

10th International
Opera and Music Festival
13 Oct – 17 Nov 2026

JANÁČEK BRNO



Festival Magazine

NdBopera



CONTENTS

- 3 Why is it special to have a festival?
- 4 Map of venues
- 6 Festival programme
- 12 Edu programme
- 14 An intimate reflection of a composer's soul
- 16 The women in Janáček's life
- 18 There are no heroes, only survivors
- 20 Jenůfa is a fascinating study of the human consciousness
- 22 Double return: Hruša & Bamberg Symphony
- 24 Folksong: Janáček's love and truth in life
- 26 Janáček's characters are neither saints nor sinners
- 28 Katya's emotional storm
- 30 An enigma
- 32 The power of choir singing
- 34 Petrenko: Czech Philharmonic & Folk inspirations
- 36 The eternal cycle of animal and human life
- 38 A Christmas miracle in the forests of Bílovice
- 40 I am looking forward to everything
- 42 A return to its roots: Janáček's Šárka at the Besední dům
- 44 A spark of the divine in the darkness of Siberia
- 46 The festival celebrates 2004–2026
- 48 How the festival began
- 50 The magic of chamber music
- 52 Janáček's satirical odyssey to the past and to the Moon
- 54 A focus on Brouček
- 56 Christopher Ward brings Šárka back to the Mahen Theatre
- 58 The soul of the people through song
- 60 Unite, those who belong together!
- 62 The roots from which opera grows: the next generation
- 64 The curse of immortality
- 66 I feel very drawn to Janáček's characters
- 68 I so want to die!
- 70 Janáček's music as a universal language
- 72 A perfect union
- 74 The monastery shaped the boy's path to music
- 76 Visiting Janáček
- 78 Discover Janáček with TIC BRNO

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

For five editions, from 2016 to 2024, the festival's distinctive visual identity was shaped by Robert V. Novák, an outstanding graphic designer, photographer and visual artist whose work spans multiple disciplines. He derived inspiration from Janáček's creative legacy to the very cosmos itself, the beauty of Moravian folk costume, to collaboration with the painter Jakub Špaňhel, who, at Novák's prompting, created a portrait of Leoš Janáček for the visual identity of Janáček Brno 2020. The visual identity of the 2024 edition features an illustration by the distinguished artist Petr Sís.

The visual identity for the 10th anniversary edition of the Janáček Brno 2026 festival has been created by the renowned Czech illustrator and artist Michal Bačák. His work is characterized by its distinctive style, meticulous attention to detail, and the ability to combine tradition with a playful sense of perspective. The visual concept is based on illustrations inspired by Janáček's individual operas, which together form the motif of a heart – because our hearts beat for Janáček! Bačák was named Illustrator of the Year 2024 at the Czech Grand Design competition and is also a recipient of the prestigious EDIDA 2025 award. His work continues to attract attention both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

The festival's overall visual style was developed by the graphic designer Žaneta Kögler, a former head of Graphic Design Studio 1 at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Brno University of Technology, and an experienced designer of a number of visual identities.

NdBdiva

National Theatre Brno Magazine

Imprint:

Published by: National Theatre Brno
 MK ČR E11077
 ISSN 1803-0408
 Editor-in-chief: Patricie Částková
 Editors: Pavel Lojda, Gabriela Vilímková
 Sub-editor: Dana Gattrigerová
 Translation: Graeme Dibble
 Cover illustration: Michal Bačák
 Graphic design: Žaneta Kögler
 Printing: Printo, spol. s r.o.
 PR and Marketing: Gabriela Vilímková
 vilimkova@ndbrno.cz, +420 720 050 682

The festival magazine is available in the theatres and the NdB pre-sale.

Commercial information:

National Theatre Brno, contributory organization,
 Dvořákova 589/11, 602 00 Brno
Information on performances, reservations and payment on delivery:
 obchodni@ndbrno.cz, +420 542 158 120
Online sales: www.janacek-brno.com
Cash and card sales (Advance ticket sales):
 National Theatre Brno Customer Centre
 Dvořákova 589/11, Mon–Fri 8.30am–6pm,
 +420 542 158 120
Cultural Information Centre – Student Agency
 Dům pánů z Lipé, nám. Svobody 86/17,
 Mon–Fri 9am – 12pm, 1pm – 5am, +420 539 000 770
Evening ticket sales
 45 minutes before the performance at theatre box office

National Theatre Brno, contributory organization, is financially supported by



south moravian region



Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic

(In)visible roots which connect us

Janáček Brno 2026 will be a celebratory edition, marking the tenth time when Brno immerses itself for several weeks in Janáček's music, inspirations, life story and the influence he exerted over his contemporaries and successors.

This year's motto is ROOTS, because what we grow from shapes us all. In the work of artists – whether composers, visual artists or performers – their roots are reflected throughout their lives. At times they may be more visible, at others less so, but they never completely disappear. Therefore, this anniversary edition endeavours to show where Janáček's creative work was rooted, which sources it grew from, and how widely its branches have spread.

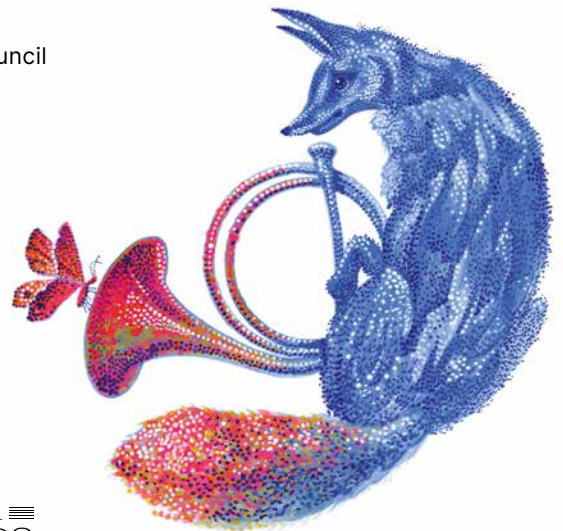
JANÁČEK BRNO 2026

Festival Artistic Committee

Patricie Částková – dramaturge of Janáček Opera NTB
Lubica Čekovská – composer
Martin Glaser – director of National Theatre Brno
Jiří Heřman – artistic director of Janáček Opera NTB
Jan Hlaváč – Czech Radio music editor
Robert Kružík – chief conductor of Janáček Opera NTB
Ludmila Loucká – director of the Leoš Janáček Foundation
Stanislav Michalík – chair of the Cultural Commission of Brno City Council
Vítězslav Mikeš – dramaturge of the Brno Philharmonic
Ondřej Pivoda – musicologist
Svatava Šenková – head of the Dramaturgy Centre, TS Brno
Barbara Maria Willi – professor at JAMU
Jiří Zahrádka – musicologist

The patrons of the IFJB 2026 festival are

Petr Pavel – President of the Czech Republic
Oto Klempíř – Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic
Jan Grolích – Governor of the South Moravian Region
Markéta Vaňková – Mayor of the City of Brno



Why is it special to have a festival?

TEXT MARTIN GLASER

To ask this question in Janáček's very own city might appear redundant, but this is not the case. A festival is a feast or celebration, as is indicated by the origin of the word. To celebrate every two years the fact that our city is where the composer spent his most productive creative years – and whose works are now admired and recognized around the world – is not entirely self-evident, as is suggested by this year's edition, its tenth. The entire cultural world is familiar with and performs Janáček's works, the much loved *Jenůfa* was first performed on stage in 1904, and so we might have thought that a festival celebrating the Maestro's work would have had a much longer tradition.

We can only speculate as to why this is not the case. There have been tens if not hundreds of educated, industrious, culturally committed people from our town who have strived for something similar. The first festival took place in 2004, which was later given the edition number of zero, and since 2008 we have been meeting in National Theatre Brno's theatres and elsewhere every two years. So what was missing before the year 2004? We might try to discover who put obstacles in the way and how many of them there were. We might look into who was hard-hearted, turned a deaf ear and kept their fists tightly closed instead of opening up generously. But we have to admire the fact that these obstacles were finally overcome, making it possible to start writing the history of this event – one which is today unquestionably the flagship for the cultural identity of the distinguished city of Brno.

Over the period of just a few years, this modest festival has grown into an event which can compete confidently with others in the European cultural calendar which are much older, with far bigger budgets, and with an army of permanent and freelance collaborators at their disposal. The proof that Janáček Brno is able to hold its own among them is that the International Opera Awards has already twice chosen our festival as the best opera festival in the world, despite the fact that it is run by a relatively small yet industrious creative team of people, who recognize the remarkable potential this event has. As a result, they do not compare themselves with others who might have more privileged working conditions, since Janáček himself did not have it easy. They are constantly coming up with wonderful ideas for how to make the next festival even better than before, devising ways in which to surprise our audiences. For it is only those who recognize we live in a beautiful city with an incredible cultural history, in a safe place in the heart of Europe, who are then able to organize this feast of music and theatre, welcoming guests from across the world with open arms and inviting them onto our stages and into our auditoriums. And there, together, we will open our hearts and minds to the Maestro's music in the hope that once the final bar fades, we will be slightly better and wiser people than we were before. I believe Leoš Janáček sought nothing less, and so it is not only important but essential to have this festival which bears his name! ♥



After the premiere at the festival's opening ceremony – Jakub Hruša, Martin Glaser and Tomáš Netopil / © Marek Olbrzymek

Map of venues

Locations

Mahen Theatre – Malinovského nám. 1
Janáček Theatre – Rooseveltova 31
Reduta Theatre – Zelný trh 313
Orlí Theatre – Orlí 19
Theatre Husa na provázku – Zelný trh 9
Žlutý kopec Water Tanks – Tvrdého 15
Augustinian Abbey Brno – Refectory – Mendelovo nám. 1
Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary – Mendelovo nám. 1
Leoš Janáček Memorial – Smetanova 1
Music Faculty JAMU – Komenského nám. 6
Besední dům – Husova 534/20
Atrium of the BUT Rectorate – Antonínská 1
Villa Tugendhat – Černopolní 45
Villa Stiassni – Hroznová 14
Villa Löw-Beer – Drobného 297

Tickets

Online sales: www.janacek-brno.com

Main sales areas:

National Theatre Brno Customer Centre
 Dvořákova 589/11, Mon–Fri 8.30am–6pm,
 +420 542 158 120, obchodni@ndbrno.cz

Cultural Information Centre – Student Agency
 Dům pánů z Lipé, nám. Svobody 86/17, 4th Floor,
 Mon–Fri 9am – 12pm, 1pm – 5am,
 +420 539 000 770, dpl@studentagency.cz

Festival Pass

**The more productions you fit in,
the greater the experience.**

This is why we can offer you cheaper admission if you purchase a festival pass.

When purchasing tickets:

- 25% off when purchasing tickets for 3 or more performances
- 30% off when purchasing tickets for 5 or more performances

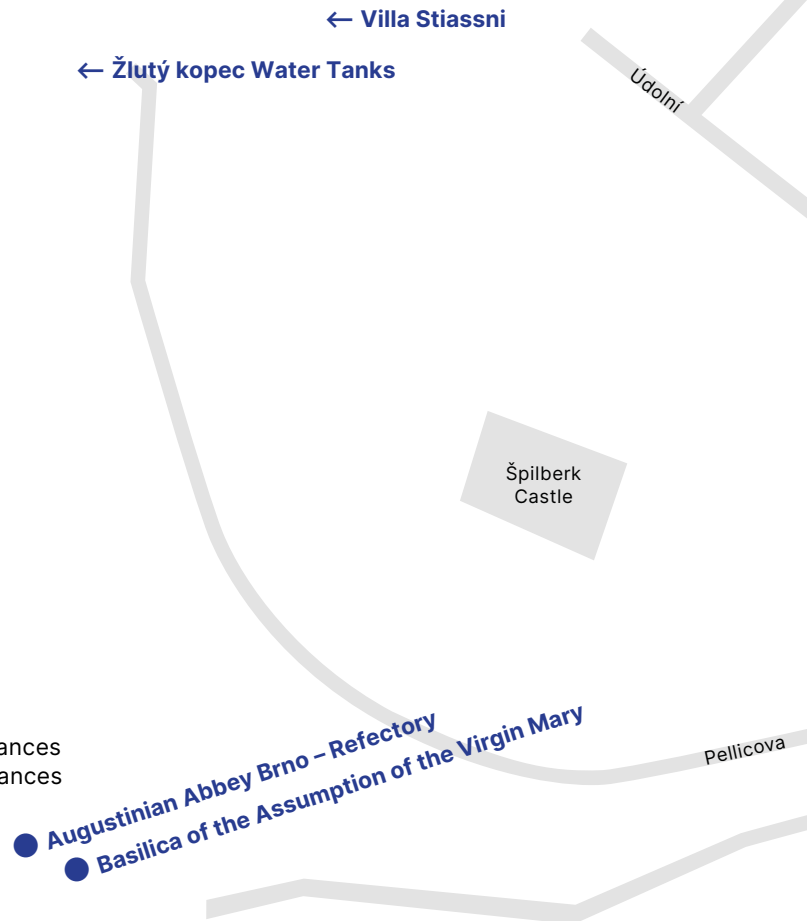
The Festival Pass cannot be used for performances at the Villa Tugendhat.

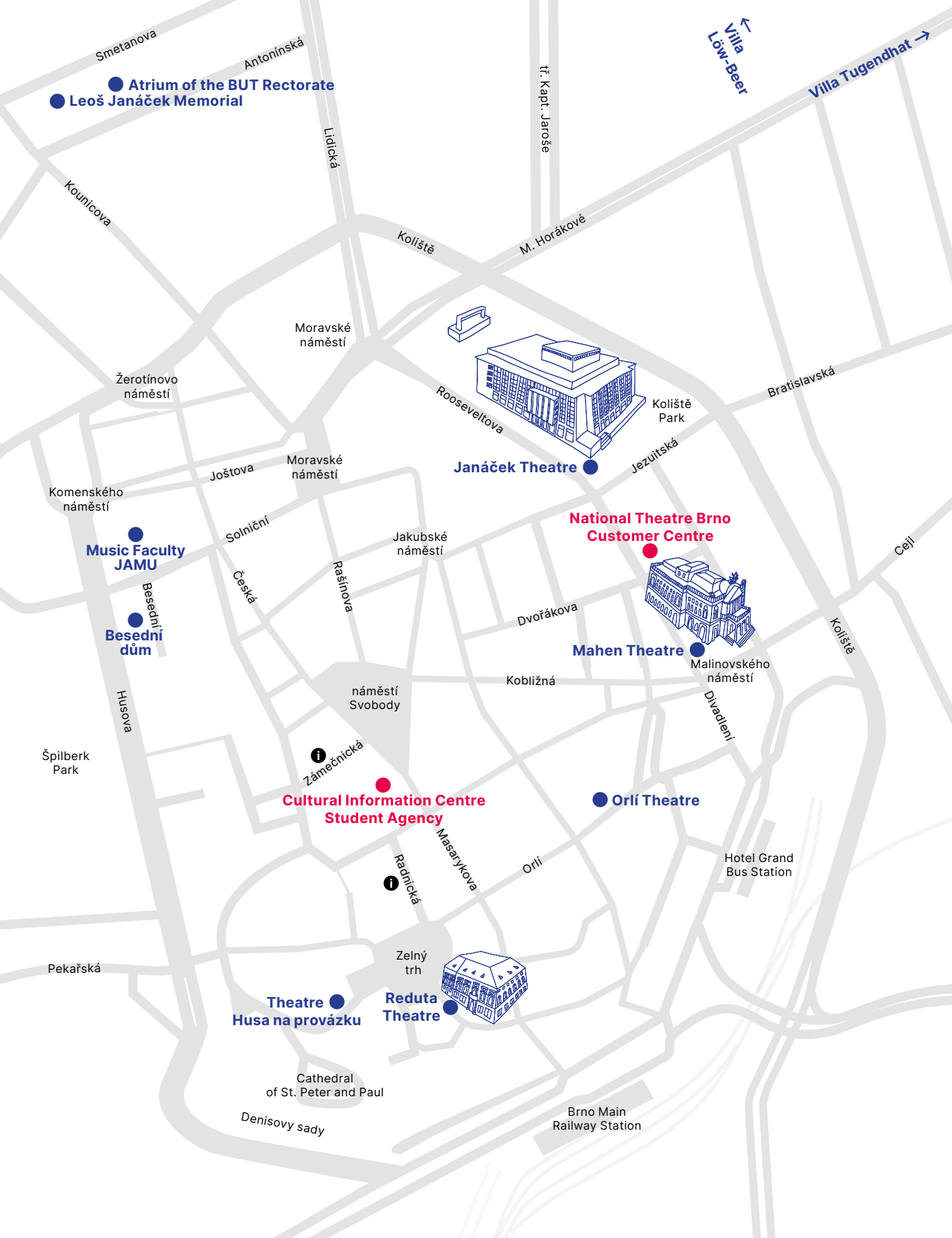
Informace

+420 542 158 120, obchodni@ndbrno.cz

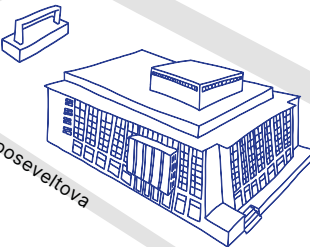


www.janacek-brno.com
 JanacekBrno
 janacek_brno_festival
 Festival Janáček Brno





● **Atrium of the BUT Rectorate**
● **Leoš Janáček Memorial**



● **Janáček Theatre**



● **National Theatre Brno
Customer Centre**



● **Mahen Theatre**



● **Reduta Theatre**

● **Theatre Husa na provázku**

● **Orlí Theatre**

● **Cultural Information Centre
Student Agency**

● **Music Faculty JAMU**

● **Besední dům**

← Villa Löw-Beer

Villa Tugendhat →

tr. Kapt. Jaroše

M. Horákové

Koliště

Moravské náměstí

Žerotínovo náměstí

Moravské náměstí

Komenského náměstí

Joštova

Jakubské náměstí

Dvořákova

Koblišná

náměstí Svobody

Malinovského náměstí

Špilberk Park

● **Cultural Information Centre
Student Agency**

Hotel Grand Bus Station

Pekařská

Zelný trh

Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul

Brno Main Railway Station

Denisovy sady

Smetanova

Antonínská

Lidická

Kounicova

Bratislavská

Koliště Park

Rooseveltova

Jezuitská

Solniční

Česká

Rašínova

Husova

Cejl

Koliště

Divadlení

Orlí

Masarykova

Rašnická

Zámečnická

Programme

JANÁČEK BRNO
13 Oct–17 Nov 2026

- 5. 9.**
7 p.m.
Opera
Production
Festival
Preview
- Leoš Janáček:**
THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR
- Conductor: Robert Kružík
Director: David Radok
National Theatre Brno
Elina: Jana Šrejma Kačírková
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 14. 10.**
7 p.m.
Chamber
Series
- BRNO CONTEMPORARY ORCHESTRA**
- Conductor: Pavel Šnajdr
E. F. Burian: War, F. Rzewski: Coming Together
→ **THEATRE HUSA NA PROVÁZKU**
- 19. 9.**
7 p.m.
Opera
Production
Festival
Preview
- Leoš Janáček: DESTINY**
- Conductor: Tomáš Hanus
Director: Robert Carsen
National Theatre Brno
Živný: Enrico Casari & Mark Le Brocq
Míla: Alžběta Poláčková
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 15. 10.**
7 p.m.
Opera
Production
- Leoš Janáček:**
THE EXCURSIONS OF MR. BROUČEK
- Conductor: Marko Ivanović
Director: Robert Carsen
National Theatre Brno, in co-production with Teatro Real Madrid and Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin
Brouček: Nicky Spence, Málinka: Jana Sibera, Mazal: Daniel Matoušek
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 30. 9.**
7 p.m.
Opera
Production
Festival
Preview
- Leoš Janáček:**
FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD /GLAGOLITIC MASS
- Conductor: Robert Kružík
Director: Jiří Heřman
National Theatre Brno
Luka: Štefan Margita
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 16. 10.**
7 p.m.
Chamber
Series
- LEOŠ JANÁČEK & KRYŠTOF MAŘATKA**
- Tenor: Aleš Briscein, Alto: Michaela Zajmi
Piano: Kryštof Mařatka, Clarinet: Yan Mařatka
Viola: Karine Lethiec
Leoš Janáček: Nursery Rhymes (world premiere), The Diary of One Who Disappeared; Kryštof Mařatka: Altotem, Pastoral Fables, The Mystery of Mr Rybka
→ **REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL**
- 7. 10.**
7 p.m.
Opera
Production
Festival
Preview
- Leoš Janáček:**
THE EXCURSIONS OF MR. BROUČEK
- Conductor: Marko Ivanović
Director: Robert Carsen
National Theatre Brno, in co-production with Teatro Real Madrid and Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin
Brouček: Nicky Spence, Málinka: Jana Sibera, Mazal: Daniel Matoušek
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 17. 10.**
11 a.m.
Concerts
in Villas
- MARKÉTA CUKROVÁ & BENNEWITZ QUARTET**
- Alfred Schnittke: String Quartet No. 3
Antonín Dvořák: Four Songs on Poems by Gustav Pflieger-Moravský (arr. Tomáš Ille)
Leoš Janáček: String Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters"
Antonín Dvořák: In Folk Tone (arr. Tomáš Ille)
→ **VILLA TUGENDHAT**
- 13. 10.**
7 p.m.
Opera
Production
- Ceremonial Opening**
FINAL PERFORMANCE
Leoš Janáček: DESTINY
- Conductor: Tomáš Hanus
Director: Robert Carsen
National Theatre Brno
Živný: Enrico Casari & Mark Le Brocq,
Míla: Alžběta Poláčková
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 17. 10.**
3 p.m.
Choral
& Folk
Concerts
- FOLK CONCERT**
- A chamber music programme created in collaboration with Magdalena Můčková, exploring the connection between folk music and the works of Leoš Janáček
→ **REDUTA THEATRE**



17. 10.
7 p.m.
**Orchestral
Concerts**

CZECH PHILHARMONIC
Conductor: Vasily Petrenko
Béla Bartók: The Wooden Prince – Suite
from the Ballet
Leoš Janáček: Sinfonietta
Igor Stravinsky: Petrushka
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

18. 10.
3 p.m.
*Choral
& Folk
Concerts*

BRNO CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Luboš Fišer: Fašank
Miloslav Kabeláč: To Nature
Leoš Janáček: Folk Nocturnes
Bohuslav Martinů: Špalíček (selection)
→ **REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL**

18. 10.
7 p.m.
*Chamber
Series*

**CORINNE WINTERS
& DAVID MAREČEK**
Selection of songs by A. Dvořák,
V. Kaprálová, L. Janáček and E. W. Korngold
→ **MAHEN THEATRE**

22. 10.
7 p.m.

