SHAKESPEARE 400+ FESTIVAL
May Celebration

With the end of the Shakespeare season approaching, the Hungarian State Opera will be organising its biggest festival ever – and certainly its most varied – between May 17 and 2 June 2016. While it won’t be easy to exceed the scale of 2014’s Strauss150 festival or the scope of the previous year’s series on the theme of Faust, the unmatched influence of the “Swan of Avon” nevertheless ensures that this year will see premieres of 17 different adaptations in four different venues (Opera House, Erkel Theatre, Music Academy and Palace of Arts), most of them more than once, and with several Hungarian premieres among them as well.

The Tempest

Opera in three acts

Conductor | Péter Halász Director | Ludger Engels
Szereplők ➤ Franco Pomponi, Erika Miklósa, István Horváth, Andrea Szántó, Péter Balczó, István Kovácszádi, Tamás Tarjányi, Krisztián Cser, Zsolt Haja, András Palerdi

The composer attempts the impossible by taking Shakespeare’s play and then, without adapting it as a whole, but still preserving the spirit, wildness and philosophically circumspect playfulness of the original, brings to life the story of the dethroned king. Through the tale of Prospero, Caliban and Ariel – as well as the young Ferdinand and Miranda – the viewer is confronted with issues such as the thirst for vengeance, the power of good and evil, the nature of magic, the possibility of love, and paths to reconciliation. Presented in Hungary for the first time.

21, 25, 28 MAY & 1 JUNE 2016 OPERA HOUSE

Sly

Opera in three acts

Conductor | Sándor Gyüdi Director | Pál Göttinger
Cast ➤ Boldizsár László, Zoltán Kelemen, Krisztina Könya, András Kiss

On one visit to a London pub where he is a regular, the poet Sly drinks himself unconscious. The Earl of Westmoreland decides to play a joke on the poet: dressing him in fine clothes, he takes him to the palace to make him believe that he himself is the Earl, and that his beautiful “wife”, Dolly, has been praying for him to wake from his ten-year sleep. In truth, however, the cruel joke is the one that comes when he regains his sense of reality...

27, 29 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE
Lear

Aribert Reimann

Opera in two acts

Conductor | Stefan Soltész Staged by | Anger Ferenc
Director | Jean-Pierre Ponnelle
Cast | Tómas Tómasson, István Kovács, Zsolt Haja, Boldizsár László, István Kovácszházi, András Palerdi, Barnabás Hegyi, Dániel Vadász, Éva Bátori, Szilvia Rálik, Eszter Sümegi

Lear decides to retire from reigning over the realm, and divides his kingdom among his daughters. His sweetest, youngest daughter, Cordelia, cannot find words fine enough to express her love for her father, and the offended man disowns her, instead dividing his power among her two honey-tongued elders. The old king must then suffer great disappointment, and only after being banished to the wilderness does he finally understand the rules of love and of the exercise of power. This brutal and beautiful opus, by all measure the loudest in musical literature, is being staged in Hungary for the first time by Ferenc Anger, based on the original production by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle of the Munich world premiere.

29, 31 MAY 2016 OPERA HOUSE

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Otto Nicolai

Singspiel in three acts

Musical director | Dániel Erdélyi
Featuring the artists of the Hunagrian State Opera Choir

The Merry Wives of Windsor, that is, the story of Sir John Falstaff being taught a lesson and the loving marriage of the young Anne Page, has been a favourite thematic source for prose and musical theatre alike since the time of Shakespeare. Nicolai’s singspiel, which was last performed here more than 60 years ago, is performed by artists from the Opera’s highly professional chorus in the foyer of the Erkel Theatre, allowing the audience to enjoy the new revision in intimate proximity to the performers.

25, 31 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE, FOYER

The Fairy Queen

Henry Purcell

Semi-opera in five acts – excerpts

Conductor | Benjamin Bayle Director | András Almási-Tóth

Purcell composed The Fairy Queen to honour the 15th wedding anniversary of the royal couple William III and Mary II. Its first performance took place in London in 1692. The piece is a wonderful semi-opera packed with musical and dramatic fantasy based on A Midsummer Night’s Dream by Shakespeare: the audience find themselves in the world of the beautiful Titania and the story of her love affairs. The magic journey leads all the way to China...

17 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE, FOYER
(PREMIERE: 17 JUNE 2016 OPERA HOUSE)

West Side Story

Leonard Bernstein

Musical in two acts

Conductor | István Dénes Director | Péter Novák
Cast | András Káldi Kiss, Boldizsár László, Helga Nánási, Lúcia Megyesi Schwartz

The now classic musical work that sheds an old-yet-new light on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet will be performed on the stage of the Erkel Theatre. The conflict between immigrants and “natives” as well as warfare between street gangs are, unfortunately, not problems that are unknown to our own time, either. Director Péter Novák has taken on the task of premiering this Bernstein classic on a Hungarian opera stage for the first time in a production that combines operatic voices and elements of dance theatre.

