

Gergiev resumes his Shostakovich symphony project with the Mariinsky Orchestra

Stephen Smoliar

December 19, 2012



In [March of 2011](#), I reported on two active projects to record the complete [symphonies](#) of Dmitri Shostakovich, one on Naxos involving Vasily Petrenko conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the other with Valery Gergiev conducting the Mariinsky Orchestra on the ensemble's own recording label. At that time Naxos has released five CDs, while the Mariinsky series had only released three. Since that time Petrenko's project has advanced to its [seventh release](#) while Gergiev has occupied himself with other matters (including other releases with the [London Symphony Orchestra](#)).

Last week Gergiev's Shostakovich project resumed with the release of [the fourth CD in the series](#), consisting entirely of the Opus 60 ("Leningrad") symphony in C major. This is a composition that has bewildered (to use the terminology of Alice Driscoll's translation of the booklet notes by Leonid Gakkel) many serious listeners. No less than Béla Bartók, listening to the broadcast of the American premiere given by Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra on July 19, 1942 from his hospital bed, was so put off by the first movement that he made fun of it in his own *Concerto for Orchestra*.

Nevertheless, like many of Shostakovich's compositions, this music can really only be appreciated in its proper context. That context (and the reason for the title) is the Siege of Leningrad by Adolf Hitler's German Army Group North during the Second World War. The magnitude of this event cannot be underestimated. It lasted for two years, four months, two weeks, and five days (yes, the Wikipedia entry is that specific), beginning on September 8, 1941 and lasting through January 27, 1944. What is even

more interesting, however, is that Shostakovich began work on this symphony in the first few weeks of the siege, composing at a furious pace and interrupted only by the need to evacuate the city the following month. Even then he kept working, and the symphony was concluded by the end of December, 1941.

Think about that. No composer working on American soil has ever had to endure such conditions. During the London Blitz William Walton was relatively safely attached to the Army Film Unit as music advisor, and he himself had little to say of note about the music he composed at that time. Ralph Vaughan Williams was slightly better with his *Six Choral Songs To Be Sung In Time Of War* but produced nothing on the scale of his symphonies. In order to imagine a situation analogous to Shostakovich's, we have to think of what it would have been like had Daniel Defoe written *A Journal of the Plague Year* from first-hand experience.

Another way to approach Opus 60 is to compare it with its successor, [the eighth C minor symphony](#), Opus 65. This was completed in 1943. Russia was beginning to gain the upper hand over Hitler; but, as can be seen from those dates above, relief was still far from coming to Leningrad. I have previously described Opus 65 as Shostakovich's [most harrowing](#) symphony, very much a reaction to how he, along with just about every other Russian, was giving in to war-weariness. Opus 60, on the other hand, covers a far broader spectrum of moods, most likely a sign that Shostakovich (again, along with his fellow Russians) was not quite sure how to react to siege conditions. Darkness is never absent; but it can be shaded with moments of quiet introspection (as in the chorale that begins the third movement) or even bitter edges of irony. Given Shostakovich's familiarity with American music (even [when he had to conceal it](#)), we have to assume that irony was intended when he had the German troops marching on Leningrad to the ostinato repetition of the shave-and-a-haircut theme. This is one of those passages that drives otherwise serious musicologists up the wall, but the mind can do weird things when it is under heavy stress.

In such a complicated context, performing this symphony can be a real challenge. The recording of that Toscanini broadcast is included in *Arturo Toscanini: The Complete RCA Collection*; and, as was the case with many of his performances of [twentieth-century modernism](#), I would have to say that the conductor never really "got it." Bartók had good reason to be put off, but the problem probably had more to do with Toscanini than with Shostakovich!

Personally, I find Gergiev's account to be the most satisfying recording of Opus 60 I have yet encountered. The most important reason is that Gergiev seems willing to take the score at face value, rather than introducing his own emphatic gestures to make sure that listeners "get the message." Nothing in this score needs to be exaggerated, and Gergiev appreciates this constraint.

On the other hand, where his own hand is necessary is when Shostakovich requires his orchestral resources to execute a gradual crescendo over a sustained duration. Petrenko was particularly good at this in the coda of the final movement of the Opus 47 (fifth) symphony in D minor. Opus 60 imposes the demand of two such prolonged crescendos in the first and last movements, respectively; and Gergiev knows how to play them out for all they are worth. The result is a performance that is as technically

capable as it is expressively sympathetic, the perfect guide for the listener who does not wish to succumb to that bewilderment that has bothered (if not bewitched) so many others.

