

## CENTRAL EUROPE MUSIC JOURNEY NOV/ DEC 2018 - PERFORMANCE NOTES



*Krakow, Poland*

Welcome to our latest music tour that visits Krakow, Brno, Vienna and Berlin. It promises to be rather different to most of Sally's and my previous tours but I believe it will be very special and I hope you all have a wonderful experience. As I see it, the special differences include:

- A week in the lovely Czech city of Brno, capital of Moravia, absorbing the unique atmosphere of the Centenary of Czech independence through the Centenary Janacek festival
- A week in Berlin (if you include the two day extension most of you are taking), Europe's music capital, at the height of the city's music and opera season, including the Baroque festival celebrating the re-opening of Staatsoper unter den Linden
- Our first musical visit to Poland in the historic city of Krakow
- Our first winter tour (or at least late autumn) when the musical scene becomes really serious in the places we visit. So bring your winter woollies!

There will be a huge amount of music to enjoy but also we will visit many fascinating out of the way places, especially in and near Brno and Krakow. Expert English language guides will give us insights into places most of us will never have visited before. On most days I will give a talk after breakfast in the hotel about the day's performance(s) illustrated with recorded excerpts, but these notes should give you a broad background to the music, the composer and the culture of the time.

### ***Krakow***

Krakow, Poland's second largest city, dates back to the 7th century and has always been one of the leading centres of Polish academic, cultural and artistic life. After the horrors of the Nazi regime where most of the Krakow ghetto perished in nearby Auschwitz, having escaped wholesale destruction, the city has been cited as one of Europe's most beautiful cities and one of the most unique destinations in the world, with its extensive cultural heritage across the epochs of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture that includes the Wawel Cathedral and the Royal Castle on the banks of the Vistula river, the St. Mary's Basilica, Saints Peter and Paul Church and the largest medieval market square in Europe.

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### Thursday 22 November at 7 pm: Chopin Recital by Maria Moliszewska

At Kraków Chopin Gallery, Sławkowska 14

Grande Valse Brillante in A flat, op. 34 no 1

Scherzo b minor op.20

Mazurkas op.17:

1 in B major

2 in e minor

3 in A flat

4 in a minor

Scherzo in b flat minor op. 31

Nocturne in B major op.9 no 3

Etude in c sharp minor op.10 no 4

Nocturne in B major op.62 no 1

Waltz in A flat op.42

Maria Moliszewska is an 18 year old pianist who was born and studied in Krakow and to date has followed a brilliant career winning some 40 provincial piano competitions in Poland and central Europe. Her recital contains some of Chopin's finest and most beautiful pieces.

The Grand Valse Brillante in A flat op 34 is one of three waltzes by that name published in 1838 under op 34. This one in A flat is probably his longest waltz and one of his most colourful. It starts with a fanfare from the pianist and morphs into a lilting and familiar waltz melody.

The recital includes two of Chopin's most famous scherzos, in b minor and b flat minor. Chopin's scherzos are quite unlike the baroque or even classical concept of a scherzo as a sort of dancing, light-hearted piece. Generally they accord to Chopin's regular tripartite A-B-A construction but are more extended and dramatic, even stormy ultra-Romantic pieces. The dramatic and turbulent b minor Scherzo, with its piercing chord at the beginning, contrasts with the lyrical middle with its quotation from the Polish carol-lullaby "Lulajże Jezuniu." The popular B flat minor scherzo, which Schumann compared to the poetry of Byron, features stormy episodes in the outer sections and the peaceful trio in the middle section.

The opus 17 set of four mazurkas was the first set of mazurkas Chopin wrote after he had moved to Paris. he had arrived intending to make a name for himself before returning to his Polish homeland when the political situation changed for the better, but he never did return. The first of the mazurkas in this set features an attractive theme that calls to mind the more fashionable ballrooms of nineteenth-century Poland. The second in E minor, opens with a typically ambivalent Chopin theme, rather reflective and gloomy, and full of the homesickness he was prone to. The next one in the set, in A flat is one of his longest mazurkas, lasting about six minutes. Again it is full of sadness but has a wistful ardour. The last mazurka in the set, in A minor, marked Lento, ma non troppo, is one of the composer's most touching and admired pieces. It has a curious disembodied opening and at the end vanishes like it started. The overall mood is despondent, even bleak, that continues in the brighter but repetitive middle section.

The Etudes (Studies) of Chopin are perhaps his most challenging and innovative pieces. In his opus 10 and opus 25 he wrote 12 studies each that even today are regarded as amongst the most difficult both musically and technically for the pianist. In our recital we hear op 10 no 4, generally called the Torrent for its surging sequences, suggesting a river in full flood.

Two of Chopin's 21 Nocturnes are included in our program, both in B major. The Nocturnes are amongst his most poetic and melodic pieces. Chopin was very attracted to the style of piano pieces composed by the Irish pianist and composer John Field (1782-1837) who wrote many nocturnes. The name Nocturne conjures up romantic images of the night, the moon, and all the shades of lyrical and dramatic expression associated with them, generally in a slow dreamy tempo.

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Chopin's nocturnes are in the A-B-A form and are characterised by an ornamented melody in the right hand, with a left-hand accompaniment based on flat or broken chords. Chopin was a great admirer of the bel canto operatic composer Bellini and the nocturnes are often thought of as the piano versions of Bellini's operatic arias.

### **Friday 23 November at 6.30 pm: Donizetti: *Anna Bolena*,**

Choir and Orchestra of Opera Krakowska, Lubicz 48, 31-512 Krakow.

Music director: Tomasz Tokarczyk

Director: Magdalena Łazarkiewicz

Set designer: Paweł Dobrzycki

Costume designer: Maria Balcerek

Principals:

Anna Bolena - Katarzyna Oles-Blacha

Enrico (Henry VIII) - Wolodymyr Pankiw

Giovanna (Jane Seymour) - Monika Korybalska

Riccardo (Lord Richard Percy) - Andrzej Lampert

Our first opera on the tour is Donizetti's great operatic drama *Anna Bolena*, first performed in Milan in 1830, and famous as the first of Donizetti's "three Queens" operas, *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Roberto Devereux* (featuring Elizabeth I). It was a great success and led to Donizetti being linked as one of the triumvirate of Italian opera composers with Bellini and Rossini. It was little performed in the 20th century until the huge success of Visconti's lavish production at La Scala featuring Maria Callas in one of her most famous roles and with Giulietta Simionato as Jane Seymour

The Krakow Opera was established in 1954 but only in December 2017 was the new opera house inaugurated, with *The Devils of Loudun* – the great Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki's first work. The new Opera House seats an audience of 760 for the main stage, and 150 for the Chamber Stage.

### **Synopsis**

ACT I: The story takes place in 1536 in England. Anne Boleyn is now Henry's wife, but is unhappy. The King has been ignoring her and has his eye on another woman, Anne's lady-in-waiting, Jane Seymour.

Anne's brother Rochefort makes an appearance at court, and is amazed to see that Percy, Anne's first love, has returned from exile. The king himself has arranged Percy's return, as a ploy aimed at building a case for Anne's infidelity, and takes a perverse pleasure in watching Anne and Percy meet again.

Smeton, a household musician who is in love with Anne, has a miniature portrait of Anne and doesn't want to be caught with it. But when he tries to return it to her, Rochefort appears unexpectedly and Smeton is forced to hide.

Rochefort tries to persuade Anne to meet with Percy. She agrees, against her better judgment, and Percy tells Anne he's still in love with her. When Anne begs him to find someone else, Percy draws his sword and threatens to commit suicide. At that moment, everything comes tumbling down around Anne. Smeton rushes out from hiding and at the same moment, Henry bursts into the room. Finding Anne in a compromising position with two men, one of them a former lover, he orders all three of them arrested. Smeton pleads Anne's innocence, but inadvertently drops the miniature portrait at the king's feet. Henry is enraged and the act ends with a spectacular sextet as Percy, Anne and Smeton are all led away.

ACT II: As the second act begins, Jane comes to Anne and tells her that the king has agreed to spare her life if she'll admit to her relationship with Percy. Jane also has more news. The king, she says, is in love with another woman. Anne demands to know who it is and the confrontation develops in a powerful duet. Torn between her love for Henry and her loyalty to Anne, Jane confesses that she is the King's latest lover.

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At Anne's trial, Smeton lies and says he, not Percy, has been pursuing Anne. He's hoping to save her but actually seals her fate. Anne is condemned. Percy and Rochefort are offered clemency but they both refuse it when they learn it does not extend to Anne.

Alone in her cell, Anne wistfully recalls her girlhood love for Percy and slowly loses control of her emotions. Cannons and bells sound, announcing the king's new marriage. That jolts Anne back to her senses. She calls on heaven to forgive her persecutors as she's taken to the executioner.

### ***Janacek Brno: 6th International Opera and Music Festival***

Due to the Czech Centenary, the 6th Janacek Festival will undoubtedly be the most important yet given. It will be devoted almost exclusively to the works of the Moravian master. It will present Janáček's complete stage oeuvre, from the early pieces created in the last decades of the Habsburg Monarchy, when his output was influenced by the moves towards Czech national self-determination, up to his greatest works from when the independent republic was finally in existence. In addition the Festival team has devised a series of concerts that have particular relevance to the Czech Centenary, mostly featuring Janáček.

