

Leoš Janáček

JENŮFA

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

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Moravian Theatre Olomouc

In co-production with National Theatre Brno
as part of the Janáček Brno festival

The production is produced in co-operation
with the organisation Úsměv mámy (A Mother's Smile).

20. and 21.11. 2024

7 pm, Mahen Theatre

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| Conductor | Anna Novotná Pešková |
| Director | Veronika Kos Loulová |
| Musical Study | Anna Novotná Pešková |
| Dramaturgy | Marta Ljubková |
| Set Design | Irina Moscu |
| Costume Design | Irina Moscu |
| Light Design | Fiammetta Baldiserri |
| Choirmaster | Michael Dvořák |
| Assistant to the Conductor | Anna Svoboda |
| Musical Preparation | Milada Jedličková, Lucie Kaucká |

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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Cast | |
| Jenůfa | Barbora Perná |
| Kostelníčka | Eliška Gattringerová |
| Laca Klemeň | Josef Moravec |
| Števa Buryja | Raman Hasymau |
| Grandmother Buryjovka | Sylva Čmugrová |
| Stárek | Jiří Příbyl |
| Karolka | Helena Beránková |
| Barena | Anna Moriová |

Moravian Theatre Olomouc

Intermission after Act 1

Synopsis

Act 1

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 step-brother Laca also carries a flame for Jenůfa and asks her about Števa. The delighted Števa arrives with his friends and musicians at the mill – he has not been taken away and, together with the other recruits, they celebrate their fortune with drink. Jenůfa's strict guardian Kostelnička sees the riotous company with Števa and announces that she will only give her consent for a marriage between Jenůfa and Števa after a year of probation, during which Števa will not be allowed to drink. Laca convinces Jenůfa that Števa loves her only because of her beauty and during the argument he cuts her face with a knife.

Act 2

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 Jenůfa over to him. When Kostelnička gives away the secret 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 the birth. As soon as Laca leaves, Kostelnička drowns the child in an icy river and convinces Jenůfa that she had slept for several days in a fever and the little boy had died in the meantime. The devastated Jenůfa agrees to a marriage with Laco.

Act 3

During the preparations for the wedding between Jenůfa and Laca the news breaks out 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 admits her crime 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 would still want her and sends him away. Laca however wants to stay by her side and promises that he will be with her even in the bad times. Jenůfa realises that she has found her true love "and God is pleased with it".

A word from the dramaturg

Every stage work takes on new meanings with each new interpretation. In its time, Janáček's (and Preissová's) *Jenůfa* raised the topical issue of illegitimate children and the resulting social stigma. It is not our intention to stage this opera, provocative in its time, as a window into the past, but rather as an opportunity to take a look at our lives today through the lens of ageless music. We are interested in the fate of the stepmother Kostelnička, who we do not see as a hard woman, we are interested in young Jenůfa, whose fate is decided by others, and we are interested in the newborn baby who is condemned to death by cruel social conventions. We are trying to look beyond the fate of these characters at the time at which the piece was written – and we see contemporary women who are struggling with doubts arising from motherhood and who are fighting postpartum depression with the help of the organisation A Mother's Smile. We see the story of Jenůfa and Kostelnička as an opportunity to tell the stories of today's women – and perhaps to give the opera a new optimistic ending. In addition to the libretto, we are also interested in the wording of the contemporary reviews, which literally denounced Preissová's stage original, and the words written by the clients of A Mother's Smile, and we will also be giving an opportunity for a song by the band VIAH to be heard. *Jenůfa*, in the first version, is an opportunity for us to reinvigorate the polyphony of the voices of women on behalf of whom Gabriela Preissová may once have spoken. Janáček put music to her words fourteen years after the premiere of her stage play – and we are now giving them the face of the twenty-first century.

Marta Ljubková

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) is one of the most important figures in Czech music and his work also earned him a firm place in the international context. A native of Hukvaldy in northern Moravia, he was deeply influenced by the folk music and speech of this region which fundamentally shaped his unique compositional style. After studying in Brno, Prague, Leipzig and Vienna, Janáček became a distinguished teacher and organiser of musical life in Brno, where he also founded an organ school, predecessor to today's Janáček Academy of Performing Arts.

Janáček did not establish himself on the opera scene immediately. His path to recognition was long and beset with difficulties, though he nevertheless left us an extensive and original body of work. The opera *Šárka* (1887–1888) remained unfinished and was overlooked in its time. At the turn of the century, he wrote *Destiny* (1903–1904), which was not performed until after his death and did not make much of an impression. Despite this failure, Janáček continued his experimental work. A third opera *Jenůfa* followed and met with a great response.

Janáček then wrote a number of major operas. *The Excursion of Mr Brouček to the Moon* (1908–1917) and *The Excursion of Mr Brouček to the Fifteenth Century* (1908–1917), written to a libretto by Svatopluk Čech, are more gentle comedies that address the clash of idealism and pragmatism, although they are performed less often.

This was followed by *Káťa Kabanová* (1919–1921) whose libretto was based on motifs from Ostrovsky's drama *The Storm*. *Káťa* is another character in whom Janáček explores inner psychological conflicts. The opera was premiered in Brno in 1921 and was presented on foreign stages soon afterwards.

The Cunning Little Vixen (1921–1923) deviates from the classical opera concept as it is full of playfulness, poetry and images of nature. At the same time, it also asks philosophical questions about the cyclicity of life. The opera was performed in Brno in 1924 and enjoys lasting popularity.

Janáček's last works of opera, *The Makropulos Affair* (1923–1925) and *From the House of the Dead* (1927–1928), represent the pinnacle of his work. *The Makropulos Affair*, which was premiered in 1926, explores the theme of immortality and the meaning of life, and its success confirmed Janáček's status on the international stage. *From the House of the Dead*, an opera based on motifs from Dostoevsky's novel, is his last, unfinished, work and was premiered posthumously in 1930. Here, Janáček achieved his most distinctive musical minimalism and harsh raw truth, bringing his operatic career to completion.

In addition to operas, Janáček's work also includes choral and orchestral pieces, among which his *Glagolitic Mass* (1926) and the symphonic rhapsody *Taras Bulba* (1915–1918) stand out. These compositions also reflect his deep interest in folk traditions, spirituality and philosophical questions.

Janáček's music is characterised by a distinctive melodic language that is based on the intonation of spoken language, which he employed successfully to evoke the natural expressiveness of music. This method, known as "speech melodies", played a key role in shaping his operatic works.

Her Stepdaughter, performed abroad under the title *Jenůfa*, was based on motifs from the play of the same name by Gabriela Preissová, and it took Janáček more than eight years to complete the opera. The story of a tragedy in a Moravian village, in which the principal theme is the clash between traditional morality and individual destinies, affected Janáček deeply. His personal experience associated with the loss of his daughter Olga (1903), who died at a young age, influenced the emotional depth of this opera's music profoundly.

Musically, Janáček avoided the traditional operatic pathos that was common in the works of his contemporaries in writing *Jenůfa*, and concentrated instead on the psychological delineation of the characters and the natural dynamics of their interactions. His work with motivic material is extremely economical here, and he often builds an entire scene on a simple

but distinctly rhythmic motif that corresponds to the natural rhythm of speech. Folk music, and Moravian songs in particular, is present in *Jenůfa* not literally, but transformed into original musical structures.

The importance of Janáček's third opera lies, among other things, in the fact that it is one of the first operas on the global scale composed to a non-versed prose text. The composer wrote his own libretto based on the drama *Her Stepdaughter* by Gabriela Preissová. It was Janáček's wish that the world premiere would take place in Prague, but this was rejected by Karel Kovařovic, then Head of Opera at the National Theatre. Brno got to experience the first performance of this classic work of world opera literature on 21 January 1904 as conducted by Janáček's student Cyril Metoděj Hrazdila and directed by Josef Malý. Janáček subsequently revised the opera in 1906 and 1911. Its Prague premiere did not take place until 26 May 1916 in a version with adaptations by Karel Kovařovic. The work was then performed in this version on other stages in the Czech Republic (Plzeň, Ostrava, Olomouc) and abroad. Contemporary directors therefore have two versions at their disposal – the first in the 1908 edition and the second, Kovařovic's version, from eight years later.

In the context of Janáček's work, *Jenůfa* marks not only a significant shift in his personal style, but also a profound transition from romanticism to modernism. Janáček's emphasis on musical realism, work with the spoken word and an innovative approach to rhythm and harmony influenced the entire following generation.

Gabriela Preissová (1862–1946) was a Czech writer and dramatist and an important figure in the Czech realist literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She was born in Kutná Hora and grew up in the Moravian-Slovakian borderlands which had a fundamental influence on her literary work, which she often set in rural Moravia. Preissová was an outstanding

observer of human destinies, and her works are dominated by strong female characters and clashes between traditional morality and personal emotions. These elements were strongly expressed in her theatre work, of which the most famous is the drama *Her Stepdaughter* (1890) which provided the template for Leoš Janáček's opera of the same name.

In her time, Preissová rejected the idealised image of the countryside that was popular among her contemporaries and focused on realistic and often cruel depictions of the lives of common people. In the drama *Her Stepdaughter*, she focused on the story of a Moravian village in which a tragedy unfolds around an illegitimate child and a clash of generations, with the key characters being the young Jenůfa and her stepmother Kostelníčka. The conflict between traditional values and personal tragedies gives the drama a deep emotional charge that attracted the attention of theatregoers and music composers alike.

Preissová did not meet Janáček immediately after writing the play, though Leoš Janáček chose her work for his opera adaptation. The path of his opera version to the audience was initially a difficult one, although the drama itself was a success with audiences. Janáček's score highlighted the psychological aspects of Preissová's characters and added a new dimension to their inner conflicts by means of emotional and dramatic music. It is an interesting fact that Janáček's adaptation brought Preissová a new wave of popularity, even though the author herself was not actively involved in the musical production in any way.

Gabriela Preissová's work is strongly influenced by naturalistic elements and an effort to depict the harsh living conditions of ordinary people, their daily struggles and their desire for personal happiness. A typical feature of her dramas are strong female characters who defy social conventions and fight for their place in the world, often at the cost of personal tragedy. This motif is particularly evident in her first play, *The Farmer's Woman*, in which the leading character Eva attempts to break free from

her constricting life, but in the end comes up against the impossibility of escaping social norms.

Preissová did not avoid difficult and taboo topics either. In her plays, we find motifs of illegitimate children, adultery, suicide, and the clash between individual desires and the collective norms of the rural community. These themes were controversial at the time of their writing, and some of her plays were criticised for being excessively raw and pessimistic. Nevertheless, Preissová has gained recognition for her ability to portray deep emotional and moral dilemmas that are universal and timeless.

In addition to her dramatic work, Preissová also devoted herself to prose. Her short stories and novels often deal with similar themes to her stage plays, with the main focus remaining the human desire for freedom and happiness that is constantly constrained by the rules and expectations of society. One example of this is her novel *The Child* (1903), in which she again deals with the theme of motherhood and social pressure. Preissová was, however, also able to capture subtle psychological nuances and interpersonal relationships, and this makes her an important representative of Czech realist literature.

Gabriela Preissová was also interested in women's emancipation and actively supported feminist ideas. Her work, although focused on the rural environment, reflects deeper social changes and the development of the position of women in Czech society. This aspect of her work secured her a distinguished position not merely in literary history, but also in a wider cultural context.

During her career, Gabriela Preissová collaborated with a number of important personalities on the Czech cultural scene. She counted the playwright Alois Jirásek, for example, who appreciated her realistic treatment of rural subjects, among her literary friends and supporters. In the field of drama, Preissová was also in close contact with Josef Šmaha, a distinguished director at the National Theatre who staged a number of her plays, including *Her Stepdaughter*.

Extracts from the correspondence of Gabriela Preissová

...when Kostelnička confesses her act, she probably says, "I carried the child to the river and "cut through the ice"; the act of cutting through the ice makes the deed more terrible, and I wish as much as possible for the plot to be natural and for the protagonist not to be horribly embellished, so that she remains sympathetic at least in view of the circumstances that drove her to destroy the child. This is why I described the frantic incitement before the deed, when people incite her with their mockery, point at her, "You see her - - - you see - - - Kostelnička!" We could correct the matter like this: instead of "she cut through the ice" - "By the bank, there was a hole cut in the ice where I pushed the child..." Since the moment when Kostelnička cuts the ice would be terrible - a person full of passion from the unhesitating goading (such as the conceit that she is an exemplary mother, and the horror of shame) can excusably commit a crime, but it is inexcusable when she has enough time to think about it.

From a letter from Gabriela Preissová
to Otýlie Sklenářová-Malá, the first woman
to play Kostelnička at the National Theatre

Šubert believes that Her Stepdaughter is far superior to The Farmer's Woman, the plot original and profound - though the ending is ineffective - in contradiction of the Old Testament. The heroine does not kill herself, she says to herself, "One would never believe it - what can survive and continue to live a more worthy life, and the murderer of the pastor's child, Kostelnička does not take her life either, but takes strength from her stepdaughter and allows herself to be taken off to court.

Gabriela Preissová in a letter
to Bronislava Foustková-Herbenová

I was brought to the literary field only by feeling and volition, the desire to be of some benefit - I did not read Freytag's Die Technik des Dramas sent to me by a well-meaning acquaintance, and I have not read anything at all that you might think; I wrote as I saw and felt, without an inkling of ambition, lust for fame, without asking for royalties, of which I have not kept a penny. But the literary field was a sanctuary for me - where horror and lamentation, passion and crime are allowed in the poet's images - - - honest judgments of taste, principles, impressions - that is what I thought before. And now I know that if I set foot on that field, ugliness will crawl at my feet. I cannot journey into that - I will not. All the rest of you, whether you laugh at me or pity me, are guided by a piece of that person's dignified ambition, that star forgot to accompany me. I will write in private and hide well. If it has a little value, it will survive the years - otherwise, to hell with it.

Gabriela Preissová
in a letter to Vilém Mrštík

A Mother's Smile

A Mother's Smile is the only organisation of its kind in the Czech Republic. It cares for women who have experienced psychological difficulties during pregnancy or after childbirth. Its pink logo jumped out at me on the Internet one spring afternoon five years ago, and I still remember to this day how my eyes lit up and The Smile immediately fit like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle in my perception of the psychological difficulties women face. At that time, I was on maternity leave with my third child, so I had already had the opportunity of experiencing what it means to become a mother three times and what an earthquake it is in life. I also had ten years of experience at a clinical psychologist's surgery behind me. So I already had a knowledge of postpartum depression and lactation psychoses somewhere in my consciousness, but this was always just academic teachings and theories, incomplete and unspecific sentences. Over the last ten years, I have met women with children of various ages (including teenagers) and listened to them say *"I don't remember my son's first year at all"*, *"I'm ashamed that I didn't fall in love at once as soon as I saw my baby"*, *"The post-natal period is like a complete fog, I wanted to give the child back, I wanted to jump out of the window"*. They also had feelings of guilt and shame, and fear that I would judge them. Not only did I not judge them, of course, but I listened, I asked them questions, and I thought about how it happened, what the problem was, how to help them and also – how come they were ashamed? When I uttered the phrase "postpartum depression" in front of them, they looked mystified. They didn't know what it was, they didn't understand, and I was shocked – modern young women don't know that the psyche is so fragile after childbirth. Well, A Mother's Smile has brought answers and solutions in a single place.

I am delighted that I was able to start helping the entire organisation grow alongside its founder Veronika Kubrichtová. The Smile grew close to my heart very quickly and easily, as did the key women in it. Thanks to the groups organised by A Mother's Smile, I was able to get much closer to women with

experiences of this kind and to the stories they had to tell, and I never stopped being amazed at how sensitive a mother's soul is after the birth of a baby and how each woman describes her experience in a different way, even though they all have a great deal in common. What the vast majority of their stories had in common was the shame I have already mentioned, the feelings of guilt and failure, and the fear of condemnation – *"I should be happy, after all I wanted a baby, I shouldn't be angry with him for crying"*, *"I don't know who to tell, no one would understand me"*. They were also often unable to find suitable words, they came up with names for their states of mind together, and it was far from just depression or anxiety, but also *"unbearable fear for the child, that I am doing something wrong, that I will hurt him"*, *"the huge weight of responsibility that everything is up to me and that I'm alone in this"* or even *"I would never have imagined how much I could miss such a simple thing as sleep and food in my life"*. I realised that women rarely start talking about their psychological problems on their own after giving birth, there is too much shame and uncertainty about how to convey their experiences to those around them, and that it is therefore necessary to meet them halfway. And so it began to happen that wherever I brought up the topic – not just among friends, but also at the hairdresser, attending to bureaucratic business, with random mothers in children's corners – a swarm of women aged from twenty to a hundred would appear, would tell their stories and would be completely unstoppable. It was as if the dark spaces in the lives of women, and also of men who did not know how to deal with their wives, began to fill up.

A Mother's Smile is absolutely critical to women's mental health. During the ten years it has been in operation, it has managed to support thousands of mothers, but it still has a lot of work ahead of it, and today's Jenůfa can help us with this. Thank you.

Renata Banášová

In the words of clients of A Mother's Smile

I often had bouts of blackness, hopelessness, the feeling that this life is not worth living like this, that it is simply not possible to live like this. I was often in such a panic that I felt like they would have to drag me away at any moment or I would collapse, that I was suffocating, my stomach and throat were tight, I couldn't breathe, I had trouble eating anything.

a client of A Mother's Smile

Instead of love, I hated my child. I didn't understand why I should love someone who caused me such pain, such hurt. And particularly someone who had destroyed my previously idyllic relationship with my husband (I should point out that my husband and I were not in any state of marital breakdown, everything was still working). Suddenly I was faced with a reality that brought me to my knees. Our active life had become a daily horror in the form of a brawling "worm" that had robbed me of everything. Of every second of my life of freedom. I would never get to go to the mountains again, my husband and I would never get to watch a movie alone in peace again. This person will be with us forever. And I don't want him. If I could have made a deal with the devil back then, that he would give me a magic ring that I could turn to take back my decision to have a child, I would have done it without hesitation.

a client of A Mother's Smile

I had the feeling that it would never get better, that I would stay at rock bottom for ever, that I was defeated. I've got everything I wanted, the family that I definitely wanted to have in my life, and I am at my wits end. Simply the end! This was supposed to be the peak, the peak of happiness, endless love, I have brought life into the world. So what's wrong? I have failed... I feel betrayed, where is the happiness? Everyone has it, so why not me, what's wrong with me? Why do I feel so terrible that it's not even worth... living anymore... Why should I carry on living? THIS was supposed to be the best thing ever and it's hell on earth, so why carry on? Nothing better will come of it anyway and this is not worth living! My head starts spinning and I fall into an abyss from which I cannot get out alive...

a client of A Mother's Smile

The Great Wall of Vulva (The Great Wall of Vagina) is an art project by British artist Jamie McCartney. His giant sculpture consists of plaster casts of female genitalia. He began working on his “Great Wall of Vulva”, evidently his most famous feminist work, in 2008, and exhibited it for the first time in 2011. Since that time, more and more casts of women of various nationalities from all corners of the world have been added. It was originally a wall sculpture eight metres long created from plaster casts of vulvas taken from four hundred female volunteers. The goal was to shed a light on variety, diversity and the absence of a norm, as well as to draw attention to the fact that many women go through aesthetic plastic surgery on their genitals, in part under the pressure of the porn industry.

From rehearsals of the production

This production of *Jenůfa* came about as an attempt to penetrate deep into Janáček’s music, and also as an attempt to accentuate the topic of motherhood from a contemporary perspective. During the course of preparations for the production, we joined forces with A Mother’s Smile, an organisation dedicated to women suffering from postpartum depression, and our team was expanded to include non-actresses – performers with a unique story. We were interested in the personal life of Gabriela Preissová, who was completely crushed by the reaction to her drama (incidentally, a seminal play in the Czech literary canon to this day). And then we projected our own – maternal – destinies onto all of this to some extent.