**PREMIERE
Bohuslav Martinů:
THE THEATRE BEHIND
THE GATE**

23. 10.
10 a.m.
*Student
Projects*

Conductor: Filip Urban
Director: Hana Mikolášková
Brno Conservatory
→ **MAHEN THEATRE**

23. 10.
8 p.m.
**Orchestral
Concerts**

**ORF VIENNA RADIO
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**
Conductor: Tomáš Netopil
Baritone: Adam Plachetka
Béla Bartók: Dance Suite
Johannes Brahms: Hungarian Dances
(selection)
Gustav Mahler: Songs of a Wayfarer
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

24. 10.
11 a.m.
*Choral
& Folk
Concerts*

ENSEMBLE VERSUS
Choirmaster: Vladimír Maňas
Sacred polyphonic works of the late
Renaissance from the music archive of the
Augustinian monastery: G. P. da Palestrina,
T. L. de Victoria, O. di Lasso, etc.
→ **AUGUSTINIAN ABBEY BRNO
– REFECTORY**

24. 10.
3 p.m.
*Concerts
in Villas*

AROLA QUARTET
Winner of the 31st Leoš Janáček International
Competition in Brno in the String Quartet
category
→ **VILLA LÖW-BEER**

24. 10.
7 p.m.
**Opera
Production**

**Leoš Janáček:
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN**
Conductor: Tomáš Netopil
Director: Jiří Heřman
ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra
and the Chorus of Janáček Opera NdB
Vixen Bystrouška: Kateřina Kněžíková
Forester: Adam Plachetka
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

25. 10.
11 a.m.
*Chamber
Series*

**PIANO RECITAL:
JAN JIRASKÝ**
Antonín Dvořák: Mazurkas
Leoš Janáček: On an Overgrown Path
(Series I), Con moto, Allegro
→ **LEOŠ JANÁČEK MEMORIAL**

25. 10.
3 p.m.
**Opera
Production**

**Leoš Janáček:
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN**
Conductor: Tomáš Netopil
Director: Jiří Heřman
ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra
and the Chorus of Janáček Opera NdB
Vixen Bystrouška: Kateřina Kněžíková
Forester: Adam Plachetka
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

25. 10.
7 p.m.
*Chamber
Series*

IVO KAHÁNEK & BALET NDB 3
Leoš Janáček: On an Overgrown Path
(Choreography: Mário Radačovský)
Leoš Janáček: Capriccio
(Choreography: Megumi Nakamura,
Featuring students of HF JAMU,
Conductor: Vít Spilka)
Leoš Janáček: In the Mists
→ **MAHEN THEATRE**

28. 10.
7 p.m.
**Opera
Production**

**PREMIÉRA – Leoš Janáček:
ŠÁRKA (1888 version)**
Conductor: Dominik Pernica
Director: Jiří Heřman
Chorus of Janáček Opera NdB
Šárka: Eliška Gattringerová, Ctírad:
Nicky Spence, Přemysl: Daniel Kfelíř
Piano: Julius Drake
→ **BESEDNÍ DŮM**

- 29. 10.**
7 p.m.
9 p.m.
Choral & Folk Concerts
- ENSEMBLE VERSUS**
Choirmasters: Vladimír Maňas,
Zuzana Badárová
Chants and polyphonic songs from the Přebor
Hymnal dating from the late 16th century
→ **ŽLUTÝ KOPEC WATER TANKS**
- 30. 10.**
7 p.m.
- Leoš Janáček:
KATYA KABANOVA**
Conductor: Ondrej Olos
Director: Robert Carsen
National Theatre Brno
Katya: Kateřina Kněžíková,
Boris: Peter Berger
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 31. 10.**
7 p.m.
Chamber Series
- IVO KAHÁNEK
& MARTIN KASÍK**
František Neumann: Pan
(melodrama for reciter and piano)
Leoš Janáček: Taras Bulba (arrangement
by Břetislav Bakala for piano four hands)
Leoš Janáček: Mládí (arrangement by
Břetislav Bakala)
Leoš Janáček: Sinfonietta (arrangement
by František Jílek for piano four hands)
→ **REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL**
- 1. 11.**
11 a.m.
Chamber Series
- MATINÉ OF THE JAMU
FACULTY OF MUSIC**
A programme arranged by students featuring
an unconventional presentation of their
artistic work
→ **JAMU FACULTY OF MUSIC**
- 1. 11.**
3 p.m.
*Concerts
in Villas*
- BELLA ADAMOVA
& AHMAD HEDAR**
A selection of songs by C. Debussy,
D. Shostakovich, R. Hahn, L. Berio, B. Britten
& M. de Falla
→ **VILLA TUGENDHAT**
- 1. 11.**
7 p.m.
Chamber Series
- PAVEL HAAS QUARTET
& JÁN BARTOŠ**
Antonín Dvořák: Piano Trio No. 4 "Dumky"
Leoš Janáček: String Quartet No. 1
"Kreutzer Sonata"
Dmitri Shostakovich: Piano Quintet in G minor
→ **REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL**
- 3. 11.**
7 p.m.
- PREMIERE – Leoš Janáček:
THE BEGINNING
OF A ROMANCE**
Conductor: Ondrej Olos
Director: Marek Řihák
Hausopera in co-production
with the National Theatre Brno
→ **ATRIUM OF THE BUT RECTORATE**
- 4. 11.**
7 p.m.
**Opera
Production**
- 5. 11.**
7 p.m.
**Opera
Production**
- Leoš Janáček: JENŮFA**
Conductor: Jakub Hruška
Director: Martin Glaser
Bamberg Symphony and Chorus
of Janáček Opera NdB
Jenůfa: Corinne Winters, Števa: Thomas
Atkins, Laca: Nicky Spence,
Kostelnička: Eliška Weisssová
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 6. 11.**
7 p.m.
**Orchestral
Concerts**
- BAMBERG SYMPHONY**
Conductor: Jakub Hruška
Leoš Janáček: Jealousy
Antonín Dvořák: The Wild Dove
Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in E-flat
major "Romantic"
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**
- 7. 11.**
11 a.m.
3 p.m.
Chamber Series
- PIANO RECITAL
BY STUDENTS OF THE
JAMU FACULTY OF MUSIC**
Piano: Kento Satsuma & Jan Schulmeister
Leoš Janáček: Moravian Folk Songs for Piano
Pavel Haas: Folk Songs for Piano
Václav Kaprál: Miniatures
Leoš Janáček: In the Mists
Leoš Janáček: 1. X. 1905
→ **LEOŠ JANÁČEK MEMORIAL**
- 7. 11.**
5 p.m.
**Opera
Production**
- FINAL PERFORMANCE
Leoš Janáček: JENŮFA**
Conductor: Jakub Hruška
Director: Martin Glaser
Bamberg Symphony and Chorus
of Janáček Opera NdB
Jenůfa: Corinne Winters, Števa: Thomas
Atkins, Laca: Nicky Spence,
Kostelnička: Eliška Weisssová
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

7. 11.
7 p.m.
9 p.m.
*Choral
& Folk
Concerts*

PARADE OF FOLK COSTUMES WITH CIMBALOM MUSIC

Like the Costume, Like the Style!
An extraordinary fashion show of garments
from the time of Leoš Janáček.
→ **ŽLUTÝ KOPEC WATER TANKS**

8. 11.
11 a.m.
*Concerts
in Villas*

PIANO RECITAL: TOMÁŠ VÍŠEK

Darius Milhaud: Tango des Fratellini
(from the ballet Le Bœuf sur le toit)
Bohuslav Martinů: Eight Preludes (selection)
Igor Stravinsky: Piano-Rag-Music
George Gershwin: Song-Book for Piano
(selection)
→ **VILLA LÖW-BEER**

8. 11.
3 p.m.
*Concerts
in Villas*

ZEMLINSKY QUARTET

Emil František Burian: String Quartet No. 4
Béla Bartók: String Quartet No. 2
Leoš Janáček: String Quartet for Two Violins,
Viola and Cello ("Intimate Letters"), JW VII/13
→ **VILLA TUGENDHAT**

8. 11.
7 p.m.
*Opera
Production*

Leoš Janáček: THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR

Conductor: Robert Kružík
Director: David Radok
National Theatre Brno
Elina: Jana Šrejma Kačírková,
Gregor: Aleš Briscein, Prus: Svatopluk Sem
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

10. 11.
7 p.m.
*Student
Projects*

PREMIERE – NEW OPERAS BY THE JAMU CHAMBER OPERA

Tereza Marečková: Here is the Island
Eunike Gabriela Pechánková: Oh Humanity!
→ **THEATRE ON ORLÍ STREET**

11. 11.
7 p.m.
*Orchestral
Concerts*

Leoš Janáček: ŠÁRKA & Josef Suk: FAIRY TALE

Conductor: Christopher Ward
Orchestra and Chorus of the National Theatre
Prague
Šárka: Mária Porubčinová, Ctirad: Aleš
Briscein, Přemysl: Svatopluk Sem,
Lumír: Daniel Matoušek
→ **MAHEN THEATRE**

12. 11.
7 p.m.

Leoš Janáček: THE BEGINNING OF A ROMANCE

Conductor: Ondrej Olos
Director: Marek Řihák
Hausopera in co-production
with the National Theatre Brno
Dirigent: Ondrej Olos
→ **ATRIUM OF THE BUT RECTORATE**

13. 11.
5 p.m.
*Opera
Production*

13. 11.
8 p.m.
*Opera
Production*

Leoš Janáček: KATYA KABANOVA

Dirigent: Robert Jindra
Režie: Krzysztof Warlikowski
Bayerische Staatsoper
Katya: Corinne Winters, Boris: Pavel Černocho
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**



14. 11.
11 a.m.
*Chamber
Series*

AT THE JANÁČEK'S'

Narration: Hana Briešťanská
Piano: Jan Jiraský
Dramaturgy: Šárka Zahrádková
→ **LEOŠ JANÁČEK MEMORIAL**

14. 11.
3 p.m.
*Student
Projects*

NEW OPERAS BY THE JAMU CHAMBER OPERA

Tereza Marečková: Here is the Island
Eunike Gabriela Pechánková: Oh Humanity!
→ **THEATRE ON ORLÍ STREET**

14. 11.
8 p.m.
*Choral
& Folk
Concerts*

COLLEGIUM 1704

Conductor: Václav Luks
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina: Missa brevis
Pavel Křížkovský: Graduale in Dominica
Resurrectionis
Leoš Janáček: Exaudi Deus II
Johann Sebastian Bach: Magnificat
→ **BASILICA OF THE ASSUMPTION
OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

15. 11.
11 a.m.
2 p.m.
*Concerts
in Villas*

PIANO RECITAL: MAREK KOZÁK

Selection of works by L. Fišer, B. Bartók,
I. Stravinsky, F. Chopin, B. Smetana
and J. S. Bach
→ **VILLA STIASSNI**

15. 11.
3 p.m.
Opera
Production

Leoš Janáček:
ŠÁRKA (1888 version)

Conductor: Dominik Pernica
Director: Jiří Heřman
Chorus of Janáček Opera NdB
Šárka: Eliška Gattringerová, Ctirad: Nicky Spence, Přemysl: Daniel Kfelíř
Piano: Julius Drake
→ **BESEDNÍ DŮM**

15. 11.
7 p.m.
Opera
Production

FINAL PERFORMANCE
Leoš Janáček:
THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR

Conductor: Robert Kružík
Director: David Radok
National Theatre Brno
Elina: Jana Šrejma Kačírková,
Gregor: Aleš Briscein, Prus: Svatopluk Sem
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

16. 11.
7 p.m.
Opera
Production

Leoš Janáček:
ŠÁRKA (1888 version)

Conductor: Dominik Pernica
Director: Jiří Heřman
Chorus of Janáček Opera NdB
Šárka: Eliška Gattringerová, Ctirad:
Nicky Spence, Přemysl: Daniel Kfelíř
Piano: Julius Drake
→ **BESEDNÍ DŮM**
LIVE STREAM OPERAVISION



Spolufinancováno
Evropskou unií

17. 11.
5 p.m.
Opera
Production

Ceremonial Closing
FINAL PERFORMANCE
Leoš Janáček:
FROM THE HOUSE OF THE
DEAD /GLAGOLITIC MASS

Conductor: Robert Kružík
Director: Jiří Heřman
National Theatre Brno
Luka: Štefan Margita
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

Programme subject to change.



Complete
Festival
Programme

Dramaturgical introductions
Always 45 minutes before the start of the performance

15. 10.
Leoš Janáček:
THE EXCURSIONS OF MR. BROUČEK

Speaker: Patricie Částková
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

17. 10.
CZECH PHILHARMONIC

Speaker: Jiří Zahrádka
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

23. 10.
ORF VIENNA RADIO SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Speaker: Ondřej Pívoda
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

24. 10., 25. 10.
Leoš Janáček:
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

Speaker: Patricie Částková
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

30. 10., 31. 10., 13. 11.
Leoš Janáček: KATYA KABANOVA

Speaker: Jiří Zahrádka
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

3. 11., 4. 11., 12. 11., 13. 11.
Leoš Janáček:
THE BEGINNING OF A ROMANCE

Speaker: Patricie Částková
→ **RECTORATE HALL, BUT**

5. 11., 7. 11.
Leoš Janáček: JENŮFA

Speaker: Jiří Zahrádka
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

6. 11.
BAMBERG SYMPHONY

Speaker: Lubomír Spurný
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

8. 11., 15. 11.
Leoš Janáček:
THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR

Speaker: Miloš Štědroň
→ **JANÁČEK THEATRE**

15. 11., 16. 11.

Leoš Janáček: ŠÁRKA (1888 version)

Speaker: Patricie Částková
→ BESEDNÍ DŮM

17. 11.

Leoš Janáček: FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD / GLAGOLITIC MASS

Speaker: Patricie Částková
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Discussions with the producers

The discussion will take place after the performance.

25. 10.

THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

28. 10

ŠÁRKA (1888 version)

→ BESEDNÍ DŮM

4. 11., 13. 11.

THE BEGINNING OF A ROMANCE

→ RECTORATE HALL, BUT

7. 11.

JENŮFA

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Public dress rehearsal

26. 10. 6 p.m.

ŠÁRKA (1888 version)

→ BESEDNÍ DŮM

Exhibitions

13. 10.–17. 11.

Autographs of Janáček's Operas

The exhibition will feature large-format prints of the autographs of all nine of Janáček's operas. It will offer a glimpse into the early stages of these works' creation as well as the beauty of Janáček's handwriting.

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE FOYER



Professional platform

5.–7. 11.

Opera Europa Conference

Directors and artistic directors from European opera houses meet to discuss artistic and managerial issues.

→ REDUTA THEATRE

9.–11. 11.

Colloquium: Folk music in interdisciplinary contexts

Throughout the festival, researchers will meet, as is tradition, at the Department of Musicology, this time to discuss our changing understanding of folk music, its distinctive features and differences.

→ MASARYK UNIVERSITY, DEPT. OF MUSICOLOGY



**Complete
OFF Programme**

Education programme

Programme for schools

9. 10., 16. 10., 10. 11. 9 a.m.

Workshop: “WHEN I SAY THE WORD JANÁČEK”

What is Janáček's story? How did he live and work? Which places in Brno are associated with him? A two-hour-long educational workshop, describing the milestones in Janáček's life and work in an entertaining format.

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

22. 10. 11 a.m.

Dress rehearsal: THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

Play the Vixen QR game in the foyer, experience a dress rehearsal, and engage directly with the producers.

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

9. 11. 11 a.m.

Backstage with THE MĀKROPULOS AFFAIR

A programme for curious minds of all ages who want to discover the world of opera. Join us for 70 minutes of interactive fun behind opera productions with the soloists and orchestra of the Janáček Opera of the National Theatre Brno. Your guides will be dramaturge Patricie Částková and chief conductor Robert Kružík.

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Programme for all the family

18. 10. 11 a.m.

WHO IS THAT SCREECHING?

Set out with Leoš Janáček on a trip to the Moravian forests and villages to hear about their life and stories. A playful adventure in search of folk melodies and the language of animals.

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

20. 10. 5 p.m.

A Sneak Preview of Janáček's Opera ŠÁRKA

Would you like to be among the first to discover the details of our forthcoming premiere? Join us for this special preview, where the production team and soloists share their insights into the opera, along with behind-the-scenes stories and highlights from the rehearsals.

→ BESEDNÍ DŮM

24. 10. 2:30 p.m., **31. 10.** 11 a.m.

Workshop: “WHEN I SAY THE WORD JANÁČEK”

A workshop for children and parents on Leoš Janáček's music and legacy. We set out in the footsteps of Janáček, examining how his personal experiences affected his music. We then find out more about his work and inspiration through creative, interactive tasks.

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE



Complete
OFF Programme

The educational programme is available only in Czech. ♥



An intimate reflection of a composer's soul

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

Spa society, a forbidden love, an illegitimate child, a deranged mother and a tragic downfall. A story which is quintessentially operatic by its very nature, elevated by the music of Leoš Janáček into a raw human tragedy, now newly conducted by Tomáš Hanus.

Leoš Janáček's third opera is one of his more frequently overlooked works; however, this Brno production demonstrates that *Destiny* can be a fascinating work about an artist's search for identity, which, despite its apparent incompleteness, offers a powerful catharsis. This is especially true when the challenge is taken up by a director such as Robert Carsen. His fascination with Janáček's work is no secret; today he has staged nearly all of his operas. The inspiration for *Destiny* came to the composer through his encounter with Kamila Urváková at the Luhačovice spa, an experience which led to a drama about the composer Živný, his fateful love Míla, and his creative anguish. From the very first notes of the orchestral waltz, we are transported into a world of refined spa society; here, plain natural prose is replaced by a language in the style of the Decadent poets. Created especially for the ensemble of the Janáček Opera of National Theatre Brno, Robert Carsen brings to the production an original conception of retrospection. He splits the character of the composer Živný between two singers: the elderly Živný, seated at the piano, evokes his memories, while his younger self relives his turbulent past. ❤️

Leoš Janáček: DESTINY
Conductor: Tomáš Hanus
Director: Robert Carsen

Janáček Opera NTB

Cast:

Živný, the composer – **Enrico Casari and Mark Le Brocq**

Míla Válková – **Alžběta Poláčková**

Míla's Mother – **Eliška Gattringerová**

Dr Suda – **Vít Nosek**

Lhotský, the painter – **Jan Štáva**

Konečný – **Igor Loškár**

Doubek, the child – **Hugo Poláček**



13. 10. 7 p.m.
FESTIVAL CEREMONIAL OPENING
Leoš Janáček: DESTINY
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE



The women in Janáček's life

TEXT VENDULA GALDOVÁ NOSKOVÁ

Much has been written about Kamila Stösslová, Leoš Janáček's muse in his later years, who would inspire his major works. Her influence on the composer is one of the great stories in Czech musical history. However, there were several other influential women in Janáček's life, and although none of them affected his work as greatly as Stösslová, each of them helped write a distinct chapter in his life.

This is not to suggest, however, that they were all romantic affairs. Different roles in his life were also played by his mother Amálie, the pianist Wickenhauserová, his mother-in-law Anna Schulzová and the singer Calma-Veselá. Alongside these less obvious though important figures were women whose relationships with Janáček were more emotionally charged and who had a direct or indirect impact on his work.

It would be impossible to overlook his wife Zdenka in any account of his most important relationships. Although their marriage would rapidly deteriorate, it was initially full of genuine affection. Zdenka Schulzová, the daughter of Janáček's boss, Emilian Schulz, was his piano pupil to start with – she was only twelve when they first met. A relationship gradually developed which would become a lifelong bond. His future wife, however, influenced only a few of Janáček's early works, the most well-known being the *Zdenka Variations* for piano, a work still rooted in the Romantic tradition.

Their marriage in 1881 was immediately followed by a turbulent period. Janáček's fiery, complex temperament led to family quarrels and disappointment. Although they had a daughter, Olga, the pair were estranged for some time. Throughout it all, however, Zdenka remained inwardly true to her husband: *"Better unhappy with him than happy with someone else."*

This would be borne out in the future. The death of their two children united them through their grief, but which each bore alone. Despite all of the upsets in life, Zdenka remained his rock and anchor, "the silence he needed for his work." Janáček would later describe the certainty with which he approached their relationship: *"We do not have to declare our love: fate has already bound us firmly together."*

The woman he probably loved unconditionally was his daughter Olga – which also brought him the greatest pain in his life. Losing her at the tender age of twenty-one is reflected in his work – death, which he avoided and feared his whole life, found its way into his music. The relationship with his daughter developed gradually, but over time a strong bond would emerge. Olga's health had been poor since childhood and her parents were constantly concerned about her. Olga's relationship with her father was



Olga Janáčková / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum

strengthened by the fact that she shared Janáček's interest in the Russian language and culture. He was therefore very supportive of a proposed study trip to St Petersburg, without realizing the journey would prove fatal.

His relationship with Olga left its greatest mark on his opera *Jenůfa*, which he dedicated to her. The Janáčeks' housekeeper, Marie Stejskalová later recalled: *"And being so sensitive, he poured all of that pain over Olga into his work, the suffering of his daughter into Jenůfa's suffering. And that harsh love of the Kostelníčka – there is so much of his nature in that."* Mrs Stejskalová also became a part of Janáček's life.

"Máňa", as they called her, served the family from 1894, outliving them both, and witnessed several momentous events in their lives. One of the most tragic for Janáček was when Olga was dying – *"Daddy, play Jenůfa for me, for I will never hear it again."* And so at his daughter's urging, he played through the whole opera before her death. Janáček then noted down as a speech melody Olga's last words before she died. This notated 'window into the soul' served as the desperate father's painful memory of his beloved daughter, where we find the tragic cry of: *"I don't want to die. I want to live!"*

The spa town of Luhačovice was a special place in Janáček's life, where he went not only for treatment but also for romantic adventures. It was here he met Camilla Urválková in 1903. The *"Luhačovice Slanice"* as he called her, was in his view *"one of the most beautiful women"* amongst the spa guests. At a time of deep depression following the death of his daughter, she became a ray of light and a muse, whose own story inspired him to write the opera *Destiny*. Although this was the only opera never to be played during his lifetime, it remains an exceptional work in terms of its music and content. We find here the unusual use of the viola d'amour, the sound of which reminded Janáček of Camilla's voice.

Another blow to the Janáčeks' fragile marriage was his affair with the Croatian-born singer Gabriela Horvátová. This outstanding interpreter of the Kostelnička awoke in Janáček a deep feeling of artistic kinship. Following the successful Prague premiere of *Jenůfa* in 1916, the composer began to appear in public with this temperamental diva, and thus Horvátová managed to hasten a definitive break in their marriage, driving a desperate Zdenka to attempt suicide.

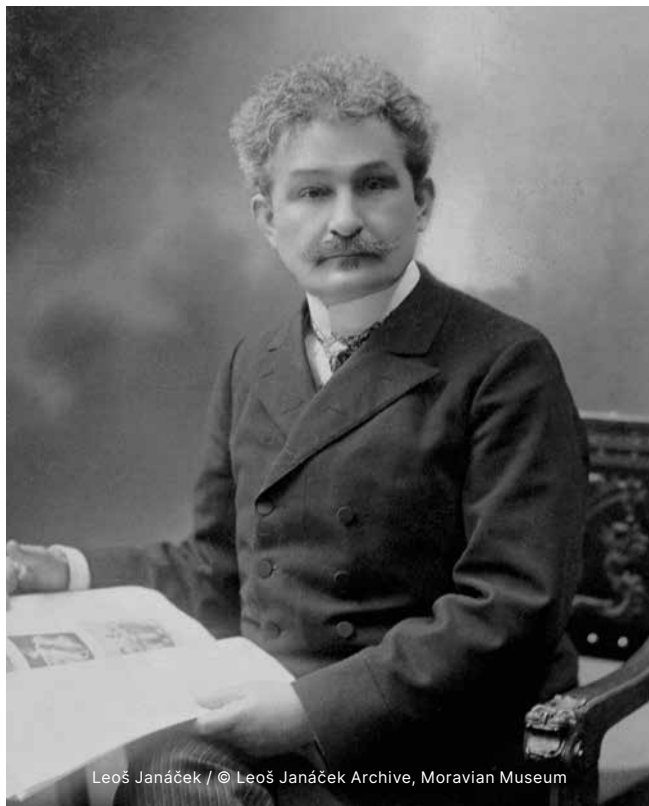
Finally, 1917 witnessed his life-changing meeting with Kamila Stösslová. With her strikingly captivating eyes and carefree, joyful nature, this young mother would go on to inspire Janáček in his composing more than any other woman.

Janáček described their first summer together in Luhačovice and the paradox of their relationship: *"We went for walks together – people envied us – and yet all you were talking about was your family happiness, while I spoke of my unhappiness."* Their relationship was mainly platonic and initially one-sided. Nevertheless, their correspondence – Janáček sent hundreds of letters to his muse – and the composer's infatuation would last until his death. At times his relationship with Kamila had a protective, almost fatherly aspect to it, as though he was partly compensating for the loss of Olga.

The music he was writing during this period represents the peak of his creative powers. The energy which he poured into composing in his final decade is still awe-inspiring to this day. Without Kamila Stösslová, the world would probably have been deprived of gems such as the *Glagolitic Mass*, the *"Intimate Letters"* second string quartet, and the operas *Katya Kabanova* and *From the House of the Dead*.

"...in my compositional work, wherever there is pure feeling, sincerity, truth, passionate love, it is for you that my tender melodies come," Janáček confessed to her a year before he died. Another paradox is that Kamila had no particular understanding of his music.

Through the irony of fate, Kamila was also indirectly involved in Janáček's final days – it was during one of her rare visits with her son to Hukvaldy in 1928 that the composer fell ill and died shortly afterwards. ❤



Leoš Janáček / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum



Kamila Urválková / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum

There are no heroes, only survivors

INTERVIEW WITH CORINNE WINTERS
BY ELIŠKA HALODOVÁ

American soprano Corinne Winters returns to the Janáček Brno Festival, audiences may remember her as Katya Kabanova from the Geneva Opera production in 2022. This time, she will once again appear as Katya Kabanova in the Bayerische Staatsoper production directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski, as well as Jenůfa in Její pastorkyňa directed by Martin Glaser. In this interview, we discuss her journey of learning the Czech language and the emotional depth and complexity of Janáček's heroines.



Corinne Winters / © Beyond The Image Media

To start on a lighter note, may I ask how your Czech language studies are going, especially since I know you have been studying the language for some time now and working with it in your roles in Czech operas?

CORINNE WINTERS: It's going well. Czech is a difficult language with its case system, vocabulary and pronunciation. I've been working on it for a long time, especially thanks to singing many Czech roles, but speaking is still a challenge for me because my brain often works faster than my mouth. It's a long journey, but I plan to keep going and hope to speak fluently one day.

And while we are on the subject of the Czech language, do you have a favourite Czech word?

CW: Yes, I do. I love this question because I really enjoy saying the word bouřka. The sound of "řka" is so beautiful. I also like its meaning – in English, it means "storm". It's such a beautiful word, so whenever I have the chance to say it, I do, because I love the feeling of pronouncing it.

That's beautiful, thank you – that's a really interesting answer. And do you

feel that knowing the language helps you better understand the characters, for example, in roles like Jenůfa, Katya, or Rusalka?

CW: Absolutely. With all of them – Jenůfa, Rusalka, and Katya – understanding Czech and being able to read the text without translation makes a big difference. It's very different from working just the translated version. There is also the natural feeling of long and short syllables. Thanks to a good language tutor, I worked on that from the very beginning, but at first, it didn't feel entirely natural. I could sing Czech correctly, but it didn't have a completely natural flow. Now, especially with Janáček, whose music is so closely connected to speech, speaking Czech and getting to know the natural rhythm of the language has helped my singing enormously. It allows it to sound much more natural.

I know you have played the role of Katya Kabanova several times. How has your perspective of this character evolved over the years and across different productions?

CW: Different productions have helped me discover new layers and



18. 10. 7 p.m.
**CORINNE WINTERS
& DAVID MAREČEK**
→ MAHEN THEATRE

colours of this character. The longer I live with Katya, the more I feel that she is not just a victim. I don't think it is fair to view her that way because it reduces her to a weaker, one-dimensional figure – and I don't believe that reflects who she really is. I often say that Katya perceives the world in many different colours, while the society around her sees everything in black and white. She is someone with an enormous inner life, full of passion and energy that she longs to express but cannot. Because the society she lives in is so rigid, she ultimately sees no other way out. For me, it is not really about Boris – he is more of a catalyst, a way for her to express all those repressed emotions.

