

czech music

quarterly magazine



2

Peter Graham

2005

Vladimír Lébl

John Tyrrell

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editorial



Dear Reading

Our aim, and I hope we are more or less succeeding, is to bring you information about the kind of themes, people and events we consider interesting, excellent and generally worthy of note. But to write about Czech music also means to uncover its painful places, which of course doesn't mean filling our pages with information about bad Czech music, but does mean drawing attention to certain wider historical contexts that have had an unfortunate influence on Czech music in the past and sometimes still do. To pretend that there have been no negative factors in Czech music would not only be unfair, but would deprive our readers of an essential part of the picture, and the chance to get a better understanding of those people and phenomena that emerged despite the times and conditions, and became true originals in the face of abnormal and deforming circumstances. Without them Czech music would not be what it is.

Obviously, almost half a century of totalitarian rule could not have failed to make its mark on Czech musical culture. Many *possible ways* of composing and playing music (and of developing cultural life in public at all) were systematically suppressed or curtailed by the communist regime. The outstanding musicologist Vladimír Lébl was one of the many people to suffer the stifling effects of communist power, but in one of his texts (which you will find immediately after the portrait of Lébl written by his colleague of many years, the musicologist Jitka Ludvová), he briefly but very persuasively shows how the attempt to restrict and confine Czech music in the name of various ideals goes back far earlier than the rise of the doctrine of socialist realism. And while socialist realist doctrines have generally been consigned to history, much of what Lébl criticised is still detectable in the atmosphere of Czech music to this day. And what about the "true originals"? Read our interview with composer and musicologist Peter Graham, who is definitely highly interesting, excellent and worthy of note. The third number of Czech Music will come out in September.

Au revoir until then

PETR BAKLA
EDITOR

2005

Contents

2

Page 2

The work is never done
Interview with Peter Graham

PETR BAKLA

Page 12

Vladimír Lébl

JITKA LUDVOVÁ

Page 15

Czech Musica Nova

VLADIMÍR LÉBL

Page 18

A little distance can be beneficial
Interview with John Tyrrell

JANA JANULÍKOVÁ

Page 22

Reviews

Cover: excerpts from graphic scores by Peter Graham (collage)

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PETR BAKLA

peter graham: the work is never done

It's over-dramatised, to my taste, but otherwise quite accurate. I'm simply the messy type whose element is chaos and who manages to lose everything he picks up. That easily explains the number of unfinished things... And also I've never felt the need to create some sort of „artistic šmé“ around me (šmé is the Brno expression for pretence – here I mean “personality image”). I've never had time for anything like that. It's a fact that I don't make my living by composing, and I have (in the pure sense) quite an *amateur* attitude to it. It really is fundamentally important to me to do what I enjoy. I don't feel bound by any norms or adherence to some kind of movement. Perhaps I could quote Morton Feldman here: “Every morning I get

up and make a revolution against myself...” I must admit that I'm not much impressed by any kind of clearly defined personal style even when it comes to the great masters – I feel much more comfortable with someone like Wallace Stevens, a poet who adjusts his opinions with every poem. Just yesterday I was rung up by the composer Martin Smolka, who wanted me to help him on the piano with some background music for television. When we were chatting about the fee he wittily said that my quality couldn't be expressed in money and that it would be hard to explain to anyone who didn't know me well exactly why I was important... I don't know myself.

Pleasure in creation is one thing, but another thing is a definite (even if temporary) satisfaction in what one has created. How important is that “having got it written” feeling for you? Are you spurred on just by the need to compose, or is there also a desire to have actually composed something (brilliant) and at least partly “have it finished”?

That's quite an interesting question! But in fact I don't make that kind of distinction. As a child and in my youth I used to get great pleasure from a finished piece of work – it's really a peculiar feeling, seeing something that started as a sort of vague vision taking material form in the artefact of a score. But the older I get the more I have the feeling

that a work is never ready, and that even after finishing the score you have to go on working on it with the performers and then write it anew. And the fact is that I've set aside the majority of my finished pieces for reworking – but when am I going to get round to it...? So far I've only managed to do so in a very few cases. I hope that the second versions are usually better, but I wouldn't like to say they were the definitive versions. A composition usually takes a very long time to mature. For example I often find myself working up ideas I had when I was still at the conservatory. Even though I quite often write something in a very short period, in most cases it's the result of very long-term thinking before hand, ripening and ideas that have

been properly. I have a vast heap of paper at home, but it's all just initial experiments, and essentially it's as if I'm starting over time and time again, testing different directions, going back here or there. It's more a kind of "big dance", or to put it better "Brownian movement" that some kind of "movement forward". At all events I see it more in front of me than behind me...

In front of me I still have a mass of problems that I need to solve. For example one of my big problems is notation. After experimenting with notation in my early period (and finding practically no understanding for it anywhere), I went back to more or less conventional notation, which I use in different variants. The advantage here is that for musically trained

me. It seems to me that it's just a question of entirely natural *feeling* – but the problem is that my *feeling* is based on influences that are different from the ones to which well-trained musicians have been exposed. My aesthetics are different from the aesthetics in which they have been trained. I would like to find a method of notation that would provide a more precise means of expressing this difference in conception, communicating not just the different character of the notes themselves, but also a certain relaxation in the frame of a whole range of parameters, especially those that are usually considered fundamental, i.e. rhythm and pitch. For the moment I cope with the issue on a piece-by-piece basis and try to work as closely as

In 1998, in an essay devoted to Brno musical culture, the leading Czech composer, conductor and essayist Petr Kofroň wrote the following about you: „The work of Peter Graham is an example of absolute freedom. In his case the motto, “I do whatever I enjoy” is taken to what might be thought absurd lengths. The usual kind of musicologist, if trying to assess his music, would be forced a dreadful conclusion: Graham doesn't actually have any kind of style of his own; one piece differs from another, one day it is electronic music, the next day a song for children, the next day a visual score, the next a classicist violin concerto... It's as if each composition of his says, “Do I have to? No I don't!” While most composers try to paste together the little elements of their works that seem to them “original”, so that their music should be “instantly recognisable to everyone”, Graham resists any urge to develop such personal stereotypes. What is most important to him is just whatever he is doing at a particular moment, and this has a whole range of effects that are not so usual in serious music. On the one hand nothing necessarily has to be completed, nothing has a set “time limit”, and so if something stops being enjoyable, it is set aside (sometimes until it starts to be enjoyable again). And on the other hand, once something is complete it stops being “fun” and so it is very hard in Graham's case to put together some coherent “inventory of his oeuvre” (a whole series of things are lost, forgotten, given away). The meaning of Peter Graham is something “outside music”, not a matter of individual pieces, but a global view of life and creative attitude. Don't say anything, just listen. Don't think anything up, everything is already here. Just repeat. You are not the centre, but just a part of it all. Do not cultivate your “I” but just try to repeat the “I” of everything with everything.” What is your reaction to that?

been there for ages. At other times this tends to be balanced by inability to finish off something that started off promisingly just because some kind of “inner note” that leads you into unknown territory has broken off. It could be completed on the basis of logic and a certain technique, but to try and do so doesn't attract me, because knowing everything in advance has very little value for me. For me composing is much less like building a house than like pushing my way through thick jungle or maybe walking with my eyes closed along a rope stretched over a precipice...

When I think about it, I haven't ever actually “finished” anything. When someone asks me what I've already written, I can't even remem-

performers it offers a certain relatively easy means of communication between us. At the same time, however, it's the source of many misunderstandings, since this type of notation brings with it a certain performance convention that usually I try to steer completely clear of. This means that I'm often oppressed by the sense of the inadequacy of the score, which means that I then have to give extra explanation to the musicians because it doesn't communicate the expressive side of the thing. And I confess that this usually becomes clearer to me myself only when I am faced with musicians' failure to understand. When I write something, everything is clear to

possible with the performers. The essential condition is getting beyond a purely professional relationship and approaching mutual trust and human proximity. This is why I also give precedence to individuals or small groups. I don't find it easy to imagine how I would manage this with large ensembles and I don't think anyone would have time for it in that kind of situation...

During our conversations I've already noticed many times that you find the composer – performer relationship complicated and difficult. I remember how you once pregnantly summed the whole problem up by saying that “the composer doesn't communicate with the public, but with the performer”. This



Orpheus' Garden (1976/1992-; excerpt)

puts paid to the usual cliché about how the composer communicates something to the public. But don't you think that the mediating role of the performer in conveying the message could be an advantage as well? It means that the composition acquires a certain degree of objectivity, which can't be achieved with the old "folk" method of creation (the composer being performer himself)...

When I was young I thought that a performer simply plays a work and that's it. I mean that it's a more or less mechanical matter of trained specialists converting the notation into sound. Experience (and not just my own direct experience, but what I keep observing around me), has driven me to the opposite conclusion, which is that in the overwhelming majority of cases it is the performer who determines whether a piece is successful or not. The best way to grasp the difference between mechanical conversion and *real performance* is to think of the computer demo-version, where everything is correct, but it's actually unbearable to listen to the thing. This is because performance is always an *interpretation of a text* – which is what it is interesting! Naturally it's easy to judge the interpretation of a text we know. The difficulty arises in cases when we don't know the text. This means that the listener is in a position a little like that of an illiterate serf when the lord's scribe is reading out to him a letter he has received from someone unknown. And if the letter is full of unfamiliar expressions, then the poor serf may not even be able to work out that it's from some distant relations who is leaving him a fortune... And if it's a kind of subtle poetry (as is often the case with contemporary music...) but read in an official voice, concerned mainly with very careful pronunciation and its own importance, then the recipient just shakes his head incredulously and doesn't want to hear anything like it again. The most important thing with a text is to grasp the meaning, and interpretation is a great adventure. What's more, we only consider the composers who found good per-

formers as good composers! How would Arvo Pärt have ended up if there hadn't been a Gidon Kremer and Hilliard Ensemble? Where would Cage have been without David Tudor? And just consider that even as late as the time I was studying at the conservatory, Anton Bruckner was regarded as an unbearable turgid and tedious composer. And as far as I know it was Sergiu Celibidache, who then devoted huge care to his music and managed to convince the world that Bruckner was one of the greatest symphonic composers. I in fact wrote a short essay about the importance of performance a while ago. It has never been published and so maybe I can quote it here: When people talk about the crisis of contemporary music (and they've been talking about it for a long time now and pretty often too), they mostly talk about one or both (depending on their particular line) of the two poles represented by composer and listener. The composer writes a "message" and the listener is the person it is addressed to. If this model, tried and tested over the centuries, has suddenly stopped working, that according to some people it is because composers have recklessly abandoned the reliable models of classical music and are trying to grab all the attention for themselves, "each with a bias for his or her particular method". According to others, the reason for the failure of communication lies more in the low level of education of the listeners, who prefer shallow entertainment to the serious business of keeping up with creative developments. Both views are the same in the sense that they overlook the function of the mediating link in the chain, which is the performer (and also the organiser). The general idea seems to be that if a performer has had the proper training, and has mastered the standard repertoire and so shown technical and musical qualifications, and has even won competition laurels, then he or she must be capable of coping with essentially any kind of demand from the composer and smoothly conveying it to its destination, i.e. the listener. It is an illusion that is regularly shown up in practice, but it is so deep-rooted that it

occurs to few to think about it, even though the facts are staring everyone in the face. In jazz, rock, pop and folk music the performer is essentially identical with the music. For much of the general public the singer presenting a song is even considered the "author" when he or she is not. In serious music there is a certain distance between the performer and music. The classically trained musician wants above all to show off his own abilities – as it were independently of the notes that are given to him. Let us not forget that the aristocratic music of the feudal period was played mainly by a caste of servants and something of the behaviour of servants (who as servants naturally try to steal a march on their lordships but at the same time pretend that they are actually just fulfilling their obligations) remains atavistically encoded in the mentality of orchestral musicians. Woe to the composer who doesn't have a devoted bum bailliff in the form of the conductor! (In any case, bailliffs too are only servants and sometimes happily take the side of those they are meant to be overseeing... Just remember the famous scandal in New York Philharmonics in 1961, when the orchestra players sabotaged the performance of John Cage's *Atlas Eclipticalis* and Leonard Bernstein joined them, despite the fact he himself had commissioned the piece.) For a long time I considered the years I spent in the Divadlo na provázku [a legendary theatre in Brno] as lost, from the point of view of my musical development, but later I realised that I had learned one fundamental thing there: how important it is for an actor to understand the situation that he acts out. And exactly the same applies to the performer of music! Otherwise there is a risk of his wasting his energy on inessential things that actually damage the way the music ought to sound. The secret of great performers is the capacity to recognise where and what to add or take away. The 19th century saw the emergence of a certain ideal of performance which has survived to this day in conservatory and academic teaching. It's the idea of a "perfect" universal tone, which retains its quality in every circumstance (in all registers). Hand in hand with this aesthetic came the ideal of the *virtuoso*, who by his perfect playing sanctifies any kind of musical composition, which becomes in this sense just a means for the presentation of the abilities of the musician. A piece that doesn't provide enough opportunities for showing virtuoso powers is regarded as unsuccessful or second-rate (the example of Brahms's *Violin Concerto*). In Freudian terms it is the performer's Ego that is clearly dominating here. As a result a whole series of works were written by composers who were themselves virtuoso performers, which very clearly illustrate this approach (Bruch, Lalo, Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski, Ysaye). When I listen to it today, I feel something operetta-like and vulgar there. Or could it be the way that it is played...? Over the 20th century, however, this essen-

tially "immature" and one-sided ideal has survived. New music meanwhile became more and more at odds with this kind of template of performance. Music also started to be about other things. Life has changed and the earlier concept of beauty is slightly ridiculous (the diction of the actors in old films is a good example). Musical interpretation, however, remained wedded and glued to expressive stereotypes which – transferred to different texts – produce outlandish effects. Often at concerts we start feeling, "What a brilliant performer, and what a pity that the music he's playing is so dull!". But a good performer is precisely a performer who convinces us that the music he is playing is interesting! When Sviatoslav Richter played Vaňhal's *Sonatina*, a piece usually plonked out by children in music schools, the public realised that even a trifle like that could shine like a pearl!

And coming back to that question of "objectivity". That's also important of course – interpretation is a never-ending process. But it is tremendously important that the piece should stand on its own feet from the beginning and go in the direction that its composer assigned it. On its journey through the world it may then encounter all kinds of people and experience all kinds of things with them, but it's a pity if it loses its own identity right at the outset, and when that happens it usually falls into a ditch somewhere and nobody has any interest in it any more...

Could you now tell us briefly something about your own life as a composer against the background of these "unfinished" pieces that you nonetheless consider important?

I'm afraid it will be rather a long list. Paradoxically what I consider important tend to be the pieces about which not much is known or which haven't even been played – and so essentially they are important only for me. Maybe I could define as it were main periods and areas of interest that I've come through, but you should remember that they overlap in various ways and I often return to very old sketches and ideas.

