

Leoš Janáček

# THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

Opera in three acts from 1923, libretto by Leoš Janáček  
based on a novel by Rudolf Těsnohlídek (1882–1928)

National Moravian-Silesian Theatre

10.11.2024

7 pm, Mahen Theatre

Conductor  
Director  
Set design  
Costumes  
Choreography  
Assistant Director  
& Choreography  
Assistant Choreography  
Choirmaster  
Head of the Opera Studio  
Dramaturg

Marek Šedivý  
Itzik Galili  
Daniel Dvořák  
Simona Rybáková  
Itzik Galili

Elisabeth Gibiat  
Dulio Ingraffia  
Jurij Galatenko  
Lenka Živocká  
Juraj Bajús

## Cast

Gamekeeper	Martin Gurbal
Gamekeeper's wife / Owl	Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová
Schoolmaster / Mosquito	Martin Javorský
Parson / Badger	Jan Štáva
Harašta, a poultry dealer	Boris Prýgl
Mr. Pásek, Innkeeper	Erik Ondruš
Mrs. Pásková, Innkeeper's	
Wife / Rooster / Jay	Miroslava Časarová
Pepík, the Gamekeeper's	
grandson	Ondřej Borák
Frantík, his friend	Filip Škandera
Young Vixen Bystrouška	Sára Bernatíková
Bystrouška (Vixen)	Doubravka Novotná
Fox	Anna Nitrová
Cricket	Anna Rozálie Šimičková
Grasshopper	Žofie Trojáčková
Young Frog	Roman Patrik Baroš
Lapák, a dog / Woodpecker	Šárka Hrbáčková
Chocholka, a hen	Karolína Levková

## Cast of Ballet Roles

Apparition	Yu Matsumoto
of the Vixen as a girl	Gvendolin Nagy
Ladybug	Dorottya Fanni Lengyel,
Storks	Maxwell Davies
	Elen Šnoblová
Squirrel	Viola Izzo /
Owls	Maria Carla Ognisanto
	Leonardo Baghin / Sachiya
Blue Dragonflies	Takata Hare / Simone Giroletti
	Mark Griffiths
Hedgehog	Michal Bublík
Old Butterfly	

National Moravian-Silesian Theatre

Intermission after Act 2

# Synopsis

## Act 1

One hot summer afternoon a gamekeeper is walking through his forests. He lays down to rest for a while and soon falls asleep. The forest is full of life: flies circle above, a cricket and a grasshopper play a waltz, a mosquito staggers around, drunk on human blood, and is chased by a young frog. The young Bystrouška observes all of this in fascination. She is particularly taken by the frog, but when she tries to take a closer look the frog, terrified, leaps onto the gamekeeper's nose. The startled gamekeeper sees Bystrouška and before the fox can gather its wits, he is already taking her to his lakeside lodge.

Scene change

Bystrouška lives locked up in the courtyard of the lodge along with a dog, Lapák, and a brood of hens. The gamekeeper's grandson boasts to a friend about the new addition and teases Bystrouška with a stick. As a result the vixen bites his leg and the gamekeeper ties her up as punishment. Bystrouška moans and dreams all night about living free in the forest. In the morning she thinks up a new strategy. First on the receiving end are the rooster and its hens, who boast about their exemplary work-rate. Bystrouška easily dupes the fickle creatures and the rooster and the majority of his retinue pay with their lives. The angry gamekeeper goes after the vixen with a club, but she bites through her rope and disappears into the forest.

## Act 2

Bystrouška is enjoying her new-found freedom. She ejects the old badger from its set and settles there herself.

Scene change

At the Pásek Inn, the gamekeeper is seated with his friends the schoolmaster and the parson, playing cards and enjoying their drink. They all leave the inn unsteady on their feet. This drunken night-time walk is observed by a hidden Bystrouška. She is hiding between the sunflowers which the drunken schoolmaster

soon approaches – he mistakes the shaking flowers for the face of Terinka, a woman he is in love with. The parson remembers his love from his student days, but his reminiscences are also interrupted by Bystrouška. The gamekeeper shoots at her and both men run away in terror.

Scene change

In the light of a summer night, Bystrouška meets the fox Zlatohřbítek. An initial fondness grows into love, which is consummated in the foxes' den. The forest creatures indignantly follow Bystrouška's immoral life, though they are placated by a hastily arranged wedding.