**Leoš Janáček** (1854-1928) was a composer, teacher, conductor, pianist, writer and folklorist. He had a close relationship with Brno, not only because he spent the majority of his existence there, but also because of his tireless organizational, conducting and pedagogical activities in its cultural life. As a young man he studied at the Leipzig and Vienna conservatories but found that, as he said himself, "there was nothing else to learn". After returning he soon married Zdena Schulzová but despite raising a son and daughter the marriage was never a great success. Partly this was due to the death of their son as a two year old and of their daughter at the age of 21.

From 1888 he became fascinated in the study of folk songs and dances, which he often collected and recorded directly in the field and later published the collection *Bouquet of Moravian National Songs*. Apart from collecting folk songs, he also became interested in psychology and its expressions by spoken word, which he considered to be "windows into the souls" of people. He felt the melodic elements of speech, constituted expression of the person's character. He was convinced that human speech could be recorded objectively using notation, and from 1897 onwards he recorded and collected these speech melodies for the rest of his life. He also made more than three thousand recordings of insects, animals and random sounds like the barking of a dog, the whine of a mosquito, the creaking of parquet and the buzzing of a bee.

In the first decade of the 20th century, Janáček now in his late 50s, found new ways of inspiration in his composition. The first part of his piano cycle *On an Overgrown Path* was published and gradually became one of his most frequently-performed works. In 1902, Janáček visited Russia twice. On the first occasion he took his daughter Olga to St. Petersburg, where she stayed to study Russian. She became ill and returned to Brno, but her health worsened. As a composer the turning point was his opera *Jenufa* composed in 1903. The tragic central character's suffering was related to his agony over the suffering and death of Olga to whose memory *Jenufa* was dedicated. The opera was performed in Brno with moderate success but he was seen as a provincial despite a constant flow of chamber, choral and orchestra music of the highest quality and operas such as *The Adventures of Mr Broucek*, and *Destiny*.

In 1916, he met theatre critic and dramatist Max Brod, the friend and publisher of Kafka, who became an important artistic influence. In the same year, *Jenufa* was finally accepted by the National Theatre in Prague and was a great success, bringing Janáček his first international acclaim. He was 62. He began a relationship with singer Gabriela Horváthová, which led to his wife Zdenka's attempted suicide and their "informal" divorce. A year later, he met Kamila Stösslová, a young married woman 38 years his junior, who was to inspire him for the remaining years of his life. He conducted an obsessive and (on his side at least) passionate correspondence with her, of nearly 730 letters. Deeply inspired by Stösslová, he composed *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* and then his next 'Kamila' work, the opera *Káťa Kabanová*.

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In 1920, Janáček retired from his post as director of the Brno Conservatory but continued to teach until 1925. In the early 1920s, he completed his opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, which had been inspired by a serialized novella in the newspaper *Lidové noviny*. In 1924 his biography was published by Max Brod and in 1926 he completed one of his most enduring and popular works, the *Sinfonietta*. Other major late works of his late years before his death in 1928 were the Glagolitic Mass to celebrate Czech independence, the 2nd String Quartet (*Intimate Letters*), and his final unfinished opera *From the House of the Dead*.

Janáček's work displays a vastly expanded view of tonality, using unorthodox chord spacings and modality, as he said: "there is no music without key. Atonality abolishes definite key, and thus tonal modulation.... Folksong knows of no atonality." Janáček features accompaniment figures and patterns, with (according to Jim Samson) "the on-going movement of his music...similarly achieved by unorthodox means; often a discourse of short, 'unfinished' phrases comprising constant repetitions of short motifs which gather momentum in a cumulative manner." Janáček's use of these repeated motifs prompted Sir Charles Mackerras to call Janáček the first minimalist composer.

### **Saturday 24 November at 3 pm at Löw-Beer Villa, Brno**

*Schönberg*: Quartet No. 2 in F Sharp Minor for Soprano and String Quartet

*Bartók*: String Quartet No. 3

*Janáček*: Quartet inspired by L.N. Tolstoy "Kreutzer Sonata"

Škampa Quartet with Andrea Široká - Soprano

Schönberg's second string quartet is in four movements:

Moderate, F sharp minor

Very brisk, D minor

Litany, slow, E flat minor

Rapture, very slow, No key

It is a remarkable piece which was highly novel when it was composed in 1907. Not only does it feature a soprano part in the last two movements, it also utilises what were then new, previously unknown harmonic relationships that slowly but surely drift away from traditional tonality. The composition, though still tonally anchored in places, offers remarkable sequences of chords that sound as if they're from "different planets", as it says in one of the poems by Stefan George which the piece expresses in music, Rapture. In four movements, it was written during a very emotional time in Schönberg's life. Though it bears the dedication "to my wife", it was written during Mathilde Schoenberg's affair with their friend and neighbour, artist Richard Gerstl in 1908. The third and fourth movements are quite unusual for a string quartet, as they also include a soprano using poetry written by Stefan George.

Bartók's Quartet No 3 is in one continuous stretch with no breaks, but is divided into four parts:

Prima parte: Moderato

Seconda parte: Allegro

Recapitulazione della prima parte: Moderato

Coda: Allegro molto

Like Janáček, Bartók who was seven years younger than Schönberg was inspired by folk music. String Quartet No. 3 was composed in September 1927 in Budapest, and even though it is Bartók's shortest quartet, it is a serious work in the spirit of the Second Viennese School influenced by the Lyric Suite by Alban Berg. The mood of the first part is quite bleak, contrasting with the second part which is livelier and provides evidence of the inspiration Bartók drew from Hungarian folk music with dance-like melodies to the fore.

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The work is even more harmonically adventurous and contrapuntally complex than Bartók's previous two string quartets and explores a number of extended instrumental techniques, including sul ponticello (playing with the bow as close as possible to the bridge), col legno (playing with the wood rather than the hair of the bow), and glissandi (sliding from one note to another).

Janáček's Kreutzer Quartet consists of four parts:

Adagio – Con moto

Con moto

Con moto – Vivo – Andante

Con moto – (Adagio) – Più mosso

"I was imagining a poor woman, tormented and run down, just like the one the Russian writer Tolstoy describes in his Kreutzer Sonata", Janáček confided in one of his letters to his young friend Kamila Stösslová. In some ways the quartet is like a psychological drama with conflict and emotional outbursts, rushing towards catharsis in the final climax. While "The Kreutzer Sonata" quartet was finished in 1923, the genesis of the composition comes from 1908 when Janáček composing the Piano Trio, a work inspired by the same novel by Tolstoy but now lost. Janáček used musical material from the Trio when later composing this string quartet. He dedicated it to the famous Czech Quartet, which also gave the work its premiere performance on 17th October 1924.

### **Saturday 24 November at 7 pm at Mahen Theatre**

**Janáček: *Destiny* (Osud)**

Production by the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre

Conductor: Jakub Klecker

Director: Jiří Nekvasil

Janáček's fourth opera, *Destiny*, was composed in 1903/04 during an emotionally fraught period for the composer. In February 1903 his beloved daughter Olga died, and one month later, after almost ten years of effort, he finished the opera *Jenůfa*, his first major work in his mature characteristic style. He had presented it to the National Theatre in Prague but it was turned down and Janáček was devastated. Later that year he returned to the Luhačovice region he loved where he met Kamila Urváková (not to be confused with Kamila Stösslová in his later life), a young married woman who earlier had an affair with the composer and conductor Ludvík Čelanský. Kamila told Janáček about her relationship with Čelanský and the opera he had written based on Kamila. Čelanský had presented the main character (Kamila) as an unstable and immature personality. These circumstances intrigued Janáček who decided to write a "completely new, modern opera" featuring Kamila's personality in a way that would restore her reputation. He asked Fedora Bartošová, a young teacher who had been his daughter Olga's friend, to write a libretto based on a scenario Janáček had prepared himself. Conceptually and musically *Destiny* moves on from all his previous operas. It makes use of his vast number of recordings of human speech and advances the dramatic relationship of the two main characters in musical and sung dialogue suggesting natural conversation.

The composer did not live to see *Destiny* performed. He wanted the work to be premiered at the Vinohrady Theatre in Prague, but endless delays and failed promises meant it was not performed until 1934, six years after his death. *Destiny* was finally performed on stage in Brno for the first time on 25th October 1958, in an adaptation by Václav Nosek. The first tones of an orchestral waltz take us into a world inhabited by the refined members of spa-going society; for their speech, Janáček asked the librettist to write verses in the style of decadent poets. The story gradually unveils via the dialogue of the main characters, Živný, who is a composer, and Míla. Just as in his other operas, Janáček made great use of his recordings of human speech.

### **Synopsis**

Act 1

Míla and the composer Živný were once lovers, but Míla's mother ended the relationship in hopes of a more advantageous match for her daughter. Míla was already pregnant and is now a single

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mother. She and Živný meet again amid the amusements of a spa town. They sneak off together and rekindle their love, but her mother tracks them down in the crowd and predicts disaster.

Act 2

Four years later Živný and Míla are married, but her mother lives with them and has become mentally fragile. While their young son Doubek plays, the couple read through the unfinished opera Živný began during their separation. It is filled with bitterness against Míla, portraying her as faithless. Míla's mother, losing her mind completely, repeats snatches of music from the opera before rushing to throw herself off a balcony. Attempting to restrain her mother, Míla too is pulled over, and both are killed.

Act 3

Eleven years later, Živný's opera is at last to be performed, although it remains unfinished. He rehearses a chorus from the opera with his students, among them Doubek, now a young man. Another student, Verva, guesses that the hero of the opera is the composer himself. Through the music, Živný again relives his love for Míla and his cruelty to her. Tormented by regret, he asks Doubek to fetch a glass of water and then collapses. The end of the opera must remain in God's hands.

