

NAXOS

JANÁČEK

Orchestral Suites from the Operas • 1
Jenůfa • The Excursions of Mr Brouček

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Peter Breiner



Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) Orchestral Suites from the Operas • 1

Jenůfa – Suite (arr. Peter Breiner)		41:06	The Excursions of Mr Brouček – Suite (arr. Peter Breiner)		39:01
1	I. Už se večer chýlí (Night is already falling)	4:16	7	I. Matěj Brouček (Matthew Brouček)	5:16
2	II. Všeci sa ženija – Každý páreček (All are getting married – Every couple must get over its problems)	5:42	8	II. Ty bledy brachu tam nahoře (There is the Moon)	9:49
3	III. Neni ti teskno, Jenůfko? (Are you feeling sad, Jenůfa?)	5:03	9	III. Valčíky a jiné tance (Waltzes and Other Dances)	8:25
4	IV. Daleko, široko (Far and wide)	4:05	10	IV. Návštěvník ze Země (Visitor from Earth)	6:14
5	V. Pan Bůh rač dát dobrý den (May God grant you a good day)	7:31	11	V. Kdož sú boží bojovníci (Those who are the warriors of God)	9:09
6	VI. Odešli (They've all left – Now you leave too!)	4:28			

Leoš Janáček has recently become a staple of the operatic repertoire. But if one were to have asked Janáček himself about his work while he was writing his fifth opera, *The Excursions of Mr Brouček*, he would have said his career was in tatters. His first opera *Šárka* could not be performed, as the composer had failed correctly to acquire the rights in its libretto. *The Beginning of a Romance* is a charming but vapid precursor to his 1904 tragic masterpiece *Jenůfa*, however Janáček had great problems convincing his contemporaries in the opera houses of Vienna and Prague that even *Jenůfa* was worthy of performance. Despondent, Janáček wrote *Osud*, an experimental and autobiographical work, yet this too failed and in a further slough of despond he began his comic opera *Brouček*. It would be astonishing for the composer to learn today that *Jenůfa* is a regular repertoire piece and that *Brouček* is quite widely performed. More surprising still would be the news that Peter Breiner deemed both operas worthy of transplanting into these new orchestral suites. This first volume in the series offers a superb insight into two relatively early works in

Janáček's operatic career and with which he was repeatedly rejected by the powers that be outside his adopted hometown of Brno.

When *Jenůfa* had its première in Brno in 1904, Janáček was already fifty. His slim output was unknown, but the composer was already highly regarded in Brno as a talented conductor, critic, teacher and ethnomusicologist. In 1881 he founded a college of organists there, which he directed until 1920, and established a strong foundation for musical education with an orchestra and instrumental classes. In 1884 the Provisional Czech Theatre opened and Janáček started a musicological journal in which he reviewed the theatre's modest repertoire of performances. Inspired or at least spurred by what he saw and heard, he began to write his own stage works. Despite initial false starts, *Jenůfa* was a major achievement. The startling play by Gabriela Preissová that he chose as the inspiration for the opera follows the unfortunate life of Jenůfa, a village girl who lives with her stepmother, called the Kostelníčka. Jenůfa is pregnant with her cousin Števa's child and is fearful that he

will be conscripted into the army and her pregnancy will be discovered. The Kostelníčka hides Jenůfa away and begs Števa to look after Jenůfa, but he is spineless and shirks his responsibility. Števa's half-brother Laca remains their only hope and rashly Kostelníčka tells Laca that the baby has died. She acts quickly and drowns the baby in the millstream, telling Jenůfa that the baby passed away when she was unwell. It is only on Laca and Jenůfa's wedding-day that the truth finally comes out and Kostelníčka is taken away for trial. Laca promises to look after Jenůfa and, despite everything, she realises that God has smiled on them.

