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Carol Jean Delmar and Vladimir Chernov

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### **Vladimir Chernov: A Recital to Remember**

**RECITAL**

**VLADIMIR CHERNOV**

**UCLA DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

**APRIL 29, 2008**

By: Carol Jean Delmar

OperaOnline.us

After Vladimir Chernov's recital in UCLA's Schoenberg Hall, his accompanist, Judith Palanca Hansen, told me that she had almost been moved to tears. I hugged her because I felt exactly the same way.

I had no intentions of writing a review of this recital because Chernov and I became

friends after I wrote a story about him for Classical Singer magazine. Most publications would call a review written of a singer by a friend, a conflict-of-interest. After all, a friend might be biased. But I came home after the recital wanting to write about it because Chernov's singing was just so beautiful.

I was born a critic. I always find something wrong with singers' performances. I don't want to. I go to each production, recital or concert hoping with all my heart to love it, but that rarely happens. However on April 29th, I did.

I was discussing the recital with some proponents of Sahaja Yoga Meditation afterwards. They said that meditation enables them to develop an awareness of themselves that leads to balance and harmony. Whether it is religion, yoga or other means, most people have stress in their lives and seek alternatives to free up their minds. For me, a concert or recital can have the same effect. My mind was in the heavens while I sat there in Schoenberg Hall listening, because I was hearing an artist whose central core was dispersing emotion that reached from the tips of his fingers and toes to his smooth, rich chocolaty baritone tone. No yoga was needed. The outside world didn't exist.

I didn't even care about what he was singing. Understanding the languages somehow didn't seem important, because everything was all there in his demeanor, facial expressions and body language; and that emotional commitment was released into his voice – a voice that is so technically vibrant that I as a critic couldn't figure out if the emotion was enabling the technical excellence, or if the technical excellence was freeing him so that he could reveal the colors of his soul.

The beautiful lyricism of the music didn't hurt either. I have come to the realization that some great artists make program choices that do not enhance their artistic individuality. But this artist chose a program that was tailored to his strengths and sensibilities.

He began with Vincenzo Bellini's "Malinconia, ninfa gentile," which has been sung by the likes of Luciano Pavarotti, who often sang it at a quicker tempo with the ringing tones of a great tenor, and Cecilia Bartoli, who brings urgency and clarity to the piece. Chernov's interpretation of the hymn was slightly slower, with a type of rolling emotionally charged expressive quality that set the mood for the entire program. Bellini's "Dolente immagine di Fille mia" followed in much the same vein. A sorrowful man explains to his deceased wife that she should rest peacefully because their flame will remain eternal. Chernov sang Puccini's "Terra e mare" and "A te" with expressivity as well.

Then after the two Puccini songs, he continued the romance with four Francesco Paolo Tosti songs, ripping our hearts out with Tosti's "La Tristezza," singing in Italian: "I feel a melancholy in my heart, and yet I know not why. Looking into your eyes, I cling to you silently, my beauty."

It was the music of love, filled with the sentimentality that in this day and age critics often abhor. Yet to me, the music was poetry.

“When you look at me, rapture overwhelms me. When you speak to me, I feel as if I am dying.” And so ended his rendition of “Malia.”

When he sang the words, “No, no” in Rossini’s “Mi lagnerò tacendo,” he was endearing. He gracefully wove falsetto into his “L’ultimo ricordo,” and his “La Danza” made us feel like dancing. A few tambourines would have been a nice touch, though.

After intermission, he gave us a taste of the music from his homeland. Many in the audience were Russian and can attest to the fact that no one sings Russian Lieder like a Russian, and Chernov is one of the greatest interpreters of the genre in the world, having won prizes in Russia’s Glinka and Tchaikovsky competitions. His superb Balakirev selections were matched with Glinka’s “To Her,” when he allowed us to catch a glimpse of his lighter side. His facial expressions brought a smile to our faces as he placed a symbolic kiss on his own cheek as if it was all of ours. “I want to kiss, to kiss, to kiss,” he sang in Russian with unmistakable charm. Borodin selections were next. Then came the highlight of the evening: Anton Rubinstein’s “The Turbulent Waters of the Kir,” which I have listened to numerous times on Chernov’s “Poetry in Music -- Russian Classics” CD. Rubinstein’s music has the spiritual quality of something one might hear in a synagogue. Here Chernov bared his soul and touched our hearts with smokey mellow somberness and a palette of multiple shades and hues.

Hauntingly beautiful, we could have heard a pin drop when he sang the words of Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt in Russian: “If you wish my soul to pour all its love into your eyes, come quickly, for the night is dark. O, if it could be like this forever. O, if it could be like this forever!”

He concluded with the music of Pauline Viardot, charmingly describing the story of an abandoned flower. Camoëns’ aria from Donizetti’s “Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal” followed as an encore.

Pianist Judith Palanca Hansen was an apt accompanist who played with technical agility and added a warm presence onstage.

But the night belonged to Chernov, whose emotionally charged delivery left us inspired, with the realization that we had spent a very special evening with a great artist, recitalist and professor. On this night, Chernov’s UCLA students were able to experience first hand how voice, technique, acting, interpretation and musicianship can combine to create a complete artist in performance. Chernov’s recital was the ultimate lesson for all of us.