

Once thought to be a provincial composer of only passing interest to eccentrics, Leos Janacek (1854-1928) is now widely acknowledged as one of the most powerful and original creative figures of his time. Banned for all purposes from the Prague stage until the age of 62, and unable to make it even out of the provincial capital of Brno, his operas are now performed in dynamic productions throughout the globe. This volume brings together some of the worlds foremost Janacek scholars to look closely at a broad range of issues surrounding his life and work. Representing the latest in Janacek scholarship, the essays are accompanied by newly translated writings by the composer himself. The collection opens with an essay by Leon Botstein who clarifies and amplifies how Max Brod contributed to Janacek s international success by serving as point man between Czechs and Germans, Jews and non-Jews. John Tyrrell, the dean of Janacek scholars, distills more than thirty years of research in How Janacek Composed Operas, while Diane Paige considers Janaceks liason with a married woman and the question of the artists muse. Geoffrey Chew places the idea of the adulterous muse in the larger context of Czech fin de siecle decadence in his thoroughgoing consideration of Janaceks problematic opera Osud. Derek Katz examines the problems encountered by Janaceks satirically patriotic Excursions of Mr. Broucek in the post-World War I era of Czechoslovak nationalism, while Paul Wingfield mounts a defense of Janacek against allegations of cruelty in his wifes memoirs. In the final essay, Michael Beckerman asks how much true history can be culled from one of Janaceks business cards. The book then turns to writings by Janacek previously unpublished in English. These not only include fascinating essays on Naturalism, opera direction, and Tristan and Isolde, but four impressionistic chronicles of the speech melodies of daily life. They provide insight into Janaceks revolutionary method of composition, and give us the closest thing we will ever have to the heard record of a Czech pre-war past-or any past, for that matter.

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