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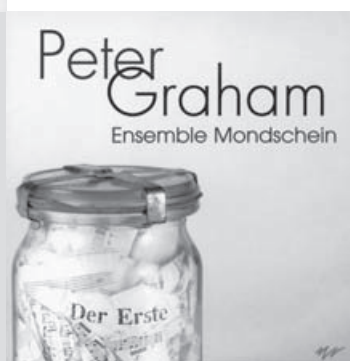
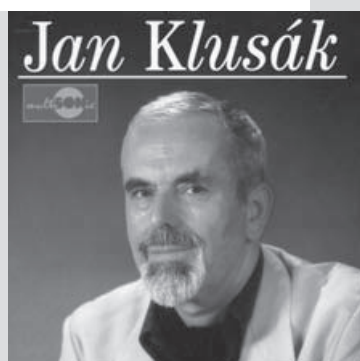
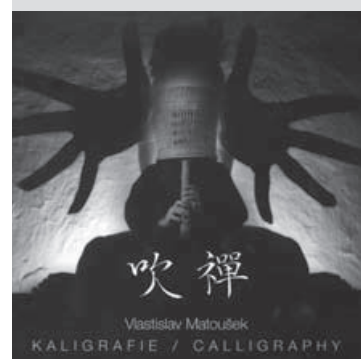
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editorial

Dear Readers,
Someone once said to me in an interview that he thought the 20th century was the century of performance. If we compare the situation today with the 19th century, for example, the view would seem to be justified. At that period people would all be waiting for the premiere of a new symphony or opera, but today what interests us is how a conductor or singer "interprets" that symphony, and if he or she manages to find something in it that no one in the last century has found. The performer is coming to be placed on the same level as the composer. A performer can take various different approaches to a work. In the case of the music of John Cage, he even has to make up a major part of it himself, since the composer has only left a guide. One man who knows a great deal about it is the composer and conductor Petr Kotík, today considered one of the best interpreters of Cage. Even in Baroque music the musician must often learn to read between the lines – but in a rather different way. It is a skill possessed by harpsichordist Giedrė Lukšaitė-Mrážková, who is also able to teach it to her students. Naturally, new music keeps on coming. Proofs of its vigour include the Meetings 2002 Festival, presenting a whole series of new composers, and also the Musica Nova Competition – we offer an interview with the victor. Winter is gradually losing its hold in Bohemia and in the next issue we shall already be welcoming Spring.

Matěj Kratochvíl
MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL
EDITOR

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from the land of amber and song to prague

VÍTĚZSLAV MIKEŠ

Giedrė Lukšaitė-Mrázková was born and grew up in “the land of amber and folk songs”, as Lithuania is sometimes called. After studies in Vilnius and Moscow, fate brought her to Prague in 1970s, and she still lives and works here. Today she has a very high reputation, and not just in the Czech Republic, both as an outstanding harpsichordist (on historic instruments) and organist, and as a teacher at the Prague Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (HAMU). She has performed and still performs in many concert halls, records CDs and is training a whole series of new musical hopes. And she is also an extremely interesting person, for whom human factors are important as well.

You come from an intellectual family. Has this background helped to form your character?

My parents had a university education, worked in university environments and were members of the Lithuanian intelligentsia. The numbers of the intelligentsia had been seriously reduced during the war by deportations, and so only a handful were left. There were so few in fact, that they all knew each other. Many of them used to come to our house – composers, writers, artists. It naturally had a clear influence on me. For example, it was tremendously interesting to watch an idea being born or developing. For example the composer Julius Juzeliūnas used to come and visit us, just at the time he was writing his opera *Sukilėliai* (Rebels). The story and libretto were created by Vincas Mykolas Putinas, who was another regular guest at our house. Seeing an opera or libretto born in this way was a precious experience, and one that inevitably had an effect on me.

I know you’ve often answered this question, since Lithuania is still a rather exotic place for Czechs and your country and story make an appealing theme for journalists. But despite this I hope you’ll forgive me if I ask you about your personal and

musical path from Lithuania to Bohemia...?

I believe we all of us have a certain path that we’ve chosen in life. Things that look like accidents in my view aren’t accidents at all, but impulses that lead us in a certain direction. In the 1950s Professor Zuzana Růžicková came to Lithuania with her harpsichord and so did Professor Jiří Reinberger, who played the organ in the concert hall in Vilnius. And it was precisely after the organ concert that I enthusiastically decided I would become an organist. Another such impulse was when the Soviet government allowed the opening of an organ class at the Vilnius Music Academy in 1962. I entered the academy in the same year, joining the piano and the organ class. In 1967 I finished my studies at university and wanted to go on to do a doctorate, but I didn’t know which of the two instruments to choose. The impulse turned out to be a free place in the organ class at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, which I gladly took up. In the same period I was offered a chance of a short visit to Prague. When I arrived, it was like a long cool draught of freedom. Compared to Lithuania Czechoslovakia seemed to me a completely free state. I toured around the country a little and I said to myself – even though only on the basis of an immediate





reaction that if I ever had to emigrate somewhere, then only Bohemia would do. After I returned to Lithuania I was able to keep in contact with Reinberger, who used to come to Vilnius to play in concerts. In 1972 he invited me to the summer master classes in Prague, where I was very successful, and in 1973–1974 I had a year's scholarship here. It was a very fruitful year, and one thing I did during that year was take up the harpsichord. And at the end of the scholarship year there was also a fateful meeting, and the result was a wedding a year later....

After you came to the country you tried to make a name with Lithuanian compositions and the music of other Baltic nations, but this was not much of a success, despite the fact that excellent music has been written there and still is. Was this because their names simply weren't known to the Czech public?

I think it was something else. The most important factor in my eyes was the psychological factor. Before Lithuania gained its independence in 1991, the great majority of Czechs thought of it as "Russian" And although other nations with different cultures existed within Russia, i.e. the Soviet Union, nobody really much noticed them. One of the

hardest obstacles for me after I moved to Czechoslovakia was the fact that people regarded me as a Russian. That made it obvious that people understood nothing at all. And I just couldn't explain to absolutely everyone I met that everything was much more complicated. And this mistake was responsible for the aversion, which of course I understood, since we in Lithuania also felt it towards the Soviet Union. Lithuanian music was felt to be "compulsory", from Soviet Russia. I would say that the problem had a very strong political side. In a smaller circle of friends I could explain something and perform some pieces, but otherwise it was taken as sign that I was trying to promote the Soviet Union. And I simply didn't have the heart to do that. The result was that I retreated into myself and stopped performing the pieces.

What do you think is the situation today in this context?

Today it's naturally completely different – we've tried to put on more concerts and invite musicians from Lithuania, but we've found that the official Lithuanian institutions that ought to be patrons and sponsors for these events don't make much effort in this area, and don't try to arrange the necessary publicity, unlike the Latvian embassy here,

for example. Lithuanian music has been presented at the Prague Spring several times and these concerts were very successful, but otherwise the situation is rather sad. I understand that now the main concern has been Lithuania's entry to NATO, but they shouldn't forget culture, despite the financial problems. I think that in the field of art Lithuania has had and still has much to offer, whether in music, theatre, film, art, photography and so forth. After all, young Lithuanians are pursuing successful careers in the arts all over Europe. I try to invest my energies among the young Czech students I teach, and in a smaller circle I try to show them what Lithuania is...

Are you able to follow the development of contemporary Lithuanian music? Has any particular composer of the younger generation caught your attention?

Unfortunately I don't get much of a chance. I get to Lithuania once or twice a year, and if it's not a concert tour, then I go in the summer, i.e. not in the concert season. I'm only in the picture when someone in Lithuania tells me about something that is good. On the other hand I do follow certain things, but it's hard to talk about because, for example, I might just read a review of some new piece

without being able to hear it. I'm of the generation of composers like Bronius Kutavičius, Teisutis Makašinas, Osvaldas Balakauskas, Feliksas Bajoras and so on, whom I know personally. Naturally I know of some younger composers, such as Algirdas Martinaitis, but I don't know enough to be able to judge the music of the younger generation.

And what about Lithuanian performers? Do you follow them, or even work with some of them?

Yes, but I ought to add that it is usually with people of my generation. Among younger musicians I follow the ones who are internationally successful, such as the violinist Čepinskis, and I hear some when I'm on the jury of the Čiurlionis Organ Competition. As far as working with Lithuanian musicians is concerned, I have long-term contacts with the Lithuanian Philharmonic. Every year I give at least one concert mainly of Baroque music in Lithuania, because performance of Baroque music is still "in nappies" there. Earlier I worked with the violinist Raimondas Katilius, and today with the flautist Algirdas Vizgirdas and others. I also try to bring musicians from the Czech Republic to Lithuania. For example I had great success with a concert with the organist Jaroslav Tůma. And last autumn I and Gabriela Demeterová did a "Lithuanian" tour with the Bach violin sonatas. That was a tremendous experience. I had expected it would be a success, because I know the Lithuanian public. They react sensitively to music with a spiritual content. But the result still overtook our expectations, and you could even say that the Bach sonatas there became what was essentially a joint meditation by the performers and public.

