

Reproducing Opera: Emergent Meanings in Janáček on Stage

by

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Abstract

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Recently, the most exciting productions of operas have attracted attention by rebelling against established ideas of the opera's text and stagings – Peter Sellars' New York settings of Mozart operas are just one example among many. Likewise, the most stimulating developments in opera criticism have been in the area of performance, where a much-needed sharpening of opera-production theory has formed around such extraordinary re-stagings. This focus on performance is a welcome one, particularly for opera, where the visual component is of no less importance than the aural. Yet the nearly exclusive attention on extraordinary productions and a concomitant valorization of the provocative is troubling. Such selectivity, particularly when founded on loaded criteria such as “strong” and “innovative” runs the risk of creating more canons of “great works” or “great men.”

This dissertation will seek to redress some of the problems with current methodologies for studying opera productions, illustrated with case studies of four of Leoš Janáček's operas: *Káťa Kabanová*, *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), *Věc Makropulos* (*The Makropulos Case*), and *Z mrtvého domu* (*From the House of the Dead*). My thinking on this subject has been filtered through work on Janáček's operas which, I have found, fit uneasily into existing models of opera studies. Unlike the Italian, German, and French operas that form the canon of opera criticism, Janáček's were notoriously slow starters. Only the premieres of his last few operas could be considered important musical events and even then only within the Czech Republic. Works such as *Věc Makropulos* and *Z mrtvého domu* have acquired significance in international opera houses only relatively recently. The unusual relationship these pieces have with the operatic performance canon required developing new approaches to their study. First, I propose supplementing any examination of opera production with the very different information reception history provides. Alone, neither production nor reception can completely represent the impact of performance: on the one hand, the visual traces of productions, particularly those pre-dating video recording, are frustratingly ephemeral; on the other, the written texts

that usually comprise reception history tell only part of the story. Bringing the two together, can fill in some of the pieces missing in either alone. Second, the myopic effect caused by focusing on single productions should be countered: as Gundula Kreuzer has recently argued, studies of newer productions often lack historical perspective. Thus I suggest along with Kreuzer, that the chronological purview of any such study be radically expanded to include stagings from the premiere up to recent years. Lastly, I suggest a shift in focus from difference to sameness. Reception histories in music have typically concentrated on changes in a work's meaning as indicators of shifts in broader historical, social, or political contexts. The problem with looking exclusively for difference is, as Jim Samson has argued, that a work's meanings may become so unstable as to render them meaningless. Tracing sameness or, to borrow from Jan Broeckx, "residual layers of receptional insight" through the history of an opera's production and reception not only reintroduces stability through continuously regenerated meanings of the work, but also provides us with new insights.

To Andy

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Introduction

Since the composer's death in 1928 it has been customary in the Czech Republic for the two leading opera houses, the National Theatre in Prague, and the Janáček Theatre in Brno, to time new productions of Leoš Janáček's operas to coincide with anniversary years or with the two cities' international music festivals. This practice, which began in 1938 with a cycle of Janáček's operas for the tenth anniversary of his death, has carried through to present day: the most recent production in Prague of *Příběhy lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) in 2002 opened that year's Prague Spring Festival.¹ In order to broaden the appeal of the new production, and following a recent widespread trend to engage directors whose expertise had been developed in work outside of opera, the National Theatre contracted the brothers Michal and Šimon Caban, whose directing experience were in ballet, television, and film, to produce the work.

This was one of the most unusual stagings of *Bystrouška* done in Prague. It was not lavish in the established manner with rustic sets, folksy details and myriad animal costumes. Instead, the simple, uncluttered stage was suffused with clear, vivid colors, and lent shimmering texture by means of translucent veils. The Caban brothers made no alterations to the music or the libretto, but they introduced new symbolic and dramatic content – even new characters – by means of the staging alone. This enrichment of action took place primarily in the many instrumental sections of the opera, where the Cabans replaced Janáček's pantomimes and dances with ones that took the drama in new directions.² Despite its beauty and innovation, the production received mixed responses and, perhaps, more than its share of negative criticism.³

The indignant reaction to the Cabans' *Bystrouška* is recorded in the journalistic and newspaper reception of the production. I believe, however, that a more nuanced understanding of the discontent voiced by the press may be reached if the written record is supplemented by the visual traces of the production. It would be easy to explain critical resistance to the Caban production as a typical reaction to interference with the text. But the simplicity of the set and its vibrant colors added, I suggest, an additional irritation: it characterized *Bystrouška* as a children's opera, a pet peeve of Czech critics ever since Walter Felsenstein directed it that way in 1957 with the Berlin Komische Oper. (That Felsenstein's production achieved international popularity only added insult to the injury). That aspect, in conjunction with the additional

¹ In addition to Janáček cycles, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, for example, was staged for the opening of the new theatre building in Brno in 1962. New productions have also usually been planned in Brno to coincide with the city's annual International Music Festival and several have taken place in Prague for the *Pražské Jaro* (Prague Spring) International Music Festival.

² For example, in Janáček's opera, the forester's son is a young boy whose only part in the opera is to tease the vixen when the forester first brings her home as a pet. In the Cabans' version, however, his character is developed over time: the audience sees him maturing into adulthood and falling in love.

³ See, for example: Tomáš Hejzlar, "Poněkud chaotická parafráze na Janáčkovu okouzující hudbu," *Právo* (Prague) 20 December 2002; and Čtk, "Cabanové připravili v Národním divadle Lišku Bystroušku," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 20 December 2002. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

storylines introduced by the Caban production, gave a strong reading that overdetermined the opera's ambiguous handling of morality. However, identifying this as a source of irritation is only possible when the tradition of the reception and production of *Bystrouška* is considered. Performances from the premiere onward create communally generated meanings that provide an additional context for understanding the opera. A comprehensive understanding of the reception of *Bystrouška* and its performance history are both required for a full explication of why a beautiful and unusual production came to be so ill-received.

The construction and depiction of an ambiguous morality in *Bystrouška* will be the topic of my second chapter; the methodology I am proposing, that of combining reception and production histories, informs the entire dissertation. Each of the composer's last four operas, *Kát'a Kabanová*, *Bystrouška*, *Věc Makropulos* (*The Makropulos Case*), and *Z mrtvého domu* (*From the House of the Dead*), furnishes a case study for this method. The corresponding chapters review and draw upon all the productions of these operas in Brno's and Prague's main opera houses from their premieres to the present day. As critical scholarship on Janáček's operas – particularly in this area – is as yet relatively sparse, I will engage with the relevant literature in each chapter as it becomes pertinent rather than give an overview of it here. For the moment, I would like to concentrate on the development of the methodology used in this dissertation.

While reception history has been well theorized, the history of productions has until lately received little theoretical attention. Fortunately, notable recent contributions to the study of the production and performance of opera have stimulated the development of my own critical approach. In *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky*, David Levin has met the question of opera production and mediation head on. He is particularly interested in the impact stagings have on both our comprehension of an individual opera, and on how we conceive the genre as a whole. "Opera itself is unsettled," he writes, and "stage performance, at its best, clarifies this condition and brings opera in its unsettledness to life."⁴ Levin's quarrel with scholarly work on the production of opera is that musicologists have largely focused their inquiries – evasively, he claims – on questions of historical performance practices.⁵ To remedy this limitation, Levin offers readings of a range of operatic mise-en-scènes and also a theoretical model that separates the "opera text" (information that exists before the performance – score, libretto, stage directions) from the "performance text" (the subsequent expression of the opera text in performance with the additional layers of meaning that performance brings).

By considering a performance as a legible text in relation to the opera text, Levin creates a methodological basis from which he can then derive criteria for evaluating stage productions. The best ones present "strong" rather than "weak" readings; that is, they "unsettle" the opera text by producing a defamiliarizing account

⁴ David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.

⁵ Ibid., 6. A similar observation, though with a rather different conclusion, has also been made by Bernard Williams, "Authenticity and Re-creation: Musicology, Performance and Production," in *On Opera* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 121-30.

of it, rather than reiterating commonly held meanings. Levin regards videos of opera performances as the primary texts for analysis. Challenging Carolyn Abbate's privileging of live performance over any other (mediated) musical experience, Levin complains that "the familiar insistence on liveness as a prerequisite for interpretation has effectively forestalled any sustained consideration of operatic mise-en-scène."⁶ I think, however, that Levin's approach might benefit from a broadened purview and more flexibility in application. As Gundula Kreuzer points out, Levin's "performance text" conflates the production with its performance, thus eliding the gap between the production team's concept and its actual rendering. Abbate has warned that too much is lost when this space is closed off from consideration. To the extent that opera is a multi-authored artwork, the text changes not merely with each new staging, but with every performance.⁷

With this in mind, I also find illuminating Kreuzer's suggestion that "the day-to-day reality of operatic production has largely escaped scholarly investigation," with the result that "discussions of recent productions often lack an historical perspective – an awareness of the variety of stagings between the first performances of an opera and recent years."⁸ Even Levin evinces this lack. His emphasis on the "best" stage productions suggests what is at stake for him:

Although most performance texts reiterate a consensus about a given opera text (rendering it readily comprehensible by inflecting it in a recognizable relation to familiar forms of representation), some productions seek to render the characteristic agitation of the opera text. It is these latter productions... that most interest me, insofar as they unsettle operas and opera, producing aptly startling accounts of pieces that are best, if rarely experienced as startling.⁹

In other words, Levin prizes certain extraordinary productions and considers only these worthy of investigation. I have reservations about his selectivity, particularly when it is based on subjective criteria such as "best," "strong," and "innovative," because it valorizes only productions that are rebellious or subversive of accepted notions, leading predictably to a canon of great directors and stagings on what now seems an outdated romantic or modernist model. The problems attendant on that

⁶ Levin, 7.

⁷ Gundula Kreuzer, "Voices from beyond: Verdi's *Don Carlos* and the modern stage," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18 (2006): 151-179; and Carolyn Abbate, "Music – Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30/3 (2004): 505-36.

⁸ Kreuzer, "Voices from beyond: Verdi's *Don Carlos* and the modern stage." Kreuzer admits that this avoidance may be because theatre is "notoriously ephemeral," and that the visual evidence of productions and performances (for example, designs, photographs, blocking schemes, and production notes) – particularly for performances that pre-date the era of video recording technique – are sparse and random. This is certainly true, although the visual evidence is probably not any less fragmentary than the information gleaned from the types of sources that comprise what we usually think of as a work's reception: journalistic criticism, newspaper reviews, and eye-witness accounts.

⁹ Levin, 11.

type of historiography are well enough known to mark such tendencies, visible in Levin's work and to a lesser extent in Kreuzer's, as undesirable.

Moreover, I doubt the very possibility of imagining an opera production as a discrete text, in part because I am reluctant to engage in the kinds of interpretational moves that doing so facilitates, such as locating the interest of a staging only insofar as it presents a new reading of the work or only in its immediate historical context. With James Hepokoski, I am skeptical of uncritical examinations of innovative productions. Hepokoski rightly asks whether it is "really possible, sidelining the traditions as stale, to study the source materials afresh...to block out past conceptions of the opera, and then in the staging to comment directly on those source materials, as if short-circuiting further encounters with past memories and histories of interpretation."¹⁰ This is a concern that Kreuzer attempts to address in her recent article on German productions of Verdi's *Don Carlos*. Like Levin, she is interested in the interpretive outcomes of innovative productions of opera, or *Regieoper*, as such productions are called in Germany. She has an additional purpose, however: to unearth the roots of *Regieoper* in stagings of *Don Carlos* from the late 1920s and subsequent decades. Although Kreuzer is not unaware of influences on directorial choices and conceptualizations of productions, she generally refrains from reinterpreting a production as an allegory for the social, political, or historical contexts of the opera's performances. Rather, Kreuzer brings the reception of several productions of *Don Carlos* together with visual evidence of their stagings, teasing out of this body of texts the issues audiences, critics and producers alike have consistently taken with the opera and for which solutions were constantly being sought.

Her recognition that consistency might be what is interesting in an opera's performance tradition is one of the things that have made Kreuzer's work such an inspiration to my own project. It is not that I oppose on principle the endeavor to read productions of operas, or their reception, allegorically. I agree that such critical work can be rich and informative. I am, however, more interested in a diachronic view of an opera's performance and reception history than in individual cases. I might also, along with Kreuzer, borrow Hepokoski's term "memory field" to describe how traditions of production become part of the meaning of the work for audiences, so that new, provocative or innovative productions could not even be recognized as such without knowing them. I would, however, propose a slight modification to Kreuzer's understanding of the term. She is only willing to allow "particularly convincing or provocative" productions into what she will accept as a viable tradition, whereas I prefer to read Hepokoski's original point as encompassing *all* productions that feed a given performance tradition. As Hepokoski writes:¹¹

Since all such staging choices are made against a memory-field of

¹⁰ James Hepokoski, "Operatic Stagings: Positions and Paradoxes: A Reply to David J. Levin," in *Verdi 2001: atti del convegno internazionale, Parma, New York, New Haven, 24 gennaio – 1 febbraio 2001* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2003), 477-83. This article is a response to Levin's "'Va, Pensiero'? Verdi and Theatrical Provocation," which is an earlier formulation of the ideas developed in *Unsettling Opera*.

¹¹ Kreuzer, "Voices from beyond: Verdi's *Don Carlos* and the modern stage."

preceding notable or conventional productions – as a necessary frame of reference – that silent but conceptually charged backdrop must continue to exist as a rule for perceiving what is interventionist about the new production. Consequently, the production’s grounding principle lies not in the palpable, physical surface of what is put onto the stage but in the implied dialogue between the new staging and the abstracted, composite backdrop of more standard productions.¹²

A dialogue, of course, has points of agreement as well as of divergence. Hepokoski, inasmuch as his formulation is a response to Levin, is trying to show how an innovative production is only categorized as innovative when seen and heard in dialogue with earlier productions with which it is in “disagreement.” But I think that points of “agreement” can be equally illuminating. As stated above, I am particularly interested in stable patterns in production histories, and in long-standing, communally generated meanings that circulate around performances of an opera, drawing on previous productions and feeding new ones. I feel that this focus on continuity rather than on discontinuity is particularly valid for opera in the Czech Republic. The practice of running opera productions on the repertoire format, rather than the *stagione* system, in addition to the casting of performances within the ensemble of the opera house, instead of engaging stars from elsewhere to take the leading roles, all may reinforce continuing, or even traditional, ways of performing the operas. This continuity gathers more force still when, as occasionally happens, the same performer reprises the same role in different productions.¹³

In the long reception histories of Janáček’s operas, then, I am looking for motifs and characterizations that endure across periods that might otherwise be regarded as divergent. In paying attention to what, year in and year out, stays the same in an opera’s performance tradition, as well as to the moments of change and difference that are the usual focal points of long reception histories, I am also responding to a problem noted by Jim Samson: namely, that reception studies can so destabilize works that their meanings become indeterminate or even undeterminable.¹⁴ I would like to reintroduce the possibility of stability. Once patterns and trends are identified, then, I put the issues they portend into dialogue with the music. Rather than using a production – even several productions – to clinch the correct or “best” interpretation, I draw out traditions in an opera’s performance and reception as a means to interpretive acts, ones that I believe elucidate what the opera has actually meant to its performers and audiences over a long period of time.

¹² Hepokoski, “Operatic Stagings: Positions and Paradoxes: A Reply to David J. Levin.”

¹³ Levin has also argued that when, after several European opera houses switched from a star system to house ensembles, the familiarity of the singers with the “theatre’s aims,” long rehearsal periods allowed for “the necessary preconditions for substantive dramaturgical and directorial innovation.” Levin, 24.

¹⁴ Jim Samson, “Reception,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 07 March 2008), <http://grovemusic.com>.

The scholarship of Abbate, Levin, Kreuzer, and Hepokoski has focused primarily on operas by Verdi and Wagner, possibly because of the elevated positions these two composers occupy in the musicological and the performance canons, but also because there seems to be a regular need to renew and refresh these operas in light of their long performance traditions. Drawing on these ideas, I am able to fill in a gap in scholarship on Leoš Janáček, by providing a longer account of the Czech productions and reception of his last four operas than currently exists. Of equal importance, however, is the chance this methodological approach affords to open up a space for new interpretations of these operas. Some of the chapters endeavor to read the opera as a rethinking of long-standing ideas about Janáček's dramatic music. The aim of Chapter One, for example, is to offer an alternative explanation for Janáček's sympathetic portrayal of *Kát'a Kabanová's* heroine as from the influence of Puccini, rather than through biographical narratives that typically accompany the opera. Other chapters – such as those on *Bystrouška* and *Věc Makropulos* – also seek to recontextualise their operas in light of contemporaneous issues in early twentieth opera composition. The last chapter, on *Z mrtvého domu*, takes up the issue of the opera's “unfinished” and thus open-ended text, in light of Janáček's posthumous reputation as an innovator of modern opera.

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Of Martyrs and Milksops (*Kát'a Kabanová*)

The Kamila narrative

These days, especially in the West, Kamila Stösslová is the constant companion of *Kát'a Kabanová*, shadowing the opera in lieu of its absent composer, whose intentions she supposedly represents. The texts that accompany modern recordings, videos, and performances of *Kát'a* rehearse how Leoš Janáček met the young, recently married Stösslová in 1917, while on vacation at the spa town Luhačovice; how his mounting infatuation with her fed the creative productivity of the last eleven years of his life, and how he projected his illicit longing for Stösslová onto Kát'a, the heroine of the opera. The plot of *Kát'a Kabanová* makes the connection between operatic fiction and authorial biography almost plausible: having fallen in love for the first time but married to a spineless mamma's boy, Kát'a commits adultery; guilt soon outweighs happiness in her lover's company, and she publicly confesses her infidelity; the lover turns out to be as feckless as the husband; abandoned, Kát'a chooses her own escape – suicide. Almost plausible, and yet not: Stösslová was happily married, did not commit adultery, and did not end her own life.

In the Czech Republic, Janáček's infatuation with Stösslová has seldom been offered as a context for understanding the opera; even in recent reception the relationship is mentioned infrequently. A critic suggested for the first time in 1948 that Janáček might have been drawing on personal experience of illicit love affairs, but named no names.¹ Janáček had an eye for women (Luhačovice was his favorite summer haunt not only for its waters, but also for its “endless supply of beautiful young women,” as Michael Beckerman put it) and he had pursued extra-marital affairs before he met Stösslová, any one of which might have been cited in connection with the opera.² Even when, some years later, Stösslová did appear in name, writers only used benign references: for example, in his program note for Prague's 1957 production of *Kát'a Kabanová*, Jaroslav Procházka quoted one of Janáček's letters to Stösslová, but only in order to establish his progress on the opera's composition; Janáček's more compromising comments to her were omitted. It was not publicly acknowledged in print until 1986 that Janáček's interest in Stösslová was a romantic, rather than a platonic one, and that the composer made explicit connections between her and Kát'a in the opera.³ But then in 1992, Petr Veber returned to a more discreet posture, writing that Janáček had composed *Kát'a Kabanová* with “a big dose of personal experience and identification”; neither

¹ “Kulturní Kronika. Janáčkovy opery Kát'a Kabanová,” *Lidové noviny* (Prague), 19 May 1948. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

² Michael Beckerman, “‘My Luhačovice’ (1903),” in *Janáček and his World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 226.

³ Dagmar Palacká, “Vítězství Káti Kabanové,” *Zemědělské noviny* (Prague), 24 June 1986.

Stösslová, nor any other woman involved with the composer were named.⁴ Czech reception has for years now tended to be protective of Janáček's reputation. Inasmuch as he is regarded as national property and an artist who should be proudly promoted as representative of Czech culture, less flattering portraits of the composer are usually suppressed.

The "Russia" narrative

The other standard story told about *Kát'a Kabanová*, and one Czech critics have adopted more frequently than the "Kamila narrative," is that the opera grew out of Janáček's great love for Russia. A setting of the popular play, *Groza* (*The Thunderstorm*, 1859), by Russian dramatist Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky (1823-1886), *Kát'a* was Janáček's first opera set in Russia. The action of Ostrovsky's play takes place in a merchant town (Kalinovo) on the banks of the Volga River in the mid-nineteenth century. It is driven mostly by generational conflict: the two heads of the principal families, the widowed matriarch Kabanicha and her male counterpart, the loutish Dikoj, preside over their families with despotic tyranny. Dikoj bullies his nephew Boris; Tichon, the son of Kabanicha, is under his mother's thumb, as is his young wife Kát'a. Ostrovsky reinforced the tension between the generations by contrasting the traditional customs and religious beliefs of the older merchants with the more modern views of the younger people. For example, Dikoj superstitiously characterizes the storm of the play's title as punishment from God, while the middle-aged, but educated, watchmaker argues that storms are nothing more than electricity that can be controlled by lightning-rods. Dikoj's religiosity, like Kabanicha's, is superficial: a piety that "sacrifices form to content," as literary scholar R. A. Pearce says, and their hypocrisy is shown up by Kát'a's genuine faith (Kát'a is the diminutive of Katerina, itself a shortened form of Ekaterina (cf. Katharine), which derives in Russian, as in other languages "pure").⁵

Kát'a was not Janáček's first composition based on a Russian subject: a few years earlier, he had composed a programmatic symphonic work, *Taras Bulba* (1918), after the story by Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol (1809-1852).⁶ At the time of the opera's premiere, Janáček's attraction to Russia was known, particularly in Brno: he had family living in Russia, had sent his daughter Olga to study there, and had visited the country himself. Moreover, since 1919, he was once again chairing the Brno Russian

⁴ Petr Veber, "...když miluji jiného," *Telegraf* (Prague), 8 May 1992.

⁵ R. A. Pearce, "A. N. Ostrovsky's *The Thunderstorm*: the Dramatization of Conceptual Ambivalence," *The Modern Language Review* 84/1 (1989): 99-110.

⁶ Subsequent works include Janáček's first string quartet (1923), titled the *Kreutzer Sonata* after the short story by Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828-1910), and his final opera, based on the Dostoevsky novel *From the House of the Dead*. Janáček had also toyed with composing operas based on Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and *The Living Corpse*.

Circle he had founded some years earlier.⁷ Antonín Šilhan was only one of the first writers who would use Janáček's "Russophilism" as the starting point for his review, after *Kát'a* opened in Prague in 1922; it seemed to explain the surprisingly ardent passion expressed in the music.⁸

These descriptions of Janáček's Russophilism have seldom recognized that, although Janáček retained a positive attitude to Russia throughout his life, the degree of his interest varied. The composer remained devoted to the idea of Slavicism, and invariably looked to Slavic literature when searching out new material for his operas; but the fervor of his youth, when he styled himself Lev rather than Leoš and gave his children the Russian names Olga and Vladimír, cooled later in life. Like many Czechs, he had supported the Russians in World War I, and was bitterly disappointed that the Russian army did not "liberate" the Czech lands from Austrian rule. But the 1917 Revolution horrified him: for communism he had neither understanding nor sympathy, not least because "two Jews are ruling 160 million Slavs."⁹ The Russia beloved in Janáček's imagination was the one he had visited in 1896 – Imperial Russia, not Soviet Russia, as Derek Katz has pointed out.¹⁰

Like the Kamila narrative, this other use of the composer's biography as a tool for understanding *Kát'a Kabanová* is a red herring. As was invariably the case with his operatic subjects after *Brouček*, Janáček chose personal drama over ideological content: he was much more engaged by Kát'a's story than by Ostrovsky's critique of Russian merchant society, of which Kát'a's tragedy formed a part. For all his supposed Russophilism, the composer considered representing the Russian setting of the opera relatively unimportant.¹¹ Vincenc Červinka, whose Czech translation, *Bourře*, Janáček used as the primary source for the opera's libretto, offered to furnish the composer with details from his knowledge of "Russian conditions and background."¹² Janáček was unconcerned: "Should I need any explanations," he replied breezily, "naturally I will turn to you." "I saw the Volga and its life in Nizhni Novgorod," he added, referring to the trip he'd made twenty-four years earlier.¹³ In

⁷ Janáček had helped to found the Russian Circle in Brno in 1897; he acted as chair for the years 1909-15 and again from 1919-21. See John Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas: A Documentary Account* (London: Faber and Faber, 1922), 250.

⁸ Aš. [Antonín Šilhan], "Divadlo a hudba. Leoš Janáček: „Kát'a Kabanová“,” *Národní listy* (Prague), 2 December 1922.

⁹ In a letter to the singer Gabriela Horvátová, one of Janáček's earlier extra-marital pursuits; Vladimir Lenin, apparently, was Jewish by association with Leon Trotsky. John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 2: (1914-1928), *Tsar of the Forests* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 193.

¹⁰ Derek Katz, *Janáček beyond the Borders* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 41.

¹¹ There was one significant repercussion from the opera's "Russianness": *Kát'a* had no performances during the German occupation of the Czechoslovak Republic in the second world war, when all works of Russian authorship or with a Russian subject were banned from the stage.

¹² Ostrovsky's play had been circulating in the Czech Republic when Janáček came across it: Červinka's new translation was published in 1918, and followed the next year by stagings at both the Prague National Theatre and the Brno Theatre. In Prague, the premiere was on 19 March 1919; Brno just pipped them to the post – their opening night was 18 March.

¹³ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 252. Tyrrell's translation.

another letter, Janáček dismissed the “purely Russian background figures” in the Ostrovsky as “just ‘stuck on’ to the action.” It was Kát’a, who contained the “psychological interest” of the drama.¹⁴

Janáček’s Russophilism has continued to show up in Czech reception of *Kát’a* from time to time: Antonín Balatka, for example, invoked it in his essay for the program of Brno’s 1953 *Kát’a*, in which he connected all of Janáček’s Russian interests (his other “Russian” compositions, his travels, and his studies of the language) to his composition of *Kát’a*. Yet I would argue that writers use the Russian story more because it is convenient – and sometimes prudent, perhaps, as for Balatka in the 1950s – than because it is truly, and consistently, illuminating.¹⁵

These frequently recounted narratives about *Kát’a Kabanová* depend on tired Romantic notions of art as personal disclosure. Janáček was less sentimental. His concern was with creating an effective, moving drama that would ensure him an operatic success, such as he’d attained in *Její pastorkyňa* (*Jenůfa*), but not duplicated since. But while this chapter will assume that *Kát’a Kabanová*’s lyricism and its compassionate portrait of the heroine were products of Janáček’s operatic influences and aims rather than evidence of a personal investment in the plot, I am also interested in the way the common biographical fallacies have shaped the singers’ portrayals and the critics’ expectations of Kát’a’s role, and how these have varied in some of the key stagings of the opera in Brno and Prague. Lastly, I extend consideration to the rest of the main characters, focusing in particular on Janáček’s portrayal of men in *Kát’a* and asking what impact, if any, the biographical narratives have had on interpretations of the opera.

Sympathy under the influence

Kát’a Kabanová was Janáček’s first completely new opera composed since the success of Prague’s *Její pastorkyňa* in 1916. Before he started work on it, no doubt hoping to capitalize on his new fame, Janáček polished up two of his older operas, the comedy he’d left incomplete, *Výlety páně Broučkovy* (*The Excursions of Mr Brouček*, 1917), and his first opera, *Šárka* (1887).¹⁶ Neither produced a second operatic hit: *Šárka* was resisted

¹⁴ Ibid., 255. Tyrrell’s translation.

¹⁵ This essay, titled “Bouře” (Storm), was printed in the program for the 1953 Brno production of *Kát’a Kabanová*. Balatka (1895-1958) was a composer, teacher and conductor; he conducted the Brno opera from 1929.

¹⁶ Janáček completed *Brouček* – putting the finishing touches on the first part (the excursion to the moon), and adding a second excursion set during the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century – by the end of 1917. He also reworked and reorchestrated *Šárka*, which had been left unfinished since 1887 when Janáček failed to get permission from Julius Zeyer, the author of the libretto, to set it. At some point very early in 1918 Janáček apparently rediscovered the opera amongst other bits of old work kept in a chest. He entrusted the orchestration of the third act of *Šárka* to his pupil Osvald Chlubna during the summer of 1918 and then requested permission to set the libretto from Zeyer’s trustees (Zeyer having died in 1901). Once that permission had been given, Janáček rapidly became more serious about polishing the work, giving the vocal parts in particular a thorough revision. More text

by publishers and theatres and, though Janáček did get *Brouček* published in a vocal score and produced in Prague (his only premiere there rather than in Brno), the production was plagued with difficulties, and delayed several times; *Brouček*'s extraordinary mix of the surreal and the overtly nationalistic was, in the end, poorly received by the critics.

After the difficulties with *Brouček*, Janáček's choice to set Ostrovsky's *Groza* for his next opera was a safe one. The basic plot is comparatively conventional: a love triangle involving a woman and two men that results in the tragic demise of the heroine. And though the process of revising *Brouček* and *Šárka* hadn't translated into material success, Janáček seems to have benefited from that work in other ways. Most of his earlier operas had been composed in fits and starts: *Brouček*, for example, spanned ten years and the libretto involved several contributors, including Janáček himself. In comparison, he composed *Kát'a* relatively swiftly and continuously: "practically in a single breath" (*napsáno téměř jedním dechem*) – as the Czech scholar Jan Racek overplayed it – from November 1919 to April 1921.¹⁷ Still, the single breath had its inhalation and exhalation: the preliminary composition was followed by Janáček's customary substantial revisions, which he made backwards this time, beginning with act three and finishing with the prelude to the opera.¹⁸ That Janáček had felt that the composition of the opera was going smoothly may be seen in his reply to Červinka, who worried that the prose language of Ostrovsky's drama was unsuitable for opera. "The original," Janáček wrote, "must certainly have been rhythmic, certainly your translation is; the words clothe themselves effortlessly in music."¹⁹

Initially, Janáček had wanted *Kát'a* to premiere in Prague, where the opera would be heard by a more international and influential audience than Brno attracted. At the same time, he was sniping at Otakar Ostrčil (who'd replaced Karel Kovařovic the previous year as the conductor of the Prague opera) over the company's difficulties with *Brouček* and the repeated delays, little of which had been the conductor's fault.²⁰ In the end, Janáček agreed that *Kát'a* should go to Brno; the Hradbách Theatre premiered it on 23 November 1921, in a staging designed by Vladimír Marek with sets by Vladimír Hruska. František Neumann, a staunch supporter of Janáček and, since 1919, the chief conductor in Brno, was in the pit. Although Max Brod later claimed that "the general opinion was that the success of

was needed in a few places, which he had F. S. Procházka supply; then Janáček asked Chlubna to go through the whole opera once more and homogenize the orchestration. His fourth opera, *Osud* (*Fate*), Janáček left unfinished, having received too much negative feedback on it to make revising it worth the effort. See, Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 6-11.

¹⁷ Jan Racek, *Leoš Janáček: Člověk a Umělec*, (Brno: Krajské Nakladatelství, 1963), 112. Racek believed that Janáček had completed composition by February.

¹⁸ John Tyrrell, "Introduction," in *Leoš Janáček: Kát'a Kabanová*, ed. John Tyrrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-36, here 4-5. That Janáček revised backwards was borne out by Tyrrell's examination of the dates Janáček left in the score; they also show that Janáček finished the revisions to *Kát'a* in April of 1921, not February as Racek had thought.

¹⁹ Vincenc Červinka, "Jak vznikla Kát'a Kabanová," *Národní politika* (Prague), 18 October 1938.

²⁰ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 258-60.

Kát'a Kabanová was unprecedented,” its eleven performances represented a respectable run, not an unmitigated triumph, even for the small city.²¹ At this time, none of the reviews commented on the Russian subject; instead, the focus was on how Janáček's new opera stood up in comparison with *Její Pastorkyňa*. Dramatically, *Kát'a* disappointed critics, both in structure and in power, but they responded positively to the music. Vladimír Helfert, in particular, was relieved that *Kát'a* didn't have *Pastorkyňa*'s excessive repetition of text. Describing the lyricism and heated passion of *Kát'a*, he declared that this was “music written with the heart's blood.”²² Both Helfert and Gracian Černušák, the critic for the newspaper *Lidové noviny*, were struck by the extraordinarily sympathetic portrayal of the opera's heroine.²³

To a number of writers familiar with Ostrovsky's *Groza*, it was immediately apparent that Janáček had made alterations to the drama. He had, in fact, reorganized the dramatic structure, and omitted unessential characters and made modifications to others, such as amalgamating Kudrjáš and Kuligin into a single character named Kudrjáš.²⁴ But cutting down the number of scenes and characters in a spoken drama for operatic purposes is unremarkable. No less evident to the critics was the net result of these revisions: Janáček had focused the opera primarily on Kát'a. It was the end point, the sympathetic light that Kát'a was bathed in, that caught the attention of the critics more than the means. In his review of the opera's premiere, Černušák noted that the opera didn't so much have “a dramatic idea, as it had human sympathy – the key to Janáček's music,” adding that Janáček might as well have called the opera's main motive “I am sorry for her.”²⁵ Černušák, like other critics, saw no reason to doubt that Janáček's music was born from the composer's *personal* sympathy for Kát'a. Commentators on the opera have been less willing to accept that the sympathy the opera conveys for its heroine is not, or at least not only, heartfelt, but carefully constructed by the composer to engender a response from listeners.

Almost exactly a year after the Brno premiere, the National Theatre unveiled its first production of *Kát'a Kabanová* on 30 November 1922. Though colored by the terms of Prague's particular opera polemics, critics there made very similar observations to those in Brno. Janáček had his detractors, who pulled no punches in critiquing the new work, particularly on the issue of the drama: Josef Bartoš, the critic for *Prager Presse*, for example, baldly declared the play simply unsuited to Janáček.²⁶ In a similar vein, Antonín Šilhan suggested that, unlike the words in Wagner's operas that “cried out for music,” in *Kát'a*, music was an “entirely redundant superfluity,” for Ostrovsky's drama had “exhausted the subject [on its own].” Šilhan spoke for many

²¹ Max Brod, “Katja Kabanowa,” in *Sternenbimmel: Musik-und Theatererlebnisse* (Prague: Orbis, 1923), 52-63. Excerpted in translation in John Tyrrell, “Letters and reviews,” in *Leoš Janáček: Kát'a Kabanová*, 97.

²² Vladimír Helfert, “Kát'a Kabanová,” *Moravské noviny* (Brno), 25 November 1921.

²³ Gracian Černušák, “Leoš Janáček: Kát'a Kabanová,” *Lidové noviny* (Brno), 25 November 1921.

²⁴ That Janáček retained the name Kuligin for an unrelated small role in the opera is incidental to the amalgamation of the original Kudrjáš and Kuligin.

²⁵ Černušák, “Leoš Janáček: Kát'a Kabanová.”

²⁶ Josef Bartoš, “L. Janáček: Kat'a Kabanova,” *Prager Presse* (Prague), 2 December 1922.

when he wrote that Janáček had made some very “risky” decisions with the libretto: individually, the scenes were too short and underdeveloped, and as a narrative whole they failed to cohere.²⁷ Several critics agreed that the action didn’t follow from one scene to the next, which made the opera a series of episodes rather than a satisfying drama (a criticism that would also be leveled at Janáček’s later operas). Moreover, the theatre’s decision to raise the house lights after each of the opera’s six scenes made its episodic quality all the more apparent.²⁸

Wagner’s appearance in Šilhan’s critique, as in several others, is unsurprising: the shadow Wagner cast over opera was as long in the first Czechoslovak Republic as it was anywhere elsewhere in Europe. Moreover, in the early decades of the twentieth century his legacy informed the ongoing debate over the development of modern Czech opera. Created by Zdeněk Nejedlý, this polemic had polarized the Prague opera cognoscenti by pitting the operas of Antonín Dvořák against those of Bedřich Smetana (hence Wagner, by association). But Wagner’s weren’t the only operas to which *Kát’a* was compared; the early reviews introduced a variety of models and influences. Some, like Bartoš’s comparison of *Kát’a* to Josef Bohuslav Foerster’s *Eva* (1899) and Otakar Zich’s *Vina* (premiered earlier in 1922), continued the old polemic. Foerster was one of the compositional heirs to Smetana, Zich was a staunch Nejedlýan, and Bartoš, who argued for the Smetana cause, predictably found *Kát’a* inferior to both. Of Janáček’s own operas, *Pastorkyňa*, still running in its original 1916 staging, also frequently provided a predictable point of comparison. *Brouček*, meanwhile, had been largely forgotten.²⁹

Other comparisons ranged further afield and, in doing so, hit closer to the mark. One critic, Josef Hutter, suggested that Janáček’s model had been “Russian repertoire opera,” by which he meant Chaikovsky. But that was not Janáček’s sole model: the “coloration” in *Kát’a* was reminiscent, Hutter wrote, of Massenet’s *Werther* as well as *Eugene Onegin*.³⁰ Otakar Šourek also looked outside Czech and German operas for influences on *Kát’a*; he suggested that Janáček’s orchestration was a reflection of the instrumentation in Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* (though Šourek openly admitted that he didn’t know Musorgsky’s “original score”).³¹ That Šourek compared *Kát’a* to *Boris* for the similarities in their orchestration, and not for the declamatory vocal style we might think comparable today, is significant. Discussions of fragmentation in the dramatic structure of *Kát’a* provided critics with a pretext to air their usual observations about Janáček’s music: mostly grumpy complaints about

²⁷ Aš. [Šilhan], “Divadlo a hudba. Leoš Janáček: „Kát’a Kabanová”.”

²⁸ O.Š. [Otokar Šourek], “Zpěvohra. Leoš Janáček: Kát’a Kabanová,” *Venkov* (Prague), 1 December 1922.

²⁹ *Pastorkyňa* ran for a total of 66 performances between 26 May 1916, when it opened and its last performance on 19 February 1924. *Kát’a*, despite being better received than *Brouček*, had no more performances – ten.

³⁰ Dr. J.H. [Josef Hutter], “Divadlo a umění. Kát’a Kabanová,” *České slovo* (Prague), 2 December 1922.

³¹ O.Š. [Šourek], “Zpěvohra. Leoš Janáček: Kát’a Kabanová.”

“speech melodies” and small motives compiled into “mosaics.”³² Yet it was not the speechlike vocal writing in *Kát’a* for which critics were unprepared, but rather its lyricism: “Wagner,” one wrote, “had made opera symphonic” and Debussy had “sucked the blood out of singing,” but in *Kát’a*, Janáček had “returned singing to its sovereign position in opera.”³³ Thus Hutter also talked about the lyrical melismas Janáček had produced for the hints of spirituality in the opera, picking out a particular moment from Kát’a’s final monologue, “Vy větry bujné” (Oh you roving winds).³⁴ And Šilhan, though he delivered the compliment backhandedly, nonetheless found the lyricism of Kát’a’s vocal music so powerful that she “rose up above her environment like a clear figure, like a creature with a rich and beautiful internal life.”³⁵ Like their Brno counterparts, the Prague reviewers rarely omitted comment on how the combination of Janáček’s orchestral underscoring with the passionate lyricism of Kát’a’s part produced an overwhelmingly sympathetic portrayal of its heroine: “As soon as Kát’a appears on stage,” Šourek wrote, “we are captivated by the impression of the author’s strong emotional attachment to the heroine of his drama; we feel the ardor and sincerity of his sympathy for her fate and we fully experience it in company with him.”³⁶ Such lyricism from the composer of “speech melodies” left the critics scrambling to explain its source.

The popularity of *Werther* at the time, and the fact that both the Massenet and Chaikovsky’s *Onegin* were in the National Theatre’s repertoire, may have been enough to justify Hutter’s comparison of *Kát’a* with them. Indeed, he had very nearly hit the mark: Janáček’s operatic influences, both works he personally liked, and ones he considered important to modern opera (not always the same thing), included staples of the Russian and French repertoire. He had long loved both *Onegin* and Chaikovsky’s *Queen of Spades*; Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* was a later personal favorite, and he included it in his opera course at the Brno Organ School as the “origin of lifelike speech” (*zdroj živé mluvy*). Although Janáček didn’t include Massenet among his favorite composers, he admired both *Carmen* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* as well as Charpentier’s *Louise*. The latter, like *Boris*, was both a personal pick and a feature of his opera lectures, in this case for Charpentier’s use of “street motives” (*pouličené motivy*).

From the notes for his lectures, it appears that Janáček also analyzed *Tristan und Isolde* for Wagner’s use of the leitmotif (*příznačný motiv*) and *Falstaff* for Verdi’s development of “sentence expression” (*větný výraz*). In addition, he included *Její pastorkyňa*, because he considered his own opera the end point of the path Musorgsky

³² Jaromír Borecký, “Janáček: Kát’a Kabanová,” *Národní politika* (Prague), 2 December 1922; Aš. [Šilhan], “Divadlo a hudba. Leoš Janáček: „Kát’a Kabanová”.”

³³ P.L., “Balada na Volze,” no pub. No date. Taken from an unmarked review in the “*Kát’a Kabanová* (Prague, Národní divadlo, 1922)” folder at the Janáček Archive in Brno.

³⁴ Dr. J.H. [Hutter], “Divadlo a umění. Kát’a Kabanová.”

³⁵ Aš. [Šilhan], “Divadlo a hudba. Leoš Janáček: „Kát’a Kabanová”.”

³⁶ O.Š. [Šourek], “Zpěvohra: Leoš Janáček: Kát’a Kabanová.”

had started in *Boris*.³⁷ With the exception of Wagner, all the components of Janáček's opera course related to vocal style – specifically its development from lyrical forms to speech forms – ostensibly the area of operatic writing with which Janáček has been most frequently associated. He had begun giving these lectures in 1917 (when the notes were dated) continuing until 1922, so they spanned the period of *Kát'a*'s composition. Yet while his choices illustrate what aspects of modern opera Janáček thought worth teaching, they give only a partial view of his own interests and influences.

The most beautiful and saddest of operas

Missing is an explanation of Janáček's turn to more lyrical writing in *Kát'a* and of the opera's unusually sympathetic portrayal of its heroine. It can be found, I suggest, in the influence of one of Janáček's contemporaries, the lyrically inspired master of wringing his audiences' sympathy dry: Giacomo Puccini. Yet Puccini figured neither among the composers Janáček admitted favoring, nor in his curriculum. Janáček had good reason to adopt a pose of indifference to the Italian composer. He'd been tarred with the brush of *verismo* by the Nejedlý clan after the premiere of *Její pastorkyňa*.³⁸ (*Verismo* was just one trend in early twentieth-century opera that the Nejedlýans classified as contrary to the aims of modern Czech opera. Much of their antagonism towards *verismo* had to do with its popularity, which posed a threat to the ongoing success of Smetana's operas, and those of his followers.)³⁹ And even though *Pastorkyňa* had proved more successful than Nejedlý might have liked, the critic and his followers were more than arbiters of taste in the city; their influence extended to the workings of the theatre itself. Janáček would have known that aligning himself with modern Italian developments would not help him to achieve, and might even hinder, further success in Prague.

In private, however, Janáček was more open about the impressions Puccini's operas had made on him: he'd liked both *Tosca* (1900) and *Madama Butterfly* (1904), when he'd heard them. He had also borrowed ideas from them: *Tosca*, for example, was influential not only on his fourth opera *Osud* (*Fate*), but also, as I argue in Chapter Three, on *Věc Makropulos*; in *Kát'a* the composer was responding to *Madama Butterfly*. Janáček saw *Butterfly* twice, initially in 1908, when it was first performed at the Vinohrady Theatre in Prague; then, in 1919, shortly before he began writing *Kát'a*, he went to a performance of Brno's 1917 staging. The second time around, *Butterfly* had lost little of its effect: "I'm so disturbed by the opera," he wrote to Stösslová. "When it was new I went to see it in Prague. Even now many places move me

³⁷ Leoš Janáček, "Opera," in *Literární dílo*, series I, vol. 1, bk. 2, eds. Theodora Straková and Eva Drlíková (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2003), 90-1.

³⁸ Zdeněk Nejedlý, "Leoše Janáčka *Její Pastorkyňa*," *Smetana-Hudební list* 6/9-10 (1916): 117-24.

³⁹ Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theatre 1900-1938* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2006), 42.

deeply.” It was Cio-cio-san’s unhappiness, in particular, that touched him: *Butterfly* was, he said, one of the “most beautiful and saddest of operas.”⁴⁰

John Tyrrell has noted that the entrance music for Cio-cio-san and Kát’a share similar rhythmic profiles, as well as a comparable melodic contour, and that both are repeated sequentially by rising whole tones – more than enough for *Kát’a* to be heard as an “echo” of *Butterfly*, as he calls it.⁴¹ Derek Katz includes in the correspondences between the two operas the unusual coloring of the viola d’amore in their instrumentation, and the use of an offstage chorus: the “Coro a bocca chiusa” (Humming chorus) in *Butterfly* and the wordless singing voices of the Volga in *Kát’a*.⁴² Granted, Janáček had used both sounds before – the viola d’amore appeared in an early version of *Osud*, and a offstage chorus in his song cycle *Zápisník Zmizelého* (*The Diary of One Who Disappeared*) – and continued to do so in subsequent compositions, such as *Věk Makropulos* and *Příboby lišky Bystroušky*. Nevertheless, I believe there is more to be said about Janáček’s debt to *Butterfly* in *Kát’a*. He did more, I suggest, than just borrow a few effects or ideas: he took the whole ethos of *Butterfly* – the victimized, suffering woman abandoned by her man – and recreated it in *Kát’a*.

To return, for a moment, to the respective heroines’ entrance music: the similarity between rhythm and melodic contour is, perhaps, the least striking point of contact between Kát’a and Cio-cio-san’s entry. Rather, the way the entire soundscape of each opera undergoes a radical shift when the heroine first sings provides a more immediate and more lasting effect. Until the entries of the lead sopranos, both operas are quite busy; the orchestral music bowls along, moving people around the stage and supporting short exchanges of dialogue. (Compare Goro demonstrating to Pinkerton the ingenuity of Japanese houses or Sharpless warning Pinkerton about marrying Cio-cio-san, with Kudrjáš extolling the beauties of the Volga to Glaša or the heated discussion between Dikoj and Boris.) Janáček even handled dialogue in a fashion comparable to Puccini, using similar cadences to punctuate the phrases, extended passages of declamation on a repeated pitch, and weaving motives borrowed from the orchestral prelude throughout the initial set-up of the drama. Puccini, though, clearly had a greater interest in interpolating aria into the largely parlando fabric than did Janáček: nothing in *Kát’a* approaches Pinkerton’s blowhard “Duvunque al mondo.”

When Cio-cio-san and Kát’a enter their respective scenes, all this busy music comes to a rapid halt with a downshift in tempo that provides the audience with ample time to contemplate the heroines. Both composers bring in the harp; Puccini also adds a celesta that, along with the sweeping harp glissandos, gives the moment sparkle; Janáček’s harp chords are more demurely sounded. Janáček does, however, sweeten the sound, marking all the strings as well as the clarinets *dolce*. Differences of instrumentation aside, the result is the same: the heroine’s voice is enveloped in a

⁴⁰ John Tyrrell, ed. and trans., *Intimate Letters: Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 29. Tyrrell’s translation.

⁴¹ John Tyrrell, “Introduction,” 24-5.

⁴² Katz, 84-5.

rich, but not densely textured, sound. Both composers prescribe for their heroines' opening phrases a peaceful manner of delivery – *serenamente* (serenely) for Cio-cio-san, *klidně* (calmly) for Kát'a. Kát'a's gets further support from the orchestra by having her vocal line doubled first by the second violins and then by the oboe, whereas the orchestral parts had previously been more or less independent of the vocal parts. The overall effect is compelling, even coercive: Šourek's comments that one knows exactly what to think about the heroine from the moment she steps on stage.

The martyr

Nevertheless, *Kát'a's* story is a little different from *Butterfly's*. Both operas' heroines are victims of their circumstances, but unlike Cio-cio-san, whose only fatal error is to mistake Pinkerton's infatuation with exotic novelty for real affection, Kát'a actively brings about her own demise: she chooses to act on her love for Boris while her husband, Tichon, is away. Yet because Kát'a frequently characterizes what happens to her – including her own choices and actions – as fateful, she is often portrayed as a helpless victim of a doomed destiny; one of the opera's prominent motives is commonly interpreted as a symbol of “fate.”

