On March 2, 2024, for the first time ever the main TV channels in the UAE, Dubai TV and Dubai One, will air a Russian series 'Chaliapin' in English with Arabic subtitles.
The eight-episode drama will be shown during prime time on Saturdays and Sundays, a few days before the start of the Holy month of Ramadan, across the Middle East and North Africa. The series will also be available on the Dubai Media Incorporated platform.

Chaliapin

Produced by: Moskino Film Company

Genre: Drama

Length: 8x50'

Format: HD

Director: Egor Anashkin

Screenwriters: Timur Ezugbaya, Natalya Nazarova

Producers: Ekaterina Zhukova, Anton Zlatopolsky, Maria Ushakova

Cameraman: Maxim Shinkorenko

Cast: Alexander Gorbatov, Yulia Snigir, Maria Smolnikova, Fyodor Lavrov, Yan Tsapnik, Alexander Yatsenko, Fyodor Dobronravov, Maria Paley, Klim Berdinsky, etc.

Synopsis

Fyodor Chaliapin's life is a battlefield where every day he fights his demons, society, and himself. The unmatched talent and strong character make him the main star of Imperial Theaters. The boy from the gutter works his way up to the very top. Chaliapin's powerful voice amazes everyone and soon the whole world knows his name. But fame and success only bring him trouble as the singer struggles to choose between two beloved women. The genius' restless soul is constantly torn between wealth and poverty, kindness and bitterness, loyalty and affair.

Trailer

The Genius Son of the Russian Land

Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin (1873 - 1938) was a Russian opera and chamber singer who became a true symbol of Russian culture at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. His art majorly influenced the world of opera. He was the leading soloist of Russia's two main theaters, the Bolshoi and the Mariinsky. His deep bass voice was known and loved in Italy, France, Germany, the US, and the United Kingdom. Sergei Prokofiev, Anton Rubinstein, Charlie Chaplin, and future English King Edward VI admired him deeply.

After the October Revolution of 1917, Chaliapin could not accept the Bolsheviks authority. In 1922, he left Petrograd to tour internationally and never returned to his homeland. Every city he visited greeted Chaliapin warmly. The crowds of admirers followed him around. The great singer died of leukemia in 1938 in Paris. Thousands of Parisians came to say goodbye to him. His tombstone at the Batignolles Cemetery in Paris, says: "To the genius son of the Russian land.".

Chaliapin's singing is a truly brilliant artistic transformation, very emotional and sincere.

> *«Chaliapin's art is an unprecedented phenomenon, impossible to describe and completely unmatched. It's an amazing blend of sincere emotions, noble spirit, immense creative energy, and, most importantly, the divine spark of genuine talent and immense personal charm—captivating and surreal.»*
>
> **Daily Telegraph, 1925**

The strength and tone of Chaliapin's voice were so powerful that the singer could blow out candles at the other end of the ballroom or shatter a glass when hitting a high note. Fyodor Ivanovich amazed audiences with both his powerful voice and his amazing ability to transform. He was one of the first performers to use makeup not only on his face but on his hands and body as well. The singer seemed to build his face from scratch.

«When I stepped onto the stage in my costume and makeup, it caused a real sensation. Very flattering for me. Performers, choir members, even workers surrounded me, exclaiming and admiring, like children; they touched me with their fingers and when they saw that even my muscles were fake, they were completely thrilled.»

© Fyodor Chaliapin

In the film, Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin is portrayed by **Alexander Gorbatov**. It wasn't easy to find an actor for such a challenging role..

«The auditions lasted for six months, and we chose and approved actors for all roles except the main one. After six months of trial and error, reviewing everyone possible, we finally settled on Alexander Gorbatov. Sasha brilliantly and completely immersed himself in the role. The vocal parts for Chaliapin are performed by Ildar Abdrazakov, a star of the world opera stage. Experts say that his deep bass is remarkably close in sound to Chaliapin's bass.»

Producer Maria Ushakova

«We don't know much about Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin... For me, it was important to understand and feel what kind of person he was. How he loved, how he hated, what Russia meant to him... I was realizing with each new scene in the script that playing a personality of such greatness is an incredible acting opportunity. You wouldn't find another one like him.

I really wanted to find some internal conflict, even a sin in him. I believe that my character needed to prove a lot, first and foremost to himself. In any case, I am playing a person of immense magnitude who was able to challenge the entire world.»

