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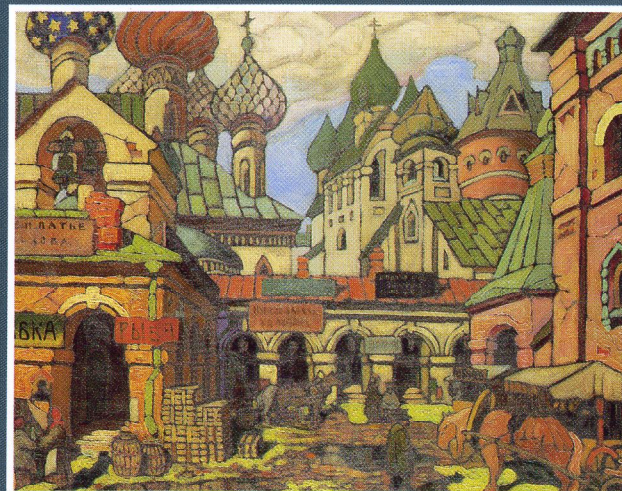
DIGITAL

CHANDOS

WALTON



The Bear



Della Jones · Alan Opie · John Shirley-Quirk
NORTHERN SINFONIA **RICHARD HICKOX**

WALTON

THE BEAR

An Extravaganza in One Act

POPOVA.....DELLA JONES *mezzo-soprano*
SMIRNOV.....ALAN OPIE *baritone*
LUKA.....JOHN SHIRLEY-QUIRK *bass*

- 1 LUKA: It is not just, Madam... [9:34]
- 2 POPOVA: Who is that? [3:27]
- 3 SMIRNOV: Fool! oaf! blockhead! [3:42]
- 4 SMIRNOV: There! She's vanished [8:37]
- 5 POPOVA: Sir, in my solitude [4:19]
- 6 SMIRNOV: *Madame, je vous prie* [3:52]
- 7 POPOVA: I was a constant, faithful wife [4:02]
- 8 SMIRNOV: I'm sick of this mourning [8:39]
- 9 SMIRNOV: Listen...Are you still angry? [7:07]

DDD

TT = 53:18

NORTHERN SINFONIA

RICHARD HICKOX Conductor

Walton wrote two operas, the second — this one — far more readily acclaimed than the first, and more often performed. He laboured for seven years (1947-1954) on the latter, *Troilus and Cressida*, a full-blown, no-holds-barred romantic opera in which the great, time-honoured tradition of Verdi and Puccini was given a marvellous new lease of life. Unfortunately it was too traditional for the taste of those austere post-war times: despite the popular success of its early performances (and it was staged at San Francisco and La Scala as well as Covent Garden), critics demurred, and word got around that the work was an anachronism and something of a white elephant. It never entered the repertoire on a secure footing, and a substantially revised version (1972-1976) failed to make the impression the composer hoped it might. It remains to be seen what the future has in store.

So second time round Walton was taking no chances. Everything, now, is on a modest scale. *The Bear* is a chamber opera in one act only, for three singers only, no chorus, and the orchestra is chamber-size with a small number of strings (originally solo players, but Walton preferred a slight boosting of their numbers). These dimensions were largely dictated by the circumstances of the first performance, which took place in Aldeburgh in June 1967 as part of the 20th Aldeburgh Festival. In fact the initial impetus for the work had come from Peter Pears (though, ironically, there was no part in it for him, as there had been in *Troilus*!) who sometime in 1964 had suggested Chekhov's *The Bear* or *The Proposal* as a one-act possibility for Aldeburgh. The Koussevitsky Music Foundation provided funds, and Walton set to work on the libretto. He soon decided he needed help, and approached the writer Paul Dehn. Work progressed swiftly and harmoniously and was impeded only by Walton's operation for lung cancer and subsequent recuperation. The score was finally completed on 30 April 1967, just about in time for the Aldeburgh (Jubilee Hall) premiere in June. It shared a double-bill with Lennox Berkeley's *Castaway*, for which Dehn had also provided the libretto. Colin Graham produced, and Monica Sinclair and John Shaw sang the leading roles. The work was well-received from the start and quickly became popular; sometimes it is paired with a staged version of the original *Façade*, a combination Walton approved (though he was annoyed by critics who invariably

invoked *Façade* in connection with *The Bear*, claiming, quite rightly, that apart from a purpose to entertain and the fact that both are the work of one-and-the-same composer, they have hardly anything in common).

Paul Dehn wrote of Chekhov and *The Bear* as follows:

Stretching immature wings between 1887 and 1890, Chekhov wrote two serious four-act plays (*Ivanov* and *The Wood Demon*) and five one-act 'vaudevilles', as he called them, of which *The Bear* brought him most acclaim and money. 'I live', he wrote to a friend in 1889, 'on the charity of my *Bear*'.

The plot is deceptively simple. Popova, a pretty widow, affectedly faithful to the memory of her late, and alas! promiscuous husband, is confused by Smirnov, one of her husband's more boorish creditors. They quarrel to a point where each aims a loaded pistol at the other. Neither can fire. They have both fallen helplessly in love. But to condense the plot of any Chekhov play is as silly as to try and dehydrate a sauce by Escoffier. Here, in the small compass of a one-acter, Chekhov's dialogue subtly breathes as much (if not more) about the war between the sexes as was ever exhaled in the entire works of Thurber or in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Thurber would have been the first to approve the fact that Chekhov's shrew (with how lethal a mixture of false fidelity, dainty fastidiousness and assumed disdain!) does most of the taming.

It is impossible to turn a one-act play into a one-act opera without abbreviating the original text. So for the *recit.* passages we have jointly evolved what we hope is no more than a reverently *pruned* version of Chekhov's own dialogue; and in the arias, I have tried to paraphrase the mood and actual content of Chekhov's prose into verse which could accommodate my composer's predilection for occasional pastiche and his genius for musical wit.

That 'occasional pastiche' and 'musical wit' calls for brief comment. Walton and Dehn did not, in the event, call their work a vaudeville (a term which, originally in France, had stood for a farcical entertainment mounted at a street fair and garnished with some popular song to which new and topical words could be fitted), but an 'extragayanza': the three *dramatis personae* are caricatures and act farcically, but their situation is *possible* in real-life and their emotions are real, however exaggerated and absurd. This touch of ambiguity is typical Walton: yet again, curiously, is invoked that strange collection of woodcuts by Jacques Callot — 17th century forerunner of Rembrandt and Goya — known as the *Balli di*

Sfessania. These already form a significant part of the background to the *Façade* Entertainment and also to the overture *Scapino* (see my notes for CHAN 8869 and CHAN 8968). Most of these woodcuts are riddled with obscenities and the burlesque element is very strong; but, complementarily and even paradoxically, taste, elegance and emotion also play their part. So they do in *The Bear*.