Following on from that, I would like to ask how you view Katya's final decision in terms of taking control of her life, and what this opera can tell us about issues such as isolation, mental health, and the importance of social support.

CW: Katya's choice is ultimately her way of taking control in a situation where she has no other options. Suicide is of course tragic and highlights the importance of support and community. People who take their own lives often feel isolated and mental health issues can be intensified by a lack of social connections – just as we see with Katya. I also think this topic remains difficult for society to deal with. It's dark and uncomfortable, but having these conversations and providing support can help prevent people from feeling so alone.

Changing the subject, I would like to ask about your collaboration with director Krzysztof Warlikowski. How did his approach influence your interpretation of the character of Katya?

CW: Working with him was amazing. Krzysztof has a very unique perspective on the world and his work is incredibly detailed. What he did with the character of Katya is brilliant – while updating the setting to make it more modern, he focused on showing her fear of expressing herself because she is so sensitive.

In 2022, you played the character of Katya in a guest production from the



Corinne Winters as Katya Kabanova / © Carole Parodi

Geneva Opera at the Janáček Brno Festival. Are you looking forward to returning to the festival this time with a different production?

CW: Yes, I can't wait! I'll also be performing Jenůfa that week, so I'll be playing both Katya and Jenůfa in the same week, which is really amazing for me. Every time I'm in Brno, I have to say – Prague is beautiful, but Brno feels very special to me, and I think it's because of my connection with Janáček. I love his work. For me, Janáček is absolutely unique as a composer of music theatre, and he has become the reason why I dedicate myself to art.

Since you'll also be playing Jenůfa at the festival, I would love to hear your thoughts on this role. How do you approach this character and what do you find most compelling about her?

CW: I think Jenůfa can seem like a very simple character at first, but

she is actually very complex. She is extremely intelligent – in another life she could have been a teacher – but due to her circumstances and pregnancy, none of that is possible. She is one of the strongest characters in opera. What I find most remarkable is how she can forgive even after such terrible events, while still expressing her anger. She has lost her son, and yet she manages to survive emotionally. And finally, the conclusion with Laca is just incredible. Karita Mattila once told me something I found very profound: *"There are no heroes in this opera, only survivors."* I think that perfectly captures the essence of the entire opera.

Thank you so much for your time and insights. It's been a pleasure speaking with you. ❤️

Jenůfa is a fascinating study of the human consciousness

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO PATRIK BORECKÝ

Leoš Janáček's most famous work returns under the baton of Jakub Hrůša with the Bamberg Symphony in a powerful staging of deep emotional wounds, crippling guilt and hope born from true love and forgiveness.

The wayward and fickle Števa, the impulsive yet fundamentally kind Laca, and, above all, the unyielding Kostelnička, whose attempt to preserve her social standing and respect within a village community leads her to the murder of her ward Jenůfa's child. Leoš Janáček captures these individual characters with a masterful dramatic cohesion which chills as well as evokes sympathy and understanding. Director Martin Glaser focuses the production on how tragically enclosed the characters are within their own inner worlds: *"the cause of the whole tragedy lies in the inability to listen to one another, while clinging to what others think of us. It also lies in the idea that a natural part of human existence is the desire to live in harmony within a higher order"*. The set design by Pavel Borák symbolizes these interpersonal barriers through identical small rooms, while the costumes by Markéta Sládečková-Oslzlá sensitively combine inspiration from Moravian-Slovakian folklore with modern minimalism. The festival performances offer an exceptional opportunity to experience *Jenůfa* with an exclusive cast. American soprano Corinne Winters, Scottish singer Nicky Spence and New Zealander Thomas Atkins have already shared the stage at London's Royal Opera House. Together with them you will experience a story which, for all its pain, ends in profound catharsis and hope for a new beginning. ♥

Leoš Janáček: JENŮFA
Conductor: Jakub Hrůša
Director: Martin Glaser

Janáček Opera NTB and the Bamberg Symphony

Cast:

Jenůfa – **Corinne Winters**
Kostelnička – **Eliška Weisssová**
Laca Klemeň – **Nicky Spence**
Števa Buryja – **Thomas Atkins**
Foreman – **Svatopluk Sem**



5. 11. 7 p.m. / 7. 11. 5 p.m. FINAL PERFORMANCE
Leoš Janáček: JENŮFA
– Jakub Hrůša & Bamberg Symphony
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE





Double return: Hrůša & the Bamberg Symphony

TEXT VENDULA GALDOVÁ NOSKOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

The world-renowned conductor and Brno-born Jakub Hrůša will appear with the Bamberg Symphony to perform an orchestral concert featuring works by Janáček, Dvořák and Bruckner, as well as for a special staging of the opera *Jenůfa*, with the orchestra performing alongside the Janáček Opera Ensemble.

Jakub Hrůša was awarded Artist of the Year 2026 by the International Classical Music Awards, while the magazine *Musical America* also named him Conductor of the Year 2026. His career trajectory has been remarkable – he is currently chief conductor of the Bamberg Symphony, music director of the Royal Opera in London, and principal guest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, where he will assume the post of chief conductor and music director in 2028. In addition, he collaborates with many other leading European and international orchestras.

How does he cope with the differences between orchestras? *“Music ensembles are personalities in their own way – albeit collective ones – and each requires a slightly different approach, without the conductor overly imposing themselves,”* Hrůša explains, adding: *“I believe in a balance between thorough personal preparation and being open to dialogue. Half of the work lies in listening and seeking mutual inspiration. A specific approach is necessary not only for each ensemble but also for each piece, each programme, each hall – and, in fact, for each moment of our lives.”*

The Bamberg Symphony, under the leadership of Jakub Hrůša since 2016, successfully performed at last year’s festival with music by Czech composers. This ensemble, with its rich history and Czech roots, will now appear in a completely new role – for the first time in its history, instead of being on the stage it will take its place in the orchestra pit for the opera *Jenůfa*.

“We are really looking forward to it, and I think it will be a truly memorable experience for everyone,” says Hrůša, for whom this Janáček work holds particular significance. *“Jenůfa is one of the operas closest to me – and in terms of its emotional impact on my soul, it may be the most powerful opera I know. The harshness and directness of its almost terrifying subject matter are conveyed with profound love for humanity and extraordinary catharsis – which always moves me deeply. When I add my experiences performing Janáček’s music – both concerts and operas – and when I am surrounded by wonderful colleagues, singers, the chorus, the orchestra, and a meaningful directorial concept, conducting this opera makes me feel closer to myself than anything else possibly could.”*

Thanks to his Brno roots, performing at the festival is, in a sense, a homecoming for Jakub Hrůša: *“I am always so grateful to be able to return to Brno. It is the city*



Jakub Hrůša at Janáček Brno 2024



6. 11. 7 p.m.
Jakub Hrůša & Bamberg Symphony
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

where I was born and where almost my entire extended family lives, but above all, it is the place that shaped me. The people who have worked here – whether I met them in person or only through their legacy – have fundamentally influenced my path. Without Brno, I would not be who I am.”

Thanks to his early conducting experiences in Brno, a defining figure in his musical development is Leoš Janáček. *“Since childhood his music has been a natural part of my world. Janáček is one of the great original composers in music history, to understand him means to embrace his uniqueness without prejudice and, in a way, without unnecessary discussion.”*

Today, Jakub Hrůša performs Janáček’s works on the world’s most prestigious stages, often working with international performers who have to overcome the barrier of not knowing Janáček’s native language. *“Often the obstacle is not so much the language as the overall attitude of the listener. I sometimes come across the perception of him as an overly exotic composer, and there are still long-debunked myths about his supposed amateurishness. However, when he is seen as the first-rate composer he truly was, then an entirely different perspective opens up. The difficulty lies especially in comparing him with other traditions; Janáček must be understood on his own merits and through the perspective of his authentic and profoundly lived connection to the surroundings which he came from.”*

The orchestral concert programme will offer a connection between two Czech musical giants. Janáček’s *Jealousy* and Dvořák’s symphonic poem *The Wild Dove* share a similar theme and time period. It is notable that the premiere of *The Wild Dove* in Brno in 1898 was conducted by Leoš Janáček himself. *“Dvořák was an absolutely pivotal figure for Janáček, yet their artistic natures were different. While Dvořák remains rooted in Romantic idealism (inspired by the realist current), Janáček always comes across as more dramatic, radical and modern. They were both inspired by folk music, particularly Moravian and more broadly Slavonic,*

but each of them treats it differently. It is precisely in this difference that we can observe the generational and aesthetic shifts, as well as the contrasts in their temperaments,” explains Hrůša, who welcomes the pairing of Dvořák’s music with that of Janáček, only thirteen years his junior, as part of a single evening’s programme as an opportunity to appreciate the distinctiveness of their poetics.

Dvořák based the thematic material of his symphonic poem *The Wild Dove* on the rhythmic structure of Erben’s verses. The Bamberg Symphony also had to familiarise itself with the content of Erben’s ballad during rehearsals. *“With programme music, it is absolutely essential to know the story and feel its spirit. It is not necessary to retell every detail of the source, but understanding its atmosphere and dramatic arc is crucial. Experience has taught me that if the orchestra grasps the literary background, its interpretation gains a deeper dimension. The music begins to breathe differently and its expression becomes more compelling. It is not strictly necessary – you can rely solely on the music – but knowing the broader context is always very inspiring.”*

The highlight of the orchestral concert will be Bruckner’s *Fourth Symphony*, the “Romantic”. Jakub Hrůša has recorded this work with the Bamberg Symphony in three different versions, an achievement which earned him the International Classical Music Award. However, deciding which version is best is not easy: *“Questions concerning Bruckner’s versions are quite tricky. Each one has its own value and reflects a different aspect of his personality.”* Hrůša also notes a parallel between Bruckner’s life and Janáček’s character: *“The similarity with Janáček is clear: both were so original that they faced pressure from their contemporaries, who tried to pigeonhole them,”* adds the conductor. At the festival, the Bamberg Symphony will perform the second version of the symphony, which, in Hrůša’s view, most faithfully reflects Bruckner’s authentic voice at the time he composed the work. ❤️



Jakub Hrůša and the Bamberg Symphony at Janáček Brno 2024

Folksong: Janáček's Love and truth in life

TEXT JIŘÍ ZAHŘÁDKA

“Folksong – it has been a part of me since I was a child. In folksong, the entire person is present: body, soul, surroundings, everything, everything. Whoever grows from folksong grows into a rounded human being. Folksong has a single spirit because it contains that pure human being with divine culture, not the artificially inoculated kind. And so I believe that if our classical music grows from the same wellspring of folk tradition, then in those creations of classical music we will all embrace one another; it will be shared, it will unite us. Folksong binds the nation, binds nations, binds all humanity into one spirit, one happiness, one well-being.”

Leoš Janáček

This was part of a speech given by Leoš Janáček in 1926 following a concert by a boys' choir in London, where they sang English folksongs for him. Folksong was one of the most profound sources for his musical thinking. It had been present during his childhood in Hukvaldy, but after moving to Brno he lost that immediate contact with folk music. A musical education at the monastery foundation followed by the Prague Organ School and the conservatories in Leipzig and Vienna – all of these were more important for the young composer, choirmaster and conductor. Although he began to notice the charm of folksong during his studies at the Brno Teachers' Institute and even wrote 'call and response' male choruses based on folk texts, he was still far from enjoying a true, deep relationship with folk music. He began to approach it more seriously in the second half of the 1880s, when he discovered not only the beauty and depth of folksong but also its significance. He was particularly influenced by his friendship with the leading scholar and



Leoš Janáček: *Písně detvanské* / © Archiv Leoše Janáčka MZM

song collector František Bartoš, whom Janáček had known since 1885. They met at the Czech gymnasium school, where they both taught, and they used to take walks together in the park below Špilberk Castle.

It was not long before Janáček began to take an active role in collecting folksongs in the field. Why in the field? He had already explained this in *Literární hlídka* in 1886, but one recollection reached back as far as 1872:

“In Znorovy, in Moravian Slovakia, they are a singing folk; I loved to listen from a distance, especially on Saturdays, late into the warm summer nights, to the songs of robust young villagers while bathing. I would stand far enough away that I could only sense the consonants, particularly on long tones, in the clearly discernible breaks of the melody. It was a fascinating phenomenon. I still remember the enchanting melody of one song to this day. How vigorously



Leoš Janáček with the painter Antoš Frolka and his wife, 1914 / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum

the final tone of each section of the song resonated, long and long, gradually fading across the pastures and the wooded banks of the quiet Morava!

As soon as morning arrived, I summoned some female singers I knew from the village and asked them to sing me the same song, which I even hummed for them. And surprisingly – I barely recognized it. The long, resonant tones had vanished, the buoyant rhythm was gone, replaced by a colourless, measured beat. Yet in the enchanting, free expanse of nature, they had sung and made musical poetry with a joy entirely different from that in the enclosed, stifling room where they were also observed. – From that time on, I began recording songs from a distance and – surreptitiously; I am convinced this is always how I capture the best versions.”

From 1888 until the outbreak of the First World War, Leoš Janáček devoted himself intensively to collecting folksongs. He chose locations which were interesting and distinctive to him, such as Wallachia (Valašsko), Lašsko and Moravian Slovakia (Slovácko). As early as 1890, he published *A Bouquet of Moravian Folksongs* together with František Bartoš, while the pinnacle of his work in this field was the collection *Moravian Folksongs (Newly Collected)*, published in 1901 and containing over 2,000 songs. Janáček was interested in folksong not only in practical terms but also theoretically, writing dozens of studies on the subject. He was active organizationally as well, serving as chairman of the Working Committee for Czech Folksong in Moravia and Silesia. His interest extended beyond songs themselves to the musicians, instruments and dances. His activities connected with folk music were vast; among them, for example, was the organisation of the Moravian presentation at the Czecho-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague in 1895.

This passion naturally also found expression in his compositional work. His folk-music period is generally defined as spanning from 1888 to roughly the mid-1890s. During this time, he produced many works with folk content, primarily arrangements of folk dances: *The Little Queens*

and *Rákoš Rákoczy* – “a picture from Moravian Slovakia with original dances and songs.” His second opera, *The Beginning of a Romance*, was also composed in a folk spirit, although Janáček would later disown it. This attraction carried a certain risk – the danger of becoming stuck in a particular compositional approach. Janáček, though, was able to detach himself from this world, which was evident in his next opera, *Jenůfa*.

Folk music, and especially song, became an important foundation of Janáček’s compositional thinking. It is present even in his major works, for example, through the use of modality. His emphasis on folksong also continued in his teaching. Folk music remains evident in song accompaniments, such as *Moravian Folk Poetry in Songs*, *Folk Poetry of Hukvaldy in Songs*, *the Six Folk Songs Sung by Gabel Eva*, and the songs in *Folk Nocturnes*.

For Janáček, folksong was a source of insight into the musical expression of individuals, regions and even his own social connections. It was a truthful reflection of human thought and emotion, and in this form it became an important part of his musical philosophy and values. In 1918 Janáček wrote: “I hold fast to the roots of our people’s life; therefore I grow – and will not succumb!” And indeed, he did not. A strong response to folk music was likewise shown by other groundbreaking composers, such as slightly younger Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky. Each approached it in his own way, but all three were profoundly influenced by folk music in their musical thinking. Janáček and Bartók were also very interested in folksong on a theoretical level, undertaking fieldwork themselves: for the former, folk music was a ‘life truth’, shaping his melodic language; for the latter, it became the foundation for his work with modality and rhythm. Stravinsky was fascinated by folk rituals, but tended to draw selectively from folk music at different stages of his creative development, using it primarily as a source of texts and melodies. These composers clearly illustrate the diverse and idiosyncratic ways in which folk music can be creatively engaged with. ♥

Janáček's characters are neither saints nor sinners

INTERVIEWS WITH THOMAS ATKINS
AND NICKY SPENCE
BY PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

Leoš Janáček's music has long since spread across the world and appears on the opera stages of international theatres almost as often as in his homeland.

His roles have thus become part of the repertoire of singers of many different nationalities, some of whom may even come from other continents.

This is also the case in the festival production of *Jenůfa*, where two tenors – one from New Zealand and the other from Scotland – compete for Jenůfa's love.

Thomas Atkins (*Števa*) and Nicky Spence (*Laca*) previously met in a production in London and will now reprise their roles in Brno.

In the London production of *Jenůfa*, you sang the role of Števa, a role you will also perform in our production at the Janáček Brno festival. Was Janáček and his music love at first listen, or did you have to find your way to him?

Thomas Atkins: Janáček's music is the gift that keeps on giving. I've always loved his music but I also realise that the more time I spend with it, the more enjoyment I find in it. What is extraordinary about his operas is the relentless manner in which the drama unfolds. In the music of *Jenůfa*, Janáček somehow captures her oppression and the helplessness of her situation without taking away her strength. This is what makes it such a sincere emotional and heartbreaking journey.

Janáček's *Jenůfa* is one of his most popular operas, both in the Czech Republic and around the world. For us, of course, it's a story connected to the places where we live, to our culture and history. But how might this opera appeal to someone on the other side of the world, say, from New Zealand?

TA: *Jenůfa* is such an intense drama that I think no matter your roots there will be something in it that affects you deeply.

Števa isn't exactly a positive character – how do you perceive his personality and the development of his character throughout the opera? Is there anything likable about him?

TA: When playing characters such as Števa I find it important to really dig into what has made them into the person you are seeing during the opera's timeline and open up the narrative of them simply being "the bad guy". Števa's first entrance is full of bravado and drunken confidence and this could lead to a rather one dimensional character. Luckily, there's more to come, as through his later scenes you see that there's a scared little boy in there as well as this swaggering "bad guy". Whether this makes him likeable or not is up to the audience, but for me playing him it gives a chance to offer a peak into what makes him tick and reasons to why he is the way he is.

You're joining the Brno production alongside Nicky Spence, who sings

the role of your stepbrother Laca. Did you discuss during rehearsals in London what kind of relationship the two of them actually have?

TA: The relationship between Laca and Števa is strained to say the least. One of them has been given everything in life and the other has to fight for whatever is left. Both of them have their own reasons for the tension in the relationship, but there were certainly a few scowls exchanged between Nicky and myself (while playing the characters of course!) on stage in London.

Is Czech a melodious language for foreigners? Would you be interested in expanding your Czech repertoire in the future beyond roles in Janáček's operas?

TA: I find the Czech language a joy to sing in. The pure vowels and consonants demand you sing with a strong legato and sustain a sound worthy of the language. The Czech repertoire is certainly addictive! I love singing in Czech and I look forward to much more in the future. ❤️



Thomas Atkins / © Victoria Cadisch



Nicky Spence / © Ki Price

You're joining the Brno production alongside Thomas Atkins, who sings the role of your stepbrother Števa. Did you discuss during rehearsals in London what kind of relationship the two of them actually have?

NICKY SPENCE: I adore Tom. We met while singing together in his native New Zealand. Offstage, I'd say we share a "bromance vibe" but on stage their relationship is complicated. As a child, Laca was incredibly jealous of Števa and his apparent ease in life. Now, both exhausted by the drama, I think they're clinging to their own islands of trauma. Of course, Laca tries to be civil to Števa but he's really just trying to avoid messing things up with Jenůfa.

What is a bigger challenge on stage for a singer – Števa or Laca?

NS: They present different challenges. Števa's singing is more bravura and exciting for a young singer but ultimately feels a bit shallow. Laca's layered and diverse singing – lyricism, heroism and outbursts – is delicious. However, the emotions connected to Laca's character arc can easily infringe on the singing, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. I enjoy his vulnerability but Števa normally gets to have more fun dancing and larking with the soldiers, which is fun.

Laca is a complicated character and probably not someone you'd fall in love

with at first sight. What do you like about him and are there any situations in the opera where you would like to step aside and tell him "Stop being such a jerk"?

NS: Laca's doesn't give the best representation of himself in the first act and I wish someone would champion him to prevent his self-destruction. He's terrified of his feelings for Jenůfa and ultimately too immature to manage his jealousy of Števa. A victim of his insecurities, I wish his inner child had been nurtured properly so he could express himself without resorting to violence whether accidental or not. However, he serves as a powerful example of how good people can do bad things and vice versa.

Do you think Laca and Jenůfa will have a happy ending and a happy life in the future?

NS: I like to think so. What happens in the finale between them is the most powerful and moving act of forgiveness and acceptance. Furthermore, it's a rare anti-vengeance gesture, rarer even in life let alone opera. In the end, they have nothing left to lose but to look forward with hope, a genuine connection and having shown up for each other in their shared desire to face life's challenges after overcoming so much.

You'll also be singing the role of Ctirad in *Šárka*, Janáček's first opera, at the

festival and Mr. Brouček is coming back on stage as well. What do all these Janáček roles offer you as a singer and how have they enriched your artistic life?

NS: I'm incredibly grateful to Janáček for inadvertently shaping so much of my artistic life. As a singing actor, I'm always curious to understand my characters' complexities beyond the obvious. Since no two Janáček roles are alike and they're all painfully human, there's endless depth to explore, which is heaven for me. Much like in life, there's never really sinners and saints or goodies and baddies in his operas. I'd hate to sing roles in which I just stand and sing; I'd have given up years ago! ❤️



5. 11. 7 p.m.
7. 11. 5 p.m. FINAL PERFORMANCE
Leoš Janáček: JENŮFA
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Katya's emotional storm

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO GEOFFROY SCHIED

Which norms and conventions shape a society whose stifling pressure drives a young woman to suicide? Katya Kabanova is a young woman who is ultimately seeking nothing more than self-realization and freedom.



Leoš Janáček: KATYA KABANOVA

Conductor: Robert Jindra

Director: Krzysztof Warlikowski

Bayerische Staatsoper

Cast:

Dikoj – **Dmitry Cheblykov**
Boris – **Pavel Černoč**
Kabanicha – **Violeta Urmana**
Tichon – **Ya-Chung Huang**
Katya – **Corinne Winters**
Kudryash – **Eirik Grøtvedt**
Varvara – **Ekaterine Buachidze**



13. 11. 8 p.m.

Leoš Janáček: KATYA KABANOVA

Bayerische Staatsoper

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

One of the festival's aims is for audiences to experience Janáček's operas in a variety of interpretations. For this reason, the 10th edition will be welcoming a distinguished guest: the Bayerische Staatsoper with its production of *Katya Kabanova*. It is directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski, who has worked with the leading opera houses and who already has two other Janáček operas to his credit – *From the House of the Dead* and *The Makropulos Affair*. His interpretation of *Katya Kabanova* will undoubtedly form a compelling counterpoint to the celebrated production by Robert Carsen. Warlikowski views Katya as an outcast, a woman denied the possibility of living according to her desires – and who ultimately chooses death over a life of hypocrisy. The heroine is trapped in a dark web of relationships: her domineering mother-in-law, Kabanicha, exerts control over her son Tichon, whose marriage to Katya is severely strained within this oppressive atmosphere. Finding no fulfilment within the family, Katya embarks on a secret love affair with Boris. As the librettist, Leoš Janáček condensed the plot of *The Storm* by Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky, deliberately omitting its broader descriptions of society. Instead, he created a musical language of extraordinary psychological subtlety, tracing Katya's inner development. Her feelings of guilt and mental anguish intensify, culminating in her public confession – an emotional storm which sweeps everything away. The production is further enhanced by its scenography, lighting design and video projections, which together evoke both Katya's inner landscape and the suffocating social constraints surrounding her. ♥



An enigma

IN CONVERSATION
WITH CHRISTIAN LONGCHAMP

Krzysztof Warlikowski's reflections on *Katya Kabanova*

"Little birds come to the grave, bringing their young with them, and flowers bloom – red flowers, blue flowers, yellow flowers." – Katya

Beneath the picture of a contented community on the banks of the Volga lies a layer of unhealthy relationships. There exists here an unspoken realm of things too shameful to be voiced, malevolent hypocrisy, secrets meant to be forgotten, age-old resentments, instinctive rejection and the oppressive weight of banality, which many try to escape from through alcohol, sex or any other means.

In the Kabanov household, a pathological perversity is ever present.

Katya does not fit into the system. She is an outsider. She lives in a parallel world, in a world of her own – twice an outcast.

"I find myself wondering why people cannot fly, why they do not fly like birds. You know, sometimes I dream I am a bird." – Katya

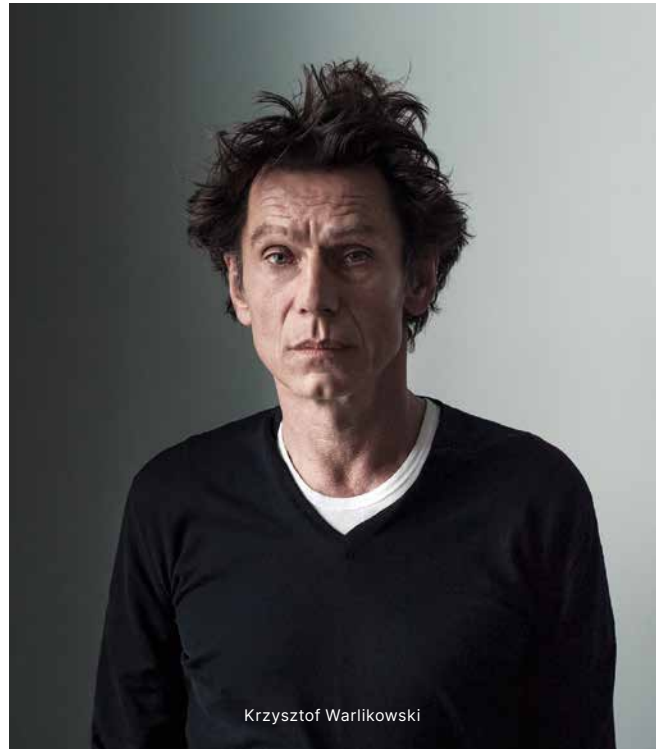
What is Katya doing in this society? Where does she come from? We are never told how she met Tichon – indeed, it is hard even to imagine. What binds the two of them together? It is as though this indeterminacy distorts our perception of both characters, as though some hidden background remains, some mystery. In this respect, the opera feels strikingly modern. It is not about saying everything, explaining everything. It is as if Leoš Janáček sought, in this way, to emphasise something essential: the part of each of us which remains unresolved – as you see so often in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni or Robert Bresson, and in the books of Marguerite Duras. Katya remains an enigma.

