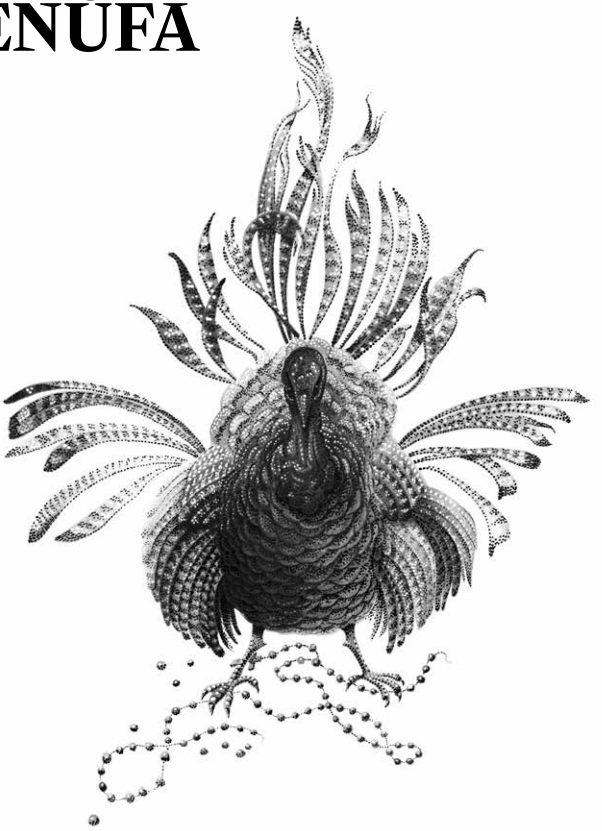
Leoš Janáček:
JENŮFA



5 November 2026, 7 p.m.
7 November 2026, 5 p.m.
→ Janáček Theatre

An opera in three acts based on the drama by Gabriela Preissová

The performance lasts 2 hours and 35 minutes,
including two intermissions.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Conductor – **Jakub Hrůša**
Director – **Martin Glaser**
Set design – **Pavel Borák**
Costume design – **Markéta Sládečková**
Choreography – **Mário Radačovský**
Lighting design – **Martin Špetlík**
Choirmaster – **Pavel Koňárek**
Dramaturgy – **Olga Šubrtová**

ROLES AND CAST

Jenůfa – **Corinne Winters**
Kostelnička – **Eliška Weissová**
Grandmother Buryjovka – **Jitka Zerhauová**
Laca Klemeň – **Nicky Spence**
Števa Buryja – **Thomas Atkins**
Foreman – **Svatopluk Sem**
Mayor – **David Szendiuch**
Mayor's Wife – **Jarmila Vantuchová**
Karolka – **Lada Bočková**
Shepherdess – **Jitka Klečanská**
Barena – **Anna Moriová**
Jana – **Martina Mádlová**
Aunt – **Ivona Špičková**

National Theatre Brno's Janáček Opera
The Bamberg Symphony

SYNOPSIS

Act I
The beautiful Jenůfa waits, fearing that her beloved Števa has been taken off to join the army. She is expecting his child and his departure would jeopardise the forthcoming marriage. Števa's stepbrother Laca also carries a flame for Jenůfa and teases her about Števa. Števa arrives at the mill in high spirits with his friends and some musicians – he has not been taken away and he and the other recruits drink to their good fortune. Jenůfa's strict guardian Kostelnička sees the riotous company with Števa at its head and remembers her cruel life with her husband, who was an alcoholic. In front of them all, she announces that she will only give her consent to a marriage between Jenůfa and Števa after a probationary year, during which Števa will not be allowed to drink. Laca tries to convince Jenůfa that Števa loves her only because of her beauty, and during the argument he cuts her face with a knife.

Act II
In fear of disgrace, Kostelnička hides Jenůfa in her home and claims to everybody that she has left for Vienna. In the meantime, Jenůfa has given birth to a son. While Jenůfa is sleeping, Kostelnička humbles herself before Števa and begs him to marry Jenůfa. For Števa, however, Jenůfa's scarred face has rendered her ugly and besides, he is already engaged to the daughter of the Mayor. Laca arrives and asks Kostelnička to hand over Jenůfa to him. However, when Kostelnička reveals to him that Jenůfa has given birth to Števa's child, he is shocked. Seeing his doubts, Kostelnička in desperation lies that the child died immediately after birth. As soon as Laca leaves, Kostelnička drowns the child in an icy river and convinces Jenůfa that she has slept for several days in a fever and the little boy has died in the meantime. The devastated Jenůfa agrees to a marriage with Laca.