Alexander Gorbatov

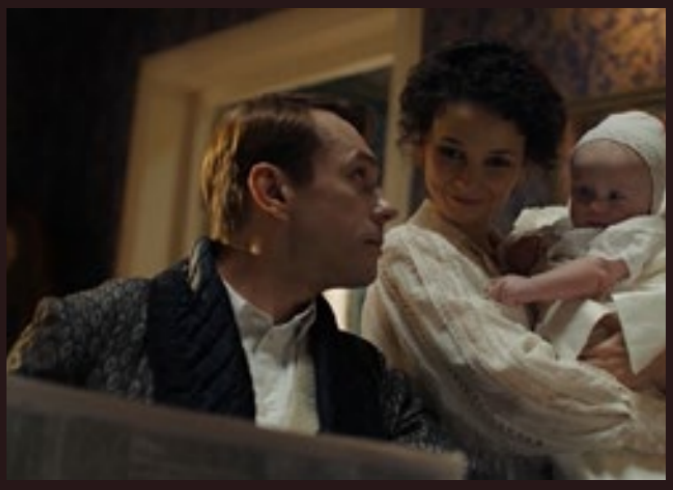
The Plot

Fyodor Chaliapin was born into a poor family in Kazan.

His father tries to find a job for little Fyodor, but the boy fails to be an apprentice or messenger. Instead, he sings in the church choir and dreams only of music and the theater.

Fyodor comes to the capital with no money. When he performs at a concert, the audience is astonished by his strong bass. But his talent shines the brightest in a private opera, a new project supported by patron Savva Mamontov.

The fame of the Russian bass is growing, and passions are raging around him. Chaliapin falls in love and marries an Italian ballerina named Iola, who is willing to give up her career for him.



But a happy family life gets interrupted by a sudden romance with his fan, Maria. Passion turns the great singer's life upside down.

He is torn between two women and two families, unable to choose only one of them.

Creators about the Series

«Chaliapin' isn't exactly a biography, though we aimed to include the main moments from Fyodor Ivanovich's life and his relationships. We were particularly interested in the time itself. The film is set in the Silver Age, a flourishing period for the Russian culture, with all the ups and downs of the early 20th century»

Producer Ekaterina Zhukova

«"Even though 'Chaliapin' is a historical film, the topics and questions we address resonate with nowadays. Our movie tells the success story of a person born into a peasant family who managed achieved unimaginable heights thanks to talent and hard work.

But if you're a famous person, you're destined to be in the public eye: people watch you all the time, and sometimes your reputation is beyond your control. Chaliapin had inner strength: when he faced failures, stumbled on his path, he would rise and keep going. That's the magnitude of his personality. Never give up! I think it's an inspiring message to the audience.»

Director Egor Anashkin

Actors and Their Roles

Iola Tornagi

Maria Smolnikova

«I admire my character. In Chaliapin she saw not just talent but a light that she couldn't forget. This love illuminated her and gave her the strength to radically change her life. For him, she left her career, her beloved passion, family, and friends. Chaliapin was the dearest person on earth to her, that's how she felt. Despite all the challenges in their relationship, she remained devoted to him until the very end. That's her strength.»

Maria Petzold

Yulia Snigir

«Who is my character? Was she a cunning woman who saw a successful, interesting man and decided to have him? Or she couldn’t simply live without him? Maybe there was some force preventing her from resisting the feelings? She justifies herself by truly loving Chaliapin, of course.»

Konstantin Korovin

Alexander Yatsenko

«My character is very straightforward; he is always honest and tells Chaliapin what others can't. He is incredibly sincere with his friend. They share a strong, genuine friendship, yet they constantly argue and make up. In fact, their friendship started with some foolish conflict when Korovin smiled back at rude Chaliapin, recognizing the light and talent within him.»

Mamont Dalskiy

Yan Tsapnik

An eccentric actor, he performed at the Maly Theatre in Moscow and the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. He was a friend and drama teacher of Chaliapin’s.

«Mamont Dalsky is an extraordinary, unique person, a very selfish man and an anarchist. He was partly mad but undeniably talented and brilliant. He played a crucial role in Chaliapin's fate, teaching Fyodor Ivanovich the art of acting. Chaliapin captivated audiences not only with his voice but also by literally living on stage. Unlike other opera performers of that time, he wasn't a costumed puppet. On stage, he transformed, fully embodying the character he portrayed.»

