

THE ART OF SHALIAPIN

RECORD 1 D018101—02

Oh, bright sun
(M. Slonov — Mochalov)
Recorded in 1901

Ruslan's aria (fragment)
(M. Glinka — "Ruslan and Ludmila",
Act II). Recorded in 1907

Nilakantha's stanzas
(L. Delibes — "Lakme", Act II)
Recorded in 1907

In the valley
(Ukrainian folk song) — In Ukrainian
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

From under the oak, from under the elm
No autumn drizzling rain
Little splinter

The sun rises and sets
(Russian folk songs)
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

The storm rages
(V. Sokolov — I. Nikitin)
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Pimen's monologue and narrative
(M. Mussorgsky — "Boris Godunov",
Acts I and II). Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Two Demon's romances
(A. Rubinstein — "Demon", Act II)
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

RECORD 2 D018103—04

Bacchanal song
(A. Glazunov — A. Pushkin) — in French
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

La Marseillaise
(Rouget de Lisle) — in French
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Incantation of the flowers
Scene by the church
(Ch. Gounod — "Faust", Acts III and IV)
Marguerite — M. Mikhailova (soprano)
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Phillip's aria
(G. Verdi — "Don Carlos", Act III)
in Italian
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Don Silva's recitative and cavatina
(G. Verdi — "Ernani", Act I) — in Italian
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Orovezo's aria
(V. Bellini — "Norma", Act I)
in Italian
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Don Alfonso's cavatina and aria
(G. Donizetti — "Lucretia Borgia",
Act I) — in Italian
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Appeal of Bertram
(G. Meyerbeer — "Robert the Devil",
Act III) — in Italian
Recorded in 1910 — 1912

Legend about tsar Ivan the Terrible
(S. Lyapunov — folk words)
Recorded in 1912 — 1914

Legend about Ilya Muromets
(folk music and words)
Recorded in 1912 — 1914

The mother-in-law had seven sons-in-law
(Russian folk song)
Recorded in 1912 — 1914

The green oak
The big gnat
(Ukrainian folk songs) — in Ukrainian
Recorded in 1912 — 1914

Word of farewell
(M. Slonov — Skitalets)
Recorded in 1912 — 1914

Ode to Sapho
(J. Brahms — G. Schmidt)
Recorded in 1912 — 1914

RECORD 3 D018105—06

The last voyage of the seaman
(E. Alnes — G. Fergeland)
Recorded in 1921

If I could express it in music
(L. Malashkin — G. Lishin)
Recorded in 1921

Nightingale
(P. Tchaikovsky — A. Pushkin)
Recorded in 1921

I bless ye, woods
(P. Tchaikovsky — A. K. Tolstoi)
Recorded in 1923

Aleko's cavatina
(S. Rachmaninov — "Aleko")

Susanin's aria
Recitative and scene of Susanin
(M. Glinka — "Ivan Susanin", Act IV)
Recorded in 1923 and 1924

Igor's aria
Konchak's aria
(A. Borodin — "Prince Igor", Act II)
Recorded in 1924

Boris's monologue
"My heart is full of grief"
Parting with his son and death of Boris
(M. Mussorgsky — "Boris Godunov")
Recorded in 1925 and 1926

RECORD 4 D018107—08

Oh, Vanka
Dubinushka
Ei, ukhnem (The barge-haulers' song)
(Russian folk song)
Recorded in 1923, 1924 and 1927

The flea
(M. Mussorgsky — W. Goethe,
translation by A. Strugovshchikov)
Recorded in 1926

How the king went to war
(Kenneman — M. Konopnitskaya)
Recorded in 1927

Night review
(M. Glinka — V. Zhukovsky)
Recorded in 1926

Two Grenadiers
(R. Schumann — H. Heine,
translation by M. Mikhailov)
Recorded in 1926

Under the grave-stone
(L. Beethoven — G. Karpani) — in Italian
Recorded in 1927

Two Mephistopheles' arias
(A. Boito — "Mephistopheles",
prologue and Act I) — in Italian
Recorded in 1925

