

# “Le Gars” / “Молодец”

*A modern ballet in two acts*

*with orchestra and solo coloratura soprano*

Based on French and Russian texts by Marina Tsvetaeva

Music by Eskander Bektambetov

Choreography by Alla Sigalova (the choice of choreographer is optional)

Costume design by Youri Kot

Original concept and libretto by Julia Kogan

Technical requirements: minimum of 11 dancers, an orchestra of strings, piano, bass and B flat clarinets, percussion, flute, and oboe

## Act I “The Dancer” (40 min)

Overture

Scene I “The Proposal”

Scene II “The Ladder”

Scene III “Brother and Sister”

Scene IV “Mother and Daughter”

Scene V “Underground”

## Act II “The Sleeper” (40 min)

Scene I “The Count”

Scene II “The Marble Palace”

Scene III “The Wedding”

Scene IV “The Masters of Ceremony”

Scene V “The Song of the Angels”

# Synopsis

(Translation of Introduction by M. Tsvetaeva)

*This is the story of a young being who preferred losing her family, herself and her soul to losing her love.*

*This is the story of a damned soul who did all to save her whom he had to lose from himself.*

*Of a being who became inhuman.*

*Of a damned soul who became human.*

*And, finally, of two who became one.*

*Of one who beyond death, forgetfulness, motherhood—loved.*

*Of one who beyond death, forgetfulness, motherhood of the loved one—loved.*

*And this is also the story of an old mother who knew too much about what was to come.*

*And the very short one of a little brother who had to pay his sister's obsession with his own self.*

*And here are the false friends of all time, born laughing accomplices of evil.*

*And here are friends more false than their false beards, demons of the lower court, infernal and eternal enemies of the isolated.*

*And here is the big fool, the jolly and credulous count, the fatal braggard, the proud noble.*

*And his old valet, who knew too much of things past. And here also is the little child, adored and abandoned—since one doesn't bring one's son along to hell.*

*And here, at last, is Russia, red with another red than that of today's flags.*

## Act I

### *Scene I*

There once lived a young girl, who, like all young girls from our land, went by the name of Maroussia, and was the most beautiful girl in the whole village. At an evening gathering where she lined up with the girls and jumped with the boys she met a young lad in a red shirt who was new and never before seen in the village. He danced with her alone and after the dance, asked for her hand in marriage.

### *Scene II*

Not knowing anything about him, other than that his shirt was red and that she loved him, she attached a string to his belt on the advice of her mother, and followed him until the string stopped. The string stopped in front of a church. Perched at the top of a ladder leaning against a wall, she saw such horror that she fell all the way down and ran as fast as her legs could carry her. When questioned by her mother, who seemed to know much, she said nothing.

### *Scene III*

The following evening, after the dance, just at the stroke of midnight, the lad asked her if she had followed him and *seen*. Maroussia denied all. The lad promised her the death of her little brother for that very night. Questioned by her mother, who seemed to know yet more, she said nothing and that same night, the little brother died, strangled.

### *Scene IV*

The following evening at the same place at the same hour, the same question and the same denial. The lad promised her the death of her mother that very night. Interrogated by her, who seemed to know too much, Maroussia said nothing, and that same night the old woman died, strangled.

### ***Scene V***

The following evening, just before the stroke of midnight, there is pleading from the lad to no longer deny, to tell all, to tell him his actions fully, to name him by his name to liberate herself from him forever... That otherwise, it will be too late, that today, it was her turn. But it is already too late, and Maroussia, at the stroke of midnight, denies all. The lad promises her, for that same night...

Back home, she sits on the bench and awaits death. But instead of feeling herself die she feels herself flower—a flower on the lawn. And in the humming of a wasp she hears the voice of her lad who dictates their last three wishes, his and hers: to not allow the closing of her casket with nails, to let herself be carried out not above the threshold, but below, to allow herself to be buried not in a cemetery, but at a crossroads. And – for a life to come – never to have anything red in the house, never to invite friends, not to go to mass for five years – as per their five meetings.

## **Act II**

### ***Scene I***

And so it was that a young count, as young as his valet was wise, arrived at the crossroads where Maroussia was buried. There he saw, surrounded by snow, a red flower, and, having become enamored with it, took it away with its roots, along with and despite the advice of the elder.

### ***Scene II***

Once he arrived at home he only had eyes for the flower. But his wise valet warned him that strange things were happening in the palace late at night and convinced him to keep vigil that same night. The young man sees the flower, fallen from its stalk, reveal itself to be a woman at the stroke of midnight, and follows the woman-flower in her sleeping and dancing footsteps. Once she arrived in the grand hall, she relived her whole past life, unknown to the count, in front of his confident eyes: the Ladder, the Dance, the Death, the Burial. Then, still asleep, she retraced her steps and, at the stroke of one, rejoined the native stalk to once again become a flower. But the young man no longer wanted her to remain a flower. A struggle. The plant, which had become a tree, gets involved and the woman would have returned to her flower form for good if the old valet hadn't appeared suddenly with a cross. The charm broke, the woman remained a woman. When questioned about everything, she knew nothing. Naïve by birth and madly in love, the count begged her to become his wife all the same, to which, being indifferent, she acquiesced, asking him only for these three things: nothing red, no friends, no mass for her for the next five years. To this, all fire and flame, he agreed.

### ***Scene III***

Four years of happiness as perfect as can be between a young man who no longer drinks – and a woman who sleeps. And at the end of the fifth year a son arrived. The count, mad with joy, shouted the news from the rooftops to the wind, to all the passers by.