It was no hardship at all for Walton to write an opera somewhat in the *buffo* style of the Italian composers he so admired — Rossini, Donizetti, the Puccini of *Gianni Schicchi*. His temperament was always basically Latin or Mediterranean (he confessed to sleeping through Wagner) and it was surely predestined that he would one day settle in Italy, on the island of Ischia, where *The Bear* was written; fittingly enough it was *The Bear* that formed the subject of the first summer Master Class held at La Mortella (the Walton home) in 1989. Much of its sparkle and spirit lies in its ongoing series of musical jokes and references. Some of these are more obvious than others, and on quite a few occasions it's hard to tell whether Walton *is* in fact engaging in parody or pastiche or direct allusion — or merely *pretending* to. I do not here intend to spoil listeners' enjoyment by identifying those references I myself happen to have recognized; but I'd be prepared to bet that if all those who heard *The Bear* were asked to draw up a complete list of the 'jokes', hardly any two lists would be identical. But that, of course, is all part of the fun.

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Della Jones, one of Great Britain's best-known singers, has a wide recorded repertoire ranging from the bel canto period to contemporary music. She is particularly noted for her Rossini and Handel roles and in the French repertoire, her most recent recordings for Chandos including a Rossini operatic recital (CHAN 8865), *Messiah* (CHAN 0522/3) and a recital of French Songs (CHAN 9147). Della Jones sings regularly with the leading British opera companies and orchestras. Foreign engagements have taken her Belgium, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Japan, Poland, Russia, Switzerland and the U.S.A.

Alan Opie was born in Cornwall and studied at Cambridge University, the Guildhall School of Music and the London Opera Centre. After performances with Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Phoenix Opera and at the Wexford Festival he joined Sadlers Wells (now English National Opera) as principal baritone. He has combined his work at ENO with

performances at other opera companies in the UK: Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Scottish Opera, whilst his international career has taken him to Chicago, Sante Fe, Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna, Brussels, Israel and Hong Kong. He sang the role of Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at Bayreuth in 1987 and 1988, and took part in the first performance of the same opera in unified Berlin at the Staatsoper.

During the 1993-94 season Alan Opie sings Sharpless in *Madam Butterfly* at Covent Garden and the title role of *Barber of Seville* at ENO. He also appears at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester where he will sing *Belshazzar's Feast* and Britten's *War Requiem* with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. Further recordings with Chandos Records are also planned.

John Shirley-Quirk, one of Britain's best-known international artists, was born in Liverpool, where his early musical studies were on the violin. After studying singing with Roy Henderson, he soon began to make his mark in British musical circles.

Mr Shirley-Quirk has sung all over the world in concerts and recordings with most of the leading orchestras and conductors. His huge concert repertoire is complemented by a discography extending to over one hundred recordings on all the major international labels.

John Shirley-Quirk devotes a considerable part of each season to appearances with the major orchestras in the USA, recent appearances including Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Charles Dutoit in Philadelphia and New York. He lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife oboist and conductor Sara Watkins Shirley-Quirk and their three children.

For more than 30 years the **Northern Sinfonia** — based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne — has performed orchestral music of the highest professional standard, making frequent appearances throughout Britain and the world. The 1993/94 season sees the orchestra on tour in Germany, Austria and Spain.

In September 1990 the distinguished Austrian artist Heinrich Schiff took up his appointment as the Sinfonia's Artistic Director, whilst Richard Hickox continues his highly successful association with the orchestra as Principal Guest Conductor.

This is the third recording in a new collaboration between the Northern Sinfonia and Chandos.

Richard Hickox is recognised as one of Britain's leading conductors. His repertoire is unusually wide-ranging from Renaissance to contemporary, and in recent years he has become increasingly known for his interpretations of British music, receiving the first Charles Groves prize awarded by the National Federation of Music Societies for Services to British music.

He won an Organ Scholarship to Queen's College, Cambridge and from 1972 to 1982 he was Director of Music of St Margaret's Church, Westminster — a platform which also enabled him to found the City of London Sinfonia, of which he is still active as Music Director.

Since 1976 Richard Hickox has been Music Director of the London Symphony Chorus, and in 1985 the London Symphony Orchestra created him their first ever Associate Conductor. With the LSO, he has toured America, conducted at the Proms and the Royal Concert.

From 1982-90 Richard Hickox was Artistic Director of the Northern Sinfonia, and he continues his association as Principal Guest Conductor. From Autumn 1992 he has also been appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. With Simon Standage he was involved in the formation of Collegium Musicum 90, which is devoted to the performance of Baroque music and which records exclusively for Chandos Records.

Richard Hickox has conducted productions for the Royal Opera, English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Opera North, Los Angeles Opera and Rome Opera. Future productions include Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* for Opera North and Handel's *Julius Caesar* for the Komische Oper, Berlin.

Walton schrieb zwei Opern, von denen die zweite, *The Bear*, sehr viel erfolgreicher war als die erste, *Troilus and Cressida*, und weitaus häufiger aufgeführt wird.

The Bear (Der Bär) ist eine Kammeroper in einem Akt für nur drei Stimmen und ohne Chor. Die Besetzung des Kammerorchesters sieht nur wenige Streicher vor (ursprünglich Solisten, doch Walton entschied sich dann für einige mehr). Diese bescheidene Besetzung entsprang hauptsächlich den Umständen der Erstaufführung, die im Juni 1967 in Aldeburgh im Rahmen des 20. Aldeburgh Festivals stattfand. Die Anregung zu der Oper kam von Peter Pears, der bereits 1964 Tschechows *Der Bär* oder *Der Antrag* als mögliche Einakter für Aldeburgh vorgeschlagen hatte. Die Koussevitsky Music Foundation stellte die Mittel zur Verfügung, und Walton machte sich an das Libretto, wobei er bald den Schriftsteller Paul Dehn zur Hilfe zog. Die Arbeit machte gute Fortschritte, wurde jedoch durch Waltons Lungenkrebs-Operation und anschließende Genesungszeit unterbrochen. Schließlich war *The Bear* am 30. April fertig, gerade noch zeitig genug, um in Aldeburgh im Juni uraufgeführt zu werden. Das Werk wurde von Publikum und Kritikern gut aufgenommen und blieb seither im Repertoire.

Paul Dehn schrieb wie folgt über Tschechow und *The Bear*:

In den Jahren 1887 bis 1890, als Tschechow als Schriftsteller flügge wurde, schrieb er zwei ernste vieraktige Schauspiele (*Iwanow* und *Der hölzerne Teufel*) und fünf einaktige

“Vaudevilles”; wie er sie nannte, von denen *Der Bär* am erfolgreichsten und auch am einträglichsten war. Tschechow schrieb 1889 an einen Freund, er lebe auf Kosten seines Bären.