Don Basilio's aria
(G. Rossini — "The Barber of Seville")
in Italian
Recorded in 1925

Don Quixote's death scene
(J. Massenet — "Don Quixote", Act V)
in French
Dulcinea — O. Klin
Recorded in 1927

Rodolfo's recitative and cavatina
(V. Bellini — "La Sonnambula", Act I)
in Italian
Recorded in 1927

Leporello's aria
(W. Mozart — "Don Giovanni", Act I)
in Italian
Recorded in 1928

RECORD 5 D018109—10

Boris's monologue
"I have reached the heights of power"
Boris' scene

Parting with his son and death of Boris
(M. Mussorgsky — "Boris Godunov",
Acts II and IV)
Recorded at the performance given in the
Covent Garden Theatre, London, 1928

The prophet
(N. Rimsky-Korsakov — A. Pushkin)
Recorded in 1927

The horn
(Flegier) in French
Recorded in 1929

The old corporal
(A. Dargomyzhsky — P. Beranger,
Russian translation by V. Kurochkin)
Recorded in 1929

Double
(F. Schubert — H. Heine)
Recorded in 1928

Death and the maiden
(F. Schubert — M. Klaudius)
Recorded in 1928

Doubts
(M. Glinka — N. Kukolnik)
Recorded in 1930

RECORD 6 D018111—12

The blind ploughman
(Clark) — in English
Recorded in 1928
Trepak from the cycle
"Songs and Dances of Death"
(M. Mussorgsky —
A. Golenishchev-Kutuzov)
Recorded in 1929

Masha is not allowed to cross the river
Farewell, happiness
Along the PETERSKAYA street
Song about Stepan Razin
Down the Volga
(Russian folk songs)
Recorded in 1929 — 1932

Varlaam's song
(M. Mussorgsky — "Boris Godunov",
Act I). Recorded in 1927

Recitative and song
of Vladimir Galitsky
Konchak's aria
(A. Borodin — "Prince Igor",
Acts I and II)
Recorded in 1927

Song of the Varangian merchant
(N. Rimsky-Korsakov — "Sadko", Act IV)
Recorded in 1927

Aleko's cavatina
(S. Rachmaninov — "Aleko")
Recorded in 1928

Eremka's song
(A. Serov — "Hostile forces", Act III)
Recorded in 1931

Farlaf's rondo
(M. Glinka — "Ruslan and Ludmilla",
Act II). Recorded in 1931

RECORD 7 D018113—14

Mephistopheles' couplets and serenade
(Ch. Gounod — "Faust", Acts II and IV)
in French. Recorded in 1930

The Miller's aria
Scene of the Miller and Prince
(A. Dargomyzhsky — "The Water Nymph",
Acts I and III)
Prince — G. Pozemkovsky (tenor)
Recorded in 1931

Boris' monologue
"I have reached the heights of power"
Boris' scene "Ukh, its hard..."
(M. Mussorgsky — "Boris Godunov",
Act II). Recorded in 1931

Legend about the twelve robbers
(folk music — N. Nekrasov)
Recorded in 1932

"Now my sins are pardoned..."

(Strokin)

Recorded in 1932

"Penance opens all doors"

(A. Wedel)

Recorded in 1932

My faith in God

(A. Arkhangelsky)

Orthodox Church prayer

(A. Grechaninov)

Recorded in 1932

RECORD 8

D018115-16

Duke's song

Farewell song

Serenade

Don Quixote's death

(J. Ibert — from music to the film "Don Quixote"). Recorded in 1933

The prisoner

(A. Rubinstein — A. Pushkin)

Recorded in 1933

Like a rippling wave

from the set "Persian Songs"

(A. Rubinstein — Mirza Shafi,

translation by P. Tchaikovsky)

Recorded in 1933

Elegy

(J. Massenet — L. Gallé)

Recorded in 1931

Black eyes

(Old romance)

Recorded in 1927

She laughed

(G. Lishin — A. Maikov)

