



Intimate Letters

Leos Janáček

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These are the letters of a great love story. In 1917, the Czech composer Leos Janáček met Kamila Stösslová while on holiday at Luhačovice, a spa resort in Moravia. He was sixty-three and locked in a loveless marriage; she was twenty-six, the wife of an antique dealer frequently away from home. After the holiday, Janáček began writing to Stösslová. Undeterred by her lack of interest in his work and her spasmodic replies, he continued to send her letters until his death eleven years later. An extraordinarily self-revealing portrait emerges of an isolated artist at the height of his creative powers and the beginning of his international fame. It is also a portrait of a lonely man who, as the years went by, came to fantasize about Stösslová as his true "wife"--the inspiration for many of the works of his old age.

Most of these letters were suppressed until changing conditions in Czechoslovakia allowed their full publication in 1990. John Tyrrell has edited and translated a comprehensive selection, concentrating on the almost daily letters of the final eighteen months. Supported by a diary of meetings between Janáček and Stösslová, a decoding of the erotic references in the letters, and a selection of mostly unknown photographs, this remarkable book breathes life into the story one of the greatest of operatic composers and provides vital clues to the nature of his creative genius.

Originally published in 1994.

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