

czech music

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Karel Vachek and Bedřich Smetana

Pavel Haas

Konvergence



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editorial

Sometimes it is not easy with great names of our history, not only in music. They seem untouchable and far away from our time. It is good when someone tries to find a new point of view. This was the case of director Karel Vachek and his documentary. It is sometimes very useful to talk about music from the artist from different field. We can see then, that Smetana and his music can tell us something new about our time and maybe, as the title suggests, about future.

Group of young performers and composers Konvergence does not have Smetana's works in their repertoire. They are oriented towards contemporary music and gain good reputation in this field. In our interview we try to find out, what we can expect from them in future.

Interest in life and work of composer Pavel Haas is maybe stronger abroad than in Czech republic. Text of Vojen Drlík brings interesting information on Haas' works for stage.

Couple of new CDs was released recently, which, in our opinion, are worth recommending. There are archival recordings of guitarist and composer Pavel Richter, new CD of Vlastislav Matoušek and new collection of works from the group of young female composers called Hudbaby. I wish you nice time and look forward to see you with next issue of Czech Music

Matěj Kratochvíl
MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL
EDITOR



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bedřich smetana is the poet of the future

an interview with director karel vachek

LUKÁŠ JIŘČKA



Stones and trees, the opera *Dalibor* and politicians, doctors and ecologists, poets and singers, a theatre director and a documentary maker, the National Theatre and dialogues about the present. All these elements come together the concluding documentary film of the tetralogy *Malý kapitalista* [The Little Capitalist] directed by Karel Vachek, and entitled *Kdo bude hlídat hlídače? Dalibor aneb klíč k chaloupce strýčka Toma* [Who Will Guard the Guards? Dalibor or the key to Uncle Tom's Cottage]. The documentary is unconventional not only because it is almost four hours long, but above all in the way it is structured, more like a novel or piece of music than a traditional documentary. It consists mainly of a film record of piano rehearsals of Smetana's opera *Dalibor* at the National Theatre, directed by Jan Antonín Pitínský, which is intercut with conversations on the themes of the current cultural, political, medical and human situation

Let's start with the title of the film. Can you explain it for us?

Certain works of art are important for me, and because I want people to read them, I like to add them to the names of my films. This last film is called *Who will Guard the Guards? Dalibor or the key to Uncle Tom's Cottage*. Uncle Tom's Cottage is an important book for the liberation of the black inhabitants of America, and opened up the question of minorities for the whole world. In the same book there is also reference to the Bible, also not a book to make light of, and the passage that reads, "Who will guard the guards?" When someone guards us, he needs to be guarded in his turn, and we are the only ones who can guard him. This is an important idea about government throughout the world: if we give someone power, we must also keep an eye on him ourselves. In *Dalibor*, Smetana allows one of the guards to be deceived in order that the hero should regain his freedom... I also want people to

listen to Bedřich Smetana.

The whole tetralogy, of which *Dalibor* is the final part, is called *The Little Capitalist*. The title is a paraphrase of the novel *The Little Lord*, in which a grandson reforms his grandfather, an aristocrat who oppresses his underlings.

In the other films I have also used musical passages from Smetana. In *Nový Hyperion* [The New Hyperion] I have used the *Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, in the film *Co dělat?* [What is to be Done?] you hear the prelude from the *Devil's Wall* and in *Bohemia Docta* parts of the *Bartered Bride*. The title *What is to Be Done* is taken from Chernyshevsky, *Bohemia Docta* from Bohuslav Balbín, *Labyrint světa a lusthauz srdce* [The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart] is from Jan Amos Komenský and *Božská komedie* [The Divine Comedy] is the work of Dante. *Hyperion* comes from Friedrich Hölderlin.

You use these works to explore the present. The fictional Hyperion also helps in the Greek fight for independence from the Turks.

Hyperion helps in the struggle for liberation, but he ruins something in his struggle, and so damages his relationship to his spiritual lover Diotima, the equivalent of Dante's Beatrice. If you rebel and fight, then you will most probably be tainted precisely what you trying to get rid of. How can Diotima love Hyperion if he is foolish? That is what my films are about: if we damage something, we must remedy it ourselves.

What brought you to Smetana's music and why is it his music that you use in your films?

When I was young I wasn't at all interested in Bedřich Smetana. I thought *Dalibor* was tiresome swash-buckling medieval stuff. I mainly listened to Mozart and Bach, and Smetana was on the periphery. But my wife forced me to find a way to him, and take him seriously.



in the Czech Republic. All these themes are linked up and woven around problems that are given concrete embodiment in the opera *Dalibor*. And trees and stones are silent companions to Smetana's music, although they too certainly have something to say. Almost four hours long, but above all in the way it is structured, more like a novel or piece of music than a traditional documentary. It consists mainly of a film record of piano rehearsals of Smetana's opera *Dalibor* at the National Theatre, directed by Jan Antonín Pitínský, which is intercut with conversations on the themes of the current cultural, political, medical and human situation in the Czech Republic. All these themes are linked up and woven around problems that are given concrete embodiment in the opera *Dalibor*. And trees and stones are silent companions to Smetana's music, although they too certainly have something to say.

And so I opened up to Smetana. His music is devoid of ego, you know, and he has the ability to see everything in the same light. He doesn't create passionate turning-point climaxes when someone is dying or avowing love or expressing joy; everything is narrated with the same feeling, the only possible feeling. This makes Smetana the poet of the future. It is an ability that Leoš Janáček does not possess, nor even Antonín Dvořák in most of his work. I may be making the point humorously, but I am convinced of it from my own personal experience. In all the preceding parts of the *Little Capitalist* tetralogy there are echoes of Bedřich Smetana, one of the most profound musicians who ever lived. In my eyes he is a real mystic, because he teaches us something fundamental. Yet we read him as a Czech musician, who just bases his music on Czech national melodies. This is sheer stupidity, but it is a good thing that the image appeals to people, and so at least Smetana gets to be

performed. He is a much deeper composer than Richard Wagner and although he often uses Wagner's composing techniques, it was always in full awareness that it was necessary to exploit some discoveries in a wise cause.

How did the rehearsals of *Dalibor* get into your film?

Originally we went to the *Dalibor* rehearsals at the National Theatre just with the aim of getting a few shots, and without any inkling that we would shoot the whole way through. In the National Theatre we worked for a mere five days at the piano rehearsals, one reason for the ease of proceedings being that the director Pitínský is a very nice person.

In the film, what is happening is a kind of deconstruction of the opera, since there is no orchestra, conducting, or definitive performance of role. It is all only rehearsal, where you only have the basic rhythms and distances between the notes, and so the





people involved can really get to grip with it without misleading outer layers of silt.

In my view music ought to expand out into the world in a way that allows people to use it to correct specific ideas and realities of everyday life. That is why in the film I added the auditorium, where we interviewed various people who would most probably be given no space in another film or television programme. All the dialogues relate to the tragic ideas to be found in *Dalibor*.

You deconstruct scenes and individual passages from the opera *Dalibor*. The viewer would naturally expect, at least on the basis of conventional film structures, that at the end he would see the complete production of the opera, whether at the premiere or later. But this expectation isn't one that you fulfil.

