

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner. It consists of the word "NAXOS" in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a blue rectangular box. Above the text are three stylized white icons representing classical architecture: a temple facade, a column, and a pediment.

NAXOS

The background of the entire page is a painting of a dense, overgrown forest. The scene is dominated by thick, gnarled tree trunks and a complex network of bare, dark branches that create a sense of a path almost completely obscured by nature. The color palette is earthy, with various shades of brown, tan, and muted green. In the lower foreground, a stream flows through the forest, its surface reflecting the surrounding trees and sky. The overall atmosphere is one of a wild, untamed, and somewhat somber natural environment.

# JANÁČEK

On an Overgrown Path

Gustav Piekut, Piano

Leoš  
**JANÁČEK**  
(1854–1928)

**On an Overgrown Path, JW VIII/17 (1900–11)**

**Series I**

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 1  | No. 1. Naše večery ('Our evenings')                              | 3:29 |
| 2  | No. 2. Lístek odvanutý ('A blown-away leaf')                     | 2:46 |
| 3  | No. 3. Pojd'te s námi! ('Come with us!')                         | 1:07 |
| 4  | No. 4. Frýdecká panna Maria ('The Madonna of Frydek')            | 4:02 |
| 5  | No. 5. Štěbetaly jak laštovičky ('They chattered like swallows') | 2:09 |
| 6  | No. 6. Nelze domluvit! ('Words fail!')                           | 1:54 |
| 7  | No. 7. Dobrou noc! ('Good night!')                               | 3:21 |
| 8  | No. 8. Tak neskonale úzko ('Unutterable anguish')                | 3:38 |
| 9  | No. 9. V pláči ('In tears')                                      | 2:28 |
| 10 | No. 10. Sýček neodletěl! ('The barn owl has not flown away!')    | 4:00 |

**Series II**

- |    |                   |      |
|----|-------------------|------|
| 11 | No. 1. Andante    | 3:13 |
| 12 | No. 2. Allegretto | 4:12 |

**Series II supplement: Paralipomena**

- |    |                 |      |
|----|-----------------|------|
| 13 | No. 1. Con moto | 3:00 |
| 14 | No. 2. Allegro  | 6:02 |
| 15 | No. 3. Vivo     | 2:05 |

## Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

### On an Overgrown Path (1900–11)

Following the Bohemian exodus of Beethoven's time, it was left to the independent will of three visionary nationalists to shape the next hundred years of Czech music: Smetana (encouraged by Liszt), Dvořák (championed by Brahms), and Janáček. Among the lastingly original operatic forces of the 20th century, Janáček, a lowly Moravian from Brno, began as a trail-blazing teacher and nature-loving folklorist. Discovered late (not until his sixties, with the 1916 Prague production of *Jenůfa*), his pioneering of 'speech-melody', based on the rise and fall and rhythms of his native tongue, gave him the distinguishing musical soundprint of his lifework. 'If speech-melody,' he wrote in 1918, 'is the flower of a water-lily, it nevertheless buds and blossoms and drinks from the roots, which wander in the waters of the mind.' 'I don't need to understand the words,' his Brno student, the conductor Vilem Tausky, remembered him saying. 'I can tell by the tempo and modulation of speech how a man feels; if he lies, or if it is just a conventional conversation. I have been collecting these speech rhythms for years, and I have an immense dictionary. These are my windows into the soul of man, and when I need to find a dramatic expression I have recourse to my library.' 'Janáček's creation was life, and to live was to create,' his biographer Jaroslav Vogel has written (1962). 'He composed permanently – in the streets, at the market, during his morning walks ...He even composed during his classes...' The older he got the younger his art became, transcending its Romantic roots through the radical economy, cellular modernity and non-conformity of its conception. The energy was unstoppable, the inventive cocktail endless.

In his preface to Volume I of the Complete Critical Edition (Prague/Kassel 1978), Ludvík Kundera writes that Janáček's piano works 'are neither numerous nor ostentatious; they do not follow the Liszt or Chopin tradition nor flaunt the virtuosity of either the composer or the interpreter. [But] they include several... valuable compositions reflecting the composer's inner life and revealing a poetic conception of the instrumental medium' close to that of Schumann. Brahms, too, on occasion, he might have added.

