Louis Danto
Tenor

sings

Russian Art & Folk Songs
Louis Danto
Sings Russian Art & Folk Songs
Ivan Basilevski - Piano  Lonya Kalbouss - Accordion
Theodore Zarkevich - Guitar

01 Snowfall (Myetyelitsya)
Varlamov  2:31

02 Lonely Accordion (Adinokaya Garmon)
B. Mokrousov  2:40

03 Do Not Revive Memories of the Past
(Nye Probuzhdan Vespominanya) P. Bulakov  4:03

04 The Peddler (Korobushka)
Varlamov  1:54

05 Oh Fate! (Ekh Ti Dolya)
3:02

06 Grass (Shto Ti Rano Travushka)
Varlamov  3:28

07 Traveling Song (Dorozhnaya)
I. Dunayevsky  2:27

08 Moscow Nights
(Podmoskovnya Vyechera) V. Solovyev-Sedoy  3:30

09 Flowers Bloom Sweetly in Spring
(Khoroshi Vesnoy V'Sadu Tszetochki) B. Mokrousov  1:55

10 Dark Night (Tiomnaya Noch)
Bogoslavsky  2:56

11 Oh My Darling (Akh Ti Dushechka)
2:33

12 Why Despair (Shto Mnye Zhit)
Varlamov  1:38

13 The Lonely Bell (Kolokolchik)
2:41

14 Forgotten Kisses of Love
(Zabytye Nyezhniyab Lobzanya) A. Lenin  2:48

Production Co-ordinator: Rouhama Danto
Liner notes: Bernard Lebow, Rouhama Danto

Engineer: Ed Marshall
Graphic Design: Stan Greenspan

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Label/Collector</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Zing Un Tanz (Yiddish)</td>
<td>RCA 1653/54</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Israeli Composers (Hebrew)</td>
<td>MHS 1653/54</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Psalms of Israel, Hallel Oratorios (Hebrew)</td>
<td>MHS 1709</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Song of My People (Yiddish)</td>
<td>Sound Path Records SP009</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Russian Romantic Songs (Russian)</td>
<td>MHS 1185</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Louis Danto Salutes Israel (Hebrew)</td>
<td>MHS 1781/Cadenza 113</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Russian Romantic Songs (Russian)</td>
<td>Da Camera TSM 9001/Cadenza 100</td>
<td>LP/Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Prayers of My People (Cantorial)*</td>
<td>Cadenza 101</td>
<td>LP/Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Songs of Holocaust and Heroism (Yiddish)</td>
<td>Cadenza 103</td>
<td>LP/Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Favourite Jewish Songs (Yiddish)</td>
<td>Cadenza 104</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>None But the Lonely Heart (Fr., Ger., Rus.)</td>
<td>MHS 3276/Cadenza 105</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>The Art of Cantor Louis Danto (Cantorial)*</td>
<td>Cadenza 106</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Russian Art &amp; Folk Songs (Russian)</td>
<td>Cadenza 107</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Gems of The Jewish Operetta (Yiddish)</td>
<td>Cadenza 108</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Rivka Golani, viola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I Heard a Voice From Heaven (Liturgical: Hebrew, Ladino)</td>
<td>Cadenza 110</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Arias and Songs of Love (Fr., It., Rus., Eng., Sp., Ger.)</td>
<td>Cadenza 111</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Music from the Soul of a People (Liturgical)</td>
<td>Cadenza 112</td>
<td>Cass/CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>The Best of Louis Danto</td>
<td>Cadenza 114</td>
<td>CD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*selections from “The Art of Cantor Louis Danto” (Cadenza Records LR106) are included on the compact disk version of “Prayers of My People” (Cadenza Records LRCD101)
Louis Danto

“A voice of great beauty, clear and true...breathtaking, radiant, as though from another world”.
Allan Rich, New York Times (USA)

George Jelinek, a distinguished broadcaster and music critic for Stereo Review magazine (USA), in a rave review about tenor Louis Danto, stated that “No other tenor under contract to a major U.S. opera company today can duplicate such technique and overall control”.

Danto’s uncommon vocal talents were already recognized, while still a student in Rome, by Gigli and Schipa, who heralded him as a major discovery in the tradition of the great bel canto tenors.

Born in Suwalki, Poland, he studied voice and cello in the conservatory of Minsk and later of Lodz. While still a child, he won first prize in the All-Russia voice competition. Louis Danto soon became internationally recognized, for the rare beauty and purity of his voice, its mastery, power and control, and for his breathtaking emotional expressivity.

