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VECTORS OF THEATRICAL CREATIVITY OF ALEŠ BŘEZINA

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Contemporary Czech musical theater in 2020 and 2026 is defined by a bold departure from "museum-like" preservation toward a living, breathing art form that reacts to the modern world. The Czech Republic remains the epicenter of this evolution, blending centuries of tradition with cutting-edge technology and social activism.

Aleš Březina (born 1965) is a prominent Czech composer and musicologist, widely recognized for his work in both contemporary opera and film music. He is particularly noted for his collaboration with director Jan Hřebejk and his scholarly work on the composer Bohuslav Martinů. Since 1995 he has been the director of the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague and the chairman of the editorial board of the Complete Critical Edition of Bohuslav Martinů's works.

Březina has composed music for more than 20 films, e.g. Jan Hřebejk (*Divided We Fall, Up&Down, Beauty in Trouble, Kawasaki Rose, Honeymoon, The Case for the Exorcist*), Petr Zelenka (*The Buttoners*), Jiří Menzel (*I Served the King of England and Donšajns*), Dagmar Knöpfel (*Durch diese Nacht sehe ich keinen einzigen Stern*), Petr Nikolaev (*Miss Black, Black Miss and Wolves in the City*), Juraj Lehotský (*Nina, Plastic Symphony*), Georgis Agathonikiadis (*My Uncle Archimedes*), Tomáš Pavlíček (*Cottage for Sale*), David Mrnka (*Milada*).

Together with the librettist and director Jiří Nekvasil, he is the author of the opera *Zítřka se bude...* (often translated as *Tomorrow There Will Be...*) about the trial of Dr. Milada Horáková (*Alfréd Radok Award for Best Music* in 2008). Premiering in 2008 at the Kolowrat Theatre, it became one of the most successful and critically acclaimed works of contemporary Czech music theatre.

The opera deals with one of the darkest chapters of modern Czech history: the show trial and judicial murder of Milada Horáková in 1950. Horáková was a politician

and human rights activist who was falsely accused of conspiracy and treason by the Communist regime. Despite international outcry (including pleas for mercy from Albert Einstein and Winston Churchill), she was executed.

The libretto consists entirely of authentic historical documents. It uses transcripts from the court proceedings, Milada Horáková's final letters from prison, period propaganda, and "letters from the working people" demanding the harshest punishment for the "traitors."

The title *Zítřa se bude...* is a truncated reference to a famous 1950s communist propaganda song, "Zítřa se bude tančit všude" ("Tomorrow there will be dancing everywhere"). This creates a chilling contrast between the forced optimism of the regime and the grim reality of the courtroom.

Aleš Březina utilized a minimalist musical language, characterized by repetitive patterns (ostinatos) that build a sense of claustrophobic tension and inexorable fate.

The lead role was written specifically for the legendary Czech opera star Soňa Červená (1925–2023). Her participation was deeply symbolic: her own mother had died in a concentration camp, and she herself had to flee communist Czechoslovakia in the 1960s to pursue a world career.

Since September 2021, the F.X. Šalda Theatre in Liberec has been presenting Březina's full-length ballet *Mauglí*. Březina's ballet emphasizes conveying emotions and ideas through movement. Dancers use their bodies as a means of expression to convey a variety of feelings and experiences.

In November 2024, the F.X. Šalda Theatre in Liberec premiered his new full-length ballet, *Sněhová královna* (The Snow Queen) based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale. The dance adaptation of an icy, mysterious, almost horror fairy tale is the result of renewed collaboration in Liberec between already well-known authors: choreographer Marika Mikanová, designer Aleš Valášek, composer Aleš Březina and Pavel Ridoško.

Březina's ballets lack the rigid rules and standards of classical ballet. Choreographers and dancers have greater freedom to experiment and interpret music and movement. Březina's dance works move away from specific plots and instead use abstract forms, symbols, and metaphors to express more abstract ideas.

