

# czech music

2 | 2004

quarterly magazine

**Rafael Kubelík**

Josef Adamík

Societas Incognitorum



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## editorial

Dear Readers,

and friends of Czech music. The face of this issue is Rafel Kubelík, one of the greatest personalities of Czech music history. We present here three texts concerning different aspects of his life and work.

We also look deeper into our history in an interview with Eduard Tomašík, leader of ensemble Societas Incognitorium. This ensemble revives forgotten gems of past.

We return to the contemporary music scene with reviews of festival Exposition of New Music and with reports about three new chamber operas.

In this issue you will find next of a series of supplements called Profiles, designed to mark the Year of Czech Music and introduce some of the composers whose jubilees fall in this year. We have chosen those who in our view had a major influence on the development of Czech music but who are not always so well known in the rest of the world. This time it is Miloslav Kabeláč, usually considered the founder of Czech national music in general and opera in particular. The second figure is Pavel Haas, who has died in concentration camp Terezín in 1944.

I believe you will find a great deal of interesting information in this issue and I look forward to our meeting at the next issue.

*Matěj Kratochvíl*  
MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL  
EDITOR

## Contents

2004

Page 2	Adam Michna of Otradovice and the Societas Incognitorium VLADIMÍR MAŇAS
Page 5	Rafael Kubelík: We Loved Our Giants JINDŘICH BÁLEK
Page 9	Rafael Kubelík: The Soul Cannot Be Mangled by Politics PETR KADLEC
Page 11	Rafel Kubelík: Homeland and World Art PETR KADLEC
Page 13	Josef Adamík: Composer in Disguise JAROSLAV ŠTASTNÝ
Page 15	17th Exposition of New Music PETR BAKLA
Page 18	How to Make Opera Today MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL
Page 20	Reviews

**Czech Music Information Centre,**  
Besední 3, 118 00 Praha 1,  
Czech Republic,  
fax: ++420 2 57317424  
phone: ++420 2 57312422  
e-mail: his@vol.cz  
<http://www.musica.cz>

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# adam michna of otradovice and the societas incognitorum

VLADIMÍR MAŇAS

**The Third Mass from the Sacra et Litaniae Collection is remarkable for its character – continuous variations over a repeating bass melody. The Societas Incognitorum ensemble have chosen an approach that is relatively unusual, but all the more interesting for that. Many will be surprised by the changes of tempo between the individual passages, and in the introduction to the recording this choice is justified in some detail as “the word of the performer”. Can you say something more about this mode of performance?**

Michna's mass is truly excellent music in terms of structure and inventiveness, and so I was all the more surprised to find it had never been recorded before. All I know is that some Czech ensembles have played it, but since I never heard any of their performances, I couldn't draw on any specific experience for my own approach. It is simply my own interpretation, and I stand by it. The choice of instrumental voices is also specific. The virginals, used in some places instead of a positive organ, rather change the character of the pieces, and so fulfils the aim of presenting the variety and colour possibilities of the Baroque basso. Instead of the normally used viola da gamba, however, a cello shares in the playing of the continuo, and in some passages we hear only the theorba and the positive is silent – all of this contributes to that effective mutability of colour. But these are still debatable steps, and deserve some commentary from the ensemble leader.

In some of his printed prefaces Heinrich Schütz says that ultimately it always depends on the capacities and possibilities of the cappelmeister. I don't offer the example as an alibi for my instrumentation, but to point out the huge variability that existed in early music and was integral to it. As far as

using the cello rather than the viola da gamba in the basso continuo is concerned, this relates to a problem much more complex than it might seem at first sight. Particularly in the 17th century, there was massive diversity in terminology, size, tuning and so forth in stringed instruments. However much performers today tend to use the gamba for accompaniment, – and it is often the right choice – it cannot be regarded as the only correct possibility. I use the cello more often because it has a more solid, sharp and concrete sound. Also I have been working with Ondřej Michal for a long time, his play suits me, and we're so used to each other that we know exactly what to expect from each other during productions. As far as the instrumental mutability of the general bass is concerned – leaving aside the period sources – in today's practice I have essentially encountered two opposite views. Some people claim that the instruments participating in the accompaniment should play from the beginning to then end (if the composer does not state it explicitly) while others think it better to treat the continuo more colourfully, depending on a given mood or emotion. My view is that there is no single practice to be followed in this aspect either. On the one hand you cannot invent a complicated accompaniment scheme at any price, but on the other there are places that are all but invitations to transform the colour of the continuo and so very much enliven the piece but also testify to the interpretative inventiveness of the cappelmeister.

**Why did you choose Italian pronunciation for your performance of Michna?**

There is no doubt that at the beginning of the 17th century Italian culture became hugely fashionable in Europe. It affected almost all branches of art with different

degrees of intensity in different places, and gripped most of the major centres surrounding Bohemia (Vienna, Salzburg, Munich and Desden) to such an extent that some Austrian or German statesmen corresponded with their subjects in Italian instead of their native language. We can only speculate on exactly how strong Italian fashion was in Bohemia itself at the time, but given that the influx of Italian musicians into Moravia goes back to the 1620s, it seems reasonable to assume that in Michna's day Italian culture was pretty well known (at least in music). Direct proofs on Italian pronunciation in the Bohemian Lands are absent, but equally there is no clear evidence of use of the hard pronunciation in Michna's Latin. I have several times heard the ridiculous argument that since Michna was a Czech composer, why not sing him in “our Latin”, and I would like to put things in proportion here by pointing out that there is no Czech pronunciation of Latin, but only the German pronunciation, which we adopted for historical reasons and which differs strongly from the original ancient Latin pronunciation. Frankly the whole dispute is more about personal taste, and no one will ever win it by making tedious theoretical historical arguments. For me Italian, just like Italian “soft” Latin is an ideal speech for singing bel canto in the true and original sense of the term. – but here we are getting to another issue that would deserve a separate article. If I have to choose between hard and soft pronunciation of Latin, I always choose Italian, because it is unquestionably more singable.

**Given the relatively small circle of performers of early music in this country it is inevitable that the instrumentalists in particular are involved in many projects at the same time, and so contrasts in the interpretative approach, or**



**perhaps more the sound quality of the individual ensembles are not necessarily so great. Nonetheless, every ensemble tries to give itself a special profile, to be different. What is the overall performance concept at Societas Incognitorum, if something of the kind can be defined at all?**

It's true that the basic core of skilled performers of early music is very small in this country. The reasons for this state of affairs, which have to do with the training system, are not things I want to talk about here. On the other hand it is usual in the world for the same musicians to be hired for projects under different "trade names" without the result being uniformity of sound or interpretation. The essential factor here is the personality of the cappelmeister; who gives a piece of music clear contours, projects his or her personality into it and stands by it. To have your own distinctive view, "to stick your neck out" – in my view these are the only things that prevent uniformity creeping in, and give music meaning altogether. This is



**Adam Michna of Otradovice is beyond doubt the best known of Czech baroque composers, but his Latin liturgical pieces are rarely heard in concert programmes and on recordings. A recently released CD from the Brno Ensemble Societas Incognitorum and the Schola Gregoriana Pragensis goes some way to filling the gap, and paying the debt to this most important protagonist of the Czech organ baroque and dedicated Marian from Jindřichův Hradec. Michna's third Ordinary of the Mass, Marian Vespers, and Loretan Litany are here augmented by gregorian chant. We talked about questions of performance and about the Societas Incognitorum itself with its artistic director Eduard Tomašík.**



also the basic principle behind the performance concept at Societas Incognitorum.

**Your choice of instrumentalists must definitely differ from choice of singers, since singers are the real core of Societas Incognitorum. How did you make the choice, and what training and education do the core members and the guests have?**

Let me just clarify and stress that the Societas Incognitorum is actually a voice ensemble, which invites instrumentalists to play with us. But I should also add that whether we are talking about players or singers, a certain circle of musicians has crystallised who suit me professionally and personally and who are used to playing together. They alternate in various combinations in SI projects, depending on the time-pressure on some of the members, and the fact that not every repertoire suits every performer. This mode of work requires great performance experience in each member (and here I should add that our ensemble is made up of musicians who have many years of experience with early music not just in this country but abroad as well) and also forces me to do a great deal of thinking and planning to come up with a clear interpretation approach. It should be added that this system of work is common abroad and has many advantages.

**How important is management for early music? Does its role differ here from the more usual production of classical music?**

It's safe to say that no type of culture can get by today without good management. The less commercial a genre is, like early music as a branch of serious music, the more necessary management is. We don't have to go

far for an example. A few years ago it took my breath away, in the positive sense of the phrase when I found information about a Schola Gregoriana Pragensis concert conducted by David Eben in the programme of a folk festival. This was a mark of excellent management, which also gives the young generation the chance to hear music that few people get to hear in the everyday course of events

**Tell us something about the recording environment, technical side and realisation. Did you encounter technical difficulties when you were working on the recording?**

I should just say several people have told me that the booklet lacks the necessary technical data on the production of the CD. But in fact all the information is present on the inner side of the inlay when you take the CD out. This information includes details of the exquisite picture that we used for the title page. I was told about this exquisite work by Miloš Stehlík; I would like to take the opportunity of thanking him here. Recordings that try to present particular liturgical forms in their integrity (the mass as a combination of proprium and ordinarium) are slowly beginning to appear in this country as they have abroad. The combination of figural ordinarium and choral proprium, and in some cases the alternation of the multi-part and choral parts of the Marian Vespers is nonetheless one of the main advantages of your recording. **It's hard to talk of "choice" of performers of Gregorian choral in this country, when Schola Gregoriana Pragensis has a bit of a monopoly here, but could you say something about your work with them?**

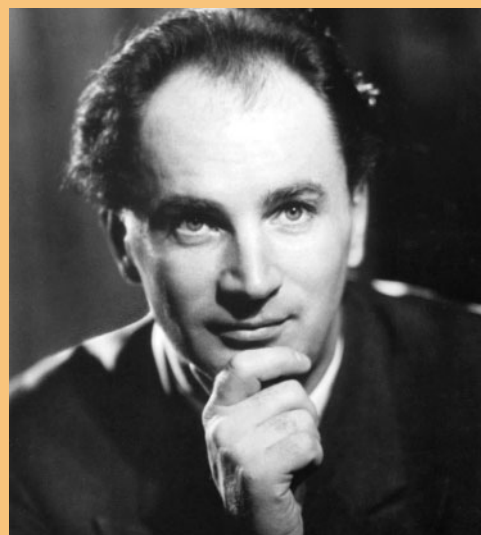
I wouldn't agree that the Schola Gregoriana is completely isolated in this country. I think

there are other good ensembles with the same interests here, but of course Schola Gregoriana is the most visible and the most famous. Currently they are the only professional ensemble that makes a living with this very specialised repertoire, and they are correspondingly careful to maintain the high level of their production. I can only say that that they have kept up this standard on our recording too, and that also applies to the communication between me and David Eben, which is direct, practical and based on a common attempt to get the best possible results from the project.

**Your new recording dedicated to Bohuslav Matěj Černohorský is due to come out in May. Do you plan to go on "mapping" Michna's work, which after all is among the most frequently performed Czech Baroque music?**

I'm not sure if Adam Michna is one of the most frequently performed composers in this country. If so, then only a small part of his output consisting of a few songs from the Bohemian Lute or the Christmas carol "He Wants to Sleep". And if we look at some of the programmes at Czech classical music festivals, we are unlikely to find any of Michna's liturgical works. The situation is the same on the recording market, where there are still gaps. I'm sure that if someone as original as Michna had lived in his time in England or France, there would already have been several recordings of his complete works long ago. I don't know if it's a matter of our Czech small-mindedness that Michna's liturgical music has yet to be fully appreciated even – it seems – in expert circles. I would like to pay this debt with more recordings of music by this native of Jindřichův Hradec.

JINDŘICH BÁLEK



# rafael kubelík - - we loved our giants



The typical story of a Czech musician is the story of a poor boy who overcomes his disadvantaged background and wins through to world recognition. Rafael Kubelík, however, knew the meaning of celebrity and a life of chateau luxury from childhood. His father, the violinist Jan Kubelík, was in his time as famous as Caruso or Destinnová. His mother came from a noble Hungarian family, and was notable mainly for her aristocratic whims and ability to run through Kubelík's large fees. It was at one of the chateaux that the family successively owned, in Býchory near Kolín, that Rafael was born, on the 29th of June 1914.





## rafael kubelík

### School of Life

He had five sisters, all of them musically gifted, but his talent was the most outstanding. He started to learn to play the piano and the violin, and from his earliest years his meetings with his father were in themselves an education in music, and a later source of wonderful memories. "My father's concept of violin play was not just to play different works, but to use different tones for each. When I was small and used to listen to him practising, my father sometimes scratched the notes, as you might put it, looking for a new tone, trying it out. He wanted to hear all

the different possibilities of the violin sound and identify the various styles. And suddenly emerging out of these scraped tones there would be some newly radiant phrase like an exquisite pearl. I was astounded, it was like a small miracle. And so I would ask him, "Why are you doing that? And he would say here you have to search like an alchemist for gold. He used to say that when you play Beethoven you must play Beethoven, and when you play Paganini you need to play Paganini, and if you play Mozart or Dvořák, Tchaikovsky or something modern, you

always have to feel a different soul. You have to find the style, you have to draw the bow differently, move the fingers somewhere else, vibrato isn't the only vibrato on the violin. There are various different vibratos that you need to practice, and that demands work. Only through work and continual concentration on these different variations and metamorphoses contained in the note can you get to an understanding of the soul of the violin. The soul of the violin is something like a human soul. That's the way my father brought me up."





*The Dove*. And then again I heard *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* sung in Czech at the National Theatre and also of course Wagner in German in the German theatre and Smetana in Czech in the Czech theatre. It was such a harmony so taken for granted that I simply couldn't imagine anything else. It was the same in cultural life as a whole."

#### **In front of an Orchestra for the First Time**

In conducting he was not a pupil of Václav Talich, but he was to a considerable extent a pupil of Talich's Czech Philharmonic. He made his debut with the orchestra while still under the age of twenty on the 24th of January 1934. The following year he went on a tour of America with his father, accompanying him on the piano and several times conducting American orchestras. In September 1936 he toured Bohemia with the Czech Philharmonic, playing a different major programme with it on ten successive days. He rapidly built up his repertoire. The philharmonic was used to hard work, supported the young conductor in every way and made no trouble for him. When he successfully stood in for Talich on a tour of England, Scotland and Wales in the autumn of 1937

(twenty concerts within a single month), there was not doubt of his capacities. Kubelík himself, however, suffered a great deal of self-doubt and often felt that he still knew nothing. With his openness, the friendly working atmosphere he knew how to generate, and also his pure moral principles, however, he coped very well with his apprenticeship years. Later he recalled that "When Erich Kleiber came to Prague one time, he asked me to prepare Mahler's *Seventh Symphony* with the orchestra at one rehearsal for him. I was then twenty-three, and thought why not, and was sure it would work. I started and in the very first phrase I was gripped by terrible depression at the idea that actually I didn't know anything. I didn't know how to do it, I had absolutely no idea what to do with the baton. I was so desperate that I told the orchestra they could leave. I can't do anything, I would ruin it all, I just don't know how to do it. I went home and confessed everything to Kleiber. He smiled and said, my dear boy, you forgot to breathe. And then I understood, a whole book could be written about that. Every rehearsal and every concert was a lesson to me, I observed myself as in a mirror, I checked myself, I thought about every gesture. At every error in the orchestra

In 1929–1933 he studied composition, violin and conducting at the Prague Conservatory. He took little notice of the journalistic disputes and the time and saw the cultural life of the First Republic as one great spiritual community in a democratic atmosphere. „In the thirties there was an atmosphere of strong musical unity at the Prague Conservatory. We lived Czech, Slavonic, German, Italian and also French culture and our professors and students were a genuine family who were striving together to achieve something new. We wanted something new because our republic was at that time new and young too, we were a young and fresh-minded nation. It was a time of co-existence between Czechs and Germans. I went to the German theatre and heard Czech operas there, which were also sung in German, for example Kleiber's production of Smetana's



I looked first into myself. Only when I had ruled out a mistake of my own by precise analysis, did I correct the orchestra."

