

Khodorkovsky - Greek National Opera

ΕΑΣ

A co-production with



Khodorkovsky, the modern opera of distinguished composer and professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna Periklis Liakakis, which won the 2017 Best Independent Opera Production Award at the Austrian Music Theatre Awards, will be given its Greek premiere on the Greek National Opera Alternative Stage at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center.

The work is a co-production between the GNO Alternative Stage and the music theatre organization Sirene Operntheater in Austria and it will run for three unique performances on 27, 28 and 29 February 2020.

A relentless battle between profit and politics, Khodorkovsky the opera refers to the rise and fall of Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who opposed Vladimir Putin in the 90s. The libretto and direction bear the stamp of Kristine Tornquist, and the thirteen-member musical ensemble is conducted by Jury Everhartz.

The performance is realized thanks to the support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's (SNF) grant to the Alternative Stage.

The modern opera *Khodorkovsky* first premiered at the Atelier of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts in 2015, and two years later, in 2017, it won the Best Independent Opera Production Award at the Austrian Music Theatre Awards. The opera is based on Mikhail Khodorkovsky's biography: his rise as a young bank owner in the years of perestroika at first, the time he reached the zenith of his fame as owner of the huge oil company Yukos, and his final fall after being targeted by Vladimir Putin as a dissident, Yukos' collapse and his imprisonment.

It is a political opera whose protagonists are real persons and which "doesn't attempt to take anyone's side", as composer Periklis Liakakis characteristically notes. *"The opera is not trying to pick anyone's side. I believe that in modern opera there should not be good or bad people, just facts and reactions to these facts. Sanctifying or demonizing people has been avoided, to the extent that that was dramaturgically possible, and my main concern was that this opera could speak to a Russian, same as to an Austrian or a Greek"*.

The libretto by Kristine Tornquist, the bulk of which was written before Khodorkovsky's unexpected release from prison in December 2013, deals not only with the Königsdrama between Khodorkovsky and Putin, but situates it in a complex historical context stretching from 1989 to 2013.

The changing relationship between business and government alters the relationship between the protagonists, who initially aren't too dissimilar to one other, both of them young, ambitious men with grand plans, and nothing to lose.

At a watershed moment in history, financial blunders and political intrigues allow fast-climbers to thrive. But as soon as the two rivals reach their respective zeniths, the differences in their natures become all too apparent. While one stands sentinel over his territory, the other thinks ahead of the game and risks everything.

Composer Periklis Liakakis states: *“The opera Khodorkovsky is based on the life of the Russian oligarch who opposed President Vladimir Putin at the end of the 90s. It is a political opera, in which any similarities to the Greek financial crisis are anything but coincidental. The opera’s characters, the various situations we shall see, and the libretto are dramatized; they have, namely, been constructed in such a way, so that they are both dramatically and theatrically interesting. An important component of the opera is the couple of the two common, anonymous people (Natasha/Ivan) whose life is marked by the consequences of the people in power. In the opera Khodorkovsky no attempt is made to find who is right and who is wrong, there is no attempt at an historical or “objective” narrative of the relevant facts. However, an attempt is made to bring on stage the thoughts that come to us while observing the History (with a capital “H”) and the fate of all those who have never been asked about the decision-making that has a direct impact on their lives”.*

A Russian proverb summarizes it into a simple picture: you cannot draw clean water from a well that you yourself have been spitting into for years. In the last few years of the Soviet Union, the shadow economy called „na levo“ was a necessary survival practice in a collapsing system. But in the post-Soviet chaos the freedom to spit everywhere was almost unlimited. During this time, when not law but Fortuna was governing, two young, ambitious men worked their way up. When the leader of the oligarch pack, Khodorkovsky, and Putin, the newly elected president, met at the top, not only two powerful men were standing in each others way, but also the two principles of power they represented - the power of money and the power of politics. I wrote the libretto in 2013. Khodorkovsky had bought politics often enough and corrupted it, but after all Putin had defeated him and the money with the help of the corrupt judiciary.