## Act 3

Summer passes and in autumn the gamekeeper comes across Harašta, a poultry dealer, in the forest. Harašta boasts about his forthcoming marriage to Terynka, but the gamekeeper is more interested in whether Harašta hasn't been poaching in his forest. Bystrouška and Zlatohřbítek appear with a litter of fox cubs and when Bystrouška smells Harašta and his bag full of poultry, she decides to have some fun. She pretends that she is unable to walk on all fours, but when Harašta aims at her, she nimbly disappears. However, the game goes wrong – Harašta shoots and Bystrouška falls down dead.

Scene change

At Pásek's Inn, the gamekeeper discovers that Harašta's Terynka was given a new fox-fur muff for her wedding. The schoolmaster takes the news of Terynka's wedding very hard, but the gamekeeper soothes him by telling him that she wasn't the woman for him. Everyone starts to feel nostalgic and the gamekeeper decides it is better to go home. On his way through the forest he remembers his youth, he admires the beauty of the forest and realizes that life repeats itself. The forest looks as it did when he caught Bystrouška. And then he sees her... the spitting image of

her mother! He wants to catch her again but he is prevented by a small frog, the grandson of the one from before. The circle of life is eternal...

If there is one of Janáček's seven operas which is more closely connected to the city where he lived and its surroundings than any other, then it is not only because it is where Janáček composed it. *The Cunning Little Vixen* – an incredible combination of the profound philosophy in life of a composer approaching his seventies, a colourful picture of the first years in the life of the young Czechoslovak Republic and the charm of the Bílovice forests – began its life in Brno in the editorial offices of Lidové noviny. The daily newspaper Lidové noviny was established in Brno in 1893. Its founder was the journalist and politician Adolf Stránský (1855–1931). Although a trained lawyer, he began contributing to newspapers during his student years in Prague. When he returned to Brno he published Moravské listy from 1889–1893, which was the forerunner of Lidové noviny, a landmark newspaper in the history of Czech journalism. Contributors to the paper included such notables as Karel Čapek, Jiří Mahen, Eduard Bass, Pavel Váša and František Gellner. Arnošt Heinrich (1880–1933) also worked in the offices from 1904 and soon became a head editor and then editor-in-chief in 1919. The type of newspaper that he wanted was best described by Eduard Bass: *Serious, true and honest to the extreme in matters, flexible, humorous and perfect in its literary form, that's what we want to be...*

And he did in fact gradually manage to build just such a newspaper. Leoš Janáček was not only one of Lidové noviny's loyal readers. He also contributed to it from the very first edition and continued to do so until his death. Many of the journalists in Brno became Janáček's friends and confidantes. Janáček also often found inspiration from the pages of Lidové noviny for his own works, such as *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* or his *Nursery Rhymes*. However, the greatest inspiration for Janáček came from editor-in-chief Heinrich's wish that Lidové noviny become a newspaper for *true contentment*.

The Lidové noviny art supplement was always important, although the war interrupted collaboration with many of its artists.

At the end of 1919, Heinrich came up with the idea that there should be a cartoon with a short, humorous text every day in the newspaper. The problem of a lack of artists was addressed by appointing an art editor whose job it was to source the drawings, and this thankless task fell to the journalist Jaromír John. The newspaper required almost a thousand pictures a year, and so Jaromír John approached prominent artists in their studios in Prague. A promising discovery was the young Ondřej Sekora, who was still a student at the law faculty, but this was still not enough and John had to continue on his journeys. One of his trips to Prague led him to Vinohrady and the studio of Stanislav Lolek (1873–1936).

Lolek was a prominent landscape artist and one of the leading impressionist painters in Moravia. Animals were often a central motif of his paintings. In 1936 there was an exhibition of Lolek's paintings in Hodonín which the newspaper rated thus: *Stanislav Lolek was a very distinctive landscape artist who never looked to complicate matters. And his creations from the animal world are a true mastery of an entirely new style which will not immediately find such a successor and imitator. In the hands of Lolek, eternal reality and a profound knowledge of the forest and its mute creatures are seen from a magical perspective with emotional warmth, unprecedented heroism and unique poetry.* He literally brought together the hunter and artist in one person. After finishing secondary school in Prostějov, he had to work for a year as a forestry apprentice in Veselí u Mohelnice, where he met the gamekeeper Augustin Kořínek, who taught him a great deal. He became the model for the hunter in a collection of drawings Lolek made at the Academy of Fine Arts. Jaromír John recalled how Lolek became one of the fathers of the cunning vixen from the Jezerská hunting lodge: (...)

