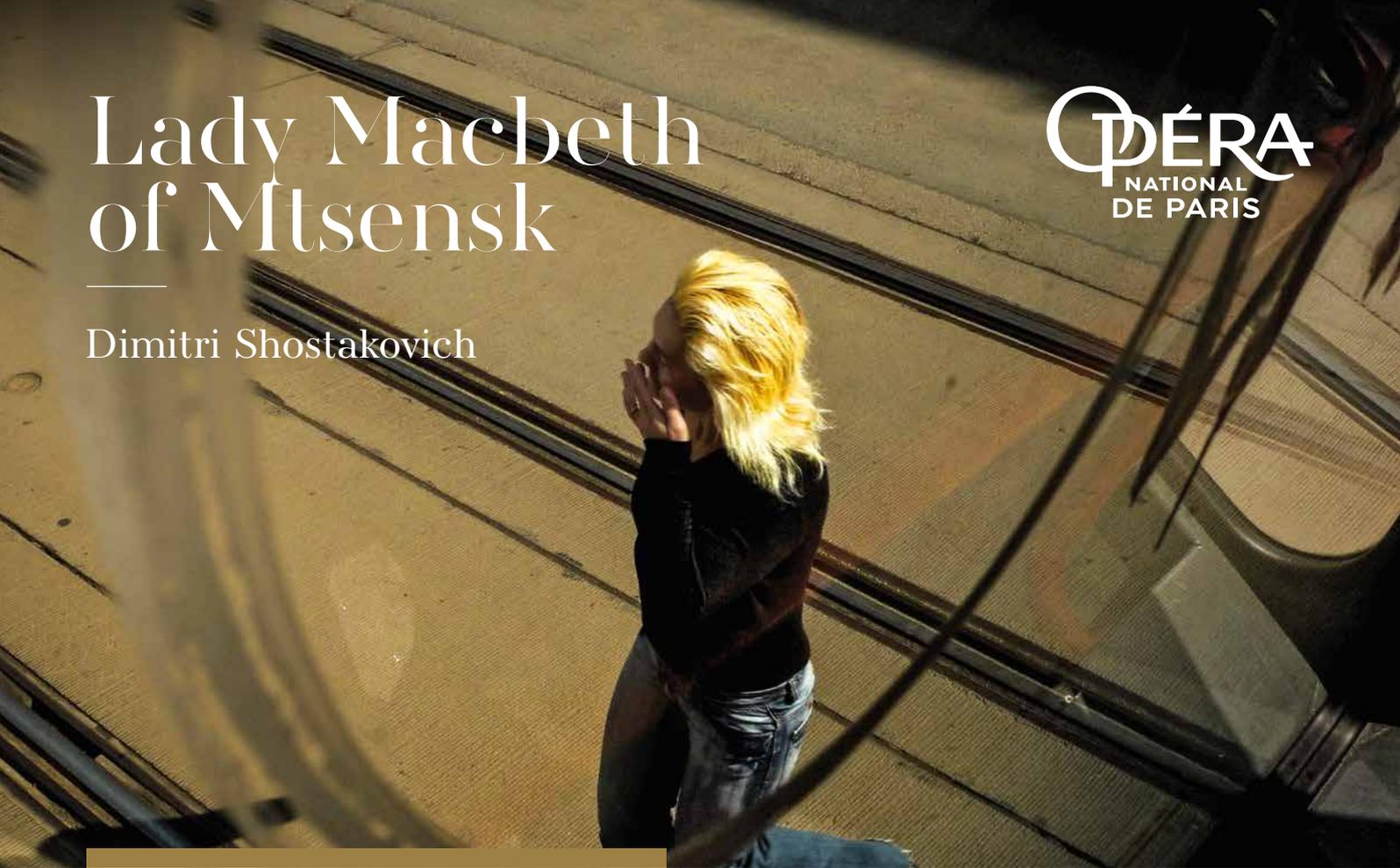


Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk

OPÉRA
NATIONAL
DE PARIS

Dimitri Shostakovich



Opera in four acts and nine parts (1934)
Music by Dimitri Shostakovich
Libretto by Alexandre Preis, Dimitri Shostakovich
After Nikolai Leskov

New production

Of Shostakovich's initial undertaking – a trilogy on the tragic destinies of Russian women through the ages – only one opera was ever written: the hard-hitting *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Although one of the mainsprings of the work, the Shakespearean parallel is here bitterly ironic: unlike Lady Macbeth, Katerina Ismailova who, in the remote reaches of rural 19th century Russia, falls in love with one of her husband's employees and is finally forced to commit suicide, is less a manipulator than a victim of a violent and patriarchal society. Krzysztof Warlikowski liberates all the subversive power of this scorching and scandalous work, which marked the early years of the Opéra Bastille.

