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***Great Performances* Explores Two Historic Music Events in New Documentaries About Soprano Maria Callas and Pianist Vladimir Horowitz**

Great Performances: The Magic of Callas premieres Friday, January 15, 2021 on PBS

Great Performances: The Magic of Horowitz premieres Friday, January 22, 2021 on PBS

This winter, ***Great Performances*** shines a spotlight on international music icons **Maria Callas** and **Vladimir Horowitz** with two concert documentaries exploring the stories behind the most remarkable performances of their lives, premiering Fridays, January 15 and 22, 2021 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), pbs.org/gperf and the PBS Video app. Both films are introduced by **Peter Gelb**, currently General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, as well as Vladimir Horowitz's former manager. In 1964, opera sensation Maria Callas hadn't performed in more than two years due to her tumultuous personal life. Critics were concerned that she had lost her voice until she made her return with a sensational performance at Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden. And more than 60 years since his departure from Russia, legendary pianist Vladimir Horowitz finally made his homecoming return in April 1986 with a concert at the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow.

Premiering Friday, January 15 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), ***Great Performances: The Magic of Callas***, documents the soprano's triumphant return to the

stage for an extraordinary performance of Giacomo Puccini's "Tosca." Through performance footage recorded from the opera's second act and original interviews with opera luminaries **Thomas Hampson**, **Kristine Opolais** and **Rolando Villazón**, singer-songwriter **Rufus Wainwright** and Royal Opera House music director **Antonio Pappano**, the film reveals why this performance cemented Callas' place as one of opera's finest voices of all time. The program tells the story behind Callas' surprise return to the opera stage after her illustrious career was said to be over and her romance with billionaire boyfriend Aristotle Onassis was generating headlines, instead of her vocal virtuosity. Callas wanted to show the world that the title of *prima donna assoluta* was still rightfully hers. With the condition that acclaimed director **Franco Zeffirelli** stage the production, the legendary diva once again stepped into the difficult role of Tosca. Fans who waited outside for up to five winter nights to obtain the sought-after tickets witnessed one of the most dramatic acts in opera history.

Great Performances: The Magic of Horowitz, premiering Friday, January 22 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), delves into the story behind Horowitz' virtuoso 1986 Moscow concert. The documentary weaves together concert footage, including intimate close-ups of Horowitz' agile hands interspersed with the emotional audience reactions, historical context and original interviews with Horowitz' former manager **Peter Gelb** (Metropolitan Opera) as well as composer **Tatjana Komarova**, violoncellist **Alina Kudelevic** and contemporary piano virtuosos **Martha Argerich**, **Daniil Trifonov** and **Sophie Pacini**.

Recent meetings between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev provided hope that the Cold War was coming to an end, and Horowitz' return to Russia was seen as a way to help open the door between the two superpowers. The concerts marked the first time in years that one of the world's leading romantic pianists performed live on stage. Horowitz put together a demanding program featuring works by leading classical composers Scarlatti, Mozart, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Schubert, Liszt, and Chopin, selected for their private meaning to him. ***Great Performances: The Magic of Horowitz*** spotlights this magnificent and historic performance.

Throughout its more than 40-year history on PBS, ***Great Performances*** has provided an unparalleled showcase of the best in all genres of the performing arts, serving as America's most prestigious and enduring broadcaster of cultural programming. The series is available for streaming simultaneously on all station-branded PBS platforms, including pbs.org and the PBS Video app, which is available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, and Chromecast. PBS station members can view episodes via Passport (contact your local PBS station for details). ***Great Performances*** is produced by THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET. John Walker is Senior Producer, Bill O'Donnell is series producer and David Horn is executive producer.

Great Performances: The Magic of Callas and ***The Magic of Horowitz*** are productions of Sounding Images in co-production with C Major Entertainment and ZDF/ARTE. Produced by Claus Wischmann, ***The Magic of Callas*** is directed by Holger Preusse; ***The Magic of Horowitz*** is co-directed by Preusse and Philipp Quiring.

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Websites: <http://pbs.org/gperf>, [facebook.com/GreatPerformances](https://www.facebook.com/GreatPerformances), [@GPerfPBS](https://www.instagram.com/GPerfPBS)
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