

czech music

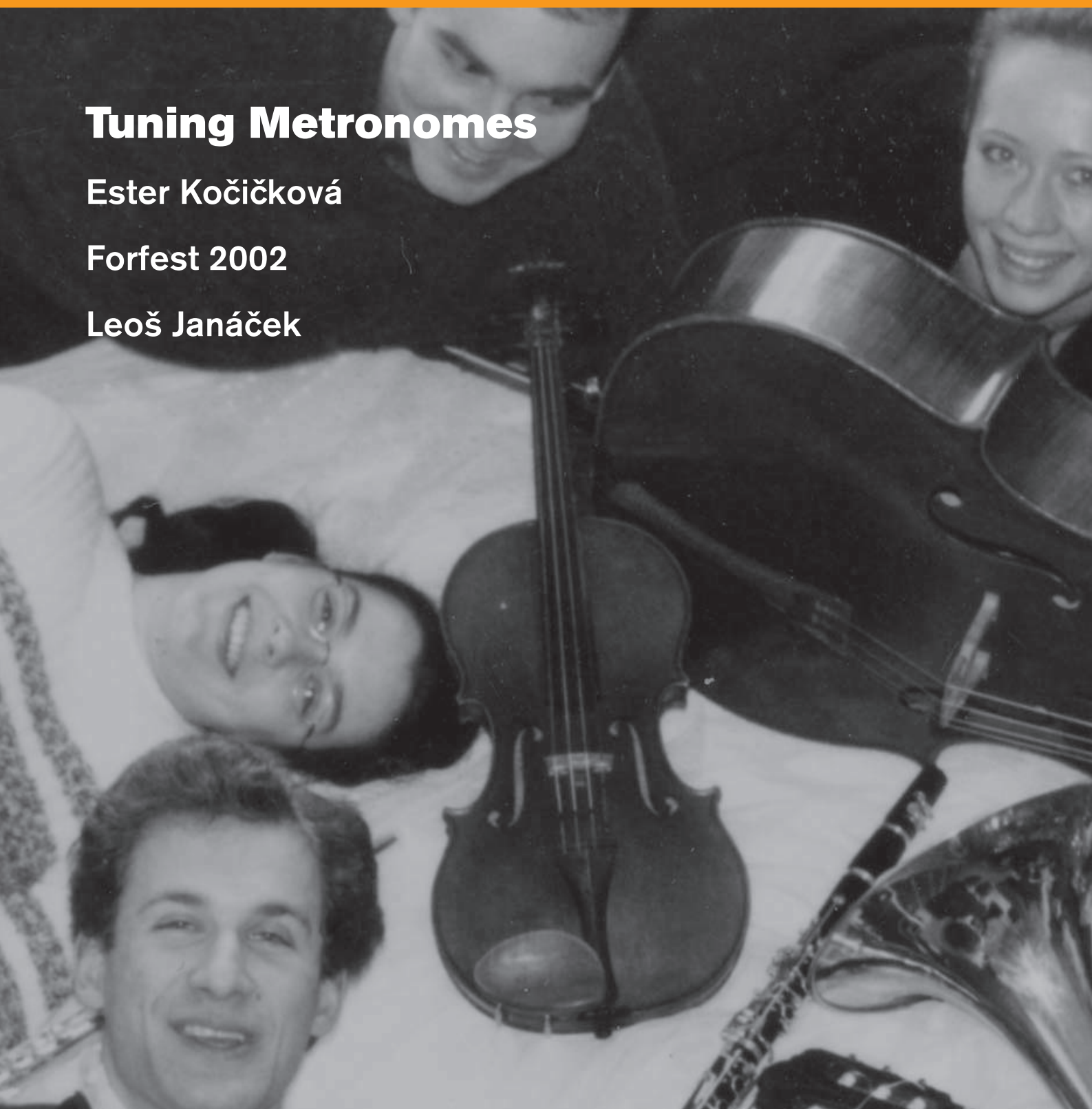
4 | 2002 bimonthly magazine

Tuning Metronomes

Ester Kočíčková

Forfest 2002

Leoš Janáček



Český hudební fond

KATA
Catalogue
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 2001

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Hire Material

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TINŮ
From Long Ago



editorial

Dear readers,
We apologise for the delay in getting this new issue of the magazine out to you. As you may have guessed, the reason was the floods that recently hit the Czech Republic. Our editorial office and our graphic studio are both in areas of Prague that were flooded, and we are only just getting back to normal. The calamity has hit musical life in general, since several important institutions and concert halls have been flooded and damaged. It is under these difficult circumstances that a group of young musicians focused on contemporary music, and called Tuning metronomes, is entering its second year of existence. An interview with one of them shows that contemporary "serious" music can be performed within a very broad perspective. The interview with Ester Kočíčková is from a quite different "barrel" - since its subject can be considered one of the few, if not the only, representative of chanson music in this country. Since the release of her first CD, awareness of her work has been on the increase and we should like to contribute to raising her profile, since this genre of music has been unjustly marginalised. Summer is above all a time of festivals. From the practically innumerable festivals on offer we have chosen two: Forfest, dedicated to contemporary classical music, and Boskovice, which has a more "rock" orientation. In our series on printed editions of Czech composers we have now reached Leoš Janáček. He is increasingly popular internationally at present and so it is interesting to find out what is going on around the publication of his works. I wish you pleasant reading, and hope that the next number will not be affected by any new catastrophe.

Matěj Kratochvíl
MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL
EDITOR

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Michal Trnka and the tuning metronomes

TEREZA HAVELKOVÁ

Contemporary music ensembles are usually founded by composers, and it is hardly a surprise that one of their motives should be the desire to hear their own latest pieces performed live. The composers and performers of the Tuning Metronomes, however, have a further – and moreover a shared – interest. They want to play 20th-century music, and above all the difficult world repertoire, as well as possible.

Contemporary music ensembles, especially “young” ones, often fail to survive the first year of life. Tuning Metronomes is just coming up for its second season, but the moving force of the group, Michal Trnka, has not succumbed to the defeatism that assails many in the unequal fight for grants. His irony conceals energy and optimism, and so it seems that the “Metronomes” will be ticking on for some time to come.



When you formed the ensemble about a year ago, did you formulate some kind of “programmatic declaration”? What did you consider most important at the beginning? What principles did you want to uphold?

You mean something like a Tuning Metronome Manifesto? All right, I can see it looks suspicious just playing for a year without any apparent purpose. But during all that inconspicuous rehearsal and concert time, ideas have been hatching in our heads that will ultimately stir the still waters of conventional musical life, and have journalists not just writing about first-class musical performance of the pieces but arguing about the social significance of our acts. We know that at election time the public is particularly indifferent to serious declarations – a reaction tends to set in and there are hidden

consequences that rebound on the writers of a pamphlet in a very unfair way. And so for the moment we only communicate the secret ideological basis of our activities by word of mouth from member to member, which has its charm, of course.

Which of the thoughts hatched in your brains have turned out to be Utopian or impossible in local conditions? Have you had to resign yourselves to anything?

Well, one project that turned out to be Utopian in local conditions was a concert for the opening of the Pyrenean canal, and that was because in Spain and on the Spanish side they just didn't want to listen. Even though we offered to help dig the canal ourselves. But in principle we haven't given up on the idea of these accompanying acts for our

concerts. They ensure a wider social impact for titles that would otherwise look too elitist.

