



Stagione 2022~2023

4 dicembre 2022 ore 18 ~ Anteprima Under30
7 dicembre 2022 ore 18 ~ Serata inaugurale
10, 13, 16, 20, 23, 29 dicembre 2022 ~ ore 20

Modest Petrovič Musorgskij

BORIS GODUNOV

Dramma musicale popolare in quattro parti (sette quadri)
Libretto di Modest Petrovič Musorgskij

Nuova produzione Teatro alla Scala

Direttore **Riccardo Chailly**

Regia **Kasper Holten**

Scene **Es Devlin**

Costumi **Ida Marie Ellekilde**

Luci **Jonas Bøgh**

Video **Luke Halls**

Orchestra e Coro del Teatro alla Scala

Maestro del Coro **Alberto Malazzi**

Personaggi e interpreti

Boris Godunov	Ildar Abdrazakov
Fëdor	Lilly Jørstad
Ksenija	Anna Denisova
La nutrice di Ksenija	Agnieszka Rehlis
Vasilij Šujskij	Norbert Ernst
Ščelkalov	Alexey Markov
Pimen	Ain Anger
Grigorij	Dmitry Golovnin
Varlaam	Stanislav Trofimov
Misail	Alexander Kravets
L'ostessa della locanda	Maria Barakova
Lo Jurodivyi	Yaroslav Abaimov
Pristav, capo delle guardie	Oleg Budaratskiy
Mitjucha, uomo del popolo	Roman Astakhov

Prezzi

Prima - da 2.500 a 100 euro più prevendita

Repliche - da 250 a 30 euro più prevendita

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Boris Godunov, guilt and loneliness of power

***Boris Godunov* by Modest Mussorgsky conducted by Riccardo Chailly
and directed by Kasper Holten opens the 2022/2023 Season.
The so-called *Ur-Boris* is performed.**

Modest Mussorgsky's ***Boris Godunov*** conducted by Maestro **Riccardo Chailly** and directed by **Kasper Holten** is opening the 2022/2023 Opera Season at Teatro alla Scala opens on 7 December 2022 at 6 p.m. **Es Devlin** designed the sets, **Ida Marie Ellekilde** signs the costumes and **Luke Halls** the videos, while the light designer is **Jonas Bógh**.

Starring in the main roles are Ildar Abdrazakov as the protagonist, Ain Anger as Pimen, Stanislav Trofimov as Varlaam, Dmitry Golovnin as Grigory Otrepev, Norbert Ernst as Šujskij and Lilly Jørstad is Fyodor. The Teatro alla Scala Chorus is led by Maestro **Alberto Malazzi**.

Boris Godunov is a recurring title of La Scala's seasons ever since the Italian première in 1909 wanted by Toscanini but conducted by Edoardo Vitale. Later on it was conducted by Toscanini himself and also by Guarnieri, Votto, Gavazzeni and Gergiev among others. This year *Boris Godunov* opens the Season of Teatro alla Scala for the second time, after the memorable 1979 edition with Claudio Abbado on the podium and the staging by Jurij Ljubimov. The version which is now performed is the so-called *Ur-Boris*, composed in 1869. Mussorgsky's contemporaries were dismayed by its innovative and realistic features both from a dramaturgical and musical point of view. This version focuses on the theme of individual guilt and its inevitable consequences.

The dark and current subject echoes the theme of Verdi's *Macbeth* with which La Scala opened its 2021/2022 Season. The action is set 1598: when tsar Fyodor dies, guards and priests force the crowd to beg Boris to become tsar of Russia. Finally, the coronation takes place in the Kremlin's cathedral square in an imposing ceremony disturbed, however, by some unrest. In a cell in the Chudov monastery, the elderly monk Pimen is about to finish his chronicle of Russian history. The chronicle reports the truth about the assassination of tsarevich Dmitry, the legitimate heir to the throne, perpetrated on the orders of Boris. Pimen recounts to the novice Grigory the events of Dmitry's murder and mentions that the tsarevich would have been Grigory's age. Grigory resolves to pose as Dmitry to lead an uprising against Boris to seize the throne. Grigory takes refuge in Poland, avoiding arrest by crossing the border into Lithuania. The last scenes narrate events that took place in 1604: Boris's children, Xenia and Fyodor, have grown up; the tsar now governs a country worn out by famine, where discontent is rife among the people and rumors of regicide are multiplying, while rebel forces led by Grigory are pressing the borders. Haunted by the ghost of tsarevich Dmitry, Boris Godunov loses his wits and dies after a final plea to his son Fyodor.