Presented by Alain Duault

3:30 including one 30-min interval
Performed in Russian, with English subtitles
Film Director: Stéphane Metge

Conductor: **Ingo Metzmacher**
Director: **Krzysztof Warlikowski**
Sets: **Krzysztof Warlikowski**
Costumes: **Małgorzata Szcześniak**
Lighting design: **Felice Ross**
Choreography: **Claude Bardouil**
Dramaturgy: **Christian Longchamp**
Chorus master: **José Luis Basso**

Paris Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Boris Timofeevich Ismailov : **Dmitry Ulyanov**
Zinovy Borisovich Ismailov : **John Daszak**
Katerina Lvovna Ismailova : **Aušrinė Stundytė**
Serguei : **Pavel Černoč**
Aksinya : **Sofija Petrovic**
Sonietka : **Oksana Volkova**
Shabby peasant: **Wolfgang Ablinger-Sperrhacke**
The teacher: **Andrei Popov**
A priest, a guardian: **Krzysztof Baczyk**
The female convict: **Marianne Croux**
The chief of police, the old convict: **Alexander Tsymbalyuk**
A sergeant officer: **Sava Vemic**
The steward: **Florent Mbia**
The porter, the policeman: **Julien Joguet**
The foremen: **Paolo Bondi, Cyrille Lovighi, Hyun-Jong Roh**
The miller: **Jian-Hong Zhao**
The coachman: **John Bernard**
A drunk guest: **Fernando Velasquez**

ACT 1

Locked in a loveless marriage with Zinoviy Borisovich, Katerina feels dispirited. Her father-in-law, Boris Timofeyevich, who runs an industrial slaughterhouse, reproaches her for failing to provide his son with an heir after four years of marriage. Katerina holds her husband responsible for their childless union. When her husband is obliged to leave for a few days to resolve an unexpected work-related issue, Boris Timofeyevich compels Katerina to swear before all the workers that she will remain faithful to her spouse. Aksinya, a young woman in the family's service, evokes the reputation of the newly-hired Sergei: he's a handsome fellow but also an inveterate womaniser. He was forced to leave his last place of employment after he tried to seduce the mistress of the household.

A group of workers, led by Sergei, harass Aksinya. Katerina intervenes and chastises the men for their disrespectful behaviour. Sergei challenges her to wrestle with him. Katerina accepts, but soon has to concede defeat. Just then, her father-in-law unexpectedly appears. Katerina invents a story to dispel any suspicion surrounding her and Sergei.

Alone in her room, Katerina voices her frustrations: she yearns to be loved and desired. Her father-in-law advises her to go to sleep rather than burn the candle unnecessarily. However, someone knocks at the door: it is Sergei who pretends to have come to borrow a book. His true intentions, though, are all too obvious and, after some resistance, Katerina abandons herself to him.

ACT 2

Suffering from insomnia, Boris looks back nostalgically on the excesses of his youth. Suddenly, he sees Sergei climbing out of Katerina's bedroom window. He catches him and wakes everyone with his yelling. He demands that a whip be fetched and gives Sergei a severe beating. Powerless, Katerina is obliged to witness the scene. Boris locks up Sergei and orders Katerina to prepare him a meal since all the whipping has made him hungry. She goes and makes the mushroom dish that she usually prepares for him and laces it with rat poison. Soon thereafter, the old man goes into convulsions. Ignoring his cries, Katerina takes the keys to the warehouse where Boris locked up Sergei and leaves. In the morning, the workers find Boris at death's door and summon the priest. In his death throes, the old man accuses his daughter-in-law of having poisoned him, however, the priest does not understand his mutterings. Katerina feigns affliction.

Katerina shares the conjugal bed with Sergei. The latter is troubled because he knows Zinoviy will soon return home. Katerina reassures him and tells him he has nothing to fear: he will be her husband. Her only cause for trepidation is Boris's ghost, who appears in her bedroom every night to curse her. Not long after, Zinoviy returns home without warning. Sergei barely has time to hide. Zinoviy has heard what happened in his absence and he questions Katerina. She denies any involvement until Zinoviy beats her with Sergei's belt. The latter comes to her aid and while he immobilises Zinoviy, Katerina strangles him. They then hide the body in the food cellar.

ACT 3

Zinoviy is missing and presumed dead. Katerina and Sergei are getting married. Katerina is tormented by remorse. However, Sergei reproaches her for being so anxious at a time when everyone is preparing to celebrate. In a cabaret number, the shabby peasant suggests that Zinoviy's corpse might be located nearby. The police officers are also happily participating in the festivities. Most of the guests are now inebriated.

Suddenly, Katerina realises that the body has been discovered. She warns Sergei, but the latter is reluctant to flee and abandon all the wealth now within his reach. When he finally agrees to take flight, it is too late: the police intervene. Unable to control herself, Katerina confesses and the two accomplices are arrested.

ACT 4

Sergei and Katerina along with a group of other convicts are on their way to a prison camp. Sergei no longer wants anything to do with Katerina: he blames her for having destroyed his life. He tries to seduce Sonietka, a young prisoner. In exchange for her favours, she asks him to find her a pair of stockings. Sergei goes to see Katerina and, after claiming to have been injured by his shackles, he manages to convince her to let him have her stockings to make a bandage.

However, Katerina soon realises that she has been duped. The other prisoners mock her. Adding insult to injury, Sonietka offers her cynical thanks for the stockings. The prisoners arrive at a bridge. Katerina approaches Sonietka, pushes her into the river and jumps into the water after her. The two women drown. The convoy resumes its journey.

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