Act III

During the preparations for the wedding between Jenůfa and Laca, the news breaks that a dead child has been found in the river. Jenůfa recognises her little boy's bonnet and the suspicion of murder falls upon her. Kostelnička confesses in front of the assembled guests. Before the Mayor leads her off to court, Jenůfa forgives her, for she understands that she did it out of love for her. Jenůfa does not believe that Laca will still want her and sends him away. Laca, however, wants to stay by her side and promises to stand by her even in the bad times. Jenůfa realises that she has found her true love "with which God is pleased".

Just as with Janáček's second opera, *The Beginning of a Romance*, the libretto for *Jenůfa* was also based on a work by the writer Gabriela Preissová. This time it was the drama *Her Stepdaughter*, which had been performed on the stages of Prague and Brno in 1890 and 1892, provoking much debate. Before *Her Stepdaughter*, Preissová had enjoyed great success at the Prague National Theatre with the play *The Farmer's Woman* (which was later turned into an opera entitled *Eva* by J. B. Foerster), which – like *Her Stepdaughter* – offered a realistic view of life in rural Slovácko. The *Farmer's Woman* prompted Preissová to write another drama called *Her Stepdaughter*, the reception of which, however, was far less warm. The premiere once again took place at the Prague National Theatre in 1890 and almost caused a scandal – critical voices were raised, accusing the author of disparaging the people from the region of Slovácko.

Of course, this did not prevent Janáček from securing *Her Stepdaughter* from Preissová before the premiere of the opera *The Beginning of a Romance* in 1893, even though Preissová had tried to convince him that her play was not suitable for an opera. However, this time Janáček did not want to write a libretto in verse and was the first composer to decide to work from a prose text. His decision may have been influenced by the problems with the verse libretto for *The Beginning of a Romance*, but Janáček was mainly drawn to a prose libretto by the principle of truth in capturing the melody of speech. Although Janáček's first documented speech melody dates back to 1897, it is clear that he would have already noticed the musical elements in human speech in connection with his intense interest in folk songs. He considered human speech to be a kind of window to the soul, and in his view these melodies were a reflection of a person's character and immediate mood. The melodic and rhythmical aspects of human speech were to occupy Janáček until his death

– several thousand melodies noted down by him have been preserved. Speech melodies and folk songs led Janáček onto a new creative path that – together with the prose concept of *Her Stepdaughter* – was to be a decisive factor in the development of the work's new musical and theatrical style.

Janáček created the opera's prose libretto based on Preissová's play himself. He began to work on it in 1894 and greatly abridged the original template. It is not entirely clear when he began the actual composition of the opera. While editing the libretto, he began to note down musical ideas, and in the same year he began to compose the symphonic scene *Jealousy*, which he originally intended as the overture to *Jenůfa*. In the end, he left it as a composition in its own right. The work on *Jenůfa* took Janáček almost nine years. He completed the first act in 1897, while the second and third acts came about during a time of tragedy for the Janáčeks. In 1902, the composer's daughter Olga became seriously ill whilst visiting Janáček's brother in St. Petersburg. Janáček completed the second act of the opera after Olga's return, and just after her death in March 1903. He dedicated *Jenůfa* to the memory of his daughter.

Janáček wanted to entrust the premiere of the opera to the National Theatre in Prague. However, they refused, saying that the opera was not suitable for the leading Czech theatre. Therefore, the first performance took place in Brno on 21 January 1904 at the theatre on Veveří Street under the direction of Janáček's pupil C. M. Hrazdira, meeting with extraordinary success. However, Janáček continually strove to have the work performed in Prague – partly because the National Theatre was the most important Czech opera house, and also because the poor conditions at the Brno theatre were inadequate for performing his innovative work. The Prague National Theatre, however, continued to refuse to stage his opera and, even though the opera was performed in Brno again in 1906 and 1911 and the Club of Friends of Art published the first printed piano score in 1908, the negative attitude of the Prague theatre caused Janáček considerable pain. It was not until 1915 that, thanks to the diplomatic efforts of Janáček's friends, the theatre's management

and the conductor Karel Kovařovic were persuaded to take *Jenůfa* under their wing.