Critics and audiences find him equally impressive in the Italian, Russian, and French opera repertoire, as well as in the Yiddish and cantorial music of which he is one of the world’s all-time leading exponents. Louis Danto concertizes extensively throughout North America, Europe and Israel, and has recorded 18 highly acclaimed solo albums for RCA, DaCamera, Musical Heritage Society, and Cadenza.

He was the featured performer in a recent gala Thanksgiving service held at the Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, Canada. Among the 16,000 enthusiastic audience were Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. Both congratulated and thanked him personally.

Numerous leading contemporary composers have written for, and dedicated their works to Louis Danto. In addition, he is a researcher and a champion of rare and unusual repertoire: during his 1989 East-European tour (of concerts in Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa, Kiev and Budapest) he discovered the manuscripts of many songs from the long-lost original classics of Jewish music, several of which he recorded for the first time on his “Gems of the Jewish Operetta” and “Masters of the Jewish Art Song/The St. Petersburg School”.

His recent work includes “Arias and Songs of Love”, made during his 1995 concert tour of Europe, recorded with the State Opera of Prague and “I Heard a Voice From Heaven” recorded with noted violist Rivka Golani, both released in the spring of 1996.

In December 1997 he released a new C.D., “Music From The Soul of a People”. In February 1998, Cantor Louis Danto received an Honorary Doctorate in Music from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.
Louis Danto
Sings
Russian Art & Folk Songs
Ivan Basilevski - Piano    Lonya Kalbouss - Accordion
Theodore Zarkevich - Guitar

The Russian songs on this recording span a century and a quarter. Most have achieved folk song status- the others, even the most modern, are well on the way to achieving it. Included are favorites from nineteenth century repertory such as the melodies of Alexander Varlamov who in the course of a short life (1801 - 1848) wrote more than two hundred songs and drew up the first Russian singing method. There are also selections of recent vintage: a song about a soldier (Dark Night) that was a great favorite during WW 2, a song of the road (Traveling Song) which gives a Soviet accent to the familiar theme of love for one's homeland, and Moscow Nights - a pop number from a Soviet motion picture. The texts of the older songs, those pertaining to old Russia, tend to be built around a figure in whom all interest centers - a peddler, a returning exile, a prisoner in Siberia, an accordion player, or lovers who run the gamut from bold to naive, from one who is in love with love to one who has been rejected, from one fearful of being hurt by love to one unable to warm even to the memory of it. Nature in the shape of snow, spring flowers, autumnal desolation etc. is at times an integral part of these songs; occasionally it serves as an artificial backdrop or as a means of demonstrating a general truth. The Soviet songs, on the other hand though they too deal with individuals, seem less interested in them than in their reactions to their environment - i.e. the former Soviet Union. Thus the soldier, the traveler, and the lover show a deep emotional involvement with the land - its natural beauties, its sheer size and giant economic strides, and the necessity of giving one's life to defend it against invaders.

1. Snowfall - Snow is whirling down the street. Through the flakes, I see my sweetheart walking. Stop, my sweet, and let me feast my eyes on you. Let me drink in your beauty, your flawless complexion. Such loveliness takes the breath away.
2. **Lonely Accordion** - Once more everything is hushed and sleeping, waiting for dawn. Not a door creaks - fires burn low on the hearth. Only somewhere in the street broods a solitary accordion. Over the fields blows the frost-laden night air. The apple trees stand radiant in white bloom. Oh young accordion player, what is your urgent need? Perhaps, your longing will be fulfilled. Perhaps she is not really the girl you want. What drives you to go walking at night alone? Why do you disturb the sleep of the girls?

3. **Do Not Revive the Memories** - Do not wake in me the memory of a time that is past. Do not fill my heart once more with yearning. Do not turn on me those eyes that can wreak havoc with me. Do not make me a prisoner again to thoughts of love and to your beauty. And yet, for him who can extinguish the divine fire of love in his heart, life offers only emptiness....

4. **The Peddler** - my pack is bursting with calico and brocade. Sweetheart, meet me tonight, I beg you, in the field where the rye grows tall. I'll be waiting there, and when I see my black-eyed girl, I shall show my wares./ Night falls, a cloudy night, and the bold fellow waits. Ah, there she comes; the one he longs for has come. The peddler makes a sale./Only the dark night knows what really happened between the two. Stand straight and tall, you spears of rye, and guard their secret well....