Riccardo Chailly and *Boris Godunov*

Among the now numerous paths that make up Riccardo Chailly's more than 40 years of experience as a conductor at La Scala, the one that traverses the Russian repertoire has a special significance. After his early debut on the podium with Verdi's *I masnadieri* in 1978, called by Abbado to replace Gavazzeni, in 1979 Chailly achieved a warm personal success by conducting Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at the Lirico Theatre, followed in 1981 by the critical and interpretative conundrum represented by Mussorgsky's *The Fair at Sorochyntsi*, brilliantly resolved. In 1994, it was the turn of Prokofiev's *Angel of Fire*, a success that many still remember. "During the first seasons of my musical direction", the Maestro explains, "I considered it necessary to focus

exclusively on the Italian repertoire, with the programs dedicated to Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Verdi's 'Youth Trilogy' and the operas that had their premiere at La Scala. Today, the time has come to give space also to other voices that are fully part of La Scala's history. Modest Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* had its first Italian performance in our Theatre in 1909 with Edoardo Vitale conducting and Fyodor Chaliapin as the protagonist, and remained a constant presence in the following seasons, thanks not only to Arturo Toscanini who conducted it for four seasons between 1922 and 1927, but also to Antonio Guarnieri who revived it in 1935, 1941 and 1946, and then to Antonino Votto and Gianandrea Gavazzeni, among others. In 1979, *Boris Godunov* was the second non-Italian opera to open the Season on 7 December after *Fidelio* conducted by Karl Böhm in 1974: a choice of Claudio Abbado, who gave a memorable interpretation together with director Yuriy Ljubimov. I was Abbado's assistant at the time and I remember the months of rehearsals to realize a very innovative performance that was also the subject of criticism, but which went on to remain in the interpretative history of opera as well as that of La Scala. Tullio Serafin wrote that the greatness of *Boris* is perhaps indebted to the grim realism with which Verdi paints the vertigo of power in *Macbeth*. Presenting the two operas in two consecutive openings also takes on this significance. This *Boris Godunov* - which as every 7 December will be filmed by the cameras of Rai Cultura - is for me the unavoidable point of arrival of a journey into Mussorgsky's music that I began when I was very young by conducting in Firenze and Bologna the scene of the death of the protagonist with a historical interpreter such as Boris Christoff together with the *Songs and Dances of Death*, and that had an important staging at La Scala during the Mussorgsky Festival in 1981 with *The Fair at Sorochyntsi* directed by Sylvano Bussotti".

The current production

The production signed by Kasper Holten and his creative team proposes an interpretation of the opera centered on the themes of conscience versus power and truth versus censorship. At the root of Holten's reflection is the origin of the libretto, the play by Pushkin, which was composed in 1825 and published in 1831. Dealing with the epic of the 'turbid period', Pushkin was openly inspired by the great Shakespearian historical dramas, not only in the grandeur of the fresco but also in the depth of the characters. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that Shakespeare lived at the time of the historical Godunov. It is precisely to Shakespeare's theatre that certain solutions adopted in the play refer to, such as the representation of guilt through the materialization of ghosts, real or imagined, on stage. The specter of tsarevich Dmitry, who was slaughtered by Boris to gain power, will be a recurring element, a visible sign of the guilt and ultimately of the madness of his murderer. Another element that will be placed in the foreground is the figure of Pimen, whom we will see on stage from the very beginning intent on writing his chronicle, a truthful and therefore politically dangerous testimony to the facts that Boris and his scribes attempt to conceal. At the center of this production there will be precisely this call to truth and the need to bear witness to it. The spectator will be transported into Pimen's chronicle and thus into History, in which past, present and future intersect and influence each other. A circular History in which violence returns as a constant.

The story, articulated in seven scenes, is divided into two distinct parts that will be emphasized by the insertion of an interval: in the first four scenes we witness the public coronation ceremony as a mean of confusing and deceiving the people, Pimen's subversive testimony of truth and Grigory's decision to distort this truth in order to usurp power: in short, we witness what happens to Boris by looking at him from the outside. In the remaining three scenes - which take place almost seven years later - we are with Boris, we see how he tries to live with his guilt, we feel his fear and his path towards madness. Here too, the temporal planes intersect: Boris's children, Fyodor and Xenia, will have the same fate as tsarevich Dmitry, but also as many victims of the blind violence of power. With Boris's death, a circle of ink and blood closes, in which we see History and its narration represented together.