I know that one of your initial resolutions was to try to rehearse as much as possible, so that at the concerts the pieces would be properly digested and “settled”. Is that working out?

Roughly a month before a performance I get everyone to write down their free time and I find the overlaps. There aren't usually many, and so first I beg for small shifts of schedule and then I try to persuade partners I've hunted down to cancel their dates and excursions and finally I look for baby sitters. In the end we don't just use all the time overlaps, but even rehearse when one person can't be there. I try to make sure that when that happens it's always a different person. As you will have noticed, I eat into players' free time and personal lives, because we all feel that the fees in Tuning Metonomes can't be allowed to mollycoddle us so much that we start giving short weight to our jobs. At rehearsals I don't push the players into “settling” the piece and digesting it, since a piece should only really settle at the concert. And it's a bad thing if a work starts to settle at a rehearsal where someone is missing.

In this country there is a lot of talk about how difficult it is to find performers for contemporary music, and how performers aren't interested in it and don't know how to play it. Do you think that in the generation your members are recruited from there is some general visible change in this respect, or is it just a case of the exception proving the rule?

It seems to me that if a composer knows how to write music, then musicians will know how to play it. It emerges by itself, you can't force it. It's a waste of time long-windedly explaining the basics of interpretation when what is in the notes ought to be quite enough for the players to discover it for themselves. They have to have their freedom in the search for it. I think it's a mistake to have an idea of the characteristic sound of an ensemble and to go after it without regard for the individuality of the players. If someone plays more romantically, for example, it's a good thing to “hide” him or her in a piece where that approach is appropriate and give a piece where it's inappropriate to someone whose style of expression suits the piece better. That someone usually has more interest in the piece anyway. Fortunately contemporary music is a wide category, and so everyone has enough space.

Although you are an ensemble founded by composers, it seems that there's equality between composer members and performer members in the group. Does that in any way affect the functioning and repertoire of the group?



The equality between composers and performers in our group is unheard of. We've even – theoretically – allowed the performers to compose for the ensemble, although fortunately no one has taken up the offer – which we had to make so I could play on the violin. The performers have the right to say that one of our pieces is awful and refuse to play it, and the composers can tell the performers that they are playing terribly and could damage their instruments. One small positive inequality is that while the performers carry the music stands, the composers carry golf balls – a fact I can mention here without fear because it is approved in the 184th supplement to our statutes.

At concerts I get the impression that the wind section of the group is more co-ordinated – and perceptibly more self-confident for that reason – than the strings. Why is that?

That's just an illusion. The wind section show off and give the impression that their interplay is more secure just because while they're playing they can chat, make a row and get up, as happened most recently in the Beria Quintet. But try chatting with a violin under your chin, or getting up and sitting down again and again with a cello. Coordinated play is easier for wind anyway, since the instruments are right at their lips, which we have a more than half a metre long instrument and it takes a while to get from one end to the other. True, there's something called a "lightning bowstroke", which could make up for deviations in interplay, but you get terrible thunder with it!

You are a group that happily selects any kind of instrument combinations, even a duo, from your "full-scale" membership. In fact, there are actually relatively few pieces for the whole group in your repertoire. Is this part of ensemble policy, or more "making a virtue out of necessity"? Isn't it a slight disadvantage that the group doesn't have much opportunity to play altogether and so "settle down" as a whole?

It's a virtue of necessity, since foreign publishers of note material mostly treat works for more than five instruments as orchestral music and the price for hiring them for one performance is many times more than buying outright the parts of a wind quintet, for example. We're forced to avoid works published under this system, especially since another problem is the fact that these parts come at the last minute and there often isn't enough time to rehearse the piece properly, so the investment isn't even worthwhile. We made an exception for Stravinsky's Septet, which would certainly not just get played by our ensemble every year but would be more often performed in the world at large if the parts could be purchased outright. We could have chosen a septet by a local author

instead, because we would have got those parts for free, but Stravinsky's music is worth all the trouble and expense, at least once. The high cost of materials is one reason why most of the ensembles here give priority to local music. It's practical, since none of the sponsors take account of the high price of foreign noted material. On the contrary, it's paradoxical but local music, which involves no costs to ensembles because composers are willing to produce the parts themselves, is generously subsidised

The works of the "home team" composers of the ensemble (Trnka, Nejtek, Smejkalová, Pták, Cigler) are juxtaposed at your concerts with the great names of 20th-century music, and not only post-war music (Stockhausen, Berio, Ligeti, Feldman...), but also what are known as the "classics" (Stravinsky, Shostakovich and so on). Apart from yours, of course, there are almost no Czech names in your programmes. Can't you find composers here with whom you would like to be together on a programme, composers who have inspired you?

I've noticed that the older generation of Czech composers don't present their music alongside international work of the same generation at their concerts, but just mutually juxtapose their own work, or present it with some "classic" which is "beside the point". We respect their motives, and wouldn't like to embarrass them with tactless neighbours. And so we shall only be choosing those that we are sure we won't be hurting by placing their pieces in world context. We've already successfully performed a quintet by Hanuš Bartoň, and we may approach other composers. I say "may" advisedly, because there's always the danger that composers will descend on our ensemble like locusts on a cornfield and so push out the disagreeable competition of the world repertoire. As far as our own compositions are concerned, it's up to each one of us whether he or she can cope with the neighbours. Some pieces have already been called off under these circumstances, but we all still have a taste for carrying on writing. I don't think we ought to have a common view of our own pieces. And I wouldn't like to give precedence to the young generation as such, as the field of student, or in the real sense of the phrase as juvenile experiments. I see Sylva Smejkalová and Michal Nejtek, for example, as convincing proof that a composer doesn't have to be past fifty to create something epoch-making. But the gulf between the level of their compositions and the heap of rubbish produced in conservatories and academies is so obvious that the term "young generation" is fortunately losing not only its sneeringly indulgent subtext, but also its content, and I want our choice of works performed to contribute as much as possible to that development.

Is the music of the 20th-century "classics" just something that all the members of the group like, or do you really see it as the necessary context in which new music ought to find its place? Can you give any specific examples of the which pieces by the members of the ensemble draw on this music?

I'd hate to believe that any of us would spend his or her free evenings playing practically for nothing on account of some necessary cultural context. I have been surprised by the consensus that we've found on music of the 20th century. For performers 20th-century music is a special opportunity. Not long ago I heard someone quip that a musician either plays rubbish for brilliant money, or interesting pieces for lousy money. Somewhere in between is the standard repertoire for mediocre money. You couldn't have a more accurate picture of contemporary musical life, and it's interesting that on a smaller scale the comment even applied to composer showcase events as well. And it quite clearly defines the position of our ensemble, a fact that gives me a certain pleasure. The ever more commercial exploitation of the classical repertoire is actually shifting music of the 20th century from the level of the incomprehensible to the level of the interesting.

What if anything do the "Home team" composers have in common? Is it just a generation group, or is there some shared aesthetic, musical taste...?"

We went through academy seminars where everyone passes superior comments on everyone else's work and composers huddle in cliques according to their style of work. After school we developed a kind of peculiar agreement that we would mutually respect each other's freedom. That doesn't mean that debates on our pieces are taboo. On the contrary, they are all the more pleasant because nobody expects anybody else to act on his advice, which was the whole point of the seminars. We have a lot in common in musical taste, but I don't think it would make any difference to our relationships if someone went musically crazy.