### Decisive Moments

He lived through the first years of the war as the principal conductor of the Janáček Opera at the Land Theatre. This brought him completely new experience as an opera director and he developed a wide repertoire (from *The Bartered Bride* to *The Magic Flute* to the first Czech production of Berlioz's *The Trojans*) – up to the closure of the theatre in 1941. The tours that Jan Kubelík organised in 1939 and 1940 were also a major expression of national feelings. This was a cycle of concerts involving ten evenings of ten different programmes, about thirty violin concertos with the orchestra, and at each concert seven or eight encores, without a single piece being played more than once. It was in fact a summing up of his own life's work, and Rafael accompanied his father, this time as conductor.

At the beginning of 1940, however, Rafael became seriously ill with meningitis and was unable to work for five months. The hardest moment came at the end of the year, when not long after his own recovery his father died, on the 5th of December 1940. Once again he had to find his true self, but at the same time he knew well that his father lived on within him. It is rare for the son of a genius to be a figure of the same order, but an exceptional combination of love, musical background, inspiration and strong moral principles gradually came to fruition. The great majority of the works that he later played with world orchestras were pieces he had already played with the Czech Philharmonic. When in 1941 he became its principal conductor, it was in a very difficult situation. It was not allowed to play music by Jewish composers, or, as time went by, by Russian, English or French composers. Of the German composers, however, Kubelík usually kept to Mozart and Beethoven, avoiding the officially promoted Wagner as much as possible. And as far as Czech music was concerned, what was amazing was how much the Nazi censors missed. Programmes of Czech music made up more than half Kubelík's repertoire. It is well known that in wartime art is experienced much more deeply. And that which ripened in the war years grew wings when the war was over.

### Wings of Freedom

O. F. Korte remembers his way of conducting in the following terms. „In his appearance on the podium he was a little like the embodiment of the old prototype of romantic artist. And at dramatic orchestral climaxes he lived up to his biblical name, resembling a wrathful angel on a great canvas or the ceiling allegories of the baroque masters." At the end of May 1945 he conducted the first concert in the liberated country, and on the 21st of May he conducted *My Homeland* on Old Town square – where he was to conduct it again 45 years later on the day of the first free elections after the fall of communism. In the autumn of 1945 he presented Shostakovich's *Leningrad Symphony* and a series of works by composers banned during the war. These included Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* and a representative range of Russian music and new French music. He conducted dozens of concerts for all kinds of occasions, often accompanying his wife, the violinist Ludmila Bertlová. He successfully toured France and Poland with the philharmonic, and in 1947 conducted in Australia, England and Holland. He presented a great many new interpretations of works of Czech music, and Yehudi Menuhin, Pierre Fournier and others performed under his baton. This was just a celebration of freedom, but a re-forging of the international connections and contexts of Czech musical life, and its highest symbol was the newly established Prague Spring festival, which Kubelík co-founded and in most cases opened and closed. Each time with a different concert.

The festival of 1948, which Kubelík opened and closed in the courtyard of Prague castle with Dvořák's oratorio, *Saint Ludmila*, was of special significance. Given that it took place after the communist take-over and the com-

poser had been considering emigration since the beginning of the year, it can be regarded as Kubelík's farewell to his country. In fact his very last appearance with the Czech Philharmonic was a performance of *My Homeland* on the 5th of July 1948 in the Lucerna as part of the All Sokol Congress. Once again, let us quote O. F. Korte: "...In the context of the post-war years I never stop seeing Rafael Kubelík as a stimulating, youthful and poetic symbol of soaring flight, freedom and imagination, courage and also warmth and tolerance. As such he became the absolute darling and pride of Prague, and in the right sense of the word a first-class cultural representative of his country." He was to remain so even in the years when his name was taboo in his native land.

In relation to emigrants, the communist regime had a fondness for misusing a quote from a well-known poem by Viktor Dyk, in which the Fatherland addresses its son and uses the harsh words "If you leave me, I shall not perish – If you leave me, you shall perish." We can find this quotation applied to Rafael Kubelík in Holzkecht's History of the Czech Philharmonic, but we can counter it with the famous words of the composer himself, "I left my country in order not to have to leave my people," a remark that the years proved true. In emigration, he lost nothing that he had absorbed in his youth, and if we may paraphrase Dyk's poem, that which often almost perished in his country, never perished in him. At the time when he emigrated the thirty-four-year-old conductor already possessed enough rich experience to fill a lifetime. He carried in himself the imprint of the best that Czech culture had created in the first half of the 20th century and for the rest of his life he sought out ways of developing and fulfilling it.





# Musicians announce boycott

Thirty-four of the world's leading musicians yesterday protested against the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

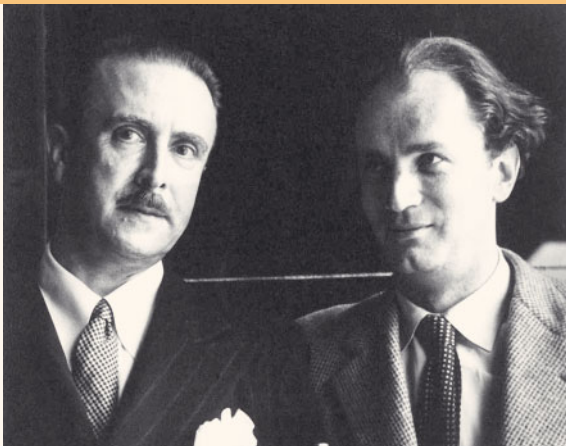
The protest read: "The occupation of the Republic by the five nations of the Warsaw Pact is a violent contradiction of the humanitarian ideals we have as artists.

"Until all foreign soldiers have withdrawn from Czechoslovakian territory and the legal government of the C.S.S.R. is free to govern again, it is impossible for us to keep artistic relations with these five nations and Czechoslovakia."

It was signed by Claudio Abbado, Claudio Arrau, Daniel Barenboim, Clifford Curzon, Dean Dixon, Rudolf Firkušný, Marius Flothuis, Andor Foldes, Wolfgang Fortner, Pierre Fournier, Carlo-Maria Giulini, Friedrich Gulda, Bernard Haitink, Eugene Jochum, Paul Kletzki, Dr. Otto Klemperer, Rafael Kubelik, Ferdinand Leitner, Nikita Magaloff, Enrico Mainardi, Frank Martin.

Jean Martinon, Yehudi Menuhin, Nathan Milstein, Charles Munch, Jacqueline Du Pré, Fritz Rieger, Mario Rossi, Artur Schnabel, Wolfgang von Schneiderhan, Georg Solti, Isaac Stern, Igor Stravinsky, and Sir William Walton.

*The Times*  
27.8.1968.



## rafael kubelík - - the soul cannot be manacled by politics

PETR KADLEC



## —Letters—

### Appeal to Brezhnev

*(The following letter was sent to Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, on July 20. No reply has been received.)*

Our many colleagues the world over beg you to join us in urging the Czechoslovakian government to allow Vaclav Havel and his friends, initiators of Charter 77, who are now in prison and awaiting trial by jury, to lead their lives in peace and security. We respect your long and patient work for peace and feel that you share with us the conviction that human hearts are as important as weapons. The oppression of honorable people striving to uphold provisions entered into solemnly in the Helsinki treaty can only destroy the admirable efforts symbolized by the SALT negotiations. Conversely, nothing would gain the world's confidence and trust as much as your intercession on behalf of the people of Charter 77. May we therefore count on your invaluable and immediate support?

RAFAEL KUBELÍK.

YEHUDI MENUHIN.

Lausanne, Switzerland.

*Herald  
Tribune  
7. Aug. 1979*

### The Soul Cannot be Manacled by Politics

It's a long time since people called writers the conscience of the nation, and probably no one ever talked about musicians in this way. It is therefore all the rarer to meet a musician – one of the most remarkable this country has ever produced – for whom the voice of conscience has been more important than anything else. This is abundantly clear from the many decisions and actions of Rafael Kubelík, and it is puzzling how little we still know about them. After February 1948 Kubelík was not the only one to realise that what was waiting for the country was essentially the same as what it had endured under Nazi occupation. More tyranny, this time "under the baton" of Czechs themselves, was unacceptable to him. "I left so as not to have to collaborate in the destruction of our culture and humanity." The communists were continuing where the Nazis had left off.

### The First Years of Exile

The communists were well aware that they were losing a famous cultural figure who could have helped to legitimise the Czechoslovak "people's democratic" regime, and so it is no surprise that they tried repeatedly to lure Kubelík back home – using the Czech Philharmonic and some other musicians. In 1956 Kubelík replied to one such invitation with a telegram that could have left no one in any doubt of his views: "I regret that I cannot accept your invitation to conduct in Prague while it is still necessary to accompany such an invitation with the assurance that I shall naturally be allowed to return freely to London. When the Prague government grants this normal right to every Czechoslovak and when the syndicate of performing artists and the syndicate of composers revise their current position on freedom of artistic expression, as I sincerely hope they will, I shall be happy to come and there is nothing to which I would look forward more than to seeing you again, dear friends." For the Viennese Free Press he added, "Why on earth hasn't every respectable Czechoslovak the right to travel about the world freely, as was always the case in the past? Did anyone promise Smetana, Dvořák or my father and Ema Destinn that they would be able to go home? Is this supposed to be a privilege for just a few of the elect? I don't want to be one of those."

### In Defence of Freedom

Kubelík keenly watched the thaw of the later sixties in the arts and politics and was "in agreement and solidarity" with Dubček's reform course in 1968. His hopes of visiting or even returning home rose, but August 1968 swept them away. Kubelík reacted quite unequivocally. "The occupation of the republic by five states of the Warsaw Pact is a violent contradiction of the humanitarian ideals we have as artists. Until all foreign soldiers have withdrawn from Czechoslovakian territory and the legal government of the CSSR is free to govern again, it is impossible for us to keep artistic relations with these five nations and with Czechoslovakia." More than a hundred artists, the real world elite, joined the protests and boycott initiated by Kubelík, and the world's press devoted a great deal of attention to the initiative. A year later the Czech Philharmonic was touring in Switzerland and Kubelík held a special evening party for its members in his house. Every player received a commemorative medal as Kubelík's protest against the August invasion. On one side the medals had a picture of a woman with a linden tree growing up at her foot. The woman is being struck down to her knees by five bayonets (representing the five countries that had attacked Czechoslovakia), and between them is a serpent as a symbol of treachery; in the upper part are the dates "1918 and 21. 8. 1968". On the other side of the medal is the state emblem and the inscription. "Truth will prevail". It is no surprise that immediately after their departure the philharmonic musicians had to give the presents from Kubelík to the orchestra authorities. (The violinist Jaroslav Horák managed to smuggle one through). In 1979 Kubelík took a similarly outspoken line and again attracted exceptional attention from the international press. From the end of May 10 members of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted (VONS) made up of Charter 77 signatories had been imprisoned on remand, accused of subversion of the republic. Rafael Kubelík and Yehudi Menuhin sent an open letter to the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in July 1979, demanding their release. "We respect your long and patient work for peace and feel that you share with us the conviction that human hearts are as important as weapons. The oppression of honourable people (...) can only destroy the admirable efforts symbolised by the SALT negotiations (author's note: negotiations between the USA and the USSR on nuclear arms limitation, which started in 1969; the first treaty was signed in 1972 by Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev, and the second in 1979 by Jimmy Carter and Brezhnev). Conversely, nothing would gain the world's confidence and trust as much as your intercession on behalf of the people of Charter 77. May we

therefore count on your invaluable and immediate support?" There was, however, no answer and no intervention, and six members of VONS including Václav Havel were finally convicted in October 1979. The letter's goal was not achieved, but solidarity with the Czechoslovak defenders of liberty undoubtedly had its own importance, like all international publicity for the Czechoslovak dissident movement.

### Return Home

Kubelík whole-heartedly shared in the joy at the fall of the totalitarian regime and arrival of freedom. He knew that the change of regime was important, but that the inner transformation of each person was even more important. "Freedom also consists in a

disciplined attitude to questions of ethics. It's not enough just to proclaim it on banners. It has to be internal." He foresaw one of the greatest pitfalls waiting for the emergent democracy, and one that remains a problem today, telling the Literary News in one of his first interviews that what is most essential is "to put all that is positive in the service of the shared idea, not to create a chaos of mutually destructive ideas, not to fragment the flowing current of ideas and forces. To look for the unifying current of the connecting idea that can multiply the energy invested. And in this way also to find the un-enforced democratic method that has almost been forgotten here."

Kubelík's political commitment has a more general philosophical grounding that he

expressed in a programme broadcast by Radio Free Europe at the beginning of the 1970s. "I regard myself as a member of the great artistic family of humanity, which for two thousand years has been fighting for freedom of soul and mind on humanist-Christian foundations. No artist may betray this family, but must breathe and live for it. The vocation of every artist is to develop the spirit freely according to his own ideas, openly to express the credo of his own beliefs and to act in accordance with his own conscience."



# rafael kubelík - - homeland and world art

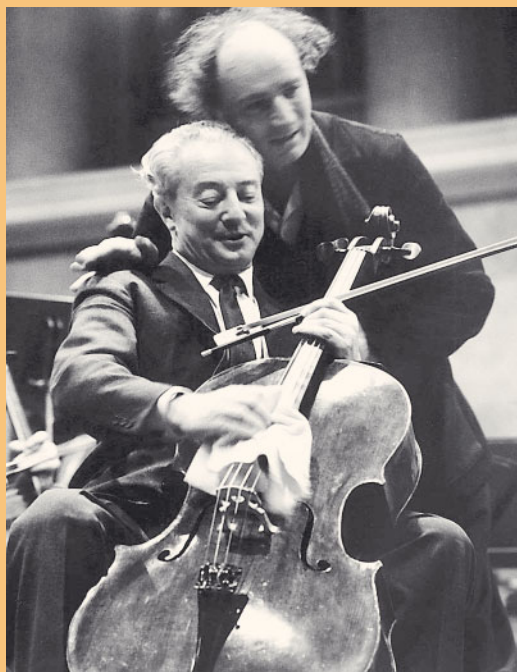
PETR KADLEC

**Rafael Kubelík most certainly isn't a "Swiss conductor of Czech origin", as the Grove Music Encyclopaedia describes him. He has always been a passionate and genuine patriot, and as the conductor Daniel Barenboim perceptively put it, "through his beloved Smetana and Dvořák he has always been more connected with his homeland than many people who were living in the Czechoslovakia of the time". Of course artistic emigration has been a**

### Chicago Grateful and Ungrateful

In the summer of 1948 he went with his wife and small son Martin to the Edinburgh Festival to conduct *Don Giovanni* and did not go back. Helped in the initial stages by Sir Adrian Boult, Kubelík started to direct leading English orchestras and in 1950 accepted an invitation to become chief conductor of the orchestra in Chicago.

