

Project Butterfly

Boosting environmental
awareness in opera creation

The Project Butterfly Newsletter
June 2025 



Project Butterfly comes to life in Gdansk

Final flight at Opera Bałtycka

On 31 May and 1 June, Project Butterfly concluded its European journey with two final performances at Opera Bałtycka in Gdansk. Bringing together the trilogy—*Lake of Ashes*, *Breathe*, and *Perla di Speranza*—this closing event was both a celebration and the culmination of months of collaborative work across borders and disciplines, driven by ecological awareness.

The evening began with *Lake of Ashes*, the Polish act developed by Opera Bałtycka. Set against a landscape shaped by memory, loss, and rebirth, the performance wove together fragmented soundscapes, raw movement, and evocative visuals to depict a world scorched by past choices yet quietly yearning for renewal. Deeply rooted in Polish cultural realities, *Lake of Ashes* resonated with local audiences in a profound and personal way—an emotional mirror reflecting both regional identity and universal ecological concerns.

Following this, *Breathe* and *Perla di Speranza* carried the audience through immersive, multisensory worlds shaped by air, water, transformation, and hope. As each act unfolded, themes of resilience and interconnectedness grew stronger, underscoring the central message of *Project Butterfly*: that art can be a living response to environmental urgency.

As always, sustainability remained at the heart of the production. Modular set designs, recycled materials, eco-conscious lighting, and low-impact touring practices embodied our commitment to reducing environmental harm while creating compelling, boundary-pushing opera.

We extend our thanks to the entire team at Opera Bałtycka, our international creative partners, and the vibrant Gdańsk audiences who welcomed us with open arms. Your engagement and support gave *Project Butterfly* the perfect final flourish.



Behind the scenes: more about the costumes

While last month's newsletter explored the breathtaking settings of *Project Butterfly*, this edition turns the spotlight to the remarkable costume design—where sustainability, symbolism, and storytelling converge across the opera's three transformative acts.

From the ritualistic silhouettes of *Lake of Ashes* to the elemental expressions in

Breath, and the textured human journey of *Perla di Speranza*, the costumes throughout *Project Butterfly* are more than attire—they are living extensions of the opera's environmental and emotional arc.

Sculptural and mythic in *the Lake of Ashes*, the garments are almost relics of a forgotten civilisation. These looks, constructed from repurposed textiles and biodegradable materials, are both visually arresting and deeply symbolic of nature's cycles—destruction, decay, renewal.

In *Breath*, the design language shifts to elemental abstraction. Nature, water, air, and ice converge in organic, flowing forms—ethereal and almost impossible to pin down—crafted from recycled silks, plant-dyed fabrics, and zero-waste cutting techniques. The contrast is stark when the factory owner and assistant appear in rigid, tailored pieces that draw from post-industrial shapes using surplus menswear—visually communicating power, control, and environmental dissonance.

The final act, *Perla di Speranza*, brings us closer to the natural world. Costumes here are tactile and personal: raw cottons, linens, and upcycled lace tell a quieter story of resilience and rebirth. Luca's and Perla's garments evoke childhood simplicity evolving into personal agency, while bolder characters like Gemma and the passerby express emotional intensity through daring silhouettes and chromatic layering, all assembled from vintage fabrics and remnant stock.

By reimagining fashion as ecology, the costumes of *Project Butterfly* don't just clothe the characters—they embody the opera's pulse, a message woven with conscience, creativity, and care.

[Learn more about Project Butterfly here!](#)

Key Dates in opera, music, and sustainability

Interesting facts and Anniversaries to keep in mind!

As June unfolds, we take the opportunity to spotlight meaningful events, milestones, and anniversaries in opera, music, and sustainability. These occasions celebrate the artistic legacy of the past while also reflecting the continuing shift toward more environmentally conscious cultural practices.



KEY DATES TO REMEMBER!

- 5 June:
 - Anniversary of Carl Maria Von Weber's death (1826)
 - World environment day
- 8 June: World Oceans Day
- 11 June: Anniversary - Premiere of Salome at Covent Garden
- 29 June: Anniversary of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's birth

- **5 June:**

- **Anniversary of Carl Maria Von Weber's death (1826)**

Carl Maria von Weber was a pioneering German composer, conductor, and critic, best known for helping shape the Romantic opera tradition. His most famous work, *Der Freischütz* (1821), marked a turning point in opera with its dramatic storytelling, folk-inspired themes, and supernatural elements. Weber's music brought a new emotional depth and connection to nature that influenced later composers like Richard Wagner. He is remembered as one of the founding figures of German Romantic opera.

- **World environment day**

Established by the United Nations in 1972, World Environment Day is the most widely celebrated day for environmental awareness and action. Held every year on 5 June, it highlights urgent environmental challenges and encourages global efforts toward sustainability. For the world of arts and opera, it's a moment to reflect on how creative practices can support ecological responsibility—through sustainable design, mindful production, and storytelling that inspires change.

- **8 June: World Oceans Day**

World Oceans Day, celebrated every 8 June, was officially recognised by the United Nations in 2008 to raise global awareness about the importance of our oceans and the need to protect marine ecosystems. It's a day to reflect on humanity's connection to the sea and the urgent environmental challenges it faces. For opera and the arts, it offers a chance to explore water as a symbol of life, transformation, and fragility—themes that resonate deeply with environmentally conscious performances like *Project Butterfly*.

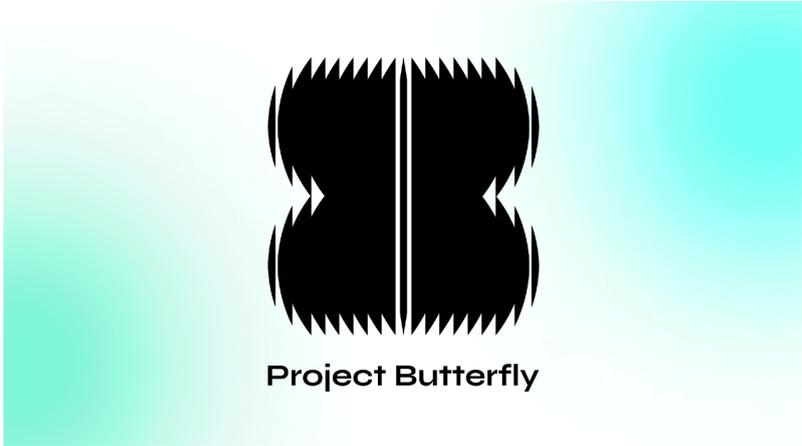
- **11 June: Anniversary – Premiere of Salome at Covent Garden**

On 11 June 1910, Richard Strauss's *Salome* premiered at London's Covent Garden, bringing his bold, modernist vision to one of opera's most prestigious stages. Based on Oscar Wilde's play, *Salome* shocked and fascinated audiences with its intense psychological drama, daring orchestration, and provocative themes. The Covent Garden premiere marked a significant moment in the evolution of opera—pushing artistic boundaries and embracing new forms of emotional and musical expression that continue to influence contemporary productions.

- **29 June: Anniversary of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's birth**

Born on 22 June 1897, Erich Wolfgang Korngold was a musical prodigy who became one of the most influential composers of the early 20th century. Known for his lush harmonies and cinematic style, Korngold made a mark in both opera and film music. His opera *Die tote Stadt* (The Dead City) gained acclaim for its emotional intensity and innovative orchestration. Later, he became a pioneer of Hollywood film scores, shaping the sound of Golden Age cinema. Korngold's legacy bridges the worlds of opera and film, showing how powerful

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Project Butterfly Team

The project is implemented by:

Associated partners:

Co-funded by the European Union

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