Has active work in the ensemble changed your approach to composition in any way?

Nobody can play music without uninterrupted musical imagination. As soon as a musician switches off, his playing becomes unbearable. But from my own experience I know that in composition it is actually possible to switch off for a larger or smaller part of the process, or at least it seems musically permissible. It's something that composers are often led to do by historically established composition techniques, by which I don't mean just those strictly serial techniques where a sequence of notes is to a great extent given in advance, but even classical



harmony. In general I mean the techniques that in some way pre-organise what's known as musical material. In my own work I've turned the whole thing around. I have a pre-invented work process that is thought out in such detail that I can leave the specific notes to my musical imagination. As far as note pitches are concerned, I have thought up the technique of a kind of note chain. The difference between my chain and usual sequence is that the sequence is pre-determined and given, or more precisely limited to a certain number of notes. My chain has emerged during my work, and while it is divided up, the division is variable and at any moment I can use a note according to my ear, without this breaching the serial character of the work. It's actually a chain creating an unlimited quantity of series, all more or less fleeting.

What are you planning for the next season? Will your concerts be held in the Atrium in Žižkov again?

Over the holidays I'm organising our Autumn project, for which we're preparing a chamber version of Ustvolská's Fifth Symphony, two longer Xenakis pieces, a Lutoslawski Quartet, Rychlík's Africa Cycle and our own now almost orchestral pieces. But what if I told you that none of these things will happen because these plans are too modest and we've already got more money from all sides than we ever wanted, and at our last concerts sponsors were jumping on us in hordes, and so in order to spend all this money in time we have to order much more expensive music and hire a foreign symphony orchestra. Petr Cíglar is going to try out his new and dangerous experiment on them.



After the experiment some members of the orchestra will never play straight again. But don't begrudge a young composer his fun! In my case, I shall be trying to put a string quartet in helicopters. It's every composer's dream these days. The musicians will finally get masseurs. When we've managed to think up how to spend all the cash then we'll put together a specific concert programme. Whatever happens, everyone will know about it by the end of September. For nostalgic reasons I think we should remain loyal to the Atrium in Žižkov and put a bit of money into it. We've already reserved the evenings of the 10th of October, 13th of November and 10th of December there.



metamorphoses of a bar singer

an interview with ester kočičková

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

When Ester Kočičková was a presenter at the original Limonádový Joe [Lemonade Joe] radio station, only a small circle of fans knew her name, but as soon as she appeared on television, interview followed interview. Most of them have hinged on whether or not she is a feminist. Only a few interviewers ask her about her musical activities, even though she herself regards them as the most important aspect of her career. Now, after several years of concerts, she has released a CD with the pianist and composer Lubomír Nohavica. Her songs can be defined as chansons, a genre that has not been much to the forefront in this country recently. On the one hand she honours the tradition of the French chanson, but on the other she approaches the genre in her own way – above all in texts that mix humour with pathos.

Originally you studied drama. How did you get into singing?

The subject I studied at conservatory is called "musical drama" and actors were supposed to learn to sing there too. But for five years they kept telling me, "Don't try to sing, you won't make it up to soprano anyway." For some time I did theatre improvisation, with Martin Smolka accompanying me, and at that time I often stylised myself into the role of a bar singer who leans on the piano and comments on events. Then some friends of mine invited me to their club, where I actually started to work as a bar singer. And that was where I met Lubomír Nohavica. We were supposed to do songs that wouldn't disturb anyone in the bar – the kind I call "bar workouts" – Ježek, Hegerová, things I would never dream of singing today. We began to compose, with Luboš bringing a melody for me to try to invent a text. Then, when we had our own melodies and texts, we started to be sorry that people were eating and talking through them. Hockey players would come to the club, for example, and have competitions on who could do handstands and so on. One day we decided that maybe we deserved some attention from people. The transitional stage was a "bar opera", Rumunským psům [To Rumanian Dogs], which was my chance to get the courage to sing in theatre. It ran for four years and then I realised that now I just wanted to sing.

Is the role of bar singer still an interesting one for you?

Definitely. But at the time it bothered me that when I played at being a bar singer, the people there wouldn't act along with me. I mean acting that they were in a club where a tired

woman with a past was singing. They preferred just to listen, but in fact the original idea of the club had been precisely that kind of play. I was there as majordomus – I wrapped myself in a boa, knew all the regulars and sang them "their songs". But then someone had the idea that more people would come if there were a disco, and of course it worked. But then I didn't have any role. This happened just at the time when we were beginning to think we deserved a more perceptive public. I would really like there to be a club here where some madam would sit and when she felt like it she would go over to the piano and sing. But there's nothing like that here. I have one wish. To have my own club called the "False Kitten", where I would actually live, and if a musician turned up I would sing something. And there would be the same atmosphere there day and night.

You have made your CD at your own expense. Was that because you wanted to keep complete control of it or was it just because no one was interested in publishing it for you?

A bit of both. If someone had been interested, we would have gone for it. Supraphon only contacted us now, but we don't want it any more. They are offering us either a license, which means the sale of all rights, or co-production, which would be more acceptable for us because that way we could get into the distribution network, which is hard for small publishers. But we shall see. This particular CD was actually the result of high pressure. Currently Luboš and I have songs for another three CDs, and so we said to ourselves that we needed to get rid of some of the songs so that we could give full



attention to the next ones. Many of our listeners were also starting to talk about a recording, and so we also did it for our public – which wasn't very big – for our fan club. If I said that we had three hundred loyal listeners, then that would be a lot. We recorded the CD in a day and a half under psychological stress and with my voice not at its best. We didn't have any money for more recording time, and so retaking and corrections weren't possible. Some notes were flat, but had expression and so we left them as they were. We repeated maybe two songs twice, but in most cases we knew them very well from the stage.

What's the situation with distribution of the CD?

You can't buy the CD in a shop. Nobody can hear the songs unless he or she comes to our concert. That was originally the deliberate idea, but now it looks as if it would be right and proper if the CD was available normally, although I still think that until we're established on the television screen there's not much point. And I would hate to see a CD that we published ourselves and borrowed money for, lying around somewhere in the discount section. Much bigger artists have ended that way, often simply because the recording company made mistakes. I don't know whether it would help if we tried to promote it in some way, or even how to promote it. I suppose we could let it be sold somewhere in supermarkets by the cash desk...

But now you are already beginning to establish yourself in television. At least as a presenter...

...but that doesn't necessarily mean in a positive sense. I took on work in a feminist, actually pro-women programme, and as I suspected, the first responses are very mixed. Everyone is so appalled at the thought of my being feminist that they don't think about me at all. People don't listen to what I'm actually saying. It was a touch deliberate on my part, because I hoped it would help the CD a little. But if I had my own talk show, where I could invite people myself and talk on my own themes, it would look different.

Can you imagine your songs in any form other than simply piano accompaniment?

In my case yes, but it's true that the combination of piano and voice is relatively unusual here. Now we have plans for work with other musicians and we also want to take on less familiar songs, which will mean more work. On our next CD we would like to invite just a few friends for extra colour. I can imagine some of these songs just with a double bass and nothing else, for example. The trouble is that it might mean losing our distinctive signature. But I can also imagine something with an accordion.

