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Gabriela Demeterová

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Horologe
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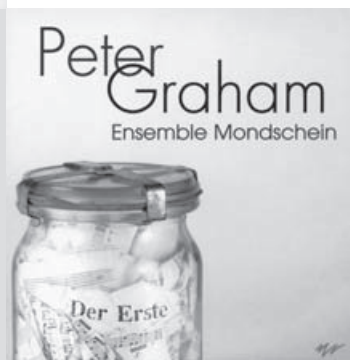
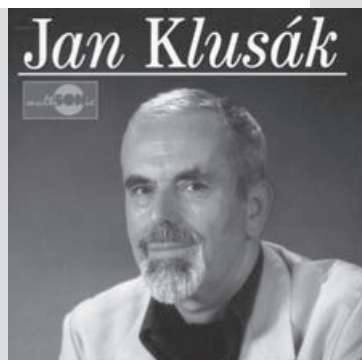
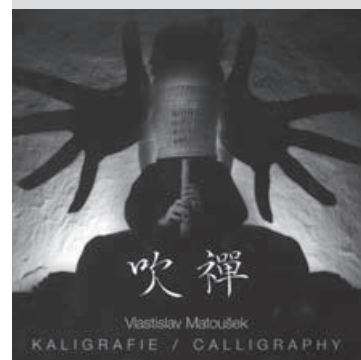
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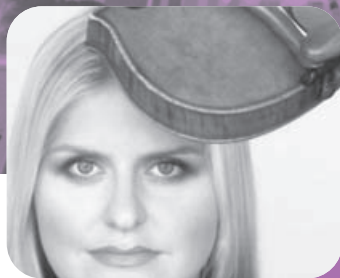
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editorial

Dear readers.

I must immediately make two apologies for this issue. First and foremost for its late publication, the result of technical problems. The second apology relates to the interview with the Trio des Iscles in the last issue. The interviewer was not Jana Pospíšilová but Markéta Pospíšilová.

The title interview in this issue presents Gabriela Demeterová, a violinist who while by no means a newcomer on the Czech scene still always manages to have surprises in store. Her most recent surprise was adding a viola to her musical arsenal and releasing an album in which she played on both instruments - at the same time.

Lovers of contemporary music have already come to associate the autumn with the New Music Marathon - a festival that presents a series of interesting composers and performers and has already established a certain tradition.

Free improvisation is a peculiar genre, and hard to describe in words. Nonetheless we try the best we can in this issue. First there is a review of a CD by the Durman&Posejpal duo, and then an article on Horologe of Dreamers, a free association of free improvisers.

I hope that in 2003 all our readers find time for good music. Perhaps even some of the music that you read about in our magazine.

Matěj Kratochvíl
MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL
EDITOR

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not just play the notes

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

The violinist Gabriela Demeterová is already one of the established stars of the Czech music scene. Apart from performing she is also involved in organising a festival devoted to Baroque music and she is the leader of the ensemble known as the Collegium of Czech Philharmonists, with whom she plays this music. Last Autumn she released a CD of Karel Stamic duets for violin and viola, playing both the parts herself. She first presented herself live as a violist in mid-November in the Rudolfinum in Prague. Our interview took place during a pause between rehearsals for this concert, and included the pianist Markéta Cibulková as well as Gabriela Demeterová. The former is now studying in Graz in Austria and has already, for example, worked with Charles Mackerras and the Czech Philharmonic.

What pieces can we look forward to at the concert?

MC In the first half there will be Hindemith's *Trauermusik* for viola and piano and Shostakovich's *Sonata for Viola and Piano*. In the second half we've put cheerful violin pieces like Kreisler's *Chinese Tambourine*, Sarasate's *Gypsy Melodies* and Prokofiev's *Three Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*.

Why have you decided to take on the viola as well as the violin?

GD Because I like to get to grips with difficult tasks and I don't like just sticking in the same spot. The velvet tone of the viola has always fascinated me, and its a very pleasant change for the ear after the violin, which is more incisive and dominating. But the main reason is that the viola extends my repertoire, since there are beautiful pieces for the viola, like the Shostakovich Sonata, for example, that hasn't been played in the Czech Republic for a long time, and may not be heard for a long time to come here either. It's a very momentous piece, which is not often performed. I said to myself - why not

choose something non-traditional to start with? And I also wanted to use it to launch a series of concerts in which I want to offer the public a rather more diverse programme. Alternating the violin and viola might also be more interesting for audiences than the classic violin recital that everyone offers.

The viola has the reputation of a rather "poor relation" among classical musicians. Is it that way in reality?

GD The viola has always been in the position of a kind of "makeweight" to the violin. Most parts for it have also been composed in this spirit – just as an accompaniment. But in these Stamic Duets for example, it is an equal partner. The position of the viola has also been affected by the fact that worse violinists often retrained as viola players.

But in recent years hasn't the viola seemed to be getting a place in the sun?

GD That's thanks to a number of performers. There are a few people on the international scene, for example Pinchas Zuckermann,

who play brilliantly on the violin and the viola. So it's emerging that playing the viola has its own meaning and the clichés about it are not entirely correct.

On the last CD you recorded a duet with yourself. Why?

GD I had the idea of doing something non-traditional, and actually I had already tried something similar on one of my earlier projects – it was the CD *The Magic Violin* [Kouzelné housle]. There I recorded using a playback of Strauss's *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, arranged for me and the Collegium by Otmar Mácha. He wrote the arrangement for two violins and I had the idea of playing the second part myself as well. It was quite interesting to have the two parts played by the same person, so that there's perfect harmony of expression. Then when Supraphon were considering a new CD but didn't have the funds for a major project with an orchestra, it occurred to me to combine the viola with the violin. I had found the Stamic duet in a bookshop in London about six years before, but at the time I never thought that one day I would put them to use. I liked the

fact that the viola part was genuinely interesting, and not limited just to a few notes of accompaniment. First I recorded the violin part and then added the viola part. It was fascinating, but also difficult. Fortunately I was helped by Zdeněk Zahradník and Tomáš Zikmund's excellent recording team.

Didn't using playback make it necessary to play more mechanically than when two musicians are playing together at the same time?

GD Stamic is Classicism, where you don't have much latitude with the tempos anyway, and often these pieces are constructed precisely on a mechanical rhythm. They include very difficult and fast passages that have to be played with complete precision. And because I feel it in the same way on the viola and the violin, the result can be even more precise. When I finally heard the result I was surprised how good it sounded. I had been a little bit scared, but musically the pieces didn't suffer

What's your attitude to the use of technology in music?

GD I adore technology, and I'm a computer enthusiast, but I'm cautious about it in the context of music. I've tried out an electronic violin connected to computer and I already have some idea of the sort of pieces that could be wittily arranged for this instrument using electronic acoustic possibilities. That would probably interest me as a kind of joke, but otherwise I don't feel the need to have everything. Or at least it hasn't got to me so far, but perhaps one day I'll be more interested.

Is it hard to find a good accompanist?

GD Accompanist... it's quite a horrible label. I'd rather say partner. Yes it is hard. In life you only meet a few people whom you really understand and vice versa. .

What kind of qualities must someone have to be the right partner?

GD Above all he or she must be on the same wavelength. It's not precisely definable, but the person must basically be able to read your thoughts, so that you can react to each other correctly. As soon as your partner fails to react, the music suffers. The person should be on your level at least, and if possible even better.

What does the other half of the partnership think?

MC Playing with someone is great. You don't have to think up everything for yourself, there's less work involved and sometimes there can be a surprise, which is an essential aspect of concerts and also the most enjoyable thing about it. So far I have been lucky in my partners. Chamber music is compulso-





ry at the place where I'm studying, but I have managed to find a hugely talented flautist – she's five years younger than me but there's perfect communication between us.