**Sunday 25 November at 3 pm, at Villa Tugendhat**

***Martin Kasík - piano recital***

Zoltán Kodály: Marosszéki táncok

Erich W. Korngold: Piano Sonata No. 3

Slavko Osterc: Six petits morceaux

Leoš Janáček: In the Mists

**Zoltán Kodály** (1882–1967) was a life-long friend and musical collaborator with Bela Bartók. Like Bartók, he was intensively involved in the collection of folk songs, and these had a similarly significant influence on his musical language. His famous works include the cantata *Psalmus Hungaricus*, the opera *Hary János* and the *Dances from Galanta*, long with a large output of piano and vocal works that had tremendous influence in both music education and in ethnomusicology up to modern times. He composed *Marosszéki táncok* in its piano version in 1927 and decided its colorful, folk-inspired music would adapt well to a larger setting and arranged the orchestral version in 1930. The six tunes used here he collected from Marosszek, a town in the Szekely region of eastern Hungary. The folk sources of these dances are Transylvanian and date back several centuries. The piece opens with a catchy theme whose ethnic character exudes a colorful exoticism and passion. He works the music into a more intense, fiery manner, after which he introduces the next theme, a livelier and equally colorful tune. But the opening melody soon returns, now in a bigger, more epic guise. He presents the material with a fine sense for contrast and color, playful and carefree music, for example, being followed by dramatic, exotic, and almost frenzied music. A mood of festivity and merriment closes out the work in grandly colorful style.

**Erich Wolfgang Korngold** (1897–1957) was born in Brno, in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, to the Jewish family of lawyer and influential critic Julius Korngold. Soon afterwards, he left with his family for Vienna where he was seen as a prodigiously gifted child from the very beginning. As the son of a powerful music critic, he was presented to and encouraged by the Viennese musical elite such as Mahler, Zemlinsky and Richard Strauss. Even as a child he composed music of astonishing complexity and maturity. He became an important operatic composer though only *Die Tote Stadt* (The Dead City) is in regular present day repertoire. In 1934 he was invited to Hollywood where he wrote mainly film music and later became one of the most celebrated film composers of all time. His musical language is lush and tuneful late romanticism, but with tremendous technical assurance. Much of his later instrumental and orchestral music has come back into the repertoire and his reputation as a slick commercial film composer has been rehabilitated. The critic Tim Mahon says of the third piano sonata composed in 1926:

“This is an infinitely more reserved and refined work than its predecessors in the genre. Although the sonata did not create a critical stir in the same way some of his earlier works had done, Korngold still succeeded in conveying a sense of exuberance and demonstrates herein his

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continual search for new methods of musical expression. An interesting historical note for Korngold fans is that it was during a 1938 recital of this sonata by Robert Kolmer that Korngold received the famous telegram asking him to go to Hollywood to score *The Adventures of Robin Hood* -- without which he and his family may well have perished in the Holocaust.

**Slavko Osterc** (1895–1941) was a Slovenian composer, In 1925 he arrived in Prague to study and ended up studying quarter tone composition with Alois Hába. After returning to Slovenia, he taught many important Slovenian composers. Being a remarkable innovator, he was invited on several occasions to the International Festival of Contemporary Music (ISCM), where his work was accepted positively. His *Six petits morceaux* for the piano comes from the very end of his fairly short life.

**Leoš Janáček's** piano cycle *In the Mists* was completed in 1912, the last of his more substantial solo works for the instrument. It was a sad time for him after the death of his daughter and lack of success with his work with his operas still being rejected by the Prague opera houses. Much influenced by his admiration for Debussy and his musical impressionism, this melancholic work is largely written in "misty" keys with five or six flats. Also characteristic of the cycle are the frequent changes of metre. *In the Mists* has a feeling of introspection about it, living up to its name by maintaining an air of distance, as if the piano were at times lost in a bank of clouds. It makes few technical demands of the performer -- but it requires a light, rhapsodic touch and close attention to the halting nature of its delicate phrases.

### **Sunday 25 November at 7 pm at Janacek Theatre** **Janacek: *The Makropoulos Affair*** **Opera Vlaanderen (Belgium) production**

One of the highlights of the festival will be the piece *The Makropoulos Affair*, presented in a production by the Flemish Opera, which performs Janáček's work regularly. It will feature one of the most important Czech conductors, Tomáš Netopil, who has regularly been involved in the interpretation of Janáček's work. This futuristic production, which had its premiere in 2016, is the work of leading Hungarian film director Kornél Mundruczó, whose films have often gained awards at leading festivals such as Cannes and Sundance.

Composed between 1923 and 1925, *The Makropoulos Affair* was his penultimate opera and, like much of his later work, was inspired by his infatuation with Kamila Stösslová. It received its world premiere at the National Theatre in Brno on 18 December 1926.

After the philosophical topic of the life cycle in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, the composer turned to the theme of whether immortality can bring people happiness, or whether human life is fulfilling precisely because of the unavoidability of the end. He was inspired by the play of the same name by Karel Čapek (1890 – 1938), who was very sceptical when asked for permission to set the work to music. It has a very complicated plot for which you almost need to hire a genealogy expert in order to follow the family relationships. However, Janáček shortened the text and changed the end with the infallible feel of a playwright. It features another of Janáček's great heroines, the unhappy Elina Makropoulos, who was condemned to living for 300 years.

Musically, it presents the listener with a mass of different motifs and ideas. Janáček's writings indicate this was a deliberate ploy to give musical embodiment to the disruptive aspect of Elina Makropoulos' personality. Only at the end of the final act, when her vulnerability is revealed, does the music develop a rich lyrical vein that gives it such a moving conclusion. Two years after its premiere, the opera was given in Prague, and also in Germany in 1929, but it did not become really popular until a production by the Sadler's Wells company in London in 1964, conducted by Charles Mackerras with Marie Collier as Makropoulos, the beginning of Mackerras' remarkable association with Janáček's operas.

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### **Synopsis** (Complex plot and back story - worth reading)

More than three hundred years ago, an alchemist named Makropulos was employed by the Hapsburg Emperor Rudolf II to create an elixir to give the Emperor eternal life. Not trusting Makropulos's finished potion, the Emperor forced him to administer it to his own daughter, Elina. When she became seriously ill Makropulos was put in prison, but Elina eventually recovered and escaped. What was not apparent at the time was that the elixir actually worked, granting Elina some 300 additional years of life. During the time that she has lived, Elina has had many identities, many names (always with the initials E.M.), and many affairs. One of her more passionate affairs was with Baron Josef Ferdinand Prus, by whom she had a son. While Prus left his estate in writing to this illegitimate son, the will has long gone missing and there has ensued a century-long dispute between two branches of the family, Gregor and Prus, over rights to the estate.

### ACT I

At Dr. Kolenatý's law office in Prague, the clerk Vitek is filing papers concerning the long-standing case of Gregor vs. Prus. Gregor, the plaintiff, enters to inquire about the case's progress, followed shortly by Vitek's daughter Kristina. She is a student of singing and speaks enthusiastically about the great prima donna, Emilia Marty.

Kolenatý enters his office with none other than Emilia Marty. She has come to learn about the Gregor vs. Prus case and displays a remarkable knowledge of it. Marty claims that Baron "Pepi" Prus, who was believed to have died childless in 1827, was in fact the father of Ferdinand Gregor, whose mother was the famous singer Ellian MacGregor. (As this could not be proven at the time of the death of Pepi Prus, the Prus estate passed to a cousin.) Marty claims to know of documents in the vaults of the current Baron Prus that will settle the matter conclusively. Kolenatý does not believe her and cannot imagine how she could know this information, but Gregor insists that he look into the matter.

After Kolenatý has left, Gregor offers Marty a reward if this information helps him to win his case. She scorns his offer of money but asks if he might procure for her a sealed envelope that she knows to be among the papers in Prus's vault. Kolenatý returns along with Baron Prus, having found Pepi's will, his love letters to Ellian MacGregor, and the sealed envelope. Prus points out that it is still necessary to produce written proof that Ferdinand MacGregor was indeed the son of Pepi Prus before Gregor can legally claim the disputed property. Marty announces that she can produce this, and leaves the men astonished once again.

### ACT II

After a performance, a stagehand and a cleaning woman discuss Marty's singing. Prus comes backstage looking for Marty, and Kristina and Janek (Kristina's sweetheart and the son of Prus) enter, as well as Gregor and Vitek who come to congratulate the singer. Marty's directness and apparent lack of tact insults Janek and Gregor, yet when the half-senile Hauk-Šendorf enters and remarks on how much she reminds him of his love of fifty years past, the Spanish dancer Eugenia Montez; Marty speaks to him in Spanish and accepts him with open arms. Exhausted, she dismisses everyone but Prus, who proceeds to question her about other documents and love letters he has found in his vaults. He notes that since the love letters to Pepi Prus are only signed with the initials "E.M.," it cannot be proven that Ellian MacGregor was indeed Ferdinand Gregor's mother. Furthermore, he reveals that his mother gave her name as Elina Makropulos at Ferdinand's baptism; Marty is astonished that Prus is on the trail of her true identity. She then realizes that the signed proof she sent Kolenatý that Ferdinand Gregor was the son of Ellian MacGregor is not valid. Desperate for the sealed envelope in Prus's possession, Marty asks him to name his price for it, but he does not respond to her offer and leaves.

Gregor makes protestations of love to Marty, but in exhaustion she falls asleep. Gregor leaves and Marty awakens to find Janek staring at her in fascination. She asks him to steal the sealed envelope from his father, and he agrees. Prus catches them, dismisses Janek, and agrees to give her the document in exchange for a night of love.