Boris Godunov's versions

For his ninth Season Opening, Maestro Riccardo Chailly choses to conduct *Boris Godunov* in the first version in seven scenes presented by Mussorgsky at the Imperial Theatres of St. Petersburg in 1869. The opera, among the greatest masterpieces of musical theatre, has a complex gestation and history. The composer was born into a family of landowners and turned to music by abandoning his military career. He had suffered the economic consequences of the abolition of serfdom, reducing himself to an uncertain and precarious life, undermined by alcohol and epilepsy. *Boris Godunov* is his first opera. It breaks with the conventions of musical theatre of the time to disruptive effect. The libretto, by the composer's own hand, draws on Pushkin's tragedy and Alexander Karamzin's History of the Russian State to sketch a Shakespearean drama of guilt against the backdrop of the so-called "Time of Troubles" (1598-1614), the years of anarchy between the death of Ivan the Terrible and the advent of the Romanovs. To do this, Mussorgsky imagined a visionary and anticipatory musical language that broke the closed forms of traditional opera in favor of an absolute adherence to the morphology of the Russian language.

After little more than a year of work, from October 1868 to December 1869, Mussorgsky presented a radically innovative opera to the commission of the Imperial Theatres of St. Petersburg: divided into seven scenes, it has no closed numbers, no sentimental plot, no major female part and no heroic or amorous tenor. It is the original *Ur-Boris* or *Boris*: dense, dark, profound. Today, La Scala presents it as its inaugural title; at the time, it was far too unusual for the commission, which rejected it by six votes to one.

The composer then proceeded between 1871 and 1872, during a period in which he shared a room with Rimsky-Korsakov, to a radical revision (the so-called '**original version**') involving the addition of three new scenes. Two constitute the spectacular 'Polish Act' in which not only a series of popular songs intervene to soften the general gloom, but Grigory's tenor voice (the 'false Dmitry') finds space and heroic expansion alongside Marina, the female character missing from the first version. The third, which reworks themes from the 'scene of the innocent', shifts the finale from the muted tones of Boris's death to the grandiose uprising in the Kromy forest. Not only the continuity is broken in favor of a 'picture dramaturgy' that shifts between different places and times, but all the music is rewritten, toning down realism in favor of a more pronounced lyrical momentum. The revision was enough to get the opera performed, which was staged at the Mariinsky on 8th February 1874, but not to make it a success. Critics and colleagues accused the author of bad taste and musical ignorance: a veritable lynching.

The title's survival on the stage is largely due to the revision completed by **Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in 1896**, who reinvented the work by covering it with a lush orchestration of immense seduction, but in stark contrast to the rough and severe tints desired by Mussorgsky. Meanwhile, in 1928, Russian musicologist **Pavel Lamm** published a critical revision including the two original versions in the score, respecting the author's wishes and his meticulous manuscripts. The first performance of *Ur-Boris* took place on 16th February 1928 in Leningrad. A new version was then prepared by **Šostakovič between 1939 and 1940** and staged in Moscow in 1959. The definitive performance redemption of *Ur-Boris* would have to wait for the Kirov version conducted by Valery Gergiev in 1992.

"The different versions of *Boris*" - observes Franco Pulcini - "reflect different moments of national sentiment in Russia: the rejection of both versions by Mussorgsky reflects the sense of inferiority of nineteenth-century Russians towards European culture and their fear of appearing primitive, brutal, savage. A sentiment to which Rimsky-Korsakov's instrumental mastery offers refuge with its fairy-tale hue that softens the violence of auteur realism. The Soviet era, on the other hand, influences Shostakovich's version in which the Polish act becomes a metaphor for the fear of external aggression felt by the Russians during the Cold War years. *Ur-Boris*, with its Shakespearean accents and its almost religious reflection on the Dostoevskian themes of crime, guilt, inevitable punishment and the coexistence of good and evil, has more of a character of universality than other versions".