For the Prague premiere, Kovařovic, with Janáček's permission, made changes to the opera, particularly in the instrumentation, and oversaw the rehearsals himself. After the great success of the Prague premiere on 26 May 1916, Janáček broke through as a composer both in Czech and, quickly afterwards, in world terms. The writer and journalist Max Brod became interested in the opera and brought *Jenůfa* to the attention of the Viennese publishers Universal Edition. He translated the opera into German, and soon afterwards the Vienna Court Opera expressed its interest. The Viennese premiere in 1918 was also a resounding success and opened up Janáček's works to the rest of the world. Further performances of *Jenůfa* abroad were not long in the waiting – during Janáček's lifetime the opera was staged in places such as Zagreb (1920), Berlin (1924), the Metropolitan Opera House in New York (1924), Basel (1925), Antwerp (1927) and Helsinki (1928).

Today, *Jenůfa* is one of the most frequently performed twentieth-century operas. Thanks to the edition by the conductor Sir Charles Mackerras and the musicologist John Tyrrell, the instrumentally altered version of the opera by Karel Kovařovic, which was played over long decades, is slowly being forgotten. It is now common to hear *Jenůfa*, a work which is groundbreaking in many respects, in the form in which Leoš Janáček left it to us. At the festival, audiences will have the opportunity of hearing *Jenůfa* for the first time in Jiří Zahrádka's new edition, capturing Janáček's final revisions and changes.

Jiří Zahrádka

Jakub Hrůša

CONDUCTOR

Born in the Czech Republic, Jakub Hrůša is Chief Conductor of the Bamberg Symphony, Music Director of The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and Chief Conductor and Music Director Designate of the Czech Philharmonic (from 2028). He is Musical America's Conductor of the Year 2026, and ICMA's 2026 Artist of the Year. He performs regularly with the world's greatest orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Tonhalle Orchester Zürich, Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, NHK Symphony and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra – and with the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra in the USA. He has led opera productions for the Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Jenůfa*), Salzburg Festival (*Katya Kabanová* with the Vienna Philharmonic), Vienna State Opera (*The Makropulos Affair*), the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (*Jenůfa, Tosca, The Makropulos Affair, Carmen* and *Lohengrin*), Opéra National de Paris (*Rusalka*) and the Zurich Opera (*The Makropulos Affair*). He has also been a regular guest at the Glyndebourne Festival, conducting *Vanessa*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Carmen*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Don Giovanni* and *La bohème*, and was Music Director of Glyndebourne on Tour for three years. His relationships with leading soloists include collaborations with Behzod Abduraimov, Piotr Anderszewski, Leif Ove Andsnes, Emanuel Ax, Lisa Batiashvili, Joshua Bell, Renaud Capuçon, Gautier Capuçon, Isabelle Faust, Julia Fischer, Sol Gabetta, Christian Gerhaher, Kirill Gerstein, Karen Gomyo, Hélène Grimaud, Augustin Hadelich, Hilary Hahn, Alina Ibragimova, Steven Isserlis, Janine Jansen, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Leonidas Kavakos, Evgeny Kissin, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Lang