### ACT III

It is early morning and Marty and Prus are in her hotel room. Marty demands the sealed envelope from him, and he angrily gives it to her. A maid enters and explains that Prus's servant is downstairs with a message. He hurries out and returns with the news that his son, Janek, has just killed himself out of love for Marty. She coldly remarks that lots of people kill themselves and Prus leaves in a rage. Hauk-Šendorf enters ready to take Marty to Spain with him. Marty agrees and begins to pack, but they are interrupted by the arrival of Kolenatý, Gregor, Kristina, Prus, and Vitek. Kolenatý, suspicious that Marty is a fraud, produces the letter she sent him claiming to be from Ellian MacGregor, noting that it is in the same handwriting as that of Marty herself. Marty excuses herself, and while she is away, they search her personal belongings and discover correspondence bearing various names: Emilia Marty, Ellian MacGregor, Eugenia Montez, Elsa Mueller, Ekaterina Myshkin, and Elina Makropulos.

Marty returns with a bottle of whisky, which gives her courage to confess her real identity: she is actually Elina Makropulos, born in Crete in 1575. To the disbelief of everyone in the room, she explains how her father was made to administer the longevity potion to her as a child. She has lived ever since, in different

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countries under different names, but now feels her strength failing and requires the formula (the sealed envelope) to rejuvenate herself. She collapses and upon reviving realizes that she does not want the potion after all, for her life has been marked by boredom and loneliness. She offers the formula to Kristina and sinks happily into death.

### **Monday 26 November at Grosse Saal, Vienna Konzerthaus at 7.30 pm**

*Bernstein: Overture Candide*

*James McMillan: Percussion Concerto No. 2*

*Prokofiev: Symphony No 5 in B flat op 111*

Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Robertson with Martin Grubinger  
(Multipercussion)

The SSO is on a tour of Europe and we are fortunate to hear them in one of the world's great musical cities in the magnificent Great Hall of the Konzerthaus. This great 19th century venue has three fabulous concert venues, all beautifully restored, The Great Hall for orchestral concerts, the Mozart Saal for chamber music and the intimate Schubert Saal for solo recitals.

Our concert starts with the mischief of Bernstein's *Candide Overture*, one of his most raucous and effervescent pieces. *Candide* was first proposed by playwright Lillian Hellmann as a vehicle taken from French satirist Voltaire to launch a tirade against the US Committee for Un-American Activities. Bernstein had just completed *West Side Story* and took up *Candide* as a small scale musical which initially was not a success, but over the years it has been changed, enlarged, re-written and treated in a multitude of ways by companies such as Scottish Opera, Royal National Theatre so that now it's usually presented as a full scale operetta

James McMillan's 2nd Percussion Concerto is a new 25 minute piece written for fellow Scot percussionist Colin Currie. It follows the tremendous success of his first concerto back in 1992, entitled *Veni veni Emanuel* which is probably his most frequently performed piece, and in a way is the byword for a modern percussion concerto. The new piece starts at a great speed with a bewildering array of percussive sounds, many untuned and in high registers, including car horns and growling sounds. A deeply felt slow movement follows and the incredibly sonorous finale brings us back to the bright sounds and optimism of the first movement

McMillan, born in Scotland in 1959, is one of Britain's most important and acclaimed composers. He is a devout Catholic, he and his wife are lay Dominicans, and both his music and his public position are actively involved in political causes supporting political and religious freedom. Some of his religious works are amongst the most powerful in the contemporary literature, such as the *Mass* (2000), *Vigil* (1997), *St John Passion* (2008) and *St Luke Passion* (2013)

Our SSO concert in Vienna finishes with Prokofiev's 5th symphony, probably his most popular. It was written in one single month in 1944, mostly at a dacha for Soviet composers and artists, at a time that was one of the happiest times of his life, with his 2nd wife and children around him and when the war was going well for the Soviets. In 1936 he had returned from the US to Moscow to live. During his years in the West, he had built a solid international reputation, partly based on several ballets he composed for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, culminating in *The Prodigal Son* (1929). In this latter work, he unveiled his style of "new simplicity", created in reaction to what he believed were the excesses of modernism. However, the siren call of his homeland, with official promises that he would play a leading role in defining Soviet music with his "new simplicity", became irresistible.

In preparing to compose the 5th Symphony, he made a statement at the time that he intended it as "a hymn to free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit. I cannot say that I deliberately chose this theme. It was born in me and clamoured for expression. The music matured within me. It filled my soul."

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The first movement's exposition presents two themes - one calm and sustained, the other soaring with tremolo accompaniment from strings - which are then involved in an elaborate and climactic development section. The movement is wrapped up with an electrifying coda, punctuated by a roaring tam-tam and low piano tremolos. The second movement is an insistent scherzo in Prokofiev's typical toccata mode, framing a central theme in triple time. The third movement, a slow movement, refers back to the yearning romantic mode of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The Symphony's finale brings the work to an apparently exuberant end, but the music is in fact as double-edged as the finale of Shostakovich's Fifth. The braying laughter from the strings, rather than genuine mirth, sounds forced and inane. Motorized rhythms increasingly overwhelm the music until its final few bars playing a mindless, mechanistic ostinato—emphasized by the steely glint of piano and harp—gives a chilling twist to the music's ostensive merriment.

### Tuesday 27 November at 7 pm at Brno Exhibition Centre

Smetana: *Libuše*

Production of Janacek National Theatre of Brno

Conductor: Robert Kružík

Director: Jiří Heřman

This new production of Smetana's *Libuše*, performed by the Brno opera ensemble under the direction of its Artistic Director, Jiří Heřman, was created to celebrate the centenary of the Czech state in 2018. The struggle for Czech statehood became inseparably entwined with the arts, and included works which became permanent symbols of Czech national culture. *Libuše* was written by Smetana as a festival opera and concerns a myth about a legendary Czech queen. The opera, which culminates in a grand scene in which a prophecy is made about the future of the Czech nation, had its premiere at the opening of Prague National Theatre in 1881 and again at the re-opening of the Czech National Theatre.

Bedřich Smetana (1824 – 1884) pioneered the development of a musical style that became closely identified with his country's aspirations to independent statehood. He has been regarded in his homeland as the father of Czech music and is best known for his opera *The Bartered Bride* and for the symphonic cycle *Má vlast* ("My Homeland"), which portrays the history, legends and landscape of the composer's native land. He was musically identified with Liszt and Wagner and despite his passion to establish a true Czech voice in music and opera, ran up against the Prague establishment, suspicious of the innovations from Wagner factions in Germany.

*Libuše*, as a 'festival opera', is more like a pageant, rather the equivalent of *Gloriana* in Britten's oeuvre. In Czech historical myth, Libuše the title character, prophesied the founding of Prague. The action – mostly quarrels and tableaux vivants – takes place during the 8th century. Two brothers are in dispute over Libuše's ruling in a land inheritance question, and her yielding to reality (aka chauvinistic pressure) by taking as husband an enigmatic, Coriolanus-like figure, Premysl, who, it happens, is an old buddy. Premysl exchanges rural for married bliss and solves the brothers' quarrel with Libuše's pacifying advice. However, this isn't the end of the story as Libuše introduces and commentates on no less than seven "pictures" of future Czech glory and disaster. The opera has the rich tonal palette of *Ma Vlast* and the folk song tunes of the *Bartered Bride*, and has large scale sung processions not unlike Wagner's *Lohengrin*.

### Synopsis

#### Act 1

The brothers Chrudoš and Sťáhlav are fighting over the settlement of their father's estate, with Queen Libuše as arbiter. Czech law dictates either co-management or equal division of the land. German law, which Chrudoš, the elder, favours, would demand *primogeniture*, where the elder sibling would inherit the entire property. Libuše decides in favour of equal division, to the anger of Chrudoš, who leaves. Because some of her male subjects, including Chrudoš, do not fully accept the idea of a woman as their ruler, Libuše then asks her subjects to choose her husband. They say

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that she should make her own decision on her spouse, where it turns out that she prefers the farmer Přemysl. The act ends as the subjects worry about Chrudoš and the possibility that he will sow discord.

Act 2

*Scene 1*

Part of the reason for Chrudoš' ill humour is revealed, in the relationship of Chrudoš to Krasava. Chrudoš loves Krasava, who returns his sentiments, but considers him insufficiently romantic in his personality. Krasava thus feigns romantic interest in Sťáhlav to make Chrudoš jealous. Her father, Lutobor, asserts his authority and demands that she reconcile the quarreling brothers. Krasava then challenges Chrudoš to either (a) forgive and embrace her, or (b) kill her with his sword. Chrudoš takes the route of forgiveness, and reconciles with Sťáhlav.

*Scene 2*

Přemysl is watching over the harvest on his lands. A royal escort then arrives to bring him to Queen Libuše, to be married.

Act 3

A celebration of the double wedding, of Libuše to Přemysl, and of Krasava to Chrudoš, is taking place. Přemysl devises a way for Chrudoš to apologize to the queen while still saving face. A moment of prophecy then takes hold of Queen Libuše, and she tells of future visions for the Czech nation.

### **Wednesday 28 November at 7 pm: Opera Diversa at Reduta Theatre**

*Janacek: Sarka*

Conductor: Gabriela Tardonová

Director: Kristiana Belcredi

Opera Diversa is an ensemble which has already earned a steady place in Brno's cultural scene both by performing operas by the authorial duo of Krasa/Drábek and through an interesting series of concerts which regularly offers less well-known 20th century compositions. For the very first time, Opera Diversa is cooperating with the festival on a project which combines two versions of Janáček's first opera, *Šárka*. The concert version will be performed in the original version from 1887, with piano accompaniment only. The stage version we will attend combines Janáček's music with the work of the founder of Opera Diversa, Brno composer Ondřej Krasa, and it will be directed by Kristiana Belcredi, permanent director for the ensemble.