Can you compare Czech and Lithuanian music? What do they have in common and what are the differences?

It's easier for me to talk about what I have experienced myself. The music of the 20th century interests me immensely and I like playing it. In Lithuania I have premiered a number of works by on the whole more traditional composers of the older generations – Antanas Račiūnas, Balyš Dvarionas and others, but it was – let's say – an "authentic" interpretation, because I knew them personally. As far as Lithuanian music is concerned, I feel that it reflects a certain mental feature of Lithuanians, and this is great sorrow. This nation has suffered a huge amount, and the suffering has influenced its whole way of thinking and is expressed in music as well. Sometimes I appreciate this one-sidedness, but sometimes it tires me. I like drama, where there is everything: joy, grief, colour. But just sorrow – that isn't life, because life is everything. Many contemporary Lithuanian composers – Vytautas Barkauskas, Onutė Narbutaitė or Mindaugas Urbaitis and so on – whose works I've heard, are certainly "supranational" but with the stamp of their nation's mentality, which is sometimes an advantage, but sometimes is just too much.

When one listens to their music for the first time, or for the first time after a gap, then it is very impressive, but when I see the whole background, the advantage becomes a certain frame, which keeps me within certain boundaries. In the Czech nation, by contrast, you can feel a humorous lightness. In this respect I have more affinity for Czechs, because I also like joking. On the other hand it seems to me, especially when I'm teaching my students or rehearsing pieces by Czech composers, that when it comes to true drama they somehow pull back and don't offer an entirely open emotional expression. If they are faced with something sad, Czechs tend to be defensive, and they defend themselves by starting to joke. I don't want to say that it's a superficial approach, but more just the characteristic of not showing oneself or exposing oneself. Even the music seems that way to me – it won't open itself up. When I play a piece back to its composer, I love the moment when I can be choleric, put myself into it, and all at once see a spark come to the composer's eyes and hear him say, "I had no inkling that could be there." And then he adds, "Yes, yes, that was exactly how I had imagined it." In this country I've found a number of composers I greatly respect and with whom I've always worked very well: Jiří Teml, Jiří Gemrot, Ivana Kurz, Petr Eben, Milan Slavický and others.

In this country there's a saying, "If you're a Czech, you're a musician". Lithuanians are perhaps even more closely connected with music, above with what are known as the dainas, Lithuanian folksongs. What similarities and differences do you see between the musical traditions of the two nations?

In the Czech Republic there are immensely musical people with an inborn feeling for music. It's one reason I feel very much at home here, because the same is true of Lithuania. On the other hand – to simplify – I think that Czechs have a closer relationship to instrumental music, while Lithuanians are inseparably linked to singing, to songs. Even today people in Lithuania are still in very close contact with folklore, and they sing songs on every occasion. Love for folksong has survived partly thanks to occupation, not only in the period of the Soviet Union, but also earlier times (Tsarist Russia, Poland). There have been collections of folk songs, and there still are (I myself took part in several such expeditions when I was young) and a huge number are printed. And generally I think that someone who has been singing or playing an instrument all his life, finds the path to more demanding music an easier one.

Your life is concerned primarily with concerts and with teaching. It probably makes little sense to ask which has priority, and it's better to ask what effect the two spheres have on each other and how they complement each other...

You've forgotten one sphere, and that's family. Anyone, but particularly a woman, has to decide what is most important for him or her. I had started teaching and performing when I was still in Lithuania, and I would say I got my career off to a very rapid and promising start there. Immediately after graduating I started to teach and to perform, and I was even able to go abroad, which was rare in those days. Then came the moment when I had to decide whether I wanted a family or not, and I decided I did... And that decision meant that I came to Czechoslovakia. I didn't know if I would get good work or be accepted, even though I had a certain guarantee because I had given concerts here before. I tried to forge a concert career here, but I gave priority to bringing up my daughter. For me, as a foreigner who had come from abroad, who hadn't grown up here and had no friends from college here and so forth, it was important for me to find contacts and establish relationships, so I would have some support. I found the support in Milan Munclinger, who accepted me into the outstanding ensemble Ars rediviva. And thanks to him more opportunities for recording and concerts opened up for me. Concerts are always very special for me. I don't have so many every year, but each time I try to get the very most out of myself. I also like playing with others, including Jaroslav Tůma, Petr Maceček, Gabriela Demeterová or Petr Matuszek. As far as the relationship between teaching and concerts is concerned, in my case they are very strongly interlinked. I wouldn't feel able to teach something that I hadn't experienced myself. I train musicians, and prepare them for the podium, and so I want to hand on to them what I've learned from my own experiences. And from the other side I get a great deal from the students themselves – through their questions and needs. A teacher must search in order that his pupils should learn how to search. The upshot is that I teacher and learn myself at the same time. And from the psychological point of view bringing up my daughter has helped me here. It showed me the stages that she passed through, and so I can also see the life of my students.

Your name, which in translation means "bright" or "radiant" just seems to shine out of you. Are you basically an optimist in life?

You know, when anyone is on their life's journey, they get caresses, and slaps. Most people take the caresses for granted, but when they get slaps they stop and ask why. Every obstacle gives you something, teaches you something, and so you say to yourself that there's nothing so bad that it's not good for anything. I'm a Sagittarius by star sign, and that predestines me to take pleasure in small things. Moreover, I am very much fulfilled by music, which is both my work and my hobby. I'm simply an optimist.

new music meeting + and the international conference musica nova V

MARKÉTA DVOŘÁKOVÁ

7 concerts, 5 operas, a series of lectures and seminars, 5 papers from 5 countries at the conference Musica Nova V, guests (composers and performers) – from the USA (the most numerous), France, Portugal, Germany, Austria and The Ukraine... it was all just one more year of the “New Music Meeting +” festival held in Brno from the 24th of November to the 8th of December 2002.

This year's festival was unusually diverse, going beyond concert production to venture into the field of multimedia. The programme was partly devoted to guests from abroad (a recital by the pianist Vicki Ray, clarinetist Jean-Marc Foltz, and an appearance by the Portuguese Misso ensemble from Lisbon), and partly to domestic musicians (concerts from the Mondschein Ensemble, Dama Dama, and Ars Incognita, a concert of pieces by students at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, and a production of two student operas) as well as a Czech-American opera project that bridged the division between the two sides.

Together the concerts and other events offered audiences a wide and colourful spectrum of the possibilities, views, approaches and roads that new music is taking in this country and abroad. The festival ranged from virtuoso exhibitions of solo instruments to music theatre, to live electronic, performances by multi-member ensembles and the multimedia presentation of several chamber operas.

The festival opened on Sunday the 24th of November with a concert by **MoEns** from Prague. The group played pieces by contemporary East European composers. Lithuania was represented in works by **Bronius Kutavičius**, **Nomeda Valančiūtė** and **Rytis Mažulis**, and Estonia by **Erkki-Sven Tüür's** *Architectonics II* for clarinet, cello and piano, played by Kamil Doležal, Milada Stražilová and Hanuš Bartoň. From Russia **Yuri Kasparov** (almost) came to the performance of his *Landscape running away into infinity* and the concert ended with an already acknowledged “classic” 20th-century composer – the Polish composer Henryk Mikolaj Górecky and his *Trombone Concerto* op. 28.

The evening of Tuesday the 26th of November in the Goose on a String Theatre offered a mystical, truly theatrical performance by the Central European percussion ensemble **DAMA DAMA**. The group managed to knit together seven completely different composers (A. Parsch – *Magické krajiny* [Magical Landscapes], D. Dlouhý – *Turbulence*, A. Kubiček – *Flexibilní indiferent* [Flexible Indifferent], V. Zouhar – *Petite sirène*, I. Medek – *Tamtamania*, K. Šimandl – *Piano Quartet* and A. Piños – *Music of Good Hope or Stormy Music*) into a convincing whole and they had little difficulty keeping up the eerie and mysterious atmosphere evoked at the beginning (so typical of the group, using light effects, smoke, black habits, and an overall choreography of movement), throughout the evening. One piece that was rather an exception to the general mood and brought a smile to the faces of the audience was Adam Kubiček's *Flexible Indifferent* – “a virtuoso solo exhibition of practically all possible ways of getting sound out of one's own body, the floor, the music stand...” (programme notes), performed by the composer himself.