GD I'm not even looking for chamber groups bigger than a duo, because the probability of more musicians on the same wavelength coming together is so low. Audiences don't necessarily notice the problem, but the musicians can feel it.

Does it make any difference whether the partner is a man or woman?

GD I like playing with women, and so far I haven't found many good partners among men. Men concentrate too much on technique and too little on emotion, although recently I heard Norbert Heller play, for example, and I would be able to work with him. For the most part I work with women.

As a woman, what kind of authority do you have in your ensemble?

GD The musicians have to obey me. I don't use kid gloves there. Sometimes they have a hard time, because they come to me after a full day's rehearsal in the Philharmonic where they've been struggling with Mahler, and I want them to play accurately and cleanly. But during that time I think the ensemble has improved and it has drive. That's probably the most important thing.
MC We don't quarrel.

On the one hand you play the Romantic repertoire and Twentieth Century and on the other you devote yourself to Baroque. How easily do the two go together?

GD I like alternating genres. Baroque is actually something like a hobby. My main area is naturally Romantic music, and that is

the music I have to play all the time at concerts. My approach to the Baroque is peculiar in the sense that I play it on a modern instrument, but I am still interested in playing in the correct way for the time. After Shostakovich, Baroque is like balm.

Do the two areas influence each other?

GD Of course. Recently I played Igor Stravinsky's violin concerto, in which the composer draws a great deal on Bach. Given that I know how to play Baroque, I can identify it properly in Stravinsky as well.

MC We have just been dealing with the same thing in Shostakovitch. There is Baroque note symbolism in every bar of it. It's not in any way hidden, but you need to know how to read it.

GD Today, when access to Baroque sources is so easy, I think every performer has an obligation to learn a little about these matters. Otherwise you are not properly professionally equipped, and all you do is read the notes.

Anyone who enters on a professional musical career must be very certain that he or she has something to offer – something new that the competition lacks. Is it hard to maintain this conviction?

GD In our field – even at the top – there are only a few people who are true musicians. Only these few people think about music analytically.

MC It's a question of personal courage. You are constantly thrown back just on your own feelings and intuitions, which are hard to defend. You have to keep on defending yourself and the most interior emotions, with which you go to the marketplace. Just ful-

filling the demands of the market is easier. GD It is very difficult and already begins at competitions. I had to cope with it with my teacher when I went to some competition. It was clear that I had a good idea for the performance, but the jury included x and y and I knew they wouldn't like it. And so I had to compromise in the interests of winning. Competitions are where a career begins, and you draw attention to yourself. Later of course you don't want to compromise in your own eyes. If you play a Dvořák Concerto, for example, according to your own ideas and not as it "ought to be played", the critics won't like it. But I don't play for the critics. The important thing for me is a full hall and an enthusiastic audience. When someone comes to me after a concert and says that he is ninety years old and now he can die, that's better than any reviews. I don't want to play by rote. I want to rank among the few people on this planet who genuinely know how to read the notes.

Do you take any notice of reviews?

GD Reviewers know how to stab and wound, because we are brought up to be successful, and that includes good criticism.

MC But there are secondary ways of keeping up the belief that my playing is good. You need a circle of people whom you trust. When Gabriela comes to me and tells me that there was such and such a mistake, I can believe her.

GD It's good to have at least one person whose opinion you can trust. And when he or she says it's good, then it's good. After playing I very often have a bad feeling, because one tries to play absolutely perfectly. And then I really need to have someone else tell me how it sounded from the outside.

It's frequent today to take methods

from pop music and use them in serious music. You have both already shot videoclips to go with some pieces. How far can this convergence of genres be taken?

MC It depends on the idea. If the idea is good and relevant, then you can do anything. Personally I wouldn't be against playing with Sting. It all depends on whether you know what you're doing and what you want to say.

GD We live in the era of communications technologies and if we don't come to terms with the fact that the world is moving in this direction, then it doesn't matter how right I am – nobody will know about me and I shall just be playing for myself. If I'm generally known, a sponsor will believe that he will get a return on investing in me and I am able to arrange a tour and record the kind of music I like. From this point of view there's no sense in making distinctions between popular and serious music.

MC Recently when I was visiting a jazz club I realised that modern jazz has already become entirely the equivalent of classical music in complexity and length. And so it struck me that it would be possible to play classical music – Beethoven sonatas for example – in the club. In informal clothes and a relaxed atmosphere. This kind of link up of the two spheres could work.

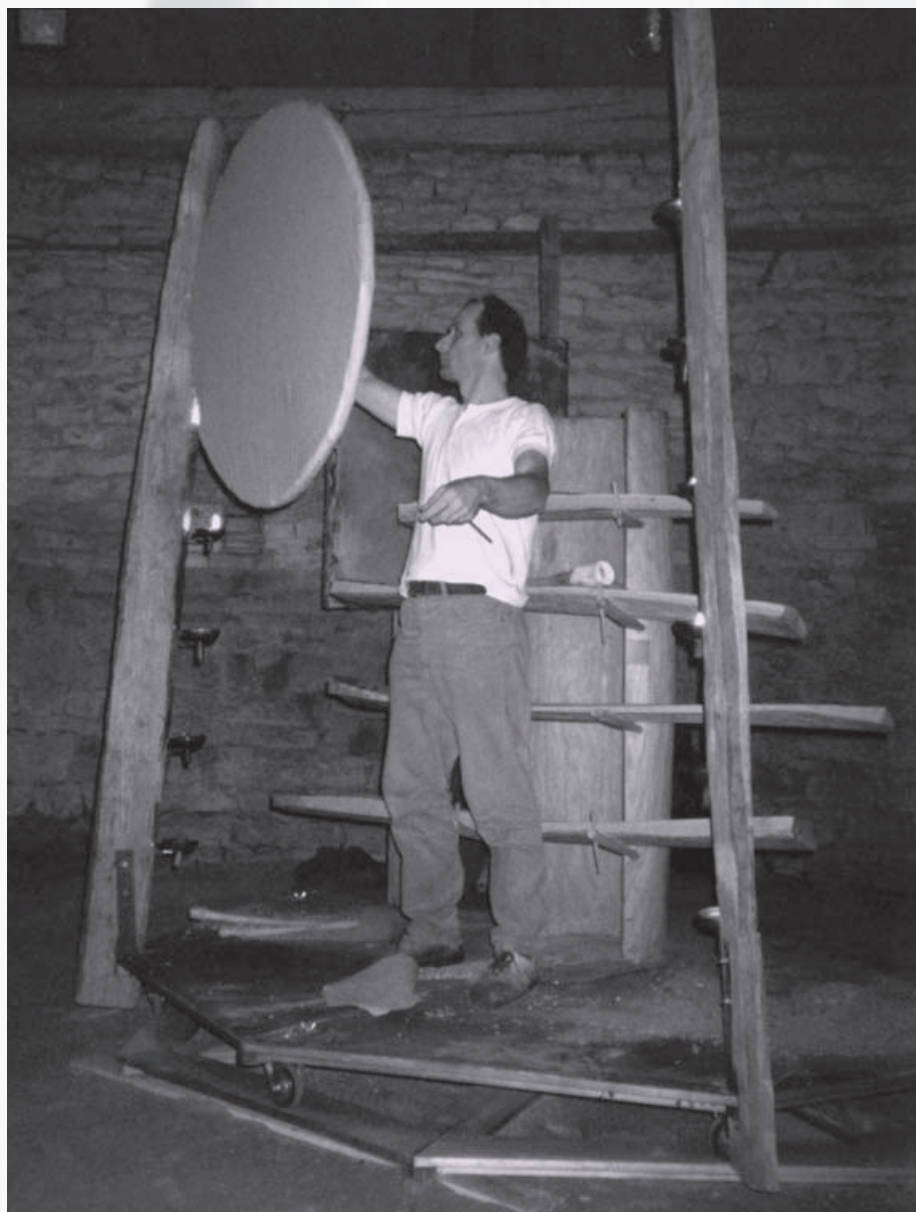
GD We can also learn from popular music about communication with the public. People go to a classical music concert with a feeling of solemnity and a barrier arises between the public and the artist. When I suddenly actually speak to the audience, I see the burden somehow falling from their shoulders. That's why I like more intimate chamber venues. One gets audiences of three thousand in Japan, but it's pleasant to play for, say, a hundred people. It means I can be conscious of every listener separately.