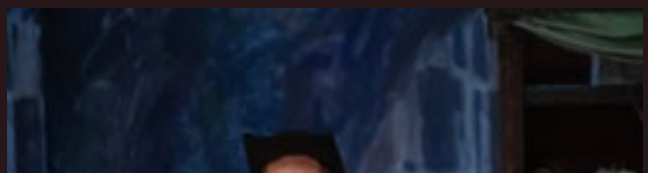
Isay Dvorishchin

Fyodor Lavrov

«Isay is the secretary of Fyodor Ivanovich, who dedicated his entire life to Chaliapin's talent. He deeply respected and valued the singer, remaining loyal and devoted to him even after his emigration. While Chaliapin was a short-tempered person with powerful energy, my character is more calm and thoughtful. They formed a good team... Our film will reveal an unknown side of Chaliapin to the audience. Few people know about his life, friends, love life, and struggles.»

Costumes and Makeup

When bringing real characters to screen, the makeup crew worked hard to make them look as close as possible to their portraits and photos. They not only used regular makeup but also employed theatrical prosthetics, especially when transforming Chaliapin into various opera characters.



One of the main challenges for the makeup team was to emphasize the contrast between Chaliapin's two loves: Iola and Maria. For Yulia Snigir’s look, who played the singer's lover, they chose a vibrant makeup look with red lips and cool waves in her hair. Her wardrobe is marked by bold red and black colors, along with eye-catching accessories.

For Maria Smolnikova, they opted for a light and natural makeup to emphasize her "softness". The singer's first wife wore clothing in light tones, featuring delicate lace blouses and classic skirts.

«It was an incredibly interesting project; we all lived through this story with its characters! We meticulously studied Chaliapin's life and his friends, not making up anything, striving to tell everything as truthfully as possible, especially when it came to the appearance of the characters. It was important for us to be accurate in the details of that era so that the audience would believe us.»

Makeup artist Artem Demidov

The project involved around 100 wigs and over 200 pieces of facial hair, mustaches, and sideburns. All costumes for the main characters were custom-made based on photos or paintings, while the extras' outfits were mostly rented. A considerable amount of footwear was also crafted –

both for the main characters and for actors in crowd scenes.

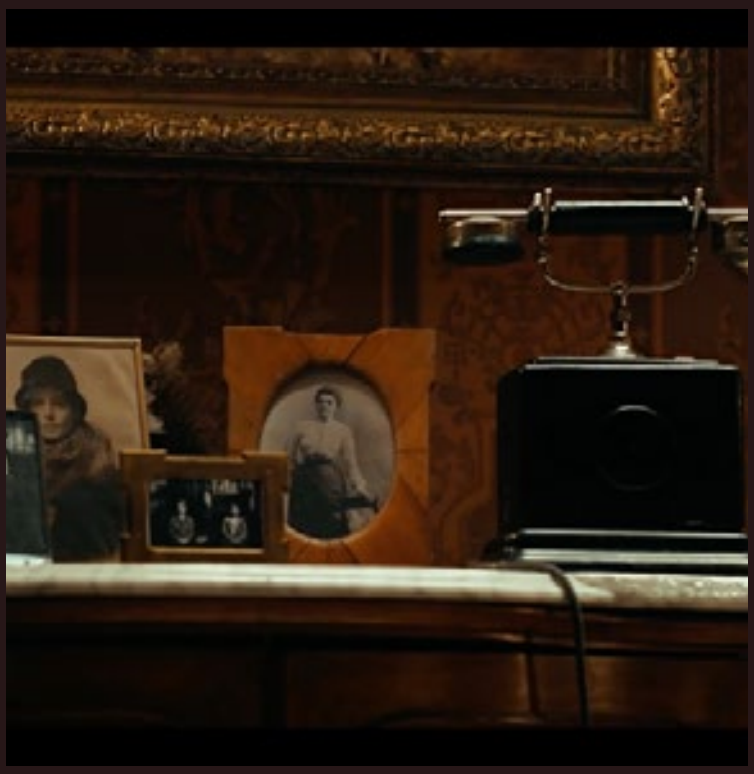
To transform the lead actor, Alexander Gorbatov, who was leaner and more robust than Chaliapin, the costume team lifted his jacket sides to make him look bigger. They lightened his hair and gave him a haircut resembling Fyodor Ivanovich's. Gorbatov also had to put on dental veneers and have gel fillers added to his gums for a perfect smile and rounded cheeks.