*My gaze then turned from the dusty pile at the armchair and my eyes fastened on the floor and a dusty piece of paper with an ink-drawn glade. Lolek listened to all my lamentations and pleas and shook his head: "I am a landscape artist, I don't*

*do figures, and those animals, the deer, are just a work of love!" I looked at the floor at the glade sticking out. I pointed at it.*

*"And what is this down here?"*

*"Nothing! That's nothing for you!"*

*"I'd like to look at it!"*

*"God forbid!"*

*"So tell me, then, what is it?"*

*"Just nonsense from the Academy – impossible things... anyway... now I need to go down into Prague... shall we go together?" I reached the floor and lifted up a thick bundle of drawings. I dusted them off and looked through them. There was a series of pictures in the style of Busch of a furious hunter with a bristling beard and a sort of sly fox. As I could delay the protesting Lolek no longer, I thrust it under my arm, stuck on my hat and hurried to the station. I missed the second express train to Brno so I waited for the last night connection. Looking at the pictures in the Zavřel station restaurant cheered me up. Not one page was missing. The story was complete and the pictures could be easily reproduced for the newspaper. "Add some text and we can stretch out these damned stories for at least three months!" I arrived in Brno at four in the morning and went straight to the office. Heinrich and his friends were still at a table drinking wine. "Těsnohlídek has to add some verse to them!" However, Těsnohlídek did not write verse, but incredible prose telling the story of the clever vixen who gave the hunter the runaround. The name of his novel – *The Cunning Little Vixen*...*

Although originally from Čáslav, the writer and journalist Rudolf Těsnohlídek (1882–1928) lived for more than twenty years in Brno. Here he wrote his major works and was one of the journalists who were responsible for the high quality of Lidové noviny. His arrival at Lidové noviny transformed the melancholic, pessimistic character of Těsnohlídek's early short stories. One of his main jobs at the newspaper was the section From the Courtroom, where Těsnohlídek discovered the world of Brno folk and their distinctive language. Under Těsnohlídek the section

was filled with distinctive social pictures whereby Těsnohlídek was able to masterfully and sensitively capture and describe the characters of the people he saw daily in court. The world which he encountered through his work was later reflected in his other literary endeavours. Těsnohlídek liked to travel to the forests around Bílovice nad Svitavou and it was here that his greatest literary work was based.

Rudolf Těsnohlídek's most famous work is undoubtedly about the spoiled vixen Bystrouška, which he was more or less forced to write by the editor-in-chief Heinrich. *The Cunning Little Vixen* came out in instalments in Lidové noviny from 7 April to 23 June 1920, and the book was published a year later. More of a novel than short story in size, its form is closer to Těsnohlídek's previous feuilleton-novels, but its composition is more coherent. It is also different in the way that the human and animal worlds are connected. In his previous works, animals were of only marginal interest, but here they are the main characters, and the animal world is captured in all its forms – from mosquitos to frogs, birds, hares, foxes and badgers. The plot, which is divided into 23 chapters and is set in the forests of Bílovice and around Brno, is simple – an old hunter catches a fox cub in the forest and brings her home. The vixen is always making mischief and ends up entering the poultry pen in the yard and manages to escape back to the forest. Life is hard in winter, though, and she raids the hunting lodge, making the gamekeeper's life a misery as he tries in vain to catch her. Spring comes and Bystrouška falls in love with the fox Zlatohřbítek and starts a family with him. Těsnohlídek populated the human world with three friends who meet at the Pásek Inn – Bartoš the gamekeeper, the parson and the schoolmaster. As in his earlier works, Těsnohlídek describes ordinary people persuasively with all their failings. The gentlemen enjoy imbibing and after their card game often return home dead drunk. The gamekeeper shows respect for his resolute wife, the parson for the innkeeper's wife, while in his past there must have been a love affair. The blunt schoolmaster

is in love with Terynka the confectioner. Těsnohlídek shows this world from two perspectives – animal and human – and in his view, the animal perspective is purer and better, and at the same time he draws certain parallels between the two worlds and their inhabitants. Těsnohlídek uses language to describe characters and situations. In the Brno suburbs he mixes elements of at least two dialects – Haná and South Moravian. Těsnohlídek's characters often use standard language, occasionally in an exaggerated manner, for example, when the fox is courting the vixen, or when the forester is speaking in company, but as the intake of alcohol increases and spirits rise, he slips back into dialect. The Líšeň dialect is then mixed together with the parson's interjections in Latin and Greek.