Die Handlung ist täuschend einfach. Popowa, eine hübsche Witwe, die ostentativ dem Andenken ihres (untreuen!) verstorbenen Mannes treu ist, gerät mit dem ungeschliffenen Smirnow, einem Gläubiger ihres Mannes, in Streit. Sie richten schließlich Pistolen aufeinander, doch keiner der beiden vermag auf den anderen zu schießen, denn sie haben sich hoffnungslos ineinander verliebt. Doch den Inhalt eines Schauspiels von Tschechow zusammenfassen zu wollen ist so dumm wie der Versuch, eine Soße von Escoffier einkochen zu wollen. Im kleinen Rahmen eines Einakters sagt Tschechows subtiler Dialog hier so viel (oder mehr) über den Krieg der Geschlechter aus wie die gesammelten Werke von Thurber, oder wie Shakespeares *The Taming of the Shrew* (Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung). Thurber hätte wohl als erster zugegeben, daß Tschechows “Widerspenstige” (mit einer tödlichen Mischung von falscher Treue, gezierter Pinge-lichkeit und geheuchelter Geringschätzung!) den größten Teil der Zähmung besorgt.

Es ist unmöglich, aus einem einaktigen Schauspiel eine einaktige Oper zu machen, ohne den Originaltext zu kürzen. Für die Rezitative haben der Komponist und ich zusammen eine hoffentlich respektvoll *beschnittene* Version von Tschechows Dialog ausgearbeitet, und für die Arien habe ich versucht, die Stimmung und den Inhalt von Tschechows Prosa in Versform so zu paraphrasieren, daß der Vorliebe des Komponisten für gelegentliches Pasticcio und seinem Talent für musikalischen Humor Rechnung getragen wird.

Zu diesem “gelegentlichen Pasticcio” und dem “musikalischen Humor” muß noch kurz etwas gesagt werden. Walton und Dehn nannten ihr Werk schließlich nicht “Vaudeville” sondern “Extravaganza”: die drei *dramatis personae* sind Karikaturen und handeln grotesk, doch ihre Lage könnte *eventuell* lebensnah sein und ihre Gefühle sind wahr, wenn auch übertrieben und absurd. Diese Zwiespältigkeit ist typisch für Walton, hatte aber auch schon im 17. Jahrhundert bei Jacques Callots ungewöhnlicher Reihe von Holzschnitten, den *Balli di Sfessania*, Pate gestanden, die im Wesentlichen den Hintergrund zu Waltons *Façade* und auch zu seiner Ouvertüre *Scapino* (siehe meine Notizen zu CHAN 8869 und CHAN 8968) bilden. Diese Holzschnitte sind reichhaltig mit Obszönitäten und burlesken Darstellungen versehen, doch paradoxerweise sind auch Eleganz, Geschmack und Gefühl vertreten, wie das auch in *The Bear* der Fall ist.

Walton hatte keinerlei Schwierigkeiten, eine Oper im Buffo-Stil der italienischen Komponisten zu schreiben, die er so bewunderte, so z.B. Rossini, Donizetti und Puccini (in *Gianni Schicchi*). Temperamentsmäßig war er immer vorwiegend Südländer (er gab zu, bei Wagner eingeschlafen zu sein), und es schien ihm vorbestimmt zu sein, eines Tages in Italien zu leben. Er ließ sich auf Ischia nieder, und dort entstand *The Bear*. Dort, und zwar in Waltons Villa La Mordella, bildete *The Bear* im Sommer 1989 bei der ersten dort abgehaltenen Meisterklasse das Hauptthema. Die geistsprühende Lebhaftigkeit der Oper beruht hauptsächlich auf den vielen musikalischen Späßen und Anspielungen, die mehr oder weniger leicht identifizierbar sind. An vielen Stellen ist schwer erkennbar, ob es sich hier um eine Parodie, ein Pasticcio oder eine direkte Anspielung handelt, oder ob Walton nur so tut als ob. Ich will den Hörern nicht den Spaß verderben, indem ich alle Stellen anführe, die ich persönlich gefunden habe. Wenn alle Hörer eine Liste der von ihnen identifizierten “musikalischen Späße” machten, dann wäre jede dieser Listen wieder anders. Doch das ist ja gerade der Witz der Sache.

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Übersetzung: Inge Moore

Della Jones ist eine der bekanntesten Sängerinnen Großbritanniens und hat ein weit-gefächertes Repertoire eingespielt, das vom Zeitalter des Belcanto bis zu zeitgenössischer Musik reicht. Sie ist besonders für ihre Rollen in Rossini und Händel sowie im französischen Repertoire berühmt. Zu ihren Aufnahmen für Chandos gehören ein Rossini-Opernalbum (CHAN 8865) und der *Messias* (CHAN 0522/3). Sie singt regelmäßig an allen britischen Opernhäusern und Musik-festivals und tritt häufig mit führenden britischen Orchestern auf. Engagements im Ausland führten sie in die USA, nach Belgien, Deutschland, Frankreich, Griechenland, Holland, Italien, Japan, Polen, Rußland, Spanien, Zypern sowie in die Schweiz und die Tschechoslowakei.

Alan Opie wurde in Cornwall geboren und erhielt seine Ausbildung an der Universität Cambridge, der Guildhall School of Music in London und dem London Opera Centre. Nach zahlreichen Auftritten mit der Welsh National Opera, der Glyndebourne Touring Opera, der Phoenix Opera und beim Wexford Festival wurde er vom Sadlers Wells Theater (jetzt English National Opera) als Solobariton engagiert. Seine Arbeit an der English National Opera verbindet

Alan Opie auch mit Auftritten an anderen Opernhäusern Großbritanniens, so zum Beispiel der Royal Opera Covent Garden, der Glyndebourne Festival Opera und der Scottish Opera. Seine internationale Karriere führte ihn bisher nach Chicago, Santa Fé, Paris, Amsterdam, Wien, Brüssel, Israel und Hong Kong. In den Jahren 1987 und 1988 übernahm er bei den Bayreuther Festspielen die Rolle des Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* und nahm in der gleichen Rolle an der ersten Aufführung dieses Werks im wiedervereinigten Berlin an der Staatsoper teil.

Während der Spielzeit 1993-94 wird Alan Opie an der Royal Opera Covent Garden die Partie des Sharpless in *Madame Butterfly* und die Titelpartie im *Barbier von Sevilla* an der English National Opera singen. Zu weiteren Aufgaben gehören Waltons *Belshazzar's Feast* und Britten's *War Requiem* mit dem BBC Philharmonic Orchestra beim Three Choirs Festival in Worcester. Auch weitere Einspielungen bei Chandos Records sind geplant.

John Shirley-Quirk, einer der auf internationaler Ebene bekanntesten britischen Künstler, wurde in Liverpool geboren, wo er zunächst Violine studierte. Schon bald nach seinem Gesangsstudium bei Roy Henderson begann er sich in den musikalischen Kreisen Großbritanniens einen Namen zu machen.

Mr. Shirley-Quirk hat weltweit in Konzerten und Schallplattenaufnahmen mit vielen führenden Orchestern und Dirigenten gearbeitet. Sein gewaltiges Konzertrepertoire spiegelt sich in seiner Diskographie wider, die über hundert Titel für alle führenden internationalen Schallplattenlabels verzeichnet.