Regardless of what significance Janáček might have attached to the rising fourth motive, first heard in the trombones, tuba, and timpani in the opening measures of the prelude (see example 1), he gave it an overwhelming presence in the opera; as Tyrrell has shown, he quite consciously, in fact, went back to add in several more iterations in the timpani across the score.⁴³ The early critics didn't miss its prominence; several linked it explicitly to “fate” or “doom,” and the idea subsequently took root.⁴⁴ And yet the idea that Kát'a is a victim of fate deserves further examination. Kát'a's own attitude toward fate is ambiguous at the moment in the second act when, prompted by her sister-in-law Varvara, she takes the decision to meet with Boris.

The summer is hot, and Varvara informs Kát'a that she has arranged for them to sleep outside in the garden. The sultry air is merely the pretext for indulging another heat: ever the enabler, Varvara has stolen the key to the garden gate so that she and Kát'a can meet with their lovers. She offers the key to Kát'a, who responds with a refusal that Varvara brushes aside. Now Kát'a more vehemently denounces Varvara's actions: “What have you done, you seducer! However is this possible? You've gone mad, truly mad!” (*Cos to natropila, ty svůdnice! Cožpak je to možné? Zbláznila jsi se, opravdu zblátnila!*), but Varvara coolly calls Kát'a's bluff and, her task completed, exits. In terms of the stage directions, the key is offered but not taken; yet once Varvara has left, Kát'a somehow has it in her hand. The omission of the stage

⁴³ Tyrrell, “Introduction,” 23.

⁴⁴ O.Š. [Šourek], “Zpěvohra. Leoš Janáček: Kát'a Kabanová.”; and R.J. [Rudolf Jeníček], “Beseda. Kát'a Kabanová,” *Právo lidu* (Prague) 2 December 1922.

direction seems to reflect Kát'a's perception of the events unfolding around her: she would have it that this was fate.

As Varvara explains how she's arranged the double rendezvous, the orchestral music oscillates between two very different affects (see example 2). The passage begins with five measures of the jaunty tune Varvara will later sing with Kudrjáš during their tryst, played *leggero* in the violas. The same little melody is heard between her first and second phrases (just after the *a tempo*), and then again underneath her line "Za malinami jsou vrátka, maminka vždycky je zavírá na zámek" (Behind the raspberries there's a gate, mother always keeps it locked." Between Varvara's lines, at the *Più mosso*, the orchestra fills in with a theme that is distinctly more fraught. If this were its first appearance, this jagged theme, played *forte* in the violins overtop an ominous tremolo, would seem to suggest Kát'a's mounting alarm at Varvara's plan. But the theme – now rhythmically adjusted for the change in meter, but otherwise at the same tempo – is a carry-over from the previous scene when Kabanicha had been admonishing Kát'a (see example 3); it represents, then, a residue aggrievement rather than a new anxiety. Indeed, as the scene unfolds, Kát'a's alarm seems to dissipate rather than accrue; by the time she holds the key in her hand, the anxious violin theme has slowed to a languid *adagio*, switched from minor to major, and traded a threatening *forte* for a *piano* additionally marked *dolcissimo*. Rarely has Kát'a sounded so peacefully blissful as she does when she accuses the key of sealing her "misfortune" (see example 4).

Kát'a's immediate impulse is to throw the key out of the window into the river. She doesn't, of course; instead, she thinks about it a moment and, when Kabanicha's voice is heard offstage, hides the key in her pocket. It's a false alarm: no one disturbs her and yet Kát'a tells herself that pocketing the key couldn't be helped: "It's obvious, fate has decreed it" (*Je vidět, osud tomu chce*). This, the moment when Kát'a keeps the key rather than throwing it away, marks the point at which the affair between Kát'a and Boris becomes inevitable and is thus, perhaps, the fateful moment of the opera. But throughout the entire scene, the "fate" motive is missing. Even if the rising fourth is taken as a signifier of Kát'a's perception that she is caught in fate's web, rather than the type of omniscient indicator that early critics thought it, its absence from the moment where Kát'a herself sings "fate has decreed it" is striking. Is Kát'a deceiving herself, and has the music caught Kát'a out in her lie?

Kát'a's dissembling should not at this point in the opera come as a complete shock: the audience already knows from her "ecstasy monologue" in the first act that Kát'a does not always speak the truth. As she admits to Varvara, "I say one thing, but I'm always thinking another" (*Jazykem přemílám slova, ale na myslí mi táne něco jiného*). Still, the music in the key scene suggests that Kát'a accepts her "fate" willingly. This may explain why some critics have perceived Kát'a less as victimized than martyred, an idea with some persistence in the reviews. For example, Šilhan found that Kamila Ungarová "prevailed" in Prague's first *Kát'a* with "quiet martyrdom."⁴⁵ Martyrs have had both a long history and a lasting appeal in the Czech lands. Thomáš Garrigue

⁴⁵ Aš. [Šilhan], "Divadlo a hudba. Leoš Janáček: „Kát'a Kabanová”."

Masaryk, for example, in his 1895 essay *Česká otázka*, noted that the period of history Czechs considered their most glorious had begun and ended with martyrs – St. Wenceslas and Jan Hus. He criticized this veneration, “our especial cult and outright proclivity to martyrdom,” as a weakness of the Czech character.⁴⁶ Historically long on martyrs and short on heroes, the Czechs have, Ladislav Holý argues, continued to give preference to the former over the latter throughout the twentieth century, adding to the list modern martyrs such as Jan Masaryk, Jan Palach, and Alexander Dubček.⁴⁷

Some critical reactions to Kát’a’s character can be situated, I suggest, in this context of Czech affinity for martyr figures. Kát’a was always thought a sympathetic figure, but critics found her most appealing when she was given a martyred quality in productions. Though Josef Hutter, in 1938, approved of Marie Šponarová’s portrayal of a “peaceful, sweet little merchantess,” acceptance of Kát’a as a docile wife passively resigned to her lot, was more the exception than the rule.⁴⁸ More than one critic berated Ludmila Červinková, who sang Kát’a in Prague’s 1947 production, for playing Kát’a as a “young wife type.” Decades later, in Prague’s 1974 staging, Marta Cihelníková faced similar criticism for being a “timid, gentle, and dutifully loving wife.”⁴⁹ The “young wife type” was, perhaps, too ordinary a woman to carry off an ennobling tragedy; as a martyr Kát’a acquired purity and unimpeachable morals (evidence to the contrary notwithstanding). Šilhan, who had called Kát’a “poetic, genuine, and spiritual” in the first Prague production, now ramped up his description to an “ecstatic visionary...blazing with spiritual ecstasy,” in 1938.⁵⁰ Janáček’s oft-quoted remark – that “the surface of the Volga was as white in the September moonlight as Kát’a’s soul” – began to appear regularly in reception at this time, its enduring popularity taking on additional significance in the context of Kát’a’s idealization as some kind of martyr.⁵¹

While Kát’a’s ecstasy may be said to come directly from the score, the spiritual aspects of the role took on increasing prominence in production and reception. While photographic evidence is an imperfect tool for judging live performances, it can

⁴⁶ Thomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Česká otázka [1895]; Naše nynější krize [1895]; Jan Hus [1896]* (Prague: T.G. Masaryk Foundation, 2000), 151.

⁴⁷ See, Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-communist Transformation of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131-6.

⁴⁸ J.H. [Josef Hutter], “Slohová Nadstavba nad Zkrácenou Dramatičností Janáčkovou,” *Nová svoboda* (Prague), 18 September 1938; Šourek called her a “tender, impulsive heart of a young merchant’s wife.” Ot. Šourek, “Janáčka Kát’a Kabanová,” *Venkov* (Prague), 18 September 1938.

⁴⁹ la., “Kultura. Talich řídí Kát’u Kabanovou,” *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 27 April 1947. Vladimír Bor also criticized Červinková along similar lines when she took the part again in 1957 (bor, “Janáčková „Kát’a Kabanová“ v Národním divadle,” *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 19 May, 1957; Pf., “Kát’a Kabanová znovu v Národním divadle,” *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 3 July 1974.

⁵⁰ Aš. [Šilhan], “Divadlo a hudba. Leoš Janáček: „Kát’a Kabanová”.”; Ant. Šilhan, “Z Kulturního života. Leoš Janáček: „Kát’a Kabanová”,” *Národní listy* (Prague), 18 September 1938.

⁵¹ R.J. [Rudolf Jeníček], “„Kát’a Kabanová“ nově nastudována,” *Právo lidu* (Prague), 18 September 1938. See also: Abs., “Janáček-Dramatik,” *Nová politika* (Prague), 18 May 1948. In 1896, during his trip to Russia, Janáček visited the city of Nizhni Novgorod, which is situated at the juncture of the Volga and Oka rivers.

provide some indication of what took place, particularly after pictures had moved beyond posed publicity shots and were taken during fully staged rehearsals. Witness, for example, a photo taken of Hanuš Thein's 1964 production of *Kát'a* for the National Theatre in Prague: a supplicant Libuše Domanínská, her dark velvet jacket forming a stark contrast with her pale complexion and the stage lights sparking her hair into radiance, turns her eyes soulfully heavenward (see figure 1). Further affirmation was found in the music. Kát'a's unique lyricism and the sympathetic support given to her by the orchestra was, for the critics, proof of the unblemished state of Kát'a's soul. "Recall only Kát'a's first entrance on stage," Josef Ceremuga enthused, "what moral purity, what musical beauty!"⁵²

Once she had achieved a martyr's moral high ground, all Kát'a's actions, suicide included, were exonerated. Rather than an "atonement" for "sin" (the view Kát'a herself takes of her suicide), her death was increasingly perceived as a sacrifice for a cause.⁵³ Miroslav Barvík, in his review of Prague's 1957 production, anticipated the views expressed by many subsequent critics when he said, "Kát'a is not guilty – she is standing up for what is right"; her suicide was "rebellion," "reconciliation," "redemption," and "sacrifice."⁵⁴ A comparison of the treatment of her death in two stagings from the 1940s illuminates the soulful idealization that sometimes took place. The first, a Brno production, designed by Ota Zítek in 1946, covered up Kát'a's dead body with rough sacking (see figure 2). Václav Kašlík's staging in 1947 for the Velká Opera, by contrast, draped a delicately slender Kát'a (Jaroslava Vymazalová) gracefully from Dikoj's arms, with Kuligin in the background ready to shroud her bare shoulders in her shawl (see figure 3). For the scene pictured in figure 2, the final moment of the opera when Tichon throws himself on Kát'a's corpse, Kašlík's pose is again eloquent; Kát'a is now on full display, glossy braided hair and pristine dress miraculously neither dirtied nor sodden from her plunge into the river (see figure 4).

There were limits, however. The "blindingly white dress" designed by Josef Jelínek for Brno's 1986 *Kát'a* had the critics cringing at the crude flagrancy of director Daniel Dvořák's personification of the heroine as a "ray of light in a dark world" – a conception Dvořák had taken from the nineteenth-century Russian literary critic Nikolai Dobroliubov's interpretation of Ostrovsky's play.⁵⁵ That said, failure to present a sufficiently sympathetic character was always poorly received, as in Prague's 1992 *Kát'a* (a third revival of Karel Jernak's production, first seen in 1974). Jiřina Marková, replacing the renowned soprano Gabriela Beňáková-Čapová couldn't live up to either her predecessor's vocal standards or her interpretation. Vilém Pospíšil had described Beňáková-Čapová as "high-flown, buoyant, thirsty for love, and

⁵² Josef Ceremuga, "Janáčková opera Kát'a Kabanová v ND," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 20 May 1957.

⁵³ la., "Kultura. Talich řídí Kát'u Kabanovou."

⁵⁴ Miroslav Barvík, "Další Janáčkovovo vítězství," *Divadlo* 7 (1957): 694-7; Jarmila Brožovská, "Ve znamení Roku české hudby," *Mladá fronta* (Prague), 28 June 1974; Cl., "Kultura. Okouzlení Janáčkem," *Práce* (Prague), 29 April 1947; Vilém Pospíšil, "Nová Kát'a Kabanová," *Hudební rozhledy* 8 (1986): 347.

⁵⁵ Eva Hermannová, "Kát'a Kabanová," *Tvorba* (Prague), 18 June 1986.

prepared to die for it.”⁵⁶ In contrast, Hana Šlesingerová described Marková witheringly as a “bored, panicked, spoilt daughter who, by the finale, is schizophrenic.”⁵⁷

Space and oppression

Compared with the consideration they paid to portrayals of the title role, critics gave the direction and design of productions relatively little attention: staging *Kát'a Kabanová* simply did not exercise writers into the heated debates that some of Janáček's later operas would occasion. (For an example of how contentious the staging of *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* could become, see Chapter Two). In fact, the National Theatre tended to revive old productions rather than stage the opera anew – not the usual practice when it came to Janáček's operas. Karel Jernak's Prague production was recycled three times: in 1974, 1986, and 1992. But while Josef Svoboda's sets (originally designed for and used in Hanuš Thein's 1964 production) became more and more threadbare as the years went by (see the striped, scalloped-back settee from Act II, in figures 5, 6, and 7), it was the repetition of the staging, not the staging itself, that wore out the patience of the critics, who felt that Janáček's reputation deserved better than furniture nearly thirty years old.

Nevertheless, the reason why Svoboda's sets were acceptable for such a long time, I would suggest, was because they captured a satisfactory balance between detail and emptiness that allowed different directors to foreground Kát'a's drama. The feature item of the staging was a massive iron branch suspended from the flies that, depending on the scene and Kát'a's emotions, blossomed or withered through the use of projections on the backdrop (see figure 8).⁵⁸ The branch was present even above the interior scenes, otherwise indicated by a few pieces of furniture and two wooden frame windows suspended at the back of the stage. The rest of the staging relied on projections (the “undulating waves” of the river, its atmospheric “foggy haze”; see figure 9) and light (for example, rays shining through the suspended windows from “outside”) to suggest the dark, close, oppressive atmosphere within the Kabanov house.⁵⁹

The sparseness continued a trend toward clearing the stage space of detail, to give greater prominence to the interaction among the opera's characters. This uncluttering process began directly after the first production of *Kát'a* at the National Theatre in Prague, which was done by the theatre's long-standing designer Josef Matěj Gottlieb. Gottlieb's sets were elaborate – one can see why they took so much time to change that the theatre turned the lights on between scenes – and predominantly, if romantically, realistic in style. The outdoor scenes were typical of

⁵⁶ Pospíšil, “Nová Kát'a Kabanová.”

⁵⁷ Hana Šlesingerová, “Kát'a bez Káti,” *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 14 May 1992.

⁵⁸ Ivana Glasová, “Světelný scénář Káti Kabanové,” *Ahoj na sobotu* (Prague), 20 June 1975.

⁵⁹ Zdeněk Candra, “Katěrina do Skotska,” *Práce* (Prague), 10 June 1964.

the designer's lushly verdant representations of nature, already seen, for example, in his sets for the 1919 production of Leo Delibes' *Lakmé*, as well as in those for the stagings of Antonín Dvořák's *Šelma sedlák* (*The Cunning Peasant*) and Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in 1920. Nor did Gottlieb omit the usual, unmistakable "Russian" signposts: the birch trees in the opening scene (he'd also used them in *Onegin*), and the cupolas in the backdrop, always visible just left of center, regardless of whether the scene was the park adjoining the Kabanov house, the ruined church in the storm, or the river banks from which Kát'a makes her leap to death (see figures 10, 11, 12).

Gottlieb's cupolas and birch trees were, in essence, a kind of exotic coloring no more Russian than Janáček's similarly "Russian" musical signposts: the "troika" bells, for example, that feature in the prelude and again when Tichon departs on his trip, or the song that Kudrjáš sings by himself and the snatches of refrains that he trades with Varvara. In what Derek Katz has called Janáček's "fake folk" style, the songs are Russian only by virtue of the opera's Russian setting. And, in fact, several critics thought the fake folk songs just pasted in to the opera's musical fabric not much differently from how Janáček had regarded some of Ostrovsky's background to be stuck on to the action.⁶⁰ Indeed, in his review of the first production of *Kát'a* in Prague, Rudolf Jeníček observed that the Russian setting was largely incidental to the opera, suggesting that, "the action on the banks of the Volga would be conceivable elsewhere – even in the environment where the characters of his first feted singspiel lived" (i.e. even in rural Moravia, where *Pastorkyňa* is set).⁶¹

But after Gottlieb, such elaborate, naturalistic detail was never seen again in Prague productions of *Kát'a*. For example, when Ota Zítek directed the opera next at the National Theatre, in 1938, František Muzika's sets for the new production replaced Gottlieb's picturesque vision of nineteenth-century Russian riverside landscape with a austere urban environment composed of blunt, monumental shapes (see figures 13 and 14). Little remained in Zítek and Muzika's stark stage to form a dialogue with Šilhan's Russophilism narrative, recycled from his review of Prague's 1922 *Kát'a*. When Zítek directed *Kát'a* in Brno in 1946, he recreated the urban riverport look, with the help of the architect Zdeněk Rossmann, who provided sets that bore more than a little resemblance to Muzika's (see figure 2 again). Though the critics provided little commentary on either of Zítek's productions, most seemed satisfied with both (Šilhan, unsurprisingly, was one of the few exceptions, criticizing Muzika's "white boards and linoleum."⁶² But generally the simple stagings were thought ideal matches, in particular, for the opera's "intimate" atmosphere.⁶³

The intimacy critics pointed to in *Kát'a* was, like the occasional use of the word "psychological" to describe the opera, an expression of the tightly-knit, tension-filled

⁶⁰ "Kulturní Kronika. Janáčkovy opery Kát'a Kabanová."; Jiří Fukač, "Drama v Opeře: Janáčková Kát'a-drama citu," *Rovnost* (Brno), 12 May 1968.

⁶¹ R.J. [Jeníček], "Beseda. Kát'a Kabanová."

⁶² Šilhan, "Z Kulturního života. Leoš Janáček: „Kát'a Kabanová’."

⁶³ Kar., [Bohumil Karásek], "Kát'a Brněnských," *Práve* (Prague), 28 May 1948.

relationships on which the tragedy balances as if on a knife's edge.⁶⁴ Thus, judicious use of one or two details in a production – such as the watery projections in Jernak and Svoboda's staging to symbolize the ever-present Volga – was as key to representing the opera's oppressive atmosphere as was allowing space for the performers to portray the tension between the characters. The consistent appearance in productions of icons, the only "Russian" detail that featured in stagings year after year, should, perhaps, be understood in this light. When Gottlieb hung one high on the wall inside the Kabanov house, it was, like his onion-topped cupolas, just another unmistakable symbol of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and thus "Russia" (see figure 15). Later productions, however, seemed to use icons less obviously as signposting, and more to depict religious practice and belief.

Thus the huge icon Rossmann suspended ominously above the set in the 1946 Brno *Kát'a* represented not only the religiosity that informs the narrow-minded traditionalist elders in the town, such as Kabanicha and Dikoj, but also, and by contrast, Kát'a's genuine faith and concomitant sense of guilt. Its looming presence over the household perfectly captured, one critic wrote, "the oppressive atmosphere" of Kabanicha's severity as well as the crushing weight of Kát'a's guilt (see figure 16).⁶⁵ Later productions borrowed or built on Rossmann's idea. For example, Miloš Tomek's sets for Brno's very next *Kát'a*, which opened in 1953, expanded the icon imagery both in size and in number (see figure 17). The creation of the opera's heavy atmosphere was taken the furthest – ironically, perhaps, given what he did for his next staging – by Josef Svoboda, who designed the sets for *Kát'a* when it was given at the newly opened theatre Velká Opera 5. Května, in Prague, in 1947. Under director Václav Kašlík's concept of "poetic realism," Svoboda cast real objects in unrealistic and symbolic light; the riverside jetties, footpaths, and trees took on an almost nightmarish quality, emphasized by the lighting, which cast enlarged shadows of grasping, tangled branches onto the backdrop (see figure 18).⁶⁶

Boors and milksops

Against these backdrops, and in conjunction with the intensification the sympathetic portrayal Janáček had given to Kát'a in stagings and reception, the portrayal of the other characters in the opera also underwent readjustment. Their fundamental character traits were also given a sharpening and exaggeration by singers. The eventual result was polarization: against Kát'a's elevation, Tichon and Boris were weakened, while Kabanicha and Dikoj became more abhorrent. As the oppressors, their darkening was to be expected: the more evil they became, the more sympathetic

⁶⁴ See, for example, H.D. [Hubert Doležil], "Zahájení Janáckových oslav, Obnovení opery Kát'a Kabanová," *České slovo* (Prague), 18 September 1938; Jiří Fukač, "Drama v Opeře: Janáčkova Kát'a-drama citu.," and Jarmila Brožovská, "Úsečná, ale bohatá," *Mladá fronta* (Prague), 30 May 1986.

⁶⁵ "Kulturní Kronika. Janáckovy opery Kát'a Kabanová."

⁶⁶ "Ruské Drama v Janáckově Hudbě, rozhovor o Katě Kabanové," *Svět sovětů* (Prague), 24 January 1947.

Kát'a became by contrast. More ink has always been spilt on Dikoj than on either of the principal tenor roles, Boris or Tichon, although his part is no less "episodic" than theirs.⁶⁷ Like many villains, Dikoj was obviously more fun to play than either the subservient mama's boy Tichon, or limp, indecisive Boris, whom even the renowned tenor Beno Blachut couldn't bring to life. Despite having even fewer attractive traits, Dikoj possesses a loud voice and a louder personality, and some of the great Czech basses, such as Dalibor Jedlička, sank their teeth into the part.

Portrayals of Dikoj over the years demonstrate how roles in the opera could become exaggerated to the point of caricature. An uneducated brute – his name means "savage" in Russian – but a wealthy one nonetheless, Dikoj went from being a tastefully embroidered, cane-carrying boor in Prague 1922 (as sung by Jiří Huml, see figure 19), to a feral animal in the Velká Opera production of 1947: hirsute, wild-eyed and gesticulating (Jan Rožánek, see figure 20). Rožánek was no doubt a tough act to follow; Vladimír Šefl complained that Karel Berman's Dikoj in Hanuš Thein's staging of 1964, was "neither hulking nor drunkenly loathsome enough" (see figure 21).⁶⁸ But while Berman's costume appears to have been tailored for broader shoulders than his, not filling the role's shoes – in this case, its shirt – was only part of the problem.

The underlying issue with Dikoj in Thein's production was his relationship with Kabanicha, as Berman and Jaroslava Prochazková interpreted it in their second act scene (Naděžda Kniplová, pictured above, took the role in the second cast). Even before the opera had been staged, back in the second decade of the century, the scene had raised eyebrows. The way Janáček played up the relationship between the two tyrants in the opera had so disturbed Max Brod that, as he was translating the opera into German for the score's publication by Universal Editions, he tried to convince Janáček to change it. "I consider it very misguided to have Kabanicha lead Dikoj away and then reappear [in the middle of the second act]," he wrote to the composer, "the audience will think they've been up to goodness knows what with one another. Besides, this coming and going of the two is completely *unmotivated*."⁶⁹ The "coming and going" in question supposedly occurs at the moment Kát'a overhears Kabanicha speaking off-stage to Dikoj just a few minutes before the two older characters share their scene together. Dikoj does not even reply to her, so his presence is insignificant; the passage is in no way risqué. Yet Brod suggested Janáček take it out, or at least have the conversation take place on stage with Kát'a in attendance (as a chaperone to curb the audience's wild imaginings). Janáček ignored him.⁷⁰ In any case, the passage acquires its whiff of impropriety only after the relationship has been made visible in the following scene. Even there, perhaps, one has to read between the lines, but where the words and stage actions may be ambiguous, the music makes the interaction between Kabanicha and Dikoj – a complex dance of begging, denying, and teasing that borders on the sadomasochistic – quite clear.

⁶⁷ V.S., "Janáčková Kát'a po deseti letech," *Lidová demokracie* (Brno), 22 May 1968.

⁶⁸ Vladimír Šefl, "Další Janáček pro Edinburg," *Večerní* (Prague), 5 June 1964.

⁶⁹ Letter reprinted in John Tyrrell, "The libretto," in *Leoš Janáček: Kát'a Kabanová*, 48-69, here 64-5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 13, p. 201. Tyrrell's translation.

Their scene lurches in with a slightly off-balance swoop in the violas and cellos marked *lichotivě* (flatteringly), which captures both Dikoj's tipsiness and his attitude toward the widow at that moment (see example 5). Markedly different in affect from any other motive in the opera, it accompanies Dikoj whenever he is trying to be, in his own fashion, winning. It introduces and underpins his whining plea to be given a dressing down, and then, after a protracted description of sinning and beating, reappears at the end of the scene, as he gets down on his knees for one last advance.

The exaggerated music allows singers to shade the scene into the burlesque, as Berman and Prochazková seem to have done in 1964. Prochazková, though at this point a mature singer, was not a true contralto (the original voice type for the part) and her mezzo paired a light-weight Kabanicha with the diminutive Berman. Jarmila Brožovská was only one of several critics who found Prochazková both lacking the necessary vocal weight for Kabanicha's character and erring in her tendency toward "comedy."⁷¹ Vladimír Bor, whose review covered the portrayals of Kabanicha and Dikoj at length, shared Brod's squeamishness regarding the pairing. But while Bor didn't like the ribaldness in the score, he actively objected to the comedic manner in which it was delivered, sniffing that Berman and Prochazková "came off as a couple of old dears, almost as though they were Philemon and Baucis" (the impoverished but accommodating couple in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*).⁷²

Performing the scene as comic relief to the opera's tragedy, though arguably supported by the score, had by 1964, come to sit uneasily with the caricatural an evil duo that Kabanicha and Dikoj had become. Just as Dikoj's behavior became more "animalistic" under these polarizing tendencies, Kabanicha turned into a woman whose actions and words were "ruthless," "evil," and even, as Bor put it in 1974, "cruel, sadistic, and malicious."⁷³ Her role in the drama as Kát'a's oppressor was similarly ramped up by directors and performers. Marie Rejholcová, who created Prague's first Kabanicha, was already criticized for overacting, and "ranting" when she should only have been, in Boleslav Vomáčka words, "a sharp busy-body, the way mothers-in-law often are."⁷⁴ By comparison, in 1938, Anna Patzaková described Kabanicha as a "terrorizing despot who ... by the knout of her well-aimed words flayed the last flash of morals and love out of Kát'a."⁷⁵ One review of 1947 makes it clear that exaggerated acting by the singers in the roles of Kabanicha and Dikoj was not only appropriate, but even obligatory.⁷⁶ Josef Ceremuga wrote with glee that, as

⁷¹ Jarmila Brožovská, "Píseň o ženské duši," *Mladá fronta* (Prague), 23 June 1964.

⁷² Vbr [Vladimír Bor], "Kát'a Kabanová pro Edinburg," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 6 June 1964.

⁷³ R.F., "Svátek v Národním Divadle," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 30 April 1947; Vilém Pospíšil, "Kát'a Kabanová v Národním Divadle," *Hudební rozhledy* 13 (1957): 467-471; and Vladimír Bor, "Pražským koncertním životem," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 8 November 1974.

⁷⁴ Boleslav Vomáčka, "Kát'a Kabanová," *Lidové noviny* (Prague), 2 December 1922.

⁷⁵ Ajp [Anna J. Patzaková], "Divadla. Leoše Janáčka Kát'a Kabanová," *Národní osvobození* (Prague), 18 September 1938.

⁷⁶ Mg, "Kát'a Kabanová v Národním divadle," *Vyšehrad* (Prague), 28 May 1947.

Kabanicha in Prague's 1957 *Kát'a*, Marta Krasová was, "quite frankly, the devil incarnate."⁷⁷

Just as contrast with Dikoj and Kabanicha effectively exaggerated Kát'a's victimization, so too did turning the opera's two tenors, Tichon and Boris, into ineffectual milksops incapable of saving her. Janáček usually used the tenor voice in his operas to suggest not only youth, as in the roles of Janek and Gregor from *Makropulos*, but also weakness of character, as in the superficial Števa from *Její pastorkyňa*, and the cowardly landlord Brouček. Like many of the composer's tenors, the operatic Tichon is no match for the women around him. More surprising, perhaps, is that so is Boris. Tyrrell's view that Boris is Kát'a's equal – as he says, "the one person in the dreary provincial town who has the education and imagination to ... share her dreams and enthusiasms" – has very rarely been adopted in Czech reception.⁷⁸

Neither Boris nor Tichon, at first, made much impression on critics: unless their singers were included in a list of the performers, early reviews completely overlooked both characters in favor of the opera's heroine and the two oppressors. Later, when the two tenor roles did begin to attract enough attention for commentary in reviews, they were repeatedly labeled with adjectives that captured their failings. Tichon, almost invariably, was "weak" (*slaboch*) or "spineless" (*slaboství*). Both terms were also applied to Boris, whom critics additionally and repeatedly slapped with "passive" (*passivní*) and "irresolute" (*nerozhodný*).⁷⁹ While critics faulted sopranos who fell short of the lofty heights expected of Kát'a, the tenors who sang Boris and Tichon were, on the contrary, occasionally criticized if they rose above the sought-for lows. Bohumil Karásek, for example, wrote that Jaroslav Stříška, Tichon in Prague's 1964 production, sang "beautifully," but too "heroically." Some years later, Ivo Židek was similarly criticized for singing, "one notch more energetically than was appropriate to Kát'a's spineless lover," when he took the part of Boris in 1974 at the National Theatre in Prague.⁸⁰

Janáček's adjustments to Tichon's character, though subtle, had made him even more submissive than he is in Ostrovsky's play.⁸¹ There, Tichon obeys his mother's dicta but is at least aware that her behavior doesn't deserve genuine respect: before he departs on his trip, for example, he tells Kát'a not to torture herself

⁷⁷ Josef Ceremuga, "Janáčková opera Kát'a Kabanová v ND."

⁷⁸ Tyrrell, "Introduction," 4.

⁷⁹ See for example, "Kulturní Kronika. Janáčková opery Kát'a Kabanová."; -b., "Kát'a Kabanová," *Čin* (Brno), 18 May 1948; Abs., "Janáček – Dramatik."; Ot. Šourek, "Janáčka Kát'a Kabanová."; V.T., "Kulturní Hlídka. Kát'a Kabanová opět v Národním divadle," *Národní osvobození* (Prague), 30 April 1947; Mg., "Kát'a Kabanová v Národním divadle."; Emanuel Kopecký, "Nové nastudování Káti Kabanové," *Práce* (Prague), 19 May 1947; Bohumil Karásek, "Vynikající Kát'a Kabanová," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 20 June 1964; Zdeněk Candra, "Katěřina do Skotska."; Pf., "Kát'a Kabanová znovu v Národním divadle."; Vladimír Bor, "Janáčková 'Kát'a' s Beňákovou," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 5 June 1986; and Vilém Pospíšil, "Janáčková Kát'a Kabanová," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 4 June 1986.

⁸⁰ Bohumil Karásek, "Vynikající Kát'a Kabanová."; Ps., "Obnovená Kát'a Kabanová," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 5 July 1974.

⁸¹ Tyrrell, "The libretto," 52.

listening to his mother's jibes. "You know how she talks! So let her talk and let it go in one ear and out the other." He also doesn't take bullying from his sister lying down, answering Varvara's accusations that he drinks too much with spirited rejoinders. Janáček's Tichon, by contrast, manifests no vocal resistance: his comment about ignoring his mother is cut, and Varvara's accusations are met not with answering ripostes but staggered silence and flight. As in voice, so in action; in the scene of Tichon's departure where Ostrovsky had Tichon kneel following his mother's order to do so, Janáček shifted the stage direction so that the kneeling came ahead of the command, thereby making the son's subservience to the mother appear so ingrained as to be reflexive.

Tichon's subjection is further reinforced in his music, which frequently takes its cue from Kabanicha's part. For example, when she enters to inform him that everything is ready for his departure, she sings "It's time, Tichon" (*je čas, Tichone*) beginning on a C-flat, rising to an E-flat for "time," and then returning to the C-flat for his name (see example 6a). A few measures later, Tichon echoes the same phrase, "It's time, mama" (*bude čas, maminko*), on pitch (see example 6b). Even his protestations, for example when Kabanicha tells him to instruct Kát'a how to behave during his absence, sound feeble because they follow his mother's melodic lead; the cumulative musical profile is that of man completely under his mother's thumb.

The adjustments Janáček made to Tichon were all intensifications of his basic character. What happened to Boris was slightly more complex, and can be best understood, perhaps, by returning to *Madama Butterfly* for another look. To recreate *Butterfly*'s trope of the victimized, abandoned woman in the very different context of Ostrovsky's play would require, in addition to the obvious similarities between Kát'a and Cio-cio-san, that Boris become a distant relation of Pinkerton's. That Janáček had indeed thought along these lines is suggested by his alteration of Boris's monologue from the play, in which he ruminates on his love for Kát'a, into a dialogue with Kudrjáš. While Tyrrell has analyzed Janáček's changes in this passage in some detail, he offers no plausible explanation why Janáček would have made them. Once situated alongside *Butterfly*, however, it becomes apparent that this passage now mirrors the one in which Sharpless advises Pinkerton not to go through with his marriage to Cio-cio-san. By having Boris ignore Kudrjáš's warnings that pursuing Kát'a will ruin her, Janáček makes Boris, like Pinkerton, shallowly and selfishly interested only in his own gratification. That Boris runs, barely willing to stay on stage with Kát'a as she begins to rave in her final monologue of the opera, heightens her similarity to the sympathetic victim Cio-cio-san: ruined, abandoned, and with no recourse but the desperate act of suicide.

In English scholarship, Boris is typically thought of as Kát'a's male counterpart – a view that is influenced, I suggest, by the "Kamila narrative." In these versions, Boris is bullied by Dikoj just as Kát'a is harried by Kabanicha; they seek relief from their oppression in each other's arms. Clearly, however, this has not been the impression Czech reception has taken from the opera, where, as the commentary quoted above indicates, Boris is the weak Tichon's counterpart, not Kát'a's: "Sure," sniffed Šilhan in 1938, "he's in the same situation [as Kát'a], but he gives her no

support. He is a hollow soul, an everyday weakling.”⁸² The picture Petr Veber called up in 1992 of a Boris who “fails to take responsibility” stems from the tendency in Czech productions to exaggerate and polarize the rest of the opera’s characters in order to “martyrize” Kát’a.⁸³ The martyr and milksop views of *Kát’a Kabanová* that Czech performances and reception have created, no less than the narratives that explain the opera by recourse to the composer’s biography, are a response to the sympathy Janáček’s music demands for the opera’s heroine. Putting that *Kát’a* in dialogue with the lyrical vocal writing and orchestral support Janáček constructed for the opera’s heroine, as well as his revisions to its supporting characters, illuminates the extent to which Janáček was influenced by cosmopolitan operatic styles and taste, modeling *Kát’a* at least in part on Puccini’s tear-jerker, *Madama Butterfly*, rather than composing solely out of nationalistic fervor or personal fantasy.

⁸² Šilhan, “Z Kulturního života. Leoš Janáček: „Kát’a Kabanová”.”

⁸³ Petr Veber, “...když miluji jiného.”

Example 1.

Moderato, $\text{♩} = 48$

Tromboni e Tuba

con sord. 1° 2°

con sord. 3° *ppp*

T. *ppp*

Timpani

p

♩ Moderato, $\text{♩} = 48$

con sord.

pp

con sord.

Violoncelli

pp

Contrabbassi

pp

Example 2.

Allegretto, ♩ = 80

Fl. *mf* [sim.]

Cl. si^b

Cel. *mf*

6 16

VARVARA (stoupne si před zrcadlo a upravuje si šátek na hlavě)
BARBARA (tritt vor den Spiegel und richtet sich das Kopftuch)

mf 2

Pů - jdu
O vte

6 16 Allegretto, ♩ = 80

VI. I

VI. II

Ve. *legg.* *mf* 2

Varvara (*standing in front of a mirror and arranging a kerchief on her head*): I'm going ...

Example 2 continued.

[colla parte] **a tempo**

Fl. *1^o 2^o 3^o* *4^o*

Cl. (sib) *1^o*

Cel.

Va. *rit.*
Ba. též se pro-jít. — Gla-ša nám u-ste-le v za-hra-dě.
warm ist es heut! — Da kann uns Gla-scha im Gar-ten

Vo. *[colla parte]* **a tempo**

Più mosso [♩. = 108] **Allegretto** [Tempo I]

Fl. *1^o 2^o ** *8^o [4^o]* *4^o [8^o]* *[8^o]* *[4^o]*

Cel. *mf*

Va. *auf-geht.*
Ba. Za ma-li-na-mi jsou vrát-ka,
Kennst du das Tür-chen beim Him-beer-strauch?

Più mosso [♩. = 108] **Allegretto** [Tempo I]

Vi. I *f*

Vi. II *f*

Ve. *[trem.]* *mf*

Vc. *[trem.]*

Cb. *[trem.]* *f*

Varvara: ...to go for a walk. Glaša will make up our beds in the garden. Behind the raspberries there's a gate.

Example 2 continued.

Example 2 continued. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Euphonium (Eg.), Cello (Cel.), Violins (Va. Ba.), Violas (VI. I, VI. II), and Cellos/Double Basses (Ve., Vc.). The vocal parts (Va. Ba.) have lyrics in Czech and German. The tempo is marked *riten.* (ritardando). The woodwinds and strings play a rhythmic pattern. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics: *ma-min-ka vždy - cky je za - vi - rá na zá - mek a klíč scho - vá - vá, -* and *Mut-ter ver-sperrt es gut, hebt auch den Schlüs-sel auf. Sie gibt acht auf mich!*

Varvara: mother always keeps it locked and hides the key...

Example 3.

Example 3. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl. (sib)), Euphonium (Eg.), Violins (VI. I, VI. II), Violas (Ve.), Cellos/Double Basses (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The tempo is marked *Più mosso, vivo* with a metronome marking of $\text{♩} = 108$. The time signature is $\frac{3}{2}$. The woodwinds and strings play a rhythmic pattern. The vocal parts (VI. I, VI. II) enter with the lyrics: *[rit.]* (ritardando). The score includes a rehearsal mark **6** at measure 16.

Example 4.

rit. Adagio, $\text{♩} = 60$ [50]

Ob. *1^o solo* *p* [espressivo]

Cl. (si^b) *1^o solo* *pp*²

Cor. (fa) *1^o (c.s.)* *sf p* *p dim.*

(Katherine pohlíží na klíč)
(Katherine blickt auf den Schlüssel in ihrer Hand)

KATHERINA
KATHERINA

Vi - da!
Be - te!

rit. Adagio, $\text{♩} = 60$ [50]

VI.I *arco* *p* *espressivo*

Ve. *sf p* *dim.* *sul ponticello* [trem.] *pp*

Vc. *sf p* *p* [espressivo]

Ob. *a 2* *p* *dolcissimo*

Cl. (si^b) *1^o*

Cor. (fa) *1^o (c.s.)* *p* *via sord.*

(dívá se na klíč)
(schaut auf den Schlüssel)

Kat. *2*

Ne-ště-ští! Ta-dy je to ne-ště-ští!
Be-te nur! Und das Un-glück packt dich doch!

VI.I *p* *dolcissimo* *[trem.]* *arco*

VI.II *(sul pont.)* *pp*

Ve. *[trem.]*

Vc. *pp*

(Kát'a keeps looking at the key)

Kát'a: See! (she looks at the key) Misfortune! Here is that misfortune!

Example 5.

172

Meno mosso, $\text{♩} = 60$ [Tempo I] Un poco più mosso [Tempo II] accel. a tempo [colla parte]

Ob. mf

Fg. mf

(Kabanicha vstoupí se světlem a se zákusky do pokoje, za ní Dikoj.
Výklenek tmavý, pokoj osvětlený)
(Die Kabanicha, ein Licht in der Hand, tritt in das Zimmer, hinter ihr Dikoj.
Der Erker ist nun dunkel, das Zimmer beleuchtet)

DIKOJ f

Nic zvláštní-ho, je-nom jsem
Ge - vat-te - rin, daß ich be -

3
8

Meno mosso, $\text{♩} = 60$ [Tempo I] Un poco più mosso [Tempo II] accel. a tempo [colla parte]

VI. I mf *tvrdě - hart*

VI. II mf *(lichotivě - schmeichlerisch)*

Ve. mf *senza sord.*

Vo. mf *(c.s.)*

Cb. mp

[a tempo II]

Fg. p *(colla parte)*

KABANICHA f

Te - dy jdi spát!
Dann geh doch schla - fen.
(usedá - setzt sich)

Do-mů!
Geh nur!

Di. f

tro - chu na-chme-len.
-trun-ken bin, merkt Ihr wohl?

A kam mám jet?
Wo - hin mit mir?

[a tempo II]

VI. I mf

VI. II mf

Ve. p

Vo. p *senza sord.*

Cb. p

Dikoj: Nothing special, I'm only a little tipsy.

Kabanicha (*sits down*): Then go sleep it off!

Dikoj: And where do I go?

Kabanicha: Home!

Example 5 continued.

173

[a tempo II] *a 2* *[colla parte]* [a tempo II]

Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass

Kabanicha: Kam bys šel!
Geh nach Haus!

Dikoj: A - le když ne - chci do - mů!
Gra - de nach Haus will ich nicht!

[a tempo II] *pizz.* *[colla parte]* [a tempo II]

Kabanicha: če - ho si pře - ješ o - de mne?
al - so, was willst du? Re - de doch!

Dikoj: Hned ti to po - vim!
War - te nur, bit - te.

[colla parte] *[12] Tempo I* *a 2* *[colla parte]* *[12] Tempo I* *Un poco più mosso* *[Tempo II]*

Kabanicha: Do - mluv mi pře - ce,
Du sollst mich trö - sten,

[colla parte] *[12] Tempo I* *Un poco più mosso* *[Tempo II]*

Kabanicha: (kňouravě) (weinerlich)

Kabanicha: You should go home!
Dikoj: But I don't want to go home!
Kabanicha (*more softly*): Well, what do you desire from me?
Dikoj: I'll tell you directly!
(*whiningly*): Reprimand me, won't you...

Example 6a.

Con moto, ♩ = 138

25

Fl. *pp*

Ob. *pp*

Tbn. *pp*

Tba. *pp*

Rol. Schell. *p*

KABANICHA (za scénou) (hinter der Szene)

Je čas, Tichone.
S'ist Zeit Ti - chon,

Con moto, ♩ = 138

25 [div.] pizz. e col legno

VI. I *pp*

VI. II [div.] pizz. e col legno *pp*

Ve. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Cb. *pp*

Kabanicha (*off stage*): It's time, Tichon.

Example 6b.

[illegible]

Tichon (*indecisively*): Yes, of course, it's time, mama.



Figure 1. Libuše Domanínská as Kát'a (Prague, National Theatre, 1964).



Figure 2. *Kát'a Kabanová*, directed by Ota Zítek (Brno, Janáček Theatre na Hradbách, 1946).



Figure 3. *Kát'a Kabanová*, directed by Václav Kašlík (Prague, Velká Opera 5. Května, 1947).



Figure 4. *Kát'a Kabanová*, directed by Václav Kašlík (Prague, Velká Opera 5. Května, 1947).



Figure 5. Dalibor Jedlička and Naděžda Kniplová as Dikoj and Kabanicha (Prague, National Theatre, 1974).



Figure 6. Eva Zikmundová as Kabanicha (Prague, National Theatre, 1986).



Figure 7. Marta Cihelníková as Kabanicha (Prague, National Theatre, 1992).



Figure 8. Josef Svoboda, sets for Act II, scene ii (Prague National Theatre, 1974).



Figure 9. Josef Svoboda, sets for Act I, scene i (Prague, National Theatre, 1974.)



Figure 10. Matěj Gottlieb, sets for Act I, scene i (Prague, National Theatre, 1922).



Figure 11. Matěj Gottlieb, sets for Act III, scene i (Prague, National Theatre, 1922).



Figure 12. Matěj Gottlieb, sets for Act III, scene ii (Prague, National Theatre, 1922).

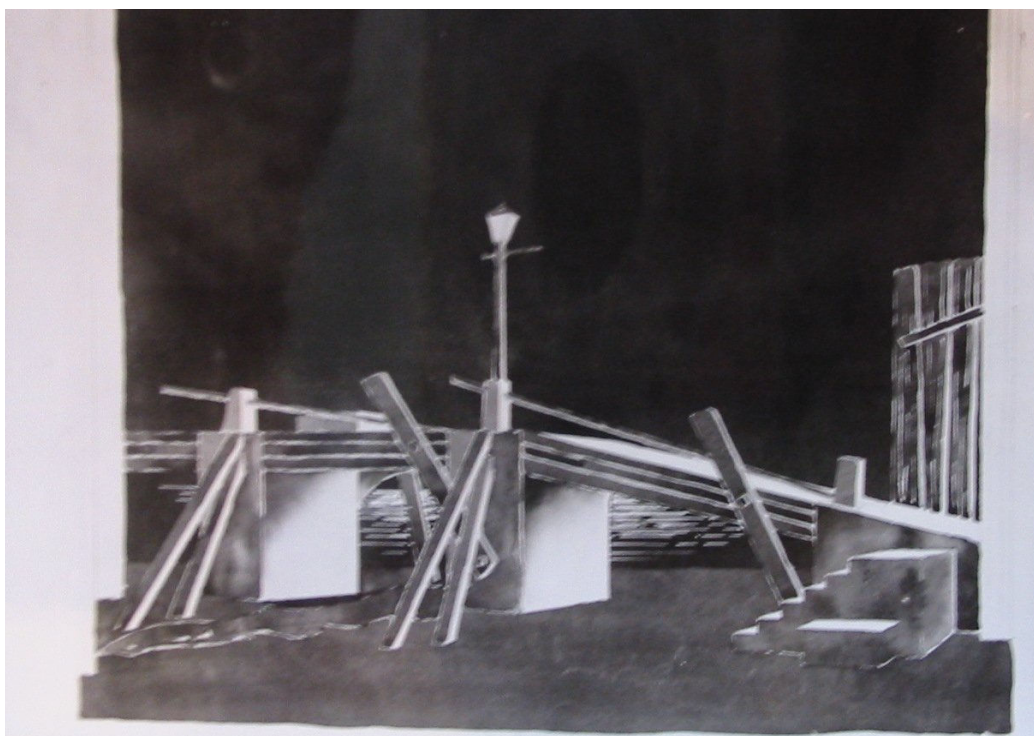


Figure 13. František Muzika set design for Act III, scene ii (Prague, National Theatre, 1938).



Figure 14. František Muzika set design for Act III, scene i (Prague, National Theatre, 1938).



Figure 15. Matěj Gottlieb, sets for Act I, scene ii (Prague, National Theatre, 1922).