Lang, Igor Levit, Albrecht Mayer, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Emmanuel Pahud, Beatrice Rana, Josef Špaček, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, Antoine Tamestit, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Daniil Trifonov, Mitsuko Uchida, Lukáš Vondráček, Yuja Wang, Alisa Weilerstein and Frank Peter Zimmermann. He has received numerous awards and nominations as a recording artist. He was a double winner at the 2024 Gramophone Awards for his recordings of Britten's *Violin Concerto* with Isabelle Faust and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and *Katya Kabanová* with the Vienna Philharmonic at Salzburg Festival. With Bamberg Symphony, he received the ICMA Prize for Symphonic Music in both 2022 and 2023 for his recordings of Rott's *Symphony No. 1* and Bruckner's *Symphony No. 4*. He was awarded the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik for his recording of Mahler's *Symphony No. 4*, and in 2021 his recording of violin concertos by Martinů and Bartók with Frank Peter Zimmermann was nominated for the BBC Music Magazine and Gramophone awards, while his disc of the Dvořák *Violin Concerto* with the Bavarian Radio Symphony and Augustin Hadelich was nominated for a Grammy® Award. His recordings of *Dvořák and Martinů Piano Concertos* with Ivo Kahánek and the Bamberg Symphony and *Vanessa* from Glyndebourne both won BBC Music Magazine Awards in 2020. Hrůša is an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 2025, he was awarded the Medal of Merit in the field of the Arts by the President of the Czech Republic, and in 2024 he was awarded the Silver Medal of the President of the Czech Senate, its highest award. He was the inaugural recipient of the Sir Charles Mackerras Prize, and has also been awarded the Bavarian Order of Merit, the Bavarian Culture Prize, the Czech Academy of Classical Music's Antonín Dvořák Prize, and – with the Bamberg Symphony – the Bavarian State Prize for Music.

Martin Glaser

DIRECTOR

Before finishing his studies, Martin Glaser accepted an engagement at the Drama Theatre at the South Bohemian Theatre in České Budějovice in 1998, which he later managed (from January 2006) as its artistic director. He has been the director of National Theatre Brno since November 2013. At the time when he worked at the South Bohemian Theatre, he shaped the company as a modern drama ensemble with a focus on the concord of actor personalities and the contemporary drama which formed the main pillar of the repertoire. He mounted the premieres of a number of Czech and foreign plays. In his productions, he deals primarily with the theme of games, manipulation and power (Havel – *Leaving*, Shakespeare – *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, Hampton – *Dangerous Liaisons*, Trier – *The Boss of It All*, Lausund – *Benefit*, the Presnyakov Brothers – *Playing the Victim*, Maupassant – *Bel-Ami*, Mastrosimone – *Like Totally Weird*), faith and fanaticism (Schwab – *Die Präsidentinnen*, Słobodzianek – *Ilya the Prophet*, Corneille – *Polyeucte*) and the disintegration of traditional moral values (Zelenka – *Acquittal*, Crimp – *The Misanthrope*, LaBute – *Fat Pig*). He also often and repeatedly reflects on outsiders, loneliness and rootlessness (McDonagh – *The Lonesome West*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, Belbel – *The Cell Phone*, Vedral – *Kaspar Hauser*, Egressy – *Portugalia*, Chekhov – *Three Sisters*). He said goodbye to his workplace with the original drama *Blackout*. He gives regular guest performances in Prague, Brno, Ostrava, Olomouc, Liberec, Pardubice and Plzeň. He won the Josef Balvín Award, conferred by the Prague Theatre Festival of the German Language to the best Czech production of a play written in German, for the Olomouc rendition of *Arabian Night* by Roland Schimmelpfennig. His production of *Dangerous Liaisons* was awarded the prize for the most remarkable artistic feat at the exhibition Czech Theatre in 2008. Zelenka's *Acquittal* was declared the best new Czech play

at the Alfréd Radok Foundation Awards. For the drama stage of National Theatre Brno, he has created productions including František's *Havel in the Land of Cattlemen*, Havlíček's *Oil Lamps*, *Terror* by Ferdinand von Schirach and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, as well as the original adaptation of the novel *Hana* by Alena Mornštajnová. He first became acquainted with music genres when directing the musicals *Funny Girl* at the Plzeň Theatre and *Painted on Glass* at the České Budějovice Drama Theatre. He has also tried his hand at operetta, directing Piskáček's *Wanderer*. His first opera direction was Verdi's *Otello,* followed by *Genoveva*, the only opera by Schumann. He has staged Janáček's *Jenůfa*, Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, Verdi's *Don Carlos* and *Otello*, Dvořák's *The Jacobin* and Händel's *Agrippina* with the Brno ensemble.

