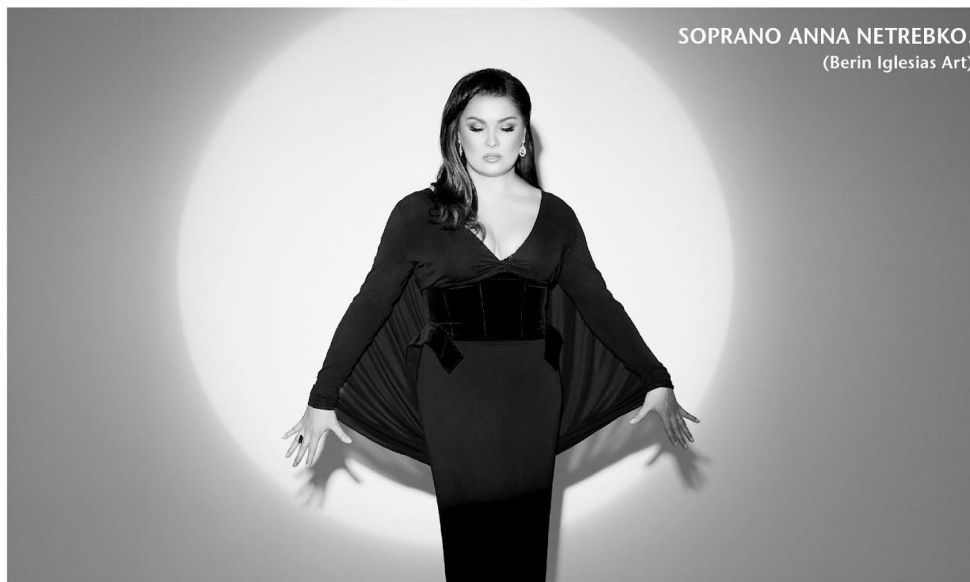




SOPRANO ANNA NETREBKO.
(Berin Iglesias Art)

A soprano, a tenor and the JSO

• By IRVING M SPITZ

Soprano Anna Netrebko, tenor Yusif Eyvazov and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Marco Boemi, will light up Tel Aviv on Saturday night.

Netrebko was born in 1971 in Krasnodar in the Soviet Union. To support herself while studying at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, she worked as a janitor at the Mariinsky Theatre. There she met and was auditioned by conductor Valery Gergiev, who became her vocal mentor.

Netrebko made her Metropolitan Opera debut in February 2002, as Natasha in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. In the role of Susanna in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* in Washington, she completely dominated the production with her winning stage presence and magnificent voice, to the extent that the opera could have been dubbed "The Marriage of Susanna."

Her international breakthrough came in 2002, when she sang Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Salzburg Festival. Another tour de force performance was also in Salzburg in 2005 as Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*. Following these landmark appearances, she solidified her international reputation.

With the voice of an angel, the face of a film star and the figure of a supermodel, it is not surprising that she became a world celebrity. She won multiple international awards, and was included in *Time's* 2007 listing of the 100 most prominent people in the world. She has the distinction of having been invited to appear in three consecutive opening night new productions at the Metropolitan Opera, Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* and *L'elisir d'amore*, and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

She has starred in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Puccini's *La Bohème*, Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* as well as other major soprano roles in all the international operatic venues. Recently she has ventured into more dramatic operas, such as Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Bellini's *I Puritani* and Verdi's *Il trovatore*, *Macbeth* and *Aida*. I have been privileged to hear her in all these operas.

I recollect two unforgettable experiences related to Netrebko. I attended her 2014 debut in Verdi's *Il trovatore* in Salzburg. Three days later I was in the vicinity of the festival hall during an intermission. The elegant crowd was having

refreshments. I struck up a conversation with two elegant dressed patrons. One wore a long evening gown with a white hijab elaborately encrusted with precious stones. They told me they were from Abu Dhabi. I inquired how they were enjoying the performance. They replied, "To be honest, this is not part of our culture." I told them that it was certainly part of mine. Without a moment's hesitation, the gentleman smiled, presented me with his two tickets, said, "Enjoy" and they wandered off. I entered the festival hall and sat in the front row for the remainder of the performance.

On another occasion, while on a cruise of the Danube we were docked in Vienna. That night Netrebko was singing in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. The performance ended somewhat late and the taxi driver, a recently arrived immigrant, got hopelessly lost and I arrived late for the cruise departure. The captain was furious as he missed the scheduled departure time. I was persona non grata for the cruise but the performance was unforgettable.

The performance will take place on October 1 at 9.00 pm at the Charles Bronfman Auditorium, Tel Aviv.