

PER BOYE HANSEN

Artistic Director of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera

opera

The Christmas musical fairy tale *Tuttifäntchen* at the Estates Theatre

On 30 November 2023, the Estates Theatre in Prague will host the Czech premiere of Paul Hindemith's *Tuttifäntchen*, a Christmas musical play for children. The production, featuring song, dance, mime and puppets, will be performed in Czech, as translated by Ondřej Hučín. Staged by Radim Vizváry, Artistic Director of Laterna magika, it will be conducted by David Švec. The *Tuttifäntchen* adaptation is the last stage project of the National Theatre and the State Opera within the Musica non grata cycle, which has been financially supported by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Czech Republic.

Bearing the secondary title "A Christmas fairy tale with song and dance", Hindemith's *Tuttifäntchen* tells the story of a puppet come to life and a girl who together set out into the world. The Prague production also features mime and puppetry. "Although music plays an essential role, *Tuttifäntchen* is not an opera in the right sense of the word. It consists of 16 self-contained musical numbers, vocal and instrumental, which are not long, while the vocal passages are not arias, but songs. The score employs folk melodies and Christmas carols, including the Czech song *We Bring You the News*," says the conductor **David Švec**. The orchestra is the size of a chamber ensemble, with a large percussion section. Evoking a Yuletide atmosphere, the story unfurls to Hindemith's sublime and airy music, which also integrates jazz and expressionist elements, typical of the 1920s – a case in point being the scene when with a magic wand the puppet takes the girl's heart, which is one of the main motifs.

Hindemith completed his *Tuttifäntchen* in the autumn of 1922, to a text by Hedwig Michel and Franziska Becker. On 13 December of that year, the piece premiered to great acclaim at the Hessisches Landestheater in Darmstadt. Just as the original play, the National Theatre's production primarily aims to reach out to children, as the stage director **Radim Vizváry** confirms: "I have striven to foreground situations that speak to children, bearing in mind that for many of them it could well be their very first theatre performance – their very first encounter with mime, opera singing, and even an orchestra. Breaking down the "fourth wall", the production also makes use of the auditorium and the orchestra pit, with the latter being higher than is usually the case. The cast is made up of six actors-singers and six mime artists, who portray puppets come to life, clad in fairy-tale characters' costumes. The all-wood scenery has been designed by **Eva Jiřikovská**."

The Czech title of the production, *LouTkáček*, refers to the puppet that comes to life. “Our puppet is remotely related to Carlo Goldoni’s Pinocchio. Initially naughty and mischievous, Pinocchio gradually turns into a good boy, whereas our *Tuttifantchen*’s fate is different – one I like more, as it is less human-centred, less egocentric,” says **Ondřej Hučín**, chief dramaturge of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera, who has translated the text into Czech and who has significantly co-shaped the form of Vizváry’s production. “The puppet becomes a sentient being, who, paradoxically, does not want to remain in the human world,” Hučín adds.

Tuttifantchen is part of a series of projects for children that are being prepared within the final phase of the *Musica non grata* cycle, dedicated to composers who were persecuted by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. “I am very glad that the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera have created a performance for children as part of the *Musica non grata* project, of a work penned by one of the most important representatives of 20th-century German music. It is simply grotesque that such an important personality as Paul Hindemith, who enjoyed extraordinary respect in Germany and beyond between the two world wars, was placed on the Nazi regime’s index of undesirable composers because of Adolf Hitler’s antipathy,” **Per Boye Hansen**, Artistic Director of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera, points out.

The production is recommended for children aged five and over. Performed in Czech, it lasts 60 minutes. The exclusively afternoon shows will take place at the Estates Theatre from 30 November to 14 December. More information and tickets: musicanongrata.cz.

LouTkáček (Tuttifantchen)

Music: Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)

Libretto: Hedwig Michel (1892–1982) and Franziska Becker (1874–1942)

Czech translation: Ondřej Hučín

Production detail: <https://bit.ly/3ujtAbx>

Premiere performances

30 November 2023 at 5pm and 7.30pm

Prague, Estates Theatre

Further performances

2, 3, 6, 7, 12, 13 and 14 December 2023

Photo gallery

<https://bit.ly/3SSQjFz>

© narodni-divadlo.cz / Serghei Gherciu

Creators

Conductor: David Švec

Stage director and choreographer: Radim Vizváry

Set and costume designer: Eva Jiřikovská

Light designer: Karel Šimek

Dramaturge: Ondřej Hučín

National Theatre Orchestra

Singers

Hoblina, master woodcarver: Zdeněk Plech / Miloš Horák

Týna: Ekaterina Krovateva / Karolína Levková

Loutkáček: Vít Šantora / Peter Malý

Péťa: Marek Žihla / Petr Dvořák

Berta: Yvona Škvárová / Jana Sýkorová

Master Punoni: Jiří Hájek / Jiří Sulženko

Mime artists

David Bosh, Valéria Daňhová, Anton Eliaš, Vojtěch Fülep, Anna Kukuczková, Lukáš Šimon

Press contact, Musica non grata

Iva Nevoralová

PR, Musica non grata

+420 608 028 054

i.nevoralova@narodni-divadlo.cz

Press contact, National Theatre

Kateřina Motlová

PR, National Theatre Opera and State Opera

Tel.: +420 725 712 443

k.motlova@narodni-divadlo.cz

Tomáš Staněk

National Theatre press agent

Tel.: +420 605 207 249

t.stanek@narodni-divadlo.cz

Social networks

facebook.com/groups/musicanongrata

facebook.com/ndopera

instagram.com/narodnidivadlo_opera

...and yet it still resounds!

musicanongrata.cz





GENERAL PARTNER

OFFICIAL PAYMENT CARD



PARTNERS OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE



V E R M O N T



ARICOMA

PARTNERS OF PRODUCTIONS



PARTNER OF PREMIERES



BENEFACTORS OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE



KOLOWRAT  KRAKOWŠTÍ

Prof. Dr. Dadjá Altenburg-Kohl

GENERAL MEDIA PARTNER



PRINCIPAL MEDIA PARTNER OF PRODUCTIONS

mediální skupina **mafra**

PRINCIPAL MEDIA PARTNER

 **Český rozhlas** | **100**