Three years after a permanent Czech theatre opened in Brno in 1884, Janáček started working on his first opera, *Šárka*. He was inspired by the drama *Šárka* by Julius Zeyer (1841-1901), which was published in the *Česká Thalie* magazine. It was the fourth part of Zeyer's extensive poetic epic *Vyšehrad*, which the author had transformed into a libretto originally intended for Dvořák. Janáček shortened Zeyer's text himself and adapted it, asking for the poet's permission only when the piano version of the opera was already finished. Zeyer refused as the unknown composer had not asked permission and had already changed the text. Janacek put it aside but rediscovered his partially completed score almost thirty years later and finished the instrumentation of the work with the help of his pupil Osvald Chlubna. He asked the Czech Academy, heir to the rights after Julius Zeyer had died, for approval to use the text in October 1918. Now a recognised composer, it was granted to him immediately. *Šárka* finally had its premiere at the National Theatre in Brno in November 1925. *Sarka* is also the third part of the epic orchestral suite *Ma Vlast* by Smetana.

*Sarka* is a full blooded short opera - little over an hour of music but set in three dramatic acts. Its compression intensifies the dream-like quality. The principal point of the story, the love-hate conflict between man and woman, is made all the more evident, a theme which the great Janacek scholar Jaroslav Vogel relates to such other operas as *Tristan*, various settings of the *Armide* story and even *Don Giovanni*. At the start there are more echoes of Dvorak and Smetana than there are anticipations of the mature Janacek, but – partly as a result of his later revisions – the Janacek flavours become increasingly evident, not least in typical ostinato repetitions and in vocal lines

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which in his revision he made more conversational and compressed, more Janacek-like in echo of Czech prosody.

### *Opera synopsis*

#### Act 1

After the death of Princess Libuše, the women lost their numerous privileges, including the right to choose their own husband, so under the leadership of the warrior Vlasta, they decided to declare war on men. The men were led by the husband of the deceased Libuše, Prince Přemysl. A young warrior, Ctirad, arrives at the courtyard of Libuše's castle. He explains to Přemysl that he has come for the weapons left to him by his ancestors which are kept in Libuše's tomb. Přemysl and the other rulers leave and Ctirad enters the tomb of the dead princess. Whilst lost in contemplation he is disturbed by a group of warriors led by Šárka, who wants to secure Libuše's crown for Vlasta, the ruler of the women. Ctirad, however, obstructs their path and Šárka and her warriors flee.

#### Act 2

Although Šárka is aware of her growing sympathy for Ctirad, she is overcome by the desire for revenge and places him in a trap. She orders the other warriors to bind her to a tree and then hide. Ctirad is lured by Šárka's appeals to be set free, and she tells him that she was tied up by Vlasta for her failed attempt to secure Libuše's crown. Enchanted by Šárka's beauty, Ctirad immediately confesses his love for her and Šárka almost succumbs to the temptation to become his wife. But then she regains her resolve and with a blast of her horn signals her warriors to come out of their hiding and kill Ctirad. Later, Šárka regrets her actions.

#### Act 3

Led by Lumír, men bring the body of Ctirad to Vyšehrad and build a pyre to burn him on. Šárka arrives and confesses what she has done in front of everyone. Then she jumps onto the fire and stabs herself. Lumír then lights the pyre with a torch and everyone marvels over the power of love.

### **Thursday 29 November at 7 pm: Orchestral concert at Brno Exhibition Centre (Pavilion P)**

Suk: *Towards a New Life*, a ceremonial Sokol march

Janacek: *Amarus*, cantata for solos, mixed choir and orchestra

*Na Soláni čarták*, cantata for tenor, male choir and orchestra

Sinfonietta

Choir & Orchestra of Janáček Opera Brno. Conductor: Gabriela Tardonová

The orchestral concert presents two compositions inspired by the Czech gymnastic association Sokol, and two rarely performed cantata pieces by Janáček. The festive Sokol march *Towards a New Life* is closely connected with the tradition of the Czech Sokol movement, which reaches back to the 1860s. Even though the founders of this important gymnastic organization strived for apoliticality, the organization later became unavoidably embroiled in the national emancipation process. Janáček, Suk and Masaryk all belonged to Sokol. In 1920, at the 7th Sokol gymnastic festival, the first to be held in the newly established republic, a march was required for the parade of the sportspeople into the stadium. A contest for composers was announced and won by Josef Suk (using a pseudonym) who later orchestrated it for choir and orchestra.

Janáček's **Sinfonietta** is also closely connected to the Sokol movement. At the beginning of 1926, the composer was asked by the editors of the newspaper *Lidové noviny* if he could write "some music" as a salutation for the 8th gymnastics festival in Prague. Janáček decided to write fanfares, drawing inspiration from an experience two years earlier when he visited a promenade concert of military brass music at Palacký Park during which "a solo player or group of players trumpeting would get up and raise the ends of their instruments, which were decorated with flags, high into the air so as to make a greater impact." He started his work in March 1926 and the fanfares expanded to form a whole symphonic composition, which he called the Military Sinfonietta due to the presence of military music. It was offered to the organizers of the festival and subsequently included in the programme of a concert given by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra dedicated to Sokol juniors.

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It has become one of his most ingenious and popular works composed at the end of his life and dedicated to the Czech armed services. Scored in its usual concert form for orchestra including 25 brass players, it is in five movements and the material of each movement derives from the opening motif:

- Allegretto — Allegro maestoso (Fanfare)
- Andante — Allegretto (The Castle, Brno)
- Moderato (The Queen's Monastery, Brno)
- Allegretto (The Street Leading to the Castle)
- Andante con moto (The Town Hall, Brno)

The first movement is scored only for brass and percussion. The second movement begins with a rapid ostinato from the wind but later has a more lyrical episode. The third begins quietly in the strings but is interrupted by a stern figure in the trombones, leading to another fast dance-like passage. In the fourth movement, Janáček celebrates the newly liberated Czechoslovakia with a joyous trumpet fanfare. The finale begins in the key of E flat minor with a calm version of the opening melody. However, this quickly moves into a triumphant finale, the return of the opening fanfare decorated with swirling figures in the strings and wind.

Janáček found surprisingly many similarities with his own life in the poem *Amarus* by Jaroslav Vrchlický, which speaks of childhood in a monastery, without a mother or love. Janáček completed the lyrical cantata for solos, mixed choir and orchestra at the beginning of 1897. He immediately sent the score for evaluation to Dvořák, who praised it and finds "clear progress in every aspect". *Cantata Amarus* represents the conclusion of the romantic line of Janáček's artistic development and the beginning of Janáček's new terse vigorous musical style. The cantata *Na Soláni čarták* for tenor, mixed choir and orchestra was created to order for Vilém Steiman, the choir master of a Prostějov choir, Orlice. He approached the composer in 1910 asking for a composition for the fiftieth anniversary of the choir. Janáček worked on the piece in 1911 and its premiere took place in Prostějov on 23rd March 1912.

### **Friday, 30 November at 7 pm Mahen Theatre. Janacek: *The Diary of One Who Disappeared***

Muziektheater Transparant, arranged by Annelies Van Parys and directed by Ivo van Hove

*The Diary of One Who Disappeared* is a song cycle, but its dramatic and intimate character is perfect for stage presentation. The Belgian ensemble Muziektheater Transparant will present it at this festival under the direction of Ivo van Hove, one of Europe's most distinguished stage directors. Some of us will remember his outstanding *Salome* at the Dutch National Opera last year. I was also lucky enough to see his *Makropoulos Affair* at Dutch National Opera a year or two earlier. Van Hove, who holds many awards for his work in drama, is also one of the opera directors most sought-after by leading European institutions. His production of *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* is extended to include musical input from Belgian composer Annelies Van Parys, which gives Janáček's intimate confession of love a unique form.

In the summer of 1917, the 63-year-old Janáček met Kamila Stösslová in Luhačovice. The young married woman became Janáček's last great love and the inspiration for his great musical works of he had cut out from a newspaper a year before. The poem concerned a young village boy who fell in love with gypsy girl called Zefka who he secretly ran away with. The parallel with Kamila was unmistakable. For two years, Janáček worked on a collection of 22 poems in the folk style to turn them into the remarkable song cycle *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* for tenor, mezzo soprano, a choir of three female voices and piano. The premiere took place on 18th April 1921 at Brno's Reduta Theatre.

### **Berlin**

So we come to Berlin, undoubtedly the capital of music in Europe these days - maybe it has always been! In the six days most of us have decided to stay, we will attend seven performances,

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all featuring the outstanding artists who are attracted to perform in this musical city, where the audiences are so knowledgeable and committed. In our time in Berlin during the first week of December, one of the highlights is the **Baroque Days**, a festival devoted to the work of the great Baroque composers Monteverdi and Rameau, mounted by the best known of Berlin's three professional opera companies, Staatsoper unter den Linden. This festival celebrates the re-opening of their famous opera house on Unter den Linden that has been undergoing a total transformation during the last eight years, no less.