John Shirley-Quirk widmet einen Großteil jeder Saison seinen Auftritten mit den führenden Orchestern der USA, darunter in jüngerer Zeit in Strawinskys *Oedipus Rex* mit dem Philadelphia Orchestra unter Charles Dutoit in Philadelphia und New York. Er lebt mit seiner Frau, der Oboistin und Dirigentin Sara Watkins Shirley-Quirk, und ihren drei Kindern in Washington, DC.

Länger als 30 Jahre hat **Northern Sinfonia** — aus Newcastle-upon-Tyne — Orchestermusik erstklassiger Qualität hervorgebracht, mit zahlreichen Auftritten im Vereinigten Königreich und der Welt. In der Konzertsaison 1993/94 wird das Orchester in Deutschland, Österreich und Spanien.

Im September 1990 übernahm der bekannte Heinrich Schiff aus Österreich die künstlerische Leitung des Orchesters. Richard Hickox verfolgt weiterhin seine äußerst erfolgreiche Zusammenarbeit als der Gastdirigent des Orchesters.

Dies ist die dritte Einspielung in einer Reihe von Chandos-Aufnahmen in Zusammenarbeit mit der Northern Sinfonia.

Richard Hickox ist anerkannt einer der führenden britischen Dirigenten. Sein Repertoire ist ungewöhnlich vielseitig und erstreckt sich von Barockmusik bis zur Gegenwart. In den letzten Jahren hat er sich zunehmend durch seine Interpretationen britischer Musik einen Namen gemacht und erhielt dafür den ersten von der National Federation of Music Societies verliehenen Charles-Groves-Preis für Verdienste um die britische Musik.

Richard Hickox war Orgelstipendiat am Queens College, Cambridge, und von 1972 bis 1982 Musikdirektor an der Kirche von St. Margaret in Westminster. Während dieser Zeit gründete er auch die City of London Sinfonia, dessen musikalischer Leiter er noch immer ist.

Seit 1976 ist er Musikdirektor des London Symphony Chorus. 1985 ernannte ihn das London Symphony Orchestra zum außerordentlichen Dirigenten. Mit dem LSO hat Richard Hickox Amerika bereist, an den Londoner Promenade-Konzerten und den Royal Concerts teilgenommen.

Von 1982 bis 1990 war Richard Hickox künstlerischer Leiter der Northern Sinfonia und bleibt weiterhin Erster Gastdirigent dieses Orchester. Im Herbst 1992 wurde Richard Hickox zum Ersten Gastdirigenten des Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ernannt. Zusammen mit Simon Standage ist er für die Gründung des Collegium Musicum 90 verantwortlich. Dieses Ensemble widmet sich der Interpretation von Barockmusik und einspielt ausschließlich für Chandos.

Richard Hickox hat Aufführungen der Royal Opera, der English National Opera, der Scottish Opera, der Opera North, der Los Angeles Opera und der Opera di Roma geleitet. Auf dem Terminkalender stehen ferner Aufführungen von Waltons *Troilus und Cressida* der Opera North und Händels *Julius Cäsar* der Komischen Oper, Berlin.

Walton écrit deux opéras. *L'Ours*, le second, (enregistré sur ce disque), reçut un meilleur accueil que le premier, *Troilus and Cressida*; il est aussi repris sur scène plus souvent que le précédent.

The Bear (L'Ours) est un opéra de chambre en un acte, pour trois chanteurs seulement. Il est dépourvu de chœur et l'ensemble orchestral ne compte qu'un petit nombre de cordes (à l'origine, il ne se composait que des musiciens solistes, mais par la suite, Walton décida d'augmenter les effectifs). Cette dimension réduite fut dictée par les circonstances de la création, en 1967, au 20ème festival d'Aldeburgh. L'idée initiale de cet opéra est attribuée à Peter Pears; le célèbre ténor pensait qu'une courte saynète de Tchékhov, *L'Ours* ou *La Demande en mariage*, transformée en opéra, conviendrait particulièrement à Aldeburgh. L'idée fut retenue, la Koussevitsky Music Foundation procura les fonds et Walton se mit au

travail sur le livret. Mais le compositeur découvrit rapidement qu'il avait besoin des conseils d'un spécialiste et demanda à l'écrivain Paul Dehn de l'aider. Le travail progressa alors rapidement et harmonieusement, interrompu, hélas, par un cas de force majeure: la maladie de Walton (un cancer des poumons), son opération et sa convalescence. La partition fut néanmoins achevée le 30 avril 1967, juste à temps pour le Festival d'Aldeburgh, et la première mondiale qui eut lieu au mois de juin. L'ouvrage connut de suite un grand succès populaire qui ne l'a pas abandonné depuis.

Paul Dehn écrivait au sujet de Tchekhov et de *L'Ours*:

Entre 1887 et 1890, Tchekhov, dans un esprit de recherche et de transition, produisit deux grandes pièces de théâtre en quatre actes: *Ivanov* et *L'Esprit des forêts*, plus cinq "vaudevilles" — comme il les appelait — en un acte, parmi lesquels *L'Ours* qui lui apporta à la fois éloges et argent. "Je vis — écrivait-il à un ami — de la charité de mon Ours".

L'intrigue est d'une simplicité trompeuse. Popova, une jolie veuve, semble vouloir rester fidèle à la mémoire de son époux, qui lui, par contre, l'avait trompée sans vergogne. Elle est néanmoins troublée par Smirnov, un des ex-créanciers de son mari, et un homme rustre. Ils se disputent, et la dispute s'envenime au point où chacun pointe un pistolet en direction de l'autre. Mais aucun ne tire — ils sont tombés désespérément amoureux l'un de l'autre! Essayer de condenser l'intrigue d'une pièce de Tchekhov est une entreprise aussi vaine que de tenter la déshydratation d'une sauce d'Escoffier. Les dialogues, bien que dans le cadre restreint de cet acte unique, laissent subtilement filtrer autant (sinon plus) de réflexions sur la guerre des sexes que tous les ouvrages de Thurber (1894-1961, conteur, dessinateur et satiriste américain, auteur, notamment, de "A-t-on besoin des femmes?"); autant et même plus que *La Mégère apprivoisée* (Shakespeare). Et Thurber aurait été le premier à apprécier le fait que la mégère de Tchekhov, par un mélange fatal de fausse fidélité, de coquetterie délicatement exagérée et d'arrogance feinte, est des deux protagonistes celui qui réellement apprivoise l'autre.

Il est impossible, sans abréger le texte original, de transformer une pièce en un acte en un opéra, également en un acte. Nous avons, par conséquent, élaboré ensemble une version des dialogues, respectueusement (du moins l'espérons-nous) raccourcis pour les récitatifs. Nous avons essayé de paraphraser la prose de Tchekhov dans nos vers et de reproduire ses traits d'esprit dans les *arias* — ce qui d'ailleurs convenait très bien à mon penchant pour le pastiche fortuit et au don génial [de Walton] pour l'humour musical. Ce "pastiche fortuit" et cet "humour musical" demandent une légère explication.