<http://www.examiner.com/article/gergiev-resumes-his-shostakovich-symphony-project-with-the-mariinsky-orchestra>

Valery Gergiev Suggests That Pussy Riot Are Fame Whores

December 19, 2012

Said the maestro and Putin confidante, "Why go to the Cathedral of Christ to make a political statement? Why with screaming and dancing? ... I am told by too many people that those girls are potentially a very good business proposition. Suppose that someone created all this in order to produce another touring group earning millions and millions? Anna Netrebko didn't need to do something like this."

SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No. 7 “Leningrad” – Mariinsky Orch./ Valery Gergiev – Mariinsky

A second effort by Gergiev on recording this wartime symphony; perhaps worse or perhaps better than the previous effort.

John Sunier

December 19, 2012

This noble symphony probably has a lot more meaning to Russians than to those of us outside. It was premiered in Leningrad during the over 800-day siege of the city by the Nazi, by the only symphony orchestra that was then operating, filled out with members of military bands due to symphony musicians that had been killed or were unavailable. Its symbolism may fall on critical Western ears, with stretches of obviousness and banality, yet somehow it doesn't overcome those problems with its sheer energy, as does the Shostakovich *Fifth Symphony*. The “invasion march” theme of the Nazis gets a bit tiresome. There are also passages of great gloominess, as occasionally found in Shostakovich.

Gergiev recorded an earlier multichannel setting of this symphony in 2003, in which he somehow combined members of his Kirov Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theater (don't know if the name has changed to the Mariinsky Orchestra in the meantime), plus members of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. It's on a Philips SACD (470 623-2) and only 4.0 channel, with the center channel missing and only 48K original recordings. While this live recording is a bit muddy compared to the new one, I feel it has a lot more spectacular playing and commitment and is more exciting and enjoyable. The new version is perhaps the longest single SACD yet released at 82:21 (I had thought the absolute maximum time for a SACD or CD was 80:00 flat.) Gergiev seems to be stretching things out and playing them for all they're worth, whereas except for the last movement all the movement timings in 2003 were shorter and snappier. Yet some online critics feel this new Mariinsky version outdoes the 2003 attempt in making the banal parts of the symphony sound more convincing.

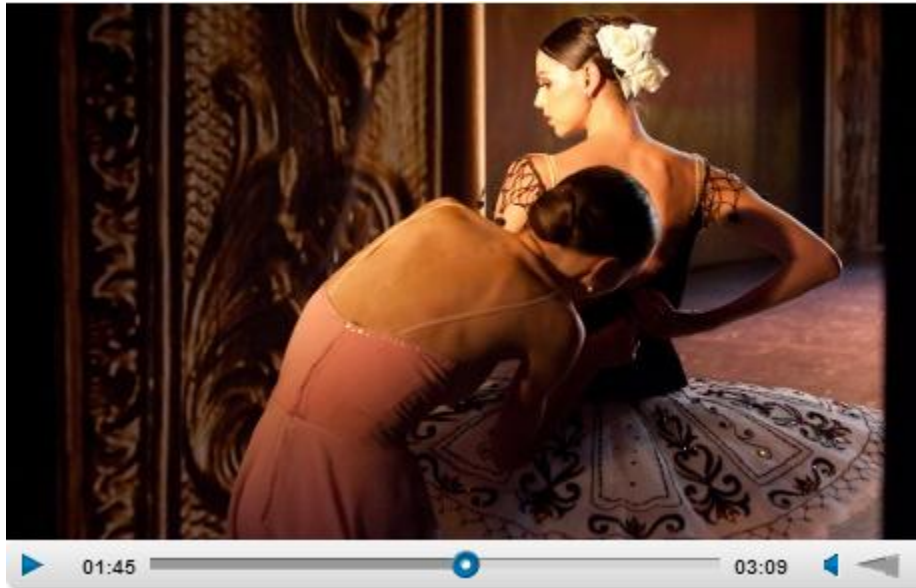
However, as perfect and personally-involved an interpretation as Gergiev and his St. Petersburg forces can offer of the Shostakovich Seventh, I still prefer the overall performance and especially the gorgeous surround acoustics of the Concertgebouw in the [LSO Live SACD by the Royal Concertgebouw conducted by Mariss Jansons](#). Plus they get thru the whole painful thing in only 74 minutes.