He was to stay only three seasons, however, because the conservative local public had little appreciation for efforts to present original American composers and 20th-century music. Concert programmes that would have been considered normal in Prague often caused conflicts in America. Many people acknowledged and respected Kubelík, but the prejudiced music critics finally got what they wanted. Over the three seasons, however, the young Kubelík had studied more than sixty new pieces with the orchestra, including *Má vlast* [My Homeland]. His Chicago premieres included *Taras Bulba* and Dvořák's *Piano Concerto*, but also Mahler, Brahms and Bruckner. After his departure in 1953 the view of his time as



**part of Czech history from the times of the baroque and classicism. Many artists used to leave for economic reasons, to find better material conditions for the development of their gifts, but as the 20th century has shown, there can be other reasons for emigration.**

conductor in Chicago changed somewhat, and he came to be seen as the first important conductor to have raised the orchestra's profile after the uncertain war years and to have provided it with a stable repertoire. He often returned to Chicago as guest conductor.

### A Foreigner in Covent Garden

Following his return to England he drew public attention with his production of Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* at Sadler's Wells, and shortly afterwards in 1955 he was appointed musical director of Covent Garden. Just as in Brno, here too he presented a successful production of *The Bartered Bride* and tried to build up the broadest possible core repertoire. For example he presented Verdi's *Othello*, Janáček's *Jenufa* and Berlioz's *The Trojans*.

His departure was partly the result of a personal attack launched by Sir Thomas Beecham. Beecham, a conductor who in his youth had embraced the same principles as Kubelík and done so much for English music before the war, had turned into an intolerant and conceited old man. He wrote a chauvinist piece for a British newspaper criticising the Covent Garden management for [a]ppointing foreigners to the post of musical director "in defiance of all common sense, even though they had plenty of opportunities to choose some capable Englishman." The management didn't take Beecham's absurd attack particularly seriously – later they appointed Georg Solti to the same post – but the affair confirmed Kubelík in his decision to resign. In addition he felt that the London public was mainly interested in big soloist names, while he wanted to build up a stable domestic company. In his 1957/58 season, which was his last, his productions included *Boris Godunov*. He never remained in any position, however prestigious, if he felt a lack of readiness and goodwill around him. His interpretations of *Katya Kabanova* and *Jenufa* won Janáček a proper reputation as an operatic composer on the international scene. His other English premiere, Berlioz's *The Trojans*, went down in music history as an evening to remember. He had a particularly close relationship with this opera, perhaps because its grand musical dramatic conception appealed to him, and perhaps also because of Virgil's story of Aeneas, the Trojan hero forced by the voice of conscience and his ancestors to leave what he most loved. Kubelík was later the first to present *The Trojans* at La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera.

### Guest Conductor

In Czechoslovakia meanwhile, official publications commented that "with only small and insignificant exceptions we shall find nothing about the genuine contradictions of American in the music of Bohuslav Martinů, but we shall also find nothing reflecting the great fight that our people were fighting at the time... he has nothing to say to us" In the same period Kubelík got to know the composer and on the 26th of August 1956 he premiered one of Martinů's best-known pieces, *The Frescos of Piero della Francesca* at the Salzburg Festival.

Kubelík wrote to the composer, "I don't know if you listened on the radio to the Salzburg concert – and if so, if you were satisfied with the performance, but one thing I am sure of, and that is that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was rapturous about "Frescos". The score is bewitchingly transparent, expressive and sounds refined. In short – a delicious piece from all points of view! I thank you from my heart and remember you in loyal friendship! Your old friend as always Rafael."

Apart from his permanent engagements Kubelík played and recorded in England with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He often gave concerts with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and with the Israeli Philharmonic. He worked less often with the Berlin Philharmonic than with the Vienna Philharmonic but still made several top recordings with it, including a complete set of all nine Dvořák symphonies. In America he was guest conductor not just with the Chicago Philharmonic, but with the New York, Cleveland and Boston symphony orchestras. He made a unique series of recordings, particularly of Czech music, to which he always returned. He was a pioneer and above all a brilliant interpreter of the works of Gustav Mahler. He recorded the nine Beethoven symphonies symbolically with nine different orchestras.

### In Munich Almost as at Home

In 1960 when he first conducted the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, his appearance was very favourably received and when he received an offer to become its principal conductor he didn't hesitate for long. "I fell in love with the sound of this orchestra", he said. He settled permanently in Switzerland on the banks of the Vierwaldstaatter Lake in the village of Kastanienbaum near Luzerne. His first wife died, and in 1963 he remarried, this time the Australian soprano Elsie Morison. He headed the Bavarian Radio Orchestra from 1961. Great sensitivity to civil political matters continued to characterise Kubelík during his period in Munich. When a new law limited some of the powers of the public media corporations was passed in 1972, he refused to prolong his contract in protest, and for a year was officially only a guest conductor. The law was amended a year later partly as a result of his "civic initiative". He remained principal conductor until 1979, and a permanent guest conductor up to 1985. Under his leadership the orchestra had unique status in Munich musical life. "With Kubelík every concert was an event," one of the players recalls, and the critics shared his opinion. "In Munich at the moment we have a conductor that the whole world might envy," one of them wrote.

### Reform of the Metropolitan Opera?

In the 1973/74 season, Rafael Kubelík became (historically the first) musical director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He managed to get Berlioz's *The Trojans* into the repertoire and to present Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. Kubelík had been invited to this celebrated institution by the director and new-

ly appointed general manager Goran Gentel. Unlike his predecessor Rudolf Bing, Gentel decided to name a permanent music director (previously the Met had always just made one-off contracts with conductors as with singers). Gentel's arrival was thought to herald a certain democratisation, modernisation of the repertoire and productions that would bring opera closer to drama. Kubelík shared these ideas and accepted the offer, but the tragic death of Gentel and consequent failure of the reform policy meant that after a few months he resigned on the grounds that the financial situation prevented him from fulfilling the ideas with which he had come to the Met. He was not a man of compromises and took the clear view that the opera should be more than just a shop window for primadonnas. A new management was appointed and a new music director – James Levine, who heads the opera house to this day.

### In the Mirror of Recordings

The following years in Munich saw Kubelík making many of his best gramophone recordings. The first and still much acclaimed complete set of Mahler's symphonies, Weber's *Oberon* with Brigit Nilsson and Plácido Domingo, a series of recordings with Dietrich-Fischer Dieskau and the elite of German singers. All the symphonic poems of Dvořák, Janáček's symphonic works and the *Glagolitic Mass*, and the fourth complete recording of *My Homeland*. He succeeded marvellously in humanising Wagner and warming up Brahms. It will perhaps surprise some that he was also a brilliant Mozart conductor. A beautiful combination of musicality and intelligence, purity of feeling for style and for dramatic structure, make his recordings of Mozart's last symphonies a unique achievement. In fact Kubelík did not much enjoy studio recordings. Live concerts were always the high point of his work and the recordings of the Munich concerts are among the best in his discography.

What all the recordings have in common is the complete absence of the calculated; there is either music there, or it is not – there are no "ifs" and "buts" about them. In music things cannot be done by halves. Kubelík had something of the romantic temperament of artists a generation older, and it is clear that he truly embraced the ideals he inherited from his father. "The previous world, which my father knew, I took over from him in music. At that time his world contained a measure of direct humanity that entered musical creation in the form of warmth and tradition, both springing from times in which a humanist spirit still existed. I have always felt that we were children of a time that had one common denominator: a strong internal concept, harmony and rhythm. And this rhythm and this harmony took pleasure in itself in art, in music."

### Crowning Good Fortune

At the beginning of July 1985 Kubelík collapsed during a performance of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony and decided to retire from conducting, but events in Prague in 1989 quite literally



restored him to life. he forgot about his serious health problems and within a few months had got back to his former fitness and energy. The news that he could once more conduct the Czech Philharmonic and open the 1990 Prague Spring Festival acted on him like a miraculous medicine. It was another beautiful example of the way his entire life was connected with his homeland.

His reunion with the Czech Philharmonic in the post-Velvet Revolution period was an experience close to religious ecstasy for him. He regarded Václav Havel, for whose release from prison he had agitated while still in exile, as God's blessing on the country. We can also consider both his legendary performances of *My Homeland* in May 1990 as a gifts from God, gifts creating obligations. By no means a matter of the euphoria of the moment, they were a great confirmation of the values in which he had been brought up and which he had defended all his life.

In 1945 he had conducted a "concert of thanksgiving" on Old Town Square, and everyone had awaited the new liberty with hope. In 1990 he conducted a "concert of mutual understanding" in the same square, as the first estimates of the election results (a little more optimistic than the final results) began to circulate among the people: "Civic Forum has over fifty, and the communists less than ten". After 1945, freedom held out for only three years. And it is up to us to ensure that the freedom endures much longer after 1990. Kubelík conducted his last concert, the *New World Symphony* in the Smetana Hall on the 11th of October 1991. He died in Lucerne on the 11th of August 1996.

### What We Owe Our Legends.

Kubelík's performance of *My Homeland* from the Prague Spring of 1990 will one day be considered as historic and momentous as Ema Destinn's appearance in the role of Libuše not long after the founding of the republic. It should, however, be remembered that the importance of these artists is a matter of their lifelong careers on world stages. To this day there is not a single monograph on Kubelík, and to this day most of us have no idea how much this conductor has meant for Czech art. We have plenty of good musicians, but only a few artists of Kubelík's stature. His biblical name of the archangel Rafael is appropriate in a different sense – he was not afraid of moral seriousness and strong unambiguous words. And throughout his life he fulfilled these words: "I believe that music and art have their justification only if they try to ennoble man. Without this ethical justification art is no more than a clever game". Or on another occasion, "Nobody is free, nobody in the world, if he does not have a clear conscience." It is not then a question of how to return Rafael Kubelík to Czech culture to the greatest extent possible, but above all of how to bring Czech culture closer to Kubelík's values.

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## Josef Adamík – composer in disguise

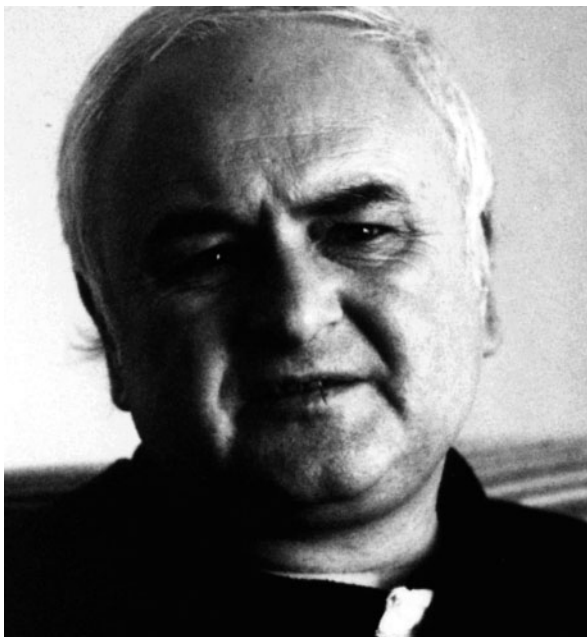
JAROSLAV ŠŤASTNÝ

**Few of the inhabitants of Valašské Klobouky have any inkling that they have a great Czech symphonic composer living among them. And something of the kind wouldn't even occur to members of our cultural community. After all, every beginner knows that the first condition for being an artist is to be in Prague....**

But concealed under the mask of a jovial village uncle, a teacher at a music school, is one of the most interesting of Czech composers. Anyone who wants to study Czech music of the seventies and eighties will inevitably encounter his name, and will definitely be astounded at his work, highly individual in the context of the period, and the reflection of exceptional talent.

Josef Adamík (1947) was one of the most gifted of Miloslav Ištvan's students. After graduating from JAMU (the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno) he took himself off to Valašské Klobouky, where he still works today as a teacher at an arts-orientated basic school. Here on the sidelines he created several remarkable pieces that always met with a favourable response from the public and performers – Josef Adamík always had a great understanding of the musician's soul and the instruments for which he was writing (At one of the Brno autumn festivals in the later seventies his piece *Nebeské pastviny* [Heavenly Pastures], was included at the request of the orchestra!). He was much less interested or talented, however, when it came to the intrigues necessary for building a career, and in any case his voluntary isolation made this difficult even had it been in his character.

He kept up his connection with JAMU with postgraduate studies, when he wrote several unusual pieces: *Stínování* [Shadowing] for flute, 4 violins and piano (1975), *Vox humana* for bassoon and piano (1975), *Song* for mixed choir, oboe, trombone and percussion on a text by Walt Whitman (1975–76), a single experiment in the field of electro-acoustic music *Z tajemné laboratoře v Bílých Karpatech* [From the Secret Laboratory in the White Carpathians] (1977–79) and most notable the extraordinarily ambitious *Wind Quintet with Children's Toys* (1977–79), in which he explored the idea of alternative ensembles and created several equal versions: The complete versions for instruments and children's toys, the version for instruments, the version for toys and solo versions for the different instruments (the five movement *Sonatina for solo flute*, *Four Inventions* for oboe, the three-movement *Zátiší s klarinetem* [Still Life with Clarinet], *Two Etudes* for bassoon and *Chorale* for french horn). When composing these pieces the composer refused the usual acceptance of chance results and chose to work through all the variations in detail, but the performers are allowed to put together their own order of movements marked only by graphic symbols.



During this demanding project Adamík already started to suffer from the health problems that in the end became a source of inspiration for his *2nd Symphony* (1983), an imposing work in which independently of outside influence (he had almost no up-to-date information on international trends) he arrived at his own version of postmodernism. Here an archaistic "Beethoven-Schubertesque" texture gradually disintegrates under the force of its own logic. The composer himself characterised the works as a "musical allegory of human life marked by an excessively high dose of suffering".

This was followed by the more objectively conceived 3rd Symphony and the fantasy *Tance labilní a nepravděpodobné* [Dances Unstable and Improbable] (1983-84) for chamber orchestra, the only Adamík piece to have been released on an official recording (AGON, Arta Records F1 0018-2111, 1991). We should also mention at least the *Nonet* (1981), to which Petr Kofroň devoted the first of his *Třináctí analýz* [Thirteen Analyses] (H+H, Jinačovice 1993).

During 1985 Adamík's health problems led him to decide to give up composing. Nor did a one-year episode of teaching at the Kroměříž Conservatory bring any change for the better; he found more understanding in the school environment, but no proper accommodation. In the end he went back to Valašské Klobouky, where he was gradually overwhelmed by the limited conditions and growing problems at his work place. His unconventional, hypersensitive nature met with hostile attitudes in his surroundings. Around 1998 the crisis culminated in a sense of threat. At least a temporary return to composing brought some relief. In 1999 he wrote two monumental cycles: the piano *Vzpomínky na lepší časy* [Memories of Better Times] and *Il ritorno* for clarinet and

piano. In both cases these were collections of many smaller pieces in archaicising mood. The undertones of historic music, which have always accompanied Adamík's work, are here uncovered and stripped of all modernist elements. These pieces are astounding for the radical simplification of techniques. Adamík seems to be giving up not only modern forms of expression, but the whole of modern civilisation. His new work became an experiment in the true sense of the word: what would a man of today achieve if he were thrown four centuries back, and given only the means of expression known around 1600? It is the music of a world without flickering screens, exhaust fumes, third-party insurance and the ever present ominous whirring of electric appliances. In both these long cycles we sense the testimony of a human being in an extreme situation. They are both tragic and full of poetry. A music melancholic and consoling, containing both extreme simplicity and instrumental refinement. It is a voice that comes from the distance and from the deep.

Josef Adamík is still teaching in Valašské Klobouky. In recent years his material circumstances have become even more straitened. He no longer has much strength left for systematic composing. His case is a dumb reproach to a society more interested in advertising, scandals, stupidities and noise than in genuine talent.

