



PRESS RELEASE

OPERA

Ostrava, Czech Republic

30 January 2026

ROSSINI'S GRAND OPÉRA *MOSES AND PHARAOH* – MODERN CZECH PREMIERE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OSTRAVA

In February 2026, the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre will present, for the first time in its history, Gioachino Rossini's rarely performed work **MOSES AND PHARAOH, or The Crossing of the Red Sea** (*Moïse et Pharaon, ou Le passage de la Mer Rouge*, 1827). The four-act opera will receive a modern Czech premiere in Ostrava, introducing audiences to master of bel canto Rossini in a less familiar yet essential role—as a composer of monumental music-dramatic frescoes standing at the threshold of the great French operatic tradition of the 19th century.

Rossini was already a highly sought-after composer during his lifetime. He achieved international renown through comic operas such as *The Barber of Seville* and *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, as well as through serious works of the bel canto tradition, notably *Otello* and *Semiramide*. The final phase of his operatic career was devoted to French grand opéra. Ten years after the Italian-language premiere of *Mosè in Egitto* (1818), Rossini returned to the subject and fundamentally reshaped it into a full-scale grand opéra, with a French libretto by Luigi Balocchi and Victor-Joseph Étienne de Jouy, expanded orchestration, ballet scenes, and large-scale choral tableaux.

The opera is rooted in the biblical Book of Exodus. With divine assistance, Moses leads the Hebrew people out of Egyptian bondage, defying Pharaoh, who refuses them freedom. The Hebrews, naturally beset by doubt, place their trust in Moses's unwavering faith that he will guide them safely to the Promised Land. Rossini thus portrays Moses as a spiritual authority bearing responsibility for an entire community, set in contrast to Pharaoh—a ruler driven by fear of losing power and by his own pride. It is therefore clear that Rossini's work reflects the political and emancipatory ideas of the Risorgimento, while its themes continue to resonate in later eras marked by social conflict.

The opera also includes the familiar dramatic motif of lovers standing on opposing sides of the conflict. Through this personal dimension, Rossini transcends the strictly biblical narrative and endows the work with a deeper human complexity. The dramatic climax comes in the Crossing of the Red Sea, realized on stage as a powerful musical and theatrical tableau.

The Ostrava production is directed by **Vladimír John**, one of the most promising representatives of the youngest generation of Czech opera directors, for whom this marks his first collaboration with the NDM. John approaches opera as a living art form with the "right to evolve," while maintaining respect for its musical and dramatic structure. Together with his creative team—set designer **Kristina Komárková**, costume designer and choreographer **Barbora Rašková**, and lighting designer **Martin Krupa**—he employs contemporary theatrical means, including a minimalist stage environment and costumes inspired both by historical



NÁRODNÍ DIVADLO MORAVSKOSLEZSKÉ NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE

sources and present-day fashion aesthetics. On the intimate stage of the Antonín Dvořák Theatre, a sense of grandeur is further shaped through lighting design and video projection.

“Clarity of situations was essential for us, which is why the stage is conceived as a symbolic space allowing the conflict to be read in a timeless context. We work with the movement of performers, transformations of space, and the symbolism of both worlds. Monumentality was one of the core pillars of the production. I did not seek to achieve it through material weight, but through elegant visual effects in collaboration with Martin Krupa. We searched for materials and lighting situations capable of evoking a sense of grandeur without compromising the purity of the space,” says the set designer.

Costume designer **Barbora Rašková** draws on archaeological and iconographic sources from ancient Egyptian and Hebrew cultures, treating them as a starting point for her own stylization. The result is a fusion of ancient forms and contemporary fashion: through the choice of colours and materials, the Egyptian court and the Hebrew camp are placed in deliberate contrast, forming a clearly legible visual principle of the production.

Alongside the debuting director Vladimír John, Ukrainian bass-baritone **Andrii Kharlamov** will also make his first appearance before Ostrava audiences, portraying the title role of Moses and alternating with **Martin Gurbal’**. The role of Pharaoh will be performed by **Miloš Horák**, alternating with **Daniel Kfelíř**. Further soloists and guests of the NDM Opera take part in the production; the chorus is led by **Jurij Galatenko**. Music direction by **David Švec**.

With its staging of *Moses and Pharaoh*, the NDM engages with a less frequently performed work of the French grand opéra repertoire, seeking a balance between historical form and a contemporary theatrical perspective. In view of the opera’s timeless themes of faith and identity, it should be emphasized that the production is conceived as an artistic undertaking in its own right and does not aim to

reflect or comment on the current situation in the Middle East or on any contemporary political crisis.

* * *

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.



OSTRAVA!!!

Show dates

1st premiere: 12.01.2026

2nd premiere: 14.01.2026

reruns in the 2025/2026 season: 17.02.2026; 03. and 06.03.2026; 01.04.2026; 10. and 28.05.2026, 12.06.2026

Sung in French with Czech and English surtitles



NÁRODNÍ DIVADLO MORAVSKOSLEZSKÉ NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE

Venue

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

Creative team

conductor **David Švec / Lukáš Kovařík**

assistant conductor **Lukáš Kovařík**

stage director **Vladimír John**

set designer **Kristina Komárková**

costume designer & movement director **Barbora Rašková**

lighting & AV designer **Martin Krupa**

dramaturg **Juraj Bajús**

Cast

Moses **Martin Gurbal' | Andrii Kharlamov**

Pharaoh **Daniel Kfelř | Miloš Horák**

Amenophis **Martin Javorský | Martin Šrejma**

Eliezer **Raman Hasymau | Ondřej Koplík**

Osiride & A Mysterious Voice **Pavel Divín | Petr Urbánek**

Auphide **Václav Morys | Vít Šantora**

Sinaide **Veronika Kaiserová | Magdaléna Rovenská**

Anai, a Hebrew Girl **Lada Bočková | Veronika Rovná**

Marie, Moses' sister **Betty | Dominika Škrabalová**

Including NDM Opera Chorus and NDM Opera Orchestra—concert masters **Jan Šošola** and **Lucie Staňková**

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 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



NÁRODNÍ DIVADLO MORAVSKOSLEZSKÉ NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE

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

Mgr. Soňa Horsinková

Foreign Relations Manager NDM
sona.horsinkova@ndm.cz
+420 725 716 375
+596 276 214

NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE
established and funded by the Statutory City of Ostrava
Čs. legií 148/14, 701 04 Ostrava – Moravská Ostrava
www.ndm.cz/en

OSTRAVA!!!