

Eugene Onegin

by

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Based on the poem by Alexander Pushkin

is jointly produced by the

SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Robin McCabe, *director*

and the

SCHOOL OF DRAMA
Sarah Nash Gates, *director*

DIRECTOR NOEL KORAN
CONDUCTOR / MUSIC DIRECTOR PETER ERÖS
SET DESIGNER DEANNA ZIBELLO
COSTUME DESIGNER KIM NEWTON
LIGHTING DESIGNER AMIYA BROWN
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR ALEX DANILCHIK
STAGE MANAGER ASHLEY ROLPH
VOCAL COACH RHONDA KLINE
REPETITEUR FRANÇOISE PAPILLON

CAST

MADAME LARINA STACY HUNT
TATYANA TESS ALTIVEROS; RALUCA MARINESCU
OLGA FAINA MOROZOV
FILIPEVNA REBECCA SULEK; REGINA THOMAS
EUGENE ONEGIN DAVID BORNING; PETER HAMILTON
VLADIMIR LENSKY DAVID MARGULIS; JOHN ERIC RUTHERFORD
PRINCE GREMIN CRAIG NIM
A CAPTAIN MARTIN ROTHWELL
ZARETSKY DREW DRESDNER
MONSIEUR TRIQUET DUSTIN JARRED

ACT I. With her devoted servant Filipevna, the widowed Madame Larina sits in the garden of her country estate. Her daughters, Olga and Tatyana, sing a love song that reminds the older women of days gone by. Peasants coming from the fields bring freshly cut hay for their mistress and celebrate the completion of the harvest with songs and dances. Olga taunts Tatyana for failing to enjoy the festivities. Pale and shy, Tatyana remains pensive and apart, wrapped in the fantasy of her beloved novels. As the peasants leave, the poet Lenski, Olga's suitor, and his worldly friend Eugene Onegin arrive. When Madame Larina and Filipevna enter the house, the four young people mingle, awkwardly at first. Then Lenski pours forth his love to Olga. Onegin, strolling with Tatyana, asks if she does not tire of her bucolic existence. Visibly upset by the handsome stranger, the girl answers with difficulty. As night falls, the two couples go in for dinner.

In her bedroom, Tatyana persuades Filipevna to speak of her first love and marriage. Filipevna notices that the girl's mind is wandering and asks if she is ill. Tatyana declares she is in love and begs to be left alone. Resolved to reveal her passion to Onegin, Tatyana sits up the entire night and writes to him, full of fear and shame. She closes by pleading for his mercy and understanding. When day breaks, she gives the letter to Filipevna for her grandson to deliver.

As they work to pass the time, a group of women gathered in Madame Larina's garden sing about flirting with boys. When they leave, Tatyana hurries in, soon followed by Onegin, who asks that she hear him out. He admits he was touched by her letter but adds he would tire quickly of

marriage. Though she has all the virtues he might wish in a wife, the most he can offer is a brother's love. He advises more emotional control, lest another man fail to respect her innocence. Crushed, Tatyana rushes away.

INTERMISSION

ACT II. Some months later in Madame Larina's house, a party is under way in honor of Tatyana's name day. As young couples glide merrily across the floor, the older guests sit watching and gossiping. Onegin dances with Tatyana but clearly is bored with these country people and their provincial sensibilities. To get back at Lenski for dragging him there, he dances with Olga, who is attracted momentarily and responds to his advances. The dance is interrupted by Triquet, an elderly French tutor, who serenades Tatyana with a song he has written in her honor. When dancing resumes, Lenski jealously confronts Onegin. The merry-making stops. Madame Larina implores them not to quarrel in her house; Lenski is remorseful but cannot contain his rage at Onegin, who accepts his challenge to a duel.

At dawn on the banks of a stream near an old mill, Lenski and his second, Zaretski, await Onegin. Reflecting on the folly of his brief life, and saddened by its now unalterable course, the young poet imagines his beloved Olga visiting his grave. Onegin arrives with his second. The two men, standing apart and without looking at one another, sing a cannon in which each admits privately that they have acted rashly—that they would rather laugh together than fight—but pride and impulsiveness prevail. The duel is fought and Lenski is fatally shot.