The New Music Studio [Studio soudobé hudby] had prepared two concerts for the festival. One was to mark the birthdays of **Leoš Falta** and **Zdeněk Zouhar**, both composers who have long ago found their own paths and distinctive individual idiom. The second, by contrast, offered an opportunity for young composers at the beginning of their careers – students of JAMU in Brno. Thursday the 28th of November was the day for the veterans, each getting half of a programme that ended with an encore in the form of Vít Zouhar's minimalist *Duny* [Dunes] for 2 marimbas. Apart from this piece, which attracted far and away the most attention, it

Jacqueline Bobak



was the first half of the concert devoted to Leoš Faltaš that made the most distinctive and interesting impression, whether with the recent (2001) *Il guoco terzo* for bass clarinet, 8 instruments and percussion convincingly performed by Vít Spilka and Ars Incognita under the direction of E. Skoták, or his nostalgically atmospheric *2nd String Quartet* of 1977 in a new version (played by the Moravian Quartet) or the *5th Sonata* for piano, of 1992, which is already well known by the public and released on CD, and was here performed by the composer's "court" pianist Petr Hala.

The concert of music by JAMU students on the 3rd of December proved a surprise, partly because of its unusually diverse and colourful programme and the unusual number of composers involved (27) including three conductors, but mainly because of the unexpectedly high benchmark set by the very first piece, as well as the inventiveness, mastery of composition and natural musicality shown by all the composers and going hand in hand with persuasive performance. The latter wavered slightly only in the last piece *Comment dire* by Vojtěch Dlásek on a text by Samuel Beckett, "thanks" to the singer Petr Veslár. But let's get back to the beginning. The opening *Invence* [Inventions] for solo trombone by Jana Doleželová, performed by J. Kadlec, was an immensely inventive technical study exhausting almost all possibilities and techniques of play on different parts of the instrument. The post-Baroque ornamental harpsichord *Silent* by V. Dlásek was followed by two calm movements of the *Písně pro hudbu* [Songs for Music] for 2 violas, 2 voices and percussion, written by the Slovak composer Matej Haász, who conducted it himself. Although the originally planned 3rd and livelier movement was omitted, the piece still sounded coherent, pleasant, and contemplative, the overall impression enhanced by the Tibetan bowls at the end. The chamber cantata on a Sumerian text *Gudeani Gičbatukam* by Edgar Mojdl took us to the Near East and several centuries back to primitive instruments, a few pentatonic sequences and melismatic chants. Admirably performed by a quartet of volunteers–non-singers (including the composer) and the Ars incognita ensemble under the baton of Pavel Šnajd, it gave us a chance to experience a completely different world for a short time (perhaps 25 minutes). Jan Kavan then introduced us to his electronic world with the piece *Diffusion* for cello, which he played himself, and electronics. Blue lighting enhanced the mysterious atmosphere and threw the enlarged shadow of the cellist onto the wall. The students' concert started off a series of concerts and seminars lined up back to back every day, with no interval for relaxation. Vicki Ray, an American pianist and head of the piano department at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles, introduced herself with a recital on Wednesday the 4th of December. She opened with the world premiere of a two-movement piece by Eric

Chasalow (1955), called *Due(Cinta)mani* for piano and electronics. Vicki Ray then temporarily made way for the soprano J. Bobak and baritone P. Berkolds, who teach at the same institute, and sang M. Bobak's two-movement *Vocablement*. The first movement, based on a the simple repeating principle of taking over and strengthening notes, gave the singers less room for the demonstration of their art than the second movement, which was livelier and had a larger dynamic range. One real treat was a very early work by M. Feldman, called *Nature Pieces*. Each of the five movements had its own animating idea, special character and concluding point. This was followed by more song, this time by composer, and also performer Marc Lowenstein's. His *Two Sacred Songs*, recalled historical lieder repertoire (Schubert, Schumann and in places Schönberg) in the solo part and the piano setting. Vicki Ray ended her recital with a relatively long virtuoso piece by the young South African Shaun Naidoo (1962). Here the audience could appreciate not just the technical refinement of the pianist or the huge range of colours achieved by different kinds of touch, but also the unusually elaborate pedalisation, allowing for all sorts of effects with resonating notes.

The player of all kinds of clarinet, and former member of the "Ensemble Inter-contemporain", Frenchman **Jean-Marc Foltz** captured and charmed everyone present with his lectures and seminars for composers and clarinetists at JAMU, prepared with German precision and thoroughness and given with casually worn French erudition and nonchalance. Absolute planning in the form of production of 50-page notated examples together with CD sound extracts and later live performance fascinated audiences no less than the sheer number of different sounds and tones that could be produced from the instrument known as the clarinet. Jean-Marc Foltz's evening concert, held on Thursday the 5th of December in the JAMU Hall, nonetheless exceeded all expectations. The programme consisted entirely of music by French and Italian composers of the later 20th century, with the exception of one composer from the east. Pierre Boulez, with whom Foltz personally worked, was represented by two pieces (*Domaines* for B clarinet and *Domaines* for bass clarinet), and Pascal Dusapin by *If* for B clarinet. The pieces for bass clarinet – *Easy/Uneasy* by Denis Levaillant and *Mémoire pour Dolfy* by Etienne Rolin were Czech premieres. The later pieces were all for B clarinet, including *Lied* by Luciano Berio, *Clair* by Franco Donatoni or *Involutive* by Paul Mefan. The one excursion to foreign lands was the Vietnamese composer Tiet Ton That and his piece *Bao La*. Friday the 6th of December, at least from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., was devoted to the Musica Nova V International Conference on the theme of New Trends in Music and Their Historical and Theoretical Roots, which took place at JAMU. The conference was

launched by Jaroslav Štastný as composer, theorist and one of the festival organisers. His address was entitled "The change of musical paradigm and its repercussions in the Moravian countryside, or The Age of Changes: "New Music" as Folk Music of the Future?". The German theorist Detlef Gojowy followed with a brief excursus on the life and vision of the composer Joseph Schillinger (1895–1943) and the morning block concluded with a paper from the Ukrainian composer Ivan Nebesnyj, who presented several contemporary Ukrainian composers just as he had done at the seminar for students. In the afternoon, there was a contribution based on direct experience and entitled "The Creation of Special Musical Instruments – Art Objects and Some Possibilities for their Use in Composing" from their creator himself, the composer Dan Dlouhý. He was followed by Jean-Marc Foltz on the theme of "Komponieren, Interpretieren, Improvisieren... Welche Dialektik heute" and later by an Austrian guest, the head of the Institut für Elektronische Musik in Graz and electro-acoustic composer Josef Gründler, who outlined the possibilities of "Setting up Realtime Electroacoustic Environment for Improvisation". Improvisation had also been the theme of his seminar on the previous day for composers, where he had presented some of his projects – the most interest being shown in a project designed to give school children space for improvisation and the discovery of fresh acoustic possibilities. The conference concluded with a paper by the American composer Marc Lowenstein on the theme of "Love and Music Theory". Anyone not completely exhausted by the whole-day conference could go to the evening performance of two operas by JAMU students – *Don Juan* by Karel Škarka and *Žirafí opera* [Giraffe Opera] by Markéta Dvořáková. This, the third performance in the Barka Theatre in Brno (after a successful premiere in the Estates Theatre in Prague) was also the last. The evening of Saturday the 7th of December at the Barka Theatre was again operatic. The original idea of the Czech-American project was to write three operas on the same theme, the short story "The Doctor" by Anton Chekhov, but only two of the three composers involved (the American Martin Herman and Ivo Medek) kept to it. The third – Miroslav Pudlák – seems to have been scared off by the seriousness of the theme and instead wrote an opera about a sausage. In the context of the evening as a whole this turned out to be fortune idea, enthusiastically received by the public at both performances (i.e. in Brno and two days later in the Rokytnice Theatre in Prague). Pudlák's opera *Ve stínu klobásy* [In the Shadow of the Sausage] based on short story with the same name by Artmann, tells a banal little tale of a meaningless incident between a street sausage seller and an arrogant custumert, but it can nonetheless be understood on various different levels. After the two preceding, more or less serious "doctor" operas, the "sausage" at the end



From Ivo Medek's opera Vrch

lightened the mood, brought a smile and was like a refreshing sweetie particularly following the pathos of the American opera. The production was skilfully carried off by the Why Not Patterns ensemble directed by the author, and all three singers – Markéta Dvořáková, Petr Matuszek and Tomáš Krejčí, who also sang in the first opera, Ivo Medek's Vrch.

For his opera Medek used only the bare outline of the Chekhov plot, on which he hung his own world of sound in the form of electronics, pre-recorded child's voice and chamber ensemble. The latter was made up of members of DAMA DAMA (Dan Dlouhý – percussion), Ars incognita (Kateřina Novotná – flute, Libor Novotný – clarinet) and Marijan (Markéta Dvořáková – keyboards, and Jan Kavan – cello) conducted by Emil Skoták.