Can you tell us something about the way you work with Lubomír Nohavica?

Usually Luboš gives me a cassette containing several motifs and says, "Do what you like with it!". Sometimes I make up a text for something immediately – last year I brought back thirteen texts for him from my holiday – I was bored there. But sometimes it works in different ways. For example recently I sent friends a text message about a grill party, "I

greet you and grill you...", and immediately the song Grill Pushkin was born – "I grill you...". Sometimes I even think up a melody, but Luboš still has to develop it and finish it. I only compose what I know already, while he thinks like a musician and is more original. On the other hand, Heaven help us when Luboš comes up with an idea for a text! We are very different in some things. I call it the "Southpark difference". Lubomír Nohavica has absolutely no understanding of the poetry of the film Southpark, while if I need to be cheered up I put on Southpark: Hell on Earth and feel better. He's the typical good-natured Moravian with his passionate melody and I usually go against his grain – because his cantilena annoys me.

There are some songs on the CD with titles that suggest inspiration from current events (Hizbullah Chardash, the Kosovo Demarcation Line), but when you hear them they turn out to be about other, more general themes. Are the provocative titles there to attract attention?

I am a lyric writer and also a notorious television addict I can't avoid it. Hizbullah Chardash for example is about the psychology of the terrorist, not some solution to the Middle East conflict. The idea is also to make people laugh a little. When such a serious song is created, he title is supposed to lighten it a bit. But sometimes the humour is a little heavy. Nobody suspects us of political purposes any more, and so the second CD ought to have more fairytale type themes.

forfest 2002

or czech contemporary music in the context of an international festival

JAN VRKO ů

FORFEST, the thirteenth annual international festival of contemporary music and art with a spiritual focus took place this year on the 22nd – 30th of June in Kroměříž.

FORFEST is an annual festival of contemporary music and art which this year took place for the thirteenth time in Kroměříž, a small and picturesque town in South Moravia. **FORFEST** (the name was derived from the English words **FOR FESTIVAL**) seeks to highlight trends in world and Czech art that contain elements of a new spiritual charge, drawing inspiration from the spiritual roots of European culture or contributing in some different way to the search for new paths.

FORFEST is a member of the European Conference of Promoters of New Music and is registered in the **UNESCO** Calendar of Cultural Events. It is sought out by artists from abroad and composers write music specially for the festival... Over 13 years in an internationally recognised festival, unique as an event both in the Czech Republic and in Europe, has grown up in Kroměříž.

FORFEST takes place under the aegis of the Czech Ministry of Culture, the Archdiocese of Olomouc and with the support of the town of Kroměříž.



Each year the festival programme includes concerts of contemporary music for organ, choirs and chamber ensembles, recitals by top performers (this year e.g. Mutsuko Aizawa, Marat Bisengaliev, Miloslav Jelínek, Kamil Doležal and Hanuš Bartoň, Kristýna Valoušková), concerts involving composers (František Emmert, Jan Grossmann, Max Stern), an exhibition of electro-acoustic music (this time pieces by Krzysztof Knittel and Rudolf Růžička), visual-musical performances (the joint work "Ohně" ["Fire"] by composers Ivo Medek, Markéta Dvořáková and Jan Kavan, the opera "Endymio" from Tomáš Hanzlík). Alongside these events there are exhibitions, naturally with musical openings, at which visitors can see the most recent works of leading artists (this year wood carvings by Jan Jemelka, statues and liturgical objects by Otmar Oliva, paintings by Ludmila Jandová and the monumental canvases of Václav Vaculovič), and music theory lecture

cycles ("English Music Today", "American Premieres", "Czech Musical Emigration in the 20th Century" etc.), literary programmes and authorial readings...

Among the most interesting pieces performed this year, and warmly received by the public, were compositions by Jiří Teml (the choral pieces "Credo" and "Laudetur Jesus Christus"), Petr Pokorný ("Tichá hudba pro vlahé letní noci" "Quiet Music for a Mild Summer Night") – in the unforgettable interpretation of Tomáš Ondrůšek! and Max Stern ("Mozaika - šest synagogálních dlaždic" ["Mosaic – Six Synagogal Tiles"], "Tři písně na texty terezínských dětí" ["Three Songs on texts by Theresienstadt Children"], "Beduínské imprese" ["Beduin Impressions"], "Píseň Hannah" ["Hannah Song"]).

At the excellent concert given by Mutsuko Aizawa we observed that the Czech composers Petr Pokorný and Ivo Medek man-

aged to overshadow even so world famous a figure as Iannis Xenakis.

Concerts of a surprisingly high standard were offered by two university, non-professional mixed choirs – "Vox Iuvenalis" from Brno (choirmaster Jan Ocetek) and from Prague "Gaudium Pragense" (choirmaster Lukáš Hurník). Incomparable performances were given by the violinist Marat Bisengaliev and the pianist John Lenehan, the soprano Kristýna Valoušková, the clarinetist Kamil Doležal, the Černohorské Quartet from Ostrava, the Musica Gaudeans ensemble, the Czech-French Ensemble Alienor... Unfortunately there is no space to provide details of all these brilliant achievements, and so I shall simply try to give some information at least on the most interesting works by Czech composers...

A very well attended authorial concert in the Diet Hall of the Archbishop's Chateau gave the public a chance to get to know the music of the Czech composers František Emmert and Jan Grossmann.

Back in 1994 the Kroměříž performance of Emmert's song cycle "Lomikámen" had already aroused the interest of festival-goers, his "Biblické písně" ["Biblical Songs"] and "De Profundis" were presented at the FORFEST in 1999, in his song cycle "Andělu strážnému" ["To a Guardian Angel"] in 2000, and in 2001 his Mass for Female Voices, Flute and Organ – to name only the most successful premieres of pieces that were "unforgettable" at the FORFEST. This year's authorial concert included Emmert's choral "Pater Noster" and "Magnificat", "Seventh Piano Sonata" and violin "Sonatina", while other works by Emmert could be heard at other festival concerts ("Duo for Double Bass and Piano" was performed by the Marcela and Miloslav Jelínek Duo, and the Ensemble Alienor included part of the song cycle "L'atome de Jesus Hostie" in its programme). It is interesting to reflect on the "dual aspect" of Emmert's music. While his instrumental pieces are carefully ordered in broad time proportions, his chamber and vocal music is dominated by the author's subjective views, introverted moods, and fitfulness. In the latter the music softens, grows quieter, and there is an almost "punctualist" economy in the voice part. This is particularly evident in the songs. It is as if the composer is retreating into the background, and shifting aside his own fantasies and distinctive idiom to "clear the space". But why? Is it perhaps so that the "Creator" himself can speak in these pieces? It is an impression sometimes given in Emmert's music, a form of musical expression quite different from that of his sonatas or choral and orchestral works. After the concert Emmert modestly bowed and rapidly departed, and few people in the hall had an inkling of what this man has within himself, and the "gifts" with which he has been endowed. Who would guess that this composer has behind him 12 symphonies, several oratorios, many

Mutsuko Aizawa





Marat Bisengaliev, John Lenehan

choral works and a series of instrumental concertos?

Composer Jan Grossmann is also a regular visitor to the Kroměříž Festival, although he prefers to come just as a listener rather than to push his own pieces. With his deep interest in sacred music he is enthusiastic about FORFEST and has never missed a year or a concert. I remember his highly individual cantata "Lava me", a major Grossmann "triumph" at the FORFEST several years ago. It is a pity that his pieces tend to be played in a rather formal, ceremonial spirit.