Dehn et Walton n'ont pas qualifié leur opéra de "vaudeville"; mais d'*extravaganza*. Les trois *dramatis personae* sont des caricatures et agissent d'une manière cocasse. La situation dans laquelle elles se trouvent est cependant tout à fait plausible et leurs émotions sont bien réelles, aussi exagérées et absurdes qu'elles puissent paraître. Cet aspect assez ambigu est typiquement waltonien, bien que, d'une façon curieuse, il évoque davantage, ici, la série d'estampes *Balli di Sfessania* de Jacques Callot (graveur et dessinateur français du XVII^{ème} siècle, précurseur de Rembrandt et de Goya, qui entra quelques années au service des Medicis). Ces estampes servaient déjà de toile de fond à *Façade* et à l'ouverture *Scapino* (j'en parle plus longuement dans les notes qui accompagnent les disques CHAN 8869 "Façade" et CHAN 8968 "Œuvres orchestrales"). La plupart d'entre elles sont criblées d'éléments obscènes et fort burlesques; mais parallèlement et même de façon paradoxale le goût, l'élégance et l'émotion juste jouent un grand rôle. Il en est de même dans *L'Ours*.

Il était facile à Walton d'écrire un opéra dans le style bouffe des compositeurs italiens qu'il admirait tant: Rossini, Donizetti, et le Puccini de *Gianni Schicchi*. De tempérament, on aurait pu le croire essentiellement latin ou méditerranéen (il avouait s'endormir en écoutant Wagner). Il était sûrement destiné à s'installer en Italie; en fait, dans l'île d'Ischia, et c'est là qu'il composa la musique de *L'Ours*. Ce fut *L'Ours* qui servit de sujet aux premières classes de maîtrise (1989) qui maintenant se tiennent chaque été à *La Mordella* (la propriété que possédaient les Walton à Ischia). L'humour étincelant de l'opéra provient en grande partie des plaisanteries et citations musicales en séries ininterrompues. Certaines sont plus faciles que d'autres à reconnaître au passage. Il est parfois malaisé de décider s'il s'agit de parodies et de pastiches, ou d'allusions directes, ou encore si Walton a seulement prétendu les faire. Je ne veux pas amoindrir le plaisir de l'auditeur en lui donnant la liste des citations que j'ai pu moi-même identifier, mais je suis prêt à parier que si tous ceux qui connaissent *L'Ours* faisaient une liste, aussi complète que possible, des "plaisanteries" qu'ils ont discernées, il n'y aurait probablement pas deux listes semblables! Mais, cela évidemment, fait partie de notre plaisir.

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Traduction: Paulette Hutchinson

Della Jones est l'une des cantatrices britanniques les plus célèbres. Son répertoire impressionnant va du bel canto à la musique moderne. Della Jones est particulièrement connue pour ses interprétations d'héroïnes d'opéras de Rossini et de Haendel et son interprétation du répertoire français est notoire. Chandos a enregistré son récital d'arias tirées d'opéras de Rossini (CHAN 8865); elle figure également parmi les solistes sur le disque du *Messie* (CHAN 0522/3). Elle se produit régulièrement sur la scène des grands opéras britanniques, aux festivals de Musique et, en concert, auprès des orchestres de renom. Ses divers contrats l'ont conduite des Etats-Unis en Russie; à travers l'Europe: Belgique, Hollande, Italie, Espagne, Grèce, Allemagne, Chypre, Suisse, Pologne, France, Tchécoslovaquie, et jusqu'au Japon.

Alan Opie, natif de Cornouailles (britannique), a fait ses études à l'université de Cambridge, et à la Guildhall School of Music (Londres), études suivies d'une formation pratique au London Opera Centre. D'abord membre de l'Opéra national gallois, des Tournées d'opéras de Glyndebourne, du Phoenix Opera, et du groupe des interprètes du Festival de Wexford, il est entré ensuite, comme principal baryton, au Sadlers Wells (devenu peu après l'English National Opera). Au Royaume-Uni, en dehors de l'English National Opera, il s'est produit à la Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, à Glyndebourne (Festival d'opéras), au Scottish Opera; tandis que ses engagements internationaux le conduisaient de Chicago et Santa Fe, à Paris, Amsterdam, Vienne, Bruxelles, ainsi qu'en Israël et à Hong Kong. En 1987, il chantait le rôle de Bechmesser, des *Maîtres Chanteurs de Nuremberg* à Bayreuth, et en 1988, il prenait part à la première représentation de ce même opéra au Staatsoper de Berlin réuni.

Pendant la saison 1993-94 Alan Opie est Sharpless, *Madame Butterfly*, à Covent Garden; Figaro, *Le Barbier de Séville*, à l'English National Opera. Il est aussi l'un des solistes interprètes de *Belshazzar's Feast* et du *War Requiem* de Britten, auprès du BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, au Festival des Trois Chœurs à Worcester. Alan Opie a d'autres enregistrements en vue chez Chandos.

John Shirley-Quirk, un artiste britannique bien connu sur la scène internationale, est né à Liverpool, où il choisit d'abord d'étudier le violon. Il étudia ensuite les techniques vocales, sous la direction de Roy Henderson, et rapidement les cercles musicaux britanniques découvrirent ses qualités.

John Shirley-Quirk s'est produit, pratiquement dans le monde entier avec la majeure partie des plus grands orchestres, sous la direction de chefs renommés. Son répertoire, récitals et concerts, est immense, sa discographie impressionnante: plus de 100 enregistrements sous les étiquettes de toutes les grandes maisons internationales de disques.

John Shirley-Quirk consacre une grande partie de son temps à la saison musicale des Etats-Unis, pendant laquelle il se produit auprès des orchestres les plus renommés. On a pu l'entendre récemment à Philadelphie et à New York, dans l'oratorio *Oedipus Rex* de Stravinski, avec le

Philadelphia Orchestra, sous la direction de Charles Dutoit. M. Shirley-Quirk demeure à Washington, avec son épouse, hautboïste / chef d'orchestre, Sara Watkins Shirley-Quirk, et leur trois enfants.

Depuis plus de trente ans le **Northern Sinfonia** — dont le siège est à Newcastle-upon-Tyne — interprète de la musique orchestrale. Le degré d'excellence de ses interprétations lui vaut de se produire fréquemment aussi bien à travers le Royaume-Uni qu'à travers le monde. La saison 1993/1994 comporte une tournée en Allemagne-Autriche, une autre au en Espagne.

Depuis septembre 1990, Heinrich Schiff, musicien autrichien de renom, est le Directeur artistique du Sinfonia, tandis que Richard Hickox, directeur précédent reste toujours associé à l'orchestre en tant que principal chef invité.

Il s'agit du troisième enregistrement dans le cours de la nouvelle collaboration entre le Northern Sinfonia et Chandos.

Richard Hickox est certainement l'un des chefs d'orchestre les plus connus de Grande Bretagne. Son répertoire est extrêmement varié, allant de la musique de la Renaissance à la musique contemporaine. Ses dernières années il s'est particulièrement distingué dans le domaine de la musique britannique, ce qui lui a valu d'obtenir de la Fédération nationale des Sociétés musicales le Premier Prix Charles Groves pour avoir servi avec honneur la musique britannique.