Pavel Borák

SET DESIGN

Pavel Borák, born in Brno, has been active in scenography since 1994. In more than 100 productions to date, he has worked with M. T. Růžička, Z. Mikotová, J. A. Pitínský, O. Elbel, P. Šimák, M. Glaser and others; since 2008, he has worked regularly with director Roman Polák. He won the DOSKY award for the best scenography of the 2009/2010 season in Slovakia for the stage design for the production of Molière's *The Misanthrope* at the Slovak Chamber Theatre in Martin; his stage design for *The Brothers Karamazov* was nominated for the DOSKY 2013 award, as was his stage design for the drama *The Bride of the Mountains* in 2015. For the Janaček Opera at National Theatre Brno, he has designed the scenography for *Der fliegende Holländer*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Don Carlos* and *Jenůfa*. Selected productions include *Hedda Gabler, Arcadia, The Bride of the Mountains, Buddenbrooks, Mercedes Benz, Herodes and Herodias, Three Sisters, Triptych, The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Shepherd's Wife* – all directed by Roman Polák, Slovak National Theatre Bratislava, *Love in Crimea* directed by Marián Amsler at Astorka Theatre Korzo 90', Bratislava, *The Rats* directed by R. Polák at DAB Nitra, *Faith, Love, Hope* directed by Kamila Polívková at Komedie Theatre, Prague, *The Ear* directed by Ondřej Elbel at HaDivadlo, Brno, *Fireface* directed by Martin Tichý at the F. X. Šalda Theatre, Liberec, *Hippodamia's Death* directed by J. A. Pitínský at Zlín City Theatre, *Stars Over Baltimore* directed by J. A. Pitínský at Divadlo Husa na provázku, Brno, *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Pavel Šimák at the Horácké Theatre Jihlava, *The Executive Lodge* directed by Ondřej Elbel at HaDivadlo, Brno, *Twelfth Night* directed by Roman Polák at Brno City Theatre, *Murlin Murlo* directed by Pavel Šimák at Divadlo Husa na provázku, Brno, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Wild Barbara* directed by M. T. Růžička at Divadlo v 7 a půl, Brno, *Calandriáda* directed by Zoja Mikotová at Zlín City Theatre and *Phèdre* directed by Martin Tichý at Drama Studio Ústí nad Labem.

Markéta Sládečková

COSTUME DESIGN

Markéta Sládečková graduated from Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in 2000 after studying scenography at the studio of Ján Zavarský. She worked externally with Czech Television for several years as an architect's assistant during the shooting of the series *Četnické humoresky* directed by Antonín Moskalyk and *Černí baroni* directed by Juraj Herz. She later focused primarily on drama scenography. She has worked in many theatres in the Czech and Slovak Republics. She has worked repeatedly with the director Martin Tichý, for whom she designed the sets and costumes for the production *Arabian Night*, for which she was nominated for the Alfréd Radok award in 2005. She also frequently works with the director Viliam Dočolomanský and his international company *Farm in the Cave*. She designed the stage sets for the production *Waiting Room*, which is still shown today at the NOD experimental space in Prague, as well as the costumes for their most recent production *Whistleblowers* (2014, Divadlo Ponec). At National Theatre Brno, she first met Břetislav Rychlík while working on the production *Gazdina roba* at the Mahen Drama Theatre, for which she designed the costumes. Since then, they have worked together regularly – including the recent stage sets for *Cena facky* by Karel Steigerwald at the Slovácké Theatre in Uherské Hradiště. At Divadlo Na zábradlí, she has designed the costumes for the production of Jiří Havelka's *Insanity*, and in 2015 she worked on *Anamnesis* with Rastislav Ballek. At the same time, the premiere of *J.A.K.* directed by Martin Tichý, for which she also designed the costumes, was shown at the Puppet Theatre Ostrava. She occasionally engages in spatial design. In 2014, for example, she created the Czech exposition at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Martin Špetlík