Taking a look at the programme of Expositions of past years, I was once again astounded by its almost chaotic diversity. Is it a case of no clear focus? lack of structure? Absent-mindedness? Or is it maybe like this: a festival that is generous, that doesn't serve as an instrument for composer's cabals or as a banner for prognosticators of the supposed music of tomorrow, a festival whose director knows that there is more need to inform than to cut profiles in our developing country. I consider it proven that the Exposition's prime mover Jaroslav Šťastný doesn't produce the festival "for himself". What is more evident is his effort to educate (not necessarily a pejorative term) and the aspiration to present the world of contemporary music in the greatest breadth possible and with the greatest possible "objectivity". And he also knows how to give a chance to new ensembles and composers as well as bringing on the Arditti Quartet.

## PETR BAKLA





All this can be attractive not just for audiences (and essentially all the concerts attracted decent audiences), but also for Czech performers able and willing to get involved in contemporary music (there are not so few of them as is often claimed). In our conditions playing contemporary music means mostly to serve "the self-defence activities of Czech composer groups", and while these attempts to get one's own work across are legitimate and natural, and soothing at a time when not much more is happening, I have the feeling that the situation does not offer much to performers in the way of motivation and prestige (let us be honest here). Festivals of the Exposition kind can help a little by offering space for the appearance of Czech performers with music from the world repertoire (and perhaps stimulate their performance in the first place), and by providing the necessary lustre in the form of a high-profile event. To a considerable extent this is what is already happening.

#### Gunda Gottschalk

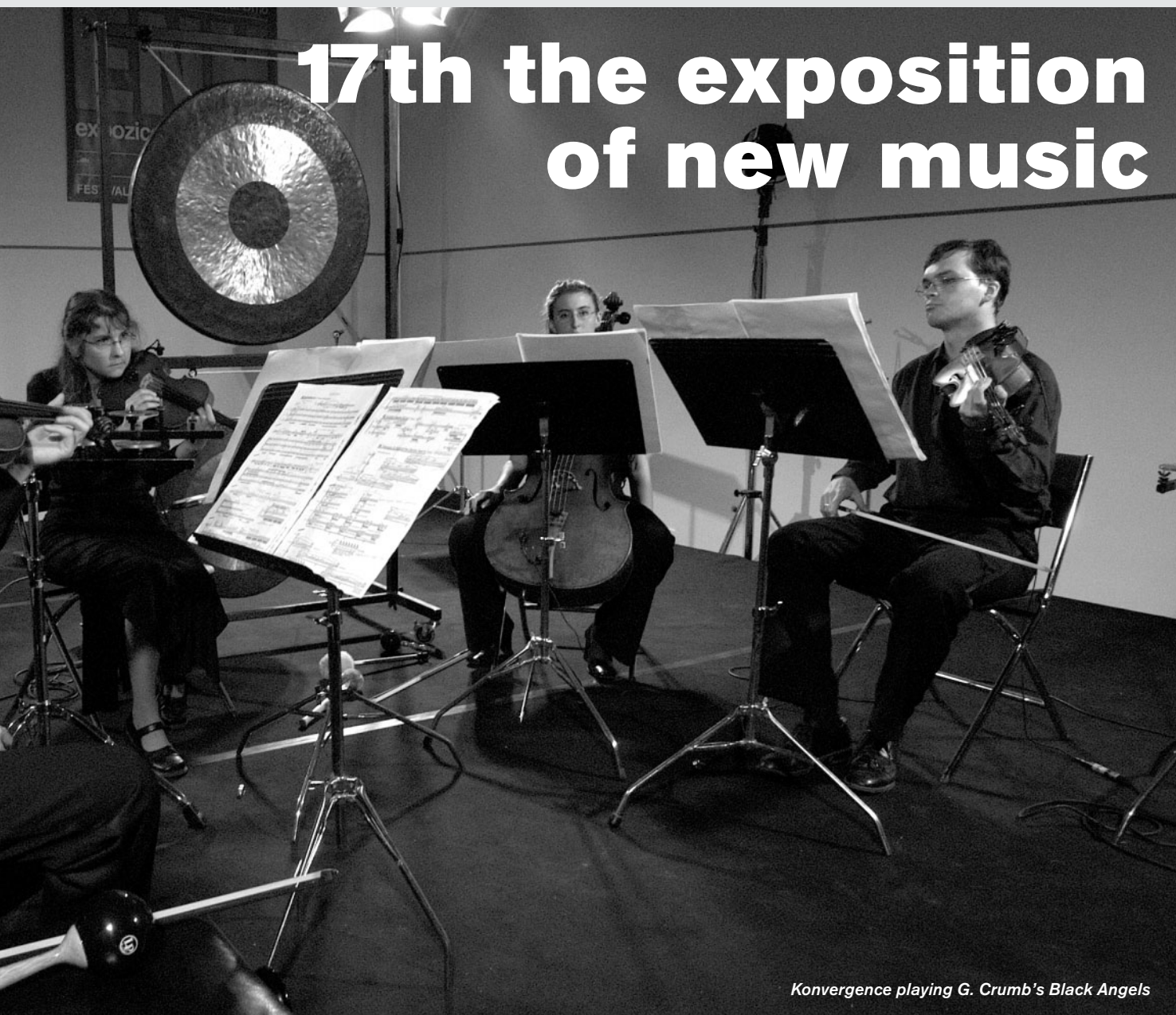
The appearance by the violin improviser Gunda Gottschalk left me very much in two minds. In the programme she was presented as the "Jimi Hendrix of the violin". A touch of the circus act, perhaps, but that aside, her play is very energetic, with most of the music loud and lively (and tending to deeper registers). Gottschalk is indisputably outstanding as a violinist, and sometimes sings as well, by no means badly. It is appealing to find that she doesn't succumb too much to the standard improviser clichés – she plays "above the bridge" only occasionally and when she does, in a way that is functional and fresh. The music tends to the tonally based, but without fussy (or automatized) phrases. But the precise re-tuning of the instrument during play is something rather beyond my understanding. Cheap comparisons with Iva Bittová naturally suggest themselves – what one plays, the other brings off with vocals, but otherwise

they have much in common: the same mannerisms in vocals, stamping, occasional shouting. If with Bittová I have sometimes had a sense that the emotions bared were over the top, with Gottschalk this sense became oppressive, and I longed for some non-performing composer with a mathematical approach. When you think about it, how can we talk about the "uniqueness of the most interior and most spontaneous emotions" when they are the same in all cases? Kundera might well write something about aggressive sentimentality.

#### Petr Kotík & spol.

The abbreviation conceals Joseph Kubera (piano) and Chris Nappi (percussion), i.e. together with Kotík the S.E.M. Ensemble itself, the St. Laurence Quartet [Kvarteto sv. Vavřince] (D. Šimíčková – soprano, T. Roskovcová – mezzo soprano, P. Kohoutová and M. Marinová – altos) and an incomplete

# 17th the exposition of new music



*Konvergence playing G. Crumb's Black Angels*



DAMA DAMA. They played pieces by Kotík (*There is Singularly Nothing, Děvín*), Morton Feldman (*Why Patterns?*) and Christian Wolff (*Percussionists, with flute*). The same programme could be heard in Prague a few days before the Brno concert.

For me personally the Kotík pieces were the high point, but I can't satisfactorily explain why, since everything about them suggests that they shouldn't be good at all. There is *Singularly Nothing*: an "unending" melody (the flute and piano in this version) trudging round and round, apparently without imagination and helplessly while a choral quartet declaims an extract from G. Stein's lecture "Composition as Explanation" in a similar manner. No dynamics or other swells, the tempo neither slow nor fast, no acoustic charms, everything more or less in the middle register. *Děvín*: a similar situation, but instead of melodic instruments subdued percussion in complex metro-rhythmic overlaps merging into a "hum", vocals on Vančura's prose. Sometimes the singing parts layer up and the originally consecutive parts of the text are sung together, but otherwise practically nothing that would at first sight deviate from the translation of the text into vocal declamation in a routine and even banally archaic way (frequent fifth doubling, diatonics).

I know we have long ago learned to listen to all kinds of "static", "non-teleological", "non-narrative" and who-knows-what music, but this is something a little different from Feldman, let us say, or Cage's number pieces or Phill Niblock (see below). This is because in Kotík's case there is not only a lack of "drama" (not even *Děvín* is "rhapsodic", although the theme would suggest this to more prosaic souls despite the non-dramatic quality of the Vančura text), but also an absence of that aspect of the "fine" sound, "informed with inner life" (the instrumental colours are conceived in an entirely standard way) and no "suspension of time" either (no pauses, ametrically scattered sound events or patterns à la minimalism). What occurred to me was the phrase "music stripped of music" in the best sense – the removal of musical rhetoric in all its parameters. Why it sounds so good I don't know, perhaps just because... If Petr Kotík knows, perhaps he could tell us some day.

### Konvergence (Convergence)

We wrote about this young composer-performer association at the end of last year. Their appearance at the Exposition of New Music represented the end of their first regular season, and so it is time for a more general evaluation.

They have fulfilled their promise to present works by great world composers, playing Ligeti, Crumb, Xenakis, Feldman and others. They have also played pieces by members of their own generation, rather symptomatically only composers from abroad. The standard of performance has been as good as could be hoped in the circumstances, but the concerts have sometimes suffered from

Martin Smolka



the choice of music more on the basis of practical criteria than on the basis of the quality of the pieces themselves (for example Xenakis's *Plektó* is perhaps not one of the great man's best productions). It is praiseworthy that Konvergence does not suffer from "premiere mania", rehearsed pieces are played more than once and so have more chance of getting into general consciousness and repertoire (although it is clear that such repetition can easily become a two-edged sword). The quality of the accompanying materials is more problematic. The authorial commentaries tend to be heavy-handed and garrulous, while the information texts on the pieces by the "classics" are sometimes distinctly unsuccessful and misleading – this is not so important in itself but reveals certain stereotypes of thinking about the music itself. As far as the compositions by the association members themselves are concerned, a characteristic feature is dependence on the sound world of Morton Feldman and, as one of the Brno audience aptly commented, a rather "Jugendstil Taste". This is true particularly of the proclamatively spiritual T. Pálka although very much less true of R. Pallas, but Pallas has not been much to the forefront, if we leave aside the actually unmissable interpretation of Crumb's *Macrocosmos II*. Konvergence seems to lack a strong (and sufficiently cynical) person capable of making the right changes in the activities of the group, starting with presentation and ending with the form of the concerts.

And the Brno concert? The core was formed by "domestic" pieces (R. Pallas: *Tom&Tom*, J. Rybář: *Touha* [Desire], T. Pálka: *Prošba* [Plea], O. Štochl: *Úniky k radosti* [Escapes to Please]; the last two were treated spatially), the culmination was than Feldman's *The Viola in My Life II* and G. Crumb's quartet *Black Angels*. A good end to the season.

### Arditti Quartet

The obligatory phrase is that the Arditti Quartet needed no introduction, and I shall keep to it. This year these messengers of new music excelled (how else) with Ligeti's *Second Quartet*, Brian Ferneyhough's *Second Quartet* and Xenakis's crowning piece *Tetras*. At the instigation of the Exposition's organisers the Arditti then premiered quartets by Martin

Marek, Martin Smolka and Mirek Srnka.

M. Smolka rather disappointed me with his five-minute piece "*For a Buck*" – *Variations on a Theme by Tom Waits* since I'm used to hearing more inventive music from him. In the context of the "Arditti" style of music it also seem to huddle back in a slightly inappropriate way, and not just by being so short. His two other Czech colleagues suited the general idea of the correct kind of music for Arditti to a much greater extent (whether this is a good or bad thing, I leave open). M. Marek was represented by the quartet *Dromos*, which is in my view the best I have heard from him – if Marek's music usually sounds rather awkward, here the composer and performer had enjoyed a fortunate meeting and the result was satisfactory. I am not, however, able to judge how far Marek wanted to suit the performing style of Arditti and how far the quartet perhaps even slightly insensitively apply their own style wherever they get the least chance to do so. (Take a look at their recordings and you will see just how much music we know only in the performance of the Arditti Quartet – naturally they are the last people to blame for the situation, but it would be worth investigating whether their almost complete monopoly has not been excessively influencing our idea of "a typical New Music string quartet". The same goes for the far from bad quartet by M. Srnka, but he seems to have made a deliberate attempt to achieve the "Ardittian note" his deliberate task. Unfortunately, next to Ferneyhough in particular, it did not stand out as much as it should have done.

### ...and much else

We cannot pass over the solo recital by Gareth Davis. This young but sovereign and much sought after bass-clarinettist presented pieces by Nicola Sani (\*1961) and Luigi Ceccarelli (\*1953), both with electronics and both interesting and energetic, unburdened by instrumental clichés. (Have you noticed how many pieces for solo clarinet start *del niente*? A catalogue of first lines of the clarinet repertoire would be quite humorous reading). A good half of the concert was then devoted to pieces by Brno



1-3 Konvergence  
4 Gareth Davis  
5-7 Arditti Quartet

composers (Faltus, Košut, Parsch, Piños, Zemek), which I found rather lacking in interest, with the exception of the piece by the last mentioned, Pavel Zemek Novák. If it didn't sound like platitudinising, I would say that that his undisguisedly monodic *Chrámové sólo* [Temple Solo] was outstanding for its purity and well thought out, elegant simplicity. Instead I shall write that it was quite beautiful...

Afternoon concerts under the heading ComPosition, all of them more or less connected with electronic music, were a new feature at this year's Exposition. Phill Niblock appeared in person, presenting five of his pieces (based on the interference between close frequencies) and the films *Movements of People Working* (an extensive set of documentary shots of people doing manual work, from which Niblock chooses freely). The music and the picture are in no way connected and despite my usual views I would almost say that the picture does not get in the way of the music – the concurrent projection of two different events shifts the films onto a surprisingly abstract level. The primacy of the visual percept is not overcome, but I cannot with a clear conscience declare that the interesting music was a mere accompaniment. On the other hand, I would still prefer to hear the pieces lying down and in the dark.

The ComPosition series also provided a chance to hear a retrospective of Czech electro-acoustic music. All the generations of the academic branch were represented, and Miloš Haas was particularly interesting with his piece *Ormai* for EA and multipercussion (T. Ondrůšek). From the other side – alternative electronic music – listeners heard Jaap Blonk & BRAAXTAAL (Blonk, a crazy phonic poet, most of all resembles some underground Uncle Jedlička – a Czech comedy character – of the cybernetic age, but his music tends to the conventional) and the Spanish improvisation duo Cremaster, whom unfortunately I didn't get to see.



# how to make opera today



M. Pudlák: *Saxons in Bohemia* (P. Matuszek, Z. Polda)

More than one contributor to Czech Music has noted that interest in opera remains high among contemporary composers, and this May has brought another three new operas to underline the point. The first two are the work of a group of students of the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) and the other an addition to the Banging on the Iron Curtain series at the National Theatre.

## Operace

Roxy NoD, 5th and 7th May

Opera project Operace presented two graduation pieces by AMU students Roman Pallas and Slavomír Hořínka. Some of the singers, the orchestra (under the baton of Marko Ivanović) and production team were from the same school.

The project press release informs us that "The priority here is communication of the topical contents that have some points of contact in the two works. The composers see the capacity of of music drama to convey ideas as the huge potential of the genre." What is meant today by "capacity to communicate" – in its time the slogan of socialist realism?