5. **Oh Fate** - Oh fate! Oh bitter fate! Why did you condemn me to Siberia? In Siberia I found myself in a mine-shaft, narrow and damp; there I met my fellow prisoners. "Comrade, we're in this together." And the years of our youth speed by I live without friends and family here in Siberia. Do they still remember me?

6. **Grass** - Why should the grass have become sere and yellow so early in summer? What reason for the flowers to be shedding their petals so soon? Why, sweet girl, do you look so pale and wan? Where are the roses that should be blooming in your cheeks? The flowers withered because a cruel blight struck them. And I, I had barely learned to know the sweetness of love when my loved one left me....

7. **Traveling Song** - On the horizon the rays of the sun paint a blaze of color. I gaze out of the window and cannot get my fill of the sights gliding past - dense forests, smooth meadows, wooden sheds, steel structures. Such a variety of sights to delight the eye; so much to make life rich, such a vast expanse, and
it all belongs to me! The brick factories with their high chimneys, the whitewashed houses - all these are dear to my heart, every inch of this dear familiar land. The window clouds with the rising mists of night. Already the moon's outline can be seen, and I still stand spellbound at the train window. It is time for the lamps to be lit. I look into the growing dark and say to myself: Such a variety of sights to delight the eye, etc.

8. **Moscow Nights** - Here in the garden all is still until dawn. If only you knew how dear you are to me, nights on the outskirts of Moscow! Ripples move on the stream, and then its surface lies smooth, silvery in the light of the moon. A snatch of song is heard and then dies away in the growing stillness. Tell me, darling, why you shyly turn your eyes from mine, why you hang your head. It is very hard to say all that is in my heart. Dawn is beginning to light the sky. Never forget, my darling, these summer nights on the outskirts of Moscow....

9. **Flowers Bloom Sweetly in Spring** - Flowers bloom sweetly in Spring but the girls, they bloom still sweeter. You meet your love in the garden when it grows dark, and from that moment your life is no longer the same. The one I love is here; I do not have to seek her far. I tap on her window: "Come out on the porch, my darling. It is I, the fellow who has loved you for so long." That's how things happen in life. You think a storm is threatening. Then the black clouds blow away, the wind dies down, and the skies are blue once more....

10. **Dark Night** - Dark night and bullets whistling across the steppe; the wind hisses through the barbed wire. Up above, the stars are shining bright. On this night so black, I know, my love, that you do not sleep but sit by the bedside of our child, alone and wakeful. How dear to me are your deep eyes, full of tenderness! How I long to kiss them! But the dark night separates us, my dear; the black steppe divides us from one another. I know you are true to me. This knowledge has kept me safe among the flying bullets. Even during the thick of the fighting, my heart is at peace. Because I know you love me and are true to me, I am safe from any blow. Death does not seem a thing to be feared. We have faced it again and again on the steppe. I walk in its shadow secure because you wait for me at the side of our child....
11. **Oh My Darling** - Oh darling, oh beautiful girl of mine, we will go for a stroll, just you and I. We will go together to the green meadows and gather flowers for a wreath. There I shall tell you of the love that burns in me and eats my heart....

12. **Why Despair** - Why despair and live in wretched loneliness? Where are you, my precious, my black-eyed love? Cruel one, rather than live with unhappiness as a constant companion, I shall seek you out wherever you are!...

13. **The Lonely Bell** - Monotonously jingles the harness, and the road before me is filled with clouds of dust. The driver's song rings out over the spreading fields. There is so much feeling in this song, in its familiar strains, that in my breast long numb and closed to feeling, my heart begins to thaw. I recall times long gone and fields and woods once dear to me. Tears glint in my eyes which have long been strangers to weeping. Monotonously jingles the harness and echo repeats the sound. The driver finishes his song, but the road stretches ahead without end....

14. **Forgotten Kisses of Love** - Forgotten are the tender kisses; the passion that once flamed in me is cold and dead; love no longer possesses me. The thought of meeting you does not quicken my pulses, nor does misery gnaw at my heart. Past bliss, I have learned, cannot return. I have no pretty illusions about what happened. Nothing is to be gained from giving another your heart and love. The wind strips the trees in autumn of their beauty and piles up dry brown leaves in garden paths till winter storms sweep over the unhappy earth and scatter drifts down many a road. So lovers that are forced apart are enveloped in a shroud that none can see.