Like the first artists behind the *Vixen*, Lolek and Těsnohlídek, Janáček was also fond of nature and animals. Not only did he listen to their calls and note them down in his speech melodies, but he was also a competent farmer, as we can read in R. Smetana's article for LN in 1933, *The House behind the Conservatory*: (...) *A love of animals was one of his very strong characteristics, a characteristic so strong that he awoke in the traits of animal phenomena which had never been seen before. The hens would be spoiled because they had been so dutiful in laying their eggs, in the evening when it was time for them to sleep he taught them to jump on command onto the garden table, from where they were taken to the henhouse in the loft, he walked alongside them and behind them all across the garden, he taught them not to rake about in the flower beds, and he behaved in a much friendlier way towards them than was usual with real farmers. His two dogs – the sturdy black poodle, Čert, and the stray, Čipera, were very unique dogs. This company of animals, which Janáček would chat with very gently for a long time, was also used to further his musical interests. He listened captively to the songs of his goldfinch, he noticed and recorded the changes to Čipera's voice; when she was growing up, he walked with her along the paths in his garden – one time they came across a hairy black caterpillar*

and Čipera growled at it in surprise, he went to note down her grumbings.

Therefore, Janáček's warm relationship towards nature and all living things may have been behind his interest in Těsnohlídek's stories. He cut out all of the instalments of *Bystrouška* from the newspaper, but beforehand he had other work to finish. He worked on the manuscript of *Katya Kabanová* until 24 December 1920, the premiere of which was on 23 November 1921 at the National Theatre in Brno. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1921 Lidové noviny published a report on 15 May about a new opera the Maestro was contemplating. There was also mention of a new work on 11 June 1921 in the feuilleton *The Little Goldfinch*, where Janáček wrote that he was *assembling some company for Vixen Bystrouška*. The date on the manuscript of the score shows that Janáček started composing on 20 January 1922, and on 10 February he wrote a letter to his friend, Kamila Stösslová: *I have started writing The Cunning Little Vixen. A jolly thing with a sad ending. And I am taking up a place at that sad end myself. And so I belong there!* Janáček composed and studied nature. In 1922 Lidové noviny published several feuilletons with animal themes, while he noted the melodies of the birds when he was walking in Lužánky Park in Brno. He noted the sounds of other animals when he was in Hukvaldy – in the summer the gamekeeper Jan Sládek located a fox's den for him so that Janáček could observe first-hand the life of the young cubs. However, before making a start on the composition, Janáček had to adapt Těsnohlídek's novella. The changes he made were substantial – the plot of the opera is more concise than the novel – of the 23 chapters Janáček chose the ten most suitable, creating three acts from them. He also changed the order of the stories as well as their chronology, some of the events from the chapters he had left out became part of the Vixen's narration. He had already started to mark the passages which he liked from the cut-outs he had kept from the newspapers. He made more thorough changes in the book version from 1921, where there are

clearly two stages of alterations – in red and then in ordinary pencil. The notes in red suggested there would be five acts and the use of significantly more passages from the book, including the vixen's nightly raids on the hunting lodge. Janáček began to connect the story with the seasons of the year and thought about there being a death at the end, although at that time he only marked it with a cross. The next stage, written in pencil, is more thorough and at the end of chapter 22, where Bystrouška falls in love with Zlatohřbitek, Janáček noted the date of 23 June 1922. It is, therefore, possible that he carried out this alteration at the same time as he was composing. Janáček worked extensively with the text, choosing those sections which emphasised the connection between the human world and nature. He left out the social passages and the stories of the foxes' raids on the hunting lodge and its supplies. He cut back on the political satire while emphasising the poetry of the whole story. Dividing the plot according to the seasons of the year was symbolical of the finality of human existence and the eternal cycle of nature.