I like Grossman's distinctive musical idiom – his uncomplicated, limpid structure in verticals, with only exceptionally an overlap of layers, and instead several instruments sharing in the creation of a common rhythmically strong tissue. The course and development of horizontal elements is admirably inventive, from almost unchanging, meditative passages to dramatic development, a strongly evolutionary and emotionally engaged music.

At his authorial concert Grossmann had his pieces played from a tape: the symphonic "Oblouk", ["Curve"] and "Concerto for Harp and Orchestra". His "Clarinet Quartet", dedicated to the memory of Miroslav Ištvan was also powerful. There is something from folk music in the piece, and a kind of relief and lightening of mood, an optimistic overview – remarkable in a composition written in memoriam. According to need the four clarinets well express that grief, merriment, sorrow and comfort. Grossman's music is pleasantly straightforward and does not distract

with sophisticated combinations, and the second movement is wholly joyful, almost inexhaustibly, endlessly happy, as if "from conviction"... It is only in the third movement that we hear the tone of resigned grief, a noble memory of a man who yesterday was so close, and today is already somewhere on "the other shore".

The composer Ivo Medek had an important place in this year's FORFEST programme, and was involved in two concerts. Together with Jan Kavan and Markéta Dvořáková he organised the video-performance "Ohně" ["Fires"] in the Archbishop's Chateau, and on the following evening the Japanese percussionist Mutsuko Aizawa played some of his pieces.

We encounter the music of the composer Ivo Medek very frequently at FORFEST concerts. He usually brings outstanding performers or whole groups with whom he is working to the FORFEST. A tireless organiser of concerts of contemporary music, he has made great contributions to the cultivation of experimental and avantgarde music and founded or led several specialised ensembles – Art Inkognito, Camerata Brno and others. He has worked for many years with leading interpreters of contemporary music such as Dan Dlouhý (and the DAMA DAMA ensemble), Tomáš Ondrůšek, Pavel Šnajdr, Daniel Forró... In 1999 the full-length evening performance "Křížení" ["Crossing"] (a joint project with the sculptor Jan Šimek) was presented at the FORFEST. This year it was thanks to an invitation from

Ivo Medek that the Japanese musician Mutsuko Aizawa came to Kroměříž, and at her recital she performed two of his pieces: "Migrations" and the very difficult "Triax" – a piece for two percussion soloists accompanied by a chamber orchestra (including a group of woodwind instruments, muted brass and piano) which is a kind of "concerto" for percussion and orchestra. Tomáš Ondrůšek took the second solo percussion part. The separate placing of the soloists on the left and right edges of the podium meant that the audience could experience a stereophonic effect, with all the acoustic advantages and disadvantages of the Diet Hall of the Archbishop's Chateau.

The composer divided the piece into short, approximately 30-50 second sections (as it were "film shots of the universe"), where myriad notes ("stars and planets") circle in inexhaustible clusters and combinations. The quite sharply separated time sections are strongly contrasted using different rhythmic "densities" and instrumental ingenuity and colour. Dramatic gradations are alternated with static string tremolos, high timbre passages resolutely interrupt cymbal and marimba sections, and the silences are surprising. How many shades of silence there are! Silences deep, mysterious and dignified, (the kind that are able "to fill the universe"). This mosaic of fascinating shades and colours is roofed by a fanfare element (trombones), which returns several times in the course of the piece. Only in roughly the last third of the piece do the separate passages begin to overlap, and become layered. A persistent



ostinato rhythmic element appears and then everything returns again into silence. The composition genuinely speaks more through silence than notes, keeps the listener in suspense and draws the attention away from what is heard to what can be anticipated, what can be imagined, what has not yet sounded, but perhaps in the next moment... This poetics stimulates the audience into truly active listening, and to the incorporation of his or her own imagination in the experience – no mean feat!

The performance of Mutsuko Aizawa, especially in this Medek piece, remains in the memory as one of the high points of this year's FORFEST programme.

Jiří Teml is another composer who was not attending FORFEST for the first time this year. The spiritual focus of the festival seems to accord well with his intellectual world and he returns to Kroměříž with pleasure. In past years his instrumental pieces have been played at Kroměříž, and this year he presented his "Credo" and the prayer "Laudetur Jesus Christus", both for mixed choir. Teml's music combines classical techniques with the use of ingenious timbre passages, the structure is strikingly cohesive and perfectly lucid. In the choral works we find his idiom pared down in comparison to his instrumental music, and the voice parts are developed with extreme "economy", each note having an irreplaceable value. The means of expression are used very thoughtfully and purposefully, the score evolves surprisingly, but without losing its characteristic lucidity. The gratitude of the prayer text emerges fully and sincerely.

ly. The composer tends to avoid exposed registers at the limits of vocal capacity but nonetheless, using essentially ordinary means, he produces the maximum expressive and emotional impact. This is one reason why – as choirmasters agree – Teml's choral music is popular with performers and often presented.

The Gaudium Pragense ensemble offered an excellent experience at the closing concert of the festival, which focused on the premiere of the almost forty-minute cantata, "On the Mountain" by Daniel Kessner. Choirmaster Lukáš Hurník conducted this lengthy composition for soloists, choir and organ and the musicians under his direction sang with evident enthusiasm. Soloists Kristýna Valoušková and Tomáš Krejčí gave tremendous, ideally balanced performances.

The cantata is based on texts by the American naturalist and writer John Muir which celebrate the unspoiled landscape of the Californian West. Inspired by this wild nature, Kessner's music is also unfettered, free and pure, a music of elemental breadth and depth. It conjures up "before our eyes" the endless horizons and astounding mysteries of all forms of life.

The American composer wrote the cantata for the festival, and its performance in Kroměříž was therefore its world premiere, and highly successful too. Its success owed much to the members of the Gaudium Pragense mixed choir, who coped wonderfully well with the difficult score. The choirmaster Lukáš Hurník had prepared an outstanding

concert programme, which in addition to the Kessner cantata included the cantata "Prastaré obrazy" ["Ancient Pictures"] by his father Ilya Hurník and also two of his own compositions, "Magnificat" and "Svatovojtěšská hodinka" ["St. Vojtěch's Hour"] interesting conceived as a "collage". His achievement as choirmaster and performer are remarkable, and his versatility entirely exceptional. Lukáš Hurník obviously has a great musical future.

The Gaudium Pragense choir festival in particular moved the FORFEST yet another step further towards those new perspectives of contemporary art and new paths that must be sought out and explored unceasingly. ...In another year we can continue on the journey, and in another year there will be another festival in Kroměříž, in the last week of June....

FORFEST pages: www.forfest.cz

boskovice 2002

11th - 14th of july

organised by unijazz

PETR FERENC

Spread out over four days, if the ninth annual festival to save and restore the Boskovice Jewish Quarter (one of the most important in Moravia) promised no guaranteed crowd puller, it still provided plenty worth seeing and hearing. The music programme was more or less put together from the stalwarts of the Unijazz stable, while scattered around the small and picturesque town there were all kinds of exhibitions, film screenings, theatre performances, as well as the monuments, of course, and pleasant places of refreshment.