Looking through your earlier interviews it's noticeable that journalists are sometimes more interested in your hobbies or clothes than in the music you play. Does this tax on popularity bother you?

GD One has to be pleased to be visible and one of the things that makes me interesting for the music public is the fact that apart from playing I am also a live person. Obviously I would rather talk about music, but that doesn't so much interest magazine readers. Or at least their journalists don't believe that it does. If I didn't answer the questions, I would be overtaken by a hundred other people who might be no more than average players, but willing to reveal anything about themselves.

kunuk - an eskimo message

MARKÉTA DVOŘÁKOVÁ



“At the bottom of the ocean lives the Mother of Sea Creatures, a mythical variant of the Great Goddess of Beasts, the source and womb of all life, on whose goodwill the very existence of the tribe depends. This means that the shaman must regularly go down under the water surface to renew connection with the mother of beasts.” Mircea Eliade

If you weren't at Tomáš Ondrůšek's farm in Trstenice near Litomyšl on Thursday 5th of September 2002 shortly after midday then you missed a great deal. And what you missed was the prepremiere of the production KUNUK, that magical descent to the bottom of the ocean to purify the self from all the wrongs of the world.

Kunuk is the graduation project of a student of stage design at DAMU [Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts], Kristýna Täubelová, who invited the composer Ondřej Adámek and percussionist Tomáš Ondrůšek to work with her.

In the project Kristýna Täubelová (1977) capitalised not only on her experience of attending middle industrial art school in Žižkov and then specialising in woodcarving and furniture restoration at the same school, but also on her studies in Doc. Zeithammel's sculpture studio. The structure she has made of wood and stretched sheepskins is an interesting artwork in itself. Thanks to its variability and position on a turntable it becomes a changing stage and also a “musical instrument” into which a performer – drummer breathes life. Because the whole production is based on an ancient Eskimo myth, the performer, who moves round the structure and its changing shapes and makes it ring using not only his sticks but also his own body, is also an actor, the character who takes us through the story. The atmosphere of the production is much enhanced by the surroundings (an old stone barn) and the lighting (candles in the structure giving off the aroma of the sheep fat from which they are made). The natural sound and textures (wood and skin) are a treat for the ears and eye of the spectators and awaken in them instincts long suppressed by civilisation, and the capacity to perceive what is simple, beautiful and natural.

As mentioned, there were two musicians involved in the project.

Ondřej Adámek (1979) is a student of composition at the HAMU [Musical Faculty of the

Academy of Performing Arts] in Prague in Marek Kopelent's class and at the same time a visiting student at the Paris Conservatoire. He is well known for his work with dancers and choreographers in the CR and abroad, and he writes music for live interpreters, and electroacoustic, stage and film music. He frequently provides space for improvisation in his pieces.

Tomáš Ondrůšek (1964) hardly needs an introduction - he is a multipercussionist in demand throughout the world, and his repertoire is exclusively contemporary music. He is a member of the AGON Orchestra and a founder and teacher of percussion at HAMU in Prague. He also holds international summer courses for composers and percussionists in Trstěnice by Litomyšl.

Kristýna Täubelová, Ondřej Adámek and Tomáš Ondrůšek have together produced an appealing multimedia production that voluntarily renounces modern technical effects and plays on the hidden strings of the human interior in modest, unsensational, natural mode. The very idea of an artist, composer and performer collaborating on the project is itself remarkable enough to justify us asking a few questions of its authors.

Kristýna, You're the main instigator and intellectual force behind the whole project, so let's go back to the beginning. What actually is KUNUK and how it came into existence?

KUNUK- this name emerged when we were formulating the project for a grant. At that point we didn't yet know which myth we would choose from Knud Rasmussen's book of “Greenland Myths and Legends”, and so I used the general term KUNUK, because that is the short name Knud Rasmussen uses for the Eskimos. In itself the name also contains the motif of the circle, which accompanies the whole production both at the level of ideas, and action (The performer's use of revolving, circular movements.)

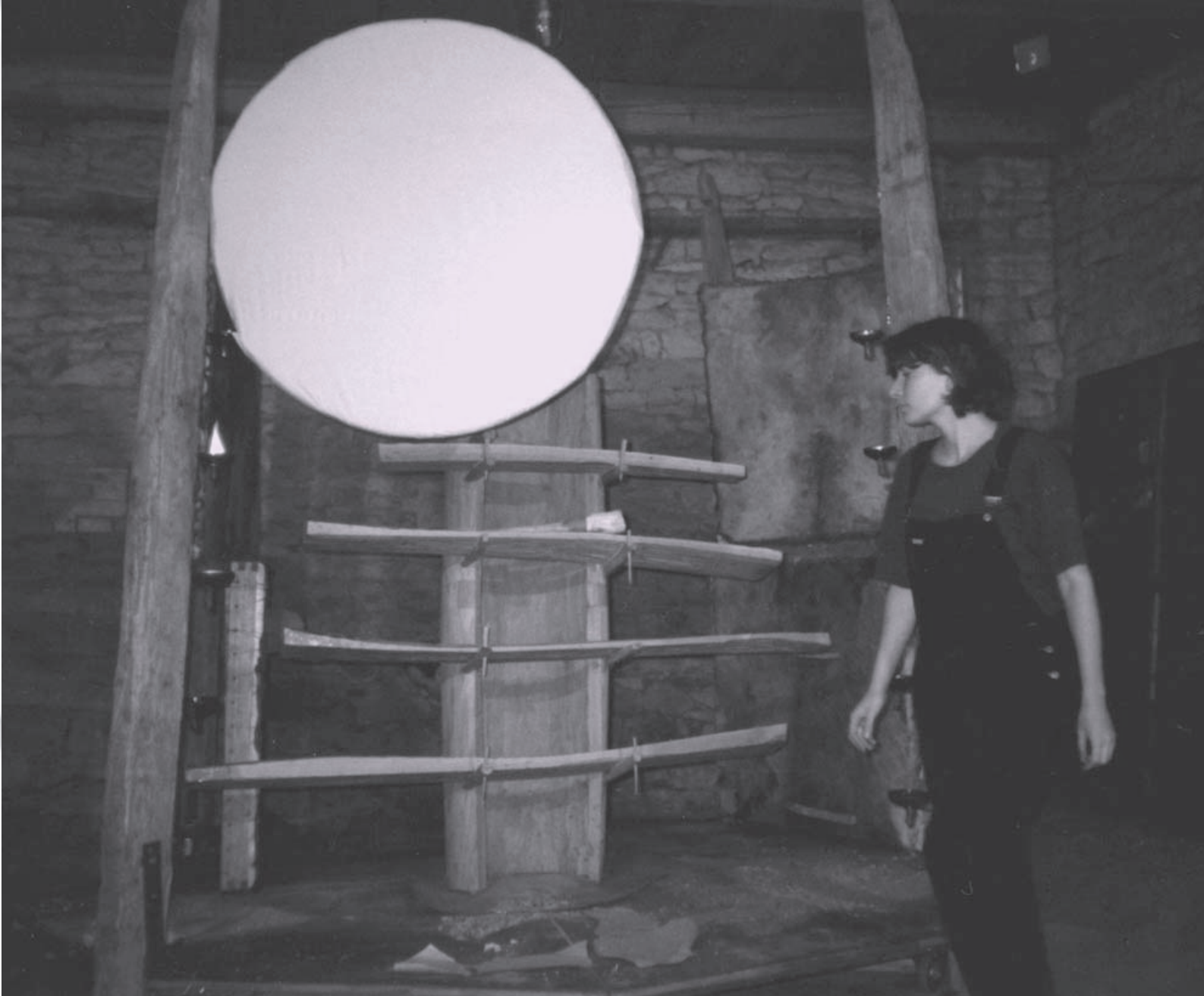
How long did you work on your graduate project, what were the paths that led to collaboration with Tomáš and Ondřej, and how did the collaboration work?