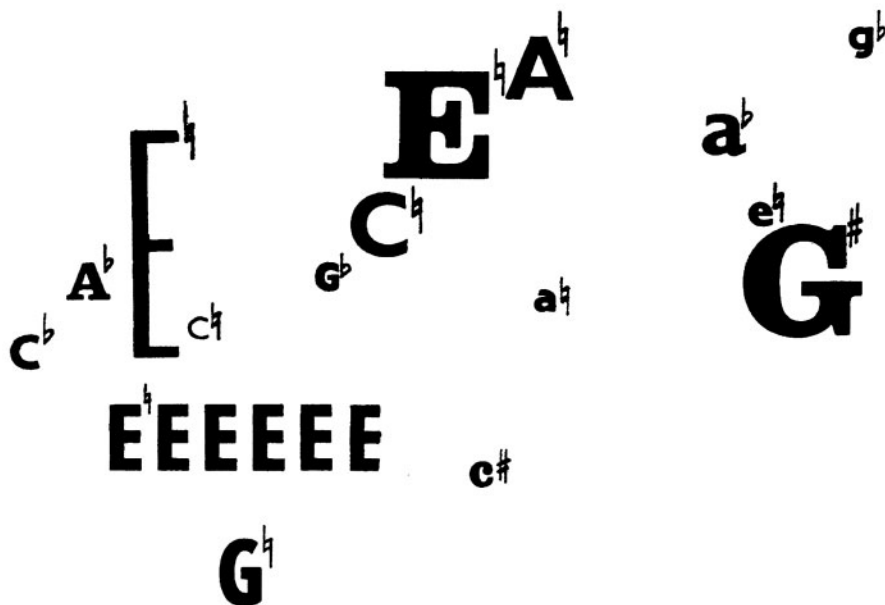
My early period was probably the most experimental; what principally interested me were the reactions of performers to strange situations. This included attempts to exploit the psychological or physical differences between players directly in the creation of musical structure. So for example in *Punctum contra punctum* for two pianos (1974) the performers together assemble a certain form from the visual notation on transparent sheets, and then have to learn it and later do it from memory. *Fantasia for 6 cellos* (1974) lets the players realise the intervals on the basis of the span of their hands and estimate the parameters from a suggestive visual notation. In *Meditation for Organ* (1974) what is already quite an elaborated visual graphic part is no longer used for notation of the sound, but for distracting the attention of the interpreter, who is supposed to be brought to uncontrolled improvisation in this way...

In this period I was inspired by Vladimír Lébl's theory that "the result of the composer's activities is not music, but the score", and so I focused mainly on external problems of notation and the external form of the score. I was also interested in meta-musical and, para-musical ways of expression, or downright musical pataphysics (for example an incredibly knotted washing line called *As Yet Undeciphered Notation in Knot Script*, 1975) and I created various objects (one memento of this activity is the "musical can" on the jacket of the CD *Der Erste*), and I was involved in the mail art movement. In this context my most important work was a little book of crazy notations entitled *Verdrehte Musik* (1976), which I sent to Dieter Schnebel, who sent me a collection of his scores in return.

The concrete sound form of the pieces was quite secondary for me at the time. The emphasis was on conception and notation. Unfortunately, for these pieces I didn't manage to find performers who would be interested and in any case in the conditions of the time there wasn't really anywhere to present them. I presented some experiments at the conservatory, or in the Small Music Theatre at Alois Piňos's meetings, and several just on a private basis or at sporadic events for a closed circle.

Gradually my interest also started to shift to internal structure and the construction of the musical form. To stand for all of these pieces I could at least mention *KAMÁ* for orchestra, tape and piano and two synthesisers (1978) and *Triple Concerto for French Horn, Violin, Piano and Large Orchestra* (which also

Twenty-three Still-lives (1994/2002; No. 1)



Get Out of whatever CAGE (1992–; excerpt)

included organ and bagpipes, 1980). Here various interval selections are employed, and in the *Triple Concerto* certain algorithmic techniques as well. The *Fantasia for Ten Stringed Instruments* (1980) then progresses (while retaining the same tonal successions) from pseudo-Baroque chords to aleatorics. Thanks to a former fellow student who married an Italian conductor this was the first of my pieces to be presented abroad.

I wrote the *Nocturne* for bass clarinet, piano

and tape (1981) as a commission for the Swedish bass clarinetist Tommi Lundberg, but the different parts are completely independent and can be played separately or in any kind of combinations. The main part is the piano part, however, where Chopinesque chord breakdowns encounter and clash with twelve-tone punctualist shattering. A strong tension between these two musical worlds develops and here the confrontation is perhaps the sharpest – at the same time the composition is very delicate, subtle, perhaps even elegant. I think that it's expressive exposition is not entirely usual.

In the same year (1981) I also wrote my *First String Quartet*, although I had already produced a first version in 1977. It involves a succession of different tonal systems, which each in their own different way illuminate the same interval selection: the first movement (slow) is in sixth-tones, the second (*delirando*) in the ordinary semi-tone system, the third (an emotional viola solo with a "cold and indifferent" accompaniment from the other instruments) is in quarter tones and the fourth (*without inhibitions*) is outside system – with the instruments arbitrarily tuned and a preponderance of non-tone and non-fixed sounds (rustles and glissandos). For a long time no one had any interest in performing it, but after about fifteen years it was played in Prague by the German Hába Quartet.

The *Duo for oboe and accordion* (1982), on the other hand, has been played relatively often thanks to its truly outstanding interpreters, Milan Kaňák (oboe) and Jan Tesař (accordion). It's a slightly eccentric work, essentially all on a tonal drone, which at one moment changes and only returns with the final chord. This harmonic primitivism is

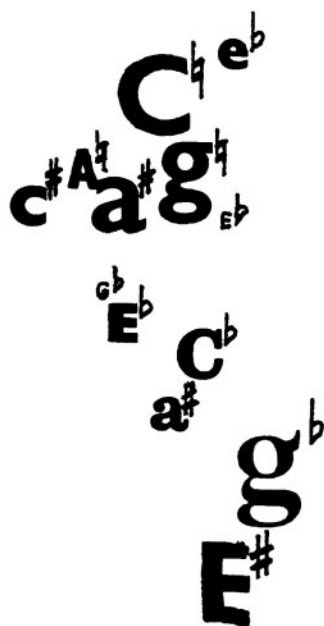
bejewelled with virtuoso, constantly mounting action on both instruments. The aesthetic tends to the oriental or at least Balkan – it was something that had been maturing in me for a long time and suddenly it was ready... I remember writing the whole piece in three days... From today's point of view it seems to me that I was sailing in the lee of the sort of "rustical postmodernism" which over the eighties began to appear in Californian but also Hungarian architecture. But I only learnt that much later.

The eighties were a period when I tried out different paths. It's from this period that most of the unfinished sketches probably come. At that time I had material and personal problems, and I didn't have much idea of the way forward. Composing became ever more a private matter for me. I remember what a great encouragement it was for me when I encountered the music of Morton Feldman – in one evening programme on the Vienna Radio they broadcast a programme of his short chamber pieces and for me it was a revelation. It helped me to start trusting my own intuitions more. At that time I was writing pieces that were composed outside any kind of system or based on pretty strange principles. For example *Křehké vztahy* (Brittle Relations, 1986) is an attempt at a sort of "archaeological" re-harmonisation of a cut version of Cage's one voice *Cheap Imitation* (which as is well-known was produced by "de-harmonising" and melodic transformation of Satie's *Socrates*).

Another example is the orchestral piece *Adrienne*, where the original piano solo is "retouched" by other instruments. The quite long *Piano Sonata* (1985) was an attempt to master a large form, classically divided into four movements but rather non-classical in content.

The three-quarter-of-an-hour *Chamber Symphony with texts by Marie Filipiová "Bare Feet"* (1986) was a kind of summing up of my development up to that time. I still consider the ideas of this naive painter on art to be among the most penetrating studies of the theme. Under mask of clumsy formulation they express precisely what art is about, at least as I understand it. A composition is actually illustratively programmatic – only the "subject" is the process of composition itself. On its first performance (admittedly very poor) *Bare Feet* met great resistance from the public and very hostile reactions from colleagues who were offended by the naive themes. Only Petr Kofroň appreciated the piece and over the year he presented it several times with the Agon Ensemble. Although I've revised it again and again for these occasions, I'm still not satisfied and the theme is a continual challenge to me.

In 1989 I moved to Prague. A new marriage brought me a new name and in fact a new identity. In the spring I started to work as a manual labourer at the Czech Music Fund. I was responsible for the stores of note mate-



rial. So plenty of scores went through my hands – new and historical. All of it interested me, and I studied what I could. It was also at this time that I became close friends with Eduard Herzog, who was already retired and so pretty well always had time for me. He was an outstanding musicologist, one of the best minds that Czech musical science and culture in general ever had [editor's note: for example he was the first, before H. Eimert, to calculate a complete list of all-interval twelve-tone rows]. Together we listened to recordings from his marvellous collection, which contained music from literally all over the world and all historical periods. Herzog was an exceptional teacher as well. When he wanted to explain something he would present the facts in such a way that you managed to deduce the point yourself. It was Herzog who forced me to listen to Mozart and Beethoven, composers that had scarcely interested me at all before then. It was probably partly because of his influence that my music became clearer, as it were. I strove for more objective positions, and often reached for simple common chords, although I tried to combine them in unconventional ways. The octave was also a full-value interval in my concept of harmony, and in the same way the concrete position of each tone was important. A series of subsequent pieces were based on a kind of abstract "harmonic" plan. Thanks to David Matthews I got a commission from the English Chamber Orchestra for the *Violin Concerto* which was then performed at a concert of Czech music in London in November 1989. The atmosphere was very excited at the time, with Czechs in the centre of attention [because of the revolution], and the piece was quite well reviewed. But I wasn't satisfied with the form of the violin part, which I still have put on one side to be reworked. But probably the idea hasn't yet ripened... In England I got to know many interesting people and established contacts that I still keep up today... But contacts with Prague musicians, especially around the Agon Orchestra, were also important to me. In 1990 I wrote the clarinet trifle *Jiná geometrie [Different Geometry]* for Kamil Doležal; in fact it was originally just a little piece for the opening of the exhibition of the same name, but in the end it became a sort of emblem of the new style. 1990 was relatively fertile, and of everything I wrote then I should mention at least *Tichá hudba pro tři klarinety [Quiet Music for Three Clarinets]*, a slightly mysterious, not very highly structured piece, in which coolly flowing long notes sound like electronic music. In December 1990 I then wrote *Stabat mater* for mixed choir. I remember I composed it after coming back from the hospital. I got into a strange trance while doing it and on the 12th of December just as I had finished the last page, the telephone rang. It was my mother to tell me that my father had just died. It was a great loss for me. My father had led me to music and even though I had never brought

him much joy, he had always given me great support. Immediately afterwards, in a dazed state, I wrote *Ave verum corpus* and soon after that my *Third String Quartet*, "*Lunch break in the Factory of the Future*" (1991) where things that are very difficult to understand are going on under an unobtrusive, as it were classicist surface. The quartet was specially commissioned (again thanks to David Matthews) for a festival in Cardiff, where it was also performed and very well received. In 1991 I met György and Márta Kurtág, who were in Prague to play Kurtág's four-handed *Játékok* and his arrangements of the Bach trio sonatas. Their performance and my personal meeting with these beautiful people left a deep impression on me and I wrote a small four-handed trifle called *The Lovers* (1991) for them. It is just a few notes derived from their names, but bashful and mutually tender behaviour – the kind I noticed between them – is prescribed in the pauses. It was the Kurtágs who really brought it home to me that musical performance is not just notes played, but overall mastery of the situation which is somehow contained in the notes. And indeed the whole series of pieces that followed, for example *Der Erste* for female voice, bass flute, bass clarinet, accordion, double bass and percussion on a text by Franz Kafka (1993), or *23 zátiší [Still Lifes]* for piano (1994), the major vocal cycles like *Kafka-Lieder* (1996) and *Žalmy [Psalms]* (1997), the ensemble piece *MOENS* (1998) and many others, can be understood as particular situations in which "something is happening" which cannot very well be expressed in words, but is present in as it were the dramatic roles of individual instruments or groups and in a kind of current of energy that needs to be followed. The second version of the *Second String Quartet* (1988/2000) and *Subida* on a text of St. John of the Cross (2002) then emphasise the sense of a movement as the listener proceeds through various different musical situations, contrasting – bizarre, humorous and toilsome – as if on some great journey. My most recent direction, although this relates mainly to pieces in progress, is one of a renewed search for new spaces: on the one hand the depersonalised objectivity of the organ cycle *Things so simple...* (2004), and on the other the hypersensitive subjectivity of piano *Mazurkas*. Now I've even written one polka (as yet without a name). I still don't know what will develop out of it... But maybe I should also mention the jazz themes that keep cropping up along the way, and are often the a source for "more serious" composition as well.

You have already said that distinctiveness of personal style isn't something that impresses you much. Obviously a relates issue is that of originality. For some people originality is actually a chimera ("we all still do the same

things") but for others it is quite a fundamental value, which they apply to themselves and by which they rate the results of their work. What is your attitude? And by what do you actually measure the success of your work?

I'll start with the second part of the question. Success is a very relative term. When a little kid plays a scale quite well, its a greater success than when a concert performer plays Chopin "quite well"... My motto has always been that "Failure is more important than success". Because failure forces you to think and work on yourself, while success leads you to believe that you are actually good, and especially when you get well paid for it, most people think that everything's all right... External success – even if it can make a big impression on someone – is quite a misleading thing, and usually people pay heavily for it.

Naturally, I've been blessed by plenty of artistic and other failures in my life, but my attitude hasn't changed much. Even today I would be simply unable to let myself be guided by what "people want", as they say. And I have never lifted a finger in my life for some kind of personal advancement. If I have ever achieved something at any time in my life, it has always been on the initiative of my friends, to whom I owe a great deal, but have also done the same for them. This interview is itself something of the sort. Life is mutual exchange! Unlike quite a few of my colleagues I've never even suffered from a sense of being insufficiently appreciated, and I've never grumbled about my music being so rarely played. I take things as they come and as they go.

Maybe it would be worth thinking about what real success is. Irvine Arditti once put it nicely when he said it was when people listen to a piece attentively from the beginning to the end. When the atmosphere in a hall changed for a while, like that time at JAMU when Martin Erdmann and his students showed how to play Morton Feldman and during *Four Instruments* the public suddenly went so quiet you could have heard a pin drop... Or when Jarmila Češková once played my *Fragile* – it was the last piece of the concert, and there had been plenty of other musicians and all kinds of music beforehand, and the audience was visibly tired, and I said to myself, "God, how are these people going to survive my punctualist tinkling?" but then Jarmila came (and you know that great musicians are already concentrating when they come on, and not just when they start to play), and she played it in a way that meant no one dared to move an inch. She managed to give those long pauses an almost erotic tension and she touched the keyboard so tenderly and bashfully that it even slightly moved people who definitely were not well disposed to me...

