

1. Personal view of Anna Netrebko

Biographical account of Opera singer - Anna Netrebko

Introduction

Anna Netrebko is one of the world's most current prolific soprano's being part of the Time magazine's 'most influential people'. She is the darling of the Opera world having had a glittering career as a world-class Opera singer since the age of twenty-two. But where did it all start and how did a young girl, working as cleaner become the leading lady of her own Fairytale. To find out the truth behind the legend, we can first take a look at her family roots, early life and the beginnings of her vocal training.

Early life and Education

Anna was born to parents of a Kuban-Cossack background, her mother-a Communications officer and Geologist father, in Krasnodar, Russia on September 18th, 1971. Growing up in Russia, Anna says she never had money and couldn't really afford to buy any records. With no professional musicians in her family, she first became exposed to music through her parents regularly attending concerts. She also began singing at school, joining a choir and also a travelling musical performance group called the 'Kuban Pioneers'. As well as singing, Anna also learnt the piano at school. Netrebko also demonstrated prowess as a young athlete, particularly in Acrobatics, for which she holds the title of 'Master of Sports'. Some might say her athletic training put in her in excellent stead for an Operatic career, for which the body needs to be physically fit and singers are described as "Vocal Athlete's". Throughout Anna's career as an Opera singer, she has also landed many contracts with top fashion houses, brands and magazines for her beauty and beloved persona and charisma. It is no wonder then at seventeen years old she came second in the people's choice award for the 'Miss Kuban Beauty' contest.

As a young adult Anna desperately wanted to become an actress, she said herself; "First I wanted to be an actress"¹ so at sixteen, moved to St Petersburg where she was met with healthy competition. Dissuaded by this, her acting abilities would later benefit greatly in propelling her operatic career.

Anna started studying at a specialist Music school for gifted children. The Rimsky-Korsakov music school named after one of Russia's 'Big Five' composers, was originally founded in 1936 and for students of secondary age with considerable musical skills and the prospect of attending a music conservatoire. As well as Anna attending, so did the famous Operatic mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina. After attending the school for two years, in 1991 Anna became a student at what was then called the prestigious 'Leningrad Conservatory' (now the St Petersburg academy), which was affiliated with her previous music school, to begin her vocal studies in pursuit of an Operatic career. Whilst at the conservatory she studied with Professor Tamara Dmitrevna Novichenko, a soprano and a Meritorious artist, awarded this title of merit for exceptional artistic achievement.

During her studies, in 1993 Anna entered into the nationally renowned 'Mikhail Glinka' vocal competition in Smolensk and won. The competition dates back to 1959 and continues to run to this day, promoting 'the further improvement of artistic skills of young singers and to identify new talents'².

¹ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/anna-netrebko-a-rare-jewel-from-the-east-423103.html>

² <https://www.aec-music.eu/about-aec/news/xxvi-glinka-international-competition-of-vocalists>

Her professional journey

Whilst Anna was at the Leningrad conservatory she took a job as a cleaner to earn money and support her studies, at the Marinsky Theatre as a cleaner. After her success in the Mikhail Glinka competition she auditioned for the Marinsky Theatre where Valery Gergiev was the artistic and general director. The story goes that Gergiev recognised her from working there as the ‘humble cleaner’ and upon hearing her at the audition, he declared: “You can sing?”. The Cinderella story it was not however as Anna tells Peter Conrad from the Guardian in 2007 on her cleaning job; “What I washed? I was useless. Old lady did work for me...Usually I sneak backstage with my girlfriend. We flirt with ballet dancers”.³ It is not surprising then that whilst a student living in what is now St Petersburg, her former boyfriend was a ballet dancer of the Kirov Opera. No stranger to dancing herself, Anna’s other passion is Salsa dancing and her fluidity of movement and connection to her physicality is shown in her numerous performances of, for example, Giuditta’s aria from Lehar’s Opera of the same name; Anna spins, twirls and dances, embodying the very frivolity of the young gypsy-esque character.

After her first audition at the Marinsky, Gergiev from then on became her mentor and in 1994, a fourth year student at the young age of twenty-two, she was given the lead role of Susanna in Mozart’s *‘Le nozze di Figaro’* at the Marinsky Theatre with the *Kirov Opera*. For this role Anna won the Casta Diva Russian Opera prize in 1998.

The pivotal moment in Anna’s career came in 1995 when she was thrust into the international limelight in San Francisco. Gergiev was conducting a production of *‘Ruslan and Lyudmila’* and cast Anna as the leading lady Lyudmila. Netrebko even says “it was a big, big role”⁴. To have taken on such a substantial role at the tender age of twenty-three shows an artist with a lot of determination and already an inner self-assurance-qualities which I believe are so important in the career of an Opera star. After her huge success in the USA, Anna left the conservatory where she was still a student to pursue her career. The Russian Federation radio station – *Radio Svoboda* claims that Anna never formally graduated from the Leningrad conservatory in St Petersburg before embarking on her professional journey.

Anna’s professional studies continued in 1996 when she became a participant during the summer of the reputable Young Artist program (YAP) in San Francisco – the Merola Opera program. This YAP is ‘an internationally respected model for building strong careers in Opera...Merola trains and develops the finest young Opera singers, coaches’⁵, which one could arguably state is true considering the alumni includes singers such as; Susan Graham, Deborah Voigt and Joyce DiDonato.

During the beginning of her career in her early twenties, there was really only one musical mentor that influenced her life and that was Valery Gergiev. Even Anna has said herself in numerous interviews how she owes everything to him- “All the credit should go to Gergiev.....when I auditioned he took me”⁶. Gergiev gave Anna what every artist really needs; a golden opportunity. In that old cliché, she happened to be in the right place at the right time, when she worked at the Marinsky. It goes without saying that Anna had the voice and the musical talent, but she also gained somebody quite monumental who believed in her. In an interview with Jessica Duchon in 2006, Anna says on

³ Netrebko, Anna in an Interview with Conrad, Peter:

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2007/sep/02/classicalmusicandopera.proms2007>

⁴ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/anna-netrebko-a-rare-jewel-from-the-east-423103.html>

⁵ <https://merola.org/about-us>

⁶ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Russian-Soprano-s-Star-Rose-Quickly-Netrebko-3016494.php>

Gergiev; “He has been so supportive and he always believes in me”⁷. And with her talent alongside her beauty, sassy excitable nature, and charm, Gergiev gave Anna the stepping stones into the abyss of international Opera. To this day Netrebko and Gergiev remain good friends and has a strong bond with the Maestro, having continued to work together throughout her shining career, more recently again in January 2015 at the *Metropolitan Opera*, New York.

Anna’s predominant professional debut one can note came in 2002 at the Metropolitan Opera in *War and Peace*. A 20th century Opera composed by Prokofiev and based on Tolstoy’s novel – *War and Peace*, the Opera was a reaction to the German invasion of the Soviet Union during the war. Anna was cast as the leading lady, Natasha for the Met’s 2002 production. From then on her career went from strength to strength. Netrebko held her position of lead singer touring with the Marinsky theatre, and reprised the role of Natasha in St Petersburg, Madrid, Milan, London and Moscow. In 2007 Anna told The Observer “she had no voice for Russian Music”⁸, having chosen to have success in Western repertoire.

Anna’s notable operatic roles began in the lyric to lyric-coloratura vocal fach and more recently accelerated to the spinto and dramatic voice types. Roles that brought her to more popular wider acclaim tend to be those of the lyrical and bel canto repertoire, youthful Italian and French courtesans and heroines, that arguably seem to suit Anna’s personality and vocal colour.

Notably in 2003 Netrebko took on the role of Violetta in Verdi’s *La Traviata* with great success, performing in Munich, and she later reprised this role in 2005 at The Salzburg Festival to an even more rapturous reception and again at the Royal opera House Covent Garden, in 2008. In 2003 Anna also made her debut in Los Angeles Opera, singing the demanding coloratura role of the crazed Lucia in Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Speaking in an interview to Peter Conrad about another bel-canto crazed role she sang at the Met in 2006- Ophelia in Bellini’s *I Puritani*, she says “Is fun to be a mad person; you are free, you do what you like.”⁹ Other of her roles in the bel-canto repertoire include; Gilda in Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, & Juliette- in Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* which she reprised at the ROH London in 2009.