I wouldn't have wanted to shoot the premiere, or the scandals that blew up around Pitínský's particular interpretation of *Dalibor*. My work is different from that of J. A. Pitínský as director of the production, or Kulínský's as music director, or the work of the singers. Anyway, for financial and technical reasons it wouldn't even have been possible to film the premiere, and I was just grateful to Pitínský for letting me film five days of rehearsals. I didn't set anything up or make them stop at any point, and I don't think I disturbed them at all. I was an observer who occasionally stood in the light. The fact that some of the scenes in the film are in the wrong order was just because that was how they were rehearsed, and some moments repeat in the film but just because they were repeated at the rehearsals.

To what extent does the film copy the structure of the music itself? Was *Dalibor* the basis for the composition of your film?

To give you a prosaic answer – when the cameraman is walking about the stage with a camera that weighs twenty-five kilograms, and taking various turns and going between the singers, then he's behaving musically. I think my films are aggressive; they are operations, and make surgical interventions in the thinking of this society. These interventions are drastic, but useful, and that is an attribute of Smetana's music as well. All the different phenomena have equal importance, and should be understood in terms of notion that the human being having basically only one emotional response to everything. And we divide and classify this one emotion: there is no admiration for passion, a grain of coffee is as important as *Dalibor* and the air we breathe. That too is the content of Smetana's music.

Dalibor is distinctive for being perhaps the most important of Smetana's works, where Zdeněk represents the philosopher who teaches *Dalibor* his relationship to being. When Milada arrives and sees *Dalibor*, whom she has up to then hated because he killed her brother, she realises that this is a man of a different order, a spiritual order. And she starts to love him and to learn from him to be a philosophical individual. And then there is

Jitka, the ward brought up by Dalibor, a pure young woman who helps Vítek. For me *Dalibor* is a story about philosophers and not about the homosexual relations that were emphasised in this production.

As a film-maker I have tried to be worthy of Smetana. I hope the result is as silly as all Smetana's operas. A philosopher must know how to be silly as well!

But with their emphasis on continuity without gradation or refrains, your films have more in common with the music of the 1960s than with Smetana. You create chains of events rather than drama.

It is impossible not to be eclectic and so I steal and find sources of inspiration, just like Camil Saint-Saens who had the ability to tune himself to any register. As far as comparisons with the structure of the film are concerned, I think of the German composer Stockhausen, who affected me in the 1960s. And also structural pictures, and Mikuláš Medek who scratched through the layers of paint on the canvas with his fingers. I learned from all this and discovered that everything can be incorporated into the composition of a film, which can carry a great deal. Other important figures for me have been the writers John Dos Passos or Karl Kraus, who created structures that have been an inspiration to me. But the strongest influence on me has still been Smetana, and that is why I like working with his music in my films. And I enjoy his *Two Widows* and other trifles more than *Jenůfa*, which everyone so loves to be horrified by. And at the same time Leoš Janáček was as it were closer to Stockhausen, because no one else had such a genius for capturing the physical and psychological human feelings that have gone into the language and from the language into music. But he didn't allow his compositions any philosophical outcome, and so there is no tranquillity in his music. I can't stand such operas.

How significantly did *Dalibor* determine the themes that you talk about with your guests in the film?

Dalibor is a potent theme for the present. He behaved decently to the serfs who escaped to his estate although they belonged to someone else, and so it is into surprising that the nobility had him destroyed, given that he had taken their property. Another is the theme of change and revolution, stability and order. A society unable to integrate the two tendencies will develop in the direction of fascist dictatorship. Moreover a society that gets rid of one of its selves – a part of its identity – immediately defines itself as the best. It is essential not to allow a situation in which someone is marginalised and destroyed immediately they protest. Dalibor is an opera concerned with the need for an open society, which is in motion and everyone in it knows everything. We still keep allowing society to be governed by people who have the right to operate with a degree of secrecy, because they know and possess power. And then we wonder at the



result. And for that reason it is important to fight for transparency in society, so that it is not only the kind who has the right to judge the situation in which society finds itself and to take steps to tackle it. I have deliberately called my film, *Who will guard the guardians?* But in the film you also have interviews on the theme of under-tying malignant tumours (an experimental form of cancer treatment that caused huge controversy in the Czech Republic recently). What is the relationship of this topic to *Dalibor* as an opera? At first sight there doesn't seem much of a connection.

In the passage on malignant tumours I used the passage in which Jitka sings: "... and let us go to his aid". And she persuades the armour-bearers who are friends of Vítek and they actually go to his aid. She gives them the courage not to be afraid of power.

There was such a lot of unnecessary theatre and posturing round the issue of under-tying tumours... If the medical institutions had behaved normally, it would have been possible to deepen the research and use it. I know that in the film the subject gives the impression of just being an item of contemporary news, but I make contemporary films. The work must react to contemporary phenomena, it has to do something. The films made in the Czech Republic for Bohemian Lion prizes are only up to date to the extent that they need to be as a means of entertainment, but I am up-to-date because I am not entertaining and I refuse to produce a false interpretation of the recent past. I don't want to believe in disintegration and in the arrival of the last days of Rome. Perhaps I offer testimony to that in my films.

Did your reading of *Dalibor* accord with the director Pitínský's reading?

We didn't actually take much notice of each other, and the results of his rehearsals weren't important to me. We were each doing something else and had different aims. It was enough for me that Pitínský was a good man who let me shoot me film in the National Theatre, for which I am very grateful to him. What is important for me is Smetana.





pavel haas's music

Interest in the Brno composer Pavel Haas (1899–1944) is scanty today, to say the least. Only very occasionally do his works appear in concert programmes, and although his one opera *The Charlatan* [Šarlatán] has been restaged by the State Opera in Prague (1997), it has yet to be produced again in his native Brno. Such interest as has been shown in the composer has tended to be stimulated from abroad, where he is known as one of the “Terezín composers”.

Perception of the work of Pavel Haas is in many respects similar to the kind of attention enjoyed by his otherwise much more popular younger brother, the actor Hugo Haas, who lives on in the consciousness of the Czech public simply as the hero of a number of pre-war films, while his much longer and more prolific film career in America falls outside our angle of vision. The music of Pavel Haas figures more in music guides than in the minds of listeners, despite the fact that the output of the composer has found an enthusiastic and devoted publicist in Lubomír Peduzzi (Pavel Haas, Brno 1993).

Pavel Haas is known chiefly as a composer of songs, operas and orchestral music. As far as work not designed for concert performance is concerned, there has been most attention to his film music. Although the Barrandov Studio gave the composer only three commissions, all of them turned out to be for unusually successful film. Much of the credit for the success must go to Hugo Haas, as the actor in the lead roles but also as the person who got his brother the work.

Haas's film music was written in the Thirties and still lives on, in its way, in screenings of old films. His music for the stage, however, with the exception of his opera *The Charlatan*, was a child of the Twenties and has been forgotten, some of it lost entirely. It was clearly not regarded as an independent body of work and the composer paid no great attention to its subsequent fate, especially since it was written without pretensions to later representation as concert music. Nevertheless, we cannot write off Pavel Haas's work for the stage as entirely marginal. Surviving materials (some of them newly discovered) testify to the immediate reactions of the composer to the stimuli of his time and are also evidence of his personal contacts.