She talks about the mystical crises she experienced as a child, which allowed her to attain states of unforgettable bliss – ecstatic, even orgasmic states.

"I so enjoyed going to church. It felt as though I had entered paradise. I saw no one, heard no one, I lost all sense of time – even when the service ended." – Katya

In this respect, Katya may be compared to the heroine of *Breaking the Waves* by Lars von Trier. In the film, young Bess engages in a habit she undoubtedly picked up in childhood: whispering dialogues with God, speaking her own part and then voicing the replies she attributes to Him. She clearly grew up within a religious community which left its mark on her, constructing a psychological and social framework which Katya also continues to carry within herself.

Why does Katya fall in love with Boris? Is it because he is a man who represents the complete opposite of her husband? Do his interests and behaviour allow her to forget the drudgery of her everyday life? Does his sexual desire provide a way for her to confront, albeit partially, her own frustration?



Krzysztof Warlikowski

Is it the longing of a broken woman for the joy and fulfilment she once felt as a child?

"And you know, on sunny days, when the sunlight reflected off the dome and clouds of incense shimmered within it, it seemed to me as though I could see angels flying in the rays of light, singing. And I fell to my knees and wept, not even knowing myself why I was praying and crying." – Katya. Yes, there is a slight madness within her. At the end, Katya confesses what her husband had forced her to conceal.

I find it difficult to tell whether Katya already harboured suicidal tendencies before meeting Boris, or whether it was the encounter with him – including the consequences of this dead-end and of having committed a betrayal by sinning – which drove her to suicide out of despair.

There is a profound imbalance between what she experienced as a child and her current situation. The opera could almost be summarised in a single line: "Several days in the life of a woman" or "There once was a woman."

The river and water are central motifs. The river is a place where puppies are drowned. It is also the cause of disasters brought by floods when it spills its banks. The river is a symbol of both beauty and danger, of disappearance. Within this river flows a dark life – a life which is perhaps even strangely alluring. It is a merging with nature.

"It was as if I saw towering golden cathedrals, mountains and trees, and it felt as though I were flying, soaring high into the sky, with invisible voices singing everywhere." – Katya

Her suicide by drowning has echoes of Ophelia's suicide in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

The opera is also the story of a woman who could not overcome the dissonance between what she feels and what she carries in her memories and in her body; between the harmony she experienced in childhood and the fundamental contradiction in which she now sees herself within her environment.

The actual plot is secondary; in the foreground we see the portrait of a woman who, now that she has grown up, cannot live in this world, overwhelmed as she is by a longing for her childhood – a childhood in Christ. But is it possible that what Katya recounts about her childhood is untrue? Might she not have grown up in a sad, strict orphanage, creating an imaginary, enchanted world which allowed her to survive the drudgery of everyday life? Some situations Katya handles with great ease, while others prove much too difficult.

Does she know what desire is when she begins to succumb to it? Had she already experienced love and sexual passion before Boris?

"I cannot sleep. There is a whispering in my ears. Someone speaks to me so gently, like a cooing dove, as if embracing me fervently, fervently and passionately, as if wanting to carry me away somewhere..." – Katya

Janáček leads us to a place where the intensity of emotion – the bliss during a mystical crisis – is very close to sexual orgasm, much like Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*: both spiritual and sensuous.

Motherhood is not a theme in this story, which is interesting, given that Katya and her husband are a young married couple.

Janáček's work transforms realist drama through its music. It is the chronicle of a death foretold. Katya's death is an everyday event. In this, essentially, lies the banality of the story. And yet Katya exists, and through her that banality is sublimated.

"If only they took me and threw me into the Volga!" – Katya

The figure of the mother-in-law evokes fears of castration, while the son's actions are devout yet powerless – and then there is Boris, the most educated of all of them. *Katya Kabanova*, in other words, is the story of a man from the city who spends a holiday in the countryside, bringing misfortune to a family already afflicted by toxic relationships.

Alban Berg's *Lulu* and Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* were created around the same time. *Lulu* was shaped by life itself – therein lies her strength. In contrast, Katya grew up in a religious community whose tendencies toward insularity, fear and guilt reinforced her own mental framework.

Janáček's music is impressive. It is not monumental. Unlike Dmitri Shostakovich, who uses music to depict society, the fragility of a woman is placed at the forefront here.

Tango classes belong to that modern malaise which drives people to want to become part of society. The Tango is a fantasy image of harmony: two bodies, an embrace, feigned passion. Only by observing these bodies dancing did Katya perhaps begin to imagine touching another body, pressing it to her own, embracing it.

Shortly before her death, only the ruins of reality and emotion remain. Her mind seems to shatter. The suicidal state is observed from within. Ghosts appear.

"Wait, wait, what was it I wanted to tell you..." – Katya ♥



Corinne Winters / © Geoffroy Schied

The power of choir singing

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

When children play

Can you guess what the age of the youngest performer at the Janáček festival might be? It is certainly younger than you would expect. Concerts by the Brno Children's Choir, founded in 2004, have been a regular part of the festival programme for several years. In addition to their own concerts, its members also appear in opera productions, such as *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Their festival concert will be a playful one, as children's voices have always been closely linked to folk games and customs – traditions that inspired many 20th-century Czech composers. We can see this influence in works such as Leoš Janáček's *Folk Nocturnes*, Bohuslav Martinů's *Špalíček*, Luboš Fišer's *Fašank* for children's choir and piano set to Moravian folk poetry, and Miloslav Kabeláč's cycle of children's choruses *Nature*.



Brno Children's Choir / © Marek Olbrzymek



18. 10. 3 p.m.
BRNO CHILDREN'S CHOIR
 Choirmaster: Valeria Maťašová
 → REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL

The art and beauty of choral singing was part of Leoš Janáček's life from early childhood when, as a member of the "Bluebirds" choir of the Augustinian Abbey in Staré Brno, part of his duties included singing at Mass. Later, he served as choirmaster of the Old Brno choir and the Brno "Svatopluk" Craftsmen's Society.

Sacred music and folksong laid the foundations for his earliest choral works. This inspiration was later transformed into distinctive compositions, particularly for male chorus and children's choir.

Musical treasures of the Augustinian monastery

What kind of music would have been heard from the organ loft of the Staré Brno Basilica when Janáček's teacher Pavel Křížkovský was the director, followed by Janáček himself? Ensemble Versus, a Brno-based group specializing in Renaissance polyphony, will perform sacred polyphonic works by late-Renaissance composers such as Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Tomás Luis de Victoria and Orlando de Lassus, taken from the music archives of the Augustinian monastery. The performances will take on different forms – from purely vocal interpretations to versions with instrumental accompaniment – all within the impressive setting of the Art Nouveau refectory.



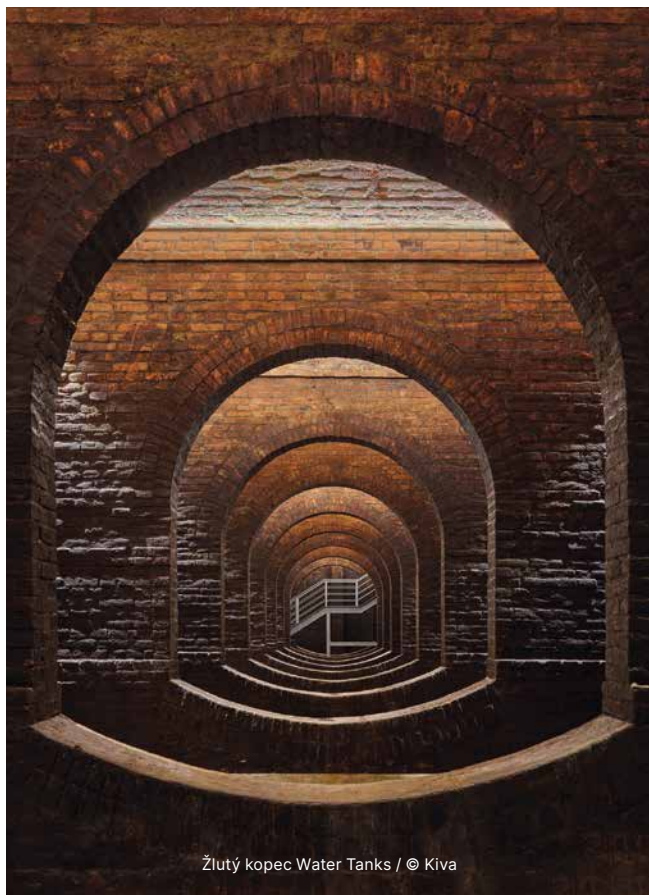
Ensemble Versus / © Ensemble Versus Archive



24. 10. 11 a.m.
ENSEMBLE VERSUS
 Choirmaster: Vladimír Mañas
 → AUGUSTINIAN ABBEY BRNO – REFECTORY

Back to the roots

Chants and polyphonic singing from the *Příbor Hymnal* dating from the late 16th century – a unique Czech musical manuscript which also attracted the interest of Leoš Janáček – will be presented alongside the Gregorian chants Janáček himself would have sung as a choirboy at the Staré Brno monastery, as well as his earliest Latin compositions. Ensemble Versus will weave together these musical layers spanning centuries in the complex spaces of all three Žlutý kopec water reservoirs – a site where past and present meet in a uniquely immersive acoustic experience.



29. 10. 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.
ENSEMBLE VERSUS
Chormasters: Vladimír Maňas,
Zuzana Badárová
Director: Kateřina Křivánková
→ ŽLUTÝ KOPEC WATER TANKS

Choral concerts thus offer not only a musical experience but also an artistic journey into places closely connected with Janáček's youth – such as the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Staré Brno and the refectory of the Augustinian monastery. Other concerts offer a view into unique architectural spaces, including the Brno Water Tanks at Žlutý kopec.

From Janáček's youth

The organ loft of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Staré Brno is closely linked with Janáček's childhood and youth. He was a choir singer here and later became the director of the organ loft. His teacher – the director of the choir and the foundation, Pavel Křížkovský – was a great promoter of the reforms in ecclesiastical music, the aim of which was to purge it of its classical and romantic elements, renew Gregorian chant, perform compositions from the turn of the 17th century, and produce music which was closer to the so-called Palestrina style. The young Leoš Janáček also shared this passion. The outstanding ensembles Collegium 1704 and Collegium Vocale 1704 will be appearing at the festival for the first time and their concert will provide an opportunity to experience the Renaissance and Baroque music which would have been heard from the choir under Janáček's direction, together with his own and Křížkovský's liturgical works.



14. 11. 8 p.m.
COLLEGIUM 1704, Conductor: Václav Luks
→ BASILICA OF THE ASSUMPTION
OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Petrenko: Czech Philharmonic & Folk inspirations

TEXT VENDULA GALDOVÁ NOSKOVÁ
PHOTO PETR CHODURA

The festival debut of the Czech Philharmonic with Vasily Petrenko reflects this year's theme – a journey to the roots of folk music through works by the greatest masters of folklorism.

The programme, featuring Bartók, Janáček and Stravinsky, brings together Slavic lyricism, vibrant dance rhythms and the mysterious atmosphere of ancient rituals.

This year, the Czech Philharmonic celebrates 130 years since its very first concert. With its exceptionally rich history, the orchestra stands as one of the pillars of Czech musical culture. Figures such as Rafael Kubelík, Karel Ančerl and Jiří Bělohlávek have been among its most distinguished chief conductors and their legacy is continued today by Chief Conductor Semjon Bychkov. The orchestra regularly appears on the world's most prestigious stages – from Vienna's Musikverein and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw to New York's Carnegie Hall.

The Czech Philharmonic will appear at the festival for the first time under the baton of the outstanding conductor Vasily Petrenko. Born in Russia and artistically rooted in the United Kingdom, Petrenko has collaborated with leading orchestras worldwide and performed at major festivals such as the BBC Proms and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Since 2021, he has served as Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; he has been named Conductor Laureate of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and this year also became an International Visiting Artist at the Royal College of Music. He also remains committed to supporting young artists – this summer he will lead an academy for young conductors in Yerevan, Armenia.

"I am very much looking forward to working with the Czech Philharmonic," says the conductor, for whom Prague and Czech musical culture hold an important place: *"It is always a pleasure for me to perform on Czech stages. The Czech people have such a passionate and longstanding tradition of classical music and a proud history of outstanding composers, orchestras and conductors. It is inspiring to see how Czech music has always been – and is still is – an important part of Czech society and something that has such enduring and universal appeal across countries."*

For Petrenko, music is a powerful unifying force: *"Music is a truly unique phenomenon which allows people to share emotions regardless of their social status, age, background, education or cultural or religious beliefs. Everyone who comes to a concert hall shares the same emotion with the person sitting next to them. This is one of the few situations in life where something like this happens."*

The programme brings together works by three composers who, despite their differing compositional approaches, are strongly connected by their engagement



Vasilij Petrenko



17. 10. 7 p.m.
CZECH PHILHARMONIC
Conductor: Vasilij Petrenko
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE



Vasily Petrenko with the Czech Philharmonic

with folk music and its melodic language. *“All three composers were true masters in bringing those melodies into their music and organically integrating them into the overall musical structure,”* explains Petrenko. His own affinity for folk idioms dates back to his studies in St Petersburg. *“Folk music was an obligatory part of our studies. We learned Russian folk songs and even travelled to small villages to experience them in their natural environment.”*

In the inspirations of Janáček and Stravinsky, he sees deeper roots reaching back to pagan rituals: *“Both composers sought to go back to the very ancient melodies, rituals and ways of life in their regions. For me, it is very important to understand this context, to respect the origins of the music and to grasp the circumstances of its creation and how it evolved over the centuries.”*

Two works – Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* and the suite from Béla Bartók’s ballet *The Wooden Prince* – will offer audiences the chance to hear ballet music in a concert setting. Both pieces strongly reflect their composers’ folk inspirations: *Petrushka* evokes the atmosphere of a Russian fair, while *The Wooden Prince* draws on distinctive Hungarian melodic idioms.

Performing dance works in concert form presents a specific challenge for the orchestra – without staging, the audience relies solely on the musical interpretation. From the conductor’s perspective, however, this can be an advantage: *“When you are on stage with the orchestra alone, you can explore the pure logic and structure of the music. In a sense, you have more freedom in what you want to express and what you discover in the composer’s score,”* Petrenko explains.

The Czech Philharmonic will also perform one of Leoš Janáček’s most celebrated works – the five-movement *Sinfonietta*. The piece was premiered a hundred years ago by the same orchestra under Václav Talich. At the premiere, a military brass band joined the orchestra, whose sound is said to have inspired Janáček’s opening fanfares.

It is not only these characteristic fanfares that fascinate Petrenko: *“Brass instruments play a major role here; the musical language, the development and the architecture of the work are absolutely unique. The entire piece is filled with tremendous energy.”* Janáček composed this vividly energetic work late in life, after being asked to write “some music” for the VIII. Sokol Festival. *“It is quite remarkable for a man at the age of 72 to write such a piece. Moreover, Janáček composed it very quickly, almost with a hot pen,”* the conductor adds.

Janáček assigned titles to the individual movements of *Sinfonietta* inspired by important locations in Brno. Petrenko will visit the city for the first time and will have the opportunity to experience these iconic places in person – yet he is already deeply familiar with the work: *“I always approach each composition within a much broader context; I am interested not only in the composer’s biography, but also in the historical circumstances of the time – 1926 was a very intense period in Europe after the First World War, full of change,”* he explains, outlining the broader background of the piece.

“It is a work with many layers, where musical, geographical and historical influences intertwine. Among Janáček’s key inspirations is the already mentioned influence of military music, as well as references to his passionate friendship with Kamila Stösslová. It was with her that he once sat in a park in Písek and heard a military band – that is when the idea of the fanfares was etched into his memory.” Petrenko also points to the folk character of the work: *“It is permeated with numerous folk motifs, and it is fascinating to observe how they develop and relate to the character of the piece, which is by no means purely militaristic. There is much more – lyricism, elegiac moments and tremendous energy. With Sinfonietta, Janáček expressed a longing for a better world.”* ❤️

The eternal cycle of animal and human life

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

The most famous vixen
on the opera stage has to be the one
from Brno by Janáček!
Enchanting, gentle, full of children
and their toys, which playfully transform
the Gamekeeper's home into a forest
and themselves into woodland animals.



Leoš Janáček:
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN
Conductor: Tomáš Netopil
Director: Jiří Heřman

Janáček Opera NTB
and the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra

Cast:
Bystrouška – **Kateřina Kněžíková**
Zlatohřbítek – **Václava Krejčí Housková**
Gamekeeper – **Adam Plachetka**
Schoolmaster / Mosquito – **Petr Levíček**
Priest / Badger – **Jan Štáva**
Harašta – **Roman Hoza**



24. 10. 7 p.m., 25. 10. 3 p.m.
Leoš Janáček:
THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Each of Janáček's operas is a world unto itself and *The Cunning Little Vixen*, in which the human world and the animal world interweave on stage, has no real equivalent in the operatic repertoire. In its literary form, *The Cunning Little Vixen* ends with a wedding, but Janáček wanted a theme which would reflect his view of the world and the eternal cycle of life, and thus his Vixen dies at the hands of the poacher Harašta. But another little Vixen appears... life goes on. Everything is as it should be, as Janáček's music also tells us, lyrical and melodic, with an orchestra shimmering in the colours of the Bílovice forests. Standard language blends with the dialect of Líšeň, and the dashing Fox offers the Vixen both a cigarette and a rabbit. Everything sparkles with humour, quite brusquely in a Janáčekian manner, yet ultimately through the kind gaze of the Gamekeeper when reflecting on his life. The style of the production was also influenced by the fate of Rudolf Těsnohlídek, the author of the literary source, as director Jiří Heřman explains: "The inspiration came from *Těsnohlídek's* great idea of founding the Dagmar Children's Home, where our production is situated, with the story of the Vixen unfolding through the eyes of children". For the festival we will be joined by the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra together with conductor Tomáš Netopil. ♥



A Christmas miracle in the forests of Bílovice

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

“The forests, my forests, I thank you for the golden evening which follows an equally golden day. If only you could speak of your present wistful beauty, in which your last leaf burns to the quick! If only the words of my mother tongue were as soft as your muffled rustling beneath a timid foot and hesitant steps! You, the forests, my good forests, I have confided in you and woven my evening song from your magic. I cannot help it that I have bound it within the worn frame of a simple, light tale, to which you lured a wanderer astray at your crossroads.”

Rudolf Těsnohlídek, feuilleton *To My Forests*



Rudolf Těsnohlídek / © Municipal Museum in Čáslav

If Janáček's seventh opera has the strongest connection to the town where he lived and the surrounding area, it is not only because Janáček composed it there. *The Cunning Little Vixen* represents the incredible combination of the composer's philosophy of life as he turned seventy, together with the colourful picture of the first years of the young Czechoslovakia and the charm of the forests of Bílovice

with its distinctive inhabitants. But the life of the Vixen in Brno predated that of the famous opera, specifically in the editorial offices of the *Lidové Noviny* newspaper.

Today the name of Rudolf Těsnohlídek is mainly associated with his book *Liška Bystrouška*, with few people looking deeper into his literary or journalistic endeavours. This is a pity as these writings clearly show the source of this gentle humour and his ability to describe everyday life with both wisdom and a light irony. However, one of his most important acts had nothing to do with his writing, but rather with a freezing pre-Christmas evening in the forests of Bílovice and chancing upon an abandoned infant. This discovery would lead to the establishment of the traditional Christmas Tree of the Republic and the Dagmar Children's Home in Brno.

Two days before Christmas in 1919, Těsnohlídek set out on a walk with two of his friends through the forest near the Kuní stream. Nature's winter calm was then suddenly broken by a child's cry. When the companions followed in its direction, they came across a frozen baby amongst the roots of a stately spruce tree. The rescuers immediately wrapped the child in a coat and took it to the police station. It later transpired that the little girl, Liduška, had been left their by a desperate single mother, Marie Kosourová. As a servant in the difficult postwar period, having a baby meant she could not find work, and in her desperate situation she had hoped someone else would look after her daughter. Liduška was lucky and was given a loving home by the Polák family from Brno. Rudolf Těsnohlídek also visited her a year later and was moved by the happiness and joy in her eyes, which he described as "large shining wells". Liduška grew up, married and lived a happy life, thus fulfilling the poet's hope of a "second birth".

Těsnohlídek was deeply affected by the plight of the abandoned child. He realized that Liduška was not an isolated case and so he searched for a way to help those most vulnerable. He was inspired by the example of Copenhagen, where a collection was held for poor children beneath the Christmas tree in the square. He decided to introduce this tradition to Brno, and on 6 December 1924 a tall spruce was ceremonially cut down in the Bílovice forests. One week later, on 13 December, to the sound of the fanfare from Smetana's *Libuše*, it was put up on Brno's Naměstí Svobody as the very first Christmas Tree of the Republic. Following the ceremonial decoration of the tree, the proceeds from the collection were to go to the building of a modern home for abandoned children. Těsnohlídek's wish came true on 8 December 1929 when the Dagmar Children's Home was opened in Brno-Žabovřesky.

The building, which still serves its original purpose today, was designed by the outstanding Brno architect Bohuslav Fuchs, who carried out his work for free. Sadly, however, Rudolf Těsnohlídek never lived to see the opening of the home. He died in 1928, shortly before the completion of his greatest charitable work. On his desk lay a poem where he likened himself to a Christmas tree that had grown from the paving stones of a square, in order to "serve the good of others" and "wipe the tears from чужí (strangers') eyes."

Today, more than a hundred years later, the tradition of the Christmas Tree of the Republic continues. Each year, when the lights of Christmas trees are illuminated in town squares, the legacy lives on of a man who transformed the chance discovery of a freezing child into a lasting wave of solidarity.

In the final version of Leoš Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, there is no clear link to Liduška and her story. However, from the composer's sketches it is evident that his original opening differs both from the present-day version and from Rudolf Těsnohlídek's literary source, in which the gamekeeper, on his way home from the pub, catches a fox cub and takes it back to his lodge to amuse the children. In Janáček's earliest drafts, the opera began in the middle of the night. The gamekeeper, the priest and the schoolteacher are returning home from the pub. As in the final version, the gamekeeper falls asleep in the forest and is disturbed by a mosquito. Here, however, the mosquito is doubled by the figure of a tramp, who, together with his female companion, places a child in the form of the Vixen beside the sleeping gamekeeper before fleeing. What inspired Janáček to come up with this version of the opening remains unknown. It is, however, possible that the idea was connected with the discovery of Liduška in the Bílovice forests. In any case, Těsnohlídek's story and his idea of establishing a children's home became the inspiration for the production team of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. The set by Dragan Stojčevski is dominated by a circular window, which is very characteristic of Bohuslav Fuchs's architecture, the same kind which the children at the Dagmar Home still look out from today towards the Wilson Forest. Director Jiří Heřman connects the story with children because, just like the fox cub at the end, children represent the perpetuation of life within that Janáčkian cycle. ❤️



Photo from the world premiere of *The Cunning Little Vixen* / © NdB Archive



Dagmar Children's Home / © Dagmar Children's Home Archive



Dagmar Children's Home / © Dagmar Children's Home Archive

I am looking forward to everything

INTERVIEWS WITH JIŘÍ HEŘMAN
BY ELIŠKA HALODOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

The tenth edition of the Janáček Brno festival will present all of Janáček's operas in a single festival. Artistic Director Jiří Heřman discusses the original piano version of *Šárka*, the connection between historical legacy and contemporary artistic approaches, and his productions of *The Beginning of a Romance*, *From the House of the Dead* and *The Cunning Little Vixen*.



Jiří Heřman with members of the Children's Choir Brno

Why did you decide to direct *Šárka* and what was behind the decision to choose the original piano version from 1887?

JIŘÍ HEŘMAN: The decision to produce *Šárka* goes back a fairly long way – I think it was in 2022 when Julius Drake and Nicky Spence were here at the festival. Back then we said we'd love to create something together and one of my ideas was to look at Janáček's *Šárka*. I was fascinated by the fact that the original version has still been preserved in this form because Zeyer refused to give permission for the work to be performed. Within the context of the tenth edition, when we are showing all of Janáček's operas, its authentic form seemed logical to me and an inspirational part of the programme.

What were your main considerations when choosing a venue for the production of *Šárka*, and why did you decide on a site-specific approach as opposed to a traditional theatre space?

JH: I thought about it a lot and from the start I toyed with the idea of

not producing it in a traditional theatre space. The version for the Mahen Theatre was technically challenging – I wanted to link the auditorium with the stage using one continuous floor, and so we decided on the Besední dům, a place where Janáček used to perform and lead the choir, and where all his major concerts were played. The venue is strongly associated with national pride and so I immediately saw the scenography as being more or less ready. Together with the scenographer, Dragan Stojčevski, we agreed that everything we needed was already there in the Besední dům – the backdrop would be the space itself with all of its history and atmosphere.

Audiences already know they will be actively involved in the performance. How did you approach linking the venue, the music and the audience?