In both cases it means a return to certain musical "certainties" such as tonality, melody

and rhythm. In Pallas's opera *Klinická smrt* [Clinical Death], based on a short story by Igor Chaun, communicative power seems to be a matter of Minimalist inspiration and ingenious instrumentation. The story is bizarre: a necrophiliac mortuary employee (Jan Dolanský) as the deliverer of an apparently dead woman (Tereza Roglová) and the desires he arouses in her husband (Petr Matuszek). The music successfully reflects the atmosphere of the story, and the singing often shifts into spoken language. The concrete severity of the NoD means that it needs no decor to be changed into a plausible mortuary. The director Karla Sturm-Štaubertová exploited the fact and so staging is minimal. The space is often entirely empty, left to the music alone. In his concept of communicativeness Slavomír Hořínka draws on the traditional understanding of opera as the scene of great stories and emotions. His *Ortel* [The Verdict] is essentially a romantic opera transposed into chamber dimensions. The story (based on the novella by Y. Zamyatin) is an Orwellian vision of a totalitarian society and its conflict with human individuality, but also a tale of unhappy love, and this is this level that predominates. A member of a society rejecting love as the greatest evil suddenly falls in love and believes that he is capable of standing up

to society for love's sake. At the decisive moment, however, he chooses obedience to the social order. The musical treatment is also faithful to opera tradition. The melodies are arched and there is a culminating love aria. This does not mean that Hořínka's music thinking is stuck in the 19th century, but the techniques that he takes from more recent music serve the ideas of the opera as a great story held up by great melodies. The "anti-heroic image" of Goran Načevský in the leading role of Citizen D might seem to contradict this, but in fact it reflects the character of a man hesitating between feeling and obedience. Citizen I, his partner, was sung by Pavla Jančová. The director Jan Nebeský made more attempt to create the illusion of "real theatre" including mass scenes. Compared to *Clinical Death* the spectator has to engage his own imagination more, but the creators of opera perhaps have a right to demand this of the public.

## Miroslav Pudlák: *Sasíci v Čechách*

[The Saxons in Bohemia]

Estates Theatre, 16th of May

Following Nagano, another opera on the theme of national identity has been staged at the National Theatre, and just like Nagano it treats the theme playfully and ironically. The



complete title is *Sasíci v Čechách aneb Marnost bojů proti RKZ (poslední vlastenecká opera)* [The Saxons in Bohemia or the Futility of the Fights against the RKZ (Králový Dvůr and Zelená Hora Manuscripts – forged ancient Czech epics once considered genuine – translator's note) (the last patriotic opera)]. The libretto is by Pudlák together with Lukáš Jiříčka and it employs many quotes from all kinds of different sources. Just like the libretto the music is full of references and hints. Compared to Miroslav Pudlák's concert output this opera music is more energetic, rhythmically more striking and less melancholic. A limited instrumental range (clarinet, trumpet, tuba, violin, viola, cello, electric guitar, piano) in no way hampers the composer as the music shifts from the grandeur of "ancient Czech scenes" to the drunken yodelling of the German singer Beckmesser or an Old Prague cabaret. The music of Richard Wagner has an important role here – in some places it is played from a recording – but cut and looped in various ways. The contrast between the Wagnerian orchestral pomp and the eight-member band in the orchestra put reflects the contrast between the dreams of the main character, the composer Foltýn who wants to create a grand patriotic opera on themes from the manuscripts, and the reality in which the director of the opera wants him to produce "...showy numbers and brilliant singing parts... women, ballet." and in which Masaryk convinces him of the falseness of the inspiration he has chosen. The composer Foltýn and the singer Lumír are both sung by Pudlák's "court singer" Petr Matuszek, who copes well with the split personality and confusion of his character. Rather more expressive, however, is Zdeněk Polda as Beckmesser and also the theatre director Schmoranz. Irena Houkalová in the role of Ludiše has little to sing and mainly stands there like a statue in an ancient Czech robe.

While most of the productions in the Bang-ing on the Iron Curtain series tend to economise on the visual side, the director Ondřej David has tried to use the existing National Theatre resources to the hilt, and has taken costumes from Libuše. English titles were projected, but anyone who concentrated on them for a moment was rewarded by the discovery that they were rarely limited to the function of translation, but commented on the action on stage in a manner worthy of Monty Python's Flying Circus.

M. Pudlák: *Saxons in Bohemia* (Foltýn's vision of Czech history)



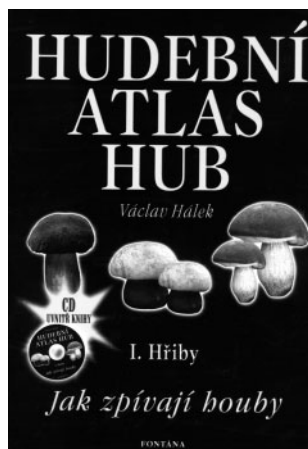
## the music of mushrooms

Václav Hálek: *Hudební atlas hub. I. Hříby. Jak zpívají houby* [A Musical Atlas of Fungi. 1. Boletus. How Mushrooms Sing.] Fontána, Olomouc, 2003.

Can mushrooms emit sounds? Or excrete notes? Or even sing? In his unusually conceived book entitled *A Musical Atlas of Fungi*, the first volume of which has already been published by the Fontána Press ([www.fontana.ws](http://www.fontana.ws)), Václav Hálek (born 1937) tries to persuade us that the answer is yes. And he presents his "proof" is a highly appealing (even humorous), distinctive form – a form that has few if any parallels anywhere in the history of music.

If someone creative has an intense interest in more than one subject, his or her work in the different subjects often shows crossovers and influence even if the spheres of interest seem incongruous and their combination at first sight absurd. Hálek is a good case in point. A composer (his musical output includes three piano concertos, the oratorio *La divina commedia di Dante Alighieri*, two string quartets and many songs and choral works), he is also a mycologist (a member of the Czech Mycological Society who has even written several scientific studies of different varieties of fungus). And he has been systematically demonstrating an interface between the two areas in his work, for example in his *Mykokosmická symfonie* [Mycocosmic Symphony], but above all in a remarkable number of short little pieces – apparently already more than 1600 (!) inspired by individual kinds of fungus.

It is from this large cycle that he has taken the noted music for the 42 pieces published in the *Musical Atlas of Fungi*; all these pieces are linked by titles of a common fungus variety – boletus. The systematic division of the volumes of the Atlas (more are in preparation, such as *Arachnoids*, *Russulae*, *Champignons*, *Puffballs* etc.) has its rationale not only in natural science, but in terms of composition – in the treatment of the macrostructure of the cycles: "...it was hopeless when I tried [to combine] different varieties, for example boletus and fly agaric", he says. "They just don't go together. Impossible. Incompatible. No affinity..." Furthermore, even the cycle *Hříby* [Boletus] need not be seen just as a free linking up of "varieties of boletus" (i.e. "pieces") but as a meaningful compositional whole, in which individual movements with atypical



programmatic names (*Boletus edulis*, *Boletus pinicola*, *Boletus appendiculatus* etc.) follow each other in a logical order.

In the great majority of cases the pieces are for just one part, using violin, viola, cello, double bass, bassoon or oboe as the solo instrument; only in three cases do we encounter duets for stringed instruments. Hálek avoids constructivist approaches, and his by no means aggressive but nonetheless inventive freely atonal style is guided more by intuition, the idea of the moment or – pictorially speaking – the sight of the mushroom that has been recorded into notes. The strongly lyrical character of the pieces and their expressive brevity add to this impression.

A concert performance of the whole cycle would certainly be interesting, but in my view this would require an unconventional production concept (theatrical). Dry presentation would obviously have a monotonous effect, as is evident from the CD attached to the Atlas (the CD is also unpleasantly broken up by unnecessary spoken introduction of the pieces by their names, which the listener can find in the Atlas anyway).

The overall impression of the first volume of Hálek's Musical Atlas of Mushrooms is enhanced by high-quality accompanying photographs of the boletus varieties that have been "set to music" and their descriptions. Together with the music, all this forms an effective compact whole and highly individual multimedia project, which may be seen as a successful example of a synthesis of art and natural science. It has an appeal not just for musician-mycologists, musicians and mycologists, but for anyone who can appreciate an interesting idea.

VÍTĚZSLAV MIKEŠ

## MUSICA NOVA 2003

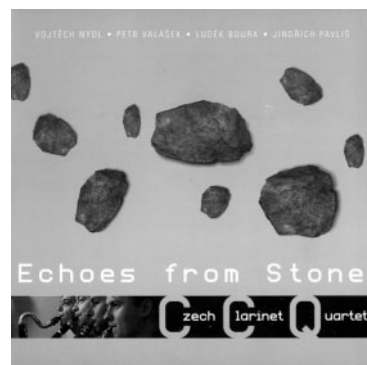
The 12th International Electro-Acoustic (EA) Music Competition, Musica nova 2003, an event traditionally held in Prague under the patronage of the Czech Music Council with the support of the Ministry of Culture, the City of Prague, the Czech Music Fund and OSA, attracted 126 entries from 29 countries in two categories: pure EA compositions (autonomous art EA music) and EA music with a live instrument (music for instrument and EA media). In the pure EA composition category, the international jury, which met in November last year in the reconstructed FAMU (Film school) Sound Studio, awarded the first prize to the Italian composer Claudio Gabriele for *Ombra nell'azzurro*, and the second prize to Briton Pete Stollery for his piece *Vox Magna*. In the live electronic category the first place went to the American Robert Scott Thompson for his composition *The Ninth Wave*, and the second place to the Japanese Yasuhiro Takenaka for his composition *Séparé et invisible*. As is now traditional, there was a special category for Czech composers. Here the award went to the young Petra Gavalasová with her composition *Survivors*. Most of the entrants were under the age of 35, but the jury picks the youngest as one of the finalists. In 2003 this was the Greek Konstantinos Krathanasis with his piece *De Ligno Chalibeque*. The Concert of Winners in the presence of the award-holders was held on the 5th of December 2003 in co-operation with the Music Faculty of the Academy of Dramatic Arts (HAMU).

Once again the standard of the competition was high, partly because of rules that are clear and precise, and the competition deliberately does not extend into multimedia, pop and sound art. The prize-winning pieces were of good quality both in terms of sound parameters and structure, but very diverse in style – and indeed the competition has a long-term reputation for stylistic variety.

A few words on the winners: Claudio Gabriele (1963) studied composition and keyboard instruments in Italy and France (IRCAM, GRM), he is a teacher at the State Conservatory in Benevento and a visiting professor at NY University. The five-part piece *Ombra nell'azzurro* is a symbolic image of the planet. It uses natural sounds and instrumental noises rich in aliquot notes. Robert S. Thompson (1959) is an internationally very successful composer who has worked in EA since 1976 and also developed EA software; he is professor of composing at the State University in Atlanta. The *Ninth Wave* for cello a EA medium (2001) was inspired by Celtic mythology. The EA sounds are derived either from the sounds of a cello (played by Craig Hultren), or are created using the Chant programme. Pete Stollery (1960) is director of studies at the University of Aberdeen. His *Vox Magna* (2001) was originally created a sound effects for an exhibition celebrating machine-tool industry in Rotterdam, but was worked up for the purposes of the competition. Yasuhiro Takenaka (1951) studied EA in various institutions including CCRMA. He finished his piece *Séparé et Invisible* in France. The live saxophone is the symbol of the emotional human ego, while the EA part represents the transcendent dimension of life. Petra Gavalasová (1976) studied composition in Ostrava and EA at the conservatory in Amsterdam. Her piece *Survivors* for fl., trb., el. guit., tape and live electronics was recorded in the church the Nikali Kerk in Utrecht. The 4-part composition is based on the idea of people (instruments) searching for each other after some unspecified catastrophe.

The rules of the next year of the competition can be found at. The deadline for receipt of entries (compositions) is the 10th of October of the same year.

LENKA DOHNALOVÁ



**Czech Clarinet Quartet: Echoes from Stone**  
Jiná vlna & Czech Clarinet Quartet

The Czech Clarinet Quartet was founded by students, today graduates of the Prague Music Academy HAMU. Over the few years of its existence it has developed a wide repertoire from classical music to Jazz and Jewish songs. On the CD *Echoes from Stone* the members of the quartet give rein to their own composing ambitions.

The combination of four clarinets (three and one bass clarinet) create a special compact sound that can be exploited in interesting ways, as Steve Reich showed in the famous *New York Counterpoint*. On the other hand, the result can also be monotonous. This seems to have been the reason why the clarinetists decided to diversify the recording with other instruments (saxophone, guitar, bass guitar, percussion), vocals and electronics. The latter is used mainly to layer the rhythmic models, with the result that the similarities with Reich are very often marked (e.g. *Vltava*). *Orlík* or *3+CC* are more orientated to jazz. In terms of sound *Wave 931* is also particularly interesting, using the clarinet like a percussion instrument. There are some elements that are more debatable. For example the pseudo-Pygmy chant in *Pygmy song* fails to convince. In this piece there is also a quotation from the melody *Sweet Lullaby* popularised by the Deep Forest group as *Pygmy* (in fact it is from the Pacific). *Trancid* (on the CD and the corresponding videoclip) is a little disappointing too, an interesting layering of motifs breaking off into a simple house rhythm. *Spring Retro* also works with undertones of dance electronics, but in a much more interesting and less stereotypical way. Vocals appear not just in *Pygmy Song* but also in *Žába na prameni* [Frog at the Spring] and *Little Love* (with Radka Fišarová as guest). While the second is pleasant pop, the first is a kind of New Age a la Enya brew.

The CD gives the impression of technically highly skilled musicians playing with studio equipment and testing out its possibilities. In many cases the music that emerges is an interesting combination of different influences, pleasant to the ear but not predictable. In Czech conditions it is also a brave experiment in combining pop approaches with inspirations from elsewhere. But more discrimination wouldn't hurt, since the separate tracks are diverse to the point of incongruity.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

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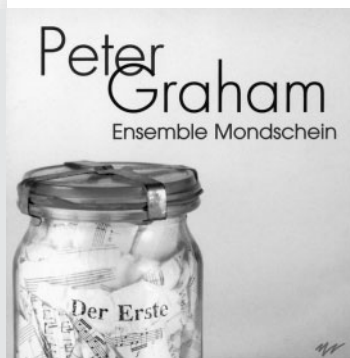
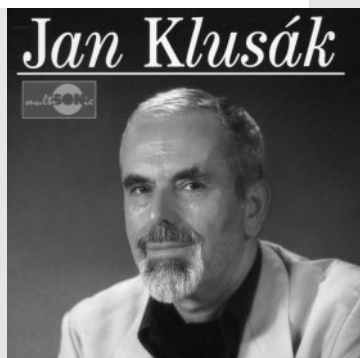
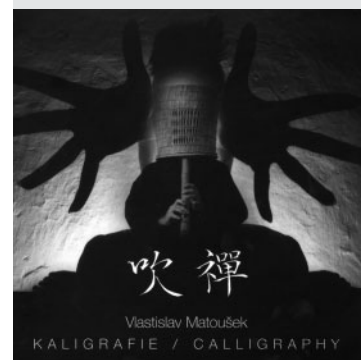
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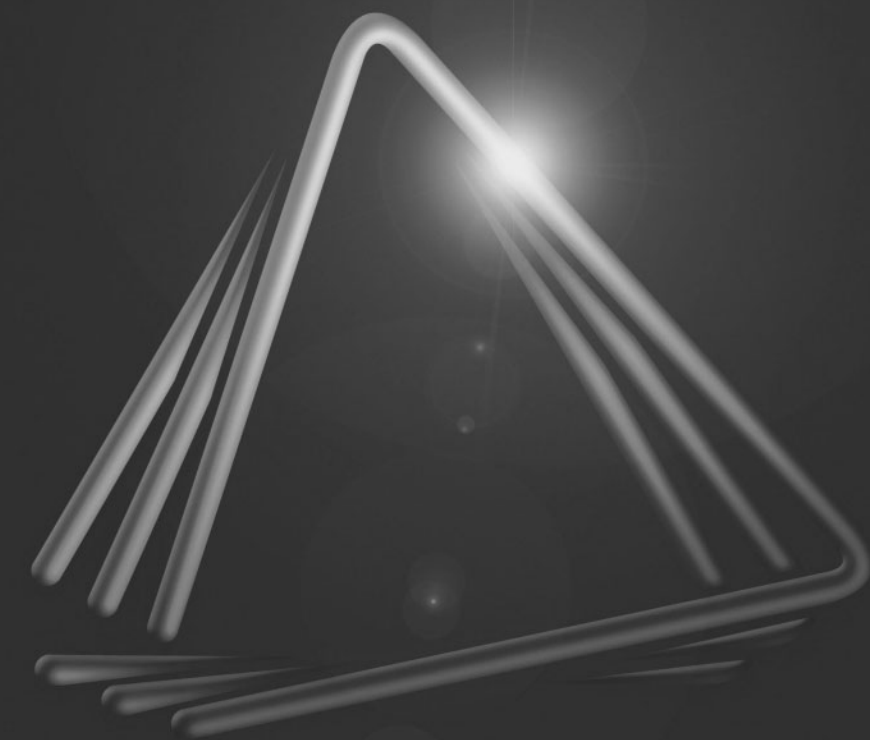


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# czech music | 2004

## *An integral part of European culture*

A Czech Ministry of Culture project that aims to support important music anniversaries in 2004, with a special focus on presentation of the Czech Republic during the year of its accession to the European Union

Under the auspice of president of the Czech Republic, Mr. Václav Klaus, and Mrs. Viviane Reding, an European Commission member responsible for education and culture

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Phone: + 420 224 809 195, Fax: + 420 224 811 452

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In 2004, the Czech Republic celebrates more than sixty anniversaries of outstanding Czech composers, some renowned performers as well as several music organisations. Traditionally, the musical public immediately recognize that years ending in the numeral four are considered to be a “years of Czech music”.