Another notable lyric-coloratura role Netrebko that stands out for me is her depiction of Massenet’s *Manon* in the opera of the same name in 2012. At this point in her career, known as a world-renowned opera diva, she took on the starring role in Laurent Pelly’s new production at the Met. I was lucky enough to see a live broadcast of this at the time, and from Manon’s naïve ignorance to her sassy inner strength and bravado right until her death, this was characterised beautifully by Anna’s passionate, emotionally intense and committed performance from start to finish. Vocally she excelled, and her voice flew around the top notes like glittering bubbles of champagne, with a sense of expensive ease and crystalline sharp clarity.

Later on in her professional operatic career, the roles Netrebko has been mastering have taken a different tangent, due to a ‘change in her voice’ as she claims. This is not without truth, in a sense that over time a singers voice will mature and develop and the voice can become fuller and stronger. But in Anna’s case some might argue that her more dramatic roles since 2017 are not where her true voice shines. In 2016, aged forty-four, Anna cancelled a string of performances at the ROH as Norma in Bellini’s opera of the same name due to this vocal change. In 2017, Anna took on the role of Verdi’s Aida at the Salzburg festival, and Puccini’s Tosca in 2018 at the Met. Other newer more dramatic roles in her current repertoire include Leonora in Verdi’s *Trovatore*, Elsa in Wagner’s *Lohengrin* and Manon Lescaut in Puccini’s opera of the same name.

⁷ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/anna-netrebko-a-rare-jewel-from-the-east-423103.htm>

⁸ Netrebko, Anna in an Interview for The Observer: <https://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/music/anna-netrebko/>

⁹ Netrebko, Anna in an Interview with Conrad, Peter: <https://amp.theguardian.com/music/2007/sep/02/classicalmusicandopera.proms2007>

Anna's professional international career since her initial debut in the Marinsky Theatre in 1994 has taken all over the world on her operatic journey. She has performed in all major opera houses, touring with the Marinsky Theatre, and performing many times in the USA, Europe and her home country of Russia. She is a regular artist at the Metropolitan Opera, New York and has frequently performed in the Royal opera House, Covent Garden and also La Scala, Milano as well as the Salzburg festival. Some countries performed in include; UK, USA, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Austria, Germany, France, Turkey, Japan and Russia. It is undeniable to see that Anna has become a global star, a far cry from her humble beginnings in Krasnodar.

She has earned many competitive credits and awards in her time as a Diva so far to include; 'The Golden light'(2003)-St Petersburg theatre prize, 'The Salzburg music festival' (2003) 'Singer and Album of the year'(2005)-German Echo prizes, 'Classical Brit award' (2008), 'Musician of the Year'(2008)-Musical America Magazine, 'Opera News award' (2015) & 'Best Singer' (2017)-International Opera Awards.

In this current season of Anna Netrebko's professional journey she will be taking on the lead role in Puccini's *Turandot* in Munich and later on in the year Elisabetta di Valois in Verdi's challenging five-Act opera *Don Carlo*. These are again evident examples of her vocal intentions to sing more dramatic repertoire at her current stage and age in her career.

Critical Response to Anna

My first response to Anna Netrebko came when I was nineteen years old. I was lucky enough to be taking part in my very first 'Last night of the BBC Proms' at the Royal Albert Hall, London as a member of the BBC Symphony Chorus. I later went onto complete 7 BBC Prom seasons but this particular LNOP back in 2007 was certainly my most memorable. Anna Netrebko was the invited lead soloist for this LNOP, and she was sensational. I remember during the orchestral rehearsal in the afternoon of the concert, Anna burst onto the stage in front of the choir like a firework. We had the pleasure of singing with her in excerpts from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, hearing her coloratura passage although not perfectly polished, she attacked them with a great sense of liberation and colour. It was however, her rendition of the ever popular aria 'Meine lippen sie kussen so Heiss' (On my lips every kiss is like wine) that was the most captivating. Anna performed in the rehearsal with an enigmatic charisma that gave a taste of how she would perform later that evening. Her vocal quality was rich and full, but still with that soprano sparkle, but it was her commitment to the character and the storytelling that really struck me. I had never heard the aria before, but I fell in love with it immediately watching her perform. And in the prom that night, Anna did not disappoint. She held the audience in the palm of her hand and literally danced her way through every embellishment. Of course, her beauty automatically charmed and she stunned everyone, entering in a lavish ball gown which seemed to float across the stage with her. I had never seen a performer command such a stage presence until that point and I have never since. She quite simply became the fairytale that everyone wanted to fall in love with and so many seemed to blush as she confidently flirted coquettishly with the orchestra and front row seats, throwing them red roses from a bunch in her arms. It was this performance that night that inspired me to really try to pursue a solo career in Opera. It didn't seem so unreachable from where I was sat behind her on the stage. Her voice and performance has held a strong influence over me since that day.

Throughout her career the response from Anna's critics on the whole have been one of an elegant sound coupled with her skilful acting abilities resulting in idolisation from audiences across the globe. To begin with in her debut at the Met as Natasha in *War and peace* back in 2002, she was

hailed as ‘astonishing¹⁰...outstanding¹¹ and the star of the evening¹²’. Her young lyric voice was described as being ‘pearly¹³..rich & agile¹⁴..with rock solid intonation¹⁵’, and interestingly most critics agree of her debut’s at the Met and also the Salzburg festival the same year, that here was a woman with a youthful voice, with the sparkling height but a fuller rounded sound, light however nonetheless. Something which I noted of Anna’s vocal quality in the 2007 LNOP. Also noted by several New York critics in her Met debut, were her acting abilities. Howard Kissel for the New York daily news wrote ‘Netrebko has the gift of making her character seem entirely natural’ and another critic said Anna ‘embodied the role of Natasha so sparkingly that it was impossible to imagine anyone else singing it’, thus highlighting early on Anna’s natural intrinsic talent for acting, characterisation and convincing storytelling. One reviewer also compares her striking beauty to ‘Audrey Hepburn’ which seemed to have carried her through her career whether it may contracts with fashion houses, or large lucrative advertising campaigns.

Anna has received many great reviews for her major success roles. In one of her most famous roles as Violetta that she has reprised many times, she was given high-acclaim from the critics at the San Francisco production in 2009. As before her voice was given the highest praise with Scheinin writing that her voice was ‘pouring like liquid amber’¹⁶, but it is the same point that we are drawn to again ‘Netrebko can act’¹⁷. Almost suggesting that ‘acting’ is a phenomenon amongst opera singers. Something which I find strange because at the heart of all Opera is the text. Music in opera, I believe, is a vessel that is used when words alone are no longer enough. Anna says herself on acting in opera ‘Everything is there in the music...as an actor you have to find the music in the lines for yourself’¹⁸.

In 2012 Anna performed the role of Massenet’s Manon at the met, which in my opinion is arguably one her best operatic performances and one of the roles I believe suits her voice and character perfectly. Critics tended to agree with this for the most part- it was written about her vocal performance in Manon, that Anna ‘sang melting phrase with silken legato and shimmering beauty....and she can send top notes soaring’¹⁹. Anna is quoted in saying ‘the way Massenet writes for the voice makes it a big pleasure for me to sing. I don’t have any struggle when I’m singing it’ emphasising how comfortable she feels with this role. However, some critical reviews were not so perfect for Anna in this production stating ‘she’s too self-consciously girly at the start’²⁰.