JH: It fascinates me how music can change a venue. The libretto to *Šárka* is fairly archaic and isn't easy for today's audiences to understand, so I wanted to try a form of theatre where the audience would be involved. The performance will take place throughout the Besední dům, so the

audience won't just be sat in one place. The fact that it is the piano version means the performers and the audience can be very close, thus creating an intense, vivid contact with the music and the story. The maximum capacity will be for 200 people, but the performance will also be streamed live as part of Opera Vision, so it will be possible to watch it online.

The theme for this year's festival is "Roots". How has this been reflected in the programme and the new projects such as *The Beginning of a Romance*?

JH: I see this year's theme as a question about where we come from and what firmly links us to our history and traditions. With Janáček it's all about being open to people, collecting speech melodies, and the great inspiration he took from folk music. His early opera, *The Beginning of a Romance*, naturally falls within this context and reflects all of these influences, and it is also one of his less frequently played works.

You have also given space for young artists in the festival programme.

How did the cooperation on *The Beginning of a Romance* come about and how is this production unique?

JH: A graduate from opera directing at JAMU, Marek Řihák, has been working on the production along with National Theatre Brno and Hausopera. It is going to be performed in the hall of the rectorate of Brno's University of Technology, which has turned out to be an inspired choice. It's another festival opera which is going to be shown outside the traditional theatre venues. And Marek has come up with a very distinctive and current view of the work. This is because in addition to directing he also studied at the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Technology. He has brought in a humanoid robot to the production, which gives a contemporary twist to Janáček's *Destiny* through the eyes of an artist with a scientific background. In addition to this, it is also an interesting concept with a strong element of generational conflict.

I'd like to move on to another opera, *From the House of the Dead*, which you linked with the cantata *Glagolitic Mass*. This will in fact be the production's final performance at the festival. But let us go back to the beginning. What led you to this unusual pairing?

JH: The idea came from the conductor Jakub Hrůša, while for me, a crucial role in this pairing was played by the idea of light and hope. I don't see these two parts as separate – more as a single journey through time, with the only dividing line being the boundary of death and the subsequent fading of great suffering, which may be partially eased through reconciliation. I see the *Glagolitic Mass* as Janáček's idyllic wedding in a forest, in the cathedral of nature, where it is possible to become connected to something essential and set out on the path to resurrection, or not – in certain moments there is still a sense of enclosure and despair, it just depends on the individual which path they follow.

Your production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* which premiered in 2018 will also be shown at the festival. How did the idea come about to set some

of the story in the Dagmar Children's Home and link it with the opera?

JH: The dramaturge Patricie Částková told me the story of an abandoned child, Liduška, who was found by Rudolf Těsnohlídek in the forests of Bílovice. He then decided to build the Dagmar home, which was designed by the architect Bohuslav Fuchs. When I visited the home I was immediately struck by the round window looking out onto the Wilson Forest, which then became part of Dragan Stojčevski's imaginative stage set. But I still carry the most powerful aspect of it all in my heart – the children from the home and how they interact with the world of adults.

How did you balance the human characters and the animal world in your production, and how is the role of the Gamekeeper reflected in the story?

JH: Together with the stage designer we looked for a balance between the children and adult characters and the animal world. In the story, the Gamekeeper is a landlord, his wife looks after the children, and the animal world is represented by old toys, which many of us can still remember, and which gradually come alive in the imagination of the children and the Gamekeeper.

For me, the *Vixen* is about the cycle of life – youth, growing old and continuity. The juxtaposition of the children and the adults, their playfulness and energy, all of this gives a new dimension to the production. It is also a pleasure to watch how entire generations of the Brno Children's

Choir have grown up under the direction of Valerie Maťašová.

And one final question: what are you personally most looking forward to as the festival's artistic director?

JH: I'm actually looking forward to everything as this year's festival is incredibly diverse. For the first time we have the Bavarian State Opera with Warlokowski's *Katya Kabanova*, featuring Corinne Winters and Pavel Černoch. Audiences will also have the chance to see Carsen's interpretation of the same opera in our production. Other highlights will be the Bamberg Symphony conducted by Jakub Hrůša, *Jenůfa* directed by Martin Glaser, and *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček* by Robert Carsen, which won an International Opera Award. And I'm also looking forward to Jana Šrejma Kačirková's debut as Emilia Marty in David Radok's legendary production of *The Makropulos Affair*.

I also can't wait for those concerts in the villas, the folk-music programme, and to see conductor Tomáš Hanus take on a new musical production of the opera *Destiny*, as well as Tomáš Netopil leading the ORF Orchestra in a new musical production of our *Cunning Little Vixen*. The festival will then close with our chief conductor Robert Kružík and a production of *From the House of the Dead* with Štefan Margita as Luka.

Each moment of this year's festival will offer something unique and I can't wait for the audiences to see and hear the complete works of Leoš Janáček, which we have continued to stage since 2014. ♥



Jiří Heřman rehearsing *The Cunning Little Vixen*

A return to its roots: Janáček's Šárka at the Besední dům

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO PETR ZIKMUND
ILLUSTRATION MICHAL BAČÁK

Who has the right to rule?
Does it matter if it is a man or woman?
Be a part of Janáček's debut opera
and experience Šárka as a unique
site-specific event at the Besední dům.



Leoš Janáček: ŠÁRKA (1888 version)
Conductor: Dominik Pernica
Director: Jiří Heřman
Piano: Julius Drake

Chorus of the Janáček Opera NTB
Choirmaster: Martin Buchta

Cast:
Přemysl – **Daniel Kfelíř**
Ctirad – **Nicky Spence**
Šárka – **Eliška Gattringerová**
Lumír – **Ondřej Koplík**

During the performance, visitors will have the opportunity to explore the Besední dům building. Four seats are reserved for people with reduced mobility.



28. 10. 7 p.m. PREMIERE
Leoš Janáček: ŠÁRKA (1888 version)
→ BESEDNÍ DŮM
Reprises: 15. 11. and 16. 11. **LIVE STREAM OPERAVISION**

The first premiere of the season is traditionally linked to a new production of a work by Leoš Janáček, and on this occasion it will be an unconventional project. The motto of the 10th festival edition is "Roots", and our contribution engages with this theme through the Maestro's first opera, *Šárka*. However, it will not be performed at the Janáček Theatre but in a location associated with Janáček's activity in Brno's cultural life. Director Jiří Heřman and Set Designer Dragan Stojčevski, together with the audience, will be transforming the Besední dům into a symbolic castle and forested wilderness. Leoš Janáček only completed the work in a piano reduction at the time, and although a later orchestrated version exists, it is this early form which offers a fascinating insight into the development of Janáček's compositional style. The piano part will be performed by the distinguished British pianist Julius Drake, and he will be joined on stage by soprano Eliška Gattringerová in the role of Šárka and British tenor Nicky Spence as Ctirad, along with the Chorus of the Janáček Opera of the National Theatre Brno. Learn more about Janáček at the threshold of his career in music already marked by a strong sense of drama and theatre – an energy that remains compelling and relevant even today. ♥



A spark of the divine in the darkness of Siberia

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

A unique pairing of Leoš Janáček's late masterpieces, in which a staged form of the Glagolitic Mass – as a continuation of the opera *From the House of the Dead* – offers new testimony to the power of faith in humanity.



Leoš Janáček:
**FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD /
GLAGOLITIC MASS**

Conductor: Robert Kružík

Director: Jiří Heřman

Janáček Opera NTB

Cast:

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov – **Roman Hoza**

Luka (Filka Morozov) – **Štefan Margita**

Skuratov – **Peter Berger**

Šiškov – **Károly Szemerédy**

Major – **Jan Štáva**

Aljeja – **Romana Kružíková**

A unifying thread runs through all of Janáček's compositions – one of profound humanity and originality in form. This is perhaps most evident in his final two major works: the opera *From the House of the Dead*, a pared-down study of the souls of prisoners, and the *Glagolitic Mass*, a highly personal expression of faith set to an Old Church Slavonic text. Bringing together Janáček's last opera with this monumental mass represents an undertaking which lends both pieces an entirely new dimension. While the opera immerses us in the raw environment of a Siberian prison, filled with suffering, crime and pain, the subsequent staged performance of the *Glagolitic Mass* offers forgiveness and hope of redemption. The central motif, woven through Janáček's work and the entire evening, is the composer's credo, inscribed at the opening of the score: "In every creature, a spark of the divine!" Director Jiří Heřman and Scenographer Tomáš Rusín have created a visually striking opera in which realistic scenes from prison life gradually transform into a universal vision of purification and faith in humankind. The figure of the eagle, symbolizing freedom in the opera, becomes, through the image of Christ, a link between these two worlds. ♥



17. 11. 5 p.m. FINAL PERFORMANCE

30.9. 7 p.m. FESTIVAL PREVIEW

**Leoš Janáček: FROM THE HOUSE
OF THE DEAD / GLAGOLITIC MASS**

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE



The festival celebrates

The tenth edition
of the Janáček Brno festival
– and one year zero
2004–2026

TEXT JIŘÍ ZAHŘÁDKA

The Janáček Brno International Opera and Music Festival is now regarded as both a cornerstone of Brno's cultural life and a significant part of the international scene. Patricie Částková and I are now the only members of the dramaturgical board who have been with the festival since the very start, which means this year's anniversary edition is the perfect opportunity for a brief retrospective.

It all began back in 2001, when the then head of the Department of Musicology at Masaryk University, Mikuláš Bek, and the director of opera at National Theatre Brno, Tomáš Šimerda, came up with the idea of a spectacular way to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Leoš Janáček and the centenary of the first performance of the opera *Jenůfa* in 2004. The project, including its artistic concept and budget, was approved by Brno City Council as early as 2001, though those behind the idea soon left the organizational team. The aim was to stage all of Janáček's operas in addition to some of his orchestral, chamber and choral works.

Preparations for the festival were eventually finalized by the theatre's new director, Zdeněk Prokeš, and the festival was able to open on 21 January 2004 – exactly one hundred years after the first performance of *Jenůfa* – with the premiere of a co-production of the opera with the Vienna State Opera, directed by David Pountney and conducted by Jaroslav Kyzlink.

Janáček operas were also performed by Czech and Slovak ensembles, while the Irish Touring Opera brought *The Cunning Little Vixen* from abroad. Particularly unforgettable were the two appearances by conductor Charles Mackerras. He conducted both *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*, in a performance by National Theatre Prague, and the closing concert featuring the *Glagolitic Mass*.

It was almost a miracle that Brno – usually a rather sleepy town during the final two weeks of January – was transformed into a hive of Janáček activity, attracting a considerable number of international visitors into the bargain. A few years passed and another anniversary approached, this time marking the death of Leoš Janáček in 2008.

One of the most remarkable achievements was a production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* by the then head of opera Tomáš Hanus and directed by James Conway, while the Hungarian State Opera arrived with an excellent production of *Jenůfa*. However, the festival, held in November and featuring outstanding singers such as Peter Straka and Eva Urbanová, did not attract the same level of audience attention. It became clear that if the festival were to continue on a biennial basis, it would need a defining concept to make it distinctive and attractive. That concept became the dramaturgical theme which was assigned to each edition.

For 2010, the theme chosen was *Leoš Janáček and Expressionism*, which was perhaps not the easiest edition

for audiences, but it proved to be an outstanding one nevertheless. The world premiere of Janáček's original version of *The Excursion of Mr. Brouček to the Moon* was staged under the direction of Pamela Howard. An exceptional production of *Lulu* from Essen was presented, while Helikon Opera visited with an intriguing interpretation of *The Makropulos Affair*. It was also the first year that saw concerts being held in Janáček's house.

The following edition focused on Janáček's relationship with Brno and brought an unforgettable production of *The Makropulos Affair* directed by Robert Carsen, conducted by Marcus Bosch and performed by the Nuremberg State Theatre. A captivating *Katya Kabanova* arrived from Maastricht in the Netherlands, directed by Harry Kupfer, while operas by Josef Berg were also performed. It was also the first edition overseen by Pavel Lojda as secretary and producer – a role he continues to fulfil to this day.

The 2014 edition was devoted to Janáček as both an inspired and inspiring figure. The resident Janáček Opera offered an outstanding production of *The Makropulos Affair* directed by David Radok and conducted by Marko Ivanović, while the Kronos Quartet performed Steve Reich's iconic *Different Trains*. The festival concluded with a remarkable coup: a performance of the *Glagolitic Mass* together with *The Eternal Gospel* in the Stadion Hall on Kounicova Street, where the work had originally received its world premiere.

All of these editions were accompanied by art exhibitions at the Leoš Janáček Memorial and numerous accompanying events. At the same time, ticket sales began to rise significantly and the international audience expanded steadily. However, the festival continued to struggle with a problem which greatly limited its ambitions: a very modest budget. In spite of this, there remained a firm determination to maintain the festival's high dramaturgical standards – a commitment recognized and appreciated by experts and audiences alike.

The arrival of new leadership at National Theatre Brno brought fresh energy and financial support. As a result, the festival in 2018 was finally able to flourish with the highest standards of both performance and dramaturgy, attracting large audiences.

One serious blow which the festival fortunately managed to bounce back from was the COVID pandemic and the associated restrictions. The most recent editions are still fresh in our memory: the festival has developed into an event of exceptional quality, filled with superb opera productions, concerts and a wealth of accompanying activities. Increasing numbers of visitors from every corner of the world now travel to experience this unique occasion and its unmistakable atmosphere – something the people of Brno have the privilege of enjoying every two years. Long may it continue. ♥

How the festival began

Why opera should have foreign-language subtitles too

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

It is hard to believe how quickly twenty-two years can pass. And yet that is exactly how long it has been since the festival – then called *Janáček's Brno* – first took place in a gloomy January at the Janáček Theatre and other venues across Brno. The following years brought not only a slight change of name to *Janáček Brno*, but above all, and particularly in the last decade, the rapid development of an event that has firmly placed Brno on the world festival map.

It is difficult to look back now and remember which performances and concerts were part of which edition, and so I found myself browsing through an ever-growing folder on my computer with the simple title "Festival". Photographs, visual design proposals, proofs of magazines and daily programmes, and among all of it, a document entitled "John Tyrrell".

A name that needs no introduction to lovers and connoisseurs of Janáček's work, the British musicologist John Tyrrell (1942–2018) is a figure closely associated with

Czech music, and particularly with that of Janáček. As a tireless advocate, author of numerous books including a definitive biography of Janáček, and editor of musical editions of Janáček's operas, he – together with conductor Charles Mackerras and director David Pountney – played a major role in bringing Janáček's operas first to Britain and then to the wider world.

But that inconspicuous document reminded me of one more thing – that behind the festival stands a whole host of people who the ordinary audience never sees taking a bow on stage and would most likely pass by unnoticed in the foyer, such as the festival secretary Pavel Lojda, who has been with us since 2011, along with his production team; yet without them, the festival simply would not exist. And then there are the other regular guests and great supporters of the festival, such as John Tyrrell himself, who was there from the very outset, served for many years on its honorary board, and above all was an attentive audience member and wise adviser. After every festival he attended, he never forgot to write – praising what he had enjoyed, pointing out what had not worked, and contributing many good ideas for future editions.

The aforementioned document contains a letter from the time when, after the inaugural edition, the future direction of the festival was being discussed. Reading through all the observations and comments reminded me just how long a journey the festival has made, and so I wanted to share at least a few passages from it:

Every two years seems good to me. If you give it every three or four years this seems like an occasional event and you have to start from scratch ('od Adama') each time, whereas for every two years is easy to remember, and 'biennale' is an attractive, rather stylish word.

Target the young people as Janáček audiences of the future. Make sure that cheap tickets are available for students and that they are encouraged to take them up.

These will be will be

(a) Janáček lovers (a niche market, but a strong and devoted one) and

(b) opera lovers.

You need to find effective ways of getting through to them.

*If people come all the way to hear Janáček they will want to hear things that they don't normally hear. In England we hear *Jenůfa*, *Katya Kabanova* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* on a regular basis. But these three operas dominated the festival. One really needs to represent as many other operas of Janáček as possible.*

Non-operas. These are of course much easier but in this festival this was confined to two concerts. You would probably need to have separate evening concerts of



John Tyrrell / © Marek Olbrzymek



Sir Charles Mackerras rehearsing *Glagolitic Mass* (2004) / © Jana Hallová

orchestral works (how seldom one hears *Balada blanická* or *Šumárovo dítě*) and choral-orchestral works (I myself have heard *Věčné evangelium* live only once in my life) but the rest are comparatively easy to put on. At the Janáček conference this year there was a wonderful concert of Janáček's earlier liturgical works sung in the Augustinian basilica.

Janáček instruments and venues. You need to capitalize on these venues since these are unique and only Brno can offer them. Hearing Jan Jiraský play Janáček's piano music on Janáček's own piano was a very special experience for me and needs to be repeated every festival. Most foreigners won't have heard Moravian folk music and instruments such as the *cimbál*. You could organize a very nice concert (a bit like the folk concert that Janáček organized in the *Besední dům* in 1892) which would involve Moravian folk ensembles plus Janáček's arrangements of some of the pieces.

What to do in Brno. If people come to the festival for a week or two (or even just a few days), they need to be entertained the **WHOLE** time, not just in the evenings. In Edinburgh they have morning concerts (from 10 or 11), afternoon concerts, evening concerts and late night concerts. If you are expecting foreigners, then it's useless for the operas to have just Czech surtitles.

The 2016 festival would be the last one John Tyrrell could attend. But even afterwards he sent me an email full of observations, and it was so pleasing to read how much he had enjoyed the programme by the JAMU students:

It was a wonderful idea to have JAMU students perform the Capriccio. This is a very difficult piece to bring off, and it usually doesn't work because rather bored brass players from the local orchestra are brought in for the occasion. Here, however, we had really keen young brass players, excellently coached and conducted, and I ended up thinking what a wonderful piece it was – the most convincing performance I have ever heard!

I am sure he would have enjoyed the other festivals, including those in which Janáček's complete works were, or will be, performed. He would also have been delighted by the fact that the festival has been recognized by the International Opera Awards on two occasions – when Janáček Brno won the Best Festival award in 2018 and then in 2024.

And we now have subtitles in three languages. ❤️



Moving a Steinway concert piano from the Janáček Theatre to the Villa Tugendhat / © Marek Olbrzymek



A production of Berg's *Lulu* from Essen (2011) / © Theater Essen Archive



Jakub Hruša and Robert Carsen (2016) / © Marek Olbrzymek



Jiří Hejman and Martin Glaser (2018) / © International Opera Awards Archive



Karita Mattila as *Kostelníčka* (2020) / © Marek Olbrzymek

The magic of chamber music

The Reduta Theatre is not only the oldest theatre building belonging to National Theatre Brno, but thanks to its Mozart Hall, it is also a venue where festival concerts are regularly performed. Once again, all of the concerts promise to be unforgettable experiences, thanks to both the performers and a programme which is seldom heard in concert halls.

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

From Janáček to Mařatka

The festival programme also highlights the juxtaposition of different generations of composers and Janáček's work within the broader context of musical developments spanning the 20th and 21st centuries. On this occasion there will be the fascinating contrast of two Czech composers separated by almost one hundred years – Leoš Janáček and Kryštof Mařatka. They both share an interest in folk music – while Janáček's roots lie in Moravia, Kryštof Mařatka has been inspired by the ethnic music of several continents, and he often uses exotic musical instruments in his compositions, such as the elder flute, gemshorn, rag whistle, nose flute, shepherd's horn and bone flute. Janáček's folk world is presented through the unique song cycle *From the Diary of One Who Disappeared* sung by tenor Aleš Briscein and mezzo-soprano Michaela Zajmi, accompanied on piano by Kryštof Mařatka. But Janáček is not just a passionate declaration of love to Zefka; his playful side is revealed in the humorous *Nursery Rhymes*, which will be performed at the festival in the world premiere of an arrangement by Kryštof Mařatka. For his composition *Altotem*, Kryštof Mařatka found inspiration at the Museum of National Archaeology in Saint Germain en Laye in Paris. He reimagines the Altotem as an ancient and forgotten musical instrument, a kind of predecessor of the modern viola, whose archaic and unusual sound protects the museum's collection like a guardian. The title comes from the combination of two elements: alto referring to the viola and totem as a symbol of protection and patronage.



Kryštof Mařatka / © Philippe Stirnweiss



16. 10. 7 p.m.
LEOŠ JANÁČEK & KRYŠTOF MAŘATKA
 → REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL

Conductor composers

We would probably not expect to see the names of conductors such as František Neumann, Břetislav Bakala and František Jílek featured on posters in places usually reserved for the names of composers. All three, however, were not only performers as they also wrote their own musical compositions. All the more intriguing, then, is this programme which presents Neumann as a composer and Bakala and Jílek as arrangers of Janáček's orchestral works – *Taras Bulba*, *Youth* and *Sinfonietta* – in versions adapted for two pianos. They will be joined by two outstanding pianists, Ivo Kahánek and Martin Kasík, both renowned for their exceptional emotional depth and expressive sensitivity. The actor Daniel Bambas will also be appearing as the narrator in the melodrama *Mr František Neumann*.



Jan Bartoš and the Pavel Haas Quartet

The Pavel Haas Quartet, listed in *BBC Music Magazine's* "10 greatest string quartets of all time", are an ensemble whose every appearance at the festival is a true artistic celebration – not only because of their rich tonal palette, but also for their infectious energy and exceptional sense of unity. They will be joined on this occasion by one of the most distinctive pianists of the Czech music scene, Jan Bartoš, in performances of Antonín Dvořák's *Piano Trio No. 4 "Dumky"* and Dmitri Shostakovich's *Piano Quintet*. It can only be regretted that Leoš Janáček did not write more works for string quartet – but the *String Quartet No. 1 "Kreutzer Sonata"*, inspired by Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*, as performed by the Pavel Haas Quartet, will certainly make up for it.



31. 10. 7 p.m.
IVO KAHÁNEK & MARTIN KASÍK
→ REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL



1. 11. 7 p.m.
PAVEL HAAS QUARTET & JAN BARTOŠ
→ REDUTA THEATRE – MOZART HALL

Janáček's satirical odyssey to the past and to the Moon

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

Leoš Janáček's opera about a 'small-minded' Czech man, directed by Robert Carsen, breaks down the boundaries of time, space and even human pettiness, and was awarded the 2024 International Opera Award for Production of the Year.

Leoš Janáček:
THE EXCURSIONS OF MR. BROUČEK
Conductor: Marko Ivanović
Director: Robert Carsen

Janáček Opera NTB
Coproduction: Teatro Real, Madrid,
and Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin

Cast:
Matěj Brouček – **Nicky Spence**
Mazal / Blankytný / Petřík – **Daniel Matoušek**
Sacristan / Lunobor / Domšík – **David Szendiuch**
Málinka / Etherea / Kunka – **Jana Sibera**
Würfel / Patron of the arts / Alderman – **Jan Štáva**
Young waiter / Prodigal child / Pupil – **Andrea Šířoká**
Poet / Oblačný / Vacek Bradatý – **Tadeáš Hoza**
Painter/Duhoslav/Vojta of the Peacocks/Professor – **Vít Nosek**
Composer / Harfoboj / Miroslav, goldsmith – **Ondřej Koplík**



"You don't look so bad, oh pale brother up there. Surely your people are happier than we poor mortals down below!" Matěj Brouček shouts up at the Moon shining over Prague. Artistic imagination knows no bounds, so why not travel to the Moon with Janáček to discover whether Mr. Brouček is right? None of Janáček's operas can truly be called comic – although humour is never absent, it is more of an occasional flavouring. However, in this opera about a landlord from Malá Strana, a typical 'small-minded' Czech man, Janáček overflows with humour, albeit a sharply honed one. The world-renowned director Robert Carsen found an original way into what he himself calls "the craziest work". He connected the story with the pivotal years of 1968 and 1969. On stage, the poetry of the 'flower children' mixes with the atmosphere of the Soviet-led occupation and mankind's first Moon landing. Carsen, who has a deep affinity with Janáček's work, has created a production for the Brno National Theatre company which is dramatically powerful, witty and visually arresting. British tenor Nicky Spence excels in the title role, finding unexpected paths and human depth in Brouček's 'repulsive' nature. ♥



15. 10. 7 p.m., 7. 10. 7 p.m. FESTIVAL PREVIEW
Leoš Janáček:
THE EXCURSIONS OF MR. BROUČEK
→ Janáček Theatre



A focus on Brouček

TEXT ELIŠKA HALODOVÁ

The Excursions of Mr. Brouček under the historical microscope

One of the undoubted highlights of the last festival was the production of Janáček's opera *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*, which also opened the Janáček Brno festival with its premiere on 1 November 2024. It was created as a co-production between the Berlin State Opera (Staatsoper Unter den Linden) and Teatro Real in Madrid. And if we add that it was directed by Robert Carsen, with musical direction by Marko Ivanović, set design by Radu Boruzescu, costumes by Annemarie Woods, and principal roles performed by Nicky Spence, Doubravka Novotná and Daniel Matoušek, it is hardly surprising that the production received the prestigious International Opera Award 2025 in the category of New Production.

The Excursions of Mr. Brouček was unique among Janáček's operas as it had its world premiere at the National Theatre in Prague on 23 April 1920, under the direction of the then new opera director Otakar Ostrčil – and we hope that Brno residents no longer hold a grudge against the opera because of this! It was his fifth opera and was based on two short stories by Svatopluk Čech (1846–1908) from 1888: *The True Excursion of Mr. Brouček to the Moon* and *The New Epochal Excursion of Mr. Brouček: On this Occasion to the 15th Century*.

So let us set out together with Mr. Brouček and take an 'under the microscope' look at the shifts in time and place devised by the production team under the director's lead – shifts which were undoubtedly a surprise to many.