What I mean by *real success* is when music enters a space and fills it up so naturally that you forget to think of anything, the expert

stops concentrating on how it is done and the layman just sits there, simply listens and experiences what we most frequently call *poetry*. It is when you can feel the beat of angel wings in the hall.

I remember the dress rehearsal before the premiere of *Duo for oboe and Accordion*. It was in 1982 in Ostrava. Milan Kaňák and Jan Tesař began to play. I turned and looked out of the window. And suddenly that music somehow combined with what was outside, and at the same time permeated the whole space and me, and what had once been just inside me was all at once sounding all around me. I stopped listening critically and gave myself up to the moment. Now that I remember it, that was really *success* – the musicians themselves were caught unawares by the way their instruments combined and what actually came out of them. Some light came on for them, since at the beginning they had looked at their parts with some suspicion. In the evening I was on tenterhooks wondering if they would manage it again, but they played like demons and people seemed quite captivated. That was great, but of course I had already experienced my *success* the moment that the musicians had understood what the piece was about and how it ought to sound. Since then they've played it several times more and always very successfully. That piece also brought us much closer together. And that is the kind of success I care about. Publicity, recordings, competitions, commissions and so on – it's all very fine and perhaps has its importance, but these are external things and anyone clever can manipulate them. For me it's more the inner feeling that is the criterion of success.

Here we actually get around to answering the first part of the question. It could be said that there are two types of originality – external originality, based on clever carefully judged “gimmicks” that are intended to ensure success on the market (for example deciding to wear the same hat all the time so

that the crowd will always recognise me) – this isn't much for me. For external success it is clearly important to keep on linking one's name with one thing, with permanent distinguishing marks – for as long as it takes before people start noticing you. Only when you do something original in this sense and it's a success, then you are in a trap, because people no longer want anything else from you. I felt very sad once looking in London galleries and seeing them selling new pictures by Antonio Tapičs, which looked essentially the same as his pictures from the end of the 1950s. In my view, an art work that keeps repeating itself in this way in order to satisfy the ideas of customers, ceases to be an art work and becomes a *commodity*. From commodities we require quality, reliability, a guarantee. The name of the artist is often considered a kind of guarantee and so everyone is actually trying to “make a name for themselves”. But is this really an artistic aim? Or is it just the attempt to win success on the market?

Natural originality emerges when someone has been so deeply involved in something that he or she no longer cares what the others think of it. Such originality is innate, however. We often meet it in children and we had it once ourselves. But who keeps it? In the end you do what is given you, and it is good if you manage to find it in yourself and not to rush somewhere else. Personally I'm not to keen on the “*proper way to do things*”. Or rather, I might want to know how, but I don't want to use it in such a form.

I'm in fact continually testing out my own originality. What will happen if I take some conventional material? What will happen if I arrange it this or that way? What will happen if I use one or another compositional technique? Occasionally, as an exercise I write a melody in the frame of the most primitive conventions (for example two times sixteen bars or normal blues) – just in order to discover what can be done in such straitjacket conventions. I think that it's good to exercise

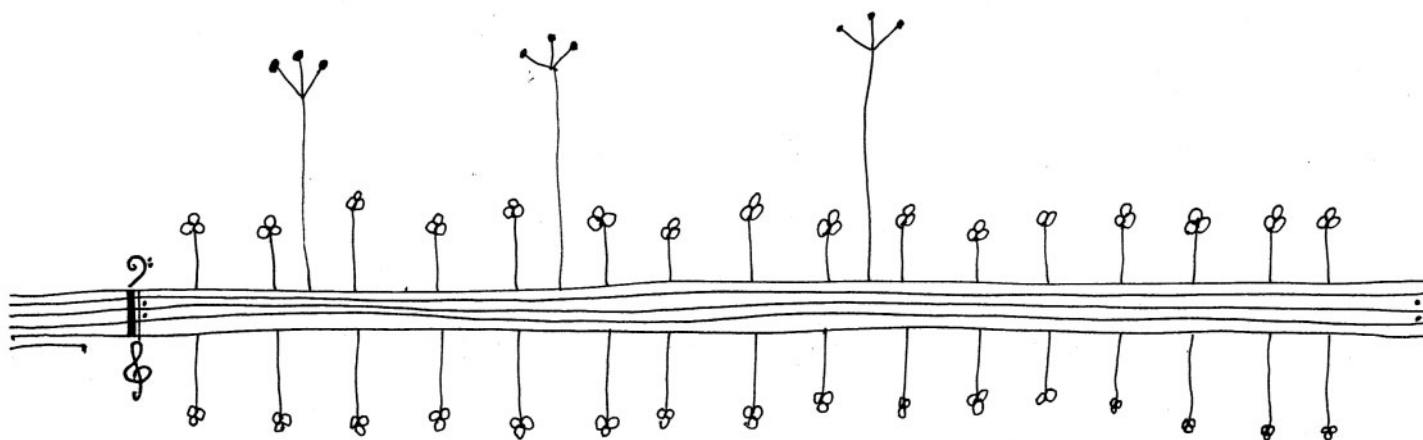
one's imagination on something very primitive, because it can easily happen that while you use appealing and enchanting sounds (and electronics are a special temptation), you tackle the combination in some schematic way.

I'm always starting something but then tacking off and setting out on the trail of something I catch in the air.

Sometimes I have the feeling that I'm coming on something that maybe no one has done before, but the extent to which it is truly original is something only time can tell...

You're now in about your twelfth year as programme director of the Brno Exposition of New Music, an important contemporary music festival. How did you come to do this and what are your goals here?

I became involved in the ENM in 1992, when the director of the Brno International Music Festival (of which the ENM is a part), Arnošt Parsch, invited me to collaborate on the programme. Then he soon entrusted me with the programme as a whole. This was because he was aware that I knew a lot of people abroad and that I try to keep up with the domestic scene as well, and am willing to devote a lot of my energy to preparing the festival. Although I had never had any such ambitions beforehand, and the whole thing brings plenty of cares and problems, I still throw myself into this work with revivalist enthusiasm. I regard it as my mission to persuade people that “contemporary music” can represent something other than what they know and expect. In this country the term has generally very low credit and mostly unpleasant associations. It's a fact that people here have always had quite a problem accepting music that in some way goes beyond domestic habits. Even Bedřich Smetana had to struggle with that, and so it's paradoxical that it's his work that has undeservedly become the emblem of musical conservatism and even reaction. In our coun-



Orpheus' Garden (1976/1992–; excerpt)



try people who in some way deviate from the as it were unfounded but more or less universally accepted ideas about "Czech music" have always had a hard time. The short era of the sixties did not manage to shake, let alone break the carapace of these atavisms, and they were followed by the hard-line years of Husák's "normalisation" in the seventies and eighties, which have left their mark on musical life to this day. During these twenty years contemporary music was successfully removed not only from musical education (where it has never been at home anyway) but also from cultural consciousness and life in general. Perhaps this was because music is the acoustic image of thought and you can tell from it very reliably who is capable of conformity. I remember that when in the later seventies and beginning of the eighties Petr Kofroň started to write tonally and even with certain elements of Late Romanticism, he still aroused the unerring suspicion of the comrades. The change of conditions after November 1989 brought unprecedented relaxation, but also new viewpoints that forced an economic custodianship on culture. The cultural break was not complete, but it acquired new dimensions. In this situation I consider it important to provide our public with a picture of new music that is as objective as possible. I am convinced that the ignorant and superficial performance with which this music is usually identified has contributed to its lack of success in this country. I therefore try to

give the public a chance to get to know the best available foreign performers and also the great world repertoire which is still ignored in our music higher educational system (for example I don't know a single teacher in the classical instrumental fields who devotes systematic attention to it! Could you imagine a technical university where physics would end with Newton?)

It is of course necessary to present the most recent movements on the one hand and on the other to provide space for domestic efforts, including those of the youngest generation – and even at the cost of problematic quality! Otherwise the rough edges will never be rubbed off. In reality it would need at least five such festivals. I try to somehow balance all these demands and always give the whole some coherently conceived musical form. Individual concerts can be excellent and interesting and are always focused on a slightly different type of public, but the main effect of the festival out to be in the contrasts and juxtapositions of the elements and the impact of the whole.

Although people attend the festival and it has its faithful audience, the question of how to address a broader public remains a burning one. Here one always hits problems that go beyond the competence of music as such and are what you might call more sociological. History plays its part too, since for centuries this nation has been deprived of its own elites and subject to foreign supremacy and it could be argued that this has led to an apriori distrust of high culture and preference for "plebeian" values, which you can see for example in the incomparable greater value placed on hockey gladiators than on anyone in intellectual fields. But these questions would need more detailed analysis.

You do in fact also engage with theoretical matters. You've published several books on the theory of composition in which you look at wider contexts as well. Could you briefly introduce these publications for us?

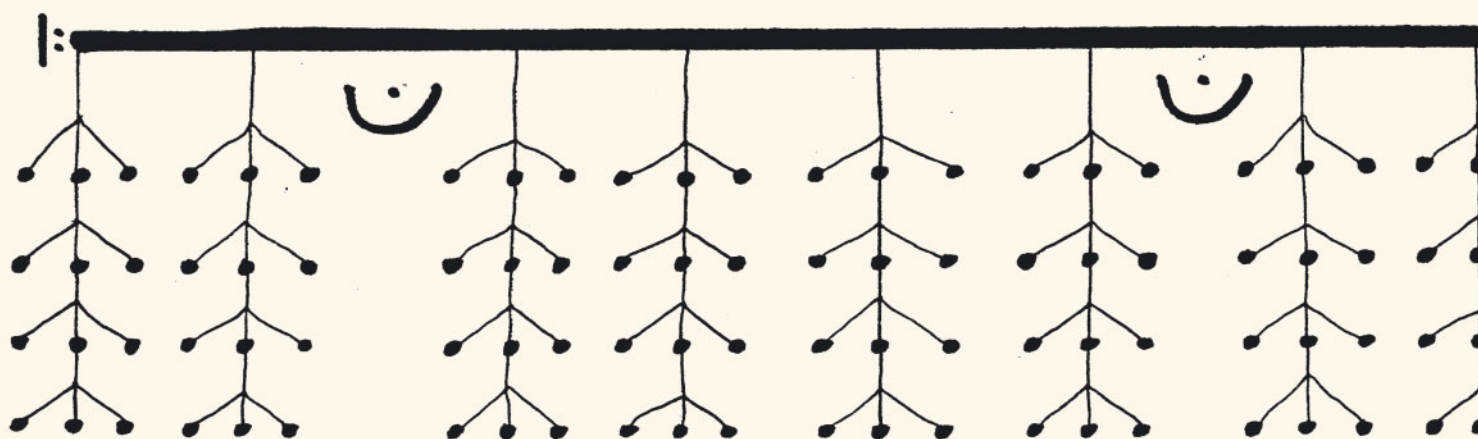
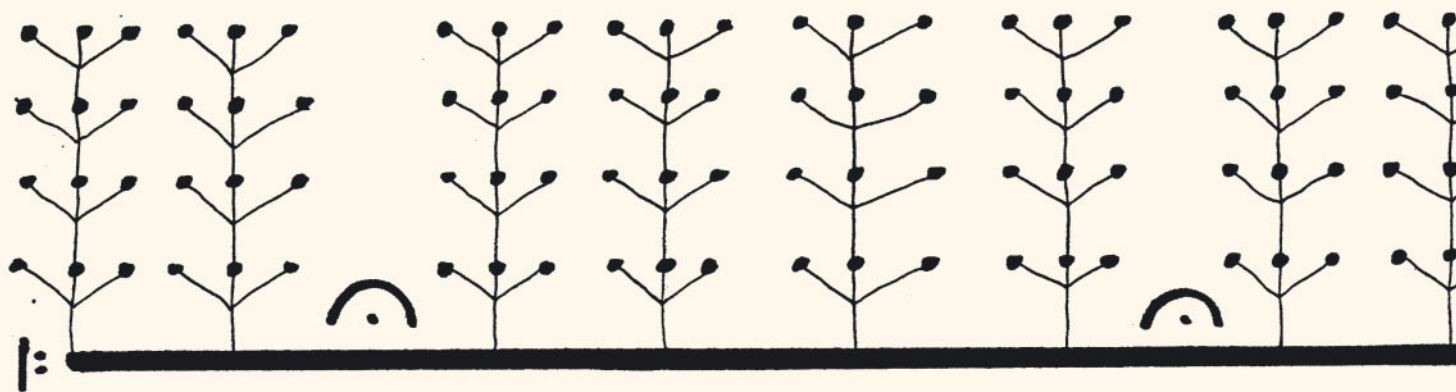
In 1999 I had the good fortune to be offered the place of "scientific worker" by JAMU [Janáček Academy of Performing Arts] on a large-scale ministry grant-funded programme for science and research in universities. This meant I could get to grips with current questions of musical composition from the theoretical point of view as well. It was interesting for me in its way – the challenge of trying to take things that I thought about on a normal basis and formulate and polish them up in publishable form. I'm no graphomaniac and I always had a lot of trou-

ble with this. And so for example out of an ambitiously conceived project in which I intended to compare questions of musical and literary style for a whole series of composers, all that remained was the fragment focused on Alois Piňos and Roman Berger,¹ but even so I hope I uncovered some quite interesting connections. The toughest task for me, however, was the life and work of the Brno composer Josef Berg (1927-1971), with which I engaged in the book *Josef Berg a jeho Snění*. [*Josef Berg and His Dreaming*]² Originally it was meant to be just a brief analysis of his last and particularly in the Czech context completely unique microtonal piece, but the more absorbed I became in the theme the clearer it was that such a complex personality needed to be considered in a larger context and so the whole study expanded to almost monographic proportions, because it had to take account of many aspects of the period and also of Berg's views and work beyond the limits of music, which for him was just one segment of the huge range of his interests. The book is essentially concerned with the theme of a hypersensitive individual in confrontation with society. I was very pleased that a fantastic short story by Vladimír Lébl, inspired by Josef Berg, could be included in the publication.

Arnošt Parsch and Alois Piňos worked with me on another two publications. *Transference hudebních elementů v dílech současných skladatelů* [*The Transference of Musical Elements in the Works of Contemporary Composers*]³ is about the use of transferred materials in music. My opening study *Second Hand Music* deals mainly with general questions and the ethical aspects of this approach. Arnošt Parsch analyses a series of examples from domestic composers and Alois Piňos contributed a systematic generalising summary of the problem.

The last book, *Náhoda, princip, systém řád*. *Poznámky k odrazu přírody v soudobé hudbě* [*Chance, Principle, System, Order*]⁴ is actually a continuation of the preceding project, with the difference that my co-authors provided me with materials and I was responsible for the overall formulation. Here the theme is interesting similarities between modern musical forms and some natural phenomena or events.

The text is conceived with a view to the needs of performers, whom it may help to gain a deeper view of the issues in modern composition – if they read it of course... Writing theoretical texts took up much



Orpheus' Garden (1976/1992–; excerpt)

more energy than I originally expected. Nonetheless, this year my grant ended and so I have some hope of being able to devote more time to music...