Lubomír Peduzzi, Pavel Haas's biographer, mentions seven works for the stage in his list of the composer's output. Six were written for the National Theatre in Brno, and one for the Vinohrady Theatre in Prague shortly after Hugo Haas had been engaged there as an actor. Pavel Haas had the good fortune to be embark on stage work with a play that is today still regarded as a modern classic. His

first project was to work with the Brno National Theatre on the production of Čapek's play *R. U. R.*, which had its Brno premiere on the 9th of April 1924 in the Na hradbách Theatre, directed by Bohumil Stejskal. The Brno company (still under the repertoire direction of Jiří Mahen), was therefore only three months behind the Prague premiere of the play in the National Theatre (25th of January 1921). In the cast list, besides such leading company actors as Karel Urbánek (Domin), Ladislav Pech (Alquist) and Zdeňka Grafová (Helena), we also find Hugo Haas as “Third Robot”. It was Hugo Haas's first theatre season, the composer's younger brother just starting on what was to be a dazzling career in Czech theatre and film. In Brno, Čapek's drama was presented with the secondary title “A Utopian Play” and the composer of the music was concealed under the pseudonym A. Pavlas. In fact, in the newly discovered score (L. Peduzzi believes it to be lost) the pseudonym is given as H. Pavlas, making the composer's identity even more obvious. The “A” probably crept in by mistake and was then actually retained in the subsequent production (premiered on the 2nd of December 1927 at the Na hradbách Theatre), directed by Vladimír Šimáček (conductor Kurt Glas), again with Zdeňka Grafová, but with Ladislav Pešek as the robot Primus (in 1922 this role had been taken by the director B. Stejskal). Naturally we do not find Hugo Haas in the latter production, since by this time he was already becoming a star of the Prague theatre scene.

R. U. R. is in many ways a typical conversation piece, and so offers relatively little space for music. The surviving score together with comments in the original director's record show that Haas's role was quite limited, but

for the stage

VOJEN DRLÍK

surprisingly less limited in length than in terms of dramatic use. The seven-member orchestra, made up of flute, horn, 1st and 2nd violin, cello, harp and harmonium-celesta, only "took the floor", as it were in the last act and always in the form of a melodrama. The title page of the score reads: Music Backstage and 2 places in the 3rd Act, with the 2 corrected to 3 in pencil. In fact Haas wrote two fully-fledged numbers – the first for the dialogue between Helena and Prius, and the second for the closing dialogue between Alquist and the robots who are turning into human beings. The added third part survives only in the part for keyboard instrument (played by B. Bakal), and it is quite likely that it was written just for this instrument and as an extra touch in response to a specific staging need. Although occasional music was not at the time an automatic feature of the Brno company's productions, none of the reviews of its *R. U. R.* include any mention of Pavel Haas's contribution. On the other hand, the very fact that a twenty-two year old composer, just starting out on his career, should get such a commission is in itself telling. After all, we find no other composer involved with any other stage production in the same Brno season (although we can assume that there was some music in some form for the production of Moliere's *Le Malade Imaginaire*, since a choreographer is mentioned). It may be rash to speculate that Pavel's younger brother helped him get the commission but it is certainly possible, even though Hugo at the time was very much a "greenhorn".

The theory is strengthened by the fact that Pavel Haas obtained his next stage commission in a another production where his brother was playing, this time in one of the central roles. The production was itself rather problematic. It had been written for a competition organised by the National Theatre co-operative in Brno and was one of four plays recommended for staging but not actually awarded a prize, since the jury did not consider any of them quite worth the award. The addition of music may well have been part of an attempt to "improve" the play (the director also added a prologue with the same aim). Quidó Marie Vyskočil's romantic bandit

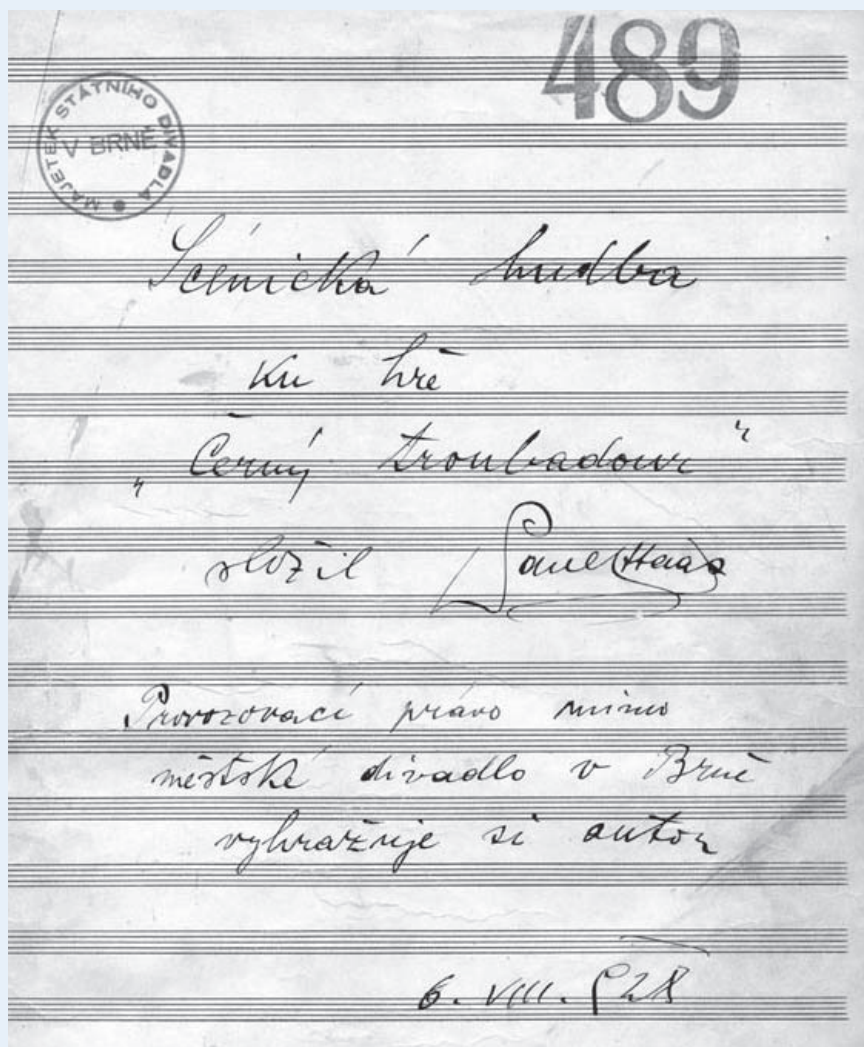
entertainment, *Brigands from the Bohemian Forests or the End of the petrovští* was a far less powerful piece than Čapek's *R. U. R.* and certainly had no great pretensions. The author was known as skilful and prolific, but hardly as intellectually profound or artistically refined. *The End of the petrovští* is even less than an anecdote. The whole comedy is just a sequel to the punishment of the brigands as described in a well-known Czech fairytale. After their humiliating defeat by animals, Vyskočil's bandits have lost their dignity and make a living by small-scale thieving. In complete desperation they try to seize a farm managed by three energetic young women. The result is predictable – the women win and the brigands are forced to work for them on the farm. Tender feelings soon develop, and everyone ends in an embrace, with only one of the men going back into the forests, into the lap of nature...