The True Excursion of Mr. Brouček to the Moon: We're all off to Moonstock

The central character, Mr. Brouček – performed by Nicky Spence – remains a typical Czech anti-hero: a man whose ambitions in life fit comfortably between a glass of beer and a plate of sausages. The first part of the production is visually striking with the stage intercut by authentic footage from the Apollo 11 mission, the moment when Neil Armstrong uttered his famous words about "one small step for man". While the world watches the triumph of science and technology in a live television broadcast, Brouček finds himself – in his own fashion – on the Moon, in a completely different society. Instead of the black-and-white world of lunar footage, he slips into a kind of lunar parallel to the legendary Woodstock festival: "Moonstock", a place filled with music, freedom and idealistic 'flower children', or hippies.



And it is this reference to Woodstock which provides another layer of meaning to the production. The festival, held in August 1969 in the state of New York, became a symbol of an entire generation – one which rejected war, authority and conventional social values. Performing at the time were musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and The Who, and their concerts are still among some of the most iconic moments in the history of popular music. The atmosphere at the festival – a mixture of music, protest and belief in freedom – was also widely publicized through the media, much like the Moon landing, which was watched by millions of people around the world in a live television broadcast.

The director Robert Carsen deliberately sets these two worlds on a collision course – on the one hand, a technological triumph; on the other, the utopia of a free society. What this juxtaposition ultimately offers, however, is left to each audience member who chooses to embark on this journey alongside Brouček.





21 August 1968 in Ostrava / © Miroslav Dvořák

The New Epochal Excursion of Mr. Brouček to the 15th Century, or not?

What was originally the second part of the opera takes us to 15th-century Hussite Prague – a period of pivotal importance for Czech society, particularly during the nineteenth century when the modern nation was taking shape. It was at this time that the Hussite movement began to be reinterpreted not only as a chapter in history, but also as a symbolic source of national identity.

The Hussite movement was formed around the preacher and reformer Jan Hus, a master and rector of the University of Prague, who was burned at the stake in 1415 at the Council of Constance. However, it represented far more than a purely religious dispute as it contained a powerful social, political and national dimension. After Hus's death, it evolved into a powerful emancipatory movement which challenged both ecclesiastical and secular authority. It is this tradition of resistance, but also of an emphasis on truth and conscience, which has repeatedly resurfaced in Czech history – whether regarding the reformation church associated with the Unity of the Brethren and Jan Amos Comenius, or in cultural reflections from the nineteenth century, from historical scholarship to the literary works of Alois Jirásek.

And it is here where Carsen's shift in time proves unexpectedly appropriate. By relocating the action from the Hussite wars to the period after 1968, he is not simply replacing one historical theme with another, instead he is revealing their underlying affinity. Just as the Hussites faced the political and ideological pressures of their time, following the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops, Czechoslovak society was also confronted with the problem of how to respond to a lack of freedom.

Resistance, however, does not take on a single form in the production. Alongside open struggle – whether Hussite or civic – there are also quieter, more personal forms of defiance. One of the most vivid symbols of such an attitude

became the student Jan Palach (1948–1969), who in January 1969 set himself on fire in Wenceslas Square in Prague in protest against the growing passivity of society following the August occupation. His act was intended to jolt the public and remind it that freedom is not a given. Palach thus became a symbol of a moral appeal which transcends the boundaries of his own time and country.

Palach is not named in the production, which makes his visual image all the more powerful as a result. International audiences might therefore consider looking up his photograph so they might recognize this powerful historical reference and connect the scene to a specific story – naturally without wishing to patronize our audiences.

The same historical framework is further shaped by other events which fundamentally marked the Czechoslovak psyche of the late 1960s. The period of the Prague Spring in 1968, associated with the reformist politician Alexander Dubček (1921–1992), ushered in hopes of “socialism with a human face” – an attempt to loosen censorship, expand civil liberties and create a more open society. However, this was forcibly quashed in August of the same year by the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops, bringing an end to the reform process and ushering in the period known as “Normalization.”

Alongside these tragic moments, the collective memory also absorbed events which seemed distant from politics – for example, the ice hockey match between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union at the 1969 World Championship. The victory of the Czechoslovak team acquired powerful symbolic meaning at the time: a game unfolded on the ice which many saw as a silent yet all the more intense form of resistance against the occupiers. For a brief moment, sport became a language through which it was possible to express what otherwise could not be said.

We hope you did not lose your way on Mr. Brouček's journeys, and we look forward to seeing you in the audience. And if you feel you already know everything, don't worry – there is still far more hidden within the production itself. ♥

Christopher Ward brings Šárka back to the Mahen Theatre

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER WARD BY VENDULA GALDOVÁ NOSKOVÁ

Conductor Christopher Ward will be appearing at the festival with the orchestra and soloists of National Theatre Prague. The Mahen Theatre will be the venue for a magnificent concert version of Janáček's *Šárka* as it would have been heard at its premiere more than one hundred years ago. A delightful contrast will then be provided by Josef Suk's lyrical *Fairy Tale*.

The British conductor Christopher Ward is one of the stand-out figures of his generation. Artistically speaking, he has felt particularly at home on German opera stages and has been artistic director at Aachen Theatre since 2018. For the upcoming season, he will be adding the position of music director of the Longborough Opera Festival to his portfolio. Czech audiences will be familiar with him through his collaboration with Prague's National Theatre, and he has had a long affinity with Czech music.

You will be appearing at our festival with the orchestra of National Theatre Prague. How much are you looking forward to working with them?

CHRISTOPHER WARD: I've always greatly enjoyed working with National Theatre Prague and we've collaborated on a number of projects in the past. I've always known the musicians to be enthusiastic, talented and highly musical, and I'm very much looking forward to working with them in the future.

The concert programme focuses solely on Czech music. As a British

conductor, was it difficult to find a way into this repertoire?

CW: Over the years I have conducted a fairly large amount from the Czech repertoire and I've always had a close relationship to it. The language as well as the expressive world of this music is very natural to me and it's always been a great pleasure to focus on this repertoire.

The concert programme is based on a distinctive contrast – on the one hand is Suk's soft, gentle and lyrical *Fairy Tale*, while on the other is Janáček's direct and dramatic musical language. Which of these musical worlds is closer to you personally?

CW: I feel closely connected to both of them. Suk's lyricism and gentleness are deeply attractive, while Janáček's immediacy and dramatic intensity are equally compelling. As a conductor, it's a privilege to have the opportunity to discover such contrasting musical worlds within one programme.



Christopher Ward / © Ch. Ward Archive

Both these works were written within approximately a decade of one another and are linked by the librettist Julius Zeyer. Do you find any musical parallels between Janáček's *Šárka* and Suk's *Fairy Tale*?

CW: Yes, in that they have a shared poetic and narrative atmosphere, which comes from Zeyer's text. From a musical perspective, though, they are from quite different worlds: Suk's language is more rooted in late-Romantic lyricism, whilst Janáček has already moved towards a more individualistic and dramatic means of expression.

Joseph Suk's music is performed quite frequently in the Czech Republic. How is he viewed internationally?

CW: Outside of the Czech Republic Suk is definitely performed less often and as a result can be overshadowed by figures such as Leoš Janáček.



Orchestra of the National Theatre / © Josef Rabara

Having said that, an awareness of the depth and beauty of his music has been gradually increasing and the audiences which come across him are often very struck by his sophistication and emotional sincerity.

As part of your concert with National Theatre Prague you will be performing the second, revised version of Janáček's opera Šárka, which was not revised and orchestrated until 1925. What are the main musical differences compared to the first version from 1888?

CW: As the first version was only preserved as a piano score it's quite difficult to make direct comparisons. What is clear, though, is the fact that Janáček returned to the work with greater experience and a clearly defined system for his dramatic and musical priorities. The later version appears more focused and more effective theatrically, with a more pronounced sense of tempo, rhythm and form. It contains fewer motifs and a longer closing number, which foreshadows his more mature works.

Although Šárka had its premiere long after it was written, it is in fact Janáček's first opera. Do you see it as somehow 'less Janáčekian' compared with his later operas?

CW: It certainly shows a composer who is just beginning to find his own distinctive voice. And even though it doesn't show all of the characteristics of Janáček's later works, there are still clear indications of his individuality – in particular in its dramatic conception and the work with rhythm and speech.

Janáček's first opera is going to be performed at the festival in concert form. From the conductor's perspective, is a concert performance easier in some ways than a fully staged production?

CW: In certain ways a concert performance can be more direct because there is none of the complexity associated with a staged production and the coordination with the theatrical elements. On the other hand, this places greater onus on the music, which has to convey the drama itself, which also brings its own specific challenges.

Šárka is going to be performed at Mahen Theatre, i.e. the same venue where it had its premiere 101 years ago. Is it possible for a conductor to prepare in some way for the acoustics of the space where the compositions are to be played?

CW: To a certain extent it is possible to prepare by studying the

size and character of the hall, as well as based on previous experiences with similar spaces. But in the end the acoustics are something you need to experience directly within the venue. Most important of all is during rehearsal when it's possible to balance the sound, articulation and tempo according to how the theatre carries the sound. It is going to be a huge honour for us to perform this work in its original setting, knowing that it has a natural place in this building with its specific acoustics.

What for you are the greatest challenges when performing Janáček's music?

CW: For me the greatest challenge is how to come to terms with the complexity of the score while achieving that feeling of flexibility and lyricism. It is essential to go beyond the score's complexity and allow the music to breathe naturally. ❤



11. 11. 7 p.m.
Leoš Janáček: ŠÁRKA
& Josef Suk: FAIRY TALE
→ MAHEN THEATRE

The soul of the people through song

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

“What shimmering richness of colour in the combined playing of the violin, bagpipes and cimbalom! The lead fiddler lavishly embellishes the melody; the second violin fills out the harmony, while the cimbalom veils the tunes in an unrestrained clangour, like the evening mist glittering with the gold of the setting sun as it envelops mountain after mountain.”

Leoš Janáček

When tracing the roots of Leoš Janáček’s work within the festival, it would be impossible to overlook Moravian folk music, which was a powerful source of inspiration from the very outset. He not only transformed the melodies of the Moravian countryside into his own distinctive musical language, but he also made them his lifelong passion. For almost forty years, he devoted himself systematically to collecting folksong as well as instrumental music and dances.

As in previous years, festival audiences will once again have the opportunity to experience at least part of the musical richness of the Moravian region in authentic performances, thanks to Magdalena Mučková, her cimbalom ensemble Danaj, and their guest artists. Folk music has been a lifelong passion of cimbalom player Magdalena Mučková and her festival concerts continue to explore one of Moravia’s musical regions in connection with Janáček’s activities as a collector and composer.

Folk music is inseparably linked with traditional costumes and Moravian costumes stand out not only for their beauty but also for their remarkable diversity. They differ from village to village and cover everything from festive and ceremonial attire to everyday work clothes. The tradition Leoš Janáček knew from its heyday had, by the postwar period, been largely reduced to the costumes from the Kyjov region, which became a kind of ‘template’ for the Czech national costume. Fortunately, these national treasures have seen a renewed interest in recent years, and original forms of regional dress are now being reconstructed in many areas, including costumes from the Brno region.

This year’s festival programme will therefore offer two wonderful opportunities to explore Moravian folklore: first in a concert focusing on folksong, and second through a fashion show of traditional costumes, accompanied by cimbalom music and professional commentary. The costume presentation will take place in the striking setting of the Žlutý kopec Water Tanks, a unique industrial heritage site whose history dates back to the 1870s. ♥

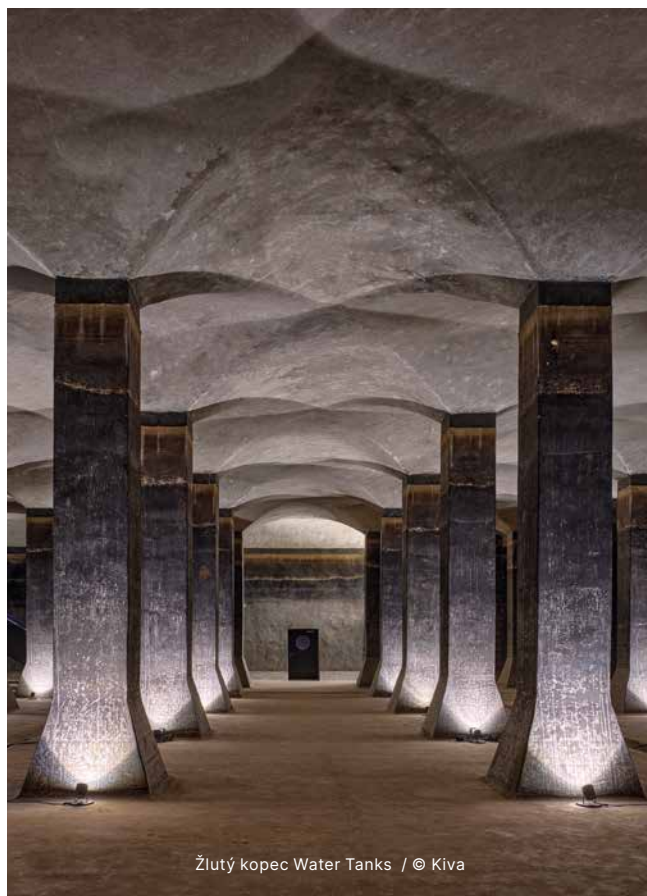




© Marek Ołbrzymek

“Our people do not wish merely to speak, but also to sing that which fills the heart. For a familiar song to come to mind – one that suits the mood and expresses what one wishes to reveal from within, partly veiled and partly confessed – our people need not search for long. It is not uncommon for them to know as many as 600 verses with their melodies. Every stage of their life has its own songful expression, which, at the right moment, in the right place, and among the right company, can easily evoke genuine feeling.”

Leoš Janáček



Žlutý kopec Water Tanks / © Kiva



17. 10. 3 p.m.
FOLK CONCERT: A CURE FOR ALL ILLS
 The world of folksong according to Janáček
 → REDUTA THEATRE

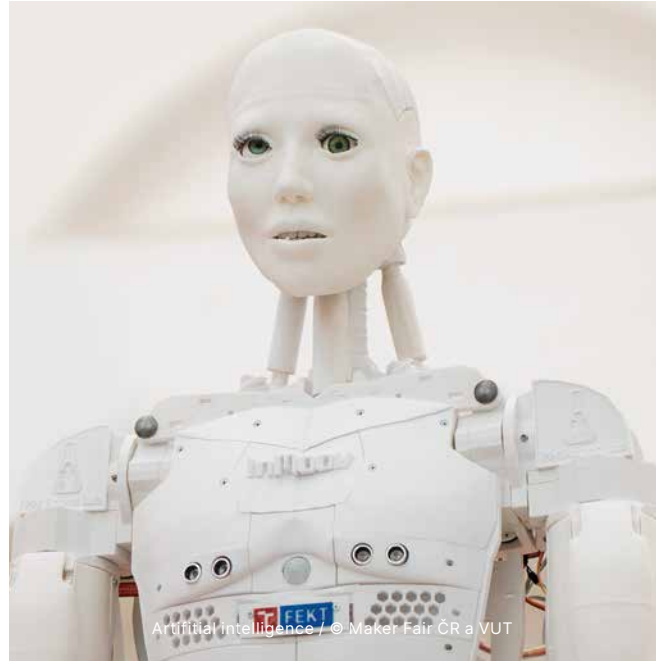


7. 11. 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.
PARADE OF FOLK COSTUMES WITH CIMBALOM MUSIC
 → ŽLUTÝ KOPEC WATER TANKS

Unite, those who belong together!

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

The 10th edition of the festival presents Janáček's early opera *The Beginning of a Romance* through the eyes of the younger generation as a clash between tradition and the world of technology. Will the heart or artificial intelligence prevail?



Leoš Janáček:
THE BEGINNING OF A ROMANCE
Conductor: Ondrej Olos
Director: Marek Řihák

Hausopera in co-production with National Theatre Brno, in collaboration with Brno University of Technology's Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Communication and the VOX IUVENALIS choir.

Cast:

Poluška – **Adriana Banášová**
Jurásková – **Daniela Straková**
Countess Irma – **Alžběta Symerská**
Tonek, farmer's son – **Michael Robotka**
Baron Adolf – **Raman Hasymau**
Mudroch, gamekeeper – **Daniel Kfelíř**
Jurásek – **Jiří Sulženko**
Count Halužanský – **Josef Škarka**



3. 11. 7 p.m. PREMIERE
Leoš Janáček:
THE BEGINNING OF A ROMANCE
→ ATRIUM OF THE BUT RECTORATE
Reprises: 4. 11., 12. 11., 13. 11.

The complete staging of Janáček's operas during the 10th edition of the festival offers a unique opportunity to not only experience his operatic masterpieces, but also to become familiar with works which are not so commonly seen on stage today. Among them is his second opera, *The Beginning of a Romance*, a piece strongly influenced by Janáček's deep interest in folklore at the time, which the composer himself described as a vaudeville filled with folksongs. Inspired by a short story by Gabriela Preissová, it has been given an entirely new dimension in this new festival production. Young director and recent JAMU graduate Marek Řihák has chosen to transfer the original conflict between two social classes to the heated atmosphere of the present day. While in the 19th century the opera's characters were divided by their background and social status, in this new interpretation the dividing line is their relationship to modern technology. The world of the 'upper classes' becomes an elite society which uses technology to such an extent that the boundary between a living human and a humanoid robot begins to disappear. Poluška and Adolf thus become representatives of two worlds who wish to meet, but come up against barriers which are insurmountable for the older generation. Will Poluška's heart succumb to the beautiful but artificial words of a handsome robot, or will she choose the natural folk melodies instead? ❤️

Opera extracted from the theatre

The Hausopera association is a loose collective of artists who work at the intersection of music, theatre and architecture. As the name suggests, the dominant languages are opera and the house. Opera, as a medium of communication, transforms non-theatrical space into a place of imagination and unexpected connections. The main principle used in this fusion is the site-specific format. Hausopera made its debut in 2018 with the opera *The Last Water Polo* (music by Marko Ivanović, directed by Petr Hašek, libretto by Josef Škarka), which it staged in the Rašín Baths with a synchronised swimming team and singers performing in the pool. The collaboration of Hausopera with the Janáček Brno festival on the opera *The Beginnings of a Romance* represents a major opportunity for the group, both in terms of the scale of the project itself and in promoting the idea that the world of theatre (opera) knows no boundaries, and that a remarkable story can unfold even in the most ordinary moment or in a forgotten corner.

The world of theatre (opera) knows no boundaries; a remarkable story can unfold even in the most ordinary moment or in a forgotten corner.



The roots from which opera grows: the next generation

TEXT ELIŠKA HALODOVÁ

In addition to professional opera productions, the Janáček Brno festival programme also includes projects by students from the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) and the Brno Conservatory. It is thanks to these productions that, for the fourth edition now, the festival has been able to work with young talent from both institutions and thereby open up opera to fresh perspectives.

This is very much in keeping with this year's theme of "Roots", which emphasises the importance of tradition as an essential basis for creating art today. Within this context, the student projects demonstrate how a deep understanding of operatic tradition provides both the energy and courage to experiment, allowing the emerging generation of artists to search for a distinctive voice.

Let us therefore take a closer look at how new operas are born within these institutions – from the initial inspiration and collaboration to their staging on theatres in Brno, specifically the Theatre on Orlí Street or, in the case of the Brno Conservatory, at the Mahen Theatre.

“We wanted to develop a ‘creative reactor’ where artistic ideas could collide.”



Brno Conservatory students at Janáček Brno 2024 / © Marek Olbrzymek

The two student productions, *Oh Humanity!* and *Here is an Island*, are not merely the result of individual creative efforts, but above all a testament to a well-thought-out system which has been developing at JAMU over recent years.

This system is the brainchild of a working group which includes the Komorní Opera production manager Zdenka Vlachovská, the company's artistic director Tomáš Krejčí, opera directing lecturer Tomáš Studený, Head of the Department of Composition and Multimedia Creation Dan Dlouhý, and festival representatives Jiří Heřman and Patricie Částková. More recently, Pavel Drábek has also played a significant role in shaping the concept of librettos by leading the Libretto in Contemporary Opera Creation workshop, thereby enabling a deeper connection between theoretical aspects of the libretto and the students' practical creative work. As a result, young composers, librettists and directors are being systematically brought together across the theatre and music faculties, fostering the essential creative chemistry between students of different disciplines. "The aim was to encourage the emergence of future artists for whom it is essential to meet in person and discuss these topics together. We wanted to develop a 'creative reactor' where artistic ideas could collide and lead to something productive," explained Tomáš Studený in an interview for this article.

One of the outcomes which audiences can look forward to is the opera *Oh Humanity!*, whose journey onto the stage was not exactly straightforward as it had to wait for its opportunity. It had originally been written for the 2024 festival, when an unusually large number of very strong artistic proposals were submitted. "We were surprised when four composers and four librettists contacted us with very interesting subjects," recalled Studený. And so instead of the usual maximum of two projects, four operas were selected. Audiences had the opportunity to see three of them – *Echo and Narcissus*, *Oliver* and *Tvorování*. The fourth opera, *Oh Humanity!*, was not forgotten and has made its way onto the Janáček Brno 2026 programme, where it will be performed in one evening together with the comic opera *Here is an Island*.

The existential opera *Oh Humanity!* was developed by a creative team consisting of the composer Eunika Pehánková, the librettist and dramaturge Bára Viceníková and the director Eliška Mervartová, who together shaped

its contemporary and conceptually concise form. The opera focuses on the issue of people's passiveness, moral responsibility and the limits of individuality during times of extreme conflict. Through the story of Pierre (or Petr?) we follow the transformation of "an ordinary individual" into someone confronted by the absurdity of a war which disturbs their previous certainties and forces them to take up a principled stance. The central theme is the paradox of human existence in which death and violence become an exclusively human act, while the question of personal activism or resignation determines the role a person will assume in the world. The libretto is written in Czech and will form a linguistic counterpoint to the second opera of the evening, which will be performed in Slovak.

**“Here is a theatre. Here is an island.
Here is the sea.”**

The second opera, *Here is an Island*, is based on Karel Čapek's *Apocryphal Tales*. The creative team of composer Tereza Konzalová, librettist Richard Lux Kramár and director Isabelle Arce chose an approach which could be termed 'playfully synthetic'. "It creatively linked several apocryphal tales: *Ophir*, *Hamlet – Prince of Denmark*, *Napoleon* and *The Confession of Don Juan*," explained Studený. The result is a story set on the island of fulfilled dreams (Ophir), where three famous figures are washed up during a storm – Don Juan, Napoleon and the actress Mlle Claire, who performs Hamlet.

The opera freely works with the principles of theatricality and illusion, both recognizing and thematizing them. "The characters are openly acknowledging: 'here is a theatre, here is an island, here is the sea'". But there is a more serious level beneath this playful surface. "It is an amusing anecdote with serious repercussions in the spirit of Čapek," said Studený, adding that the central theme is identity. The characters arrive on the island hoping to shed the image the world has imposed on them, only to discover it is impossible: "In the end, they find out it is impossible because everyone is completely imprisoned in their own 'self-hood'".



New operas emerge at JAMU / © JAMU Archive

**“And what actually is it – the theatre
beyond the gate?”**

The second student project, this time by the Brno Conservatory, differs from the original operas created at JAMU in that it does not seek to create a new work, but rather to interpret an existing one – Bohuslav Martinů's *Theatre Beyond the Gate*. The production has been developed under the guidance of the Conservatory's teaching staff and turns to the interpretative work of young singers and musicians, who encounter here the distinctive compositional and expressive world of Martinů's music.

The directorial concept emphasises the principle of theatre within a theatre, as well as the playfulness and stylization that are characteristic of the work, while also creating space for irony, economy of expression and rapidly alternating situations. The production is led by director Hana Mikolášková; musical direction is provided by Tomáš Krejčí and Helena Fialová; choreography is by Ladislava Košíková; scenography by Kateřina Doleželová; and lighting design by Jakub Kubiček. Under the supervision of the Head of the Vocal Department, Petr Julíček, students from the third to sixth years of the vocal programme will be performing alongside the student orchestra.

“And what actually is it – the Theatre Beyond the Gate?” In the words of Bohuslav Martinů, it is *“nothing other than a stage at a market, a fair beyond the town – a travelling theatre, in essence.”*

The Janáček Brno 2026 festival thus offers an insight into how the future of opera is being shaped by a new generation of artists and performers. Come and judge for yourself as new musical energy grows from these 'roots'. ❤



New operas emerge at JAMU / © JAMU Archive



10. 11. 7 p.m. PREMIERE, 14. 11. 3 p.m.
NEW OPERAS
BY THE JAMU CHAMBER OPERA
→ THEATRE ON ORLÍ STREET

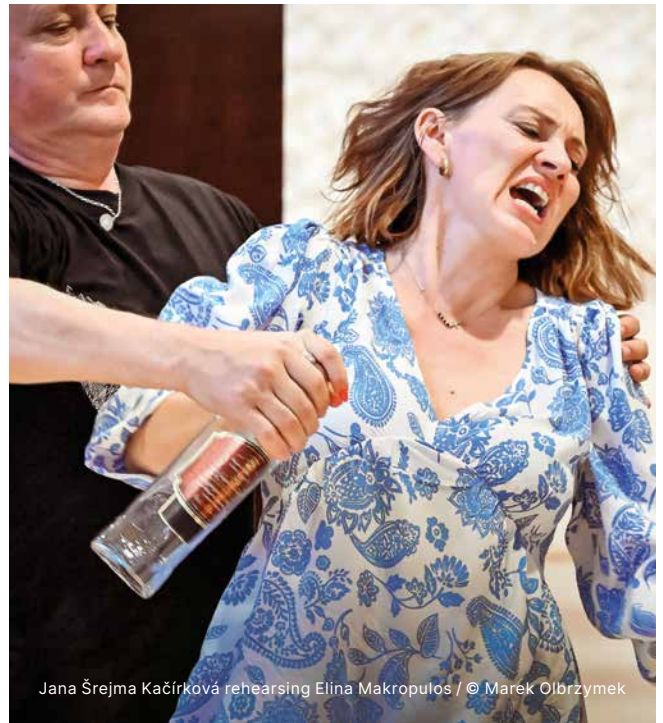


22. 10. 7 p.m. PREMIERE, 23. 10. 10 a.m.
Bohuslav Martinů:
THE THEATRE BEHIND THE GATE
→ MAHEN THEATRE

The curse of immortality

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO PATRIK BORECKÝ

The elixir of life, a cynical opera diva and a court case that lasts a century. David Radok's production reveals the chilling emptiness of endless existence in one of Leoš Janáček's most famous works.



