

## June 11, 2020 – Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*

On this week's Thursday Evening Opera House I'm presenting one of the landmarks in the history of Russian opera, Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Glinka was the first Russian composer to gain wide recognition inside his own country, and is often regarded as the father of Russian classical music. *A Life for the Tsar* was the first of his two great operas, being originally entitled *Ivan Susanin*. Glinka's second opera, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, is based on one of Alexander Pushkin's earliest poems. The poet had hardly agreed to prepare a dramatic version of his fairy tale when he was killed in a duel owing to the supposed infidelity of his wife. As a result of Pushkin's untimely end, Glinka employed the services of no less than five different librettists. The premiere took place in St. Petersburg on November 27, 1842, at the Bolshoi Kamenny Theater.

Lyudmila (soprano **Bela Rudenko**) is wooed by the poet-prince Ratmir (contralto **Tamara Sinyavskaya**), the cowardly warrior Farlaf (bass **Boris Morozov**), and the knight Ruslan (bass-baritone **Yevgeny Nesternko**). She disappears at a feast and is promised to whichever suitor can find her. The wizard Finn (tenor **Alexey Maslennikov**) tells Ruslan that she has been stolen by an evil dwarf and warns him against Farlaf's helper, the evil fairy Naina (mezzo-soprano **Galina Borisova**). Ruslan encounters a giant head whose breathing causes a storm. He calms it and finds a magical sword beneath it. With the sword he kills the dwarf and rescues Lyudmila, awakening her from a magical sleep with a ring given to him by Finn.

**Yuri Simonov** conducts the Orchestra and Chorus of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre in this 1996 Melodiya recording.

**Olga Peretyatko** sings Lyudmila's cavatina "Grustno mne, roditel' dorogoi" in a 2015 Frankfurt concert performance: <https://youtu.be/4ANn0gJKeVU>.

Be sure to tune in next Thursday, June 18th, for an encore broadcast of Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani*, hosted by the late **Al Ruocchio** (1937-2007). Elvira (**Joan Sutherland**) is in love with Lord Arturo Talbot (**Luciano Pavarotti**), who's in competition with Sir Riccardo Forth (**Piero Cappuccilli**) who's in turn annoyed that she doesn't return his ardor. **Richard Bonyng**e conducts this 1987 recording.

The Thursday Evening Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, or you can listen on our Android or iPhone apps.

*Bob Chapman*

**W. Robert Chapman, Host of the Thursday Evening Opera House**