This undemanding trifle, directed by Rudolf Walter, had its premiere on the 31st of January 1923 in the na Veveří Theatre, and Hugo Haas, as has been said, had a major role. The production text book (with the censor's stamp of permission) and Haas's score have both been preserved in the archives of the National Theatre in Brno. The data in the text book do not, however, entirely correspond to the form of the score. The book records an introductory melodrama, then a little song for the three sisters (Waltrová, Balounová, Urbánková), with the comment unaccompanied, as light as possible, then backstage music for the end of the 1st Act, Věra's song in the 2nd Act, a song for the sisters and brigands (Horňák, Haas, Walter), likewise with the comment unaccompanied – short, and finally the closing melodrama turning into a finale. The score, dated 25th of January 1923 is briefer and purely orchestral. It contains an introduction, clearly used in the form of a melodrama before the play actually commenced, then the melodrama Matůska, the close of the 1st Act and the close of the 3rd Act. It is quite possible that Haas did not include the simple ditties for the actors in the score, although these must have been parts of the stage music, since the length of their texts makes it impossible to believe that they were recited or just

somehow improvised. In any case, comments in the text testify to the need for musical treatment. The simple sung parts did not become part of the musical material (according to the comments the singing was a capella) and have obviously just disappeared for good.

For his second venture in stage music Haas used the same instrumental line-up that had proved its worth in *R. U. R.* The score for the *End of the Petrovští* is written for flute, horn, harp, 1st and 2nd violin, cello and harmonium. Stage music was once again an infrequent feature of the rest of the company's season, a fact which highlights Haas's position. Only in two other cases did directors use stage music: Suk's music was already virtually obligatory for Tyl's *Strakonice Bagpipe Player* (music by Karel Kovařovic) and Zeyer's *Radúz and Mahulena*. Unfortunately, there was scarcely more response from the critics than there had been over *R. U. R.* Only a critic calling himself E. S. in the national daily Lidové Noviny remarked at the end of a crushing review that "Mr. Pavel Haas composed music to create the mood behind the scenes..."

The situation proved to be the same shortly afterwards, when Haas worked with the Longen husband and wife team who from February to June 1923 were guests at the Brno Reduta theatre and were trying to build on their repertoire from their period at the Revolutionary Stage in Prague. In Prague their ensemble had boasted a number of actors with major reputations (Ferenc Futurista, Vlasta Burian, Eman Fiala, Karel Noll, Saša Rašilov, Josef Rovenský. Xena Longenová), but in Brno the actors to hand were inexperienced. After the actors of the Brno National Theatre refused to work with them and the directors forbade members of the company to do so, the Longens relied on the help of amateurs until the police authorities prohibited amateur involvement in professional performances. This complicated and still not entirely illuminated chapter in Brno theatre history was certainly one of the first signs of striving for another Brno theatre company and venue independent of the conservatively minded National Theatre. A group of young



Title of Haas' *Black Troubadour*

Brno artists (including Křapa and Chalupa) formed around the Longens. We cannot say with any certainty whether Pavel Haas was one of them, but his contribution to the production of *Woyzeck* is certainly evidence of contact. The intermediary may well have been the playwright and later repertory director of the Brno Theatre Lev Blatný, whose play *Kokoko-dák* had been presented by the Revolutionary Stage in 1922.

Following his production of Tonka Šibenice with Xena Longenová in the leading role, a success with audiences, on the 5th of March 1923 Longen presented Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck*. Since its modern premiere in Vienna in 1914 in Vienna, *Woyzeck* had attracted the attention of all avantgarde artists. The quality of the Prague production at the Revolutionary Stage in 1920 was said to have been better in quality than the version at the Prague German Theatre. In Brno the production was given stage music by Pavel Haas. The surviving musical material shows that the composer had been offered a relatively major opportunity both in terms of the size of the orchestra and the number of musical pieces (numbers).

For the production in the Reduta, Haas used an orchestra consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, two trumpets, trombone and percussion (triangle, piati, tambourine and large drum). He thus entirely excluded strings and keyboard instruments. The score contains six parts (March, Polka, Lively, Adagio, Freely, Pain-Murder – Adagio), and the surviving material also includes a sketch of the polka for piano. Artistically important though they were, the guest appearances of the avantgarde ensemble found almost no response in the Brno public, but the press conceded the seriousness and sincerity of Longen's production. Criticism was directed at faults in stage design, to some extent at Longen's performance and above all at technical shortcomings of the staging. Here the Lidové Noviny critic "it would not have disappointed ... if the stage machinery had not been so excessively visible, with only the music employed to cover it..." agreed with J. B. Svrček from *Rovnost* "...but the primitive character of the stage structure this time broke up the unity of the flow of action and the stage music, although very appropriate, did not have the power to over-arch the gaps

and bind the whole thing together." J. B. Svrček nonetheless favoured the composer of the music with a specific mention "...the composer Mr. Pavel Haas wrote stage music for the play in the spirit of simple folk music, and it went well with the mood of the action..." At this point nobody could have guessed that soon the same drama in the treatment of Alban Berg would be provoking a storm of outrage from part of the public.

In September 1922 Jiří Mahen resigned his post as repertory director. Pavel Haas left for an engagement in Ostrava for the 1923/24 season. Under the repertory directorship of Vilém Skoch he was to get no chance of a stage music commission, and in fact there is no mention of any composer of stage music for the 1923/24 season at all, while for the 1924/25 season there is evidence only for minimal dance accompaniment to the dances in Saché Guitry's play *The Illusionist*. It was only when Lev Blatný took control of repertory (from the 1925/26 season), that stage music returned to the scene in greater measure. Various young composers took a hand, Osvald Chlubna, J. Kubina, Karel Hil-sza, and once again Pavel Haas.

The Russian dramatist Nicolai Yevreyin's brief one-act play *Merry Death*, quite often performed at the period, was subtitled a Harlequinade and deliberately based on elements of the commedia dell arte. The surviving score shows that Haas made full use of the opportunity, composing a total of seven musical numbers for a one-acter (Prelude, Harlequin begins to play, Doctor's song, Columbine's song, Dance of love, Harlequin's song, Death dances – ballet). *Merry Death* had its premiere on the 6th of November 1925 in a double-bill with Achard's play *Do You Want to Play with Me?*. Once again the director was Rudolf Waltz, who also played the role of Harlequin, with Zdeňka Grafová as Coumbine, Antonín Turek as Pierot, Otto Čermák as the Doctor and Marie Walrová as Death. As so often before, there was no word of reaction to the musical element from the critics.