In the Summer of 2000 Tomáš Ondrůšek gave a concert in Český Krumlov. Listening to him playing Helmut Lachenmann's “Interieur I” I realised that the interpretation of the piece didn't consist of just the musical interpretation, but involved other elements like dance and the aesthetic impact of the percussion set (which actually formed a kind of interior), although these emerge as a secondary product of the musical interpretation. It struck me that one could work with these secondary products deliberately and consciously, in such a way that when writing the work the composer would already be reckoning with the movements of the performer in the space defined by the instrument, and would find inspiration in new sounds offered by the artist and percussion player. (This means that the artist provides a new form, material etc, while the percussion player provides a new or unfamiliar way of playing the instrument – object). The idea also appealed to Tomáš Ondrůšek and Ondřej Adámek, and so we developed the idea of a joint project where we would try to put these principles into practice.

I was working on the project from the Spring of 2001, when I formulated our idea and applied for a grant. By January 2002 I had gathered the materials and produced a model of the structure. In the course of the spring and summer I then built the object at Vojnarka farm directly where the first performance would be.

I discussed ideas and designs with Ondřej and Tomáš throughout the year. First it was necessary to prepare the “instrument” – to offer material. Only then during August 2002 could the composition be produced on the basis of exploration of the acoustic possibilities. We had the chance to work with the young director Tatyana Ayzitulova from St. Petersburg, who helped us considerably with the conceptual structure of the whole production. The current version of the production basically emerged over one week, when we took all the elements making up the whole, compared them and looked for the ideal ways to link them up.

What kind of importance to you attach to the Eskimo myth. Ought the audience to understand the specific story, or is it enough for you if people go



away with the sense that it was about something, even if they don't quite know what?

The Eskimo myth is important mainly for us. It forms the material on which we drew and led us to understand the philosophy of Eskimo culture, and to compare it with Central European culture and the environment in which the project developed, i.e. the natural and human rhythms of the Czech village. The idea was not to create an illustration of a myth, but to find universally valid principles, both in choice of materials and in the message of the story itself. To answer your question directly then – it's enough for me if spectators go away with the feeling that it was about SOMETHING. I would even be pleased if not everyone went away with the sense that they knew precisely what kind of story it was. That way we give spectators space to come away from the performance

with their own individual feelings, images and reactions.

Ondřej, obviously working with someone from another field is nothing unusual for you (I know, for example that you have recently returned from Africa where you wrote music for a ballet performance), but I still want to ask you whether your collaboration with Kristýna was something new, interesting and fruitful?

Musicians don't usually collaborate much, even though cooperation is essential for art. The normal experiences of people in theatre – daily rehearsals for two months before the opening of a new production, a joint search and exploration involving excitement, enthusiasm and so on, are outside the range of ordinary musical life. I enjoyed getting away from my field and helping physically produce

the structure, being in constant contact with all the members of our team and engage in a truly shared creative search. It was also important staying at the farm, where I could try out anything at any time of day and night on the instrument I was writing for, and where I could suggest and talk through any idea immediately with Kristýna and Tomáš at any moment, and live with the project at every moment. It's nice to compare the different perspectives of people from different fields, who are nonetheless very close in views on art and personally. The object structure is also interesting for me from the visual point of view, which was very inspiring. And it's acoustically unusual and forced us to very careful exploration of how to exploit it.

Tomáš, since the whole project (not just the performance, but long-term preparation) took place in your farm, you evidently had a strong interest in it

from the beginning. You also certainly took a share in the creation of the work itself, at the very least making sure that it remained practically possible in terms of performance.

I shared in the project as a performer in the framework of ordinary cooperation that Ondřej writes about. During rehearsals and exploration of the material I discovered some unusual possibilities of the object and techniques for "sounding" it. This was an important experience for me, since all music came into being on "non-instruments" or "ur-instruments". Experimenting with this acoustic object was something very close to my philosophy of instruments: to feel the instrument as material and not just its form – the finished instrument. When I vibrate – sound this material, – a trace of the sound just made remains in the space. It is a visual element created whenever material is sounded. We used these traces in the KUNUK project. They were the basis for the choreography and this then had an influence on the action of the story. This linkup of all elements in mutual interaction was very exciting for me: movement is born from sound, gesture from movement, action from gesture, and action then provoking sound.

Actually this is the first time I have worked in this way. I became a bit of an actor, it wasn't possible just to go up to the instrument casually, since my footsteps themselves created sound and were part of the story. Working with Tatyana Ayzitulova, who was primarily sensitive to the dramatic element of the project, was important for me in this context. In the same way it was crucial to consult with Kristýna who discussed the acoustic possibilities of the different parts of the object-structure with me. Her artwork said something to me right at the beginning, and in collaboration with Ondřej, who approached it with great sensitivity, went beyond the boundary of pure visual form and acquired acoustic form as well.

What about KUNUK in the future? Will we have another chance to see it and hear its message?

Kristýna: We would like to present the production at Vojnarka Farm in Trstěnice by Litomyšl at the Open Day on the 3rd of October 2002. The situation is slightly complicated by the fact that Ondřej is going to study in France, I am off to Russia for more than a month and Tomáš has a packed programme a year in advance. But we shall try to bring the production to Prague, and we're negotiating the possibility of an appearance at the international KukArt Festival in St. Petersburg. On the other hand before that we have to find some time together for rehearsals, to iron out the faults that emerged at the first public performances.

There is a certain group of people who ask the same question every year: Will there be a Marathon this year? Although the New Music Marathon has become a major event, giving us the opportunity to hear many important works and greatly raising the level of musical education in the local public, every year its life seems to be in the balance. As yet no patron offering generous and above all stable sponsorship is in sight, and this year the financial problems were exacerbated by the fact that the Archa Theatre, the usual home of the festival, had been closed after the summer floods. Nonetheless, even this year there were inspiring and interesting moments in abundance. A replacement venue was provided by the Ponec Dance Theatre, which may not have ideal acoustic conditions but is at least close to a railway track, so that the sounds of the trains mingled tastefully with the tones of the music (in some pieces this was not in fact distracting). The only missing element were the traditional meetings with composers.



Egon Bondy

a festival in defiance of circumstance

new music marathon 14th - 17th november 2002

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL



The number of seats occupied (the auditorium was slightly smaller than at the Archa) was a good reflection of the interests of the public today. The Thursday evening offered contemporary classical music in its more academic form, but without well-known names – the theatre was disagreeably empty. On Friday the audience was larger, boosted partly by the permanent following of the Agon Orchestra, and partly by people attracted by the block devoted to Mare Kopelent. Saturday was star-studded and the Ponoc was packed to bursting: John Zorn and Steve Reich have a decent following in the Czech Republic but their works are relatively rarely played in concert here, and that is an ideal combination. A second factor was the main star of the evening, the philosopher Egon Bondy, who appeared as a singer. The Sunday concert by Irvine Arditti, the biggest foreign star at the festival, took place in the Rudolfinum Gallery among exhibits of Socialist Realist art. The space allocated for his appearance was full, but this still meant only half the audience numbers of the Ponoc. Although Arditti is an absolutely top performer and the piece played, **Luigi Nono's** *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura*, is a major work of contemporary music, the combination is evidently not a huge draw for listeners.

