

# PRESS RELEASE

May 12, 2023

## **Tomáš Hanus with orchestra from Cardiff, Wales opens the Prague Spring Festival**

Already 78<sup>th</sup> Prague Spring Festival opens this year with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra and its chief conductor Tomáš Hanus. The traditional Smetana's My Country will be performed in the Municipal House at 8 p.m. in the personal presence of the President of the Czech Republic, Petr Pavel.

*“Tomáš Hanus has been reaping one success after another. The Czech-Welsh My Country will certainly be festive but also fresh and unbound by musical conventions. The island country of dragons, witches and giants is geographically distant but very close to the long tradition of performing Czech music,”* says Pavel Trojan, director of Prague Spring.

*“When I hear My Country, I ask myself how Smetana could have created such a thing. Something so original, so different,”* says Tomáš Hanus and continues: *“Today we need the tones of My Country very much. They awaken the better in people, the self-awareness of who we are, what our history tells us and what is its meaning. Music has the power to go deeper than words. We don't have to bow to Smetana's My Country, look scholarly and get a little bored. It has the power to find us on its own and embrace us.”*

*“Under the baton of Tomáš Hanus, our orchestra continues to grow from success to success and I am glad that it has been invited to the prestigious Prague Spring International Music Festival. This is an honour that is rarely given to an opera orchestra and offers the players another opportunity to demonstrate their excellence on the international stage,”* says Welsh National Opera Director Aidan Lang.

The Welsh National Opera Orchestra will be the fourth British ensemble to take on the ceremonial task. In 2005 it was the London Symphony Orchestra with conductor Colin Davis, in 1996 with an illuminating historical interpretation by the London Classical Players with Roger Norrington and for the first time, exactly thirty years ago, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra with the conductor Libor Pešek.

Tomáš Hanus is one of the three most internationally successful pupils of Jiří Bělohlávek. However, unlike Jakub Hrůša and Tomáš Netopil, he hardly conducts in the Czech Republic at all. In order to give the domestic audience a chance to experience his

conducting skills the Prague Spring Festival decided to invite him to perform with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra, which he has been leading since 2016. *The fact that My Country is not part of the ensemble's traditional repertoire is not a disadvantage,"* says Hanus himself. *"Our orchestra is hungry for new things and capable of tackling the most complex scores. A fresh approach without preconceptions can be very interesting! In the Czech Republic, it is little known that the orchestra has a very lively tradition of Czech music, especially the Janáček tradition,"* adds Tomáš Hanus. The conductor Charles Mackerras and the opera director David Pountney were the main contributors. Moreover, Hanus is not the first Czech conductor of the Cardiff Opera. Between 1951 and 1956, it was regularly conducted by the Přerov-born Vilém Tauský.

Hanus has several major opera projects in the current season: The Makropulos Affair, with which he was also a guest at the Janáček Brno Festival, Her Shepherdess at the Vienna State Opera, and on 6th June he will have his first ever performance of Dvořák's Rusalka at La Scala in Milan.

In addition to opera performances, Hanus regularly appears with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra on concert stages throughout the UK. When he first stood in front of the orchestra as music director, the Guardian gave the concert the highest five-star rating and wrote: *„The chemistry between Hanus and the orchestra was indeed palpable in the performance of Mahler's Second Symphony and no one could have expected anything better... Hanus used the acoustics of the hall to stunning effect and the monumental orchestral coda sealed a memorable evening.“* Before Hanus and the orchestra headed to Prague, at the end of January he also played the entire cycle of Smetana's symphonic poems to a Cardiff audience in a regular concert series at St. David's Hall.

Bedřich Smetana's My Country is also offered live on Czech Television and Czech Radio. For several years now, the festival has also organised the Opening of the Prague Spring on Kampa with a projection of the opening concert on a large screen with excellent sound in a park on the banks of the Vltava River. A repeat of the concert is scheduled for tomorrow, 13 May, again at 8 p.m. in the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House.

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Photographs for the concerts of Prague Spring 2023 are available here:  
[https://bit.ly/PJ2023\\_foto](https://bit.ly/PJ2023_foto)

Photographs from the festival concerts can be found [here](#).