



# Song Without Words: The Photographs & Diaries of Countess Sophia Tolstoy

*Leah Bendavid-Val*

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## **Song Without Words: The Photographs & Diaries of Countess Sophia Tolstoy** Leah Bendavid-Val

Through never-before-seen photographs and intriguing personal diaries, this beautiful book provides an intimate glimpse into the lives of Countess Sophia Tolstoy and her husband, Leo Tolstoy—one of the greatest authors of all time—set against the grand and terrifying backdrop of aristocratic Russia on the brink of its demise.

Between 1885 and 1910, Countess Tolstoy made more than a thousand photographs representing her entire world—from artists to aristocrats to peasants to family, from the Crimea to Moscow to the family estate 100 kilometers to the south. She also kept detailed diaries, which sweep us into fashionable balls and local gossip...magical scenes of winter in Russia...and devastating famine in the countryside. Sophia's works deepen our understanding of the era as well as of this amazing woman, who had thirteen children, battled a troubled marriage, and, though blessed with a creative life of her own, was so devoted to her husband's career that she hand-copied his great works *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* many times over.

*Song Without Words* showcases the photographs by theme, with Sophia's writings providing emotional context for many of the images. Commentary by author Leah Bendavid-Val weaves through the book, linking diaries with pictures and placing each in its historical and literary setting.

Autobiographical in nature, yet global in its true scope, *Song Without Words* brings to light the gifts of a major figure whose previously unknown works enrich our knowledge of literature, photography, and history.

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