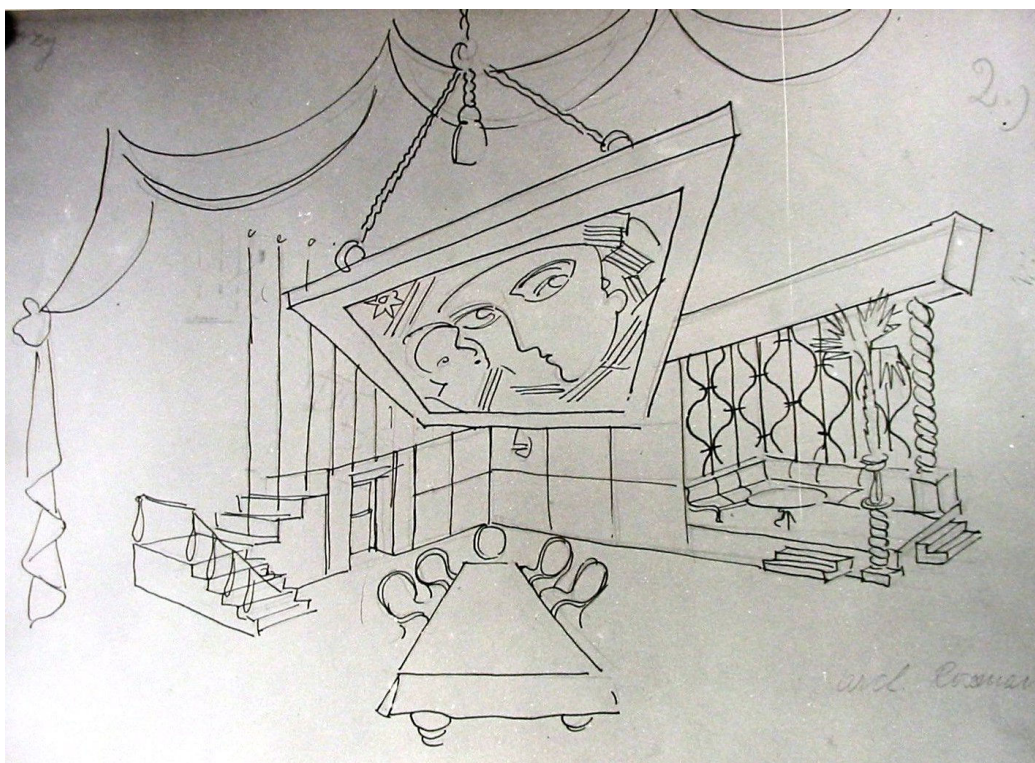


Figure 16. Zdeněk Rossmann, set design for Act I, scene ii (Brno, Janáček Theatre na Hradbách, 1946).



Figure 17. Miloš Tomek, sets for Act I, scene ii (Brno, Janáček Theatre na Hradbách, 1953).



Figure 18. *Káťa Kabanová*, directed by Václav Kašlík, sets by Josef Svoboda (Prague, Velká Opera 5. Května, 1947).



Figure 19. Jiří Huml as Dikoj (Prague, National Theatre, 1922).



Figure 20. Jan Rožánek as Dikoj (Prague, Velká Opera 5. Května, 1947).



Figure 21. Karel Berman and Naděžda Kniplová as Dikoj and Kabanicha (Prague, National Theatre, 1974).

How the *Vixen* Lost her Mores: Gesture and Music (*Příhody lišky Bystroušky*)

The hedgehog problem

“It will be a dream, a fairytale that will warm your heart”: echoing billboard promises of pleasure and packed with insider tidbits on the production, a local newspaper whetted Brno’s appetite for Janáček’s newest opera, *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*, hereafter *Bystrouška*). The opera was set to open at Brno’s Na hradbách Theatre on 6 November 1924 with František Neumann at the podium and in a staging by Ota Zítek, but the article revealed little of the music or the set. Instead, it treated its readers to a taste of the “seventy costumes” designed by artist Eduard Milén: Grasshoppers and crickets in “yellow-green tailcoats and magnificent little wings”; black and white glowworms with reflectors “to light up their bottoms” in the night scenes; a wire-frame rooster costume lined with brightly colored fabrics; and a green, blue, and black dragonfly of “melancholy beauty,” whose tiny, delicate underwings were illuminated in glittering gold.¹

The writer’s near exclusive focus on the opera’s costumes, and in the animal and insect costumes in particular, reflected one of *Bystrouška*’s most unusual features: its large number of animal characters. The story, which intertwines the fate of a young female fox, along with her animal friends and foes, with the human inhabitants of a rural Moravian village goes, very briefly, like this: A forester finds a female fox-cub and takes her home. She kills all his fowl and escapes back to the forest where she takes over a badger’s den. She falls in love with a handsome male fox; there is a shotgun wedding; fox-cubs follow soon thereafter. The forester tries but fails to recapture the vixen. Finally, the vixen plunders a poacher’s poultry and is shot dead. In a return to the opening, the forester awakens from a nap to find himself observed by a young and curious female fox-cub.

Bystrouška was a success in Brno. The article cited above embraced the opera’s animal heroine as “a fellow compatriot” of Moravians and loved her all the more for speaking the Moravian dialect, like many in the city. Milén’s costumes for *Bystrouška* (see figure 1) also continued to draw attention and admiration: Ludvík Kundera, in his review of the premiere, pronounced them “truly beautiful pictures” in their own right.² Not to be outdone – at least in costumes and sets – in their first production of *Bystrouška*, the Prague National Theatre engaged Josef Čapek, one of the city’s

¹ B.N., “Z příprav na Lišku Bystroušku,” *Moravské noviny* (Brno), n.d. All translations, unless otherwise noted are my own.

² Ik. [Ludvík Kundera], “Premiéra Janáčkovy Lišky Bystroušky,” *Lidové noviny* (Brno), 7 November 1924. Milén’s designs were used more than once: Zítek reused both sets and costumes for Brno’s very next “new production” of the opera in 1927. In terms of convenience, practicality, and economy this is unsurprising given the number and diversity of costumes the theatre provided for the premiere – even if the critic who estimated there were seventy was exaggerating. Oskar Linhart, when he first staged the opera at the Brno opera house in 1952, also adopted Milén’s costume designs alongside sets by Josef A Šálek.

foremost painters and brother of the prominent author Karel, as designer. Scheduled to open on 18 May 1925, *Bystrouška* was one of the showcase Czech compositions at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival, held that year in Prague. Čapek had some experience in costume and set design for spoken drama, in particular productions of his brother Karel's plays at the National Theatre, such as *R.U.R.*, *Rossum's Universal Robots* (1920), and *Ze života hmyzu*, (*From the Life of Insects*, 1921), but this would be his first opportunity to design for opera. Both *R.U.R.* and *Hmyz* had been huge stage sensations, rapidly traveling beyond the borders of the Czech lands to international stages; the National Theatre was surely counting on the Čapek name to bring Janáček's opera additional attention. The rest of the production team was also solid: Otakar Ostrčil, then well-established as director of opera at the National Theatre and respected for his musical interpretations and attentive preparatory work with the composer, was the conductor. The staging was entrusted to Ferdinand Pujman who, although not yet officially appointed as director at the National Theatre, had already cemented his reputation as a opera director: he had staged the first *Pelleas et Mélisande* at the National Theatre, as well as a hugely successful production of Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) in 1923 which would go on to amass 383 performances over the next eleven years.³

As in Brno, there was fun to be had with the opera's wide array of costumes and Čapek's designs are full of whimsical touches: black and white jail-bird stripes and flying goggles for the mosquito; flouncy polka-dot petticoats for the hens; cowboy spurs with golden rowels for the rooster; a furry deerstalker for the forester's dog. A sketch for a hedgehog is particularly arresting for – in a way that resonates with Kundera's observation about Milén's designs – Čapek's watercolor sketch doesn't appear to be costume at all. Rather, it resembles an illustration for a story: animated, childlike, a little anthropomorphized, and rendered in Čapek's inimitable style (see figure 2). This in itself might not be sufficient to make Čapek's hedgehog noteworthy. But the hedgehog design raises two interpretive problems that provide access to the issues of gesture and morality in *Bystrouška* that are this chapter's topic: one is that there is no hedgehog role in Janáček's opera; the other is that hedgehogs have fleas.

While it is barely possible to imagine fleas on Josef Čapek's untroubled and merry creature, one of his contemporary literary kin plainly suffered from them. The suggestion that its eponymous rodent had an itch he had to scratch was one way in which the Czech author Jaroslav Hašek's *Povídka o neslušném ježkovi* (*The Tale of the Indecent Hedgehog*) satirized base human urges. Hašek's hedgehog is employed by a hotel to keep the cockroaches in check, but the salacious rodent turns out to be an obsessive voyeur. Instead of ridding the hotel rooms of pests, he spies on the guests, watching them from under the furniture, beady-eyed and scratching himself compulsively, as they undress.

³ Ostrčil held the position as chief conductor of opera at the National Theatre in Prague from 1920 to 1935. Pujman was giving steady employment as a guest director with the National Theatre in Prague from 1920 to 1926, when he was officially appointed director.

Hašek continued to mock human weakness and vice in his writing, including in his epochal novel *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* (*The Good Soldier Švejk*).⁴ He penned a number of short stories in which he used, as he had in the hedgehog story, animals as the satirical device. Indeed, Hašek's story of the immoral hedgehog was only one of a number of animal satires dating from the early twentieth century. When animal stories and fables made a late addition to the nineteenth-century interest in collecting folk tales and mythologies, collectors tended to clean up their rougher edges and to heighten – or provide – moral subtexts before including them in their anthologies.⁵ The modern animal satires, of which Hašek's *Povídka* was an example, were a sort of updated twist on this practice. Other Czech contributors to the animal satire genre were the Čapek brothers, whose collaborative play *Ze života hmyzu* used insects to satirize a number of evils in society including, most topically, war.

A list of Czech animal satirists might also include the Moravian writer Rudolf Těsnohlídek, the author of the story on which Janáček based his opera. The adventures of the vixen had run originally in the Brno newspaper *Lidové noviny*, from April to June of 1920, and had taken the form of a serial, illustrated by artist Stanislav Lolek. That Janáček based the libretto on cartoons published in his daily newspaper is the most pervasive misconception about *Bystrouška*. Lolek's pen and ink drawings – around two hundred of them – preceded the writing of the text, but they were not printed as a captioned comic strip as often is assumed.⁶ The editor of *Lidové noviny*, who had spotted Lolek's drawings at the artist's studio, contracted Těsnohlídek to develop a story based on them for the newspaper. The resulting installments comprised a half-folio page of text with two or three of the pictures printed alongside. The serial proved so popular with readers that it was subsequently reprinted – without any modification – as a novella.⁷ Lolek's illustrations had occasionally put the animals in recognizably human situations; Těsnohlídek's text

⁴ "Povídka o neslušném ježkovi" was a short story published in 1908 in the magazine *Humoristické listy*. Hašek was a prolific writer of short stories; it was the medium in which he initially developed Švejk's character, first published in 1911. Hašek only began composing *Švejk* as a novel in 1921; he intended it to have four volumes, but the last of these remained incomplete when he died in 1923 of tuberculosis.

⁵ J. R. Porter and W. M. S. Russell, eds., *Animals in Folklore* (Ipswich: Rowman & Littlefield, 1978), ix. See also: Samuel A. Derieux, *Animal Personalities* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1923); Boria Sax, *The Frog King: On Legends, Fables, Fairy Tales, and Anecdotes of Animals* (New York: Pace University Press, 1990); and Anthony Wootton, *Animal Folklore, Myth and Legend* (New York: Blondford, 1986).

⁶ Erik Chisholm, for example, described them this way in his book, *The Operas of Leoš Janáček* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1971). Some of the misunderstanding may have been caused by Těsnohlídek's modest remark that he was asked to provide "little lines" for the pictures. John Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas: A Documentary Account* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 284. Indirectly, though trenchantly contributing to the myth, is the booklet printed for the 1981 recording of the opera conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras, which reproduces the drawings in a very similar layout to that of modern newspapers comic strips: four conjoined panels. Most recently, an animated film of the opera, directed by Geoff Dunbar to an adapted score by Kent Nagano, was released in 2003.

⁷ There were fifty-one installments in total: the first appeared on 7 April, the last on 23 June 1920. Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 283.

amplified and made obvious the implied satire of Lolek's pictures, but the result was one more of gentle humor than either the bald crudeness of Hašek's stories or the Čapeks' uncompromising condemnation of humankind.

Pigeonholes and animal opera

Except, perhaps, for Ravel's almost exactly contemporaneous *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, there are virtually no opera with which *Bystrouška* could be compared: the exploits of animals have rarely been given scope on the operatic stage. Even amongst Janáček's operas *Bystrouška* holds "an entirely special place," the critic Hubert Doležil observed. Its "unusual and arresting appearance as an 'animal opera'" attracted attention and, Doležil predicted, "predestined it for the same success in theatres around the world as the Čapek brothers' insect play had achieved."⁸ By comparing *Bystrouška* to *Hmyz*, Doležil offered animal satire as a possible context for an opera that otherwise had none. Indeed, several critics initially positioned *Bystrouška* in this context, comparing it not only to Czech works such as Čapek's *Hmyz*, but also locating it more broadly in an early twentieth-century renaissance of animal satire and beast fable that included Rudyard Kipling's stories and Edmund Rostand's play *Chantecler* (1910).

It was an uneasy fit, or at least only a partial one, arising more out of attempts to pigeonhole Janáček's animal opera than out of any real conviction that it was a satire. So even as critics situated *Bystrouška* alongside to *Hmyz* and *Chantecler*, they qualified the opera's position, contrasting its ambiguous satire with the more pointed thrusts of the other two stage works. Janáček had followed the same path as Kipling, Rostand, and Čapek, one critic suggested, but his musical setting captured Těsnohlídek's story with "pantheistic optimism and inherent passion."⁹ Another writer observed that Janáček's animals revealed "the quintessence of human wisdom" as well as "human idiocy," unlike in *Chantecler*, where Rostand's animals exclusively caricatured human failings such as jealousy and egoism; nor did Janáček's opera mock with the "ungodly irony of the Čapek brothers' insect play."¹⁰

There is, in other words, neither consistency nor system to Janáček's use of the animals as devices for the purpose of satire in *Bystrouška*. In part, this is because in the opera – as in Těsnohlídek's novella – both animal and human characters are brought together, thus breaking the convention that has animal fables and satires depict animals alone. *Bystrouška*'s combination of animals and humans, the critic Antonín Šilhan suggested, created problems. Making use, once more, of a comparison between *Bystrouška* and *Chantecler*, Šilhan argued that Rostand's representation of solely the animal world on stage allowed its illusion of animals talking and behaving as humans to be maintained and thus comprehended by the

⁸ H.D. [Hubert Doležil], "Znovu Janáček. Liška Bystrouška v Národním divadle," *České slovo* (Prague), 23 May 1937.

⁹ Abs., "Příhody Lišky Bystroušky," *Národní politika* (Prague), 18 May 1948.

¹⁰ B.N., "Z příprav na Lišku Bystroušku."

audience. The action of Janáček's opera, by contrast, alternated between the fantastic and the realistic, meaning that the audience had to readjust their frame of reference from scene to scene.¹¹ What is more, the opera does not just alternate the human and animal worlds, it also allows them to interpenetrate, further complicating the issue.¹²

Literary scholar Karen Ryan has suggested that the effectiveness of animal satire depends, in a large part, on the portrayal of the animals allowing a "dual level of perception" – that is, they appear simultaneously animal and human. "If there is slippage in either direction (ie., if the characters lose their dual and balanced beast/human quality)," Ryan argues, "the satire will sacrifice some of its force."¹³ In *Bystrouška*, Ryan's required balance is disturbed most, I suggest, during scenes in which animals and people interact. From the perspective of the audience the animals regularly take on human characteristics, but for the people in the opera with whom they interact, they are nothing other than ordinary animals. Perhaps the most extreme example of this occurs in the scene in which the schoolteacher staggers home from a late night at the pub. In the darkness and the haze of his intoxication he confuses some sunflowers (inadvertently animated by the concealed vixen) for a girl named Terynka on whom he has a crush. The vixen observes the schoolteacher's comedic lurches and listens to him rambling drunkenly, but does so warily from the undergrowth; she also remains completely silent. With nothing to say and little to do except act out the part of a mistrustful wild creature, the perception of the vixen as both human and animal in this scene tips entirely in favor of the animal.

Even when not complicated by the presence of animals and humans together on stage, Janáček's treatment of the individual characters in *Bystrouška* is more complex than people behaving like animals and animals acting humanly. So while the historian Charles Susskind has suggested that the opera is reminiscent of Aesop's fables, particularly in its use of the sly fox trope, Czech critics of the early productions thought the kinship between Janáček's vixen and her fabled cousin more removed.¹⁴ "Much to my surprise," Doležil wrote, "the foremost characteristic trait of her slyness, which operates so wittily both in our own and in foreign fables and stories, was not used very much in the anthropomorphization of this fox."¹⁵ Indeed, though Janáček had *bajka* (fable) in the opera's title during the early phase of its composition, he discarded it soon thereafter in favor of the *příhody* (adventures) of Těsnohlídek's story.¹⁶ Neither had Těsnohlídek gone out of his way to draw on the customary perception of the fox as a sly animal. Although in English titles Janáček's

¹¹ Aš. [Antonín Šilhan], "Leoš Janáček: Příhody Lišky Bystroušky," *Národní listy* (Prague), 23 May 1937.

¹² See, for example, H.D. [Doležil], "Znovu Janáček. Liška Bystrouška v Národním divadle"; K.B.J. [Karel Boleslav Jiráek], "Kulturní Hlídka. Mezinárodní festival. Premiéra Janáčkovy „Lišky Bystroušky“," *Národní osvobození* (Prague), 20 May 1925; Abs., "Příhody Lišky Bystroušky"; and Vladimír Šefl, "O Lišce, která zpívá," *Večerní* (Prague) 29 June 1965.

¹³ Karen L. Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire, 1917-1991* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2009), 50.

¹⁴ Charles Susskind, *Janáček and Brod* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 70.

¹⁵ H.D. [Doležil], "Znovu Janáček. Liška Bystrouška v Národním divadle."

¹⁶ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 296.

little vixen is “cunning,” and in German she is *schlau* (shrewd), the Czech *bystroušský* means sharp-eared.¹⁷ Těsnohlídek had actually called her *bystronožský* (fleet-footed), but the typesetter at the newspaper misread the word and from then on the vixen’s name became “sharp-ears.”

Additionally weakening the connection between Aesop’s sly fox and Janáček’s vixen is the absence of a moral principle to underpin the opera’s drama. Janáček’s previous operas had strong ethical subtexts, but *Bystrouška* doesn’t fit the model of social critique, psychological drama, and tragedy of either *Její pastorkyňa* (*Jenůfa*) or *Kát’a Kabanová*. Even the comedic, waltz-laden *Výlety paně Broučkovy* (*The Excursions of Mr Brouček*), advocating active nationalism and criticizing the materialism and apathy of the bourgeoisie, was more pointed. The difference between fable and opera is clear: Aesop’s fables have morals, but at the end of Janáček’s opera no moral can be easily drawn.

Bystrouška might lack a moral principle, but it is not entirely without message – Janáček had ensured that. When Těsnohlídek heard that Janáček was interested in setting the escapades of his saucy vixen to music, he had thought it was a joke. He wrote to the composer to express his reservations about the appropriateness of his story for music, “which of all human things,” he said, “is the least earthbound.”¹⁸ But Janáček had his own ideas and so, having obtained the author’s dubious agreement, he had proceeded. Following the practice he had begun with his previous opera, *Kát’a Kabanová*, Janáček wrote his own libretto, which was compiled from a selection of scenes from Těsnohlídek’s novella and modified with a few (such as the vixen’s death) of his own. The earthiness of Těsnohlídek’s language remains in the opera, as do a few of its more ribald scenes but, whether he had meant to or not, Janáček tempered these so that *Bystrouška*, in the words of one critic, “combines jocular humor with melancholy nostalgia.”¹⁹ In particular, the framing scenes of the opera, in both of which the forester is awakened from mid-afternoon naps by a inquisitive young fox (first the vixen, later one of her cubs), lend the opera its nostalgic, even sentimental tone. What is more, by having one of the vixen’s cubs restart the chain after the vixen’s death, Janáček had given the opera an unmistakable theme not present in the novella: the eternal circle of life.

Observations that *Bystrouška* reflects nature and its endless cycle have been as common as the admiration of the forester’s meditative closing monologue (routinely interpreted as a reflection of the composer, then in his autumnal years). Kundera started it off, perhaps, with his observation that the opera’s blend of animal and human was also its ideological underpinning: the “connection of the worlds of people and animals, the situations between both of them, and their internal analogies.”²⁰ And similar representations of the opera – as a “symphony,” a “meditation,” an “ode,” or

¹⁷ Or, possibly, “sharp little one,” depending on whether one thinks of the syllables as two root words (sharp and ear), or one root word plus a diminutive. For more on this, and the details of the eventual alteration to the vixen’s attribute, see Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 284-85.

¹⁸ Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas* 283. Tyrrell’s translation.

¹⁹ T., “L. Janáčka Příhody lišky Bystroušky,” *Pražské noviny* (Prague), 23 May 1937.

²⁰ lk. [Kundera], “Premiéra Janáčkovy Lišky Bystroušky.”

a “hymn,” praising nature and celebrating the “eternity of life” – have been accruing ever since.²¹ Otakar Šourek, the Prague music critic, commented that Janáček had created *Bystrouška* as “a fairytale depiction of the essential fate of union between everything that lives in nature.”²² Jaroslav Vogel, who conducted several of Janáček’s operas as well as writing a biography of the composer, described it as an “intoxicated hymn of love and sympathy for the human and animal worlds, a sanctified optimistic whirl in love and brotherhood with nature.”²³

Still, matters here, as with considerations of *Bystrouška* as animal satire, were not entirely straightforward. Several critics were troubled by Janáček’s elusive correlations between characters in the animal and the human worlds. For example, the same singer was to be used for the forester’s wife and the owl, the priest was paired with the badger, and the schoolteacher with the mosquito (both have low tolerance for drink). Finally, there were the vague suggestions that the vixen was the animal embodiment of a desirable village girl named Terynka. These “symbolisms,” as several writers dubbed them, needlessly complicated the plot. One problem identified by the critic Karel Boleslav Jiráček was that the character Terynka appears in the opera in name only. A second was that the parallel character traits between the animal and human pairs were inconsistently maintained: the priest, for example, doesn’t display the greediness of his animal counterpart, the badger. “Insofar as it is possible to listen to *Bystrouška* as a narrative fairytale,” Jiráček concluded, “it is fine, but once the libretto falls into symbolisms that we don’t understand, this is a cause for concern [as it] induces a bleak sensation of dissatisfaction.”²⁴ Jiráček’s point could be taken as a demonstration of how Janáček’s opera avoids satire; interestingly, a different critic argued that the symbolisms obscure the opera’s “guiding thought ... the idea of endless cycles in nature” which, as a consequence, “does not emerge graphically and clearly from the action.”²⁵ In the end, neither expressions of satire nor embrace of life’s regeneration were as clear to early reviewers as they are today.

The complications surrounding both descriptions of the opera stem, I suggest, from *Bystrouška*’s peculiar neutrality with regard to the actions of its characters and events of its story. Doležil, for example, criticized the opera for being “barely dramatic” because there was neither linear narrative to connect the individual scenes, nor sense that one particular event had more dramatic weight than another: “The scenes stream before us in lively variation,” he wrote, “yet they neither proceed to a climax nor fall off. Even the vixen’s death is not dramatically motivated; instead it is

²¹ B.V. [Boleslav Vomáčka], “Příhody Lišky Bystroušky Talichovo provedení v Národním divadle,” *Lidové noviny* (Brno), 24 May 1937; Martin Tůma, “Apoteóza života a přírody,” *Tvorba* (Prague) 29 July 1970; J.P.K., “V nastudování Václava Talicha Liška Bystrouška znovu v Národním divadle,” *A-Z ranné v úterý* (Prague), 25 May 1937; R.J. [Rudolf Jeníček], “Talichova ‘Liška Bystrouška,’” *Právo lidu* (Prague), 23 May 1937.

²² O.Š. [Otkar Šourek], “Janáčková „Liška Bystrouška“,” *Venkov* (Prague), 23 May 1937.

²³ J.V. [Jaroslav Vogel], “Janáčková Liška Bystrouška v brněnské opeře,” *Národní obroda* (Brno), 18 February 1947.

²⁴ K.B.J. [Jiráček], “Kulturní Hlídka. Mezinárodní festival. Premiéra Janáčkovy „Lišky Bystroušky“.” See also, Josef Bartoš, “Janáček-Première im Nationaltheater,” *Prager Presse* (Prague), 20 May 1925.

²⁵ J.P., “Leoš Janáček: „Příhody lišky Bystroušky“,” *Lidové listy* (Prague), 22 May 1937.

coincidental and, moreover, not even the climax of the action, which proceeds regardless.”²⁶ Paul Stefan, an American journalist in attendance at the Prague premiere, put his finger on *Bystrouška*’s peculiar morality – or rather, absence of morality – perhaps, when he wrote that the opera expressed a “pantheistic credo,” implying, thereby, that the opera’s observance of morals and ethics fell outside more conventional codes of behavior.²⁷ Another critic, several years later, suggested that Janáček had “adapted *Bystrouška* according to his personal psychological and moral laws,” adding not only “humor and the grotesque, but also the serious and tragic.”²⁸ What all these writers were addressing was the complex expression of morality, bordering on amorality, enacted in Janáček’s opera, and the related difficulty of defining its generic context.

Caught in the act

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the issues Czech directors responded to in staging *Bystrouška* have been the same ones that preoccupied critics: the two sides – production and reception – have informed other. One unprecedented staging problem was that of differentiating the animal characters from their human companions.²⁹ Janáček had evidently considered the matter to some extent, because he suggested casting children in some of the animal roles in order to distinguish them from the adults portraying the people in the opera.³⁰ And though the composer reputedly had a good laugh over actors crawling around on all fours, it is not evident that he thought it should be otherwise. On the other hand, there were some improbable interactions that Janáček had not considered – the logistics of having the bass (the forester) hoist the lead soprano (the vixen) by the scruff of her neck, for example. As well, there were the paired human and animal characters, performed by the same singer, to blur the distinction. Janáček surely developed the double roles to help Brno’s small ensemble cope with the exigencies of a large cast, but he also attempted (if patchily) to integrate them by forming parallels between the pairs, as discussed above.³¹ Lastly, there were some problems caused by the transference of the earthiness of *Těsnohlídek*’s story to the opera. For example, it was one thing to describe in words the vixen relieving herself into the badger’s den to force him to evacuate, but another to mime it

²⁶ H.D. [Doležil], “Znovu Janáček. Liška Bystrouška v Národním divadle.”

²⁷ Paul Stefan, “Forecast and Review: Echoes From Prague,” *Modern Music* 3/1 (1925): 31-2.

²⁸ Abs., “Příhody Lišky Bystroušky.”

²⁹ The newness of the problem was first pointed out by Kundera: lk. [Kundera], “Premiéra Janáčkovy Lišky Bystroušky.” See also, Ajp. [Anna J. Patzaková], “Janáčková ‘Bystrouška’ po sedmnácti letech,” *Národní osvobození* (Prague), 23 May 1937. See also: –id., “Hymnus věčně přírody a lásky,” *Čin* (Brno), 18 May 1948; and Zuzana Ledererová, “Bystrouška a scénograf,” *Scéna* (Prague), 21 January 1985.

³⁰ When the National Theatre in Prague was preparing for their first *Bystrouška*, Janáček wrote to conductor Otakar Ostrčil requesting that the chicken extras be played by children, and that “girls about fifteen years old” be cast in the parts of the Rooster, the Hen and the dog Lapák. Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 293. Tyrrell’s translation.

³¹ Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 293. Doubling of roles occurs in *L’Enfant et les sortilège* as well.

onstage. Troubled by the indelicacy of the scene, Max Brod, who was translating *Bystrouška* into German for Universal Edition's score, suggested it be changed. Why not, Brod asked, have the offending act be the vixen administering a kiss on the badger instead? Janáček refused.³² In the end, all that can be said is that Janáček treated the matter of staging animals and humans together in his opera with about as much consistency as he had addressed the issue in composing it.

In their overview of staging approaches to Janáček's operas in Brno, Czech scholars Jindřiška Bártová and Monika Holá argue that the defining issue in productions of *Bystrouška* has been the separation of its animal and human worlds.³³ However, while critics have identified differentiation of the animals and people in *Bystrouška* as one aspect that directors might engage with, it is not the only one. Indeed, to make it the central issue of stagings is to overlook the opera's premise that everything in nature is connected – a message that few critics have missed. What is more, it is not clear from the reception of *Bystrouška* that maintaining some kind of distinction between animals and people was ever an all-consuming issue; instead, I suggest that Bártová and Holá's perspective was shaped specifically by the director of *Bystrouška*'s 1924 premiere, Ota Zítek, who raised the problem into prominence in 1947 and set the terms of its debate.

In addition to the opera's premiere, Zítek had several other opportunities to direct *Bystrouška* in Brno, the last of which came in 1947. On the morning of this later production's opening night, Zítek published a feuilleton in which he explained his objective of a complete divorce of the animal world from the human and how he had gone about achieving it. His account is detailed and extensive: an attempt, perhaps, to foreclose anticipated criticism, but its particularity also suggests obsession. Even at this late date, 23 years after he'd directed *Bystrouška*'s premiere, Zítek was still recalling the criticism it had received:

The first production was stylized. [Eduard] Milén worked out set designs and costumes that hinted at a stylization with which Janáček and [I] were in complete agreement. After the performance, however, Dr. Vladimír Helfert correctly pointed out ... that some sort of difference must be created between the animal world and human world: possibly that the animals should be separated from the humans in order that the audience could have a clearer sense of the action.³⁴

The issue of the separation of animals and humans in *Bystrouška* that Zítek raised in his feuilleton was duly taken up by the critics. Some did little more than parrot his words in their reviews, but others engaged with his statement more analytically. One writer supported the director's view, arguing that separation was

³² Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 299.

³³ Jindřiška Bártová and Monika Holá, *Režijní přístupy k operám Leoše Janáčka v Brně* (Brno: Janáčková Akademie Múzických Umění, 2004), 35–38.

³⁴ Ota Zítek, "K nové inscenaci Lišky Bystroušky," *Svobodné noviny* (Prague), 15 February 1947.

appropriate because the opera's music consistently formulated "dualism." But not all agreed that division was necessary: another critic argued that Janáček, on the contrary, had made deliberate connections between the worlds of animals and people, citing the paired human and animal characters as evidence.³⁵

Zítek never seemed to question the appropriateness of Helfert's criticism. He took it as read and made it his life's mission to render the distinction properly on stage. Other directors, however, were not as consumed by the problem as he. As a consequence, perhaps, the attention critics paid to how much a production differentiated beast from man has a much lower profile in the reception of both earlier and later Brno productions of *Bystrouška*. Nor was it pursued with the same energy in Prague. Instead, I would argue that separation was important only insofar as it related to how the production represented the opera's ambiguous morality – in particular, how to avoid rendering it too childishly black-and-white. Czech directors have responded to these issues with a variety of means. Here, I will focus on the treatment of gesture – that is to say, physical movement – in their productions.

Critics have rarely, if ever, articulated the role that gesture plays in shaping *Bystrouška*'s subtexts; nonetheless, its importance in performing the opera emerges clearly from the reception. For example, Nad'a Šormová, who sang the title role in Brno in 1965, referred specifically to gesture when asked if she found it difficult to "turn, all of a sudden, into a fox." "Not at all," Šormová replied, "the only issue is connecting the gestural action with the singing, but this doesn't bother me. I am at home with regard to gesture."³⁶ It had also played a significant part in Zítek's later strategy for evoking disparate animal and human worlds in the opera. The "stylization" Zítek referred to looking back at the premiere was that production's tendency toward abstraction rather than realism. Eduard Milén, who had trained as a graphic artist, simplified the lines and shapes of his costumes, frequently using geometric shapes to represent the animals' characteristic markings (see figure 1 again). Visual evidence of bygone opera productions can be frustratingly ephemeral, but it is likely that Zítek's choreography was similarly stylized: the poses from a scene early in the first act, a danced pantomime between a frog and a mosquito, appear stiff, angular, and not, perhaps, particularly animal-like (see figure 3). Certainly, the production photograph suggests nothing of the gestural aping Božena Snopková, the first performer of the vixen role, adopted in her posed publicity photograph (see figure 4). In his 1947 staging, Zítek first exaggerated the perspective and size of the sets for the animal scenes in order to represent the world through animal eyes (see figure 5) and then applied this exaggeration to the animal gestures as well – even to the point, Zítek said, of "grimacing." They were not meant to be realistic, but were extractions, he said, from the "characteristic features of the gestures that make an animal unique."³⁷ Their function was the reverse of the sets: to represent animals through human eyes. There is little to show what Zítek's "grimacing" actually looked

³⁵ –k., "Nová Liška Bystrouška," *Svobodné noviny* (Prague), 18 February 1947.

³⁶ Luděk Štěpán, "Před premiérou," *Mladá fronta* (Brno), 2 October 1965.

³⁷ Zítek, "K nové inscenaci Lišky Bystroušky."

like on stage, but it is evident that most critics found it off-putting.³⁸ One writer, who otherwise commended the director's use of ballet to emphasize the "visual" aspect of the opera, drew the line at Zítek's indulgence in "caricature" and condemned the "violations of forced gestures" in the singers' otherwise natural style of acting.³⁹

Zítek's 1947 production was not the first to be faulted for abuse of gesture in *Bystrouška*, nor would it be the last. Generally, there has been a preference for subtlety in the acting over "mummery or artificiality," or what the critic Vladimír Bor called "Disneyesque illustrations of naturalism," by which he meant the precise matching of action and music that we commonly refer to in English as "mickey-mousing."⁴⁰ Much later, in his review of Brno's 1984 *Bystrouška* (directed by Oldřich Šimáček and choreographed by Boris Slovák), Jiří Fukač observed that the more the staging "reserved gestures of both [acting and dancing] types, the greater the significance each detail had."⁴¹

Finding an acceptable level of gestural representation remained an elusive goal: just as it was possible to overdo it, not having sufficient gestures was as dangerous a pitfall. In 1956, the Berlin Komische Oper had rocked the boat with a production by Walter Felsenstein – in German – that brought the opera unprecedented international success. Czech press reacted to the popularity of this foreign staging with anxiety: the Komische Oper's representation of *Bystrouška* as a comic "animal" opera was a misinterpretation.⁴² What is more, it was embarrassing that a foreign production had more successfully staged an opera that, with its rural Moravian setting and dialect, had always been close to Czech (and even more to Moravian) hearts. That it dumbed down the opera's philosophical and moral subtexts, reducing it to "a series of adorable episodes," and pitching it at children, was bordering on national insult.⁴³

So, in 1965, the director Miloš Wasserbauer responded by taking the opera in a more adult direction. There was a lot at stake for this production: Brno had just built a new, state-of-the-art opera house, and *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* was chosen to inaugurate it before a distinguished audience comprising political dignitaries, foreign and Czech opera cognoscenti, as well as the general opera-going public.⁴⁴ One critic described the production as having eschewed the opera's "traditionally-established fairytale quality," in order to focus on the forester and the "spiritual temperament of a man whose day-to-day relations with nature have brought him wisdom and rich emotional experience."⁴⁵ Yet this representation white-washed some of

³⁸ Gundula Kreuzer, "Voices from beyond: Verdi's *Don Carlos* and the modern stage," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18 (2006): 151-179.

³⁹ Fch., "Liška Bystrouška v Janáčkově opeře," *Čin* (Prague), 18 February 1947.

⁴⁰ J.H. [Josef Hutter], "Příhody Lišky Bystroušky v Talichově podání," *Národní střed* (Prague), 23 May 1937; Vbr. [Vladimír Bor], "Nové divadlo v Brně začalo Janáčkem," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 6 October 1965.

⁴¹ J.F. [Jiří Fukač], "Liška nejen pro festival," *Brněnský večerník* (Brno), 1 October 1984.

⁴² See, for example: Jiří Fukač, "Bystrouška otevřela nové divadlo," *Rovnost* (Brno), 5 October 1965.

⁴³ Ledererová, "Bystrouška a scénograf."

⁴⁴ See: "Slavná chvíle brněnské kultury," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 3 October 1965.

⁴⁵ vb., "Kultura. Bystrouška otvírá nové divadlo," *Zemědělské noviny Morava* (Brno), 7 October 1965.

Wasserbauer's more risqué decisions. As critic Jiří Bajer pointed out, the director had dramatically “sexed-up” all the relationships in the opera, casting, for example, a tenor, Vladimír Krejčík, in the role of the male fox, a part originally written for soprano.⁴⁶ The result was that the opera's heroine, portrayed by Nad'a Šormová as a sexy mod vixen, sported a handsome, manly fox on her arm, along with her sleek blond hairdo and go-go boots (see figure 6). Wasserbauer called his staging concept a “lyrical song of nature”; Bajer suggested that an “erotic song of love” would have been more accurate.⁴⁷

The gender switch, perhaps surprisingly, passed mostly without comment. On the other hand, the Slovak soprano Anna Martvoňová, who replaced the indisposed Šormová on opening night, received slightly more attention for singing her part in a Slovak translation (but this was Brno and the opera's use of dialect was a point of pride in the city).⁴⁸ The real sticking point was how Wasserbauer treated gesture in his staging: in order to shift the balance of *Bystrouška* towards the human world, the director had excised much of the stage business involving the animal roles. A number of reviews voiced disappointment about the opera's deserted and unanimated stage, yet a photograph of Wasserbauer's production reveals the stage wasn't that bare at all (see figure 7). The disappointing emptiness the critics perceived was more the result of the production's lack of physical animation; as one writer pointed out, at least *some* representation of the music's implied physical activity had to appear on stage: “Janáček's forest is full of life [but] Wasserbauer's,” he complained, “is almost empty.”⁴⁹ The director achieved his emphasis on human relationships by toning down the gesture, but critics responded that as a consequence, the opera's diversity of perspectives on human existence had been lost.

Over the years, Czech productions of *Bystrouška* have tended to alternate between stagings that have overdone the opera's action and stage business and those that have undershot it; directors have consistently sought correctives to problems of previous productions, including balancing the animal and human spheres and enacting the opera's ambiguous moral code. After the disappointment with Wasserbauer's barren stage, Prague's 1978 *Bystrouška*, staged by Ladislav Štros and choreographed by Jaroslav Čejka, saw the unruly animals and their defiant antics once again taking over the opera (see figure 8). And once again, reviews echoed the old concerns about over-doing the gestures. “I am unable,” critic Vladimír Čech wrote:

to banish the impression that this production is designed especially for children, who are certainly worthy of the hens' hilarious high jinks or [the moment] when the vixen kicks (!) the forester so that he falls down onto the platform below. Likewise, a child's heart will delight in the fact that hardly a

⁴⁶ Jiří Bajer, “Co s nimi,” *Divadelní a filmové noviny* (Prague), 20 October 1965.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See, for example: Jiří Fukač, “Bystrouška otevřela nové divadlo”; and vb., “Kultura. Bystrouška otevírá nové divadlo.”

⁴⁹ Jiří Bajer, “Liška Bystrouška v novém,” *Rudé právo* (Prague), 8 October 1965. See also: Vbr. [Vladimír Bor], “Nové divadlo v Brně začalo Janáčkem.”

beat in the score is not matched to a stage exposition ... But in the end the fragile, symbolic web is severed and the philosophical subtext drowned in gilded effects.⁵⁰

Of course, in any opera, too much mickey-mousing on stage risks offending the fastidious; the issue here isn't merely that some productions of *Bystrouška* were ridiculous and others visually boring. At the heart of Čech's concern, like Bajer's with Wasserbauer's production and other critics' elsewhere, was the perception that *any* extreme handling of the gestures – be it too expansive or too minimal – had a detrimental effect on the transmission of the opera's subtexts to the audience. The eternal debate over gesture in *Bystrouška* leads me to suggest that we need a better understanding of how gesture, music, and meaning work together in the opera.

Mimicry, music, and meaning

In setting Těsnohlídek's novella to music, Janáček could have enlisted the potential of music to comment on the stage action to retain the story's gently satirical bent, even with the modifications he made to it. It seems apparent, however, that Janáček was at pains *not* to do so; in addition to weakening the satire, he removed any moralizing tone from the opera. A clue to his motivation may be found in one of his letters, in which the composer described an incident he witnessed in his own village. A spurned lover tried to shoot the guests at his former sweetheart's wedding. The young man was tried and sentenced, but when he finally returned to the village, everyone treated him as though the incident had not happened. "For me," Janáček wrote, "it was confirmation that ordinary people don't take evil as a lasting stigma. It happened – and is no more. My Vixen is like that."⁵¹ So how did Janáček make the world of his *Bystrouška* so acquiescent and forgiving? I propose that he achieved this intended amorality by playing with various interactions between music and stage action – interactions whose diverse effects I will describe through close readings of three moments in the opera.

Perhaps because animals have little to say, a large portion of *Bystrouška* consists of instrumental music – sections of "ballet," in effect. In addition to offering possible divertissement, the instrumental sections play functional roles in the opera. The critic Josef Bartoš felt, for example, that Janáček's "daring experiment" in *Bystrouška* – "placing side by side animal scenes, atmospheric illustrations of nature, and realistic scenes played by humans" – only worked because those diverse scenes were "organically linked by ballet."⁵² Janáček conceived of the idea of numerous danced instrumental sections early in the planning of the opera: even as he read through the novella while preparing the libretto, he marked certain scenes to be

⁵⁰ Vladimír Čech, "Příliš hrubozronné Příhody," *Brněnský Večerník* (Brno), 10 October 1978.

⁵¹ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 295. Tyrrell's translation.

⁵² Bartoš, "Janáček-Première im Nationaltheater."

danced or mimed, rather than sung. Indeed, Janáček seems to have been particularly struck by the visual suggestiveness of the story: some of his stage directions correspond closely with Lolek's illustrations, the instruction for the forester to pick up the vixen by the scruff of her neck in the opening act, for example (see figure 9). What is more, Janáček referred to the instrumental sections of the opera as "pantomime" as often as he called them ballet, invoking a sense of stage movement that is more gesturally mimetic than dancelike.⁵³

The mimetic effect of *Bystrouška's* music, which one critic, in 1937, described as rendering in sound "the whirling turns of animals, the quaint movements of a grasshopper, [and] the heavy steps of the drunk schoolteacher," is striking.⁵⁴ Another writer, Karel Boleslav Jiráček, called particular attention to the "witty rhythms" of the ballet music in the first act, which he thought was some of the most effective music of that type that Janáček had ever written.⁵⁵ Indeed, more than any of Janáček's previous operas, *Bystrouška* overflows with the type of music that, as Mary Ann Smart has argued in a different context, operates on a level of gestural meaning, "pinning itself to a particular character or sequence of movements in order to guide the spectator's attention, sending us signals about where to look or what to feel while looking at a body on stage."⁵⁶ One brief example should suffice to illustrate the most straightforward type of mimetic music that occurs.

During a ballet danced by a mosquito in the first act, a frog attempts to seize the insect. As the dance music is swept away (four measures before rehearsal number 11), a six measure ostinato pattern begins in the upper extreme of the violins' range (see example 1). The music, reflecting the stage direction above it, suggests a repeated snatching motion; as the creature in question is a frog, perhaps we can award the accented C-flat eighth-note on each downbeat the snapping flick of a long tongue, and the subsequent descending sixteenth its recoil. The conclusion of the six-measure gesture is marked by another musical shift and a further stage direction: *Komár uskočí* (The mosquito jumps away). Violins still dominate the instrumental texture, but the previous rhythmic cell is altered by tying the final sixteenth over to the next bar. The articulation of the eighth note (now on A-flat) is changed to *staccato*, and as the sixteenth descend from the A-flat in little hops, so too does the final iteration of the motif jump down a third.

Such precise mimicking is relatively common in music, and in music for theatre or film (the aforementioned "mickey-mousing") in particular; here a further interest lies in the relationship between the physical gesture and Janáček's characteristic use of ostinati. Janáček's compositions were often criticized for the "pointillistic" effect of his frequent use of small cells: Doležil's comment that Janáček

⁵³ For representative comments by Czech critics on pantomime and ballet in the opera, see: Ik. [Kundera], "Premiéra Janáčkovy Lišky Bystroušky," and Ra., "Liška Bystrouška," *Lidové noviny* (Brno), 18 May 1948.

⁵⁴ "Leoš Janáček: Příhody Lišky Bystroušky," *Národní listy* (Prague), 23 May 1937.

⁵⁵ K.B.J. [Jiráček], "Kulturní Hlídka. Mezinárodní festival. Premiéra Janáčkovy „Lišky Bystroušky“."

⁵⁶ Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 6.

was “the master of details, of the single situation and its splinters, of that which his music can capture with exhaustive appropriateness, but which, in their rhapsodic isolation, does not connect together in a more unified whole” is representative.⁵⁷ Typically, this charge had two subtexts: a concern, as Doležil shows, for the absence of thematic development and large-scale form in the music, and an accusation of provincialism in the man (as discussed in chapter one). But rather than being the product of deficient compositional technique, the ostinato here is generated by the actions on stage.

The frog and mosquito pantomime is a reasonably straightforward example of the type of instrumental music that frequently occurs in the opera to accompany physical action taking place on stage. But Janáček’s mimetic music is not only orchestral: it also appears in the vocal lines at special moments. Janáček was, amongst other things, pleased with the opportunity *Bystrouška* gave him to extend his speech melody theory to the “speech” of animals, with which he claimed to be well-acquainted. Near the beginning of his work on the opera, after word had got out that he was going to set Těsnohlídek’s story, Janáček wrote a short feuilleton, “Stehlíček” (The Little Goldfinch), for the local newspaper. The article described the birds that visited his garden and was sonically illustrated with musical notations of their birdcalls. Janáček closed with the following comment: “Why these few words about the goldfinch’s angular tones in glowing crystals, in prickly thistles, in pale flashes? In the first place, because it pleases me. And also, I am collecting suitable company for *Liška Bystrouška*.”⁵⁸ Vocal imitations of this sort is evident in the example cited above (the frog only croaks in response to the mosquito’s inquiries); they appear from time to time throughout the opera, adding to its impression of continuous mimicry.

The hedgehog’s cheeky tongue

Tight parallels between action and music were no doubt useful in *Bystrouška*, where the underscoring often provided much needed continuity and even sometimes articulated the drama. Indeterminate periods of time pass between scenes, ends of plots are left dangling: the audience is frequently left with “several nagging questions for which,” Jiráček suggested, “the answers can only be found in the musical language.”⁵⁹ Rosa Newmarch, an English musicologist and a contemporary of

⁵⁷ H.D. [Doležil], “Znovu Janáček. Liška Bystrouška v Národním divadle.” For a sample of this observation about Janáček’s operas see: Josef Bartoš, “Janáček-Première im Nationaltheatre”; J.P., “Z kulturního života. Leoš Janáček. Věc Makropulos,” *Národní listy* (Prague), 21 December 1926; Bedřich Bělohlávek, “Co se Hraje. Věc Makropulos,” *Právo lidu* (Prague), 2 March 1928. Another term in use was “aphoristic,” see: J.P., “Leoš Janáček: „Příhody lišky Bystroušky“.”

⁵⁸ Janáček, “Stehlíček,” *Lidové noviny* (Brno), 1 June 1921. Reprinted in Leoš Janáček, *Literární dílo*, eds. Theodora Straková and Eva Drlíková, series I, vol. 1, bk. 1 (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2003), 473-5.

⁵⁹ K.B.J. [Jiráček], “Kulturní Hlídka. Mezinárodní festival. Premiéra Janáčkovy „Lišky Bystroušky“.” For an additional expression of this problem, see: –ek., “Obnovená Liška Bystrouška,” *Rovnost* (Brno), 18 February 1947.

