



Music of the Czech Lands

The Janáček Brno Festival

4–9 November 2026 (MM 223)

6 days

Speakers: Professor Jan Smaczny & Martina Hinks-Edwards

Deep immersion in music of the Czech Lands, music which touches the head, heart and soul.

Two performances by the renowned Bamberger Symphoniker with Jakub Hrůša: a full staging of Janáček's *Jenůfa* and an orchestral concert featuring works by Janáček, Dvořák & Bruckner.

Two intimate piano recitals, and a second Janáček opera, *The Makropulos Affair*, complete a varied music programme.

Brno is one of the loveliest cities in Central Europe, a treasure-house of historic and modernist architecture, yet with few tourists.

Daily talks on the music by Professor Jan Smaczny, and visits in Brno and the vicinity led by Martina Hinks-Edwards.

The second city of the Czech Republic and capital of Moravia, Brno is among the loveliest and most interesting cities of the former Habsburg Empire. A showcase for historic architecture spanning many centuries and scene of a rich cultural life, it nevertheless remains strangely overlooked by tourists – which is part of its charm. This tour provides delicious immersion in the music of Bohemian and Moravian composers – Leoš Janáček, Antonín Dvořák, Pavel Haas, Bohuslav Martinů and others.

This is only the tenth edition of the biennial Janáček Brno Festival but it has already achieved international acclaim. Brno was home to Leoš Janáček for much of his life, and the theatre that bears his name, opened in 1965, is a superb venue for a wide variety of opera. Here we see *Jenůfa*, one of Janáček's most powerful and personal works; composed over nine years during the illness and death of his daughter Olga. Under the baton of Jakub Hrůša, the internationally acclaimed Bamberger Symphoniker brings this tragic tale of love, shame and sacrifice to life. Hrůša and the Bamberger Symphoniker return for an orchestral concert including Janáček's rarely heard *Jealousy*, Dvořák's *The Wild Dove*, and Bruckner's majestic Fourth Symphony.



Brno, 1930s coloured etching.

Complementing these grand performances are two piano recitals in more intimate settings. At the Leoš Janáček Memorial – the composer's home for the final 18 years of his life – students from the Janáček Academy perform works by Janáček, Haas, and Kaprál. At Villa Löw-Beer, an elegant early 20th-century Art Nouveau residence, pianist Tomáš Višek presents a more international programme including works by Martinů, Milhaud, Stravinsky, and Gershwin.

The tour concludes with a performance of *The Makropulos Affair*, a haunting meditation on immortality, as Janáček transforms Karel Čapek's play into an emotionally charged opera about the human desire for meaning.

The performances are interspersed with expert-led visits to the architectural and historical riches of Brno and wider Moravia. Among them is Villa Tugendhat, a masterpiece of Modernism by Mies van der Rohe; the Baroque monastery at Rajhrad; and the magnificent château at Valtice, once a seat of the Liechtenstein family. The walks, talks, and excursions deepen the connection between the music and the region, while time is also reserved for rest or independent exploration.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly mid-morning from London Heathrow to Prague and drive to Brno, arriving in time to settle into the hotel before dinner.

Day 2. Morning visit to Villa Tugendhat, designed by Mies van der Rohe, it is one of the most important modernist family homes in Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2001. *Visit subject to final confirmation in July 2026.* Guided afternoon walk through central Brno, followed by evening opera at the Janáček Theatre: *Jenůfa* (Janáček) with Jakub Hrůša (conductor), Martin Glaser (director), Corinne Winters (*Jenůfa*), Nicky Spence (*Laca*), Thomas Atkins (*Števa*), Eliška Weisssová (*Kostelnička*), and the Bamberger Symphoniker.

Day 3. Excursion to the monastery at Rajhrad, a vast complex with a magnificent church designed by Jan Santini-Aichel, the most inventive of Czech Baroque architects. Continue south through lovely countryside to Valtice, a Baroque mansion which lies at the centre of estates straddling the Austrian border once owned by the Liechtensteins, the richest magnates in the Habsburg Empires. See

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the reconstructed Baroque theatre, chapel and stables. Evening concert at the Janáček Theatre: *Bamberger Symphoniker with Jakub Hrůša (conductor): Janáček, Jealousy; Dvořák, The Wild Dove; Bruckner, Symphony No. 4.*

Day 4. Morning piano recital at the Janáček Memorial: *Students of the Janáček Academy of Music & Performing Arts (JAMU), Kento Satsuma & Jan Schulmeister (piano): Janáček, Moravian Folk Songs for Piano; Haas, Folk Songs for Piano; Kaprál, Miniatures; Janáček, In the Mists; Janáček, Piano Sonata 1. X. 1905.* After an independent lunch there is a private visit to St Thomas's Abbey where the pioneering geneticist Gregor Mendel was abbot, and the young Leoš Janáček a chorister.

Day 5. Morning piano recital at Villa Löw-Beer: *Tomáš Víšek (piano): Milhaud, Tango des Fratellini (from the ballet Le Bœuf sur le toit); Martinů, Eight preludes (selection); Stravinsky, Piano-Rag-Music; Gershwin, Song-Book for Piano (selection).* After a free afternoon for independent exploration, there is an early dinner, followed by an evening opera at the Janáček Theatre: *The Makropulos Affair (Janáček) with Robert Kružík (conductor), David Radok (director), Jana Šrejma Kačírková (Emilia Marty), Aleš Briscoin (Albert Gregor), Svatopluk Sem (Baron Jaroslav Prus) with the Janáček Opera Ensemble and the Orchestra of the National Theatre Brno.*

Day 6. Drive to Prague Airport and arrive at Heathrow mid-afternoon.

A number of the visits are by special arrangement. It is possible the order of visits may vary from the description above.

Lecturers

Professor Jan Smaczny. Sir Hamilton Harty Professor Emeritus, Queen's University, Belfast, and an authority on Czech music. An author, broadcaster and journalist, he has published books on the Prague Provisional Theatre, Dvořák's Cello Concerto, Music in 19th-century Ireland and Bach's B-minor Mass. He is a graduate of the University of Oxford, has studied at the Charles University in Prague and worked extensively in university education.

Martina Hinks-Edwards studied English at Charles University, Prague. She began working for MRT while still studying, firstly as an interpreter for groups visiting the Czech Republic, and from 2004 as a tour leader with

a wide breadth of knowledge of the country's cultural history. She has led tours throughout the Czech Republic and has a particular interest in 20th-century Czech history and architecture. The countless accolades she has received over the years from her clients, is a reflection of her energy and enthusiasm for the job.

Practicalities

Included: private coach for airport transfers and excursions; hotel accommodation as described below; 2 dinners and 2 lunches with wine or beer, interval canapés at 3 performances; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturers.

Accommodation. Grandezza Hotel, Brno (grandezzahotel.cz): a characterful 5-star hotel located in the heart of Brno's historic centre. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? On the sightseeing tours and excursions there is quite a lot of walking, much of it on roughly paved streets, some on inclines. Walks to and from the theatres are between 15/20 minutes. The tour would therefore not be suitable for anyone with difficulties with everyday walking.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.