Mikhail Borisovich had been in prison for ten years and there was no telling if he would ever leave it alive. But he was not absent. I followed his public correspondence with Lyudmila Ulitzkaja and his other writings from custody. I was impressed by the polite and careful tone of the letters - the letters show a man who realizes his own mistakes. 20 years of uncontrolled capitalism and liberalism had destroyed civil society and poisoned the wells. He changed his mind, he thinks ahead. A strong and open civil society (with clean wells) is a country's greatest wealth and strength and the only way to guarantee security.

Democracy never follows a revolution. Revolutionary forces are too rough for something so fragile. It is a long and effortful process to balance democracy - an exhausting and endless process of mistakes, of rethinking and giving in. Not only in Russia there is a need to think about history and learn from it but everywhere.

Kristine Tornquist

BIOGRAPHIES

Periklis Liakakis Composition

Born in Athens, he received prizes and scholarships for his work by the Cities of Vienna and Graz, the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, the Austrian Office of the Federal Chancellor, the Greek Friends of Classical Music Society and the Thüringen Philharmonie. He collaborated with such ensembles as Ensemble Modern, Die Reihe, Athens State Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, Phace, Oktoplus and Dramagraz. He has been commissioned to compose works by the City of Trossingen (Germany), the Ensemble Modern International Academy, Vienna Saxophon Quartet and sirene Operntheater. In 2017 *Chodorkowski* was nominated as the best new production for music theatre at the Austrian Music Theatre Awards. In his work he blends different musical styles such as orchestral, operatic, electronics and pop / rock, which has led him to a very personal musical style. He holds a teaching position for over a decade at the University of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna and since 2010 he is a Senior Lecturer.

Christine Tornquist Libretto, director

Born in Graz, Austria, she studied metal sculpture at the University of Applied Arts of Vienna and learned the craft of goldsmithing. Since then, she has been circling freely between visual arts, theatre, writing and thinking.

The desire for collaboration with other artists led her to the creation of the art group 31.Mai (1986-1991), the artist duo Burkert / Tornquist, the foundation of the Theater am Sofa (1998-2006) and the opera company sirene Operntheater (since 1998, with Jury Everhartz). She has written forty two libretti, which were set to music and directed for more than fifty new operas for sirene Operntheater, Vienna Chamber Opera, Tyrolean State Theatre (Innsbruck), Carinthian Summer and others. As a visual artist, she works in video formats and as a painter.

Jury Everhartz Conductor

Born in Berlin, he lives in Vienna as a composer, organist, conductor and curator. He studied theology, philosophy, musicology, church music and composition in Berlin and Vienna. He is married to the author and director Kristine Tornquist, with whom he founded the sirene Operntheater in 1998. As a conductor he is specialized to contemporary music. Moreover, as a conductor he premiered numerous works of Austrian composers and conducted in Berlin, Cairo, London, Ossiach, Steyr and Zagreb, including festivals such as Wien Modern, Zagreb Music Biennial, Carinthian Summer and many others. He has composed ten stage works and numerous compositions for chamber music ensembles. One focus of his work here is on vocal music, in almost all of his compositions the focus is on the human voice. Moreover, he is a sought-after curator and juror, for example for the Belvedere Singing Competition at the Vienna State Opera, as well as at the opera houses in Yerevan, Istanbul, Udine, Wroclaw, Hamburg, Cologne and Stuttgart. He works as a music adviser in the Austrian Federal Chancellery.

Andrea Költringer Sets

After her studies at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg (Austria), she worked as a costume and set designer for Salzburg State Theatre [*Salzburger Landestheater*], Schauspielhaus Salzburg, Linz State Theatre, Vereinigte Bühnen Graz, Vereinigte Bühnen Bozen, Volkstheater Wien, TAG Vienna, Hamakom Vienna and Coburg State Theatre. Furthermore, she collaborated in free productions with L.U.S. Theatre, the association o r t s z e i t and the “new space company”. She also created several set designs for Music High school in Munich, Scene Salzburg and sirene Operntheater. Guest performances led her with sirene Operntheater to Zagreb and Cairo and with o r t s z e i t to São Paulo (Brazil). She took part in several art projects with a social impact. In 2008 together with the “new space company” she won the Nestroy Theatre Prize for the best off production for the play *koma*.