Etudiant organiste, il obtient une bourse au Queen's College de Cambridge; puis de 1972 à 1982 il est directeur musical à l'église St-Margaret de Westminster, un poste qui lui permet de créer le City of London Sinfonia, dont il est toujours en charge de la direction musicale.

En 1976 il est nommé directeur du London Symphony Chorus et en 1985 le London Symphony Orchestra en fait — et pour la première fois — son chef d'orchestre associé. C'est avec cet orchestre qu'il a effectué une tournée aux Etats-Unis, c'est cet orchestre qu'il dirigeait aux Concerts Promenades, et au Concert Royal.

De 1982 à 1990 Richard Hickox est directeur artistique du Northern Sinfonia, auquel il est toujours associé comme principal chef d'orchestre itinérant. A l'automne de 1992 Richard Hickox est devenu principal chef invité du Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Avec Simon Standage il vient de former le Collegium Musicum 90, ensemble qu'il destine à l'interprétation de la musique baroque. L'ensemble a un accord d'exclusivité d'enregistrement avec Chandos Records.

Richard Hickox a dirigé de nombreux opéras: au Royaume-Uni à Covent Garden, à l'English National Opera, au Scottish Opera, à l'Opera North; à l'étranger: aux opéras de Los Angeles et de Rome. Bientôt il sera à nouveau à la tête de l'orchestre d'Opera North pour les représentations de *Troilus & Cressida* (Walton), puis au Komische Oper, Berlin, pour celles de *Jules César* (Haendel).

THE BEAR

LUKA

¹ It is not just, Madam... you're simply killing yourself. The cook and the housemaid have gone out in the woods picking strawberries... ev'ry living soul is happy... even the cat knows how to enjoy herself walking in the courtyard and chasing birds. But you sit indoors all day, as tho' in a nunnery, taking no pleasure in anything. Why, it's nearly a year since you even went out of the house!

POPOVA

And I never will go out. Why should I? My life is over. He lies in his grave — I have buried myself within these four walls... We are both dead.

LUKA

There you are, at it again! I wish I hadn't to listen to you! I lost my missus too... Well what about it? I cried and grieved for a month or two, and that was enough for her. Suppose I kept on weeping and wailing and mourning all my life — it would be more than the old woman was worth. *(Sighs)* You've forgotten all your neighbours... You won't visit or receive them... And it's not as though there weren't any nice people about — the whole place is full of them... There's a regiment at Ryblovo, and the officers are perfect gentlemen — you hardly can take your eyes off them! In the camp there's scarcely a Friday goes by without a ball, and the military band plays music every day, they say. Ah! dear lady! You're

young, pretty, blooming with health — all you need is to live your life to the full... You know, beauty won't last forever! There may come a time when you'll want to show off to the officers too — flaunting your tail like a peacock — but it will be too late then!

POPOVA

(resolutely) I must ask you never to speak to me again like this! You know quite well that since my poor husband died life has no meaning for me. I may seem to you to be still alive, but that is only what you think! I made a vow to wear this mourning always, never to look at the light of day until I go to my grave... Do you hear? May his dear, departed spirit see how I love him... Yes, I know it was no secret to you that he was often unjust, mean, brutal, and... and even unfaithful to me. But I'll be faithful unto death, and let him see how well I can love. Watching from beyond the grave, he will see me just as I was before he died...

LUKA

Instead of talking like that, you'd do better to walk in the garden or have your horse Toby put into harness and call upon your neighbours.

POPOVA

Oh! *(Weeps)*

LUKA

Madam, dear lady!... What is it! What is it! What is the matter? God be with you!

POPOVA

He was so fond of Toby! He always used to drive him when he went to call on the neighbours. How well he used to drive! How forceful he looked when he tugged at the reins with all his strength! Don't you remember? Toby, Toby! Tell the groom to give him an extra bag of oats today.

LUKA

Yes, Madam.

(off-stage loud knocking at the door)

POPOVA

² *(fearfully)* Who is that? Say that I'm not at home!

LUKA

Yes, Madam. *(He goes)*

POPOVA

(sits alone gazing at the photograph) You shall see, Nicolas, how well I can love and forgive... My love will only fade away when I do, when my poor heart, stops beating. *(laughing through her tears)* Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I'm such a good little woman, such a true and loyal wife. I have locked myself up and I'll be faithful to you all my life, while you... aren't you ashamed of yourself, you silly old fatty? How you deceiv'd me and made scenes and left me alone for weeks on end!...

LUKA

(appears, flustered, in the doorway) Madam, there's someone asking to see you.

POPOVA

Didn't you say that I'm not at home?

LUKA

I did, but he said it's very urgent.

POPOVA

I'll see no one!

LUKA

I told him so, but he swore and push'd past me... he's in the dining room now.

POPOVA

(irritably) Very well, show him in... *(Luka goes, closing the door)* How rude people are! How extremely impertinent they are! Why should they go on disturbing my peace of mind? It would seem as if I really must enter a convent... Yes, a convent...

Enter Luka and Smirnov fighting

SMIRNOV

³ Fool! Oaf! Blockhead! — You're far too fond of talking... Donkey! *(he sees Popova and makes a dignified bow... clicking his heels)* Madam, I have the honour of presenting myself: Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov, landowner, and retired lieutenant of artillery. I must trouble you on a most important matter...

POPOVA

And what do you want?

SMIRNOV

At the time of your husband's lamented demise,

He owed me a debt of inordinate size.

POPOVA

(in alarm) How much?

SMIRNOV

Thirteen hundred roubles.

POPOVA

What for?

SMIRNOV
Oats, Madam.

POPOVA
That reminds me, Luka. Don't forget to give Toby his extra bag of oats. *(exit Luka)*

SMIRNOV
I lent him the sum out of friendship and pity.

By raising a loan from my Bank in the City, On which (to my mingled vexation and sorrow)

My Bank is demanding the interest... tomorrow.

I am loth to intrude in this grief-stricken house,

But I must have the money I lent to your spouse.

POPOVA
How soon?

SMIRNOV
This very instant.
(She winces)

SMIRNOV
If not, my estate will be put up for sale: And myself, a poor bankrupt, must languish in jail.

POPOVA
The debt shall be paid. I'll certainly speak To my bailiff, who comes at the end of the week.

SMIRNOV
I need it today!

POPOVA
Your prospects are bleak.
My bailiff will pay at the end of the week.

SMIRNOV
I need it today
My finances will crash!

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POPOVA
My bailiff will pay.
I haven't the cash.

SMIRNOV
My finances will crash!

POPOVA
I haven't the cash.

SMIRNOV
I need it today!

POPOVA
My bailiff will pay.

SMIRNOV
I have come to see you, not your bailiff!
What the hell...excuse the expression...
What the hell do I want with your bailiff?