### SELECTIVE VIEW OF ANNIVERSARIES

František Václav MÍČA (1694 - 1744)

Bedřich SMETANA (1824 – 1884)

Leoš JANÁČEK (1854 – 1928)

Antonín DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Bohuslav MARTINŮ (1890 - 1959)

Rafael KUBELÍK (1914 - 1996)

Milada ŠUBRTOVÁ (1924)

Eva OLMEROVÁ (1934 - 1993)

Prague Symphonic Orchestra FOK (1934)

Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra (1954)

### Main partner:



### Medial partners:



### Partners:



# pavel haas

21<sup>st</sup> june 1899 – 17<sup>th</sup> october 1944



„The course of events gathered momentum. The tension of March days in Brno intensified thanks to German chauvinists so much that, when Brno was occupied, the Haas family eventually packed their luggage and set off for Prague even with their one-year-old child, hoping that they would be safe there. They arrived in Prague on 15 March simultaneously with the German occupation army. That was a distressing time. Everybody was trying to look after himself above all. The disappointed Haas family returned home next day. In the following weeks they tried to find out how to emigrate abroad. All their attempts to get any entry visa, whether for the USSR, England or USA, failed. There was too much interest and the quotas for the Czechoslovak Republic were low. The Haas family could not get visa earlier than in five years.“ People born after World War II know the situation in the spring of 1939 from history textbooks only. The events of 15 March were illustrated with the famous photograph of chilled soldiers of the Hitler's army and snowflakes mixed with tears on the faces of people lining roads. 15 March 1939 dismembered large unions of nations and states as well as communities of friends and families. It was not caused by anyone, as it appeared in error in the formulation of the said quotation from the monograph on Pavel Haas by Lubomír Peduzzi. It was a guilt, irremediable and irreparable, the consequences of which are hauled even by those who were born afterwards. Artist Pavel Haas was one of millions of people whose lives were damaged due to Hitler's pathological hunger to rule the world. A torso of art work was left which is - as any work of art - an evidence of that time. But not every work of art is such a great exclamation and stirring warning.

## **„Whether good times or bad times, have a smile on your lips...”**

Pavel Haas was born as the first son on 21 June 1899 in Brno, in the family of Zikmund Haas, a shoe trader. His mother came from Russia, her maiden name was Epsteinová. Brother Hugo was born two years later. He was an artist as well but his fate was a bit happier; not because of his popularity and fame of a theatre and film actor, but because he managed to escape the Nazis and survived the war. However, it is difficult to judge whether living with a life-long trauma of an emigrant and knowledge that it was only the wayward fortune that had saved the life of the younger of brothers can be considered a victory of life. At the time when Haas was born, Brno in its greater part was a German city. Czech cultural efforts slowly gained ground but were in the minority. The Haas family professed to be Czech and they spoke Czech at home, although they must have known both languages, in a trader's family it could not have been different anyway. Both brothers showed predispositions to theatre which could have been inherited from (or influenced by) the Viennese brother of Ms. Haas, an actor in Vienna. Good upbringing of middle-class children comprised adequate musical education, and so both brothers played the piano.

Pavel showed interest in music for which, as his brother Hugo said, he was more talented. He tried to compose his first piece when he was around thirteen. Three years later he was set to devote himself fully to music. Apart from playing the piano and learning musical theory, he helped his father in the shop. His early, often left, composition attempts contain songs, piano compositions, a quartet, but also a symphonic poem and symphony. They are inspired by themes of The Old Testament which apparently attracted Pavel in his youth. In 1918-19 he composed a cycle of *Six Songs in the folk tone* which was assigned the opus number one. The folk inspiration remained one of typical features of his works. It was predominantly strengthened by the influence of Leoš Janáček, Haas's composition teacher. In 1919 both Haas brothers became students of the newly opened academy of music in Brno. Pavel studied composition, his first teachers were Jan Kunc and Vilém Petrželka, Hugo studied singing. Hugo, however, was attracted to theatre too much to have enough will to finish his studies. Nor Pavel finished his studies of the academy of

music „regularly“; in his second year he transferred to Janáček's Master School. To be a student of Janáček must often have been dramatic, no young novice in composition could have felt confident before his temperament, nor Pavel with his amateurish experiments. Pavel Haas remembered: „Today he destroyed tough work of a young scared brain with his numerous lines and next time he was passionately inflamed with rage above his own hieroglyphs. [...] Master praised rarely, if ever. He either condemned or was silent.“ During his studies of the academy of music he composed the *1st String Quartet*, several arrangements of folk songs, but he also tried to compose an opera (not finished) and scenic music to *R. U. R.*, a drama by Karel Čapek (lost). It was played on stage in Brno in 1921 and Haas was introduced under a pseudonym, H. Pavlas. At that time he also composed *Chinese Songs op. 4* for alto and the piano, which were given a meaningful pendant among Haas's works in the cycle of *Four Chinese Songs*, being written for bass player Karel Berman in Terezín. In June 1922 Pavel Haas obtained a diploma from the Master's School.

Unfortunately it did not guarantee his living, and therefore he still helped his father in his trade. His feeling for theatre as well as the necessity to earn money made him compose other scenic music, such as *Vojcek* by Georg Büchner, but also music named *Black Troubadour* for the play named *Jazz Singer*, staged in Brno in 1928. In fact it was a theatre adaptation of a film about black Jewish singer Al Jonson, named *The Jazz Singer* and based on a short story by Samson Raphaelson - *The Day of Atonement*. Raphaelson was the author of the screenplay of the film which was released in 1927 and became the first sound film in the world. And surely, it is not by coincidence that it was the time that „jazz opera“ by Ernst Křenek, named *Jonny spielt auf*, rushed on opera stages (Brno was the first city where it was staged in the Czech language on 22 December 1927, eight months after its premiere in Leipzig. Haas's music to *The Jazz Singer* has not been preserved, as the title indicates, Haas probably used his ability to work in various genres there. A later proof is the music to the film named *Život je pes*, made by Hugo Haas and Martin Frič in



Portrait of P. Haas by Petr Klen





1933, and music to some other films. It is possible to say that Haas as a composer underwent the development which more or less affected all his generation: from the romantic roots, over enchantment by Art Nouveau and folk songs, temporary passion for jazz and new technical media with the radio and film, up to conscious and inquiring search for own artistic confession in the selection of themes and their arrangement. As for Haas, such a maturation was very slow; having a civil job, he had little time for composing, and maybe that is why his works seem to be so sound, thoughtful and coherent: Program the *2<sup>nd</sup> String Quartet „From Monkey Mountains“*, filled with onomatopoeic elements, was a reminiscence of his summer stay in the „Českomoravská vrchovina“ (Czech-Moravian Hills, called the „Monkey Mountains“ in the jargon spoken in Brno). The *woodwind quintet*, *Psalms 29*, *Piano Suite* and finally Haas's masterpiece, opera named *Charlatan*.

**„Here, come here, folks, the world is full of wonders...“**

The model of the only opera finished by Haas was a novel by Josef Winckler, named *Doctor Eisenbart*. Adventurous life of a baroque barber offered lots of situations suitable for stage adaptation as well as for serious philosophical-ethic ideas. The composition originated in a rather complicated period at the beginning, but later followed by a happy phase of Haas's private life. In 1932 he met doctor Soňa Jakobson, wife of significant philologist Roman Jakobson. They became lovers and after mutual agreement their relationship was eventually solved by the divorce of the Jakobsons. In 1935 Pavel Haas married Soňa Jakobson. At that time Haas could devote all his time to composing and fully concentrate on composing the *Charlatan*. The only problem was the approval for setting the adaptation to music which he needed to get from the author of the novel. Under the Nuremberg Laws, cooperation of Josef Winkler with Haas was considered as collaboration with a Jewish composer and Josef Winkler would have been prosecuted. Therefore Haas decided to situate the plot in Bohemia to eliminate any association to the German origin of the model. (According to Lubomír Peduzzi, Winkler might have given his silent approval because his wife was Jewish.) It was not very difficult to adapt the topic to the Czech environment as there was a Czech parallel to the story in the *Medicaster*, a medieval play. Thus doctor Eisenbart became Pustřpalk. The libretto was arranged by Pavel Haas himself (the subheads of our article are chosen from



P. Haas with brother Hugo and father

it). The premiere was in „Zemské divadlo“ (Provincial Theatre) in Brno on 2 April 1938, directed by Rudolf Walter. The stage was designed by František Muzika and the conductor was Quido Arnoldi. The leading role was sung by Václav Bednář. The opera was given a prize by the Foundation of Smetana. Thanks to its official recognition, it meant the peak of Haas's musical career. In 1997 the opera was staged as a concert in the State Opera in Prague, conducted by Israel Yinone, and it was recorded by Decca on a recording. However, we are still waiting for the modern stage premiere of one of the most interesting Czech operas of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As described by Haas himself, the opera depicts „the rise, fame and fall of a doctor, medicast, [...] who, as a typical figure of his time, travelled with his retinue town to town, showing his spectacular »wonders« at fairs.“ However, the mission of the opera is wider. The Faustian story of charlatan Pustřpalk is an allegory of the fight of good and evil, a picture of split human soul; it is about superstition, fraud and search for the truth, about misuse of false and available lures, and about pure life happiness that is difficult to find. It is also a warning against conjurers who dull people's minds and promise illusory things.

**„Against the danger as it is antidote is needed...“**

In January 1939 Haas's composition could

be played on the radio last time. After shattered hopes to escape from occupied Czechoslovakia, a private tragedy occurred. As Haas's mother, Ms. Soňa was Russian Jewess, but of Orthodox religion. Officially nobody knew about her Jewish origin (not documents existed) and so there was a chance to rescue her - at that time primarily the medical practice. The Haas family had to look after not only for their own daughter but also for the son of Hugo Haas who stayed in Brno after a successful emigration of his parents. In April 1940 Pavel and Soňa Haas were split which saved the lives of daughter Soňa Haas and nephew, but condemned Pavel Haas to death. During lengthy waiting when he could not work in public, he composed his *Symphony*. It is only a torso. Immediately after the war Osvětim tried to reconstruct it and almost half a century later it was finished by Zdeněk Zouhar. Regarding the last chapter of Haas's life in Terezín, it was described in many details. The evidences and efforts at reconstruction are contradicting in various aspects. It cannot be different: human memory fails predominantly when it should recollect events which by effect of the self-defence reflex should be forgotten. Stark facts contained in documents admit various viewpoints. Depending on the time and situation in which people met Pavel Haas in person, their descriptions of his physiognomy and character traits differ. Perceiving his work, we are aware of the circumstances under which it originated. It is affected by our sub-consciousness but also by unambiguous and clear symbolism incorporated in the compositions by the composer and which – undoubtedly – he wished to pass on us: the symbol of St. Wenceslas's chorale, whose topic appears in a lot of his compositions. The symbol of a broken and shattered life, expressed in *Four Chinese Songs*. The symbol of fragility, strength and permanence of a work of art that his *Study for Strins* is, premiered in September 1944 as part of a film made by Kurt Geron (who himself became a victim of the Nazis later). The film should have evidenced the „excellent treatment“ of Jews in the Third Empire. A month later Pavel Haas was transported to Osvětim. The composer died but parts of his *Study* were preserved by Karel Ančerl. Based on them, Lubomír Peduzzi reconstructed the score and this composition composed by Haas in Terezín could become a permanent part of the concert repertoire.

VLASTA REITTEREROVÁ

With permission of magazine Harmonie

## profiles

miloslav  
kabeláč1<sup>st</sup> august 1908–17<sup>th</sup> september 1979**A Small Portrait  
of Miloslav Kabeláč  
(in the form of a dictionary entry)**

Miloslav Kabeláč (1st of August 1908, Prague – 17th September 1979, Prague, buried in Prague in the cemetery by the Strašnice Crematorium). Czech composer and conductor. After completing scientific high school (22nd June 1936), he studied at the Czech Technical University in Prague (Insurance Technology at the Special Sciences High School, 1926–1929). Private piano studies with Adolf Mikeš, professor at the conservatory (from 1926); Mikeš advised him to make a career in music and so Kabeláč decided not to continue in his technical studies and in 1928 he was accepted into the 2nd Year of composition at the State Conservatory of Music in Prague; his composition professor was Karel Boleslav Jirák and his professor of conducting was Pavel Dědeček; other teachers – particularly: Erwin Schulhoff (instrumentation – he strongly influenced his students with his requirement that the compose directly for a chosen set of instruments rather than instrumentate an acoustically neutral sketch), Jaroslav Řídký (instrumentation, after Schulhof), Alois Hába (counterpoint, he introduced his students to new composition techniques). After moving into radio (from 1st of

April 1930 he took up the post of “head of the Music Section of Radiojournal”), Jirák continued to teach only composition at the conservatory. As of September 1930 conducting became a separate department, with a five-year course (composing remained a four-year course). Kabeláč graduated in composing in June 1931 (*Sinfonietta*, graduation concert 24th June 1931 with the Czech Philharmonic conducted by K. B. Jirák), and in conducting in June 1932. From the 1st of October 1931 to the 23rd of June 1934 he studied piano at the Master School of the State Conservatory of Music in Prague in the class of Prof. Vilém Kurz, graduating on the 22nd of June 1932 as a soloist in his own *Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra op. 1* (composed for his graduation).

Students of composition with K. B. Jirák and conducting in the same year as Kabeláč at the conservatory included Klement Slavický and Kabeláč's future wife Berta Rixová (24th August 1909 – 10th October 1988), who also studied solo piano (with Prof. Roman Veselý) and then continued in piano studies at the Master School with Prof. Kurz (active concert pianist, 1946–1975 professor at the conservatory in Prague).