Jana Šrejma Kačírková rehearsing Elina Makropulos / © Marek Olbrzymek

Leoš Janáček:
THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR
Conductor: Robert Kružík
Director: David Radok

Janáček Opera NTB
Co-production with Opera Göteborg

Cast:
Emilia Marty – **Jana Šrejma Kačírková**
Albert Gregor – **Aleš Briscein**
Solicitor Vítek – **Petr Levíček**
Kristina – **Zdislava Bočková**
Jaroslav Prus – **Svatopluk Sem**
Janek – **Vít Nosek**
Advocate Dr. Kolenatý – **Jan Štáva**



8. 11. 7 p.m., 15. 11. 7 p.m. FINAL PERFORMANCE
5. 9. 7 p.m. FESTIVAL PREVIEW
Leoš Janáček: THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

A complex detective story with bizarre comedic elements, human tragedy and philosophical reflection; all of this is contained within the opera *The Makropulos Affair*, based on the play by Karel Čapek. The fates of ordinary people intersect with a single, extraordinary – and endless – destiny. The central character, Emilia Marty, formerly Elina Makropulos, the daughter of the Greek physician to Emperor Rudolf II, has been making her mark on history for over three hundred years. Under various names, yet always with the same initials E. M., she has been conquering opera stages, but her inner life is dead. She is exhausted, lonely and cynical; life no longer brings her any joy because it lacks the natural boundary of death. Director David Radok builds on minimalist acting and contrasts in the settings – an intricately designed law office contrasts with the exposed backstage of the theatre, just as the emptiness of the protagonist and the cruelty of those around her are gradually revealed. More than solving the mystery of the formula for eternal youth, this work is about a profound realization: that the greatest human happiness is from “the silly fact that we die young”. ♥



I feel very drawn to Janáček's characters

INTERVIEW WITH ŠTEFAN MARGITA BY PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

Outstanding singers from around the world regularly come to the festival to present their interpretations of Janáček's music in his home city. This year's guest will be Štefan Margita, the Slovak tenor who has long performed Janáček's works at leading opera houses including Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera and La Scala. He will close the festival's tenth edition as Luka Kuzmič in *From the House of the Dead*.



Štefan Margita as Luka Kuzmič / © Clive Barda

The festival is dedicated to the music of Leoš Janáček and its wider context, and this year's theme is *ROOTS*. What are your own roots? What has shaped you, and what keeps you grounded despite your international success?

ŠTEFAN MARGITA: Humility. It is incredibly important to remain humble, because the more successful and well known you become, the more you need it. When you first start singing professionally and things begin to go well, there isn't a singer alive who hasn't let success go to their head, at least a little. The real question is whether you will realize this is not the way forward and change direction. If you can, everything is perfectly fine. But if you carry on that way, you are unlikely to get very far in life.

Do your roots from home – whether Slovak or Czech – stay with you when you're travelling?

ŠM: Absolutely, because I began my career at the theatre in Košice, which was a wonderful period in my life. Without that engagement, I would never have gone on to compete at the Prague Spring International Music Competition. And had I not stepped in as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* at the National Theatre in 1984, I would never have joined the company there, because it was thanks to that performance that Zdeněk Košler engaged me. My roots are in both Košice and the Czech Republic, and wherever I am in the

world, I always say how fortunate I am to live here. It is such a beautiful country and a place that is very close to my heart. No matter where I have sung around the world, I have always loved coming home.

I have to admit that my first memory of you is on the stage in Brno as Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*. What first drew you to Janáček?

ŠM: That's lovely to hear. I don't know whether you know this, but I actually ended my time in Košice with *The Elixir of Love* as Nemorino – it was my farewell performance with the company, and it was a wonderful occasion. As for Janáček, I'll tell you the story exactly as it happened, without trying to make it sound more dramatic than it was. I had joined the agency that still represents me today, and in 1987 I took up an engagement in Basel. At the time they were offering me the Italian repertoire – Nemorino, Alfredo in *La traviata*, and similar roles. My agent attended all my performances, then came to me and said, "*Štefan, there are two possibilities: either we'll represent you, or we won't.*" I asked what the problem was, and he replied, "*If you want to sing the Italian repertoire, we won't represent you, because your voice is Slavic, not Italian. There are plenty of Italian singers, and you won't build an international career in that repertoire.*" At first, it was quite a blow. But I realized he was right. However, I didn't move straight into Janáček.



17. 11. 5 p.m. CEREMONIAL CLOSING
30. 9. 7 p.m. FESTIVAL PREVIEW

Leoš Janáček: FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD / GLAGOLITIC MASS
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Instead, I sang a great deal of Mozart. Then came an invitation to audition for Semyon Bychkov, now Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, for the roles of Laca or Števa in a new production of *Jenůfa* in Florence. The audition took place in Vienna. As soon as I'd finished, Semyon Bychkov offered me the role of Laca on the spot – and that's where my journey with Janáček began.

Were you already a fan of Janáček's music before then? Had you hoped to sing roles in his operas or was it really just fate?

ŠM: No, I have to admit I hadn't. I had heard the *Glagolitic Mass* in Košice and thought it was impossible to sing.

Janáček's tenor parts are really quite extreme...

ŠM: They really are. I'd say that one of the most difficult roles is Živný in *Destiny*. It's a punishing role. But then when I learned the part of Laca, it awakened something really special inside of me. And then there was working with Semyon Bychkov! I arrived for the first rehearsal in Florence and he said to me: "You have to sing it like Puccini. You can't just declaim it. You have to sing every note that's written." The part in the last act where Laca sings "Jenůfa, I have brought you a bouquet from the gardener" – we spent hours and hours on that. The work was incredible and it was then I fell in love with Janáček. After that came an invitation to sing in *Katya Kabanova* in Geneva, then *Destiny*, followed by concert performances of Janáček's works. I really should to take flowers to his grave every day. I've sung in sixteen different productions of *Jenůfa* around the world.

You've worked with a number of first-class international directors on Janáček's operas – including Patrice Chéreau and Robert Carsen. What was that collaboration like?

ŠM: Robert Carsen is a phenomenon. I sang in his very first production of *Jenůfa*, and later in his *Katya Kabanova*. *Jenůfa* premiered in Antwerp, while *Katya Kabanova* was staged at La Scala in Milan. At first I sang Kudrjáš, and later Tichon. Working on *Jenůfa* wasn't easy because the entire stage was covered with soil throughout the

rehearsals. It was physically demanding. We'd go home with dirt everywhere – even in our mouths. But everyone approached it with absolute dedication because we knew we were creating something extraordinary. And then, at the end, the rain came pouring down on stage. It was sheer genius. None of us cared about catching a cold – we just wanted to make it work. Later I was invited to join *From the House of the Dead* with Patrice Chéreau. I arrived in Vienna for the first rehearsal. The production was conducted by Pierre Boulez, and Chéreau turned to the répétiteur and said, "You can go home now. Come back in a week's time." I remember thinking, "This should be interesting – what on earth are we going to do?" The entire cast – whether singing major or minor roles – had to be present at every rehearsal. From day one we wore our costumes, and the full set was already in place. Chéreau would sometimes just sit down and say, "Now I'd like all of you to improvise an étude on the theme that someone has died in prison." And that's what we would do, for hours on end, day after day throughout the week. It was an utterly fascinating and wonderfully enriching way of working.

Has Janáček ever surprised you in the way he portrays his characters? Was there one in particular which was more difficult to understand?

ŠM: Živný in *Destiny*. I have to admit that when I was studying the role, I didn't really understand him much to begin with. I kept wondering what I was supposed to do with this character, and I was probably saved by the Prague production directed by Robert Wilson. Here his distinctive theatrical style really suited both the production and the music. I had seen some of his other productions, including *Aida* in Paris, where his usual approach didn't seem appropriate to me. But it worked really well with *Destiny*.

Janáček is the only Czech opera composer who has really made his mark on the world's leading stages. How have international audiences responded to his operas?

ŠM: Whenever we've performed Janáček abroad, the response has

been tremendous – the greatest enthusiasm was probably in Japan. Naturally, the story of *Jenůfa* resonated with Japanese audiences, and they loved it. The Germans absolutely adore Janáček. When we performed Patrice Chéreau's production of *From the House of the Dead* in Berlin, people were standing outside the theatre before every performance looking for spare tickets. I've never experienced anything like that at home. Whenever Janáček is performed here, performances rarely sell out. It's almost as if people are intimidated by the music, even though it contains so much beautiful folk inspiration and so many wonderful melodies. Paris went wild for *From the House of the Dead*. The only place where people weren't immediately enthusiastic was La Scala in Milan. Even the chorus grumbled during rehearsals that it was 'ugly music', so we had to explain that they couldn't sing Verdi all the time. After Milan we took *From the House of the Dead* to Aix-en-Provence and New York, and around ninety-five per cent of the performances were sold out.

Živný, Laca, Kudrjáš, Tichon, Luka – these are very different personalities. Do you feel drawn to Janáček's characters?

I feel very drawn to his characters. Above all there's Laca – the sheer depth of his love and the lyricism of the role. It's such a rewarding part because, at the beginning, Laca has to come across as someone who torments Jenůfa. But I think she senses from the very start that he's only putting on an act and that everything he does is driven by his love for her and desire to win her over. It's a role that develops magnificently over the course of the opera's three acts. Luka Kuzmič in *From the House of the Dead*, on the other hand – well, excuse my language – is a complete bastard, a truly dreadful human being. I was fortunate to perform the role in Patrice Chéreau's production, but I still maintain that the production of *From the House of the Dead* at the National Theatre, directed by Daniela Špínar with Robert Jindra conducting, was genuinely outstanding. And now I'm looking forward to coming to Brno. I've already watched the video of your production, and it looks wonderful. ♥

I so want to die!

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ
PHOTO MAREK OLBRZYMEK

The stage becomes a surface of water, reflecting the emotions and tragic fate of the heroine – the now iconic production of Leoš Janáček's famous opera *Katya Kabanova*, directed by Robert Carsen.



Leoš Janáček:

KATYA KABANOVA

Conductor: Ondrej Olos

Director: Robert Carsen

Janáček Opera NTB

Licence holder: Opera Vlaanderen, Antwerp/Gent.

Cast:

Katya – **Kateřina Kněžíková**

Boris Grigorjevič – **Peter Berger**

Tichon Ivanyč Kabanov – **Aleš Briscein**

Varvara – **Václava Krejčí Housková**

Savěl Prokofjevič Dikoj – **Jan Štáva**

Kabanicha – **Jana Hrochová**

Váňa Kudrjaš – **Vít Nosek**

We all know that Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* had its premiere on the stage of today's Mahen Theatre in 1921. However, there is another premiere associated with this opera in Brno: the production staged for the 2016 festival was also Robert Carsen's first-ever staging to be presented by a Czech theatre. This now iconic production signalled the start of a collaboration between the Brno opera ensemble and the world-class director, continuing with his staging of Janáček's *Destiny*, created specifically for this company, and culminating in *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*. Leoš Janáček was inspired by Ostrovsky's play *The Storm* to create this intimate drama about a young woman oppressed by social conventions. For Carsen, *Katya* represents a universal tragedy of human emotion: "We wanted to create a symbolic reference to water and its connection to her because water is mentioned from the very beginning; *Katya* is drawn to it. She feels that something terrible will happen and that she will bring it upon herself. Another reason is really love water – it is a beautiful element in nature, but also dangerous and threatening. We used it to mirror *Katya's* isolation". ♥



30. 10. 7 p.m., 31. 10. 3 p.m.

Leoš Janáček:

KATYA KABANOVA

→ JANÁČEK THEATRE



Janáček's music as a universal language

TEXT VENDULA GALDOVÁ NOSKOVÁ

For the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the performance conducted by Tomáš Netopil will mark its festival debut. The orchestra will be presented to Brno audiences twice – as part of a concert evening with baritone Adam Plachetka, followed by a unique performance of Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen*.

Each edition of the festival brings several 'firsts'. Among the guest orchestras there will be a first appearance by the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, an ensemble with a history dating back to 1969. For conductor Tomáš Netopil it will also be a first-time collaboration: *"I am very much looking forward to our first collaboration – it is the last of the Viennese orchestras I have not yet had the opportunity to conduct."*

The programmes of the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra often place Romantic works within the original context of 20th and 21st century music. This is also the case for the festival concert programme, which offers a combination of music by Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler and Béla Bartók.

Alongside Bartók's folk-inspired Dance Suite, we will also hear Brahms's famous Hungarian Dances. This energetic work, originally written for piano four hands, is today one of the most frequently played pieces of classical music. Does performing works which are popular with audiences force the conductor to continually search for new interpretive approaches? *"I'm not someone who says the conductor has to change a work or constantly impose something new on it. The most important thing is always to create the clearest musical picture which corresponds with your ideas, but which also faithfully reflects what the composer wrote in the score,"* explained Netopil.

The three evenings with the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra are also linked by the outstanding baritone Adam Plachetka, who has a long-term working relationship with Tomáš Netopil. The singer appears in Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, one of the composer's most intimate works, filled with warm yet unfulfilled emotion, and as the Gamekeeper in *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

Tomáš Netopil is known to audiences both in the Czech Republic and internationally not only as a successful opera conductor but also as an outstanding figure on concert stages; in recent years he has also appeared as a violinist focusing on Baroque music. All these musical worlds fulfil him artistically, yet each requires a different approach. In opera conducting, working on a new production also differs from taking over an already prepared one: *"In opera productions, it is always about the synergy with the director and the entire team involved in the performance. In the case of a new production, it is ideal if the conductor is in close contact with the director and they can shape the work together. However, when a conductor steps into an already existing production, they must accept and follow the concept already established."*



Tomáš Netopil / © Marco Borggreve



23. 10. 8 p.m.
ORF VIENNA RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
 Conductor: Tomáš Netopil
 → JANÁČEK THEATRE



ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra / © Ingo Pertramer

As part of the festival, Tomáš Netopil will present Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* together with the opera ensemble of the National Theatre Brno, accompanied by the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra. Although he is returning to this opera after a longer hiatus, it remains one of Janáček's works which is closest to his heart. *"It was actually the very first Janáček opera I actively came across as a conductor,"* Netopil recalls. He first took up the baton for a performance of *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Seville in 2004, with a production by British director David Pountney.

"Since then, I have had the opportunity to conduct The Cunning Little Vixen in Dresden and at the Vienna State Opera, and I have also performed music from this opera at numerous concerts." Netopil sees the opera's exceptional quality in its unique use of musical means of expression: *"Its musical language stands out markedly from what we know from Janáček's periods before and after the creation of this work. Its colourfulness and descriptiveness are fascinating, with Janáček brilliantly transforming the text into musical narration. One general characteristic of Janáček's style is his ability to compress the entire drama into the shortest possible time spans. In the case of The Cunning Little Vixen, there are sudden twists and a similarly concentrated dramatic structure, but I see even more strongly here the attempt to depict a particular mood with the greatest possible precision."*

Despite growing up in Kroměříž and being surrounded by a different dialect, Janáček's language remains close and comprehensible to him: *"In my native Haná region the dialect is slightly different, but I am able to recognize the differences between dialects. I also feel a strong affinity with the folk music Janáček collected and incorporated into many of his works,"* Netopil explains. *"Folk speech was in Janáček's blood; he sensed the differences between individual dialects and was able to incorporate them into*

his librettos. It is up to us as conductors to ensure that the text is performed as precisely as possible according to Janáček's notation," he adds.

The Czech conductor is in awe of the scope of Janáček's rich orchestral and operatic output: *"Janáček's passion and distinctive instrumentation are evident in every work he composed,"* says Netopil. He is most drawn, however, to those heightened dramatic moments in which the story is compressed into intensely concentrated musical gestures, typically in the operas. He describes his relationship to Janáček's compositional legacy thus: *"When we listen to his operas, there are no weak moments – this, in my view, is what sets Janáček apart from other composers. Each of his operas is, in its own way, a work of genius."*

Tomáš Netopil has conducted the works of Leoš Janáček on many of the world's stages, including in Asia. His experiences have shown that this music can be understood even by audiences whose language and culture are vastly different from our own: *"This is the miracle of Janáček's music – it can even be understood by someone who does not speak Czech at all. It would be worth trying an experiment in which no surtitles are offered during an operatic performance, allowing only the music and the story itself to act upon the listener,"* he suggests. According to Netopil, the key lies in Janáček's fascination with speech – its rhythm, melodic contour and precise articulation – which he then masterfully transformed into music. *"As a result, the rhythm and tempo-rhythm of the sentence are reflected with complete precision in his music. The music itself thus becomes a kind of translator of moods and dramatic situations, capable of reaching listeners anywhere – in Japan, Australia or Germany. I am convinced this is why the level of understanding of Janáček is truly remarkable."* ❤️

A perfect union

TEXT PATRICIE ČÁSTKOVÁ

Brno can boast of world-class architecture. Alongside the Functionalist Villa Tugendhat, music and architecture come together in two outstanding Art Nouveau villas. The Villa Löw-Beer is a favourite venue for chamber concerts, and was recently joined by the newly restored Villa Stiassni. All three villas were historically linked through family and personal ties. Their owners were devoted patrons of the arts, and the festival's concerts continue this tradition.

The living area of the Villa Tugendhat, overlooking an autumn-coloured garden with Špilberk Castle on the horizon, seems tailor made for a delightful start to a festival morning in the company of the outstanding Bennewitz Quartet and the mezzo-soprano Markéta Cukrová, one of the foremost interpreters of song. *Intimate Letters*, Janáček's confession in music, together with Schnittke's *String Quartet No. 3*, containing musical inspiration ranging from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, and songs by Antonín Dvořák, form a perfect combination with which to start the festival day.

The Art Nouveau hall of the Villa Löw-Beer is perfect for string quartet concerts. The festival has always been closely connected with young artists and the Leoš Janáček International Competition, and thanks to this tradition the festival audience will be able to hear the winner of the competition's 31st edition, the Arola Quartet. Although this young ensemble was founded in Switzerland only two years ago, its membership is international. Their programme will feature Janáček's celebrated *String Quartet No. 1 "Kreutzer Sonata"*, Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8* and Béla Bartók's *String Quartet No. 4* – a fascinating combination of works capturing raw emotion, a composer's personal confession, and the search for a new musical language through elements of folk music.



Markéta Cukrová / © Ilona Sochorová



Arola Quartet / © Arola Quartet Archive

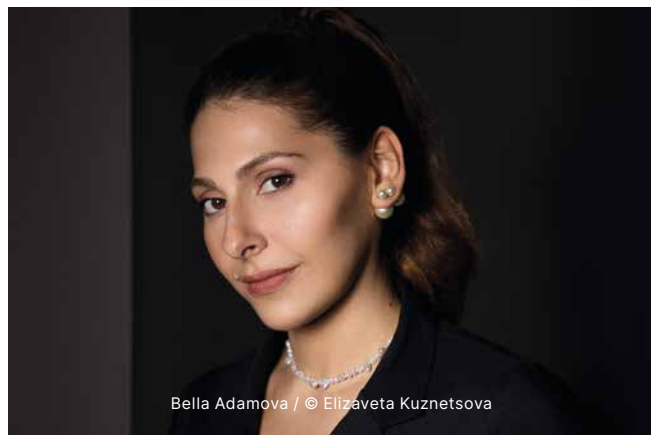


17. 10. 11 a.m.
MARKÉTA CUKROVÁ
& BENNEWITZ QUARTET
 → VILLA TUGENDHAT



24. 10. 3 p.m.
AROLA QUARTET
 → VILLA LÖW-BEER

Folksong as a source of inspiration is a theme that runs throughout the whole of Western musical culture. The richness of the dialogue that can emerge from this connection is the subject of a concert by the rising international star, mezzo-soprano Bella Adamova, and the outstanding pianist Ahmad Hedar. Together they will lead us through distant musical landscapes – from Spain and Italy to France, Russia and England – in songs by Manuel de Falla, Benjamin Britten, Luciano Berio, and others.



The Zemlinsky Quartet need no introduction for festival audiences. Their previous concerts, filled with supreme musicianship and the warm tone of their string instruments, were truly memorable experiences. This time they will appear at the Villa Tugendhat with a programme that includes *String Quartet No. 4* – a deeply personal work by Emil František Burian, one of the most interesting composers of the Czech avant-garde. An intriguing counterpoint to it will undoubtedly be provided by Janáček's *"Intimate Letters"*.



1. 11. 3 p.m.
BELLA ADAMOVA & AHMAD HEDAR
 → VILLA TUGENDHAT



8. 11. 3 p.m.
ZEMLINSKY QUARTET
 → VILLA TUGENDHAT

The name of pianist Tomáš Víšek is associated with many successes on Czech and international stages alike. He will appear at the Janáček Brno for the first time, and the concert programme promises an explosive morning filled with the rhythms of jazz and its influence on the music of the first half of the twentieth century. The halls of the Villa Löw-Beer will therefore resonate with works by George Gershwin, Darius Milhaud, Igor Stravinsky and Bohuslav Martinů.



Impeccable technique, a sense of musical development, immense musicality and an inner humility towards the written score – this is how the personality of pianist Marek Kozák has been characterized. A performer regularly appearing on top international stages, he will present a festival programme whose unifying theme is dance in piano music, whether in the form of the *Mazurkas* by Fryderyk Chopin, the *Tango* by Igor Stravinsky, or the *Czech Dances* by Bedřich Smetana.



8. 11. 11 a.m.
PIANO RECITAL: TOMÁŠ VÍŠEK
 → VILLA LÖW-BEER

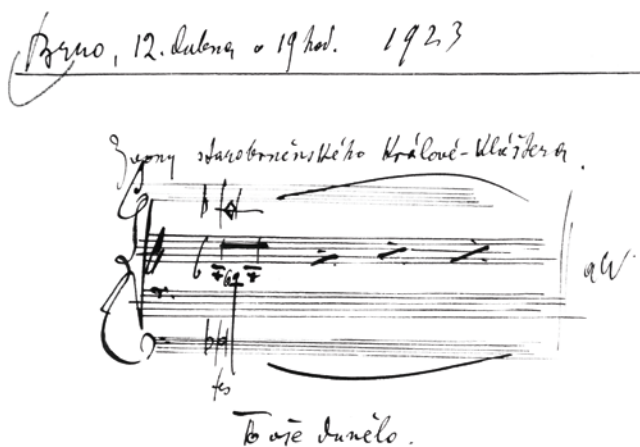


15. 11. 11 a.m.
PIANO RECITAL: MAREK KOZÁK
 → VILLA STIASSNI

A monastery childhood shaped his path to music

TEXT JIŘÍ ZAHŘÁDKA

The father's decision to enrol the young Leoš at the Staré Brno Monastery foundation was to change the boy's life. It would determine his musical future and the town he would live in – Brno.



Brno being the more obvious choice. When Jiří Janáček took his first post as an assistant teacher in Neplachovice near Opava in 1831, he noticed a neglected boy named Karel Křížkovský, the illegitimate child of a village servant. Jiří Janáček recognized the boy's remarkable musical talent and ensured it was not wasted. Thanks to him, the young Křížkovský became a foundation student and chorister at the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Opava. After completing his studies in philosophy and theology, he arrived as a novice at the Augustinian Abbey of St Thomas in Brno in 1845. At that time, the abbey was one of the spiritual centres of Moravia. Karel Křížkovský adopted the religious name Pavel and, following his ordination in 1850, became curate of the Staré Brno abbey parish. He was responsible for the music – he directed the order's musical programme at the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and provided musical education to the young foundation students, including Leo Janáček.

When the eleven-year-old Leo arrived in Brno in 1865, he could hardly have imagined that this town would shape his destiny and become the place where he would spend the rest of his life. He left the familiar surroundings of his family for a strange, strict and emotionally cold environment. At the age of seventy, he reflected on his arrival in Brno in his autobiography *A View of the Life and Works*:

"I had a fearful night with my mother in a kind of dark chamber – this was on Kapucínské náměstí. Me with my eyes wide open. At first daylight, quick, out! Mother left me with a heavy heart at Klášterní náměstí. I had tears in my eyes, so did she. Alone. Strange people, unkind, a strange school, a hard bed, even harder bread. No caresses. My world was built exclusively by myself. Everything fell into it. My father died, the ill-considered cruelty."