The composer finished the manuscript of the first act on 22 March 1922, the second act on 5 July 1922 and the whole opera on 25 October of the same year. Everyone knew about Janáček's new opera and so when the director of Brno's National Theatre, Václav Štech, heard in November 1922 that the work was finished, he at once wrote a letter to Janáček asking if the new work could be performed by Brno's National Theatre. We can judge what Janáček's reply was by the fact that only three days later on 25 November there was a brief report in the journal *Divadelní šepť*: *Maestro Janáček has completed the score for his new opera The Cunning Little Vixen based on the story by Rudolf Těsnohlídek. The opera will be performed for the first time at the National Theatre in Brno at the start of next season.* The report, however, was overly optimistic, as on 3 April 1923 Janáček was still writing to Kamila Stösslová that: *I didn't go anywhere over the holidays; I am up to my neck in work copying out The Cunning Little Vixen. I'm doing Bystrouška like the devil*



*catching flies – when he's got nothing else to catch. I caught the vixen for the forest and for the sadness of the late years.*

The opera transcription was ready a year later, in October 1923. The piano score was in the theatre by December and the complete score by January 1924, making it possible to start preparing the orchestral parts.

The premiere was supposed to take place in the autumn and preparations began in the summer. At Janáček's request, the scenery and costumes for the premiere of *The Cunning Little Vixen* were entrusted to Eduard Milén. Earlier the composer had asked him for a design for the front page of the piano score, which was published by Universal Edition in Vienna in July 1924. The drawing featured a charming young, slightly coquettish, woman, which pleased Janáček greatly. Milén said later: *Bystrouška was, first and foremost, a woman for Janáček.* Eduard Milén created impressive scenery and modern costumes. Their geometric shapes are ablaze with colour and at the same time humorously sum up the characteristic features of each animal. Ota Zitek (1892–1955), who joined the Brno theatre ensemble in 1921, was chosen as director. It was his first Janáček premiere and he had a difficult task in store – to find a way to join the two diverse worlds of humans and animals. Janáček was heavily involved in the rehearsals and spent a great deal of time with the young director discussing the composer's ideas for the stage design of the *Vixen*.

Janáček was not only greatly involved in the director's work, he often went to the theatre for the rehearsals and the performances of his work, a quiet observer behind the scenes. As with Janáček's other operas, the musical production was the work of the head of the opera, František Neumann. Janáček had himself recommended this conductor and composer as head of the National Theatre, and he proved to be a loyal supporter and collaborator, and at rehearsals the two of them would often correct and finalize his operas. There was a great deal of curiosity about the premiere and Lidové noviny, which was behind

the genesis of *The Cunning Little Vixen*, devoted much attention to it. On the day of the premiere, 6 November 1924, Adolf Veselý published a feuilleton called *The Journey of a Work of Art* which familiarized readers with the origin of the opera from the composer's desk to the theatre stage, including trivialities such as the unexpected wedding of the singer playing the Vixen, and in the evening there was the gala premiere of *The Cunning Little Vixen* at the theatre with Hana Hrdličková as Bystrouška, Božena Snopková as Fox and Arnold Flögel as the Gamekeeper. Both the public and critics were happy with the production and the new work.

At the end of November, even the head of the opera company at Prague National Theatre, Otakar Ostrčil, came to see a performance of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. He had already asked Janáček about the possibility of performing the *Vixen* in Prague back in September 1924. Janáček, however, was wary after his experience with the Prague premiere of *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* and he did not want the premiere of his new work to be in Prague. The Prague premiere at the National Theatre on 18 May 1925 was part of an orchestral festival organized by the International Society for Contemporary Music. The opera was conducted by the head himself, Otakar Ostrčil, and was directed by Ferdinand Pujman. The scenery and costumes were created by Josef Čapek. Janáček was not particularly satisfied with it. During the composer's life, *The Cunning Little Vixen* was performed abroad only in Mainz, but today, along with *Jenůfa*, it is one of his most frequently played works both at home and internationally.

Patricie Částková

# Marek Šedivý

## Conductor

Conductor Marek Šedivý is the musical director of the opera company at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava. He graduated in conducting from Prague Conservatory and the Music and Dance Faculty at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. In the years 2016–2018 he was chief conductor of the Silesian Theatre in Opava, and in the years 2018–2022 chief guest conductor of the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, with which he recorded pieces including a significant proportion of the symphonic works of Svatopluk Havelka and Jan Novák. He has performed at music festivals such as Prague Spring, Dvořák Prague International Music Festival, Pardubice Music Spring, Mozartfest Würzburg and Internationale Gluck-Opern-Festspiele Nürnberg. He made his debut in Vienna with the Tonkünstler Orchestra in September 2019 with a performance of Dvořák's *Requiem*. In January 2015, he recorded two of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano concertos (Nos. 1 and 4) for Sony with the Chinese pianist Fang Yuan and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Marek Šedivý was also the artistic director of Ensemble terrible at the Music and Dance Faculty at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (HAMU), focusing on contemporary music written by young composers.