POPOVA
Sir, I'm not used to hearing such vulgar language. I will listen to you no longer.
(She goes out quickly, slamming the door)

SMIRNOV
4 There! She's vanished. Everyone vanishes...except my creditors. But when I try to get money from my debtors...

Grozdiov is not at home,
Koritsin is out riding,
Yaroshevitch is still in Rome,
And Mishkin still in hiding.

O I could shed a bitter tear,
But that would not be mannish!
Why, o why must creditors appear
And debtors always vanish?

Chubakov is always drunk,
Mazutov is moronic,
Nemorov has become a monk,
Volnitsky has bubonic.

And I am prey to grief and fear
Which nothing, now, can banish.
Why, o why must creditors appear
And debtors always vanish?

Not one of the wretches has paid me, not one! And all because I'm soft-hearted, a milk-sop, an old woman! Brr! How angry I feel, how furious! I'm positively shaking with rage, I can hardly breathe...Ugh! My God! I feel sick! I'm almost fainting. *(shouting)* Hi there!
(Luka appears in the doorway)

LUKA
Well, what is it?

SMIRNOV
Bring me some kvass, or a glass of water!
(Luka goes out, closing the door)
When a man's in such deadly need of money it's like a mill-stone round his neck, but she won't pay because, if you please, her bailiff's away! Typical feminine logic! That's why I never like dealing with women. I'd rather sit on a barrel of gunpowder than try and reason with a woman. Brr! They make me get cramp in my legs! I want to shout "Help!"

LUKA
(enters and puts a glass of water on a table)
Madam is indisposed and will see no-one.

SMIRNOV
Get out! Get out!
(Luka gets out!)
Indisposed and will see no-one? Very well, then, you needn't...If you're ill for a week, I'll stay for a week...If ill for a year, I'll stay for a year...I'll get my own

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back! I'm not taken in by those widow's weeds or those dimples...We all know about dimples! Brr! *(goes to the window and shouts)* Semion, unharness the horses! We'll be staying here quite a time! Tell that fool of a groom to feed them some oats. It's insufferably hot, no one will pay, I've had a thick night, and to top it all there's this yowling, howling female. My head aches. *(sits holding his head)* Perhaps I should have some vodka? I will, I will. Hi there!

LUKA
(appears in the doorway) Well, what is it now?

SMIRNOV
Bring me a bottle of vodka!
(Luka goes, closing the door)

SMIRNOV
(suddenly catching sight of himself in a mirror) Ugh! I look a fine sight, I must say!

Mud — in my hair!
Muck — on my boots!
Ugh! and the stink of me!
(shouting) VODKA! VODKA!
Why should I care?

I don't care two hoots.
What must she think of me?
(shouting) VODKA! VODKA!
Where is that fool?

Has he dropped dead?
I'll try being civiler.
(calling softly) Vodka!
(to himself) Only keep cool!
Don't lose your head!
(roaring) Dunderhead! Driveller.
VODKA! VODKA!

LUKA

(enters with the vodka which Smirnov snatches from the tray) Sir, you take too much of a liberty...

SMIRNOV

What's that? Who the hell do you think you are talking to? Keep your mouth shut!

LUKA

(aside, going to the door) There's a brute for you! The devil himself must have sent him here.
(Luka goes out)

SMIRNOV

Oh! What a rage I'm in! So furious! So angry, I could grind this whole house to powder. I feel positively sick! Almost faint!...*(Shouts)* Hi there!

POPOVA

(enters with downcast eyes)

[5] Sir, in my solitude I have long been unused to the sound of the human voice — and I can't bear shouting. I beg you most earnestly not to disturb my peace.

SMIRNOV

Repay me my money and I'll go.

POPOVA

I've already told you quite plainly, I've no money in hand at the moment. Wait till the end of the week.

SMIRNOV

I have also told you quite plainly that I must have the money today, not at the end of week. If you won't pay me today, I'll have to hang myself tomorrow.

POPOVA

But what can I do, if I haven't the money?

SMIRNOV

So you won't pay me now? You won't?

POPOVA

I can't...

SMIRNOV

In that case I shall stay here till you pay me...*(sits down)* I shall keep on sitting here, just like this. *(He shows his irritation by drumming on the table with his fingers, and tapping the floor with his foot. Jumps up, shouting)* Do you think I'm joking?

POPOVA

Please don't shout! This isn't a stable!

SMIRNOV

I don't need to shout in a stable!

POPOVA

You don't seem to know how to behave in the presence of a lady.

SMIRNOV

Yes, I do know how to behave in the presence of a lady.

POPOVA

No you don't!

SMIRNOV

Yes I do.

POPOVA

No you don't! You're just a coarse ill-mannered peasant. Well brought-up people don't talk as you do, to a lady.

SMIRNOV

Well, this is a surprise! How would you like me to converse with you then? In French, or what?
(parodying a French singer)

[6] *Madame, je vous prie, Sortez d'ici* with me. And let us walk together in this delightful weather, *Pour oublier nos troubles. Madame, je vous prie, Sortez d'ici* with me. I feel so very gay

That you will not repay My thirteen hundred roubles. *Madame, je vous prie Flânez un peu* with me. Your humble servant pleads: Put off those widow's weeds. Unveil, as did Salome! *Madame, je vous prie, Sortez with me d'ici* I feel *bien amusé* That you will not repay The money that you owe me.

POPOVA

That's rude and not at all clever or funny!

SMIRNOV

(mimicking her, quasi falsetto) Rude and not at all clever or funny! So I don't know how to behave in the company of ladies! Believe me, in my time, I've seen more women than you have sparrows. I've fought duels over three of them. Jilted more than twenty, and ten have jilted me. Yes indeed! I know them inside out! I've loved, suffer'd and sigh'd for them! And wouldn't give that *(snapping his fingers)* for the lot of them.

POPOVA

In that case you can tell me who is more faithful and constant in love? The man?

SMIRNOV

Yes, of course, the man.

POPOVA

The man! The man is more faithful and constant in love! What right have you to defend my husband and accuse *me*? Let me tell you the truth!

[7] I was a constant, faithful wife, Every temptation scorning, And shall be constant all my life... In mourning, mourning, mourning.

Defend my husband if you can! What words could you praise *him* in? A woman loves one man. My man Loved women, women, my man loved women!

The dark, the fair, the slim, the stout, Tall, middle-sized and small, With brains and (frequently) without, He loved them all, all, all.

How should a loyal wife react Who, in his desk, discovers One hundred letters (neatly stacked) From lovers, lovers, lovers?

What could a poor, weak woman do But humour his caprices, When acts more suited to a zoo Took place with neighbours' nieces?

I smiled, I turned the other cheek, I never once a grouse made... Except the day he tried to wreak His will upon my house-maid.

I was a constant, faithful wife, Every temptation scorning, And shall remain so all my life... In mourning, mourning, mourning.

8 SMIRNOV
I'm sick of this mourning, mourning,
mourning! What do you take me for?
As if I didn't know why you wear black
and shut yourself up in these four walls!
So mysterious, so poetical! We all know
these tricks!

POPOVA
What! How dare you say that to me?