The "Enchanted Castle" was commissioned by Frederick II from his friend the architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff in 1741 on what was intended to be the first part of a Forum Fredericianum. A full ten months before its actual completion the monarch's impatience precipitated the opening of the opera house with a performance of Carl Heinrich Graun's *Cleopatra e Cesare* in December 1742, marking the beginning of more than 275 years of cooperation between the Berlin Staatsoper and Berlin Staatskapelle. The history of the company features wars, deadly rivalries, burnings and some of the greatest music making of all times. It was Hitler's favourite stamping ground during his period of power and the centre of the musical scene during the long decades of the East German Democratic Republic. Now under the lifelong direction of Daniel Barenboim, the company and the Staatskapelle Berlin have been restored to their pride of place.

### **Saturday, 1 December at 7 pm: Monteverdi: *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, at Staatsoper Unter den Linden**

Nerone - Max Emanuel Cencic

Ottavia - Katharina Kammerloher

Poppea - Roberta Mameli

Musical Director - Diego Fasolis with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Stage Director - Eva-Maria Höckmayr

The leading Venetian composer of the early 17th century, Claudio Monteverdi, was also the supreme master of opera in its earliest form. *Poppea* is his last opera and the last of only three full length operas that have survived by Monteverdi, the others being *Orfeo* (1603) and *The Return of Ulysses* (1640). By the time of the premiere of *Poppea* in December 1642, Monteverdi was in his last year and a celebrity of the Venetian court. Much controversy surrounds both the true version of the opera and the morality of the libretto. This has given a field day to academics trying to define what is genuine Monteverdi and what has been completed by his followers. These issues have never been resolved and are never likely to. What is undisputed is that *The Coronation of Poppea* is one of the great operas of all time, and as relevant in today's cynical age as it was at the time.

In an article in Gramophone, Iain Fenelon summarises the textual difficulties: "there are the difficulties of the score (and the ten or so different versions of the libretto), difficulties which make any production that lays claim to historical authenticity an almost hopeless enterprise. The two manuscripts of the work that have survived, one in Naples the other in Venice, not only differ from each other; they also contain emendations and additions by other composers, including the famous final duet which, as is now generally agreed, is not by Monteverdi at all."

As regards the libretto, on the face of it, it is nothing short of scandalous. Evil seems to triumph with the adulterous love of Poppea and Nerone having flow on effects of causing the death of the upright philosopher Seneca and the forced exile of Nerone's wife Ottavia, so that Nerone and Poppea are set free at the end to indulge their love. However, the critic Edward B. Savage asserts that despite the lack of a moral compass in virtually all the main characters, Busenello's plot is itself essentially moral, and that "this morality is sustained by the phenomenon of dramatic irony". From their knowledge of Roman history, audiences in Venice would have recognised that the apparent triumph of love over virtue, celebrated by Nerone and Poppea in the closing duet, was in reality hollow, and that not long after this event Nerone kicked the pregnant Poppea to death. They

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would have known, too, that Nerone himself committed suicide a few years later, and that others—Ottavia, Lucano and Ottone also met untimely deaths.

*Poppea* broke new ground in matching music to stage action, and in its musical reproductions of the natural inflections of the human voice. Monteverdi uses all the means for vocal expression available to a composer of his time—aria, arioso, arietta, ensemble, recitative. These elements are woven into a continuous fabric which ensures that the music always serves the drama, while maintaining a tonal and formal unity throughout. The characters have strong emotions, fears and desires which are reflected in their music. Thus Poppea's and Nerone's scenes are generally lyrical, sung mainly in the forms of arioso and aria, while Ottavia sings only in dramatic recitative. Seneca's music is bold and compelling, while Ottone's is hesitant and limited in range.

Monteverdi employs specific musical devices to signify moods and situations. For example, triple metre signifies the language of love for Nerone and Ottone (unfulfilled in the latter case); forceful arpeggios are used to represent conflict; and the interlacing of texts, written as separate verses by the librettist Busenello, indicates sexual tension in the scenes with Nerone and Poppea, and escalates the discord between Nerone and Seneca. The technique of "concitato genere"—rapid semiquavers sung on one note—is used to represent rage.

One of the key issues in performing the opera is the question of its instrumentation. The many versions or editions of Monteverdi's time provide no clear guide and every performance you hear is likely to have a different instrumental texture. My own recording by Richard Hickox is at the pure unadorned end of the spectrum, which seems more in line with Iain Fenelon's remarks that "apart from any other considerations, it is known from contemporary accounts that Venetian theatres usually employed ten instrumentalists: two violins, two viole da braccia, one violone, two theorbos and a pair of harpsichords." This contrasts with many modern performances that add colour with many so-called authentic Baroque woodwind and brass instruments.

Our performance is played by Berlin's premier baroque ensemble, Akademie für Alte Musik and is conducted by Diego Fasolis, a leading Baroque opera specialist. The parts of Nerone and Ottone are originally for castrati, but here will be taken by counter tenors, in the case of Nerone by the sensational Croatian Max Emanuel Cenčić.

### **Sunday 2 December at 11 am at Pierre Boulez Saal**

Monteverdi: Madrigals of Love and War, Book No. 8

LA CAPELLA REIAL DE CATALUNYA

LE CONCERT DES NATIONS

Directed by Jordi Savall

Unfortunately at this stage, we don't know which sections of the 8th book of Monteverdi's madrigals will be performed, as the total playing time is at least two and a half hours. What we do know is that the 8th book is a distillation of his finest work and in effect sums up the best in his entire, long career. Published in 1638, almost 20 years after the 7th Book, it is his last significant publication, except for his last two operas. Major works from all stages of his career are included. The Book is divided between the Madrigali Guerrieri and the Madrigali Amorosi. Each section includes a major independent work: *The Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda* (1624) to a text of Tasso about the Crusades in the Canti Guerrieri and the deeply moving *Lamento della Ninfa* in the Canti Amorosi. Two superb ballets, including sung sections conclude each of the two sets of Canti, *Volgendo il ciel* for the canti guerrieri and *Il Ballo delle Ingrate* in the Canti amorosi.

At the time of publishing the 8th Book, Monteverdi wrote a remarkable foreward to his readers and performers, setting out his insights, both practical and philosophical, explaining how the principal passions or affections (anger, temperance, humility, supplication etc) should be communicated in music. For example at one point he says: "...the manners of playing should be of three sorts: oratorical (based on the written text), harmonic (combination of notes) and rhythmic."

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Hesperion XX (XXI since 2001) is the early music instrumental group founded by world-famous gamba player Jordi Savall and his late wife Montserrat Figueras in 1974, and has become probably the world's most distinguished performers of mediaeval, Renaissance and Baroque music. The Capella Reial de Catalunya is the ensemble of specialist singers founded by Savall in 1987. Originally established to promote Catalan music to the world, Savall, the Capella and the associated Baroque orchestra Concert des Nations have collectively become bywords for authentic performance practice of early Western music.

The performance takes place in the Pierre Boulez hall, a new medium size concert hall with an unusual circular space design meant to provide an intimate experience for all 680 seats. Designed by Frank Gehry in association with Boulez and commissioned as a flexible space for the Barenboim Said Akademie, it is home for the East West Divan orchestra, and is located next to the Staatsoper Unter den Linden with which it shares facilities.

### **Sunday 2 December at 3 pm at Apollo Saal**

Rameau: Cantata *Le Berger Fidèle*

Leclair: Première Récréation de Musique op 6

Deuxième Récréation de Musique op 8

Montéclair: Cantata *La Morte de Lucretia*

Léa Desandre (sop) and Les Talens Lyrique directed by Christophe Rousset

In a day full of music, our afternoon concert as part of the Baroquedays of the Staatsoper unter den Linden features the French Baroque, about a century after the height of Monteverdi's career. The focus of the Festival is Jean Philippe Rameau, undoubtedly the greatest composer of this time in France.

Rameau was born in 1683 in Dijon and little is known about his early life. He was taught music by his father before he could read or write and spent much of his early musical life in Milan. All his life he was obsessed with music and had little outside interests despite what appears to have been a happy marriage with four children. From early on this genius was recognised but in his maturity he fell foul of French musical politics especially from the Lullyistes, Lully having been the darling of French Baroque for more than a generation.

His brilliance as a musical innovator was early channelled into a comprehensive study of musical theory. In 1722 he published his *Treatise on Harmony* that describes music and how to write it based on the tonal system used today in music. It uses the modern major and minor keys to teach readers what to do to achieve good sounding music based on the 12 tone music scale, and its pedagogy is still relevant today. He was fifty before he composed his first opera *Hippolyte et Aricie* and this precipitated him into the success of the opera world from which he never looked back, and which dominated his career from then on.

The cantata we will hear *Le Berger Fidèle* is one of six he composed. Not to be confused with the Italian or German cantata, it was a highly successful genre in the early 18th century soon taken up by many leading composers of the day, such as Montéclair, Campra, and Clérambault. Cantatas and the modest musical forces they required were Rameau's first contact with dramatic music. *Le Berger Fidèle* is probably the last cantata he wrote before he ventured in to the operatic form with *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Regarded as his best and most 'French' it is written for solo voice and simple instrumental accompaniment consisting of two violins and continuo and is set to a typical pastoral set of lyrics.

We also hear a cantata by another French baroque composer Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, a little older than Rameau, admired by Francois Couperin and an innovator in orchestration. His work

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was later taken up by Rameau by using certain instruments to enhance the stage scene, e.g., letting horns play softly behind the stage to simulate a faraway hunt.