# Iztik Galili

## Director, choreographer

Iztik Galili was born in Israel and established himself as a leading choreographer with his work for renowned dance companies. Galili's interest in opera began in 2014 during a co-production between the New York Metropolitan Opera and the Dutch National Opera and Ballet in Amsterdam, when director Dmitri Tchernyakov invited him to create the choreography for the famous Polovtsian Dances in Borodin's opera *Prince Igor* ("Seldom in opera does dancing intensify the central drama, but that happens here..." commented the New York Times critic Alastair Macaulay). He participated in the production of Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv as co-director and choreographer in 2018, and acted as director, choreographer, set designer, lighting designer and costume designer of his own dance opera *Forever and a Day* at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre in Vilnius in 2019. Galili holds numerous choreography awards and was made a Knight of the Royal Order of the Orange-Nassau Dynasty by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands in 2006 for his contribution to Dutch culture. Intertwining dreams with reality and the past with the present, Galili invites the audience to consider what remains hidden beyond the bounds of reality. He connects expressive movement with dramatic and poetic images – often achieved with his own lighting design – and remoulds his own personal experience and perception of the world into productions imbued with a deep humanity. Constant and intensive research into the interaction between movement and Galili's habitually poetic texts, whether projected, recited or sung, makes him an extraordinary and remarkable choreographer of international repute.

# Daniel Dvořák

## Set design

Daniel Dvořák studied architecture and set design with Professor Josef Svoboda at the Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague and then at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna. He has worked as a set designer on theatre, film and television productions. He has produced more than 400 theatre sets to date in this country and abroad. He founded Opera Furore, the first ensemble in Czechoslovakia to focus systematically on experimental opera, with Jiří Nekvasil in 1988. He was employed to manage the Prague Chamber Opera, which he then reorganised into Opera Mozart, in 1990 along with Jiří Nekvasil. He co-founded the Summer Mozart Season at the Estates Theatre in 1992. He was appointed Director of the Prague State Opera in 1998 and worked as Director General of the National Theatre in 2002–2006. He acted as Director of National Theatre Brno in the years 2007–2012. He exhibits his works at individual and group exhibitions. The Czech exposition to which he participated at the Prague Quadrennial 1999 won the main prize – the Golden Triga. He received the Alfréd Radok Award for theatre set design in 1999 and was nominated for the award again in 2001. In the same year, he was awarded the Prize of the Masaryk Academy of Arts for set design. He was named a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government in 2002. Two book monographies have been published about his work, and he has also been featured in the prestigious cycle of television programmes *GEN* (Gallery of the Elite of the Nation) that documents the work of the most distinguished figures in the Czech Republic.

# Simona Rybáková

## Costume design

Simona Rybáková studied at secondary school of applied arts and subsequently the Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague and also took study trips to the University of Industrial Arts in Helsinki and Rhode Island School of Design in Providence (USA). She defended her doctoral dissertation *Alternatives and New Paths in Costume Design* in 2014. She has been working actively in the costume design sub-commission at the international organisation OISTAT since 1996. She is a member of the Czech Film Academy and the European Film Academy. She acted as curator of the international exhibition *Extreme Costume* at the Prague Quadrennial 2011. The significant awards she has received include first prize in the Swarovski Award competition, the Golden Triga for the collective Czech exposition at PQ 99, three main prizes for costumes at World Stage Design, and an iSTAN Excellence Award. She has been nominated for the Czech Lion for best costumes six times and has won the award twice for the films *Three Brothers* and *Milada*. She is an internationally established costume designer and has worked on more than 300 projects for film, TV, opera, drama, dance, events and commercials. She exhibits regularly all over the world and lectures and leads workshops at universities in the Czech Republic and abroad. She has led the Studio of Fashion and Footwear Design at the Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague (UMPRUM) since October 2023.