At the monastery, he became one of the Staré Brno foundation students, known as the 'Bluebirds' for their light-blue uniforms. They were musically talented boys from poor families who were given the opportunity to receive a proper musical training while also providing music for Masses and



Janáček's notation of the Staré Brno bells / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum

The first roots Leoš Janáček set down in Brno were in Staré Brno, where he arrived at the age of eleven at the foundation of the Augustinian Abbey of St Thomas. The reason was simple: he was one of fourteen children of Jiří Janáček, a schoolmaster from Hukvaldy, whose health and financial situation were becoming increasingly precarious. Someone had to take care of young Leo (as the Maestro was actually called at the time). The answer was to place him in a monastery foundation, where an underprivileged boy could be cared for and provided with an education. Young Leo was not exactly the studious type, but he showed musical talent, so his father considered a foundation where boys participated in the choir. He had two options: Kroměříž or Brno, with

monastery musical productions. The Augustinian monastery gave young Leo not only a solid musical foundation but also a comprehensive general education. Most importantly, it was here that he truly discovered music. At the Staré Brno choir, the repertoire initially included works by composers such as František Xaver Brixi, Michael Haydn, Luigi Cherubini and Ludwig van Beethoven. Later, the focus shifted primarily to Cecilian music, inspired by the so-called Palestrina style, as well as 16th-century Renaissance polyphony compositions. The Bluebirds also occasionally performed at Brno's concerts and operas, and the young Leo sang in Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète*.

This environment not only shaped Janáček musically but also in his values. He found himself in a place where outstanding scholars were active, such as the natural scientist Gregor Johann Mendel, or, in earlier times, the literary scholar František Tomáš Bratránek and the philosopher František Matouš Klácel. At the same time, it was a centre which promoted the Cyril and Methodius traditions and the idea of Slavonic identity. Abbot Cyril Napp himself was a member of the Matice Velehradská committee and in 1863 actively participated in the celebrations of the thousandth anniversary of the arrival of the Slavonic apostles, saints Cyril and Methodius, in Moravia. Janáček's teacher, Křížkovský, also had a close connection to the apostles. He composed the cantata *Cyril and Methodius* and, in 1869, organised the music programme for the thousandth anniversary of St Cyril's death at Velehrad, which was attended by the fourteen-year-old Janáček. On that occasion, Janáček asked his uncle, Father Jan Janáček, who had been supporting the young boy financially after the death of his patriotically minded father, to buy him a Slavonic costume for the celebrations.

"Dear Uncle, you will already be aware that there is to be a large celebration at Velehrad this year and the esteemed Mr Pavel Křížkovský has been appointed director of singing, which he has accepted, and so 20 singers, including myself and the whole Foundation, will travel to Velehrad from Brno on 5 June. Travel, food and accommodation will be paid by the esteemed Archbishop of Olomouc. You have no idea how much I am looking forward to seeing where the great Svatopluk and the Slavonic

apostles Cyril and Methodius once stood, though I am not worthy to tread there. I have one favour, dearest Uncle: Please could you buy me a Slavonic outfit? The best thing to do would be to buy it somewhere in the vicinity, for example in Bistrec, so-called 'Russian linen' is slightly better material, it won't be so expensive there either, then send it to Brno, and the tailor in the monastery will be able to sew it for me cheaply."

It is unsurprising, then, that the passionate young Slavonic enthusiast began to sign his name as Lev.

Although he left the foundation in 1869 after his voice broke, he remained in close contact with the Augustinian abbey. In 1872, he took up the post of deputy choirmaster at the monastery's Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, standing in for Pavel Křížkovský, who had moved to the archiepiscopal seat in Olomouc. The young Janáček rehearsed music for the liturgy with the foundation students and played the organ at Mass. When a new Steinmeyer organ was installed in the Staré Brno basilica, he performed Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in C major* at its inauguration on 30 August 1876. He remained there until the early 1890s, enjoying, among other things, the monastery's famed cuisine.

Janáček remained connected with the Staré Brno basilica until his death. He was married there; his children Olga and Vladimír were baptized there; and, tragically, it was from there that he and his wife accompanied both children on their final journey. When Leoš Janáček died suddenly on 12 August 1928, his body lay in the basilica's Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre until his funeral on 15 August.

At the festival concerts, we will recall Janáček's youth in the Augustinian monastery. In the refectory, the Ensemble Versus will perform Renaissance polyphony compositions which were once heard there, while the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary be the venue for performances of music by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Leoš Janáček, Pavel Křížkovský and Johann Sebastian Bach. ❤



The Monastery and Basilica in Staré Brno / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum



Monastery classroom / © Leoš Janáček Archive, Moravian Museum

Visiting Janáček

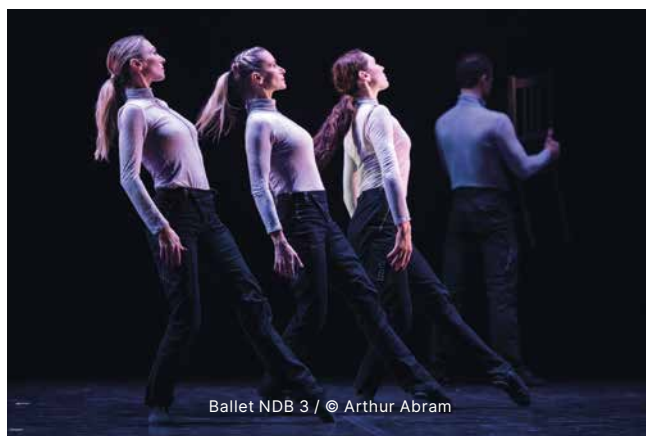
What better way to describe a concert series which explores not only Janáček's work and its broader context, but also guides audiences through places closely connected with his life and legacy – from the Mahen Theatre, where many of his operas received their world premieres, to the present-day Leoš Janáček Memorial, originally a small house beside the Organ School, where Janáček both lived and composed his greatest works. Join us as we follow in Janáček's footsteps.

American soprano Corinne Winters will not only be appearing at the festival in the roles of Jenůfa and Katya Kabanova. This outstanding singer fell under the spell of Czech music some time ago and her repertoire has gradually expanded beyond opera roles to include songs, which will therefore be taking centre stage in her recital at the Mahen Theatre. Accompanied on the piano by David Mareček, this programme will feature songs by Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček, as well as works by the Brno-born composer Vítězslava Kaprálová, whose promising career was tragically cut short by her premature death. Erich Wolfgang Korngold was also born in Brno, although he moved to Vienna and later across the Atlantic to the United States, where he became what could be called the father of film music. The songs which he composed in the late 1920s will provide an intriguing contrast to their Czech counterparts. The concert will not only consist of songs but will also feature the cello, which is often said to be the instrument closest to the human voice. Janáček's *Fairy Tale of Tsar Berendyey* is filled with emotion, tenderness, drama and joy – only this time, the story will be told by the cello with piano accompaniment in a true family pairing: David Mareček (piano) together with his son Lukáš Mareček (cello).

After a long absence, ballet returns to the festival, offering audiences the opportunity to see a programme which enjoyed great success at Expo 2025 in Osaka. The production was created as part of the new NTB 3 project, which brings together experienced dance artists and offers them a unique perspective at the closing stage of their careers, while opening new professional horizons. In Osaka, NDB 3 presented two choreographies set to music by Leoš Janáček – *Capriccio* and *On an Overgrown Path*. The central theme of both choreographies is defiance and transience. In Janáček's *Capriccio*, choreographer Megumi Nakamura explores the theme of confronting adversity, which so often places us in seemingly hopeless situations. The work, originally composed for the left-handed pianist Otakar Hollmann, who suffered a wartime injury, evokes the courage to face despair – an idea she elevated into the guiding principle of her choreography. In Janáček's *On an Overgrown Path*, choreographer Mário Radačovský emphasizes the theme of the fleeting nature of all things. Joining the dancers as their musical partner will be the outstanding pianist Ivo Kahánek, together with students from the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts Music Faculty.



Corinne Winters / © Liliya Namishnyk



Ballet NDB 3 / © Arthur Abram



18. 10. 7 p.m.
CORINNE WINTERS & DAVID MAREČEK
 → MAHEN THEATRE



25. 10. 7 p.m.
IVO KAHÁNEK & BALLET NDB 3
 → MAHEN THEATRE

Where better to experience Janáček's music than in the very places where it was literally created? The concerts held in the house where Leoš Janáček lived are among the most memorable parts of the festival programme, especially when Janáček's own piano is played by an artist who deeply understands both the instrument and its composer – pianist Jan Jiraský. On this occasion, Janáček's study will resonate not only to his own works, but also to piano compositions by Antonín Dvořák, a composer who was both a great inspiration and close friend.

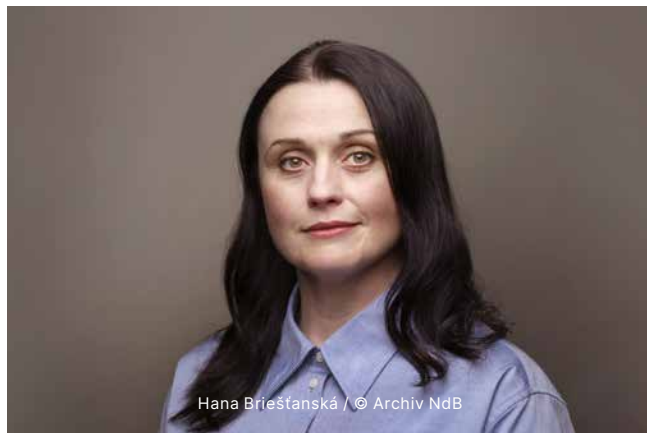


Jan Jiraský / © Marek Olbrzymek



25. 10. 11 a.m.
PIANO RECITAL: JAN JIRASKÝ
 → LEOŠ JANÁČEK MEMORIAL

What was it like at home with the Janáčeks? The house-keeper Marie Stejskalová was best placed to know as she spent more than forty years in the household. The great Maestro was vividly portrayed in her memoirs which, for one evening, will be given voice by Hana Briešťanská, accompanied by pianist Jan Jiraský.



Hana Briešťanská / © Archiv NdB



14. 11. 11 a.m.
AT THE JANÁČEK'S'
 → LEOŠ JANÁČEK MEMORIAL

Janáček belongs among the youth – something the festival continually confirms through new generations of students from the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, who devote themselves to his work and whose concerts are among the festival's most popular events. On Janáček's own instrument, pianists Kento Satsuma and Jan Schulmeister will perform his compositions alongside works by his students Pavel Haas and Václav Kaprál.



© Marek Olbrzymek



7. 11. 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
PIANO RECITAL BY STUDENTS
OF THE JAMU FACULTY OF MUSIC
 → LEOŠ JANÁČEK MEMORIAL

It looks like war! Just like Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů, Emil František Burian, a remarkable figure of the Czech interwar avant-garde, was also inspired by folk poetry. It led him to create a remarkable folk play with songs and dances, enriched by a highly distinctive musical setting incorporating voice-band, chamber ensemble and jazz. A work seemingly made for the Brno Contemporary Orchestra with its motto: "It doesn't end with Janáček!"



Brno Contemporary Orchestra / © Jakub Šnajdr



14. 10. 7 p.m.
BRNO CONTEMPORARY ORCHESTRA
 → THEATRE HUSA NA PROVÁZKU

Discover Janáček with TIC BRNO

TEXT ŠÁRKA ZAHŘÁDKOVÁ

The city of Brno and Leoš Janáček are inseparably linked. For the Janáček Brno festival, TIC BRNO is once again offering a diverse programme and the chance to discover the composer not only through his music, but also by introducing you to places, stories and even flavours associated with him. You will be able to try out recipes from Janáček's housekeeper, go on guided walks and tours, and visit Hukvaldy. This year also features events in the breathtaking setting of the Žlutý kopec water tanks.

In the footsteps of Janáček (everywhere possible)

Janáček “was always walking and travelling somewhere”, in the words of his housekeeper, Marie Stejskalová, which is why this year's TIC BRNO programme is full of walks and guided tours. You can set off on your own in the footsteps of Janáček through Brno using the Loxper app, or join a **guided walk**, which also includes a visit to the Leoš Janáček Memorial, where the composer spent the last quarter of his life and created his most important works. You can also visit Janáček's ‘little house’ even if you prefer a **guided minibus tour** to walking. If you feel like a longer trip, you can join TIC BRNO on the public holiday of 28 October for a full-day themed **excursion to Janáček's Hukvaldy**. There you will visit the Leoš Janáček Memorial in the charming house the Maestro bought from his sister-in-law in his later years and used as a country retreat. In the former school in Hukvaldy, where Janáček was born in 1854, the son of a schoolmaster, you will be able to see a brand-new exhibition. Visitors can then climb through a game reserve, past the statue of the Cunning Little Vixen, and head up the hill to explore the imposing ruins of Hukvaldy Castle.

After spending most of his childhood in Hukvaldy, Janáček entered the Augustinian monastery in Brno at the age of eleven, becoming one of the “modráčci” (“Bluebirds”) – foundation scholars, musically gifted boys from poor families, named for their blue uniforms.



Janáček in the streets of Brno / © Vít Mádr

A **guided tour of the monastery** will take you to places connected with Janáček in the Augustinian complex, including the foundation classroom and the choir loft of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, and will also feature singing by the “Bluebirds”.

If you are interested in the connection between Janáček's family and the **Vesna Women's Educational Association**, as well as the charitable activities of the Janáček family, you can learn more on a guided tour of places linked to both the historical and present-day work of Vesna, including the Jurkovič Room and the Úprka Hall. All tours, walks and excursions will be part of TIC BRNO's autumn series of **AuthenTIC guided tours**. Tickets will go on sale from 14 August 2026.

Art-historical recordings of Janáček

In cooperation with Czech Television and Masaryk University's Department of Musicology, we are offering the unique opportunity to see all of the television adaptations of Janáček's works, which were filmed at the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s by the outstanding director Václav Kašík. Over two November afternoons and evenings we will present screenings of *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* and the operas *Katya Kabanova*, *From the House of the Dead* and *The Makropulos Affair*. The screenings will be free and will be shown in the lecture hall of the Department of Musicology at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, on Janáček Square (did you know we have a Janáček Square in Brno?).

Glagolitic Mass in an underground cathedral

A new feature of this year's TIC BRNO off-programme will be an audio installation in the Žlutý kopec water tanks, an unmissable part of Brno's underground spaces. At regular intervals throughout the Janáček Brno festival, visitors to the reservoirs will hear sections of Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* and their sonic metamorphoses, created by students from the Department of Composition and Multimedia at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts Faculty of Music under the guidance of audiovisual artist Jiří Suchánek.

Recipes from Janáček's housekeeper

A popular part of the accompanying programme is the gastronomic element inspired by the recipes of Marie Stejskalová, the Janáček's housekeeper. Some Brno venues, featured in the Gourmet Brno poll, will offer dishes and

desserts based on recipes from *Marie's Cookbook* during the festival. Some of the things you can look forward to this year include Janáček's cherry cake and tart, Janáček's sweet buns with custard, Janáček's fine black coffee and Janáček's appetiser, little cauliflower "brains" with mayonnaise. In addition, we will be meeting in the kitchen of the Vesna association, where participants will prepare a selected recipe from *Marie's Cookbook* as part of the "Vesna on a Plate" series.

Janáček in the streets

At various locations across Brno, you might chance upon Janáček and his little dog Čipera, enhancing the festival atmosphere by bringing music directly into the city centre. All you need to do is scan the QR code on the Maestro's coat to listen to a sample of Janáček's music on your mobile phone. You can make your walk through Brno more enjoyable by listening to the wedding scene from *The Cunning Little Vixen* or excerpts from two of this year's centenary works, the orchestral *Sinfonietta* and the opera *The Makropulos Affair*.

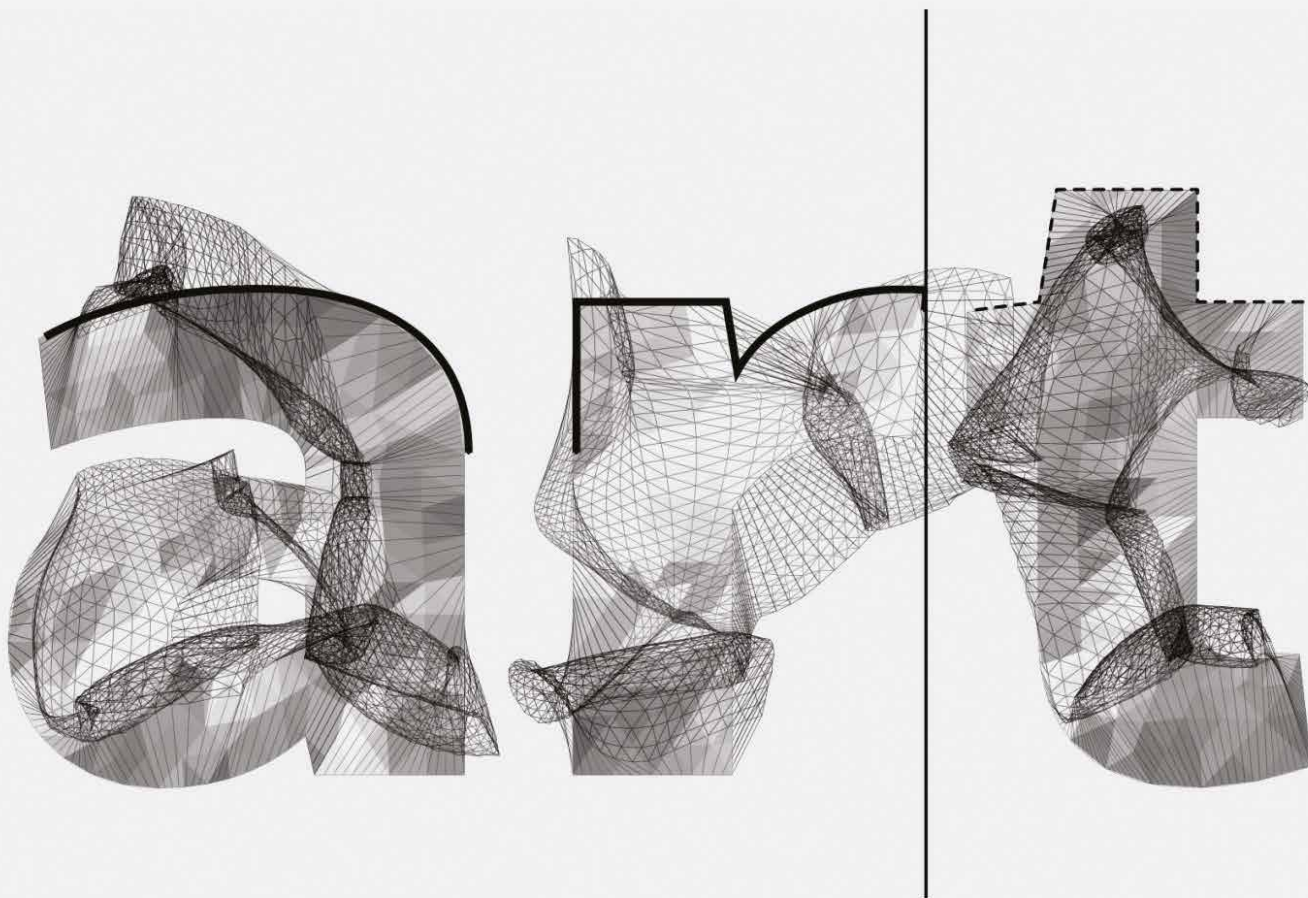
The Janáček Brno festival offers the unique opportunity to experience Janáček's music in all its forms, often in authentic locations, performed by world-class artists. At the same time, the accompanying TIC BRNO activities provide an ideal opportunity to discover Janáček in a broader context – not only as a world-renowned composer, but also as a person, a family man and a resident of Brno. The accompanying programme is intended not only for festival visitors, but for anyone who during the festival celebrations – whether while walking through the city, enjoying good food or visiting the reservoirs – encounters Janáček as a figure closely connected with the city of Brno.

More at www.leosjanacek.eu/en/festival-jb/



In Janáček's footsteps with Jiří Zahradka / © Jiří Zahradka Archive

ČT art every day from 8 p.m.



COMPOSER & FOUNDER

We foster talent and mastery, turning dreams into successful projects. We are a crossroad of opportunities, where wealth is generated and preserved for future generations.

We are a private and investment bank where every encounter is an opportunity to grow together.

Let's meet.

Experience JANÁČEK with TIC BRNO

During the Janáček Brno 2026 Festival,
enjoy a rich accompanying programme

- Follow the Janáček trail on foot or by minibus
- Take a bus trip to Janáček's Hukvaldy
- Watch archival film recordings of Janáček's operas
- Experience Janáček's music in the Žlutý kopec Water Tanks
- Taste Janáček's favourite recipes from Mára's Cookbook
- Listen to Janáček in the streets of Brno, day and night

More information at leosjanacek.eu



B | R | N | O

TIC BRNO ←

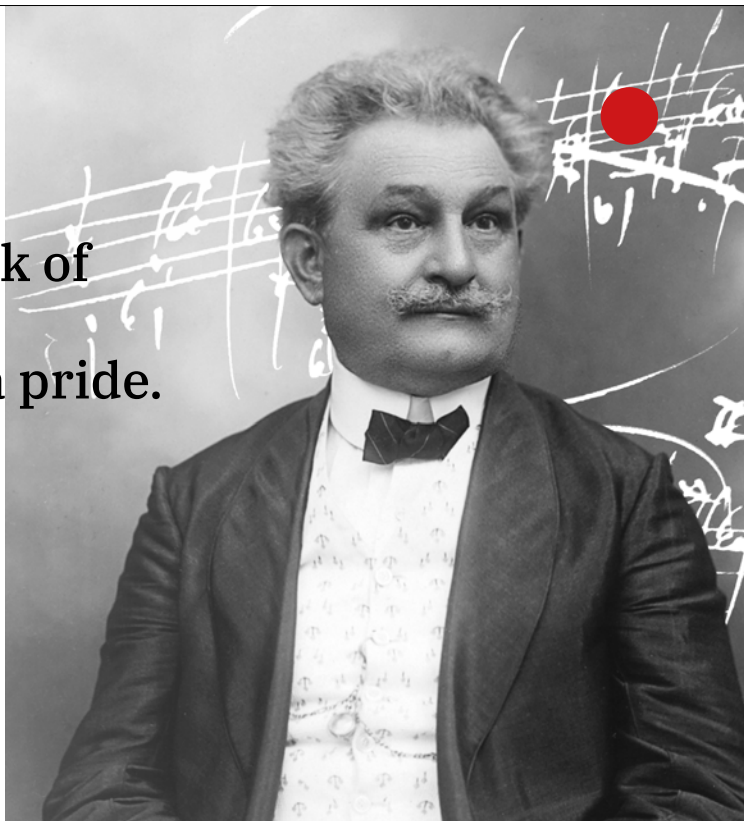
[GOTOBRNO.cz](https://gto.brno.cz)



{ Nadace
Leoše
Janáčka

Experience the work of Leoš Janáček. We pass it on with a pride.

It is a mission of honour for the Leoš Janáček Foundation to support, develop and revive the legacy of Leoš Janáček. Thanks to the Janáček Brno Festival, his music resonates in truly world-class quality, which is why the Foundation has proudly supported the festival from its very beginnings.



Oper
**BURG
GARS**

Intendanz
Clemens Unterreiner

Giacomo Puccini

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

11. Juli – 1. Aug. 2026

operburggars.at



operette & musical
LANGENLOIS

23. JULI – 08. AUGUST 2026

Experience a summer highlight in Lower Austria with the beloved Broadway classic.

Open-air performances set against the picturesque backdrop of Schloss Haindorf. Starring Verena Scheitz as Dolly Levi and Christoph Wagner-Trenkwitz as Horace Vandergelder.

July 23 – August 8, 2026

Evening & early evening shows

Regional wines and culinary specialties at the atmospheric “Winzerdorf” in the castle park.

Tickets range from € 35 to € 74.50 | www.operettelangenlois.at | office@kulturlangenlois.at



Photo: Marco Sommer

Škoda Fabia and Scala

In the special **Classic** editions, you'll find everything you want in your car – front and rear **parking sensors**, reliable **smartphone connectivity**, and other **practical features** that make every journey easier. Travel in comfort and with confidence thanks to benefits such as the Standard Prepaid Service Plan and Extended Warranty, both included free of charge when you choose CHYTŘE financing. We will be happy to provide you with more information in person, or you can contact us by phone or online.



Your authorized Škoda dealer:

AZ SERVIS

AZ TOWER - Pražákova 69, Brno

Tel.: 513 077 777

E-mail: skoda@az-servis.cz

www.az-servis.skoda-auto.cz



SKODA

Classic Special Edition Made Simple for You

From **399 900 Kč**

Free Prepaid Service with CHYTŘE Financing.*

Free Extended Warranty with CHYTŘE Financing.*

SKODA Financial Services

Illustrative photo

Combined fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions of the vehicle. * Standard Prepaid Service Plan: Škoda Fabia Classic: 5.0–5.5 l/100 km, 113–125 g/km; for 5 years or up to 60,000 km. Škoda Scala Classic: 5.1–5.7 l/100 km, 115–129 g/km. Extended Warranty: for 5 years or up to 60,000 km.

K+ Klasika Plus.cz

CLASSICAL MUSIC PORTAL

...Your Perfectly Tuned Partner

Support us



The main aim of the festival is to commemorate, through a prestigious biennial, the importance of the composer Leoš Janáček in the place where he lived and worked for more than fifty years. We are continuously striving to make improvements, but in order to do so, we need you – our patrons and supporters.

You can support the festival with a one-time voluntary contribution of your choice. Depending on your level of support, you can enjoy a range of benefits during the festival and throughout the year.

Share the love of Janáček with us! ❤️

Thank you for the support of our partners and sponsors

With financial support



south moravian region



Ministry of Culture
of the Czech Republic

{ Nadace
Leoše
Janáčka

J&T BANKA

Main partner

Main Media partners



RESPEKT



Media partners

Partners



MASARYK
UNIVERSITY



kolby

Leoš Janáček: KATYA KABANOVA

Bayerische Staatsoper

13. 11. 2026, 8 p.m.
→ JANÁČEK THEATRE

Corinne Winters as Katya / © Geoffroy Schlied

www.janacek-brno.com