<http://audaud.com/2012/12/shostakovich-symphony-no-7-leningrad-mariinsky-orch-valery-gergiev-mariinsky/>

New hotspot for theatre tourists - Mariinsky Opera and Ballet in St. Petersburg

Tatiana Bubleva

December 20, 2012



There will soon be another landmark on the world map for the fans of theatre tourism. Mariinsky Opera and Ballet Theatre in St. Petersburg is finalizing the construction of its state-of-the-art second stage. The theatre's artistic director, renowned conductor Valeriy Gergiev, has just revealed the details of how he plans to surprise the public.

http://ruvr.co.uk/2012_12_20/Theatre-tourists-Mariinsky-Opera-Ballet-St-Petersburg/



VALERY GERGIEV AND JAMES CAMERON TEAMING UP FOR 3D FILM OF SWAN LAKE

December 20, 2012

Ballet and film normally share little common ground, but two art gurus – the man behind “Avatar” James Cameron and the Mariinsky Theatre’s artistic director Valery Gergiev – have teamed up to work on a 3D version of “Swan Lake”, RT reports.

“We have had extensive talks with James Cameron and his team to consider what we can learn from famous films like Avatar,” one of the world’s most sought-after conductors, Russia’s Gergiev told the Independent.

“They have the experience, talent and expertise. There is no team in the world that knows better how to work in a 3D environment in an opera house where you cannot stop the performance once the music has started,” he explained. “The cinemas will bring thousands of people together.”

Earlier this month it was announced that Gergiev has earned a 'best performance' Grammy nomination for Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances for both himself and the London Symphony Orchestra, of which he is Principal Conductor.

According to online studies of UK classical music, the indefatigable Gergiev was apparently the busiest conductor of 2010, performing 88 concerts in America and Europe over the course of the year. His new tour de force with Cameron will be broadcast from the Mariinsky Theater in St Petersburg live into cinemas across the world on February 14.

<http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/news/common/news8774.html>

Mariinsky ballet to perform in Baden Baden

December 20, 2012



The ballet company of St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theater has set out for the German spa resort of Baden Baden where it will present a series of modern and classical ballets at the local Festspielhaus Theater.

These include "The Park" staged by Angelin Preljocaj and Pyotr Tchaikovsky's ever-popular "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker".

The weeklong tour will end on December 27 with a gala featuring an amazing duet of Mariinsky prima Diana Vishneva and Bolshoi Theater soloist Andrei Merkurjev in a one-act ballet, "Subject to Change".

http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_12_20/Mariinsky-ballet-to-perform-in-Baden-Baden/

Tchaikovsky on Mariinsky Stage: Stereo Swans online

Olga Bugrova

December 20, 2012



The famous Russian conductor Valery Gergiyev and a cult American film director, James Cameron, are preparing a surprise for the lovers of the Russian ballet art – direct stereo broadcasts of Tchaikovsky’s ballet “The Swan Lake” staged by the Mariinsky Theatre of St. Petersburg.

A 3D format is not a novelty for the Mariinsky Theatre. Moreover, the Mariinsky ballet troupe was actually the first to use it. Two years ago the Mariinsky ballet troupe was the first in the world to present Adam’s “Giselle” in a stereo regime. The broadcasts of another film-ballet – “The Nutcracker” by Tchaikovsky – were carried out in a 3D format a few days ago. Viewers in both Russia and abroad will be able to see it during the Christmas and New Year celebrations. For example, 500 movie theatres in the USA have already filed their applications to relevant instances. “The Nutcracker” has become a debut in cooperation between the two countries that seem to be the main newsmakers of the musical stage and stereo cinematography. There is Valery Gergiyev and his troupe on the one hand and James Cameron and his team on the other hand. Making a proposal to the creator of “Avatar”, the Maestro believed that this could prove helpful in finding the shortest way from a ballet stage to the digital cinema screens. You see, Valery Gergiyev is very serious when he says that he is determined to turn millions of fans of modern technologies into a theatre audience.

"The reports saying that the 3D movie theatres, equipped with certain technologies, are getting good box-office returns from the demonstration of “Titanic”, which my friend James Cameron remodeled into a 3D format, make me happy. The point is that we will involve these movie theatres too because we plan to carry out the broadcasts of our ballets there. The work is currently going in full steam."

The new work of Valery Gergiyev and James Cameron will be different from their former work. Tchaikovsky's legendary ballet "The Swan Lake" will not be recorded like "The Nutcracker" or "Giselle" – the broadcasts will be carried out in a stereo regime online, which is far more difficult. However, Valery Gergiyev acknowledges that none of the teams in the world can work in a 3D format in an opera theatre than Cameron and his teammates. Besides, one should not forget that the Mariinsky Theatre has carried out direct stereo broadcasts earlier. Two years ago a ballet gala concert was broadcast from the Mariinsky Theatre in a stereo regime live, and the Mariinsky Theatre again proved to be a pioneer in this field. Inspired by this success, Valery Gergiyev said at that time "We will go further".