Pulcinello's Victory, by a member of the Brno opera company Bedřich Zavadil, was similar in inspiration. Zavadil had come to Brno in 1906 and remained faithful to the Brno theatre with a few short interruptions up to his death in 1942. In the opera he was usually cast in buffo-roles, and later he directed as well. He translated a series of opera and operetta librettos, and *Pulcinello's Victory* was the first and last stage play of his that the Brno theatre presented. Although a comedy in verse, and definitely influenced by poeticism, it gave the composer surprisingly little scope, since to judge by the text book only one song of Harlequin was designed for musical arrangement. The musical material has so far proved impossible to track down, and so we have the least information about this particular piece of Haas's work for

stage. It was premiered on the 21st of January 1926, directed by Ladislav Pech in the Veveří Theatre, and provoked mixed reviews. The Lidové noviny critic was generally favourable about the play and the production. J. B. Svrček in Rovnost wrote that "...Pulcinello's Victory only got to be staged because Mr Zavdil is a theatre inspector..." But he didn't forget the composer "...The stage music, sweet and nostalgic, was composed for the play by Pavel Haas."

We are in a similar situation with music for a play that had its premiere shortly before, but at the Vinohrady Theatre, on the 25th of November 1925. It is no surprise to find that Hugo Haas was acting in the play, *Primus*, the first drama from already well-known writer Zdeněk Němeček. Fraternal help is almost certain to have been behind the elder Haas's commission in this case, but we cannot judge the nature of the musical contribution to this comedy set in the world of diplomacy because the musical material has completely disappeared. On the other hand, the fact that Pavel Haas did not work with the Vinohrady Theatre in subsequent years suggests that this time his music was too "avant-garde" and complicated for the specific needs of the production.

Haas' final venture in stage music was the now newly discovered stage score for a play that was a response (if a superficial response) to the rise of new musical movements and American culture in general. Raphael Samuelson's *The Black Troubadour* uses the setting of music-hall and jazz, but his theme is basically the classic clash between two generations, a father and son, and the power of family tradition. The specific conflict is built on the contrast of different musical and social traditions. On the one hand there is orthodox Jewish culture with its distinctive musical idiom, whose bearer is the synagogue cantor, and on the other there is the religiously neutral liberal society with the modern musical idiom of jazz. This was a theme for which Pavel Haas may have felt a close personal affinity, since he himself came from a family that kept up the Jewish tradition, while he was also a composer striving for a contemporary musical idiom. Directed by Vladimír Šimáček, *The Black Troubadour* had its premiere on the 18th of August 1928 with Ladislav Pešek in the leading role. The small orchestra consisting of saxophone, trumpet, violin, harmonium and piano was conducted by František Lukas. The surviving score for the stage music contains Jack's song about *Mother in the Distance*, short revue music and an offstage foxtrot. In the material there is also a voice part for the Jewish song *Kol nidre*. Comments in the director's book show that there were actually more musical numbers. In the introduction there was supposed to be an old Jewish song, then Jack's song, *Funny Mummy*, variations on the Jewish song *Eju kelohenu* *Nothing in the World Puts Me Out*, then the



From Black Troubadour

song *Friends, Friends it Was a Hard Day*, the finale to the 2nd Act with foxtrot melody off-stage, then the song *Mother in the Distance*, and the finale to the 3rd Act *Kol Nidre*. The play itself did get beyond the conventional, even though it was put in modern garb and verbally it brought audiences the most recent musical fashion, American jazz. Haas's music actually had nothing in common with it, and put the emphasis on the opposite pole associated with traditional Jewish ritual music. The radical J. B. Svrček was unsparing... "The religious songs were unending and you felt you were in a synagogue rather than a theatre." Further evidence that the musical element was richer than would be suggested just by the surviving material is provided by the more diplomatically worded reactions of the Lidové noviny critic, who commented that... "The musical inserts by Pavel Haas, which could only be judged by a musician as far as their internal content is concerned, were a little long in an action-packed play."

This quote incidentally explains why we often hear so little about stage music in reviews. Critics specialising in spoken drama did not feel competent enough to judge what were anyway quite rare pieces of stage music while music critics did not usually concern themselves with plays. This practice gradually changed as music became a more frequent part of stage productions. Indeed, the Brno theatre itself was now beginning to make more use of its own, domestic forces for the purpose, for example in the 1926/27 season there were musical contributions from Antonín Kincl, Ota Zítek and Vilibald Rubíněk, in the 1927/28 season from Ota

Zítek and Vilibald Rubíněk and in the 1928/29 season Ota Zítek and Pavel Haas. But the latter was also the season when Haas's work with the Brno theatre ended. The appointment of Jindřich Honzl as Brno repertory director meant a shift of focus, but the theme of America and jazz lived on in the Brno theatre, as shown by productions like *Broadway* (1928), *Jazz* (1929) and ultimately even the *Beggar's Opera* (1930), *Bar Chic* (1930) and the *Jazz Five* (1931). As has been said, the composer himself – once again with the help of his younger brother – obtained three commissions for film music (*Život je pes* [Life is a Dog], *Mazlíček* [The Pet] and *Kvočna* [The Hen]), and he returned to the stage only once, as an opera composer (*The Charlatan*, premiered on the 2nd of April 1938 in the Na hradbách Theatre).

Petr Haas's did not write a great deal of stage music, and in many ways this part of his output was occasional in character. Nevertheless, it had a certain importance for the composer's understanding of the principles and mechanisms of drama and to this day it is redolent of the unique atmosphere of the nineteen-twenties.

The author is the repertory director of the National Theatre in Brno. He is also a journalist and translator.

konvergence

PETR BAKLA

The composers' association KONVERGENCE is one of a number of groups of young musicians orientated to contemporary music that are particularly appealing because they give concerts that strike a balance between music written by their members and music by other "outside" composers. All these groups have been creating platforms that are relatively independent of official and established structures. The effect has undoubtedly been to enrich the music scene with performance of works by relative unknowns at the beginning of their careers, and also by famous names whose music has for one reason or another almost never been played here.

Konvergence was founded in the spring of 2002 by students at HAMU (The Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague): Roman Pallas, Tomáš Pálka, Jan Rybář and Ondřej Štochl. Since their first concerts at the Forfest in Kroměříž they have achieved a great deal, and they still seem to be forging ahead.

On the one hand you play pieces by members of the association, and on the other pieces by other composers? Which other composers?

OŠ: For our concert programmes we draw on three sources. First our own pieces, and then music by interesting young composers who are completely unknown to us personally, but whom we know of from composing courses, for example, and whose work appeals to us. The third source is music by well-known composers rarely performed in this country. For example, our concerts have included music by L. Berio, P. Boulez, G. Crumb, M. Feldman, G. Ligeti, some of the pieces performed for the first time in this country. For instance we were the first Czech group to play Feldman's *Piano and String Quartet* and Crumb's *Black Angels*.

What is the connecting link between you as composers? Would it be meaningful to think of you as having some kind of common programme or direction?

TP: The interface is simply in our joint concert activities. Otherwise we each have rather different musical interests, but that has a positive effect in the sense that the individual concerts don't follow the same stylistic line all the time. We try to make sure that every concert has a slightly different focus within the framework of what we all agree on.

OŠ: There are points of contact between any

two of us. You definitely couldn't say that there was any one of us who nothing in common with any of the others. But on the other hand we certainly don't have some common compositional programme we would all put our names to and commit ourselves to for future years. For example, for me and for Tomáš Pálka, Morton Feldman has been a strong influence: we've played him and we shall certainly go on playing him, and most of his pieces have never yet been performed here. Me and Jan, on the other hand, share a fondness for Holan.