# Doubravka Novotná

## Bystrouška (Vixen)

During the course of her career, she has twice been nominated for a Thalia Award, the first time for the role of Ophelia (*Hamlet*), the second time for the role of Morgana (*Alcina*). She made her debut in 2017 on the boards of the National Theatre in Prague, where she has been a regular guest performer ever since and where she has played such roles such as Oscar (*Un ballo in maschera*), Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) and Madeleine (*Ball im Savoy*). She became a permanent member of the Janáček opera company at National Theatre Brno in the 2024/2025 season, and has performed here in such roles as Musetta (*La bohème*), First Wood Sprite (*Rusalka*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*) and Valencienne (*The Merry Widow*). She also performs regularly on other opera stages – the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre (*Julietta*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*), the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň (*Hamlet*, *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *Candide*), and the South Bohemian Theatre (*Mephistopheles*, *The Jacobin*). She has also appeared as a guest performer in Krefeld, Germany as Ophelia (*Hamlet*). She also cultivates an interest in early music. She works with such ensembles as Musica Florea, Czech Ensemble Baroque and Collegium 1704.

# Anna Nitrová

## Zlatohřbítek (Fox)

The Czech mezzo-soprano Anna Nitrová comes from Olomouc. After completing grammar school, she studied solo singing at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ostrava. After her studies, she continued to attend private lessons with the opera singers Natalia Romanová and Tatiana Teslia, and currently consults with the leading opera singer and teacher doc. MgA. Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová, Ph.D. She has been a finalist in the Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský International Vocal Competition in Trnava and the Antonín Dvořák International Singing Competition in Karlovy Vary, and was awarded second place at the international competition Musica sacra in Rome. Since 2001, she has been a soloist with the opera company at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava where she has played such roles such as Varvara (*Káťa Kabanová*), Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*), Káča (*The Devil and Kate*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Isabella (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Lucretia (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Panna Róza (*The Secret*), The Foreign Princess (*Rusalka*) and the Fox Gold-Stripe (*The Cunning Little Vixen*). She has been nominated for Thalia Awards for her portrayal of the roles of Donna Elvira (2007) and Isabella (2010). Anna Nitrová has also performed on the stages of the Silesian Theatre in Opava, the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc, the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň and National Theatre Brno. Her concert activities as a singer have included a guest performance at the festival Les Musicales de Louvergnay in France and appearances at the Leoš Janáček International Music Festival, Janáček's May, the Saint Wenceslas Music Festival, the Autumn Festival of Sacred Music and the series of concerts *Meeting with Mozart*.

# Martin Gurbal'

## Gamekeeper

He was named absolute winner at the International Antonín Dvořák Singing Competition in Karlovy Vary while he was still studying at the conservatory (1996) and later won second prize at the Mikuláš Schneider-Trnavský International Vocal Competition and at the Lucia Popp Vocal Competition in Bratislava. He was a soloist with the opera company in Košice in the years 1995–2001, before taking up an engagement with the opera company at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava. He has been a regular guest performer at the National Theatre in Prague, National Theatre Brno, the Slovak National Theatre and other leading opera houses in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. He specialises in the works of Giuseppe Verdi, Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček. He has performed essential bass roles in both the Czech repertoire (including the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, the Water Goblin in *Rusalka* and Kecal in *The Bartered Bride*) and the world repertoire (including Don Pasquale and Bertram in *Robert le diable*), as well as landmark works of the twentieth century (including Bluebeard and the Gold Merchant in *Cadillac*). In addition to opera, Martin Gurbal' is also involved in concert activities; he has sung under the baton of prestigious Czech conductors such as Jiří Bělohlávek, Tomáš Hanus, Tomáš Netopil and Jakub Hrůša. He has performed on the stages of European opera houses and concert halls with the Czech Philharmonic, the Slovak Philharmonic, the Giuseppe Verdi Orchestra in Milan, the Budapest Symphony Orchestra in Hungary, the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden, the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra and the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He is also a frequent guest at such festivals as the Saint Wenceslas Music Festival, Smetana's Litomyšl and Janáček Brno, and has also performed at the Miskolc Opera Festival and OPA Pisa – Anima Mundi. He sang the role of the Forester for the BBC in the Czech version of the animated film of Leoš Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

# Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová

## Gamekeeper's wife / Owl

Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová is a soloist at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava which has been her home theatre since 1985. She has, however, also performed as a guest on many opera stages and has given concerts with Czech and foreign orchestras (The National Theatre in Prague, National Theatre Brno, the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava, the National Theatre in Košice, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, the Czech Philharmonic, the Munich Philharmonic, the Kölner Philharmonie, the Göteborgs Symfoniker, the Odense Symfoniorkester, the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, the Slovak Philharmonic, etc.). She has portrayed an enormous number of operatic characters from the Czech and international repertoire. She won a Thalia Award for the role of Mimì in Puccini's opera *La bohème* in 1996 and the same award for the title role in Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1998. She works as a teacher at the Janáček Conservatory in Ostrava and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ostrava where she heads the Department of Solo Singing.