INTERMISSION

ACT III. Several years later, in a hall of a palace in St. Petersburg, a magnificent ball is in progress. Onegin has traveled widely, seeking to alleviate his boredom and give his life meaning. With bitterness he says his search has led him tonight to a monotonous social event. Suddenly he recognizes Tatyana across the room, but she is no longer the girl he knew: sumptuously gowned, she walks with poise and dignity. Questioning his cousin, Prince Gremin, he learns that Tatyana is now Gremin's wife. The older man tells of his marriage two years earlier and describes Tatyana as his life's salvation. When Gremin introduces Onegin, Tatyana maintains her composure, excusing herself after a few words of polite conversation. Captivated, Onegin dashes from the palace.

In the Gremins' town house, Tatyana receives Onegin in answer to an impassioned letter he has written. When he falls at her feet, she remains controlled. Now that she has a rich and noble husband, she asks, does he desire her position or her shame? She recalls the days when they might have been happy; now he can bring her only grief. As Onegin's pleas grow more ardent Tatyana prays for courage. Suddenly finding strength, she rushes out, leaving the distraught Onegin behind.

-- Courtesy of *Opera News*

EUGENE ONEGIN, A MAN OF HONOR

Alexander Pushkin published his short novella in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, in 1828. Full of spontaneity and wit, it was Pushkin's attempt to transform himself from a romantic poet into a realistic novelist. The novella is highly satirical of society and filled with Pushkin's ironic, philosophical observations, as well as many autobiographical digressions. It was Pushkin's own favorite work, and soon became hugely popular with the general public.

By the time Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky decided to turn the novel into an opera and set it to music some fifty years later, the novel had taken on mythical proportions and the heroine of the story, the shy, sensitive Tatyana, had become a national symbol of feminine purity and integrity. *Eugene Onegin*, the opera, was completed in 1878 and first performed on March 17, 1879 in Moscow, by students of the Moscow Conservatoire. Set in both the Russian countryside and St. Petersburg during the 1820s, the libretto tells the story of an aloof and troubled young aristocrat, Eugene Onegin, who is introduced by his poet friend, Vladimir Lensky, to the Larin family. Madame Larina's young daughter, Tatyana, falls hopelessly in love with Onegin and divulges her feelings to him in a highly emotional love letter. Onegin, as a man of honor, politely, but coolly rebuffs her and tells her he cannot return her love. Some months later at a party for Tatyana, Onegin, irritated from being isolated in the country, flirts with Tatyana's sister, Olga, to annoy Lensky, her betrothed. This infuriates Lensky, who then accuses Onegin of being a seducer and openly challenges him to a duel. At first, Onegin tries to calm his friend down, but finally is forced to accept the challenge when he feels his honor has been improperly maligned. Lensky dies in the duel and Onegin is left to live out his life dealing with the overwhelming guilt of killing his best friend for the sake of honor.

In this day and age, it is difficult to understand how, in the name of honor, someone could be killed by his best friend in a duel for flirting with his girlfriend at a social event. But then, the importance of upholding one's honor at all costs is no longer an integral part of civilized society. In Pushkin's time honor was still central to a cultured man's identity and being. This is evidenced by the fact that Pushkin himself died from wounds suffered in a duel of honor. In an ironic twist of fate, the situation of Pushkin's death is nearly identical to that of Lensky's death in the opera. Pushkin challenged an acquaintance to a duel for publicly pursuing the affections of his wife Natalia. Pushkin was mortally wounded in the duel, which took place on January 27, 1837 and died 2 days later. He died at the young age of 27 to preserve his all-important sense of honor, the thought of which leaves most of us today shaking our heads in disbelief.