Markus Kuscher Costumes

Born in Klagenfurt, Austria, he did his apprenticeship as a tailor at the Vienna State Opera and worked later as a technical director for several Viennese fashion design and costume workshops. Since 1992 he is working as a freelancer, mostly as a costume and set designer. He collaborated among others with Barrie Kosky, Michael Sturminger, *Vintilă Ivănceanu*, Barbara Albert, *Homunculus*, Messing, Robert Lepage, Jan Fabre, Christoph Marthaler, Peter Sellars, Kristine Tornquist.

Bärbel Strehlau Choreography, Fortuna

Born in East-Berlin, she studied dancing at the State Ballet School, Berlin, and choreography at the University of Performing Arts Ernst Busch, Berlin. In 1992 she was founding member of the Freies-Tanztheater Berlin. From 1991 to 2008 beside her activity as a freelancer, she worked as a dancer, trainer and choreographer at several theatres in Germany. Since 2008 she lives in Vienna, where she works as a free choreographer, dancer, director and author. Since then she has been working in several projects such as Theater Drachengasse, Kosmostheater, Jungle Vienna, Nestroyhof and Palais Kabelwerk. In 2012 she was founding member and artistic director of “artfusion”, producing the theatre trilogy *Goodbye Europe* (2013/17), where she worked as an author and a director. *Chodorkowski* (2015) was her first collaboration with sirene Operntheater. Recently she worked on a comic book for the theatre project *Meet Europe in Person*, which was published in 2019.

Edgar Aichinger Lighting

He has been working for more than thirty years as a lighting and sound designer, as a technician and occasionally as a musician, mainly in the fields of music, theatre, exhibition and dance. He has designed and realized numerous lighting concepts for theatre performances and dance shows and has been on tour, sometimes all over Europe, Mexico, New York, Turkey and Egypt. Since 1997 he has been working, almost each summer, at the Viennese International Dance festival ImPulsTanz, in collaboration with some of the world’s biggest dance companies. He is co-founding member of sirene Operntheater and has taken part in the majority of its works as a technical director and a “lighting captain” in regular theatre halls as well as in unusual venues like industrial buildings, orphaned authority offices, dance halls and public spaces.

Elsa Giannoulidou Xenia Kritikovskaya

Greek mezzo-soprano, she was born in Athens, she received her biology degree from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki before starting her musical studies. She graduated with honors from the University of Music and Performing Arts of Vienna, where she studied opera, Lied and oratorio. She was awarded scholarships from the Richard Wagner Foundation, the Janacek-Sobotka Foundation and the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. She was a member of the International Opera Studio in Zurich and won first prizes in international competitions. As a soloist at the Landestheater Linz (Austria), she sang, among other, Isabella (*L'Italiana in Algeri*), Angelina (*La Cenerentola*), Nicklausse (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Nancy (*Albert Herring*), Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*). As a concert singer she gave song recitals, sang in chamber music concerts in Austria (Musikverein Vienna, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Landesgalerie Linz), Greece, Germany, Italy, Serbia and France and worked with ensembles such as Belgrader Philharmoniker, Bruckner Orchester, Virtuosi Brunensis and Capella Istropolitana.