The End of the Avant Garde?

The first course at the Thursday concert offered pieces by **Rudolf Komorous** and his Canadian pupils **Christopher Butterfield**, **Martin Arnold** and **Owen Underhill**, performed by the Slovak ensemble Opera Aperta. The pieces were written in the last two years and showed how the pioneer of New Music had turned into an academic and how his pupils were following him. Their musical world has its roots somewhere in the first half of the Twentieth Century, and they pick and choose only very cautiously from more recent developments. On the other hand the music is at least written in a way that makes for good playing, and this was



Kryštof Lecian

evident in the level of performance. The pieces by **Pavol Szymanský**, played by the OMN chamber ensemble, might be described in the same terms – they are not about experiment, but about links with tradition – but on hearing them one is immediately sure that one is dealing with a creative personality. None of the pieces was boring, and the most interesting was the final *Recalling A Serenade*, in which fragments referring to musical history would appear and then vanish again, as if the musicians were trying to remember a serenade they had once played a long time ago. The third block was also taken up by Slovak performers, this time the Veni ensemble (which overlaps with the Opera Aperta) and Slovak composers of the middle generation – **Marián Lejava**, **Boško Milakovič**, **Lubomír Burgr** and **Daniel Matej**. The pieces presented confirmed the impression that some composers are now tired of experiments and want to write quite normal music. No particularly memorable experience arrived, however, and during the final pieces (and also the most experimental in terms of sound sources), **Daniel Matej's** *jaune, bleue, rouge*, in which sounds recorded in the course of an evening in the theatre bar were played into long repeated notes, drowsiness was heavy in the hall.



Nostitz Quartet

The introduction to the Friday concert consisted of a block called Czech Young Bloods, in which the Agon Orchestra presented current work by young composers. **Ondřej Adámek**, **Marko Ivanovič** and **Ivan Acher** showed that their generation needs no longer worry about catching up with international trends. What their professors failed to teach them they have sought out for themselves and managed to create their own idiom. Progressive compositional procedures and the use of electronics, for example, can no longer be classified as experiments but as an ordinary part of their musical language. In relation to Adámek's piece *Kapky, kapičky* [Drops, Droplets], Ivanovič's *Protestsong* and Acher's *Tance sv. Víta* [Dances of St. Vitus] we can make the general comment that while they have enough original sound ideas, there is an insufficiently strong unifying idea. The germ of such an idea exists in the case of Acher in the use of extracts recorded from the radio and then repeated in a different musical context, and in the case of Ivanovič in reference to the protest songs of the Sixties.

Stars

Apart from Arditti, the only figure with foreign star at the festival was the singer **Sigune von Osten**, the principal performer at the concert devoted to **Marek Kopelent**, whose works she has already been interpreting for some years. She was joined by the German ensemble Musica Temporale conducted by **Alicja Munk**. Five pieces from the period 1967 – 1983 presented what it is that makes Kopelent so important for Czech music. Here the techniques of the New Music are not employed for their own sake but are combined with a unique poetics. Sigune von Osten is not only a brilliant singer but also a phenomenal actress, as she had the chance to show in the *Agnus Dei* and in *Snehah*, but above all in *Black and White*

Tears for solo voice without accompaniment. In *Bludný hlas* [Wandering Voice] on a text from a Sophocles tragedy she was replaced by the "real" actress Taťána Medvecká, and her performance, enhanced by film projection, was in no way inferior to that of her colleague. The only purely instrumental piece was *Hudba pro pět* [Music for Five]. While Sigune von Osten is not very well known in this country and so her performance was a surprise, Irvine Arditti had already appeared here with his quartet and his reputation preceded him. Nono's almost hour-long piece perhaps seemed rather short to him (or else he was bothered by having to share it with Gideon Kremer, virtually present on electronically modified recording), since he decided to add **Franco Donatoni's** *Ciglio* and *6 capriccios* by **Salvatore Sciarino**. Both are virtuoso pieces, but alongside Nono's opus seemed like etudes. *La lontananza...* works with the movement of both elements, live and pre-recorded, in space. Arditti moved between music stands (a glimpse of the notes suggested he was playing straight from the manuscript), while workers, peasants and socialist intelligentsia looked down on him from their frames of the gallery wall – something that might have pleased Nono with his leanings towards socialism.

Large Mouthfuls

Saturday evening promised to show us how young Czech performers coped with the music of two American "stars" of contemporary music. The programme included three pieces by **John Zorn** and *Music for 18 Musicians* by **Steve Reich**. Whatever instruments Zorn writes his music for, essentially he always works in the same way. Technical difficulty, rapid cuts, occasional references to historical styles or popular music which immediately dissolve in sonic chaos. The string quartet *Cat O' Nine Tails* is a typical

example and the Nostitz Quartet mastered it with sufficient panache and precision. The *Untitled* for solo cello, on the other hand, was quite wearisome, although this was not so much the fault of **Kryštof Lecian** as that of the composer himself (does the title maybe suggest a certain helplessness on his part?). *Angelus Novus* for wind octet performed by the **Tuning Metronomes** was not boring. Paradoxically it was also the least Zornian and more flowing. I personally particularly liked the passage where the performers began to play biphonically (i.e. each playing two notes at the same time), and a minimalistically rhythmatized passage emerged from the sounds.

Steve Reich is popular in the Czech Republic and when he cannot come here himself, we have to use our own resources. The combined forces of students and graduates of the Brno Music Academy JAMU and the Prague music faculty HAMU led by Marek Ivanovič and Martin Opršál had a difficult task ahead of them. *Music for 18 Musicians* (however I counted, the number of musicians always came out at nineteen) is an hour-long piece demanding absolute precision and perfect interplay. In these respects the musicians did not fail and for the whole hour managed to maintain the rhythmic pull and almost magical effect of this Minimalist classic. The main shortcoming was the sound. The keyboards used instead of pianos had an insufficient dynamic range

HAMU & JAMU ensemble



and the loudness of the singing, whether through the fault of the singers themselves or the sound engineers, varied disagreeably. Nevertheless, this was a remarkable experience that deserves to be repeated and was not even upset by the noise of the passing express train from Košice.

There's No Accounting for Taste.

Taste is a peculiar affair, and the end of the concert on Saturday – the best attended – offered plenty of material for reflections on this theme. **The Maloměstský orchestr Požoň sentimentál** [The Small-Town Požoň Sentimental Orchestra] (Messrs. Lenko, Burgr, Piaček and Buranovský – mostly from the Veni circle) presented repertoire from its CD *Urban Songs*, with the addition of a few other pieces. The first fifteen minutes made a more agreeable impression that the recording and seemed to be a logical continuation of Reich's minimalism, grafted onto Viennese or Bratislava table music. Decompositions of a fifth chord do not, however, provide much excitement if not combined with something higher, which did not happen in this case.

Boredom set in, as was also clear from occasional expressions of protest from the public. The audience was waiting for the main star of the evening, **Egon Bondy**, with whom Piaček and Požoň had prepared a sequence also entitled *Urban Songs*. During a dramatic prelude the philosopher sat down at a table, pulled his cigarettes and ashtray from his pocket, and in his untrained but for that reason all the more expressive voice sang a

choice of pre-war Prague pub songs. *Cvočkářem byl Danda* [Danda was a Nutcase], *Padla facka* [It came to blows], *Na Pankráci* [In Pankrác]. Despite ostentatious denigration from part of the audience Bondy turned out to be a brilliant performer who knew what each song needed, as was particularly clear from the final piece *Hřbitove, hřbitove* [Graveyard, Graveyard] sung a capella into a darkening hall. The public was enthusiastic.