The third composer in this program, also a contemporary of Rameau, was Jean Marie Leclair, a violinist and prolific composer, mostly on small scale instrumental music, sonatas, duos, trios and a couple of stage divertissements. I can find no details of his two *Récreations de Musique*

Christophe Rousset is a highly talented and successful harpsichordist and music director specialising in 17th and 18th century music and opera. He established Les Talens Lyriques and together they have performed and recorded an astonishing range of opera and vocal music including most of Lully's, Rameau's and Monteverdi's operas. The performance I saw that they gave in Vienna a few years ago of a staged production of Handel's *Messiah* directed by Claus Guth was nothing short of sensational. We hear the concert in the Apollo Saal at Staatsoper Unter den Linden, an elegant classical reception/ chamber concert hall where chamber music is regularly given.

### **Sunday 2 December at 6 pm at Deutsche Oper Berlin: Giordano: *Andrea Chénier***

(In Italian with English and German sub-titles)

Cast Principals:- Chénier: Roberto Alagna

Charles Gérard: Roman Burdenko

Madeleine von Coigny: Maris Jose Siri

Countess Coigny: Annika Schlicht

Conductor: Giampaolo Bisanti

Director: John Dew

Stage design: Peter Sykora

Costume design: José Manuel Vázquez

Chorus and orchestra of Deutschen Oper Berlin

*Andrea Chénier* was Umberto Giordano's third opera. The libretto, by Puccini's regular collaborator Luigi Illica, is loosely based on the life and tragic death of the French poet André Chénier, who was executed during the French Revolution. The premiere of *Chénier* on 28 March 1896 was a great success, and the opera became one of the most popular examples of the verismo (literally, 'realist') movement in Italian opera. Giordano wrote many operas though apart from *Andrea Chénier*, but none have remained in the regular repertoire. This opera is not only a classic example of the 'verismo' style, with its colourful period and plot of the French Revolution. The main protagonist, the poet André Chénier has been cast true to the historical character, and the atmosphere of the French Revolution with its alterations between terror and pathos has been very effectively recreated for theatre. The story in which the poet, Gérard and Maddelena find themselves entangled is rendered all the more poignant against this backdrop.

Giordano perfectly captures the atmosphere of Paris pre- and post-Revolution, through music including an elegant Gavotte (Act I) and the popular revolutionary songs 'La Carmagnole' and the 'Marseillaise'. Not surprisingly, the tenor protagonist gets some fine solos, including Act I's ardent aria 'Un dì, all'azzurro spazio', and Act IV's nostalgic 'Come un bel dì di maggio'. But Maddalena and Gérard also have wonderful arias: the former's impassioned 'La mamma morta', and the latter's tormented 'Nemico della patria?' as he wrestles with his conscience in Act III.

The production for Deutsche Oper is very glamorous with fabulous over the top costumes, so it should be a great evening. *Andrea Chénier* requires a great Italianate tenor for the title role and we have it here with Roberto Alagna singing for our performance, now one of the top two or three tenors in the world today in the Italian style repertoire.

**Synopsis** (from Deutsche Oper)

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It is the summer of 1789. A festivity is being prepared in the castle of Countess de Coigny. Charles Gérard, a servant of the Countess, voices his hatred of the French aristocracy's decadence. His aged Father is forced to labour all day long and Gérard himself leads the undignified life of a lackey. Moreover, he is secretly and unhappily in love with Madeleine de Coigny, the daughter of the House with whom he was raised. The political situation is very tense. When the visitors attending the ball finally arrive, they try to distract themselves from the disquieting news from Paris with the help of arcadian idylls and games. The young poet André Chénier is among the guests. Madeleine requests him to recite a poem. He sings of love and laments the injustice of the powers that be in such a convincing manner that Madeleine is deeply moved and forced to quit the room. The doors are suddenly opened and a mob of irate people led by Gérard shocks the ball guests. However, the Countess manages to pacify and disperse the mob. The dancing continues.

It is five years later and nobody is dancing. Paris trembles under the regime of Robespierre. Gérard has been elected prosecutor at the revolutionary tribunal, the impoverished Madeleine lives in Paris, supported by Bersi, her former maid, who now works as a courtesan. Chénier is being persecuted due to his poems against Robespierre's regime of terror. Although his friend Roucher entreats him to leave Paris, he refuses as he has fallen in love with an unknown woman who secretly corresponds through letters. The unknown woman is no other than Madeleine. When the two meet and confess their feelings during a nocturnal rendez-vous, they are surprised by Gérard who has been looking for Madeleine with the help of his spies. Gérard and Chénier fight and Gérard is wounded. Gérard implores his rival to flee with Madeleine and guard her safety. At a revolutionary tribunal meeting he later signs the prosecution warrant against Chénier, whom he considers to be doomed already. Madeleine attempts to save her lover and offers herself to Gérard who is deeply moved by her love. He vows to defend the poet before the tribunal, but it is in vain. Chénier is sentenced to death. On the eve of his execution Madeleine manages to enter the prison with the help of Gérard. She bribes a guard and takes the place of another condemned woman. United, the lovers await death.

### **Tuesday 4 December at 7.30 pm at Deutsche Oper Berlin: Offenbach: *The Tales of Hoffmann***

(In French with German and English sub-titles)

Cast Principals: Hoffman: Daniel Johanssen

Olympia/ Antonia/ Giulietta/ Stella: Cristina Pasariu

La Muse / Nicklasse: Irene Roberts

Lindorf/ Coppélius/ Miracle/ Dapertutto: Alex Esposito

Andrès/ Cochenille/ Frantz/ Pitichinaccio: Gideon Poppe

Scenery and Costumes: Laurent Pelly

Set Design: Chantal Thomas

Chorus and orchestra of Deutschen Oper, conducted by Enrique Mazzola

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) was born in Cologne, the son of an synagogue cantor, was trained as a cellist and later became an impresario. But his fame is primarily as a composer of countless operettas (some say more than a hundred) that dominated the musical scene in Paris (and indeed around the world) in the two decades from 1850. His final opera, really his only opera as distinct from the operettas, was the *Tales of Hoffmann* which he never saw completed. He always regarded it as his masterpiece and in his last year told everyone that his only remaining wish was to see his opera completed and performed. Since his death, it has been widely accepted as one of the most original and attractive operas in the repertoire and has always been a favourite with audiences. Its circumstances are very similar to Monteverdi's last opera *Coronation of Poppea*, nearly 250 years earlier, when the almost-complete opera was subject to many versions, changes and "improvements" in the subsequent years.

*Tales of Hoffmann* is based on three of ETA Hoffmann's famous macabre stories which he wove in to an overall storyline and called an *opéra fantastique*. Hoffmann himself is the protagonist of the opera, the libretto of which was written in French by Jules Barbier. Offenbach intended that the four

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soprano roles be played by the same singer, as Olympia, Giulietta and Antonia are three facets of Stella, Hoffmann's unattainable love. Similarly, the four villains (Lindorf, Coppélius, Miracle, and Dapertutto) are usually performed by the same bass baritone because they are all manifestations of evil. Many performances of the work use different singers for the loves of Hoffmann. This is because different skills are needed for each role: Olympia requires a skilled coloratura singer with stratospheric high notes, Antonia is written for a more lyric voice, and Giulietta is usually performed by a dramatic soprano. When all three roles (four if the role of Stella is counted) are performed by a single soprano in a performance, it is considered one of the largest challenges in the lyric-coloratura repertoire. Of course Joan Sutherland took all four roles in all her performances: Lotfi Mansouri's production for Australian Opera in the 1970s with Dame Joan was one of the company's great achievements.

The production we will see in Berlin originates from 2005 where it was the first production in Jean Nouvel's new opera house in Lyon. Laurent Pelly brings this famous production to Berlin; it uses Michael Kaye's much praised musicological research that provides us with the most authentic version of the opera yet presented. Pelly's production emphasises the nightmarish atmosphere of the original concept. The Opera Today critic Michael Milenski said of the 2009 revival in Lyon: "Offenbach never lets up on his teasing of the world of art — E.T.A. Hoffmann was a poet, Offenbach's Hoffmann is a poet and singer, Stella is a singer, etc. Pelly and his brilliant scenographer Chantal Thomas have created a production that is continuous creation, and like the roles of Hoffmann and Stella in all her transfigurations — roles that demand great virtuosity and superhuman strength — their production teases the art of stagecraft by teetering it on the edge of what mechanical stagecraft can possibly achieve."

### Synopsis

#### Prologue

In the 19th century, at the pub near the opera house in Nuremberg, the poet Hoffmann waits for an opera singer Stella, who performs at the opera house. Stella sent him a letter that he must wait for her until she finishes her opera performance. But, Councilor Lindorf, who also loves Stella, steals this letter. Hoffmann is tired of waiting for her, and he begins to tell his friend, Nicklausse, about his past lost loves.

#### Act 1 (Olympia)

The first lover is a puppet, Olympia, who is the daughter of a scientist in Rome. A mad creator, Coppélius created this doll. In addition, he sells Hoffmann a pair of magic glasses. As Hoffmann puts on the glasses, he perceives Olympia as human, and he falls in love with her. But, Coppélius gets angry with the scientist for not paying for the doll, so he breaks the doll.

#### Act 2 (Antonia)

The second lover is a singer, Antonia, who is sickly. Her father thinks that Antonia may die young as her mother did. So, he forbids her from singing. Hoffmann falls in love with her. But, a charlatan, Dr. Miracle, advises Antonia to sing. Antonia continues to sing, and she dies.

#### Act 3 (Giulietta)

The third lover is a high-class prostitute, Giulietta. Dappertutto, who is a magician, gives her a diamond, and he asks her to steal Hoffmann's shadow. Giulietta gets closer to Hoffmann, so he falls in love with her. Giulietta succeeds in getting his shadow, and she leaves him.

#### Epilogue

When Hoffmann finished talking about these stories to his friend, he drinks himself unconscious. His rival, Councilor Lindorf, shows Stella dead drunken Hoffmann. Lindorf and Stella leave together.

