**Aziz:** It is with great pleasure that I would like to introduce Mrs Tatiana Lanskaya. Laureate of an international competition, owner of a marvellous soprano, Art Director and President of the Belcanto Charitable Foundation**.** I would like to welcome you to our Oral Histories project, and this is not an interview, but a conversation with people who can tell us about the times we live in through the prism of their sensations. This project aims to record people's testimonies about the time in which we live, about their perceptions of that time. And as a historian, I say that this will be an essential source for reconstructing our era. From the mouths of eyewitnesses like you and I want to say at once that I am your fan, it is probably not surprising for you, you have an army of admirers of your amazing gift, talent. Please tell me about yourself, your family, your childhood, your youth, how did you develop your interest in your current career?

**Tatiana:** I come from a family where everyone was involved in aviation, a family of a pilot and a stewardess. My grandparents were involved in building aeroplanes. And suddenly I became interested in music. I was born in Ekaterinburg. I graduated from the central music school there in piano class. I entered the Gnessin Academy in conducting. I completed postgraduate studies at the Conservatoire as a vocalist.

After graduating from the conservatoire, I had a dilemma about whether to go to the theatre, but theatres don't always have the number of performances where you can prove yourself. I was more attracted to chamber music and concert practice. I wanted to sing concerts of amazing music, there is a lot of it, Renaissance music, Baroque music and Strauss and songs by Mendelssohn and Schubert and the French programme and Gabriel Fauré. You don't get all that in the theatre.

**Aziz:** it's amazing. Usually everyone is keen to start a career in theatre. Were you not satisfied with this framework?

**Tatiana:** Yes, and it's a very dependent speciality, just like acting. Where you depend on the director, whether the conductor likes you or not, where the coefficient of efficiency can be quite small. Unless you meet someone in the theatre who is interested in you. And there is so much amazing music in the theatre that I wanted to show exactly that, and that's why I had the idea as a post-graduate student to create a fund to promote the development of musical culture, which was called Belcanto. It was connected with me and with vocal music. The audience of our first concerts was small. It was a diploma corps.

Later on I had a wonderful concertmaster, Elena Borisova, unfortunately she is no longer here. She was a wonderful pianist and organist. And she had the idea of doing an organ concerto. Thus, organ concerts came into being. First in Moscow, in St Louis Cathedral, and then in the Glinka Museum, in the Conservatoire. And now our foundation has chosen to develop in such a way that our main activity is organ concerts. We have a whole project on organ music, for example, the Berlin Mass written for organ and choir. And a variety of concerts, ranging from elemental music with ethnic music, Japanese, Uzbek, Armenian and all of this is connected with the organ. We have installed an organ in the Darwin Museum in Moscow, where Tales of the Living Nature takes place, in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, where we do adult programmes of Pushkin's literary and musical and children's fairy tales. We were the first to occupy such a niche.

**Aziz:** no one's ever done that before?

**Tatiana:** probably yes. Our main venue is the Evangelical Lutheran Cathedral of St Peter and Paul, the German cathedral, which is in China Town.

This is our main hall, where our office is located and where we have all kinds of concerts.

**Aziz:** You manage to combine the role of artistic director, manager and performer. Do all the organisational activities fall on your shoulders?

**Tatiana:** Among other things. But we have a wonderful team.

**Aziz:** how many people work in your foundation?

**Tatiana:** before Covid, there were a lot of us. Covid forced us to minimise everything and now it's about 15 people. But at the same time we have 50 concerts every month.

**Aziz**: is it with different performers?

**Tatiana:** yes, it's different performers and different venues.

**Aziz:** do you collaborate with a lot of theatres?

**Tatiana:** with theatres and with all the organists in the world who write to us all the time. We had the oldest organist from Mexico, I can't remember his name now.

**Aziz:** Do you collaborate with the Bolshoi Theatre?

**Tatiana:** With orchestras and artists of the Bolshoi Theatre.

**Aziz:** and these activities are both international and Russian? You go on tour to Europe and other countries.

**Tatiana:** the foundation has always had this dream. To open not in any city, because in cities our programme is of interest only to the Philharmonic. For example, the Samara Philharmonic, in Yekaterinburg, they all ask us for different programmes, for example, anime music. We had the idea that we needed to show our art and our capabilities outside of Russia. Uzbekistan was chosen as the first starting point.