Recorded in 1929

The night

(Russian folk song)

Recorded in 1930

The wretched wanderer's song

(A. Manykin-Nevstruev)

Recorded in 1934

Rise, bright sun

(Russian folk song)

Recorded in 1934

The flea

(M. Mussorgsky — W. Goethe,

translation by A. Strugovshchikov)

Recorded in 1936

Ei, ukhnem

(Russian folk song)

Recorded in 1936

The recordings included in the anthology "The Art of Fedor Shaliapin" were compiled and restored by G. P. Kovalevsky and E. F. Osaulenko (The All-Union Recording Studio) and I. F. Boyarsky, the collector.

Irakly Andronikov

THE ART OF SHALIAPIN

The number of our contemporaries, who had the good fortune to hear and see Shaliapin on the opera and concert stage, is declining. But his creations do not fade

with time nor do they become the property of the elect. His fame does not wane, on the contrary it becomes greater with years. Everything that Shaliapin's name embraces in terms of singing, continues to remain a vital fact of art. Nothing in his performance has aged. Not a single element of his performance calls for retrospective correction, condescension to the tastes of his day or explanations to the effect that modern technique has impressively advanced. Everything is contemporary and perfect in his art, art that has virtually become a legend because it represents a fine blend of his vocal, musical and dramatic talents...

You may not agree with me here and remonstrate: "One can form an opinion upon the art of Shaliapin the singer and Shaliapin the musician going by his records. But his dramatic art (excluding the film "Don Quixote", which, we are told, does not represent his highest achievement) is lost to us forever!" Naturally, this is true of that part of his dramatic art that found expression in theatre performances and scenic embodiment. But Shaliapin created characters in his singing, in romances and arias alike. To say nothing of scenes from operas in which we "hear" how he acts and moulds forceful characters.

General opinion has it that the secret of Shaliapin's impact upon audiences lay in the unusual might and beauty of his bass. Yet it is not quite so. The world opera stage, including that of Russia, has known voices that were much more powerful than Shaliapin's. There were also many bass voices of great beauty. But never before was there a voice so rich in timbre and tone colours. Singer S. Levik, who frequently appeared in performances with Shaliapin, says in his writings: "The power of Shaliapin's voice was not a gift of nature, but the result of his ability to adroitly distribute tone lights and shadows". In other words the ability to change and diversify timbres. "Purely from the physiological viewpoint Shaliapin's voice was no phenomenon, but seen as an artistic phenomenon his voice was inimitable".

Shaliapin made his voice obedient to him within the limits of the possible. That is the reason why his voice sounded more powerfully, broadly and sonorously than the voices of other singers. And though some singers were endowed by nature with more powerful voices, Shaliapin's voice was considered to be unprecedented and inimitable, in other words it was "the one and only voice".

His vocal schooling under the guidance of his first and virtually only teacher D. Usatov has often been mentioned. But this does not fully explain Shaliapin's vocal perfection. Maybe this is better explained by the fact that he imbibed the best of what he heard, the elements of all schools and styles and melted them in "the crucible of his singing" to such an extent that they could not be distinguished in his performance.

Yet Shaliapin could never have accomplished this if he had not been a musician

of genius. This gift of his involved the ability to not only communicate the musical text to the audience, but the contents held within it too.

Shaliapin used to say: "Notes are but a mere record, they should be made into music according to the composer's conception".

Once during the dress rehearsal of the opera "Demon" the singer asked conductor Altani to permit him to direct his part from the stage himself. Altani gave him his baton and Shaliapin began to sing showing the orchestra what he precisely wanted it to do. When Shaliapin reached the culmination in the final aria, the members of the orchestra were so delighted with his performance that they played a flourish especially for him.