JR: I like Xenakis, for example, and so I've persuaded the group to rehearse a piece of his for this year's season. Another composer who is important to me is Ligeti, and we've played him at our concerts as well. Roman Pallas likes G. Crumb, for instance, and so we've also played some of his music. So you see each of us has his preferences, and on the basis of these we try to put together concerts that work (the different pieces mustn't be at odds with each other) but are also diverse and don't consist of pieces that are all from one school of composition, which would be a mistake.

Do you see gaps in the work of other Czech contemporary music ensembles that you would like to fill?

OŠ: The gap we see is precisely in the way concerts are put together. We try to ensure that concerts are compact and coherent and have a certain line of development, that the

pieces played at a concert should have one or more common denominators, in subject, stylistic affinity and so on. We want our concerts to give the impression of a natural whole with a comprehensible dynamic structure, and not just a random display in which the pieces get in each other's way and ultimately none of them sound the way they deserve to sound.

Do you really believe that the structure of concerts, as you describe it, is quite so important? Is it really necessary that the pieces should somehow follow on from one another and make up a whole? Doesn't that approach involve a certain lack of respect for the individual pieces, and undermine their independence and right to be heard on their own terms?

OŠ: I think that's the whole point. Music of this kind is something that audiences often find remote, and if the listener is to have the chance to penetrate a little way further into its work and enjoy it properly, it is absolutely essential that we should keep on marinating him in a single substance for a reasonable length of time. Ultimately, pieces are always placed in some order or other at concerts and there is no reason not to try and turn the fact to advantage.

When you have these kinds of educational and even missionary tendencies, do you try in any way to project them



for example into your programme materials, perhaps in the form of a deeper and more informed commentary than is usual?

OŠ: We do try. When we played the *Piano and String Quartet*, the programme contained about a page of material not just on when and how the piece was written, but also with comments on what the listener should and should not expect from the music. This is music that expresses a state, and not a process, and the listener should know that and not keep waiting for some major change, for example. For *Black Angels* Prof. Václav Kučera has written us an outstanding commentary – information on the background of the piece, what it was reacting to, quotations, what it contains and so on. I think listeners will appreciate it.

Let us stay with your activities to date. I seem to remember that apart from normal concerts you have worked with Czech Radio.

TP: That was a concert broadcast live on Studio 1, in April, with the programme made up of our pieces and Feldman's *I Met Heine on the Rue Fürstenberg*. It was actually a kind of presentation of Konvergence to a wider audience, and included an interview on "who we are and what we want".

OŠ: Apart from that we have done four programmes with Wanda Dobrovská, where we played recordings of our pieces and talked about them. It's probably only a matter of

time before we do more radio work. The problem is that there are only two programmes that we could appear on (Studio 1 and Musica moderna), and of course we're not the only people who are interested in the chance.

What are you planning this year?

OŠ: We are concentrating mainly on our concert series in Prague. We're rehearsing for a total of four concerts, and one will present a spatial composition by members of the association and Gerald Resch, a recent graduate of the Vienna Academy who works somewhere between structuralism and spectral music. As far as more famous names are concerned, as we have said already we are rehearsing something by Xenakis, Roman has plucked up courage and is planning to rehearse Crumb's *Makrokosmos II*, and David Kalhous will be playing at least the first book of Ligeti's *Etudes*. We shall also be playing Feldman's *Viola in my Life* at the "spatial" concert I mentioned, Lutoslawski's *Grave*, Kopelent's *5th String Quartet* and P. Manoury's *Trio*.

TP: Otherwise, we shall be appearing in Bratislava, for example at the Melos-Étos festival organised by the students of composition there (apart from a piece by Jan Rybář we shall be playing string quartets by V. Janárčková and M. Kopelent) and we shall also be playing in Brno at the Exposition of New Music, where we shall probably

be repeating *Black Angels*, among other things.

Are there any young composers whose music you like to play but who are outside the association?

OŠ: We have played a quartet by Jana Kmitová, a piece by Marián Lejava, and an interesting composition by Katarína Rosenberger. The Pole Michal Pawelek is also very interesting, and now seems to be beginning to make a name for himself outside his own country. We shall definitely be returning to these names in the future and we are already preparing something along those lines for the coming season. We are also planning to work with the Austrian association Gegenklang, which was founded by the same G. Resch we mentioned before.

TP: We are also including music by the young composers that we meet on courses in Český Krumlov. This is an important source of contacts.

You are all able instrumentalists, but you still often need other performers. Are you trying to create a kind of circle of people who work with you on a closer basis?

OŠ: Without a doubt. For this year we have already formed an ensemble that will appear under the name Corona and consists of flute, clarinet, string quartet, percussion and piano. If we need other instruments we have a circle of friends who are willing to co-operate,

and we are also prepared to exploit the repertoire of friendly soloists, for example in last year's season the clarinetist Karel Dohnal appeared at one of our concerts and played Berio's *Sequenza IX*.

Finally, I'll try and provoke you a little. I don't seem to meet many students of composition at concerts of contemporary music (not even to speak of other music students). You might naively think that almost everyone would go to nearly everything... So who exactly is supposed to go to the concerts, when they don't even interest the processions?

JR: Anybody at all, and especially people outside the field.

OŠ: It naturally depends a great deal on resources for publicity – we more or less cope as far as the concerts are concerned with foundation money, but there isn't enough for any really large scale promotion. In any case, although we want to make the music we play accessible to the ordinary listener, there are limits. We would certainly never do any sort of variety show with dancers, floodlights and so on. In other words, we're not prepared to lure audiences with something that is actually irrelevant to the music.

(Note: R. Pallas was also present at the interview and generally murmured agreement with his colleagues)

Roman Pallas (1978)

Studied piano and composition at the conservatory in Teplice, and since 1999 has studied composition at HAMU (Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts) in the class of I. Loudová. He also works as the choirmaster of the Litoměřice girls' choir *Puellae cantantes*. His sources of inspiration include the minimalists, G. Crumb and F. Zappa.



Tomáš Pálka (1978)

After secondary school he studied composition at the Brno Conservatory under P. Novák, and he is currently studying at HAMU under M. Kopelent. He performs as a pianist in the orchestra of the National Theatre in Brno, and as violinist with the *Musica Figuralis* orchestra, and is also active in the Prague Philharmonic choir. He inclines to a static flow of musical events at lower dynamic levels.



Jan Rybář (1981)

He studied piano and composition (VI. Tichý) at the Jan Neruda High School in Prague, and is now a master's student at HAMU in M. Slavický's composition class. He is interested in the different types of modal technique and in putting them together with sonic qualities, and pays particular attention to composition for voice.