Janáček matches this desperate tale with a wildly emotional score. Calling on Moravian folk-music and an imitation of the rhythms of Czech speech, Janáček's sound-world is rough-hewn and beautiful. Peter Breiner's orchestral suite charts the entire span of the opera, starting with the evocative sound of the mill, indicated by the tapping of a xylophone. We realise, through the shifting harmonies, that all is not well. The second movement, a riotous dance, is taken from the scene in which *Jenůfa's* beloved Števa returns celebrating his avoidance of conscription. It represents one of the few moments of happiness in the opera, but that joy is not unbridled, and the suite moves seamlessly into music taken from the wise words of *Jenůfa's* grandmother (endorsed by the whole community) that every couple have their own problems. The third movement brings us to the preparations for Laca and *Jenůfa's* wedding, although the ominous rumbling from the opening of the suite returns and, as if in flashback, we move to the introduction to the second act when Kostelníčka commits her crime, a trick that the highly cinematic Janáček would have relished. Again in flashback we return to Števa's drunken antics and the song '*Daleko široko*' with slurring brass mimicking his behaviour, preceded by a plangent violin solo, heavy with *Jenůfa's* predicament. The next movement returns us to Laca and *Jenůfa's* wedding with a jolly bridesmaids' song, moving to Grandmother's blessing. The contentment is short-lived and the events of the previous two acts reach their zenith in the adumbration of the discovery of *Jenůfa's* baby in the millstream and the

villagers subsequently turning on the Buryja family. The last movement charts Laca and *Jenůfa's* final moments, facing the challenge of their future life. It sees Janáček at his most lyrical, the belligerent mill tapping now calmed to the ululating harp with long-spun melodies high in the texture in a numinous coda.

The Excursions of Mr Brouček finds Janáček in a very different mood, with a comic story of a drunken landlord. This satirical view of the Czech Everyman was the creation of the nationalist writer Svatopluk Čech. Janáček read *Výlet pana Broučka do Měsíce* (The Excursion of Mr Brouček to the Moon) when it was first published in 1888 and the composer later reprinted part of the story in his musical journal. After the disappointment of *Jenůfa*, and his floundering opera *Osud*, Janáček sought to change his dramatic approach and cast his mind back to Matěj Brouček. He is a drunk, bumbling figure who somehow finds himself transported to the Moon – a place dominated by pretentious artistic types. Subsequently he is taken back to the fifteenth century, where he becomes embroiled in nationalistic wars. Over the course of this esoteric opera, Brouček reveals himself as nothing but an oaf and a coward.

The suite, largely comprised of sections from the first 'excursion' to the Moon, is introduced by the musical depiction of Matěj Brouček's name, spelled out clearly by the horns and trumpets. We first meet our eponymous lout on a peaceful moon-filled evening in Prague, with lush strings in counterpoint with the dogmatic punctuation of the woodwind. Brouček is staggering home and overhears the lovers Málinka and Mazal; their characters are clearly discernible through the orchestral textures. Life on earth is too much for Brouček and he decides to journey to the moon, depicted in the second movement's spectral opening bars. Disappointment greets Brouček, however, who is horrified to discover that, despite the many beauties of the Moon, it is populated by the artistic and intellectual avant-garde. The third movement sees Janáček testing his orchestral dexterity with a series of moon dances, which take place in the Lunar Palace of Arts. Like the moon characters themselves, who strongly resemble some of

Brouček's acquaintances back home, the dances are thoroughly imbued with Czech spirit. Earth is more Brouček's kind of place and he returns whence he came, eventually carried home by his neighbours in a barrel.

The final movement draws its inspiration from the music of the fifteenth-century 'excursion' which, despite Brouček's presence, is a much more serious affair. Fifteenth-century Prague is under siege from the armies of the Holy Roman Empire and Brouček is drawn into the mire. The heraldic brass start a triumphant 'dance' of victory as the Czech national fighters suppress outside forces. The people celebrate victory with a hymn (based on the Hussite Chorale 'Kdož jsou Boží bojovníci', which also appears in Smetana's *Má vlast*), but there have been deaths and their effect is sobering. Brouček is discovered in hiding and

accused of treachery. Rather appropriately, he is sentenced to death, again in a beer barrel. Although the opera ends with Brouček claiming that he saved Prague 'single-handed', the Suite ends in a glorious encapsulation of the true victory music, rounding off this depiction of Janáček's capricious but beautiful nationalist opera. Those heraldic tones would have had singular resonance for the new nation of Czechoslovakia in which *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* had its première in April 1920. By that time too, his peers finally regarded Janáček as a great composer.

