



PRESS RELEASE

5 March 2018

SCOTTISH OPERA PERFORMS RACHMANINOV'S *ALEKO AND FRANCESCA DA RIMINI*

The 2017/18 Sunday Series: Opera in Concert concludes on 6 May at 3pm at Theatre Royal Glasgow with a Rachmaninov double bill of *Aleko* and *Francesca da Rimini*. This concert marks the first ever performance of Rachmaninov on the Scottish Opera stage, and the Scottish premiere of *Francesca da Rimini*.

Scottish Opera's Music Director **Stuart Stratford** has curated The Sunday Series concerts which have focused this Season on his love of, and expertise in, Russian music.

Adapted from *The Gypsies*, a dramatic poem by Alexander Pushkin, *Aleko* was Rachmaninov's first opera. A blistering tale of gypsies, jealousy and violent revenge, *Aleko* tells the tragic love story of Aleko, a Russian, and Zemfira, a young gypsy girl. The score draws heavily on Russian folk music, blended with Rachmaninov's unique and melodic voice.

With a plot based on the fifth canto of Dante's *Inferno*, *Francesca da Rimini* is a story of love and death, sin and innocence. Composed more than ten years after *Aleko*, this little-known and rarely performed 'symphonic opera' is one of tenderness underpinned by Rachmaninov's unmistakably dark tone.

Stuart Stratford conducts a cast of international soloists including **Evez Abdulla** (*The Fiery Angel* 2017), **Anne-Marie Owens** (*Iolanta* 2017), **Alexei Tanovitski** (*The Fiery Angel* 2017)

and **Ekaterina Goncharova**, who has starred in a number of recent productions at St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. The soloists are joined by a chorus and The Orchestra of Scottish Opera.

The concert takes place during the run of the Company's staged production of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, also conducted by **Stuart Stratford**, which has performances in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness and Belfast.

Stuart Stratford said: 'I'm very excited about *Aleko* and *Francesca da Rimini*. Rachmaninov was only 19 when he wrote *Aleko* as his graduation piece from the Moscow Conservatoire, which is an amazing achievement.

'*Francesca da Rimini* is a real stroke of genius. Its story is taken from Dante's *Inferno*, more specifically the Second Circle of Hell – Lust. This theme is beautifully portrayed by amazing swirling chromatic movements, and by an offstage wordless chorus which is sensational.'

-ENDS-

www.scottishopera.org.uk

Aleko and Francesca da Rimini Creative Team

Conductor **Stuart Stratford**

Aleko Cast

Aleko	Evez Abdulla
Young Gypsy	Oleg Dolgov
Zemfira	Ekaterina Goncharova
An old man, Zemfira's father	Alexei Tanovitski
Gypsy Woman	Anne Marie Owens

Francesca da Rimini Cast

Ghost of Virgil	Alexei Tanovitski
Dante Alighieri	Oleg Dolgov
Lanciotto Malatesta	Evez Abdulla

Francesca Malatesta
Paolo Malatesta

Ekaterina Goncharova
Oleg Dolgov

Performance Diary

Rachmaninov's *Aleko* and *Francesca da Rimini*

6 May, 3pm

Theatre Royal Glasgow

Notes to Editors

Scottish Opera biography:

Scottish Opera is Scotland's national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. It was founded by Alexander Gibson in 1962 and was inaugurated with a production of *Madama Butterfly* at the King's Theatre in Glasgow.

Notable achievements include the world premiere of James MacMillan's *Inés de Castro* at the 1996 Edinburgh International Festival; complete Ring cycles at the 2003 Edinburgh International Festival, which won the 2004 South Bank Show Award for Best Opera Production; and the Achievement in Opera Award at the 2017 UK Theatre Awards for Sir David McVicar's production of Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande*. Recent commissions include *Five:15 Operas Made in Scotland* (2008-10); *The Lady from the Sea*, *Clemency*, the double bill of *In the Locked Room* and *Ghost Patrol* (winner of a South Bank Sky Arts Award) which premiered at the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival and 2016's *The Devil Inside* by Stuart MacRae and Louise Welsh.

Scottish Opera is committed to bringing the widest possible range of opera, performed to the highest possible standards, to the maximum audience throughout Scotland and the UK. Each year it performs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, as well as smaller theatres, village halls and community centres throughout the country.

Scottish Opera's Education and Outreach Department was the first of its kind of any opera company in Europe. It operates an extensive programme which involves over 8,000 primary school children every year as well as many other activities including adult learning and *Unwrapped* taster sessions.

Scottish Opera is supported by the Scottish Government.



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