### ***Scene IV***

The friends, thus summoned, arrived, all in red, hailing, demanding his wife and «their offspring» with shouting and screaming, declaring his wife ugly when she doesn't appear, then – monstrous, the count, vexed, sent the valet to get her, the wife refused, the count sent for her again, the wife refused again, and it wasn't until the count led her by the hand that she appeared at last, the child in her arms. The gathered people, who had nothing to say about her beauty, called her a peasant and went on so effectively that the count, drunk with wine and mad with rage, swore, his right hand raised, despite the raised hands of his pleading wife, to bring her to church. The crowd, their goal reached, disappeared.

### *Scene V*

Dawn. A voice warned the sleeper not to go to church, but so it is that things must reach their end and there she was in the carriage, next to he count, the child in her arms. A vision – in a snow storm – of her whole past life: here was her little brother begging for a coin, here was her old mother, clinging to the carriage, here were her wicked friends in a mad circle, but the naive count saw naught but a little bird, but some dead wood, but «fie! Tricks of the wind!» It is not until he saw her himself, a flower at the crossroads, that he shivered, took the reins (the valet had disappeared), and in a hail of snow and ice, arrived before the door of the church.

A living wall of beggars. Grimaces and threats. The count, seeing nothing but human insolence, knocked them out of the way with his fists, and entered the sacred lieu with his wife. Through the priest's voice, another voice: the voice of the *other* responded to the voice of the priest, opposing each sacred word with words of his damned love. Trio of voices: the priest, the other worshippers (who are only the beggars, only the accomplices, only the...). The more the mass advanced, the more the other spoke as master. But as much as he beckoned, he repelled, as much as he commanded, he defended – the beloved from eternal damnation. As time pressed, the words were redoubled: a follow-up of counter orders, barely separated by the sacred words. And here the sleeper, without lifting her lashes over her tears, kissed the child and gave him to her husband. Solemn moment in the orthodox mass: prayer of the Cherubs. Rolls of thunder, shattered windows, thick clouds, whirlwind, priest and worshippers on the ground... Called by her name, the sleeper awakened, the lost one found, raised her eyes at last and stretched out her hand. Then, the happy flight, hand in hand, to eternal damnation.

### **Biographies:**

#### **Composer**

**Eskender Bektambetov** was born in Uzbekistan, where he began his musical education. He completed his studies in Moscow. Mr. Bektambetov works as a violinist, both as soloist and as ensemble member. In parallel, he is a successful and increasingly acclaimed composer. His works have been performed in the United States, Russia, Europe, and South America. Mr. Bektambetov's *a la pointe* won the audience prize of the 2006 International Homage to Mozart competition, while John Corigliano has described Eskender Bektambetov as a "very gifted" and "fascinating" composer whose works "speak very directly to their audience". His first collaboration with Julia Kogan produced a bi-lingual Russian and English orchestral song cycle based on the poetry of Joseph Brodsky. It was broadly praised by The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Mikhail Baryshnikov, and was performed in Moscow's Slobodkin Hall, Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall, the Baryshnikov Arts Center, and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.



### **Choreographer**

**Alla Sigalova** is an Honoured Artist of Russia.

She graduated from the Leningrad Vaganova Choreography School and subsequently from the directing faculty of the Russian Academy of Theatre Art (GITIS), where she also completed an assistantship as a choreography teacher.

Alla Sigalova works in many different genres, and her works include ballets, dance scenes in operas, musicals and variety shows. Alla Sigalova has worked with such theatres as the Mayakovsky Theatre, the Satirikon Theatre directed by Oleg Tabakov, the Mossoviet Theatre (Moscow), the Latvian National Opera (Riga) and the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet Theatre (Vilnius). In 1989 she established and became director of the Independent Company theatre, where she staged *Hide and Seek*, *Otello*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Salome*, *The Mask Sculptor* and *La divina* (in memory of Maria Callas).

She has also worked in theatres in Germany and Belgium. Since 2004 she has been a professor and head of the faculty of eurhythmics at the Studio School of the MKhAT. Her 2008 production based on the music of Stravinsky won the coveted "Golden Mask" award.



### **Librettist and concept creator, soprano soloist**

**Julia Kogan** is an American-raised Ukrainian-born coloratura soprano living in France. Her international career encompasses opera, art song and oratorio repertoire in styles ranging from Baroque to contemporary. Highlights from her opera career include Queen of the Night in "Die Zauberflöte", Blonde in "Die Entführung aus dem Serail", and Zerbinetta in "Ariadne auf Naxos" at Austrian, French, and American theaters and festivals. Julia has concertized in Austria, France, Russia, Spain, the UK, and the US, including in such venues as the Kremlin, the Alcazar Palace, the Library of Congress, and Carnegie Hall. Her work has been praised in numerous publications, among them the Kronen Zeitung, Opera News, The Washington Post, and The New York Times. Her interest in new projects fusing literature, music, theater, and language has led to the creation of several innovative works in collaboration with over half a dozen renowned composers.



### **Costume Designer**

**Youri Kot** was originally from Minsk in Bielorrussia, where he joined the fashion industry early in his career before moving to Moscow. There, he designed costumes for modern and classical dancers, among them soloists of the Bolshoi Ballet.

He moved to Toulouse, France in 1988, and started his own designer label, working with fashion shows, Joseph Rusillo's contemporary ballet company, and dressing celebrities from all over Europe. Youri Kot has created collections ranging from wedding gowns to sportswear and is now renowned for his creativity and elegance. He diverse client list includes the official stylist for the L'Oréal Professionnel collections, where he is the official stylist, and the Toulouse Chamber Orchestra.