Ingrid Habermann Marina Filippovna Khodorkovskaya

Soprano, born in Linz. She studied at the Mozarteum, Salzburg. Her first engagement was at the Bern Theatre, where she sang among others Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and Norina (*Don Pasquale*). Later, followed a position as ensemble member at the Linz State Theatre. Her roles entailed all significant of Mozart's repertoire, as well as Violetta in (*La traviata*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Leila (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*) and Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*). She performed at the La Monnaie, Brussels, (cond. Antonio Pappano), Graz and Klagenfurt Operas. She worked with directors such as Christof Loy, Stein Winge, Beverly Blankenship and David Pountney. A focus of her career are works of the 20th and 21st century. She sang Sophie Scholl (*Die Weiße Rose*), Marie (*Wozzeck*), *Pierrot Lunaire* at the Gmundner Festival and played a part in numerous Austrian debut performances. She sang the Duchess (*Powder Her Face*) in Vienna and at the De Vlaamse Opera Antwerpen and performed *La Voix humaine* in Linz, at the Concert hall Vienna and in the Netherlands. Over the past few years she collaborates closely with the sirene Operntheater.

Matthias Haid Alexei Vladimirovich Pitchugin

Austrian baritone, he studied voice and piano at the Mozarteum, Salzburg. He has performed numerous roles in various opera houses in Austria and Germany, including *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Hello Dolly*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La traviata*, *Der Bettelstudent* and *Chodorkowski*. In addition, he regularly gives concerts singing such repertoire as *A German Requiem* by Brahms, *Christmas Oratorio* by Bach, Telemann and Distler. He currently lives in Paris as a singer, pianist and teacher.

Gernot Heinrich Leonid Borisovich Nevzlin

Austrian tenor, he began his musical training as soloist of the Vienna Boys Choir [Wiener Sängerknaben]. He studied trumpet at the University of Music in Graz and singing at the University of Music in Vienna. He has performed in over forty opera and operetta productions and has sung in the Ulan Bator State Theater (Mongolia), Frankfurt Opera, New Opera Vienna, Vienna Chamber Opera and in such festivals as Bregenz Festival, Seefestspiele Mörbisch, Carinthian Summer Music Festival, Ruhr Festival in Recklinghausen, Wien Modern, Vienna Festival [Vienna Festwochen], Styriarte, Osterfestival Psalm, Festival dell' Aurora in

Crotone, Budapest Spring Festival, Kyburgiade. He sang in several contemporary operas, at sirene Operntheater's productions as well as for Neue Oper Wien. A further focus of his work lies in concerts and oratorios: he sang Händel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Stabat Mater* and two Clemencic-Consort concerts (Vienna Musikverein), Bach's *Johannespassion* (Polen) and *Matthäuspension* (Klagenfurt), Orff's *Carmina Burana* (Liszt Centre, Raiding), Haydn's *Schöpfung* (Organ festival, Lockenhaus).

Richard Klein Roman Arkadyevich Abramovich

Tyrolean tenor, he studied jazz piano at the Tyrolean State Conservatory, but subsequently switched to classical singing. He graduated from the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. His repertoire reaches from early music over classical and romantic opera, Lied and oratorio to operetta and contemporary musical theatre. He performed at Tyrolean State Theatre (Innsbruck), Berlin State Opera, Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, children's tent of the Vienna State Opera, sirene Operntheater, Musica Festival in Strasbourg, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Konzerthaus Vienna, Oldenburg State Theatre, Klagenfurt State Theatre, Theater an der Rott, Linz State Theatre and Tyrolean Festival Erl. He has worked with conductors like René Jacobs, Konrad Junghänel, Dietfried Bernet, Andreas Spörri, Thomas Rösner, Karsten Januschke, Caspar Richter and Gustav Kuhn. In 2006 he founded the vocal quartet Mundschenk, performing primarily works of Franz Schubert and Felix Mendelssohn. In the summer of 2008, he completed his law studies at the University of Innsbruck.