Ondřej Štochl (1975)

Studied viola at the Prague Conservatory, where he also started to study composition. In 2003 he graduated in composition at HAMU as a pupil of M. Kopelent. He now works as a teacher at a Basic Arts School in Hostivár and at the conservatory in Teplice. His musical idiom rests on an atonal vertical and emphasis on timbre, and his aim is the expression of a state through music – the illusion of musical timelessness.





krumlov composition classes



PETR BAKLA

In 1996 Marek Kopelent started the International Composition Classes at Český Krumlov, to remedy the fact that unlike all the neighbouring states the Czech Republic still had no courses of the kind. Since then the classes in Český Krumlov have been held every year with great interest from students at home and abroad. Students from more than twenty countries all over the world have now used the chance to meet colleagues and important figures of contemporary music, and to present and get reactions to their pieces outside the limit circle of their schools.

The classes last a week, with two foreign lecturers being invited each year and M. Kopelent being the permanent fixture. Over the eight years those taking part have included famous composers (I mention at random S. Gubajdulina, V. Globokar, P. Manoury, and M. Smolka) and performers, since for the first five years the classes included seminars for performers focused on contemporary music and accompanied by concerts (but then the money ran out...). This has meant appearances in Krumlov by K. Zlatníková (dulcimer), K. Doležal (clarinet), T. Ondříček (multipercussion), V. Globokar (bassoon) and the singer Sigune von Osten. What is more, each year one Czech composer of the middle generation comes to lecture on his or her work (most recently it was M. Marek).

This year the classes were attended by 13 students (6 from abroad). L. Thoresen and

H. Oehring were the visiting lecturers.

The Norwegian composer Lasse Thoresen (*1949) is highly versatile. His music has been successively characterised by Neo-Romanticism, micro-intervals and spectral approaches, and inspiration from North European folk music. His current work is a synthesis of all these elements (but also often uses a synthesiser). Out of the pieces by Thoresen that I had the chance to hear in Krumlov, I was particularly interested by Thus, composed specially for the New Band, which is an ensemble that keeps up the legacy of Harry Partch – its range of instruments makes it possible to hold a real micro-interval orgy. By the way, fans of aliquot registers will be intrigued to hear that one of Thoresen's basic folklore inspirations is a kind of equivalent to our Czech "halekání" (a form of yodelling), where the phrasing is formed by a twelfth interval raised by perhaps a quarter tone. As well as being a composer with a rich and varied output, Thoresen is also a teacher and theoretician who has created and elaborated a theory of the typology of musical objects and analytical methods based purely on the sound perception. "Composing doesn't interest me so much. My music is blood, tears, violence, hatred, death, love. But what does my music sound like? It is dark, morbid, operatic, dramatic, hard, schizophrenic, sick, androgynous, full of longing, realistic as a nightmare." No idyll or salon fiddling, then. Although provoking terror is one of the hardest effects to

Helmuth Oehring



Lasse Thoresen



achieve in music, the work of Helmuth Oehring (*1961) is genuinely remarkable, just like his life story. He was born to deaf and dumb parents and says that until he was twenty he was almost unaware of the existence of music. Then he encountered the New Music and set out on the path of the composer. The most striking element of his output is his use of the voices of the deaf and dumb, and he has even written several operas for deaf and dumb singers. Oehring's music does not pretend to be anything but German – it is as if it continues the tradition of extreme expressionism, but using quite different techniques. It is also interesting that in its atmosphere his music of the eighties is akin to the work of M. Chadima (you have rightly guessed that Oehring is from the former GDR). The profile of the students was very diverse. By some happy accident of fate each was orientated to a different style of fashion and both more progressive and more traditional movements were represented. This stylistic variety was very refreshing. (And another pleasant discovery was that students who want to join the classes need not present official proof of studying composition). It was, however,

a slight pity that this favourable constellation was not used, for example, as a basis for discussion of the problems of inclination to a certain style, dependence on particular models and the need (!) to find new paths. Let me make myself clear: I don't consider it to be a problem when one person's piece resembles another one or has borrowed a phrase from somewhere else. The problem is that nobody talks about it. It is as if this were not longer a valid theme, or an actually immoral theme. Of course, this is not a lacuna exclusive to the Krumlov courses, and the question of originality strikes me as being something of a taboo everywhere. What I don't know, however, is whether this is just a matter of laxity or whether it is the beginning of the end of modernity. Most appearances and discussions were, moreover, marked by a certain lack of interest in "kitchen" matters such as what a piece is made from and why, and "which compositional problem the composer has addressed". Perhaps it's no longer interesting, but what else can be sensibly talked about? Everyone would like to live in České Budějovice, but it's really pleasant in Český Krumlov. Especially this way at the end of the summer...

krumlov composition classes

pavel richter _____ richtig music



Indies records

With this double album of previously unreleased Pavel Richter home recordings, Indies is paying one of many publishing debts. After the break-up of the legendary band Švehlík in 1983, Richter (who is above all a guitarist and composer, but also plays keyboards, clarinet and electronic instruments and has an interesting singing voice), together with his fellow traveller Luboš Fidler and the folk-orientated musician Oldřich Janota, formed a group called High Fidelity (or Džafiri), combining folk with minimalist sound experiments, put in a brief appearance on the first Dunaj album (Iva Bittová and Dunaj, Panton 1988) and finally formed his own Richter Band. The total number of groups in which he has played and still plays is, however, much greater. The booklet of the present collections lists them in alphabetical order: Amalgam, Dunaj, Elektrobus, Guru Band, Janota-Fidler-Richter, Richter Band, Sanctus Musicus, Švehlík, and Wooden Toys. For completeness we might here add groups not represented on the double album, i.e. Stehlík, F. O. K., Chadima's group Fimfárum or the Forgotten Orchestra of the Land of Dreamers. And the title of the collection? It is also the name of Richter's private publishing company.

Since the double album is a selection, the following text will be more an enumeration than a review. One reservation I have is that four of the twenty-three tracks have already been released and so take up space that could have been given to previously unheard music, especially when Richter's "non-public" output (recently he has given only sporadic concerts and devoted most of his time to recording) is quite substantial. Specifically, my complaint relates to the inclusion of Elektrobus (Black Point 2001), Švehlík from the early Eighties (Black Point 2002) and its reincarnation from the

middle of the last decade (Rachot / Béhémot 1995) and Dunaj. The recording of Janota's song *Pleteš* [You are Knitting] has also already come out in a different version (Indies 2001), but the piece *Všechno se dá* [Everything is Possible] is a valuable document of the unfinished recording of the "posthumous" High Fidelity album in 1995.

The first CD of the double album ranges over the period from 1976 and 1995. Among the previously unpublished pieces on the CD we find two Švehlík songs to which time has not been kind, but the guitar solo from the Marek's Amalgam concert (19th May 1978 on the sixth of the Prague Jazz Days in the Lucerna) has stood the test of the years. The real surprise comes with the two recordings made using tape recorders and gramophones in the improvised conditions of a home studio. *Pro tebe, má láska* [For you, my love] interestingly exploits the possibilities of changing the speed of an LP of the eponymous poem by Prévert against the background of stage music for a Kolotoč theatre production (one of the members of the Prague Five) played backwards. *Do práce!* [To Work!] is a collage of tape recordings of various exhortations, which reacts with icy sarcasm to the socialist „cult of the worker", offering looped slogans like "Sweat out the ideas". The first line-up of the Richter Band (Richter, Antonín Hlávka, Štěpán Pečírka) uses undertones of world music and the interesting sound of what is known as a fiderophone, sets of jars struck with plastic strainers.