**Aziz:** Uzbekistan was lucky.

**Tatiana:** I was really dissuaded for a very long time. I was in Uzbekistan for the first time in 2019. And I fell in love with this country. I was not in July, I was in late September and at that time we were met by an amazing historian guide, we were all in love with him. We still have a dream to visit a non-Russian museum, we are friends with Mkrtychev. We have been friends with him since Moscow, where he worked as deputy director of the Museum of Oriental Art, where we also did a lot of projects.

**Aziz:** maybe we can give a concert there too?

**Tatiana:** He is very keen on it. We have even agreed that the piano will be brought to us from the theatre. There are subtleties here too. Savitsoky Museum. Moreover, I was so impressed and the second time I was here was in May 2022. I went to Samarkand, and ended up at the Ulugbek Observatory. It is a unique figure, it is the Leonardo da Vinci of the East. We had an idea to make a festival dedicated to him. This festival is going on, it is one concert a month, which we put on pause in summer. Why did this idea come about? We have a very interesting project that started in 2019 called Hablefest.

**Aziz:** Hubble is a telescope?

**Tatiana:** yes. they provide us with video and photos, this is open information that is provided to all mankind and we have a project called Hubblefest, that is Music of the Universe. And there is a variety of music on a variety of instruments. And duduk and two pianos, etc.

**Aziz:** specific instruments?

**Tatiana:** yes. it all goes together with the video that was taken with this telescope. And when I got to the Ulugbek Observatory, I thought, why don't we get in touch with the observatory and do an Ulugbek Fest? And we did. We had artists from Uzbekistan participating. A pianist who studies at the Moscow Conservatory, and also Ziyed Ishankhodjaev, who leads the band Uchkuduk. We did an extraordinary project with him. I have long had a dream of making a mugham that he performs on guitar with an organ. And we did it. Apart from the fact that there were works by Uzbek composers. Now we are going to perform Sogdian frescoes. When I came here in the autumn, I came to Mustafo Vafoev's anniversary concert quite by accident. This is just the Carl Orff of Uzbekistan. Incredible music. We asked him for the score, from the orchestra of the Ministry of Defence, and we're going to do it. It's called "Sogdian Frescoes."

**Aziz:** I didn't know any of that.

**Tatiana:** there are amazing composers here.

**Aziz:** "Sogdian Frescoes" is a testimony to the fact that you have penetrated very deeply into Uzbek culture. How do you know such names? It is necessary to know the history.

**Tatiana:** well, it is knowledge of this work.

**Aziz:** I want to say without any flattery that all this characterises you as an independent creative power and you really don't fit into narrow frames and you are very prone to experiments?

**Tatiana**: absolutely.

**Aziz:** this is probably what classical music needs. To attract a modern listener, it's no longer enough to reason, concerts, but something else.

**Tatiana:** of course you can perform the most difficult programme in an empty hall. You have to make sure that the hall is full. And then you can always include something in the concert programme. We had a very big project at the Historical Museum. It's on Red Square. It's called Historical Cultural Parallels. Each concert was linked to an exhibition of artists on a particular theme. Artists are very hard to get into a concert. At least in Russia. It was contemporary art. And we had a concert dedicated to the work of Bach. There was a choir from Stuttgart. We performed different Bach cantatas and we could barely get the artists to attend the concert. They were so excited afterwards. They painted me a picture and gave it to me as a present. They thought Bach was a horror and when they heard Bach it was really amazing music.

**Aziz:** I'd like to ask you, I'm very interested, tell us about the concert at the art museum where we are currently filming our conversation. How did this idea come about and how did you manage to realise it so successfully?