The bond of *Boris Godunov* with La Scala

Boris Godunov is one of the titles of the great international repertoire most closely associated with the history of Teatro alla Scala. Suffice it to say that the one to be staged on 7 December will be the title's 26 occurrence in the Theatre's seasons: a universally famous and performed opera such as *Carmen* stops at 24. At the Piermarini, the Italian premiere of *Boris* took place on 14 January 1909, as part of a broader project of renewal and internationalization of the repertoire desired by Toscanini amidst the perplexity and often open opposition of the public and the press. If the definitive opening to the Wagnerian repertoire, culminating in *Tristan* in 1923 in which the great conductor had Adolphe Appia at his side, remains at the heart of this revolution, not less important are the premieres of Richard Strauss's *Salome* in 1906 and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1907. For 1909 Toscanini drew up a program that included, in addition to the opening of Carnival and Lent Season with *La Valchiria*, the premieres of *Elektra* by Richard Strauss and *Boris Godunov* with Fyodor Chaliapin who had triumphed in Boito's *Mefistofele*. In 1908, however, Toscanini left La Scala for Giulio Gatti Casazza's Metropolitan: the three foreign operas were entrusted to the baton of Edoardo Vitale and *Boris* was a success turned into a triumph above all by the performance of Chaliapin. On his return to the helm of the Milanese Theatre, Toscanini reaffirmed in the strongest terms his absolute faith in the opera, which was performed under his baton in 1922 (with Pertile as Grigory) for 14 performances and in 1923 for 10, followed by a further 8 in 1925 and 2 in 1927. In 1927 the sketches were by Nicola Benois, who would sign the sets for all of La Scala's *Boris* until 1960. By this time *Boris Godunov* was part of our Theatre's repertoire and remained a constant in the program: in 1929 Ettore Panizza took the podium, in 1930 and 1931 Chaliapin was again the protagonist under the baton of Giuseppe del Campo, in 1935 Antonio Guarnieri conducted, and he was to return, with Tancredi Pasero in the leading role, in 1941 (Fyodor was Giulietta Simionato, directed by Mario Frigerio) and at the end of the war in 1946, when Rimsky-Korsakov's version was used for the first time. Pasero also sang in the 1944 revival with Del Campo on the podium, and in the 1947 revival for the opening of the Autumn Season conducted by Joel Perlea. The 1944, 1946 and 1947 editions were held at the Teatro Lirico due to the bombing of the Piermarini. The return to the restored historic hall took place in 1949 with Issay Dobrowen conducting and directing and a new protagonist: Boris Christoff, who had already been Pimen two years earlier. It took only two years for a new production: in 1953, Antonino Votto conducted Nicola Rossi Lemeni in Tatiana Pavlova's production, which was to be revived in 1956 again with Rossi Lemeni and in 1960 with Boris Christoff in the Rimskij-Korsakov version, which was to be used in all editions until the restoration of the original by Claudio Abbado in 1979. In 1964 La Scala hosted the ensembles of the Bolshoi Theatre conducted by Evgeny Svetlanov under the direction of Leonid Baratov, but as early as 1967 a new production was staged under the direction of Jerzy Semkov and directed by Peter Shtarbanov, marking the debut at La Scala in the title role of Nicolai Ghiaurov. Ghiaurov returned in 1973 in Josif Tumanov's production conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni, which was also La Scala's first *Boris* with Romano Gandolfi as Chorus Master. Claudio Abbado chose *Boris Godunov* to open the 1979/1980 Season. It was a decision that established the role of this opera in La Scala's history but it was still a bold gesture: the only international title accepted on the evening of Saint Ambrose had been Beethoven's *Fidelio* conducted by Karl Böhm. Abbado, on the other hand, had already dared in 1973 by proposing an opera buffa for 7 December, *L'italiana in Algeri* directed by Ponnelle. For the event, he chose the original edition in Pavel Lamm's version revised by David Lloyd-Jones, and the cast was impressive: Nicolai Ghiaurov was Boris, Nicola Ghiuselev Pimen, Lucia Valentini Terrani Marina, Ruggero Raimondi Varlaam, John Shirley-Quick Rangoni and in the part of the hostess Fedora Barbieri, who had been Marina in 1949, returned. The hieratic performance by Jury Ljubimov with the large iconostasis designed by David Borovsliij impressed everyone. In the auditorium, great celebrations were held for Sandro Pertini's first 7 December, who refused the central box and chose an orchestra seat. The performance was revived in 1981 as part of the Mussorgsky Festival commissioned by Abbado, who would return to conduct the opera in 1983 at Covent Garden in another historic production, by Andrej Tarkovsky. In 1989 it was again the Bolshoi that brought *Boris Godunov* to La Scala with the direction of Andrei Chistiakov, directed by Leonid Baratov and starring Evgenij Nesterenko. In the following years the programming shifted rather to other titles of

the Russian repertoire, but in 2002 Valery Gergiev together with the director Viktor Kramer presented for the first time in a La Scala season (but at the Teatro degli Arcimboldi) the *Ur-Boris*, i.e. the original version presented by Mussorgsky at the St. Petersburg theatres in 1969 and now proposed by Riccardo Chailly for 7 December 2022.