The opera The Doctor by American composer Martin Herman, professor of composition at California State University in Long Beach, is one in which, by contrast, the approach is entirely serious. Unlike the other two operas

it was created not just by one person, but drawn up in libretto by a director and stage designer and later passed to the composer for musical arrangement on the basis of previously established features. The overall effect was one of grand gestures and emotion – perhaps the composer's idea (he is a Korean American) of the Russian soul... The highly professional production (soloists Jacqueline Bobak, Kati Prescott-Terray and Paul Berkholds and especially the lighting design of Danny Walker) was thus forced by the exaggerated gravity of the piece to the verge of flirtation with parody, although (unfortunately) it never went over the edge.

For the final concert of the festival on Sunday the 8th of December in the Barka Theatre, was a recital by the Portuguese **Miso Ensemble** from Lisbon – husband and wife team Miguel (marimba, electronics) and Paula (flute) Azguime. In a quadrophonically arranged auditorium the audience listened to four entirely different pieces that were nonetheless all distinctively the work of

composer Miguela Azguime. The first – *Nonio* for flute and electronics, in which the electronic music consists only of other flutes, evoked the atmosphere of a peculiar rather sorrowful world, in which the listener could float and move at will for a whole twenty minutes. A virtuoso – perhaps seven-minute marimba piece was followed by the purely electronic composition *Sobreposi-goes*. The final, more than thirty-minute long *O Ar do Texto Opera a Forma do Som Interior* on Miguel's own text was an interesting combination of live-electronic and opera for one actor. The Miso ensemble fully lived up to the good reputation that had preceded it.

The scale, link-up with the Musica Nova International Conference and above all the interesting figures invited put New Music Meeting Plus on a footing with such major activities in the field of new music as the Exposition of New Music and the Prague Marathon.



petr kotík's umbilical cord

TEREZA HAVELKOVÁ

If I wanted to be caustic, I could say that Petr Kotík had taken a patent out on John Cage. Still – as he points out himself – he is Cage's second oldest living collaborator, has devoted himself systematically to the interpretation of Cage and was in personal contact with him throughout his later career. Whether or not we agree with his often very blunt views, he certainly has things to say on the performance of John Cage.

When did you first meet Cage?

It was in Vienna, in 1964, in my first year of studies at the Vienna Academy. I was studying composition and flute and one of my professors was Fridrich Cerha, who one fine Spring day called to tell me that Cage was coming and asked if I wanted to play with him. Up to then I had only known of Cage from a few texts I had read. I had also heard recordings from the concert in the Town Hall (for the 25th anniversary of Cage's work as a composer) but I didn't know much about the music and had never seen a score. Thus prepared, I got to the rehearsal for the concert – we played *Atlas Eclipticalis* in a three-hour version, only the percussion parts. The piece was to be of almost fateful significance for me, since I've never ceased to perform it to this day, and in 1992 we started the S.E.M. Orchestra with it in New York. Later I realised that the whole evening was legendary. It was an appearance by Merce Cunningham and his dance group with a programme entitled *Event Nr. 1*. When I arrived in New York in 1969, Cage took me to see Cunningham in his studio and there were boxes of old programmes lying about. One of them advertised the production of *Event Nr. 85*. And I had taken part in its first performance!

Incidentally, there was also a poster of his Prague concert hanging in Cunningham's studio. They were vastly proud of it, because Pragokonzert, which had no idea what was actually coming to Prague, put posters up all over the city with the legend: Merce Cunningham Dance Company, John Cage, David Tudor, Musica Viva Pragensis, Robert Rauchenberg, and under it "West Side Story style dance". That time about 3,000 people came to the Fučík Cultural Centre.

And so you met again in Prague...

Yes, after the spring Vienna concert he came to Prague in September of the same year – I

organised it, so as to get the Musica Viva Pragensis ensemble involved as well. Among other things we played the Cage Concerto for Piano and Orchestra with David Tudor on the piano, at the Fučík Centre again. There's a bit of a story linked to that. Just like Cerha in Vienna, Cage in Prague asked me to get hold of some musicians – without any specifications. I brought volunteers from the ensemble, we arrived at the rehearsal and waited. One hour, two hours...the musicians were already getting nervous. And then Cage turned up, saw two trombonists and said, "I'm sorry but I only need one trombone". I went to tell the trombonists that one of them had to go home, and a skirmish broke out. I should add that back then it wasn't money that was the issue – they simply wanted to play. So I went back to Cage and asked if he couldn't do something with the situation, and he said "Sure no problem" and asked me to bring him the trombone part. He took it, tore it into two and told me to rewrite the times and double them, so that both musicians could play, each on a different half of the trombone part. In the Nineties that memory led me to the idea of doubling the orchestra in the *Concerto for Piano*, so we actually had two orchestras, a total of 26 people instead of 13, and naturally it sounded far better. Cage only wrote it for 13 people because it never occurred to him in his wildest dreams that he might one day have the means to hire more than 13 people.

It's said that John Cage helped you to get a green card in the United States...

It's naive to believe that John Cage was a name that meant anything to immigration officials. Also it wasn't a green card that was at issue, but emigrant status. I didn't really want to apply for political asylum, because even though I'd had plenty of problems in Czechoslovakia, I wasn't a political refugee, and my reasons were professional. And so I

filled in the immigration form as if I had been an Englishman, Frenchman, Italian or Swede, and I wrote my profession down as musician. My application was rejected because for immigration officials music isn't a profession. When I went to the immigration office to ask what I should do now, they said I had the right to apply in the category for exceptional persons – the official thought about it for a while, and then said "like the singer Chevalier, for example". It seemed clear enough to me that I wouldn't qualify, but I still put an application in, and because I needed recommendations, John Cage was one of the people who wrote me one. In the end I was given immigrant status in the category. I really don't know why, but I doubt it was only because of Cage.

Let's move on to the performance of Cage's music. His scores are so open that they seem to offer a wide field for interpretation. Do you think that's true?

It's a complete mistake. There's some space for interpretation there, but that exists in all music, and is what makes music a living medium. In this respect Cage's music is no different.

All right, then let's say his scores can be filled with a diverse specific musical content...

The biggest misunderstandings arise from thinking about historical works as if they were contemporary. If you want to reflect on Cage and his work in the 1950s and 60s, then you have to realise what kind of years these were and the circumstances in which Cage was working. At that point none of the composers that are now so well-known – Cage, Feldman, Brown, Wolff, and with them Tudor – anticipated any success or interest from the wider musical public. In Cage's case this approach was reflected in the fact that

between 1952 and 1970 all his compositions were basically written directly for Tudor, or at least with Tudor in mind. At that stage almost nobody else played him and Cage had no reason to think that the situation might change. Tudor and Cage were like twins, and practically inseparable. When in 1970 Tudor decided that he was no longer going to work with Cage in this way, it was a shock for Cage. When he mentioned it to me at the time he said now he would have to write everything in a different way, and it would have to be technically far easier, so he could play it himself.

Do you know why Tudor made that decision?

That would need a whole interview in itself. Briefly one can say that Tudor started to work independently, as a composer and above all a creator of "live electronic music" and he realised he couldn't continue in such a close collaborative relationship because it took up too much of his time.

David Tudor was a very individual personality, a very American individual, a sort of pioneer type – he had to find out everything for himself, do everything for himself, try everything out for himself. He was known for the fact that while practically everyone composed for him in the Fifties – Boulez, Stockhausen, Pousseur, Brown, Bussoni and so on, he never allowed them to be involved in the rehearsal of their pieces. They were always presented with a *fait accompli* at the first performance. And they were enthusiastic, even if Tudor transformed their work into something they hadn't been expecting at all.

Did John Cage have a precise idea about how his work ought to be performed? Do you believe one approach to the interpretation of Cage is more legitimate than another?

In music there are two aspects to interpretation: the first is the note record and the second, which is just as important, is the tradition of performance – something we call style – that leads straight to the composer. Only when a tradition is interrupted and vanishes from consciousness, do we discover how imperfect and incomplete the note record is. The most important thing, the quality that makes a score into a work of music, is not something we shall actually find in any note record. This is true for Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Wagner... Today we have an easier time of it because we have recordings. But the way to play Beethoven, for example, leads straight back to the way he played it himself. His pupils copied him and they taught others, and so even if there was constant change, there is also always the umbilical cord that leads directly to the composer. That is why I have a problem with Baroque music, which wasn't played for a century of more...

And how to play Cage? The very notion that you can buy the sheet music without knowing anything about it and can read everything out of the notes and instructions is just as

nonsensical as the idea that you could learn to play the flute on a correspondence course, by e-mail. That is not the way music is done. If you want to play Cage well, you obviously have to respect the score, but that doesn't tell you everything. In his instruction Cage didn't include things that were completely obvious to himself and to Tudor.