 **Tatiana:** how I got to the museum is unbelievable in general. When I was in Uzbekistan for the 2nd time in 2019, back in Moscow, I called many of my friends, said we are ordering pilaf and making an Uzbek party. My friend, a very famous architect and restorer brought me a present, a painting of the Mountains of Tashkent. It was painted by Valery Kuznetsov, People's Artist of Uzbekistan, Academician. I said: does he have any other works? It turned out that he was visiting his daughter in Moscow, who studies at the Institute of Architecture and does not miss a single concert in the Cathedral of Peter and Paul, and then she brought me his work as a gift. And when I found myself here in the winter, I called Kuznetsov. He said: 3 days ago I finished my solo exhibition and today, 14 February, I am already taking down the exhibition, but you come and see something. You can't see everything in the artist's studio. He introduced me to the Director of the museum and to Jahongir Pulatovich. It was an unexpected acquaintance. I asked: Can we see the Romanov House?

**Aziz:** it is currently under restoration.

 **Tatiana:** we went there, looked at it and were absolutely delighted. Through the art of an Uzbek artist we got to know each other. He has lived here for many generations. His great-great-great-grandfather came here to manage the Turkestan railway.

**Aziz:** how did the idea for the concerts come about?

**Tatiana:** in Russia and in Moscow a huge number of concerts are held in museums. It is already a tradition. We hold them not only in museums, but also in art galleries. In Ilya Glazunov's gallery, which began while he was still alive. In Shilov's gallery. These are historical monuments. Now it's summer and I'm flying to a concert at the Kuskova estate. It's the Sheremetyev estate. It can only be in the summer because they were summer houses and these halls are not heated. They are all light, made of wood. Tsaritsino manors. There are a lot of very different manors.

**Aziz:** was it all before you or did you initiate it?

**Tatiana:** it was before us, but we initiated it to a greater extent. We try to make sure that the theme reflects the place where the concert takes place.

**Aziz:** in the context of the cultural space.

**Tatiana:** for example, there are galleries where the owner of the gallery likes jazz and it all combines beautifully. At Ilya Sergeyevich's, it is always very strict, only classical music and we follow the interests of the author, who owns the gallery.

**Aziz:** there is this synthesis.

**Tatiana:** we have a huge success at the Pushkin Museum. People come and see the house where Pushkin lived after his wedding. A child sees both the museum and the exhibition and listens to Pushkin's tales in a completely different way. Go to the Darwin Museum, tales of wildlife. This and Mowgli and Rikki tiki tavi and Puss in Boots. and in Tashkent, since I found myself here I madly wanted to do concerts in the museum.

**Aziz:** we have never had such a thing.

**Tatiana:** I would also like to do a concert at the Museum of Applied Arts. It's a very beautiful space, although it's very private. The museum was kind enough to meet us. They told us that we could do any project there. We didn't make the first programme themed. First we had to attract people, as there is nothing like it in Tashkent. At first we wanted to show all the facets of the repertoire we wanted to present here. Kandinsky's painting was restored, and we could do a concert of music from Kandinsky's time. That amazingly complex time, which is reflected in the music of Kalinnikov and Masalov.

**Aziz:** Apart from being a wonderful solo artist yourself, you have had amazing musicians perform with you. Do they cooperate with your foundation?

**Tatiana:** yes, they cooperate with our foundation. Evgeny Siginyuk from the Bolshoi Theatre, Yegor Vinnikov, a jazz pianist from Moscow, Igor Ten, who graduated here from the Uspensky School and the Gnessen Academy in Moscow. Our backbone is our trio: organ, duduk and saxophone. These are our musicians Manukyan, Tashtamirov and Ipatov is my main partner, accompanist, organist and pianist. He graduated from the Conservatoire as a pianist and composer, but since the concerts are organ concerts, he learnt to play the organ from Zaretsky at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire as a 3rd speciality. He's an absolutely marvellous organist. He is the author of all the arrangements.

**Aziz:** what are your impressions? Are you yourself satisfied with these concerts?

 **Tatiana:** I think that, yes, and the audience received us absolutely marvellously.

**Aziz:** I can confirm, there was a huge response.

**Tatiana:** I can't speak for the whole of Uzbekistan, but the audience in Tashkent is much warmer than in Moscow. I myself am a participant in concerts, and I often go to other concerts myself. And the audience is just wonderful.