LIGHTING DESIGN

Martin Špetlík graduated from Jan Palach Grammar School in Turnov, where he witnessed the formation of an amateur theatre company in which he participated from 1996 as a lighting engineer. After graduating from high school, he was admitted to the Faculty of Architecture at the Czech Technical University in Prague. He left his studies in his second year and, after a series of obscure jobs, then went back to the theatre. In 2003, he worked as a lighting engineer at the Dejvice Theatre, and in 2004 he began working at the Švanda Theatre in Smíchov as a scenic lighting master. During this engagement, he also worked with other theatre companies such as Divadlo Continuo. In 2007, he decided to leave the Švanda Theatre, and since then he has been working as a freelance lighting designer. He has worked with such theatre companies as Compagnie Decalages (CZ/FR), Teatr Novogo Fronta (RUS/CZ), Krepsko (FIN/US/CZ), Spitfire Company (CZ), Divadlo Continuo, Silo Theatre (NL) and Debajehmujig Theatre Group (CAN). He specialises in physical and dance theatre as well as site-specific theatre, and occasional object and visual theatre. As far as his teaching experience goes, he spent several months in Wikwemikong, the Canadian First Nations Reserve, where he held lighting design workshops in addition to scenic lighting installations. He has given lectures at the Berlin Die Etage, among other places. In 2011, he managed the eight-day workshop Light and Dark at the Jiráskův Hronov festival.

Mário Radačovský

CHOREOGRAPHY

After graduating from the Eva Jaczová Dance Conservatory in Bratislava, Mário Radačovský made his start with Slovak National Theatre Ballet in 1989, where he soon became a soloist. In 1992, he received an offer to dance at the Jiří Kylián Netherlands Dance Theatre in The Hague. During his time at the NDT, he met the most prominent choreographers of his time, including some of the very big names such as Jiří Kylián, Mats Ek, Nacho Duato, Ohad Naharin, William Forsythe, Édouard Lock and many more. In 1999, he accepted another offer from abroad and became the first soloist of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. He returned to the Slovak National Theatre Ballet in 2000 as a guest soloist, before becoming its artistic director in the years 2006–2010. He is the founder of the company Balet Bratislava, which he directed until it was dissolved (2011–2013). Since the 2013 season, he has been the artistic director of the National Theatre Brno Ballet. As a dancer, he has participated in many prestigious ballet galas, such as Gala des Étoiles in Montreal (2000–2006), Gala Stars in Toronto (2003), World Stars Gala in Budapest (2005, 2007 and 2008) and the Gala Meeting in Prague (2003–2006). As a performer, he has appeared at such prominent theatres as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (2005), Ballet British Columbia (2004, 2006), National Ballet of Canada Toronto (2005) and Jacob's Pillow (2007). He began his creative work as a choreographer in 2002 at the Grand Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. His first piece was the miniature *The Letter*; he also created *Inspiration* (2002) and *Train Station* (2004) during his time there. After returning to the Slovak National Theatre, he mounted the ballets *Change* (2005), *Meeting the Swan I.* (2007*), Warhol* (2007), *68* (2008) and *Everest* (2009). At Balet Bratislava, he introduced, for example, *Monos* (2012), *Queen* (2013) and the musical *Mata Hari* (2013), though most of his choreographic work has been performed outside of Slovakia: *Bolero* (2006) at

the Jeune Ballet du Québec in Canada, *Romeo and Juliet* (2011), *Black and White* (2012) and *Beethoven* (2015) at the Grand Rapids Ballet in the USA, and *Compulsive* (2013) at the Diablo Ballet in San Francisco. He has also introduced other choreographies to the Czech Republic: *Fateful Loves* at the National Theatre Brno Ballet (2012) and *Slavic Quartet* for the Prague Chamber Ballet (2014), *Black and White* (2015), *Together*, *Beethoven* (2016), a dance version of the musical *West Side Story* (2017) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2019) at the National Theatre Brno Ballet and *Carmen* for the ballet ensemble at the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň (2016). Abroad, he has prepared the premieres of the *Piano Concerto* by Rihards Dubra at the Latvian National Ballet in Riga (2014) and the musical *Maria de Buenos Aires* for the National Operetta in Bucharest (2010).

