



Svetlana Zakharova

Prima ballerina with the Bolshoi Ballet. Born in Lutsk, Ukrainian SSR, USSR. Zakharova started ballet at the age of 10. She has won many international prizes and performs at famous theaters around the world. When in Japan, Zakharova likes to travel by Shinkansen bullet train and go to *onsen*, Japanese hot springs, with her friends.

Svetlana Zakharova in Spartacus. © Damir Yusupov.

Graceful Ballerina Bridges Japan and Russia

“Our countries, although very different, share a love for art.” Svetlana Zakharova, prima ballerina with the Bolshoi Ballet, remembers the enthusiastic audiences flocking to her first performance in Japan in 1996 as “one of the biggest discoveries of my life. I encountered Japan as a country advanced not only in technology, but also in artistic perception.” Now, when visiting Japan for her own work, Zakharova makes time to take in concerts and ballet performances by the world’s leading artists. “Japanese people love art; they understand art. Visiting Kyoto, this impressed me in a different way. Japan’s former capital preserves thousands of years of history and tradition. My country shares this deep appreciation for treasures and lore of

the past.” Zakharova also finds Russian and Japanese people’s quest for perfection a point in common. “Seeking to give our best performance, we never stop trying to improve ourselves.”

As Zakharova has worked regularly with a major theater, artists, and choreographers in Japan, keeping good relationships with them personally is important for her. In addition, she takes part in various activities to bring people in Japan and Russia closer through ballet. With the enthusiastic support of President Vladimir Putin, Russia has decided to implement “Russian Seasons” cultural events in countries around the world, Japan being selected as the first venue. The project offers more than 200 events introducing art



Zakharova and her husband Repin, a world-renowned violinist, paid Prime Minister Shinzo Abe a courtesy call after the opening of Russian Seasons. Prime Minister Abe told Zakharova that he was deeply moved by her performance.

and culture to people in Japan and leads to “Russia Year in Japan” and “Japan Year in Russia,” the two countries’ bilateral year of culture in 2018, featuring major culture, education, and sport events. Zakharova danced “Giselle” after the Russian Seasons opening ceremony in June 2017. “I was truly honored to perform for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Japanese people.”

Zakharova will perform in Japan again in September 2017 at the Trans-Siberian Art Festival, part of Russian Seasons. The festival, for which Zakharova’s husband, Vadim Repin, serves artistic director, was started in Novosibirsk, Russia four years ago. In the way that the Trans-Siberian Railway connects east and west, the festival seeks to become a bridge of friendship between people through art. “We started it in Russia

and didn’t expect to have it in other countries so soon, so I am very pleased.” Zakharova will perform “Amore,” a modern ballet program consisting of three vignettes in different styles. “I’m so thrilled that I will be able to hear from Japanese audiences how they feel, as they will see a new me in this program, one I’ve never performed in Japan,” Zakharova says.

For Zakharova, Japan is a totally different world. “I have a new impression every time I visit the country. This difference makes us more interested in each other, and as a result, we try to understand each other better. Russia and Japan have had strong ties in art for a long time. But now it’s officially recognized by the two countries that art and culture can bring people closer together. This has great significance, and I am very proud to be part of it.”



Zakharova and her husband Repin, greet the audience at the Trans-Siberian Art Festival. The festival started in Novosibirsk, Russia and now is held in Japan and other countries, as well as in Russia.