I know you have a lively interest (even outside your duties for the ENM) in practically every kind of newly emerging music, even experimental sorts outside the traditionally defined field of serious music. What has grabbed you? Do you feel that some trend or style that will ultimately have a broader application is being born (or has already been born)?

Music just interests me and in fact I'm puzzled that there's so little general interest in new music... At the same time I feel a need to support everyone who is making a sincere attempt to create something, even if the opinions behind it and the aesthetic result differs from mine. Ultimately I think it's important for anyone and particularly for young people to feel a certain moral support or maybe friendly criticism as well, and to be able to have someone to chat to about their efforts. I would like the still and stagnant waters of the Czech musical pond to be finally stirred up a bit. And finally, I wouldn't

mind if it wasn't me who managed to do the stirring – but I would like at least to contribute to it in some way.

That stagnation is not, of course, just a Czech phenomenon. We meet it, if at a completely different level, at famous world festivals as well, where works several decades old often sound much the most fresh (And once again – could it be because by now people have some idea how they should be played?) But in general I can't get rid of the impression that in reality there exist only a very few basic concepts that have already been defined by the music of the 20th century, and that today these are only being elaborated on, or sometimes combined in various ways. It even seems to me that actually the most interesting and most up-to-date movement is occurring on the improvisation scene, which is developing in quite a lively way. Especially the trends that one might collectively call "ego-less music" (they are based on old Cagian ideals, but at the same time shift them into the field of natural feeling) are very interesting to me. Here what is happening is the complete identification between the musicians and the music he or she plays – to the point that these expressions escape from the field of show business, which after a time

reliably kills everything that is genuinely alive in music. Since this is a trend that is making waves and acquiring more and more supporters, it will be interesting to see to what extent it will resist commercial pressures and what ultimately comes out of it...

Unlike many, I take a positive view of the musical plurality of today. I consider the domination of some stylistic form or other, as for example in the period of Vienna Classicism, as entirely dubious. (In any case, despite the broad spectrum of contemporary music, mass produced pop-music is actually globally unified in a distasteful way...) And I hope and pray that no style will turn out to predominate completely, and that the direction will be towards greater diversity, but also towards greater general perceptiveness, so that musical expressions will not judged according to the external criteria of the means used, but according to the intensity and authenticity of the creative endeavour.

⁵ *Otázky tvůrčího myšlení u skladatelů Aloise Piňose a Romana Bergera*, JAMU, Brno 2000

⁶ JAMU, Brno 2002

⁷ JAMU, Brno 2003

⁸ JAMU, Brno 2004



Peter Graham

(Jaroslav Štastný-Pokorný) was born on 1st July, 1952 in Brno and studied organ at the Brno Conservatory, from where he went on to study composition under Alois Piňos at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno. On completing his studies he worked temporarily in quite a number of capacities – as a répétiteur at the Conservatory, in theatre, as a music director in radio, as an employee of the Czech Music Fund and as a music school teacher... His greatest interest, however, is in composition. Graham says of his own music, that it „grows as does timber in a forest“, without predetermined plans and goals. He is concerned with creation itself rather than with the cultivation of the personality: „I am what I do.“

Several of his works have met with success at performances in Great Britain, Germany, Poland, Austria, Italy, Romania, Holland, Sweden, France and USA. In 1993 his chamber cantata *Der Erste* gained him a prize in the *Musica iudaica* festival's international competition for works on texts by Franz Kafka.

I.

Vladimír Lébl passed his school-leaving examinations in 1946 at scientifically orientated high school and began studies at the Medical Faculty of Charles University in Prague. He played the piano in student bar groups and in the 1948/49 season he was pianist for the Prague Theatre of Satire [Divadlo satiry]. After six terms he abandoned medicine and in 1949 changed over to the Philosophical Faculty (studying musicology and ethnography), graduating in 1953 with a dissertation entitled *Five Chapters about Leoš Janáček*. For the next four years he worked at the university as a junior lecturer in the Department of Music History, and produced his doctoral thesis *Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949)*; he was then to keep returning to Novák in smaller or lengthier texts throughout his life. In 1955 he wrote his first contribution to the magazine *Hudební rozhledy* [Musical Outlooks], published by the then Union of Czechoslovak Composers; it was about entertainment music.

In the mid-fifties a Ministry of Culture service and information centre for theatre was built up and 1957 established as the Theatre Institute. It had a library, bibliographical service and several research officers. Vladimír Lébl became head of the music theatre department and drew up its programme. The tasks of the institute included monitoring the day-to-day life of Prague and provincial opera stages and reviews, and from 1959 Lébl started to write about modern operas and opera repertory programming in the magazine *Divadlo* [Theatre]. In 1960 he published his first opera review in *Literární noviny* [Journal for Literature]. 1959 saw the formation of conductor Libor Pešek's Komorní harmonie [Chamber Harmony Ensemble], which found an "in-house" composer in Lébl's friend Jan Klusák; Lébl was soon diversifying his themes in *Literární noviny* with concert reviews and columns dealing with sociological questions of concert life. (This is the period in which Lébl wrote his one published piece of music – for Ivo Havel's satirical comedy *Od koření ke koření* [From Spice to Spice], put out by the Dilia Agency in 1959.)

At the Theatre Institute he conceived and embarked on a project for a documentation base for music theatre in the Czech Lands, aimed at serving both the practical needs of theatre productions and the academic needs of historical studies. It was based on everyday contemporary opera documentation and with the help of external researchers it was extended well back into the past. Excerpts were taken from

vladimír lébl

6th February 1928 Prague

– 8th June 1987 Prague

Vladimír Lébl was one of the most important of the Czech musicologists of the generation that started careers after the Second World War. He was an expert on 20th-century music and in the sixties one of the key figures in the birth of New Music in the former Czechoslovakia. He headed various authorial teams that in the seventies and eighties published comprehensive treatments of the history of Czech music. With the exception of the first few years immediately after he had completed his studies, he did not teach and therefore created no school. His most striking char-

acteristic was his capacity to pose questions, to probe assertions and assumptions that had been repeated hundreds of times and to see hidden relationships and emergent trends. Throughout his life he worked behind the iron curtain and the door to international communication opened a little only for a few years of his career. He died of a heart attack at fifty-nine, suddenly but not unexpectedly, since he was already seriously ill as a result of long years of heavy smoking. This meant that his life and work remained confined to the Czech environment.

museum collections and journals and an overview of Czech music theatre was created. The immediate result of the activity was the very first *Soupis české hudebně dramatické tvorby* [Catalogue of Czech Music for Theatre], which was published in 1959 by Vladimír Lébl and Eva Herrmannová on a mere 149 pages. A much lengthier working version in four thick typed volumes still serves researchers today, although unfortunately the original card index was dispersed in recent years after work on the project stopped.

In 1963 Lébl changed his place of work. A year before, an Institute of Musicology had been founded in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences with the task of writing the history of Czech Music of the 20th century and Lébl took over responsibility specifically for the first part, dealing with the period 1890–1918. At the same time he began to pursue his other main interest, the theory and practice of contemporary music. He sought to create conditions for its study on academic territory, and from 1964 he started to build up and equip a sound laboratory at the Institute of Musicology.

The political relaxation in Czechoslovakia in the sixties, the at least limited opening of the borders to the west and the total collapse of the normative aesthetic theory of socialist realism created unexpected space for contemporary art. As it turned out, turbulent developments in the arts were to be permitted for just ten years. Czech composers gained the chance to try out in practice the techniques of composition that had previously only heard or read about. Lébl was involved in the setting of the so-called Electronic Committee at the Union of Composers, which, in collaboration with the Plzeň Studio of Czechoslovak Radio and the Radio and Television Research Institute in Prague, acquired and provided the necessary technical equipment. Together with Miloslav Kabeláč and Eduard Herzog Lébl organised national thematic conferences on New Music in 1964 and 1965 and an international seminar in 1967, to which Pierre Schaeffer, at that time already a classic of French *musique concrète*, came with some of his colleagues. In 1965 the composers Rudolf Komorous, Marek Kopelent, Vladimír Šrámek, Zbyněk Vostřák and the theoreticians Josef Bek and Eduard Herzog founded an association called the Prague New Music Group [Pražská skupina Nové hudby]; Lébl was their programme spokesman. He maintained lively contact with the Brno composers Miloš Štědroň and Alois Piňos and with the group that formed around them, and he became a close personal friend of the Brno composer Josef Berg.

The occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968 at first had no obvious effects on art. The first emigrants headed out of the republic

but cultural life meanwhile continued without visible breaks. Even at the Union of Composers the seminars on electronic music continued in 1968 and 1969 and in 1969 Lébl managed to publish several numbers of a specialist magazine *Konfrontace* [Confrontations], devoted to New Music, with Union backing. The monthly magazine *Tvář* [Face] still appeared and for a time Lébl was part of its editorial team. In September 1969 the Electronic Committee organised a meeting with musicians from an electronic music studio on Utrecht, but this was to be its last event since political purges were now fully underway and a rigid communist regime was returning, armed with experience and adapted to the new conditions. In contrast to the fifties, when political enemies of the communists were threatened with loss of life, in the sixties the persecution took the form of "merely" making any kind of public free expression impossible, gradually liquidating troublesome institutions, or throwing people out of their jobs or shunting them onto the sidelines. Official censorship was abolished, but the purged institutions began to censor their own activities voluntarily.

Vladimír Lébl was affected first by the purges in the Union of Composers, which excluded from its ranks all the former cells of New Music. The professional destruction of some figures often had grotesque elements as the less scrupulous and less talented pursued their careerist ends in political guise. By the end of the sixties adherents of the New Music had managed to establish a certain territory for themselves in the publishing houses (a number of pieces came out with introductions by Lébl), at the radio, in magazines and in the programmes of the Prague Divadlo hudby [Theatre of Music], which presented music from gramophone records. It was this territory that the former or new functionaries wanted to win back by political force. There was less and less, of course, to win back. From the mid-sixties the technical and financial base of the whole culture industry had been collapsing, allocations of paper to publishers diminishing, concert halls and theatres falling apart and closing, and printing machines that had not been mended for years were giving up the ghost.

Voluntary institutional censorship hit the first volume of the *Dějiny české hudební kultury* [History of Czech Music Culture 1890–1918], which was completed at the Institute of Musicology under Lébl's direction in 1970. Lébl had taken on the lion's share of the work as author, but above all as editor and source of the overall conception that he then refined into definitive form after many collective discussions. The volume came out anonymously, with a preface signed by the "authorial team", and the name of the publisher's technical editor stated on the imprint. Lébl's name was given only in the list of author's of individual chapters. The institute management made several curious censor-

ship cuts in the text (including on p. 36 the shortening of the name of the emigrant Vladimír Karbusický to give it the Kafkaesque form of "Vladimír K."). Parts of the second volume of the work, devoted to the period 1918–1945 were already almost complete, but Lébl ceased to work on it. The project was anyway halted, and the text ultimately came out in a revised version, also anonymously, as late as 1981.

The Institute of Musicology still had its sound laboratory, which employed two technicians, and here Lébl wanted to continue in basic research on New Music. In the journal *Hudební věda* [Musicology] 1971 he announced a several-year research project to include themes from acoustics, the psychology of perception and music theory, but he was only able to complete a small part of the programme outlined. Research in this area was not forbidden, but nor was it supported. New equipment from the countries beyond the hard currency barrier was impossible to obtain, and the old equipment was insufficient. Work lagged and after two years came to a halt.

On the 1st of January 1972 the Institute of Musicology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences was merged with the Institute of Theory and History of Art, which was orientated to fine art and aesthetics. Just like other academic centres it was charged by the political authorities with "making atonement" for "erroneous" academic and political attitudes taken during the Prague Spring of 1968, and of demonstratively distancing itself from such attitudes. In the department of musicology there were very few people willing to lend their names to denunciatory texts of the type required, and so the leadership decided that the task should be conceived in broader terms. What was to be produced was an overall view of the history and state of musical science from its beginnings to the present. The text was also to serve as basic textbook material for universities. Vladimír Lébl was the chief editor of the chapters on music theory, he himself wrote the chapter on musical acoustics and contributed to a number of other sections dealing with general questions in the field. The first draft of his part of the project was complete when in 1974 Lébl first became seriously ill and was unable to work for a long period. The editorship of the text was taken up by Ivan Poledňák who substantially augmented it in a three-volume work entitled *Hudební věda, historie a teorie oboru, jeho světový a český vývoj* [Musicology, its History and Theory, its World and Czech Development] and published it in 1988.

After his return to work Lébl embarked on his own independent historical project. He brought together six authors from different institutions in Prague and Brno and started work on a publication on the history of Czech

music from the Middle Ages to the mid-20th century. He involved the wider specialist public as well and in 1977 organised two seminars, the first on the general view of the history of Czech music (with Lébl giving the opening lecture on *The History of Czech Music as Problem and Task*), and the second devoted to national (ethnic) issues in the history of the Czech lands, especially the role of German culture in the overall picture. The book was completed in four years and under the title *Hudba v českých dějinách [Music in the Czech History]* published first in 1981, and a second time in 1989, after Lébl's death.

Lébl's health problems worsened over time and enforced longer or shorter pauses that led him to themes he could tackle entirely by himself. The subject that he chose first of all was Miloslav Kabeláč, about whom he had written earlier. Now he could no longer expect the usual publicity, because up to Kabeláč's death in 1979 the composer had been one of those cultural figures whom the authorities had managed to banish almost completely from Czech musical life. Lébl worked with his posthumous papers, wrote some smaller studies and in 1983 completed his biography. He typed out his texts in a few copies, circulated them to friends, or lectured on them in private or semi-private meetings. He also devoted a lot of time to his son Petr Lébl (1965–1999), later a remarkable theatre director, who at that time was starting to study at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts.

His work on Kabeláč's papers returned Vladimír Lébl to the whole context of new Czech music. It was already possible to take stock and evaluate: a number of significant composers had died, and their work was closed, and individual trends had appeared in what had previously seemed an inchoate whole, while the decisive impulses had become apparent. At the turn of the year 1986/7 Lébl organised a series of lectures in the Prague Theatre of Music, in which he looked back on the creative achievements of the sixties, seventies and eighties. These were his last public appearances.

II.

Vladimír Lébl started as a journalist and gained more systematic experience from 1959 in the magazine *Divadlo [Theatre]*. If he could re-edit his texts today, he would certainly make many of the radical cuts for which he was famous. His reviews are far from free of the fashionable intellectual schema of the periods and of inessential flourishes. But they also open up new themes. Lébl was writing exclusively about the opera of the 20th century and had to come to terms with the question of its function in theatrical repertoire, the public attitude to contemporary composers and the

economic problems associated with its production, which while not yet pressing in Czechoslovakia, were very obvious and the subject of much comment in the West European opera world.