Tuning Metronomes



Irvine Arditti

What was this kind of performance doing in a festival of contemporary "serious" music? Some of the audience undoubtedly asked themselves the question and some answered it by departing early. It is interesting that people who had endured the wild creations of Zorn and the repetitiousness of Reich should decide to leave through the middle of the hall, demonstratively and noisily, during a nostalgic old Prague song.

The organisers decided to hold this year's festival over four days rather than the usual three. This meant that audiences were never as exhausted after the concerts as they had sometimes been earlier. It also meant that there were none of the usual delays in the start of individual blocks. Much of the music that the public absorbed was of good quality, and we can only hope that next year as well the Marathon will manage to overcome its material problems and celebrate its tenth anniversary.



chrom-vanad universal and the heavenly organ the inconspicuous horologe of dreamers created by jaroslav kořán has been here ten years

PAVEL KLUSÁK

"It all started in the Šumava Forest, first of all just for the reason that there were no musical instruments there", recounted Jaroslav Kořán in 1993, and since then not much about the Horologe of Dreamers [Orloj snivců] has changed. Percussionist and composer Kořán established himself as an accompanist and improviser in projects at the Theatre Archa where he celebrated 10 years of his changeable community, the Forgotten Orchestra of the Land of Dreamers, spent some time studying in the USA, played in the New York Knitting Factory, launched the Internet pages www.softbooks.cz, began to release recordings under his own Pagoda label, and worked with many artists and musicians as an improviser. In keeping with his notorious lack of pushiness, he never – outside the confines of the acoustic club scene – made the limelight with a project that would most likely stand up well even at the international level of progressive music and is a very isolated phenomenon in the Czech context.

The Horologe of Dreamers is both a music project and the original musical instrument through which all the music is realised. On the Šumava Forest: "In the garage there we have wooden beams, with long nails hammered into them and various things hanging on the nails. When you strike on a nail, it resonates through the entire cottage. That fascinated me and I got the idea of making something similar that could be moved. So I gathered sticks, hammered nails into them, and created what is known as a village kalimba. I needed a sounding board and found one in a polystyrene box for flowers. I put the wood sticks across it and the sound became more distinct and resonant. One day I put a long nail across in the same way and accidentally touched it. I completely froze at

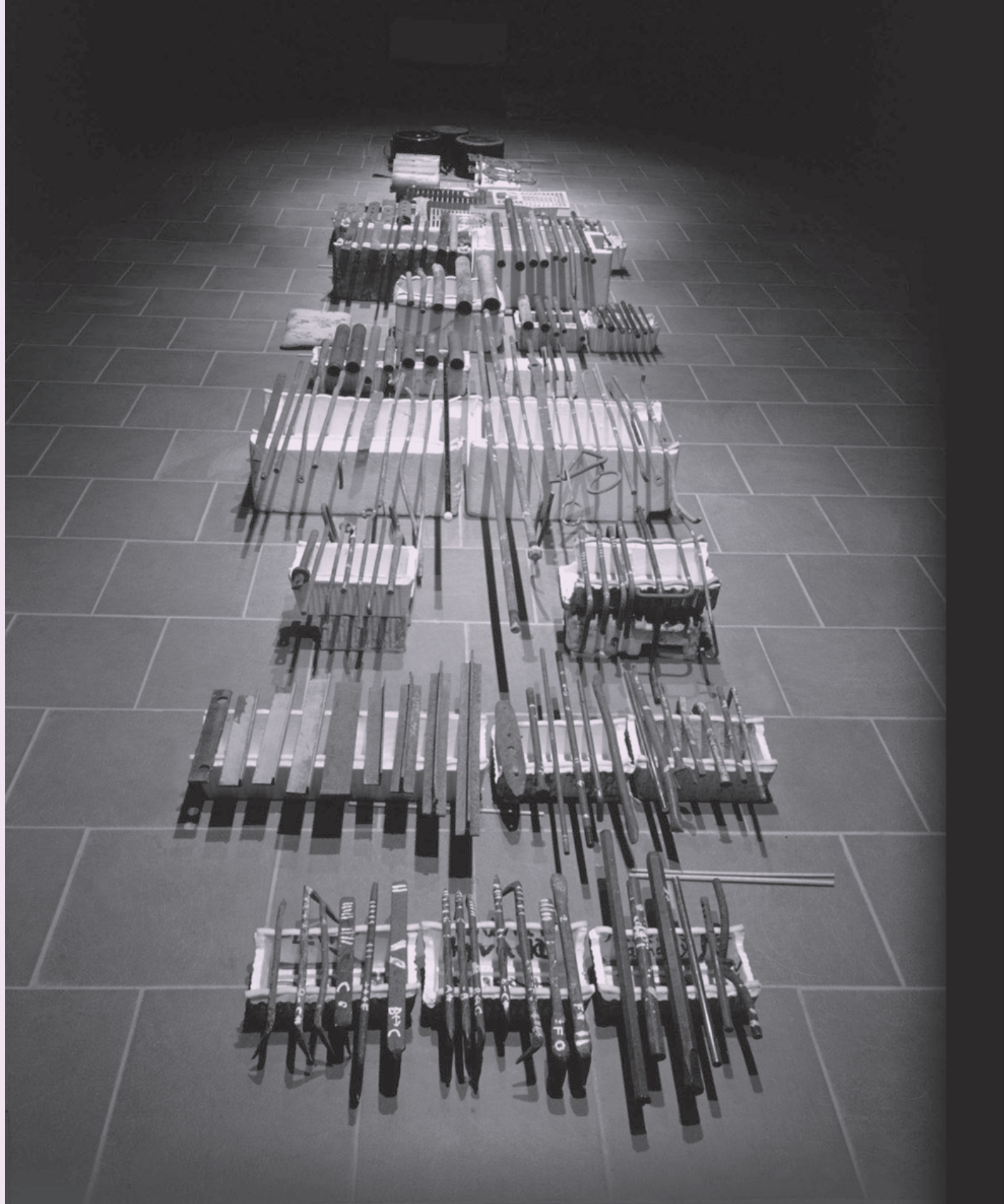
the sound it made, and the principle of the horologe was born."

The horologe is a sound installation made of found metal objects. The music is mainly created from it by drumming, which produces a range of delicate, long notes and sounds. Kaleidoscopic changes of musical motifs, in most cases repetitive patterns, give rise to an irregularly developing structure, a kind of order in chaos. The music is extremely dependent on quiet, acoustics, environment. Acoustic play in a resonant space is the ideal.

Kořán has been continuing to improve and tune the Horologe to this day by patient selection of iron bars, pegs, nails, and tin plates. For a time he worked on it together with his brother Michal and a third player, Marek Šebelka: the clash and encounter of fragile aliquots asked for more than two hands to take on the task of "kaleidoscopic" production of repetitive motifs. (Šebelka, 1993: "And so what we took away from the cottage was a hundred and fifty kilos of useless iron: the growth of the instrument has to be subjected to technical and organisational conditions – in other words, we have to be able to achieve every effect we want when playing and then to be able to drive it away.") Horologe as a trio played for some time on the ambivalent stage of Czech teahouses. After a period Kořán was then left on his own with the horologe, and it was also alone in the Šumava village of Mokřice that he produced a recording: a cycle of études for the Horologe and its possibilities, characterised by titles that were active verbs: "Goes", "Strikes", "Plays", "Works"...