Clemens Kölbl Mikhail Borisovich Khodorkovsky

Baritone, born in Innsbruck, Austria. He received his first musical education within the family, playing piano from early ages. He started studying architecture but soon was caught by bands, chorus, and musical theatre projects, along with his first singing lessons. In 2000 he enrolled for vocal studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna. Further stages were two years at the Royal College of Music in London (Prof. Neil Mackie, Prof. David Ward), a Post Graduate Diploma with distinction, various opera and recital projects, works with Austrian and UK's choirs and ensembles, a study visit to Paris, numerous masterclasses. In 2007 he concluded his Master Studies with Prof. Ralf Döring and Prof. David Lutz in Vienna and since 2009 he has been coached by Wicus Slabbert. His work stretches from teaching singing and Lied repertoire at the University Vienna, over conducting children's and detainees' choirs, students' and amateur orchestras, up to performing in original new music projects, off-theatre productions, experimental Lieder recitals, as well as singing classical sacred and operatic works.

Dieter Kschwendt-Michel Matteo Tiziani

Baritone, he was born in Vienna, Austria. Before pursuing the career of an opera singer, he studied history and politics at the University of Vienna and worked as a journalist. He also entered the opera and operetta class at the Vienna Conservatory of Music. Engagements and guest contracts then led him to the Volksoper Wien, Neue Oper Vienna, Stadttheater Baden, Theater am Kornmarkt Bregenz, Regensburg Theatre, Ulmer Theatre, Sarajevo National Opera, Teatro Lope de Vega, in Seville, and to the Angelico Auditorium San Francisco. He is a regular guest at European festivals (Bregenz Festival, St. Margarethen Opera Festival, Seefestspiele Mörbisch). The singer's extensive repertoire reaches from opera to operetta, musical and

contemporary music. On stage he has sung more than fifty different roles and was a leading soloist in more than twenty first performances.

Martin Mairinger Vladimir Petukhov

Tenor, born in Horn, Austria. He studied singing as well as operetta, lied and oratorio at the Vienna Conservatory, attending also vocal lessons under Gerhard Kahry. He has engagements at Burgtheater, Volkstheater, Theater an der Wien, Vienna Konzerthaus, Vienna Musikverein, Salzburg Festival, Bregenz Festival, Festival Origen, Opera de Lille, Opera Klosterneuburg, Musiktheaterfrühling Kilb and others, as well as in worldwide concerts and tours. In his repertoire are roles such as Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fenton (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Rosillon (*Die lustige Witwe*), Stanislaus (*Der Vogelhändler*), Lieutenant Niki (*Ein Walzertraum*), Swan (*Carmina Burana*), Uriel (*Die Schöpfung*), Evangelist (*St. John's Passion*), Freddy (*My Fair Lady*), Phantom and Raoul (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Jesus (*Godspell*) and others.

Alexander Mayr Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin

Tenor, he studied voice at the Mozarteum Salzburg and at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. As a specialist for high tenor roles such as the Sergeant (*The Nose*, Shostakovich), Arkenholz (*Die Gespenstersonate*, Reimann), he has performed at various international venues including Innsbruck, Basel and Oldenburg Opera Houses, Opera Zuid (Maastricht), Deutsche Opera am Rhein (Düsseldorf), Cologne Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Aldeburgh and Almeida Festivals, as well as Salzburg and Bregenz Festival. There, he has collaborated with artists such as Johannes Kalitzke, Christof Loy, Brigitte Fassbaender and Sir Peter Ustinov. He was invited to sing various concert programs at Vienna Konzerthaus, Dortmund Konzerthaus, Radio Studio Ernest Ansermet in Geneva, Mozarteum Concert Hall in Salzburg, e.g. opera and operetta galas. He holds a Doctor of Arts and he is currently teaching voice training as a professor at the Haute École de Musique in Geneva and as a senior lecturer at the University in Vienna.