The main character

Ildar Abdrazakov reaches his sixth 7 December with *Boris Godunov*. Since his debut in *La sonnambula* in 2001 Abdrazakov has sung at La Scala in *La forza del destino*, *Macbeth*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Iphigénie en Aulide* (with Riccardo Muti, 7 December 2002), *Fidelio*, *Moïse et Pharaon* (with Riccardo Muti, 7 December 2003), *Carmen*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Carlo*, *Ernani* and the last three Season Openings with Riccardo Chailly: *Attila* on 7 December 2019, the evening “A riveder le stelle” on 7 December 2020 and *Macbeth* on 7 December 2021, as well as in numerous concerts. Endowed with a vocal technique and stage qualities that enable him to tackle a vast repertoire, Abdrazakov has engagements in these seasons which range from *Italiana in Algeri* (Salzburg 2022 and 2023 with Cecilia Bartoli, St. Petersburg 2022) and *Il turco in Italia* (Vienna, 2022) to *Attila* (London 2022), *Don Carlo* (Munich, 2022 and 2023), *La damnation de Faust* (Naples 2023), *Boris Godunov* (Valdivostok 2022, Munich 2023). He will return to La Scala in March 2023 to play the four devilish characters in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* conducted by Frédéric Chaslin. His concert activity is also intense, and after the galas at the Arena di Verona and St. Petersburg, he will return to the United States in 2023 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andris Nelsons.

Meetings, conferences, insights

Like every year, the run-up to the premiere will be opened by a conference dedicated to the opening title. The meeting entitled “*Boris Godunov* - Drama of History and Solitude of Power” will be held on Saturday 12 November in the Ridotto dei Palchi and will feature Elisabetta Fava, Fausto Malcovati, Franco Pulcini and Maestro Riccardo Chailly in conversation with Raffaele Mellace.

Maestro Chailly will meet the audience again on Thursday 24 November at 6 p.m. in the Ridotto dei Palchi participating in Elisabetta Fava's lecture for the “Prima delle Prime” cycle organized in collaboration with the Amici della Scala.

Each performance of *Boris Godunov* will be preceded by an introductory lecture by Elisabetta Fava reserved for the evening's audience. The lecture will be held in the Ridotto dei Palchi (or in the Ridotto delle Gallerie) one hour before the start of the performance.

The Premiere on Rai

The collaboration between Rai and the Teatro alla Scala on the occasion of the Premiere, which began in 1976 with *Otello* conducted by Carlos Kleiber and directed by Franco Zeffirelli, is confirmed once again this year: on 7 December *Boris Godunov* is proposed by Rai Cultura live and exclusively on Rai 1 starting at 5.45 p.m. The performance, directed by Arnalda Canali, is also broadcast live on Radio 3, on Rai1 HD channel 501 and on Rai Play, where it can be seen for 15 days after the Premiere. Rai Com will distribute the opera live in cinemas. More than 30 Italian cinemas will be involved, but the event will also be available live or deferred in several international theatres.

La Prima diffusa

The Prima Diffusa, now at its 11th edition, is a true festival with which the Municipality of Milan, Edison and RAI accompany Milan in the week leading up to the La Scala opera Premiere with dozens of initiatives including concerts, performances, readings, meetings and conferences, exhibitions and reviews dedicated to opera, involving Milan's cultural venues and symbolic city spaces in all nine municipalities. An involvement of the entire community that grows until 7 December, the day on which the Premiere is finally staged at La Scala and will be broadcast live in spaces of the nine municipalities and also in the metropolitan area. The full program of the event will be announced at a press conference in November.

The UNDER30 preview

Once again, this year the Prima will be preceded on 4 December at 6 p.m. by the nowadays traditional Preview for UNDER30 audience. The initiative, inaugurated on the occasion of the Premiere of *Don Carlo* in 2008, allows all young people under the age of thirty to purchase a ticket for the Season's Preview at the price of €20 and has become a cornerstone of the Theatre's policy of opening up to the new generations. Tickets regularly sell out shortly after the opening of sales for the similar initiative reserved for young ballet spectators, who this year will attend the Preview of *The Nutcracker* on 15 December. The previews of the performances are just one of the initiatives and possibilities offered to the UNDER30 audience by Teatro alla Scala.

All details on passes, subscriptions and offers can be found at
<https://www.teatroallascala.org/en/under30/index.html>.

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