

# British Theatre Guide

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## Jawnuta

Stanisław Moniuszko, Text by Władysław Ludwik Anczyc

Poznań Opera

Poznań Opera, Poland

18 December 2022–18 June 2023

Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–1872) is considered the father of Polish national opera. *Jawnuta*, conducted by Rafał Kłoczko, gets a rare showing by Poznań Opera. The music is Slavic.

The opening song asks, “where have all the gypsies gone?” It’s a question which instantly recalls Pete Seeger’s song, “Where have all the flowers gone?”

Stach (Piotr Kalina), a rich young man, loves Chicha (Małgorzata Olejniczak-Worobiej), but his father (Jaromir Trafankowski) doesn’t want him to marry a gypsy, believing all gypsies are “thieves, tramps and blackguards.”

Ilaria Lanzino, the director, has hijacked the opera to make her production a political statement, a memorial to the Polish gypsies who were exterminated by the Nazis in World War 2. Hitler put gypsies in the same category as Jews. It is estimated the death toll was between 25,000 and 50,000.

The mournful production has two familiar images. The stage flooring is dominated by the rail track which led right up to the main gate of Auschwitz. The stage itself is full of jostling people herded together, carrying a single suitcase and about to board a cattle train.

Coming to the opera for the first time, I didn’t feel I had really seen Stanisław Moniuszko’s *Jawnuta*. The Holocaust updating takes precedence over Stach and Chicha’s love for each other completely.

Poznań Opera’s production of *Jawnuta* can be viewed free on the OperaVision channel.

**Reviewer:** [Robert Tanitch](#)