The eminent conductor Fritz Stiedry, who toured the Soviet Union in the twenties and thirties, once said that a poor conductor showed only what the score said while a good one displayed what the score left to his artistic discretion. Shaliapin made wide use of the potentialities laid down in the score. He cannot be called a performer in the conventional sense of the word for every time he was, more or less, the co-author of the composer. And in this respect he can well be compared with such musicians as, say, the outstanding pianist Ferruccio Busoni, whose reading of works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt and Chopin was as interesting as it was individualistic. Shaliapin can also be compared with violinist Eugene Ysaye or pianist Leopold Godowski. Musicologist L. Lebedinsky once compared the recording of one of the scenes from "Boris Godunov" as performed by Shaliapin with Mussorgsky's musical text and discovered how far Shaliapin had departed from the direct reproduction of the text. In a conversation with playwright A. Gladkov, V. Meyerhold recalled the following: "In the 'delirium' scene Shaliapin needed extra time for his brilliant scenic improvisation: he had to play some minutes here without singing, but it turned out that there was 'not enough' music here so he asked the orchestra to repeat the so-called 'music of the chimes'. Those who heard and saw him in this performance agreed that the effect was wonderful. I do not think that Mussorgsky himself would have had anything against this insertion. Nevertheless, some of the people, who knew the score well, were indignant. By the way, listening to the radio one day, I again heard the 'chimes' in the 'delirium scene'. This means that this has become a tradition. So it always comes about: first you are an arbitrary innovator and then you find yourself to be the founder of a tradition".

And, really, many discoveries made by Shaliapin have with years become as canonical as Liszt's or Busoni's editions of piano literature. But this does not mean that every singer or pianist can intrude into the author's text. No and no! Only a gifted artist has the right to encroach upon the original work.

The well-known Soviet cellist, Professor of the Moscow Conservatory Victor Kubatsky recalls that in 1920, during rehearsals at the Bolshoi Theatre, in moments when he was free, Shaliapin would walk up to the proscenium and shielding his eyes from the glaring lights with his hand, listen attentively to the playing of the cello group. Being the leader of the group Kubatsky presumed that Shaliapin was not pleased with the cellists' performance and asked him if it was indeed so. "No", answered Shaliapin, "the cellos teach me to sing". Only a musician of merit could give such an answer.

Shaliapin was convinced that the power of his singing lay in the preciseness of his intonation, in the correct shade of meaning that he gave a word or phrase. He said that he first perceived the importance of intonation, when he was working at the role of the Miller in the early days of his career. He worked persistently at the character, but the result seemed somewhat artificial.

Being dissatisfied with himself he turned to the famous tragic actor Mamont Dalsky for advice. The latter asked him to read the text by Pushkin for him. And when Shaliapin read the text, with all the commas, full stops and pauses, Dalsky suggested that he pay more attention to the intonation. Turning to Shaliapin, he said: "You speak the way a petty shop-keeper would speak, but the Miller is a staid man, the owner of a mill and arable land". Shaliapin recalls: "Dalsky's remark pierced me like a needle. I immediately understood the falsity of my intonation and blushed with shame. At the same time I was glad that Dalsky's remark was congenial to my own confused notion. The key to the problem was the intonation or the tone colour one gave a word. And so the power of singing lies in correct intoning, in the tone colouring of a word or phrase".

In his memoirs Shaliapin frequently speaks of intonation as of a method of penetrating into the essence of a role, into the depths of romances and songs, that nobody before him had probed. Dwelling on Mussorgsky's romances and songs, he writes: "I have found their true intonation". Shaliapin recalls another instance when "the correct intonation of one single phrase turned a malicious snake into a ferocious tiger". He said that this remarkable change in his portrayal of Godunov took place during the rehearsal of "The Maid of Pskov", when Mamontov pointed out what quality was lacking in the character of Ivan the Terrible.

Shaliapin further writes: "The most effective aria sounds aloofly and formally if the intonation of the phrases is ignored and the sound is not tinted with the necessary shades of emotion".

It should be mentioned here that subtle musicians, who had heard Shaliapin sing, invariably remarked upon the importance of intonation technique in the general impression that his talented performances created. They also marked the profound-

ness of the inner rhythm of his performance.

