

**PER BOYE HANSEN**

Artistic Director of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera

**opera**

## The “self-made woman” at the State Opera

As a part of the *Musica non grata* project, the State Opera will present Franz Schreker’s *Der Ferne Klang* after 102 years. Being one of the most famous operas composed in the first half of the 20th century, the piece will be directed by the twice Golden Mask Award holder Timofey Kulyabin as his Czech debut. Premieres are scheduled for 20th and 26th March with reprises on 29th March and 3rd and 10th April.

*“For me, Der Ferne Klang is a story of today’s world set in an unspecified, pulsating, modern European city. Just like in Schreker’s libretto, we witness a relationship between two people at times, when they are together and when they are apart, with the episodes separated by several years in each case. But for me, this is not a tale of romantic love and deceptive illusions but rather one of the nature and rights that genuine talent brings. And even more so if a woman is the one to have such talent,”* says **Timofey Kulyabin** about his take on staging the piece. The opera was work in progress from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Alexander Zemlinsky pushed for it to be presented in Prague since 1911. Finally, the opera premiered on 18 August 1912 in Frankfurt am Main. But the second theatre in the world to present *Der Ferne Klang* to its audience was the New German Theatre in Prague. The date was 20 May 1920 and Alexander Zemlinsky was the conductor. *“We are now in the middle of something of a Schreker renaissance in Europe, so as soon as we decided to go ahead with the Musica non grata project, I was quite clear that Der Ferne Klang was a must for its program. It is an extraordinarily beautiful work of late romantic music language and strong autobiographic overtones. Personally, I think that it is one of the masterpieces of 20-century opera,”* says **Per Boye Hansen**, the Artistic Director of the National Theatre Opera and the State Opera.

While designing the production, the team let itself be inspired by films such as Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* or Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus*. It takes full advantage of sound effects prescribed by the author himself distorting the sound perspective of the audience in creative ways. Thus, spectators can look forward to a chorus hidden behind the scene or small ensembles dispersed over secret hiding spots. The scene itself is also very interesting, being conceived in the form of an endless corridor. *“In Schreker’s version, Grete loses everything in the end: her love and her life of which there is nothing left. In the story we tell, she wins her life back. I would call her a ‘self-made woman,’”* says Timofey Kulyabin.

The cast will be led by the soprano **Svetlana Aksenova** as Grete and the tenor **Aleš Briscein** in the role of the composer Fritz. Musically, the production is being prepared by **Karl-Heinz Steffens**, the Music Director of the State Opera, who will be conducting the **State Opera Orchestra and Chorus**. Five performances are planned for Prague.

*Musica non grata* is a project prepared with the financial support of the **Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Czech Republic**.

## Der Ferne Klang

Music and libretto: Franz Schreker (1878–1934)

Conductor: Karl-Heinz Steffens / Richard Hein

Director: Timofey Kulyabin

Set Design: Oleg Golovko

Costumes: Vlada Pomirkovanaja

Lighting Design: Taras Mikhalevsky

Chorusmaster: Adolf Melichar

Dramaturgy: Jitka Slavíková / Ilya Kukharenko

Grete: Svetlana Aksenova

Fritz: Aleš Briscein

Grete (Double): Kristýna Štarhová

The Old Graumann / The Count: Daniel Scofield

The Old Graumann / The Waitress: Veronika Hajnová

The Old lady / A Spanish lady: Darya Rositskaya

The Landlord / The Baron: Ivo Hrachovec

The Actor from Smirk: Jiří Rajniš

Dr. Vigelius: Miloš Horák

Mizzi: Zuzana Ballánová

Mary: Tereza Štěpánková

Milli: Lenka Pavlovič

Rudolf: Jiří Hájek

The Chevalier / The First chorister: Václav Sibera

The Second chorister: Pavel Borek / Alexander Laptev

The Suspicious individual: Jan Mária Hájek

The Gondolier: Michael Skalický / Vladimír Müller

Fritz's mistress: Kristina Kubová / Eliška Mourečková

State Opera Orchestra

State Opera Chorus

**Premiere: 20th and 26th March 2022 at the State Opera at 7:00 PM**

**Reprises: 29th March, 3rd and 10th April 2022**

### Timofey Kulyabin

Directing both drama and opera, **Timofey Kulyabin** is one of the most talented Russian directors of the last decade. This is apparent from the list of awards he gained in that time, including two Golden Mask Awards (*Onegin* and *Three Sisters*, both Best Productions) and two nominations (*Macbeth* and *KILL*). His home stage is the “Red Torch” in Novosibirsk, where he has been working since 2007, from 2015 as the theatre’s chief director. In his capacity, he created a number of bold interpretations of works by Chekhov, Ibsen, Gogol, Pushkin, Lermontov and others. His regular collaborations include drama theatres in Munich, Zurich, Berlin, Riga, Saint Petersburg or Moscow. *Prince Igor* became his opera debut at the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre in 2009, where he followed with Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* in 2014. That production, however, resulted in a political scandal and had to be withdrawn after four performances following an outcry from local Orthodox Church officials. Still, it received the audience award. At the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, he staged *Don Pasqual* (2016) and *Rusalka* (2019). He also worked for Opernhaus Wuppertal – *Rigoletto* (2017) and *Les Noces/Oedipus Rex* double (2019). Franz Schreker’s *Der Ferne Klang* will be his opera debut at the National Theatre. His other plans for this year include *Macbeth* at the Schauspiel Frankfurt, premiere of Chekhov’s *Platonov* at the Deutsches Theatre Berlin and a joint project with Ingeborga Dapkūnaitė and John Malkovich at Riga’s Dailes Theatre.

### Production team’s statement on the Russian invasion of Ukraine of 25 February 2022

#### Production information

<https://bit.ly/3KQTQwO>

#### Photographs for download

Production photographs: <https://1drv.ms/u/s!ApBE3x3pPyNihZNBhGnZqHcM7TdNjg?e=64cdW4>

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