



**Project Butterfly**  
Boosting environmental  
awareness in opera creation

# The Project Butterfly Newsletter

## July 2025





## Summer reflections: young voices take centre stage

### New narratives emerge from new generations

With the final curtain fallen and summer holidays underway, it's the perfect moment to pause and reflect on one of the most powerful elements of Project Butterfly: the voices of young people. From Gdańsk to Helsinki to Modena, students from three different schools each played a vital role in shaping the opera's narrative, breathing life into its themes of sustainability, renewal and transformation.

In this issue, we revisit the three acts of Project Butterfly through the lens of the young minds who co-created them. Their ideas, their creativity, and their commitment to a better future remind us why youth participation is at the heart of this project.

Let's take a look back at how these students helped make Project Butterfly soar.



### Act 1: Gdańsk's Lake of Ashes - A tale of return and renewal

At the heart of Project Butterfly lies collaboration and nowhere is this more vividly felt than in Act I: The Lake of Ashes, co-created with students from High School No. 6 in Gdańsk.

Set in a world where nature has fallen silent, the story follows Salacja's return to a once-sacred lake, now poisoned by human neglect and industrial greed. What she finds is a landscape ravaged by a monstrous virus - a haunting metaphor for environmental collapse. Yet, it is not despair that defines this act, but resilience. Through courage and connection, Salacja reclaims the lake's original name - Elpids Lake - and begins the journey to healing.

Beyond the stage, students immersed themselves in creative workshops exploring themes of sustainability. From recycling and waste segregation to rethinking consumer habits, their learning extended into real-world action. These young co-authors did not simply write a story; they embedded their hopes and convictions within it.

This act reminds us that regeneration begins with awareness — and that a

new world is always possible when we dare to imagine it.



### **Act 2: Helsinki Students take the stage**

In *Breathe*, the second act of Project Butterfly, students from Otaniemi Lukio in Helsinki offered a stirring reflection on the battle between exploitation and harmony.

Here, the stage became a battleground of values: a ruthless factory owner faced off against elemental forces — Air and Nature — who pleaded for balance, not domination. Through choreography, dialogue, and symbolism, the students interrogated the systems that drive environmental degradation, and the hope that lies in collective action.

The creation of *Breathe* was as transformative as the story itself. Students participated in lectures and discussions on sustainability, drawing connections between personal responsibility and planetary health. What emerged was more than an opera act - it was a generational message.

Their work underscores the core message of Project Butterfly: that art and education are powerful agents of change. As these young voices breathe life into their vision of a better future, we are reminded that progress begins with listening - to nature, to each other, and to the next generation.



### **Act 3: Perla di Speranza and the power of choice**

The final act of Project Butterfly, *Perla di Speranza*, was brought to life through the creativity and insight of students from Selmi High School in Modena. Set in a world scarred by pollution and indifference, the story followed Perla, a young woman confronting the harsh realities of her environment and, more importantly, her role within it.

As the narrative unfolded, Perla began to see beyond complacency. She transformed from a passive observer into a catalyst for change, choosing to stand up for a future that values health, nature, and hope. Her journey mirrors the real-life reflections of the students who shaped her - young minds grappling with today's climate challenges and imagining bold solutions.

Through workshops and artistic development sessions, the Selmi students explored sustainability not just as a theme, but as a lived experience. From analysing the impact of waste to embracing the potential of activism, their process gave voice to a generation ready to act.

*Perla di Speranza* is not just a story, it is a call to responsibility. In its message of personal awakening and collective transformation, it embodies the essence of Project Butterfly: that the path to a healthier planet begins with the choices we make today.

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

# Key Dates in opera, music, and sustainability

## Interesting facts and anniversaries to remember

As summer deepens, July brings a rich blend of cultural anniversaries and environmental milestones. From groundbreaking operatic premieres to global days of reflection on biodiversity and climate, this month reminds us of the enduring connection between artistic expression and the world around us.

- **7 July: Birth of Gustav Mahler (1860)**

A visionary composer and conductor, Gustav Mahler was born on 7 July 1860. His symphonies - vast, emotional, and richly textured - paved the way for modernist approaches in both orchestral and operatic music. Deeply attuned to nature, Mahler often retreated to the countryside to compose, and his music reflects a profound sensitivity to the natural world, an artistic sensibility that resonates with today's sustainability values.

- **9 July – Premiere of Reimann's Lear (1978)**

Aribert Reimann's challenging, expressionist opera *Lear*, based on Shakespeare, premiered at Munich's National Theatre on 9 July 1978, starring Dietrich Fischer Dieskau and conducted by Gerd Albrecht. A modern masterpiece of psychological depth.

- **10 July: Anniversary of the premiere of Puccini's Madama Butterfly at Covent Garden (1905)**

*Madama Butterfly*, one of Giacomo Puccini's most beloved operas, made its Covent Garden debut on 10 July 1905. After a rocky world premiere in Milan the previous year, the revised version was a triumph, captivating London audiences with its emotional depth, lyrical beauty, and East-West cultural themes. The opera's enduring popularity invites reflection on intercultural dialogue, representation, and the power of music to transcend borders.

- **11 July: World Population Day**

Established by the United Nations in 1989, World Population Day raises awareness of global population issues, including resource sustainability, climate change, and equitable access to education and healthcare. In the context of the arts, it's an opportunity to explore how cultural initiatives can contribute to sustainable development goals, encouraging responsible production, inclusive outreach, and environmental stewardship.

- **16 July – Anniversary of Premiere of Mozart's Die Entführung aus dem Serail (1782)**

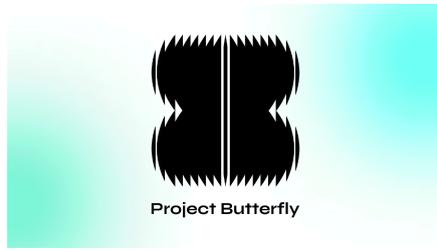
Mozart conducted this singspiel himself at Vienna's Burgtheater on 16 July 1782. Its infusion of 'Turkish' musical elements showcased early cultural exchange, relevant today in conversations about respectful cross-cultural storytelling.

- **22 July – Anniversary of Premiere of Verdi's I masnadieri (1847)**

Verdi debuted his opera at London's Her Majesty's Theatre on 22 July 1847, conducting it himself. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert attended the first performance, together with the Duke of Wellington and every member of the British aristocracy and fashionable society who was able to gain admission.

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**Project Butterfly Team**



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