Corinne Winters

JENŮFA

Corinne Winters has performed as a guest artist at the the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in London, the Teatro Real in Madrid, Vienna State Opera, the Opernhaus Zürich, the Grand Théâtre de Genève, the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, the Bavarian State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York, as well as the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Her repertoire includes roles such as Cio-Cio-San (*Madama Butterfly*), Jenůfa, Blanche de la Force (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), Nedda (*Pagliacci*), Lauretta, Giorgetta, Suor Angelica (*Il trittico*), Mimì (*La bohème*), Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*), and the title roles in the operas *Rusalka*, *Iolanta* and Stanisław Moniuszko's *Halka*. She made her debut at the Salzburg Festival in 2022 in the title role in *Katya Kabanová*. In 2025, she was named Best Singer at the OPER! AWARDS. She frequently performs in recital and concert, and will perform Strauss's *Four Last Songs* this season on tour in Europe and the US. Corinne earned a Master of Music degree in vocal performance from the Peabody Conservatory and a Bachelor's degree magna cum laude from Towson University before appearing as a resident artist at the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. She is featured in the title role on the premiere recording of the opera *Esther*, recently released on Pentatone.

Eliška Weissová

KOSTELNIČKA

Eliška Weissová has emerged as one of the most compelling interpreters of the great dramatic roles. Weissová first established her career as a mezzo-soprano, singing roles such as Amneris in *Aida* and Ortrud in *Lohengrin* in opera houses in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany. In 2018 she began the demanding transition to the dramatic soprano repertoire, beginning with Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il tabarro*, a move that opened the door to some of the most demanding roles in works by Janáček, Wagner, Strauss and Verdi. The years that followed brought a sequence of major house debuts. She first sang Kostelnička at the Welsh National Opera in Cardiff in 2022 under Tomáš Hanus, and later that year at the Wiener Staatsoper. Debuts as Tosca and Lady Macbeth followed in Košice; in 2024 she made her debut at the Staatsoper Hamburg as Kostelnička, before returning to Vienna as the Foreign Princess in Dvořák's *Rusalka* (a role she reprised at the Staatsoper in January 2026), and in March of that year she stepped in as Abigaille in Verdi's *Nabucco* at the Wiener Staatsoper. At the Wiener Staatsoper she also played the roles of Turandot and Minnie (*La fanciulla del West*). A debut in Košice as Milada in a concert performance of Smetana's *Dalibor* in 2024 and Elektra at Theater St. Gallen in May 2025 further extended her repertoire. In 2025, she sang Isolde at the Seoul Arts Center under Jaap van Zweden. Her dramatic repertoire now includes Isolde, Ortrud, Elektra, Brünnhilde, Abigaille in *Nabucco*, Turandot, Minnie in *La fanciulla del West*, Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Fata Morgana, alongside her signature role of Kostelnička. In the autumn of 2026, she is appearing for the first time at the Palacio de la Ópera in A Coruña, once again as Kostelnička; *Jenůfa* then brings her together with the Bamberger Symphoniker under Jakub Hrůša for a concert performance, which is also to be given twice at the Janáček Brno International Opera and Music Festival. In March 2027, she will

be singing Kostelnička for the first time at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires under the baton of Philippe Auguin. Alongside her stage work, she also pursues an active concert career and remains closely identified with the Czech repertoire that formed her, championing the operas of Janáček, Smetana and Dvořák before international audiences.

Nicky Spence

LACA

Nicky Spence's unique skills as a singing actor and the rare honesty of his musicianship have earned him a place at the top of the classical music profession. The BBC Music Magazine named him 'Personality of the Year' in 2022, he was made an OBE in the 2023 King's Birthday Honours, and was named winner of the RPS Singer Award in 2024. Nicky's roles in the 2025/2026 season include debuts at Staatsoper Hamburg as Finn/Bayan in *Ruslan i Ludmila,* and at Opera Philadelphia as Co-Ed 2, Algorithm 3, Neighbour, Death in their world premiere of *Complications in Sue*. He returns to Opéra National de Paris as Arjuna in *Satyagraha*. In concert, he performs Hauptmann/Narr in *Wozzeck* and *The Dream of Gerontius* with Bayerischen Rundfunk and Simon Rattle, Bobby Riggs in Laura Karpman's opera *Balls* with the London Philharmonia, and Siegmund in the first act of *Die Walküre* with Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España. Other recent engagements include the title role in *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček* at the Janáček Festival in Brno, Laca in *Jenůfa* for the Royal Ballet and Opera, Florestan in *Fidelio* for Maifestspiele Wiesbaden, Boris in *Katya Kabanová* for the Glyndebourne Festival and a debut in the title role in *Peter Grimes* for the Welsh National Opera. Performances on the concert stage include Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the Hallé Orchestra and Kahchun Wong, Torquemada in *L'heure espagnole* with Orquestra Sinfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya, and Sergei in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the BBC Proms. In 2020, he won the BBC Music Magazine Vocal Award and Gramophone's Solo Vocal Award for his critically acclaimed recording of Janáček's *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*. Nicky is President of the Independent Society of Musicians.