"When we say a "ballet performance", we mean movement, colour, costumes, beauty, and plasticity. We are not interested in the commercial aspect of this project. We simply want to know whether a breakthrough in new technologies can provide any advantage to Russian theatres, including the Mariinsky Theatre."

The 3D broadcasts of "The Swan Lake" from the Mariinsky Theatre are set for February 14th, which is set aside as St. Valentine's Day, or Lovers' Day, and perhaps February 14th will trigger an increase in the Russian ballet art lovers.

http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_12_20/Tchaikovsky-on-Mariinsky-Stage-Stereo-Swans-online/

Denis Matsuev, Kavakos, LSO, Valery Gergiev, Barbican, London

Michael Church

December 20, 2012



Unveiling plans for his new Mariinsky theatre, vociferously backing Putin over Pussy Riot, and popping up as an improbable Father Christmas on Radio 3, Valery Gergiev has been hard to ignore this week. But his current exploration with the London Symphony Orchestra continues.

He's presenting the symphonic works of Brahms in tandem with those of the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski, whose dates – 1882-1937 – are necessary to place this shadowy figure's music in the context in which it should be heard.

Born in the same year as Bartok and Stravinsky, Szymanowski didn't enjoy their luxury of growing up in a vibrant symphonic tradition: Poland's first professional orchestra was only founded in 1901, and Szymanowski had to look to Russia, France and Germany for his initial

inspiration.

He found his own voice thanks to his immersion in Arabic and Polish poetry, and in the folk music of the Tatra mountains; his exotic blend of Oriental mysticism and highland dances found its fullest expression in his Third Symphony ('Song of the night'), for which Gergiev and the LSO were joined by tenor Toby Spence in the first of this week's concerts. The great world-sleep hymned by the Rumi poem which Spence intoned was bodied forth in swirling orchestral and choral lines, but it all owed rather too large a debt to Strauss and Skryabin.

Gergiev could not have chosen better soloists for Szymanowski's Symphony No 4 - in effect a piano concerto – and for his Second Violin Concerto: Denis Matsuev is one of Russia's most charismatic young pianists, and Leonidas Kavakos – son of a violinist, and grandson of a village fiddler – possesses a wonderfully Protean technique.

Matsuev made something bright and brilliant of the symphony's remarkably Bartokian first movement, and brought a coltish energy to the tumultuous finale; Kavakos's performance was typically commanding in the concerto, which emerged as an eloquent and noble work. But despite this admirable enterprise, I suspect Szymanowski will forever be overshadowed by Mahler, Skryabin, Schoenberg, and Bartok.

By taking his leave of us with Brahms's Fourth Symphony, Gergiev unwisely revealed a blind spot, because this music is simply not his metier. I have never seen a conductor more visibly out of sympathy with his material, nor heard a more drably mechanical account of this supremely Romantic work: no drama, no poetry, gratingly crude dynamics – it could have been a first rehearsal.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/reviews/denis-matsuev-kavakos-iso-valery-gergiev-barbican-london-8426817.html>

Mariinsky II to open in 2013

December 21, 2012

Diamond and Schmitt Architects complete expansion to Mariinsky Theatre next year



The Mariinsky Theatre's 2012/2013 landmark season, which includes an extraordinary schedule of tours, performances, recordings and events, will see the inauguration of Mariinsky II in St. Petersburg on 2-4 May, 2013. The new opera house will join the legendary Mariinsky Theatre and the Mariinsky Concert Hall to further the transformation of the Mariinsky's complex into one of the world's premier centres for classical music, opera and ballet.

The milestone marks the 25th anniversary of the leadership of Artistic and General Director Maestro Valery Gergiev, taking the Mariinsky Theatre from the closing years of the Soviet era, when it had been renamed the Kirov, to a modern 21st-century lyric arts company, enhancing and underlining the Mariinsky as a centre of artistic excellence and innovation and

creating one of the largest, most acclaimed and most dynamic performing arts institutions in the world.

Designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects in collaboration with acousticians Müller-BBM, Mariinsky II is situated on Dekabristov Street and connected to the historic Theatre by a pedestrian bridge over the Kryukov Canal. Mariinsky II, which is designed to complement St Petersburg's 19th-century architecture while adding a distinctive element to the region around Theatre Square, will have state-of-the-art

facilities that will enable the Mariinsky to present the most ambitious, technically-demanding productions, beyond what is currently possible on the historic stage.