Could you give an example of something that was obvious to them?

It's different in each score. We did *Variations IV*, for example, – I think it was in 1990 – and Ben Neill who was working with me at that point had a lot of ideas on how to approach it. *Variations IV* is in fact half theatre and half music, and there are no notes but only instructions. I wasn't too happy with Ben's ideas, and so I called Cage and he asked us over so that we could look at the whole thing. I thought it would take a few minutes, but in the end we were there for two hours. It turned out that everything had been thought out with complete precision, and every time Ben objected that there was "something different again" in the instructions, Cage would tell him "Pay no attention to it, it's 'third level', a higher class you haven't reached yet." All these different possibilities had been thought up for Tudor, who played Cage all his life. When you do something for twenty or thirty years under right direction, then you can get your freedom and you'll still "hit the target". But if you are doing it for the first time, then don't go taking those kinds of "liberty". It was well-known that Rachmaninov would sometimes improvise when he played his piano concertos, but no teacher at a music school would allow it. It's a little like in Zen Buddhism, where an experienced monk can hit the target even in complete darkness... but when you start you have to have the lights on and wear glasses.

And so back to Cage's idea of how it ought to look...

We are living in a culture built on the Enlightenment illusion that people know what they want. No one dares to say that he doesn't know what he wants, since that would discredit him. And in the Fifties Cage was one of the first to draw attention to the fact that he didn't want anything. Things arise organically, one out of another. One silly view you can hear from professors at all the universities is that a composer writes music he hears internally, and it is an expression of what he wants. If that were the case then Beethoven wouldn't have had to rewrite *Fidelio* twice, and Mahler used to correct his scores almost endlessly – in fact even today they are not finished; they are only "complete" because he died. Does it mean he was a bad composer because he didn't precisely know what he wanted?

So what was the situation with Cage? Did he simply find an ideal medium in Tudor?

Yes. He had absolute faith in which Tudor would make of it, and Tudor always made it

what it ought to be. Sometimes people have a spiritual connection, and complement each other. Their connection was perfect and Cage deliberately left some things open. But of course this presents us with a problem today – and perhaps it rather destroys Cage's work to the point where it won't be possible to resurrect it – incidentally reflecting some of Cage's social-ideological beliefs. Although they worked well as far as artistic strategy was concerned, they were damaging in relation to the practical situation, above all the practicalities of interpretation. One of the basic foundations of Cage's thought was the rejection of value judgements. He completely refused to judge things, and was utterly consistent about it. So when someone "messed up" his music in some ghastly way he wouldn't stand up and start shouting "How dare you?" but would just sit there saying nothing, and then leave. The problem is that this attitude is often been regarded as agreement. It got to such a point that there are musicians Cage simply couldn't stand who still think he was terribly fond of them.

So he never commented on performance.

No.

When you asked him before hand, then he advised you...

If you took the initiative, he was very willing to help.

So he did have a particular idea...

It was a process.

Recently I realised yet again that a thing that united us – me, Lucier, Wolff, and Cage – even though our music differed so greatly – was that exciting moment when you set a process in motion in a way that endures the result is not what you predicted. The dialogue between your plan, your working strategy, and acceptance of certain unforeseen results.

What unites us is an interesting question. Every period has its common denominators, which is how you recognise that it's Baroque, Romanticism, Renaissance... And judged by traditional criteria we do very different things, which might even look unconnected. But that's not true. With hindsight our work will certainly turn out not to have been so heterogeneous after all, and some common denominator will be found. There are certain things that hang in the air and that many people arrive at independently because they are an expression of their time. For example, take the fact that Duchamp's *Great Glass* was broken because they were taking it from the Brooklyn Museum where it was exhibited to Connecticut and they threw it into the truck without any kind of protection. Duchamp put it together again – he was gluing it for about two years – and then he said, "I've got used to these cracks and I'm beginning to like them." He's talking about a yearning for precision, but at the same time the acceptance of accidental elements. That

was in the Thirties, but the tendency to accept accidental elements can be found throughout the Twentieth Century.

Do you think that today's performers must be capable of perceiving this period feeling if they are to interpret Cage "correctly"? What if they don't have that "umbilical cord"?

They have to have it. There are people here who worked with Cage, and it continues on with them.

What about the people who didn't work with Cage? Do they have any chance at all of finding an approach to Cage's music?

Perhaps, but it's not likely. There are recordings, there are plenty of things that can be learned that way...

Correct performance ought then to respect the tradition of interpretation...

There is only one correct interpretation. And a great many variations within it, of course. But things become meaningful only from within. Performance by someone who approaches the music from outside is completely pointless. It is as if I were to do a football commentary, although I know nothing about football. Every fan would laugh at me.

Can this correct interpretation be characterised in some way?

It's hard. But the most important thing for the performance of Cage is discipline, and not license. That's precisely because there are so many possibilities there. The more possibilities you have, the more disciplined you have to be, since otherwise it will fall apart. That applies not just to music but to life as well. Cage characterised discipline in the following terms: "You can't do what you like, but every possibility is open". Don't pay attention to yourself, get over your own ego.

What do you think is central, and most durable, in Cage's work?

In Ostrava I conducted Wagner's overture to Tristan and Isolde and the Liebestod, and so I was educating myself a little about Wagner and I discovered that Cage and Wagner are completely parallel figures, each for his own century. They were born in the same period, Wagner in 1813, Cage in 1912, and in both cases their most important work, the one with which they made their mark on the world scene, was written in the year 57: Orchestra for Piano and Orchestra in 1957 and Tristan and Isolde in 1857. And both were still controversial fifty years after the works were written – Mahler only dared to conduct Tristan without major cuts sometime at the beginning of the 20th century, and both were great ideologists of socialist stamp – it's even said that Wagner was mixed up with the burning of the opera house in Dresden and so had to flee abroad, and when he was allowed to return to Germany he was still forbidden to set foot in

Saxony. Bakunin was one of his closest friends and several critics described Wagner as a communist. Cage and Wagner both published texts that had an influence their times not only in the sphere of music, but also on a broad social front – they had a great impact on the intellectual life of their era.

As far as the durability of his work is concerned, I think Cage's importance starts in the 1950s. First with *Music of Changes* for piano. Then the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* and *Atlas Eclipticalis*. *Etudes Australes* were the next step and then *Freeman Etudes*. For someone to say, "I know what Cage's Music is about", he has to mean these works. In the same way that you have to know the Eroica, the late quartets, a few piano sonatas, the 7th Symphony, in order to be able to say you know Beethoven. The First Symphony isn't enough.

What do you think is the most important thing that you personally learned from Cage?

Recently I was asked to write something about Cage's influence on me. I was aware that what is usually described as influence is actually imitation, which actually has very little in common with influence. Unfortunately society praises people who imitate others, but imitation has never attracted me and so that's why my music possibly sounds completely different from any other...

I came up with the working hypothesis that influence is actually confirming someone in an opinion he had before. To do independent work and concern yourself with ideas that no one has had before isn't just hard, but involves a whole scale of insecurities and confusions. You don't know what the point is, or what you're actually doing (and plenty of your ideas are naturally worthless and end on the trash heap). But when you discover that someone else is also taking the same direction, it's a kind of confirmation of the rightness of your own work, and that can have an incredible influence on a person. That is the kind of influence Cage had on me. I don't recall ever having encountered something and saying to myself, "This is amazing!" and then doing a hundred-and-eighty-degree turnaround. But when I encountered Cage's opinions, suddenly it corresponded to what I had felt myself. And if Cage hadn't been here, who knows whether I would have been strong enough to continue in the same direction by myself. But Cage was here, I met him, and that is how it influenced me. Does that make sense?

It does. If you meet a great man or woman it can cause things to crystallise, things you had only sensed but not articulated...

Something like that happened to me. In 1974 Cage and I had a huge conflict. At that point Cage had proclaimed something I saw as a denial of all his previous ideological claims... I was quite shocked... But in the end I found that actually he had been right.

We did a performance of *Song Books* in Buffalo and one of the musicians decided to sabotage the performance, which caused a huge scandal, and there were also certain personal factors playing a role, and so Cage was terribly offended. It was a piece for which Cage had expressly wanted no rehearsals. This was an expression of anarchist ideology – every player had to study his own part and at the end it would all come together at the performance. The rational justification for why they were no rehearsals was that one player might influence another and somebody might even come to dominate, but without rehearsals what would emerge was the beauty of anarchy, with everyone doing their own thing, and so long as no one trod on another's foot, everything would go beautifully harmonically together. We had no rehearsals, I didn't know who would do what, and Julius Eastman decided to play silly games, which was what caused the scandal. After the concert Cage came up on the podium and said, "What was that supposed to mean?" And I said, "I didn't know what was going to happen, because we had no rehearsals". And he turned to me and said, "But you're the leader of the ensemble!" And I realised – not immediately, it took me a while – that actually he was right. That if I sign myself as the music director of the S.E.M. Ensemble, then I'm responsible for what the ensemble does there. I can't excuse myself on the grounds that the composer has some stupid directions that we should or shouldn't rehearse, and ideas on what we should or shouldn't do.