Šina



There were two main music venues (not counting the dance camp under the castle, which many visitors to the festival never left throughout the event). Afternoon concerts took place on a little square in front of the local club Sklepy, and the main evening performances were held a little further away, in the Summer outdoor cinema. On Thursday Jim Čert welcomed visitors to the smaller venue, but difficulties putting up a borrowed tent meant that I only heard him in the distance. A day later Sklepy was reserved for three Boskovice groups. Apendyx and Hluboké bezvědomí [Deep Unconsciousness] are representative of the unending stream of young big beat bands, and especially as far as the first band is concerned, look set to remain so for a long time. While Hluboké bezvědomí seems to be fumbling at the door of a harder, strenuous style, Apendyx with its unusual saxophone element still seems unsure of its direction. Together with the regulation amount of kicks it therefore serves up an under-confident arrangement of domestic disco with the addition of texts that are sometimes comically tough and sometimes slightly poetic. But who didn't start out this way?

But the music of Hrdla na horách [Throats in the Mountains] is completely unique. The group centres on the author of the music, pianist and occasional violinist Ondřej Tasovský (on this occasion he wasted the opportunity since he dropped his violin and the fingerboard fell off), started two and a half years ago and since then has grown substantially from the original duo. The future conductor Tasovský creates his pieces on the basis of improvisation and the study of classical music, and is also – as he himself says – strongly influenced by Moravian folk music. His long carefully arranged compositions are mainly in medium tempo and can sometimes be reminiscent of Psí vojáci (however much I realise that no band with a piano can avoid this rather stale comparison), but he denies this influence. In some places in an otherwise successful performance, the recitations clashed unpleasantly with the female vocals. Perhaps the sound

was to blame, and I have the feeling that the group is on the very of a major breakthrough.

Before we move on to the Summer Cinema, it is worth mentioning that on Friday afternoon the Panorama cinema was the venue of a sold out appearance by Ti syčáci [The Louts] with their punk opera SSSS. In HIS VOICE 6 / 2001 I criticised the premiere of this tape for excessive length and occasional lack of content. This time I came away with a much better impression. The trio played only (a perhaps two-hour) cross-section through the work. Now it was more assured and relaxed, without the Váša-style vocal mannerisms that Messrs Zavadil and Fröhlich had adopted under front-man direction. They are more natural, although the original did have a certain charm.

The main course in the Summer Cinema started off with the Slovak singer songwriter, bass guitarist and publisher Šina with the group Dlhé diely. Their music, which quietly underpins the restrained style of the lead singer, is lightly touched with jazz, and especially in the structure of the vocal parts (free verse with no refrain), the poetics of Dežo Ursiny. For me Šina, and later Slnko production as a whole, was the biggest surprise of the festival.

The Preßburger Klezmer Band, Ahmed má hlad and on the next evening Chorchestr fell into the same single category as far as I was concerned. All of them play Klezmer, Balkan music and funk, since it is right on line, requires no problematic creative activity and the kids just dance and dance. The groups concerned are pioneers of these revival fashions, and so can't be accused of calculation, but there are so many similar gold-diggers that I can perhaps be forgiven for treating myself to other experiences. They all hit the mood brilliantly and the public was over the moon. They produced the effect that they wanted. Nothing more.

Václavěk's V.R.M. presented its morbid folk-type songs for jazz players in a harder style adapted for amphitheatre, while the international Klar band gave a performance identical in sound to its last album, and ended its appealing set in now traditional style with a cover version of Hendrix's Hey Joe.

For the first time I heard the tried and tested brand name group Už jsme doma without its founder, "the fastest saxophonist of the Czech alternative scene", Jindra Dolanský, who left the group last year. But even bereft of one of the group's main distinguishing mark, Miroslav Wanek and co managed a generally honourable performance. They kicked out their traditional playlist in punk form, but the effect was surprisingly melodic. The saxophone parts were divided up between Wanek, who either sang them or played them on keyboards, and the guitarist Radek Podveský.

On Saturday afternoon the Jones Benally Family performed in front of the Boskovice ruins. The family foursome of Navajo Indians – father, two sons and daughter – are going round the world with examples of shamanic medicine dances, which a large part of the audience started to join in by the end of the performance, and with a lecture, discussion and appeal for the release of the imprisoned Indian activist Leonard Peltier. The musical side of the Indian dances, like the dances themselves, is completely practical and so minimal that there is no point in attempting to analyse it. The priorities here are communal spirit and the desire to get to know another culture.

Back again to the place in front of the Sklepy club. Saturday afternoon here was devoted mainly to underground. It was launched by New Kids Underground, a four-some led by the irresistible singer and bass guitarist Vašek Hrtan. He and his ensemble have fallen in love with the Plastic People of the Universe, which on the one hand they admire and on the other they parody and take apart with its own weapons. The lyrics of the New Kids' songs are full of sarcastic humour and the same is true of the music – endless repetition of simple bass motifs and saxophone riffs are taken to an almost unbearable extreme (Své svaly kluci ukazují rádi – Boys like showing their muscles), but the group knows when to stop and how to amuse with a pleasant witticism (a Doors style piano interlude in Plastic conversion, the introductory scene in the song about acne, Bedřich) sometimes on the borders of Dada (Kůžička). No concert by this group has disappointed me yet, and I find their enchanting mixture of love and betrayal very original.

The following act Dřevěné pytlí v jutových uhlích [Wooden Bags in Jute Coal] is mainly an opportunity for a few friends to entertain themselves (including Hrtan and the music journalists Ondřej Bezr and Antonín Kocábek), and their productions frankly look that way. The only things to interest me in their secondary-school mixture of poetry, dim-witted humour and fumbling music were the last three pieces: a cover version of Anarchy In The UK, a musical arrangement of Krchovský's poem 24 and a memory of the New Wave Odvážní bobříci [Brave Little Beavers] in the form of the once famous Všichni jednou umřem [We shall all die one day]. To sum up – pretty well all the interesting songs are by someone else. They were followed by the group Skrytý půvab byrokracie [The Discreet Charm of the Bureaucracy] which suffered from the beginnings of a downpour, and had to leave the stage after five songs. I quite like their debut album Nic se nestalo [Nothing has happened], but live they sounded fitful.

In the Summer Cinema the winners of last year's Young Alternative, Budoár staré dámy [The Old Lady's Boudoir] braved the cruel



Budoár staré dámy

rain. This mainly female teenage ensemble is reminiscent of early Dybuk in its faux naive style, but musically it relies more on rock. The band is industrious, gives frequent concerts and has a large repertoire of catchy songs (the last song Stromy [Trees] is sweet enough to kiss). Many of the songs are scarcely distinguishable from each other, it must be admitted, but the youth and enthusiasm of The Old Lady's Boudoir raises many hopes.

Fru Fru Serious is the group founded by singer Václav Bartoš after leaving Pluto and from the beginning it has been distinguished for its large number of drummers and small number of ideas. After hearing them at Boskovice, however, I am delighted to be able to report that another really distinctive group has matured in Moravia. Fru Fru Serious still relies on a duo of drummers and Bartoš's percussion, but the other members of the group are turning its sound more in the direction of jazz (the guest trumpeter František Kučera therefore fitted in beautifully). This gives a precision which combined with the rhythmic beat and alternative style of Bartoš creates a music that is artful, entirely danceable, and very poetic. It is a kind of synthesis of traditional elements from jazz, rock and dance music made distinctive by the nostalgic spirit that Bartoš has brought from his previous experience. The finest moment in the performance was the long song Tajga, while on the less positive side I am inclined to forgive a few "macho" (Elvis) flies in the ointment! In Boskovice Fru Fru Serious made good use of its chance on a large stage and reaped deserved ovations.