More recently Anna has been at the centre of some rather mixed reviews, though she almost certainly always comes out on top as the reigning Diva. One critic states ‘I think Anna Netrebko is by now review-proof...She’s golden. Her charisma is eternal’²¹. Since 2017 and giving birth to her son Tiago whom she had with her previous Opera singer partner Erwin Schrott, she claims that she has felt her voice suddenly open up and get much bigger. In theory this could be true if she had gained more strength in her abdominal wall, though as a maturer performer it may be that she wishes to tackle larger repertoire. Recently in 2019 Anna took on the larger Verdi and Puccini divas of; Lady

¹⁰ <http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹¹ <http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹² <http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹³ <http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹⁴ <http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹⁵ <http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2009/06/14/review-anna-netrebko-brings-glamour-and-star-power-to-la-traviata-at-s-f-opera/>

¹⁷ <https://www.mercurynews.com/2009/06/14/review-anna-netrebko-brings-glamour-and-star-power-to-la-traviata-at-s-f-opera/>

¹⁸ Netrebko, Anna quoted by Farach-Colton, Andrew - Profile for opera news 2002:
<http://windhorst.org/netrebko/debuts.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/28/arts/music/a-striver-comes-to-an-ignoble-end.html>

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/jun/23/manon-review>

²¹ <https://www.classicstoday.com/review/not-yet-ready-for-verdi-netrebko/>

Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Leonora in *Il Trovatore* and Tosca in the opera of the same name. The majority of these performances were met recently by critics and reviewers with high-acclaim. Her Leonora was noted as ‘spectacular’ – ‘The bottom of her voice has become richer with time, but the top has lost none of its fullness or beauty.....name a soprano who can even approach her in the role nowadays’²². And her depiction of Tosca ‘always true to the text and music, but encompassing great sincerity and charm, a genuinely lovable human being.’²³. However, Anna released a CD entitled ‘Verdi’. Robert Levine doesn’t give such a generous review of her vocal suitability in some of these arias. He goes as far as to call his review ‘Not-yet-ready-for-Verdi Netrebko’. On her Lady Macbeth, Levine writes ‘her sound is not dense enough in the middle’²⁴ and in her Leonora ‘Netrebko doesn’t move the listener’²⁵. Whatever the opinion is of Anna’s move into the dramatic and spinto repertoire she continues to do so with charisma and strength, currently playing Turandot and later Elisabetta di Valois *Don Carlo*.

Her relationships ‘on and off’ stage

During her career, Anna has worked with many other top-rated opera singers, and her leading men have been no exception. She has enjoyed a fruitful relationship on stage with Rolando Villazon, working with him in a production of *La Bohème* for film in 2008. They’ve recorded a CD of duets together and appeared in numerous concerts. It is obvious of their on stage performance chemistry, but dubbed as ‘operatic sweethearts’ by the Independent, they speculate that even though the couple remain friends ‘the body language says otherwise’.²⁶ Anna also enjoyed working with her Russian peer- the late great Dmitri Hvorostovsky who died recently in November 2017 of cancer. They collaborated on many occasions such as in her earlier career at Carnegie Hall in 2007, in London at the Royal festival Hall in 2010 and in Moscow’s Red square in 2013. Their last performance together came in April 2017 in a Toronto concert. Anna and Dmitri had become close friends, and when he passed away of Brain cancer she was deeply saddened and lead a star-studded cast of singers in a tribute to him at the Royal Opera house in March 2018.

Anna has had several personal and romantic relationships with her leading-men and fellow Operatic colleagues. Most notably in December 2007, Anna announced her engagement to Erwin Schrott, a bass-baritone from Uruguay. They had met previously when working together back in 2003. They never in fact married, although they declared they had in 2008. The couple eventually separated in 2013, but they did have one son together- Tiago, born in Vienna in September, 2008. A statement issued by Netrebko at the time of their split states the reason was due to “demanding schedules and the resulting constant time apart”²⁷.

Whilst rehearsing for a production of *Manon Lescaut* in Rome, 2014 she met her current husband Yusif Eyvazov, a tenor from Azerbaijan. They were married only a year later in Vienna and currently co-habit in New York along with her son Tiago who is now 11 years old. A decisive factor for Anna to marry Yusif was the excellent relationship that he has with Tiago. Yusif says himself “Everything that we do now is done for our family and the future of our child”²⁸.

²² Perdian, Rick: <https://seenandheard-international.com/2017/09/just-who-can-top-anna-netrebko-as-leonora-in-il-trovatore/>

²³ <https://observer.com/2018/04/anna-netrebko-debuts-breathtaking-tosca-at-met-opera-review/>

²⁴ Levine, Robert: <https://www.classicstoday.com/review/not-yet-ready-for-verdi-netrebko/>

²⁵ Levine, Robert: <https://www.classicstoday.com/review/not-yet-ready-for-verdi-netrebko/>

²⁶ Seckerson, Edward: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/reviews/anna-netrebkorolando-villazon-barbican-london-422789.html>

²⁷ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.680news.com/2013/11/25/soprano-anna-netrebko-says-she-has-split-with-bass-baritone-erwin-schrott/>

²⁸ Eyvazov, Yusif: https://eticket4.com/blog/article/jusif_eyvazov_ob_otnoshenijah_s_annoy_netrebko_32

Anna dotes on her mildly autistic son Tiago, whom she had with Schrott, and he now permanently resides with her Eyvazov. In an interview speaking about her son's diagnosis of Autism, Anna says 'he had difficulty analysing his thoughts, but has made progress with this'²⁹. Anna was first pointed towards autism whilst in New York where they initially scored Tiago and 8 out of 10 on the Autistic spectrum. With help from therapists he improved, however she says that when his father- Schrott found out about Tiago's autism, "he abandoned him"³⁰. But Tiago has formed a special bond with Anna's husband Eyvazov, to whom he now calls 'dad'. Yusif notes that 'I do not pretend to be Tiago's father...I have become so...I do not consider him as my son-he is my son'³¹, demonstrating Tiago's new found attachment to his mothers new partner, something which he lacks with his own father who he only speaks to on the telephone once in a while. Perhaps Anna's own experiences with her son is one of the reasons why she has become the Honorary director of 'The children's welfare society'.

'Bumps' in the road

In recent years Anna has become quite well-known for cancelling shows. Now speaking as a busy singer, this is quite understandable when your body is your instrument and you are working hard, it is inevitable that on some occasions you are likely to become ill as you are more susceptible. For instance, back in 2008 she cancelled some performances of *La Traviata* at London's Royal Opera house, due to bronchitis. And for some concerts in Berlin in 2019 she cancelled her concerts due to laryngitis stating 'Unfortunately my battle with virus for several days wasn't successful'³². However, when Anna cancelled her performances of Norma at the Royal Opera house with Maestro Antonio Pappano in 2016, this was not met with understanding. Her reasons being that changes in her voice would not allow her to fulfil this commitment as her "voice has evolved in a different direction"³³. The director of Opera at the ROH expressed is frustration saying ' We are of course very frustrated that Anna has felt it necessary to cancel a major role debut with us for the second time'³⁴, highlighting an underlying resentment perhaps that she was making a habit of cancelling. Maestro Pappano however seemed a little more understanding of Anna's predicament stating '..we all have to accept that things sometimes change'³⁵.

Very recently in 2019 Anna cancelled her debut performance at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus. She was set to be singing the role of Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, when medically she was told she must take some time off to rest. Again from a singers perspective, it seems to me that the general public and critics assume that singers, musicians and performers are machines and can just 'keep-going'. With a reviewer calling her failed appearance at Bayreuth 'the never ending story'³⁶. There is an enormous amount of pressure placed on singers to perform, and when they stop, they are immediately accused of letting the public down. Personally, I feel this happens far more to female singers other than men, after all female operatic stars are called the 'Diva' which also carries the

²⁹ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.gramilano.com/2018/03/interview-with-anna-netrebko-on-her-son-his-autism-and-his-abandonment-by-his-father-erwin-schrott/>

³⁰ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.gramilano.com/2018/03/interview-with-anna-netrebko-on-her-son-his-autism-and-his-abandonment-by-his-father-erwin-schrott/>

³¹ Eyvazov, Yusif: <https://www.gramilano.com/2018/03/interview-with-anna-netrebko-on-her-son-his-autism-and-his-abandonment-by-his-father-erwin-schrott/>

³² Netrebko, Anna: <https://operawire.com/anna-netrebko-cancels-berlin-concerts/>

³³ Netrebko, Anna: <https://www.roh.org.uk/news/cast-change-anna-netrebko-to-withdraw-from-norma>

³⁴ Holten, Kasper: <https://www.roh.org.uk/news/cast-change-anna-netrebko-to-withdraw-from-norma>

³⁵ Pappano, Antonio: <https://www.roh.org.uk/news/cast-change-anna-netrebko-to-withdraw-from-norma>

³⁶ Time Online: <https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2019-08-06---opera-diva--netrebko-and-bayreuth-just-do-not-come-together-.SJgR0exwXr.html>

definition 'self-important person who is temperamental and difficult to please'³⁷. In Anna's case of exhaustion and in being prescribed three weeks rest, I am in very much support.