Ever since then I've taken a very critical view of any kind of instruction or view. And so for example I conduct some Cage orchestral pieces even though he said, for ideological reasons, that there should be no conductor. To do a thing with a hundred-member orchestra without a conductor – as he demands in piece 103 – is complete nonsense. In Cologne at the premiere they had sweated blood for a week, and the concert recording showed the performance had been catastrophic. I rehearsed it with the Janáček Philharmonic and it was absolutely outstanding. One thing that I terribly regret is that Cage did not live to see my work with orchestra. I'm convinced he would agree with me on many things, as he agreed when I proposed certain changes in *Ryoanji*.

How do you know which instructions you ought to respect and which not? That is "third level".

Do you think that you've achieved the "third level"?

I hope so. After forty years of work it would be sad if that wasn't the case. And if not me, then who else? I'm among the very small number of people who worked with Cage practically without a break from the beginning of the Sixties.

juliette x 2 – bregenz and paris



It would be hard to imagine two more opposite interpretations of Bohuslav Martinů's opera *Juliette* or *The Book of Dreams* [Snář] than this year's productions in Bregenz and Paris. While In Paris in the Garnier Palace the Surrealist opera was given the right share of playful poetry and lyricism, at the festival on the Lake of Bodam, direction loaded the opera with expressionism, philosophy and existential meanings.

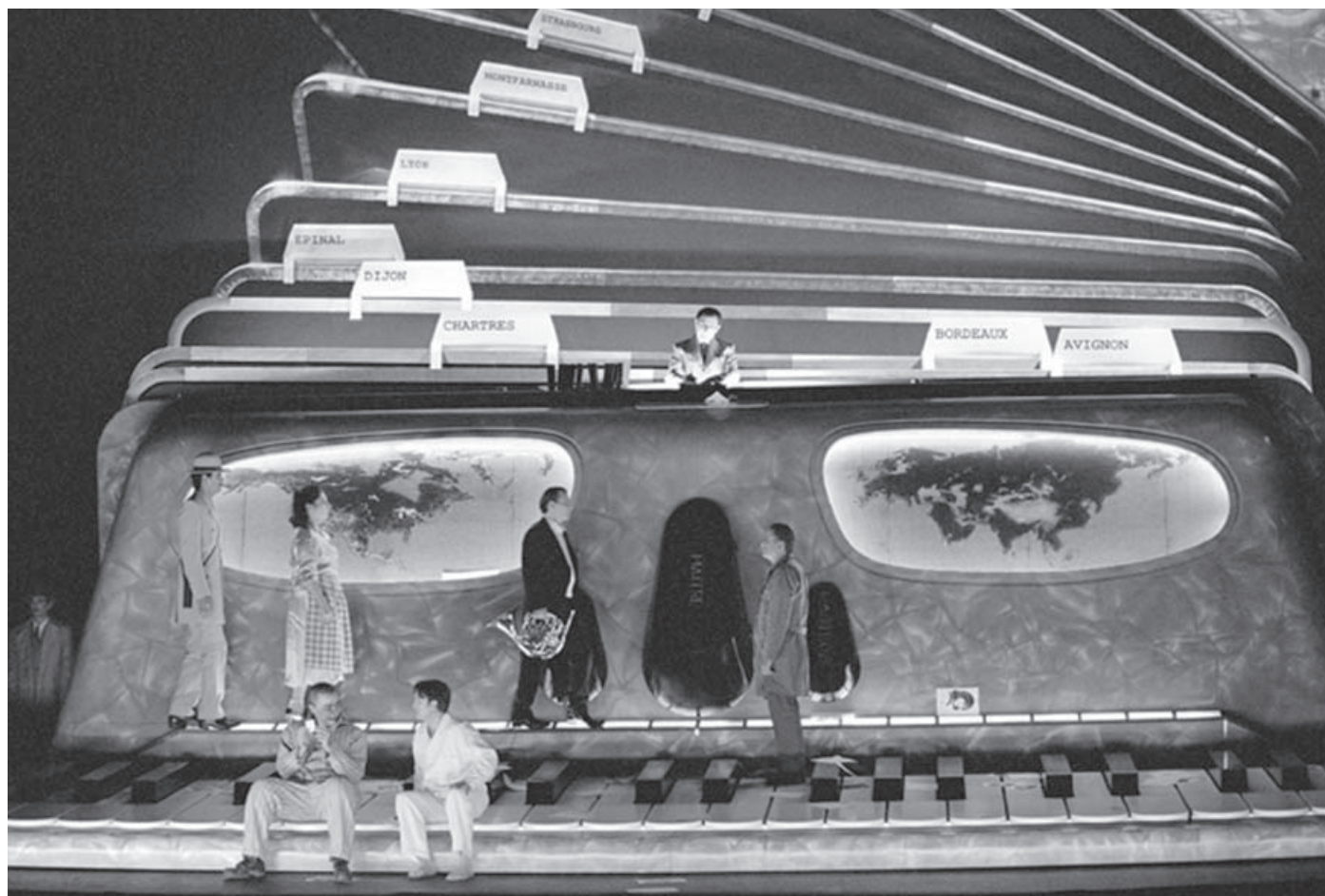
PETR VEBER

The first Austrian production of the 1920s work, with five intervals in a room seating 1,700 and adjoining the amphitheatre (where *La Boheme* was presented outdoors on the other days) naturally had less of an impact than twenty performances of the veristic

spectacle for an audience of 6,800, but it was still undoubtedly a major cultural event. The young German director **Katja Czellnik** and the stage designer **Vera Bonsen** had a conception of *Juliette* that was quite different from the usual way in which Czechs see

it – the subtle poetry was gone, and the Surrealism acquired the contemporary and modern accent of absurdity and alienation. Dreaming, longing and searching were presented materially, in a tougher mode. The viewer was nonetheless helplessly drawn

Juliette in Paris



into the new reality so evocatively created by the performance, making it all the clearer that the eeriness was heading in the direction of psychological derailment. The German translation of the libretto had been translated, with the help of the Czech musicologist Aleš Březina, director of the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague, by the conductor of the whole project **Dietfried Bernet**. He gave the orchestral sound its urgency of expression and imprinted it with a strong, coherent view of the opera. The tenor **Johannes Chum** and the soprano **Eva-Maria Westbroek** coped admirably well with the leading roles.

It was only comparison with the Paris production in the autumn that showed quite how wide of the usual mark Czelnik's interpretation had been. The Paris production, directed by **Richard Jones** with stage design by his British compatriot **Antony MacDonald**, came much closer to the generally definable ideal. Where the first version had stressed problems, the Paris version chose well being. Where the first emphasised horrors, the second went for loving understanding. To put it in a nutshell, the Paris Julietta was concerned with short moments of happiness, and not just the impossibility of finding the longed for ideal. The opera Julietta thus returned to Paris, where its libretto and music had been written and where Martinů himself would have loved to see it, almost seventy years after its premiere in Prague. It was sung in French translation and presented in a form that showed great internal sympathy with the work. Perhaps it will help the French to further discovery of Martinů, or, as it were, his rehabilitation in the eyes of the wider public. The production was part of a programme entitled Czech Season. The conductor was the German **Marc Albrecht**, who showed great sensitivity without sentimentality. He himself characterised his approach as on the lyrical side, and definitely not Kafkaesque. The role of Juliette was excellently sung by the young French singer **Alexia Cousin**, who played her charmingly as a carefree very feminine girl. The role of Michel, seeking his ever-vanishing ideal, was taken by the American tenor **William Burden**, who combined lyrical song with uncertain gestures. The crucial element of the staging was the motif of the accordion, an instrument that is the bearer of important meanings in the music for Julietta. In the middle second act there was even quite a genuine forest, in keeping with French Surrealism and Czech poetism. It could not have been more different than the Bregenz production, where the whole opera took place at the bottom of a sort of empty navigation lock... In contrast to Czelnik, then, the producers of the French project "merely" – but very successfully and imaginatively – fulfilled tradition. The only causes for regret were the ill-considered out cuts of several episodes from the Paris production.

up to mountain? to berg!

JAN VÁVRA

For me Berg is an unconquered mountain. And so is an orchestra formed of young musicians who vehemently deny that it is just a student affair. Certainly it has an unusual repertoire and, last but not least, it's a group that opens every concert with the premiere of a "made to measure" piece by a Czech contemporary composer.

