

FROM: **AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE**  
890 Broadway  
New York, New York 10003  
(212) 477-3030

## LEOŠ JANÁČEK

Leoš Janáček was born in Hukvaldy, Moravia on July 3, 1854. He studied with Frantisek Skuhersky in Prague, Leo Grill at the Leipzig Conservatory, and Franz Krenn at the Vienna Conservatory. He founded the organ school in Brno, and taught at the Teachers Institute there, while composing choral, instrumental, and orchestral works as well as operas, the first of which, *Sarka* (1887), was not performed until 1925. In 1888, he began to collect and edit folk melodies, which form the musical basis of his next opera, the one-act *Beginning of a Romance* (1891). In composing *Jenufa* (1904), he integrated folk material into his style. *Fate* (1905, revised 1907) was not performed until 1934, and it was only after *Jenufa*'s belated success in Prague (1916) and internationally, that Janáček completed *The Excursions of Mr. Broucek* (1920).

Now assured performances, in his final decade he composed four more operas. In part, inspired by his one-sided passion for a young woman, Kamila Stosslova, three of them focus on a central female character: *Katya Kabanova* (1921), *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1924), and *The Makropoulos Affair* (1926). *From the House of the Dead* (1930) is a harrowing ensemble work based on Dostoyevsky's prison diaries. Dramatically terse, musically economical, with frequently angular and awkward vocal lines based on Janáček's own principles of stylized "speech-melody" and only sparingly blossoming into lyricism, these operas were too original for quick public acceptance. Since World War II, they have come to be valued for their directness, theatrical effectiveness, and moving assertion of the centrality of death and regeneration to human existence.

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## JANÁČEK - Page 2

Leoš Janáček composed no ballet music, but his music was used for many ballets by many different choreographers. Among them, *Lachian Dances* (as part of the folk-song play *Rakocz Rakoczy*, Augustin Berger, 1891); *Taras Bulba*, (Lubos Ogoun, 1963); *First String Quartet*, (Erich Walter, 1966 and Antony Tudor, 1971); *Intimate Letters*, (Pavel Smok and Gise Furtwangler, both 1968, Harold King, 1975, Lynn Seymour, 1978, and Jirí Kylián, 1980); *Glagolitic Mass*, (Pavel Smok, 1969, Jiří Kylián, 1979); *Concertino, In the Mists*, and No. 7 from *From an Overgrown Path* for piano (Ashley Killar's *Arriving Bellevue Sunday*, 1971); and various piano pieces for Jiří Kylián's *Return to a Strange Land*, 1975. In addition to the ballet by Jiří Kylián, *Sinfonietta* has also been used for a ballet by Pavel Smok in 1971.

Janáček died in Moravska Ostrava on August 12, 1928.

-30-

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**Sources:** *Metropolitan Opera Encyclopedia; The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet*, Second Edition, edited by Horst Koegler; Oxford University Press, London, New York, Melbourne, 1982