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MARTINŮ
THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

Lucy Crowe – soprano, Andrew Staples – tenor, Derek Welton – baritone, Jan Martiník – bass, Simon Callow – narrator

*Czech Philharmonic, conductor Manfred Honeck
Prague Philharmonic Choir, choirmaster Lukáš Vasilek*

Recorded live in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, Prague, 25-27 January 2017

Special thanks to: Ministry of Culture Czech Republic & Bohuslav Martinů Foundation

"I have realised that, notwithstanding the immense progress we have attained ... the questions I have come across in the literature of a nation we refer to as primitive still accompany us. They are the questions of friendship, love and death. In the epic of Gilgamesh, we encounter a very acute and almost anxiously distressful yearning to find the answers, which we have been seeking in vain to the present day." The music Martinů created during the last decade of his life demonstrates his penchant for religious and spiritual texts. The idea of setting the epic written 4,500 years ago matured in the composer for 15 years. Although differing boldly from the avant-garde of the 1950s, it is an utterly modern piece, reflecting Martinů's intense interest in Baroque music and the Notre Dame school. The oratorio, premiered on 23 January 1958 in Basel, was a tremendous success. Its performance in Prague in January 2017 by the Czech Philharmonic and a superb international team of soloists, conducted by Manfred Honeck, brought back to life the work's English version, based on Reginald Campbell Thompson's translation. The recording, featuring a unique constellation of performers, renders the spiritually profound aspect of Bohuslav Martinů's work with an exceptional emotionality.



The Epic of Gilgamesh sung in the original English version on an engrossing premiere recording, conducted by Manfred Honeck.

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890–1959)

The Epic of Gilgamesh, h 351 (1955)*

Oratorio for Soloists, Narrator, Mixed Choir and Orchestra

Libretto by Bohuslav Martinů after Reginald Campbell Thompson

1/ Gilgamesh (*Tablets 1, 2*)

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2/ The Death of Enkidu (*Tablets 7, 8, 10*)

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3/ Invocation (*Tablet*)

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***The world premiere recording of the original english version**