22, 26 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE
Giuseppe Verdi

*Falstaff*

Comic opera in three acts

Conductor | Marcus Bosch
Director | Arnaud Bernard

Cast | Ambrogio Maestri, Gunyong Na, Péter Balczó, Zoltán Megyesi, Géza Gábor, János Szerekován, Beatrix Fodor, Orsolya Sáfár, Bernadett Wiedemann, Erika Gál

Verdi’s clever riposte to Rossini’s dig that he couldn’t write comedy. Aging gentleman’s midlife crisis complete with romance, escapes in laundry hampers, a dunking in the Thames, and woodland shenanigans. Duets, quartets, and musical quotations inspired by Shakespeare with a knight and his reality show – and a guaranteed happy ending.

20, 22 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE

Giuseppe Verdi

*Macbeth*

Opera in four acts

Conductor | Renato Palumbo
Director | Miklós Szinetár

Cast | Lado Ataneli, István Rácz, Szilvia Rálik, Nadin Haris, István Kovácszáli, Gergely Boncsér, Ferenc Cserhalmi, Sándor Egri

An ambitious general at the top of his career aims higher: he does not wait until he can move forward, he slays his monarch to become a king himself. An even more ambitious wife, passionately in love with him, stands by his side as a willing and bloodthirsty instigator, while the horrible plan is also assisted by witches and the forces of darkness – or are they only the demons of the soul? Instead of the political aspect, Verdi’s opera focuses on the powerful passions of the Shakespearian characters, the monsters around and within us, the light and shady stage of the soul.

22, 26 MAY 2016 OPERA HOUSE

Giuseppe Verdi

*Otello*

Opera in four acts

Conductor | Gergely Madaras
Director | Stefano Poda

Cast | Roberto Aronica, Andrea Rost, Mihály Kálmándi, Judit Németh, Gergely Boncsér

Verdi’s penultimate opera premiered in La Scala in 1887 after so many years of silence. The music rang out with elemental force in the overture’s turbulent tempest scene. The man who considered himself an outsider had composed the tale of another „outsider“: The Moor Otello is a soldier, a general and a loving husband who, despite all of his accomplishments, is not accepted by the people of Venice. He remains the eternal „black“ foreigner. The vulnerability of the stranger seeking to fit into society is something that is easy for false friends to exploit – as is his jealousy.

24, 27 MAY 2016 OPERA HOUSE
Programme of the Shakespeare400+ Festival

Purcell
The Fairy Queen – excerpts
(17 May Erkel Theatre)

Gounod
Roméo et Juliette – concert performance
(17 May Erkel Theatre)

Seregi–Goldmark–Hidas
The Taming of the Shrew – ballet
(18, 20 May Opera House)

Szokolay
Hamlet – concert performance
(19 May Erkel Theatre)

Adés
The Tempest
(21, 25, 28 May & 1 June Opera House)

Verdi
Macbeth
(22, 26 May Opera House)

Bernstein
West Side Story
(22, 26 May Erkel Theatre)

Nicolai
The Merry Wives of Windsor
(25, 31 May Erkel Theatre)

Bellini
I Capuleti e i Montecchi – concert performance
(23 May Erkel Theatre)

Verdi
Otello
(24, 27 May Opera House)

Reimann
Lear
(29, 31 May Opera House)

Britten
A Midsummer Night’s Dream
(27, 29 May Music Academy)

Wolf-Ferrari
Sly
(27, 29 May Erkel Theatre)

Wagner
Das Liebesverbot – screening
(1 June Palace of Arts)

Szokolay
Hamlet – concert performance
(19 May Erkel Theatre)

Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra concert
Dvořák Otello Overture
Tchaikovsky Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture
Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night’s Dream – incidental music
Conductor | Arthur Fagen
(30 May Opera House)

Shakespeare song recital
(2 June Opera House)
László Seregi–Karl Goldmark–Frigyes Hidas

The Taming of the Shrew

Ballet in two acts

Conductor | István Silló
Choreographer | László Seregi

Featuring the artists of the Hungarian National Ballet

Kate, the shrew can keep the whole of Padua in fear: no wonder she is unable to find a suitable suitor. Unfortunately, her gentle sister, Bianca cannot be given away until Kate, the first-born is married. Enter Petruchio. He knows the task is immense, but he makes a bet on his success, and he sets out to get the job done. He only needs to overcome one obstacle: the would-be spouse he wishes to love and chasten. Naturally, Petruchio succeeds by methodically crushing Kate’s resistance, making her meek as a lamb in the final scene.

