

'My children will not become musicians'

Famous opera singer tells us about his family, life in London and well-known pop singers

By Lyudmila Minakova

Dmitry Khvorostovsky is one of the most popular opera singers in the world, taking leading roles in well-known operas and regularly performing solo. He has sung with the orchestras of the San Francisco Symphonic, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and the New York Philharmonic. His incomparable baritone has rung out several times in the concert halls of Belarus: in Minsk and at the *Slavianski Bazaar* in Vitebsk Arts Festival. The recent 3rd International *Vladimir Spivakov Invites* Festival gave musical gourmets another chance to meet Dmitry, who was excited to take part, having not seen Vladimir Spivakov for six years. He admits, "When I learnt that I could perform with him on stage in Minsk, I agreed with pleasure. It's a delight for me to meet audiences who know me and are waiting for me."

In London, you live with your 'international' family: your second wife, Florence, is Italian, her parents — Italian and French. How do you feel regarding your nationality?

I feel that my soul is Russian: not geographically but as a state of mind. Foreigners tend to imagine the Russian soul endlessly searching for contentment: ever repeating mistakes and indulging in great sentimentality and nostalgia. There's some truth in this but it also encapsulates our love for our native land and a certain feeling which is difficult to put into words: love for our culture and pride in it.

Philips has asked you to record duets with such

singers as Andrea Bocelli and Madonna, but you've refused. Why's that?

I actually ended my contract with Philips over this, as I prefer to perform only with stars of the operatic stage. I've thoroughly enjoyed my series of concerts 'Khvorostovsky Invites', appearing with such

never'. I consciously took that step and, thanks to recording the 'Déjà Vu' album, managed to attract the attention of those who rarely attend classical concerts. I must admit that I had doubts concerning the wisdom of recording this music. I stopped twice but then continued after receiving

high genres? And, in particular, events connected with Nikolay Tsiskaridze?

Such a situation could happen only in repertoire theatre. Very talented artistes don't stay in one place, needing fresh air and freedom, but this isn't true of those in repertory theatre. After some time,



Dmitry Khvorostovsky

You have a big family, with four children living in London: two from different marriages. How do you see

career. I can say with absolute confidence that my children will not become musicians. They simply lack the determination to learn music.

I'm surprised to learn that you're afraid of heights.

Yes, I'm even afraid to go on balconies when staying on upper floors. I've tried to overcome this fear — even once jumping in tandem with a parachute. To my astonishment, I enjoyed it and should try it again some time.

Does anything else worry you?

Yes. I worry about the future, about my family, and about our fragile world. People don't realise the repercussions of their actions. A time may come when there's no more demand for what we do, since people's values are changing. We need to be aware of how we behave.

What advice can you give to those who come after you?

In order to succeed in life, you need to push yourself constantly, ever searching for something new. You need to take yourself to the absolute limits of what's possible.

Your tour schedule is planned for many years ahead. Did it take long for you to become used to the 'capitalist' side of life?

Early on, it was very difficult. But I eventually began to enjoy myself in excess — as is our national trait. I now know where such behaviour can lead; it's a luxury I can no longer afford — not least because I have a large family.



During Dmitry Khvorostovsky's performance at *Vladimir Spivakov Invites* International Festival

guests as Sumi Jo, Angela Gheorghiu and Anna Netrebko. In March, I'll perform with Elīna Garanča, at the Kremlin. These are the sort of projects which interest me.

However, you took part in recording an album with Igor Krutoy and have sung with Lara Fabian. Are those exceptions to the rules?

My principle is 'never say

positive feedback from Sumi Jo. She heard a track and immediately jumped on a chair paying compliments for Igor Krutoy's music.

You often visit Russia and know everything happening at the Bolshoi Theatre. What do you think about the situation which draws the attention of not only those who are keen on

they start to behave like spiders in pots.

Another problem which worries me as a musician is that music is no longer taught as it used to be in ordinary comprehensive schools. I used to teach, following the much-debated 'three pillars' of Dmitry Kabalevsky. Crucially, music was present in the life of our children.

their future and would you like them to follow in your footsteps?

In order to become a musician, you need to work hard, so I'd say not. My life has been filled with studying. These days, life, especially in London, offers so many choices. My son Maxim knows everything about dinosaurs, so that may influence his future

Bright exhibitions at unusual time

By Sergey Smirnov

Double portion of Night of Museums prepared for Ice Hockey World Championship

The *Night of Museums* international campaign is held in mid-May, allowing visitors to visit during the hours of darkness, and giving a new feel to familiar places. As the forthcoming hockey tournament is being hosted by Belarus in May, the National Art Museum has decided to organise the *Night of Museums* event to coincide.

Museums will be making preparations through April, explains Vasily Chernik, Belarus' Deputy Culture Minister. He tells us, "We should present the night in a new way: putting on show



Night of Museums is always hugely popular

items usually hidden away — or giving theatrical performances. The hockey theme could be explored too. Lots of ideas are being discussed."

Cultural institutions across the Belarusian capital are taking part, as well as those in district and regional centres,

including Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve, Mir Castle Complex, Gomel's Palace and Park Ensemble, Polotsk's National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve and Grodno's Museum of History and Archaeology.

Master class for young bayan players

By Svetlana Semenova

8th International My Friend — Bayan Contest hosted by Gomel

The international competition brought together around 300 young musicians — from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania — aiming to popularise such musical instruments as the accordion and bayan.

The event also encourages performance by pupils and teachers from children's

musical schools, colleges and universities.

The programme featured a concert and master classes by Honoured Artiste of Bashkortostan Prof. Vladimir Grachev — of the Folk Instrument Chair at Saratov Conservatoire (named after L. Slobodkin). Honoured Figure of Variety Arts of Ukraine Andrey Dushny conducted master classes, as did Prof. Eduardas Gabrys, of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre.