

JANÁČEK TO THE START!

Conductor

Robert Kružík

Performers

Kateřina Kněžíková	soprano
Václava Krejčí Housková	mezzo-soprano
Svatopluk Sem	baritone
Josef Špaček	violin
Tadeáš Hoza	baritone
Ondřej Koplík	tenor
Vít Nosek	tenor
Jan Šťáva	bass
Pavel Čeněk Vaculík	recitation

Orchestra of the Janáček Opera
of the National Theatre Brno

Programme

Vítězslava Kaprálová

Suita rustica Op. 19

- I. Allegro
- II. Lento
- III. Allegro ma non troppo

Leoš Janáček

The Excursions of Mr. Brouček

Svatopluk Čech's aria from Act 2

Tadeáš Hoza

Antonín Dvořák

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in A minor,
Op. 53, B108

Violin Josef Špaček

- I. Allegro ma non troppo (att.)
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Finale. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo

Interval

Pavel Haas

Radio Overture for orchestra,
4 male voices and recitation, Op. 11

Pavel Čeněk Vaculík, Tadeáš Hoza, Ondřej Koplík,
Vít Nosek, Jan Štáva

Leoš Janáček

Jenůfa

Jenůfa's Prayer from Act 2
Kateřina Kněžíková

Bohuslav Martinů

Variations on Slovak Folk Song for Cello and Piano
(Instrumentation by Martin Wiesner)

Cello Robert Kružík
Theme: Poco andante, rubato

- I. variation Moderato
- II. variation Poco allegro
- III. variation Moderato
- IV. variation Scherzo, Allegretto
- V. variation Allegro

Leoš Janáček

Katya Kabanova

Katya and Varvara's scene "Why People Don't Fly"
Kateřina Kněžíková (Katya)
and Václava Krejčí Housková (Varvara)

Bohuslav Martinů

Suite from the ballet Who is the Most Powerful
in the World (selection)

Overture: Moderato

Serenade (Mouse Date): Tempo di Minuetto

Finale (Wedding): Polka kalamajka: Allegretto-Polka

Leoš Janáček

The Cunning Little Vixen

duet of the Vixen and the Fox from Act 2

Kateřina Kněžíková (Vixen)

and Václava Krejčí Housková (Fox)

End of the opera

Svatopluk Sem (Forester)

and Adéla Plachetková (Young Frog)

The concert was financially supported by the Leoš Janáček Foundation.

The publishers of the works are:

Antonín Dvořák – Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in A minor, Op. 53, B108
Bärenreiter Praha, s. r. o.

Pavel Haas – Radio Overture for orchestra, 4 male voices and recitation, Op. 11
Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd

Vítězslava Kaprálová – Suita rustica, Op. 19
Czech Radio

No limits! As humans, we set countless boundaries, but the path to the realm of imagination is open to all, and music knows no limits.

Today's concert is dedicated not only to the works of Janáček, but also to other Czech composers associated with the Brno Master and especially with the city of Brno, be it Brno natives Pavel Haas and Vítězslava Kaprálová or Bohuslav Martinů, whose work has always had its place on the stages of Brno.

The festival motto was also inspired by Janáček's fifth opera *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*, where the composer's imagination took him and the main character to the Moon and on a time-travel journey back to the 15th century. None of Janáček's operas can be called comic, although humour is never absent in them, it is rather a rare spice. But in this opera about the landlord from Malá Strana, a typically Czech little man, Janáček sparkles with humour, even if it is quite sharp-edged. Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) found his inspiration in the popular novellas by the poet Svatopluk Čech and complemented his satire to perfection with music in a dance rhythm and the use of unusual instruments such as the glass harmonica or bagpipes. Janáček did not forget to portray the author of the literary subject directly in the opera and dedicated a charming, slightly nostalgic monologue to him.

The work on *Jenůfa* took Janáček nearly nine years. He completed the first act of the opera in 1897, while the second and third acts were written under circumstances that were most tragic for Janáček's family. In 1902, the composer's daughter Olga fell seriously ill during a visit to Janáček's brother in St. Petersburg. Janáček completed the second act of the opera after Olga's return and the third just before her death in February 1903. *Jenůfa*'s prayer for her son seems to reflect all the concern that the composer himself must have felt, and is one of the opera's tenderest moments.

Katya Kabanova was written at a time when Janáček was finally being recognised both at home and abroad. His meeting with Kamila Stösslová opened a new well of inspiration, and it is not surprising that he was attracted by the story of Katya

Kabanova, the heroine of A. N. Ostrovsky's play *The Storm*, and decided to return to the great female characters he had so masterfully portrayed before. He created a very intimate drama that puts two worlds in stark contrast – the dreamy world of Katya, so beautifully portrayed in Katya's narrative of her childhood, and the rough and tough world of Kabanicha and the weak-willed Tikhon, which only occasionally glimpses the irrepressible optimism and cheerfulness of the young Varvara.

Every opera by Janáček is a *solitaire*, and *The Cunning Little Vixen*, where the human and animal worlds intertwine on stage, has no parallel in the opera genre. Janáček was looking for a theme that would reflect his view of the world and the eternal cycle of life, because that's how it should be and that's what Janáček's music says, lyrical and melodic, where the orchestra revels in the colours of the Bílovice forests and their inhabitants. As Janáček himself eventually said: "I wrote it for the joy and sadness of the later years."

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) was a great role model and friend to Janáček. If folk music was one of Janáček's lifelong sources of inspiration, it is Dvořák's *Violin Concerto in A minor* that belongs to the period when folk melodicism and Slavic inspiration are strongly intertwined in the composer's work. The concert premiered on 14 October 1883 in Prague's Rudolfinum and, thanks to the violinist František Ondříček, Dvořák's *Violin Concerto* was soon taken to foreign stages and is still regularly performed.

The first of the many works of Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959), which had its premiere on the Brno stage, was the ballet *Who is the Most Powerful in the World*. Martinů began composing it while still a student at the Prague Conservatory in 1922. His musical language here is playful and full of dance rhythms, including fox-trot. The premiere took place on 31 January 1925 at the Mahen Theatre together with Osvald Chlubna's (1893–1971) opera *Alad-dina and Palomid*, but in the very next performance the young

composer's ballet found itself in the same evening as the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*. In 1959, conductor František Dyk created a suite of ballet music, from which three movements can be heard today – the overture, the charming dance serenade to the mouse date and the joyful wedding finale.

Variations on a Slovak Folk Song for Cello and Piano are a work from the end of the composer's life and the premiere took place in Prague two months after his death, on 17 October 1959. From the collection *1000 Slovak Folk Songs* by Viliam Figuš-Bystrý, Bohuslav Martinů chose the song *If I Knew*. Martinů works with folk song in his own distinctive way, the main link between the individual variations being the typical interval of the augmented fifth, but in the variations Martinů does not just work with the theme, but brings new musical ideas and moods. For the Janáček Brno 2024 Festival, a new instrumentation for orchestra and solo cello has been created by Brno composer Martin Wiesner (*1985).

Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915–1940) was born in Brno, where she studied both composition and conducting at the conservatory and became the first woman conductor to stand before the Czech Philharmonic at the premiere of her *Military Sinfonietta*. It was the London performance of the *Military Sinfonietta* that caught the attention of the Universal Edition publishing house, who asked Kaprálová to write a new orchestral work inspired by Czech folk dances and songs. *Suita rustica* was first performed on 16 April 1939 by the Brno Radio Orchestra under the baton of Břetislav Bakala. After a vigorous start dominated by brass and percussion instruments, themes of folk songs begin to weave their way into the music. The second movement takes us into the world of Dvořák's and Smetana's music, including a witty quote from *The Bartered Bride*. In some moments, the third movement rhythmically evokes Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, which falls into the calm and almost jovial theme of the folk song melody, so that the percussion and the brass together foreshadow a strong and optimistic ending of the piece.

Although experiments with radio broadcasting in our country date back to the beginning of the 20th century, regular broadcasting did not begin until 18 May 1923. A branch of the Czechoslovak Radio also operated in Brno, and on 2 June 1931, thanks to the initiative of Karel Vetterl, a concert of contemporary Moravian radio compositions took place. In addition to works by Vladimír Ambros and Osvald Chlubna, the programme included a new composition by Janáček's pupil Pavel Haas (1899–1944) *Radio Overture, Op. 11*. The piece, intended for a chamber orchestra, has an unusual instrumentation, including saxophone, and the instruments are accompanied by four male voices and recitations; the lyrics were written by Haas' brother Hugo. It celebrates radio and one of its pioneers, the Italian physicist and inventor Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937).

Patricie Částková