The opening weekend will include a gala concert and ballet and opera performances, followed by Mariinsky's XXI 'Stars of the White Nights' Festival which will run from 24 May to 14 July with performances in all three venues - the Mariinsky Theatre, Mariinsky II and the Mariinsky Concert Hall.

Joining the historic Mariinsky Theatre, which dates from 1860, and the Mariinsky Concert Hall, which was inaugurated in 2006, the Mariinsky II will expand the Mariinsky's cultural complex on legendary Theatre Square and enable the institution to offer the public a greatly increased schedule of presentations. Mariinsky II, funded by the Russian Government, is designed by the Toronto-based firm of Diamond Schmitt Architects in conjunction with the Russian firm KB ViPS. The 851,580 sq ft Mariinsky II will be one of the largest lyric arts facilities in the world.

Jack Diamond, Principal Architect of Diamond Schmitt Architects, stated: "When I was approached by Valery Gergiev to enter the international competition to design the new Mariinsky Theatre, he presented the opportunity to work in one of the world's most magical architectural settings, not to mention with a Maestro who is justifiably renowned as one the world's most respected leaders in the performing arts. I am very proud of Mariinsky II and trust it will achieve our design intent, which is to channel the immense creative spirit that is at the heart of the Mariinsky Theatre and its Maestro."



Russian dancers chase into cinemas with 'Nutcracker 3D'

December 23, 2012

Every city offers presentations of "The Nutcracker" in December. In some places, including D.C., audiences even have multiple productions from which to choose.

Given its ubiquity at this time of year, it seems strange to learn that Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's ballet about an extraordinary Christmas present actually wasn't a success when it premiered on Dec. 18, 1892, at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. America didn't even see a production of the complete ballet until Christmas Eve 1944. But it soon fell in love, and the immense popularity of the work in this country helped turn it into a holiday classic.

Russia recently returned the favor. For just one day -- Dec. 3 -- Americans could see "The Nutcracker" performed by those who know it best. And they could see it in 3-D.

NCM Fathom Events and More2Screen brought the Mariinsky Ballet Theatre into cinemas for this special presentation. It's the sort of event that could become more common, thanks to a confluence of factors: advances in technology, an increasingly globalized cultural world, and fewer movie tickets being sold. Fathom is a leader in cinema special events. It's behind the very successful "Live in HD" series, in which Metropolitan Opera productions are broadcast in theaters across the country -- and across the world -- giving people who might never get to New York the chance to see and hear Russia's premier opera company in a way they couldn't at home.

When the show finally began, we were whisked immediately to the Mariinsky Theatre, with shots of the audience accompanying the sound of the overture. We also had regular looks at the conducting of Mariinsky general and artistic director Valery Gergiev. For one week earlier this year I spent nearly every night at the legendary St. Petersburg theater, and I didn't often have such a chance to see the master maestro at work close up.

You could also see the very soles of the shoes the dancers wore. The shots of the show itself were creative. Cameras from above allowed an almost panoramic view of the action. The gorgeous costumes sparkled on screen. And the close-ups of the faces revealed how young some of the performers were -- but they also made it impossible to see the dancing, if only for a few moments.

The Mariinsky has almost no equal in the world when it comes to technique, though theirs is, of course, a particular Russian style of ballet. This "Nutcracker" was majestic but it wasn't quite as wondrous as seeing the Mariinsky Ballet live, which I was lucky enough to do more than once this year in St. Petersburg.

Few Americans will ever find themselves in Russia. Seeing a three-dimensional performance straight from Russia's cultural capital in your own city or town is certainly the next-best thing.

http://washingtonexaminer.com/russian-dancers-chasse-into-cinemas-with-nutcracker-3d/article/2516744#.UORLkm_7K8A



The Feral Beast: Close call at Russian Embassy

Matthew Bell

December 23, 2012

Actors and conductors have been known to savage members of the audience whose mobile phones go off during a performance. So who on earth dared to leave their phone switched on as Valery Gergiev was unveiling the prestigious new Mariinsky II, at the Russian Embassy on Tuesday? To illustrate the calibre of artists and productions on offer at the spiffy new £400m opera house, Gergiev, its artistic and general director, chose to play an extract from Verdi's *Attila*, with the mighty young bass Ildar Abdrazakov in the title role. But as the Hun roared, there came that all too familiar buzz. Nervous hands frantically reached for pockets, but the truth was soon out: the phone was Gergiev's own. Easily done, you see, maestro.