B. Asafiev wrote: "I have always thought that the sources of Shaliapin's rhythm and his profoundly realistic singing go back to the rhythmic and picturesqueness of Russian folk speech of which he was master".

Many musicians and critics perceived Shaliapin's art to be a synthesis of the "vocal gift", intonation, rhythm, speech and scenic plastics. The more sensitive among them also distinguished Shaliapin's remarkable penetration into the system of the Russian language, his articulation and sense of speech, that was organically adherent to him.

Thus K. Stanislavsky pointed out the following: "Shaliapin's secret lay in the way he pronounced words. He had the knack of articulating the consonants in his singing in a special way. I had occasion to frequently speak with Shaliapin in America. He asserted that any word could be singled out in a phrase and yet the necessary rhythmic accents in singing would be retained... And though his voice was not as powerful as that of the bass V. Petrov, his singing was much more impressive due to his sonorous phrasing".

Vocalists are well aware that Shaliapin knew how to give colour to a syllable, how to "contract" and "stretch" it without violating neither the verbal nor the musical structure. Few Russian actors understood poetry as profoundly as Shaliapin. When he sings "The Prophet", a poem by Pushkin set to music by Rimsky-Korsakov, one is astounded with the singer's penetration into the biblical system of Pushkin's language, into the stateliness and picturesqueness of Pushkin's verse.

In my opinion, this amazing penetration is the result of his comprehension of the proportionality of all elements and of the importance of the principal word, of his ability to show up the rhyme and lend colour to each sound and syllable.

"...Dukhovnoi zhazhdou tomim" ("My spiritual thirst is great") — quietly sings Shaliapin the first phrase, laying stress on the sonorous "o" in the word "tomim", very clearly articulating the "m" in both instances.

"...V pustinne mrachnoi ia vlachilsya" ("In the gloomy desert I made my weary way"). Here the open and imperious "a" in "mrachnoi" and "vlachilsya" lends the words greater vividness and force. This wandering in the boundless desert is portrayed solemnly and despondently.

Shaliapin now pronounces the phrase "I shestikrylii seraphim" ("And the six-winged seraph"). The word "shestikrylii" is a long one both in the poem and the musical score, but Shaliapin makes it still longer by laying stress on the letter "y" after which the word "seraphim" sounds weightlessly and incorporeally. Here Shaliapin removes all colour from the word lending it an airy quality, associated with the soaring in the air of the winged being.

The search for happiness at the crossroads of life — such is the main subject of this musical narrative in which pure colours glitter and play. All this you feel

from the very first line of "The Prophet", that paves the way for the subsequent revelations of the singer.

This blend of music and plastics of speech Shaliapin could convey not only in Russian, but in other languages too. Thus, singing the part of Mephistopheles in Boito's opera in Italian, he amazed the Italian audience not only with his singing and acting, but with his Italian pronunciation, that the great singer Angelo Masini described as being "Dante-like" in its quality.

In a letter addressed to the editorial board of a St. Petersburg newspaper he wrote: "It is a remarkable accomplishment of an actor, whose native tongue is not Italian". The French press frequently remarked upon Shaliapin's excellent French. But even when he sang abroad in Russian even the most experienced listeners were astounded by his masterful performance.

In 1908, when all Paris was eagerly awaiting the performance of "Boris Godunov" that was to be shown for the first time there, Shaliapin came of the dress rehearsal to which many celebrities of the French capital had been invited, in an ordinary jacket (the costumes had not yet been unpacked). During the rehearsal of the hallucination scene he had uttered the words "Who is it there, rocking in the corner?", he heard a loud noise and looking into the hall he saw the spectators had all risen from their seats in order to see what was so unusual in the corner to which Shaliapin was pointing. Not knowing Russian the people decided that Shaliapin had seen something terrifying there. "Salvini!" shouted the enthusiastic audience in Milan after the highly successful performance of Boito's opera, comparing Shaliapin with one of the greatest tragic actors of the 19th century.

