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ID: 43149

**'Ivan the Terrible', 1986**

Ballet in 2 Acts

Composer:	Sergei Prokofiev	
Libretto:	Yuri Grigorovich	
Choreography:	Yuri Grigorovich	
Production Designer and Costume:	Simon Virsaladze	
Conductor:	Vassily Sinaisky	
Performers:	Yuri Vladimirov	Ivan the Terrible
	Lyudmila Semenyaka	Anastasia
	Boris Akimov	Prince Krubsky

Running time: 1:53:20

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*History of the ballet:*

The music to the ballet was originally composed to Sergei Eisenstein's film about the sixteenth-century ruler. Between 1942 and 1945, Prokofiev had composed music to both parts and it is catalogued as Op. 116, his music is fascinating in how it portrays images and intonation; playing various rhythms and sounds to create a poetic story that has formed the basis of the ballet scenes. It was in 1973 when the composer Mikhail Chulaki and choreographer Yuri Grigorovich drew on Prokofiev's film score to create the ballet entitled Ivan the Terrible.

Ivan the Terrible was the Grand Prince of Moscow from 1533 to 1547 and Tsar of all the Russia's from 1547 until his death; the first of such a title. Throughout his long reign he saw the conquest of many regions, transforming Russia into a multi-ethnic empire and an emerging regional power. History provides incongruent accounts of Ivan's personality, which varied from intelligent and devout to outbreaks of mental illness. Many speculate that this worsened when his wife, Anastasia died, supposedly of poisoning or murder. Ivan's whole reign was overwhelmed with contradictions, one the one hand he would be dynamic and sometimes even bold, on the other he would become secluded and removed. He unintentionally killed his own eldest son, during one of his mental outbreaks, which continued to haunt him throughout his life.

It could be said that the essential theme of the ballet is the nature of the Russian people, the traditions, loyalty, heroism, ethics and morals of the individual Russians. The ballet itself does not solely focus on Ivan the Terrible and his character, but personifies the Russian people themselves.

*Plot summary:*

The ballet begins with Ivan's coronation, who is facing conflict from his boyars right at the start. Ivan takes Anastasia as his bride, to the horror of Kurbsky who has been hopelessly in love with the mesmerising Anastasia but he does not show his frustration. As a loyal ally of the royal, he follows Ivan to war with the Tartars and comes back victorious. Although his defeat of the Tartars encourages the population, the boyar's treason is imminent and they ascend to the throne when Ivan falls ill. Ivan's struggle with the boyars begins and they place Ivan's wife Anastasia, at the centre of a plot which also involves Kurbsky. They play upon Ivan's emotions when it is Kurbsky who presents Anastasia with a cup that contains poison, she drinks this and dies. Ivan mourns the death of his beloved wife and his anger towards her killers grows ever stronger. Kurbsky, in fear of the righteous wrath of a king, flees the country. The king surrounds himself with loyal men and gathers his power to take on the title of Tsar and confirm his superiority as the first imperial ruler

of Russia. He is however, left alone with only his conscience, having lost everything; his beloved wife, friends and comrades in the war, but with more power than he imagined.

*Performance history:*

Ivan the Terrible first premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1975 by the renowned choreographer Yuri Grigorovich. At the premiere the leading roles were performed by Yuri Vladimirov, Natalia Bessmertnova, Boris Akimov, the conductor was Algis Zhuraitis.

This plot is essentially the same as Eisenstein's film and thus Prokofiev's music is fitting and still conveys the same story. Grigorovich's rendition from one medium to another has illustrated brilliantly how Prokofiev's original score is highly evocative and lends itself perfectly to dance.

The ballet is completely evocative and full of complex elements of dance subject to a carefully outlined image. There are three rotating apse interiors, which resemble the towers and cathedrals and outer walls of the Kremlin towers. When the artists begin to move, it seems that the mural comes to life, with icon painting faces and whole groups of characters emerging on stage. The ballet reveals individual pages of Russian history, creating a psychologically complex image of Ivan's unresolved personality and his idea of resolving his difficulties. The ballet focuses on the disclosure of Ivan's destiny and his inner peace. The continual presence of bells in the ballet, have quite a symbolic meaning to them. It is thought that at first, the bells herald Ivan's coronation, in the middle of the ballet they symbolise war, suffering and victory. At the end, the ringing of the bells portray that Ivan has subdued the empire and its people.

Although Ivan the Terrible had ruled over four centuries ago, his identity is still the subject of heated debate – was he a 'Collector of Russia' or a cruel tyrant? In the performance, his whole life passes by in front of the viewers. At the beginning of the ballet, the young king who has fought with the Kazan's returns to Moscow, and in the final scene he was ready to hear the trumpets of the archangel.

As this production was intended for television broadcast it benefits greatly from different camera angle uses which provide a more concise and detailed image of the ballet. Moreover, given that this ballet attempts to bring forward a difficult period in Russian history capturing oppression, poverty, nobility and imperialism. It also portrays a combination of cultural elements suggested by the vivid costumes and the variety of movement, both of these elements emphasise Ivan's ultimate aim to seize power as oppose to abide with his current position as a ruler.

In 2011, the heirs of Sergei Prokofiev gave Bolshoi Theatre the rights to renew the ballet, choreographed by Yuri Grigorovich. The premiere is scheduled for November 2012.