

Society Culture

### **David Gvinianidze: Melody Of The Heart**

**"If the heart sings, there is no need for words"- David Gvinianidze finishes every concert of his "Three Baritones" world tour with these words from "Smile", by Muslim Magomaev. In principle, we could end this article with this phrase too. Because during Gvinianidze's performances the hearts of the audience sing -it is just impossible to describe the atmosphere in the hall any differently!**

#### **Timeless masterpiece**

David Gvinianidze has dedicated performances in the USA, the UK, Italy, Germany, the Baltic States, Israel, Cyprus, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine to the memory of outstanding artiste Muslim Magomaev. Even name of the tour was taken from the singer`s autobiography "My Love is Melody". You can find fans of Magomaev in every corner of the world, so it is small wonder that there are no empty seats at Gvinianidze's concerts.

"But there is always one very interesting detail about the performances in honour of Muslim," says Anna Panisheva, a cultural observer and journalist. "At the beginning the public is skeptical and wary, because performing Magomaev songs is a hard task, as people will compare what they hear with the original.

"But for David Gvinianidze and his colleagues Sergey Plyusnin and Yuri Zaltsman this tour is a tribute to the memory of great singer. Therefore, each of them performs the repertoire of Magomaev in his own way, how he feels and perceives the songs. All the soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre, and Zaltsman particularly, sing Russian folk songs very well, and Plyusnin, also from the Bolshoi, is a master of impersonation. At every concert he wins over the audience by performing Di Laila as Magomaev himself did. To enhance the effect he dims the lights, and this impels people to think: the King of Baritones is back! It is his amazing similarity with the artiste which helped Plyusnin win 1st place at the International Muslim Magomaev Contest last year.

"Then, after all this, the organiser of the tour himself, David Gvinianidze, appears," Anna Panisheva tells us. "This is the principal adornment of the concert, because he presents the creations of Magomaev from an absolutely different angle. This is a distinctive feature of Gvinianidze - his terrific ability to discover and convey new aspects of art".

#### **Exception to the rule**

However, Gvinianidze has never been "like everybody else". Firstly, David disobeyed his parents, who had dreamt about a "serious profession" for their son, and went to the Paniashvili Tbilisi Music Academy. Then, while other students were merely studying, he made his own programme for Georgian TV about opera singers and composers. In defiance of the stereotype that beginners without experience of TV work cannot achieve success in this field, after the 3rd episode he signed a contract with several international channels to produce more and at the same time won the Golden Ring international music contest.

It must have seemed that this was the time to reap. But when his programme had become the most popular show in Georgia he suddenly abandoned his career as a TV host, went to Russia and joined the Bolshoi Theatre. In record time, he became a soloist in several American and English theatres at once and obtained the status of Honourable Guest at La Scala Milan. At this time Gvinianidze also created the Talents of the World fund which supports musicians from all over the world. For this activity he has been awarded the UN medal for Contribution to the Arts and was entered in the Worldwide Encyclopedia of People of the Millennium. When this happened, the critics suddenly forgot that they had once said that opera is now out of fashion, and Gvinianidze's project will die very soon.

So it is no wonder that as an exception to the rules David has a unique manner of singing. He performs Magomaev in his own individual way, but his approach does not spoil it. Conversely,

it even beautifies it. Most classical singers adopt a traditional style, but Gvinianidze is not afraid of wearing bright costumes or joking with the audience. He not only dances during the pop songs but maintains contact with the audience whilst performing classic arias.

"I understand that not all people can understand opera," he explains, "and that is why I want to arouse their interest in different ways. I lay myself bare, try to artistically express the plot of a song, and talk about the history of opera, the life of Muslim Magomaev and his work with Arno Babadjanan.

### **Art for everybody**

This is the main purpose of Gvinianidze`s world tour - to make people like good music. Herein lies the explanation of the strange, at first sight, pricing. While in provincial Kazakhstan tickets cost less than 30 dollars, in Italy you have to pay 3,000 dollars to see these concerts. In the most famous theatres in the world, ticket prices start from 10,000.

"I think this is the wrong approach to culture", Gvinianidze explains. "Art must serve the people, but in the reality only well-heeled people can attend such events. So my team and I counter this because our work is for everybody. My fund regularly organises tours at which we sing free of charge, for orphans or disabled children. People are similar everywhere, their financial status does not influence their perception of art. Our tour includes 90 cities in Russia and Europe, and we sing operatic compositions interspersed with pop music so that people do not think that we are demanding that they love opera immediately." He laughs. "As the saying goes, love cannot be forced, right?"

Anna Panisgheva says, "Foreigners like concerts by Gvinianidze because of their Georgian colouring. Of course, it would be silly to try and use opera to present Georgian traditions, and David Gvinianidze understands this and does not draw attention to his nationality. But Georgian blood always displays itself, through temperament or the purely Georgian adamant hopefulness. For example, whilst performing "Oh, this Wedding!" he began to do a dance with elements of the lezginka which was as appropriate, cheerful and, most importantly, sincere as everything Georgian is. Doubtless this is one of the reasons why Russian audiences respond to him so warmly." Regardless of political conflicts, the personal factor is the most important of all. Only art is able to reconcile us and to show us that, firstly, we are all human.

Instead of P.S., or All or nothing

Gvinianidze does not plan to dwell on his achievements.

"When I decided to go to Moscow my friend told me: "You should conquer all your doubts, otherwise they will eat you up." He smiles, "Fortunately Moscow did not eat me up - I took a risk and changed my life successfully. Now this is my credo: everyone must try and progress and strive for goals. Mistakes and failures only steel us. I understood that, and this knowledge helped me a lot. This is why our fund has existed for 10 years and has made its name. The world knows us, as we give about 80 concert programmes. The most popular ones are duels between singers, and shows like How Opera Stars Joke, A Big Date with Opera, etcetera. Today, in anticipation of the New Year, the producers have asked us to put on our Christmas Cocktail, or Drunk Concert.

Furthermore, this coming summer Gvinianidze, with the help of the Adjara government, will host the Batumi International Opera Festival.

"I have dreamt of doing something like this in Georgia," he says. "I am very glad that singers from the Metropolitan Opera, France and the USA believe in this project and will come to support it. I hope that it will become a new tradition in Batumi, because Georgia is full of talents, and the world should know about them".

**By Danara Kurmanova, Kazakhstan**

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