Shaliapin's acting was so impressive that many people thought that he would have made a fine dramatic actor. Nevertheless, when it was suggested that he play Macbeth on the dramatic stage he said "I'm afraid!". Apparently he rejected this proposal because playing in a drama, he would have been deprived of some components that went into the moulding of his scenic characters such as his inimitable singing voice, music and rhythm. But even the most qualified experts were of the opinion that the dramatic stage was open for Shaliapin and only very few people said that "his playing was his singing". But all the world, from prominent authorities on the theatre to the most unexperienced listeners, is aware of the fact that never before was there an actor in whom the three arts were represented in such a perfect blend. In this connection K. Stanislavsky said in his writings: "Very few actors ever managed to achieve a synthesis. I can name only Chaliapin". Another founder of the Moscow Art Theatre Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko stated that Shaliapin was "the first perfect actor-singer". Shaliapin's scenic range was vast. The characters he portrayed were tragic and comic, lovable and terrifying, noble and insidious, cunning and passionate, rakish and staid, majestic and cowardly. He could with equal skill portray the most contrary emo-

tions such as, say, humour and unearthly melancholy. His repertory included Boris and Varlaam, Dosifei and Duke Calitsky, Sussanin and Yermka, the Miller and Khan Konchak, Olofern and Farlaf, Aleko and Salieri, Ivan the Terrible and Pimen, Demon and Mephistopheles, Philip and Leporello, Don Basilio and Don Quixote.

All the roles he played were the result of strict selection. They were roles in which "Shakespearian principles prevailed", to quote the theatre science expert M. Yankovsky, for well nigh his every role represents not only a highly original part, but material for the moulding of the greatest creations of scenic art. The number of roles he played was not great yet each role revealed a new facet of Shaliapin's talent and represented an important event in the history of world opera. "These roles are not theatrical masks, but human lives lived anew by the great Russian actor in his every performance" (B. Asafiev).

When at concerts Shaliapin sang "Night review", "Two Grenadiers", "The titular counsellor", "The old corporal", "Trepak", "The flee", "The Seminarian", "The General", "The forgotten one", Massenet's "Elegy", Glinka's "Doubts" or Russian and Ukrainian songs, the gallery of characters created by him on the opera stage was replenished by new characters that existed on their own, without partners, costumes or make-up and even without the support of the scenery and theatre curtain. These characters from songs brought to life by Shaliapin's singing and acting were no less impressive than his opera heroes. He achieved this not only by penetrating into the essence of the character but through profound transformation that made it possible for him to fathom the epoch, style, author and character. As was mentioned earlier he could portray both comic and tragic characters with equal craftsmanship. Every song or romance sung by Shaliapin was a dramatic play. A case in point is Shaliapin's performance of Glinka's "Night review". When he sings this song we perceive it as the romantic history of Napoleon, who rises from his coffin "at midnight, every night" and of his soldiers, who followed him to ruin. We also take note of the measured lines of Zhukovsky's romantic ballad, the wonderful flow of Glinka's melody, the versatility of the strophes, that represent the intensification and abatement of the great historic drama contained within the limited boundaries of this vocal-dramatic narrative. But when we listen to the song "Along the Peterskaya Street" we find ourselves falling under the spell of dashing merriment and the spaciousness and might of the national Russian character. Into the singing of this song Shaliapin puts all his life experience, all his wanderings among the Volga wharves, his knowledge of life and the people, the fervency of passion. When he snigs, Russian landscapes seem to unfold before our gaze and in the artful, perky and forceful intonations of the song the hero of the song stands out in all his strength and glory. And every time Shaliapin himself takes delight in this invincible might. He was also invariably stirred anew by the tragedy

of the two grenadiers and the old corporal or by the mysterious appearance of Shubert's "Double". In the same way the tragedy of the Miller, Boris and Don Quixote (in the opera the Jules Massenet wrote especially for him in 1910) never failed to impress him with new force every time he sang the parts.

