

Russian bass Ildar Abdrazakov's performances cancelled by Boston Symphony Orchestra and Carnegie Hall

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World-famous Russian bass Ildar Abdrazakov has become the latest musician to face the consequences of the vicious anti-Russian campaign being waged by the whole imperialist propaganda machine on behalf of the US/NATO proxy war in Ukraine.

Abdrazakov, 46 years old and in the prime of a career that has taken him to the Metropolitan Opera and most of the world's most famous opera stages and concert halls in the past 20 years, was replaced by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a series of three performances scheduled for early May. At the same time, Carnegie Hall also dropped Abdrazakov from performances next January, also with the Boston Symphony.

According to the OperaWire website, referring to the Putin regime, Abdrazakov “was recently accused of being close to the Russian dictator.” The report continued, “the bass has participated in numerous concerts featuring major politicians and was even caught dancing with the Secretary of Defense.”

The wording [“caught dancing”] reflects the witch-hunting hysteria with which the anti-Russian campaign is being pursued. Overlooked in all of this is the irony that Abdrazakov was scheduled to perform in Dmitri Shostakovich's massive Symphony No. 13, for bass and men's chorus, subtitled “Babi Yar” and including famed verses by Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko denouncing anti-Semitism and commemorating the massacre of Soviet Ukrainian Jews near Kiev in 1941. Meanwhile the present Ukrainian regime and its military glorifies figures like the notorious Stepan Bandera, the Nazi collaborator whose Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists participated in the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Jews and Poles.

Also significant in this respect is the other

Shostakovich work from which Abdrazakov has been removed—a concert performance of the 1934 opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. This is the work that provoked the notorious official condemnation (“a muddle instead of music”) in *Pravda* in early 1936, on the eve of the bloody Moscow frame-up trials. During this period and again from the late 1940s until the death of Stalin in 1953, Shostakovich was under continuous threat. The supporters of the proxy war in Ukraine, working in solidarity with the Ukrainian far right, the direct political descendants of those who assisted the Nazis at Babi Yar, are understandably uncomfortable with a Russian artist performing and associating himself with either of these works.

Abdrazakov is the most prominent casualty of the anti-Russian campaign since the banning of Russian conductor Valery Gergiev and Russian soprano Anna Netrebko almost immediately following the beginning of the war last year. The Russian bass made his debut at the Metropolitan in 2004, in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* under James Levine. This was shortly after Netrebko debuted in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. Abdrazakov has also sung at the La Scala Opera House in Milan, in the Royal Opera House in London, and many other famous venues. He has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Leipzig Gewandhaus and numerous other world-famous orchestras, while also continuing to base himself in Russia, where he founded a music academy in St. Petersburg in 2015. He has also launched the Ildar Abdrazakov Foundation to assist young artists.

For a certain period of time, even though Russian performers other than Netrebko and Gergiev also saw their recitals in Europe and America disappear,

Abdrazakov continued some performances in the West, as well as in Russia. The Metropolitan Opera and its general manager Peter Gelb, among the loudest voices in support of the proxy war, did not take any immediate action. According to one report, conductor Riccardo Muti insisted on an appearance by the Russian bass at a concert last year in Salzburg, Austria.

About a month ago, however, Abdrazakov himself announced, in an interview with OperaWire, that he had “paused” his relationship with the Met Opera, canceling upcoming performances in two very big productions, Verdi’s *La Forza del Destino* and Gounod’s *Romeo et Juliette*. There is little doubt that the Met management was behind the cancellations. According to Abdrazakov, he was acting “out of solidarity with his colleagues Anna Netrebko and [Abkhazian-Russian soprano] Hibla Gerzmava ... My deep conviction is that people of art should remain neutral, thereby continuing to unite peoples and countries with their art.”

Under the phony banner of “human rights,” the imperialist powers have launched a new Cold War and are preparing for a third world war against their adversaries in Russia and China. The invasion of Ukraine by the oligarchic Putin regime, though bankrupt and reactionary, was provoked over a lengthy period, especially through the 2014 coup in Kiev, which led to the installation of a government aligned with European and US imperialism. Those waging proxy war in Ukraine against what they falsely claim was an unprovoked invasion have their own history of truly unprovoked wars, most recently in Iraq, Libya and Syria, and with more than a century’s worth of blood on their hands from two world wars as well as colonial and semi-colonial butchery in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

There is increasing resistance to the anti-Russian campaign, particularly in Europe. In the US, Netrebko has just won an arbitration award of \$200,000 against the Met for breaking her contract. She continues to appear in Europe, while she has been attacked by Putin supporters, and withdrawn from performances in Russia, following her criticism of the invasion. Netrebko still remains banned in the US, presumably because she continues to maintain a “neutrality,” and will not lend her celebrity to the Ukrainian regime and its imperialist patrons.



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