



PRESS RELEASE

OPERA

Ostrava, Czech Republic



3 June 2025

***JULIUS CAESAR IN EGYPT* – A REVIVAL OF BAROQUE CREATIVITY IN OSTRAVA AND ZNOJMO**

The **National Moravian-Silesian Theatre** (NDM) in Ostrava partners with the esteemed **Znojmo Music Festival** and **Czech Ensemble Baroque** to present George Frideric Händel's masterwork ***Julius Caesar in Egypt*** (*Giulio Cesare in Egitto*). Featuring an international cast led by celebrated countertenor **Andreas Scholl** in the title role, the production will be performed on **19, 21, 22, 25, and 26 June 2025 in Ostrava**, and on **10, 12, and 13 July 2025 in Znojmo**, Czech Republic. This marks the first time in its more than one-hundred-year history that the Ostrava theatre presents a Baroque opera in historically informed performance interpretation.

"Authentic Baroque opera may surprise audiences with its vivid energy—characterized by spontaneity, improvisation, and virtuosic tempos that flow naturally from both the soloists and the orchestra," says **Roman Válek**, music director of the production and founder of Czech Ensemble Baroque. "The orchestra will perform in a slightly informal setup, positioned prominently on stage and interacting directly with the soloists—just as it was done in the Baroque era. This creates a uniquely cohesive experience, where musicians and singers are closely connected, forming a vibrant and unified whole."

Czech Ensemble Baroque is one of the Czech Republic's leading period-instrument ensembles, widely recognized for its dynamic and historically informed interpretations of Baroque music. "The orchestra has a distinctive sound, rich in colour and character. Many of its musicians have pursued specialized training well beyond standard conservatory education, bringing a deep understanding of Baroque repertoire and performance practice. They have an extraordinary ability to transform even a simple score into something powerful and full of energy—almost like Baroque big beat," says **Monika Jägerová**, one of the most sought-after interpreters of Baroque repertoire across Europe, who appears as Cornelia in the production.

The co-production is distinguished by its exceptional cast, bringing together leading voices in Baroque opera. In the title role of the Roman emperor, the NDM is pleased to welcome **Andreas Scholl**, one of the world's most respected countertenors, making his Ostrava debut. The roles of Sesto Pompeo and Tolomeo will be performed by acclaimed countertenors **Valer Sabadus** and **Franko Klisovič**, both recognized for their refined artistry and deep understanding of Baroque performance practice. **Doubravka Novotná** takes on the role of Cleopatra, continuing her acclaimed work in Baroque opera following her well-received



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performance as Morgana in an authentic interpretation of Händel's *Alcina*—a 2022 Czech-French co-production by the National Theatre Brno, Collegium 1704, Théâtre de Caen, and the Royal Opera – Château de Versailles Spectacles. The role of **Achilla** will be interpreted by baritone **Michal Marhold**, with performances alternating with **Adam Plachetka** in Znojmo, a regular guest of the Znojmo Music Festival.

While the **Znojmo Music Festival** focuses primarily on classical music, its programming also features cimbalom ensembles, jazz, and inventive crossover projects. Many performances are created exclusively for the festival and are not presented elsewhere. Among these, the staging of a historically informed opera stands out as a signature achievement—representing the artistic pinnacle of the festival's programme.

Where did the idea to stage *Julius Caesar in Egypt* as a co-production between the NDM and Znojmo Music Festival originate? "The idea took shape in Znojmo, driven by a long-standing ambition to present an authentically performed opera at the festival each year," explains **Roman Válek**, conductor and artistic director of Czech Ensemble Baroque. "As the festival evolved, so did Czech Ensemble Baroque, gradually becoming a resident ensemble. We've intentionally included both standard operatic repertoire and works delivered in historically informed interpretation. However, these bring a distinctive sound, a different atmosphere, and offer creative opportunities for both directors and audiences that conventional productions often cannot accommodate. That's why the idea of collaborating with an opera house had been maturing for some time—this kind of repertoire cannot be approached in a 'universal' way with a large symphonic or operatic orchestra," he adds. "Baroque music is inherently more inventive, agile, and expressive—qualities that come fully to life on period instruments. I hope this approach will occasionally find a place in established theatres and offer audiences something truly enriching. I am confident that the Ostrava–Znojmo production of *Julius Caesar* will stand shoulder to shoulder with any European opera house that regularly features historically informed performances in its repertoire."

