

NAXOS

# JANÁČEK

## Orchestral Suites from the Operas • 2 Káťa Kabanová • The Makropulos Affair

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra  
Peter Breiner



**Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)**  
**Orchestral Suites from the Operas • 2**

<b>Káťa Kabanová – Suite</b> <b>(arr. Peter Breiner)</b>		<b>The Makropulos Affair – Suite</b> <b>(arr. Peter Breiner)</b>	
<b>1</b> I. Overture	5:00	<b>6</b> I. Smrt na mne sahala ... (Death was touching me)	3:04
<b>2</b> II. Je čas, Tichone ... (Tichon, it's about time ...)	6:03	<b>7</b> II. Causa Gregor Prus (The Gregor Prus Case)	6:05
<b>3</b> III. Vida, chvástala jsi se ... (There, you bragged ...)	7:45	<b>8</b> III. Zdá se vám to divné, co? (It appears strange, doesn't it?)	4:56
<b>4</b> IV. Intermezzo and Songs	8:15	<b>9</b> IV. Já jsem totiž idiot (I am actually an idiot)	4:22
<b>5</b> V. Přijde bouře (The Storm is coming)	11:07	<b>10</b> V. A já vás miluji! (Though I love you!)	7:00
		<b>11</b> VI. Nu? (So?)	6:13

Leoš Janáček spent the first sixty years of his life struggling to achieve renown, teaching, conducting and composing for local forces without enjoying financial or artistic success. Along with his professional frustrations, Janáček had a loveless marriage. The composer sought to overcome these disappointments in his work and fought long and hard to have his opera *Jenůfa* performed in Prague. When the opera was eventually accepted (albeit with a few caveats) by the National Theatre in 1916, and subsequently by the Court Opera in Vienna, Janáček became known beyond far the boundaries of his adopted hometown of Brno. At this time he met Kamila Stösslová, a young married woman, whom he spotted in the spa-town of Luhačovice in July 1917. Her appearance, along with the Independence of Czechoslovakia and his wider recognition, allowed Janáček to enter the final decade of his life, as it would turn out to be, with confidence and seemingly boundless inspiration. This second disc of Operatic Suites focuses on two of the masterpieces of that period, *Káťa Kabanová* and *Věc Makropulos*, both based on pre-existing dramatic texts.

Janáček was desperate to write a new opera after the hard-earned success of *Jenůfa* and so turned to the Russian dramatist Ostrovsky's tragedy *The Storm*, the main protagonist of which is called Káťa. Like Puccini and Tchaikovsky before him – two composers he held in the highest regard – Janáček hoped to write a lyrical romantic tragedy about the plight of a young woman. Janáček turned immediately to Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* for inspiration. The composer first saw the opera in Prague in 1908, but revisited it again in Brno in December 1919. Soon after seeing it afresh, he began writing *Káťa Kabanová*. Káťa's story is certainly as tragic as that of Puccini's geisha. Stuck in a provincial town, Káťa becomes worried that she will cheat on her husband Tichon. Despite her plea to him not to go to market, her harsh mother-in-law sends him on his way. In Tichon's absence, Káťa starts a relationship with Boris. The weight of this sin is too much for her to bear and she throws herself into the Volga.

The suite begins with the bleak overture to the opera in the dark key of B flat minor. The ominous eight beats on the timpani seem to signify something oddly fatalistic, pitted against the aching harmonies in the rest of the orchestra. A second theme (itself derived from the timpani motif), accompanied by sleigh bells, prefigures Tichon's departure for market. The second movement is taken from music of the action of act one, beginning with the interlude between the two scenes. Janáček repeats several motifs here, but uses the harmony to indicate a change in the psychological circumstances, with the meek Káťa pitted against her hateful surroundings. More convivial music – taken from Káťa's scene with her adopted sister Varvara – hints at something more hopeful, but we are quickly moved on into Tichon's departure and the return of the ominous fate motif pitted against the sleigh bells. The momentum builds and a searing theme appears in the high strings, underpinned by the brass and woodwind, as Tichon departs and the tragedy is put in motion.

A third movement takes us into the second act, and the preparations for Káťa's meeting with Boris. The tension and passion mounts, describing the hot summer night on which Varvara and Kudrjás, Káťa and Boris, have their brief moment of happiness. The fourth movement is largely given over to Kudrjás's teasing song about a spoiled girl who is constantly bought presents and to the touching melodies of their calls for Káťa and Boris to return home. The movement ends with the ecstatic close of the second act, a brief moment of passion in an otherwise bleak world.

The final movement concerns the storm proper, with the whirl of the cyclone spinning through the various sections of the orchestra. It was in *Káťa Kabanová* that Janáček really began to experiment with time, situating voices off stage and contracting and expanding timings for dramatic effect. As Káťa runs wildly off through the storm, we hear those distant echoes calling her toward her watery echo, all the time egged on by the defeatist timpani. After her outrageous confession, we find Káťa alone contemplating her fate, with her meek countenance

coming through in the heartfelt music of her final meeting with Boris. It is another brief enclave of contentment and the suite ends with the staggeringly rapid death of Janáček's 'most beautiful and saddest' of heroines. Her fate is sealed by one last blast from the timpani.

