

# THE LAST

(le Gars - Molodets)

Lyric ballet in two acts

with soprano and orchestra

Based on French and Russian text by Marina Tsvetaeva

Music by Eskender Bektambetov

Libretto and original concept by Julia Kogan

## Marina Tsvetaeva (1892 - 1941)



Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva (also Marina Cvetaeva and Marina Tsvetayeva) was born in Moscow. Her father was a professor and founder of the Museum of Fine Arts, and her mother, who died of tuberculosis when Marina was 14, was a concert pianist. At the age of 18 Tsvetaeva published her first collection of

poems, *Evening Album*. During her lifetime she wrote poems, verse plays, and prose pieces; she is considered one of the most renowned poets of 20th-century Russia.

Tsvetaeva's life coincided with turbulent years in Russian history. She married Sergei Efron in 1912; they had two daughters and later one son. Efron joined the White Army, and Tsvetaeva was separated from him during the Civil War. She had a brief love affair with Osip Mandelstam, and a longer relationship with Sofia Parnok. During the Moscow famine, Tsvetaeva was forced to place her daughters in a state orphanage, where the younger, Irina, died of hunger in 1919. In 1922 she emigrated with her family to Berlin, then to Prague, settling in Paris in 1925. In Paris, the family lived in poverty. Sergei Efron worked for the Soviet secret police, and Tsvetaeva was shunned by the Russian expatriate community of Paris. Through the years of privation and exile, poetry and contact with poets sustained Tsvetaeva. She corresponded with Rainer Maria Rilke and Boris Pasternak, and she dedicated work to Anna Akhmatova.

In 1939 Tsvetaeva returned to the Soviet Union. Efron was executed, and her surviving daughter was sent to a labor camp. When the German army invaded the USSR, Tsvetaeva was evacuated to Yelabuga with her son. She hanged herself on August 31, 1941.

## "The Lad" - Molodets/Le Gars - (1922/1929)

Act I "The Dancer" (50 min)

Ouverture

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" (50 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.*





**Julia Kogan** - Librettist, soprano soloist

Julia Kogan is a London-based award-winning Russian-American-French soprano. She is also the creator of contemporary musical projects fusing music, literature, dance, theater and film. Her concert and operatic appearances span repertoire from Baroque to contemporary and have taken her to venues around the world, including multiple appearance at Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, The Library of Congress in Washington D.C., as well as the operas of Aix-en-Provence, Toulouse, Toulon, Avignon and many others across North and South America, Europe and Africa. Her work has been featured in numerous broadcasts on television and radio (including BBC Radio 4), as well as in the press (The New York Times, The Washington Post, Opera News, etc.) Her solo recordings, “Vivaldi Fioritura” with Chamber Orchestra Kremlin and “Troika: Russia’s westerly poetry in three orchestral song cycles” with the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, are distributed by Harmonia Mundi. [www.JuliaKogan.com](http://www.JuliaKogan.com)



**Eskender Bekmambetov** - Composer

Canadian composer Eskender Bekmambetov was born in Uzbekistan, where he began his musical education. He completed his studies in Moscow at the Gnessin Institute. After graduation, Mr. Bekmambetov worked as a violinist, both as soloist and in some of Moscow’s top orchestras. In parallel, he became an increasingly acclaimed composer. His works have been performed in the United States, Russia, Europe, and South America. Mr. Bekmambetov’s a la pointe won the audience prize of the 2006 International Homage to Mozart competition, while John Corigliano has described Eskender Bekmambetov 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. The ethnic mixture surrounding Eskender in Uzbekistan has played a crucial role in the development of his compositional style, which incorporates the fundamentals of the Russian school along with rhythmic and melodic elements of his native Crimean Tatar music, as well as German, Greek, Jewish, Gypsy and Uzbek musical traditions, among others.



**Wayne Eagling** - Choreographer

Wayne Eagling is a former principal dancer with The Royal Ballet in London, and now an international choreographer and director. Born in Montreal, Canada in 1950, Eagling spent much of his early life in California, where he attended the Patricia Ramsey School of Dance Arts. After deciding to pursue a career as a professional dancer, Eagling was invited to take a place at the Royal Ballet School in London. Eagling joined the Royal Ballet company in 1969, he was promoted Soloist in 1972 and Principal in 1975. During his time with the company he partnered a number of notable dancers, including Dame Margot Fonteyn, and also worked with the renowned British choreographer Sir Kenneth Macmillan. After retiring from the Royal Ballet in 1991, he decided to continue his career in dance as a choreographer and director, becoming Artistic Director of the Dutch National Ballet from 1991-2003. He has choreographed numerous dance works for the Royal Ballet and Royal Ballet School, La Scala, Dutch National Ballet, Hong Kong Ballet, Rome Opera and Kremlin Ballet Theatre. In 2005, Eagling served as the Artistic Director of English National Ballet in London from 2005-2012. His choreography will be featured in coming seasons in Japan, Russia, Holland and the UK.

## THE EXTREMISM OF MARINA TSVETAEVA

After having read a story called “The Vampire” published by A.N. Afanassiev in his infamous collection of popular tales, Marina Tsvetaeva wrote a Russian poem based on the same theme in 1922, translating, as it were, from prose to rhyme. Seven years later, she undertook the translation of her Russian poem into French, and accomplished this task, which seemed unreal: this became “Le Gars”. With this new poem, she created a tale similar to, but also profoundly different, than that of Afanassiev. Finally, with a view to publish the poem in France, she wrote an introduction to the tale summarizing the content of Afanassiev’s “The Vampire”, and of her own poem (both the Russian and French versions) in a few aphoristic phrases.

The translation of the Russian (Molodets) into French was long and difficult; it lasted eight months. Three years later, Marina Tsvetaeva wrote in a letter that the Russian poem took her three months of work. The fact that the translation took almost three times longer than the original is not negligible; what is even more significant is that Marina Tsvetaeva sacrificed more than a year of her life to the project. Certainly, she had hoped to earn some money, which she desperately needed: “Money means my ability to continue writing. Money turns into my verses of the future ....” It was to remain unpublished.

The fairy tale-poem “Le Gars” is a parable about the “non freedom between human beings”. Tsvetaeva had chosen a popular tale as a point of departure. The author remained true to herself: she had chosen the most difficult path, an almost unbreachable road. Can one transform “The Vampire”, one of the most terrifying tales in all of Russian folklore, into a love poem?

The folk tale is a linear narrative; the author follows it faithfully. But all that is simple in the folk tale becomes an explosion of colours, sounds and emotions in hers. Never before in the history of European literature has any poet allowed himself such liberty vis a vis a foreign language. The author’s linguistic extremism, that is to say with regard to form, is the direct product of the extremism of the content. As a poet, she liked to define herself as “a being of the essential”.

“LE GARS” is a poem glorifying love. Real passion knows no limit, no moral scruple: “The Lad” is a damned soul, a man-monster, the incarnation of a demon.

Initially, “Le Gars” was dedicated to Boris Pasternak, whom Marina Tsvetaeva did not know personally, but who was the great love of her life. “Now, you have entered into my existence,” she wrote him on the 14th of February 1923, “after a veritable internal devastation: I have just finished a long poem, since one must call it something! No, not a poem, an obsession, and it isn’t I who have finished it, but rather it has finished me. We parted as if we were torn asunder!”

Efim ETKIND

Score

## Molodets

### Introduction

E. Bekmambetov

$\text{♩} = 80$

Flute

Bass Clarinet

Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

Julia Kogan

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