The orchestra was formed back in 1995 on the initiative of the man who is still its sole conductor and leading personality – Peter Vrábel. There was no one better to help me with my imagined climb up the mountain.



So let's start from Adam. Or from Alban, or from Josef. I can't resist asking – why Berg?

That's definitely the question I'm asked most frequently. We would like to leave it slightly veiled in mystery, but the truth is that we didn't just want to call ourselves the Young Prague Chamber Orchestra, or something similar. We knew from the beginning what we wanted to play – a lot of 20th-century and contemporary music. Alban Berg was ready to hand, and then was reduced to Berg. But we still like to mystify and leave it to other people to interpret the name as they like.

The orchestra has been playing since 1995. Did you start as an orchestra of student enthusiasts, or has the orchestra kept to its well-defined agenda since the very beginning?

We didn't start entirely as a student orchestra, even if it might look that way. We went on from concert to concert mainly because we wanted to play pieces that nobody had played here before. The idea of playing 20th-century music came from us, although at that time Prof. Václav Riedlbauch helped us a lot with our programmes. He was always tipping us off about some interesting piece, and he gave us the impulse to play and discover

more composers. Of course, as time went by we began to get offers from composers, first of all from our fellow students at the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts, and that was how we had the idea of playing one premiere at every concert.

Are all the premieres "made to measure" for the orchestra?

Not always. We commission pieces from some people, while other people already have finished pieces in the drawer and are just looking for the right opportunity. The main factor is chance, and above all agreement. Composers have a natural tendency to want to hear their own music, and in this country there are no so many chamber orchestras willing to devote themselves to the task systematically. We don't represent any particular group or generation of composers. Today I'm the only person responsible for programme planning and in practice it's based on my subjective impression of each piece of music. But before I finalise anything I like to discuss it with other people from the orchestra and hear their opinions.

It must be difficult and demanding to play a premiere at every concert. Aren't you afraid that one day the source will, as it were, dry up? Don't you some-



times find it a whip that you've made for your own back?

It's hard to answer that. We don't even think about that kind of thing. When I don't see a problem I don't look for one. We're pleased that so far it's worked as it should.

At your concerts you include new pieces alongside works from the classical repertoire, mainly 20th century. Do you think the combination is always beneficial?

I don't think it would be a good idea to play only new music at a concert, if for no better reason than that only a small circle of initiates would actually turn up to hear it. The sort of people who would avoid that kind of concert like the plague and would much prefer to hear Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich get just a portion new music from us, and I think that this way it's more likely to get into their bloodstream. Finally, even a classic piece sounds different in the context of work by contemporary composers, and this is exactly what we want.

Few of the members of your orchestra are over thirty, and most are student at the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (HAMU). Don't you have problems with the tendency to confine the group within the rubric of student orchestra, especially when your subscription concerts are held in the Martinů Hall, in the Lichtenštejn Palace, i. e. on HAMU premises?

It is a problem although we are trying to build our own identity. From the beginning HAMU supported us and we still co-operate. Obviously, many of our players and above all soloists are from HAMU, and when an instrumentalist has the chance to play with a chamber orchestra, it's terrific experience for him or her.

What about the members of the orchestra? Do they change frequently, or is it always the same line-up of people?

The main limiting factor is that most of the players have all kinds of other activities. The orchestra relies primarily on its group of "core players", who form the spine of the orchestra. Without them the group would be impossible to imagine. For example the wind section and the first row strings have scarcely changed at all up to today. Then we have a broader circle of players and it's very unusual for us to go outside them. It's good to know what you can expect from each player.

The Berg started regular concert cycles in 2001. This year, with the cycle ANNO 2003, you have started selling subscription tickets publicised by an advertising campaign. Do you see this as a major shift?

It's simple. We said to each other that it would be possible to do a little more and so we decided to make ourselves more visible. The subscription series was a sufficiently good reason. We're continuously looking for the right identity and image for the orchestra. We just see it as the next step in our progress.

The next step on the road up – the mountain – Berg?

You could put it that way, but sometimes we feel like that beetle who keeps rolling his ball up and it keeps falling down on him. Strong words about our perseverance aren't appropriate here. There's simply no alternative.

Your advertising slogan is "Leave the Eine Kleine Nachtmusik at home in your bedroom – we'll play you music you never hear elsewhere..."



So what is that we can here this year only and exclusively at your concerts?

We've tried to create the programmes using tried and tested recipes from the earlier cycles. Apart from the planned Czech premieres (Teml, Matějů, Bartoň, Loudová, Feld, Hybler, Nejtek), we shall be playing a varied mix of composers from Bach to Lutoslawski. At the same time we are preparing a sort of mini-profile of the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, who has created what I think is very interesting music which is never played here live.

interview with mario mary (winner of the musica nova 2002 competition)

LENKA DOHNALOVÁ

MARIO MARY (born 1961, Argentina), graduated in composing and conducting at the National University in La Plata. In 1992 he continued his studies in Paris in GRM, the Paris Conservatoire, and IRCAM. In 2001 he obtained a PhD at the University of Paris 8, and he currently teaches there himself.

He is the holder of the 1st Prize in the International Competition L. Russolo 1994, Pierre Schaeffer 1998, TRIME 1998 and 2001, and the composition competition PanAccordion 2000. In 1992 he won an honorable mention in the International EA competition in Bourges. At the Musica nova competition 2002 he took 1st place in Category B for instrument (s) and EA with his piece *Aarhus* – for violin and E medium.

This year's Musica nova 2002 International Prize for EA Music attracted 125 entries from composers from a total of 30 countries. The other winners were: Ka-Ho Cheung (China) with the piece *Lost Souls Sketches*, which came first in Category A for EA. In Category B there were honorable mentions for Michele Biasutti (Italy) with his piece *Ricerca* and Kotoka Suzuki (Japan) with his composition *Slipstream*. The prize for a Czech composer went to Ondřej Adámek for his composition *Střepy z Kibery* [Shards from Kibera]. The pieces were presented at the Concert of Laureates on the 16th of December 2002 in the Inspirace Theatre. The competition was organised with the support of the Czech Ministry of Culture, the City of Prague, the Czech Music Fund Foundation and the Copyright Foundation OSA.



You compose both acoustic and electro-acoustic music, do you think its a good thing for EA composers to have a general training in composition, and – from the other point of view – what influence does composing EA have on your instrumental work?

For me instrumental composing is the inexhaustible source nourishing EA music. Having a training in composition enables me to think more deeply in EA too about aspects like orchestration, polyphony, macro-micro-form and so on, which are sometimes still on the margins of interest in EA. Composing EA then extends the parameters of sound material (spectrum, spatial quality). It's a mutual enrichment. For example for a long time I've been working on EA orchestration, which makes possible the most minute and intricate arrangement of sound elements in space. The various levels of acoustic movement enrich the inner life of the sound. Work on sound material, spatial distribution and the resulting structure is extremely closely connected in EA.

What do you think of the methodology of teaching EA? What is your experience in this context?

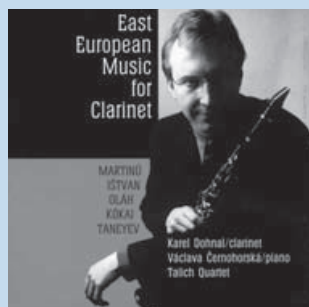
In EA compose we must first create the sound material itself, and so teaching must contain knowledge of acoustics and the technology of instruments (analogue and informatic). But we must never forget that we are concerned only with instruments in

the service of musical creativity. Just getting the latest versions of the software and hardware serves no useful purpose from the musical point of view. Learning how to structure materials (mixing, form) will be easier for people who have been trained in ordinary composition.

In France I had the chance to study EA composition and informatics at GRM, at the Paris Conservatoire, at IRCAM and at the University of Paris 8. At GRM there is a stress on developing special sensitivity to sound and the meaning of the spatial arrangements of a composition in concert performance. At the conservatoire students often take courses in instrumental composition, including analysis and theory, alongside EA. At IRCAM I had the chance to specialise in music information studies. It's a very dynamic atmosphere and composition takes first place there (Murail, Fernyhough and others). At the University of Paris 8 you can study computer composition, and I got my doctorate there. The stress is on research there (i.e. they see themselves more as researchers than as musicians).

What do you think is the point of international competitions in composing?

International competitions give the winners the chance to get to know each other and test out their work in competitive conditions. The prizes are important not just as a psychological boost, but sometimes as a way of opening doors to other creative and publishing possibilities.



