20
		TT 74:43

Chorus of Opera North

Martin Fitzpatrick chorus master

Choristers of Leeds Parish Church

Simon Lindley chorus master

English Northern Philharmonia

David Greed leader

Paul Daniel

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