Lébl saw the problem as a question of the quality and type of new work. He did not regard the new operas of the time as convincing enough to attract a wider public and he saw the use of rational methods in music as the way to improve the situation. In 1957 the Soviet communist ideologues, soon followed by their Czechoslovak equivalents, decided to acknowledge the legitimacy of cybernetics as a scientific field and allow scientists on their side of the iron curtain to pursue the subject. The first enthusiastic laymen outside the mathematical world, including Lébl, saw in cybernetics the way to understanding and formalising the activity of the human brain. They believed that knowledge of how our thought-processes actually work would enable us to develop all our intellectual functions further. Not just aesthetic creation, but the perception of that creation would be improved: communication between composer and listener would be brought to a new high point. Lébl was convinced (if only for a time) that it was just a matter of time before contemporary music would find its place alongside the contemporary literature, drama and film that was discovering a source of inspiration and new expressive possibilities in modern technology.

His first text on electronic music came out in the magazine *Hudební rozhledy* in 1958 in an obscure context. Unlike *Literární noviny*, where the editors were already clearly signalling a more liberal line, at *Hudební rozhledy* a hard line was maintained and the political leaders in every issue interpreted resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on the desirable direction to be taken by the arts. Even here, however, there were increasingly gleams of other themes. The leader in Number 11, in which support was expressed for the "struggle of the Chinese people with Chang Kai Chek", was followed by Lébl's text *On the Music of the Future and the Future of Music*. He posed the question of what music would be like in 300 years time, what contemporary technical composition techniques would be like and the direction that might be taken in the immediate future by electronic music, musique concrète and music for tape. The lengthy article was solidly based on several German works and was definitely not naive.

Lébl's systematic interest in technical music then emerged in successive articles focusing on all kinds of aspects of the theme: the objective acoustic and compositional attributes of music created from technical sources, the way in which it was subjectively perceived, problems in its notation and the

issue of whether it could be written down at all. In 1966 Lébl then tackled the historical aspect of the theme in a separate publication *Elektronická hudba [Electronic Music]* which offered the Czech reader an account of the short history of this kind of music and described the centres where it was cultivated. He went on to deal with more general questions: What is the relationship between the composer and interpreter of technical music? What exactly is a work, when its composition no longer has the basic features of pieces written in previous centuries? What new processes, customs and rituals has the New Music brought to concert life? In the collection *Podoby [Forms] II*, published by Václav Havel and comprising texts by authors from the *Tvář* magazine circle, Lébl contributed an article on this theme with the title *Metamusic*, which contained "partly real facts about the musical present, partly a hypothesis and partly a Utopia", and reflected on the crossroads at which contemporary music had arrived. Another of Lébl's articles, called *On Boundary Kinds of Music* from the collection *Nové cesty hudby [New Paths for Music]* (1970) was concerned with already existing forms created on the boundary between music and the word, music and fine art and music and theatre.

Experience with contemporary music and the questions that had to be asked in this environment had a major influence on Vladimír Lébl as historian. He explicitly formulated these questions in the lecture *Dějiny české hudby jako problém a úkol [The History of Czech Music as a Problem and a Task]*, with which in 1977 he launched his work on the book *Hudba v českých dějinách* (it was published posthumously in the journal *Hudební věda* in 1988). Lébl had carefully read the existing treatments of the history of Czech music of the 19th and 20th century, summarised their common starting points and posed the question of whether such premises were still acceptable. Was it possible to interpret the historical development of Czech music primarily on the basis of domestic history? Was it reasonable to consider the norm-creating period of the 19th century, and the "national values" explicitly defined in this period to be the keys to Czech music? Did any of the "absolute" attributes in terms of which Czech music was usually described in the historical accounts actually exist? And should not "national character" in the modern age be defined more in terms of the range of impulses that a culture is capable of adopting than in terms of specific features in the narrow sense of the word? Some of these questions had been posed by foreign literature, while others were reactions to the intellectual schemata informing Czech historiography since the 19th century. The book *Music in the Czech History*, the first work of its kind to include German culture on Czech territory in its account, sought to find an answer to at least some of these questions.



czech musica nova

historical background and sociology of the phenomenon

(Lecture, 1983)

VLADIMÍR LÉBL

In the modern history of Czech music we find certain initiation periods characterised by the concentrated development of new movements. These periods were first and foremost the eighteen-nineties (or turn of the century), the twenties and the sixties. The turn of the century was the time of the rise of the Czech modern movement in music, in the twenties the generation with affinities for the avant-garde came to the fore, and the sixties were the era of the New Music. In each of these three decades we can trace a more or less continuous innovative trend. But we can also observe the other side of the coin, a trend to throw up barriers and opposition of all kinds. I have chosen precisely this theme, which offers an unusual angle from

which to consider the new phenomena. In my view it is an important theme, because the innovative trend in Czech musical life has not encountered barriers of a constantly changing kind, or of a chance variety, but a continuous pressure of objectively acting factors and a constant tradition of forces of restoration, fed from a very fixed ideological source.

Let us consider this second aspect of the matter first, and pose the question of the nature of the ideology that has been continuously acting here, the nature of the set of opinions, ideas, illusions, sympathies and antipathies that had and still has such lasting force that it could without difficulty not only acclimatise to the period between the two world wars but also develop into a

qualitatively different model of musical culture emerging after 1945 and especially after 1948.

Concisely, and even if at the price of some schematisation this ideology may be described in terms of the following points: Invested in Czech music from an early stage there has been a stubborn introverted, permanently self-regarding and at the same time jealous sense of ownership of certain features generally considered to be nationally specific. This centripetal tendency involves a frequent loss of proportion in value judgments and a neurotic instability of value judgments whenever the necessity of comparing or contrasting Czech music with other musical cultures has arisen; this kind of com-

parison occurs only rarely, and usually only under the pressure of extreme circumstances, and typically involves a symptomatic alternation between self-overvaluation and self-undervaluation.

Built into the character of Czech music at an early stage there has been an emphatic imperative towards homogeneity and internal unity, and this has always been applied the more relentlessly, the stronger the natural tendency of modern culture to fragmentation on all sides. Typological, stylistic and other kinds of plurality have in Czech conditions usually been considered an anomaly, a danger, and at best a necessary evil with effects that need to be limited. In this country there was always an attempt to prune developmental branches, to privilege one as basic, and historically necessary. Traditionally the periods when domestic music culture has in practice been pressed into a single mould by violent external pressure have been regarded as the crowning periods.

The demand for homogeneity could arise and be applied in the longer term for reasons that included a strong Pragocentrism. The concept of "Czech music" was always interpreted from the perspective of the easily identifiable situation of musical Prague and ultimately from the point of view of a few Prague institutions headed by the National Theatre. This limitation always greatly helped the interpretation of Czech music as a monolithic organism.

Fixed in the environment of modern Czech music from an early stage there has been an awareness of the multiple ties of the creative individual to society, and this sense of social bond has had results both positive and negative. On the one hand it has worked as a source of fertile inspiration, but at times it has functioned as a dogma. In any case these strong sociogenic ties put a brake on extreme creative approaches, radicalism and artism. They also, however, have bound the Czech composer in a geographically existential sense. Anyone who spent more than a short time abroad had to reckon with the risk of being erased from Czech music and considered a renegade.

Czech modern music early created for itself an aesthetic ideal that has essentially survived all historical changes and subconsciously operates to this day. The defensive, restorative character of this idea consists in the fact that it is above all a set of particular antipathies. It includes an antipathy to characteristics that were for a long period generally known as "toyshoppery" or "playing around", then gained the title "formalism" and were finally summed up by the word "experimenting". Then there was antipathy to any more striking emphasis on the sensual effects of music, sensualism, in this country mainly designated by the term "hedonism". Finally, a very large complex of characteristics was denoted by the durable term "decadence". To this we should add that other, musically entirely relevant concepts and terms acquired a pejorative connotation in

the Czech environment. These included most notably the terms impressionism, naturalism, and partly even expressionism, and in the older vocabulary verism. The aesthetic ideal that we are speaking of also, of course, expressed certain sympathies. For example one cannot but notice the strikingly high and enduring frequency of the adjective "serious", which in Czech music criticism developed the settled function of a blanket designation of model positive properties of a work of music. These basic positive aspects were also invested in the term "Smetanism", referring to the life and work of Bedřich Smetana. I would of course need much more time to explain how and why it happened that that the word "Smetanism" has been continuously abused since before the First World War as a massive argument used by the restorative, conservative and even militantly reactionary forces.

Czech music has always been equipped with a very strong talent for assimilating and transforming impulses coming from all kinds of directions in musical Europe. Nonetheless, for domestic restorative tendencies what is typical is a fear of "foreign influences" which are again and again regarded as destructive, subversive forces. It would be interesting to catalogue the arsenal of Czech fears and warnings against these "foreign elements". The period terminology already suggests a great deal: Germanic music, Teutonic music, French goods, Jewish-Bolshevik music, degenerate western music, and so on.

The pressure of this whole ideological armoury, which I have tried to describe as concisely as possible, was and is so strong and permanent that it could not fail to influence innovative activity. The extent to which this has happened is a question I do not want to tackle here. What is certain is that if we want to reflect on Czech musical innovation from a broader historical angle, the effects of this ideological complex cannot be overlooked.

Naturally, of course, objective processes, above all changes in the position of contemporary music in the framework of the music culture of the time, have also affected the character and very existence of the mode of Czech musical innovation. To put it briefly, if new work of any kind found ever more limited space in the Czech musical culture of the 19th and 20th century, then precisely that part of contemporary music that more or less parted company with the aesthetic status quo became ever more vulnerable. In the period of the modern movement this was still far from obvious. The term "contemporary music" did not then exist in the later sense of the word because 70 percent of repertoire was made up of new music. Practically everything that was written was also immediately played, and a stock of unperformed pieces was created only at the National Theatre, while the rejected author had at his disposal a large press platform with the help

of which he could publicly press for a production. The journalistic polemics around the modern movement had not the slightest repressive effect and there were no composers who felt themselves permanently handicapped by the lack or essential unwillingness of the means of musical communication. This all happened, and could happen because the performance of music was still a relatively cheap affair and the composer had minimal financial demands. Two limits nonetheless existed. First, the lack of domestic possibilities for music publishing was becoming evident, which was one of the few pressures that led authors to the necessity of turning abroad. The second limit consisted in the condition that the composer should live and work in Prague. Any other place of work meant consignment to the periphery and the reputation of a merely local composer. It was above all Janáček who was to feel the effects of this Pragocentrism.

The post-war years brought very radical changes. Musical performance became more costly and started to be strongly influenced by commercial factors, which related particularly to the concert agencies that gambled on the classical-romantic repertoire as performed by attractive guests and offered music in the form of an elite social event. A thick layer of music of the past and an ever more massive of hit production mounted up between the contemporary composer and the consumers. The greater part of new work was squeezed out of the frame of the main events of the opera and concert season and started to exist on the basis of self-help in the world of club, group and other communities or in special events for which subsidies could be obtained. It was in this ever more constricted space that the split between traditionalists and progressivists developed, but other divisions emerged as well. The more restricted the space the more ways were sought of liberating composers from sociological isolation. A great deal of music was written, but usually just for one performance, which usually took the form of a playthrough, and this imprisonment of new production in the sphere of groups and clubs also meant that chamber pieces were the majority. The example of Alois Hába is a good illustration of just how much perseverance, energy and self-publicisation was necessary for a contemporary composer to be able to emerge out of anonymity and make his cause a matter of public interest. Hába was also the first to draw all the necessary conclusions from the realisation that Czech musical life provided too limited and unstable a background for innovative aspirations and that it was necessary to place these activities firmly on an international platform. Hába's energy was of course exceptional, as is evident from the fate of his school and especially Miroslav Ponc, who followed most radically in Hába's footsteps and further still; when he finally realised the futility of his efforts, which remained at the stage of plans and projects

and found no sympathy either at home or abroad, he resigned himself to the situation and being utterly desperate financially, he turned to specialisation in composing stage music. While in the Twenties illusions about the position of the artist in the Czechoslovak Republic still prevailed, in the Thirties contemporary composers increasingly felt themselves to be all in the same boat. Even the supporters of programme-music conservatism reflected on the social function of their music in a way we usually consider to be typical of the avant-garde, i.e. by banking on the judgment of coming generations. And so in the end we discover that the ideological activity of the restoration forces – which dreaded the excesses of post-war youth and appealed to them with the poetic slogan, "Leave the foreign, speak with your own tongue" – was actually superfluous. The much more powerful forces of the music market were coming into play, and in these people like Emil Axman were just as near and just as far from the longed for audience as, for example, Alois Hába.

After the Second World War this material crisis of contemporary music appeared to be solved at the moment that most of the artists rallied to the banner of socialist realism and believed that it was within the power of the work itself to emerge from the circle of social isolation and become mass art. Composers believed that it would truly be enough to rid themselves of shame over comprehensibility and the cultural political commitment of artistic expression for all the barriers between the artist and society to fall at once. In reality it was necessary to do much more if the Neo-Romantic illusion of mass art was to be brought into the realms of possibility. It was necessary to release massive funds, to engage a whole institutional structure directed from the top, to set in motion massive propaganda and last but not least to suppress all art that might weaken the unidirectional achievement of socialist-realist production. Although this general attack lasted only a few years in its original force and uncompromising fierceness, a more pragmatic form of

this cultural policy became a permanent reality. It begged two questions. First, is it at all possible to fathom out an effect, and a function for that rarefied and privileged art that lives in artificially constructed conditions, has become used to them and even derives its aesthetics and poetics from them? Second, what would happen if contemporary art were to be deprived of a major part of that supportive scaffolding? This is not an academic question, because it is just what happened in the case of the New Music of the sixties. What in this country at that time for a certain period developed a concentrated way under the symptomatic period designation "new directions in composition and technique" was tolerated only so long as it accepted a mode of existence that strikingly resembled the situation of new production in the inter-war period. In the sixties the main activity of New Music escaped into a few groups, although these could not take the legal form of association activities. The New Music also tried to link itself up to the international music network, although conditions for this were less favourable than at any time in the past. On the one hand the innovative trend was driven into semi-amateurism, and on the other it felt the pressure to conform everywhere that the opportunity appeared for joining official institutions and their mediating elements. This vicious circle even led to such extreme solutions as the one chosen by Josef Berg [Brno composer, 1927-1971], reflecting on and finally doubting the meaningfulness of the nonconformism of a professional artist face to face with the rigid mechanisms of public musical life. As is well-known, Berg finally decided to create work that did not require realisation and for new forms in which he could himself act as total creator: like Matěj Kopecký in earlier times, who carved and dressed puppets, wrote a play for them, invited an audience and put on a show, Josef Berg arrived at the very edge of the territory at whose opposite end one could encounter the famous profiles of successful artists.



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JANA JANULÍKOVÁ

Talking with John Tyrrell, and not just about his forthcoming monograph about Leoš Janáček

The musicologist John Tyrrell is an internationally acknowledged expert on the life and work of Leoš Janáček. Currently he is attached to the music faculty of the University of Cardiff where he has been working intensively on a monograph about Janáček which was originally supposed to have come out in the Janáček Jubilee Year of 2004. But publication has been hampered by certain complications...

