



NÁRODNÍ DIVADLO MORAVSKOSLEZSKÉ NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE

PRESS RELEASE

OPERA

Ostrava, Czech Republic



The original press release (8 June 2022) edited on 25 January 2024

THE TWO WIDOWS BY BEDŘICH SMETANA. MEMENTO MORI or CARPE DIEM?

Bedřich Smetana's fifth completed opera *The Two Widows* is the last opening night of the 2021/2022 season performed by the NMST's opera company and scheduled for 9 and 11 June in Ostrava. Same as *The Kiss*, *The Bartered Bride* and next season's *Dalibor*, the production pertains to the **Smetana Opera Cycle Ostrava 2024**. For the year 2024, entitled the Year of Czech Music for Smetana's anniversaries, the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre strives to perform all of the completed operas by Smetana in a two-part cycle. The majestic opera *Libuše* will be staged as a concert coproduced with the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava.

The Two Widows stands as an atypical masterpiece in Bedřich Smetana's repertoire, marking a pivotal turning point in his oeuvre. "Smetana crafted a distinctive realm of conversational drawing-room comedy, and in his interpretation, the work transcends its comedic surface, delving into deep psychological, ethical, and social dimensions. Emanuel Züngel adapted the libretto, drawing inspiration from his translation of Félicien Mallefille's French one-act play of the same name. The librettist skilfully transposed the plot into the Czech environment, introducing Czech names for the main characters while retaining the French lightness, elegance, and wit. The opera premiered on March 27 1874 at the Provisional Theatre in Prague and was the last opera before Smetana going deaf. Despite this, he continued refining the opera, whose final version is most frequently performed and premiered in 1878," explains the theatre's intendant Jiří Nekvasil.

The production's stage director and set designer, Slovenian artist Rocc, elaborated on the intendant's words as follows: "*The Two Widows* is an opera comedy, but the title is a bit deceptive. They deal with love and the relationship to death, embodying two contradictory principles. The widow Anežka represents the memento mori principle—she remembers her husband and resists moving forward. By contrast, Karolina strives to forget the past, find joy, and live in a carpe diem style. A peculiar triangle unfolds when a young man, Ladislav, enters the scene. Exploring this dynamic is precisely what we aim to portray because it resonates closely with today's audience," he explains.

The opera encompasses two distinct musical aesthetics. The first act resonates with the charm of operetta or vaudeville. Subsequently, the drawing-room setting shifts to a profoundly psychological narrative. Opera company's artistic director the opera's conductor Marek Šedivý admits that the score contains a great number of intricacies: "Striking the perfect balance of fluency, text clarity, tempo, and sound, tastefully capturing the elegance and depth of the music, poses a challenging yet immensely enjoyable task for me."



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Show dates

1st premiere: 09.06.2022

2nd premiere: 11.06.2022

Smetana Opera Cycle Ostrava 2024 show dates: 06.03. and 07.05.2024 from 6:30 pm

Venue

Antonín Dvořák Theatre Smetanovo nám. 3104, 701 04 Moravská Ostrava a Přívoz, Czech Republic

Creative team

conductor **Jiří Habart / Marek Šedivý**^{1 2}

stage director **Rocc**

set designer **Rocc**

costume designer **Belinda Radulović**

movement director **Anna Knollová**

chorus master **Jurij Galatenko**

dramaturg **Juraj Bajús**

Cast

Karolina, a widow **Lada Bočková**² / **Soňa Godarská**¹

Anežka, a widow **Veronika Rovná**¹ / **Lívia Obručník Vénosová**²

Ladislav Podhajský **Martin Javorský**² / **Martin Šrejma**¹

Mumlal, gamekeeper **Martin Gurbal**² / **František Zahradníček**¹

Toník **Václav Čížek**¹ / **Rudolf Medňanský**²

Lidka **Ivana Ambrúsová**¹ / **Karolína Levková**²

Priest **Jan Rychtář**¹ / **Petr Urbánek**²

¹ cast of the March edition of the Smetana Opera Cycle Ostrava 2024

² cast of the May edition of the Smetana Opera Cycle Ostrava 2024

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NATIONAL MORAVIAN-SILESIA THEATRE
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