In another ironic twist of fate, Tchaikovsky also lived out an important aspect of Pushkin's story, but with a different conclusion. While composing *Eugene Onegin*, Tchaikovsky received a passionate love letter from a young, hero-worshipping woman who attended one of his lectures at the conservatory, begging to meet him. His responding letter, a polite but a cool rebuff (similar to Onegin's response), further inflamed her and she threatened suicide if he wouldn't meet her. Because of his own aversion for the character of Onegin and not wanting to be like him, as well as his sympathy for character of Tatyana, he changed his mind and wrote her again agreeing to meet with her. Within a month after their meeting they were married. Tchaikovsky, who was 37 years old when he married Antonina Milyukova, was hoping primarily to attain a quiet domestic life and to quell the persistent rumors about his veritable homosexuality. Although he explained the platonic arrangement he desired, Antonina Milyukova was not at all interested in a nonphysical relationship. In fact, she was reported to be a nymphomaniac. This, combined with Tchaikovsky's total revulsion to physical contact with women, understandably proved to be disastrous for the union, so the practical marriage lasted only a few days. Shortly thereafter he made arrangements never to see her again. The legal marriage finally ended when she died in a mental institution in 1917.

Tchaikovsky was a man of great emotional sensitivity and compassion, and he had a remarkable ability to infuse his music with these qualities. His opera, *Eugene Onegin*, is filled with strong human emotions and there is hardly an inexpressive note in it, but Tchaikovsky's opera is not overtly dramatic in the Verdian sense. It is in reality, a quietly sad and introspective work. All the major characters feel deeply and suffer greatly, but they express their anguish and pain with a lyrical stoicism

appropriate for members of honorable society. Tatyana, above all, bears the sorrow of Onegin's rejection with a gentle grace and dignity that deeply touches the heart. Onegin, who on the surface appears cold and heartless, is filled with enormous guilt and remorse for his actions. He bears the burden of his actions silently, becoming a solitary, tortured soul. Years later, when he meets Tatyana again at a ball in St. Petersburg, he finally recognizes her as his only hope for salvation. But she, now married, must reject him to uphold her own honor, even though she admits she still loves him. Onegin has nothing now to uphold him, not even honor. Only disgrace, shame and death remain.

—Noel Koran

NOEL KORAN, Director, received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Drama from the University of Washington in 1974 and went on to work professionally as an actor, first with A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle in *Godspell*, which ran for over 200 performances and held the record as the longest running show in Seattle for over twenty years. He then moved to San Francisco to study acting with William Ball and Allen Fletcher at the American Conservatory Theatre as a member of the prestigious Advanced Actor's Training Program and appeared in several conservatory productions. His roles there included Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, Trigorin in *The Seagull*, Ferdinand Gadd in *Trevelyan of the Wells* and Sir Benjamin Backbite in *School for Scandal*.

After finishing his studies at ACT, Mr. Koran moved to New York in 1978, where he worked as an actor Off-Broadway, most notably as Adolf in Strindberg's *The Creditors*. He also portrayed the young Dylan Thomas in the one-man show, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, performed at the Union Square Theatre, under the direction of the noted English actress and director, Joan White. While living in New York, he began nurturing a serious love for music and singing and turned to opera, at first studying voice with Emile Renan from New York City Opera. While making the transition from stage actor to opera singer, he started performing smaller supporting roles such as Gastone in *La Traviata*, Neipperg in *Madame Sans Gene* and Friedrich in *The Red Mill* for several small opera companies in New York. Encouraged by his success with these roles, he then moved to London in 1981 to begin his operatic career in earnest.

In London, he continued his voice studies with Esther Salaman from the Guildhall School of Music and the National Opera Studio. While in London, he made his professional European debut as Frontin in the rarely performed opera *Ma Tante Aurore* by Boieldieu at St. John's-Smith Square, London, and then went on to several other engagements

including the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Scotland, the Wexford Festival, Ireland, and the Three Choirs Festival, Hereford, England. He also appeared regularly with several semi-professional London groups such as Beaufort Opera and Opera Viva.

In 1984, he moved to Germany and became a member of the performing ensemble of the Stadttheater Pforzheim, singing with the company for five seasons in a wide variety of roles in opera, operetta and musicals.

In August of 1989, Mr. Koran made another major career shift and moved to Austin, Texas where he enrolled at The University of Texas School of Music. After earning his Doctor of Musical Arts in opera stage direction, he joined the faculty of the School of Music at The Ohio State University, where he served as the Director of Opera/Music Theatre, producing and directing all School of Music opera productions and scenes programs.

