

The New Edition of Borodin's PRINCE IGOR

by Anna Bulycheva

Transcription of the Youtube video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H6oIyTkc_Y

Thanks to the work of the Russian musicologist, Anna Bulycheva, now we know that the traditional, internationally performed version of PRINCE IGOR, and what Borodin actually composed are quite different. Journalist Gennady Yanin outlines the problem on Russian television (0:00 – 0:17).

0:37 – 0:57 Director of the Moscow State Conservatory, Alexander Sokolov: 'I hold here the new and absolutely unique, recently published edition of Alexander Borodin's PRINCE IGOR.

While it might sound like a paradox, thanks to this new publication there are actually two PRINCE IGOR operas: an apocryphal opera with modifications by other composers, and the restoration of Borodin's original version.'

0:58 – 1:27 Prof. Sokolov discusses the composition of the opera.

1:44 – 2:04 Borodin divided his time between chemistry and music.

2:05 – 2:37 Borodin: 'All members of our circle [Mussorgsky, Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov, music critic Vladimir Stasov] are unanimous and pleased with my "Igor" ...

2:38 – 2:56 Prof. Sokolov: 'What an amazing assessment. All of them believed that Borodin was creating a masterpiece; something very special. Perhaps their opinions stressed Borodin, and compelled him to rewrite the score over and over again.'

2:57 – 3:37 During his summer vacations, Borodin went to the village of Davydovo to compose.

3:38 – 3:50 After Borodin's unexpected death in 1887, his close friends Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov completed the opera.

3:51 – 4:25 Anna Bulycheva: 'Just imagine if Dostoyevsky had not completed one of his famous novels, and Tolstoy started working on it to bring the novel to completion. But because Tolstoy disliked some details of the composition, he slightly changed the order of the chapters. Sometimes Dostoyevsky's sentences were too verbose, so Tolstoy decided to determine the syntax, change some of the vocabulary, and, possibly, even the personalities of the characters. The result was something with the same title, the same plot, the same characters, and the same names, but it was a novel by a different author.'

5:00 – 5:34 Ninety-three manuscripts of Borodin's PRINCE IGOR are known; they are preserved in nine different archives. The reconstruction of the opera resembles an attempt to solve a musical puzzle of thousands of measures.

5:43 – 6:12 Anna Bulycheva: 'Studying Borodin's autograph manuscripts, one discovers that the composer was really anxious about the coherence of the opera. Although the position of some numbers was flexible, overall, Borodin had finalized the order of the components. But when one

interferes in Borodin's authentic order of the scenes, incongruities appear and PRINCE IGOR becomes shapeless.'

6:14 – 6:32 Even while Borodin was alive, his friends started meddling with the score.

6:41 – 6:57 Anna Bulycheva: 'Rimsky-Korsakov once took the manuscript of Galitsky's scene from Borodin and rewrote the opening chorus, making it conform to his own taste. Borodin was a very tactful, gentle person, so he delicately asked Rimsky-Korsakov not to make any other attempts like that...

7:04 – 7:12 ...contrary to Borodin's wishes, Rimsky-Korsakov arranged the scene of the eclipse for the Prologue.'

7:30 – 7:43 After such an intervention, Borodin himself ceased work on the Prologue...

7:53 – 8:06 ...but Rimsky-Korsakov's deletion of the scene of prince Galitsky's riot was reasonable. The whole production could have been ruined because of that scene.

8:16 – 8:36 Anna Bulycheva: 'In 1890, to show an onstage attempt to overthrow the legitimate prince, to summon the Veche and elect another prince, was tantamount to a subversive agitation.'

9:00 – 9:35 The apocryphal version of Prince Igor by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov was published by M.P. Belaieff, who had established a business in Leipzig so the music of Russian composers could be protected by international copyright.

9:36 – 9:49 Anna Bulycheva: "Almost every production of PRINCE IGOR appears to be a "creative" one, because directors erroneously believe there is no authentic version of the opera, and they try to improve it by making uninformed arrangements of their own invention."

9:59 – 10:09 Borodin composed several different versions of some scenes.

10:10 – 10:23 Anna Bulycheva: "For instance, now singers may choose between two authentic versions of Konchakovna's cavatina, two authentic versions of Khan Konchak's aria, and three authentic versions of Yaroslavna's Dream [also known as Yaroslavna's arioso; all of which are published for the first time in my new edition of the opera]."

10:52 – 11:17 Prof. Sokolov confirms the two authentic versions of Khan Konchak's Aria, with Prince Igor's replies and without them.

12:03 – 13:06 Prof. Sokolov: "Even if reluctantly, we must now accept that the traditional apocryphal version of PRINCE IGOR is a combination of highlights of well-known scenes. For example, we have grown accustomed to the brilliant interpretation of the Polovtsian Dances by Igor Moiseev's folk dancers. It is wonderful; it proves that the score is woven of diamond threads. But for Borodin, it is the underpinning for the entire opera, with its inner rhythms. And these rhythms, this space, this whole world absorbs opera-goers and becomes an absolute revelation for designers, dramaturges, directors, performers, who now may turn to the original source for their inspiration.

13:25 – 13:42 The world premiere of Anna Bulycheva's edition of the original version of PRINCE IGOR was performed by Helikon Opera in Moscow on April 1, 2011.

13:3 – 14:20 Anna Bulycheva: “It was one of the longest concerts at the Moscow International Performing Art Centre. It began at 7 p.m. and lasted until 11:15 p.m. Only Borodin’s music was performed. This fact proves that Borodin composed plenty of his own music for PRINCE IGOR. His score does not require any additions by other composers or interpolations from other Borodin works. The original score is even too abundant for a contemporary opera production, so some cuts are needed for staged performances. Most importantly, the inner logic of Borodin’s work finally came to light.”

14:21 – 14:41 Prof. Sokolov: “It seems to me, that many opera theatres would be interested now in this new possibility, and thereby this edition, which I am pleased to present to you, will become the major reference work and authority for all the serious opera directors, conductors, and singers.”