**Aziz:** maybe in Moscow they are more spoilt?

**Tatiana:** I think so. In Moscow there are a huge number of concerts, but here there is no such thing. And here you can see how people really look forward to every encounter with art.

**Aziz:** very much looking forward to it. You said a little bit about it, that there is such a stereotype that nobody needs it, that it is unrealisable, and I saw that there were not enough seats. That is, more people came than were panicked.

**Tatiana:** one person in Uzbekistan told me that this is utopia, that it would be interesting in Europe, that it would not resonate in Uzbekistan.

**Aziz:** he was deeply mistaken.

**Tatiana:** before you say that, you have to try everything.

**Aziz:** thank you for not listening to him.

**Tatiana:** if a museum has a cultural life in addition to the exhibition, it is always a centre of attraction.

**Aziz:** this is the modern concept of museums. It has to be alive, it has to work. Do you know how many spectators your concerts have attracted to museums? They probably came to the museum for the first time to see your concert. And they saw the rich exposition.

**Tatiana:** it's a diverse and amazing collection.

**Aziz:** it's a very interesting experience that you have worked out in Moscow and thank God you brought it here. Will you continue it? Exactly in Uzbekistan?

**Tatiana:** it is very hot here in the summer. We want to do an international organ festival in the Church, in Tashkent.

**Aziz:** it was also a very interesting event at the Church. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

**Tatiana:** actually there were already 3 concerts. The first 2 concerts were introductory, with very different programmes, and the 3rd concert was dedicated to the opening of the Music of the World's Cathedrals festival. And we performed music by composers who worked and created in Noterdam de Paris.

**Aziz:** spiritual music?

**Tatiana:** only spiritual.

**Aziz:** from the concerts I've listened to, do you have a taste for Baroque and Renaissance?

**Tatiana:** The basis of my repertoire is Baroque, Bach's music. The repertoire is very extensive. What I really love. There are so many Bach programmes in Moscow. And there is 127 cantata and people look for when I will sing 127 cantata and they come to this particular piece.

**Aziz:** I am also very interested in the following. I have read your biography and I was surprised by one fact that you graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy. It is a very hard study. And with your employment and creative activity, you found time for it. So you had a great interest. It's a very specific activity, philosophy.

**Tatiana:** I can tell you how it all came about. There was a period when I wanted to leave music. But then it all came together.

**Aziz:** are Bach's fugues as well organised compositionally as philosophical treatises? There's a structure there too. And what did studying at the philosophy department give you?

**Tatiana:** If I had the opportunity to go to a university now, either American or European, to study marketing, I would do it with pleasure. Nowadays, marketing is very important in any speciality. That is, the way to communicate what you do to each person.

**Aziz:** there is a huge competition now.

**Tatiana:** for example, when the year of Rachmaninoff began, on 26 March we performed all of Rachmaninoff's Night Vigils and we were the first in Moscow to do an installation using a neural network.

A lot of people did it after us. But we were the first.

**Aziz:** most people are even afraid to discuss this topic.

**Tatiana:** we even make our posters with it. Installation is something that comes together with the music. And posters are applied.

**Aziz:** great. Such interesting joints.

**Tatiana:** a lot of programmers who go to concerts can go there to see an installation created by neural network. And that way, it gets into a different atmosphere. I can already see them standing near the poster and choosing which concert they will go to next.

**Aziz:** you have opened new facets of your work for me.

**Tatiana:** there is so much knowledge that is needed and applicable.

**Aziz:** technology. Advertising, marketing.

**Tatiana:** and what makes us different from others is that my friends and my teacher think that it is necessary to promote the name, and only now I am trying to do it. I had this idea to promote the Belcanto Foundation brand. If a person comes to a concert at the Conservatory, he comes to see what? For example, to Spivakov's concert. Or Mozart's Requiem. That is, he comes either for the work, the performer, or the venue. For example, his friends come to visit him and he decides to take them to the conservatory. All our advertising is outdoor, all our advertising is partner advertising, everywhere there was only the Bel Canto Foundation. Our Logo is a red sun, red colour and all our outdoor advertising is our logo. When people are late for a concert, they look and say Where is this Bel Canto Hall? It's already a brand for them. Although everyone said it was absurd, it's not Coca Cola.