Janáček's, noted that the audience treated the libretto with "impatient criticism" because, she supposed, it required "a quickness of imaginative perception that few possess." But, she added, for those who are perceptive, the music "fill[s] in its blank spaces and light[s] up its obscurities."⁶⁰

Of course, one the main functions of operatic music is to supplement the libretto with additional layers of meaning, elucidating events on stage and providing insight into their subtexts. The coincidence in *Bystrouška* of so much music used to create continuity and fill in "blanks" with the more usual function of operatic music as a commentary on the stage action creates a situation whereby the music in this opera becomes extraordinarily active in its commentary about what is happening on stage. It is how Janáček plays with the possibilities of that commentary that is of interest here. Indeed, not all the music in the opera embodies or dictates the gesture on stage so straightforwardly. Earlier I noted that there was no hedgehog role in the *Bystrouška*, but this is not strictly true. While there is no such sung role, the score does name a hedgehog among the various woodland creatures who serve as extras. In the second act, the hedgehog is required to stick out his tongue from behind a tree stump while, at the same time, according to the instruction, squirrels giggle and the sun rises: enough to warrant a costume design, to be sure; yet, but for his one cheeky gesture, the hedgehog might well be omitted from the cast in the interests, perhaps, of economy.

But could he be? The direction is printed over four measures of instrumental music that link an exchange between two birds (an owl and a jay) and a discussion between the fox couple. The tempo is quick and the lively music matches the action on stage. Yet we do not hear a rising sun – at least nothing that sounds like a conventional musical sunrise. The bassoons *do* seem to chuckle and an oboe trill above them is suggestive, but precisely of what it is difficult to determine. While this passage could imply laughing squirrels and cheeky hedgehogs, there is no musical event that obviously mimics them in gestures. This moment provides a more ambiguous pairing of music and stage action than occurred in the frog and mosquito ballet. It encourages us to think about what happens when the music does not parallel the stage business very closely. The hedgehog could – or should – not be cut, I argue, because his unparalleled action provides a counterpart to the mickey-mousing that accompanies the frog and mosquito. It is only against a musical background in which gesture is frequently evoked that the stage actions that lack a musical depiction can stand out in sharp relief. But, more particularly, it is in moments when Janáček leaves selfish and cruel acts without musical corollary, I propose, that he creates the opera's amoral message, by allowing what is seen to pass without comment.

At the end of the first act, the vixen is tied up in the forester's yard and mocked by the rooster. Irked, the vixen attempts to rally the rooster's hens to her side, calling them "sisters" and "comrades" in a quick, martial four, sharply articulated with accented staccato notes and accompanied by snare drum. But her politicking fails and so the vixen switches to trickery: feigning a sulk, she slinks off to

⁶⁰ Rosa Newmarch, "On Leoš Janáček," *The Times* (London), 1 May 1926.

the rubbish heap, claiming that she'd rather be buried alive than live with such social backwardness. The music shifts abruptly to a compound triple meter, scored with lush strings that rise in contrary motion with the vixen's petulantly descending vocal line. Though the hens suppress their curiosity for a few moments, they soon take the bait. Led by the rooster, they approach the concealed vixen – who wrings their necks one by one. Chaos ensues, but despite the forester's threats and his wife's screeches, the vixen escapes to the forest.

Example two begins with the vixen's sulk. She delivers her taunts and then from the top of the ascending figure in the oboe, emerges on a high G-sharp, hanging there for a thrilling moment before falling off it into the mock declaration of suicide. In the eleven measures that follow, the repeated descending flourishes suggest the flutters of the hens' curiosity, while the sustained strings hold the passage static. A depiction of waiting is very clear, but there is no foreshadowing of the vixen's mischief: the E-flat major chord at rehearsal number 22 is radiant and the last, slower appearance of the descending motive in the violins and flute further relaxes the suspense. The rooster approaches, but the crucial stage direction for the vixen to kill him and the hens occurs while he is still singing; the fast rising triplets of the following measure, in 12/16 and *Più mosso*, capture the gestural quality of the one, last, frantic bird remaining in the yard. Janáček neither composed a musical gesture for the vixen's terrible actions, nor allowed any time for them. Her violence is stuffed into a barline and elided out of the music, which proceeds directly to the scene that follows. Musically, the vixen has done nothing at all.

If the farmyard scene is selective about which gestures to portray, the following example pushes this discrimination even further. At the beginning of the second act, having escaped her bonds, the vixen returns to the forest. Rather than make her own burrow, she turfs a badger out of his house: first by inciting some animals to join her in harassing him, and then by relieving herself into his den. The crotchety old badger turns his walking stick on the vixen, but does not do her any injury and is rather to be pitied in the exchange.

Three stage directions crowd around only a measure and a half (see example 3). These three actions – the vixen lifting her tail, the badger's eviction, and his huffy departure – must happen with blazing speed. But again there is neither musical representation of hasty activity, nor mimicry of the specific gestures. The most characteristic orchestral music, in fact, begins six bars earlier with the two bar motive in the oboe. This figure is heard twice and then, slightly modified, twice more with amplified instrumentation. The new instruments – the violins and the piccolo in particular – make those four measures striking and serve to highlight the vixen's simultaneous vocal entry. But the increased orchestration is only an alteration of timbre, not an indication of sudden stage activity. The difference between this example and the previous one is subtle. In the farmyard scene, the decisive action was elided from the music altogether. Here the stage actions have time and music, but they are oddly uncoupled from each other. By starting up a new pattern before the three stage actions take place and repeating the same tune throughout, the orchestral

music seems to occlude the stage events, as though by chugging along to its own tune it is pointedly ignoring what is happening on stage.

In a sense, then, the music in these scenes abandons the role it often takes in opera: giving us clues as to how to view what is happening on stage. To return to animal satire, Karen Ryan has argued that, in order for the satire to be effectively transmitted, “the author’s tone may range from gentle mockery to bitter vituperation, but the reader must understand where the author stands.”⁶¹ But in *Bystrouška* Janáček does not always clearly establish his position. The point may be illuminated by a comparison with a scene from *Ze života hmyzu* by the Čapek brothers. A young cricket couple move into a deserted hole whose former occupant has been eaten. The pair express superficial pity for his bad luck, but their words lack real sympathy and so they meet justice of the poetic sort when they themselves are eaten. The Čapek brothers, the Czech literary scholar Bohuslava Bradbrook suggests, show no tolerance for either the opportunism or the indifference of their characters, and act out retribution upon them.⁶² The Čapeks voice their judgment through the figure of the Traveler, who imparts commentary not unlike what the music in Janáček’s opera occasionally supplies. *Bystrouška* depicts a similarly dog-eat-dog world but, though the badger trudges away, wiping his tears and complaining bitterly, his moral indignation is not supported by the music, which in the moment, instead withholds comment.

Like the crickets who meet an abrupt end as a snack for another insect, the vixen is also killed, in this case by a poacher whose basket of poultry she has raided. Considering she is the title character, it comes as a surprise when she dies several scenes before the end of the opera. Doležil, cited above, had been baffled to discover that her death was not even a climax, but only one more scene in the general stream.⁶³ An extended passage of instrumental music offers a solution to this problem, if it is one, providing musical space for the vixen’s last breaths, and for the opera to take a new one, as it were, in order to continue without her. A clarinet and celesta motive – its iteration left incomplete – poignantly depicts the end of the vixen’s life. But then softly shimmering violins enter, followed by winds and harp, and encircle the poignancy with a sonic aureole: any sense that the vixen might have deserved her death is closed off. As the critic Otakar Šourek described it:

That unusual trust in the eternally unending quality of nature and its lives, those characteristics were of such paramount significance for Janáček. That the poacher Harašta shot the vixen, right in front of her fox cubs? Never mind! New life will grow in those little fox cubs; they will also profess their love to a fox, as the amorous forester once professed love to his young wife and, as it goes with nature, will fill their forest as [he filled his] yard.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire*, 50.

⁶² Bohuslava Bradbrook, *Karel Čapek: In Pursuit of Truth, Tolerance, and Trust* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 53.

⁶³ H.D. [Doležil], “Znovu Janáček. Liška Bystrouška v Národním divadle.”

⁶⁴ O.Š. [Šourek], “Janáčková „Liška Bystrouška“.”

The death of the vixen is neither mourned nor viewed as justice reasserted; neither is Harašta's lethal shot condemned. Indeed, much as it had done for all the vixen's morally dubious acts throughout the opera, the music withholds moral commentary here too. Like the violent rampage of the jilted lover in Janáček's village, the vixen's death "happened – and is no more."

To conclude then, one final look at a production: Michal and Šimon Caban's 2002 *Bystrouška* for the National Theatre of Prague was one of the more unusual stagings of the opera seen in the city. The Caban brothers were known for their work in ballet, television, and film, but they had never staged an opera. Their conception, possibly, draws on Robert Wilson for inspiration: certainly it does not follow the established Czech practice of rustic sets, folksy details, and myriad animal costumes. Instead, the simple, uncluttered stage was suffused with clear, vivid colours and leant shimmering texture by means of translucent veils (see figure 10). The Cabans made no alterations to the music or the libretto, but they introduced new symbolic and dramatic content – even new characters – by replacing the pantomimes and dances Janáček had prescribed for the opera's many instrumental sections with new ones. Yet despite its beauty and innovation, the Cabans' production received mixed responses and, perhaps, more than its share of negative criticism.

It would be easy to explain the critical resistance to the Cabans' *Bystrouška* as a typical reaction to interference with the text. But it should be clear by now that another, perhaps more nuanced, understanding of the situation is available. The additional storylines the Cabans introduced in the instrumental sections of the opera, though they neither involved "grimacing" nor the "Disneyesque," were nonetheless an additional way in which the opera's stage action could be over-determined. What is more, the simplicity of the set and its vibrant colours recalled, I suspect, the childish slant typically associated with productions in which the gestures and stage business were exaggerated.

While it may seem from the survey of Czech productions of *Bystrouška* provided here that they were negatively received, this was not, generally, the case. Many, in fact, were regarded with deep affection, despite the on-going debate over issues connected with their stagings. But this only underscores how important is the relationship between the stage gesture and music to how audiences hear and see the opera. Too little stage action might render *Bystrouška* one-dimensional, a super-saturation of gesture frequently overshadowed its sophisticated themes of life and morality. As I have argued, the variety of Janáček's gestural music in *Bystrouška*, as well as the selectivity with which he paired music with stage action, is one of the sources of the opera's amoral subtext. What emerges, from both the performance tradition and reception history, is that a similar selectivity in how and when gesture is paired with the music had to be maintained for a production to be successful. Too much, or too little, and the delicate balance would be dismantled, bringing down with it *Bystrouška*'s amoral yet morally instructive world.

Example 1.

10 $\text{♩} = 84$

f

ff

VI. Ob.
Cl.

Picc.

Junger Frosch (hascht nach der Mücke)
Skokánek (chytá komára)

11 *Frosch.*
Skokánek.

(Mücke springt zur Seite)
(Komár ulekóci)

ff

Ob. Cl.

Tr.

Mücke.
Komár.

(steht)
(utika)

Co ches, klu - ei - sko ei - zé? Sak - va,
Grü - nes Bürsch - chen, was willst du? Herr - gott,

Sk.
Fr.

ff

Bre - ke - te!
Bre - ke - te!

(The frog grabs at the mosquito.) (The mosquito jumps away.)

Frog: Croak! Croak!

Mosquito: What do you want, you strange little fellow?

Frog: Croak!

Mosquito: Lord, give it a rest! (the Mosquito jumps away).

Example 2.

80 Füchlein. Bystrouška. (scharrt eine Grube für sich) (vyhrabuje si na smetišti jámu)

Než bych já se dí - vá - la na va - ši za - o - stá - lost, Ob.
 Eh ich dies mit an - se - he, die - se Zu - rückgeblieben - heit, Ob.

B. Fw. (gräbt sich ein) (zahrabuje se)

to se ra - děj za ži - va po - hřbim!
 will ich mich lie - ber le - ben - dig be - gra - ben!

Cl. **Fl.** **Sm.** **Timp.** **Fag.** **Cor. ing.** **Cor.**

22 ritard. Schopfhenn. Chocholka. (erschauernd) (s hrůzou)

Zba - běl - ōe, po - dí - vě se, je - li už mrt - vá?
 Feig - ling, so schau doch end - lich, ob sie schon tot ist!

Fl. **VI.** (Die Hennen eilen neugierig herbei) (Slípky se zvědavě sbíhají)

(Plötzlich packt das Füchlein den Hahn und wirft eine Henne nach der andern)
 (Bystr. náhle schvátí kohouta a dává slípku za slípkou)

Vixen: I can't stand to see your backwardness – (she digs a hole in the rubbish heap) – I'd prefer to bury myself alive! (she digs herself in)
 Rooster: Coward! See whether she's dead yet! (The hens rush up inquisitively. Suddenly the Vixen seizes the Rooster and wrings the Hens' necks one after another)
 (Crested Fowl runs around in panic) Kokokodák! Kokokodák!

Example 3.

B. *Fu.*
o - ko - lo - vá o - ken.
„Seel - sor - ge“ vor - zu - ziehn!

S.
ni - kdo nes - mi o - ko - lo - vá o - ken!
Nót ist sol - cher „Seel - sor - ge“ vor - zu - ziehn!

B. *Fu.*
k só - du! A - le kdo by se ste - bou ma - zal!
leugnen, daß du mich mit schmutzigen Anträgen verfolgt hast?

S.
Dě ho k só - du!
Willst du's leug - nen?

B. *Fu.*
Tu máš ně - co žens - ký - ho, a - bys vě - děl, ze su uz - na - lá.
Gut denn, mei - ne Nót - la - ge zwingt mich, dem Ver - fñh - rer nach zu - ge - ben!
Dochs. (geht auf ihn los, um ihn zu küssen und zu umarmen, (verläßt wütend seine Höhle) zum Hallu aller Waldtiere zeigt sie ihm aber den Hintern.) (Jezevec vyjde z doupěte; rozhorlené)

Pice Ob.

Vixen: I could've taken you to court!

Animals: Take him to court!

Vixen: But who'd want to have anything to do with you? Here's something feminine for you, (*she raises her tail*) just so you know how you're appreciated! (*The Badger climbs from his den, indignantly.*) (*He runs off to a bill.*)



Figure 1. Eduard Milén, costume design for Vixen (Brno, Na Hradbách Theatre, 1924).



Figure 2. Josef Čapek, costume design for Hedgehog (Prague, National Theatre, 1925).



Figure 3. *Příběhy lišky Bystroušky*, directed by Ota Zítek (Brno, Na Hradbách Theatre, 1924).



Figure 4. Božena Snopková as Vixen (Brno, Na Hradbách Theatre, 1924).

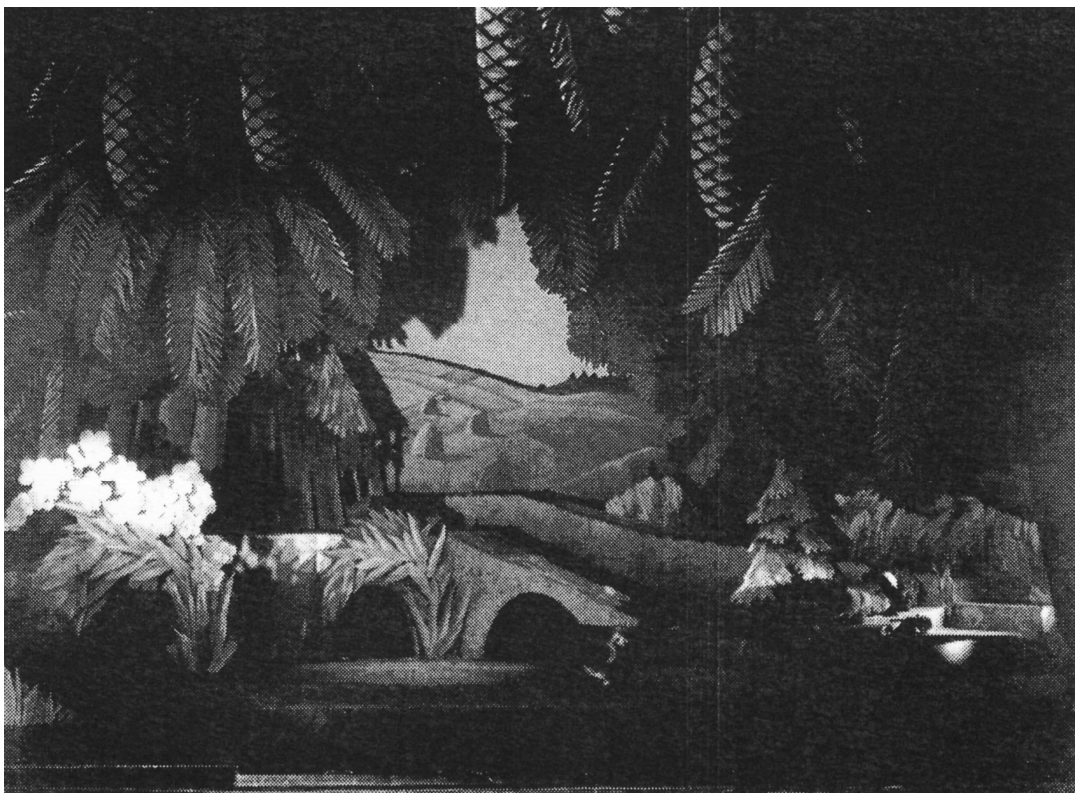


Figure 5. *Příběhy lišky Bystroušky*, directed by Ota Zítek, sets by Milan Malý (Brno, Janáček Theatre na Hradbách, 1947).

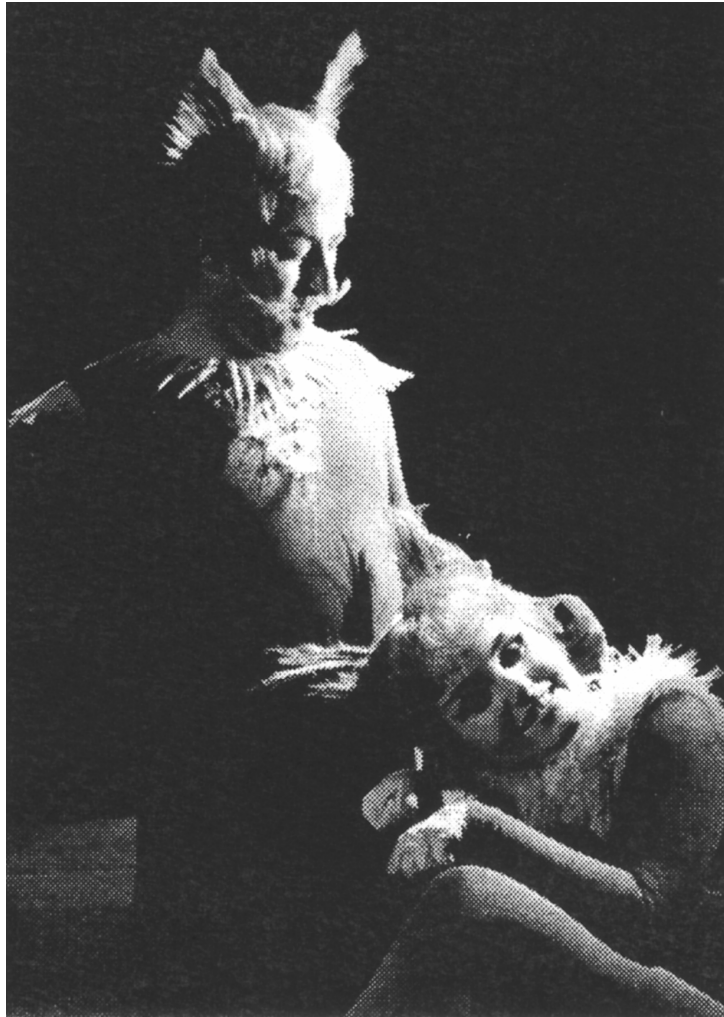


Figure 6. Vladimír Krejčík, and Nad'a Šormová as Fox and Vixen (Brno, Janáček Theatre, 1965).

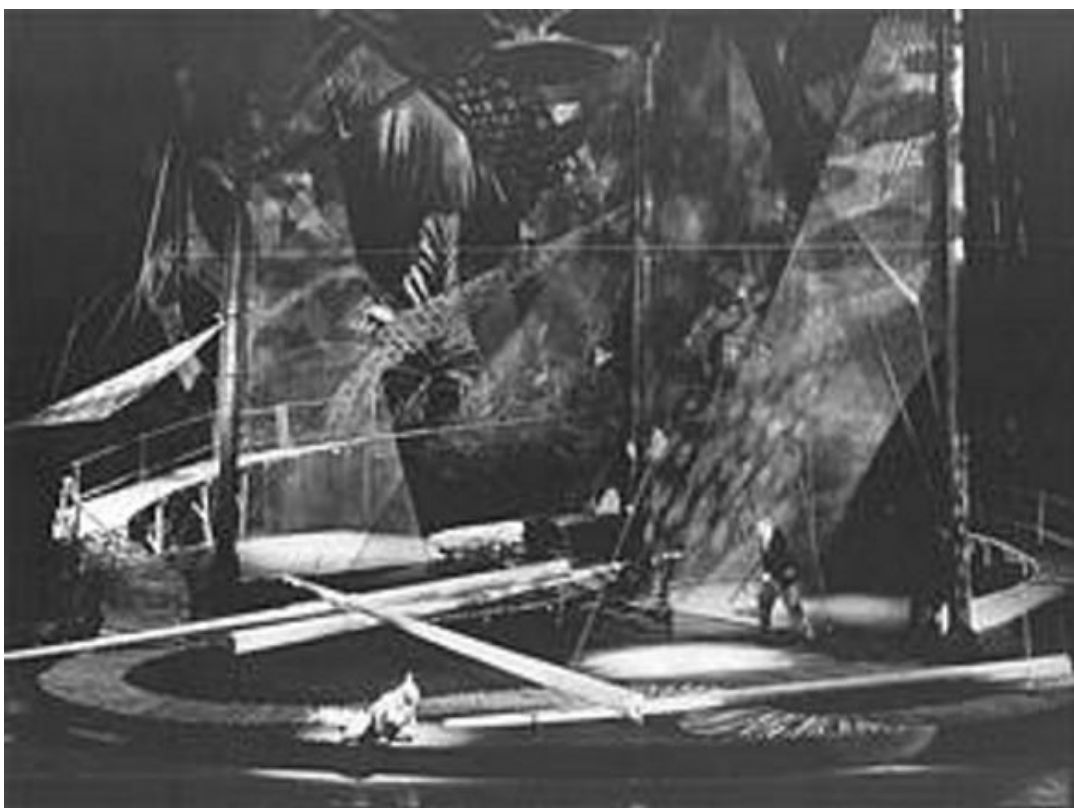


Figure 7. *Příběhy lišky Bystroušky*, directed by Miloš Wasserbauer (Brno, Janáček Theatre, 1965).



Figure 8. *Příběhy lišky Bystroušky*, directed by Ladislav Štros (Prague, National Theatre, 1978).



Figure 9. Stanislav Lolek, illustration for the newspaper serial *Liška Bystrouška*.



Figure 10. *Příběhy lišky Bystroušky*, directed by Michal Caban (Prague, National Theatre, 2002).

The Case of the Silent Diva (*Věc Makropulos*)

Disquieting Song

Grotesquely illuminated by a green light, Emilia Marty, the central character of Janáček's *Věc Makropulos*, makes her final entrance on stage. In the passing of just a few minutes, Marty – until this point an arresting, ageless beauty – has diminished to a shadow. Born in 1585, she was given an elixir of immortality at the age of sixteen; from that time, in the first years of the seventeenth century, she has lived an inhuman life as an undying singer. Now, however, the suppressed aging of her artificially sustained three hundred years catches up with her in a moment: when she creeps on stage for her last scene, she is physically ruined and near death. Marty's decline has little of the graphic horror unveiled in the transformation of Dorian Gray's portrait, yet the exposure of an unnatural force is strikingly similar. As it was in *Všlety paně Broučkovy* (*The Excursions of Mr. Brouček*), green light was again Janáček's recourse when something more than music was needed to suggest rupture and the penetration of the supernatural into the "real" world on stage.

From Marty's reappearance the opera moves swiftly to its denouement. The flurry of dramatic events and revelations in the third act contrasts with the lack of action in the preceding two, which are sustained only by a sense of gradually mounting intrigue. Janáček matches the general lack of action with economy in the music, especially the singing, which he casts in the most stripped-down terms: Marty's vocal lines above all are terse yet athletic in range, harsh in their disjunct intervals, torrid in pace. But in her final scene, as she is dying, her dormant vocality erupts in a lyrical outpouring – a swan song, in fact, of epic proportions. The lament for her long life is cast not in the erratic, rapid-fire rhythms of her previous vocal persona, but instead in rhythmically and melodically balanced phrases. The simple, lilting rhythm of the melody for "Ach, nemá se tak dlouho žít!" (Ah, one shouldn't have such a long life!) is paired with an expanding wedge in intervals, while the more complex, though symmetrical rhythm of "O kdybyste věděli, jak se vám lehko žije!" (Oh if you could see, how easily you live!) is weighted with the repetition of the D-flat – B-double-flat interval at the end of each half-phrase (see example 1). This exceptional regularity is further buttressed by orchestral combinations that Janáček reserved for moments of great emotion: swelling violin lines and rising cello arpeggios rounded out with the richness of low woodwinds and horns. The only interruptions, if they can be called that, come from an off-stage men's chorus, who intone "hymnally" between her phrases.

Marty's decrepit appearance marks a decisive break from the drama on which the libretto was based, a recent and popular play by the Czech writer Karel Čapek. In Čapek, Marty neither ages nor dies within the timescale of the play; Janáček chose to focus on her demise, and altered the conclusion so that the opera would culminate in Marty's death. That her death would be deliverance from a meaningless life was

merely implied in Čapek's play; Janáček, in the super-emotive music he provided at the conclusion of the opera, ensured that it was unmistakable. The contrast could not be greater: Čapek's rapid-fire play is witty to its final glib line; Janáček's opera concludes, as his operas often do, with a cathartic and poignant finale.

Much critical praise has been lavished on *Makropulos*'s closing music: it is as beautiful as it is unprecedented in the opera. Yet, against the modern sentiment and cynical tone of the opera, the compassion the men's chorus expresses for Marty is out of place. What is more, her entrance is sufficiently disquieting even without a green glow, as later productions have shown. The lighting that Janáček specified for his heroine was soon thought dated, and in its place, many productions have inserted subtler transformations. However, something vital may thereby have been lost. With Janáček's hair-raising vision of Marty as a withering, green-glowing old woman, the illusion of the realistic, modern, even prosaic world on stage is shattered. The lighting effect may be awkward – crude even – but the visual jolt prepares for the equally jarring musical shift.

If *Pastorkyňa* has become Janáček's folk village opera, *Kát'a Kabanová* his psychological opera, and *Bystrouška* his animal opera, then *Makropulos*, with its telephones, hotel rooms, and court cases, is without doubt his modern opera. This modernity continues to be expounded in scholarship; however, the means to its modern end has too often been illustrated only by its setting and prose libretto – as though these were enough to define operatic modernism in parochial Prague. By the time *Makropulos* was premiered, the city had already seen several productions of Gustav Charpentier's *Louise*: neither contemporary urban settings nor prose libretti would have been novelties per se.¹ Czech critics immediately recognized *Makropulos*'s modernity, but their efforts to pin that quality down were surprisingly imprecise. Brian Locke has shown that although modernism was one of the touchstone issues in early-twentieth-century Czech music criticism, what musical modernism meant – or sounded like – to the Czechs was murky. The critical waters were muddied by nationalism: as all good art had to be uniquely Czech, good modern art also had to be nationalist. Such reasoning led to increasingly anachronistic aesthetic positions; for example, Smetana's operas, even in the second decade of the twentieth century, were held up as models of modern Czech music.²

Modernity was no mere matter of setting and text. Writers mentioned Janáček's use of short motives, of ostinati, and the music's unprecedented pace. And, as with many of Janáček's compositions, the reception of *Makropulos* is threaded throughout with vague allusions to his theory of speech melodies. But perhaps more than any other Janáček opera, what *Makropulos* exudes is a sense that it had irrevocably altered, even erased, operatic singing. This is, after all, an opera about an opera singer (an aspect of *Makropulos* that has been infrequently discussed). Thus an

¹ Janáček saw *Louise* at the Prague National Theatre on 21 May 1903; see John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 1: (1854–1914), *The lonely blackbird* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 764.

² For more on how loosely Czech music criticism defined modernism at this time, see Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theatre 1900–1938* (Rochester, University of Rochester, 2006), 6–13.

alternative approach to the modernism of *Makropulos* would be to consider how it challenged the way opera could be sung. It is in the fissure between its representation of operatic singing and the singing that is opera's usual mode of discourse that we may locate the crux of this opera's modernity.

Symbols of Dehumanization

Věc Makropulos was Čapek's fourth full-length play. It was premiered on 21 November 1922, at the Vinohrady Theatre in Prague, where Čapek was engaged both as dramaturg and director of the theatre, and rapidly it became one of the year's most popular productions.³ It enacts the last days of one Elina Makropulos, who enters the play as opera's sensation of the moment, performing at the local theatre under the assumed name of Emilia Marty. Her three hundred years are almost up; the potion's effect is wearing off and, terrified of the one thing she has never experienced, she is desperately trying to acquire its formula and stave off death. She immediately interposes herself in a century-long court case: a disputation between the last living son of the Gregor family and the current Baron Prus over an estate inheritance. This case interests Marty because the secret formula for immortality is hidden amid papers belonging to the estate. Once she discovers where the document now rests, she manipulates all involved in order to get it. Her machinations are brutal: she uses people without scruples, destroying several in the process. Čapek's conclusion is that the advantage of longevity is an illusion: a life that is endless loses its meaning, its interest, and its moral distinctions. The formula is destroyed by Kristina, the daughter of the solicitor Vítek, and the play ends with Marty's glib cackle, "Haha, the end of immortality!"

Čapek recycled tropes from his earlier plays in *Věc Makropulos*, combining elements of science fiction or fantasy with contemporary everyday settings and modern language. In particular, he revisited the philosophical and social themes of his first dramatic success, *R. U. R.: Rossum's Universal Robots* (1920).⁴ Both *R. U. R.* and *Makropulos* are often considered "utopian," although, as William Harkins has suggested, they are more accurately described as attacks on the "dream[s] of utopian

³ Jarka M. Burian, *Modern Czech Theatre: Reflector and Conscience of a Nation* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 38-39. Čapek had studied philosophy at Charles University in Prague, but completed the whole of his second year at Berlin and part of his third year at the Sorbonne in Paris. After he received his degree, Čapek lived and worked in Prague. He wrote criticism for several journals and newspapers, in addition to his own essays, fiction, and dramatic works, and also remained involved in the production of theatre in Prague.

⁴ The title, *R.U.R., or Rossum's Universal Robots*, was in English in the original; however, it has more recently been rendered as *Reason's Universal Robots*. (*Čapek: Four Plays*, trans. Peter Majer and Cathy Porter (London: Methuen, 1999). Rossum, the name of the original inventor of the robot in the play, is derived from *rozum*, the Czech word for reason, or understanding. Rossum is a rationalist: he believes that by creating life he will disprove the existence of God. See William Harkins, *Karel Čapek* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 87.

absolutism.”⁵ *R. U. R.* is now more commonly noted as the source of the word “robot,” a term created from the Czech word *robota*, which referred to the system of forced peasant labor on land owned by the nobility.⁶ Čapek’s robots – organic in matter, yet constructed in factories – provide, as their name suggests, all the labor for the human race. Čapek’s descriptions of the robot-construction process are vague, but they have an eerie similarity to cloning. Artificial creation was not a new idea; Faust’s homunculus and, even closer to home, Judah Loew ben Bezalel’s golem, called up to defend Prague’s Jewish population from anti-Semitic attacks, were both well-known literary precedents. Čapek’s robots, however, akin to the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), were not creations of divine or arcane power but made possible through the advancement of science and technology. As such, Čapek’s robots offer a utopian possibility in *R. U. R.* that will, like the scientific miracle in *Makropulos*, end in dystopia – here, in fact, the annihilation of the human race.⁷

These were pressing questions for Čapek, who, along with his brother, held adamantly humanist ideals. His antifascist beliefs, anxiety over war, and concerns about clashes along class and national lines, all form subtexts in his plays. These issues, of course, had topical resonance for audiences in the years following the First World War; both *R. U. R.* and *Makropulos* were extremely successful and were rapidly translated and disseminated across Europe and North America. In *Makropulos*, as in the earlier play, Čapek was responding to a widespread sense of crisis. Beneath the veneer of satire, both plays convey Čapek’s skepticism that science or technology would improve – let alone save – society; they express, through metaphor, his fear that modern individuals in European society had already begun to lose what made them human. In Harkins’s analysis of *R. U. R.*, the robots are a symbol of this feared loss, indicating that “man is already dehumanized.”⁸ Emilia Marty is a similarly powerful symbol: numbed by the boredom of her unnaturally prolonged life, she ceases to value it or the life of anyone else. In both plays, Čapek highlighted the issues underpinning the dramas by having the male principles debate them: in *R. U. R.*, the faults of an industrialized, technocratic and capitalist society; in *Makropulos*, the dangers of immortality and concomitant loss of humanity. In the latter, the debate concludes with universal agreement that the ability to prolong life would be detrimental rather than beneficial to humanity.

⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁶ In fact, it was not Karel but his brother Josef who coined the word for an earlier work, *Opilec* (1917). While Josef occasionally wrote, often in collaboration with Karel, he was much better known for his paintings, illustrations and set designs, such as those he did for the first Prague production of *Příbady Lišky Bystrouška* in 1925 and, a few years later, Janáček’s *Makropulos*.

⁷ Čapek (and others, such as H.G. Wells, who were exploring similar ideas) was tapping into latent fears about the possible irreversible effects of artificial creation. Such fears continued throughout the twentieth century, more recently finding expression in, for example, the *Matrix* films of Andy and Larry Wachowski, (1999, 2003), *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* (Steven Spielberg, 2001), and *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2007).

⁸ Harkins, 84-95.

Janáček saw Čapek's *Věc Makropulos* in Prague on 10 December 1922, not long after it opened.⁹ At this time, however, he was still preoccupied with *Příhody lišky Bystroušky*; when he got around to seeking the rights to *Makropulos*, making inquiries through Čapek's sister Helena, permission had already been given to an American agent. Some time and perseverance was needed before the situation could be worked out to the satisfaction of all parties. The negotiations are remembered mainly for Čapek's oft-quoted line about Janáček: "That old crank! Soon he'll even be setting bits of the local column from the newspaper."¹⁰ Čapek's comment, made to Helena and published in her memoirs years later, makes an appealing support for the long-standing portrait of Janáček as the local eccentric (publicly tolerated, privately deplored) whose operatic innovations were misunderstood. In fact, Čapek's opinions on the composer's taste in opera subjects were consistently and openly expressed throughout their correspondence. He recognized that what interested Janáček was not social commentary but personal tragedy, and that he would have to alter the text significantly in order for the libretto to reflect the composer's focus – work the playwright had little desire to carry out. While Čapek maintained a (mostly) respectful diplomacy in his exchanges with the composer, he was not above poking occasional fun. To Janáček's request for the rights to a libretto, Čapek replied that perhaps his "unpoetical and over-garrulous" play was not suitable for music and proposed (with tongue in cheek?) that Janáček should just borrow the fantastical life of Emilia Marty and create the action and scenario as he wished.¹¹ After Brouček, Janáček had moved away from such overtly nationalist subjects; it was only, as Čapek had realized, Emilia Marty herself who intrigued the composer. "A 300-year-old-beauty – and eternally young – but only burnt-out [in] feeling!" the composer wrote in a letter to Kamila Stösslová in early November 1923; "Brrr! Cold as ice! About such a woman I shall write an opera." Some time later he wrote again, "Eternally beautiful – everyone falls in love with her – anyone would die for her."¹² It was the union of sensuous beauty and deadened feeling that so fascinated Janáček – a beautiful deadness that warranted sympathy rather than contempt. Thus, what had been in Čapek's play an exposé of

⁹ John Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas: A Documentary Account* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 307.

¹⁰ Helena Čapkova, *Moji milí bratři* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966), 330. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

¹¹ Several critics have echoed Čapek's uncertainty that his play was suitable for a libretto. For a representative sample of this see, V.K., "Nová premiéra Janáčkova," *Venkov* (Prague), 21 December 1926; K.B.J., [Karel Boleslav Jiráek], "Kulturní Hlídka. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos," *Národní osvobození* (Prague), 3 March 1928; ež. [Emanuel Žák], "Divadlo a hudba," *Čech* (Prague), 3 March 1928; aš. [Antonín Šilhan], "Z kulturního života. Leoš Janáček: „Věc Makropulos“,“ *Národní listy* (Prague), 3 March 1928; trn., "Kultura. Janáčkova VĚC MAKROPULOS – tentokrát jako divadlo," *Rovnost* (Brno) 16 November 1962; D[agmar]. Palacká, "Janáčkova Věc Makropulos," *Zemědělské noviny* (Prague), 31 May 1977; and vbr. [Vladimír Bor], "Pro Janáčkův rok Věc Makropulos," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 28 April, 1977.

¹² John Tyrrell, ed. and trans., *Intimate Letters: Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 43; and Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 311. (Tyrrell's translations).

the dangers threatening modern European society, would become, under the force of Janáček's compassion for his heroine, a crisis of a more personal nature.¹³

It is unlikely that Janáček would have wanted Čapek's help with the libretto, even had the author offered: after the debacle of *Brouček*, the composer invariably prepared his own texts. Moreover, he seemed unconcerned about the suitability of Čapek's "unpoetical" prose for opera; on the contrary, he preserved much of the dialogue, particularly in the first and second acts of the opera, where the action closely follows that of the play. As a consequence, the opera took on the play's snappy prose style and "everyday" quality. Critics have been struck by the similarities between the two works, both in their texts and in the premium placed on the dialogue, through which much of the intrigue and mystery is gradually revealed. As one representative critic, Vladimír Šefl, commenting on the qualities shared by play and opera, wrote, "the sensational theme of deathlessness, projected onto the fantastical character of celebrated singer Emilia Marty who has lived for three hundred and thirty-seven years, unfolds in the manner of a detective thriller."¹⁴

Yet there has also been a sense that the opera stood in contrast to the play. Zdeněk Candra rehearsed an established theme in the opera's reception when, in 1965, he wrote, "Janáček tightened up Čapek's story for opera and somehow refined the question: What gives human life meaning?"¹⁵ This refinement took place mainly in the third act, in which Janáček made the most significant alterations, omitting, for example, Čapek's protracted "philosophical debate." Dramatically, it made good sense for the long discussion of the benefits of human immortality to be taken out of the opera: the wordy and static scene, in a drama already short on action, dragged down the pace. Janáček's cuts intensified the dramatic surge of the act and imparted a conciseness that, most critics agreed, improved on Čapek's play.¹⁶ In addition, by omitting the immortality debate, Janáček barred the remaining characters from active engagement with the dangers to human life that immortality presents. This is not to imply that they do not learn from Marty's experience, but that they do so only as witnesses. Now a unique and personal tragedy, the opera could only end in Marty's death; even though he was merely supplying the conclusion already implied in Čapek's play, the difference in tone between the two works was decisive.

¹³ Janáček had expressed his sympathy for his heroine's plight in several of his letters. It was also apparent to several critics, one who perceived in Janáček's *Makropulos* the expression of a triplet of Wagnerian operatic tropes: "compassion, redemption, and miracle." Mikulaš Bek, "Opera a drama," *Divadelní noviny* 21/2 (1993): 4.

¹⁴ Vladimír Šefl, "Inscenace s pěti hvězdičkami," *Večerní* (Prague), 18 October 1965. Šefl was only one of many critics to compare the play and the opera to a detective novel. See also, Dr. Vilém Pospíšil, "Věc Makropulos opět v Praze," *Hudební rozhledy* 7 (1956): n.p.; Vladimír Bor, "Věc Makropulos v pozoruhodném provedení," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 19 October 1965; Z.C. [Zdeněk Candra], "Janáčková výzva k lidství tvořivému," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 27 April 1977; and Helena Havlíková, "Premiéra Janáčkovy Věci Makropulos v Národním divadle: Gregorův dirigentský triumf," *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 26 October 1993.

¹⁵ Zdeněk Candra, "Makropulos oživila," *Práce* (Prague), 19 October 1965.

¹⁶ O.Š. [Otakar Šourek], "Z hudebního života. Dr. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos," *Venkov* (Prague), 3 March 1928.

The Incomprehensibility of Conversational Opera

When Janáček finished *Věc Makropulos*, in December 1925, he entrusted the premiere to the National Theatre in Brno, as was becoming his usual practice. Ota Zítek, the director who had previously designed and directed *Kát'a Kabanová* and the *Vixen*, took charge, with František Neumann conducting. That Janáček's opera presented the performers with unaccustomed difficulties was apparent from the beginning. In the small city of Brno, rumors that the musicians were having trouble, and that Zítek and Neumann were tampering with the score during rehearsals, filtered back to Janáček. The resulting friction caused the premiere to be pushed back more than once and it was only in the final week, according to Janáček, that things finally began to come together.¹⁷ Despite these troubles, the opera was premiered to a packed house on 18 December 1926 with the composer in attendance.¹⁸ The critic from the Prague paper *Venkov*, visiting Brno for the occasion, pronounced a "stormy success" – acclaim that the rest of the press seconded.¹⁹ With evident satisfaction, the Brno papers also noted the presence in the audience of a large number of foreigners who, as one paper put it, "now made pilgrimages to Brno" – an obvious allusion to the treks Wagnerites made to Bayreuth, implying thereby that Janáček's operas inspired similar devotion.²⁰ Earlier disagreements now forgotten, Janáček exulted over the positive reception, writing to Kamila that "the 'icy one' had unsuspected success! To the extent that everybody had cold shivers down their spines. They say that it is my greatest work."²¹

The complications that arose during the preparations for the premiere cannot be explained solely by unfamiliarity or by the musicians' reluctance to accept a new musical style. Janáček's speech-melody theory was well known in Brno musical circles by this time, even as it continued to be regarded as a personal, even eccentric, compositional method. Still, several of the critics considered Janáček to have imposed the most rigorous application of his theory in the new opera. A. Janéček, the reviewer for *Republika*, described Janáček's use of speech melody and admitted to uncertainty that the resulting musical style, in which singing had been suppressed, could still be called *operatic*: "The quick, vital text appears clothed in a short, truly *conversational* musical attire.... Janáček is loyal to his theory of speech melodies, he pursues it to its ultimate aural conclusion so that the sung word is actually only intoned speech: perhaps closer to melodrama than to opera in its fundamentals."²²

¹⁷ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 316.

¹⁸ The theatre apparently sold out days before the premiere: on 14 December Janáček wrote that he did not even know where he would be sitting in the theatre; Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 316.

¹⁹ V.K., "Nová premiéra Janáčková."

²⁰ A. Janéček, "Premiéra nové opery Janáčkovy „Věc Makropulos“ v Brně," *Československá republika* (Brno), 21 December 1926.

²¹ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 317. (Tyrrell's translation).

²² A. Janéček, "Premiéra nové opery Janáčkovy „Věc Makropulos“ v Brně." Emphasis mine.

Prague brought out *Makropulos* at their National Theatre during the following opera season.²³ The performance was led by Otakar Ostrčil, then in mid-career as resident conductor. Yet, despite the advantages of larger facilities, Ostrčil's highly-regarded conducting, and the diligent study he had made of the score (which had included working with the composer), the Prague papers pronounced a more qualified success. Several reviews had unreserved praise only for Ostrčil's interpretation and Anna Kejřová's Emilia Marty; and in the polarized atmosphere of operatic Prague, a few were bluntly unfavorable. "Just as the editor of a daily paper, who records dramatic facts, isn't [himself] dramatic," Bedřich Bělohlávek wrote, "so neither is Janáček, at least not in this work." In particular, Bělohlávek had no patience with what he called the opera's "aggregate sounds," compiled of both "gemstones and rubble."²⁴ On the other hand, the music critic Otakar Šourek staunchly defended the work, describing the effect of the opera's terse motives rather differently:

In [Janáček's] musical language, which maintains a characteristic sharp fragrance and a strong sense of individuality, he is concerned only with the dramatic expression of the scene....A few characteristic individual features give his scenes a certain psychological shape, fleetingly, as though they just skim through motives that are of a purely *conversational* or scenically subsidiary type.²⁵

The opera polemic waged in Prague by the music critics, and Janáček's uncomfortable and often ambiguous position within it, offers possibilities for understanding differences in the operatic discourses of the two main Czech cities, Prague and Brno. Here, however, I wish to draw attention to similarities in their reception of *Makropulos*, particularly the use of the word *konveršáční* – "conversational," or "talky," perhaps – which appeared both in Prague and Brno reviews. One of the more pervasive and striking descriptions of *Makropulos*'s music throughout its reception, *konveršáční* seems to have been the critics' way of characterizing the opera's particular problems and, occasionally, its solutions.

It would have made sense for the point of reference in this discussion to have been to Musorgsky: the composers shared similar interests in speechlike vocal writing, and Musorgsky's term *opéra dialogué* is the French equivalent of the Czech *konveršáční opera*, but his name was never mentioned in reviews of *Makropulos*. The absence, at least in the early reception, may have been due, in part, to the low profile *Boris Godunov* had in the Czech operatic repertoire: it wasn't seen in Brno until 1923, the first production in Prague, in 1910, was only given a handful of performances

²³ The Prague premiere of *Věc Makropulos* was on 1 March 1928. Josef Munclinger directed the production and Josef Čapek designed the sets.

²⁴ B.B. [Bedřich Bělohlávek], "Cose Hraje: Věc Makropulos," *Právo lidu* (Prague), 2 March 1928. Bělohlávek was a follower of Zdenek Nejedlý, the prominent and influential Prague music critic, and shared the prejudices described in chapter one.

²⁵ O.Š. [Šourek], "Z hudebního života. Dr. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos." Emphasis mine. See also, E[manuel] Kopecký, "Věc Makropulos," *Právo* (Prague), 3 March 1956.

(five in 1910, two in 1912) before it was taken out of the repertoire. A subsequent production, in 1919, fared little better: though it stayed around until 1933, there were only 29 performances over those 14 years. (As a comparison, the two productions at the National Theatre during this period of Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* had a total of 215 performances.) Even if *Boris* had received more exposure than it did, Musorgsky's stylistic innovations still might not have featured in the debate over the direction of "modern" Czech opera. The terms of discussions about opera at this time were predominantly shaped by a narrow focus on the heritage of nineteenth-century German music, the main threats to, or relief from (depending on which side of the debate the critic fell), were perceived as coming from France, in developments such as impressionism, but also including primitivism *à la* Stravinsky; from the Italian *verismo* operas; and from the deplorable but unquenchable public thirst for operetta.²⁶

English scholarship has also tended to resist linking Janáček and Musorgsky: John Tyrrell, for example, has written, variously, that Janáček's references to Musorgsky are "tantalizingly few" and "puzzling and ambiguous"; most recently, Derek Katz has suggested that passages of vocal writing in Musorgsky's (and Debussy's) operas more obviously aim to recreate "spoken prose" than anything in Janáček's operas.²⁷ Of course, no one doubts that Janáček was well acquainted with Musorgsky's music: he owned scores of some of the piano pieces, as well as a Rimsky-Korsakov edition of *Boris Godunov*, and he had attended the Brno production of *Boris* in 1923 shortly before he commenced work on *Makropulos*. Moreover, before that, as discussed in Chapter One, Janáček had lectured on *Boris* at the Brno Organ School. But though the traces of Janáček's thoughts on Musorgsky are scarce, such comments as there are support a little reading between the lines. His admittedly skimpy lectures notes chart a stylistic evolution in vocal writing toward more speechlike declamation that begins with Musorgsky and culminates with his own opera, *Její pastorkyňa*. That Janáček, unlike Musorgsky, never felt the need to add a qualifying adjective like *konveršantní* or *diologická* to the noun *opera* when he referred to his own works, further suggests that he thought of, or at least wished to position, his own operas within a development that had become mainstream, rather than a sub genre in need of separate classification.