A Russian genius and an artist with a profoundly national approach to life and art Shaliapin had the quality, that elevates all people engaged in Russian art: remaining a Russian he, nevertheless, was able to fathom the spirit and character of other nations. Embodying the finest characters of Russian opera he always wanted to portray heroes of Greek tragedy and Shakespearian characters on the opera stage. His dearest wish was to play Lear and Oedipus.

When the conversation turns on Shaliapin, people who have heard him sing, recall all the elements that lent special power to his singing and acting. Among these elements they name his art of declamation, gestures and mimicry, noble stature, grace of movement and excellent make-up. All this was not only a gift of nature, but of great art too and the result of his exacting attitude to all that involved the moulding of a character. And in this too Shaliapin was helped by his talent of producer, precise notion of what he sought to achieve and aptitude for the plastic arts. He drew well, catching a likeness with surprising preciseness. He used to draw cartoons of himself and sketches of the make-up and costumes for his roles. He had that rare ability of viewing himself detachedly. He also showed an interest in modelling. He listened to advice given to him by painters Serov, Korovin, Vrubel... The general appearance of Demon in Rubinstein's opera was suggested by Vrubel's canvases. Shaliapin in his writings tells us this himself. Preparing to play Godunov he sought the advice of the well-known historian Kluchevsky and in his fancy transposed himself into the 17th century. Shaliapin's books make it clear that he achieved success by constantly searching for perfection. He always aspired to reach the core of the matter but finding a generalization, he would, nevertheless, retain a concrete approach to the subject of his research. Thus, when he was working at the role of Basilio in "The Barber of Seville", he asked the administration of the theatre to buy a donkey. According to Shaliapin's conception the public was meant to catch a glimpse of the scandal-monger through the windows of Doctor Bartolo's drawing-room. He was to be seen seated on a donkey, burdened with many baskets and parcels carrying goods and gossip from the market. His imagination of producer seemed to have no bounds. It frequently happened that Shaliapin's ideas never materialized because they were bogged down by the routinism of the theatre administration. The quoted incident was no exception — the directorate refused to buy a donkey saying that its upkeep would be too expensive. Nevertheless, due to his persistence and categorical requests, that were frequently interpreted as his caprices or coarseness, he managed to realize many of his ideas.

In the history of the world theatre Shaliapin appears before us as a unique phenomenon not only by force of his innovatory talent and the reform he brought about. He occupies a special place in art because he was a superb actor of the musical drama, an actor of unsurpassed and unprecedented merit. Shaliapin's creative work is one of the most powerful expressions of Russian realism. He served this trend loyally, staunchly believing in its inexhaustible resources. In this connection Shaliapin stated: "I cannot even imagine that this immortal tradition, that brings the live soul of the actor, the soul of man and the god-like word into focus on the stage, may one day wane".

Shaliapin like Maxim Gorki, emerged from the very midst of the masses and reached the heights of world fame. And though in his young years he could not afford a formal education he created masterpieces, that have gone down in the history of Russian and world culture, symbolizing a whole epoch in art. In a letter to Shaliapin, Gorki wrote: "You are the first in Russian music as Tolstoi is the first in literature... In Russian art Shaliapin, like Pushkin, symbolizes an epoch". In an other letter Gorki, standing up for Shaliapin's honour, wrote: "Fedor Ivanovich Shaliapin will always be what he is — a dazzlingly bright and joyous cry heard throughout the world: 'Such is Rus, such is her people — freedom and a bright future to them!' Gorki also said that Shaliapin was a national symbol.

And, really, Shaliapin's national quality is not comparable with anything in musical art. There seems to be no cleavage of opinion in the appraisal of Shaliapin. People with different tastes and of different generations, that like different musical forms

and different performers, are all unanimous in their appraisal of Shaliapin. His art is unfadingly new, bold, profound and easily understood by all. His every performance is a new discovery of such perfection that the more one listens to his singing the more merits one finds in it. Repetition does not lessen the effect of his wonderful creative work, that seems to become more profound with time.