During his studies at the Master School Kabeláč had already (at Jirák's suggestion) taken a post in the Prague Radio (from the 1st of September 1932), first as a musical director (the



first in this new position) and then as head music director after the expansion of the department. He was dismissed from the radio on the 31st of March 1942 because of his wife's Jewish origin (although he had been barred from the radio building since the beginning of 1942). At this period – during the Nazi occupation – Kabeláč's work's could not be publicly performed. Only with the liberation in May 1945 could he return to his work at the radio (from 1947 as head of music), where he remained until the end of 1955. (At the beginning of the fifties, in the most harsh period of communist rule, Kabeláč's music was once again banned for political and ideological reasons). From the 1st of March 1953 to July 1962 Kabeláč taught composition at the Prague Conservatory (subsequently he devoted himself exclusively to composing). Kabeláč took an important part in the activities of the music section of the Arts Association (Umělecká beseda), as a member from 1938, on the board from 1945, and agent from 1946.





### 8 Invenzioni (Corale)

At the start of his musical career Kabeláč often appeared as a conductor, whether on the concert podium or in the radio studio and with a focus (but not an exclusive focus) on 20th-century music, e.g. Stravinsky's *Wedding* (he attracted attention with this piece by conducting it from memory), Hindemith's *Concerto Music* for piano, brass and harps (with Berta Rix at the piano, broadcast live on the radio on the 23rd of November 1937), the world premiere of *Six Choral Pieces on Words by Michelangelo Buonarroti the younger* by L. Dallapiccola, with orchestra (on the radio on the 26th of April 1938; a letter of thanks from the composer dated the 27th of April is part of the Kabeláč estate), Vycpálek's cantata *Blahoslavený ten člověk* [Blessed is This Man] (radio 14th of September 1945), Jan Hanuš's cantata *Země mluví* [The Earth Speaks] (21st of February 1946) and others. He also conducted major classic orchestral works such as Dvořák's *7th Symphony*, Brahms' *4th Symphony* and *Variations on a Theme from Haydn*, and Beethoven's *1st* and *5th sympho-*

*nies*. From the early music repertoire he conducted a radio performance of Cl. Monteverdi's opera *Orfeo*, for example (3rd of June 1937), and several Bach cantatas. From the beginning Kabeláč also conducted his own works: the radio premiere of the cantata *Neustupujte!* [Do Not Retreat!], *Hra s jesličkami* [Christmas Creche Play], his *1st* and *2nd Symphonies* and stage music for Sophocles' *Electra*.

Before the war Kabeláč also led a vocal group (with occasional additions of instrumentalists) known as the "Kabeláč Ensemble" at the Prague Radio (it appeared in radio broadcasts from 1933, and on the concert podium from 1935). Its notable performances included participation in the radio (3rd of December 1936) and concert performance (30th of January 1937) of Stravinsky's *Wedding*, and in older music its performance of Monteverdi's *Sonata sopra Sancta Maria*, *Avis maris stella* and madrigals (radio 20th of February 1938) or Heinrich Schütz's *Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross* (radio 20th of April 1938).

The Kabeláč Ensembles activities ceased with Kabeláč's forced departure from the radio.

From his early works Kabeláč increasingly sought to use certain rational methods (various kinds of organisation of tone material outside the field of the traditional narrow major-minor tonality) to help channel and create the specific character of his musical expression. He used dodecaphony only very exceptionally (and then in a secondary way). More often he chose to mould the musical material by creating different modes (the melodic principle of the organisation of interval orders): sometimes this meant the regular alternation of small and larger interval steps (for example the regular sequence of minor third – minor second – minor third – minor second; or in the framework of the fifth interval: minor second – major second – minor second – minor third [this is actually the successive expansion of intervals: minor second – major second – minor third, with insertion of a minor second] and suchlike); or else it was a question of a

2

musical score for measures 1-3. The score includes staves for piano (p), tam tam (t), and percussion (p). Measure 1 has a piano part with a 6-measure rest and a tam tam part with a 3-measure rest. Measure 2 has a piano part with a 6-measure rest and a tam tam part with a 3-measure rest. Measure 3 has a piano part with a 6-measure rest and a tam tam part with a 3-measure rest. The score includes markings for 'poco accel.', 'rit.', 'quasi trillo', 'campane', 'pft.', and 'Ped.'

musical score for measures 4-7. The score includes staves for tam t. (t), camp. (c), piano (p), and percussion (p). Measure 4 has a tam t. part with a 6-measure rest and a camp. part with a 3-measure rest. Measure 5 has a tam t. part with a 6-measure rest and a camp. part with a 3-measure rest. Measure 6 has a tam t. part with a 6-measure rest and a camp. part with a 3-measure rest. Measure 7 has a tam t. part with a 6-measure rest and a camp. part with a 3-measure rest. The score includes markings for 'a tempo', 'accel.', 'pft.', and 'Ped.'

group of larger (whether mutable or constant) interval surrounded on both sides by minor seconds, but at other times of the successive expansion of intervals with the repetition or development of a motif (at its expressive points it is more often a minor third, especially in earlier pieces). Usually this mode is created not in the frame of a whole octave, but only a fifth, more rarely a fourth (then it is transposed). Kabeláč called these modes "artificial tone families". His melodics – in later work too – incline more to smaller intervals. In his last years Kabeláč more often also used techniques of various forms of "mirroring" or "reflection" (i.e. different methods of inversion, and in different parameters). In the majority of the work he retains tonality, but in the very broad sense of relationship to a certain centre. It should be stressed that the composer did not see the use of these compositional techniques as a dogma or iron necessity, but simply used them in accordance with his creative design. He took care to ensure that they would channel but not weaken the spontaneity of his musical invention.

Kabeláč found much inspiration in the study of Gregorian chant and his lifelong interest in non-European musical culture, especially the Indian and Japanese. It was an interest expressed in his activities in the Committee for the Study of Non-European Music at the Czechoslovak Orientalist Society (1964–1971). His daughter Káta Kabeláčová (born 1946), a trained Japanese scholar, helped him to make the Japanese sources accessible.

Kabeláč also had a strong affinity for folklore, especially in his earlier years. His output includes numerous arrangements of folksongs (orchestral accompaniment, choral treatments). In addition he liked composing music to the words of our folksongs, as in the cantata *Do Not Retreat!*, *Milostné písne* [Love Songs], *Příroda* [Nature], *Šest ukolébavek* [Six Lullabies] etc.

The cantata *Do Not Retreat!* op. 7, was in fact Kabeláč's first fully mature and already highly distinctive work. It was composed in the autumn of 1939 after the occupation of our country by Nazi Germany. It is written for male choir, wind and percussion instruments to the words of Czech folksongs (from the period of Prussian attacks on Bohemia in the mid-18th century) and the Hussite martial hymn *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* [As you are warriors of God], the last word of which gave the cantata its title. It is here that Kabeláč's lifelong attraction to percussion instruments first emerges. The premiere (radio) of this cantata (conducted by the composer) took place at a historic moment: it was broadcast on the 28th of October 1945 in the course of the re-election (after the war) of Dr. Edvard Beneš as president of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Kabeláč's series of eight symphonies is remarkable: each is written for a different instrumental combination, and Kabeláč knows

how to make excellent use of all of them. Only the *Second Symphony* is composed for symphony orchestra alone; in the *Fifth* a solo soprano (without text) is added to the orchestra, in the *Sixth* a solo clarinet and in the *Seventh* a reciter. The *First Symphony* (1941–1942) is written for strings and percussion instruments, the *Third* for organ, brass and timpani, and the *Fourth* for chamber orchestra. The last – the *Eighth* – symphony of 1969–1970) was composed for performance in the Church of St. Paul in Strasbourg; according to the composer's directions, the performers were placed on four sides of the church interior – the organ at the back, Les Percussions de Strasbourg ensemble in front by the altar, a large and small mixed choir to the left, and a solo soprano to the right (in the pulpit); hence the symphony's name, *Antiphonies* (the conductor stood in the middle facing the percussion instruments and the choir). The work had its world premiere in Strasbourg at a concert entirely devoted to Kabeláč's music ("Homage a Miloslav Kabeláč", at the 33rd Festival Internationale de Strasbourg, 15th June 1971). The composer himself could not be there, because the communist regime had deliberately denied him permission to leave Czechoslovakia to help in the concert preparations. (The work was only to get its first performance in Prague in 1984, after Kabeláč's death, when the communist "normalising" regime was beginning to lose its grip.

Kabeláč had already written one of his most famous works for the unique Les Percussions de Strasbourg ensemble in 1962. This was *Osm invencí* [Eight Inventions] for percussion instruments (six players), op. 45. Dance groups have used this piece more than once, for example the Alvin Ailey Center Dance Theatre, New York (in this case with the title *Streams*). In 1966–1967 Kabeláč wrote yet another cycle for Les Percussions de Strasbourg – *8 Ricercari* op. 51 (for one to six players) which was premiered in France at a festival in Albi on the 24th of July 1976.

The Südwestfunk Baden-Baden Radio Orchestra was invited to the Prague Spring Festival in 1968 and its conductor Ernest Bour wanted to use the occasion to premiere a new Czech work. He approached Kabeláč who composed his *7th Symphony* op. 52 for large orchestra and recitor for the event. Shortly before, in November 1967, the government of the republic gave Kabeláč the honorific title of "artist of merit" for "lifelong activity as a composer".

Kabeláč's *Eufemias Mysterion* [The Mystery of Silence] for soprano and chamber orchestra, op. 50 was composed for the 1965 Warsaw Autumn Festival. It is written on four words in Ancient Greek (which the composer chose after consultations with the classical philologist Professor Ladislav Varcl), and is one of Kabeláč's most highly individual pieces.

When the conductor Karel Ančerl was putting together the programme of a concert to celebrate his 50th birthday, he chose to include – as a premiere – Kabeláč's *Suite* from the Music for Sophocles' Tragedy *Electra* (1956), a very unconventional and effective work.

Starting with the *Seventh Symphony* op. 44 (1961) and *Inventions* for percussion, Kabeláč wrote his pieces in a new notation (proportional), and the style is already that of the composer's last creative period: rational composition techniques are elaborated even further here, and are also ever more diverse. In the orchestral pieces of his last period Kabeláč gave more and more preference to the homogenous, usually unmixed sound of instrument group and the counterposing of these kind of timbre belts.

Kabeláč's most frequently performed orchestral pieces include the passacaglia *Mysterium času* [The Mystery of Time], op. 31, structurally composed as a grand graduated arch, and *Zrcadlení* [Mirroring], op. 49, nine miniatures using different kinds of compositional design, often on the principle of "reflection" of various types. *The Mystery of Time* was premiered, and subsequently presented many times abroad, by the conductor Karel Ančerl, who conducted the premieres of most of Kabeláč's orchestral works; in the case of *Mirroring* it was Václav Smetáček, the second of the two conductors who did the most to present Kabeláč's orchestral music abroad. It was Ančerl who conducted the very first performance of a Kabeláč orchestral piece abroad – the *2nd Symphony* at the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) Festival in Palermo on the 26th of April 1949.

For *Hamletovská improvizace* [Hamletian Improvisation] op. 46, composed for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, Kabeláč received a state prize in 1965 (with the title "state prize laureate", The piece had previously won the Czech Music Critics Prize for the best Czech Composition Premiered in 1964, the first year of this award. (The fortunes of the composer's works in the sixties provide a good index of hardening and thaw in the regime's attitude to culture during the period).

Kabeláč's last orchestra works was *Proměny* (Metamorfózy) II. *chorálu Hospondine, pomiluj ny* [Metamorphoses of the chorale Lord Have Mercy upon Us], the oldest Czech sacred song, op. 58, for piano and orchestra. It was completed in July 1979 in the final weeks of the composer's life (like a new treatment of the vocal version *Proměny I*. [Metamorphoses I].)

Among Kabeláč's chamber works we should mention *Wind Quintet*, op. 8 (1940 – for an unusual and acoustically very interesting instrumental ensemble: flut/piccolo, oboe /cor anglais, 1st clarinet/alto saxophone, 2nd clarinet/bass clarinet, French horn, bassoon), the *Sonatina for Oboe and Piano*, op. 24 (1955), and *Ballade for Violin and Piano* op. 27 (1955). Among his piano works the most



remarkable are *Eight Preludes* op. 30, and among his vocal works *Milostné písně* [Love Songs] op. 25 and *Ohlasy dálav* [Echoes of Distances] five chants for altos (without text) and piano, op. 47. Kabeláč's pieces for organ – *Two Fantasias* op. 32 and *Four Preludes* op. 48 are very often performed; Czech organists continually played them abroad even in the 1970s, when Kabeláč's music was once again harshly silenced by the totalitarian regime for political reasons ("My *Eufemias Mysterion* – the Mystery of Silence – has changed, especially in Bohemia and Moravia, into the real silence of all my music", Kabeláč wrote at the time in a letter to the directorate of the copyright association OSA on the 12th of February 1976).

Kabeláč much enjoyed composing vocal and piano pieces for children, and did so frequently.

It was above all on Miloslav Kabeláč's initiative and as a result of his tenacious efforts (together with Dr. Eduard Herzog, Dr. Vladimír Léběl and others) that a new studio for electro-acoustic music with modern equipment was founded at the radio station in Plzeň. Kabeláč's own creative work in this field resulted in the cycle *E fontibus Bohemicis* (Six Pictures from Czech Chronicles) op. 55, completed in Latin and Czech versions in 1972. Evident in this work, but of course in many other Kabeláč pieces as well particularly from his last, we find inspiration from the deeply ingrained humanist traditions of Czech and European culture.

Although the developmental range of Kabeláč's output is considerable – and could scarcely be otherwise in the work of a 20th-century composer – the constants of his distinctive, unmistakable creative idiom were already emerging in his earliest music; his evolution was smooth, and marked by clear continuity. Kabeláč's work is one of the high points of 20th-century Czech music. In recognition of his achievement a complete edition of his music will be published by Editio Barenreiter Praga.

ZDENĚK NOUZA

# kabeláč's message

## the electro-acoustic composition

### *E fontibus Bohemicis*, op. 55

It was characteristic of Miloslav Kabeláč the composer that he never shut the door on any impulse or inspiration that might potentially be fruitful for his music. He always, however, used such impulses and transformed them in a highly individual and often very unconventional way. He avoided useless stereotypes, and was continually attracted to new creative problems and new solutions. (This is particularly well demonstrated in his eight symphonies, each written for a different set of instruments and each quite differently conceived, specific and distinctive). Kabeláč had a very wide knowledge of contemporary music and the music of past epochs, and also knew a great deal about the music of non-European cultures, but he never accepted any work he encountered in a passive spirit. With each one he started – as a composer – a critical intellectual dialogue, whether sympathetic or polemic. Clearly he was very much taken with electronic music, which opens up a large new field of possibilities for composers, and he himself became one of its leading pioneers in this country.

When the potential for composition in a sound laboratory became apparent – first in the Radio and Television Institute in Prague and then particularly in the electro-acoustic studio of the radio station in Plzeň – Kabeláč started on work of his own. Naturally, in his electro-acoustic composition, a composer as distinctive and strong-minded as Kabeláč was going to imprint the new material with the typical features of his creative idiom just as he did when working with traditional note material.

At that time his idea was to create a three-part composition in "musique concrète" extracted using just the sound material of a bell. The bell that he chose was Zikmund in the Prague Cathedral of St. Vitus and on the 12th of September 1965 he made a recording of the bell from three places: in the tower over the bell, in the third castle courtyard and in the royal oratory of St. Vitus's Cathedral (it

turned out that only the recording from the tower, technically the best, was suitable for use in electro-acoustic composition). He planned to call the piece *Hradčany Vigils* and he continued to use the name long after he had basically changed the whole concept of the work, to which he finally gave the more precise name *E fontibus Bohemicis – Six Pictures from Czech Chronicles* in the last stages of composition.