What they said about *Jenůfa*

Veronika Kos Loulová, director

Co-creating this production of *Jenůfa* has been the highlight of my career so far, not only because it has given me the chance of working with first-rate artists such as Marta Ljubková, Irina Moscu and Fiammetta Baldiserri, but above all because of the theme, which touches me deeply and runs through my veins straight to the work in question. *Jenůfa* accompanied me from the first months of my pregnancy and the premiere is to take place when my child will be almost a year and a half old. The female collective of the production team gave me the opportunity of processing all the frustrations and joys and prioritising the experience lived by myself and other women, mothers, non-mothers, daughters, victims...

Raising this topic at an international festival of such scope as Janáček Brno fills me with immense satisfaction. The hope for our future, as a future that is empathetic and uplifting for the underprivileged, is fulfilling, and I know that culture is often the first thing to move things forwards.

Work on *Jenůfa* has already been in progress for more than a year, and I know that it will be extremely difficult to transfer the concept from our intimate, focused and internal debates about the libretto to the merciless running of a theatre juggernaut. I have great respect for this exposure, I am scared, but at the same time I know that an unexpected and revolutionary work is being created.

Anna Novotná Pešková, conductor

For me as a conductress (I love that fact that even Google Docs automatically corrects the word from *conductress* to *conductor*:)), it goes without saying that Janáček's *Jenůfa* is, first and foremost, a great artistic and musical challenge. The music of this opera is wonderful, raw, hard, truthful and extremely demanding for everyone involved. I consider it a great goal for myself – as head of the musical aspect of this production – to rehearse *Jenůfa* so honestly and tightly that the audience will not hear primarily how demanding it is, but will hear precisely the wonderful truth and sincerity that carries great beauty and touches us in 2024 just as much as it touched the audience at its premiere 120 years ago. As for the theme and the libretto, it is still extremely relevant to me (thank God), which merely goes to prove the incredible timelessness of Preissová and Janáček and the incredibly long way that our society still has to go for “better tomorrows”. Just thinking about how many human beings would be alive and would not have lost their lives in vain because society is just simply disgusting is absolutely tragic to me. And every time I think about the position of women before (and in many cases even today), I am terribly surprised. I know about it, but the absurdity still surprises me every time. It is therefore absolutely essential to constantly and consistently draw attention to these topics, and the theatre (and, for me as a musician, opera in particular :) is one of the best ways of doing this.

Anna Novotná Pešková

Conductor

Conductor Anna Novotná Pešková graduated from Prague Conservatory in classical singing and conducting. During her studies, she worked as conductor and choir director with the Prague Children's Opera, with which she took part in many foreign festivals and staged a number of operas and original projects (Bedřich Smetana: *The Bartered Bride*, Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka*, the project *Opera Is Fun*). She began working with the F. X. Šalda Theatre in Liberec in 2017, where she made her debut as a conductor (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Don Giovanni*). She conducted Jan Kučera's opera *The Legend of the Misty Mountains* for three ensembles (world premiere 2022), the project *Journey* (Hans Krása, Leoš Janáček, Antonín Dvořák), Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Verdi's *Nabucco* in Liberec. She works with the South Bohemian Theatre, the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, the J. K. Tyl Theatre and the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc (Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka*). In addition to opera houses, she also works with symphony orchestras (the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra).

She began working with the National Theatre in Prague in 2022 and has been a regular member of the ensemble at the State Opera as a conductor since 2023 (Giuseppe Verdi: *La traviata*, Gaetano Donizetti: *L'elisir d'amore*, Paul Abraham: *Ball im Savoy*, Engelbert Humperdinck: *Hansel and Gretel*).

Veronika Kos Loulová

Director

Veronika Kos Loulová studied opera direction at the Faculty of Music and Dance at the Academy of Performing Arts and alternative theatre at the Faculty of Theatre at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Her diploma thesis was devoted to operatic acting, a subject she subsequently taught at the Jan Deyl Conservatory in Prague. She is the founder and artistic director of RUN OPERUN and has headed this thirty-member artistic group since 2015. She has achieved (and continues to achieve) considerable success in popularising the opera genre with this artistic collective. She has directed and coordinated dozens of projects including, for example, open-air performances that regularly attract audiences of more than a thousand people, such as *The Magic Flute*, *Rusalka at Stalin* and *La traviata*. She wrote and directed the original opera *Zabijačka*, which was commissioned by the government of the Czech Republic and which brought the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union to a close, with director Jiří Havelka. She has led the opera and operetta ensemble at the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc since the 2022 season, thereby becoming the youngest director of an opera company in Europe, which was one of the reasons for her inclusion on the prestigious Forbes magazine 30 Under 30 list.

