



STEREO 33C 0631—32(a)



The opera **"Simon Boccanegra"** was written by **G. Verdi** in 1857 after the drama of the Spanish playwright Garcia Gutierrez, and produced in the same year in Venice. Permeated with dramatism the opera fascinates the listener with its beautiful and inspired melodies.

The principal hero of the opera is the favourite of the people Simon Boccanegra, who dies at the hands of patricians in the struggle for the unity of his country.

The recitative and romance of Fiesco from the prologue of the opera conveys a father's sorrow. In the scene of parting with his dying daughter Fiesco takes an oath to take revenge on Simon Boccanegra, whom he considers to be guilty of his daughter's sorry fate.

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The opera **"Don Carlos"** was created by **G. Verdi** in the later period of his career, in 1867. The plot is based on F. Schiller's drama of the same name concerned with Don Carlos' unhappy love for Queen Elizabeth. The drama unfolds against the background of historical events — the Flanders' struggle against Spanish rule.

The character of Spanish king Philip II is revealed with great dramatic force and profoundness in his scene and aria in Act IV of the opera. Devoured by jealousy and suspicions the king gives himself up to sad reflections. The music of the aria reaches the heights of expressiveness and passion, emphasizing complex emotional experiences, the grief of a lonely man who suffers the pangs of unrequited love.

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W. Goethe's tragedy **"Faust"** has always attracted numerous composers. Operas, oratorios, ballets and symphonic pieces are based on its plot. Among these works C. Gounod's opera **"Faust"** is one of the most important works. First produced in 1859 on the stage of the Lyrical Theatre in Paris it very soon won great popularity and was staged in many opera theatres of Europe.

Gounod created **"Faust"** to the plot of the first part of Goethe's tragedy. The composer did not aspire to reveal here all the philosophical depth of the tragedy but chose only those ideas and characters that appealed to him most. The opera reveals the principal features of the composer's creative work: sincerity, gracefulness and beauty of his melodic language, his close ties with French popular melos.

Mephistopheles' character, drawn with high sarcasm and irony in the opera is vividly revealed in the **"love"**

IVAN PETROV

G. VERDI — **"SIMON BOCCANEGRA"**
Fiesco's recitative and romance

G. VERDI — **"DON CARLOS"**
Philip's scene and aria

A. BOITO — **"MEPHISTOPHELES"**
Mephistopheles' ballade
(in Italian)

C. GOUNOD — **"FAUST"**
Mephistopheles' couplets
Mephistopheles' arioso
Mephistopheles' serenade
(in French)

S. PROKOFIEV — **"WAR AND PEACE"**
Kutuzov's aria

S. RACHMANINOV — **"FRANCESCA DA RIMINI"**
Lanciotto's monologue
Lanciotto's arioso

M. MOUSSORGSKY — **"BORIS GODUNOV"**
Boris' death scene
Feodor — V. Klepatskaya

serenade which he addresses to Marguerite. Mephistopheles has no faith in the purity of human feelings and his only aim is to sow suffering and misfortune around him.

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Goethe's tragedy **"Faust"** inspired yet another composer — A. Boito, to compose an opera. Written in 1868 the opera **"Mephistopheles"** was first produced by **"La Scala"** in Milan. In 1901 the famous Russian singer F. Shaliapin appeared in the main role on the stage of this theatre with great success.

Mephistopheles' ballade is one of the best items of

A. Boito's opera. It conveys Mephistopheles' disdain for the world and people in general.

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S. Prokofiev's **"War and Peace"** written in 1946, recreates the extensive gallery of characters of L. Tolstoi's famous novel, the range and force of the war for liberation fought by the Russian people. The character of Field Marshal Kutuzov, a fervent patriot and a wise and experienced warrior is portrayed vividly and with historic authenticity. His aria, which is broad and melodious, is imbued with the hero's reflections on the destiny of his country, of Moscow.

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S. Rachmaninov's opera **"Francesca da Rimini"** is based on an episode from the fifth song of Dante's **"Divine Comedy"**, concerned with the poetic love of Paolo and Francesca. The opera opens with a prologue, depicting the Underworld into which the poet descends. Among the ghosts that flit by, Dante sees the ghosts of Francesca and Paolo. Dante asks them to tell him why they have been condemned to eternal suffering. The narrative of Paolo and Francesca forms the main content of the opera. Rachmaninov's music is distinguished by its romantic excitement. Lanciotto's gloomy monologue provides a contrast to the amorous duet of Paolo and Francesca. The powerful tyrant before whom all tremble feels helpless when faced with the greatness of love.

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The musical drama **"Boris Godunov"** was created by **Moussorgsky** in 1870 and introduced in the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1874. Remaining true to Pushkin's conception of the tragedy, Moussorgsky endeavoured to reveal in the destinies of the heroes — the destiny of the people and depict the conflict of autocracy with the people. Dwelling on the conception of the opera the composer wrote: "I perceive the nation as being a great personality, inspired with one general idea. This is my aim and I endeavoured to fulfill it in my opera".

The character of Tsar Boris is written by the composer with great psychological force.

The scene and finale from Act IV are the most tragical pages of the work. Feeling that his end is near the Tsar orders his son Feodor to rule over Russia with justice. The tolling of a bell brings the mournful news of the Tsar's death.

M. Starodubtseva