By the spring of 1966 Kabeláč had created one part of the originally planned *Hradčany – Fantasia* on the sound of the Zikmund Bell. The hymn *Hospodine pomiluj ny* [Lord Have Mercy upon Us], created purely by electro-acoustic treatment of the sound of the bell, appears in the middle section of this work. In the meantime, however, the whole concept of the piece had begun to grow and change in the composer's mind. As originally intended the *Hradčany Vigils* were supposed to have primarily composition studies in the field of "concrete music". Gradually, however, elements of programmatic direction began to enter the plan. Here the idea of using the song *Lord Have Mercy upon Us* and the very name *Hradčany Vigils* may have played a part as catalysts.

At that time – and for a long time to come – Kabeláč was exploring the hymn *Hospodine... Lord Have Mercy upon Us* in all its aspects; he reflected on its character and musical structure, and traced its historical roots and connections. At the same time, however, the idea of going after other themes in Czech history and so giving the new composition the character of an urgent humanist message – something not at all usual in the particular field of music concerned – was evidently crystallising in his mind.

In the summer of 1966, Kabeláč interrupted work on the *Hradčany Vigils* and decided that he would keep what he had already completed just as a study, a sketch. The idea of creat-

ing a fantasia on the sound of the Zikmund Bell and the hymns Lord Have Mercy upon Us, however, he took over into a new plan, but with a completely new approach.

Kabeláč continued to think in terms of the sound of the bell Zikmund as composition material for "concrete music" but not as the sole material. Above all he decided that he would include the spoken word in the music to give the non-musical programmatic message of the piece a more concrete, urgent character. This was not an isolated decision in Kabeláč's work, since for very much the same reasons he added a recitor to a symphony orchestra for his *7th Symphony* (1967 – beginning of 1968, in which he uses words freely chosen from the Bible to philosophise on the recurrent themes of man and eternity, man and the world, good and evil, suffering, justice and injustice. His *3rd Symphony* (1969–1970) also has a programmatic colouring, once again using strongly biblical words. Later, recited text appears in one of Kabeláč's last works – in the *Sonata* for trumpet, percussion instruments, piano and recitor entitled *Osudová dramata člověka* [Fateful Dramas of Man] (completed in 1976; it is for the most part connected with the text

and music of Kabeláč's *7th Symphony* and other works of his). Finally, years before, in the cantata "Neustupujte!" ["Do not Retreat!"] of 1939, the first highly distinctive and artistically mature of Kabeláč's works, the sung word (but also of course at the end the quotation from the Hussite hymn *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* – You who are God's Warriors – well known to Czech audiences) enhances the urgent (programmatic) message and impact of the piece.

It was mainly in connection with work on his 7th and 8th symphonies that Kabeláč eventually returned to his electro-acoustic composition in the autumn of 1970. In the meantime his idea of the overall concept of the work had ripened. It had grown to six parts ("pictures") and acquired greater seriousness, making it one of the composer's major works. Although compositional considerations of the structure of an electro-acoustic work of music by no means became a secondary concern, they developed a strikingly programmatic edge.

For the definitive version Kabeláč chose the following as the basic compositional material of this "concrete music" – which he then processed in very varied and richly inventively

ways in the Plzeň studio: the sounds of the Zikmund bell, a una voce choral chant of the oldest Czech sacred song *Hospodine, pomiluj ny*, a choral recital of the text of this song, choral note clusters, recitations of several sentences from the sermon of Vojtěch Račkův mentioned below, his own treatment of the Hussite hymn *Povstaň, povstaň veliké město Pražské* [Arise, Arise Great City of Prague] for organ, a pure sinus generator note and spoken word. After consultations with PhDr. Ema Urbánková from the Prague National and University Library he chose, compiled and modified several texts for his own purposes. These were a text from the Czech Chronicle of Cosmas for the 1st picture of the work, selected extracts from the funeral oration of Vojtěch Račkův of Ježov at the funeral of Charles IV in the Cathedral of St. Vitus, and for the last picture a few words from the speech of Master Jan Hus to the professors and students of Prague University (from the end of a Latin Quodlibet disputation). Because all the spoken passages were originally in Latin, Kabeláč created his piece concurrently in two language versions, Latin and Czech, and for both of them chose the main Latin title, *E fontibus Bohemicis (visiones sex)* rendered in the Czech version by the subtitle



*Šest obrazů z českých letopisů* [Six Pictures from Czech Chronicles].

Kabeláč worked on this project in the electro-acoustic studio of the Plzeň Radio with technical help from ing. Čestmír Kadlec from the autumn of 1970 (with a short interruption in 1971) to the 1st of December 1972 (finished together with report on the 18th of January 1973). Although at this time Kabeláč was not feeling well, he still tried – particularly on the advice of Dr. Herzog – to finish the work as soon as possible. The political situation was rapidly deteriorating, the screws tightening, and Kabeláč rightly feared that he might be prevented from completing the piece in the Plzeň studio. The need to finish the work without delay meant that it was not possible to rehearse the Latin text to perfection with the recitor, especially in relation to accent and length of syllables. Unfortunately when the work was finished the basic material was wiped and so possible reinsertion of the Latin text was not an option.

On the 20th of January 1973 the electro-acoustic composition *E fontibus Bohemicis* was presented to the Plzeň radio in both versions, Latin and Czech, at a gala private occasion in the radio auditorium. The work had its public premiere in the Czech version at a concert in the Smetana Hall of the State Scientific Library in Plzeň on the 26th of March 1973.

Conscious of the need for gradation and contrast, in the overall structure of the work the composer produced a highly sensitive and thought out alternating arrangement of the parts involving the spoken words and the parts that depended for effect purely on “concrete music”, while retaining the chronological order of the historical themes. In terms of time proportions, the “pictures” vary in length from 3.15 minutes to 5 minutes, with only the 4th picture taking up a longer proportion – 7.45 minutes. The low dynamic level of the first picture with its quiet beginning symmetrically corresponds to the last picture with its hushed conclusion (a graduated arch). The chief dynamic climax is represented by the fifth picture – a wild storm unleashed from the electronically processed sound of the organ. The contrast makes the quiet simplicity of the end of the sixth picture even more effective. Kabeláč enhances the internal coherence and integrity of the work by taking parts of sound material (bells, organ, the song *Hospodine...*) from the pictures in which it is a defining element and introducing them into the other pictures: this is a kind of equivalent of the thematic work that we know in traditional composition techniques. Likewise a certain symmetry in extra-musical meanings is suggested between the first and last pictures: both take their themes from the past and turn to both the present and the future.

1st Picture – Cosmas: As an introduction to this picture one sentence (taken from the second preface to the Chronicle) is recited with-



out mixing in other sounds, and immediately creates the right mood for the perception of the work. Only then under a text selected from the 1st Book of Cosmas's Chronicle (after the words “Here begins the Czech Chronicle”) do we hear a generator sound to which a new sound is rapidly added as another element, created by polymorphic filtering and mixing of the basic sound material of the bell.

When “the eldest, whom the others accompanied as a lord” speaks to his retinue, the voice of the recitor is electro-acoustically slowed down and so lowered, producing the impression of a kind of different voice in direct speech. Under it we hear – again in complex electro-acoustic processing – the sound of the organ (here we catch the melody of the song *Arise, Arise Great City of Prague*) with a mix of generator tone. Two of the main sound elements of this “concrete music”, the sound of the bell and organ – are thus presented in a subtle and compositionally interesting form immediately in the first picture. Effective gradation proceeds to give the impression of a rich and very complicated polyphony, created here of course by electro-acoustic methods and finally issuing, in the identifiable sound colour of the organ, into a simple minor chord at the same time as the delivery of the words that provide the centre of gravity of this section in terms of meaning: “Welcome me, promised land, sought out by us with a thou-

sand strivings, once deprived of people in the time of the flood, now as in memory of mankind keep us safe from calamity and multiple out posterity from generation to generation.”

The 2nd Picture, called *Hospodine, pomiluj ny* [Lord Have Mercy Upon Us] with the subtitle *Fantasia on the oldest Czech sacred song*, is once again constructed with a great sense for setting the scene. The choral singing of the son Lord Have Mercy, collective recitation of its text and choral clusters are used as the basic sound material of the “concrete music”. This picture has a superbly vaulted structure. Kabeláč starts with an introductory sound created just by the electro-acoustic treatment of choral chant, and then adds the singing of the particular hymn, which emerges under the changeable but always present introductory note at first scarcely discernibly but then growing in power until it is fully recognisable. At the climax the collective recitation is added as an urgent prayer for “peace in the land” – and then in the descending curve of the gradation the recitation once again yields to the singing, which swells but then falls silent leaving only the introductory filtered sound.

The six-fold repetition of the final “*Krleš*” (i.e. *Kyrie eleison*) from the song *Lord, Have Mercy upon Us*, which appears in synchronisation with chimes of the bell at the beginning of the third picture creates a subtle thematic link



with the preceding picture. The choral "Křeš" soon fades and vanishes away and only the sound of the bell remains. Subsequently this part, called The Cathedral of St. Vitus with the subtitle Fantasia on the Sound of the Zikmund Bell, is constructed only from the sound material of the bell, i.e. from the clearly identifiable colour and chimes of the bell in various high registers to polymorphous sound colours in which the connection with the basic sound can scarcely be made out. Here there is also (as Kabeláč has explicitly said) a kind of sound suggestion of a line of Gothic windows running up and down (by filtering) and in close proximity there are symbolically rendered crosses (a running narrow sound belt is cut across by a short sound with a spectrum that ranges from low to high registers).

The sound material of the second and third picture – the Lord, Have Mercy upon Us and the sound of the bell – is also abundantly used in the following 4th part, the longest in the whole cycle. It is entitled The Funeral of Charles IV, with the subtitle The Sermon of Vojtěch Račkov of Ješov. Using sound the scene of this picture – once again with the emphasis on dramatic impact – is divided into two spaces: inside the cathedral, where the funeral is going on, and in front of the cathedral where the people (as if in the distance) sing the hymn Lord Have Mercy upon Us, which then particularly in the intervals between the individual sections of the sermons forms music for the ceremony (transposed in gradation – with increased speed – first by a fifth, and then by an octave higher). The whole picture is subtly enveloped in sound extracted from the basic sound material of the bell, but an identifiable tolling helps to create the idea of a funeral ceremony.

The 3rd Volume of Sources of Czech History from which Kabeláč (in collaboration with Dr. E. Urbánková) chose the text for this pictures, prints both the Latin addresses delivered at the funeral of Charles IV in the Cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague on the 15th of December 1378: the address by the Archbishop of Prague Jan Oček of Vlašim and the address entrusted by the archbishop to the learned man and famous orator Vojtěch Račkův of Ješov (the Latin form of his name is Adalbertus Ranconis de Erincinio in Bohemia), "scholastic of the Prague Cathedral, Master from Paris in holy theology and in the free arts". Vojtěch's speech was very long (and contained the first use of the phrase *pater patriae* – father of the country, to characterise Charles IV and many other flowery descriptions), and Kabeláč naturally chose just a few sentences that he thought could provide an effective and structurally useful basis for the funeral service in the 4th picture of the composition. The composer divided the sermon (funeral oration) into three main sections that differ both thematically and in terms of proportion. The first section is a lament for the dead, the second a resignation to painful reality and the third a wise, tranquil retrospective view of the course of life. In the sermon we hear a series of references to the Bible. Each of the sections of the funeral speech is intro-

duced in Kabeláč's composition by an important line that summarises the character and direction of the whole section. This sentence is repeated – with the acoustic illusion of the interior of the cathedral – by a male choir) once after the preacher right at the beginning of each section, and also between his individual paragraphs. Because the proportions of the sections are in the ratio 3 : 2 : 1, the choir delivers the introductory sentence three times in the first section, twice in the second, and once in the third. This kind of design was to some extent already suggested in the original wording of Vojtěch Račkův's sermon. The opening line that begins the funeral service in Kabeláč's piece ("Idcirco ego plorans et oculus meus deducens aquam, quia longe factus est a me consolator" – a free paraphrase of the Lamentations of Jeremiah 1 : 2) was also the opening line of Vojtěch's speech and then appears three more times at different points in the first section of the speech. The second section in Kabeláč's treatment opens with the line: "Everything has its time and everything under heaven runs its allotted course." The opening line of the third (shortest) section is "Calm your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for the worthy will receive just wages."

Here Kabeláč has managed to create an evocative picture of the last farewell to the great Czech ruler in the space of just a few minutes. And he has done more than that, since in line with the wording of Vojtěch's speech the composer turns to his listeners with philosophical reflections. The speech comes to an end, and from the space in front of the cathedral we now hear a more massive and grand rendering of the song Lord, Have Mercy upon Us, and the picture concludes with a final repetition of the prayer for "life and peace in the land".

The 5th Picture in the cycle, entitled Hussite Prague with the subtitle Fantasia on the Song Arise Arise, Great City of Prague thunders with a huge tide of sound. The basic sound material for the electro-acoustic treatment of this picture was an organ recording of Kabeláč's arrangement of the famous Hussite song, written some time around 1419 and preserved in the Jistebnice Hymnbook. The song is an appeal to fight against the Emperor Zikmund. Kabeláč did not take it over unchanged, but somewhat modifies its melodic form (and in one place its rhythm as a way of enhancing the symmetry). On the one hand he changed its tonality by giving it a minor colouring, and on the other he successively drew in its pitch range from a major tenth to an octave by reducing some full tone steps to semitones but preserving the basic melodic outline. He accompanied this modified melody with only a second voice in the bottom parallels of minor thirds or major seconds, but on the organ this two-part pattern sounds in two top and in two bottom octaves. Apart from this basic form he recorded another literal transposition a fourth lower and a fourth higher. In addition he included clusters in the basic sound materials.

This then was the basic material, recorded on

organ, and Kabeláč now used it to build this part of his cycle. It starts with a steep dynamic gradation, which is only the vertical inversion of the final prolonged reverberation. In melodic outline the composition clearly follows the course of the song, but very diverse sound version and electro-acoustic treatments. The combinations (at different speeds as well) again create the impression of a complex polyphonic structure. From the point of view of sound gradation this picture is the dynamic climax of the work.

If the Hussite Prague of the fifth image represented primarily the Prague of the Hussite warriors, Hussite wars and storms, in the following, closing picture it is the Prague of the preacher and thinker Jan Hus that appears. It is called Hus's Praise of Prague. Here the spoken word once again comes to the fore. In this case it is chosen from Hus's speech to an assembly of Prague University. To the recitation the other elements of bell and singing of Lord Have Mercy upon Us are added, both electro-acoustically processed (and generator sound). Throughout this picture the hymn Lord Have Mercy is played in augmentation (and therefore also in a deep register, this giving the impression of male voices only). At the same time the filtered sound of the bell in different forms connects up with the entire course of the section. Yet again the composer chose just a few words from the conclusion of Hus's speech, but they are words that despite the distance of several centuries still speak urgently to the present and to future ages – to the Czech nation and to the whole of humanity. Hus here speaks in simple, subdued words without pathos or epic affectation. He speaks with deep wisdom. At the end of his speech Hus celebrates Prague, the city with which Kabeláč too was conjoined by his entire life and work. In his conclusion the composer concentrates Hus's message without shifting its meaning into the lapidary words: "And you all – be men of courage, be of one mind in truth and love each other!" This line is repeated by a male voice in a number of shifts (the composer's idea was to evoke a Hus multiplying before our eyes), until at last the recitor utters these deeply meaningful words into a subdued quietened conclusion.

The cycle *E fontibus Bohemicis* is undoubtedly one of Kabeláč's most weight pieces. It combines the ravishing compositional structuring of the field with an urgent humanist message, typical for Kabeláč. The composer is not free with strong words and gestures, but when he speaks through his work, he cannot be ignored. This is usually the way with great, powerful creative people. It is certainly the way with Miloslav Kabeláč.

ZDENĚK NOUZA

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