The All-Union Recording Studio of the firm "Melodiya" has issued a series of Fedor Shaliapin's records. The recordings of 1901 — 1936 have been collected and restored. It is the most complete collection of F. Shaliapin's performances to be ever issued. Naturally, even the finest recording cannot substitute for the live performance of the singer. Nevertheless, these records are very impressive. The repertory of the series is so vast that even the most enthusiastic fans of the great singer will, undoubtedly, be satisfied. Here you will find vocal works that the singer never sang in Russia and, at the same time, works that I doubt that foreign audiences have ever heard. Listening to the records in their chronological sequence you will be able to retrace his career and come to understand how Shaliapin became Shaliapin. You will have the opportunity to hear him sing three parts in the same opera, a feat he could never accomplish during an opera performance. It is a well-known fact that sometimes during a single performance he would sing the parts of Boris and Varlaam. But thanks to the records you will be able to hear him sing the arias of Boris, Varlaam and Pimen into the bargain. You will also hear the arias of Igor, Konchak and Galitsky from the opera "Prince Igor". You will be able to compare Shaliapin's performance of Ruslan's part and Farlaf's part (opera "Ruslan and Ludmilla") and the two

Mephistopheles of Arrigo Boito and Charles Gounod. You will also be able to retrace Shaliapin's musical development by hearing how he sang the same vocal works, "The Flea" for example, in different years.

This collection includes folk and professional music, Russian and foreign music, secular and sacred music. Music of different schools, styles and trends, pertaining to the 17th, 18th and 20th centuries are well represented here. The singer performs the vocal works of Russian composers Glinka, Dargomyzhsky, Serov, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Rubinstein, Rachmaninov, Glazunov, Liapunov, Grechaninov, Artemy Vedel, Arkhangelsky and Strokina. You will also find here songs and romances by less eminent composers: Keneman, Lishin, Sokolov, Slonov, Malashkin and Manykin-Nevstruev. By his superb performance Shaliapin elevated these works to the heights of true art.

The German and Austrian schools are represented by the works of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Brahms. The Italian school is represented by arias from operas by Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, and Boito. The French composers, whose works Shaliapin recorded are: Rouget de Lille, Meyerbeer, Gounod, Delibes, Massenet, Ibert. English music is represented by "The blind ploughman" by Clark. Unfortunately, not everything that Shaliapin sang had been recorded in his day. No recordings of even such important works as Ivan the Terrible from "The Maid of Pskov", Dosifei from "Khovanshchina", Olofern from Serov's opera "Judith" and Salieri were made. Neither will you find here the recordings of "The Forgotten One", "The Captain", "The Seminarian", "The Gallery", "The Worm" and "The Titular Counsellor".

A special place in this series is occupied by fragments from the opera "Boris Godunov", that was recorded at the Covent Garden Theatre in London in 1928. This record differs from the other records due to its historical character. The pauses, the moving away from the microphone, sound of foot-steps on the stage and the crash of a falling bench do not impede the general impression because all this background noise brings with it the atmosphere of the theatre. The silence of the audience that is held spell-bound by Shaliapin's acting and singing and the singer's spontaneous inspiration, that can be readily guessed, single out this record from the other discs, which, though better from a technical point of view, fail to convey the atmosphere of inspiredness of the public and the singer.

The tragedy of this greatest of singers — the parting with his native land, with which his art was unseparably linked, led to unfortunate results: with few exceptions Shaliapin recorded in other countries only works that he had previously created in Russia. On his death-bed he bitterly regretted that he had not created his own theatre and yet this is not quite so. It is true that he did not create a concrete theatre in which he could realize his ideas of producer and actor, but his impact upon the musical theatre of our country and the world was great. After Shaliapin it is no longer possible to act and sing in the way it had been customary before his vocal and theatre reform. And though his acting could not be recorded, Shaliapin's voice will forever preserve for us, who have never seen him on the stage, the greatness of his synthetic art for as the famous critic V. Stassov said, Shaliapin's musicality, vocal and dramatic endowments are foremostly present in the "gigantic expression of his singing".