Lisa Rombach Natasha

Soprano, she was born into a musical environment and after years of intensive training as a violinist, she ultimately decided to become a singer. She studied with Edith Lienbacher, Marjana Lipovsek and Gabriele Fontana at the University for Music and Performing Arts, Vienna. Shortly after graduation she won the 2nd prize in the International Johannes Brahms competition in Pörschach and made her Japanese debut with Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with the Osaka Symphony Orchestra at the Osaka Symphony Hall. Together with pianist Alejandro Píco-Leonís she creates diverse recital programs centered around the Lieder of Austrian composers. Her concerts have brought her to Britain, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Japan and Taiwan. At the Helsinki Town Festival she performed also a program encompassing both Finnish and Austrian contemporary music. Due to her specialization in the interpretation of contemporary music, she was cast in several opera world premieres in cooperation with Wien Modern, Viener Taschenoper [*Vienna pocket opera*], and sirene Operntheater.

Tehmine Schaeffer Kate

Armenian soprano, after graduating with honors from the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan in vocal

studies, organ and composition, she won several international vocal competitions in Russia such as Victoria International Vocal and Choral Festival Competition (Kazan 2014), Moscow International Competition of Russian Romantic Songs Singers (Romansiada 2015) and the 25th Glinka International Vocal Contest (2014). In concert she performed with Yuri Bashmet and the New Russia State Symphony Orchestra at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, Moscow. She sang Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* (Vyatka Chamber Orchestra), Gliere's *Concerto for Coloratura Soprano* (Cairo Opera House) and Tariverdiev's *Concerto for Coloratura Soprano* (Bolshoi Orchestra, Tchaikovsky Concert Hall). Her operatic roles include Podtochina's Daughter (Shostakovich's *The Nose*), First Flowermaiden (Wagner's *Parsifal*), Nerina (Haydn's *La fedeltà premiata*), Arsena (Strauss' *Der Zigeunerbaron*), Queen of the Night (Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*). She has performed at many prestigious international festivals a.o. International Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (2011), North Aegean Music Festival (2014) and Fermata International Festival (2015). She currently resides in Vienna.

Steven Scheschareg Igor Ivanovich Sechin

Austro-American baritone, winner of the Vienna State Opera George London Prize and Grammy Award nominee. He studied singing at the Juilliard and Eastman Schools with Jan DeGaetani and Thomas Hampson and at the Vienna Music University with Walter Berry. Next to opera roles including Escamillo (*Carmen*), Father (*Hänsel und Gretel*) and Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*), he also specializes in creating contemporary works. He debuted at the Bavarian State Opera in Britten's *Billy Budd* and performs regularly at the Mannheim National Theatre and at the Vienna Volksoper. His recent performances of Weinberg's *Idiot* and Hölszky's *Böse Geister* were named "Best New Operas of 2013 and 2014." He sang title roles in Olga Neuwirth's *Outcast* and Brand's *Maschinist Hopkins* and in operas by Berg, Bernstein, Furrer (La Fenice, Venice), Glass, Heggie (Theater an der Wien), Ligeti, Messiaen, Reimann, Sausengand, Schönberg. He often performs music by composers exiled from Austria and Germany in 1938.

Sébastien Soulès Ivan Ivanovich

Baritone, born in Orléans (France), he studied singing at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. He attended masterclasses with Walter Berry, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Brigitte Fassbaender and Jose van Dam and is a winner of the Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender Singing Competition, Munich. Recently, he was highly successful in the title roles in George Enescu's *Oedipe* (Theater Altenburg Gera) and Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (Theater Augsburg), Vicomte de Fontrailles (*Cinq-Mars*, Leipzig Opera), Kaspar (*Der Freischütz*, Bühne Baden), Scarpia (*Tosca*), Golaud (*Pélleas et Mélisande*, New Opera House Linz). He sings both repertoire and modern opera. He performed among others Don Quixote (*Don Quixote*), Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), The Dutchman (*Der fliegende Holländer*), Don Giovanni (*Don Giovanni*) and Marcello (*La bohème*) in opera houses in Bern, Biel, Warsaw, Madrid, Vienna, Tours, Wiesbaden, Halle) as well as at festivals such as Wiesbaden Festival, Wiener Festwochen, Musiktheatertage Vienna, Bregenz Festival and Styriarte (Graz).