18, 20 MAY 2016 OPERA HOUSE

Charles Gounod

Roméo et Juliette

Conductor | Christian Badea
Cast | Ivan Magri, Zita Szemere, László Szvétek, Csaba Szegedi, Ágnes Anna Kun, Gábor Bretz, Gergely Boncsér, Éva Balatoni, Tamás Busa, Lajos Geiger

The immortal story of the two lovers of Verona is presented in a fresco full of flowing emotions by Gounod. His opera is a colourful, melodic adventure in which the lovers are only just not able to unite before death, while all the necessary elements of French romanticism take place on the stage from charming pages to meddlesome nurses. Virtuoso melodies, tones of light and darkness evoking the Renaissance, and romantic coloratura form the wonderful masterpiece of the French composer into a many-coloured yet organic tapestry.

17 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE

Vincenzo Bellini

I Capuleti e i Montecchi

Conductor | György Vashegyi
Szereplők | Klára Kolonits, Szilvia Vörös, István Kovács, Ferenc Cserhalmi
Featuring the National Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir

Shakespeare, love, tragic ending – reflected in a slightly lesser-known mirror. This piece by the master of bel canto does not only focus on the cover story from Verona, does not merely tell the tale of the star-crossed lovers. The composer is also interested in the feuding families, the middle ages packed with violence, betrayal, dark passions, and the battle between dynasties. It’s a game of life and death, dealing with roles, sexuality, tradition, and power; the whirling of body and soul...

23 MAY 2016 ERKEL THEATRE
Shakespeare song recital

Conductor | Gareth Jones
Featuring | Bryn Terfel
2 June 2016 Opera House

Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra concert

Dvořák
Otello Overture, op. 93

Tchaikovsky
Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture

Mendelssohn
A Midsummer Night’s Dream – incidental music

Conductor | Arthur Fagen
Featuring the Hungarian State Opera Choir
(Choir Director: Kálmán Strausz)

30 May 2016 Opera House

Szokolay Sándor
Hamlet
Live CD recording

Conductor | János Kovács

One of the best-known stories of all times that is almost impossible to construct as an opera. Sándor Szokolay’s sensitive, strongly intellectual music, his atmospheric inner world tempt to conquer this impossible task. His work features the complex philosophic content of the play, the complicated intertwining relationships of the characters, and the suffocating political mood, the scenes of a dictatorship all at the same time.

The opera is based entirely on the text by Shakespeare, the music precipitates in heavy dramatic blocks, or to the contrary, in light inner monologues that represent the thoughts of the prince, thus making their way into our minds.

19 May 2016 Erkel Theatre

The Wives of Henry VIII

The court of Henry VIII, sultry with eroticism and filthy with scandal and betrayal. A venue for fraud and deceit, slander and valid accusations, legitimate and groundless lawsuits, and of great – and sometimes fatal – amusement. The unbridled and mortally dangerous monarch was „in his heart of hearts” a poet and a composer of music. In the mirror of his plans, decisions and choices appear five different women, the king’s happily married – or resting in eternal happiness – wives: Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard. The programme features the people of the royal court as well as Henry VIII’s own musical compositions and poems, masterworks by the poets attached to the courts, excerpts from Shakespeare’s plays, as well as selections from Romantic operas and contemporary music.

Featuring Eszter Zavaros and Balázs Csémy

27, 28 May 2016 Opera House, Chanidelier Loft
Benjamin Britten
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Conductor | Dominic Wheeler
Director | Máté Szabó
Featuring the students of the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy

With its two dozen soloists and instrumental accompaniment of nearly the same size, A Midsummer Night’s Dream verges on chamber opera. It is only quite rarely staged in Hungary, and has not appeared on the Opera programme for 40 years. This version is a joint production with the vocal soloist department of the Music Academy created as a kind of examination performance, with the objective of revealing the work’s full beauty.

27, 29 MAY 2016 MUSIC ACADEMY, SIR GEORGE SOLTI CHAMBER HALL

Richard Wagner
Das Liebesverbot

Conductor | György Selmeczi
Director | Máté Szabó

This is the work with which the 23-year-old Richard Wagner made his debut as an opera composer. Based on Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure, Wagner substantially revised the plot for Das Liebesverbot, but its theme nevertheless remains intact: repressed desire and criticism of false prudery, all presented as a comedy. Wagner set the story in Palermo, with a sanctimonious German governor at its centre. A novice nun takes up the struggle against the occupier and his restrictions, and the general turmoil - after an unrestrained carnival - is ended by the return of the king.

1 JUNE 2016 PALACE OF ARTS