

PER BOYE HANSEN

Artistic Director of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera

opera

Premiere of the Musical Puppet Fairy Tale “The Bald Princess”

On Saturday, 6th April, the Ronald McDonald House in the campus of the Motol University Hospital will host the world premiere of the puppet fairy tale *The Bald Princess*, which loosely adapts the music by the Terezín composer Lena Stein-Schneider. This production has been created as part of the Musica non grata project in a co-production with the National Theatre and the Puppets in Hospital association, with financial support from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Czech Republic. The world premiere is exclusively intended for child patients of the oncology department of the Motol University Hospital.

The preparation of *The Bald Princess* production involves a young creative team consisting of **Matyáš Míka** (concept, script, and direction), **Markéta Labusová** (music), and **Iva Ščerbáková** (scenography). The inspiration for this musical puppet fairy tale came from the story of *The Goldilocks (Goldhärchen)* by the German author **Lena Stein-Schneider** (1874–1958), who was interned in the Terezín ghetto from 1942 to 1945. "I was captivated by the heroine of the story – a likable, bold rebel who dares to step out of the conventions predetermined by her status. Whereas the original fairy tale sees no virtue in the princess's outspokenness, culminating in a lesson about moderation and obedience, our story takes a different path. Our heroine embarks on a long rescue journey motivated by love, learning to be sensitive towards others and realizing that the world does not revolve around her just because she is a princess. I chose this direction for the story because I believe the ability to foresee the consequences of one's actions and the risks of arrogance and condescension resonate more clearly today than the original theme of obedience. Thus, we completely depart from the original author's text in terms of the plot," says **Matyáš Míka**.

Lena Stein-Schneider gained fame as an author of operettas, popular, and film music before the Second World War, and the new production emphasises her work especially in the musical element of *The Bald Princess*. “The vast majority of musical entries work with motifs from Lena's original songs, whose instrumentation I refreshed, added new rhythms and adapted genre-wise to communicate more intelligibly the nature and mood of the individual characters to today's children. Lena's titular song *Ich tu ja doch was mir gefällt* (I do just what I want) remained in its original version, chosen as the musical symbol for the main heroine Goldilocks,” the composer **Markéta Labusová** explains the musical concept of *The Bald Princess*. Due to constant stage actions, the actors work with playbacks, which they control themselves. Markéta Labusová combines the sound of analogue instruments, used in moments when Goldilocks enters a dangerous world, with the sound of the piano as a reminder that Lena Stein-Schneider was a renowned concert pianist, and violin that accompany the titular song.

The performance is primarily aimed at children aged 4 to 8 years and is designed for presentation in schools, nursery schools, at theatre festivals for children, and as part of the educational programmes offered by the National Theatre's ND+. The extraordinary audience for this project is promised by the organization **Loutky v nemocnici** (Puppets in Hospital), which, as a co-production partner, will regularly bring the production to child patients in hospitals and clinics. The specific needs of this audience group have also influenced the dramaturgy of the production and the way the material is handled. “With new productions, we think not only about a certain age group but also about children with specific diagnoses or needs. If the performance opens up a space for communication on topics such as being different, or the importance of not giving up on the long journey to our goal, we know that along with the story, we are bringing more than just a momentary distraction from the experience of being ill. *The Bald Princess* is one of the productions with such ambition. This exceptional project once again raises the quality of our offerings in places otherwise unreachable to professional theatres,” adds **Jakub Matějka**, producer of the Puppets in Hospital.

The partners for the world premiere are the **Ronald McDonald House**, established to support families of seriously ill children, and the **Motol University Hospital**. The performance, aptly named *The Bald Princess*, thus gains an additional symbolic dimension. “We believe that art has the power to heal and bring joy, especially to children undergoing a challenging treatment process. Collaborating with the Musica non grata, the National Theatre, and other partners allows us to provide our little patients not only with care but also with cultural experiences that can enrich their stay in the hospital,” says **Mgr. Jana Nováková, MBA**, Deputy for Nursing Care at Motol University Hospital. “Performances for our little patients are a regular occurrence here, and the children always look forward to them eagerly. It's wonderful to see them laugh and forget, even for a moment, where they are and why. We aim to offer families of seriously ill children not just free accommodation but also joy and comfort and to support them during challenging times. Therefore, we are delighted to host the world

premiere of this charming fairy tale designed by young creators and to cross paths not only with Puppets in Hospital, with whom we collaborate regularly, but also with the National Theatre and the Musica non grata,” adds **Lucia Kubištová**, House Manager of the Ronald McDonald House.

“Speaking for the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera, I am very pleased that the Musica non grata project devoted part of its efforts to children and that after its conclusion on the weekend of 5th–7th April, when this four-year cycle organised by the National Theatre ends, there will remain a production that has the potential to continue its legacy for many more years. At the same time, I am delighted that within our dramaturgical series *Women in Music*, we are reminding the public of the almost forgotten figure of Lena Stein-Schneider, who, like many other artists, suffered persecution by the Nazi regime due to her Jewish origin, and her music and pre-war successes have long been forgotten,” concludes **Per Boye Hansen**, Artistic Director of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera.

The Bald Princess has also been translated into German, and performances in German-speaking countries are planned for the future. In addition to the performance itself, the project includes also a musical workshop.

Please find more information on the websites musicanongrata.cz/thebaldprincess and loutkyvnemocnici.cz.

The Bald Princess

Concept, script, direction: **Matyáš Míka and colleagues**.

Music: **Lena Stein-Schneider** (1874–1958) and **Markéta Labusová**

Scenography: **Iva Ščerbáková**

Performed by: **Alžběta Nováková a Kryštof Míka**

German translation: **Johannes Mohl**

Project detail: <https://1url.cz/Zu8Bk>

Photos / Visuals:

Production art: <https://1drv.ms/f/s!ApBE3x3pPyNihvw5fDjEnGwhYYKMsQ?e=yUoeNV>

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Photos of artists: https://1drv.ms/i/s!ApBE3x3pPyNihvw3i2s1HS_wZ8043A?e=eSHtUO

Photos of workshop: <https://1drv.ms/f/s!ApBE3x3pPyNihvw4K7Ggp8t5OnSZXg?e=gYza5x>

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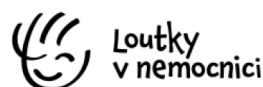
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