

# The Snow Maiden

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

OPÉRA  
NATIONAL  
DE PARIS

BASTILLE · GARNIER · 3<sup>E</sup> SCÈNE

Snegurochka was born in times of old in Tsar Berendey's mythical kingdom, the fruit of the union between Spring the Beauty and Grandfather Frost. Protected by her parents from the jealousy of the Sun god Yarilo who has vowed to warm her heart when she gets older and falls in love, Snegurochka the snow maiden is entrusted to the wood sprite... Particularly attached to the opera which he himself considered to be a work of maturity, Rimsky-Korsakov would write ten years after its creation that: "anyone who fails to love *The Snow Maiden* understands nothing of my works nor of myself". A masterpiece of popular Slavic literature, *The Snow Maiden* brings to the stage a magical fantasy enriched by the rigours of the weather. Aida Garifullina sings the role of Snegurochka whilst the production and musical direction have been left in the capable hands of two other Russian artists: the young conductor Mikhail Tatarnikov and director Dmitri Tcherniakov.

**Presented by Alain Duault**

Opera in a prologue and four acts (1882)

Music by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

Libretto by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

After Alexandre Ostrovski

**Conductor:** Mikhail Tatarnikov

**Director, sets and costumes designs:** Dmitri Tcherniakov

**Lighting design:** Gleb Filshtinsky

**Chorus master:** José Luis Basso

**Snegourotchka,** Aida Garifullina

**Lel,** Yuriy Mynenko

**Kupava,** Martina Serafin

**Le Tzar Berendei,** Ramón Vargas

**Mizguir,** Thomas Johannes Mayer

**La Fée Printemps,** Ekaterina Semenchuk

**Le Bonhomme Hiver,** Vladimir Ognovenko

**Bermiata,** Franz Hawlata

**Bobyl Bakula,** Vasily Gorshkov

**Bobylicka,** Carole Wilson

**L'Esprit des bois,** Vasily Efimov

**Premier Héraut,** Vincent Morell

**Deuxième Héraut,** Pierpaolo Palloni

**Un Page,** Olga Oussova

Paris Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Duration: 3hrs 25mins approx. plus one interval

Performed in Russian, with English subtitles

**Film Director:** Andy Sommer

A community known as the Berendey gather in the present day to recreate the archaic way of life of their Slav ancestors.

## PROLOGUE

Sixteen years ago, Father Frost and Spring Beauty had a daughter they called Snowmaiden. After her parents separated, Snowmaiden was left to live with her father. Obligated to leave, Father Frost talks to Spring Beauty about their daughter's future. They agree to send her to live with the Berendey — something that Snowmaiden herself also wishes because the wonderful songs of a certain Lel have attracted her to the community for some time already. The parents let their daughter leave to embark on her new life. Father Frost commands the Wood Sprite to watch over her. Snowmaiden finds herself amid the Berendey just as they are celebrating Candlemas. Bobyl and Bobylikha, an old, childless couple, accept her into their home as their own. Snowmaiden is happy: she has a new family and new friends.

## ACT I

Time passes. Snowmaiden is still living with Bobyl and Bobylikha and she has finally met Lel, to whom she is attracted. Despite her shyness, Snowmaiden finds the courage to ask him to sing his songs that she likes so much. Lel sings but, suddenly distracted by the sight of other young girls, he leaves her. Snowmaiden blames herself for his lack of interest in her. The ever-impatient young Kupava is soon to be married. She is eager to share her joy with Snowmaiden. In a state of excitement, she awaits the visit of Mizgir, her wealthy fiancé. In keeping with an old custom, the fiancé must pay a ransom to retrieve his beloved from her friends. However, on seeing Snowmaiden, Mizgir suddenly abandons Kupava. Kupava feels dishonoured and wants Mizgir to be punished. Everyone is indignant at his disloyalty and they advise Kupava to ask Tsar Berendey to defend her.

## ACT II

Tsar Berendey voices his concerns with his advisor, Bermyata: Yarilo, the formidable Sun God, is angry with the Berendey for an unknown reason. To placate the god, the Tsar decides to celebrate Yarilo's holy day with a wedding for all engaged couples. Kupava is received by Berendey. She asks the Tsar to defend her and punish Mizgir for having deceived and dishonoured her. Appalled, Berendey orders that Mizgir be brought before him

and summons everyone to the supreme court. The Tsar orders Mizgir to marry the insulted Kupava, but Mizgir renounces his fiancée in favour of Snowmaiden. Berendey sentences Mizgir to exile, but when Snowmaiden arrives the Tsar is so moved by her beauty that he reverses his decision. Realising that Snowmaiden has never known love, he declares that the man who can make Snowmaiden fall in love with him before dawn may marry her. Everyone is convinced that Lel alone can set her heart on fire, so Berendey entrusts Snowmaiden to Lel. However, Mizgir suddenly asks for his exile to be deferred and swears he can win the young girl's heart.

## ACT III

In the forest, the young men and women are courting on the eve of Yarilo's holy day. Moved by Lel's song, Tsar Berendey tells him to choose a girl who will thank him with a passionate kiss in front of everyone. Snowmaiden expects Lel to pick her but to her deep dismay he chooses Kupava instead. Mizgir's insistent courting of Snowmaiden forces her to flee. Relentless, Mizgir pursues the frightened young girl and tries to force his love on her. However, the Wood Sprite comes to her rescue and stops him. Snowmaiden is the unwitting witness to a love scene between Lel and Kupava. Kupava thanks Lel for saving her from dishonour. When he sees Snowmaiden, Lel advises her to listen carefully to Kupava's ardent words and to learn to love like her. Snowmaiden is left in despair.

## ACT IV

Snowmaiden remembers her mother, Spring Beauty, who is her last hope. She begs her to help and to give her the gift of love which everyone reproaches her for not having. Mizgir, exhausted after searching for Snowmaiden, finally finds her in the middle of the forest. The young girl, who has undergone a complete metamorphosis, gazes lovingly at Mizgir and happily opens her arms to him. Tsar Berendey and all the fiancés and fiancées gather to watch the sunrise. Mizgir is eager to present Snowmaiden to Tsar Berendey as his fiancée and to ask him to bless their union. But Snowmaiden abruptly dies in Mizgir's arms, after uttering her final words of love for Lel. Everyone is deeply moved, but Tsar Berendey explains that Snowmaiden's death must not cast a shadow over the festivities in honour of the Sun God Yarilo that are about to take place.

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