Fyodor Chaliapin had over 30 costumes in the series, both for daily life and stage. Chaliapin loved dressing elegantly. That’s why the main character has such an extensive wardrobe. The most valuable piece is Chaliapin's beaver fur coat from the famous portrait by Boris Kustodiev, which closely matches the original. It was found in the "Mosfilm" costume warehouse. Then craftsmen matched the coat's lining, collar, and cuffs with real beaver fur.

Shooting and Set Design, Historical Accuracy

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a remarkably beautiful and elegant period. To save this charm on screen, it was highly important to meticulously develop the visual concept of the entire project, find the right color palette, and select appropriate interiors and exteriors.

> *«The Silver Age is a period of Art Nouveau, architectural proportions, art, talented individuals, and a feeling of an upcoming tragedy. We tried our best to reflect all of this. In terms of color, we chose cool tones close to the Art Nouveau style: turquoise, lilac, gray, white, and black. Texture, color relationships, proportions – these were the key elements in creating the atmosphere of that era.»*
>
> **Production Designer Alexander Zagorsky**



The filming took place at 130 locations, in historical sites across Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kostroma, Nizhny Novgorod, Tutaev, and along the Volga River. It included the interiors of major theaters, Chaliapin's House-Museum, Repin Estate Museum, and the Vitebsk Railway Station. The film crew even put an authentic steam locomotive from that era there.

The streets of modern cities transformed into promenades from the Silver Age. The series was filmed at the square in front of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. To align with the era depicted in the series, the illumination on its facade was turned off. Moreover, thanks to modern technology, the filmmakers managed to show the Bolshoi Theatre in way cinema viewers haven't seen it before. In St. Petersburg, streets were specially closed for filming, creating entire blocks with false facades. The art department concealed distinctive modern features and added billboard stands, address plaques, signs, lanterns, sleds, and carriages, all perfectly matching the early 20th century atmosphere.

Success of the Series

The TV series premiered on February 13, 2023, on the "Russia 1" channel, and the next day on the VOD platform "Okko."

Rating

Share: 19,8 | TVR: 5,8 | IMBd: 7,8

According to Mediascope, ‘Chaliapin’ became the third most popular TV series in Russia.

Awards

National Award

TEFI, 2023

NOMINATED FOR:

Best Historical Series

Best Historical Series Actor
Alexander Gorbatov

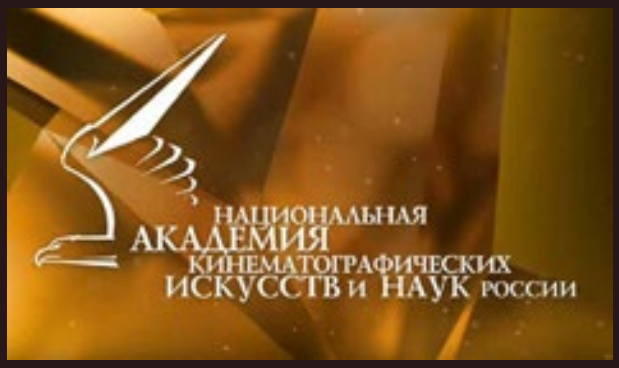
Best Historical Series Actress
Yulia Snigir

Best Series Director
Egor Anashkin

Best Series Screenwriter
Timur Ezugbaya

AWARDS:

Best Series Producer
Ekaterina Zhukova,
Anton Zlatopolsky,
Maria Ushakova



National Award

The Golden Eagle, 2023

Nominated for:

Best TV series

Best Actor
(Alexander Yatsenko)

Best Actress
(Yulia Snigir)

Viewers about the Series

«The undeniable success of the series is in its melodramatic nature. The creators are not interested in a detailed adaptation of the biography; they want to depict both the passion and the personal experiences of the singer.»

«The film turned out to be a true Chaliapin-scale, grand project, loud and gorgeous.»

«... a small role of Chaliapin's father, a cruel, drunk and tragic man, depicted by Fyodor Dobronravov, is a small masterpiece itself.»

«The excellent cinematography by Maxim Shinkorenko provides unconventional and dynamic angles. He marvelously works with shadow and light. It's also very impressive to see such small details in the set designs and interiors.»

«Alexander Gorbatov brilliantly portrays Chaliapin as a genius, but an imperfect one, with his own flaws and struggles. He showed his rebellious spirit and refusal to conform to outdated norms, a character trait his contemporaries noticed a lot about him. He was against the dull routine people called traditions. In reality, they just didn't want to move forward. Chaliapin, a naturally talented person, couldn't stand mediocrity.»

CHALIAPIN

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