

LEOŠ JANÁČEK

Leoš Janáček (1854-1928) is today viewed as being one of the greatest music dramatists of the 20th century. Next to Puccini and Richard Strauss, Janáček is the most often played opera composer of the past century, and his outstanding dramas – *Jenufa*, *Katya Kabanova*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *From the House of the Dead* – are performed to rousing audiences around the world. Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, his string quartets and piano works have also long since attained a fixed place in concert programs.

Janáček spent almost his entire life in the Moravian capital Brno. His fame and honour came at a very late stage in comparison with other composers – even at the age of 60 he was almost unknown outside of Brno. It was two legendary performances of his opera *Jenufa*, 1916 in Prague and 1918 in Vienna, which provided him with the breakthrough and made him a worldwide success. Inspired by these triumphs Janáček was at the peak of his creative force during the last decade of his life writing his most important works during these later years.

The film by János Darvas and Thorsten Fricke in Leoš Janáček presents a composer, whose roots were deeply entwined in the folk music of his Moravian home and who created a musical language founded on this basis that was both independent and advanced. It portrays the picture of a modern composer, who was a highly gifted music dramatist and a good judge of character. And it portrays an artist who was also a deeply emotional humanist: In his operas he took sides with the weak of society and found moving sounds to express the hopes and fears of simple people.

Famous conductors, opera directors and Janáček experts, including Sir Charles Mackerras, Gerd Albrecht, Harry Kupfer and David Pountney among others, describe the composer and man Leoš Janáček. In addition the film presents numerous excerpts from Janáček's works. It shows the legendary production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* by Walter Felsenstein and famous recordings of his orchestra and piano works with Rafael Kubelik, Václav Neumann, Rudolf Firkušný and András Schiff. Scenes from the most important recent Janáček productions are also included, which were shot in the opera houses of Vienna, Berlin, Lyon and Paris for this film.

Written by Thorsten Fricke
Directed by János Darvas

56 min., colour and b/w, Digital Betacam 16:9, stereo
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