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New Year Music and Opera Highlights

Festivals, star tours, and premieres will shine in the two Russian capitals.

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Bolshoi Theater. **Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency**

With less fear of lockdowns and disruptions due to covid, the main concert halls in Moscow and St. Petersburg have already set their schedules for the coming year. Here are a few highlights for lovers of opera and classical music.

Moscow Philharmonic celebrates its 100th anniversary

The famous Moscow Philharmonic, which puts on concerts at several venues in the city including Tchaikovsky Hall, Philharmonia-2 and the Moscow Conservatory, is celebrating its 100th anniversary in the beginning of 2022. On Jan. 22-23, don't miss the Stars XXI Marathon, which runs both days from 1 to 10 p.m. featuring Russian pianists Alexander Malofeev, Dmitry Masleev, and Andrei Gugnin; cellist Alexander Ramm; violionists Nikita Borisoglebsky and

Pavel Milyukov. They will be conducted by Mikhail Tatarnikov, Valentin Uryupin and Dimitris Botinis.

Then on Jan. 29, the Philharmonic's anniversary, the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory will host the program that was played on the day when Moscow Philharmonic first opened its doors to audiences on Jan. 29, 1922. In a program led by the conductors Yuri Simonov and Gennady Dmitryak, the symphonic works of Scriabin, Taneyev, Beethoven and Ippolitov-Ivanov, as well as Rachmaninov's "Second Piano Concerto" will be performed by Denis Matsuev, Hibla Gerzmava and Sergey Romanovsky among many others.

Book your tickets for this anniversary here.

Kaija Saariaho's oratorio "La Passion de Simone" at Novaya Opera

This year an oratorio by Kaija Saariaho will be performed during the annual Epiphany Festival at Novaya Opera in Moscow. This Finnish-French composer has been called the best composer alive by The New York Times, with the opera "Innocence" premiering in Aix-en-Provence in summer 2021 and her symphonic work "Vista" premiering a few months later. While alluding to the tradition of Passions in Western music, the oratorio relates the tragic life of French religious thinker and philosopher Simone Weil. It will be conducted by Valentin Uryupin, Novaya Opera's artistic director. Tickets can be purchased here.

Opera premieres

In February 2022 Richard Wagner's "Lohengrin" will premiere as part of the Bolshoi Theater's collaboration with the Metropolitan Opera. It will be conducted by Evan Rogister and directed by François Girard, with the creative team of David Finn (lighting designer), Tim Yip (set and costume designer) and Peter Flaherty (video projection) involved in the process.

In 2022 the Bolshoi will also collaborate with the famous British theater director Simon McBurney, who will stage Mussorgsky's "Khovanshchina" in June, conducted by Bolshoi's music director Tugan Sokhiev. The creative team includes Rebecca Ringst as set and costume designer and Will Duke as video designer. Bolshoi tickets can be purchased here.

While Bolshoi concentrates on the classics, other opera houses are giving very exciting premieres of 20th and 21st century composers. In April Novaya Opera will premiere Erich Wolfgang Korngold's expressionistic opera "Die Tote Stadt" (Dead City) in Vassily Barkhatov's staging and with Valentin Uryupin conducting. Although a production of this work rich in symbolism (written in 1920) could be seen at Finnish National Opera in 2019, this will be its first performance in Russia.

Last but not least, the Moscow Academic Music Theater will present the work of the recently deceased Dutch composer Louis Andriessen. And don't miss the production of Andriessen's opera "Writing to Vermeer" conducted by Timur Zangiev and directed by Alexey Smirnov on the theater's chamber stage.

International stars on tour

Although everything might change as the covid pandemic rolls on, hopefully the visits of

international stars to Russia will take place as planned. Here are some of the most long-awaited tours.

Zaryadye Hall has a very exciting mix of star evenings in 2022. In February don't miss the performance of Olivier Latry, a Paris Conservatory professor and the main organist of Notre Dame de Paris for more than 35 years. On March 10 don't miss the famous British *a cappella* ensemble "The King's Singers" founded in 1968 by alumni of King's College, Cambridge and celebrated with many honors, including Grammy and Emmy awards. On March 25 the American superstar soprano Joyce DiDonato presents her new project EDEN accompanied by the chamber orchestra Il Pomo d'Oro (Italy). And in May Sir John Eliot Gardiner comes to Moscow to perform a program of baroque music with Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists ensemble.

Meanwhile, the Moscow Philharmonic will host in April the famous composer and conductor Thomas Adès, who will premiere the first part of a two-hour ballet "The Dante Project" (2019-2020) conceived in collaboration with Wayne McGregor. In May 2022 the renowned Polish tenor Pyotr Bechala will give a solo concert.

Also don't miss a series of concerts in July 2022 at the Mariinsky Theater: Austrian pianist Rudolph Buchbinder will perform all Beethoven's sonatas over eight summer evenings.

Miscellaneous must-hear music festivals

Among the many music festivals coming up this year, we recommend the very interesting Festival of the World, organized by Russian National Orchestra and held at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in June 2022. It will consist of four concerts dedicated to the musical heritage of Italy, Great Britain, Finland and Russia. And each concert will introduce works by modern composers, including "Stonework" by Sebastian Fagerlund, "Piano Concerto №3" by James McMillan, and the world premiere of "Violin Concerto" by Nicola Campogrande. The concerts will be conducted by Finnish conductor Hannu Lintu, British composer and conductor James McMillan, and Russian conductors Sergey Krylov and Kirill Karabits. The composers will be on hand to speak about their work.

James McMillan has also been named the composer-in-residence for the season 2021/2022 at St. Petersburg Philharmonic and will conduct his own works there in February 2022: "The Confession of Isobel Gowdie" and the Russian premiere of his "Saxophone Concerto."

Another important festival that brings together the world's best performers of baroque music is the Georg Friedrich Handel: Heroes and Antiheroes Festival organized by Moscow Philharmonic in September 2022. Countertenors Tim Mead, Hugh Cutting, Nussbaum Cohen, Iestyn Davies and Owen Willetts; sopranos Lucy Crowe and Amanda Forsythe; baritone Christopher Purves and many others will perform Handel's operas "Xerxes," "Parthenope," "Agrippina" and oratorios "Athalia" and "Saul."

The Mariinsky Theater is also preparing International Flute Festival in March 2022, International Harp Festival in April 2022, and its usual annual Stars of White Nights Festival (program still unknown but includes many guest performances in opera and music) in May-July 2022.

Book your tickets here for most of the Moscow concerts, here for the Handel Festival, and here for concerts at the Mariinsky.

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