**Aziz:** the world is like that now. You have to work your way through a Coke.

**Tatiana:** the world is the way it is.

**Aziz:** I am a historian, I understand that.

**Tatiana:** brands make their way, build their history and classical music can be carried as a brand too. The last few years we have gone beyond classical. Very much out. We do crossover programmes. For example, rock hits. Not just rock hits, but accompanied by a symphony orchestra and an organ. We have Japanese organ music. A lot of film music.

**Aziz:** There was a concert of Hollywood classics. Were you also involved?

**Tatiana:** yes. we do a huge number of film music concerts. In Moscow, we will soon have a concert in memory of Eduard Artemyev. It's phenomenal music.

**Aziz:** he passed away recently.

**Tatiana:** yes, it will be a year. Even earlier, there will be a concert of Tariverdiev's music. I was in Moscow recently, we had a premiere, and one had Rybnikov's music. You can't imagine what Rybnikov's music sounds like on the organ. It's simply amazing! It was music by Rybnikov, Tariverdiev, Khrennikov. Tariverdiev wrote a lot of music for the organ. He was friends with Harry Groberg and he recommended him to write for organ. He has a concerto called Cassandra, there's a very terrible concerto that we don't include in the programme, called Chernobyl. There are some marvellous pieces, called Imitation of the Old Masters. And we're doing a programme called Bach and Tariverdiev. It's when you hear Bach preludes and Tariverdiev preludes. It's neo-baroque. They called it neoclassical, but it's not neoclassical at all. They called it that because they meant, I guess, new classical, it's Ludovic Renardi, a very large layer of this music, the wonderful Max Richter, it's music that came out of auteur cinema. We do that kind of music. It's Olaf Olafson, Arnoltz, a lot of Nordic music that is very well received by audiences and the same thing we've done for the organ.

**Aziz:** and you perform this on classical instruments?

 **Tatiana:** yes yes. and very often we combine it with classical works. People nowadays take Renaissance, Baroque very easily. What is not so easy is Romanticism. Romanticism is big canvases, and people now think telegraphically, life is text. Everything has to be short and clear and fast. We have a project called Sounding Canvases. This project originated as a multimedia project, that is, where canvases are brought to life. We started with Leonardo da Vinci, then there was Van Gogh and the last one was Gedeon Richter. A film about this amazing expressionist was recently released. So many people come to the concert not to hear the music, but to see the artist's work, which with the help of new technologies is presented.

**Aziz:** yes, it's very fashionable now.

**Tatiana:** the main thing is to bring the viewer in. And how do you bring them in, through the visuals or what. We started painting with sand, we have the best artists who can recreate a large canvas in 7 minutes.

**Aziz:** in front of your eyes?

**Tatiana:** on the eyes. We have a very popular chamber project, it takes place in the Pushkin Museum. It's Chopin and Degas.

**Aziz:** and the Pushkin Museum treats it favourably?

**Tatiana:** yes absolutely. At first, the academics were against it, but once they were at the concert, they accepted everything. We have wonderful friendly relations.

**Aziz:** I had this thought, would you like to conduct some training on this?

**Tatiana:** not yet. We'd rather do what we can still do.

**Aziz:** you have tremendous advantages over repertory theatres. They are of course great institutions, but in terms of accessibility, how you influence people, you are pioneers.

**Tatiana**: we are also different in that we used to hand out feedback sheets at concerts. This is our long-standing practice. It was like that in embassies at concerts. And people would immediately write whether they liked the concert or what they didn't like? What should be improved or what was annoying? After the concerts we have a huge queue and they all write their reviews. We therefore have a huge flow of information and if something is wrong, we listen to it. If you come to the Conservatory, to a concert, intelligent people come and if something is wrong, they realise that everyone is alive, everyone has different states of mind. But our audience, these people are demanding, he paid for the ticket, and they demand that everything be done as he wanted.

**Aziz:** it changes them.

**Tatiana:** it changes them. We listen to them and our audience is more demanding than the audience that comes to concert halls.

