

ENTRE NOUS

ANNA

Have a coffee with the stunning new voice
of the opera world.

NETREBKO

PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHEL COMTE
INTERVIEW: EDDA VENUSIA JONES
STYLING: MIKE COCKFIELD
HAIR: RYOJI IMAIZUMI
MAKE UP: MAX DELORME

N: You're an important opera singer with a voice of astounding purity and precision that has been showered with prizes and standing ovations the world over. Your stage presence and beauty are equally worshipped – including your riveting performance in *La Traviata* at the Festival here in Salzburg. After all the male icons like Pavarotti, Domingo and Carreras, you're quite a Joan of Arc for classical music...

Anna Netrebko: "... I don't know if I'm really the Joan of Arc of the opera world because I don't really think about anything like that. I feel lots of pressure and of course responsibility. Not for all the female singers, but towards the opera world that expects a lot from me every single time I go on stage and have to deliver 100%. We're all human beings and sometimes you just don't feel so great, but the performance has to be great whatever. For me the most amazing thing in the world is the stage – to make music and to perform. It is an indescribable feeling that you will never have until you try it and then you can never step down, because it is amazing..."

N: You were a cleaning lady at the Kirov Opera and Ballet in St. Petersburg and stayed there nearly around the clock just to get a taste of the opera. Ten years later you're a star on the way to becoming a household name the world over. What was the most breathtaking moment you experienced back then?

Anna Netrebko: "I was watching a performance of *Othello* at the Kirov in 1990 led by Maestro Valery Gergiev and it was a great production with wonderful singers – they sang beautifully of course but also played the drama really like trained Shakespearean actors would. It was so true and so touching... In the final scene of *Othello* when Deborah dies and the curtain went down there was total silence in the auditorium. Nobody could move because they were so touched by the whole thing. That was a big emotional thing for me and I really decided then and there that that's what I want to do."

N: You still live in St. Petersburg and have been famously quoted as saying that whenever Maestro Valery Gergiev of the Mariinsky Theatre beckons you'll come running to him, the man who discovered you when you were 22 years old. Is there something in which you'd like to be the same as him?

Anna Netrebko: "His energy! It is enormous and something which normal human beings don't have to that extent. I don't know where he gets his energy that is always there. We had a long big dinner last night until 3 o'clock in the morning! (She says, feigning dramatic exhaustion like an actress might) He even called today and said, "Hey, let's go for lunch!" and I had to say, "No, I'm doing an interview!" He's amazing and has this incredible intuition for what to do when and how. That's why he is THE Valery Gergiev, I think."

Glittering Future: Maria Callas had over 60 unique stage jewels – all set with Daniel Swarovski crystals and pearls – exclusively designed for her by the likes of Renato Guttuso, Luchino Visconti, Lila De Nobili, Franco Zeffirelli and Nicola Benois for her performances between 1947-1960. Since then no one has ever worn these brilliant creations. Until Anna Netrebko.

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N: You have chosen to utilise modern communication forms, such as your DVD “Anna Netrebko: The Woman, The Voice” that entered the charts topping pop music entries. Do you mind being mentioned in the same breath as Britney Spears, Madonna & Co?

Anna Netrebko: “If I’m mentioned with them that’s fine and I feel like I’m in great company! (laughs) If I’m so popular then of course I don’t think there’s anything bad about that, but still I’m doing my thing. I’m not doing crossover, I’m doing straight opera. I love to perform on stage – with the partners, with the costumes, with the wonderful orchestras. It’s just magical.”

N: You chose the pop music video director Vincent Paterson, who has worked with Madonna and Michael Jackson, to direct your videos. He admits to knowing nothing about opera. What was it like working with someone who hasn’t got a clue about your world?

Anna Netrebko: “It was wonderful because he’s like a kid, you know. We opened up this world of opera to him for the first time and he was so excited. He walked around with wide open eyes and was in total awe ... He started going to opera and absolutely loves it now. He’ll even be directing his first opera! Next year I will be doing Manon by Massenet in Los Angeles with him and I’m really looking forward to that and he’s very excited about it too!”

N: A good opportunity to follow your passion for fashion, which you prefer to live out in expensive department stores in America because nobody notices you there. What is the messy style you like where “things don’t always go together perfectly”?

Anna Netrebko: “You know, there is a certain style that looks good on me and I come back to these designers all the time because their style fits me ... like Marc Jacobs, Dolce & Gabbana and Anna Sui. A very feminine style. Sporty fashion doesn’t look good on me. I like to mix colours and different shapes and make them my own.”

N: You once said: “Russians always need a little shit in their lives. If everything is good and we seem completely happy, then we become suspicious of that”. What is the “little shit” in your life?

Anna Netrebko: “I will not talk about the shit in my life (laughs), but I have to tell you that I feel so much happier with my life right now it’s amazing. What I mean by that Russian saying is that you have to have the bad in order to be able to appreciate the good. Usually when you have something bad in your life, when you’re suffering and you reach that very low point, well, when something good happens then you really jump up very high and appreciate everything much more than before.”

N: You’ve been with your fiancé Simone Alberghini, the gifted Italian bass-baritone, since 1999. Speaking of mobility: how have you managed to bridge the geographic and emotional distances?

Anna Netrebko: “It seems to work very well. We do find time to see each other ... Thank god, he’s a little less busy than I am and can fly to meet me. Although I also fly to meet him too sometimes. It works pretty well and I don’t know exactly why ... but he’s wonderful and very nice guy so maybe that’s why! Otherwise it’s not easy, I think, to live with opera singers!”

N: 2006 marks the jubilee of Mozart’s 250th birthday. In fact, you are now the same age as he was when he died and seem to have lived 10 lives already ... What else is in store for you?

Anna Netrebko: “Life is wonderful and I think the older I become the more exciting life becomes too. You know, life is much better than it was five years ago. All my dreams have already come true so I don’t know what could be in store. I just want my friends, my father and my family to stay healthy and be happy, which is what makes me happy. For the rest, I think it’ll be fine ...” 🍌