

A ROYAL PRINCE IGOR

It's a production full of firsts. The first time costume designer Deirdre Clancy has worked at the Royal Opera House; ditto for set designer Liviu Ciulei. As well as the first time they have worked together as designers. And when Alexander Borodin's opera, *Prince Igor*, opens on 1 February 1990 at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, it will mark the first time since 1946 that the Royal Opera and the Royal Ballet have collaborated on a new production.

Also the first time that Clancy has worked with director Andrei Serban, *Prince Igor* will be the largest production she has ever designed. She has been shuttling between London and Rome supervising the construction of the more than 600 costumes *Prince Igor* requires. "The costumes for the principals, the ballet and the children are being built at the Royal Opera House costume shops," Clancy explains, "while the 500 costumes for the chorus and the extras are being made at Tirelli's in Rome.

"Italy may be the best country to make costumes. I like the Italian attitude toward design, their generosity in fabric, and willingness to use great colors." Once the costumes are completed, a team of fitters will come from Rome to put the final touches on at the Royal Opera House.

"I wanted a medieval look without it being a cliché," says Clancy, who looked at pictures of Russian folk costumes and then designed "her own version of the 11th century. The clothes are not copies of ethnic costumes, they were invented by me but they look convincing." Clancy used mostly natural fabrics, some with stencilling to achieve a patterned look.

"The set has a simple classical design," which according to Clancy gave her great freedom in terms of the costumes. Set designer Liviu Ciulei agrees that his set, like Clancy's costumes, has a Russian feeling without being too specific. "It could be a church, a fortified tower, or a bell tower," says Ciulei, the Roumanian-born director/designer, who has scheduled his trips to London around his teaching and directing duties at the New York University School of the Arts in New York City. "The set for *Prince Igor* has a modern, neutral look, with straight, angular lines, yet no historical or archaeological precision," says Ciulei, who specified unpainted English pine for the set which is being built by Bert Richman in Wimbledon. "The use of wood evokes 16th to 18th-century wooden churches, for a rough primitive spirit without specific folk details.

"Based on a ballad from the 14th century, *Prince Igor* is very much a 19th-century opera. It would be wrong to modernize it completely."

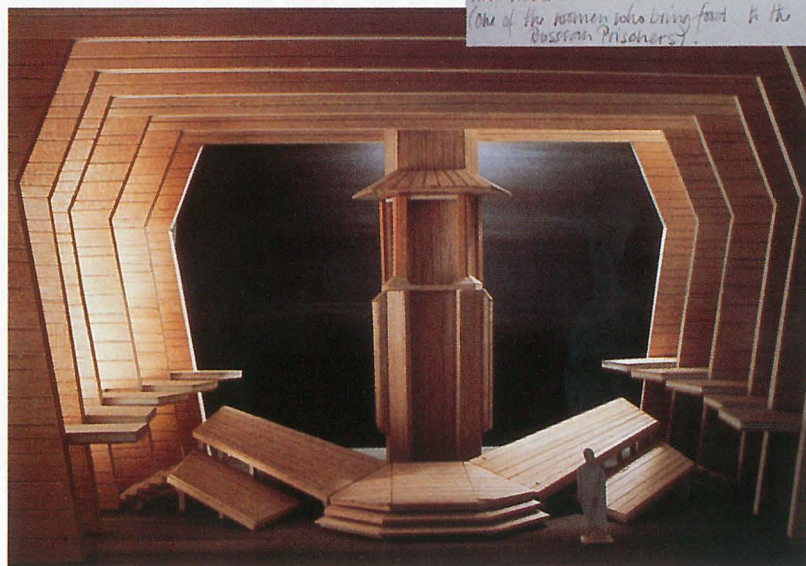


KATIE VANDYKE



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Act II
One of the women who bring food to the Russian prisoners.



ELLEN LAMPERT