

Mikhail Glinka – Ivan Susanin (1957)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Overture*
2. *Act I. V Sele Domnino*
3. *Act II. Bal U Korolia Sigizmunda*
4. *Act III. V Izbe U Susanina*
5. *Act IV. U Posada - V Lesu*
6. *Epilogue. Na Krasnoy Ploschadi V Moskve*

Ivan Susanin - Ivan Petrov
Antonida - Vera Firsova
Bogdan Sobinin - N Gries
Vanya - Valentina Klepatskaya
Russian soldier - M Mishutin
Polish messenger - Vlasimir Valaitis

Chorus and Orchestra of The Bolshoi Theater
Boris Khaikin – conductor

Mikhail Glinka, the founder of the Russian nationalist school of opera, was the first Russian composer to have his works accepted outside Russia itself. Berlioz admired his compositions and Liszt used them as the basis for several of his piano transcriptions. The son of a wealthy landowner, he was educated in St Petersburg, where he took piano lessons from John Field, and also studied the violin and music theory. In addition his uncle ran an orchestra manned by serfs and this made a great impression upon him. To satisfy his father he worked within the Ministry of Communications from 1824 to 1828, but not having to earn a living, and keen to devote himself to music, he gave up this employment. During this period he also served an apprenticeship with an opera company and as a result came into contact with the operas of Rossini. He travelled within Western Europe between 1830 and 1833, and continued to study

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music, receiving tuition in Milan, where he met both Bellini and Donizetti, and Berlin. Following the death of his father he returned to Russia, settled in St Petersburg, and married in 1835. By now he was a professional and cosmopolitan musician, familiar with the music of contemporaries such as Grétry, Méhul, and Cherubini as well as Beethoven. Ivan Susanin or A Life for the Tsar, a landmark in the history of Russian opera, was produced in 1836 and was an immediate success with its winning combination of a patriotic plot and nationalist music. Domestic problems, leading eventually to his separation from his wife in 1841, delayed the production of his second opera, Ruslan and Ludmilla, which finally appeared in 1842. Glinka then returned to travelling: he visited France and Spain in 1844, Poland in 1848, and France once more between 1852 and 1854. He died while on a visit to Berlin.

The title of Ivan Susanin was changed to A Life for the Tsar before the opera's first performance, with the Tsar himself accepting Glinka's dedication in return for this adjustment. The original title was restored when the work was revived at Moscow's Bolshoy Theatre in 1939, in a version which eliminated all mention of the Romanov dynasty. Following the collapse of the Communist government in 1989 the original libretto has been restored to general circulation. By effectively laying the foundations of the Russian nationalist school of opera, this magnificent work has great historical significance, in addition to being a fine composition in its own right. The setting is Russia in 1613. Following the death of Boris Godunov, Russia is subject to attacks from marauding Poles. The daughter of the peasant Ivan Susanin, Antonida, is in love with Sobinin, but her father will not allow them to marry until a new Tsar is safely on the throne, despite reassurances from Sobinin that the young Tsar, Mikhail Romanov, has already been popularly elected. Ivan Susanin's adopted orphan, Vanya, fears that the invading Poles will soon arrive in their search for the new Tsar, who is studying in a monastery, but Susanin assures him that none will betray the young Romanov. Following the arrival of the Poles, Ivan Susanin is forced to take them to their prey, but instead he leads them into the forest, while Sobinin leads a group of men to warn the Tsar of the dangers awaiting him, thus enabling him to escape capture. When the Poles learn what Ivan has done they kill him, but the Tsar, and so Russia, is safe. An epilogue celebrates the coronation of the Tsar as well as the sacrifice of Ivan Susanin. ---David Patmore, naxos.com

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