Irina Moscu

Set design / Costume design

Irina Moscu is a visionary multidisciplinary artist whose work seamlessly blends architecture, theatre and visual art with cutting-edge technology. Originally trained as an architect and graphic designer, Irina's creative curiosity led her to explore set design, costume design and art installations, with a particular interest in how new media and technology can transform the theatrical experience. Her journey began on the independent theatre scene, but her unique artistic voice quickly found resonance on prestigious stages across Romania and Europe. With a deep passion for storytelling through space and visuals, Irina has crafted immersive experiences that captivate audiences. Her recent venture into directing has been marked by the sensorial production "here. melancholy", an ambitious international collaboration that brought together The Youth Theatre (Piatra Neamţ, Romania), Piccolo Teatro di Milano (Italy), Toneelhuis (Antwerp, Belgium) and Teatre Lliure (Barcelona, Spain). Her reinterpretation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* further solidified her reputation, earning a spot in the National Theatre Festival. Irina's innovative approach has not gone unnoticed. In 2021, Irina won the Gopo Award for Best Set Design for her work on Radu Jude's film *Uppercase Print*, a testament to her inventive approach. Her contributions to the theatre have also garnered multiple nominations for Best Set and Costume Design from the Romanian Theatre Union and the Hungarian Association of Theatre Critics. A recipient of numerous awards, including the prestigious Prize from the Romanian Order of Architects, Irina continues to push the boundaries of artistic expression through her exploration of technology and multimedia in set design, making her a driving force on the contemporary art scene.

Barbora Perná

Jenůfa

Barbora Perná graduated from Prague Conservatory under Jiřina Marková-Krystlíková and subsequently from the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in the class of Professor Magdaléna Hajóssyová. She has been a guest performer at many theatres in this country since 2006, such as the Antonín Dvořák Theatre in Ostrava, the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň, the F. X. Šalda Theatre in Liberec, the Silesian Theatre in Opava, theatres in České Budějovice and Košice, and the National Theatre in Prague. Barbora Perná is currently a guest performer at the National Theatre in Prague and has been a permanent member of the ensemble of soloists at the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc since 2019, where she has sung the role of Jenůfa in the opera of the same name by Leoš Janáček, Fiordiligi in the opera *Così fan tutte* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, for which she was nominated for a Thalia award, the role of Leonore in *Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven, Rusalka, Vitellia in the opera *La clemenza di Tito* and Judith in Béla Bartók's opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. She also has a number of other beautiful roles to her name, such as Rusalka in the opera of the same name by Antonín Dvořák, Vixen Sharp-Ears in Leoš Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Mařenka in Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Dvořák's Terinka, Massenet's Sophie, Weber's Agatha, Mozart's Fiordiligi, Countess, Pamina, Papageno and Zerlina, Leoncavallo's Nedda, Wagner's Lora and Rachmaninov's Zemfira. She won the Jantar Moravian-Silesian Culture Award for the role of Rusalka in 2018. Perná also won the Opava Thalia Award in the 2018/2019 season. She is a past winner of many prestigious competitions, such as the Imrich Godin International Vocal Competition in Vráble, Slovakia and the International Antonín Dvořák Singing Competition. She has performed in Germany, Italy, France and Austria, as well as in Japan and China. She has participated actively in courses in Riva del Garda and courses run by the world-famous tenor José Cura.