But it wasn't only the "talkiness" of *Makropulos* to which critics reacted. The opera's terseness, its precipitous declamation, and the headlong stream of vocal exchanges virtually uninterrupted by choruses, set pieces, or even simple lyrical passages were also points of critical debate. Even for Janáček, repetition, at both the level of word and phrase, was curtailed to a remarkable extent. Except for a few instances, the text is set syllabically. The cumulative effect gave *Makropulos*, one reviewer suggested, "a verbal declamation that has a purely Janáčekian conciseness."²⁸

²⁶ For more on this, see Locke, 42.

²⁷ John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 2: (1914-1928), *Tsar of the Forests* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 486; "Introduction," in *Leoš Janáček: Káťa Kabanová*, ed. John Tyrrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-36, here 6; and Derek Katz, *Janáček beyond the Borders* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 28.

²⁸ V. K., "Nová premiéra Janáčková."

The brevity of Janáček's motifs resulted in innumerable comments on the economy and fragmentation of the opera's structure – an “aphoristically conceived score” as one critic dubbed it.²⁹ Yet in the debate over precisely how *Makropulos* was operatically new – whether it was melodrama, as the journalist Janáček had suggested, or “a work of austere, stark recitative,” as others argued – the fixation on terse declamation only tells half the story. Scholar Mikulaš Bek recently went one step further, “[*Makropulos*] sins against all the commandments of opera aesthetics of the nineteenth century....There are no arias, no ensembles, no recitative. Only dialogue leads the whirlwind tempo onward, without the breaks that are typical of opera.”³⁰ Beyond its short, fragmented motives, the sheer speed of the text setting has bemused many listeners over the years, turning the opera into “a kind of headlong, hurried tongue-twisting dialogue,” as the critic Jaroslav Volek memorably phrased it in 1965.³¹ It was above all this aspect that confirmed “conversational opera” as the appropriate label for *Makropulos*. Thus, the critic for *Lidová demokracie*, Vladimír Bor, rehashed what was by then a longstanding theme in the opera's reception when, in his review of the 1977 Prague production, he blamed *Makropulos*'s particular difficulties on its libretto, whose lack of lucidity had left Janáček with no option but to “create it as a conversational opera.” Despite Janáček's efforts to counteract this problem with a more extreme application of his speech-melody style than he had used in earlier operas, he argued, the tempo and rhythm of the vocal lines combined to make the declamation blazingly fast in places: Bor felt that *Makropulos*'s “exacting music” added little to the intelligibility of the words.³²

This in turn created problems for the audience, which found the usual difficulty of understanding the words in opera now a nearly insurmountable obstacle. Antonín Šilhan noted that at the Prague premiere, “the greater part of the audience had no idea what the opera was about.”³³ And Šourek admonished the theatre for neglecting to alleviate this difficulty:

Of course, if Janáček's “Věc Makropulos” is to affect the audience as it really should, it is particularly important that what is happening on stage is clear. The National Theatre already has erred in this matter, for they failed to say anything about the work in their notes, on top of which they did not print even a brief synopsis of the action in the program, as is customary.³⁴

²⁹ J. P., “Z kulturního života. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos,” *Národní listy* (Prague), 21 December 1926.

³⁰ Pospíšil, “Věc Makropulos opět v Praze.”; and Bek, “Opera a drama.”

³¹ Jaroslav Volek, “Tvůrčí svár o Janáčka,” *Kulturní tvorba* (Prague), 18 November 1965.

³² vbr. [Bor], “Pro Janáčkův rok Věc Makropulos.”

³³ aš. [Šilhan], “Z kulturního života. Leoš Janáček: „Věc Makropulos“.”

³⁴ O.Š. [Šourek], “Z hudebního života. Dr. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos.” Šourek added a further reproach, one that found many echoes: “This [lack of comprehensibility] was the most annoyingly felt, in that the execution of the sound of the orchestra [...] was at times too loud, so that the voices of the singers were either wholly covered or else pressed to overexertion, which obscured the comprehensibility of the words, and this even in the most dramatically important places.” See also, K.B.J., [Jiráek], “Kulturní Hlídka. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos.”; and B.O.R. [Vladimír Bor], “Nové

Writing about the Prague *Makropulos* of 1956, music critic Vilém Pospíšil approved of the “transcendent style” of Marie Podalová’s Marty, but lamented, “unfortunately not all of our singers had that cultivation of words, which truly here, in this one of Janáček’s works, is so important.”³⁵

While *Makropulos*’s fast, lean style has been extolled for ushering in a new type of modern opera, the new sound was not always met without reservations. Janáček’s “harder, more serious musical setting of Čapek’s singular stage language” was, for example, unfavorably contrasted with that of the “supremely singing *Liška Bystrouška*.”³⁶ And though such unyielding music could be conceived as appropriate to the icy cynicism of Marty’s character, for some critics it spelled the loss of the highly-regarded “psychological lyricism” of *Kát’a Kabanová* – a loss felt as much on the dramatic as the musical level.³⁷ Bor pointed out that the “conversational music increases the demands on the interpreters, who now must convey the complicated background action solely by means of their acting skills, in order for the comprehensibility of the play to not rest only in the sung text.”³⁸ Moreover, with much of the vocal music taking place in rapid dialogue, critics have felt that many of the roles lacked fully-realized musical profiles; as a result, their characters also remained undeveloped. One went so far as to describe them all as “impotent.”³⁹

To an extent, this is true even of Marty. Other Janáček heroines, such as Kát’a, Jenůfa, and the Kostelnička, are engaged throughout in moral, religious, and psychological conflicts. They frequently conceal their troubled interiority from family and friends, yet reveal themselves to the audience in more or less conventionally operatic ways, through arias or less formal solo songs. Lacking such lyrical utterances, Marty sustains her cynically imperious façade as much with the audience as with those on stage, at least until it (and she) crumbles in the final scene. But until that moment Janáček refrains from conventional means of portraying interiority in opera: Marty’s “songs” (whether arias or other kinds of lyrical utterances) are missing. Their absence contributes to the enigmatical impenetrability necessary to Marty, but also seems to have left the critics wanting more. Thus, the demand that her portrayers be exceptional actors as well as singers, reiterated in reviews from the premiere to the present, should perhaps be understood in light of the need to fill the perceived void

uvedení opery „Věc Makropulos,” *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 4 March 1956. The more intimate performance conditions of the Na Hradbách theatre in Brno, where the opera ensemble performed until 1962 before moving to the new Janáček Theatre, made the projection of the singers’ voices over the orchestra easier than in Prague. Even so, the intelligibility of the words of Janáček’s *Makropulos* remained a constant issue. The Na Hradbách theatre, now officially called the Mahen Theatre, still exists in Brno. It is more usually used now for spoken drama; in 2001 however, Brno brought out a new production of *Věc Makropulos* to be performed in the original theatre to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the opera.

³⁵ Vilém Pospíšil, “Úspěch opery Věc Makropulos,” *Večerní* (Prague), 1 March 1956.

³⁶ Ps., “Zdařilá Janáčková Makropulos,” *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 3 May 1977.

³⁷ Jarmila Brožovská, “Problémy o umění janáčkovské interpretace,” *Mladá fronta* (Prague), 22 October 1965.

³⁸ V.B.R. [Bor], “Pro Janáčkův rok Věc Makropulos.”

³⁹ K.B.J. [Jírák], “Kulturní Hlídka. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos.”

left by the “dearth of actual singing on stage.”⁴⁰ Similarly, the orchestral music was occasionally thought insufficient to the task of filling in Marty’s interior space. The Czech composer Alois Hába’s commentary on the Prague premiere of *Makropulos* describes his sense of absence most strikingly: “If I listen to Janáček’s music...I have the image of a person with a big head and big feet without a torso. Perhaps similar to the way children draw little people: instead of a torso only a thin line.”⁴¹

Opera Singers

Given that her sole lyrical utterance is reserved for the final moments, it is perhaps not surprising that few critics made special note of Marty’s profession. Although during her more than three hundred years Marty alters her name many times, her identity never changes: Janáček’s “eternally young” and “eternally beautiful” heroine was also eternally a singer. What is more, and although not even Janáček discussed it, her identity is fundamental to the setting and the story. The second act takes place in an opera house where Marty has just given a performance; the secondary female character, Kristina, is also a singer, a young member of the company. Indeed, much of the buzz surrounding Marty is created by Kristina’s reports of her arrival at the theatre and of her singing. The first entrance of the young singer is dominated by her impressions of the diva: in her excitement she literally squeals Marty’s name in a short fanfare gesture that she then repeats a third higher, rising to a high *Bb* (see example 2). Her father apologetically explains away this unseemly outburst: “Má dcera je u divadla!” (My daughter is in the theatre!). Kristina, however, brushes this off impetuously, declaring, “O táti, táti! Já půjdu od divadla” (O daddy, daddy! I’ve given up theatre). Still preoccupied with her new obsession, she continues, “To je největší zpěvačka na světě!” (This is the greatest singer in the world!). Marty is a celebrity, and while this early excitement is certainly apposite to her status and beauty, it becomes clear as the opera progresses that her unusual potency is most of all the result of her extraordinary singing.

Extraordinary singing, in the particularly apt form of the Orpheus myth, was the basis for the first operas – Jacopo Peri’s *Euridice* (1600) and Claudio Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* (1607) – which date from the period of Marty’s youth. Indeed, Orpheus’s captivating voice, the prologue from *Orfeo* suggests, is a metaphor for the entertainment the new art form promises its audience. Singers and musicians have remained prominent figures in operatic narratives, but they appeared in Czech theatre works, including opera, with particular insistence throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The play *Fidlovačka* (1834), by Josef Tyl with incidental music by František Škroup, for example, featured a blind fiddler named Mareš, whose song “Kde domov můj” (“Where my home is”) had immediate and enduring popularity (it

⁴⁰ Miroslav Barvík, “Další Janáčkovovo vítězství v ND,” *Divadlo V* (1956): 404-6.

⁴¹ Alois Hába, “Besídka: Premiera Janáčkovy opery „Věc Makropulos“,” *Československá Republika* (Prague), 4 March 1928.

was officially adopted as the Czech national anthem in 1918 and remains so today). Pipers in Czech stage works were also very common, particularly in the nineteenth century. The story of Švanda, a bagpiper whose instrument has nearly magical powers, was the subject of several plays, oratorios and operas (all entitled *Švanda dudák*); bagpipes – and their players – subsequently made a number of cameos in other Czech operas.⁴² But the musician was not always a comically folkish, fairy-tale figure like Švanda. Bedřich Smetana's *Dalibor* (1868) is a romantic opera stylistically indebted to *Tristan und Isolde* but also akin to *Fidelio* in the soprano heroine Milada and her courageous rescue of the tenor Dalibor. During his imprisonment, Dalibor comforts himself with a violin procured from the gaoler through pleading, while his enamored Milada (disguised as a boy) makes her way past guards she has beguiled with her harp-playing and singing.

One interpretation of the popularity of singers and musicians in Czech opera is that it reinforces a sense of identity by highlighting a cultural characteristic assumed to be shared by the nation. “Dalibor the violinist,” suggests John Tyrrell, “embodies one of the most potent of all Czech nationalist myths, the notion of the musicality of the Czechs and the achievement of their musicians.” Tyrrell maintains that almost all musicians and singers in Czech opera symbolize this “zealously cultivated” musical identity. But while his thesis is persuasive and there is a wealth of examples to support it, those operas that do not fit, such as Janáček's post-*Její pastorkyňa* operas, are bracketed and dismissed: “Živný, the central character of Janáček's *Fate*, is also a composer, but, like the poet, painter and musician in *The Excursion of Mr Brouček to the Moon*, he belongs to quite a different tradition: ‘Bohemian’ rather than Czech.”⁴³ (Tyrrell, following the pattern of almost every critic before him, omits – forgets? – Emilia Marty).

The distinction between Živný and Švanda that Tyrrell refers to as “‘Bohemian’ rather than Czech” could also be described as urban rather than folk. Indeed, the folk musicians who appear in Czech operas well into the nineteenth century represent an interim stage in a transition seen more broadly in opera: from mythological stories, to folk or historical-political subjects, and then finally to urban subjects. As the composers and librettists who were writing opera in the late nineteenth century became more interested in using modern, urban subjects, mythic and folkish singers and musicians vanished from new operatic works. Still, singers and musicians did not disappear altogether: Tyrrell's point about musicians in operas becoming composers is well-taken. This new preoccupation with artistic professionalism is also reflected in the relocation of folk musicians to cities, where they work in the “entertainment industry.” *La Bohème*'s Musetta is one example, and in *Tosca* Puccini elevated her type to new professional heights. Janáček's Emilia Marty

⁴² The most famous and popular of the *Švanda dudák*'s, at least outside of the Czech lands, was Jaromír Weinberger's opera (1927). Operas which featured bagpipes are, for example, Dvořák: *King and Charcoal Burner* (1871, 2nd ver. 1874, rev. 1887), Smetana: *The Secret* (1878), Karel Kovařovic: *The Dogheads* (1898), Dvořák: *The Devil and Kate* (1899), Richard Rozkošný, *The Black Lake* (1906). John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 163.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 162-4.

perhaps therefore had less to do with her Czech musician ancestors than with a more recent tendency in opera to situate actors, singers, and musicians in modern society. This was a trend that was taking place all across Europe, and Janáček both drew on and contributed to it.

Disruptive Voice

There is no doubt that Janáček knew *Tosca* well. The general influence of the Italian *verismo* operas – in particular their unabashed violence – on Janáček has been well documented. But there is some evidence that Puccini's opera about the jealous singer exerted a more direct influence.⁴⁴ Janáček had just started work on the composition of *Osud* (*Fate*, 1905) when he attended *Tosca* in its first Czech production at the Prague National Theatre on 26 November 1903.⁴⁵ Shortly after witnessing *Tosca*'s suicide leap, Janáček, indulging in a little composerly gamesmanship, contrived to add a double suicide-murder leap to his opera *Osud*.⁴⁶ But *Tosca* cast a longer shadow than that. Puccini's charismatic heroine and Janáček's mysterious Emilia Marty are closely connected: their performances as singers are represented in such a way that, while both can still be considered continuations of the tradition of the musician in opera, they also can be heard as commenting on the changing effect of singing within opera.

Puccini gave *Tosca* an opportunity for sung performance in act 2, layering it over the music that sets Scarpia's interrogation of Cavaradossi. Her concert takes place on a stage that is offstage, a distant elsewhere in the Queen's palace, out of view of the other characters and the audience. She is heard only through the window of Scarpia's office, which is left open for this very purpose. This framing of *Tosca*'s "singing" renders her voice a disembodied aural object. Yet it is still recognizable, causing the men on stage to pause. Distracted by this penetration of his space, Scarpia shuts the window. The diva's voice is intrusive, distracting: it must be silenced.

Once more a device from Puccini is made more extreme. Whereas *Tosca*'s performance is out of sight and then out of earshot, there is nothing in *Makropulos* of Marty's "operatic performance" except the location: the entire second act is set backstage in an opera house, but the performance is already over. We experience Marty's "singing" only through its effect on other characters: as, for example, in Kristina's excited outbursts, previously discussed. That her voice may also be

⁴⁴ See, for example, Hans Hollander, "Janáček's Development," *The Musical Times* 99/1386 (1958): 427; and Robin Holloway, "Expressive Sources and Resources in Janáček's Musical Language," in *Janáček Studies*, ed. Paul Wingfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 1-17.

⁴⁵ Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 1, 765.

⁴⁶ Janáček was prompted to write *Osud* during a vacation to his favorite Moravian spa town Luhačovice in summer 1903. He worked on the scenario from October to December; he continued, however, to revise it extensively through April 1904. The Prague premiere of *Tosca* was 21 November 1903.

dangerous or destructive is illustrated by its effect on the character Hauk-Šendorf. A lover of Marty's fifty years earlier, when she was known as Eugenia Montez, Hauk recognizes her voice in her performance: incredulous, he comes backstage and prostrates himself at her feet.

It appears at first that Hauk is simply senile (Prus calls him "feeble-minded," and even Hauk refers to himself as "idiot"). The monotone, uninflected declamation of his entrance can be heard all too easily as a representation of mental processes that have disengaged from their surroundings, and the *tenuto* articulation and creeping, chromatic pitches of Hauk's signature motif (sung always, and only, to "Ó") of a broken mind, endlessly repeating a single thought (see example 3a).

But this is not the entire story. Hauk reveals that, from the moment he first heard Marty sing, he has been insane: in that instant he lost his reason, his self, his soul. In contrast to the incoherent, flaccid declamation of his present, Hauk's reminiscence of the past is animated by the exotic sounds of the music he heard Marty perform: castanets and syncopated "Spanish" rhythms. "Ona byla cigánka, říkali jí chula negra. Totíž tam dole, v Andalusii. Jak se bláznil celý svět! Vaya, Gitána!" (She was a gypsy, they called her "chula negra." That is, down there in Andalusia. How the whole world was crazy about her! Vaya, Gitána!) (see example 3b). Disturbingly, Hauk's condition is revealed as permanent: the energy and coherence of the music of his reminiscence is bound to the past; it can only be retrieved in an act of recollection. When Hauk returns to the present, he returns again to repeat his inert, creeping motif.

Evidently the effects of Marty's voice are different from the momentary distraction that Tosca's voice causes. But then, Janáček's heroine is more terrible and less human than Puccini's: once granted an (albeit limited) immortality she cannot be killed, but neither can she feel emotion. Her outer perfection and vocal brilliance fascinate everyone, but her allure is unhealthy: to listen to her is to invite personal destruction. Janek is an even more tragic victim of Marty's deadly charm than Hauk-Šendorf; though in love with Kristina, he nonetheless develops an infatuation for Marty. When he is humiliated in front of her by his father, the Baron, and then passed over by her in favor of the older man, he commits suicide. In this Marty's similarity to another notorious fictional stage performer seems evident. Lulu, the anti-heroine of Frank Wedekind's plays, *Erdegeist* (*Earth Spirit*, 1895) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*, 1904), and later of Alban Berg's unfinished second opera *Lulu* (1937), was a dancer instead of a singer, but both women use sex to obtain what they desire. The similarities between the two heroines, in particular, that both are stage performers, suggests that Čapek was at least partially influenced by Wedekind. Čapek had opportunities to become acquainted with Wedekind's "Lulu plays," if not in his personal reading, then from their staging: one, directed by Jan Bor at the Švandovo Theatre in Smíchov (a suburb of Prague), ran nearly concurrently with Čapek's own plays, *R. U. R.* and *Ze Života Hmyzu* (*The Insect Play*), which appeared at the Vinohrady theatre from 1920 to 1922.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ František Langer, *Byli a bylo: Vzpomínky*, ed. Jiří Tomáš (Prague: Akropolis, 2003), 291.

The sexually predatory female, wreaking havoc on the men around her, was a familiar trope of the early twentieth-century. Diane Page has suggested that Marty is just such a *femme fatale*, her treacherous erotic fascination representing the threat that modern women posed to the dominant position of men in European society.⁴⁸ But there are also significant differences between Marty and these dangerous women; the theme of immortality in *Makropulos* cannot be ignored. As literary scholar Bohuslava Bradbrook has pointed out, the theories of causes and counteractants of ageing put forward by the Ukrainian scientist Ilya Ilitch Metchnikov (1845-1916) had captured the interest and imagination of Europe in the early years of the twentieth century.⁴⁹ George Bernard Shaw's five-play *Back to Methuselah* (1921) was also a drama on the topic of human longevity, though Shaw's conclusion regarding the outcome of an unnaturally prolonged life was more optimistic than Čapek's.

Although Čapek denied the influence of Shaw's *Methuselah*, he was conscious of, if circumspect about, another debt. A short story by his friend František Langer, *Eternal Youth* (1910), had also taken on the theme of immortality.⁵⁰ Langer's beautiful female protagonist is provided with her unnatural youth and beauty not by science, but by drinking the blood of virgins. Though less sensational, the predatory, inhuman behavior that characterizes Čapek's long-lived opera singer has more in common with Langer's cannibalistic heroine than with Shaw's philosophical ancients, and the impression of Marty's inhumanity predominates. Čapek brought the two hot topics of female sexuality and human longevity together in *Makropulos*. Marty has all of Lulu's sexual magnetism but none of her human frailty: she cannot be killed (Gregor is shocked and repulsed by the scars left on Marty's indestructible body from attempts to murder her). And despite (or perhaps because of) his music, most of Janáček's compassion for Marty was overridden, it appears, by Čapek's original portrayal of her as a symbol of dehumanized society: a "thing inside which only bloodless veins run," Jiří Bajer called her.⁵¹ Indeed, although the Czech title is usually rendered as *The Makropulos Case*, or *Makropulos Secret*, a literal translation of the word *věc* is "thing." The deliberate ambiguity allows for some speculation: *věc* is gendered female in Czech. It may be, then, that Marty herself is the Makropulos *thing*: the most dangerous female spectacle of all.⁵²

⁴⁸ Diane M. Page, "Women in the Operas of Leoš Janáček" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2000), 189-217.

⁴⁹ Bohuslava R. Bradbrook, *Karel Čapek: In Pursuit of Truth, Tolerance, and Trust* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 60. Langer had written later in life that Čapek had informed him privately of his plans for *Makropulos* before commencing writing the play because of the similarity between the two.

⁵¹ Jiří Bajer "Věc," *Divadelní a filmové noviny* (Prague), 17 November 1965. See also K.B.J. [Karel Boleslav Jiráček], "Z hudebního života Československo," *Tempo* (Prague), 4/4 (1928); Jiří Dostál, "Janáčková opera „Věc Makropulos“," *Lidové listy* (Prague), 3 March 1928; and trn., "Kultura. Janáčková VĚC MAKROPULOS – tentokrát jako divadlo."

⁵² This is an ambiguity the German title, *Die Sache Makropulos*, retains. "Sache," like "věc," has connotations both as a thing and as a matter or affair; it is also a feminine noun.

Enter the Sirens

Productions of *Makropulos* sought ways to stage the contradiction of Marty's beautiful human appearance and her inhuman being. For example, Prague's 1965 *Makropulos*, directed by Václav Kašlík, with sets by Josef Svoboda, generated much commentary among the critics for its diagonal glass walls that partitioned off a narrow strip at the front of the stage in which almost all the action of the opera took place (see figure 1). In Kašlík's conception, this space was "real, everyday life" and here Marty was, to some extent, accessible to the other characters. The interior space, which stretched to the back of the stage and remained mostly empty, represented the enigmatic darkness of Marty's psychology and extended past.⁵³ Reinforcing her alienation, Alena Míková, who sang Marty in this production, hid her eyes behind huge black sunglasses (see figure 2).

But Marty's inhumanness, as I have argued, was firmly linked to the mesmerizing qualities of her voice. Treacherously beautiful, she could even be said to represent a creature much older than the *femme fatale*: the siren of Homer's *Odyssey*. Sirens, the counterparts to Orpheus, are the other mythologized singers of classical antiquity. These were not mortal women, but hybrid monsters with human upper bodies and, originally at least, avian lower halves.⁵⁴ Like Orpheus, the sirens sang with captivating beauty; unlike him, their purpose was not just to beguile but to destroy their listeners. Yet despite the operatic tradition of setting stories about singers, in which Orpheus's benevolent enchantments found their appeal, the classical siren myth has seldom been heard there. The sirens did, however, find voice in the form of their various romanticized, sexualized, and ornamented Germanic and Slavic "daughters," the lorelei and the rusalka. There are a handful of such operas from the nineteenth century: Mendelssohn left a Lorelei opera unfinished at his death; the Italian composer Alfredo Catalani's *Elda* (1876, rev. 1877) was based, like the Mendelssohn, on Heinrich Heine's version of the story. Alexander Dargomizhsky's *Rusalka* (1856), a setting of Pushkin's unfinished poem, was performed at the National Theatre in Prague in 1889; the most famous opera by Janáček's friend and much-admired senior, Antonín Dvořák, *Rusalka* (1901), set a different version of the story. And although *Makropulos* is very much a drama of the twentieth century, the sirens and their Romantic daughters nonetheless make shadowy appearances there.

This is witnessed particularly in production – in costumes and in recurrent features of the sets for the opera. Glamorous attire and flashy jewelry are undoubtedly apposite to costuming a diva; the designs for Marty's costumes for the

⁵³ See, for example, Ps., "Kultura. Návrat Janáčkovy „Věci Makropulos“,“ *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 20 October 1965; Šefl, "Inscenace s pěti hvězdičkami."; Vilém Pospíšil, "Další Janáček v Národním divadle," *Hudební rozhledy* 20 (1965): 494-5. Bajer, "Věc."

⁵⁴ Fish have commonly replaced birds, though in depictions from antiquity to modern times lower halves can be birdlike, fishlike, or both (bird claws and fishtails) simultaneously. Also varied, though more rarely, was whether the human half was male or female; see Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "Sirens in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," in *Music of the Sirens*, ed. Linda Phyllis Austern and Inna Naroditskaya (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 16-54.

Brno premiere, however, picked up gold ornamentation and hints of watery life-forms, which excited Janáček more than anything else in the production. He wrote in a letter to Stösslová: “Those outfits of hers! In act 1 a sort of greenish fur as a lining. Those pearls and long gold earrings[!] In act 2 a white fur, a long train, in act 3 a dress made out of gold, as if out of gold scales. What a sight!”⁵⁵ (The Prague production of Dvořák’s *Rusalka* in 1915 had also draped Pavla Vachková, who sang the title role, in strings of pearls; see figure 3.) Although Brno’s original golden scales were never recreated for later Marty, metallic shimmer for her dresses has materialized numerous times. Jindřiška Hirschová, for example, who designed the costumes for Prague’s 1965 *Makropulos*, suited Alena Míková in lamé (see figure 2 again); designer Olga Filipi, in 1977, also used lamé for Naděžda Kniplová’s costume, which included, like the first Marty, long strings of pearls (see figure 4). Filipi provided a more revealing version of the costume, a gathered, strapless gown cut from the same lustrous fabric, for the elegantly svelte Eva Zikmundová, who sang Marty in the second cast for 1977 (see figure 5).

The central staging element of both the play’s and the opera’s second act troped a different motif from the siren myth: when Marty has finished singing, she sits on a throne, raised on a dais like an “island,” from which she calls her mesmerized admirers to her one by one. That many stagings also surrounded the dais with flowers puts a further gloss on the metaphor. For the Prague premiere, the throne Josef Čapek designed used sphinxes as armrests to accentuate Marty’s enigmatic existence (see figure 6). Architect Hugo Foltýn’s modernist, geometric style avoided such classical motifs in his set design for Brno in 1935 (see figure 7), but later productions employed Čapek’s stone statuary with varying success: Josef Šálek exaggerated the monstrous lions on either side of the throne in Brno’s 1948 *Makropulos*, so much that they threatened to dwarf the singers entirely (see figure 8); by contrast, František Tröster’s more modest version for the Prague 1956 production was regally commanded (as was the spellbound Gregor, sung by Jaroslav Striška) by the “inscrutable and demonic” Marie Podvalová as Marty (see figure 9).⁵⁶

The most notable trope of the Lorelei, however, occurs in the opening scene of act 3, which gives her famous seductive act an ironic turn. Marty has just closed a deal with Baron Prus – sex in exchange for the document with the formula for immortal life. While Prus castigates himself for demeaning his honor with a woman such as Marty, she is already emotionally detached. Sitting down in front of her mirror, she begins to comb her hair. The distance between their mental states widens as a letter arrives to inform the Baron that his son – consumed by jealous despair over Marty – has committed suicide. Prus disintegrates in guilt and grief, but Marty, with her inhuman disaffection, calmly orders eggs for breakfast and continues her post-coital toilette.

⁵⁵ Tyrrell, *Intimate Letters*, 98.

⁵⁶ “Janáčkovovo vrcholné hudební drama,” *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 2 March 1956.

Silencing the Diva

I am not suggesting that Marty is an actual representation of a siren; but, like the sirens, she possesses a singing voice that, although seldom heard, poses a potential menace to listeners – and to opera. The correlation may provide a context for understanding how the absence of song in the opera was perceived. The music of *Makropulos*, often heard as crushingly aggressive, seemed on occasion even to turn on itself, suppressing musical expression altogether. Karel Jirák, for example, reflecting on his experience of both the Brno and the Prague premieres, wrote in his review of the latter:

I can thus return to my verdict [about the Brno production], whose main point was this: that Janáček's new opera has wondrously little music and that this music is annoying, whipping the nerves and the passions. It isn't a wonder, because Čapek's dramatic model did not really call for musical representation: on the contrary, in the biggest scene it is pointedly resisted.⁵⁷

Moreover, it was specifically vocal expression, and even the singers, that were muffled: Miroslav Barvík, commenting on the Prague *Makropulos* of 1956, observed, “*Music* for [Janáček] continues to speak and to express emotional upheaval even as singers themselves are, as it were, repressed and self-sacrificed.”⁵⁸ Recently, Jarmila Brožovská noted with approval that singers had finally given up on performing *Makropulos* in, “the manner of *bel canto* or naturalism. Experience has done away with the idea that this would suit a twentieth-century opera that cannot, or is not able to truly sing.”⁵⁹ I am interested in how the critics understood *Makropulos* as silencing the operatic singing voice, and the sense, perhaps, that Marty's potential for dangerous song is forcibly contained.

Two contemporaneous texts by the German Prague writers, Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Kafka, provide additional support for reading – but not hearing – Marty as a form of siren, and further, for probing the problematic place of singing in modern opera.⁶⁰ Rilke's poem and Kafka's parable are retellings of the episode from the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus, advised by Circe, contrives to hear the song of the sirens without succumbing to them. Yet, in these texts, the authors have replaced the sirens' powerful song with silence. Rilke wrote *Die Insel der Sirenen* (*The Island of the Sirens*) in the summer of 1907 while he was traveling through Europe. The poem sets up a contrast between a traveler who “quietly narrates” his story for his hosts, and the sirens, whose threat to passing sailors overshadows the latter half of the poem. As the unnamed traveler (Odysseus, perhaps) tells his tales, he is troubled by the inability of his words to affect his listeners physically. The sirens, however, in contrast to this

⁵⁷ K.B.J. [Jirák], “Kulturní Hlídka. Leoš Janáček: Věc Makropulos.”

⁵⁸ Barvík, “Další Janáčkovovo vítězství v ND.”

⁵⁹ Brožovská, “Problémy o umění janáčkovské interpretace.”

⁶⁰ Kafka, like Rilke, was born into a German-speaking family in Prague, and while their mother tongues were German, they both made attempts to learn Czech.

ineffective narration, overcome the sailors (soundlessly): even when silent, the sailors are conscious that the island may dangerously sing, and they row quickly away:

wie umringt
von der Stille, die die ganze Weite
in sich hat und an die Ohren weht,
so als wäre ihre andre Seite
der Gesang, dem keiner widersteht

[As though ringed in / by the quiet which has the whole expanse / within
itself, and blows uncannily upon the ears, / as though its other side / were the
song no one can resist]⁶¹

Like the sirens themselves, the sirens' song is mysteriously missing from Rilke's text. Yet it does not matter; although the island remains silent, the eeriness of the potential for silence to become song is unsettling enough.

It seems likely that Kafka had the echo of Rilke's poem in his ear when, only a few years later, he wrote his parable *The Silence of the Sirens*.⁶² Still, Kafka gave almost every element of the original myth an ironic twist. While Rilke skirted Odysseus's encounter with the sirens (and his desire to hear them sing), Kafka underscored their confrontation: the elements of the myth are reduced to the sirens and the lone Ulysses, who, uncharacteristically, does not want to hear them sing. Alone in his ship, ears blocked with wax, and body chained to a mast, Ulysses boldly approaches the sirens' island thus fortified against their enchantments. In response, the sirens remain silent: "And when Ulysses approached them the potent songstresses actually did not sing, whether because they thought that this enemy could be vanquished only by their silence, or because the look of bliss on the face of Ulysses, who was thinking of nothing but his wax and chains, made them forget their singing." An enchanting sight, rather than a sound, seduces the would-be seducers: Ulysses, blissfully ignoring them, causes the sirens to forget what they should be doing and to desire only the vision's prolongation – a similar fate to the one that they themselves would inflict.⁶³

There have been many interpretations of Kafka's parable; surprisingly, its omission of the Homeric episode's central point – that Odysseus desires to hear the sirens – is often overlooked.⁶⁴ Lawrence Kramer, taking his cue from the parable's epigraph ("proof that inadequate, even childish measures may serve to rescue one from peril"), has attempted to address this discrepancy between the original myth and

⁶¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems (1908): The Other Part*, trans. Edward Snow (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 10-11.

⁶² This is one of several parables written between 1917 and 1923 in which Kafka ironically cast well-known Classical myths. It was not, however, published until 1931, in a collection edited by Max Brod and Hans Joachim Schoeps titled *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer*.

⁶³ Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1971), 431.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Elizabeth Boa, "Revoicing Silenced Sirens: A Changing Motif in Works by Franz Kafka, Frank Wedekind, and Barbara Köhler," *German Life and Letters* 57/1 (2004): 8-20.

Kafka's retelling. Kafka's Ulysses, Kramer explains, is a modern man, a "technocrat proud of his wiles," and thus uninterested in the aural experience he had pursued in Homer. Paradoxically, Kramer concludes that the sirens have won even as they have lost, because "their silence, which is equivalent to the modern condition, is also the condition of possibility for imagining their song."⁶⁵ But Kramer locates the imagined song in a passage where, as it were, Kafka has waxed lyrical, providing "'accompaniments' as surrogates for the absent airs, the music of which sounds in and underwrites the images that depict the moment as rhythmic, erotic, affecting and enraptured."⁶⁶ For Kramer's reading of siren victory to be convincing, Ulysses should have done the imagining, yet that is not the case. Kafka's Ulysses, having (unlike the Homeric Odysseus) blocked his ears, is concerned neither with the actual song of the sirens nor with an imagined sound (for he thinks of nothing but his wax and chains). In fact, this modern Ulysses seems to have no interest in the sirens at all: he glances at them for only a "fleeting moment" before fixing his gaze on a remote horizon. Too close to appear in Ulysses's distanced focus, the sirens fade from his sight so that "at the very moment when they were nearest to him he knew of them no longer."⁶⁷ Kramer has it wrong: the sirens have lost everything. Not only their song, its power reduced to less than that of silence, but also their audience. The modern condition, or rather, the condition of modern opera, is not silence, but a lack of interest in song.

I've dwelt on Rilke's and Kafka's literary descriptions of silenced sirens because they are useful metaphors for the transformed sound of early-twentieth-century opera, a transformation that had been proceeding steadily from the late nineteenth century onwards. The trend towards realistic representation in opera – choices of subject (such as settings of urban society), modifications to musical dramaturgy (in pursuit of dramatic continuity), and certainly Janáček's theory of speech melody (like similar tendencies to render operatic singing more declamatory and speech-like) – produced changes in operatic style and sound that can be heard as having "silenced" song. As its reception reveals, Janáček's *konveršální Makropulos* is one opera that was heard as having done just that.⁶⁸ But they only partially explain the uncanny effect of Marty's sharp lyrical turn at the end *Makropulos*, the staging of which Janáček deemed needed green light. To explain that, one last illumination is needed in the form of another relative of the sirens, the Rheinmaidens of Wagner's *Ring*.

⁶⁵ Lawrence Kramer, "'Longindyingcall' Of Music, Modernity, and the Sirens," in *Music of the Sirens*, 194-215.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁶⁷ Kafka, 431.

⁶⁸ It would be possible too, to draw other contemporary operas into the discussion. Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, for example, is also famously considered to be lacking in lyrical utterance; Janáček knew it quite well and, indeed, criticized it in those terms, prefiguring by a few years criticism of his own opera. Olin Downes, "Seventy Years Old," *New York Times* (New York), 13 July 1924. Reprinted in Leoš Janáček, *Literární dílo*, series I, vol. 1, bk. 1, eds. Theodora Straková and Eva Drlíková (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2003), 540-2.

Marty's sung performances in *Makropulos* invariably take place offstage at times prior to, or interleaved between, the onstage scenes. To the people onstage, this is not a problem; to them, offstage is simply the rest of their world, as Carolyn Abbate has argued in the context of narrative truth in the *Ring*. All the *Ring*'s narratives are unreliable, except for that of the Rheinmaidens, which takes place offstage and is heard only by Brünnhilde, for whom its veracity is absolute. Marty's singing, as "transcendent" and "absolute" as the Rheinmaidens's narrating, must likewise take place offstage, "the only place," Abbate writes, "where the transcendent idea can possibly reside." Offstage, however, is a slippery place. Constituted only by what takes place onstage, offstage is "noumenal" for the audience, as opposed to its "phenomenal" status for the characters. Thus, the audience may construe what takes place offstage differently from the characters onstage. The audience who has heard all the shifty narratives onstage in the *Ring*, Abbate suggests, has little reason to believe the Reinmaidens's narrative different, and the same may be true of Marty's supernatural singing, where the only evidence of its devastating seductive power is through its effects on the characters who hear it.⁶⁹ What is heard of Marty's singing onstage, even the moment of lyricism that calls a final halt to the breakneck stream of terse, angular motives heard throughout the opera, ultimately calls into question the diva's enchanted offstage voice.

Thus, in a very Kafkaesque way, the familiar in opera is transformed, in the final scene, into unfamiliar, possibly even alienating, sound. The unexpected lyricism of Marty's singing may be a realization, in Rilke's sense, of the "other side" of *Makropulos*'s hard modern "silence." Or perhaps the modern ideal is, at that moment, simply relinquished: in lieu of the everyday, we hear only an echo of past song whose power is now waning. Ostensibly, Marty's lament is for her own life, which, artificially sustained for over three centuries, has little sense or value remaining to it. Yet the lament might also be for opera itself. Having sung for the duration of opera's history, Marty would, in fact, seem to embody opera. It was a notion that struck at least one critic, Rudolf Pečman, who wrote: "Incorporated in the fateful figure of the 300 year old beauty and singer [are] the traces of the tradition of Czech operatic development in the nineteenth century."⁷⁰ Shared births, perhaps also shared deaths – Janáček staged Marty's demise with an abrupt surge of song. The rest of *Makropulos*'s modern conversational singing, on the other hand, might represent another expiration, in which the diva's swan song is opera's last gasp.

⁶⁹ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 238-41.

⁷⁰ Rudolf Pečman, "Brněnská Věc Makropulos," *Práce* (Prague), 13 October 1988.

Example 1.

117
(lomí rukama) (die Hände ringend)

M. Ach, ne - má se tak dlou - ho žít!
Wenn freud - los dumpf der A - tem schleicht!

mf *cresc.* *espress.* *f*

Marty
0 kdy-by-ste vě - dě - li, jak se vám leh - ko ži-je!
A - ber da-von wißt ihr nichts, ihr lebt mit leich - ten Her-zen!

Marty (*wringing her hands*): Ah, one shouldn't have such a long life!
Oh if only you knew, how easy living is for you!

Example 2.

System 1:

Kr. No, pře - ce Mar - ty!
Nun ja, die Mar - ty!

Gregor

Kdo je to?
Kenn' ich nicht.

System 2:

Kr. E - mi - li - a Mar - ty!
E - mi - li - a Mar - ty!

Vitek

O tá - ti, tá - ti!
O Va - ter, Va - ter.

Má dce - ra je u di - va - dla!
Mein Kind ist am Stadtthe - a - ter!

System 3:

Kr. Já pů - jdu od di - va - dla.
ich laß das Stadtthe - a - ter.

To je nej - vět - ší zpě - va - čka na svě - tě!
Ach es gibt kei - ne grö - ße - re Sän - ge - rin!

p, *espress.*, *f*

Kristina: Yes, even Marty!

Gregor: Who is that?

Kristina: Emilia Marty! Emilia Marty!

Vitek: My daughter is in theatre!

Kristina: Oh daddy, daddy! I've given up the theatre. This is the greatest singer in the world!

Example 3a.

(Hauk vejde skytici)
(Hauk tritt ein, mit einem Blumenstrauß)

40 Allegro (♩ = 56) **Hauk** *mf*

Do-vol-te,
Ver-zeih-Sie,

(padána kolena, vzlyká)
(fällt auf die Knie, schluchzt)

do - vol - te, pro - sím, ó
bit - te, mein Fräü - lein, o

(kleká před trůnem)
(liegt vor dem Thron auf)

Do - vol - te, a - bych -
Las - sen Sie mich hier...

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The voice part is in a soprano or alto clef, and the piano part is in a grand staff. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 56 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the vocal entry with the lyrics 'Do-vol-te, Ver-zeih-Sie,'. The second system shows the vocal part with the lyrics 'do - vol - te, pro - sím, ó' and 'bit - te, mein Fräü - lein, o'. The third system shows the vocal part with the lyrics 'Do - vol - te, a - bych -' and 'Las - sen Sie mich hier...'. The piano accompaniment consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords and arpeggios.

Hauk (*enters skipping*): Allow me, allow me, please. (*falls to knees, sobbing*) Oh... Allow me to... (*kneels before the throne*).

Example 3a continued.

41 *den Knien.* (vzlyká) (schluchet)

ó kdy - by - ste vě - dě - la... ó
 0 weiß - ten Sie, mein Fräulein...

Hauk: Oh if only you knew... (*sobbing*) Oh...

Example 3b.

Allegretto (♩ = 132) **Hauk**

0 - na hy - la ci - gán - ka, ří - ka - li jí chu - la ne - gra.

To - tiž tam do - le, v An - da - lu - si - i. Jak se

blá - znil ce - lý svět! Va - ya, Gi - tá - na! Jak se blá - znil

ce - lý svět! Va - ya, Gi - tá - na!

Hauk: She was a gypsy, they called her “chula negra”. That was down there in Andalusia. How crazy the whole world was about her. Vaya, Gitána!



Figure 1. *Věc Makropulos*, directed by Václav Kašlík (Prague, National Theatre, 1965).



Figure 2. Alena Míková as Marty (Prague, National Theatre, 1965).



Figure 3. Pavla Vachková as Rusalka; Dvořák, *Rusalka* (Prague, National Theatre, 1915).



Figure 4. Naděžda Kniplová as Marty (Prague, National Theatre, 1977).



Figure 5. Eva Zikmundová as Marty (Prague, National Theatre, 1977).



Figure 6. Josef Čapek, set design for Act II (Prague, National Theatre, 1927).



Figure 7. Hugo Foltýn, sets for Act II (Brno, Na Hradbách Theatre, 1935).



Figure 8. Josef Šálek sets for Act II (Brno, Janáček Theatre na Hradbách, 1948).



Figure 9. Marie Podvalová and Jaroslav Stříška as Marty and Gregor (Prague, National Theatre, 1956).

Dead Endings (*Z mrtvého domu*)

Uncertainty

“Three years of work at an end. What now?”

Janáček, writing to Kamila Stösslová on 5 December 1925, had just completed composition of *Věc Makropulos*: he had no new operatic project immediately lined up and no idea of what to do next.¹ He remained busy, of course. The premiere of *Makropulos* required his attention; and he completed three large, non-operatic works in 1926. A private commission resulted in *Capriccio*, for left hand piano and chamber ensemble; he also composed the *Sinfonietta*, performed at a Rally of the Sokols (a mass gymnastics movement) in the summer of 1926, and the *Glagolská mše* (*Glagolitic Mass*). Yet even at the end of 1926, Janáček remained without any operatic plans. He wrote to Max Brod on 3 December 1926 that he had not yet found a libretto to work on, nor did he even know what sort of libretto would suit him. A few weeks later, on 27 December, he confessed to Stösslová that, “for the first time I have an empty head ... I’m not preparing anything.”²

It was only on 13 February 1927, in the open letter “What I confess to,” addressed to Max Brod and published in the local newspaper, that Janáček made public his thoughts on Fyodor M. Dostoevsky’s novel *Notes from the House of the Dead* (known in Czech as *Zápisky z mrtvého domu*, 1860):

... were I thinking as a composer, I would go right *to the truth*, right to the harsh speech of the elements, and I would know how to further advance by means of art.

On this road I stop neither at Beethoven, nor Debussy, neither at Antonín Dvořák, nor at Bedřich Smetana; because I will not meet them there. I do not borrow anything from them, for it is already impossible to pay them back. Here I am close to Fjodor Michajlovič Dostojevsky. In the Dead House he found a good human soul even in Baklušin, and in Petrov and in Isaj Fomič.³

It is usually assumed with benefit of hindsight that Janáček was referring to his last opera here, but Janáček did not specifically say that an opera, or any work based on the Dostoevsky, was on his mind.⁴ It might have been nothing more than an

¹ John Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas: A Documentary Account* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 312. Tyrrell’s translation.

² Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 326. Tyrrell’s translation.

³ The letter is dated 12 February 1927, but was published in *Lidové noviny* the following day. Ibid., 327. Tyrrell’s translation.

⁴ Before Janáček decided to set it as an opera, Dostoevsky’s novel was possibly the inspiration for the violin concerto Janáček had been drafting throughout 1926 and the early part of 1927. Some words and images Janáček mentioned seem to suggest a connection with the novel, he recycled much of the

expression of kinship with the Russian writer's dedication to artistic "truth," one of Janáček's recurrent concerns.⁵ Moreover, none of the characters Janáček named in the letter would figure in the opera and no work on the composition, not even a libretto or a scenario, had as yet been done.⁶ Even if this was a declaration of operatic intent, the words with which Janáček closed his "confession" retreat into uncertainty; their metaphysical whimsy speaks more of a man contemplating the end of his life, than one full of plans for a new work:

We can both stop and think now. For me it is as though my pen wanted to fall from my hand. Out of breath, exhausted – I wait, in case some little star from a distant horizon might yet fall ringingly into my mind.

I'm liberated. Breathing like nature in the spring sun. Full of the promise of greenery, now and then a curious flower. I would only feel the flapping wings of the music of the spheres.

Perhaps this is the end of grueling, persuasive labor, Doctor Brod?⁷

Janáček continued to feel uncertain about setting the Dostoevsky for most of February, and wrote as much to Stösslová on the 19th: "I don't know what to take up. One is in reach, but every person in it is fettered. And I'd rather have smiling people."⁸ What seems to be Janáček's first concrete thoughts (in the sense that he put them down on paper) about the Dostoevsky as a dramatic work show up only near the end of February, in the form of a roughly outlined scenario.⁹ Perhaps, having made his interest public, Janáček felt he'd better get on with it; perhaps, given the reservations he expressed to Stösslová, it was not the preferred step, but simply the easiest one.

Urgency

Once he had made up his mind, however, Janáček charged straight into the opera's composition, not even bothering to write a libretto first. Instead, he transferred the

thematic material and the violin solo from the concerto in the opera's prologue, but perhaps most suggestive is that the clanking "prison" chains in the orchestration of the opera were already present in the instrumentation for the concerto.

⁵ The idea that Janáček was attracted to Dostoevsky's commitment to truth is one also explored by Geoffrey Chew and Robert Vilain. See; "Evasive realism: narrative construction in Dostoevsky's and Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*," in *Janáček Studies*, ed. Paul Wingfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56-78.

⁶ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 327.

⁷ Leoš Janáček, "K čemu se přiznávám," *Lidové noviny* (Brno), 13 February 1927. Reprinted in Leoš Janáček, *Literární dílo*, eds. Theodora Straková and Eva Drlíková, series I, vol. 1, bk. 1 (Brno: Editio Janáček, 2003), 587-8. All translations unless otherwise noted, are my own.

⁸ John Tyrrell, ed. and trans., *Intimate Letters: Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 99. Tyrrell's translation.