What will your new book be called, and when and where will it be coming out?

I always find titles difficult, and although I have always had working titles, all of my books tend to call themselves something else in the end. At the moment my new book is called *Leoš Janáček: Years of a Life*, but I can't guarantee that will be its final title. As for where and when it might come out, this is even more of a problem. The book was originally published by Faber & Faber, which publishes handsome, well-produced books, and with which I have published three books on Janáček since 1992. Ten years ago they commissioned a biography of

Janáček, which was due to appear in 2004 for the anniversary year. The commissioned length was 200,000 words – i.e. 500 printed pages. But almost as soon as I started serious writing, my book showed signs of growing far beyond this length. When I confessed to my editor at Faber that they would be getting rather more than they had asked for – three times as much – she turned pale and said that it might be best if looked elsewhere.

Two years later I had an unexpected stroke of luck. In January 2004 I went to Brno for the very successful Janáček Festival. So did about 40 members of the Dvorak Society (from England). Several made themselves known to me and one, an elderly gentleman, got talking – it was at the party in the Besedni dum after JAMU had conferred an honorary doctorate on Sir Charles Mackerras. The gentlemen, whose name was Jim Page, told me that his son was the chief executive of Faber & Faber. So of course I turned the conversation round to Faber's decision not to publish my biography and how curious it was that here in Brno for two weeks of Janáček operas was the father of the chief executive of the firm that had done so much for Janáček in England, but was now reluctant to go ahead with what I hoped would be a useful and definitive Janáček biography. And wouldn't it be a good idea if Mr Page senior should have a quiet word

with his son when he got back to England saying that he thought Faber might be making a terrible mistake. Jim Page was happy to accept this mission. Things didn't happen immediately, but within a few months the music books editor at Faber and I were talking again and in the end we agreed the following: that Faber would take the book and publish it in two volumes of about 800 pages each. The first would appear in about October 2006 and the second in October 2007. These would be more expensive books than the ones that Faber usually publish and would need a small subsidy to ensure they do not actually lose money on the deal. Perhaps without Mr Page this happy outcome would never have come about. My only problem is trying to finish volume 1 in time for Faber's deadline this year...

Tell us something about your view of Janáček and his work...

My 'book' is in fact two books. One is a fairly straightforward chronological account, year by year. Most years of Janáček's adult life will have a single chapter '1893', '1894' etc; some of the later – and longer – years will have two ('1917a', '1917b'). This is what gives the book its working title. This part of the book, maybe three quarters of it, is written on the basis of the large database that I have built up over many years comprising Janáček letters and documents, putting them (and their contents) into a chronological order. In the last few years I have been helped by a couple of young Brno musicologists (Jan Špaček and Simona Sedláčková) who have painstakingly compared my database to the card catalogues in the Janáček archive and given me details for any documents I don't yet have.

But threaded through this chronological account are short chapters based not on chronology but on particular topics. Some of them I am publishing (or have already published) in preliminary versions, include 'How Janáček wrote operas', 'Janáček and programme music', 'Conventions in Janáček operas'¹. These topics deal with genres of Janáček's music; particular problems (for instance autobiographical connections in his music – there will be several chapters on this for different stages of his life); people who affected his life (Dvořák, Kovařovic, Brod, Nejedlý); topographical chapters (spa life during Janáček's day at Luhačovice, and a

whole series of chapters on Brno at roughly ten-yearly intervals); and so on. In general these 'topics' provide context and allow me to go into matters more deeply so that they do not hold up the narrative in the chronological sections. I won't write all of these topic chapters myself. For instance Dr Stephen Lock, a former editor of the *British Medical Journal*, who provided a fascinating examination of Olga's illnesses that I included in my edition of Zdenka Janáčková's memoirs, will be writing a series of articles on Janáček's health. And Jiří Zahrádka, with the aid of a grant from the British Arts and Humanities Research Board, has been working through Janáček's finances, and will contribute a comprehensive account whose object is to estimate how wealthy Janáček was at various stages of his life. Altogether there will be about 50 of these 'topic' chapters. I can't imagine many people will want to read the whole book all the way through, but the clear arrangement will, I hope, allow readers to find out what they want to know fairly easily.

Your book on Czech opera has come out in Czech as well. Can we Czechs look forward to reading your Janáček book in our own language as well?

I doubt it. It will be a very long book, so it would mean a huge amount of translation, which would add greatly to the cost. I can't imagine that it would pay a Czech publisher to publish it. Naturally if any Czech publisher was interested, I would be only too delighted to make the book available for translation.

You are known for considering Janáček to be first and foremost an opera composer. In the book do you give more space to Janáček's operas than to his other work?

I am planning twelve topic chapters devoted to operatic matters – that's about a quarter of all the topics. However, in the chronological account, operas bulk large – not just because I am keen on the operas (which I am!) but because they took up so much of Janáček's time, and left so much trace in his correspondence, which is my chief source of information. In comparison, most of the non-operatic works were written very quickly and easily and leave less trace in the correspondence. There is just less to be said about them.

I know that you don't like expressing definitive conclusions and prefer to open up new space for further research, by which I mean mainly your systematic documentation work. You have been engaging in long-term study of the Janáček sources, and contributed to the publication of a catalogue of Janáček's works. How should we regard a monograph on Leoš Janáček is not as an exhaustive and definitive account of the life and work of Leoš Janáček?

I think you wrong me! I am happy to express definitive conclusions of my own – in fact I

believe it's better if scholars 'don't sit on the fence' too much but instead take up bold positions – this is what I will be doing here, with many suggestions and views which I know will be subjective, and not ones that everyone will agree with. What I present in the book will be my best guesses, based on my interpretation of the materials to hand. But I know that other people might very well interpret those same materials rather differently and come to very different (and equally valid) conclusions. So I hope that what I present will be exhaustive and definitive – as far as I can make it – but I also know that this isn't the last that will be heard on the subject. There will be a new generation of Janáček scholars, keen to make their own contributions. I hope only that they will find my assembly of information useful and my account of Janáček's life and work stimulating.

What will follow after the Janáček book? What are your future plans?

As for what next, well I've been writing work-

ing on the factographical basis for this book for fifteen years, and writing it for four years. I think I deserve a rest!

In the context of the book on Czech opera you said that systematic grasp of the theme has to be preceded by developing a perfect understanding of it. How has your view of Leoš Janáček as a man developed after your detailed study of his work and life?

I don't think my estimation of Janáček's works has changed much, though I do understand much more than I did about, say, the various versions of *Jenůfa*, including the 1904 version (which will be heard again in a few months in Warsaw in a version reconstructed by my former student Mark Audus). There are a few of Janáček's smaller works which I have got to know better, and perhaps like better. But the works I considered 'great' twenty years ago, have not changed in my estimation.

As for his personality, the big revelations came more than ten years ago when trans-

J. Tyrrell with Leoš Janáček



lating his letters to Kamila Stösslová. Some people ask me what I felt about Janáček after translating Zdenka's memoirs. Her memoirs are a useful source, and good to have 'in the open' (having been a shadowy presence in Helfert and Vogel) but one needs to take it with a pinch of salt. It is quite clear that with Janáček dead, Zdenka was attempting to give her side of the story, and to show herself in the very best light. So I don't think he is, for instance, necessarily as cruel as how he sometimes appears, seen through Zdenka's eyes.

The Janáček revealed in his Kamila letters helps to explain why he was such a marvelous opera composer. It may seem an odd comparison to make, but Mozart – another of the great opera composers of all time – similarly wrote wonderfully entertaining, spontaneous and emotional letters. Compare Mozart's to Haydn's letter (with their preoccupation with facts, figures and commodities and very seldom with gossip and people) and one understands immediately why Haydn's huge musical talents were best utilized in writing symphonies and string quartets rather than operas.

Much more important and reliable, I think, in coming to a view of Janáček, are his letters to Kamila. They are so spontaneous – the very opposite of letters which have been laboriously drafted, corrected and rewritten – and reveal so much of himself. There can't be many men of his time and class who are quite so much at ease in revealing their emotions, which in Janáček's case were always near the surface. The letters are the great gift he left to his biographers, and will occupy psychologists and biographers for many years to come.

Do you regard it as an advantage that you're not Czech? Does it give you a certain distance and objectivity of view?

Yes and no. One of my Czech friends, perhaps teasingly, said I would never really understand Czech matters because I didn't hear Czech fairy stories when I was a little boy. And there is some truth in this: there are some things that are absorbed so naturally within a culture that no foreigner, however curious, will be able to fathom them completely. But on the other hand, this realization does help me to be more aware, to ask naive questions which, however stupid they sound to native Czechs, may touch upon important matters that are taken for granted by Czechs and thus that they aren't expressed. In the end, a little distance can be beneficial. This goes particularly for music and musicians which in Czech culture occupy a very special position – much more so than in English culture. We English are of course interested in our cultural and historical giants, but we are happy to show them 'warts and all' (This is a famous quotation from our Republican leader Oliver Cromwell, who gave this instruction to a painter: the painter should not try and make him look more attractive but show him exactly as he was). In Czech

culture there is sometime a tendency to suppress unpleasant facts about cultural giants: for instance, until recently there was much mystification about Smetana's illness and death; there is still no complete edition of letters and no edition at all of his diaries, presumably because of the inconvenient fact that they are often written in German.

Janáček has suffered a little bit from this sort of glorification, but it is much to the credit of people such as Svatava Přibáňová, that after a long period where the most important biographical source for Janáček's life was suppressed, a superb and comprehensive edition of all Janáček's letters to Kamila Stösslová now exists which indeed shows him 'warts and all'.

I remember once when I was doing some research in the Divadelní ústav in Prague for my Czech opera book, I was accosted by one of the employees there and cross-examined about why I was writing the book and in particular who was advising me. She was concerned, she said, that without Czech assistance I would not 'get the proportions right'. I remember being very cross at the time about this! The last thing I wanted to do was to 'get the proportions right', if that meant slavishly following some Czech model, however well-informed. It seemed important for me to produce my own 'proportions' and to examine areas that might have been neglected. In this particular case, it meant seeing Smetana in a wider national context (and thus taking the operas of Šebor, Bendl and Rozkošný more seriously than, say, Nejedlý did). It also means seeing Smetana as any other world composer of his time, so that I could discern, say, Italianate formal structures such as *largo concertato* and *cantabile-cabaletta* forms in some of Smetana's operas. So yes, in the end, I think it's an advantage that I'm not a Czech. I can't pretend, however, that what I have to say will be more 'objective' – merely different.

Janáček is very popular in the world at large. Why do you think that in the Czech Republic, on the other hand, Janáček's operas play to half-empty theatres?

One easy answer lies in the difference between a repertory system and a stagione system. Don't think that Janáček is played night after night in Britain. He isn't. What usually happens is that an opera company will decide to stage, say, five performances of *From the House of the Dead* in a particular season. The dates will be calculated and known well in advance, and maybe publicized six months ahead. So I know that if I want to see the opera I will have five chances. And I make sure I do. Other Janáček enthusiasts will do so also, some coming from many miles away if they know about the event sufficiently in advance. It needs much thinking ahead, and lots of money spent on publicity. What I found when I lived in Brno for a year (in 1966–7) was that the opera schedules were advertised only a month ahead at the most and one had no idea how many perfor-

mances of a work might be given over the whole season. Sometimes an isolated performance of *From the House of the Dead* was advertised and sometimes I wouldn't go since I assumed it might come back again some time during the season on a more convenient evening. I ended up not making an effort to see things that I ought to have done. A repertory system can make an audience a little lazy.

I also think that the dead weight of tradition also doesn't help at times. We have, for instance, many productions of *The Bartered Bride* in Britain. None of them are 'traditional', i.e. with all the folk costumes and all the trimmings which are often an important part of Czech sentimental nationalism. In Britain we play *The Bartered Bride* without any trace of Czech nationalism, and instead consider it as a human story, and find interesting psychological depths in a work that the Czech productions I have seen seem unaware of. A tradition, however valuable, can have a deadening effect in excluding other aspects: imagination in particular. When I last saw *Liška Bystrouška* in Brno it was one that the same producer had done many times before. And it showed – a dull and predictable affair which had not an ounce of theatrical flair, and this in an opera that provides some of the most wonderful opportunities for interesting, witty and imaginative stagings. One has to remember that in the end opera is merely a type of entertainment. If audiences don't think they are going to be entertained, and if they are going purely out of a sense of duty – rather than for an exciting theatrical experience – they probably won't go.

The other thing I should say is that one reason why Janáček has done so well in Britain has been the 'outreach' programmes of various theatres. When Welsh National Opera did their Janáček cycle with Scottish Opera in the 1980s, they knew that they were introducing operas to audiences which knew almost nothing about the composer. So wherever the operas toured (and both companies were 'touring companies', taking their productions to many towns in Wales, Scotland and England), they prepared the way with extensive publicity and with 'workshops', in which singers, the producer, the conductor and Janáček experts would discuss a particular Janáček opera and perform scenes from it, with many live examples in an attempt to familiarize audiences with it. Even in recent years when the Royal Opera House in London has performed Janáček operas, it has been careful to organize 'study days' devoted entirely to these works, and in particular try and reach out to new audiences, especially younger ones.

Czechs of course will always have one wonderful advantage in that native singers can sing Janáček's operas in their original language to an audience that understands it. We have to settle for translations (which will always be a compromise) or sing them in a language that the audience does not understand and which the singers sometimes don't either.

Having dealt with Janáček all your professional life do you feel you have any understanding of how Janáček organized his life, and what effect did this have on his music?

Going through Janáček's life year by year, although labour-intensive, has been very rewarding. By assembling all the documents in a strictly chronological order, and working through the information they provide I have been able to build up a day-to-day picture that has yielded some very interesting insights. For me the most fascinating has been Janáček's organization of his working life, working in little bursts to deadlines, followed by rest periods (such as trips to Prague, or to see Kamila). In order to achieve so much in his final years, he needed routines, and I don't think until I put all this information together I was sufficiently aware of them. This not only helps on understand how Janáček was able to do all that he did, but also variations in the routines provide a useful tool for discovering when things weren't going so well. The pattern of his writing *The Makropulos Affair* are a case in point. He began it impulsively, with hardly a break before finishing his previous opera, but there are some very odd gaps both in composition and later in revising them that seem to me to suggest real compositional (or maybe psychological) problems with the opera. I was fascinated to see how when asked by Universal Edition for the dates of composition, Janáček clearly lied about when he began it, suggesting a much later date (by which time he had already composed two acts). Why should he do this? Admittedly, he had a terrible memory for such things, but such an enormous discrepancy is significant.

You are a scholar who surrounds himself with Janáček's things in your private life. Do you have his photograph hanging on your wall?