Eliška Gattringerová

Kostelnička

Soprano Eliška Gattringerová graduated from Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague with Professor Ivan Kusanjer. She took an individual study trip to the USA with Metropolitan Opera soloist Aprile Millo and a number of masterclasses in the Czech Republic and abroad. She won the International Antonín Dvořák Singing Competition in Karlovy Vary in 2013. She was a guest artist at the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň as Gianetta (*L'elisir d'amore*) and Tatiana (*Eugene Onegin*). She debuted at the National Theatre in 2014 as Zuzana in Shostakovich's opera *Orango*. She also performed at the National Theatre in the 2016/2017 season in Jiří Kadeřábek's opera *No Man* and in the opera *Lolita*. She debuted at the National Theatre Brno in the role of First Lady (*The Magic Flute*). She also performed here as the Foreign Princess (*Rusalka*) and Milada (*Dalibor*) in the 2023/2024 season. She has played the role of Santuzza (*Cavalleria rusticana*) at the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc. She is a member of the organisation Run Operun which endeavours to bring opera closer to a young audience and the general public, and has appeared in such productions as the monodrama *La voix humaine* by Francis Poulenc and played the role of Countess Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*) with the organisation. She regularly gives concerts in the Czech Republic and abroad (Slovakia, the USA, Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Iraq, Albania).

Josef Moravec

Laca Klemenš

Tenor Josef Moravec made his debut at the National Theatre in Prague on 28 August 2003 as Avenant in the opera *La Belle et la Bête* by Philip Glass. In the following years, he was a guest performer at both National Theatre Opera and the Prague State Opera. Since the 2010/2011 season, he has been a regular guest performer at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava (Vašek and Jeník in *The Bartered Bride*, Živný in *Destiny*, George in *The White Lord*, Ismael in the opera *Nabucco*, etc.), and is also known to audiences at the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň (Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, Bolo in *Polish Blood*, Edwin in *Die Csárdásfürstin*, Max in *Der Freischütz*, Jeník in *The Bartered Bride*, etc.), the South Bohemian Theatre in České Budějovice (Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Jiří in *The Jacobin*, *Dalibor*, Laca in *Jenůfa* and Sou Chong in *The Land of the Smiles*), the Silesian Theatre in Opava (Alfred in *Die Fledermaus*, Alfredo in *La traviata*, etc.), the F. X. Šalda Theatre in Liberec (Offenbach's *Robinson Crusoe*, Števa in *Jenůfa*, Mánek in Foerster's opera *Eva*, Paolo and Albert in Rachmaninov's operas *Francesca da Rimini* and *The Miserly Knight*, etc.), and National Theatre Brno (Piquillo in Offenbach's *La Périchole*, Bolo in *Polish Blood*, JPB in *Mai 68* by Petr Kořouň, and Vít in Zdeněk Merta's *La roulette*). He also performs abroad (Japan, Scandinavia, Algeria, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, France, Slovakia, etc.). Since the 2014/2015 season, he has been a soloist at National Theatre Opera in Prague (Skuratov in Janáček's opera *From the House of the Dead*, Ing. Prokop in Kašlík's opera *Krakatit*, Offenbach's *Orpheus*, Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Ismael in *Nabucco*, Zinovij in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*, Mustapha Bei in the opera *Ball im Savoy*, Skrivánek in Smetana's *The Secret*, etc.).

Raman Hasymau

Števa Buryja

Tenor Raman Hasymau studied choral conducting at Minsk Conservatory (2006–2010) and classical singing under Valentin Pro-lat at Prague Conservatory (2014–2018) and Helena Kaupová at the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (HAMU) (2018–2022). He took interpretation courses in singing with Mariusz Kwiecień in 2023. He played the roles General Parmenion in the opera *Lacrimae Alexandri Magni* and Giovanni in the opera *Pirates* by Tomáš Hanzlík at the Olomouc Baroque Festival (2019, 2021). He sang the roles of Dimitrij in the opera *Dimitrij* and Jiří in the opera *The Jacobin* at the Dvořák Prague International Music Festival (2021). In June 2023, he took part in the premiere of the composition *Requiem for Peace in Ukraine* with the Moravian Philharmonic Olomouc. Since 2023, he has been an opera soloist at the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc, where in the 2023/2024 season he played the roles of Turiddu in *Cavalleria rusticana*, Beppe in *Pagliacci*, Ismael in *Nabucco* and Jeník in *The Bartered Bride*. He also performs with the Munich Philharmonic and the Hamburg Philharmonic and at Konzerthaus Berlin and other concert halls in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Belgium.

