



# Janacek: Years of a Life Volume 1 (1854-1914): The Lonely Blackbird

*John Tyrrell*

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John Tyrrell's biography of the Leos Janáček is the culmination of a life's work in the field. It stands upon his existing documentary studies of Janáček's operas and translations of other key sources and his examination of thousands of still unpublished letters and other documents in the Janáček archive in Brno. Altogether it provides the most detailed account of Janáček's life in any language and offers new views of Janáček as composer, writer, thinker and human being.

Volume 1, which goes up to the outbreak of the First World War and Janáček's sixtieth birthday in the summer of 1914, consists of chronological chapters providing a straightforward account of Janáček's life year by year and another forty contextual chapters. Topics include on-going sequences ('Music as autobiography I', etc.; 'Janáček's knowledge of opera I', etc.) and individual chapters on Janáček as a teacher, as a theorist, as an music ethnographer, on his speech-melody theory, his relationship to particularly influential operas (Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*, Charpentier's *Louise*), on his mentors (such as Antonín Dvořák) and his *bêtes noires* (such as Karel Kovarovic). A particular feature are the specially commissioned chapters on Janáček's health by Dr Stephen Lock (one of the editors of the *Oxford Illustrated Companion to Medicine*, OUP 1994 and 2001, editor of the *British Medical Journal*, 1975-91, and a Janáček enthusiast since the early postwar broadcasts on the Third Programme), and on Janáček's earnings and finances by Dr Jirí Zahrádka (curator of the Janáček archive in Brno, and editor of authentic editions of *Srka* and *The Excursions of Mr Broucek*).

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