Something that Anna has been described as which is not a good title globally to hold is a 'Putinista', a name given to those who publicly support Vladimir Putin's regime. Alongside her long term friend and mentor Valery Gergiev, Netrebko is in much support of the controversial Russian president and makes no secret of it, actively supporting his public campaigns and being one of his authorised representatives. This has been met with some anger and aggression across the world where she has been performing, especially if that has been with Gergiev. On one occasion in January 2015, Mr Gergiev and Netrebko were over in the Met giving performances of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*. During a curtain call a Russian protester stormed the stage with a banner reading 'Active contributors to Putin's war against Ukraine' and Anna, Gergiev and Putin's faces. Netrebko also was pictured holding the flag of Novorossiia (a non-existent state that believes certain people in Eastern Ukraine should be separated under the title New Russia), and gave known terrorist Oleg Tsarov a large cheque for 1 million roubles, who is wanted by the Ukraine for charges of separatism. A group in the United States, named the AAA- 'Arts Against Aggression' called for any artists or performers who are supporters of Mr Putin's dictatorship agenda's and government not to be entitled to perform in the USA. An executive order also states that anyone seen to be supporting known terrorists by means of funds, goods, or services could be sanctioned. In short, Netrebko essentially could be in trouble if she is seen giving money in public to Tsarov, which is why her and Gergiev are being met currently by active protests. This may be a reason why Anna recently has made it clear on social media that she, unlike Gergiev who in the past has defended Putin's views on gay rights, does not discriminate against anyone because of their race, religion, gender, ethnic background or sexual-orientation.

Anna has performed on various occasions in Salzburg and has been a frequent visitor to the Austrian capital of Vienna. To have a global successful Opera career such as Netrebko's travel around the world to all the major Opera houses is essential. Therefore ease of travel is imperative. Since Anna was Russian she needed to complete a complex visa application for Europe, limited to only 180 days in the EU per year. In March 2006 she successfully applied for an artist fast-track to gain Austrian citizenship which she gained quite swiftly, on exception she was also allowed to retain her Russian citizenship and Passport. Her son Tiago was born in Austria in 2008 and therefore is an Austrian citizen, so for Anna Austria remains very special.

³⁷ Oxford English dictionary; OUP Press 2020

Hollie-Anne Clark – 1903493: WIAV – MA Dissertation -Topic 1.
(Approximately 8,000 words excluding titles, references and aria texts/translations)

1. Concert programme of Anna Netrebko with accompanying notes and analysis

Anna Netrebko in concert- Royal Albert Hall, London – 23rd May 2018 with Tenor Yusif Eyvazov
Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, conducted by Jader Bignamini

Programme

‘Già nella notte densa’ (Otello)

Verdi

‘Ballabili’ (Dance, Otello)

Verdi

‘Ritorna Vincitor’, (Aida)

Verdi

‘La vita è inferno all’infelice... O tu che in seno agli angeli’ (La forza del destino)

Verdi

La forza del destino (Overture)

Verdi

Cecilia Op.27

Strauss

‘No puede ser’ (La Taberna del puerto)

Sorozábal

‘La damnation de Faust’ (Part IV: Marche Hongroise)

Berlioz

‘Mario! ... Son qui!’ (Tosca)

Puccini

‘Nessun dorma’ (Turandot)

Puccini

Intermezzo (Manon Lescaut)

Puccini

‘Polonaise’ (Eugene Onegin)

Tchaikovsky

‘Marfa’s aria’ (The Tsar’s Bride)

Rimsky-Korsakov

‘Balash aria’ (Sevil)

Fikret Amirov

‘Ebben...ne andrò lontana’ (La Wally)

Catalani

‘Vicino a te’ (Andrea Chénier)

Giordano

Aria's, Translations & Programme notes (Translations sourced from <https://www.opera-arias.com>)
(Programme notes sourced from <https://www.wikipedia.org>)

'Già nella notte densa'

OTELLO

Già nella notte densa
s'estingue ogni clamor.
Già il mio cor fremebondo
s'ammansa in quest'amplesso e si rinsensa.
Tuoni la guerra e s'inabissi il mondo
se dopo l'ira immensa
vien quest'immenso amor!

DESDEMONA

Mio superbo guerrier! Quanti tormenti,
quanti mesti sospiri e quanta speme
ci condusse ai soavi abbracciamenti!
Oh! com'è dolce il mormorare insieme:
te ne rammenti!
Quando narravi l'esule tua vita
e i fieri eventi e i lunghi tuoi dolor,
ed io t'udia coll'anima rapita
in quei spaventati e coll'estasi in cor.

OTELLO

Pingea dell'armi il fremito, la pugna
e il vol gagliardo alla breccia mortal,
l'assalto, orribil edera, coll'ugna
al baluardo e il sibilante stral.

DESDEMONA

Poi mi guidavi ai fulgidi deserti,
all'arse arene, al tuo materno suol;
narravi allor gli spasimi sofferti
e le catene e dello schiavo il duol.

OTELLO

Ingentilia di lagrime la storia
il tuo bel viso e il labbro di sospir;
scendean sulle mie tenebre la gloria,
il paradiso e gli astri a benedir.

DESDEMONA

Ed io veda fra le tue tempie oscure
splender del genio l'eterea beltà.

OTELLO

E tu m'amavi per le mie sventure
ed io t'amavo per la tua pietà.

DESDEMONA

Ed io t'amavo per le tue sventure
e tu m'amavi per la mia pietà.

OTELLO

E tu m'amavi...

DESDEMONA

E tu m'amavi...

OTELLO

Ed io t'amavo...

OTELLO, DESDEMONA

... per la tua, (mia) pietà.

OTELLO

Now as the darkness deepens
all harsh sounds die away,
and now my turbulent heart
finds peace in this embrace
and calm refreshment.
Let cannons roar and all the world collapse
if after the immeasurable wrath
comes this immeasurable love!

DESDEMONA

My splendid warrior! What anguish,
what deep sighs and high hopes
have strewn the path to our glad union!
Oh, how sweet to murmur thus together!
Do you remember?
You used to tell me of your life in exile,
of violent deeds and suffering long endured,
and I would listen, transported by the tales
that terrified, but thrilled my heart as well.

OTHELLO

I would describe the clash of arms, the fight
and violent thrust toward the fatal breach,
the assault, when hands, like grisly tendrils,
clung to bastions amid the hissing darts.

DESDEMONA

Then you would lead me to the glaring desert,
to scorching sands, the country of your birth;
and then you would relate your sufferings,
tell me of chains and slavery's agony.

OTHELLO

Softened was your lovely face by tears,
your lips by sighs, when I my story told;
upon my darkness shone a radiance,
heaven and all the stars in benediction!

DESDEMONA

And I descried upon your dusky temples
genius' ethereal beauty shining there.

OTHELLO

You loved me for the dangers I had passed,
and I loved you that you did pity them.

DESDEMONA

I loved you for the dangers you had passed,
and you loved me that I did pity them.

OTHELLO

And you loved me...

DESDEMONA

And you loved me...

OTHELLO

... and I loved you...
... that you did pity them.

DESDEMONA

... that I did pity them.

‘Già notte nella densa’, from Verdi’s *Otello*

Verdi composed his Opera *Otello* in 1887 and is based on Shakespeare’s play of the same name in English – *Othello*. Set on the island of Cyprus, the new governor Otello has returned from battle. Later in Act 1, we see Desdemona (his wife) and Otello sing this aria, where they remember the reasons for their love and pray that their love will always conquer all. This aria is a duet sung by both roles and was performed by both Anna and Yusif in concert who are married in reality.

‘Ballibili’, Dances from Verdi’s *Otello*

The music for Ballibili was written in 1894 since Verdi’s opera was to be performed in France. At that time it was traditional for opera France to always include and accompanying ballet, something which Verdi was good at accommodating. These days, the ballet is not very often performed with the opera, but if it is, it appears just before the entrance of Lodovico in Act three.