# Martin Javorský

## Schoolmaster / Mosquito

In addition to the Mozart repertoire and the interpretation of the music of the old masters, Martin Javorský is often invited to perform both the music of the twentieth century and contemporary music. He has performed with orchestras in the Czech Republic and abroad, such as the Brno Philharmonic, the Moravian Philharmonic Olomouc, Czech Ensemble Baroque, Musica Florea, Ensemble Inégal, the Brno Contemporary Orchestra and the Poznań Philharmonic under the batons of conductors Pavel Šnajdr, Roman Válek, Łukasz Borowicz and Marek Šedivý. In the autumn of 2017, he took part with Ensemble Opera Diversa in the premiere of Lenka Nota Foltýnová's opera *I Am the Princess of Fools*. In the summer of 2018, he performed as Vahler (Müller's *Das neue Sonntagskind*) in a production with conductor Robert Hugo and his ensemble Capella Regia at the music festivals in Český Krumlov and Valtice along with soloists from the National Theatre in Prague. In June 2018, he performed at the Opera Nova Festival at the National Theatre in Josef Berg's works *Johannes Doktor Faust* and *Euphrides in Front of the Gates of Tymenas*. He also played the roles of Vašek (Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*) and Aquilio (Vivaldi's *Farnace*) at the South Bohemian Theatre. Martin Javorský made his debut on the stage of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre as Ladislav Podhajský (Smetana's *The Two Widows*) in 2022, and in the following seasons he also played Vitek (Smetana's *Dalibor*), Heinrich (Wagner's *Tannhäuser*), Junoš (Smetana's *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*), and the Parson and the Mosquito (Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*). In the current season at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, he will be playing the role of Pong (Puccini's *Turandot*) and will also be making his debut as Jeník in *The Bartered Bride*, as well as playing the role of Rodolfo in Puccini's *La bohème* at the Silesian Theatre in Opava.

# Jan Štáva

## Parson / Badger

Jan Štáva has been singing since childhood under the guidance of his mother, singing teacher and opera singer Zdeňka Rybecká. Since January 2010, he has been a member of the Janáček Opera in Brno, where his repertoire includes such roles as Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Baron Ochs (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Kecal (*The Bartered Bride*) and Water Goblin (*Rusalka*). He made his debut at the National Theatre in Prague in 2011 in the role of Osmin (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), since which time he has also performed here as Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) and Figaro and Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*). He is a regular guest with the opera company at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, where he has performed such roles as Kecal (*The Bartered Bride*). He has worked abroad at the opera house in Montpellier and at the Angers-Nantes Opéra where he played the role of Osmin (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), and at the Opéra de Paris and the Opéra national de Lorraine in Nancy. His extensive concert activity has included working with such orchestras as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de Lyon and the Czech Philharmonic, and he has also performed at prestigious festivals such as the BBC Proms and the Salzburger Festspiele.

# Boris Prýgl

## Harašta, Poultry Dealer

Bass-baritone Boris Prýgl studied with Zlatica Livorová and graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in the class of Peter Mikuláš. He completed his doctoral studies at the Academy of Performing Arts in 2022, specialising in Russian songwriting. He gained his first stage experience at the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava. He was a member of the opera studio at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich in the years 2017–2019 and a soloist at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich in the years 2019–2021. He has won a number of singing competitions, including the title of absolute winner of the International Antonín Dvořák Singing Competition in Karlovy Vary in 2015. His achievements abroad have included second place and the prize for the best interpretation of Mozart at the International Ferruccio Tagliavini Singing Competition in Austria. He was a finalist at two prestigious international singing competitions in July 2017 – the Belvedere Singing Competition and Plácido Domingo's Operalia (he was also awarded the Birgit Nilsson Prize at Operalia). He won the Dominique Meyer Award conferred by the then director of the Vienna State Opera at the Stella Maris International Vocal Competition in September 2019.