The second CD opens with the improvisation group Sanctus Musicus offering a reminder of its short life. Here Richter complements the "dreamer" Jaroslav Kořán (percussion), the wind and keyboards player Bharata Rajnošek and the bass guitarist Petr Knotek. The recording from the Delta club was made in 1996 and is essentially traditional rock improvisation with overtones of jazz. The

second version of the Richter Band (Richter, Rajnošek, Michal Kořán – sampler), which gave concerts only sporadically, is recalled with the already released track *Slow Train Coming* but since this comes from an album that was kept relatively dark ...*to, co lidi sytí...* [...that which satiates people...] (Richtig Music 1998), it is exempted from the complaint that it takes up space unnecessarily. The Guru Band (Richter, Hlávka, Rajnošek, Jana Koubová) offers two improvised pieces on the borders of ethno, alternative and rock, and the Wooden Toys cut (already minus the founder Jan Wood) is dominated by didgeridoo. But the high points are once again the "home" recordings. The tender songs for a theatre production based on motifs from Tolkien's *Hobbit* are a bewitching surprise. The almost folk *Hola, holal!* captivates us by the arrangement of several layers of vocals and the sound of the harpsichord (Rajnošek), while *Pavouci* [Spiders] is more eerie and provides a brilliant demonstration of Richter's potential as a singer. The sixteen-minute *Better Times* is a darkly ambient piece with slowed automatic percussion, while the concluding *Ra-ta-ta* with guest Anna Homler (who is said to have slept through most of the recording) is a joyful reminder of Richter's rock times with Rajnošek giving an appropriate period performance on saxophone.

One of the many excellent features of the handsomely presented double album is an interview conducted with the editor Jaroslav Riedel. If I am not mistaken, this is the first interview offering a retrospective overview of Richter's musical career. What about releasing some Richtig Music 2 in the same style?

PETR FERENC



hudbaby: hudbaby

[Musicrones]

Lotos

The Hudbaby [Musicrones] group of young female composers, formed six years ago at the JAMU [Janáček Academy of Performing Arts] in Brno, has published its first album. It contains pieces by four out of the five members of the group, two each from Kateřina Růžicková and Lenka Foltýnová, and one each from Barbara Škrlová and Markéta Dvořáková. The distribution of forces turns out to have been a good move. The compositions by Kateřina Růžicková and Lenka Foltýnová are among definitely the stronger. The most rewarding from the listener's perspective are probably the two pieces for percussion, all the more so because they are performed by the brilliant JAMU Percussion Ensemble. *Vedlejší příznaky* [Side Effects] by Lenka Foltýnová are charming and witty miniatures inspired by the short stories of Woody Allen, *Kolem nuly* [Around Zero] by Kateřina Růžicková is a more intellectual and worked through piece, but no less effective. The second Růžicková piece, *Romance pro křídlo* [Romance for a Wing], alternates calm and dreamy passages with the fast and robust. The tranquil introduction sounds like a dulcimer, an effect that can be partly attributed to a piano that was slightly "battered" and out of tune. But what sounds like a very effective accidental spell here can only disturb in the faster passages. As performed by Alice Rajnohová, the fast motoric passages are charged with energy, and what I found especially effective was the moment when a quasi-ragtime figure emerges from the motoric current and for a while we find ourselves on the borders of jazz. In Jiří Barta's interpretation, the concluding *Safranbolu* by Lenka Foltýnová is a study of

controlled emotion. Outwardly a tranquil meditation inspired by Foltýnová's strong attachment to Turkey, it evokes Near Eastern vocal melodics with its quarter tones, long phrases and scales, but this is definitely not a question of mere superficial imitation – more an intensively lived influence. The compositions by Barbara Škrlová and Markéta Dvořáková impressed me much less. Škrlová's *Let mouchy* [Flight of the Fly] for cello and piano was too rhapsodic for my taste and structurally unbalanced, while Dvořáková's *Nezelený muž* [Ungreen Man] for tenor and piano on a text by Hans Arp has a heavy-handed feel, despite the composer's declared efforts to play with it "in the spirit of a Dadaist vision". Even so, the CD can be regarded as a success. It presents the Hudbabas as comprehensively as possible, its internal arrangement of the pieces works well and the photographs of the Hudbabas from the atelier of Vasil Stanek as well as whole design of the booklet enhances the overall professional and representative impression made by album. In our environment this is no mean achievement.

TEREZA HAVELKOVÁ

taki ochi

Arta Records

The composer and ethnomusicologist Vlastislav Matoušek is one of those enterprising spirits who explores non-European music not just from the outside, but above all from the inside. He not only knows how to write about it with insight and erudition; he knows how to play it as well. Furthermore, it would be an error to think that this playing is just a matter of gaining technical understanding by mastering one instrument, especially when Matoušek's main non-European

instrument is the Japanese shakuhachi flute. As Matoušek himself writes in the booklet, until the mid-19th century the shakuhachi was not so much a musical instrument as a religious aid used by zen buddhist monks, who did not think of themselves as musicians. "The activity that might seem to the uninitiated like playing on the flute was in fact just another form of zen – meditation conducted by means of playing esoterically handed down special pieces, actually breathing and concentration exercises transformed into "music"." Matoušek's own play on the shakuhachi cannot be divorced from this spiritual dimension. *Taki ochi* – Waterfall, one of the old basic pieces for shakuhachi, and successively presented in three different versions, cannot be listened to "with your head in your hands", like Beethoven. It is more a question of "with your head in the clouds". The long drawn out phrases played with a single breath, the subtlety of intonation and sound colour, and the omnipresent impression of airiness and floating... all encourage a kind of perception closer to intuition than to reason, and nearer to open acceptance than to rational control. It is therefore not surprising that the album also contains a recording from the place where *Taki ochi* was originally born, the Asahidaki Waterfall. The recording came out of a spontaneous idea, the distant tones of Matoušek's shakuhachi mingle with the sound of water and birdsong, above all depicts the experience of a moment. Its value is symbolic, and not musical in the European sense of the word. The last piece on the CD, Matoušek's *V kruhu* [In a Circle], brings together Matoušek the composer and Matoušek the shakuhachi player. At this point it becomes clear that Matoušek's view of the world of traditional Japanese shakuhachi is the view of European, despite all "authenticity". It could not be otherwise.

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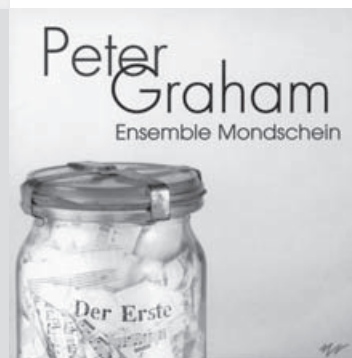
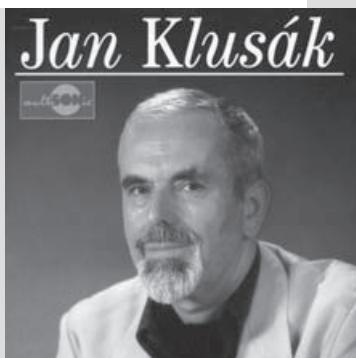
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