‘Ritorna Vincitor’

AIDA

Ritorna vincitor!

E dal mio labbro uscì l'empia parola!

Vincitor del padre mio di lui

Che impugna l'armi per me

Per ridonarmi una patria,

Una reggia e il nome illustre

Che qui celar m'è forza!

Vincitor de' miei fratelli ond'io lo vegga,

Tinto del sangue amato,

Trionfar nel plauso dell'Egizie coorti!

E dietro il carro,

Un Re, mio padre di catene avvinto!

L'insana parola o Numi sperdete!

Al seno d'un padre la figlia rendete,

Struggete le squadre dei nostri oppressor!

Ah! sventurata! Che dissi?

E l'amor mio?

Dunque scordar poss'io questo fervido amore

Che, oppressa e schiava,

Come raggio di sol qui mi beava?

Imprecherò la morte a Radamès

a lui ch'amo pur tanto!

Ah! non fu interra mai da più crudeli

Angosce un core affranto!

I sacri nomi di padre d'amante,

Nè profferir poss'io nè ricordar

Per l'un per l'altro confusa tremante

Io piangere vorrei pregar.

Ma la mia prece in bestemmia si muta

Delitto è il pianto a me colpa il sospir

In notte cupa la mente è perduta

E nell'ansia crudel vorrei morir.

Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!

Speme non v'ha pel mio dolor

Amor fatal tremendo amore

Spezzami il cor. fammi morir!

AIDA

Return, victor!

And from my lips escapes the impious word!

Victor over my father -

over the armies

defending my country,

my palace, and the illustrious name

that is my sky, my strength!

Victor over my brothers, I will see

with whose loved blood is stained -

Triumphant in the applause of Egyptian troops.

And behind his chariot,

a king, my father, the captive of this victor!

The insane word, o gods, forget!

To the bosom of his father return his daughter

struggling against the squadrons of our
oppressor!

Ah! unhappy one! What did I say?

And my love?

Can I ever forget the fervent love

that oppresses and enslaves!

Like rays of the sun which blesses me?

I will call for death to Radames,

To him that I love forever!

never on earth, by more cruelty

was a heart torn!

In the sacred name of my father, who I love,

I cannot offer or recall

For one or the other confused, trembling,

I weep and want to pray.

But my prayer becomes blasphemy

A crime are my tears, my sighs are my sin.

In night-darkness the mind is lost.

And in cruel anguish, I want to die.

Gods, have pity on my suffering!

There is no hope in my woe

Fatal love, tremendous love,

Break my heart or let me die!

‘Ritorna Vincitor’ from Verdi’s *Aida*

Aida based on Ancient Egypt, first premiered in Cairo in 1871, as Verdi was commissioned to write the opera by a Khedive of Egypt. It remains today as one of the composers most popular opera’s and is performed regularly worldwide. Aida is an Ethiopian princess daughter of the Ethiopian king-Amonsaro. She has been captured a a slave for the King of Egypt who do not know of Aida’s true identity. Radamès who is the Captain of the Egyptian guard is secretly in love with Aida even though he remains loyal to his King. In this aria Aida appears alone on stage and sings of her mind in turmoil over her love for her homeland and father-king of Ethiopia and that of Radamès, whom she also loves in return. The singer needs to have strength in voice and character to portray such a role as Aida, something which Netrebko possesses.

La vita è inferno all'infelice

ALVARO

La vita è inferno all'infelice.
Invano morte desio!
Siviglia!
Leonora!
Oh, rimembranza! Oh, notte
Ch'ogni ben mi rapisti!
Sarò infelice eternamente, è scritto.
Della natal sua terra il padre volle
Spezzar l'estraneo giogo,
E coll'unirsi
All'ultima dell'Incas la corona
Cingere confidò.
Fu vana impresa.
In un carcere nacqui;
M'educava il deserto;
Sol vivo perch'è ignota
È mia regale stirpe!
I miei parenti
Sognaro un trono, e li destò la scure!
Oh, quando fine avran
Le mie sventure!

O tu che seno agli angeli
Eternamente pura,
Salisti bella, incolume
Dalla mortal jattura,
Non iscordar di volgere
Lo sguardo a me tapino,
Che senza nome ed esule,
In odio del destino,
Chiedo anelando,
Ahi misero,
La morte d'incontrar.
Leonora mia, soccorrimi,
Pietà del mio penar!
Pietà di me!

Tu che seno agli angeli

..tu che seno agli angeli
Eternamente pura, Salisti bella, incolume
Dalla mortal jattura,
Non iscordar di volgere
Lo sguardo a me tapino,
Che senza nome ed esule,
In odio del destino, Chiedo anelando, Ahi misero,
La morte d'incontrar. Leonora mia, soccorrimi,
Pietà del mio penar! Pietà di me!

ALVARO

Life is a hell to the unfortunate. In vain
do I long for death. Seville! Leonora!
Oh, memories! Oh, night
that robbed me of all joy!
I shall be unhappy forever - so it is written.
My father wished to shatter the foreign yoke
on his native land, and by uniting himself
with the last of the Incas, thought to assume
the crown. The attempt was in vain!
I was born in prison, educated
in the desert; I live only because my royal birth
is known to none! My parents
dreamed of a throne; the axe awakened them!
Oh, when will my misfortunes end?

Oh, you who have ascended, forever pure,
to the bosom of the angels,
lovely and untouched
by mortal sorrow,
do not forget
to look down on me, unhappy wretch,
who, nameless and exiled,
the prey of fate,
longingly seeks to encounter death,
unfortunate that I am!
Leonora, help me,
have pity on my anguish.
Help me, have pity on me!

Oh, you who have ascended, forever pure,
to the bosom of the angels,
lovely and untouched
by mortal sorrow,
do not forget
to look down on me, unhappy wretch,
who, nameless and exiled, the prey of fate,
longingly seeks to encounter death,
unfortunate that I am!
Leonora, help me, have pity on my anguish.
Help me, have pity on me!

‘La vita è inferno all’infelice... O tu che in seno agli angeli’ from Verdi’s *La forza del destino*

La forza del destino literally translated as *The strength of destiny* first premiered in Russia in 1862. The story is a classic version of ‘what goes around comes around’. Don Alvaro a nobleman from South America has relocated in Southern Spain- Seville. He falls in love with Leonora, but accidentally kills her father-the Marquis of Calatrava, who is angry at their plans to elope. Years later whilst he has been living under a secret identity as Leonora hiding her days in a monastery, he comes face to face with the Marquis’s son-Don Carlo, who uncovers Don Alvaro for who he really is and vows to avenge his father’s death. They fight and Don Carlo is mortally wounded, however as Leonora kneels over her dying brother, he stabs her and she also dies. In the traditional end, Alvaro commits suicide for causing death. It is said that this opera is cursed. A lesson of karma and fate. In these connected arias, Don Alvaro has joined the army under a new identity and sings of his anguish and love for Leonora pleading with her to help him.

Overture from *La forza del destino*

The overture of the opera introduces the audience straight into the theme -Fate. The motif representing ‘Fate’ occurs throughout the opera and uses the brass section to demonstrate this idea clearly.

Cäcilie (Cecilia)

Wenn du es wüßtest,
Was träumen heißt von brennenden Küssen,
Von wandern und ruhen mit der Geliebten,
Aug in Auge,
Und kosend und plaudernd,
Wenn du es wüßtest,
Du neigtest dein Herz!

Wenn du es wüßtest,
Was bangen heißt in einsamen Nächten,
Umschauert vom Sturm, da niemand tröstet
Milden Mundes die kampfmüde Seele,
Wenn du es wüßtest,
Du kämest[6] zu mir.

Wenn du es wüßtest,
Was leben heißt, umhaucht von der Gottheit
weltschaffendem Atem,
Zu schweben empor, lichtgetragen,
Zu seligen Höhen,[7]
Wenn du es wüßtest, wenn du es wüßtest,
Du lebstest mit mir.

If you but knew, sweet,
what ‘tis to dream of fond, burning kisses,
of wand’ring and resting with the belov’d one;
gazing fondly
caressing and chatting,
could I but tell you,
your heart would assent.