SMIRNOV
You've buried yourself alive, but you
don't forget to powder your face.

POPOVA
How dare you! How dare you!

SMIRNOV
Please don't shout, I'm not your bailiff.

POPOVA
Villain! Monster! Devil! Out!

SMIRNOV
Ha, ha, ha!

POPOVA
You'll end in jail if
You defy me.

SMIRNOV
(shouting) Please...don't...shout.

POPOVA
You're the one who's always bawling.

SMIRNOV
Pay my money, and I'll go.

POPOVA
You're a peasant!

SMIRNOV
You're appalling!

POPOVA
Leave my presence!

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SMIRNOV
No!

POPOVA
NO?

SMIRNOV
NO!
(She takes a handbell from the table
and rings it)
(Enter Luka)

POPOVA
Luka, this man is going. Kindly show him
the back door.

LUKA
Dare I show him the back door?

SMIRNOV
I've seen doors. I need no showing.

POPOVA
You're a boor!

SMIRNOV
And you are...a...bore.
(threatening Luka)

LUKA
God protect me!

SMIRNOV
He had better!

POPOVA
Kill my servant, if you dare!

SMIRNOV
Madam, you are still my debtor.

POPOVA
You sir, are a bear.

SMIRNOV
A bear?

POPOVA
A brute! A monster! A bear!

SMIRNOV
It's about time we gave up the idea
that only men have to answer for
insults! If there's going to be equality
between the sexes, then let us have it. I
challenge you!

POPOVA
You want a duel? Splendid!

SMIRNOV
Now, this instant.

POPOVA
This very instant! My husband had
some pistols...I'll get them at once
(goes towards the door, opens it, but
turns before shutting it) What a
pleasure it will be to pop a bullet
straight thro' your stupid fat head! The
devil take you!
(She goes)

SMIRNOV
I'll pick her off like a partridge! I'm not a
sentimental puppy. But what a woman!
Her eyes flashed, her cheeks shone, she
accepted my challenge! I've never seen
anyone like her! All the same, I must kill
her, just as a matter of principle.

LUKA
Sir, sir, go away!

SMIRNOV
What courage! What daring!

LUKA
O leave us, I pray.

SMIRNOV
She'd kill without caring!

LUKA
Kind Sir, go away,
O leave us, I pray.

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SMIRNOV
O, she is all I could
Worship in womanhood...
A kitten at play,
But a tigress at bay...

LUKA
Sir, sir, sir! Go away!
Sir, leave this house!
It's time you departed.

SMIRNOV
Frail as a mouse,
But so lion-hearted!
Under her beauty lurks
Gunpowder, fireworks...
A kitten at play,
But a tigress at bay...

LUKA
Sir, sir, sir! Go away.

SMIRNOV
(ignoring Luka)
I like her! I definitely like her, My anger's
vanished! I'm even ready to cancel her
debt. O what a wonderful woman! O
what a pity it is that I have to kill her.
(Popova enters with a pistol in each
hand)

POPOVA
Here they are (She brandishes
them)...but before we start you must
show me what to do with them. I've
never handled a pistol before.

LUKA
The Lord save us and have mercy upon
us!
(Kneels and silently repeats this phrase
to himself. Only his lips are seen to be
moving)

SMIRNOV

(taking one of the pistols) A beautiful pistol!... You must hold it like this. *(Aside)* Beautiful eyes!

POPOVA

Like this?

SMIRNOV

Yes, that's good... Now load like this... Take aim... Head back a little! Arm full length. Right!... that's it... *(taking one of her fingers)* Then with this exquisite finger press on this little thing — it's called a trigger. And that's that. Above all, keep cool, and try to stop your hand from shaking.

POPOVA

Very well! But isn't it rather awkward to shoot in here? Perhaps we had better go into the garden.

LUKA

(Aside) I'll go and fetch the cook and the groom. *(He goes)*

SMIRNOV

All right. But I warn you. I shall fire into the air.

POPOVA

Why? Whatever for?

SMIRNOV

(He hesitates)

Because... because... well, that's my business.

POPOVA

You're afraid, aren't you? Well, I'm not. I can't wait till I've made a hole in that cowardly head I dislike so much. Why won't you be a man?

SMIRNOV

Because I like you.

POPOVA

(laughs angrily) he likes me! He's not a man — and he likes me! *(Points to the door)* You can go. Get out! *(shouting)* Out!

SMIRNOV

(puts down the pistol in silence, takes his cap and goes to the door. He stops by the door and for 75 seconds they look at each other without speaking. Then he approaches her hesitantly)

9 Listen... Are you still angry? ... Well, I'm angry too, but, don't you see... How can I explain? ... The fact is... the fact is... *(clutches the back of a chair which breaks with a loud crack)* Hell take it! What delicate furniture you've got! I like you! I'm almost in love with you.

POPOVA

Stay away from me — I hate you!

SMIRNOV

Good God, what a woman! I'm lost! I'm caught like a rat in a trap. *(He ponders)* No — like a mouse. *(He advances on her)*

POPOVA

Keep away, or I'll fire! I'll fire!

SMIRNOV

Fire! I would gladly die,
Slain by a hand so sweet.
Fire! I would gladly lie
Dead at such dainty feet.

Fire! but before we part,
Before you take my life,
Know that you set my heart
On fire! *(He kneels and bellows)* Be my wife.

POPOVA

Let us fight!

SMIRNOV

But I'm off'ring my hand in marriage!

POPOVA

Let us fight!

SMIRNOV

What! You don't want it? Then you won't get it. *(rises and walks quickly towards the door)*

POPOVA

Wait a moment...

SMIRNOV

(stopping) Yes?

POPOVA

No. Nothing... You can go... Wait though... No, go away! Go, go! I hate you! However... No, don't go. Oh, if only you knew how angry I feel! *(flings the pistol on the table)* My fingers are numb from holding the wretched thing! *(Tears her handkerchief in fury)* Why are you standing there? Get out!

SMIRNOV

Good-bye!

POPOVA

Good-bye! Where are you going? *(He turns in the door)* No! Don't come near me!

SMIRNOV

(going up to her) If only you knew how angry I am with myself — I've fallen in love like a fool. I've been down on my knees, *(gruffly)* I love you! It's the last thing I wanted to do! I must pay the interest tomorrow and now there's you! I can never forgive myself! Never!

POPOVA

(She takes the bell from the table and rings it) Keep away! Stand back! Hands off! I hate you! I challenge you! Let us fight. *(They embrace, her arm round his neck, ringing the bell until it drops from her hand. Luka and the groom enter and see the embracing couple)*

LUKA

The Lord save us. The Lord have mercy upon us.

POPOVA

(demurely, with downcast eyes) Luka, tell the groom not to give Toby any oats at all today. He's not to give any oats at all today to Toby!

CURTAIN

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SMIRNOV ALAN OPIE *baritone*
LUKA JOHN SHIRLEY-QUIRK *bass*

NORTHERN SINFONIA

RICHARD HICKOX Conductor

DDD

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