Kořán's well tempered scrap metal crosses the industrial instrument with the restraint of Pärt or Feldman. It diverges from ethnic roots (we might say from African improvised rhyth-

mic dance patterns) both towards successor minimalism and towards postmodern free improvisation, challenging not only traditional form, but also the notion of the "one correct" use of a musical instrument. Its harmonic qualities may have some reference to the troubled waters of meditative music, but at the same time Horologe is a music of constant events. The material of the found objects rules out classical harmony. Jaroslav K.: "There are no definitive scales on the horologe. The different sequences differ a great deal depending on how many bits of iron of similar sound we have managed to find. With the heavenly organ, for example, perhaps there's already nearly a scale. The heavenly organ – that's the name for one box. We have different names for different parts. The Horologe of dreamers now include God's Fingers, chromvanad universal, the sun, the moving clock hands, the acoustic sampler, and the heavenly organ is acoustically the most subtle of elements of the whole instrument. Elsewhere there are only two or three notes, and at other times we strike several iron bars that sound almost at the same pitch. These subtle differences create something that" Michal Kořán says: "we don't actually understand ourselves. Which transcends us. It creates itself. It's only then that the force and pregnancy with which you strike the iron comes into play, it all sounds different. A shared mood is very important for play. The decisive thing is not what we've agreed on in advance but how sensitively we react to the present moment. There's a constant need to perceive the sound of the whole, so that you don't start playing for yourself. Often you don't know where the sounds are coming from. If it's beautiful music, that's fine, and you then slowly learn how to handle it"



three economical operas

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

While the major opera houses just keep ringing the changes on established repertoire and hardly ever giving contemporary composers a look in, new developments are taking their own paths. One such path could be seen on the 9th of December at the NOD scene, part of the Roxy Club complex, when three operas were presented during one evening. Two were Czech, and one American, and two were on Russian themes. All three composers were economical in terms of the length of their operas, numbers of performers, stage design and costumes. Each opera fitted into twenty minutes and used three singers.

Tomáš Krejčí



Markéta Dvořáková, Petr Matuszek

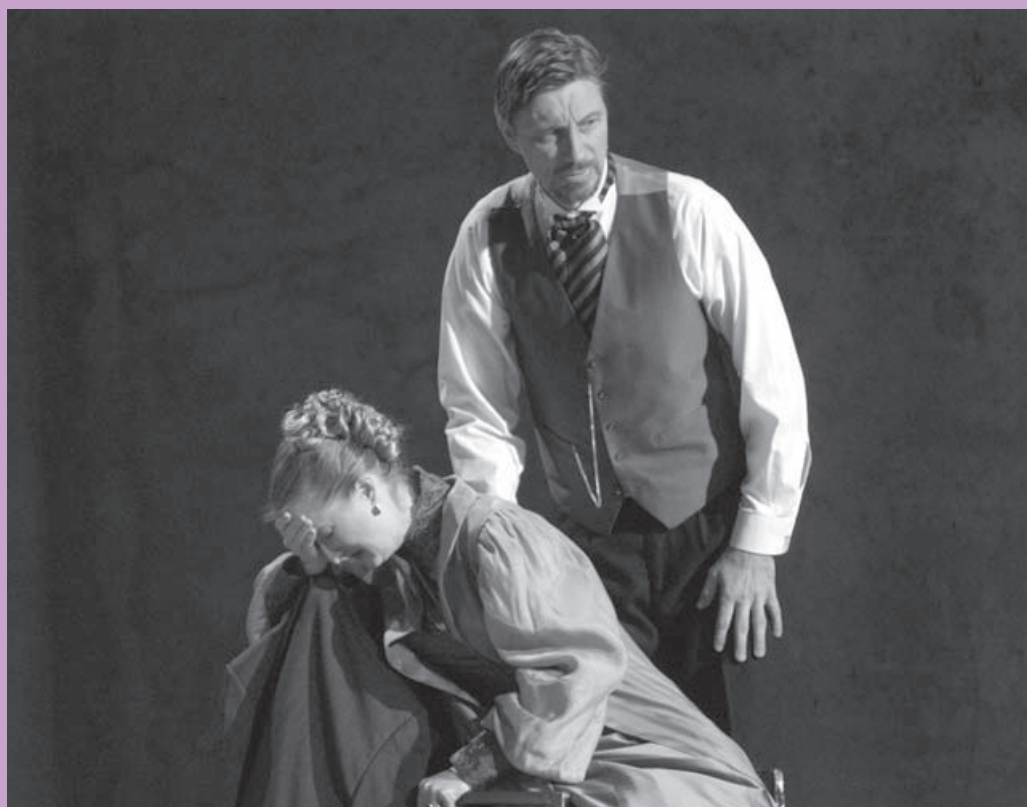
The original plan had been to create three operas on the same theme - Anton Chekhov's short story *The Doctor*. For his opera *Vratch* [Doctor in Russian] **Ivo Medek** took from the story only the basic outline and characters: the sick child (Tomáš Krejčí), the mother (Markéta Dvořáková) and the doctor (Petr Matuszek), who in the course of the action discovers that he is himself the child's father. A third figure appears in the shape of a dancer, but his wanderings about the stage seem rather unconnected to the rest of the piece. Medek invests the tragic story of the dying child with elements of bizarre humour, for example when an adult singer climbs out of the covered children's cot. The text (apart from the end) is sung in Russian. It is unclear whether the singers sang with an obtrusively "Czech" accent on purpose, but I believe that a singer like Matuszek must be capable of better pronunciation. The music, performed by members of the Ars Incognita, Marijan and DAMA DAMA ensembles, brings together the typical approaches of the last fifty years, underlining the impact of the action and only at a few points lingering to play with an extract of text. A major role is accorded to electronically processed recordings of different voices, which shift the whole thing onto the level of a surrealist dream.

The American composer **Martin Herman** chose the same story for his opera *The Doctor*, and in some respects it is his work that reveals the most obvious signs of a desire "to be like a real opera". The singers, (Jacqueline Bobak: the mother, Paul Berkholds: the doctor, Katti Prescott-Terray: the son) perform in historical costumes and their approach is more traditional, with a minimum of truly dramatic action and more concentration on the singing. This time it is the instru-



mentation that is not traditional. All the parts – partly played live, partly programmed – pour out of a synthesiser (although a version for traditional instruments apparently exists as well), and it is in fact these synthetic sounds, offering little in the way of contrast, that are the most debatable point about the opera. In the programme notes the composer characterises his music as post-minimalist, which means that he likes to repeat motifs, but not with the same degree of banality as Philip Glass. Herman's work is the most seriously conceived of the three operas, but this seriousness becomes a disadvantage when the opera is performed beside the two Czech offerings.

Miroslav Pudlák was supposed to come up with a third version of the Chekhov short story, but in fact decided on a short story by H. C. Artmann, *Ve stínu klobásy* [In the Shadow of the Sausage]. It turns on an incident involving a sausage-seller and his two customers, with the roles taken once again by the threesome Matuszek, Dvořáková and Krejčí, all of whom here show their excellent acting skills to greater advantage than in the first piece. It is Matuszek who gets the most opportunity, and the role of Viennese dandy evidently suits him. The music was written by the composer for the Why Not Patterns group in which he himself plays. The ensemble operates on the various intersections of jazz, rock and classical music, and this is the birthplace of the music for the opera, the most individual and distinctive of the three. Artmann's literary humour is reflected in the music, which in places has overtones of the old dance-halls, and in other places has the singer repeating banal phrases like a stuck record. All the musicians were also used as extras. The denouement of the story was spoiled just by one failure of nerve. At the



Jacqueline Bobak, Paul Berkholds

critical moment the sausage-seller is supposed to mess up the dandy's suit with mustard, but the action remained symbolic, perhaps because the actors wanted to spare the clothes. The genre of chamber opera has many advantages. Apart from the lesser demands of staging there is the fact that twenty minutes means much less of a risk

of boring the audience than a full-length production. The battered walls of the Roxy Club are not exactly a typical background for opera, but if they play host to more events of this kind, they could become a useful counterweight to the dignified columns of the National Opera of Estates Theatre.