After the passion of *Káta*, we move with Janáček to his coldest heroine. Karel Čapek's 1922 philosophical comedy about the 337-year-old opera-singer Emilia Marty (Elina Makropulos) struck Janáček as a possible opera text when he saw the play three weeks after its opening. *Věc Makropulos* (The Makropulos Case or Secret) concerns a legal fight over a document in which the secret of Emilia's ageless beauty is revealed. Elina Makropulos, as she was originally called, is the daughter of an alchemist at the court of Emperor Rudolf II. Over three centuries she has been known and called by a variety of different names, taking vast numbers of lovers along the way. Given her great age, she is able to help the lawyers in the story to solve a generation-old legal wrangle, meantime, however, she is searching for the details of the potion so that she can extend her life again.

The suite begins towards the end of the opera, after the secret of Marty's agelessness has been discovered. The music is taken from the moment when Emilia Marty appears on stage for the last time. Although the heraldic call at the opening of the movement indicates some former glory, Marty is lonely and exasperated. The ominous thud of the timpani (a recurring trick in Janáček's operas) indicates that death is near. The second movement is taken from the bustling overture, indicating the terrific scabble around for legal documents in the first scene. Unlike the ending to the piece, this music has drive and pugnacity, with lyrical passages pitted against whirling repeated motifs (the rumble of the timpani is

already in evidence). Janáček brilliantly encapsulates the psychological tenor of the opera in this virtuosic introduction.

More of the material from the first act forms the suite's third movement, dominated by the arching four-note 'Makro-pu-los' theme. Despite the 'seriousness' of the opera, Janáček rejoices in the piece's absurdities, no more so than in the fourth movement where Count Hauk-Šendorf recalls his affair with Marty. The doty aristocrat recognises Emilia as a gypsy woman called Eugenia Montez, with whom he had an affair in Andalusia; Janáček peppers his orchestration with 'gypsy' harmonies and castanets. The fifth movement is based around the duet between Gregor and Marty in Act II where the libretto and the music again play out the discrepancy between Marty's need for the potion and the men in her life's need for her affection. Despite the clustered harmonies that pierce through the texture, the sensuous lyricism, which has attracted generations of men to Marty, rides out. The final movement is taken from the third act. Despite Gregor's amorous approaches, Marty succumbs to Baron Prus's advances in exchange for the prized document that will set her free. The second part of this movement is taken from the last moments of the opera when Emilia rejects the potion for a natural death. Her decision is an exultant one and the brass writing, which had been so heated and argumentative at the opening of the opera, is now jubilant. Marty dies with a glorious orchestral coda.

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*Gavin Plumley has written, broadcast and lectured widely about the life and works of Janáček and created*  
[www.leosjanacek.com](http://www.leosjanacek.com)

## 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](http://www.nzso.co.nz)



Photo: Robert Catto



### **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, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, 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.

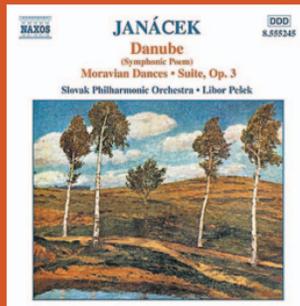
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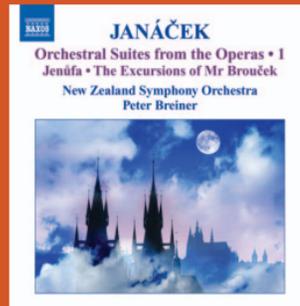
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Following the release of their stunning recording of Janáček's Operatic Orchestral Suites, Vol. 1 (*Jenůfa, The Excursions of Mr Brouček*) on 8.570555, Peter Breiner conducts his insightful suites from two popular Janáček operas – *Káťa Kabanová* and *The Makropulos Affair* – with New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Vesa-Matti Leppänen again playing a featured role. Czechoslovakian-born Breiner is ideally placed to interpret the music of his innovative compatriot.

Leoš  
**JANÁČEK**  
(1854–1928)

**Orchestral Suites from the Operas • 2**

**Káťa Kabanová – Suite**  
(arr. Peter Breiner)

38:22

- |   |                                 |       |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Overture                     | 5:02  |
| 2 | II. Tichon, it's about time ... | 6:03  |
| 3 | III. There, you bragged ...     | 7:44  |
| 4 | IV. Intermezzo and Songs        | 8:15  |
| 5 | V. The Storm is coming          | 11:06 |

**The Makropulos Affair**  
– Suite\*

(arr. Peter Breiner)

31:56

- |    |                                      |      |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 6  | I. Death was touching me             | 3:04 |
| 7  | II. The Gregor Prus Case             | 6:06 |
| 8  | III. It appears strange, doesn't it? | 4:56 |
| 9  | IV. I am actually an idiot           | 4:23 |
| 10 | V. Though I love you!                | 7:01 |
| 11 | VI. So?                              | 6:16 |



**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra**  
**Peter Breiner**  
**Vesa-Matti Leppänen, Violin\***



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