Thomas Atkins

ŠTEVA

A 2018 graduate of the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House, New Zealand, tenor Thomas Atkins is fast becoming a much sought-after artist on the international scene. He is enjoying a thriving career with recent successful debuts at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Opéra de Montpellier, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Opéra national de Paris, Royal Danish Opera, the Barbican (with the London Symphony Orchestra and BBC Symphony Orchestra) and New Zealand Opera. Atkins's 2025–2026 highlights include his highly anticipated company debut, returning to the role of Andrej Chowanskij in *Khovanshchina*, a return to the Salzburg Easter Festival as Froh in a new production of *Das Rheingold* under the baton of Kirill Petrenko, and Ralph in *HMS Pinafore* with the English National Opera. On the concert platform, he is making his debut with the Orchestre de Paris under the baton of Klaus Mäkelä as Hémon in Pascal Dusapin's world premiere of *Antigone*, is playing Froh in *Das Rheingold* in concert with the Berliner Philharmoniker, and is appearing as the tenor soloist in *The Dream of Gerontius* with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra. Last season's highlights included Tom Rakewell in a new production of *The Rake's Progress* at the Norwegian National Opera, his role and company debut at ENO as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, and his return to the Royal Opera House as Števa in *Jenůfa*. He also returned to the Salzburg Easter Festival in the role of Andrej Chowanskij in a new production of *Khovanshchina* by director Simon McBurney and made his company debut as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* at Semperoper Dresden. On the concert platform, he appeared as the tenor soloist in *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* with the Nürnberger Symphoniker, and as the tenor soloist in Britten's *War Requiem* with Fondazione Teatro Massimo di Palermo and with the Dresden Philharmonic under Sir Donald Runnicles. Highlights of recent concert engagements include

performances with The Hallé and Sir Mark Elder in Verdi's *Requiem*, Ensemble Pygmalion under the baton of Raphaël Pichon for a European tour of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, the Gulbenkian Choir and Orchestra conducted by Hannu Lintu for Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang*, the Royal Northern Sinfonia for Bruckner's *Mass No. 3* conducted by Dinis Sousa, the Orchestre de Chambre de Genève as Tybalt in *Roméo et Juliette* conducted by Marc Leroy-Calatayud, and the Insula Orchestra at Brucknerhaus Linz for Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* conducted by Laurence Equilbey.

The Bamberg Symphony

ORCHESTRA

The Bamberg Symphony is an exceptional world orchestra that is not based in a large metropolis, but in the historic city of Bamberg. Nearly ten percent of the local population holds long-term subscriptions to their concerts, yet their main strength lies in their international activity. Since 1946, they have been bringing their distinctive dark, round yet radiant sound to the world, having performed nearly 8,000 concerts in over 500 cities across 64 countries. They have in this way become significant cultural ambassadors for Bavaria and Germany, regularly performing in leading concert halls around the world in the USA, Asia and Europe. The orchestra was founded after the Second World War by musicians who were forced to leave their homes, particularly former members of the German Philharmonic in Prague. As a result, their tradition traces back to Mozart and Mahler. Since 2004, they have held the title of the Bavarian State Philharmonic, emphasising the important support from the Free State of Bavaria. Throughout its history, the orchestra has been led by five chief conductors. The current chief conductor, since 2016, is Jakub Hrůša, who continues the orchestra's historical roots and is elevating its international reputation. The orchestra also collaborates with their honorary conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Christoph Eschenbach and Manfred Honeck. Numerous radio and television broadcasts and an extensive discography also enhance its global standing. In recent years, the Bamberg Symphony has actively sought to operate more environmentally sustainably – they optimise travel, utilise greener modes of transportation, and support environmental projects to offset their carbon footprint.