If you but knew, sweet,
the anguish of waking thro’ nights long and lonely
and rocked by the storm when no-one is near
to soothe and comfort the strife weary spirit.
Could I but tell you,
you’d come, sweet, to me.

If you but knew, sweet,
what living is, in the creative breath of
God, Lord and Maker
to hover, upborne on dove-like pinions
to regions of light,
if you but knew it, could I but tell you,
you’d dwell, sweet, with me.

‘Cecilia’ by R. Strauss

This German lied is set to text by the poet Heinrich Hart, written for his wife named Cecilia. It is part of Strauss’s Opus 27, a collection of four songs composed in 1894. The poem is simply about the poet’s love for his wife, and when Strauss composed the lied he had his bride to be on the mind- Pauline de Ahna who he married the very next day. Anna performing this song then could be a dedication to her recent husband Eyvazov, whom she only married in 2015. This piece comes under

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the banner of Art song as it was initially composed for just voice and piano, however it was orchestrated later in E flat major rather than the original key of E major.

No puede ser

¡No puede ser! Esa mujer es buena.
¡No puede ser una mujer malvada!
En su mirar, como una luz singular,
he visto que esa mujer es una desventurada.

No puede ser una vulgar sirena
que envenenó las horas de mi vida.
¡No puede ser! Porque la vi rezar,
porque la vi querer,
porque la vi llorar.

Los ojos que lloran no saben mentir;
las malas mujeres no miran así.
Temblando en sus ojos dos lágrimas vi
y a mí me ilusiona que tiemblen por mí,
que tiemblen por mí.

Viva luz de mi ilusión,
sé piadosa con mi amor,
porque no sé fingir,
porque no sé callar,
porque no sé vivir.

It cannot be so! This woman is good.
She cannot be a wicked woman!
In her look, like a strange light,
I've seen that this woman is unhappy.

She cannot be a cheap siren
who poisoned every moment of my life.
It cannot be so! Because I've seen her pray,
because I've seen her love,
because I've seen her cry!

Those eyes that cry don't know how to lie.
Bad women do not look like that.
Gleaming in her eyes I saw two tears,
and my hope is they may gleam for me,
they may gleam for me.

Vivid light of my hopes
Be merciful with my love
Because I cannot pretend,
because I cannot be silent,
because I cannot live!

‘No puede ser’ from Sorozábal’s *La Taberna del Puerto*

This aria is drawn from the Zarzuela- *La Taberna del Puerto*, which is a form of Spanish music drama, similar to a musical structure with spoken dialogue in between scenes sung through. The also sometimes incorporated operatic arias and dance it. This zarzuela first premiered in 1936 in Barcelona and is written in three acts. Leandro, falls in love with the barmaid Marola and in this aria he is singing of her and how she has been misunderstood for he has seen her beauty. This aria was made popular on the concert platform having also been performed by the likes of Plácido Domingo.

Part IV: ‘Marche Hongroise’ from Berlioz *Le damnation de Faust*

The Marche Hongroise or Hungarian March is one of three orchestral parts in the opera *The damnation of Faust*. The other two parts are the Ballet des sylphes and Menuet des follets. And again, as is tradition with French opera for ballet to be included, it is likely that dance was set to these instrumental sections. Often these three parts can be performed as a set of ‘Three orchestral pieces’ from the opera.

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<u>Mario! Son qui!</u> TOSCA (chiamando ripetutamente stizzita) Mario! CAVARADOSSI (fingendosi calmo apre a Tosca) Son qui! TOSCA (entra con una specie di violenza, allontana bruscamente Mario che vuole abbracciarla e guarda sospettosa intorno a sé) Perché chiuso? CAVARADOSSI (con simulata indifferenza) Lo vuole il Sagrestano... TOSCA A chi parlavi? CAVARADOSSI A te! TOSCA Altre parole bisbigliavi. Ov'è?...? CAVARADOSSI Chi? TOSCA Colei!... Quella donna!... Ho udito i lesti passi ed un fruscio di vesti... CAVARADOSSI Sogni! TOSCA Lo neghi? CAVARADOSSI Lo nego e t'amo! fa per baciarla	TOSCA (still from without, calling angrily) Mario! Mario! Mario! CAVARADOSSI (opening the gate) I am here ... TOSCA (bursts in with a kind of violence, thrusting Cavaradossi aside as he tries to embrace her, and looks around suspiciously) Why was it locked? CAVARADOSSI That was the Sacristan's wish. TOSCA With whom were you talking? CAVARADOSSI With you! TOSCA You were whispering with someone else. Where is she? ... CAVARADOSSI Who? TOSCA She! That woman! I heard her quick steps And her dress rustling. CAVARADOSSI You're dreaming! TOSCA Do you deny it? CAVARADOSSI (trying to kiss her) I deny it and I love you
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'Mario! Son qui!' from Puccini's *Tosca*

Tosca is one of Puccini's greatest tragedies. Based on Sardou's play and set in Rome, the opera premiered in Rome in 1900. Tosca is the tragic heroine who tries to sacrifice in return for the life of her lover and painter Mario Cavaradossi. However, due to Scarpia's lies, his freedom is not granted when he is executed at the end of the opera just after Scarpia is killed by Tosca. Discovering her lover is dead, Tosca throws herself to her death before she is captured. This aria appears at the very beginning of the opera in Act one, when Tosca can hear Mario talking and calls out for him. Angelotti a fellow revolutionary hides, but suspecting Mario was talking to another woman instead, Tosca quizzes him on what he's been up to.

<u>Nessun dorma,</u> Nessun dorma! Nessun dorma, Tu pure, o Principessa, nella tua fredda stanza, guardi le stelle che tremano d'amore e di speranza. Ma il mio mistero e chiuso in me, il nome mio nessun saprà! No, no, sulla tua bocca lo dirò quando la luce splenderà! Ed il mio bacio scioglierà il silenzio che ti fa mia! (Il nome suo nessun saprà ! e noi dovrem, ahime, morir!) Dilegua, o notte! Tramontate, stelle! All'alba vincerò!	No one sleeps! No one sleeps! You too, O Princess! in your chaste room are watching the stars which tremble with love and hope! But my secret lies hidden within me, no one shall discover my name! Oh no, I will reveal it only on your lips, when daylight shines forth and my kiss shall break the silence which makes you mine (no one shall discover my name! And we will have to die!) Depart, oh night! Fade away, you stars! At dawn I shall win!
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'Nessun dorma' from Puccini's *Turandot*

Interestingly *Turandot* was never finished by the composer before he died in 1924, so that it was finished two years later by Franco Alfaro. Originally the story of this opera is derived from the seven stories by Nizami in the twelfth century. The entire work was called the haft Peykar and this particular tale of *Turandot* is derived from Nizami's story representing Tuesday. The plot of Puccini's *Turandot* is set in China surrounding the princess *Turandot*. The 'unknown' Prince (Prince Calaf) falls in love with *Turandot* and sets himself the challenge to complete her three riddles in order for him to be allowed to be her suitor. She accepts the challenge and once all riddles are complete, *Turandot* does not want to accept the Prince, so she tries to find out his real name overnight, only then will she be allowed to do what she wants and kill him if that's her wish. At night time the Prince sings *Nessun dorma* believing that he has won and no one will reveal his true name.

'Intermezzo' from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*

The intermezzo is an orchestral section of the opera at the very end of Act two. The music plays out the sequence of *Manon* followed by *des Grieux*, making the journey to Le Havre. *Manon* has been captured by *Geronte's* soldiers for whom she was the mistress, since she was trying to leave him with her love *des Grieux*. At the start of Act three we *Manon* imprisoned in Le Havre.

'Polonaise' from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*

At the beginning of Act three in *Onegin* is where we find the 'Polonaise', and orchestral interlude for a dance, just as Act two begins with a Waltz. The words *Polonaise* is French meaning Polish and refers to a traditional type of Polish dance. It is considered one of the national dances of Poland though was used outside of the country in Europe to entertain courtiers especially in France. The time signature is 3/4 time. In the opera the *Polonaise* dance is there to reflect a St Petersburg ball that *Onegin* is attending alone evaluating his life having killed *Lensky*. The *Polonaise* uses brass fanfares at the start which is in contrast to the laboured main theme in the cello's.