For many years I have had two photographs in my study: one is of Janáček standing outside his house and the other is of a group of workers from the Janáček archives standing in a similar position. I am also in this picture, taken in the depth of winter in January 1969, at the end of my initial researches and before I returned to Africa for a while. It was a reminder of the years that I had worked in the archive, of the friends I had made there, and of the fact that for a while I belonged to a community working in the very place where Janáček himself had lived and worked. More recently Jiří and Šárka Zahrádka gave me a photograph – one of their clever collages – which enterprisingly captures Janáček and me together. What is particularly amusing is that there I am, looking on with adoration at the composer, bursting with enthusiasm, while Janáček is looking disdainfully in quite the opposite direction. Now, what am I to make of that?!

The text came out in Czech in a profile edition of the music revue *Opus musicum* 1/2004 devoted to Leoš Janáček.



Jan Vičar: **Imprints. Essays on Czech Music and Aesthetics**

There is not exactly an excess of literature on Czech music in English, and so it is good news that the Togga Publishing House in collaboration with Palacký University has added to it with a collection of texts by the musicologist, teacher and composer Jan Vičar.

The book is not concerned with Czech music as a whole or with some single defined theme or problem within it, but above all presents its author and the palette of his musicological and aesthetic interests. These interests range widely, including music history, theory and aesthetics, and it is with these categories that we can divide the eleven texts contained in the book into a number of thematic groups.

The first group focuses on selected chapters from the history of Czech music: *Music Against War* maps musical life during the Second World War, including the fates of the musicians who were sent to concentration camps. The chapter *Echoes of Czech Music in America* explores some aspects of the relationship between Czech music and the United States (Antonín Dvořák and the reception of his work, musical emigrants and their influence on American music and so on). In "Unknown" Czech Music after 1945 Vičar summarises the trends in post-war Czech music and tries to analyse its situation. This historical section ends with a monographic chapter on the film music of Václav Trojan. He is a composer to whom Jan Vičar had earlier devoted a whole book, and so the text offers foreign readers the chance to appreciate one part of it.

The second group of essays is more analytical. Two of the three are devoted to Leoš Janáček and his pieces *Zápisník zmizelého* [Diary of One Who Disappeared] and *Taras Bulba*. Here the author offers a quite lengthy and detailed analysis of the form of the pieces, the treatment of motifs and the characteristic features of Janáček's musical language. The third chapter in this group reflects on Zdeněk Fibich's minor piece *Poem* and is less an analysis than thoughts on the aesthetic problems and questions that can arise in considerations of any piece and its evaluation. At the same time this text creates a transitional link to the third group of essays.

These are no longer concerned specifically with Czech music, but explore the area of more general aesthetic thought. In three chapters called *The Subject, Methods, and Significance of Aesthetics*, *Essay on Music Criticism* and *European Classical Music in Today's World*. The author starts from his own book *Hudební estetika* [Musical Aesthetics] (1998, together with Roman Dykast), and then embarks on reflections on the rationale and problems of music criticism and ultimately on what today is known as "European classical music".

There is a kind of bonus in the form of an interview with the American composer George Crumb and a facsimile manuscript of Vičar's own *Fanfare* for Palacký University, which serves as a reminder that Jan Vičar composes, as well as writing on history, theory and aesthetics.

The book comes with a CD with extracts from pieces discussed in the texts, particularly in the first historical part. It is in fact this first part that represents the main value of the book, above all by drawing the attention of foreign readers to some lesser known names in Czech music.

MATĚJ KRATOCHVÍL

Olomouc: Palacký University and Prague: Togga, 2005, 250 pp. (includes 41 notation examples, 12 photographs and pictures, 3 tables, index) plus 1 CD (contains 20 music extracts). To order: <http://www.togga.cz>



Karel Ančerl – Gold edition (Vol. 33)

Mahler:

Symphony no. 9

Czech Philharmonic, Karel Ančerl, Production: Jana Gonda, Vít Roubíček, Petr Vít. Text: Eng., German, French, Czech. Recorded: 4/1966, Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, Prague. Released 2004, TT: 78:53. ADD. Digital remastering, 1 CD Supraphon SU 3693-2 011.

in cooperation with the magazine

HARMONIE

When Karel Ančerl was appointed in Music Director of the Czech Philharmonic on the 20th of October 1950, he had behind him internment in Terezín and transport to Auschwitz. Perhaps it was precisely his experience of a time when human life emerged as so terribly relative and yet so absolute that gave him the total commitment of his next creative period. It was a commitment into which he drew the Czech Philharmonic, which in its eighteen years with Ančerl at its head rose to the peak of world orchestral art. During his period with the CP he conducted 766 concerts, but his studio recordings were the most sought after. For this reason Supraphon has now been for some years publishing Karel Ančerl Gold Edition series of those recordings that the passage of time have shown to be timeless.

Gustav Mahler's *9th Symphony* is definitely one of these. Ančerl recorded it with the CP in 1966, and naturally he was conscious that this was one of the most complex symphonic compositions ever written. Mahler composed his ninth as a farewell to this world. To the final *Adagio* of his score he added the words: „Goodbye, my lute.” This is revealing! Indeed, it is precisely in this last part of the symphony that Mahler conveys the meaning of his farewell inscription in a musical language that perhaps has no parallel in musical history. Ančerl built this complex musical cathedral mainly on the richness and colour of the string section of the orchestra, an approach that is reflected particularly positively in the melodic infinity of the last movement. The wind groups enter the story only as nuances on the palette of colours, or as means to strengthen the dynamic climaxes, in contrast to the current trend for aggressive brass. Overall the performance is distinguished for excellent ensemble play, tuning and the brilliantly thought out structuring of the phrases. The listener has a sense of complete intellectual and acoustic perfection. In my view something so exceptional can only be achieved on the basis of a long-term developing relationship between conductor and orchestra, and huge commitment, which is not the current trend. Credit for this marvellous product must also go to sound engineer Stanislav Sýkora, and the standard of the booklet is high.

JOSEF ŠEBESTA



Antonín Dvořák

Concerto in B Minor for Cello and Orchestra op. 104

*Concerto in G Major for Piano and Orchestra op. 33**

Jiří Barta – cello, Martin Kasík – piano, Czech Philharmonic, Jiří Bělohlávek, Jiří Kout*. Production: Jiří Hubač. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: live, 9/2003 (op. 33), 5/2004 (op. 104), Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2004. TT: 38:20 + 42:25. DDD. 2 CD Supraphon SU 3774-2.

This exceptionally attractive double album offers two of the most beautiful of Czech concertos performed by two of our outstanding young soloists together with the Czech Philharmonic under two of our most important conductors. *The Cello Concerto* is one of the most frequently played of Dvořák's works and it might even seem difficult to imagine anyone bringing something new to it, but Jiří Barta and Jiří Bělohlávek have managed the almost impossible. From the first notes of this extraordinarily suggestive recording we are drawn into a magical landscape, which we know intimately, but which we suddenly see in an entirely new and unexpectedly beautiful light and with innumerable surprising details. The performers keep us listening, electrified, throughout the concerto, and do not allow us to breathe out until the last notes of the final catharsis. Jiří Barta's performance, with all its maturity and insight, is so exalted in expression that in many places one could not imagine a more intense musical testimony. Under the baton of Jiří Bělohlávek the orchestra produces superb colours, from the blazing and limpid to the velvet soft and dark. The soloists of the orchestra, especially the wind, deserve special praise. All the orchestral solos were so distinctive that their performers deserved to be named alongside the soloists and conductor. The recording of the Dvořák *Piano Concerto*, excellent as it is, was not quite so impressive. Its orchestral opening, compared to the Cello Concerto, is slightly lacklustre, but perhaps this is just an "optical illusion" after the preceding captivating recording. Fortunately this impression is immediately remedied by the first entry of Martin Kasík – sovereign, radiant in sound, and perfect in rhythm. And then we perhaps forget the orchestra a little, because the pianist is so obviously the master of the situation. He gives the concerto just that pianistic shine that Dvořák's contemporaries felt was lacking in the work. Kasík has not the slightest problem with technique and he plays Kurz's difficult arrangements with dazzling brilliance. This is not just an end in itself, however, and we can feel the musician's essential optimism and huge joy in playing. The initially "lacklustre" tone of the orchestra comes into its own in the misty mood of the slow movement. The Philharmonic with Jiří Kout in some places here almost seems to be carried away by the vitality of the soloist and in the final movement becomes an almost equal partner. Supraphon has added a bonus to the two listening experiences: with each CD there is a three-minute videoclip of the concert in the Rudolfinum.

VEŘOSLAV NĚMEC

This complete performance of the songs of Vítězslava Kaprálová presents her song legacy as a surprisingly consistent whole. It is a world that is exceedingly fragile and at the same time moving in its honesty and vulnerability. The poetic texts used are by various different authors (Seifert, Nezval, Hora, Šrámek, Čarek, Křička and others), but they have affinities – they speak of grief, longing, farewells, solitude, the irreversible flow of time. It is quite extraordinary how despite her youth Kaprálová managed to imprint each song with a perfect musical form and bring to them all a touch of limpid musical poetry. They are all characterised by a pure and mature musical idiom that undergoes a certain development, yet retains a sympathetic individuality. Despite all modernity the melodic line sounds so natural that no other resolution seems possible. The piano accompaniments complete and enhance the atmosphere of the songs with extraordinary sensitivity. Kaprálová makes only minimal use of onomatopoeic, programmatic effects, and when she does it is always with ingenuity and musical wit (the bustle of *Jarní pouti* [Spring Fair], the three different stylisations of bird songs in *Koleda* [Carol], *Rodný kraj* [Native Landscape] or in *Píseň milostná* [Love Song]). Dana Burešová sings the songs with perfect understanding and feeling. She has a very pleasant and balanced voice that seems to be completely ideal for this kind of music. The American pianist Timothy Cheek plays with an awareness that in Kaprálová's music the piano part is not just an accompaniment but an equal element that needs to be thought out to the smallest detail. And he manages it wonderfully. It should be noted that Cheek is a considerable expert on Kaprálová's work and Czech culture in general (recently for example he published the excellent booklet *Singing in Czech* on Czech vocal pronunciation for English singers). Karla Hartl, the Czech translator of Cheek's accompanying text in the booklet, is the founder and president of the V. Kaprálová Society in Toronto. Her contributions to the rediscovery of Kaprálová's music cannot be praised enough. If we add to all the excellent aspects of this CD its beautiful graphic design and lavish text, we can unhesitatingly rank it among the most important and innovative Czech projects in recent years.

VĚROSLAV NĚMEC

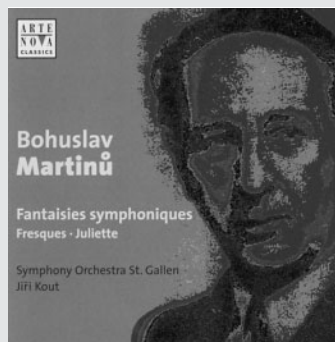


Vítězslava Kaprálová *Songs (Písně)*

Dana Burešová – soprano, Timothy Cheek – piano, Magda Čáslavská – flute, members of the Herold Quartet: Petr Zdvihal, Jan Valta – violins, David Havelík – cello. Production: Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., French, Czech, recorded: 7/2003, Studio Domovina, Prague. Published: 2003. TT: 70:13. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3752-2 231

The album contains three pieces that are among the most beautiful written by Martinů. The 6th Symphony is generally considered an extraordinary achievement, the *Frescos of Piero della Francesca* are in the same, Neo-impressionist vein, and the three-part suite recalling some key orchestral passages from *Julietta* (in the arrangement by Zbyňek Vostřák) approaches his late symphonies and equals them in intensity of beauty. The pieces are extremely demanding for performers, however, since they depend on convincing overlaps of colour, and complete integration of the major passages and small nuances of expression. Jiří Kout with his orchestra from the Swiss town of St. Gallen is astounding in these respects. You might think that orchestras from outside major cities have a right to certain limitations, but here the playing is in the first league. If there are any slight problems to be heard, these are merely the comparative smallness of the orchestra and of the hall itself (compared to recordings of Martinů from the Rudolfinum). Given the mode of play, however, these are ultimately of no importance, and the result can be considered truly impressive. Here we can feel intense concentration, devotion to the works and composer, empathy and the composer's emotional sensitivity and engagement. The frescoes are a little brighter and more colourful, while the *Symphonic Fantasias* start very darkly, slow and wistfully. They also end in a superb, slow descent towards silence. It is a score that has many dramatic moments, and at both poles of expression the orchestra plays smoothly, with rich vibrato. Here the music of Martinů has all that it needs, and emerges with its typical colour and pulse, here a cello, there an oboe... Even if the orchestra has no very distinctive reputation, it is clear that the conductor is an inspiration and the players giving their best.

PETR VEBER



Bohuslav Martinů *Fantaisies symphoniques, Fresques, Juliette*

Symphony Orchestra St. Gallen, Jiří Kout. Production: Christian Leins. Text: Ger., Eng. Recorded 6/2003 a 3/2004. Released: 2004. TT: 63:17. DDD. 1 CD BMG Classics 82876 57740 2 (Sony BMG).



Schola Gregoriana Pragensis

Maiestas Dei

(Grudencz, Dufay, Anonymous)

Schola Gregoriana Pragensis, David Eben. Production: not stated. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 2/2002, 11/1004, Chapel of the Holy Trinity at the former Augustinian monastery (district museum), Česká Lípa. Released: 2005. TT: 71:24. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3807-2. Alternatively: Bornus Consort/Accord 201412.

This brand new CD from the celebrated Schola Gregoriana Pragensis (SGP) is remarkable for several reasons. It is dedicated to the composer Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz (1392 – after 1452), but what “reigns” here is medieval polyphony, which we are of course used to hearing from the Schola but to a much lesser degree. The work of Petrus Wilhelmi has been part of the SGP repertoire for a long time, and if we look through the group’s discography we shall find his music on several preceding albums – *Rosa mystica*, *Codex Franus*, *Ach, homo fragilis* (three pieces from the last named have been taken over onto the new CD). What was earlier more a spicing for purely choral recordings has now moved to the centre of interest of the group. And rightly.

The composer Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz and his life would probably have remained entirely unknown to modern scholars and listeners had it not been for the curious discovery on the part of the musicologist Jaromír Černý, who more than thirty years ago deciphered Grudencz’s original “signature” in his pieces, i.e. acrostics, which on one case give the whole of the composer’s name. The four-part motet *Veni vere illustrator – Pneuma – Paraclito – Dator eya*, in which this “signature” is to be found, also symbolically opens an album which presents roughly three quarters of what has hitherto been identified as Grudencz’s work (not counting later arrangements).

The musical design of the album is brilliant and carefully thought out (the ingenious ending of the record is quite marvellous!) and seems much more meaningful and historically convincing than that of the now fifteen-year-old recording of Grudencz by the Polish ensemble Bornus Consort. Grudencz’s polyphony is here complemented not just by choral chant from period sources, but also by polyphonic compositions from the pen of Grudencz’s contemporaries (anonymous and Guillaume Dufay). The ensemble has a compact sound and leaves no one in any doubt that unison chant is not its only domain and it can cope with the snares of medieval polyphony as well. Precise intonation and ensemble singing go hand in hand with colour and expression. I have only one slight reservation and that is the canto *Nobis est natus hodie*. Although it is quite legitimate in terms of the album design, I still think it less impressive than the rest because of the not entirely convincing counter tenor part and the rather debatable alternating presentation.