⁹ For complete details of the scenarios, see, Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 328-30.

text directly into the score, for which he didn't use manuscript, but blank paper on which he drew staves by hand as he needed them. Janáček's orchestration for the opera was quite light, but even so, it was an extraordinary way to proceed. He owned two copies of Dostoevsky's novel, one of which was a Czech translation; however, he worked primarily from the original Russian, translating as he went along – or sometimes not: the opera's text is a bewildering mix of Czech (including the composer's native Moravian dialect), transliterated Russian, and Russian left in Cyrillic script.¹⁰

Set in a Siberian prison camp, Dostoevsky's novel is cast in the form of memoirs narrated by a political prisoner, Alexander Petrovich Goryanchikov. It draws on the experiences Dostoevsky accumulated during his four-year sentence of hard labor at the Omsk prison camp in Siberia from January 1850 to February 1854. Several chapters set the scene and describe life in the prison, such as keeping pets, hospital care, and the celebration of religious holidays; others dwell on the personal stories of the inmates. It could almost go without saying that it was the prisoners' life histories that particularly interested Janáček; he made the focus of each of the opera's three acts the events that led three men to their incarceration, narrated by the prisoners themselves. First, Filka Morozov, known in the prison under the alias Luka Kuzmič, describes how he was goaded into killing the sadistic major he served under in the army; the second narrative is by an inmate named Skuratov, who reveals that he shot an old, rich man to whom his sweetheart was about to be married; in the final act, which is set in the infirmary as the ailing Kuzmič approaches death, Šiškov, the last of the three narrators, recalls how he murdered his lover out of jealousy – only to recognize his former rival in the just-deceased Kuzmič. These fairly long monologues are enlivened by some small incidents among the large number of minor characters and, in the second act, by a theatre-in-the-theatre: two pantomimes performed by the prisoners for themselves as their feast day “celebrations.”

The whole opera is framed by the arrival and departure of Gorjančikov; his reprieve at the end of the opera gives the other prisoners a moment's glimpse of the world outside as the prison gates open and Gorjančikov leaves. Unlike him, however, freedom remains out of reach for the other inmates. This contrast is also marked by an injured eagle that falls into the prison yard in conjunction with Gorjančikov's arrival, is cared for by the prisoners, and flies away when the gates open to allow Gorjančikov to leave. The last significant character in this collective drama is a young boy named Aljeja (a trouser role). Innocent of any crime, Aljeja injects pathos but also human warmth into the grim environment: he and Gorjančikov develop a close relationship, and the older man teaches the boy to read and write.

After Janáček began work, he did not mention the opera again until, out of the blue on 17 October 1927, he informed Stösslová that he had “finished” it.¹¹ The

¹⁰ The Russian copy is the more heavily annotated of the two, according to Tyrrell; in addition, the Czech in the score doesn't always correspond to that of the Czech translation of Dostoevsky's novel, which suggests that Janáček was doing his own translations while composing. Ibid., 330.

¹¹ Tyrrell, *Intimate Letters*, 133. Tyrrell's translation.

news, as often the case with Janáček, was premature. Work remained to be done. As Tyrrell has pointed out, Janáček had taken breaks during the composition of his previous three operas in order to allow his ideas settle, but with *Z mrtvého domu* he pressed on continuously. The terseness of the sentences that Janáček used when he wrote to Stösslová on 4 January 1928, “Opera finished. The work finished,” palpably conveys the composer’s relief.¹² Yet even at this point, with the first draft (mostly) finished, he proceeded without pause to revise it, and then immediately to have it copied.¹³

It is apparent from passing comments in his letters that Janáček was conscious of his haste. “So I am finishing one work after another – as if I had to settle my accounts with life,” he wrote to Stösslová, “With my new opera I hurry like a baker throwing loaves into the oven!”¹⁴ On another occasion: “I am feeling lonely again today, I am finishing a big work – probably my last opera, so it seems to me.”¹⁵ His urgency to finish *Z mrtvého domu* would seem to be due in part to his growing sense of mortality. As much as he was constantly pressing ahead with arrangements for new performances of his works, and the composition of new pieces like *Z mrtvého domu* and his second string quartet, Janáček was also setting aside time for taking care of the end business of his life such as writing a will, which he did in June of 1927.¹⁶

Exhaustion

Janáček was a reasonably active and healthy man, but he was in his seventies and the composing of *Z mrtvého domu*, carried out at pace and length, was physically exhausting, as well as a disruption to his established daily routine. He missed his customary walks, and complained to Stösslová that the lack of exercise was causing his rheumatism to flare up.¹⁷ Indeed, his letters during the final phases of the opera’s composition were laced with complaints of tiredness: the desire to “put down my pen,” to “lay down my tired head somewhere,” and a need to “just ... sleep, sleep.”¹⁸

¹² Ibid., 183. Tyrrell’s translation.

¹³ According to John Tyrrell’s examination of the dates left in the scores and in Janáček’s letters, the composer finished going through the third act on 24 April 1928, and the second on 7 May. The first act had already been copied in March by Václav Sedláček, one of the two men Janáček used as copyists. The third act was copied by the other, Jaroslav Kuhlánek, immediately following its revision. Sedláček and Kuhlánek split the second act between them; thus all three acts were made in full copy by 23 May 1928. Further changes continued to be made and duly copied into June. See; Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 335-9.

¹⁴ From a letter to Kamila Stösslová dated 30 November 1927, Ibid., 333. Tyrrell’s translation.

¹⁵ From a letter to Kamila Stösslová written 16 October 1927. Tyrrell, *Intimate Letters*, 132. Tyrrell’s translation.

¹⁶ Jiří Zahradka, “Janáček’s finances V: Janáček’s estate and last will,” in *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 2: (1914-1928), *Tsar of the Forests* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 902-8.

¹⁷ Letter to Kamila Stösslová, written 2 April 1928. Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 336. Tyrrell’s translation.

¹⁸ From letters to Kamila Stösslová, 5, 8, and 10 May 1928. Tyrrell, *Intimate Letters*, 266, 270, 272. Tyrrell’s translations.

The exhaustion was not only physical but mental as well. As seen above, Janáček had been reluctant to take on the cheerless subject matter of Dostoevsky's novel, wanting a more light-hearted story with "smiling" people instead. And though Janáček inscribed the frontispiece of the opera with the words "V každém tvorů jiskra boží" (In every creature the spark of God), he also referred to *Z mrtvého domu* as his "black opera," the composition of which, he felt, was taking him towards the rock bottom of human destitution.¹⁹ With such oppressive thoughts continuously in mind, it is unsurprising that, when he did sleep, Janáček's nights were filled with strange dreams:

Z mrtvého domu. A terrible title, isn't it? Also yesterday, at the end [of Act I], one criminal described how, when killing the major, he said to himself, "I am God and tsar!" And in the night I dreamt that in the eiderdown a dead man was lying on me, so strongly that I felt his head! And I cried, "But I've done nobody any harm!" The eiderdown fell off me; and I was so relieved.²⁰

Even with the copying well under way, and what should have been most of the composing work done, Janáček still seemed to feel as though he was in danger of being buried under the weight of the work:

Kamila, the copyist has just gone. You can't imagine what a load will fall from my soul when this *House of the Dead* is finished. This is the third year it has oppressed me, night and day. Only when I was with you did I forget it. And what it will be I still don't know even myself. Now notes upon notes just pile up into a mountain; a tower of Babel grows. If it collapses on me, I'll be buried.²¹

These were prophetic words: Janáček did not live to put the finishing touches on his last opera. He got as far as making corrections to the clean copies of the first two acts and, with the third act of *Z mrtvého domu* also copied out and ready to be checked, Janáček headed off to his house in Hukvaldy at the end of July 1928. Before the composer got around to looking at the last act, however, he was hospitalized with pneumonia. He died in hospital on 12 August 1928.

On to the stage

As a text, *Z mrtvého domu* is more obviously open-ended than Janáček's other operas. The composer's unforeseen death, along with the unusual appearance of the

¹⁹ Letter to Kamila Stösslová, postmarked 29 November 1927. Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 333. Tyrrell's translation.

²⁰ From a letter to Kamila Stösslová, dated 16 October 1927. Ibid., 332. Tyrrell's translation.

²¹ From a letter to Kamila Stösslová, dated 5 May 1928. Tyrrell, *Intimate Letters*, 266. Tyrrell's translation. Tyrrell notes that despite the "third year" comment, there is no evidence that Janáček had been working on the opera this long, or that he'd started before February 1927.

manuscript – its intermittent staves, frugal orchestration, the libretto’s grammatical errors and other anomalies, not to mention its mishmash of languages – were taken as evidence that, not only had Janáček been unable to finish the opera’s composition, he hadn’t even progressed beyond a sketch. The assessors of Janáček’s estate denoted *Z mrtvého domu*, as one critic commented many years later, “a torso of minimal financial worth.”²² In accordance with the last codicil Janáček added to his will, the opera was eventually awarded to Stösslová, along with *Kát’a Kabanová*, *Zápisník zmizelého* (The Diary of One who Disappeared), and the String Quartet No. 2, but only after a court dispute between her and Janáček’s wife, Zdenka. According to Jiří Zahradka, *Z mrtvého domu* was given a valuation only twice that of the quartet and the song cycle and barely a quarter of that of *Kát’a Kabanová*.²³

The perception of Janáček’s last opera as a “torso” prevailed despite one of Janáček’s ex-pupils, Osvald Chlubna, having taken a look at its manuscript before Janáček left for Hukvaldy. Or perhaps because of it: years later, Chlubna claimed that at the time he thought that the opera was merely a sketch, though he noted that had already progressed as far as having the opera copied and had begun corrections.²⁴ To be fair to Chlubna, it wasn’t unreasonable to think that *Z mrtvého domu* might be a less-than-finished product. Given the composer’s practice of revising his operas right up to, and even throughout, their production on stage, the work would doubtless have continued to change had Janáček lived. But not, surely, as much as it did after the composer’s death.

No one was prepared to take on *Z mrtvého domu* the way it stood. As Chlubna explained some thirty years after the premiere, only “if someone was willing to look through it to make playable the impossible things in it, and partly add what was necessary to the orchestration, then a stage performance could be considered.”²⁵ The “someone” Chlubna was referring to had been himself, along with Břetislav Bakala, another of Janáček’s ex-pupils, and Ota Zítek, Brno’s opera director at the time. The reorchestration had been much more extensive than Chlubna made it sound, and included filling out the harmony as well as the orchestral color.²⁶ Zítek’s contribution was also substantial: not only did he correct the grammatical errors in the libretto, but he also added more text in the places where he felt that Janáček had compressed Dostoevsky’s words to the point of incomprehensibility. The most significant alteration, however, came at the end of the opera. Feeling that the concept of

²² J[aroslav]. Procházka, “Janáčkův operní epilog,” *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 27 September 1974.

²³ 4,000 Kč for the quartet and the song cycle, 8,000 Kč for *Mrtvého domu*, 30,000 Kč for *Kát’a Kabanová*. Further details of Janáček’s wills and the handling of his estate can be found in Zahradka, “Janáček’s finances V,” 902-8.

²⁴ Osvald Chlubna, “K úpravě opery „Z mrtvého domu,”” in *Opery Leoše Janáčka na brněnské scéně*, ed. Václav Nosek (Brno: Státní divadlo, 1958), trans. Tyrrell as “Osvald Chlubna: ‘On the revision ... From the House of the Dead,’” in Tyrrell, *Janáček’s Operas*, 339-41.

²⁵ Chlubna, 339-41.

²⁶ In addition to thickening the timbre, for example, adding more winds and brass instruments in several places, the arrangement also introduced celesta – not an instrument Janáček had included in the orchestration. Vilém Pospíšil, “Janáček pro Edinburku,” *Hudební rozhledy* (Prague), 11 (1964): 458-9.

freedom should be further strengthened, Zítek proposed an alternative finale to the one Janáček had composed. He cut the original somber ending, in which the prisoners were roughly shuttled back to work after Gorjančikov's release as the orchestral music petered out, and replaced it with a stirring chorus to freedom (*Svoboda! Svobodička!*) sung by the prisoners (set by Chlubna and Bakala to one of the themes from the first act, adjusted into the major mode) followed by a grand *maestoso* section for the entire orchestra, played *fortissimo*. The opera's three arrangers felt that this transformation from the grim to the optimistic was justified because it gave *Z mrtvého domu* the cathartic closure they identified as characteristic of Janáček's operas (with the exception of *Káťa Kabanová*), in particular, *Její pastorkyňa* and *Příhody lišky Bystroušky*, but also *Věk Makropulos*.

Constructing reputation

I have sketched out the biographical and compositional details of Janáček's *Z mrtvého domu*, along with the adjustments made to the score in preparation for its first performance, not because it is new information, but because, in fact, it is old. Many of these details, such as the opera's supposedly incomplete state and Zítek's supplementary ending, were known right from the beginning. Others, such as the haste with which Janáček composed and even excerpts from Janáček's letters to Stösslová, became public knowledge later. In particular, critics used this information not only as background to *Z mrtvého domu*, but also to characterize it as the epitome of Janáček's operatic innovation and establish, by extension, the composer's reputation in the history of modern opera.

Such work had to be assiduously carried out – of Janáček's late operas, Czech theatres have performed *Z mrtvého domu* the least: about half a dozen times each in Prague and Brno including revivals of previous productions. The opera was finally premiered in Brno on 12 April 1930; not only had Chlubna, Zítek and Bakala done all the work of preparing a performance score, but Zítek and Bakala also took charge of the production, directing and conducting, respectively. When Prague opened their first production the following year, on 21 February 1931, they also used the Bakala-Zítek-Chlubna version (published by Universal Editions Vienna in 1930, with a German translation provided, as usual, by Max Brod). The conductor was Vincenc Maixner, rather than Otakar Ostrčil (who had given all Janáček's operas since *Brouček* their first Prague performances); Ferdinand Pujman directed. Prague did not restage *Z mrtvého domu* for several years, but did revive their first production in 1934; in Brno, new productions succeeded the premiere in 1937 and 1948.

All these early performances of *Z mrtvého domu* used the 1930 edition; no one questioned how unfinished Janáček's last opera actually had been and everyone assumed that the arrangement was necessary. This description from an early review is typical both in its characterization of the opera as incomplete, and in its approval of the reworking:

The seventy-four year old maestro left this opera entirely in outline ...
Břetislav Bakala, Janáček's student and an outstanding expert on the maestro's instrumental style, was charged with the responsibility of [the orchestration] ... about which one could say without exaggeration that he captured the genuine spirit of Janáček's style of expression.²⁷

This was a crucial step in the work's canonization, because once the orchestration had been given the label of "genuine" Janáček, it could then be appropriated to the cause of proving Janáček's genius. One critic in 1948, who was quite aware of the work's history, went as far as to claim that the bold colors emanating from the pit were evidence not of second-guessing, but rather of "how new, groundbreaking, and unusually bold in their timbres Janáček's ideas about orchestration could be."²⁸

Similar claims were made for the harmony as well the instrumentation. In his review of the first Prague performance of *Z mrtvého domu*, Jaromír Borecký observed that Janáček had matured into a truly unique composer in his last period, and identified Šiškov's narration about Akulka in the third act of *Z mrtvého domu* as exemplary:

The composer always finds the right moment and the right means to brace the almost languishing interest in the length of the scene, and to dramatize its epic breadth. Janáček balances the absence of polyphony and the motivically defined structure with rhythm in particular, [but also] with a harmony of bold chords and, not least, in that he aims for colorfulness and passion in his instrumentation.²⁹

Reviewers also responded enthusiastically to the "hymnic apotheosis of freedom" that concluded the opera: wholly Zitek's contribution, though not usually, at this point, identified as his.³⁰

As Borecký's review suggests, it is unclear whether early critics knew the full extent and precise nature of the changes made to the opera. But neither is it entirely evident that knowing would have mattered or altered their opinions of the opera. Parts of *Z mrtvého domu* that were incontrovertibly Janáček's, such as the opera's dramatic structure, also struck critics as innovative and modern – even to the point that some were troubled by the extent to which Janáček's last opera had broken all

²⁷ "Kulturní. Poslední dílo Leoše Janáčka," *Venkov* (Prague), 24 February 1931. Similarly, this passage: "One of Janáček's last works, [*Mrtvého domu*] remained only in a well-developed sketch; the instrumentation of the opera is the greater work of B. Bakala, the maestro's disciple, who was remarkably successful in approaching the spirit of Janáček's instrumentation." Silvestr Hippmann, "Divadlo a Umění. Opera. Leoš Janáček: *Z mrtvého domu*," *Právo lidu* (Prague), 23 February 1931.

²⁸ "Kulturní Život. Janáčkův Mrtvý dům," *Rovnost* (Brno), 7 May 1948.

²⁹ Dr. Jar[omír] B[orecký], "Divadlo. Leoš Janáček: *Z mrtvého domu*," *Národní politika* (Prague), 24 February 1931.

³⁰ See, for example; Hippmann, "Divadlo a Umění. Opera. Leoš Janáček: *Z mrtvého domu*"; and "Kulturní. Poslední dílo Leoše Janáčka." At the same time, the author of this review suggested that "Janáček" might have tried to be too impressive in a few places in the opera, the ending included.

the rules of dramaturgy. *Z mrtvého domu* is similar to *Bystrouška* in that Janáček had linked together episodes and dialogue that interested him from a novel, rather than adapting a stage drama as he had for *Makropulos* and *Káťa*. But where *Bystrouška* consists entirely of action scenes (albeit largely unconnected ones), audiences were hard pressed to find any action at all in *Z mrtvého domu*. In his review of the opera's premiere, Ludvík Kundera made only a single comment about the music, describing it laconically as "one of the most excellent demonstrations of Janáček's dramatic genius." For the rest, he focused on the text, which he thought was the "worst of all of Janáček's libretti."³¹ The dearth of action in the opera, which made it, Kundera felt, undramatic, was his primary complaint; but he also took a dim view of the inclusion of Russian in the libretto.

Janáček's awareness of his opera's various novelties was public knowledge. During a casual interview which appeared in *Lidové noviny* immediately following Janáček's death, the composer had called attention to the uniqueness of the theatre-in-the-theatre and the "collective" that replaces a single hero in the opera. Janáček had also mentioned how much he liked the idea that all humans had the "spark of God," referring to what would eventually become *Z mrtvého domu*'s oft-quoted "motto."³² These points were also excerpted and reprinted in a short essay about the opera published in *Divadelní list* preceding Brno's second production in 1937, thus entering public circulation.³³ The theatre-in-the-theatre was perhaps a little less unusual than Janáček thought it was, but both the motto as well as the idea of an operatic collective would soon become repeated tropes in the reception of *Z mrtvého domu*.

Kundera had been serious in his criticism of the opera's undramatic, static scenes, but as time went on the opera's troublesome structure gradually became a positive feature. The more *Z mrtvého domu* could be shown to have transgressed the perceived operatic norms, the stronger the proof that it was an opera of "paramount originality."³⁴ Thus the absence of linear, dramatic action in the opera, the long, monologic narratives, and the opera's unusual "collective" comprised nearly exclusively of male roles, were features critics increasingly emphasized. In 1937, for example, Brno's new staging was thought unworthy of the opera: Joseph Adamíček's sets were not innovative enough, nor was Rudolf Walter's "routine approach to staging" up to the creativity of *Z mrtvého domu*.³⁵ Adamíček's design would appear, however, to have been modeled on František Hlavica's for the premiere. For the second act, in which the prisoners put on pantomimes for their own entertainment,

³¹ L[udvík] Kundera, "Kulturní hlídka. Posmrtná opera Janáčkova „Z mrtvého domu“," *Národní osvobození* (Prague), 16 April 1930.

³² It is unlikely that Janáček attributed a literal religious meaning to the idea; he wasn't a particularly religious man, didn't go to church, and when offered last rites in the hospital, told his nurse to save them until she needed them herself. Tyrrell, *Years of a Life*, vol. 2, 896.

³³ Leoš Firkušný, "Poslední Janáčkova opera. Z Mrtvého domu," *Divadelní list* 14-15 (1937): 358-368, 386-400.

³⁴ "Kulturní. Poslední dílo Leoše Janáčka."

³⁵ V[ilém]. Petrželka, "Z brněnské opery," *České slovo* (Prague), 2 March 1937.

both designers positioned the temporarily-erected “stage” centrally and frontally. Adamíček had also copied Hlavica’s close framing of the “stage” with buildings on either side, and the two sets are similarly furnished with tables and chairs not only on the “stage” but in front of it as well (see figures 1 and 2). What was acceptable in 1930 no longer was in 1937. While changes in theatrical taste shouldn’t be discounted, this increasing scrutiny of the production may be another indication that critics wanted support for the construction of the work as a particularly original and innovative example of musical theatre.

Over the years the rhetoric increased in intensity. When Brno’s new production of 1948 was brought out to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Janáček’s death, the reviews were filled with descriptions that painted *Z mrtvého domu* not only as “earthshaking and aggressively avant-garde,” but now also – unsurprisingly – as the culmination of Janáček’s creative evolution.³⁶ A couple of writers suggested it was his “artistic testament,” and the “peak of Janáček’s creative process”; a third described the opera as the “resolution” and “logical completion” of Janáček’s creative development and style.³⁷ Yet another gave a detailed account of how all aspects of *Z mrtvého domu* were, in effect, Janáček distilled:

In particular there is the deep ethical backing that starting with *Pastorkyňa* begins to be the foundation of all of his operas. Could there be a more beautiful idea than the motto of this opera: In each creature the spark of God? There is the selfsame compositional manner (*skladebný způsob*), yet even more consistently executed, the selfsame inventiveness of material, only even more simplified and dramatically succinct, and with a greater tendency to motoric motives ... His text is aphoristic, more than close-mouthed, and swarming with Russianisms. The concision is so characteristic that we have been accustomed to calling it a defect. And still the impression of the work is devastating, unique, purging. It exudes something of ancient greatness and simplicity. We feel that it speaks of genius.³⁸

The late-style discourse that emerges here had been adumbrated already in 1934, when Borecký depicted the composition of *Z mrtvého domu* as a struggle between the composer and his art that resulted in the eventual “triumph of compositional technique (*skladatelský technik*) over resistant material.”³⁹ Although the subjects of *Bystrouška* and *Makropulos* were similarly considered unsuitable for operatic settings, the composition of neither opera was characterized in terms of exertion and culmination. Such images were particular to *Z mrtvého domu*.

³⁶ –ka., “Janáček-dramatik,” *Lidová obroda* (Brno), 7 May 1948.

³⁷ ra., “Kulturní Kronika. Znovuvzkříšení Mrtvého domu,” *Svobodné noviny* (Prague), 7 May 1948; –ka., “Janáček-dramatik”; and “Kulturní Život. Janáčkův Mrtvý dům.”

³⁸ ra., “Kulturní Kronika. Znovuvzkříšení Mrtvého domu.”

³⁹ Dr. [Jaromír] B[orecký], “Divadlo. Zpěvohra Národního divadla,” *Národní politika* (Prague), 2 June 1934.

The fact that Janáček had been unable to complete the opera enhanced its mystique. Yet despite this, writers continued to seem unconcerned with separating Janáček's work from the contributions of Chlubna, Bakala, and Zítek, the latter two having returned to conduct and direct the opera's 1948 production. Indeed, Bakala's version was still considered "expressively true to Janáček"; moreover, the opera's "hymnic closing," its "elevating song of freedom," continued to impress the critics and rank as an important part of the opera.⁴⁰ In the words of one critic, it was "the creative catharsis of the whole opera," which was precisely what Zítek had intended it to be.⁴¹ The 1948 production, however, marked the end of such untroubled reception of the 1930 version as the bearer of Janáček's operatic reputation.

Uncertainty

After producing *Z mrtvého domu* a few times during the period from its premiere up to 1948, both Prague and Brno let Janáček's last opera lie dormant for ten years. When it reappeared on the opera stages of both cities in 1958, the two, almost simultaneous productions touched off a critical tempest. Prague was first to unveil their *Z mrtvého domu*, designed and directed by Hanuš Thein with sets provided by Josef Svoboda. The first performance was delayed a few days to 10 May 1958, due to the indisposition of Jaroslav Vogel, who was conducting. A little over a month later, on 26 June 1958, Brno's *Z mrtvého domu* had its opening night, conducted by František Jílek. The new staging had been created by two guest artists, the director Miloš Wasserbauer and set-designer František Tröster. The storm blew up around the last scene of the opera: while Brno had maintained their practice of performing the opera from the 1930 Universal Editions score, complete with its appended ending, Vogel and the Prague National Theatre had reinstated Janáček's original conclusion.

With the exception of the ending, however, Vogel used the 1930 edition for the performance. When interviewed about their decision, Vogel and Thein explained that, of the three areas in which Janáček's work had been altered – namely instrumentation, libretto, and ending – only the last was unnecessary. In accordance with the prevailing opinion, but also his own conception of how Janáček worked, Vogel maintained that the composer had not fully orchestrated *Z mrtvého domu*. And he thought, as many did, that correcting the mix of languages in the libretto was justified. But the appended hymnic ending was "not the composer's" and so Vogel and Thein abandoned it.⁴²

Vladimír Šefl closed his review of Prague's first night with a prediction that this move would spark "a debate that could introduce much [that is] interesting and provocative." Šefl wanted to direct this discussion towards making *Z mrtvého domu* as

⁴⁰ ra., "Kulturní Kronika. Znovuvzkříšení Mrtvého domu"; Abs., "Kulturní život v Brně. Leoš Janáček: Z Mrtvého domu," *Národní politika* (Prague), 7 May 1948; and V.S., "Janáčkův festival v brněnské opeře," *Práve* (Prague), 7 May 1948.

⁴¹ –b., "Janáčkův festival v Brně. Opera „Z mrtvého domu“," *Čin* (Brno), 7 May 1948.

⁴² "Janáčkův „Mrtvý dům“ v původním znění," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 5 May 1958.

convincing a piece of musical theatre as possible; he speculated that some would argue that this was best accomplished by performing the opera “in the traditional way.”⁴³ But Šefl was mistaken about his Prague colleagues’ investment in such a debate. Some of the columnists didn’t bother to point out the alteration at all, others only mentioned it in passing. Perhaps taking out the extra music at the end was not, after all, a radical change.

Nevertheless, Vogel’s decision to reinstate the original ending, while keeping the instrumentation and other additions to the score, was a reminder that the opera was incomplete (or at least perceived to be so) and that large parts of it were not Janáček’s work. The critics seemed to be not so much indifferent as squeamish to the point of denial. The former admiration for Bakala’s seemingly genuine rendering of Janáček’s style and appreciation of the colorful instrumentation and bold harmony was conspicuously absent. Instead, writers drew attention to features that couldn’t be mistaken for anything but Janáček’s work, for example his concern with the human:

The harsh, painfully passionate and even aggressively prickly music of Janáček’s operatic epilogue, unfolding arduously in the dreary and grim setting of the subject of Dostoevsky’s “Notes,” calls for a listener not only expert in the fundamental characteristics of Janáček’s dramatic speech – here elevated to the highest degree and heartlessly rigorous – but also a sympathetic understanding of the melancholic strands of the story, elucidating a typically Janáčekian fundamental idea in the individual confessions of the prisoners and in their severe but also eloquent collective address: the idea of human sympathy and brotherhood, of human hope and longing, the necessity of human freedom and defiance against anything that would chain it up and kill it.⁴⁴

The opera’s motto and the idea of its unique operatic “collectivity” could now be used by critics specifically to illustrate *Z mrtvého domu*’s humanistic message, and to reposition it as Janáček’s final work of genius in light of its content as well as its formal originality. Calling *Z mrtvého domu* “the cornerstone” of Janáček’s life and his artistic and ethical path in the conclusion of her review of the opera, Hana Hlavsová drew on the “collective opera without a main hero,” adduced quotes from Janáček’s letters to Stösslová, and dwelled in particular on the opera’s motto. She concluded her review: “And this apostrophe to humanity – this is Janáček’s last word, the word of the opera *Z mrtvého domu*.”⁴⁵ There was not a single word about the various problems with the opera’s text opera in the entire review.

Only a couple of writers met the issue of the ending head on: František Pala and Vilém Pospíšil both produced detailed arguments supporting Vogel’s decision to discard the appended, rousing hymn to freedom. In particular, both made appeals to

⁴³ Vladimír Šefl, “Divadelní premiéra Pražského Jara,” *Večerní* (Prague), 15 May 1958.

⁴⁴ Še., “Významná událost jarní sezóny v Praze,” *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 13 May 1958.

⁴⁵ Hana Hlavsová, “Rusko v díle Leoše Janáčka,” *Práce* (Prague), 7 May 1958.

the contemporary, postwar context, arguing that to end the opera in such an optimistic manner was impossible after the atrocities of Nazi concentration camps.⁴⁶ If anything, Pala and Pospíšil thought that Vogel could have gone further in restoring Janáček's original intentions. Pala in particular disagreed with Vogel that the opera was unfinished, at least so far as the orchestration went. "This rumor is not founded on fact," he wrote, "it is complete, [it is] only that the instrumentation isn't thick, but is frugal and modest, as was in accordance with Janáček's sense."⁴⁷ Those who took real issue with how Prague performed *Z mrtvého domu*, as another writer hinted, were not in Prague, but in Brno.⁴⁸

In Brno, by contrast, the defense of "tradition" mounted by the press overrode any squeamishness over the appropriateness of the ending. It was only a question of knowing how best to stage it, and one Brno critic wrote that Miloš Wasserbauer's production demonstrated the correct way to handle Zítek's "dramatically riveting closing."⁴⁹ The importance of the cathartic ending remained deeply rooted in Brno: several writers continued to feel that it was obvious and logical to close the opera with the hymn to freedom because, as Jiří Vysloužil suggested, it was a "powerful ethical catharsis, and the song to freedom at the end of the opera was the strongest experience."⁵⁰ Another writer reiterated that Bakala's interpretation of the opera's ending provided the audience with a "Janáčekian catharsis" similar to his other operas:

Not all of Janáček's operas are prepared in Brno so responsibly and successfully as *Z mrtvého domu*. Lately there have been disagreements about its new working-up in Prague by Jar. Vogel. Because it was not entirely revised by Janáček and Janáček did not live to see its first performance, the Janáček experts Bř. Bakala, Ot. Zítek and O. Chlubna undertook a reverent arrangement of the work [still in use in Brno]. In particular, they interpreted its ending in the sense of a Janáčekian catharsis as we find, for example, in *Pastorkeyňa* or *Liška Bystrouška*, that is to say purifying, even frankly hymnic.⁵¹

Vilém Pospíšil took up the debate once again in the context of Brno's production. Although he genuinely admired Wasserbauer's production, Pospíšil reiterated his disagreement with Brno's continuing use of the extra ending. It wasn't the case, he argued, that Janáček's operas always ended with a cathartic finale. In Janáček's entire

⁴⁶ František Pala, "Mrtvý dům – Živý odkaz," *Divadelní noviny* (Prague), 28 May 1958; Vilém Pospíšil, "Janáčkovovo poslední jevištní dílo," *Hudební rozhledy* 10 (1958): 423-4.

⁴⁷ Pala, "Mrtvý dům – Živý odkaz."

⁴⁸ Ps., "Národní divadlo uvedlo operu „Z mrtvého domu“," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 13 May 1958.

⁴⁹ B.Š., "Vynikající představení brněnské opery," *Svobodné slovo* (Brno), 2 July 1958.

⁵⁰ Jiří Vysloužil, "Tvůrčí čin brněnské opery," *Rovnost* (Brno), 28 June 1958.

⁵¹ B.Š., "Janáčková poslední opera na scéně," *Svobodné slovo* (Brno), 8 June 1958.

operatic output, Pospíšil wrote, *Pastorkyňa* and *Bystrouška* were the only examples.⁵² He also questioned how successfully Bakala *et alia* had recreated Janáček's style:

I am convinced that the Brno production confirmed that the arrangement, [although] perhaps dramaturgically possible and theoretically justifiable, cannot prevail these days ... If Janáček had decided on such an alteration, it definitely would have been realized completely differently in his music and certainly with a good deal more originality than the arrangers could have done it.⁵³

Pospíšil's voice of dissent did not find much support in Brno, where the feeling in the majority of the press was that Brno's *Z mrtvého domu* had surpassed Prague's. Despite the vehemence of Brno's resistance, however, the seeds of doubt had been sown.

Urgency

In 1964, the opera ensemble of the Prague National Theatre prepared a new production of *Z mrtvého domu*, their third, for that year's Edinburgh Festival. *Z mrtvého domu* had not been scheduled for the season, but Edinburgh had requested it in their invitation to the company, along with *Káťa Kabanová*. Bohumil Gregor, engaged as conductor, took the opportunity to perform the opera not only with the original ending as Vogel had done in 1958, but also with the orchestration in Janáček's manuscript; the new production was previewed in Prague before the company went abroad. The press reacted to the opera's latest version and the circumstances of its production both with excitement to hear the opera "for the first time just as it was written," and the hope that its exportation to Edinburgh would be an excellent representation of the strength of Czech musical culture.⁵⁴

Gregor's successful performance of *Z mrtvého domu* in Janáček's "original" instrumentation seemed to alleviate any worries critics once had about confusing Janáček's composition with the contributions of the arrangers. The new version of the opera was met with general acclaim, and, unlike their muted reaction in 1958, the press discussed it avidly. What is more, hearing the original instrumentation went a long way toward deciding the "seemingly unanswerable question" at the core of the debate around Janáček's last opera: was *Z mrtvého domu* "a torso or [was it] an inspired

⁵² Pospíšil was a little guilty of overstating his point. While Janáček did not always provide his operas with uplifting conclusions, as evidenced in the grim finale of *Káťa Kabanová*, one could make the argument that others besides *Bystrouška* and *Pastorkyňa* do. For example, even though Emilia Marty dies at the end of *Věc Makropulos*, she does so singing the *Pater nostra*: her death is portrayed as a release from her unnaturally extended life.

⁵³ Vilém Pospíšil, "Brněnská inscenace Janáčkovy poslední opery," *Hudební rozhledy* 13-14, (1958): 570-1.

⁵⁴ Zdeněk Candra, "Mrtvý dům – živé dílo," *Práce* (Prague), 28 April 1964; and Ps., "ND se připravujena Edinburk," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 28 April 1964.

work indicating the path of modern opera in all directions?”⁵⁵ Support leaned towards the latter view: “Gregor,” one critic wrote, “carefully adjusted the controversial sound of the [printed] score with the extant autograph, cleaned it of its romanticized arrangement, and in a convincing manner resolved the long-lasting controversy in favor of the original.”⁵⁶ For Pospíšil, who was already convinced that Janáček had left his final opera complete, the opportunity to hear its “authentic sound” in performance was especially exciting in vindicating his argument:

It appeared amazingly clean, expressively colored, in any case more than adequate and more importantly, personal, typically Janáčekian ... This is completely understandable. The era and sentiment has fundamentally changed. I cannot say at all that in its day the adaptation didn’t have its own significance, its own sense, and that it didn’t help Janáček. But nowadays it is clearly unnecessary.⁵⁷

The outcome of Gregor’s restoration was indisputable, Pospíšil thought, and the matter resolved: *Z mrtvého domu* was complete and in no need of the alterations made to it by Bakala, Chlubna and Zítek.

But the Edinburgh “commission” had also revealed an unhappy truth. Vilém Pospíšil began his article with the pointed observation that, in contrast to the interest Janáček’s operas inspired in other countries, Czech opera houses usually needed some kind of “impetus from outside” in order to perform them even “sporadically.”⁵⁸ This was certainly true of *Z mrtvého domu* (less so for *Káťa Kabanová*) and Pospíšil’s opinion was not unusual. Jiří Bajer opened his review of *Z mrtvého domu* with a similar complaint that, although other countries admired the Czech nation for having produced a composer such as Janáček, and perceived his works as having deep connections to his homeland, the reality of the situation was that Janáček’s operas received little support at home. “Each of our opera houses,” Bajer wrote, “has at least one of Janáček’s [operas] in its repertoire, but they often perform it before half-empty houses. God only knows when the fateful error that resulted in this grievous situation began.”⁵⁹ Another critic, wishing that Czech audiences could develop a familiar and knowledgeable relationship with Janáček’s works, noted that Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, who had attended the new production’s first night in Prague, had been “enthusiastic and literally stunned” by *Z mrtvého domu*.⁶⁰

Brno also needed, or at least used, an “external impetus” to bring out a new production of *Z mrtvého domu* – their first in sixteen years. 1974 was the 120th anniversary of Janáček’s birth and the theatre scheduled Janáček’s last opera to open at the annual international music festival. Like Prague, Brno decided to discard the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ vl., “Janáček v novém světle,” *Literární noviny* (Prague), 1 May 1964.

⁵⁷ Vilém Pospíšil, “Janáček pro Edinburku.”

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Jiří Bajer, “Živý odkaz v Mrtvém domě,” *Divadelní noviny* (Prague), 20 May 1964.

⁶⁰ vl., “Janáček v novém světle.”

1930 edition, this time in favor of a new version that took account not only of Janáček's manuscript, but also of the corrections he had made to the copied scores (which the Prague version had not). Conductor Václav Nosek, who carried out the work of preparing the score for performance, stated in an interview that Chlubna and Bakala had altered the instrumentation and harmony in keeping with an "aesthetic model" based on "prevailing practice." Janáček, however, had moved on even if his pupils hadn't; the composer simply "wasn't thinking like that anymore," and Nosek declared the old "myths" about the opera – that it was an unfinished "torso" with an unplayable score and an insufficient and incomprehensible libretto – unfounded.⁶¹

Not all the critics, however, were buying it. By this point the Brno reviewers were almost ready to concede the argument over which ending to use, although one, Jiří Majer, still sat on the fence, citing reasons in favor of either ending. He reminded his readers that Bakala and Chlubna had only added to the opera because they thought it unfinished; in particular, that they had expanded Janáček's "adumbrated" ending so that it would sound "more optimistic and noble" (of which language more in a moment), as well as "underscore Janáček's artistic aims and the intentions of his preexisting operas."⁶² Majer, however, was in the minority; generally critics agreed that it was more appropriate to perform the opera with the original ending, now feeling that the optimism of the appended one was neither part of Janáček's intentions for the opera, nor in sympathy with the composer's spirit.

But conceding the original ending was about as far as Brno critics would go. Janáček's completion of the opera continued to be queried by the press, with the unfamiliar sound of the "supposedly original version" offered as evidence that Janáček hadn't got beyond sketching the opera and that, therefore, the customary version was to be preferred.⁶³ Listeners, one writer argued, had become familiar with *Z mrtvého domu* in a scoring similar to that of Janáček's other works. Now, however, "the whole score of the opera, which we know in a brilliant arrangement, is portrayed here entirely differently from the familiar version. The music is more austere, rawer; long stretches [of it] truly suggest a masterful sketch written with frantic haste and a single breath."⁶⁴ Criticism of the orchestration, from the "rawness and crudeness" of its timbre, to the awkwardness that hampered the orchestra's expressiveness, was also given as evidence that Janáček could not have finished his last opera and to provide support for the continued use of the old version.⁶⁵ Though one critic's review concluded with the statement that it was "impossible to say if the Master's original will remain on the operatic stage permanently or if the usual version will prevail," there was no question the writer was pulling for the latter.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Procházka, "Janáčkův operní epilog." (Interview with Václav Nosek).

⁶² Jiří Majer, "Janáčková poslední opera na festivalu," *Rovnost* (Brno), 2 October 1974.

⁶³ Vladimír Šolín, "Česká hudba v Brně," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 8 October 1974.

⁶⁴ eva., "„Z mrtvého domu“ v novém podání," *Lidová demokracie* (Brno), 3 October 1974.

⁶⁵ "Janáčkovu operní dílo," *Svobodné slovo* (Brno), 12 October 1978; and eva., "„Z mrtvého domu“ v novém podání."

⁶⁶ eva., "„Z mrtvého domu“ v novém podání."

Partly underpinning this discussion, of course, are contemporary expectations of artists and works of art: the particular issues raised in *Z mrtvého domu* offered points of contact with the political atmosphere and cultural expectations of a socialist state, particularly later in the twentieth century. In the period of the opera's composition and posthumous completion, Brian Locke has suggested that leftist Czech composers still tended to look to the West rather than the East for their stylistic influence; and, as discussed above, Zítek, Chlubna, and Bakala seem to have altered the ending of *Z mrtvého domu* according to their sense of Janáček's operatic practice, and the opera house's expectations, not through any political convictions.⁶⁷ By the late 1930s, however, the Russian idea of socialist realism had acquired critical currency in Czech musical scholarship and journalism: Vladimír Helfert, for example, discussed it in his 1936 book, *Česká moderní hudba* (*Modern Czech Music*), sparking further debate that year and the next in journals such as *Tempo listy* and *Rytmus*.⁶⁸ After Czechoslovakia officially became a Communist state in 1948, the Proclamation of Prague's Second International Congress of Composers and Music Critics (often referred to as the "Prague Manifesto"), declared socialist realism official cultural policy. The dictates Andrei Zhdanov had imposed in Russia earlier that year were debated at the Congress; the Proclamation followed suit on several points, notably in advocating socialist realism as the answer to the crisis of new music, and the emphasis on music with "concrete content" – that is to say, vocal music in all forms.⁶⁹ Thus the continued use of the optimistic conclusion for *Z mrtvého domu*, particularly in Brno, where it went unchallenged for much of the century, could certainly suggest the influence of socialist thinking. The same can be said for critics such as Majer, who defended the appended ending and the increased accessibility it and Bakala and Chlubna's lush orchestration gave the opera, when Brno decided for the first time to use neither ending nor extra instrumentation in 1974.

However, other aspects of *Z mrtvého domu*'s performance and reception after 1948 do not map so easily onto the shifting cultural landscape of Sovietized Czechoslovakia. For example, the National Theatre's decision, in 1958, to revert to Janáček's original conclusion for good, came at a time when counterrevolutionary activities of any sort were still, as Miloš Jůzl says, "unthinkable."⁷⁰ The Brno theatre's choice to perform the opera without Zítek's optimistic ending in 1974 also came at an incongruous time: Russia's brutal clampdown in August of 1968 on the political loosening of the Prague Spring, is widely acknowledged to have led to an atmosphere of passivity and futility that pervaded all areas of life in Czechoslovakia for years after. Thus both actions were taken at times when the removal of the appended ending, if it were truly deemed crucial to the opera's compliance with official cultural

⁶⁷ Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theatre 1900-1938* (Rochester, University of Rochester, 2006), 262.

⁶⁸ Vladimír Helfert, *Česká moderní hudba: studie o české hudební tvořivosti* (Olomouc: Index, 1936), 163-8.

⁶⁹ Jaromír Havlík, "The Prague Manifesto after (almost) Sixty Years," *Czech Musical Quarterly* 12/2 (2007): 53-69.

⁷⁰ Miloš Jůzl, "Music and the Totalitarian Regime in Czechoslovakia," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 27/1 (1996): 31-51.

policy, might have been expected to generate particularly vehement critical commentary. This, however, a few exceptions apart, did not materialize. Moreover, the terms “socialism” (*socialismus*) or “socialist realism” (*socialistické realismus*) never appeared in the reception at any point in the opera’s history, even in periods – such as 1948 – when it had the greatest currency. References to cultural policy were usually euphemistic or couched in ambiguous idioms. Janáček’s operas never invited the blatant socialist language that Monika Kroupová describes as typical of mid-twentieth century Czech socialist music journalistic code.⁷¹

There are other, quite different, contexts in which we can locate this discussion as well. The removal of the posthumous additions to *Z mrtvého domu* was part of a trend, in which the conductor Bohumil Gregor was particularly active, to perform all Janáček’s operas in their “original” versions. Prague’s 1964 *Z mrtvého domu*, which Gregor conducted from a score based on Janáček’s manuscript, prefigured his 1974 performance of *Kát’a Kabanová* without Václav Talich’s reorchestration, standard at the National Theatre since 1947. The latter was used by Jaroslav Krombholc for the new production of *Kát’a* in 1957, in his recording of the opera on the Supraphon label in 1960, and again in the 1964 production that Krombholc had taken to Edinburgh alongside Gregor’s *Z mrtvého domu*. The new “authentic” performances by the Prague theatre of Janáček’s operas contributed to anxiety in Brno that their prerogative was being usurped. The debate over *Z mrtvého domu* formed a part of this larger debate. Brno’s opera ensemble tended to regard themselves as the leading experts in the performance of Janáček’s operas, but their vanguard position, consolidated by František Neumann’s premieres of the composer’s last operas, was now being challenged. The reluctance on the part of the Brno press to relinquish the “traditional” sound to which they were accustomed, in favor of one that struck them as “somber, stark, and denuded,” was at least partly a defense of Brno’s special relationship with its favorite operatic son.⁷²

Yet Brno’s concern over the changes implemented in the 1977 production was more than stubborn resistance. There was also anxiety that an already difficult work would lose what little accessibility it had. “The new production,” Jiří Majer wrote, “confirmed that the interventions of both of Janáček’s pupils in the orchestration of score were entirely valid, because without them the work is deprived in places of its rich aural and dramatic stratification (*vrstevnatost*).”⁷³ Another critic observed that it was particularly the circle of foreign visitors in the audience that had responded well to the performance (a further sign, perhaps, of the political times). As a rule, Brno journalists preferred to see Janáček operas greeted with heartfelt applause by his hometown audience, but, judging from the toned-down enthusiasm of the reviews, this production of *Z mrtvého domu* had not been favorably received. “The [Brno]

⁷¹ Monika Kroupová, “Totalitarian Language and its Role in Czech Musical Journals in the Late 1940s and Early 1950s,” in *Socialist Realism and Music: Colloquium Musicologicum Brunense 36* (2001), ed., Mikuláš Běk, Geoffrey Chew and Petr Macek (Prague: Koniasch Latin Press, 2004), 256–61.

⁷² Šolín, “Česká hudba v Brně.”

⁷³ Majer, “Janáčková poslední opera na festivalu.”

festival version,” the above writer finished, “was, if anything, a performance for experts.”⁷⁴

Confronted with public indifference and theatres neglecting their duty to promote a national cultural icon, Czech critics from both cities increasingly insisted throughout the 60s and 70s on the importance of *Z mrtvého domu*. For example, in his review of Prague’s 1964 production, Vladimír Bor wrote:

... and now we have a classic of our culture, a national product so great and acknowledged as is Leoš Janáček, who to date has not become accepted. Even in the theatre, even in his own Brno, Janáček is performed a good deal less than he deserves. Janáček is of course searching for a classic of modernism, an anti-traditional creation. [And] in *Z mrtvého domu* the seventy-three year old conquered the struggle with a vast literary mosaic, with ascetic, dreary and static material, with long narrative episodes and he wrote a hard, difficult, men’s opera (without female characters!) in unconventional, modern dramatic-epic form. Even Janáček’s artistic epilogue was thus a struggle over something new.⁷⁵

In addition to the admonition to Czech theatres and the assertion of originality, this passage also exemplified a shift in the way critics represented the opera. Where early reviews had mostly referred to *Z mrtvého domu* as Janáček’s “posthumous” or “posthumous and incomplete” opera, now the phrase “operatic epilogue,” which previously had been used only occasionally, became the standard description of the opera among the critics.⁷⁶

“Epilogue” suggested that the opera was in a more finalized state than had been previously assumed – complete yet understated; it also implied that *Z mrtvého domu* was the final word, as it were, of Janáček’s artistic career. The increasing use of “epilogue”, as well as of more emphatic terms such as “culmination” and “climax,” in the reception of *Z mrtvého domu* indicates how much critics had become invested in portraying Janáček’s last opera as “the logical climax of all his creations,” as Jiří Majer wrote in his review.⁷⁷ But “epilogue” could also be employed in its more novelistic sense (appropriate, perhaps, for such a literary, narrative-laden opera as this one), as providing at once closure and a glimpse of the future: in his review of *Z mrtvého domu*, titled, like so many others, “Janáček’s Operatic Epilogue,” Procházka wrote that *Z*

⁷⁴ “Janáčkovu operní dílo.”

⁷⁵ Vbr. [Vladimír Bor], “Janáčková opera pro Edinburgh,” *Lidová demokracie* (Prague), 28 April 1964.