Miroslav Posejpal

forgotten memories vol. 5 a 6

Jiří Durman, Miroslav Posejpal
at own expense, posejpal@mbox.dkm.cz
2002

The important improvisation duo series *Forgotten Memories* is recapitulating its activities of the Eighties. Unfortunately I have no idea whether Vols. 1-4 have already been released or are still in preparation, or how many volumes are planned for the series. It is, however, sad that material of this kind, albeit produced and remastered to a high quality by Miroslav Posejpal himself, has to be brought out at the duo's own expense on CDR, and seems unattractive to established recording companies.

In addition to the overall name mentioned in the review title, both disks have lengthy "subtitles". In the case of Vol. 5 this is *Message From The No Man's Land I - Song Of Mountain And Desire*, while the full title of Vol. 6 is *Message From The No Man's Land II - Song Of The Dark Clouds, Forest And Oak Tree*. Both are also divided into tracks – 7 and 5 respectively, although these run into each other without a break and so the whole track division is more a formal matter than anything else. Vol. 5 carries a recording from the Baroque rotunda of the Šternberk Palace made at the end of April 1988. Here the two protagonists surrounded themselves with a quantity of instruments. Apart from the double bass, Posejpal played on viola, while Durman concentrates on clarinet, all kinds of percussion (tubular bells, gongs, temple block) and recorders. The instrument with which we usually associate his name, the saxophone, does not appear at all on the CD. *Song of Mountain and Desire* shows not the slightest trace of the two players' jazz experience, being a symbiosis of two gradually unfolding sound stories whose intersection, enhanced by brilliant use of the natural acoustic space, perhaps takes place to a much greater extent in the head of the listener than in the conscious reactions of the musicians. The tissue formed by the long notes of the wind, the bright tinkling of the percussion instruments and the short little motifs of the double bass is most fascinating for its contemplative character, which neither musician ever violates by a sudden intervention, desire for graduated effect, or the suggestion of ostinato. Durman and Posejpal are offering us a slow walk through a landscape of sound where time has stood still and were at every step we become witnesses to a unique phenomenon. The CD naturally still has a few elements that stand out more strikingly, however, above all the crystal sound of the recorders, brilliantly set off by the echo of the room, and Posejpal's viola in the introduction to the recording. The only questionable element on the album is Durman's accordion, which is slightly out of kilter with the rest of the music. At the mid-point of the improvisation its penetrating sound and rich harmonic resources threaten to shift the effect onto a more aggressive and more banal level. Fortunately this does not quite happen, however, and the second, much simpler and deeper accordion passage is entirely fitting. On the second CD, recorded two weeks later in

the Smetana Theatre, the musicians were surrounded by perceptibly more musical instruments. Durman added alto saxophone, bass clarinet, marimba and bass drum, while Posejpal also used harp and large gong. The resonance of the hall was not as strong as in the rotunda, and so the silence between the sound passages was filled with more suspense. The music itself is more traditional and more melancholy, definitely more hectic and involving the use of jazz techniques. These emerge best in the conclusion, when Durman's caustic free jazz saxophone (still only in long notes) leads a heated dialogue with a dampening double-bass accompaniment.

I usually have a problem with listening to recordings of improvisation. Most of them have very little atmosphere and give a diffuse but also self-centred impression. In the case of *Forgotten Memories*, however, I can only offer praise and enthusiastic recommendations. This is a first rate example of musical discipline and inventiveness. I would say that the music of Durman and Posejpal was the first glimmering of the kind of music now cultivated for example by the *Forgotten Orchestra* of the County of Dreamers or the sound art experimentalist Martin Janíček.

PETR FERENC



ples upírů [the vampires' ball]

**Nederlands Blazers Ensemble:
Iva Bittová, Leoš Janáček**

The album *Ples Upírů* [The Vampires' Ball], originally released by the Dutch Group *Nederlands Blazers Ensemble* and now taken over by *Indies*, has reached us after a two-year time lag. The album is a recording of a joint concert given by the *Nederlands Blazers Ensemble* and the Czech singer, violinist and composer Iva Bittová. Until now listeners have been accustomed to hearing Bittová in smaller groups of chamber type (apart from exceptions on the *Classic* album), and a fifteen-member ensemble of wind instruments with percussion certainly represents quite a massive sound. So large a number of musicians cannot play very freely, and so the roles are divided. The vocals and violin operate freely and playfully (as is usual with Bittová) while the ensemble mainly offers ostinato accompaniments and interludes. The arrangements were created by Stevan Kovacs Tickmayer, a Hungarian composer living in France. They are undoubtedly highly professional (it is clear from the striking rhythms that Tickmayer studied composition with Louis Andriessen), but one always has the sense that the pieces were originally created for a different kind of performance and sound rather heavy-handed in their new form. The choice of pieces represents a cross-section through Iva Bittová's discography from the album *Divná slečinka* [Strange Little Miss] to the second most recent title *Classic*, and also gets up to the album *Bílé inferno* [White Inferno]. The piece *Winds* was composed specially for the NBE. Apart from music by Iva Bittová herself, the album

also includes pieces by Leoš Janáček, a composer to whom the singer has a strong affinity. Here we can find her version of the composer's *Čekám Tě* [I Wait for You] for voice and saxophone and three parts of the cycle *Po zarostlém chodníčku* [Along an Overgrown Path] (nos. 7, 1 and 11), arranged for the ensemble by the bassoonist Ronald Karten. These arrangements also sound good, although perhaps too melodious and idyllic, which is not quite in tune with the temperament of the rest of the album. Janáček's music on the one hand almost cries out for orchestral arrangement, but on the other there is a danger that his unique melodic ideas will vanish behind orchestral play with colour. Teodoro Anzellotti album (see the following review) offers an interesting comparison. The *Vampires' Ball* is an interesting and generally agreeable attempt to present well-known pieces by Iva Bittová in a new sound context, but it does not look as if this is a road that leads much further. For that we shall probably have to wait for the next studio title.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL



teodor anzelotti: leoš janáček

Arco Diva

The recording company *Winter and Winter* offers more proof that Leoš Janáček is a composer now attracting international attention. The accordionist Teodoro Anzellotti has put together an album of Janáček piano pieces that he has arranged for his own instrument. The cycle *Po zarostlém chodníčku* [Along an Overgrown Path] is the dominating piece, and is complemented by *Three Moravian Dances* and the two piano miniatures *Na památku* [Keepsake] and *Vzpomínka* [Memory]. An accordion version of *Overgrown Path* is not as distant from the original as it might seem, since Janáček actually composed the cycle for harmonium and the piano version was second in line. Supraphon has recorded the harmonium version in the CD series *Janáček Unknown*, and when you listen to it you discover that Anzellotti's accordion is closer to the original sound (and so perhaps also the composer's idea) that many pianists who are unable to forego the use of dynamics, pedal and attempts at originality of expression. Here the limited dynamic possibilities of the accordion (like the harmonium) are actually of benefit to the music, allowing the beauty of the pieces to stand out and the performer to remain their voluntary servant. Generally Anzellotti's approach has much in common with folk music, which was Janáček's principal source of inspiration (this is particularly striking in No. 3 *Pojďte s námi* [Come with Us]). As I listened to the album I was constantly reminded of another Italian accordionist, Gianni Coscia, who has made recordings of Italian folk and popular songs (the album *In cerca di cibo*, ECM, 2000), whose interpretation is akin to Anzellotti's. Despite the fact that the whole CD is built on the sound of a single instrument, it contains not a single boring moment.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

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ILJA HURNÍK



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