

# Russian tenor likes it here, longs for family

By Mary Jane Doerr  
special writer

"Please, no political, no defecation," said Vyacheslav M. Polozov in broken English, somehow without irritation.

The Ukrainian emigre is in town to sing the role of Rodolfo in "La Bohème" Saturday evening at Mason Temple with Michigan Opera Theatre.

The role has become his "calling card" in America since he sang it for his American operatic debut at the Chicago Lyric Opera and won rave reviews. Polozov loves to sing Puccini's music.

In May of 1986 the then 36-year-old winner of the Madame Butterfly Competition in Tokyo entered a po-

lice station in the United States and asked for asylum, leaving his wife and son, Stanislav, behind in Minsk and his mother in his nearby village. He knew little about America except for what he had read in Feodor Chalapin's book. The famous Russian bass died in 1938.

Since he came here, Polozov has made his Metropolitan Opera debut and finished his recording of the Russian opera "Boris Godunov" with Mstislav Rostropovich. On a previous trip out of the Soviet Union to sing at La Scala in Milan, he met his first American manager who secured his initial bookings.

"Here in America I have freedom to take any job, freedom to sing in original language, no regulations," Polozov said.



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As the "house tenor" in Minsk, Polozov had to sing operas such as "La Traviata" and "Rigoletto" in Russian, not in the original Italian.

"It is different there. Everyday you go to theater," Polozov said. "Here I say David (DiChiera) I want to go to Atlanta to sing with Renata Scotti. Maybe he not like it but he say OK I can go anywhere I want here."

THE DARK HAired, robustly built Polozov is gentle and kindly in manner and rather soft spoken, but his eyes light up when he talks about his homeland.

"When you are a good singer, you have things in Russia — medicine, apartment," Polozov said.

Polozov was recognized in the U.S.S.R. as one of the top singers before he left. He attended music school in his hometown, which he spells in English. Then he served in the Red Army for two years before he attended the Conservatory in Kiev.

After school, he worked three

years in the Kiev Opera when he became the only tenor to win the All Russian Glinka Competition. This brought him a contract at Moscow's famed Bolshoi Opera.

"The Bolshoi is a fantastic place to sing. The Russian people are not like this," said Polozov demonstrating friendliness by a pat on the back. "But they have a very good heart inside."

Polozov's father was a ship mechanic and his mother works at a train station. She loves to sing Russian folk songs with guitar accompaniment.

"During the war everything went like this," said Polozov showing a breaking motion with his hands and arms. "In Russia things were very hard for them."

Polozov is close to his family and friends. Several times a week he telephones his wife. He wants her and their son to join him here.

"When my wife will come to America, I want to sing recitals. She is a pianist."

POLLOZOV WANTS to introduce some of the little known Russian composers to American audiences. He plans to give recitals of Russian folk songs. He also wants to make a record of American songs and sing in "My Fair Lady."

Life has been good, but not easy for Polozov since he took up New York City residency. In early February, two hours before a Lincoln Center concert of Ukrainian music, his Russian-speaking manager, Alexis Skidan, who had done so much for him, died.

"It was not easy to go on stage, but the Russian music was beautiful," said Polozov. "The opera ends with a prayer 'To Thee, Our Father, we are pleading in tears, we're earnestly beseeching. Bring us to our homeland's fertile shore.'"

Polozov pauses before commenting on whether he would leave the U.S.S.R. if he had it to do over again.

"It has been very hard to be separated from my family, but professionally it is all so interesting here in America."

## Artists win awards

Cash awards totaling \$4,950 were presented to 12 artists at the opening reception of the Michigan Water Color Society exhibition last week. The juror was Jan van der Marek, curator of 20th century art, Detroit Institute of Arts.

The winners were: Vicki Brett, Ann Arbor, \$1,000; Mary Aro, Harper Woods, \$400; Barbara Keidan, Birmingham, \$500; Janet Swanson, Saginaw, \$500; Bertha

Cohen, Bloomfield Hills, \$500; Ellen Mouscoulis, Belleville, \$500; Shirley Magder, Oak Park, \$300; Barbara Nigro, Bloomfield Hills, \$300; Margaret Vega, Grand Rapids, \$250; Karin Bodyscombe, Ann Arbor, \$200; and Claire Strasser, Bloomfield Hills, \$100.

The exhibit will be on display at the Community Arts Gallery, 5451 Cass at Kirby, Wayne State University campus, through June 3.

## Madrigal Singers give final concert



Nina Machus

The final concert by the Cranbrook Kingswood Madrigals begins at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Greek Theatre, 400 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.

A Cranbrook Kingswood tradition, the Madrigals have become known locally and throughout the state for their melodic renditions of short madrigal compositions. This will be their last public appearance, due to the retirement of their leader and director, Nina Machus.

The concert will feature a solo by each senior, who will reflect on her days at Cranbrook Kingswood. In addition to honoring the seniors, the concert will include variety of selections. Locals will be the Greek Theatre, patterned after the Greeks' concept of theater in the round.

The public is welcome. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$3 for students. For information, call 645-3220.

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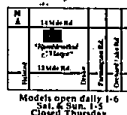
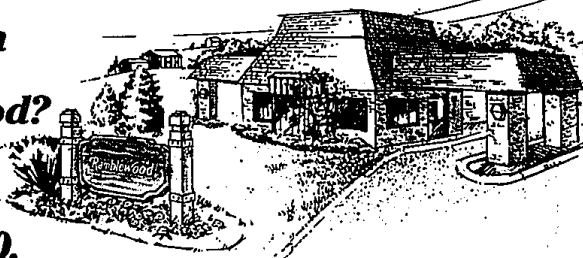
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