'Marfa's aria' from Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's bride*

On investigation it is quite impossible to locate any lyrics or translations for the text of this aria. However many of Korsakov's operas are not regularly performed as standard repertoire in the west, even though in their native Russia they are more often produced. First composed in 1898, the opera's story centres around the price of jealousy and the central heroine Marfa. Gryazoni wants to have Marfa for himself but already has a mistress Lyubasha. The Tsar-Ivan the Terrible decides he also wishes to have Marfa as his new bride. A lot of Korsakov's opera's included elements of fairytale and this opera is no exception. Mystical love potions are used against Marfa, in a bid to win her over or change her feelings, and in the end she is poisoned. Her aria happens in the final Act of the opera, where she learns that her true love Lykov has been executed.

'Balash aria' from Amirov's *Sevil*

Again with this opera it is impossible to locate any lyrics or textural translations as it was composed between 1949-1952 by Azerbaijani composer Fikret Amirov. It is the first contemporary and psychological in style opera from Azerbaijan. The story centres around two different characters Sevil and her husband Balash and the conflicting groups surrounding them, the people represented by Sevil and her friends and then the dying world represented by her husband Balash. Balash's aria depicts his personal tragedy central to his character group.

Ebben! Ne andrò lontana

WALLY

Ebben! Ne andro lontana
Come va l'eco pia campana,
Là fra la neve bianca;
Là fra le nubi d'ôr;
Laddôve la speranza, la speranza
È rimpianto, è rimpianto, è dolor!

O della madre mia casa gioconda
La Wally ne andrà da te, da te!
Lontana assai, e forse a te,
E forse a te, non farà mai più ritorno,
Nè più la rivedrai!
Mai più, mai più!

Ne andrò sola e lontana,
Là, fra la neve bianca, n'andrò,
N'andrò sola e lontana
E fra le nubi d'ôr!

Well then! I shall go far away
As the echo of the pious church-bell goes away,
There somewhere in the white snow;
There amongst the clouds of gold,
There where hope, hope
Is regret, is regret, is sorrow!

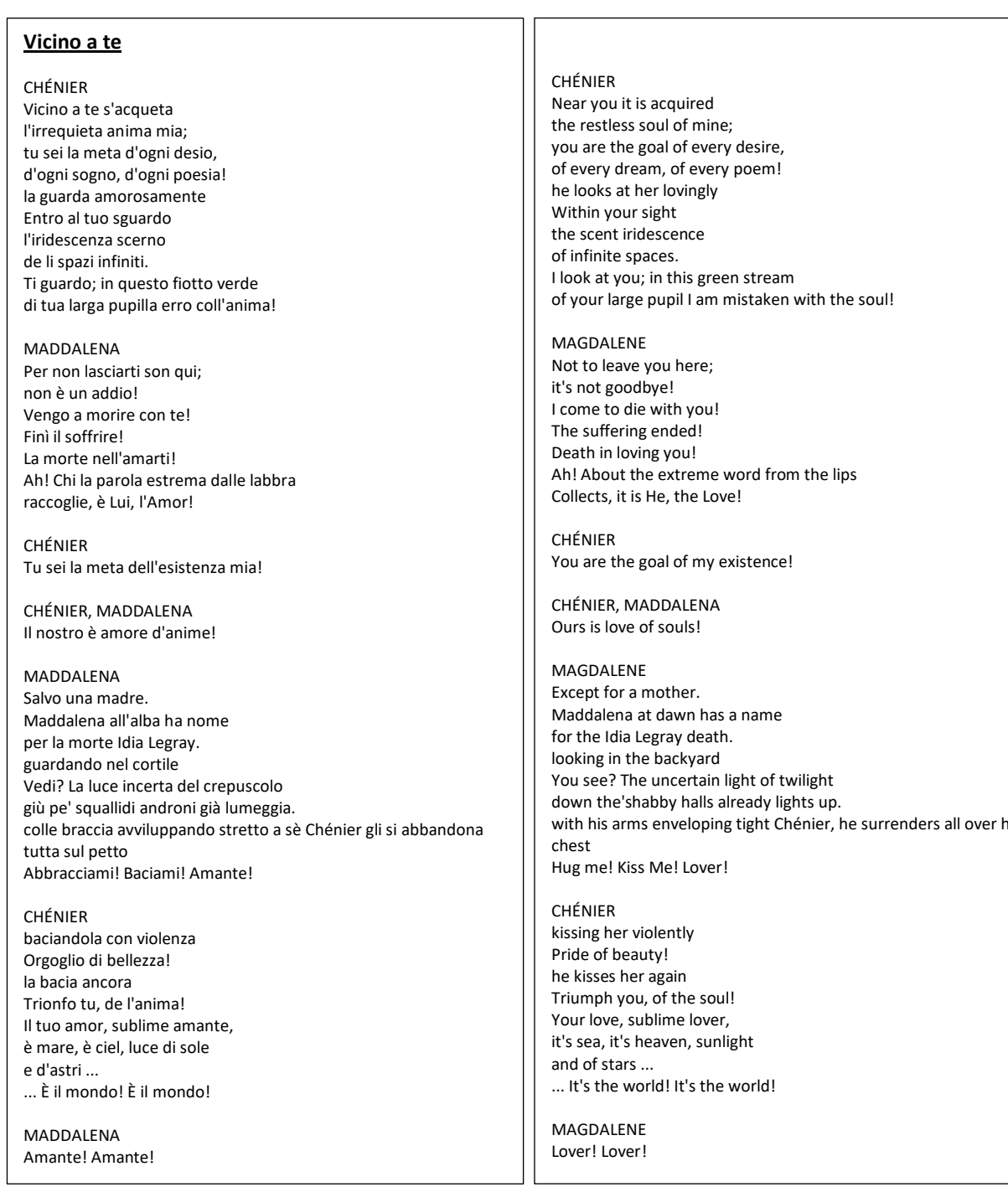
O from my mother's cheerful house
La Wally is about to go away from you, from you!
Quite far away, and perhaps to you,
And perhaps to you, will never more return,
Nor ever more see you again!
Never again, never again!

I will go away alone and far,
There, somewhere in the white snow, I shall go,
I will go away alone and far
And amongst the clouds of gold!

'Ebben ne Andro lontana' from Catalani's *La Wally*

The opera La Wally is most famous for this aria that Netrebko sings. The aria initially was composed by Catalani to be part of a set of his songs and later inserted it into this opera of four acts. The story circles a fairytale love story set in the Austrian alps but essentially ends in tragedy with both the lovers dying in an epic death from an avalanche. Wally is short for the name Walburga who is in love with Hagenbach and although he is engaged, Wally goes in search of him to try and win his love, but discovers initially she was part of a bet. In her jealous rage she wants him dead, but

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later when she finds that Hagenbach has been thrown off a ravine, she is devastated and goes in search of him high in the mountains. This is where both loves meet their untimely end. Wally sings this aria when she is deciding to leave her home- 'Well then, I'll go...'.