The American Blackfire consists of the Benally brothers and sister. When not dancing in authentic costume under the direction of their father, they give concerts in an aggressive punk spirit mildly (if that's the right word) influenced by Indian elements especially in the vocals (yes, hey a hey a ho). The concert went at a rousing pace, and the

girls were crazy at the sight of the handsome Indians, but I wouldn't go as far as to suspect the group of any particular originality. The endless speeches between songs (themes: our energy, your energy, your hearts, our hearts, globalisation is horrible, Leonard Peltier) and the introduction with the help of a long-winded interpreter (theme: hi, we're pleased to be playing here), were almost unbearable. I have no intention of denying the importance of the Peltier case, but I think the afternoon meeting and reading of his texts was enough. The next day HaDivadlo in its KomedioGRAF parodied the awful introduction.

Saturday evening ended with Tata Bojs, the only representative of modern pop with all its virtues and vices in the Czech Republic. Live they are quite charming and their music is inoffensive. What more can be said....

I spent the sunny Sunday at the Castle in the company of Buchty a loutky, HaDivadlo, Divadlo Kvelb and other cheerful theatre companies, and since I was reluctant to go down the only part of the music programme I attended was the MCH Band gig in the Sklepy Club. The band makes frequent appearances abroad and is now in good concert form, has released the successful album Tagesnotizen (see the review in the last number of HV) and played enthusiastically and fully up to scratch. The encores lasted about an hour, although most of the audience had already left Boskovice and the venue was not exactly packed. After three days of rushing around making discoveries this ration of familiar songs revived energy and drove away seductive thoughts of sleeping for a century.

I don't know to what extent it is worth judging Boskovice in a critical spirit. It is a festival that tries to support a good cause, and the design of the musical programme and other events is secondary. But still attractive.

janáček in the hands of the editio janáček

LEOŠ FALTUS

Critical publication of Janáček's work has a relatively long history. It dates back to an initiative from the department of musicology in Brno, headed by Prof. Dr. Jiří Vysloužil, Dr.Sc. and the music publishers SUPRAPHON Prague. After a series of mutual consultations the concrete outcome was LEOŠ JANÁČEK / A Complete Critical Edition / EDITING PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES – On the notation problem of classics of the 20th Century, by Milan Šolc and Jarmil Burghauser, which was published by Supraphon Prague in 1979 . This book (of cca 200 pages) was actually the start of the edition.



Among other things it determined the graphic form of the critical edition of Janáček and later became a cause of disputes. This was because the editing principles involved many innovations especially in the graphic design of notation, with which the first editors identified, and when the first titles had come out it was no longer possible to make changes in basic aspects, since this would modify the appearance of the edition. The main point, however, was to bring Janáček's work out in the most legible, possible and so simplest form. This was the concern (with all changes of personnel) of the edition board and the editors (always two) assigned to a specific title. In most cases there were plenty of problems (unless the work concerned was early and minor, such as *The Guide to Teaching Singing*, the *Suite for Strings* and suchlike): first there was the reading of the autograph, on which both authors had to agree. It is well-known that Janáček's handwriting is not easy to read at first sight, and in the end a series of SKV LJ prints are accompanied with facsimiles. One occasional bone of contention, however, was whether to retain or change a key signature in places where actually a completely different key was already being used, modified (according to the usual custom) by local accidentals. These absurdities (from today's point of view) were removed, but this sometimes caused displeasure, as did enharmonic changes of individual notes and sometimes whole passages from double flat or double sharp to simpler notated form (obviously sounding exactly the same). The fuss tended to be greatest when there was the least reason for it, for example not in relation to instruments or voices, where changes of intonation could occur as a result of notation (in cents and not quarter tones), but in the title summarising Janáček's piano works, where tempered tuning is solidly established. The notational conception of Ludvík Kundera and Jarmil Burghauser, which quite logically sought to unify in one form Janáček's frequent oscillations (within a few bars) from flats to sharps and back again, for example in the *Frýdecká Panna Marie* [Our Lady of Frýdek] (The cycle *s Po zarostlém chodníčku* [Along an Overgrown Path]), provoked expressions of indignation and refusal, most emphatically from Rudolf Firkušný in America. It is true that the visual impression, which helps to create the performer's semantic conception, was and perhaps remains fixed for pianists by the preceding editions. A harmony unexpectedly notated in sharps (e.g. bar 29 of the piece above) is for example held to have an exceptional position on the basis of the note picture, and to have been distorted by subsequent transposition into flat notation together with the next five bars. Without wishing to put up too much of a defense of this particular enharmonic transcription, we believe that such instances of conservatism are understandable among Czech pianists who are today and every day

concerned with Janáček's cycle, but that for foreign performers encountering Janáček's work for the first time a certain unification and simplification will benefit the reading.

We do not, however, want to dwell on the minor problems that are normal with such a major project as the complete critical edition of Janáček's music, and can of course, be removed in re-editions. Let us look now at what has already been achieved. Supraphon, which no longer exists today, over cca 20 years managed to publish 12 volumes: The Music for Organ, Piano Music, Music for Violin and Piano, Music for Cello and Piano, the now forgotten Guide to Teaching Singing, the wind sextet *Mládí* [Youth], of vocal music only the Male Choral Music I, and of the scores *Taras Bulba*, *Na Soláni čarták* for choir and orchestra, piano arrangements of the cantata *Amarus* and the *Violin Concerto "Putování dušičky"* ["The Wanderings of the Soul"]. The score of the Violin Concerto did not come out until 1997.

It is of course true that until 1990, when Supraphon production started to contract sharply, and in the Janáček project to stagnate, many more titles had been editorially prepared that were never actually published. Serious losses were caused by the delays in publication of the reconstruction of the autograph score (editors Faltus, Štědroň) of the Violin Concerto, in which a whole range of violinists at home and abroad had expressed an interest, as by the continuing failure to publish the reconstruction of the autograph form of the Danube Symphony (the same editors). The String Quartets had also been prepared, although admittedly time was lost over the unproven authenticity of the copy for the Moravian Quartet and the associated problems of notated text and introduction. The cantata *Věčné evangelium* [The Eternal Gospel] with piano arrangement had been prepared, as had the cantata *Amarus*, and Male Choral Music II was ready in notated form, only held up by translations of the sung text.

Some time in the later 90s Supraphon said a final goodbye to the Czech musical culture for which it had nonetheless done much, and after much confusion that it is not worth describing here its position in relation to the Janáček edition was taken up by Editio Baerenreiter. All of this might have been survivable, if there had not been continuing delays in the publication process at Editio Baerenreiter as well. I do not have detailed information about the ties between the Editio and the Baerenreiter company, but we know that this company has a kind of strategy towards subscribers to the Collected Critical Edition. According to this strategy it is not necessary to publish more than two Janáček volumes every year. It is true that after many negotiations especially between the now non-existent "Supraphon" editorial



board, the Janáček Foundation and the Editio management, the publishing house finally promised that yearly production would be increased. In reality, there is still a lot of ground to be made up.