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Gavin Plumley has written, broadcast and lectured widely about the life and works of Janáček and created
www.leosjanacek.com

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New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1946, is the country's leading professional orchestra. It has an establishment of ninety players and performs over a hundred concerts annually. Touring within New Zealand looms large in the orchestra's activities. All its main symphonic programmes are presented in Auckland and Wellington, and as well as this, the orchestra visits some thirty New Zealand towns and cities annually. In 2005 the orchestra undertook a highly successful tour that included performances at the BBC Proms, the Concertgebouw, Snape Maltings and the World Expo at Aichi in Japan. Pietari Inkinen was appointed as the orchestra's Music Director from January 2008, succeeding James Judd, who held the position from 1999 to 2007 and is now Music Director Emeritus. Other conductors who have worked with the orchestra during his tenure include Alexander Lazarev, Dimitri Sitkovetsky, David Atherton, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Edo de Waart. Soloists who have worked with the orchestra include Lynn Harrell, Lang Lang, Hilary Hahn, Vadim Repin, Steven Isserlis, Jonathan Lemalu and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra has an extensive catalogue of CD recordings. As part of a commitment to promote and encourage music by New Zealand composers, the orchestra records at least one CD of New Zealand music annually. The NZSO has a strong relationship with Naxos, recording repertoire as diverse as Elgar (three discs), Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven, Bernstein, Copland, Lilburn, Sculthorpe, Frank Bridge, Akutagawa, Mendelssohn, Honegger, Liszt, and Vaughan Williams. Over one million of these CDs have been sold internationally in the last decade and they have received critical acclaim. NZSO discs (Hummel, Elgar and Bernstein) were chosen for the "Editor's Choice" section of *Gramophone* in 2004 and Lilburn's *Orchestral Works* was chosen in 2006. www.nzso.co.nz



Photo: Robert Cutto



Peter Breiner

Born in 1957, Peter Breiner is known as a composer, conductor, pianist and arranger. He began to study the piano at the age of four and his exceptional results led to his early acceptance at the Conservatory in Košice. He studied piano, composition, conducting and percussion, later studying composition with Alexander Moyzes, one of the most significant figures in modern Slovak music. Peter Breiner has lived in Toronto, Canada since 1992. As a Naxos in-house arranger and conductor, he is perhaps best known for his numerous orchestral arrangements, including award-winning Baroque versions of the Beatles. Breiner's distinctive arrangements of all national anthems were used during the Olympic Games in Athens 2004. With over 150 CDs in the last ten years Breiner has conducted, often doubling as a pianist, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra,

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and the Orchestre National de Lille, among many others.



Vesa-Matti Leppänen

Vesa-Matti Leppänen was born in Turku, Finland. He began violin lessons at the age of five and studied at the Sibelius Academy of Music in Helsinki before joining the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the oldest orchestras in Europe. At sixteen years of age, he won the National Violin Competition for young Finnish violinists and has been the Concertmaster of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra since 2003.



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The operas of Leoš Janáček have been gaining their rightful place in major opera houses the world over. First staged in 1904, *Jenůfa*, a powerful tragedy set in a Moravian village, launched Janáček's operatic career. *The Excursions of Mr Brouček*, which had its première in 1920, is his most candidly satirical opera, rich in high jinks as the bumptious Prague publican travels to the Moon and back to the 15th century. Peter Breiner, who created the compelling orchestral suites heard on this disc, conducts these world première recordings.

Leoš
JANÁČEK
(1854–1928)

Orchestral Suites from the Operas • 1

Jenůfa – Suite*

(arr. Peter Breiner) 31:06

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**The Excursions of
Mr Brouček – Suite**
(arr. Peter Breiner)

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Peter Breiner
Vesa-Matti Leppanen, Violin*



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