East European Music for Clarinet

Karel Dohnal
Czech Radio
2002

In the twentieth century the clarinet became a very popular instrument thanks to its technical and expressive range. In the countries of Eastern Europe the clarinet was also one of the traditional instruments of folk music. The clarinetist Karel Dohnal is a representative of the younger generation of Czech performers and can already boast many successes (Laureate of the Prague Spring Competition, prizes from competitions in Ostend, Bayreuth and London), and twentieth-century music is an important part of his repertoire. His CD offers five pieces for clarinet by Eastern European composers, and all except one from the later twentieth century. Czech music is represented here by Bohuslav Martinů and Miloslav Ištván, Hungarian music by Rezső Kókai, Rumanian by Tiberiu Oláh and Russian by Sergei Ivanovich Tanyeyev. Bohuslav Martinů's Sonatina and Miloslav Ištván's Sonata were written at almost the same time – the mid-Fifties – and both show strong inspiration by folk music. Martinů at this point, however, was already an accomplished master, while Ištván was only at the beginning of his career and still under the influence of his great model, Leoš Janáček.

Just as Janáček's influenced Czech music, so Bela Bartók influenced Hungarian music. Rezső Kókai continued with Bartók's legacy not only as a composer, but also as a collector and arranger of folk songs. His Four Folk Dances are virtuoso stylisations with the pattern of progressive gradation that we can hear in Hungarian folk music.

The clarinet is also often to be found in Rumanian music, but Tiberiu Oláh draws inspiration more from the poetics of the New Music and he exploits all the possibilities of the instrument. Some passages of this technically very difficult piece nonetheless contain at least a distant reference to folk music in the form of its typical figurations.

The only representative of the nineteenth century on the recording is Sergei Tanyeyev. His Canzona still draws on the legacy of Tchaikovsky and provides the performer with a chance to show the more lyric sides of the instrument.

Dohnal's partner on this CD is the pianist Václava Černožorská and for Tanyeyev's Canzone he is joined by the Talič Quartet.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL



Haydn Hába Janáček

Hába Quartett
Žuk Records
2002

The saying that no man is a prophet in his own land is one that certainly applies to Alois Hába. While we don't often hear his music in this country, abroad his legacy attracts great attention, and his reputation goes beyond that of pioneer of microtonal music.

The Hába Quartett was formed in 1984 in Germany, on the initiative of the violinist Dušan Pandula, a former member of the Prague Hába Quartet.

This recording contains Hába's Quartet no.9, op. 79 of 1952, the First String Quartet, "Kreutzer Sonata" by Leoš Janáček and the String Quartet in C major by Joseph Haydn. What Janáček and Hába had in common was first their insistence on finding their own paths and resulting isolation on the music scene, and second their deep love of Moravian folk music. This recording provides us with a unique opportunity to appreciate how two composers could use similar sources of inspiration to go in quite different directions. In Hába's case, his piece is also affected by the time at which it was written, since in 1952 a Stalinist dictatorship that wanted to dictate even the form of music was still in power. Hába's music was branded formalist and so prohibited. Here the folk music tones create a counterweight to darker places, but the work is still glows with the composer's optimism and faith in a better future.

At first sight the Haydn Quartet seems an odd companion for the music of Hába and Janáček but in fact it was Haydn, who made the quartet into the genre with which his successors worked.

The musicians of the Hába Quartett acquit themselves with honour in their performance of the the difficult works by Hába and Leoš Janáček, and also manage to loosen up sufficiently in their rendering of the Haydn.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL



Písně krátké i dlouhé

[Songs Short and Long]
Traxleři
Etnologický ústav AVČR [Ethnological
Institute of the Czech Academy of
Sciences]
2002

While today musicologists are devoting ever more attention to contemporary popular music, its earlier past remains comparatively under-researched. This recording by the Traxleři group at least partly fills up the gaps in this field, since it focuses on the historical sources of folk and popular music, urban folk lore and student songs of the 15th to the 19th centuries. The person behind the choice of repertoire is Jiří Traxler, ethno-musicologist, who has been working for many years on the historical forms of folk and popularised songs. One section of the CD, entitled Jeníkovy Písně krátké [Jeník's Short Songs], offers a selection of the texts that Traxler has published in his Písně krátké Jana Jeníka rytíře z Bratřic [The Short Songs of Jan Jeník night of Bratřice], in which he edited the first part of the legacy of this folk song collector. Jeník z Bratřic (1756 – 1845) originally collected songs for his own pleasure and did not plan to publish them. This meant that unlike the later National Revivalist collectors he did not censor them, and the texts in his collection were just as people had really sung them, i.e. with occasional vulgarisms.

The second half of the CD is entitled Ohlasy evropských písní [Reactions to European Songs] and introduces us to the repertoire of songs popular in the Czech society of the National Revival. In this selection we find a sort of "best of" European popular songs of the 15th - 19th century. Songs originally from England, France, Germany or the Low Countries found their way all over Europe and acquired new texts. The thirteen tracks in this section take us through a history of European popular music from the renaissance to romanticism.

Since 1965, the Traxleři Group has been devoting itself to performance of the various forms of folk music. Folk music of previous centuries, urban folklore and broadsheet ballads have an important place in their recordings.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

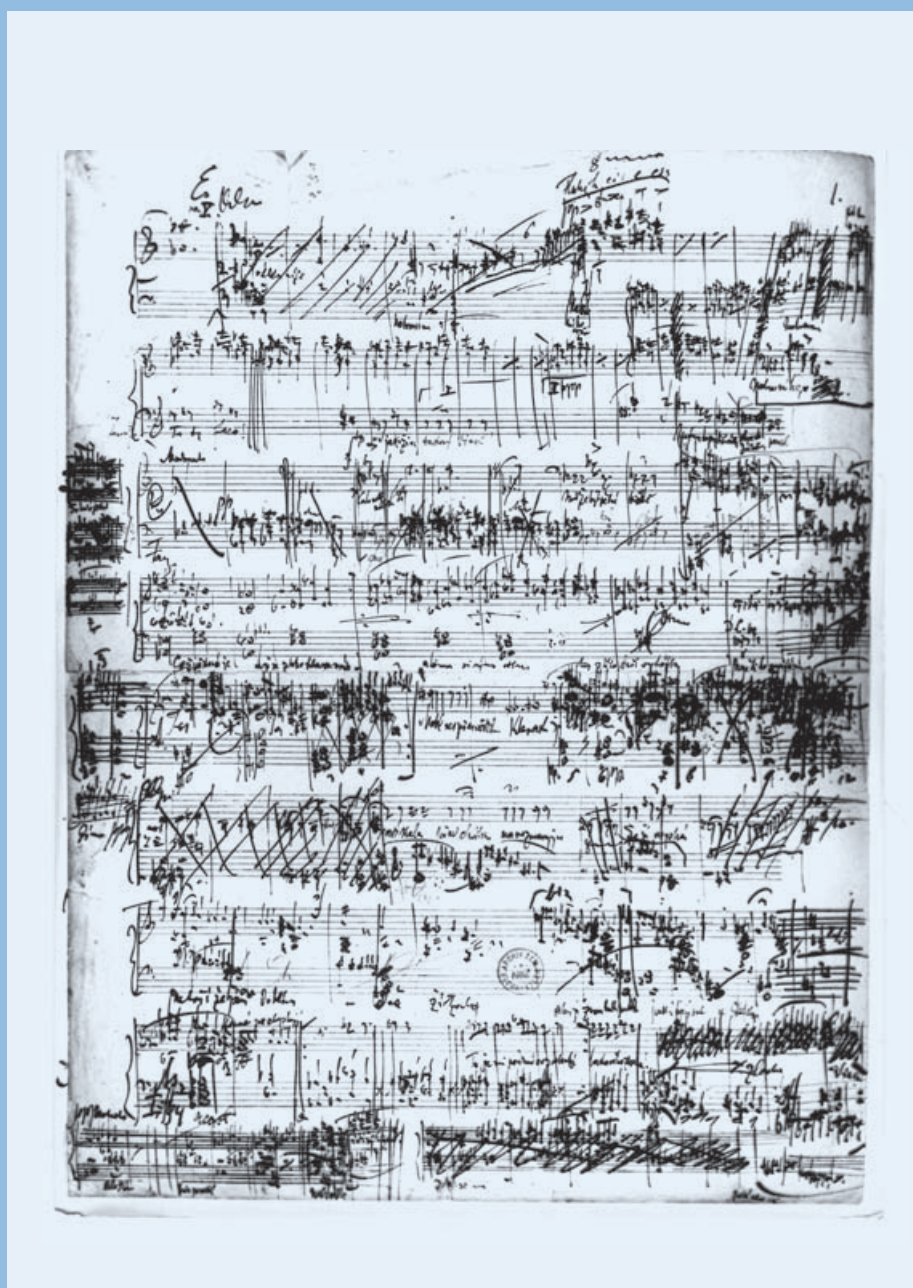
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