



## "Life for the Tsar" in the Motherland of the Heroes The Bolshoi Opera company in Kostroma.

The centre of Kostroma, which preserved happily not only the cleanliness of its streets, but for sure, cleanliness of spiritual ideas, moved to Ipatyevskaya Slobodka that memorable evening. The historic-artistic festival "Vekhi" (Milestones), sanctified by blessing of Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Aklexiy II, included into its orbit Glinka's opera "Life for the Tsar" performed by the choir, soloists, orchestra of Russia's Bolshoi Theatre directed by its leader Alexandre Lazarev. Inside the Ipatyev Monastery, on the bank of the Volga, near the holy places, connected with the birth of the new Russian state in 1613 the place where the people declared their wish to the young Kostroma's boyar Michail Romanov — he was elected the tsar! — here, in ancient Ipatia the Kostromichi heard their great compatriot Ivan Susanin, as he was depicted in one of the piercing Russian national operas. That night the performance was created by conductor A. Lazarev, director N. Kuznetsov, stage artist V. Levental, choir-master S. Lykov, technical director M. Kurilko in poetic coauthorship with the location, landscape, river, air, moon behind clouds. Huge walls, which witnessed and experienced a lot, having absorbed so many stories, seemed to defuse powerful, artistic impulses. Age-old silence was broken. Thousands of people, many of them were standing during all the performance, there was no customary theatrical comfort, climbing roofs, galleries, towers, sitting on the grass everywhere, were listening to the music with rare concentration and self-oblivion. "Vekhi" became a not less important spiritual event for the Bolshoi Theatre itself. Along with this imagine reader, non-postered life of a two thousand beehive, where days and hours are scheduled for everybody beforehand. Chronicle: 28 May, evening, the choir, orchestra and soloists are coming back from the happiest tour from Spain; 29 May, morning, changing buses, reaching Kostroma, quickly boarding the ships "Afanasy Nikitin" and "Dmitry Donskoi", three hundred persons move towards the Ipatyevsky Monastery, the orchestra rehearsal started on time, as it had been sheduled before; after it chief artist V. Levental and technical director M. Kurilko with their assistants are completing mounting the decoration and arranging it in natural conditions of Kostroma's night. (The same night, at three they will leave the town: Levental will go to Germany, where he is going to start staging a cycle of Verdi's operas together with Iohannes Felzenstein, and Michail Kurilko — to Moscow, to mount decorations for a Spanish version of "Prince

Igor".) The company is performing "Life for the Tsar" next take part in rehearsals, Alexander Lasarev is being waited for in Rotterdam Symphonic orchestra, etc. The same days on the main stage in Moscow great Marina Semyonova is being honoured, preparations are taking place to the jubilees of Irina Maslennikova, Elena Obraztsova, "Spartacus" is performed in honour of the 90th anniversary of Aram Khachaturyan. The whole season passed this way. The whole company of the Bolshoi Theatre seldom visited Russian town. Formerly the Central Committee of the Communist Party determined the tours of the company in the country. It mainly sent the Company to national republics. Those tours have not been forgotten so far. For the actors of the Bolshoi Theatre the tours to Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan cannot be compared with either tours to London, or Paris, or other impressions — it is not a phrase, it is truth. Elena Bryleva, whose cleanest and quivering soprano is constantly heard in Oslo, Koeln, Vienna, now, after performing the part of Antonida, gave an interview to Ostankino — neither she, nor her colleagues sing so well and freely as at home. Well, "Life for the Tsar" requires such inner fervour. This opera cannot be performed without home feeling, without native Russian world outlook. Here is Vladimir Matorin — Susanin, in a long shirt, bareheaded, facing the cupolas of the Troitsky Cathedral during the night, making a great impression on us by his monologues, is crossing himself vigorously, giving his last orders to everyone who stays to live in this world: his children — Antonida and Ivan (E. Bryleva, G. Borisova), son-in-law Bogdan, lucid warrior, Russian Loengrin (as he is performed by A. Lomonosov). On the edge of life and death Susanin discovers another reality, new world. Not old yet, strong man is leaving speaking sincerely about his life in front of God and people. He is leaving calling his famous "Dawn...". "Dawn" in the Kostroma version of "Life for the Tsar" followed just the death of the hero. The choir "Be glorified!", appearance of a young, radiant Michail Romanov with a scepter, holding supreme power, full light, orchestral tutti multiplied by ringing of the Troitsky Cathedral's bells and thousands of people getting up from the benches, grass, on galleries and roofs of Ipaty. As before, Russia exists lonely. Its only indisputable wealth, giving it the prefix "great" — is its spiritual culture. The ability to create such a work as "Ivan Susanin", to glorify and safe itself in such images — isn't it its real greatness?

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Pictures by Meropa Fasilpur. Kostroma.