Sound of silence

Art Garfunkel, one half of the great Simon and Garfunkel, has released a double CD of his greatest solo hits, called *The Singer*. It's a poignant moment for the 70-year-old, as he has been suffering from stiffness of the vocal cords for the past two years, forcing him to cancel concerts. But I gather there is an added sadness to the compilation, as he has been forbidden from including three key songs, at the request of his ex-partner Paul Simon, with whom he had a famously difficult relationship. When *The Beast* telephones to ask if that's the case, he confirms it is. "Correct. There's no *Homeward Bound*, no *The Boxer* and no *Mrs Robinson*. They were all going to be on there originally. But I held back their inclusion at the request of Paul and the label." So, will there be a follow-up including them? "It has to do with Paul Simon whether I can do a *The Singer 2* compilation." Come on, Paul – it could be just the bridge this troubled water needs!

Saints alive

Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh was overrun with tourists after Dan Brown included it in *The Da Vinci Code*. Now, residents of the Warwickshire village of Warmington should brace themselves for a deluge of Archers fans. For it has emerged that theirs is the real Ambridge parish church. The secret got out on Radio 3 on Friday, when the Rev Canon Adrian Daffern was a guest on Petroc Trelawny's breakfast show. Daffern is priest of Bladon, Oxfordshire, where Winston Churchill is buried, and an enthusiastic organist. He revealed that when *The Archers* needs organ music for a funeral or a wedding, it's recorded on the organ at Warmington. It came about because that was the home of the late Norman Painter, who played Phil Archer. He was the parish organist both in real life and in *The Archers*, and soon after he died, Daffern got the job. "So do you get to go *The Archers*' Christmas party?" asked Petroc. "I've never been invited," he replied, "If anyone's listening, I'd love to." "Actually," added Petroc, "Given BBC cuts, I doubt there is one."

BBC scapegoat

The BBC has been criticised for not sacking anyone over the Savile affair. But it seems they did have one rather surprising scalp in sight – Meirion Jones. As he was the producer of the doomed *Newsnight* programme, you would have thought he would have been a hero of the saga. I hear that friends of Jones

asked three journalists to write to the Pollard inquiry, to correct an erroneous impression that Jones had been leaking stories about the BBC's refusal to run the Savile allegations. Jones hadn't, but the BBC were clearly looking for a fall-guy, and Jones needed to clear his name, which he did. "The BBC was on the verge of making a very serious accusation," says my source. "They seem to have been more worried about the PR aspect than the actual allegations of child abuse." Hard to believe!

Sit-vac Hall

Stuart Hall, the veteran football commentator, has lost his column on the Radio Times after being charged with indecent assault. This follows his suspension from the BBC, where he presents on Five Live on Saturdays. Now the Radio Times, which was sold by the BBC last year, has dropped him too. Hall, 82, who faces charges relating to incidents from 30 years ago, is baffled when I call. "It's all a matter of conjecture," he tells me. "You'll have to ask them why [they've dropped me]." Hall became a household name in the 1970s and '80s as the host of *It's a Knockout*. He later bought the rights off the BBC, and made a fortune touring the show worldwide. Hall's column is missing from the Radio Times's Christmas bumper issue, despite the glut of football in the schedule. "It was an editorial decision, and we're not going to comment on the specifics of the case," says a spokesman. "We have no plans to use him until the court case is completed."

Life's just fine

So much for the world ending on Friday. The lack of an apocalypse left the 200 journalists who had flocked to the French village of Bugarach looking pretty silly. They were there to follow up rumours that aliens would be dropping in to save anyone on the mountain. But perhaps the aliens were kept away by France's famously fearsome bureaucracy: the mayor had issued a decree banning anyone or anything from setting foot on the mountain for the 72 hours preceding *The End*. One local was asked by a sniggering radio interviewer "So, what will happen if a defiant flying saucer appears on the mountain?" Without missing a beat: "He'll get an 80 fixed penalty like everyone else."

Paper plates

James Harding's departure as editor of *The Times* has sent a chill howling through Wapping, as tongues wag of a merger with *The Sunday Times*. But Rupert Murdoch knows how to keep the worker bees happy: I understand he has dispatched a team to go out and splurge £400 at Waitrose on goodies for all *Times* staff working on Christmas Day. The money has been spent on charcuterie, fruit, and a load of crackers. Not the tug-bang variety, but the ones you eat. A sensible choice – dry biscuits send a suitably arid message in these belt-tightening times.