They are used to demanding everywhere. They are bankers, marketers.

**Aziz:** you have a more live connection with the audience. Many performers in concert halls are not interested in how and what, they are sure that the audience will accept everything. But you have a direct connection. You react very quickly.

**Tatiana:** we depend on these people. That is, if they bought a ticket to our concert, we exist.

**Aziz:** it's all done on a good commercial basis. You mentioned rock music. Do you work in this field as well? What are your preferences?

**Tatiana:** it depends on the audience, and on the performer. Last week we had programmes. One programme had to do with Russian and Soviet cinema, and it was incredibly successful. The second programme was connected with Raymond Pauls. I've been planning this for a long time. The thing is that we know Raimond Pauls for his beautiful songs, but he led a pop-jazz orchestra all his life and we brought up this particular work of his, we got the sheet music and with a wonderful pianist, Vasily Grachev, a phenomenal pianist, combined it with the organ. Incredibly successful. People came out with tears in their eyes. Long Road in the Dunes is a whole pop-jazz composition. And then it became a film. And there was a programme of rock ballads. It was Scorpions, Nirvana and 2 wonderful musicians, an organist and a pianist and it all sounds different, solo piano and organ.

**Aziz:** Nirvana is garage rock and you manage to combine that with the organ?

**Tatiana:** I do.

**Aziz:** and your colleagues are okay with it? Since they perform it, do they accept it?

**Tatiana:** of course. Moreover, they often come out with suggestions themselves. Everyone lives in the modern world. There are musicians who honestly admit that they don't know how to do it.

**Aziz**: it's high art.

**Tatiana:** yes, high art. It's a much higher art. It's an art of interpretation. As Vivaldi said, you just play these notes that I have written and you don't need to invent anything. And that's enough for a great performance. And if we're talking about rock music, you have to have such talent and the art of interpretation to convey that with the piano. I'm very happy that we have such musicians who do that.

**Aziz:** they open up this music in a whole new way.

**Tatiana:** we have almost 1000 seats in the Peter and Paul Cathedral and all of them were filled.

**Aziz:** vocally, have you tried your hand at these genres?

**Tatiana:** no. Now I want to do it in minimalism, there are such plans. We are preparing a programme of composers who embraced Orthodoxy at a conscious age. There is an amazing composer called **Towner.** His music is phenomenal.

**Aziz:** is the new generation of musicians more receptive to different types of art?

**Tatiana:** it's absolutely individual. I brought a wonderful organist from Uzbekistan on tour, Tamila Sarymsakova, the granddaughter of the great mathematician academician Sarymsakov. She played a classical programme, she graduated from the Ouspensky School, after that she went to France and finished her postgraduate studies in Germany. I offered her to play the programme. She has an absolute academic European education and she said: I don't know how to do that yet. She played Vivaldi and Bach. But it was the first time she played with our saxophonist. She wanted to try it and it's wonderful. There is such a brilliant musician, Mikhail Troshin.

**Aziz:** I am under a huge impression.

**Tatiana:** We are now very much looking forward to the opening of the Uzbekistan pavilion at VDNKh. I was there 3 weeks ago, it is already very beautiful. There is a concert space in the hall to the left of Ulugbek, we want to put an organ there and we planned to start the Ulugbek Festival there. It has been a long restoration. This is the most beautiful hall at VDNKh. The fountains and everything are incredible. We are very much looking forward and want to continue our Ulugbek Fest there.

**Aziz**: I want to thank you again. It was a wonderful conversation. I don't like the word Creative, but you are an amazingly creative person. In our short conversation you talked about so many projects that have been and will be with so many modern trends, artificial intelligence, rock and jazz, Soviet classics, pop music. I'm a spectator. The future is for people like you. We need to master this modern market and it is good that you in Uzbekistan are helping us to realise this and then try to implement it**.**

**Tatiana:** we will continue the projects in the church and in the museum.

**Aziz:** I think our museum communities will help you. The 20th century covers us and there are adequate people who understand and feel these trends. Thank you very much.

**Tatiana:** thank you for inviting me.