To tell the truth, Hoffmann's friend, Nicklausse, is the Muse, the God of art/science. The Muse says to Hoffmann, "Come back as a poet. Everyone learns from love, and learns from tears."

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**Wednesday 5 December at Philharmonie, Berlin at 8 pm**

**MusicAeterna**, Teodor Currentzis conductor

**Mahler:**

Songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn (Selection)

Symphony No. 4 in G

Anna Lucia Richter, soprano

Florian Boesch, baritone

Our concert at Berlin's great concert hall, the Philharmonie, is an all Mahler concert, featuring his wonderful youthful orchestral songs from the Youth's Magic Horn and the Fourth symphony, the gentlest and most felicitous of all his symphonies. But we won't be hearing the resident orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, but MusicAeterna, a new orchestra established and directed by Teodor Currentzis. Born in Athens in 1972, his musical education took place there but from 1994 he studied conducting in St Petersburg and after some years as Director of the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre, (the largest theatre in the whole of Russia and Siberia), in 2004 he founded his own orchestra music Aeterna and his own choir a little later. The orchestra is now based in Perm in Russia.

Currentzis is the latest sensation in the classical musical scene and this extract from a recent review in the Guardian from his first Prom concert is quite instructive:

"Not many could have persuaded an entire young orchestra to relocate 1,000 miles west from Novosibirsk to Perm, as Currentzis did with MusicAeterna in 2011, when his appointment as Artistic Director of the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre was part of a cultural push in this former Soviet closed city. Nor could they have inspired such generosity from a record company as Currentzis has from Sony, which bankrolled extraordinarily long recording sessions for their three Mozart opera discs. He is also one of the most thorough. The relative isolation of Perm, hundreds of miles from any of the world's major classical music centres, means the musicians who choose to be there are fully invested in the orchestra. Currentzis demands their loyalty and their time, and gets both."

Most of the Knaben Wunderhorn songs were composed by Mahler between 1893 and 1898 in his 30s while he was director of the Hamburg Opera. They are settings from a famous collection of 'old German songs' collected early in the 19th century by von Arnim and Brentano. The collection's appeal was of a lost innocence of 'simple country folk' that appealed to the Romantic spirit of 19th century culture. However Mahler was not caught up in this folksiness. There are no folk tunes or melodic arrangements. He took the texts at their face value and composed songs suiting the texts but with extremely sophisticated harmonies and subtle orchestration, using quite large orchestration in the most pared down and delicate ways. The leading Mahler critic, Donald Mitchell groups the songs in three: 1. Songs pervaded by military or march like elements, 2. Lyrical songs, generally love songs, and 3. Humorous songs. Of course, we don't know at this stage which of the 13 songs will be presented.

The Fourth Symphony opens with the famous (notorious) shaken sleigh bells, ushering in the faux naive or childlike innocence of the opening movement that gives the impression of riding through a snowy winter landscape. There is nothing that Mahler does better than painting a musical picture of a beautiful woodland and its impact on the human person observing it, as if the observer is in the landscape being transformed by it. This delicate, kaleidoscopically scored movement is one of his finest and requires an orchestra and conductor utterly attuned to the subtle gradations of dynamics, tempi and harmony.

The second movement continues with the delicate orchestral scoring but adds an out-of-tune violin to create a macabre wild-wood atmosphere, scary for children rather than truly sinister. Then follows the long central adagio movement, opening with a serenely beautiful melody, as heartfelt as anything he wrote. The adagio comes to a fabulous climax like an incredible child-like fireworks display then eases in to the final movement, a song sung by a soprano very much in the spirit and style of the Wunderhorn songs. It is like a painting of a heavenly scene and dies away to nothing.

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The conductor David Zinman says the symphony is the most perfect of Mahler's symphonies and speaks to him more deeply and any of the others. He says:

"The music in the Fourth is all derived from the wonderful song in the last movement. He had been thinking about that song – 'The Heavenly Life' – for a long time and within that song he had found the seeds for many ideas he had already used in the Third Symphony. Something about that song really spoke to him and obsessed him. In fact he originally included the song itself in the Third Symphony, but then he replaced it with the Bell Song – 'What the Child Tells Me' ... the Fourth is very unusual, in that it was composed backwards, with the last movement composed first and everything else in the piece then relating thematically to this heavenly finale. Maybe the first three movements therefore describe a heavenly life on Earth."

### **Thursday 6 December at Staatsoper unter den Linden, Berlin at 7 pm:**

**Rameau:** *Hippolyte et Aricie*, with text by Simon Joseph Pellegrin after Racine's tragedy *Phèdre*.

Cast Principals:

Aricie: Anna Prohaska

Phèdre: Magdalena Kožená

Oenone: Adriana Queiroz

Hippolyte: Reinoud Van Mechelen

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra conducted by Sir Simon Rattle

Director and Choreography: Aletta Collins

Set and Costume Designer: Olafur Eliasson

The blurb on Staatsoper unter den Linden's website says *Hippolyte et Aricie* "carries its audience into a realm of wonders with magnificent dance and choir scenes and the greatest possible multitude of musical forms, featuring divine apparitions, spectacular forces of nature and monstrous beasts on stage."

The fame of the French Baroque reached its pinnacle with Jean-Philippe Rameau, (a contemporary of Bach and Händel), whose lasting achievements were with his operas, mostly grand tragedies, but also comedies and dance ballets which became tremendously popular with the aristocratic French public, ultimately surpassing the reputation of Lully who had held centre stage in Paris for a generation. Rameau was born in Dijon in 1683 and lived the early part of his life in obscurity slowly making his way as an accomplished musician and musicologist. In 1722, had moved to Paris and published his most important work of music theory, *Traité de l'harmonie* (Treatise on Harmony) that won him a great reputation.

But he was 50 years old before he ventured to write his first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie*. The opera was an immediate success at its premiere in 1733 though it divided the public and the critics. Some like the composer Campra were astounded by its invention and originality but others predictably saw it as outrageous and an insult to the reputation of the great Lully. At this time, Rameau became acquainted with the famous financier La Pouplinière, who also ran his own private orchestra. Rameau was appointed as his conductor and his career as the greatest of the French baroque composers of opera never looked back with operas such as *Castor et Pollux*, *Dardanus* and lighter opera-ballets such as *Les Indes Galantes* and *Les Fêtes d'Hébé*.

### **Synopsis**

Prologue

An overture in the typical Lullian style precedes the allegorical prologue set in the Forest of Erymanthus where Diane and L'Amour are arguing who will rule over the forest dwellers. The quarrel is settled by Jupiter who decrees that Love will reign over their hearts for one day every year. Diane vows to look after Hippolyte and Aricie.

Act 1

The temple of Diane in Troezen

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The story concerns the Greek hero Thésée, King of Athens, his wife Phèdre and Thésée's son by another woman, Hippolyte. Hippolyte is in love with a young woman, Aricie, but she is the daughter of Thésée's enemy, Pallas, and he has compelled her to take a vow of chastity to Diane. Before she does so, Hippolyte reveals his love for her and the goddess promises to protect the couple. This enrages Phèdre, who has been nursing an illicit desire for her stepson herself. News arrives that Thésée has made a journey to the Underworld and is probably now dead. This means Phèdre may pursue her passion for Hippolyte and offer him the crown of Athens.

### Act 2

Hades, the Underworld

Thésée descends to Hades to rescue his friend Pirithous, who has been captured when he tried to seduce Pluton's wife, Proserpine. Thésée has a special advantage: his father, the god Neptune, has promised to answer his prayers on three occasions during his life. The first prayer Theseus makes is to be allowed to reach Hades. At the entrance, he fights with the Fury Tisiphone, but makes it through to Pluton's court. Pluton condemns Thésée to share the same fate as his friend but allows a trial. When Thésée again loses, he calls on Neptune to free him (his second prayer), and Pluton is powerless to hold him back. As Thésée leaves, however, the Furies (Les Parques) foretell that Thésée may leave Hades but he will find Hell in his own household.

### Act 3

Thésée's palace by the sea

Phèdre meets Hippolyte, who offers his condolences on her bereavement. Mistaking his concern for love, Phèdre confesses her passion. Hippolyte is shocked and curses her. Phèdre tries to kill herself with a sword but Hippolyte snatches it from her. At this moment, Thésée arrives unexpectedly. He is unsure what to make of the scene, but fears Hippolyte was trying to rape his wife. Phèdre rushes off and Hippolyte nobly refuses to denounce his stepmother. But this only serves to increase his father's suspicions, now reinforced by Phèdre's confidante, Oenone. Thésée finally decides to use his last prayer to Neptune to punish Hippolyte.

### Act 4

A grove sacred to Diane by the sea

Hippolyte realises he must go into exile and Aricie vows to go with him as his wife. The forest people celebrate Diana. A monster suddenly emerges from the sea – the instrument of Thésée's punishment. Hippolyte tries to fight it but disappears in a cloud of flames. Phèdre arrives, distraught, and admits she is the cause of Hippolyte's death.

### Act 5

A grove sacred to Diana by the sea

Thésée has learnt the truth from Phèdre, just before she killed herself. Full of remorse, he too threatens suicide but Neptune reveals that his son is still alive, thanks to Diane's protection. However, Thésée will never see him again.

The forest of Aricia, Italy

Aricie wakes up, still mourning Hippolyte. Diane tells her she has found a husband for the girl, but Aricie is inconsolable until the goddess reveals Hippolyte, alive and well. The opera ends with general rejoicing.