Palace pox

Obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr John McGarry amused himself at a Buckingham Palace garden party by noting the visible medical disorders of the other guests. Writing in *The Oldie*, he reports there was a "thyrotoxic bishop", "an obviously acromegalic councillor", and royal flunkeys with raging dandruff. So far, so disgusting. But his most astonishing claim is that he spotted his "first case of tabes dorsalis for over 30 years". According to my medical dictionary, tabes dorsalis is described as "a rare neurological form of tertiary syphilis". Syphilis at the palace? Surely some mistake!

With one bound, I was online

The 39 Steps is to get a 21st-century makeover. An interactive version of John Buchan's spy thriller will go on sale in March. Faber has teamed up with software developers to come up with the concept, which is being billed as bridging "the gap between literature, film and gaming". The idea is to navigate your way through the story, interacting with it as you go. This will do no harm to the West End adaptation of

the book, going into its seventh year. Fuddy duddies worried about a high-tech version should remember Alfred Hitchcock completely rewrote Buchan's book for his 1935 film.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/diary/the-feral-beast-close-call-at-russian-embassy-8430094.html?origin=internalSearch>



Valery Gergiev Takes Mariinsky Orchestra to Moscow

December 24, 2012

During the Russian Winter arts festival, at the Moscow Philharmonic and the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall the Mariinsky Orchestra under the baton of Valery Gergiev will be performing concerts marking the eightieth birthday of Rodion Shchedrin.

The concerts, which will be held December 25 and 25 in the Russian capital, repeat the program of the two concerts recently held in St Petersburg. Yekaterina Goncharova will be performing the solo in Cleopatra and the Snake.

<http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/news/common/news8793.html>

The Telegraph

Valery Gergiev talks about his new Mariinsky Theatre – and how much it costs

Michael White

December 24, 2012



Among the many things in life I've never quite managed to get my head around, two are money and Russia; and they coincided with some force the other day during a reception at the Russian ambassador's house, which is the sinister-looking job in the middle of all the other diplomatic piles along Kensington Palace Gardens.

I've never been inside it before, but you can't cross the threshold without thinking of what must have gone on in this building over the past half-century. And I've often seen it over the garden fence from the Finnish ambassador's place next door, where they give a lot of music parties and tell funny, Finnish stories about living in the shadow of the Russians here in London as they've always done at home. With comparable tensions.

This reception, though, was unexpectedly relaxed: no protocol, no problems, easy hospitality. Russia has changed, a lot. And the purpose of the event was for Valery Gergiev to present to journos like me the grand plans for the opening of the new Mariinsky opera house in St Petersburg next May. Which is where my head started spinning.

I remember times, and they weren't *that* long ago, when the Mariinsky was the princely beggar of the opera circuit, endlessly on tour for Western currency and represented around the world by committees of worthy people who pleaded poverty on its behalf and raised money for it.

But now all this seems, at a stroke, to have changed; and the Mariinsky is about to take charge of what Gergiev calls the largest performing arts complex of its kind in Europe – comprising the old (but beautifully restored) Mariinsky Theatre, a state of the art concert hall which opened in 2006, plus the new, 2000-seat theatre that opens next spring. And the cost of the new theatre alone is a staggering 22bn roubles, which I'm told is roughly £400million.

According to Gergiev the entire sum has been provided by the Russian government, for which he's "very grateful". Who wouldn't be? And from the pictures we were shown it's obviously a glittering, flagship building – of a kind that would be inconceivable here in the UK, even if it could be done for half the cost.

All credit to Gergiev that he's got this off the ground, and that he's turned the Mariinsky into such a heavy-hitting powerhouse brand, churning out recording projects, HD films and other ventures with industrial zeal. When the second theatre opens, he'll be running three Mariinsky orchestras under the various roofs – with no hierarchical division, he says, but allocated according to repertory, with one gravitating toward Wagner/Strauss, another toward Russian rep, and the third doing (I suppose) everything between.

That St Petersburg is raising its game so dramatically will give it a far stronger draw as a cultural destination. But it will also keep Gergiev on-site rather more than in the past. 'You won't believe it', he said, 'because I have a reputation for being everywhere'; but he's going to cut down on the endless touring. He's anticipating a more focused, stable life. So no more private jets between an afternoon rehearsal in one country and an evening concert in another? I'll believe that when I see it.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/michaelwhite/100067553/valery-gergiev-talks-about-his-new-mariinsky-theatre-and-how-much-it-costs/>

Massenet's Don Quixote premieres at the Mariinsky

Jules Massenet's opera Don Quixote returns to the Russian stage after a 90-year pause with the first night taking place at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg tonight.