All of the activities of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre are financially supported by The Statutory City of Ostrava, The Moravian-Silesian Region, and the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.



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Show dates

Ostrava shows: 19, 21, 22, 25, and 26 June 2025, all from 6.30 PM

Znojmo shows: 10, 12, and 13 July 2025, all from 8.00 PM



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Venue

Ostrava: Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Smetanovo nám. 3104, 701 04 Moravská Ostrava a Přívoz, Czech Republic

Znojmo: Domeček (The Historic German Bourgeois House in Znojmo), Pontassievska 918/1, 669 02 Znojmo, Czech Republic

Creative team

music director **Roman Válek**

conductor **Roman Válek**

stage director **Jiří Nekvasil**

set designer **Daniel Dvořák**

costume designer **Hana Kelar Knotková**

movement director **Antonín Blahuta**

chorus master **Jurij Galatenko**

Cast

Andreas Scholl (Caesar) – countertenor

Valer Sabadus (Sesto) – countertenor

Franco Klisović (Tolomeo) – countertenor, alto castrato

Doubravka Novotná (Cleopatra) – soprano

Monika Jägerová (Cornelia) – contraalto

Adam Plachetka (Achilla) – bass-baritone (for Znojmo shows)

Michal Marhold (Achilla) – baritone (for Ostrava)

Sung in Italian with Czech and English surtitles

Co-produced with **Znojmo Music Festival** and **Czech Ensemble Baroque** – concert masters Elen Machová, Josef Žák, Peter Zajček.

The NDM Opera Company

The NDM Opera Company, one of the oldest in the Czech Republic, is recognized for its high-quality programming and exceptional interpretation. Led by Music Director Marek Šedivý and Intendant Jiří Nekvasil, the company honours Ostrava's long-standing tradition of opera cycles, including the notable Smetana Opera Cycle and the Terežín Opera Cycle. Their predecessor's as well as their own dedication to excellence has affirmed the company's role as a distinguished cultural institution over the past decade.

About the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre

The NDM (Národní divadlo moravskoslezské, founded in 1919) is the largest and oldest professional theatre in Ostrava and the Moravian-Silesian Region, established by the Statutory City of Ostrava. The theatre is a home to four artistic companies—opera, drama, ballet, and musical—that perform regularly on three permanent stages: the Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Jiří Myron Theatre, and the chamber Theatre 12. Each season, the theatre opens approximately 20 productions and stages nearly 500 performances. Beyond its regular productions, the NDM



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co-produces the drama festival OST-RA-VAR and the biennial opera festivals New Opera Days Ostrava (NODO) and Ostrava Days.

About the Znojmo Music Festival

Znojmo Music Festival is a unique celebration of music, wine, and history, offering world-class performances in stunning historical venues. With a strong focus on authenticity and artistic excellence, the festival presents a carefully curated program, centred around a fully staged opera or ballet production. Concerts span diverse genres, from classical and jazz to cross-genre collaborations, all complemented by exclusive regional wine tastings. By transforming unconventional spaces into concert venues, the festival creates an unforgettable cultural experience, seamlessly blending music with the rich heritage of the Znojmo region.

About the Czech Ensemble Baroque

Czech Ensemble Baroque is one of the leading European ensembles specializing in historically informed performances of Baroque and Classical music. Founded in 1998, the ensemble is dedicated to reviving both renowned and overlooked masterpieces, performed on period instruments with authentic interpretation. Under the artistic direction of Roman Válek, they have gained international recognition for their dynamic performances, collaborations with top soloists, and participation in prestigious festivals. A key part of their mission is the rediscovery of Czech-born composer Franz Xaver Richter, a significant figure of the Mannheim School. Their critically acclaimed recordings for Supraphon include the world premiere of Richter's *Requiem in E-flat major*, as well as *Deposizione Dalla Croce*, *Te Deum*, and an oboe concerto. Through concerts, recordings, and research, Czech Ensemble Baroque continues to bring the rich musical heritage of the past to life for contemporary audiences.

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