<u>Vicino a te</u> CHÉNIER Vicino a te s'acqueta l'irrequieta anima mia; tu sei la meta d'ogni desio, d'ogni sogno, d'ogni poesia! la guarda amorosamente Entro al tuo sguardo l'iridescenza scerno de li spazi infiniti. Ti guardo; in questo fiotto verde di tua larga pupilla erro coll'anima! MADDALENA Per non lasciarti son qui; non è un addio! Vengo a morire con te! Fini il soffrire! La morte nell'amarti! Ah! Chi la parola estrema dalle labbra raccolge, è Lui, l'Amor! CHÉNIER Tu sei la meta dell'esistenza mia! CHÉNIER, MADDALENA Il nostro è amore d'anime! MADDALENA Salvo una madre. Maddalena all'alba ha nome per la morte Idia Legray. guardando nel cortile Vedi? La luce incerta del crepuscolo giù pe' squallidi androni già lumeggia. colle braccia avvolgendo stretto a sè Chénier gli si abbandona tutta sul petto Abbracciami! Baciarmi! Amante! CHÉNIER baciandola con violenza Orgoglio di bellezza! la bacia ancora Trionfo tu, de l'anima! Il tuo amor, sublime amante, è mare, è ciel, luce di sole e d'astri È il mondo! È il mondo! MADDALENA Amante! Amante!	CHÉNIER Near you it is acquired the restless soul of mine; you are the goal of every desire, of every dream, of every poem! he looks at her lovingly Within your sight the scent iridescence of infinite spaces. I look at you; in this green stream of your large pupil I am mistaken with the soul! MAGDALENE Not to leave you here; it's not goodbye! I come to die with you! The suffering ended! Death in loving you! Ah! About the extreme word from the lips Collects, it is He, the Love! CHÉNIER You are the goal of my existence! CHÉNIER, MADDALENA Ours is love of souls! MAGDALENE Except for a mother. Maddalena at dawn has a name for the Idia Legray death. looking in the backyard You see? The uncertain light of twilight down the shabby halls already lights up. with his arms enveloping tight Chénier, he surrenders all over his chest Hug me! Kiss Me! Lover! CHÉNIER kissing her violently Pride of beauty! he kisses her again Triumph you, of the soul! Your love, sublime lover, it's sea, it's heaven, sunlight and of stars It's the world! It's the world! MAGDALENE Lover! Lover!
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'Vicino a te' from Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*

The opera *Andrea Chenier* in four acts, sets to tell its story with a greater sense of naturalism so that truth is at the heart. This style of opera was known as Verismo and the story is based upon the true life of the executed poet Andre Chenier during the French Revolution. The musical writing is very lyrical in style requiring larger vocal fachs. This last piece in Netrebko's concert programme is a duet between her and Eyvazov, singing the lead roles of Chenier and Maddalena and it literally

translates as 'Near to you'. The duet occurs at the very end of the opera where Chenier has been condemned to death and Maddalena switches places so she can die with him. They both face the guillotine after this duo, but not before they have sworn their everlasting love.

Examination of the performance style of two arias and Anna's vocal qualities & interpretation

'Marfa's aria' from *The Tsar's bride*

I wanted to examine this aria as it is something that is rarely performed and being in Anna's native language of Russian, to see how comfortable she is with it. From the outset this aria requires a lot of bravery from the soprano beginning with controlled piano dynamics and a sustained G sharp5 almost in the very first phrase of the aria. Throughout this aria the voice needs to sustain notes in the higher register on very soft dynamics and at the end a pianissimo which seems never-ending whilst the audience pause for breath. The singer must maintain a lot of control so as not to lose the placement since the notation occasionally jumps up in a slow descending motif. The middle section is more weightier than the start, but the danger here; apply too much weight and then struggle to float at the end. The character here of Marfa is one of confusion and anguish as she has been driven mad by the potions she has been poisoned with but also learned that her true love Lykov has been executed. The singer here must portray emotions of loss and emptiness, as now Marfa has nothing more to live for, she is almost accepting of her fate. Marfa has been the constant victim throughout the opera having the other other roles play games around her and she has paid the price like a martyr. But instead of anger, the character still retains her gentle qualities which is why she has appealed to the other characters throughout for their cruel intentions.

Anna certainly is at home here singing this aria in her native language with the diction of text here being much clearer than some of her singing in other languages. Having viewed a few recordings I found this one (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wm7Xybj-e0>) taken with Gergiev in 2018 to be the most useful in comparison to her earlier work viewed in the second aria below. Immediately Anna's richness of tone is there from the outset and she soars up to the top note in the first few phrases with great control. She makes this look quite easy without taking breaths, the difficulty here being ensuring she is supporting the voice whilst maintaining the high placement. Throughout the aria she keeps a delicate high placement in the voice, which allows her to sing through the weightier middle section with strength and of course she is using a lot of space at the back of the pharynx enabling her top notes to ring. Her voice seems to have more weight than her earlier career, though at times it felt like she may be over-weighting and driving the sound. Although, her voice still maintained the high sparkle that she has always had. Her diminuendo - pianissimo at the end of the aria on the Gsharp5 is utterly sublime which she continues to float and hold for almost as long as Gergiev holds the orchestra. This is the most exposing and difficult part of the aria for any singer, but to overcome, the voice must have space and there must be a good breath to get through. Anna does breathe right before the last note, I'm not sure if that is decisive, or grammatically works with the text, though this is the 'safest' thing to do as a singer.

From the beginning of this aria, Anna wonderfully captures the innocent, helpless character Marfa at the end of everything for her. Even in her weakest hour she is still pure and elegant and Anna allows the beauty of the music to convey this without over-singing anything. Anna uses her physicality a lot in performances, and is one of the only performers I find that every gesture follows an emotion and isn't just presented. Though perhaps, some might say a little over-done at times, her arms are very fluid in movement throughout this aria as if she is pleading with the gods to give her final strength. Again Anna's eyes are connected to the thought process and she reacts to the

music as if it calls and answers to her emotions. Her feet remain grounded and her face poised at the end which draws you in as an audience member. Something, I think that she does incredibly well at the very end is maintain her gaze, so that the audience are completely focused on her until the conductor puts down his baton.

'Ebben ne Andro lontana' from *La Wally*

On first glance this aria is a true epic legato sing for any soprano and the noted difficulties would surely be by the sustain and breath control required for the long phrases whilst keeping the voice spinning. The trick would be to ensure that there is no weight in the voice, so that it glides through the phrases with the string section of the orchestra. There is a lot of power needed in the voice too however, and the weight must carry over the orchestration when the aria reaches its climax at the end. In terms of character, the heroine of Wally here must remain stoic and strong natured as she has made her decision to leave and she will not be changing her mind. There is an element of defiance and female empowerment too.

Having viewed a recording from 2007 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrFx3Bie7Dk>) and also watched Anna perform this at the concert on the 23.05.18, to which I was in attendance, I believe she suits the aria vocally well. The length of the aria is short enough not to be too heavy for a lighter vocal fach to manage, and as this was included in Anna's earlier repertoire when her voice was certainly smaller she sings her way elegantly through the legato lines allowing enough breath to keep the sound spinning and not interrupt the phrasing. However, she still has that sparkling top that is always so eagerly described by her critics and reviewers, which this aria really does need to allow it to shine at the end. I think she manages to take out the weight of her voice well, and floats so as not to tire herself through the slow and sustained passages at the beginning. When she hits the top note at the end of the aria, you can hear the power of her sound connecting to her body and carrying over the orchestration, but the roundness of vowels give this aria a lovely warmth that a thinner voice just could not achieve. I believe her round vowels are possibly due to her Russian mother-tongue.

Her character as she performs this aria has composure throughout, in fact she barely moves, staying grounded to the spot, which really does achieve the stoic nature already mentioned. However, Anna's face is where she really connects and her acting skills come alive. For her the thought happens in the gaps she is constantly engaged to the thought process as if what she is singing she sings for the very first time. Her eyes tell us the story of a very confident woman who knows her own mind and has made her decision.

Conclusion:

What can I learn from Anna as an aspiring singer

From writing this paper I feel as though I have assured myself on what I already knew about Anna Netrebko. For whatever people think of her or write, she has withstood a barrage and always manages to produce the result of a Diva in everything she performs. What I can take from this and something that she says herself, is to not get caught up in the psychology of things and remain focused. The key things: Bravery, Passion and Determination. And in Anna's case a connection always to the text. We are so busy as opera singers trying to create the 'best' sound and master the voice that often the story is forgotten about and instead the virtuosic sounds that we live in become un-feeling and are a boastful display. Of course the voice is integral to being an 'Operatic diva', but something else more intrinsic, more congruent with human nature, is necessary, I believe, to really grip an audience: and that is to be a true storyteller. Which is something that Anna has always been and will always be, and one of the reasons she appeals to and connects to such a wide audience.

Hollie-Anne Clark – 1903493: WIAV – MA Dissertation -Topic 1.
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Since there was very limited written/published reference material on this singer as she is still very current (with only a few publications and something in German that I could find online), my sources were all obtained from the internet, using reviews, interviews and videos as well as online bibliographies. All sources are referenced below.

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