In September 2002, Mr. Koran joined the faculty of Northwestern University in the School of Music as the Director of Opera for the Edith Mason & William E. Ragland Opera Theatre, where he completely revitalized and restructured the academic curriculum for the opera training division of the Voice and Opera Program and successfully taught operatic stage techniques for more than six years. In addition, in his capacity as the Director of Opera, he led and oversaw the development of a new operatic performance division for the School of Music, producing and directing more than fifteen fully staged and costumed productions over the six years of his residency at that institution.

Finally, fulfilling a long lasting desire to return to his roots on the West Coast, he started a new position at the University of Washington in Seattle as the Director of Opera for the School of Music, beginning in September 2008.

Hungarian-American conductor PETER ERÖS was born in Budapest in 1932 and attended the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, where he studied composition with Zoltán Kodály, chamber music with Leo Weiner, and conducting with László Somogyi.

In 1956, during the Hungarian Revolution, he emigrated to Holland. At age 27, Erös was named Associate Conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, a post he held for five years. While in Amsterdam, he assisted Otto Klemperer in opera productions for the Holland Festival. In the summers of 1960 and 1961, he served as a coach and assisted Hans Knappertsbusch at the Bayreuth Festival, and in 1961 he was assistant conductor to Ferenc Fricsay for the Salzburg Festival production of Mozart's "Idomeneo." He continued to assist Fricsay both in Salzburg and in Berlin with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra and in the

Deutsche Grammophon through 1964. In 1965, Erös came to the United States for the first time at the invitation of George Szell to work with him and the Cleveland Orchestra as a Kulas Foundation Fellow.

His principal appointments were as Music Director and Conductor of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra (1966-1969) in Sweden, the Australian Broadcasting Commission Orchestras (1967-1969, Sydney and Melbourne; 1975-79, Perth), the San Diego Symphony and La Jolla Chamber Orchestra (1971-1980), and the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra (1982-1989) in Denmark.

As a guest conductor, Erös appeared regularly with major symphony orchestras and opera companies on five continents, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, Hamburg State Opera, the Hague Residentie Orchestra, and the Scottish National Orchestra, and made nine tours of South Africa. He received ASCAP awards in 1983 and 1985 for his programming of music by American composers.

Erös came to the University of Washington School of Music in 1989 as the Morrison Endowed Professor of Conducting and Music Director and Conductor of the University Symphony. He also taught conducting from 1960 to 1965 at the Amsterdam Conservatory, where his pupils included Hans Vonk, and served as Director of Orchestral and Operatic Activities at the Peabody Conservatory of Music from 1982 to 1985.

At the personal request of Richard Wagner's granddaughter Friedelind, Erös led the first set of recordings of orchestral works by Friedelind's father, Siegfried Wagner. Two discs were released on the Delysé label, featuring the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erös: the Symphony in C and the tone poems "Glück, Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär" (Scherzo), "Weltersteinspielung," and "Sehnsucht." He also conducted the first recording of the opera "Jesus Before Herod" by Hungarian composer Gabriel von Wayditch (1888 -1969) with the San Diego Symphony.

PRODUCTION STAFF

ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR.....Meena Hwang
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS Kasha Browning, Tori Page
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CHORUS MASTER Sam McCoy
GENERAL MANAGER..... Anne Stewart
MEANY HALL TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Tom Burke
CHARGE SCENIC ARTIST Jordan Baker
SCENIC ARTISTS Ruth Gilmore, Nicole Sucec
SET CONSTRUCTION.....Deanna Zibello, Matt Starritt, Andrea Bush
COSTUME SHOP MANAGER.....Josie Gardner
PROPS MANAGER Deanna Zibello
MASTER ELECTRICIAN..... Ryan Hendricks
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Skylar Hansen, Parker Greenlund
MEANY HALL STAFF..... Juniper Shuey, Matt Stearns, Ryan Hendricks
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SPOT OPERATORS..... Devin Gorham, Zoe Kim
SURTTITLES Noel Koran
SURTTITLE OPERATOR Darin Jones
SET CREW..... Raina Turner, Sydney Davis, Christian Jenkins,
Sarah Heywood, Jeff Evans, Steven Bateman
COSTUME CREW.....Sophia Kowalski, Marlena Youch,
Cameroun Court, Yoshiko Naoe, Parker Greenlund,
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