The cycle *On an Overgrown Path* is broadly autobiographical, recalling, on the one hand, the composer's rustic boyhood in the mountains and woods around Hukvaldy, the village where he was born in Northern Moravia; and, on the other, the childhood and long, suffering death of his daughter Olga 'on the eve of her twenty-first spring' (Thursday 26 February 1903). Hukvaldy was a place to which Janáček often returned – and never forgot. Its waterways he pictured with the wandering eye and sensuousness of a master poet:

They mirror the flight of a butterfly, and the dark shadows of the dense forest, which stare into them with the unwavering gaze of a child. A fallen leaf sinks to the bottom contentedly, so it seems to me. Before she drinks, the tiny wren chases away the sadness of solitude with a little song. The hind drinks from them with a gentle kiss... I know a large fountain – nearly a small lake, choked by the darkness of ages... There are no angles in this eternal darkness, only souls who play with countless marbles of pink and white [blossoms] (8 September 1922).

*On an Overgrown Path* is music of intimate nostalgia, a deeply private diary of memories and impressions, dreams and images. Of dances and songs – occasionally real, frequently illusory. Of the original series of ten pieces or 'little compositions' (1901–11, printed December 1911), several appeared initially for harmonium – Janáček was an organist – in a collection called *Slavonic Melodies* (1901/02: Nos. 1, 2, 4, 7, 10). The titles followed later. In a letter, 6 June 1908, Janáček elaborated movingly on some of them. A 'love song' (No. 2); a 'letter put away and forgotten' (No. 3); 'the bitterness of deception' (No. 6); 'perhaps you will sense weeping in [No. 9]. The premonition of certain death. During the hot summer nights [of 1902 in Hukvaldy] that angelic person [Olga] lay in deathly anguish'; the mournfully recurrent C sharp/A sharp hoot of the barn owl, superstitiously the harbinger of death, in No. 10 (bars 3–6 et al). In these pieces, Janáček wrote, 'there is more distress than there are words to tell it, they are above all things the most dear to me'. Of a projected second (untitled) series (1911) only *No. 1* in E flat was printed in Janáček's lifetime (in the Brno daily newspaper *Lidové noviny*, 30 September 1911); *No. 2* in G flat remained in manuscript; *No. 3* in E flat was left sketchy. *Nos. 2* and *3* (the latter in an extended/amplified completion by Kurz/Schafer revised Kundera) were first published in 1942, along with two discarded numbers from the first series (1902): in D major and C minor.

## Gustav Piekut



Photo: Julia-Eva Severinsen

The young Danish pianist Gustav Piekut has recorded internationally acclaimed albums, including *Towards the Flame* (works by Scriabin and Langgaard, Naxos 8.574312), which was nominated for the International Classical Music Awards 2022. Recent highlights include soloist performances with the Copenhagen Philharmonic, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Magdeburgische Philharmonie, State Slovak Philharmonic Košice and the Sønderjyllands Symfoniorkester. Piekut is a laureate of international piano competitions such as the Aarhus International Piano Competition and the Kissinger KlavierOlymp. In Denmark, Piekut has received several awards, including the Artist Prize of the Danish Music Critics' Association, the Danish Radio P2 Talent Prize, the Wilhelm Hansen Foundation Honorary Stipend, the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Talent Prize, the Léonie Sonning Talent Prize and the Gladsaxe Music Award. He is an alumnus of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation. Gustav Piekut is generously supported by the Augustinus Foundation.

[www.gustavpiekut.com](http://www.gustavpiekut.com)



Photo: Julia-Eva Severinsen

The Czech composer Leoš Janáček is primarily known for his operas and orchestral works, but at the piano he discovered a highly idiosyncratic and expressive language, strongly influenced by his studies of contemporaneous Slavonic folk music. The cycle *On an Overgrown Path* is a microcosm of this style. Composed between 1900 and 1911, these small pieces evoke the composer's rustic boyhood in the village of Hukvaldy, conveying intimate nostalgia and poignancy in an autobiographical diary of impressions and dreams tinged with joy, introspection and loss. This recording includes the two surviving pieces from the work's second series as well as the *Paralipomena* sequence of three miniatures from the 1942 publication.

Leoš  
**JANÁČEK**  
(1854–1928)



**On an Overgrown Path,  
JW VIII/17 (1900–11)**

<b>1–10</b>	<b>Series I</b>	<b>28:54</b>
<b>11–12</b>	<b>Series II</b>	<b>7:25</b>
<b>13–15</b>	<b>Series II supplement: Paralipomena</b>	<b>11:07</b>

**Gustav Piekut, Piano**

Recorded: 23 **2 5–7 10**, 24 **1 3 4 8 9**, 26 **11–15** October 2024 at Studiescenen,  
Royal Danish Academy of Music (RDAM), Copenhagen, Denmark

Producer and engineer: Jonas Eliyah Munch-Hansen

Editors: Jonas Eliyah Munch-Hansen and Gustav Piekut

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