

LEOŠ JANÁČEK: NURSERY RHYMES - INSPIRATION FROM THE LIDOVÉ NOVINY NEWSPAPER

LEOŠ JANÁČEK: ŘÍKADLA - INSPIRACE LIDOVÝMI NOVINAMI

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ABSTRACT:

Approximately two years before his death Leoš Janáček wrote the one work which was dedicated solely to children - *Nursery Rhymes*. The initial inspiration for its composition came from Janáček's active study of children's musical expression, though the final inspiration was to come from *Lidové noviny* [People's News]. Here all eighteen nursery rhymes were to be found with their dates of publication, thanks to which the dating of the work's composition could be updated. This study also brings new information concerning the origins of the nursery-rhyme texts, which until now were thought to be from the collections *Prostonárodní české písně a říkadla* [Czech Folk Songs and Nursery Rhymes] by Karel Jaromír Erben and *Naše děti* [Our Children] by František Bartoš. However, these collections contain only eight nursery rhymes from a total of eighteen, while the other poems are either contained in other collections or their origins are unknown. The information on Janáček's contacts with the artists and their cooperation on the work's origin is also of great importance.

KEY WORDS: Leoš Janáček, Nursery Rhymes, Lidové noviny [People's News], Josef Lada

Leoš Janáček's association with the newspapers in which he began to publish his first literary contributions dates back to 1875. During his lifetime he was to publish in almost forty different newspapers and magazines, though naturally the number of periodicals which wrote about him and his work ran into the hundreds. In terms of the number of contributions by Janáček published, the most important periodical after *Hudební listy* [Music Papers] was *Lidové noviny* [People's News], which published 60 of Janáček's feuilletons, five separate music contributions, one theoretical and two co-authored contributions. As well as making detailed reference to the composer's life and work, *Lidové noviny* also directly inspired Janáček to compose several of his works, particularly the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, including the song *Vixen is running to Tábor*, and the song cycle *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, to write the feuilletons *Studánky* and *Všudybyl*, and to set to music the short verses for children entitled *Nursery Rhymes*.

Short children's rhymes with illustrations by various artists had been published in a Sunday supplement called *Lidové noviny Dětský koutek* [Children's Corner] since 1922. In 1925 the first series of *Nursery Rhymes* was published, inspired by the pictures of Josef Lada and Ondřej Sekora. For the second series two years later, alongside these two artists there was also an illustration by Jan Hála and by an unknown artist for the nursery rhyme *Bear was sitting on the tree trunk*.

Long before Janáček began work on the *Nursery Rhymes*, he had studied and noted down the melodies of children's speech (1903-1906). Later he met Edward Babák¹ and František Pražák², the founders and leading representatives of the Society for Child Research in Brno, which was founded in 1921. The role that Babák and Pražák played in the creation of the *Nursery Rhymes* is demonstrated by Janáček's notes on the back of the second sheet of an autograph sketch where the composer listed their names with the comment "The main impetus, it will contain the imprint of their legacy."³ Vladimír Gregor