⁷⁶ The practice of referring to *Z mrtvého domu* as Janáček’s “operatic epilogue” appears to have begun in 1958, after which it eventually became the term of choice. Limiting the list to reviews using the word epilogue in the title, see; “Janáčkův tvůrčí epilog,” *Lidová demokracie* (Brno), 21 October 1958; Procházka, “Janáčkův operní epilog”; Dagmar Palačká, “Janáčkův operní epilog,” *Zemědělské noviny* (Prague), 29 June 1977; Jiří Pavek, “Janáčkův operní epilog,” *Práce* (Prague), 24 June 1977; V[ilém] Pospíšil, “Obnovený Janáčkův epilog,” *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 28 June 1977; Zdeněk Candra, “Janáčkův operní epilog,” *Rudé právo* (Prague), 24 June 1977; and Vladimír Bor, “Hraje se Janáčkův epilog,” *Gramorevue* 26/5 (1990): 2.

⁷⁷ Majer, “Janáčková poslední opera na festivalu.”

mrtvého domu “represents in Janáček’s world the ‘*De Profundis* of ancient greatness’ as well as the turning point in the evolution of the modern musical drama of the twentieth century.”⁷⁸

This culmination, however, didn’t have to be considered only in terms of formal innovation. Perhaps aware that appeals to stylistic originality, in particular with the harsher sounds of the reconstructed versions, were not going to fill opera houses, journalists also expounded *Z mrtvého domu*’s social relevance. Zdeněk Candra made this explicit in his review of Prague’s 1977 production, drawing parallels between several scenes in the opera and situations in concentration camps, including, through hints, the labor camps of Stalin’s Gulags, then recently exposed to the public by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s 1973 *The Gulag Archipelago* (banned at this point in the Soviet Union and circulating only in samizdat, i.e. underground, publications):

It is impossible at present to resist considering how the conditions in a Czarist prison some hundred years previous were developed and refined further by our century’s multiple fascist regimes and their successors. You see on Janáček’s stage, in which the Placmajor whips Gorjančikov just because he is a political prisoner – and you can ponder, in how many Hitlerian or Pinochetian concentration camps was murder or sadism the qualification to become kapo [i.e. to be put in charge] over imprisoned communists or honest democrats. In the second act of the opera, during a holiday, the prisoners perform a pantomime about Kedril and Juan. In Terezin during the Second World War, theatre was also rehearsed – literally and metaphorically: before the visitors from the international commission. In one scene Gorjančikov teaches the Tatar boy Aljeja to read and write. In how many prisons and camps did Luis Corvalán and his equals teach their own comrades by word and example the sanitation and literacy of human relationships in prisons and even beyond them?⁷⁹

If audiences couldn’t be convinced by “one of the most audacious experiments in the world of operatic creation,” then perhaps they would be persuaded by an opera about the “miracle of people with unbroken and unsuppressed feelings, people hoping, believing in freedom” – aspects of the human condition that had become even more pressing after Janáček’s death.⁸⁰ Most critics expounded both the opera’s formal innovation and modernity as well as Janáček’s humanistic message, using whatever means possible, it seemed, to urge public and theatres alike to pay more attention to Janáček’s “operatic epilogue.”

⁷⁸ Procházka, “Janáčkův operní epilog.”

⁷⁹ Candra, “Janáčkův operní epilog.”

⁸⁰ Jaroslav Volek, “Hudba. Šostakovič a Janáček,” *Kulturní tvorba* (Prague), 7 May 1964; vl., “Janáček v novém světle.”

Exhaustion

The critics' desperate attempt to salvage the sympathetic humanistic message in *Z mrtvého domu* at a time when the opera's subject raised painful issues in the stifled atmosphere that followed Russia's forceful suppression of the 1968 "Prague Spring" uprising, was all to little avail. After 1974, Brno would not restage *Z mrtvého domu* for another twenty-four years, and the situation in Prague was only marginally better. In 1990, the National Theatre basically recycled for a third time their 1964 production. It had already been given what was little more than a revival in 1977, which saw the return of both conductor Bohumil Gregor and director Ladislav Štros and only the replacement of the 1964 production's set designer, Vladimír Nývlt, with Květoslav Bubeník. Yet despite the new designer, critics were quick to point out the similarities in the sets and staging between 1964 and 1977. Vilém Pospíšil noted that the openings in the stage, "from which as if a hole the prisoners crawl," had been carried over, as had the solitary cage (which could be lowered and raised) suspended from the centre (see figures 3 and 4). Pospíšil also observed that the "devastatingly effective exit of Skuratov," played by Ivo Židek in both productions, once more took place under netting – "only [in 1977] the material is softer" (see figures 5 and 6).⁸¹

The 1990 *Z mrtvého domu* saw the return not only of Gregor and Štros a third time, but of Vladimír Nývlt, the stage designer from 1964, as well. It seemed a tired effort and barely anyone could muster any enthusiasm for it: Jan Dehner wrote that Štros appeared to have "exhausted his invention," and Milena Dosoudilová called the production "hapless rather than imaginative."⁸² Even most of the soloists were reprising their roles from the previous staging.⁸³ "In any case," Dosoudilová limply concluded her review, "the work in and of itself demonstrates a greater ability to metaphorically capture the lot in life and appeal to human freedom than that rendered by the sets of this production."⁸⁴

Even the usual claims that *Z mrtvého domu* was the culminating work of Janáček's artistic struggle sounded repetitive and as wearily trundled-out as the old sets. With *Z mrtvého domu*, Václav Nosek wrote, Janáček had closed a "titanic struggle over the new musical dramatic style, over the validity and durability of his compositional method (*kompoziční metod*) and over the artistic truth of contemporary art."⁸⁵ Director Ladislav Štros, however, gave this idea a more truthful – if also more resigned – gloss. Asked in a interview for *Práce* whether he thought that *Z mrtvého domu* would find acceptance with the Czech public, Štros replied: "Unfortunately this climactic work of Janáček's will not find the approval that it deserves from the public

⁸¹ Vilém Pospíšil, "Obnovená Inscenace Z Mrtvého Domu," *Hudební rozhledy* 9 (1977): 481.

⁸² Jan Dehner, "Zaklámni z premiéry," *Hudební rozhledy* 7 (1990): 369; and Milena Dosoudilová, "Z Mrtvého domu," *Svobodné slovo* (Prague), 13 March 1990.

⁸³ Ladislav Šíp, "Janáčekův hymnus o svobodě," *Práce* (Prague), 8 March 1990.

⁸⁴ Dosoudilová, "Z Mrtvého domu."

⁸⁵ V[áclav] Nosek, "Janáček a jeho opera Z mrtvého domu," *Národní divadlo informuje* (Prague), May 1990.

... this music is already sixty years old, yet it still isn't accessible to the wider theatrical public."⁸⁶

Štros's fears were, alas, borne out. Eva Herrmannová observed in her review that new productions of Janáček's opera were often accompanied by a lament for how poorly they would be attended. For the new staging of *Z mrtvého domu* by the National Theatre that opened on 1 March 1990, not even the first night sold out.⁸⁷ Underattended in comparison to new productions of Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* and Dvořák's *Čert a Káča* (*The Devil and Kate*) that year, which went on to substantial runs of 49 and 106 performances respectively, the 1990 production of *Z mrtvého domu* was given only 12 times before the Theatre closed it on 5 January 1991.⁸⁸ The critics admitted defeat: "Up to now we have made too little progress [in promoting Janáček]," Vladimír Bor wrote, "Janáček has a better position in the metropolises of Western culture and at international festivals, where the only thing they underestimate is the exceptional nature of his originality."⁸⁹ Had the dead house turned into a dead end?

Open endings

It would be possible, of course, to make a virtue of this resistance to perform – and to attend – *Z mrtvého domu* by emphasizing some of the themes present in the opera's reception. There are, for example, recurrent hints of a classic "late style" narrative, in which Janáček struggled to crown his artistic career with an utterly original artwork, a struggle that would be impossible (or very nearly impossible) to win. Indeed, John Tyrrell has suggested that the history of Janáček's last opera is one of "rehabilitation," as though throughout its performance history its accretions have been gradually stripped away, allowing the "original" work – difficult and unoperatic, with long monologues of paradoxically terse language, and harsh, sparse timbres – to emerge.⁹⁰

This narrative, however, is too narrow and linear to account for the complexities in either *Z mrtvého domu*'s reception or its performance; what emerges from these, I suggest, are continually renewed concerns with the collective and humanistic aspects of the opera. These two characteristics are mutually reinforcing. As Václav Nosek argued in his article about Prague's 1990 production, the themes of the prisoners' narratives in *Z mrtvého domu* are related, in each case giving voice to

⁸⁶ V. Balleková, "Svědomy je horší než trest," *Práce* (Prague), 6 March 1990.

⁸⁷ Eva Herrmannová, "Mrtvý dům bez naděje," *Tvorba* (Prague), 4 April 1990.

⁸⁸ In 1964, *Z mrtvého domu* ran for 39 performances between 1964 and 1973. Prague's 1977 *Z mrtvého domu* had a run of 19 performances between 15 June 1977 and 19 May 1980 before it was retired. By comparison, three productions of *Káča Kabanová* in this period had runs of 65 performances (3 June 1964 – 5 February 1977); 73 performances (21 June 1974 – 16 April 1983); and 56 performances (27 May 1986 – 20 January 1991). *Příboby lišky Bystroušky* had a run of 111 performances (24 June 1965 – 7 December 1975); 50 performances (7 April 1978 – 28 May 1983); 40 performances (29 September 1983 – 23 April 1988).

⁸⁹ Bor, "Hraje se Janáčkův epilog."

⁹⁰ Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 342.

communal experiences and emotions. Unlike writers before him, Nosek did not find dramatic expression exclusively in the pantomimes of the second act, but argued instead that, “the theatre-in-the-theatre runs through the whole opera,” because each of the narrators in the opera performs for his fellow inmates.⁹¹ The sense of compassion for human plight that is one of the defining traits of *Z mrtvého domu* is thus created by the prisoners themselves as they listen to each other’s stories. It is the sympathy of the “audience” on stage that enables the audience in the theatre to perceive the human “spark” in the men whom society has cast out and, I would suggest, this is even more particularly the case with the boy Aljeja, who, despite being one of the more prominent characters in the opera, is the one about whom we know the least. A passive actor in the drama, Aljeja’s primary function seems to be as an attentive and sympathetic listener – the ideal operatic audience, in fact – blurring the lines between actor and audience.

There is another way in which *Z mrtvého domu* is an “operatic collective.” More than in any of his other works, the open-endedness of Janáček’s last opera foregrounds the indeterminacy of the text. As I have shown, Czech theatres have seldom performed *Z mrtvého domu* with the same score twice; instead, almost every production has been the result of a different negotiation between the unstable text and its performers. As in the opera itself, no single hero has starred in the history of the work’s performance, no single author has provided the narrative, no “original” version has been rehabilitated. When Brno decided to restage *Z mrtvého domu* in 1998, the theatre returned to the “traditional” reorchestrated version of the score, rather than the reconstructed score they had used in 1974, but even then it was not a straightforward return. Director Zdeněk Kaloč and conductor Jan Zbavitel inserted their own alterations into the new production, omitting the appended ending and making changes to the libretto: in particular, nearly all the Russian in the score was replaced with Czech.⁹² Reviewing the production, Jiří Zahradka, the curator of the Janáček Archive, wrote that, “even this most current production had not eschewed the tendency to rewrite Janáček” and Zahradka thought it unfortunate that the “original Janáček version” (as if there were any one such thing) hadn’t been used.

But given the resistance to Janáček’s stark orchestration of *Z mrtvého domu*, and the poor attendance that has beleaguered productions that have tried to recreate Janáček’s original, should Brno be criticized for deciding not to continue down Tyrrell’s path of “rehabilitation”? We may recall that Brno’s 1974 *Z mrtvého domu* had been labeled “a performance for experts,” and that the critics had considered Janáček’s own orchestration to have limited the dramatic effectiveness of the opera. Perhaps the theatre’s decision to revert to Bakala and Chlubna’s orchestration was to embrace Janáček’s humanistic and social reputation, rather than champion the opera’s stylistic innovation, and a decision not to stop at a dead end, but open a new path for Janáček’s “operatic epilogue.”

⁹¹ Nosek, “Janáček a jeho opera *Z mrtvého domu*.”

⁹² Jiří Zahradka, “Janáčková opera se vydařila,” n.p., n.d. Review found in the “*Z mrtvého domu* (Brno, Janáček Theatre, 1998)” folder at the Janáček Archive of the Moravian museum in Brno.



Figure 1. Josef Adamíček, sets for Act II (Brno, Na Hradbách Theatre, 1937).

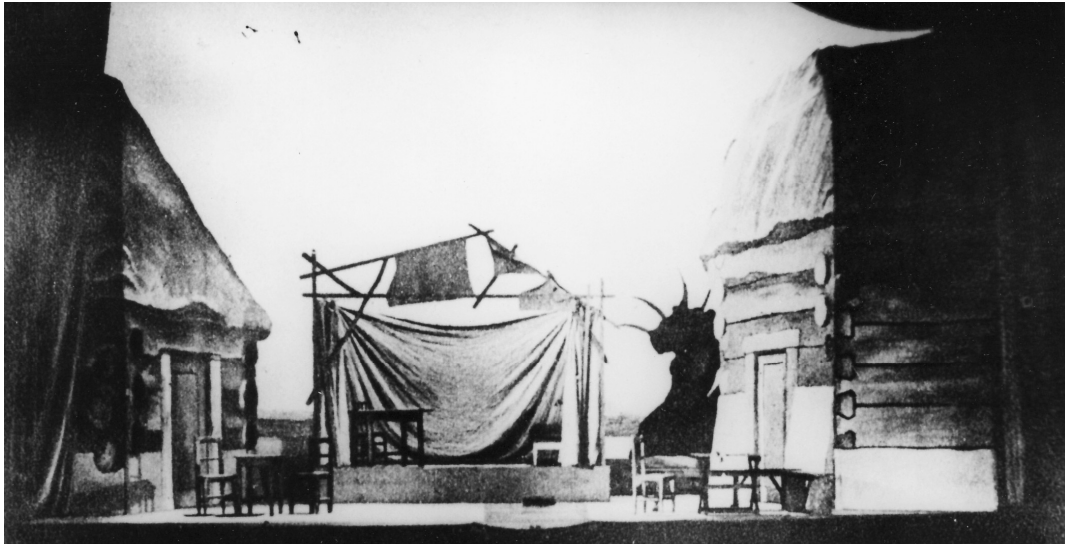


Figure 2. František Hlavica, sets for Act II (Brno, Na Hradbách Theatre, 1930).

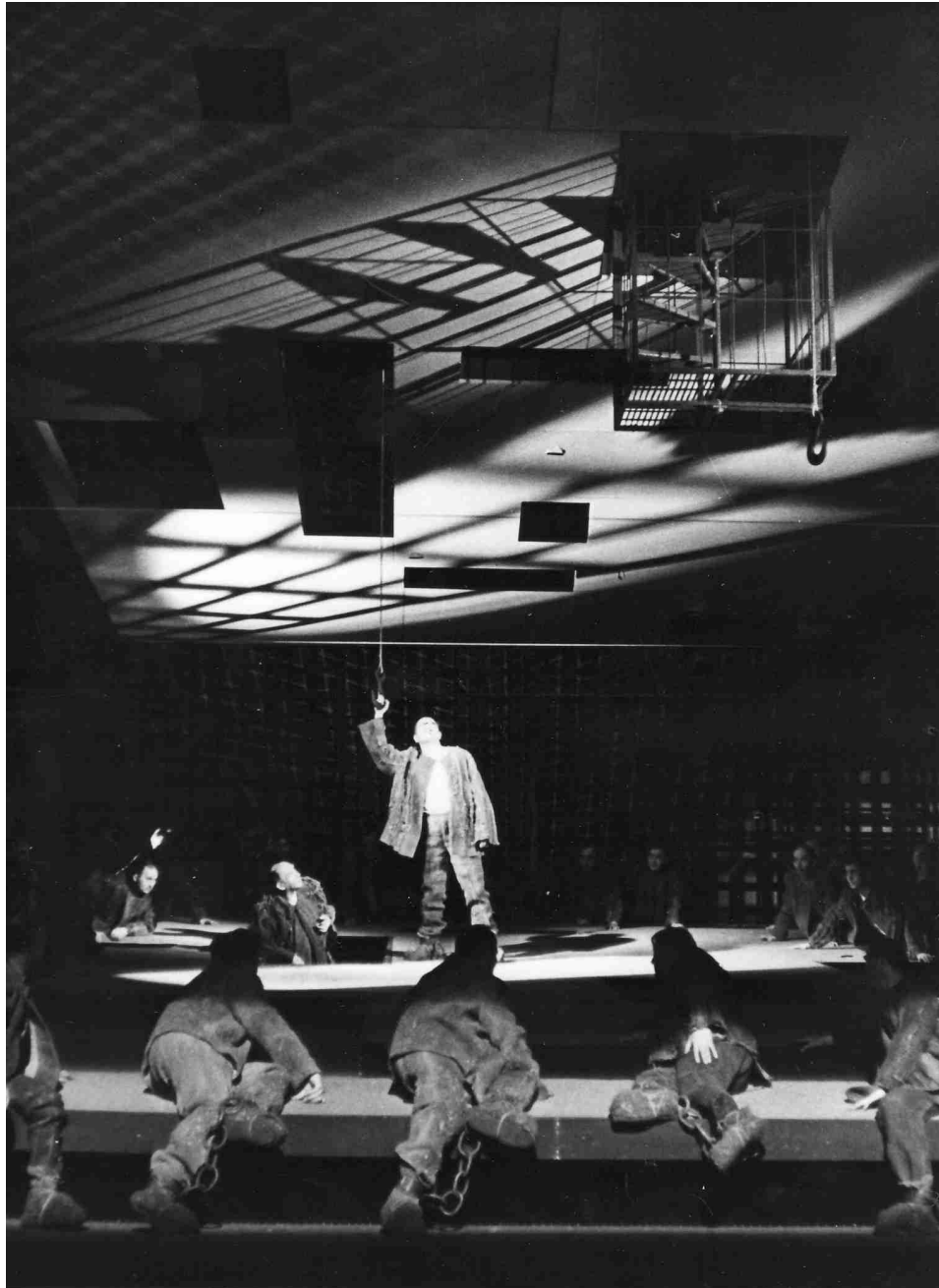


Figure 3. *Z mrtvého domu*, directed by Ladislav Štros, sets by Vladimír Nývlt; suspended cage raised (Prague, National Theatre, 1964).

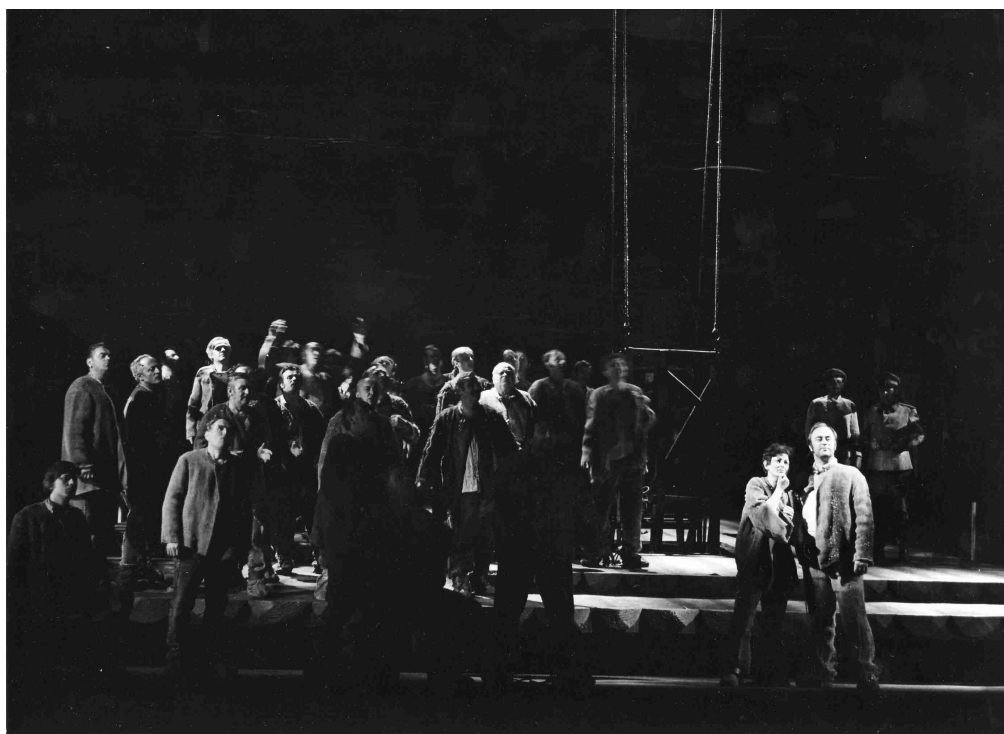


Figure 4. *Z mrtvého domu*, directed by Ladislav Štros, sets by Květoslav Bubeník; suspended cage lowered (Prague, National Theatre, 1977).



Figure 5. Ivo Žídek as Skuratov (Prague, National Theatre, 1964).



Figure 6. Ivo Žídek as Skuratov (Prague, National Theatre, 1977).

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Appendix: Productions of the Operas

***Kát'a Kabanová* in Brno**

1921 – Premiere

Date of first night: 23 November 1921

Length of run: unknown

Theatre: Divadlo Na Hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: František Neumann

Director: Vladimír Marek

Staging and Sets: V. Hrska, Č. Jandl

Cast

Dikoj: Rudolf Koulfus

Boris: Karel Zavřel

Kabanicha: Marie Hladíková

Tichon: Pavel Jeral

Kát'a: Marie Veselá

Kudrjáš: Valentin Šindler

Varvara: Jarmila Pustinská

Kuligin: René Milan

Glaša: Lidka Sebestlová

Fekluša: Ludmila Kvapilová

1924 – Second production

Date of first night: 16 October 1924

Length of run: unknown

Theatre: Divadlo Na Hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: František Neumann

Director: Ota Zítek

Sets: A. Provazník

Cast

Dikoj: Arnold Flögl

Boris: Antonín Pelz, Karel Zavřel

Kabanicha: Jelena Ježičová

Tichon: Emil Olšovský

Kát'a: Hana Pírková

Kudrjáš: Valentin Šindler

Varvara: Karla Tichá, Hana Hrdličková
Kuligin: Ferdinand Pour
Glaša: Jožka Mattesová, Božena Poláková
Fekluša: Marta Dobruská

1933 – Third production

Date of first night: 18 May 1933

Length of run: unknown

Theatre: Divadlo Na Hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Milan Sachs
Director: Rudolf Walter
Sets: Antonín Klimeš

Cast

Dikoj: Vladimír Jedenáctík
Boris: Gustav Talman
Kabanicha: Marie Hloušková
Tichon: Emil Olšovský
Kát'a: Marja Žalodavá
Kudrjáš: Antonín Pelz
Varvara: Karla Tichá
Kuligin: Vlastimil Šíma
Glaša: Božena Žlábková
Fekluša: Marta Dobruská

1939 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 15 February 1939

Length of run: unknown

Theatre: Divadlo Na Hradbách

Production

Conductor: Karel Nedbal
Director: Branko Gavella
Staging: Rudolf Walter
Sets: Antonín Klimeš

Cast

Dikoj: Vladimír Jedenáctík
Boris: Gustav Talman
Kabanicha: Marie Rezníčková

Tichon: Emil Olšovský
Kát'a: Marie Žaludová
Kudrjáš: Antonín Pelz
Varvara: Stěpana Jelínková
Kuligin: Vlastimil Šíma
Glaša: Božena Žlábková
Fekluša: Marie Zalabáková

1946 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 17 April 1946

Length of run: 11

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Bohumír Liška
Director: Ota Zítek (Miloš Wasserbauer for later performances)
Sets: Zdeněk Rossman

Cast

Dikoj: Leonid Pribytkov, Rudolf Asmus
Boris: Gustav Talman, Antonín Jurečka
Kabanicha: Marja Žaludová
Tichon: Antonín Jurečka, Gustav Talman
Kát'a: Emilie Zachardová (later Zachardová-Burjanková)
Kudrjáš: František Šubrt, Jan Čihák
Varvara: Soňa Spurná, C. Strádalová, L. Lesmanová
Kuligin: Vlastimil Šíma
Glaša: Helena Burianová
Fekluša: Jarmila Winklerová, Jarmila Lenská

1953 – Sixth production

Date of first night: 9 October 1953

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Bohumír Liška
Director: Oskar Linhart
Sets: Miloš Tomek
Costumes: Inez Tušnerová
Chorus master: Vilibald Rubínek

Cast

Dikoj: Václav Halír
Boris: Antonín Jurečka
Kabanicha: Marie Žaludová
Tichon: Jaroslav Jaroš
Kát'a: Libuše Domanínská
Kudrjáš: Zdeněk Soušek
Varvara: Libuše Lesmanová
Kuligin: Vlastimil Šíma
Glaša: Helena Burianová
Fekluša: Jarmila Lenská

1958 – Seventh production

Date of first night: 11 September 1958

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Jaroslav Vogel
Director: Oskar Linhart
Sets: Miloš Tomek
Chorus master: Vilibald Rubínek

Cast

Dikoj: Václav Halír
Boris: Antonín Jurečka, Beno Blachut (as guest)
Kabanicha: Jarmila Palivcová
Tichon: Jaroslav Jaroš
Kát'a: Alena Novaková, Květa Belanová
Kudrjáš: Zdeněk Soušek
Varvara: Libuše Lesmanová
Kuligin: Vlastimil Šíma
Glaša: Berta Žáčková
Fekluša: Zdenka Selingerová

1968 – Eighth production

Date of first night: 11 May 1968

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek

Director: Oskar Linhart
Sets and Costumes: František Tröster
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Dikoj: Richard Novák, Václav Halíč
Boris: Vilém Přibyl, Jiří Olejníček
Kabanicha: Jarmila Palivcová, Marie Steinerová
Tichon: Vladimír Krejčík, Antonín Jurečka
Kát'a: Zdenka Kareninová
Kudrjáš: Josef Škrobánek, Josef Ververka
Varvara: Jitka Pavlová, Jana Smítková
Kuligin: Jaroslav Souček

1977 – Ninth production

Date of first night: 27 November 1977
Length of run: unknown
Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Václav Nosek
Director: Václav Věžník
Sets: Ladislav Vychodil
Costumes: Naděžda Hanáková
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Dikoj: Václav Halíč, Josef Klán
Boris: Jiří Olejníček, Vilém Přibyl
Kabanicha: Jarmila Palivcová, Milada Šafránková
Tichon: Vladimír Krejčík, Josef Veverka
Kát'a: Gita Abrahámová
Kudrjáš: Oldřich Palášek, Jiří Holešovský
Varvara: Jaroslava Janská
Kuligin: Jaroslav Souček, Daniela Suryová
Glaša: Jitka Pavlová
Fekluša: Květa Belanová

1986 – Tenth production

Date of first night: 3 October 1986
Length of run: unknown
Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Gennadij Rožděstvenskij (as guest from USSR), Jan Zbavitel
Director: František Preisler
Sets: Daniel Dvorak
Costumes: Josef Jelínek (as guest)
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Dikoj: Jan Kyzlink
Boris: Jiří Olejníček
Kabanicha: Gita Abrahamová
Tichon: Vladimír Krejčík
Kát'a: Natalia Romanová
Kudrjáš: Zdeněk Šmukař
Varvara: Jana Iskrová
Kuligin: Pavel Stajskal
Glaša: Irena Vašíčková-Pollini
Fekluša: Jarmila Krátká

1994 – Eleventh production

Date of first night: 2 February 1994

Length of run; unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

(New production in honour of the 140th anniversary of the composer's birth)

Production

Conductor: František Vajnar (as guest)
Director: Alena Vaňáková
Sets: Karel Zmrzlý (as guest)
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Dikoj: Richard Novák, Jiří Sulženko
Boris: Ivan Choupenitch, Leo Marian Vodička
Kabanicha: Adriana Hlavsová, Jitka Pavlová
Tichon: Tomáš Krejčířík, (as guest) Břetislav Vojkůrka
Kát'a: Anda-Louise Bogza, Natália Romanová
Kudrjáš: Josef Škrobánek, Zdeněk Šmukař
Varvara: Hana Kobzová, Jitka Zerhanová
Kuligin: Pavel Polášek, Aleš Štáva
Glaša: Jana Iskrová, Daniela Suryová
Fekluša: Hana Málková, Irena Vašíčková-Pollini

***Kát'a Kabanová* in Prague**

1922 – First production

Date of first night: 30 November 1922

Length of run: 10 performances

Date of last night: 10 June 1924

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Otakar Ostrčil, Vincenc Maixner

Director: Robert Polák

Sets: Josef Matěj Gottlieb

Cast

Dikoj: Jiří Huml, Luděk Mandaus

Boris: Miloslav Jeník

Kabanicha: Marie Rejholcová, Gabriela Horvátová

Tichon: Vladimír Wuršer

Kát'a: Kamila Ungrová, Marie Veselá

Kudrjáš: Karel Hruška

Varvara: Marie Šlechtová

Kuligin: Jan Fifka, Štěpán Chodounský

Glaša: Marie Crhová

Fekluša: Vlasta Loukotková, Naďa (Anna) Kejřová

Pozdní chodec (Late passerby): Bedřich Bohuslav

Žena (Woman): Karla Brodecká

1938 – Second production

Date of first night: 16 September 1938

Length of run: 10 performances

Date of last night: 20 June 1940

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Václav Talich

Director: Ota Zítek (as guest)

Sets: František Muzika

Costumes: František Muzika

Cast

Dikoj: Ludek Mandaus

Boris: Jindřich Blažíček

Kabanicha: Marta Krásová, Marie Veselá

Tichon: Josef Vojta
Kát'a: Marie Šponerová
Kudrjáš: Jaroslav Gleich
Varvara: Štěpánka Štěpánová
Kuligin: Miloš Linka
Glaša: Dobroslava Sudíková, Božena Kozlíková
Fekluša: Marie Pixová, Jarmila Malá, Libuše Kořímská
Pozdní chodec (Late passerby): Oldřich Kovář
Žena (Woman): Blanka Svobodová, Jarmila Malá, Julie Waldeková

1947 – Third production

Date of first night: 25 April 1947
Length of run: 32 performances
Date of last night: 28 December 1950
Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Václav Talich (as guest), Rudolf Vašata
Director: Hanuš Thein
Sets: František Tröster

Cast

Dikoj: Vladimír Jedenáctík
Boris: Beno Blachut
Kabanicha: Marta Krásová, Helena Zemanová
Tichon: Josef Otakar Masák
Kát'a: Ludmila Červinková, Ludmila Dvořáková
Kudrjáš: Jaroslav Gleich, Antonín Pelel
Varvara: Štěpánka Štěpánová
Kuligin: Teodor Šrubař, Hanuš Thein
Glaša: Ludmila Hanzalíková
Fekluša: Gita Schmidtová, Božena Kozlíková
Pozdní chodec (Late passerby): Miroslav Mach
Žena (Woman): Marie Zalabáková, Julie Mlejnková

***Also in 1947: Velký Opera 5. Května (Grand Opera of the Fifth of May)**

Production

Conductor: Václav Kašlík
Director: Václav Kašlík
Sets: Josef Svoboda
Costumes: Jan Kropáček

Chorus master: Bedřich Havlík

Cast

Dikoj: Jan Rožánek
Boris: Jaromír Svoboda
Kabanicha: Marie Cyteráková
Tichon: Rudolf Vonásek
Kát'a: Jaroslava Vymazalová
Kudrjáš: Rudolf Petrák, Ilja Hylas
Varvara: Jaroslava Dobrá
Kuligin: Jiří Schiller
Glaša: Milada Čadikovičová
Fekluša: Ludmila Maňáková, Věra Krilová

1957 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 17 May 1957

Length of run: 44 performances

Date of last night: 27 November 1962

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jaroslav Krombholc, Josef Čech, František Jílek, Jussi Jalas
Director: Hanuš Thein
Sets: František Tröster
Costumes: Jan Kropáček
Chorus master: Milan Malý
Assistant director: Ladislav Štros

Cast

Dikoj: Karel Berman, Vladimír Jedenáctík, Yrjö Ikonen
Boris: Beno Blachut, Jan Hlavsa, Jaroslav Stříška, Pekka Nuotio
Kabanicha: Zdenka Hrnčířová, Marta Krásová, Malju Kuusojä
Tichon: Bohumír Vích, Rudolf Vonásek, Antonín Zlesák, Jorma Huttunen
Kát'a: Ludmila Červinková, Libuše Domanínská, Drahomíra Tikalová,
Anita Vålkkí, Elena Lembovičová
Kudrjáš: Jaroslav Gleich, Viktor Kočí, Jan Hlavsa, Veikko Tyrväinen
Varvara: Ivana Mixová, Věra Krilová, Anna Mutanen
Kuligin: Josef Heriban, Rudolf Jedlička, Teodor Šrubař
Glaša: Eva Hlobilová
Fekluša: Marcela Lemariová, Věra Cupalová
Muž (Man): Jaroslav Rohan, Josef Vojta, Miroslav Mach
Žena (Woman): Marie Zalabáková, Libuše Kořimská

1964 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 3 June 1964

Length of run: 65 performances

Date of last night: 5 February 1972

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jaroslav Krombholc, Bohumil Gregor, Přemysl Charvát

Director: Hanuš Thein

Sets: Josef Svoboda

Costumes: Marcel Pokorný

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Cast

Dikoj: Karel Berman, Vladimír Jedenáctík

Boris: Beno Blachut, Viktor Kočí, Miroslav Frydlewicz

Kabanicha: Jaroslava Procházková, Jaroslava Dobrá, Ivana Mixová, Marie Steinerová

Tichon: Jaroslav Stríška, Jan Hlavsa, Rudolf Vonásek

Kát'a: Libuše Domanínská, Alena Míková, Eva Zikmundová

Kudrjáš: Zdeněk Švéhla, Milan Karpíšek, Viktor Kočí, Oldřich Lindauer

Varvara: Eva Hlobilová, Libuše Márová, Ivana Mixová

Kuligin: Jindřich Jindrák, Josef Heriban, Rudolf Jedlička, Teodor Šrubař

Glaša: Marie Ovčáčiková, Sylvia Kodetová, Ludmila Hanzalíková, Marcela Lemariová

Fekluš: Sylvia Kodetová, Milada Čadikovičová, Marie Ovčáčiková, Růžena Radová

Muž (Man): Jaroslav Rohan, Miroslav Mach

Žena (Woman): Ludmila Hanzalíková, Anna Rousková

1974 – Sixth production

Date of first night: 21 June 1974

Length of run: 73 performances

Date of last night: 16 April 1983

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Jiří Kout, Josef Chaloupka, Václav Nosek

Director: Karel Jernek

Sets: Josef Svoboda

Costumes: Olga Filipi

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant director: Libuše Čechová

Cast

Dikoj: Dalibor Jedlička, Karel Berman
Boris: Miroslav Švejda, Ivo Židek, Vilém Příbyl
Kabanicha: Agia Formánková, Naděžda Kniplová, Ivana Mixová, Věra Soukupová, Marie Steinerová, Bohuslava Návrátová
Tichon: Jan Hlavsa, Oldřich Spisar, Jaroslav Stríška, Václav Eremiáš
Kát'a: Mara Cihelníková, Antonie Denzgrová, Daniela Šounová-Brouková, Gabriela Beňáčková, Eva Zikmundová, Alena Žaloudková, Hildegard Behrensová, Helena Buldrová
Kudrjáš: Josef Hajna, Viktor Kočí, Zdeněk Švehla, Miloš Ježil
Varvara: Libuše Márová, Blanka Vítková, Jitka Pavlová, Amalie Kadlčíková, Jana Židková, Jaroslava Jánská
Kuligin: Josef Heriban, Rudolf Jedlička, Jindřich Jindrák, Jaroslav Majtner
Glaša: Ludmila Hanzalíková, Eva Hlobilová, Růžena Radová, Věra Starková, Blanka Vítková
Fekluša: Eva Pechánková, Růžena Radová, Věra Starková, Blanka Vítková
Muž (Man): Alfréd Hampel, Milan Karpíšek, Viktor Kočí, Rudolf Vonásek, Miroslav Mach
Žena (Woman): Anna Rousková, Vlasta Černá, Hana Kundrtová

1986 – Seventh production

Date of first night: 27 May 1986
Length of run: 56 performances
Date of last night: 20 January 1991
Venue: Smetanovo Divadlo (Smetana Theatre)

Production

Conductor: František Vajnar, František Babický, Přemysl Charvát, Albert Rosen
Director: Karel Jernek
Sets: Josef Svoboda
Costumes: Olga Filipi
Chorus master: Milan Malý
Assistant directors: Vojtěch Spurný, Tomáš Šimerda, Vladimír Darjanin

Cast

Dikoj: Dalibor Jedlička, Karel Berman, Karel Průša
Boris: Jan Markvart, Miroslav Švejda, Miroslav Kopp, Leo Marian Vodička
Kabanicha: Agia Formánková, Naděžda Kniplová, Věra Soukupová, Eva Zikmundová
Tichon: Jan Hlavsa, Miroslav Frydlewicz, Dalibor Novotný, Vladimír Krejčík, Josef Veverka
Kát'a: Marta Cihelníková, Antonie Denygrová, Gabriela Beňáčková, Zora

Jehlčková, Magdeléna Hajósszová, Natálie Romanová
Kudrjáš: Josef Hajna, Štefan Margita, Zdeněk Švehla, Zdeněk Šmukař
Varvara: Libuše Márová, Marie Veselá, Lydie Havláková, Jitka Pavlová
Kuligin: Pavel Červinka, Ivan Kusnjer, Josef Heriban, Jindřich Jindrák
Glaša: Anna Bortlová, Eva Hlobilová, Helena Tattermuschová
Fekluša: Marta Cihelníková, Yvona Škvárová, Jadwiga Wysoczanská, Lenka
Zahutová
Muž (Man): Alfréd Hampel, Milan Karpíšek
Žena (Woman): Alena Pavlíková, Anna Rousková, Stanislava Moravová,
Miloslava Popová

1992 – Eighth production

Date of first night: 9 April 1992

Length of run: 19 performances

Date of last night: 22 May 1996

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Přemysl Charvát

Director: Karel Jernek, Vladimír Darjanin

Sets: Josef Svoboda

Costumes: Olga Filipi

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant conductors: František Preisler, Vojtěch Spurný, Paul Mauffray

Assistant directors: Luděk Golat, Lubomír Fritz

Cast

Dikoj: Dalibor Jedlička, Bohuslav Maršík

Boris: Miroslav Kopp

Kabanicha: Marta Cihelníková, Naděžsa Kniplová

Tichon: Jiří Ceé, Josef Hajna

Kát'a: Jiřina Marková

Kudrjáš: Jiří Ceé, Vladimír Doležal

Varvara: Pavla Aunická, Lenka Šmídová, Marie Veselá

Kuligin: Jaroslav Souček

Glaša: Martina Bauerová, Ivana Ročková, Miloslava Seifertová

Fekluša: Marta Cihelníková, Alena Pavlíková, Nad'a Šormová

Muž (Man): Jaroslav Březina, Jaroslav Prodělal

Žena (Woman): Alena Pavlíková, Miloslava Poppová

***Příhody lišky Bystroušky* in Brno**

1924 – Premiere

Date of first night: 6 November 1924

Length of run: 16 performances

Date of last night: 28 June 1925

Venue: Městské Divadlo Na Hradbách (City Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: František Neumann

Director: Otakar Zítek

Sets: Eduard Milén

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Hana Hrdličková, Jožka Mattesová*

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Božena Snopková

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Arnold Flögl

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Jaroslav Tyl, Jaroslav Čihák*

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Antonín Pelz

Harašta (Poacher): Ferdinand Pour

Lapák (Dog): Marta Dobruská

*Production revived 30 April 1927, 27 May 1927 (2 performances)

1934 – Second production

Date of first night: 24 November 1934

Length of run: 9 performances

Date of last night: 23 March 1935

Venue: Divadlo Na Hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Milan Sachs

Director: Václav Jiříkovský

Sets: Václav Skrušný

Choreography: Máša Cvejičová

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Věra Strelcová

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Božena Žlábková

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Vladimír Jedenáctík

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Leonid Pribytkov

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Marie Hloušková

Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Marie Zalabáková

Harašta (Poacher): Vlastimil Šíma
Pásek (Innkeeper): František Šíma
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Antonín Pelz

1938 – Third production

Date of first night: 16 September 1938
Length of run: 7 performances
Date of last night: 18 January 1939
Venue: Divadlo Na hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Milan Sachs (later, Jaroslav Vogel and Antonín Balatka)
Director: Václav Jiříkovský
Sets: Václav Skrušný

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Věra Střelcová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Štěpánka Jelínková
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Vladimír Jedenáctík
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Leonid Pribytkov
Rechtor/omár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Antonín Pelz
Harašta (Poacher): Vlastimil Šíma, Gustav Talman

1947 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 15 February 1947
Length of run: 28 performances
Date of last night: 31 May 1950
Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Robert Brock
Director: Otakar Zítek
Sets: František Malý
Choreography: V. Vágnerová, Růžena Elingerová

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Milá Ledererová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Libuše Domanínská
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Rudolf Asmus, Eduard Hrubeš
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Leonid Pribytkov, Jiří Kzderka
Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Marie Žaludová
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Jarmila Lenská, Helena Buriánová

Harašta (Poacher): František Roesler
Pásek (Innkeeper): Jan Čihák
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Josef Kejř
Lapák (Dog): M. Rezníčková
Kohout (Rooster): M. Sukupová

1952 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 5 October 1952

Length of run: 29 performances

Date of last night: 9 March 1958

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Bohumír Liška (after 1956, František Jílek)

Director: Oskar Linhart

Sets: Josef A. Šálek (as guest)

Costumes: Eduard Milén

Choreography: Růžena Eliingerová

Chorus master: Vilibald Rubínek

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Míla Ledererová, Jindra Pokorná*, Cecilie Strádalová*

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Libuše Domanínská, Jadwiga Wysoczanská*, Jarmila Rudolfová*

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Rudolf Asmus, František Roesler*, Zdeněk Kroupa*

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Květa Belanová

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Jindřich Doubek

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Josef Kejř

Harašta (Poacher): Vlastimil Síma

Pásek (Innkeeper): Antonín Pelz

Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Jarmila Lenská

* Production revived 24 April 1958 – 5 May 1965 (42 performances)

1965 – Sixth production

Date of first night: 2 October 1965

Length of run: 32 performances

Date of last night: 2 June 1969

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek
Director: Miloš Wasserbauer
Sets: František Tröster
Costumes: Ludmila Purkyňová
Choreography: Marie Mrázková
Chorus master: Jiří Kubica

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Nad'a Šormová, Sylvia Kodetová, Anna Martvňová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Vladimír Krejčík, Josef Veverka
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Václav Halíř, Jindřich Doubek
Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Kveta Belonová
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Richard Novák, Jindřich Doubek, Josef Klán
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Zdeněk Soušek, Antonín Jurečka
Harašta (Poacher): René Tuček, Jaroslav Souček, Eduard Hruběš
Pásek (Innkeeper): Vlastimil Šíma
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Helena Burianová
Lapák (Dog): Libuše Lesmanová

1970 – Seventh production

Date of first night: 6 June 1970
Length of run: 97 performances
Date of last night: 25 June 1983
Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek (later Jiří Pinkas)
Director: Václav Věžník
Sets: Josef A. Šálek
Costumes: Naděžda Hanáková
Choreography: Rudolf Karhánek and Luboš Ogoun
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Jaroslava Janská, Sylvia Kodetová, Helen Tattermuschová, Markéta Ungrová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Jindra Pokorná, Jitka Pavlová
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Richard Novák, Jindřich Doubek, Jan Hladík
Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Milada Šafránková
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Václav Halíř, Josef Klán
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Vladimír Krejčík, Zdeněk

Soušek, Jiří Holešovský
Harašta (Poacher): Josef Souček, Jiří Přichystal
Pásek (Innkeeper): František Konc, Jindřich Doubek
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Jarmila Palívcová, Libuše Lesmanová

1984 – Eighth production

Date of first night: 28 September 1984

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jan Štych
Director: František Preisler
Sets: Oldřich Šimáček
Costumes: Marta Šajtarová
Choreography: Boris Slovák
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Jaroslava Janská, Magda Kloboučková, Markéta Ungrová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Hana Málková, Jitka Pavlová, Jitka Zerhavová
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Jan Hladík, Jan Kyzlink, Richard Novák
Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Gita Abrahamová, Milada Šafránková
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Václav Halíř, Josef Klán
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Jiří Holešovský, Vladimír Krejčík, Josef Škrobánek
Harašta (Poacher): Jan Hladík, Jiří Přichystal
Pásek (Innkeeper): Jiří Bar, Stavislav Bechynský
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Jarmila Palívcová, Jindra Pokorná

1996 – Ninth production

Date of first night: 6 December 1996

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jan Zbavitel
Director: Václav Věžník
Sets: Ladislav Vychodil
Costumes: Josef Jelínek

Choreography: Daniel Wiesner
Projections: Vojtěch Štofa
Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Eva Dřízgová, Yveta Tannenbergerová
Lišák Zlatohrbítek (Fox): Jana Nábělková, Lea Vítková, Beata Zádrapová
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Richard Haan, Richard Novák, Jiří Sulženko
Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Anna Barová, Jana Iskrová
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Ladislav Mlejnek, Richard Novák, Josef Klán
Rechtor (School Teacher): Josef Škrobánek, Zdeněk Šmukař
Komár (Mosquito): Petr Levíček, Milan Vlček
Harašta (Poacher): Jan Hladík, Vladimír Chmelo
Pásek (Innkeeper): Pavel Polášek, Aleš Št'áva
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Jana Iskrová, Jitka Pavlová
Lapák (Dog): Adriana Hlavsová, Jitka Zerhauová
Chocholka (Crested fowl): Jaroslava Janská, Magda Kloboučková
Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Eva Šafářová, Alena Feldmannová
Frantík: Ivona Konečná, Martina Králíková
Pepík: Nad'a Bláhová, Markéta Lamčová
Cvrček (Cricket): Martina Čičmancová, Zuzana Kantorová
Kobylka (Grasshopper): Lenka Havlíková, Romana Valešová
Skokánek (Frog): Eva Šafářová, Alena Feldmannová

Příhody lišky Bystroušky in Prague

1925 – First production

Date of first night: 18 May 1925

Length of run: 12 performances

Date of last night: 3 October 1925

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Otakar Ostrčil, Vincenc Maixner

Director: Ferdinand Pujman

Sets: Josef Čapek

Choreography: Remislav Remislavský

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Míla Kočová

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Naďa (Anna) Kejřová

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Emil Burian

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Markéta Letnianská, Marie Šlechtová

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Luděk Mandaus, Emil Pollert

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Karel Hruška

Harašta (Poacher): Štěpán Chodounský, Jan Konstantin

Pásek (Innkeeper): Antonín Lebeda

Paní Pásková/Datel (Innkeeper's wife/Woodpecker): Marie Kalivodová

Lapák (Dog): Marie Crhová

Kohout/Sojka (Rooster/Jay): Marie Pellerová

Chocholka (Crested fowl): Blažena Snopková, Marie Jelínková

Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Marie Čermáková

Frantík: Zdenka Lázníčková

Pepík: Milada Ševcovicová

Cvrček (Cricket): Milada Ševcovicová

Kobylka (Grasshopper): Zdenka Lázníčková

Skokánek (Frog): Marie Lamačová

1937 – Second production

Date of first night: 21 May 1937

Length of run: 13 performances

Date of last night: 9 January 1938

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Václav Talich

Director: Luděk Mandaus
Chorus master: Jan Kühn, Jan Ouředník

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Marie Tauberová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Ota Horaková
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Josef Křikava
Paní revírníková (Gamekeeper's wife): Marie Veselá
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Josef Celerin
Rechtor (School Teacher): Jaroslav Gleich
Harašta (Poacher): Jan Konstantin
Pásek (Innkeeper): Theodor Schütz
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Božena Kozlíková
Lapák (Dog): Štěpánka Štěpánová
Komár (Mosquito): Františka Lavičková
Kohout (Rooster): Nad'a (Anna) Kejřová
Chocholka (Crested fowl): Zdenka Barvitiusová
Sova (Owl): Dobroslava Sudíková
Sojka (Jay): Milada Ševcovicoá
Datel (Woodpecker): Marie Pixová
Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Hana Krausová
Frantík: Marta Beranová
Pepík: Antonie (Táňa) Tomanová
Cvrček (Cricket): Jiří Hromas
Kobylka (Grasshopper): Bořena Schwörová
Skokánek (Frog): Jan Plavka