Editio Baerenreiter has managed to publish the *1st String Quartet* (2000), the score of *Amarus* (2000), a newly prepared *Capriccio for piano and 7 instruments* (2001) and a re-edition of the wind sextet *Mládí* [Youth] (2001). Of the volumes prepared earlier the *Věčné evangelium* [Eternal Gospel] (score), Male Choral Music II, both already copy edited, and the *Danube* symphony, are still gathering dust at the publishers.

Over the last year the dissatisfaction of the Janáček Foundation, the editors concerned and interested members of the music public led to discussion on how to speed up completion of the critical set. The approaching Janáček anniversary provided motivation for a plan to complete the publication of the orchestral and chamber works (including vocal music) by 2004. In order to have any chance of success, the Leoš Janáček Foundation has founded the EDITIO JANÁČEK, a publishing house directed by Dr. Eva Drlíková and mainly dependent on funds from the Janáček Foundation. Manuscripts already delivered to Supraphon and already edited remain at Editio Baerenreiter, which can choose when and if it will publish them. In its very first year the Editio Janáček has managed to bring out the Concertino for Piano and Chamber Ensemble in a charming graphic design, of course retaining the notographic appearance and spirit of the Editing

Principles. The project is supervised by an editorial board appointed by the Foundation (Dr. Leoš Faltus, Dr. Miloš Štědroň, MgA Jiří Zahrádka, Dr. Eva Drlíková, Dr. Alena Němcová, Dr. Jarmila Procházková and Dr. Svata-va Přibáňová), which also chooses and approves editors for further individual volumes. The Female Choral Music (*Vičí stopa* [The Wolf's Trail], *Hradčanské písničky* [Hradčany Songs], *Kašpar Rucký*) are currently being published and the volume Literary Works (in two volumes with a critical apparatus) is in the final stage of preparation for the press, together with *Balady blanické* [Blaník Ballads], and in the near future *Idyla* [Idyll], *Národní tance na Moravě* [National Dances in Moravia], and Mixed Choral Music. As an advance signal of broader publication of Janáček, at the beginning of this current year the Editio Janáček managed to produce a facsimile edition of Janáček's early works, known as the Collection of Compositions from his Period of Prague Studies. Even at this tempo it is not entirely clear whether the Janáček Foundation and the Editio Janáček (in parallel with Editio Baerenreiter) will be able to fulfil their resolution to pay the debt due to the 150th anniversary of Janáček's birth. Nonetheless, the attempt is being made and it is better than lamentations over the slowness of publication. Apart from *Šárka* the operatic works remain untouched; this is another, still more demanding, chapter of the Collected Critical Edition of the Works of Leoš Janáček.



between classic and jazz

Epoque Quartet

Radioservis 2002
Total Time: 58:52

This new recording released under the Czech Radio label presents the broad repertory spectrum of a young string quartet founded at the beginning of 1999. The ensemble consists mainly of graduates of the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts, has already participated in several prestigious international competitions (for example the Paolo Borciani competition) and its members often appear as soloists on Czech and international podia (the first violinist M. Válek has twice won the Kocian Violin Competition and regularly appears with orchestras at home and from abroad). The CD *Between Classic and Jazz* is the third album from this promising chamber group. It offers listeners an opportunity to savour traditional pieces from the quartet repertoire (Beethoven's String Quartet no. 1, inspired by Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*), and a series of arrangements of legendary jazz standards (D. Gillespie: *Night In Tunisia*, M. Davis: *Seven Steps to Heaven*, T. Monk: *Ruby My Dear*); it ends with an energetic little jewel in the form of *Gypsy Eyes* by the guitar mage Jimi Hendrix.

The musicians manage to master this varied palette of widely differing musical styles with ease. Their brilliant interpretation of the most subtle colour passages in the music of Janáček and Beethoven clearly confirms their perfect erudition in the sphere of classical music, while at the same time their precise phrasing and inspired solo productions in the jazz pieces shows that they possess a spontaneous musical creativity based on delight in playful improvisation.

VÍT NERMUT



echoes from long ago

Ensemble Martinů

Český rozhlas [Czech Radio/Triga]
Total Time: 76:12

This recording has many links with its predecessor. For one thing, the performers are relatively young, since while the ensemble was founded in 1978, today its musicians come from a new generation. Two of the composers featured are also the same: on both we find pieces by Sylvie Bodorová and Zdeněk Lukáš. The most important common point is, however, the attempt to strike a balance between accessibility and difficulty or between tradition and originality. As the title suggests, inspiration from the past is one theme common to all the pieces. This can take different forms. Three Rondos for Flute, Cello and Piano by Zdeněk Lukáš, Madrigal Sonata for Flute, Violin and Piano by Bohuslav Martinů and Sonata da camera by Ilja Hurník turn back to the historical musical forms of the Renaissance, the Baroque and Classicism. Sylvie Bodorová in her piece *Helios* goes back to an ancient theme that she turns into a kind of musical drama. Otomar Kvěch, whose *Echos from Shakespeare* for Flute, Violin, Cello and Piano refers to Renaissance drama in its very title, takes a similar approach. Antonín Dvořák occupies a special position here, with his *Slavonic Dances* performed in the arrangement for violin, cello, flute and piano. This arrangement was made during Dvořák's lifetime and with his consent, and when the piano or above all orchestral versions of pieces have become almost too popular it is pleasant to hear them in a change of clothes.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL



prague string quartets

Jupiter Quartet

Arco Diva
Total time: 63:40

This CD is actually a profile recording of the Quattro group of composers. These are four Czech composers (only three are still alive today), who despite differences of generation found a common language. The main theme of the recordings could be described as the search for a balance between accessibility to the listener and intellectual and musical complexity. Each composer tries to solve this dilemma in his own way, each with a different degree of success. Luboš Fišer (1935 – 1999) wrote his only String Quartet in 1984. The one-movement piece abandons the traditional formal scheme and works principally with the alternation of differently structured blocks of music and silence. Indeed, it is the treatment of silence and pauses that is the source of the dramatic quality of the piece. Sylvie Bodorová (1954) called her 4th String Quartet *Shofarot*, since it was inspired by the musical instrument, the shofar, used in the Jewish liturgy. Apart from imitation of the various techniques of play on this instrument, the piece clearly shows the influence of the melodies of Jewish folk music, a source that the composer often draws on elsewhere. While with Fišer and Bodorová the balancing act between originality and accessibility produces interesting music, the String Quartet by Otmar Mácha (1922) and the 4th String Quartet by Zdeněk Lukáš (1928) produce a rather awkward impression. In both cases we can hear the folk inspiration and both employ a wide register of tonality, but there seems to be a lack of courage and therefore a loss of interest.

The Jupiter String Quartet was founded in 1990 by students of the Prague Conservatory. It is pleasant to find young musicians who are not afraid of taking on works that are difficult and do not offer the prospect of quick success.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

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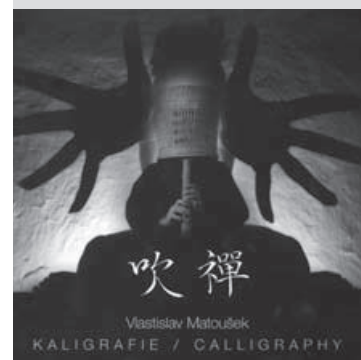
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