Alexei Lyakhov and Olga Bugrova

December 28, 2012



The composer defined his opera as *comédie-héroïque*.

Staged by Greek director Yannis Kokkos, the production stars Italian bass Ferruccio Furlanetto. Since the opera was composed especially for Fyodor Shalyapin, who debuted as Don Quixote in 1910, there is certainly a touch of Russianness on the production. It was Shalyapin who made up the main character's image: pointed beard, a funny fringe and a tall figure with thin legs. Yannis Kokkos says that he views the Spanish Don Quixote through the lens of Dostoyevsky's Prince Myshkin, who symbolizes 'absolute kindness'. Ferruccio Furlanetto also feels the Russianness of the production. He likens the rehearsals for Don Quixote to those he had while preparing for Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov...

The Mariinsky's production of Don Quixote has had several concert performances in the past two years. The company's artistic director and chief conductor Valery Gergiev included the opera in the program of his annual Moscow Easter festival and the White Stars festival in Saint Petersburg, as well as in the Shalyapin festival in Kazan. The theatre also made a studio recording of Don Quixote for its own label Mariinsky which has been nominated for Grammy. The London-based Gramophone magazine says that the recording proved that Gergiev's orchestra and choir are at their best. The Philadelphia Inquirer daily described the Mariinsky's Don Quixote as a long-awaited and high quality opera production. It's been the 15th recording made for the Mariinsky label, and Maestro Gergiev is proud about it: "The list of the recordings made for the Mariinsky label is extending. We can distribute our CDs in at least 100

countries. We have managers dealing with the issue in Asia, North America, Europe and New Zealand, as well as in Australia and South America. Our recordings see the light of the day just a week late comparing to the release of CDs in London or Paris.

Now the Mariinsky Theater has two Don Quixote productions- the one is legendary ballet by Ludwig Minkus, while the other is revived Massenet`s opera of the same name.

http://english.ruvr.ru/2012_12_28/Massenet-s-Don-Quixote-premiers-at-the-Mariinsky/



New Mariinsky Theatre Opens in 2013 in St.Petersburg, Russia

January 2, 2012



The opening of a new Mariinsky Theatre scheduled on 2-4 May, this year, is among the current projects of Canadian architecture firm [Diamond Schmitt Architects](#), known for its innovative design excellence in a wide range of building types and recognized as one of the Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies, in collaboration with the Russian firm KB ViPS and acousticians Müller-BBM. Designed to complement St. Petersburg's 19th-century outstanding architectural heritage, but in the same time to add a unique element to the region, the new opera house comes to join and transform a much larger cultural complex, which includes also other two venues like the legendary Mariinsky Theatre (which dates from 1860) and the Mariinsky Concert Hall (which was inaugurated in 2006) into one of the world's premier centres for opera, ballet and classical music.

Mariinsky II Theatre is funded by the Russian Government and its contemporary design will be of course consistent with the international stature of the Mariinsky Theatre, Ballet and Orchestra as a centre of innovation and artistic excellence, creating one of the world's largest, most dynamic and most acclaimed performing arts institutions. Situated on Dekabristov Street and connected to the legendary Theatre by a pedestrian bridge over the Kryukov Canal, the 851,580 sq ft new [opera house](#) aims to channel the tremendous creative spirit through state-of-the-art facilities that will allow the Mariinsky

to show the most ambitious, technically-demanding art productions, beyond the current remarkable schedule of performances, recordings, tours and events on the historic stage.

It will have a 2000-seat opera and ballet house with six rehearsal rooms and six stages, dressing rooms as well as other support facilities. The auditorium is designed taking into account the acoustics, audience comfort and sight lines. Its exterior architecture will reveal a contemporary identity that fits perfectly with St. Petersburg's historic settings. Form, material and color contrasts in an original manner highlighting a gently curved metal roof enlivened by a glass canopy and a fenestrated masonry base. The opening days will include a ballet and opera performances as well as a gala concert followed from 24 May by Mariinsky's XXI 'Stars of the White Nights' Festival which will end on 14 July.

[http://designlike.com/2013/01/02/new-mariinsky-theatre-opens-in-2013-in-st-petersburg-russia/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+DesignLikeDesign+\(DesignLike\)](http://designlike.com/2013/01/02/new-mariinsky-theatre-opens-in-2013-in-st-petersburg-russia/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+DesignLikeDesign+(DesignLike))