1954 – Third production

Date of first night: 7 May 1954
Length of run: 67 performances
Date of last night: 4 February 1959
Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jaroslav Vogel, Bohumil Gregor
Director: Václav Kašlík
Sets: František Tröster
Costumes: František Tröster
Choreography: Antonín Landa
Chorus master: Jan Mario Ouředník, Milan Malý
Assistant choreographer: Růžena Elingerová
Assistant director: Ladislav Štros

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Milada Musilová, Jarmila Pechová, Hana Böhmová
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Libuše Domanínská, Zdenka Hrnčířová, Milada Šubrtová
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Rudolf Asmus, Jan Konstantin, Zdeněk Kroupa
Paní revírníková (Gamekeeper's wife): Milada Čadikovičová, Marie Veselá
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Hanuš Thein, Jaroslav Veverka
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Karel Hruška, Rudolf Vonášek, Antonín Votava
Harašta (Poacher): Vladimír Jedenáctík, Jiří Joran, Josef Vojta
Pásek (Innkeeper): Jiří Joran, Josef Otakar Masák, Josef Vojta
Paní Pásková (Innkeeper's wife): Jaroslava Dobrá, Věra Krilová, Libuše Kořimská
Lapák (Dog): Ludmila Hanzalíková, Ivana Mixová, Štěpánka Štěpánová, Julie Temníková
Kohout (Rooster): Zdenka Hrnčířová, Štefa (Štěpánka) Petrová, Jaroslava Procházková
Chocholka (Crested fowl): Milada Jirásková, Magda Špaková, Blažena Kalabisová, Blažena Beranová
Sova (Owl): Milada Čadikovičová, Jarmila Malá
Sojka (Jay): Anděla Kocmanová, Milada Kučerová
Datel (Woodpecker): Jaroslava Dobrá, Milada Jirásková, Věra Krilová
Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Jana Špiegelová, Ivana Janoušková, Milada Juřicová, Jitka Kloubková
Frantík: Sylvia Kodetová, Helena Tattermuschová, Věra Cupalová, Zdenka Ledvinková, Helena Görnerová, Jana Zelenková
Pepík: Sylvia Kodetová, Helena Tattermuschová, Věra Cupalová, Zdenka Ledvinková, Helena Görnerová, Jana Zelenková, Jarmila Lunáčková
Cvrček (Cricket): Alena Vilímová, Marie Zářecká, Jan Obermajer, Vladimír Koubek
Kobylka (Grasshopper): Josef Průdek, Jiřina Zinkeová, Věra Čermáková, Antonie Vrbová, Vlasta Pixová
Skokánek (Frog): Vladimír Dlouhý, Petr Papazof, Josef Erban, Milena Vavříková, Jaroslav Tůma, Vladimír Klos

1965 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 24 June 1965

Length of run: 111 performances

Date of last night: 7 December 1975

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Bohumír Liška, Jan Hus Tichý, Josef Kuchinka

Director: Ladislav Štros
Sets: Vladimír Nývlt
Costumes: Marcel Pokorný
Choreography: Růžena Mazalová
Chorus master: Milan Malý
Assistant choreographer: Jaroslav Čejka
Assistant director: Miloslav Smrž

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Sylvia Kodetová, Nad'a Šormová, Helena Tattermuschová, Jaroslava Jánská
Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Alena Míková, Eva Zikmundová, Jindra Pokorná
Revírník (Gamekeeper): Václav Bednář, Karel Berman, Jindřich Jindrák, Přemysl Kočí, Zdeněk Kroupa, Richard Novák
Paní revírníková (Gamekeeper's wife): Jaroslava Dobrá, Libuše Damanínská, Jaroslava Procházková
Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Dalibor Jedlička, Jindřich Jindrák, Jaroslav Veverka, Richard Novák
Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Jan Hlavsa, Viktor Kočí, Rudolf Vonásek
Harašta (Poacher): René Tuček, Josef Heriban, Jiří Joran
Pásek (Innkeeper): Bohumil Černý, Oldřich Kovář, Jaroslav Rohan, Rudolf Vonásek
Paní Pásková/Datel (Innkeeper's wife/Woodpecker): Milada Čadikovičová, Jaroslava Dobrá, Jaroslava Procházková, Růžena Radová, Věra Starková
Lapák (Dog): Eva Hlobilová, Štěpánka Štěpánová
Kohout/Sojka (Rooster/Jay): Miloslava Fidlerová, Marcela Machotková, Libuše Prylová, Eva Zikmundová
Chocholka (Crested fowl): Štěpánka Jelínková, Milada Musilová
Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Kateřina Kolářová, Věra Ouředníková, Jitka Černá, Lenka Konopáá
Frantík: Ludmila Erbenová, Věra Bartlová, Brigita Šulcová
Pepík: Věra Starková, Hana Hronová
Cvrček (Cricket): Roman Gottlieb, Renée Nachtigallová, Kateřina Kolářová, Hana Weinfurterová, Zuzana Doležalová
Kobylka (Grasshopper): Eva Kubátová, Renata Mašková, Milada Tlapáková, Gabriela Kolářová, Miloslava Kahlerová
Skokánek (Frog): Václav Daněk, Luděk Šváb, Antonín Duša, Miloslav Čížek, David Štěpán, Petr Duda, Vladislav Štěpánek

1978 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 7 April 1978

Length of run: 50 performances

Date of last night: 28 May 1983

Venue: Smetanovo Divadlo (Smetana Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Niloš Konvalinka, Petr Vronský, Václav Neumann, Josef Chaloupka

Director: Ladislav Štros

Sets: Vladimír Nývlt

Costumes: Adolf Wenig

Choreography: Jaroslav Čejka

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Ballet master: Naděžda Sobotková

Assistant choreographer: Jiřina Kottová

Assistant director: Miloslav Smrž

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Naďa Šormová, Helena Tattermuschová

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Marta Cihelníková, Antonie Denygrová, Marie Kremerová, Alena Žaloudková

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Karel Berman, Jindřich Jindrák, Karel Průša

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Libuše Domanínská, Drahomíra Tikalová, Eva Zikmundová

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Bohuslav Maršík, Karel Petr

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Alfréd Hampel, Jan Hlavsa

Harašta (Poacher): René Tuček, Josef Heriban, Jiří Joran

Pásek (Innkeeper): Bohumil Černý, Lubomír Havlák

Paní Pásková/Datel (Innkeeper's wife/Woodpecker): Eva Hlobilová, Růžena Radová, Blanka Vítková

Lapák (Dog): Libuše Márová, Ivana Mixová

Chocholka (Crested fowl): Ivona Valentová, Jaroslava Vymazalová

Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Zuzana Tesařová, Luisa Podařilová

Frantík: Marcela Lemariová, Eva Pechánková, Věra Starková, Ludmila Erbenová, Jarmila Svobodová, Hana Hronová

Pepík: Eva Pechánková, Ludmila Erbenová, Jarmila Svobodová, Hana Hronová, Miloslava Douchová

Cvrček (Cricket): Lenka Konopová, Ivana Roulová, Irena Pillichová

Kobylka (Grasshopper): Ivana Roulová, Lucie Reinholdová, Soňa Strnadová, Monika Rulfová, Hana Rádlová

Skokánek/Lištička (Frog/Vixen cub): Marie Koucká, Tomáš Šidla, Katarina Korbašová

1983 – Sixth production

Date of first night: 29 September 1983

Length of run: 40 performances

Date of last night: 23 April 1988

Venue: Smetanovo Divadlo (Smetana Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Josef Kuchinka

Director: Ladislav Štros

Sets: Vladimír Nývlt

Costumes: Adolf Wenig

Choreography: Jaroslav Čejka

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Ballet master: Naděžda Sobotková, Alena Reisnerová

Assistant choreographer: Jiřina Kottová

Assistant director: Miloslav Smrž

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Jana Jonášová, Nad'a Šormová, Helena

Tattermuschová, Jiřina Marková, Grit van Jüten, Jaroslava Jánská

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Marta Cihelníková, Antonie Denygrová, Anna

Bortlová, Marie Kremerová

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Dalibor Jedlička, Karel Berman, Jindřich Jindrák

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Libuše Domanínská,

Jadwiga Wzsoczanská, Agia Formánková-Schindlerová

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Bohuslav Maršík, Karel Petr

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Jiří Ceé, Alfréd Hampel, Jann

Hlavsa

Harašta (Poacher): René Tuček, Josef Heriban, Jiří Joran

Pásek (Innkeeper): Milan Karpíšek, Lubomír Havlák, Viktor Kočí

Paní Pásková/Datel (Innkeeper's wife/Woodpecker): Eva Hlobilová,

Růžena Radová, Blanka Vítková

Lapák (Dog): Libuše Márová, Ivana Mixová

Kohut/Sojka (Rooster/Jay): Eva Hlobilová, Marcela Machotková, Alena

Míková, Blanka Severová

Chocholka (Crested fowl): Blanka Sládková, Jaroslav Vymazalová, Blanka

Nyklová, Věra Randová

Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Luisa Podářilová, Barbora Kohoutková, Lucie

Špálová, Magda Št'astná, Klára Lidová

Frantík: Věra Nováková, Ludmila Erbenová

Pepík: Ivana Ročková, Hana Hronová, Miloslava Douchová

Cvrček (Cricket): Irena Pillichová, Věra Slunéčková, Erika Pelechová

Kobylka (Grasshopper): Pavel Šmerda, Petr Pfeifer, Barbora Machulová

Skokánek (Frog): Katarina Korbšová, Lucie Špálová, Sylvie Zemková

1995 – Seventh production

Date of first night: 14 October 1995

Length of run: 38 performances

Date of last night: 25 December 1998

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor

Director: Ctibor Turba

Sets: Pavel Šmíd

Costumes: Jana Zbořilová

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant conductor: Paul Mauffray

Assistant directors: Karla Štaubertová, Lenka Hlaváčková

Stage movement collaborator: Alena Reisnerová

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Zdena Kloubová, Věra Nováková

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Jitka Soběhartová, Pavla Aunická

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Miloslav Podskalský, Luděk Vele

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Marta Cihelníková, Daniela Šounová-Brouková, Libuše Márová

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Jiří kalendovský, Bohuslav Maršík

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Jiří Ceé, Alfréd Hampel

Harašta (Poacher): Pavel Červinka, Zdeněk Harvánek, Jaroslav Souček

Pásek (Innkeeper): Jiří Hruška, Vojtěch Kocián

Paní Pásková/Datel (Innkeeper's wife/Woodpecker): Libuše Márová, Marie Veselá

Lapák (Dog): Miroslava Voková, Ivana Ročková

Kohout/Sojka (Rooster/Jay): Marta Cihelníková, Jitka Soběhartová, Pavla Zobalová

Chocholka (Crested fowl): Jana Jonášová, Božena Effenberková

Malá Bystrouška (little Vixen): Zuzana Horáčková, Markéta Mátlová, Zuzana Marková

Frantík: Blanka Odchátelová, Ivana Ročková, Radka Voborníková

Pepík: Dana Čapková, Věra Černá

Cvrček (Cricket): Anna Kofroňová, Petra Tionová, Daniela Straňáková, Michaela Haniaková

Kobylka (Grasshopper): Michaela Železná, Kristýna Stoklasová, Ludmila Mojžíšová, Helena Vajdová

Skokánek (Frog): Ludmila Mojžíšová, Tomáš Klíma, Erika Suchochlebová

2002 – Eighth production

Date of first night: 19 December 2002

Length of run: 23 performances

Date of last night: 26 February 2005

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, František Preisler, Jakub Hruša

Director: Michal Caban, Šimon Caban

Dramaturgy: Pavel Petráněk

Sets: Šimon Caban

Costumes: Simona Rybáková

Choreography: Michal Caban, Šimon Caban

Chorus master: Milan Malý, Pavel Vaněk

Assistant choreographer: Alena Reisnerová

Assistant director: Klára Zelinková

Cast

Liška Bystrouška (Vixen): Věra Nováková, Maria Haan, Liana Somičová,
Kathryn Krasovec

Lišák Zlatohřbítek (Fox): Pavla Aunická, Hannah Esther Minutillo, Jana
Štefáčková, Jolana Fogašová

Revírník (Gamekeeper): Miloslav Podskalský, Luděk Vele, Richard Haan

Paní revírníková/Sova (Gamekeeper's wife/Owl): Jitka Soběhartová, Daniela
Šounová-Brouková, Yvona Škvárová

Farář/Jezevec (Priest/Badger): Bohuslav Maršík, Roman Vocel

Rechtor/Komár (School Teacher/Mosquito): Vladimír Doležal, Alfréd
Hampel, Josef Hajna

Harašta (Poacher): Vratislav Kříž, Aleš Hendrych, Jiří Sulženko

Pásek (Innkeeper): Jiří Ceé, Miroslav Švejda

Paní Pásková/Datel (Innkeeper's wife/Woodpecker): Marta Cihelníková,
Lenka Šmídová

Lapák (Dog): Miroslava Volková, Jana Sýkorová

Kohout/Sojka (Rooster/Jay): Pavla Aunická, Jaroslava Maxová

Chocholka (Crested fowl): Hana Jonášová, Danuše Slachová

Malá Bystrouška (little vixen): Milan Švec, Kristýna Šnajdrová

Frantík: Michaela Haniaková, Josef Libiš, Jana Kuželová

Pepík: Marina Cílková, Šimon Vrtíl

Cvrček (Cricket): Kristýna Šnajdrová, Johana Štědrá, Veronika Kalátová,
Veronika Štědrá

Kobylka (Grasshopper): Jana Kuželová, Monika Ondráčková

Skokánek (Frog): David Ullrich, Petra Bouzková

Duše lesa (Spirit of the forest): ballet ensemble

Havět' lesní (Forest animals): chorus

Lištičky (Foxcubs): Kühnův dětský sbor (Kühn children's chorus)

***Věc Makropulos* in Brno**

1926 – Premiere

Date of first night: 18 December 1926

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Městské Divadlo Na Hradbách (City Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Franišek Neumann

Director: Otakar Zítek

Sets: Josef Čapek

(Costumes for part of Emilia Marty provided by Femina)

Cast

Emilia Marty: Alexandra Čvanová

Albert Gregor: Emil Olšovský

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Ferdinand Pour

Vítek (a solicitor): Valentin Šindler

Kristina (his daughter): Jožka Mattesová

Baron Jaroslav Prus: Zdeněk Otava

Janek (his son): Antonín Pelc

Hauk-Sendorf: Václav Šindler

Strojník (Stage technician): Jaroslav Čihák

Poklízečka (Cleaner): Jelena Ježicová

Komorná (Chamber maid): Marta Doburská

Lékař (Doctor, silent role): Josef Tupý

1935 – Second production

Date of first night: 19 October 1935

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Divadlo Na Hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Milan Sachs

Director: Rudolf Walter

Sets: Hugo Foltýn

Cast

Emilia Marty: Alexandra Čvanová

Albert Gregor: Emil Olšovský

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Vladimír Jedenačtík

Vítek (a solicitor): Antonín Pelc

Kristina (his daughter): Věra Strelcová

Baron Jaroslav Prus: Géza Fišer
Janek (his son): Gustav Talman
Hauk-Šendorf: Josef Kejř
Strojník (Stage technician): Vlastimil Šíma
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Marta Dobruská
Komorná (Chamber maid): Marie Hloušková

1948 – Third production

Date of first night: 20 March 1948

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Antonín Balatka

Director: Otakar Zítek

Sets: Josef A. Šálek

Cast

Emilia Marty: Jarmila Kristenová, Emilie Zachardová-Burjanková

Albert Gregor: Jan Čihák, Antonín Jurečka, Antonín Jurečka

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Eduard Hrubeš, František Roesler

Vítek (a solicitor): Antonín Pelc

Kristina (his daughter): Míla Ledererová

Baron Jaroslav Prus: Géza Fišer

Janek (his son): Burjan Burián

Hauk-Šendorf: Josef Kejř

Strojník (Stage technician): Vlastimil Šíma

Poklízečka (Cleaner): Helena Burianová

Komorná (Chamber maid): Jarmila Lenská

Lékař (Doctor, silent role): Václav Fiala

1957 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 22 February 1957

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek, Václav Nosek

Director: Oskar Linhart

Sets: Josef A. Šálek

Chorus master: Vilibald Rubínek

Cast

Emilia Marty: Marie Steinerová, Marie Podvalová
Albert Gregor: Antonín Jurečka
Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Václav Halíč, František Roesler
Vítek (a solicitor): Zdeněk Soušek, Antonín Pelc
Kristina (his daughter): Jindra Pokorná, Míla Ledererová
Baron Jaroslav Prus: Vladimír Bauer, Eduard Hruběš
Janek (his son): Boris Čechovský
Hauk-Šendorf: Josef Kejř
Strojník (Stage technician): František Kunc, Jiří Kozderka
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Helena Burianová
Komorná (Chamber maid): Libuše Lesmanová, Zdenka Selingerová

1962 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 16 November 1962

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek
Director: Miloš Wasserbauer
Sets: František Tröster
Costumes: Vojta Urbánková
Chorus master: Jiří Kubica

Cast

Emilia Marty: Naděžda Kniplová, Marie Steinerová
Albert Gregor: Antonín Jurečka
Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Václav Halíč, František Roesler
Vítek (a solicitor): Bohumír Kurfürst
Kristina (his daughter): Jindra Pokorná
Baron Jaroslav Prus: Zdeněk Kroupa, René Tuček
Janek (his son): Josef Veverka, Boris Čechovský
Hauk-Šendorf: Zdeněk Soušek
Strojník (Stage technician): František Kunc, Vlastimil Šíma
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Helena Burianová
Komorná (Chamber maid): Jitka Pavlová

1978 – Sixth production

Date of first night: 27 September 1978

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jan Štych, Sir Charles Mackerras (as guest from England)
Director: Václav Věžník
Sets: Ladislav Vychodil (as guest)
Costumes: Kateřina Asmusová (as guest)
Chorus master: Josef Pančík
Assistant conductor: František Sonek
Assistant director: František Kříž

Cast

Emilia Marty: Gita Abrahámová, Zdenka Kareninová, Elena Kittnarová (as guest from the National Theatre, Bratislav), Naděžda Kniplová (as guest from the National Theatre, Prague)
Albert Gregor: Jiří Olejníček, Ivo Žídek (as guest from the National Theatre, Prague)
Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Jan Hladík
Vítek (a solicitor): Vladimír Krejčík, Bohumír Kurfürst
Kristina (his daughter): Marketa Fussová, Jaroslava Janská
Baron Jaroslav Prus: František Caban, Jaroslav Souček
Janek (his son): Oldřich Polášek, Vojtěch Kocián (as guest from the National Theatre, Prague), Josef Škrobánek
Hauk-Šendorf: Zdeněk Soušek, Arnost Škoda, Rolf Apreck (as guest from Leipzig)
Strojník (Stage technician): Jiří Přichystal
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Anna Barová
Komorná (Chamber maid): Daniela Suryová

1988 – Seventh production

Date of first night: 30 September 1988

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek (as guest), Jan Zbavitel
Director: Milan Pásek (as guest)
Sets: Karel Zmrzlý
Costumes: Inez Tuschnerová
Chorus master: Josef Pančík
Assistant conductor: Evžen Holíš
Assistant director: Mojmír Starý
Lighting: Vladimír Urbánek

Cast

Emilia Marty: Elena Kittnarová (as guest), Hana Málková
Albert Gregor: Jiří Olejníček, Břetislav Vojkůvka
Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Richard Novák
Vítek (a solicitor): Jiří Holešovský
Kristina (his daughter): Jaroslava Janská, Magda Kloboučková
Baron Jaroslav Prus: Pavel Kamas
Janek (his son): Zdeněk Šmukař
Hauk-Šendorf: Vladimír Krejčík
Strojník (Stage technician): Jan Hladík
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Anna Barová
Komorná (Chamber maid): Jitka Pavlová
Lékař (Doctor, silent role): Miloš Svítíl

2001 – Eighth production

Date of first night: 25 May 2001

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Mahenovo Divadlo (Mahen Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Oliver Dohnányi
Director: Tomáš Šimerda
Sets: Vladimír Soukenka
Costumes: Josef Jelínek
Chorus master: Josef Pančík
Assistant conductor: David Švec
Assistant directors: Jaromír Brych, Monika Bártová
Lighting design: Arnošt Janěk
Props: L. Šimonová, M. Trávníková, B. Průšová, R. Jakubíčková

Cast

Emilia Marty: Gabriela Beňačková, Takhira Menaždina
Albert Gregor: Roman Sadnik
Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Jan Hladík, Jiří Sulženko
Vítek (a solicitor): Tomáš Krejčířík, Zdeněk Šmukař
Kristina (his daughter): Yveta Tannenbergová, Monika Brychtová
Baron Jaroslav Prus: Richard Haan, Pavel Kamas
Janek (his son): Zoltán Korda, Milan Vlček
Hauk-Šendorf: Vladimír Krejčík, Josef Škrobánek
Strojník (Stage technician): Ladislav Mlejnek, Zdeněk Plech
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Jana Iskrová, Jitka Zerhauová
Komorná (Chamber maid): Jana Štefáčková

***Věc Makropulos* in Prague**

1928 – First production

Date of first night: 1 March 1928

Length of run: 6 performances

Date of last night: 10 May 1928

Theatre: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Otakar Ostrčil

Director: Josef Munclinger

Sets: Josef Čapek, Josef Munclinger

Cast

Emilia Marty: Nad'á (Anna) Kejřová

Albert Gregor: Richard Kubla

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Emil Pollert

Vítek (a solicitor): Mirko (Vladimír) Štork

Kristina (his daughter): Ema Miřiovská

Baron Jaroslav Prus: Václav Novák

Janek (his son): Jaroslav Gleich

Hauk-Šendorf: Karel Hruška

Strojník (Stage technician): Hanuš Thein (as guest)

Poklízečka (Cleaner): Božena Kozlíková, Marie Rejholcová

Komorná (Chamber maid): Marie Crhová

1956 – Second production

Date of first night: 29 February 1956

Length of run: 31 performances

Date of last night: 12 September 1959

Theatre: Smetanovo Divadlo (Smetana Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Robert Brock

Director: Václav Kašlík

Sets: František Tröster

Costumes: Jan Kropáček

Chorus master: Vladivoj Jankovský

Assistant director: Ladislav Štros

Cast

Emilia Marty: Zdenka Hrnčířová, Marie Podvalová

Albert Gregor: Beno Blachut, Jaroslav Stríška

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Karel Berman, Jiří Schiller
Vítek (a solicitor): Rudolf Vonásek, Antonín Votava
Kristina (his daughter): Libuše Domanínská, Miloslava Fidlerová
Baron Jaroslav Prus: Jiří Joran, Zdeněk Otava
Janek (his son): Viktor Kočí, Rudolf Vonásek, Antonín Zlesák
Hauk-Šendorf: Jaroslav Rohan, Rudolf Vonásek
Strojník (Stage technician): Josef Celerin, Vladimír Jedenáctík
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Milada Čadikovičová, Marie Veselá
Komorná (Chamber maid): Ludmila Hanzalíková, Eva Hlobilová, Věra Krilová

1965 – Third production

Date of first night: 15 October 1965

Length of run: 23 performances

Date of last night: 8 April 1971

Venue: Národní divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor

Director: Václav Kašlík

Sets: Josef Svoboda

Costumes: Jindřiška Hirschová

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant director: Milada Jirásková

Filmic collaborator: Miroslav Pflug

Cast

Emilia Marty: Naděžda Kniplová, Alena Míková, Libuše Prylová

Albert Gregor: Jan Hlavsa, Ivo Žídek, Antonín Jurečka

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Dalibor Jedlička, Karel Berman

Vítek (a solicitor): Miroslav Frydlewicz, Rudolf Vonásek

Kristina (his daughter): Sylvia Kodetová, Nad'ra Šormová, Helena Tattermuschová

Baron Jaroslav Prus: Rudolf Jedlička, Přemysl Kočí, Zdeněk Otava

Janek (his son): Viktor Kočí, Zdeněk Švehla

Hauk-Šendorf: Milan Karpíšek, Antonín Votava

Strojník (Stage technician): Vladimír Jedenáctík, Jiří Joran

Poklízečka (Cleaner): Jaroslava Dobrá, Jaroslava Procházková

Komorná (Chamber maid): Eva Hlobilová, Milada Musilová

1977 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 21 April 1977

Length of run: 21 performances

Date of last night: 10 December 1980

Venue: Smetanovo Divadlo (Smetana Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Josef Kuchinka

Director: Přemysl Kočí

Sets: Oldřich Šimáček

Costumes: Olga Filipi

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant directors: Milan Karpíšek, Libuše Čechová

Cast

Emilia Marty: Naděžda Kniplová, Milada Šubrtová, Eva Zikmundová

Albert Gregor: Zdeněk Švehla, Ivo Žídek

Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Dalibor Jedlička, Karel Berman

Vítek (a solicitor): Miroslav Frydlewicz, Zdeněk Jankovský

Kristina (his daughter): Zora Jehličková, Helena Tattermuschová, Jaroslava Jánská

Baron Jaroslav Prus: Rudolf Jedlička, Přemysl Kočí

Janek (his son): Karel Dobr, Vojtěch Kocián

Hauk-Sendorf: Milan Karpíšek, Jan Hlavsa

Strojník (Stage technician): Jiří Joran, Ladislav Neshyba

Poklízečka (Cleaner): Jarmila Pechová, Růžena Radová

Komorná (Chamber maid): Božena Effenberková, Blanka Vítková

1993 – Fifth Production

Date of first night: 21 October 1993

Length of run: 20 performances

Date of last night: 15 January 2000

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Yoel Levi

Director: Ivan Rajmont, Karla Štaubertová

Sets: Ivo Žídek ml.

Costumes: Irena Greifová

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant conductor: Vojtěch Spurný

Assistant directors: Vojtěch Spurný, Karla Štaubertová

Cast

Emilia Marty: Daniela Šounová-Brouková, Mary Jane Johnson
Albert Gregor: Vladimír Doležal, Jan Markvart, Miroslav Kopp
Dr. Kolenatý (a lawyer): Antonín Švorc, Luděk Vele
Vítek (a solicitor): Jiří Ceé, Alfréd Hampel
Kristina (his daughter): Martina Bauerová, Věra Nováková
Baron Jaroslav Prus: Zdeněk Harvánek, Miloslav Podskalský
Janek (his son): Jaroslav Březina, Jiří Hruška, Vladimír Okénko
Hauk-Sendorf: Milan Karpíšek
Strojník (Stage technician): Bohuslav Maršík, Václav Červinka, Jindřich
Jindrák
Poklízečka (Cleaner): Marta Cihelníková, Libuše Márová
Komorná (Chamber maid): Marta Cihelníková, Pavla Aunická

Z Mrtvého Domu in Brno

1930 – Premiere

Date of first night: 12 April 1930

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Divadlo Na Hradbách (Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Břetislav Balatka

Director: Ota Zítek

Sets: František Hlavica

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Vlastimil Šíma

Aljeja: Božena Žlábková

Placmajor (Commandant): Leonid Pribytkov

Šiškin: Géza Fischer

Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Emil Olšovský

Skuratov: Antonín Pelz

Šapkin: Valentin Šindler

Čakanov: Vladimír Jedenáctík

Čerevica, opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Antonín Pelz

Baklušin: Gustav Talman

Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Jaroslav Čihák

Vězeň s orlem (prisoner with the eagle): Václav Šindler

Poběhllice (Prostitute): Jožka Mattesová

Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Vladimír Jedenáctík

Vězeň kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Václav Fiala

Vězeň hrající rytíře: (Prisoner playing the Knight): Bohuš Nováček

Stráž (Guard): Antonín Vacek

Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Vladimír Skalický

Duchovní (Chaplain): Adolf Brunner

Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Josef Žižka

Pantomime Roles

Don Juan/Brahmín: Pavel Jerner

Kedril: Jaroslav Suchánek

Elvíra: Máňa Zavadilová

Ševcová: Marie Pospíšilová

Popová: Ada Janíková

Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Arnošt Wanjek

Mlynář (Miller): Pavel Korenkov

Písařík: František Krejčé

1937 – Second production

Date of first night: 27 February 1937

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Divadlo Na Hradbách

Production

Conductor: Milan Sachs

Director: Rudolf Walter

Sets: Josef Adamíček

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Vlastimil Šíma

Aljeja: Věra Strelcová

Placmajor (Commandant): Leonid Pribytkov

Šiškin: Václav Bednář

Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Emil Olšovský

Skuratov: Gustav Talman

Šapkin: Jaroslav Kejř

Čakanov: Vladimír Jedenáctík

Čerevica, opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Antonín Pelz

Vězeň s orlem (prisoner with the eagle): Jaroslav Jaroš

Starý vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Karel Spurný

Vězeň Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): František Šíma

Zamračený vězeň (Gloomy prisoner): Géza Fišer

Pop: Vladimír Skalický

Stráže (Guards): Josef Kopecký, Jan Frank

Vězeňský lékař (Prison doctor): Bedřich Zavadil

Poběhllice (Prostitute): Božena Žlábková

Hlas kirgijské stepi (Offstage voice): Gustav Talman

Pantomime Roles

Don Juan: Nikola Cvejić

Kedřil: Jaroslav Jaroš

Rytíř (Knight): Konst. Baženov

Elvíra: Oldřich Napravitl

Ševcová: Pavel Korenkov

Popová: Arnošt Krap

Čerti (Devils): Hubert Kološ, Bohuš Nováček, Josef Saksl, Václav Sova

Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Josef Sokol

Mlynář (Miller): Tomáš Mašek

Soused (Neighbour): Otto Stočes

Písařík: Jan Kyšperský

Brahmín (The Brahmin): Nikola Cvejić

1948 – Third production

Date of first night: 5 May 1948

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: Břetislav Bakala

Director: Ota Zítek

Sets: František Kaláb

Choreography: Ivo Váňa Psota

Cast

Čerevica: Antonín Pelc

Opilý vězeň (Drunken prisoner): Antonín Pelc

Čakanov: Rudolf Asmus

Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Rudolf Asmus

Zamračený vězeň (Gloomy prisoner): Rudolf Asmus, Jaroslav Špaček

Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Jan Čihák

Placmajor (Commandant): Leonid Pribitkov

Alexandr Gorjančikov Petrovič: Vlastimil Šíma

Stráž (Guard): František Pospíšilík

Vězeň kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): František Pospíšilík

Kedril: Burja Burián

Staříčkový vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Karel Spurný, Bohumír Kurfürst

Skutarov: Jaroslav Jaroš

Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Jaroslav Jaroš

Aljeja: Libuše Domanínská

Hlas stepi (Offstage voice): Burja Burián

Vězeň kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Jiří Kozderka

Duchovní (Chaplain): Václav Sova

Don Juan/Bramín: František Roesler

Šapkin: Josef Kejř

Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Josef Kejř

Poběhllice (Prostitute): Soňa Spurná, C. Strádalová-Draštatová

Šiškin: Géza Fischer

Vězeň s orlem (Prisoner with the eagle): Gustav Talman

1958 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 26 June 1958

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo Na Hradbách (Janáček Theatre on the Rampart)

Production

Conductor: František Jílek
Director: Miloš Wasserbauer (as guest)
Sets: František Tröster (as guest)
Choreography: Rudolf Karhánek
Chorus master: Vilibald Rubínek

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Eduard Hrubeš
Aljeja: Jindra Pokorná
Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Antonín Jurečka
Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Jaroslav Jaroš
Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): František Kunc
Placmajor (Commandant): Václav Halíř
Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Bohumír Kurfürst
Skuratov: Jaroslav Ulrych
Čekunov: Jindřich Doubek
Opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Antonín Pelc
Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Jiří Kozderka
Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Václav Sova, František Kolouch
Duchovní (Chaplain): Oldřich Jakubík
Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner) (Kedril): Zdeněk Soušek
Poběhllice (Prostitute): Cecilie Strádalová
Šapkin: Josef Kejř
Šiškov: Vladimír Bauer, Géza Fischer
Čerevin: Antonon Pelc
Hlas za scénou (Offstage voice): Boris Čechovský
Stráž (Guard): Jaromír Kočař
Don Juan: František Roesler (singer), Jiří Amerling (dancer)
Rytíř (Knight): Ota Strejček
Elvíra: Ondřej Bohdanský
Ševcová: Oldřich Rymeš
Popová: Miroslav Válek
Mlynář (Miller): Václav Babušík
Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Zdeněk Soušek
Písařík: Alois Minařík
Čerti (Devils): L. Kotzian, V. Eliáš
Soused mlynář: (Miller's neighbour): Ota Strejček

* Production revived 1 January 1968

1974 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 29 September 1974

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Václav Nosek

Director: Václav Věžník

Sets: Vladimír Landa (as guest)

Costumes: Michal Romberg (as guest)

Choreography: Luboš Ogoun

Choir Master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Stanislav Bechynský, František Caban (as guest)

Aljeja: Jaroslava Janská, Markéta Ungrová

Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Antonín Jurečka, Vilém Přibyl

Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Josef Ververka

Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): František Kunc

Placmajor (Commandant): Václav Halíř

Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Bohumír Kurfürst

Skuratov: Vladimír Krejčík

Čekunov: Richard Novák

Šapkin: Zdeněk Soušek, Jiří Holešovský

Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Jindřich Doubek

Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Jan Hladík

Duchovní (Chaplain): Josef Klán

Mladý vězeň/Kedril (Young prisoner): Josef Škrobánek

Poběhlice (Prostitute): Magdalena Blahušiaková, Naděžda Vodičková

Šiškov: Jaroslav Souček, (as guest)

Čerevin: Jiří Holešovský, Josef Škrobánek

Poručík: Petr Růžicka

Pantomime Roles

Kedril: Josef Škrobánek

Juan: Jiří Přichystal

Rytíř (Knight): Stanislav Zatloukal, Rudolf Karhánek

Elvíra: Lubomír Večeřa

Ševcová: Lubomír Šuba, Pavel Prokeš

Popová: Emanuel Fischer

Mlynář (Miller): Boris Hrouzek, Jaroslav Šimek

Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Emanuel Fischer

Písařík: Lubomír Šuba, Pavel Prokeš

Soused: (Miller's neighbour): Miroslav Válek, Pavel Plšek

1998 – Sixth Production

Date of first night: 2 October 1998

Length of run: unknown

Venue: Janáčkovo Divadlo (Janáček Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jan Zbavitel

Director: Zdeněk Kaloč

Set: Albert Pražák

Costumes: Albert Pražák

Choreography: Jiří Kyselák

Chorus master: Josef Pančík

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Richard Haan

Aljeja: Nad'a Bláhová, Beata Zádrapová

Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Václav Málek

Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Milan Rudolecký

Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Jan Hladík

Placmajor (Commandant): Jurij Gorbunov

Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Vladimír Krejčík

Skuratov: Milan Vlček

Čekunov: Richard Novák

Opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Zdeněk Šmukař

Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Ivo Musil

Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): David Szendluch

Duchovní (Chaplain): Josef Klán

Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Zoltán Korda, Petr Leviček

Poběhllice (Prostitute): Šárka Brychová, Magda Kloboučková

Stráž (Guard): Jiří Klecker

Hlas za scénou (Offstage voice): Tomáš Krejčířík, Petr Leviček

Orel (Eagle): Vladimír Mrkvička

Šapkin: Zoltán Korda, Tomáš Krejčířík

Šiškov: Pavel Kamus

Čerevin: Zdeněk Šmukař

Pantomime Roles

Don Juan/Brahmin: Ladislav Mlejnek

Kedril: Josef Škrobánek

Čerti (Devils): Jan Našinec, Aleš Kučera, Petr Adamec, Leoš Liščák,

Mimové (Mimics): Jiří Nagy, Jaroslav Šimek

Z Mrtvého Domu in Prague

1931 – First production

Date of first night: 21 February 1931

Length of run: 6 performances

Date of last night: 4 June 1931

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Vincenc Maixner

Director: Ferdinand Pujman

Sets: Vlastislav Hofman

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Stanislav Muž

Aljeja: Bronislav Chorovič

Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Jaroslav Gleich

Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Karel Hruška

Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Hanuš Thein

Placmajor (Commandant): Josef Křikava

Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Mirko (Vladimír) Štork

Skuratov: Vladimír Tomš

Čekunov: Miloš Linka

Opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Antonín Novotný

Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Josef Celerin

Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Václav Marek

Duchovní (Chaplain): Bohumil Soběský

Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Jiří Kryšpín, Antonín Kopečný

Poběhlíce (Prostitute): Ota Horáková

Šapkin: Theodor Schütz

Šiškov: Zdeněk Otava

Čerevin: Miloslav Jeník

Strážný : Václav Rabas, František Švarc

Strážný (Guard): František Ouředník, Jan Ouředník

Hlas v dálce (Offstage voice): Míla Kočová, Marie Budíková

Kedril: Karel Hruška

Juan: Zdeněk Otava

Elvíra: Jaroslav Gleich

Rytíř (Knight): Vladimír Tomš

Ševcová: Hanuš Thein

Popová: Hanuš Thein

Čert (Devil): Karel Lička

Čert (Devil): Karel Koudelka

Čert (Devil): Emil Fasl

Čert (Devil): Vadim Baldin
Čert (Devil): František (Serafin) Bubla
Čert (Devil): Eduard Gnyp
Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Jaroslav Gleich
Její muž (Her husband): Václav Marek
Mlynář soused (Miller's neighbour): Vladimír Tomš
Písařík: Karel Hruška
Juan: Zdeněk Otava

* Production revived 30 May 1934, 16 June 1934 (2 performances)

1958 – Second production

Date of first night: 10 May 1958

Length of run: 8 performances

Date of last night: 13 January 1959

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Jaroslav Vogel
Director: Hanuš Thein
Sets: Josef Svoboda
Costumes: Jan Kropáček
Choreography: Antonín Landa
Chorus master: Milan Malý

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Václav Bednář, Teodor Šrubař
Aljeja: Sylvia Kodetová, Helena Tattermuschová
Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Jaroslav Gleich, Jaroslav Stříška
Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Josef Otakar Masák, Jiří Janoušek, Bohumil Lev
Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Karel Berman, Hanuš Thein
Placmajor (Commandant): Jaroslav Horáček, Zdeněk Otava
Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Rudolf Vonásek, Antonín Votava
Škuratov: Milan Karpíšek, Lubomír Havlák
Čekunov: Josef Heriban, Jan Konstantin
Opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Miroslav Mach, Antonín Kopečný
Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Josef Celerin, Miroslav Šindelář
Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Jiří Joran, Jaroslav Veverka
Duchovní (Chaplain): Antonín Švorc, Václav Zítek
Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Viktor Kočí, Zdeněk Švehla
Poběhllice (Prostitute): Zdenka Hrnčířová, Jarmila Pechová
Šapkin: Oldřich Kovář, Antonín Zlesák
Šiškov: Rudolf Jedlička, Přemysl Kočí

Čerevin: Jaroslav Rohan, Luděk Löbl
Stráž (Guard): Josef Vojta, Jan Kožušník
Hlas za jevištěm (Offstage voice): Alena Míková, Milada Musilová
Kedril: Miroslav Borský, Luděk Löbl
Elvíra: Norbert Stallich
Rytíř: Jaroslav Rohan
Ševcová: Josef Mužík, Boris Rudiš
Popová: Oldřich Kaplan
Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Emil (Emanuel) Hruška
Mlynář (Miller): Josef Vojta, Zdeněk Duda
Soused (Miller's neighbour): Oldřich Kaplan
Písařík: Norbert Stallich
Vězeň (Don Juan a Brahмін): Vladimír Jedenáctík, Jiří Schiller

1964 – Third production

Date of first night: 24 April 1964
Length of run: 39 performances
Date of last night: 26 May 1973
Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Bohumír Liška
Director: Ladislav Štros
Sets: Vladimír Nývlt
Costumes: Marcel Pokorný
Chorus master: Milan Malý

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Dalibor Jedlička, Zdeněk Kroupa, Eduard Hruběš
Aljeja: Jana Jonášová, Sylvia Kodetová, Helena Tattermuschová
Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Beno Blachut, Jaroslav Stříška
Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Jaroslav Stříška, Jiří Janoušek
Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Karel Berman, Jiří Schiller, Hanuš Thein
Placmajor (Commandant): Antonín Švorc, Jaroslav Horáček
Staříčkový vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Oldřich Lindauer, Rudolf Vonásek, Antonín Votava
Skuratov: Milan Karpíšek, Lubomír Havlák, Ivo Žídek
Čekunov: Josef Heriban, Jindřich Jindrák, Jiří Schiller
Opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Miroslav Mach
Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Miroslav Šindelář
Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): René Tuček, Dalibor Jedlička, Jiří Joran

Duchovní (Chaplain): Antonín Švorc, Karel Macho, Jaromír Bělor
Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Jindřich Jindrák, Viktor Kočí, Zdeněk Švehla,
Rudolf Vonásek, Neuveden
Poběhlce (Prostitute): Marie Veselá, Alena Míková, Eva Zikmundová
Šapkin: Milan Karpíšek, Jindřich Jindrák, Antonín Zlesák
Šiškov: Antonín Švorc, Přemysl Kočí
Čerevin: Viktor Kočí, Zdeněk Švehla, Rudolf Vonásek
Stráž (Guards): Jindřich Jindrák, Václav Pokorný
Kedril: Milan Karpíšek, Antonín Zlesák
Elvíra: Jaroslav Čejka
Rytíř (Knight): Bohumír (Bohumil) Lalák, Oldřich Kaplan
Ševcová: Jaroslav Čejka
Popová: Jaroslav Čejka
Čert (Devil): Ladislav Glaser, Tomáš Němeček, Jaroslav Pešek, Miloslav
Davídek
Čert (Devil): Lubomír Rešl, Jaroslav Doleček, Karel Kmoch, Zdeněk Tichý
Čert (Devil): Pavel Ždichynec, Karel Vrtiška, Jiří Paclík, Zdeněk Formánek
Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Jaroslav Čejka
Mlynář (Miller): Zdeněk Duda
Soused (Miller's neighbour): Emil (Emanuel) Hruška, Stanislav Michler
Písařík: Norbert Stallich
Vězeň hrající Dona Juana a Brahmína (Prisoner playing Don Juan and
Brahmin): René Tuček, Dalibor Jedlička, Jiří Joran

1977 – Fourth production

Date of first night: 15 June 1977

Length of run: 19 performances

Date of last night: 19 May 1980

Venue: Smetanovo Divadlo (Smetana Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor, Bohumír Liška

Director: Ladislav Štros

Sets: Květoslav Bubeník

Costumes: Marcel Pokorný

Choreographer: Jaroslav Čejka

Chorus master: Milan Malý

Assistant director: Miloslav Smrž

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: Dalibor Jedlička, Václav Zítek

Aljeja: Jana Jonášová, Helena Tattermuschová

Filka Morozov a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Jan Hlavsa, Jiří Zahradníček

Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Miroslav Frydlewicz, Jaroslav Striška
 Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Bohuslav Maršík, Karel Berman
 Placmajor (Commandant): Antonín Švorc, Jaroslav Horáček
 Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Beno Blachut, Rudolf Vonásek
 Skuratov: Lubomír Havlák, Ivo Žídek
 Čekunov: Josef Heriban, Jindřich Jindrák
 Opilý vězeň (Drunken prisoner): Miroslav Mach
 Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Miroslav Šindelář
 Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Štěpán Buršík
 Pop: Karel Macho
 Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Viktor Kočí, Rudolf Vonásek
 Poběhlce (Prostitute): Alena Míková, Eva Zikmundová
 Šapkin: Alfréd Hampel, Milan Karpíšek
 Šiškov: René Tuček, Přemysl Kočí
 Čerevin: Viktor Kočí, Rudolf Vonásek
 Stráž (Guard): Václav Pokorný
 Kedril: Alfréd Hampel, Milan Karpíšek
 Elvíra: Daniel Wiesner, Jaroslav Čejka
 Rytíř (Knight): Arnošt Hruška
 Ševcová: Daniel Wiesner, Jaroslav Čejka
 Popová: Daniel Wiesner, Jaroslav Čejka
 Čert (Devil): Antonín Jelínek, Zdeněk Formánek
 Čert (Devil): Karel Kmoch, Jiří Merta
 Čert (Devil): Ivan Krob
 Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Daniel Wiesner, Jaroslav Čejka
 Mlynář (Miller): Jan Šváb, Zdeněk Duda
 Soused (Miller's neighbour): Stanislav Michler
 Písařík: Jan Šváb, Miloš Levý
 Vězeň hrající Dona Juana a Brahmína (Prisoner playing Don Juan and Brahmin): Jiří Joran, Jaroslav Majtner

1990 – Fifth production

Date of first night: 1 March 1990

Length of run: 12 performances

Date of last night: 5 January 1991

Venue: Národní Divadlo (National Theatre)

Production

Conductor: Bohumil Gregor

Director: Ladislav Štros

Costumes: Josef Jelínek

Sets: Vladimír Nývlt

Choreographer: Miroslav Kůra
Chorus master: Milan Malý
Assistant choreographer: Alena Reisnerová
Assistant director: Miloslav Smrž

Cast

Alexandr Petrovič Gorjančikov: René Tuček, Dalibor Jedlička
Aljeja: Věra Nováková, Renée Nachtigallová
Filka Morozov, a.k.a. Luka Kuzmič: Josef Hajna
Velký vězeň (Large prisoner): Miroslav Frydlewicz, Jaroslav Striška
Malý vězeň (Small prisoner): Bohuslav Maršík, Karel Berman
Placmajor (Commandant): Jaroslav Horáček, Pavel Horáček
Staříčský vězeň (Elderly prisoner): Alfréd Hampel, Vojtěch Kocián
Skuratov: Miroslav Kopp
Čekunov: Vratislav Kříž, Jindřich Jindrák
Opilý vězeň (Drunk prisoner): Jan Hlavsa, Dalibor Janota
Kuchař (Cook, a prisoner): Karel Černý
Kovář (Blacksmith, a prisoner): Vitalij Bíma
Pop: Josef Heriban
Mladý vězeň (Young prisoner): Jan Markvart, Viktor Kočí
Poběhlce (Prostitute): Daniela Šounová-Brouková, Marie Kremerová
Šapkin: Jiří Ceé, Milan Karpíšek
Šiškov: Jaroslav Souček
Čerevin: Jan Markvart, Viktor Kočí
Stráž (Guard): Zbyněk Černý
Kedril: Jiří Ceé, Milan Karpíšek
Elvíra: Rudolf Mošna
Rytíř (Knight): Luděk Frydrych
Ševcová: Rudolf Mošna
Popová: Rudolf Mošna
Čert (Devil): Daniel Doleček
Čert (Devil): Vlastimil Mládek
Čert (Devil): Gejza Zošťák
Mlynářka (Miller's wife): Rudolf Mošna
Mlynář (Miller): Rudolf Chajec
Soused (Miller's neighbour): Luděk Frydrych
Písařík: Josef Vrabec
Vězeň hrající Dona Juana a Brahmína (Prisoner playing Don Juan and Brahmin): Pavel Červinka, Zdeněk Harváněk