



NÁRODNÍ DIVADLO MORAVSKOSLEZSKÉ NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE

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NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE ANNOUNCES THE DRAMATURGY FOR THE YEAR OF CZECH MUSIC

The **Czech Music Year 2024** has commenced, and the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre pays tribute in the first half of the year not only to Bedřich Smetana, whose two significant anniversaries we commemorate in March and May. In addition to all eight completed operas by Bedřich Smetana presented in two editions, the NMST's ballet rehearses three works by young choreographers for the April premiere under the title **RHAPSODIA BOHEMICA**. In June, the Ostrava audience will witness a new production of Janáček's opera **THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN**. The premiere of Pavel Haas's opera **THE CHARLATAN**, directed by Ondřej Havelka, is scheduled for next season's October.

The **NMST's opera company** will stage own productions of all eight completed operas by Bedřich Smetana in nine days in March and May to commemorate the composer's bicentenary and 140th anniversary of his passing. This unique feat offered by the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre is a flagship of the theatre's 2023/2024 season and runs from 2 to 10 March and from 4 to 12 May 2024. "**THE SMETANA OPERA CYCLE OSTRAVA 2024** has been systematically prepared since 2014, when the opera team led by the then Music Director of the opera Robert Jindra and I studied Smetana's last completed opera **The Devil's Wall**. Conducted by the current Musical Director of Opera Marek Šedivý, the revival of this opera premiered with a new cast and in mid-December," recalls the theatre's Intendant and stage director Jiří Nekvasil. The last revived premiere prior the culmination of the cycle is Smetana's **The Brandenburgers in Bohemia** on 22 February 2024. The pageant **Libuše**—coproduced with the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava and the Prague Philharmonic Choir—will be presented as a staged concert just twice, at the end of cycle's each edition, and will be conducted by Robert Jindra.

"It is a great loss for both the audience and the performers that Smetana's operas have almost disappeared from the repertoire of our opera houses in the last 30 years. Smetana had bad luck—he had to fight for recognition for a long time, and when he finally achieved it, he became deaf and had to leave his position of the artistic director in the theatre. But even then, he composed beautiful music, and from that time, his best works originate: operas *Libuše*, *The Kiss*, *The Secret*, *The Devil's Wall*, the cycle *My Fatherland*. He was a pioneer of 20th-century music, which unfortunately did not bring him recognition among his peers. That's why I am



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convinced that now is the right time to introduce Smetana to the world as a progressive composer," says Jiří Nekvasil.

"All 8 completed operas by Bedřich Smetana are mature works. Each one is essentially different, as if the composer were experimenting with the expressive possibilities of the opera genre, opening the doors for his successors. It is a great challenge for contemporary performers and directors. By presenting the Smetana cycle, we would like to highlight Smetana's exceptionalism and global significance. To provide a comparison to our audience—both Czech and international—we intentionally scheduled day by day. In March, dramaturgs from world opera houses and theatres will visit Ostrava due to Opera Europa's dramaturgy forum organized during last four days of the March Smetana Opera Cycle. Before the commencement of the first show of the March cycle, we will also publish all the opera librettos with English semantic translations of each opera," summarizes Jiří Nekvasil.

Smetana cycle will not be repeated in the near future, and only ***The Bartered Bride*** and ***The Kiss*** will remain in the NMST's repertoire next season. The NMST's opera company gives guest performances of *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, *The Devil's Wall*, and *The Two Widows* at the Smetana's Litomyšl festival in June 2024 as well as of *The Secret*, *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, and *The Two Widows* at the beginning of 2025 in Pilsen.

Within the framework of the Year of Czech Music, the NMST's opera opens ***THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN***. Stage direction and choreography of Leoš Janáček's opera about the adventures of little vixen Sharp Ears has been entrusted to experienced Israeli choreographer **Itzik Galili**. The premiere, conducted by the Music Director of Opera Marek Šedivý, is scheduled for 6 June. In the coming season on 10 October, an opera by Czech interwar composer Pavel Haas entitled ***THE CHARLATAN*** will premiere in the NMST. This opera pertains to the three-part series called **Terežín Opera Cycle**, which raises awareness of great Czechoslovak composers, who were holocaust victims, and which will be concluded with this piece. Its stage director is Ondřej Havelka and conductor Jiří Habart.

The **NMST's ballet company** has approached three choreographers born in the 1980s to offer a powerful fusion of 20th-century musical styles in the spring as a tribute to four Czech composers. American **Justin Peck** (1987), Tony Award winner and choreographer who collaborates with Steven Spielberg or Sofia Coppola, will stage his 2015 choreography *Heatscape* to Bohuslav Martinů's music as a Czech premiere. "The audience will see two other works in world premieres, created by two prominent personalities of the Czech dance scene **Jana Burkiewicz** (1982) and **Viktor Konvalinka** (1985)," explains Artistic Director of NMST's ballet Lenka Dřimalová. Jana Burkiewicz creates a scenic poem *Ikárie* inspired by the music of the world-renowned film music composer Zdeněk Liška known for the Czech sci-fi *Icarus XB 1* from 1963. "I am primarily inspired by the mythology of the word *Ikárie*, which is a place full of joy, happiness, and harmony. In the context of today, I want to create an ideal utopian place that is disrupted by an external mistake. I find inspiration mainly in the stylization of images and also in the sci-fi genre itself," describes the choreographer, adding that Zdeněk Liška's music will be complemented by compositions by Jiří Konvalinka. "The founder of the



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DEKKADANCERS group, former first soloist of the National Theatre's Ballet in Prague, and Thalia Award winner Viktor Konvainka will stage a choreography entitled *The Point of View* to the music of Jaroslav Ježek, Bohuslav Martinů, and Erwin Schulhoff. The composed evening *Rhapsodia Bohemica* will premiere on 11 April.

In June, the Ostrava theatre is also a venue for **NODO - New Opera Days Ostrava** festival whose dramaturgy will also reflect the Year of Czech Music. The seventh biennial is co-organized by the NMST and the Center for New Music Ostrava. Newly commissioned operas by two contemporary authors Haštal Hapka and František Chaloupka will have their world premieres as a tribute to Czech music."

The projects implemented for the Czech Music Year at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre are financially supported by the city of Ostrava and the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

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The National Moravian-Silesian Theatre (founded in 1919) is the biggest and oldest professional theatre in Ostrava and the Moravian-Silesian Region. It is also the largest cultural institution established by the Statutory City of Ostrava. Four companies of the theatre—opera, drama, ballet, and musical—perform regularly on three permanent stages, which are the Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Jiří Myron Theatre, and the chamber Theatre 12.

The theatre opens about 20 productions and performs almost 500 performances per season. In addition to its regular productions, the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre co-produces the drama festival OST-RA-VAR and biennial opera festivals New Opera Days Ostrava (NODO) and Ostrava Days.

The city of Ostrava, with more than 320,000 inhabitants, is situated in the northeastern part of the Czech Republic, which is a landlocked country in Central Europe and a member state of the European Union. The capital is Prague, the official currency is the koruna (CZK). Ostrava is the third largest city in the Czech Republic and the second largest urban agglomeration after Prague.

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