

# COUNT ORLOV

## THE MUSICAL

### SYNOPSIS

#### ACT I

The action takes place during the reign of Catherine the Great. Count Alexei Orlov, who helped put Catherine on the throne, currently heads the Russian Navy at the Italian port of Livorno as general in chief. Orlov, who has fallen out of favor with the empress, considers himself to be in honorary exile.

A group of Polish émigrés headed by Prince Radziwill, who, along with his friend Domanski, refer to Orlov as the root of all evil, for it was Orlov who brought Catherine to the throne, the latter of which who forced them to flee Poland.

There is a beautiful young woman admired by everybody in the center of the Polish circle. Noticing this, Orlov sends his sidekick Ivan to find out who she is. Ivan returns to say that the woman is well-known in Europe, having left a trail of amorous adventures behind her. She appears in different countries under different names and in Italy she is known as Princess Elizabeth.

In the company of his friends, Radziwill waves a document declaring Elizabeth as Peter the Great's rightful heir. Elizabeth fantasizes about her royal future and plans on marching to St. Petersburg with Radziwill. For this, they need the support of the Russian navy led by Count Orlov. Knowing how unhappy Orlov is with his situation, they assume that he also considers Catherine to be the enemy. Elizabeth immediately decides to write to him.

Orlov receives the letter calling on him to join her campaign, but he laughs at the impostor. Together with Ivan, Orlov plans to lure Elizabeth into a trap and win back the empress' good grace.

Meanwhile in St. Petersburg, Catherine hears news of a new challenger to the throne, a young woman claiming to be Peter's granddaughter. Catherine dictates an angry letter to Count Orlov to bring the impostor to the capital in chains and dispatches it to Italy by special delivery.

Orlov pays a visit to Elizabeth. He pretends to have accepted her offer. In response, she promises him an excellent career. Domanski, however, suspects a trap. Radziwill mocks Domanski's apprehension as being comparable to a lover's jealousy.

Catherine, who knows Radziwill as a ruthless and egotistic man, writes to him, promising to return everything that has been taken from him in exchange for Elizabeth. He accepts her offer without thinking twice.

The game of love between Orlov and Elizabeth quickly becomes an all-consuming passion, so much so that when Orlov receives Catherine's order to arrest the impostor, he has already forgotten about his devious plot. Ivan, though, reports that everything is ready according to plan; Elizabeth will be arrested tomorrow when she arrives at the ship to accept the allegiance of the Russian navy. Orlov's face falls as he realizes with desperation that he cannot prevent the inevitable.

Ivan suggests that Orlov not come to the ship that next day as everything can be done without his participation. Orlov agrees.

#### ACT II

Moscow celebrates Maslenitsa (the outset of Lent). Count Orlov, who pines for Elizabeth, celebrates the event with the crowd before leaving for St. Petersburg.

In St. Petersburg Elizabeth is imprisoned at the Peter and Paul Fortress. She also pines for Orlov, racked by uncertainty. Prince Golitsyn, the governor of the fortress, questions her about her true identity. He also questions the arrested Domanski about who prompted the impostor to claim the Russian crown. Domanski adamantly claims that it was Count Orlov.

During a card game at the palace, Catherine tries to get Prince Radziwill to reveal Elizabeth's true identity. He claims not to know and succeeds in persuading Catherine to release his friend Domanski.

Orlov appears at Catherine's palace. Catherine sends him to the Peter and Paul Fortress in order to persuade Elizabeth to confess to everything in exchange for her freedom.

In the cell, the lovers fall into each other's arms. Elizabeth is convinced that her torment has come to an end and they are free to be together again, but it suddenly dawns on her that it was Orlov who lured her into a trap, and that even now he has come to her under the empress' orders. Orlov admits as much, but pleads with Elizabeth to give up her identity for the sake of their love.

But it's too late. Learning of Orlov's betrayal, she bids him goodbye, and shortly thereafter takes her own life.

The bells ring. Maslenitsa is followed by Forgiveness Sunday. Catherine asks each and every person, the entire country, for forgiveness. Certain she is right, all her deeds, she explains, were done for the good of Russia.

All, but Orlov accept this. He wanders aimlessly with a face darkened by grief, repeating his oath of love over and over like a spell. "I love you, my happiness...I love you, my joy..."

Libretto - Yuliy Kim  
Music - Roman Ignatyev  
Director - Alina Chevik  
Choreographer - Irina Korneeva  
Set Design - Vyacheslav Okunev

*Presented in Russian with English subtitles.  
The film will run for 123 minutes.*