Although the Schola has deliberately not taken the opportunity to record all Grudencz’s known work in complete form, this is not to be regretted. On the contrary, in this way it offers listeners a much more attractive and meaningful selection, presents the composer’s creative poetics and is set in the musical and liturgical context of his time. After all, it was a time not just of political but of artistic and intellectual ferment as the Medieval faded and the Renaissance was born. Thanks to the album *Maiestas Dei* we can feel almost as if we were there.

JAN BAŤA



Bedřich Smetana

String Quartet no. 1 in E minor „From My Life“

String Quartet no 2 in D minor

Zdeněk Fibich

String Quartet no. 1 in A major

The Talich Quartet. Production: Jacques le Calvé, Michaël Adda. Text: Fr., Eng., Ger. Recorded: 1, 4/2003 Studio Arco Diva, Prague. Released: 2004. TT: 68:21. DDD. 1 CD Calliope CAL 9332 (distribution Classic).

This Smetana recording from the Talich Quartet appears on the market only six months after the brilliant recording by the Škampa Quartet. These two leading Czech ensembles thus provide us with a very interesting chance to compare them. The Škampa conceived the Smetana quartets as private diary entries or intimate returns to the past, which in their delicacy, refinement and vulnerability give the impression of rare old pastels. The Talich from the first bars draws us directly into the action. Instead of fragile pastels here we have strong, robust colours, striking dynamic contrasts, fiercer sforzata, and greater agogic swings. With the Škampa, Smetana at the end of his life is leafing through his memories, whereas with the Talich Smetana’s life is a drama unfolding “here and now”. Perhaps even more than in the Smetana we can appreciate the Talich Quartet’s colourful play and free treatment of agogics in the case of Fibich. Here the performers feel more relaxed and evidently less bound by tradition. In their interpretation the Fibich Quartet shines like a perfectly cut precious stone and blazes with so many compositional and performance ideas that we have to ask what could have led the composer to distance himself from this work. Here the booklet too deserves particular attention. In an effective enigmatic shot by the outstanding French photographer Jean-Pierre Gilson we see a very unusual view of the head of Jesus Christ from the famous Gothic cathedral in Soissons. The text on Smetana by Étienne Bertoli is relatively long and generally well-grounded, although it is a little over-emphatic (five exclamation marks on the first page alone) for my taste. The author stresses Smetana’s role as a patriot and revolutionary and praises his role as founder of a previously non-existent Czech national music. The sentence that follows this indubitable claim (and ends with another exclamation mark) is worth quoting in full: “To speak the truth – if we rake account of the historical context, Czech music was a pure abstraction at the time: a cross between folkdances of indeterminate origin and gypsy folklore.” („...un croisement entre des danses populaires aux origines indistinctes et des folklores tziganes!”).

VĚROSLAV NĚMEC



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PETRARCH SONGS Songs for Medium Voice and Piano on Poems by Francesco Petrarca

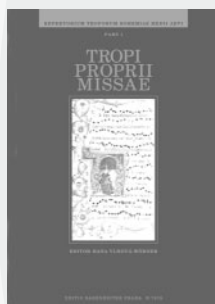
Compiled and edited by Martin Bruns

The seven hundredth anniversary of the birth of Petrarch (full Italian name Francesco Petrarca, 1304–1374), poet, the first humanist, and 'Father of the Renaissance', offers an opportunity to discover a repertoire that has remained almost unknown. This anthology is intended equally for singers, students, and music lovers, and aims to stimulate exploration of a repertoire that has lain largely fallow. The selection presented here, documents the stylistic variety of compositions

covering a good two hundred years. As regards pieces for solo voice and piano, the regular concert repertoire knows only very few musical settings of Petrarch's texts. However, only poems Petrarch wrote in colloquial Italian have been set to music. Therefore the large majority of his texts in musical works, and all those presented in this volume, come from his Canzoniere – his 'Book of Songs'.

H 7934 ISMN M-2601-0349-8, 160 pages

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Hana Vihová-Wörner TROPI PROPRII MISSAE

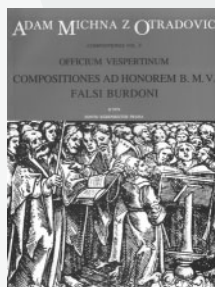
Repertorium troporum bohemiae medii aevi, pars I

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H 7931 ISMN M-2601-0317-7, 20/8/8/8 pages

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L'ATTRACTION ET LA NÉCESSITÉ Musique tchèque et culture française au XX^e siècle

Compiled and edited

by Xavier Galmiche et Lenka Stránská

Between the 1890s and World War II the axis of Paris – Prague was found to be incredibly attractive. Its attraction lay in sharing mutual political and social values and led to the demand of certain cultural and artistic unity. The aim of this book is to raise questions regarding the musical

works of this period, and discuss which musical works show this 'affinity in choice'. During the course of the 20th century 'cultural polarities' started blurring, and paradoxically enough it was not one of the Slav countries, but Paris where Czech composers reinvented, through the Neo-Classical style (mainly Stravinski's) their 'Eastern pole': light and archaic themes, a specific register of folk and trivial music, and the preference for creative spontaneity in compositions. Which features in the direction taken by Bohuslav Martinů can be regarded as typical of this tendency? What were the positions of the other Czech composers such as Leoš Janáček, Alois Hába, Karel Husa, Jaroslav Ježek and others, and artists working in the musical, artistic or literary fields, for instance Arne Hošek, Milada Součková, Jiří Kolář, Milan Slavický, Milan Kundera, within this context? The analysis of these questions regarding the whole of the 20th century is completed with several so far unpublished or unknown sources.

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zdeněk fibich

and his place in czech and european music in the last decades of the 19th century

(21st of december 1859 – 12th of october 1900)

As a child, the Czech composer Zdeněk Fibich (21st of December 1850 Všebořice u Dolních Kralovic – 12th of October 1900 Prague) developed a love of the nature that surrounded the family home of his father, a forester, while his mother made sure he acquired a knowledge and love of the arts. He received a general education at gymnasiums in Vienna and in Prague, and also a specialist music education. At fifteen he was for four months a pupil of Bedřich Smetana at his music institute in the Lažanský Palace in Prague. Subsequently he studied with Ignaz Moscheles at the conservatory in Leipzig, where the famous Samuel Jadassohn, for example, taught him music theory. He then continued his studies with periods in Paris and Mannheim. In 1871 he returned to Prague. In the years 1873-74 he studied in Vilnius, but could not get used to the place. From 1871 he lived permanently in Prague, where he privately taught music and worked as choirmaster. For several seasons he was second capelmeister of the Czech opera, and before the end of his life he was programme director of the opera of the National Theatre. He also publicly performed as a pianist, but he regarded composing as his main activity.

In early songs, chamber pieces and the opera *Bukovín* [*Beechwood*] (1871) he was much influenced by Schumann's Romanticism. After his return to Prague he developed personal and musical links with Bedřich Smetana and adopted Smetana's programme of Czech national music. This is strikingly clear in his symphonic poems *Záboj*, *Slavoj* and *Luděk* (1873 based on supposedly ancient Slav

poems from the Dvůr Králové Manuscript), *Toman a lesní panna* [*Toman and the Forest Maiden*] (1875 based on a ballad by F. L. Čelakovský), and in other orchestral works such as the overtures *Noc na Karlštejně* [*A Night at Karlštejn*] (1886 after a play by Jaroslav Vrchlický), and *Komenský* [*Come-nius*] (1892 for the 400th anniversary of the birth of the great 17th-century Czech thinker), in the cantata *Jarení romance* (1880 on a poem by Jaroslav Vrchlický), and the opera *Blaník* (1877 libretto by Eliška Krásnohorská on a story from Czech mythology). At the suggestion of his friend Otakar Hostinský, a critic, supporter of Bedřich Smetana and from 1882 professor of aesthetics at Charles University, he adopted Wagner's principles of music drama for operas starting with the *Nevěsta messinská* [*The Bride of Messina*] (1883 with libretto by Hostinský after Friedrich Schiller). Specifically this meant the use of leitmotifs, forms that involved the musical integration of whole acts and the type of vocal melody, but not to any great extent Wagner's musical style or distinctive type of invention. Zdeněk Fibich remained primarily a lyricist drawing on nature and love for inspiration. Leading examples here include the piano cycles *Z hor* [*From the Mountains*] (1887) and *Nálady, dojmy a upomínky* [*Moods, Impressions and Mementos*] (1892-94), the symphonic poem *Vesna* (1881), the cantata *Jarní romance* [*Spring Romance*] (1880), and the orchestral idyll *V podvečer* [*Early Evening*] (1893).

Fibich's ties to cosmopolitanism set him in broader literary and general cultural contexts.

Cosmopolitanism was a movement represented mainly by his literary contemporaries Jaroslav Vrchlický, Julius Zeyer, Josef Václav Sládek and others. These were trying to give Czech art an international dimension by taking great world themes, and translating and using works from other cultures. It was not a movement aimed against the patriotic work of their predecessors, since its members continued the established tradition direction with some nationally-minded works on national themes, but they nonetheless invested a great deal of effort in trying to integrate Czech art into the mainstream of European art past and present, and to enriching it with impulses from abroad. In Fibich this cosmopolitan tendency was early expressed in the symphonic poem *Othello* (1873) and the opera *Nevěsta messinská* [*The Bride of Messina*], and after writing the symphonic poem *Bouře* [*The Tempest*] (1880) in 1894 he produced an opera of the same name based again on Shakespeare's play. The piano cycle *Malířské studie* [*Painterly Studies*] (1899), inspired by works of the world old masters was in the same line. So too were the operas *Heda* (1896 based on episode in Byron's epic *Don Juan*) and *Pád Arkuna* [*The Fall of Arkun*] (1898 on the story of the defeat of the northern Slavs). The crowning expression of Fibich's relationship with literary cosmopolitanism is the trilogy of stage melodramas *Hippodamie* (on a play by Jaroslav Vrchlický on classical themes 1889-91). This work was also the culmination of the composer's originally-minded revival and modern adaptation of a genre that had been founded by Jiří Benda on the basis of an idea

by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Earlier Fibich wrote 6 concert melodramas with piano and several with orchestra, including *Štědrý den* [Christmas Eve] (1875) and *Vodník* [The Water Goblin] (1883) on ballads from Karel Jaromír Erben's *Kytice* [Bouquet].

Fibich's later work was strongly affected by the decadent atmosphere of the fin de siècle. There were personal as well as aesthetic motives at work, especially his relationship with the decadent poet Anežka Schulzová, who was entirely in tune with the fashionable movements of the day. This is clear in the operas on her librettos, *Hedy*, *Pád Arkuna* [The Fall of Arkun] and also *Šárka* (1897), where she has shifted the national mythological subject onto the highly subjectivised level of intimate tragedy. It is also evident in pieces inspired by his affair with Anežka, such as several piano pieces from the cycle *Nálady, dojmy a upomínky* [Moods, Impressions and Mementos] and the idyll *V podvečer* [In the Early Evening].

His non-programmatic instrumental pieces are less numerous, and include the *Piano Trio in F minor* (1872), *String Quartet in A major* (1874) and in *G Major* (1878), *Piano Quartet in E minor* (1874), *Quintet in D Major* for violin, cello, clarinet, french horn and piano (1894), *Symphony no. 1 in F major* (1883), *No. 2 in E flat major* (1892) and *no. 3 in E minor* (1898).

Over more than a century following the composer's death, Fibich's work and his place in Czech music culture have been the subject of very varied assessments. Time and again there have been debates on Fibich's impor-



tance and contribution to the living heritage of late 19th-century Czech music, and these have sometimes turned into sharp polemic. Zdeněk Fibich has been overestimated and underestimated. Zdeněk Nejedlý, from 1905 the first professor of musicology at Charles University in Prague, was his pupil, and as an influential music critic in the first four decades he very much over-rated Fibich, placing him on a level with Bedřich Smetana and even above Antonín Dvořák. This was never generally accepted, and would seem to have even damaged Fibich's reputation. His frequent (more in his early work) Romantic stylistic orientation to Robert Schumann did not meet with the favour of later generations of musicians with modern tastes, and sometimes they even showed an open dislike that was no doubt partly a reaction to the overblown praise from the famous critic. Pupils of Antonín Dvořák tended to take a critical line in relation

to Fibich. Vítězslav Novák expressed himself on the subject several times in his memoirs, *About Myself and Others*. Commenting on the symphonic poems he praises the natural inspiration of *Vesna* and *In the Early Evening*, but is critical of *Othello*, *Záboj*, *Slavoj a Luděk*. Nor does he spare Fibich's most original creation: "I find no appeal in Fibich's melodrama trilogy *Hippodamie*. The music played by itself in the prelude and the interludes effectively provides the stage mood, but when accompanying the spoken words of the actors it encumbers them and what are mostly undistinguished motifs or just held chords say little to the musical audience." And commenting on the small pieces from the *Moods, Impressions and Mementos* cycle, to which Zdeněk Nejedlý had devoted a whole book called *Fibich's Love Diary*, he resorts to direct ridicule: "This composer is the author of a unique curiosity in the whole piano literature.



sitting: Antonín Dvořák, Jindřich Káan,
Zdeněk Fibich
standing: Karel Bendl, Josef Bohuslav Foerster,
Karel Kovařovic

According to the detailed explanation of Prof. Zdeněk Nejedlý in his book *Fibich's Love Diary*, they are musically illustrate not just all the bodily parts of the beloved, but even part of her toilette, for example a hat – and later once again – a new hat! No other composer has ever thought of such niceties and none ever will."

Nejedlý's book had in fact been severely criticised immediately after it came out in 1925 by a professor of musical science in Brno, Vladimír Helfert in the Brno magazine *Hudební rozhledy* [Musical Outlooks]. He pointed out the incongruity and tendentious character of Nejedlý's interpretation of the individual pieces in the cycle and his uncritical approach to them. And ten years later, when Vladimír Helfert published his lengthy study of Czech music from Smetana to the present, called *Czech Modern Music*, he expressed critical reservations about Fibich of a more fundamental kind. He praised some of his positive contributions, but indicated what he considered faults. Of Fibich's tectonics he wrote that "*Fibich's large forms do not develop according to the law of organic growth and logical internal welding together as is the case with Beethoven or Smetana. He replaces this*

classic creative method with the principle of co-ordinative, i.e. essentially mosaic systems. He starts from a formally complete inspiration and then shifts it forward on the basis of modulation variations, at most at the interval of third. In doing so he derives no new musical possibilities from the inspiration concerned, does not think it through and develop it to its final point." Helfert also commented epigrammatically on Fibich's stylistic backwardness, his failure to exploit the chance of learning from the huge wave of stylistic advance brought by world music in the 1890s, and so organically to shift his form of musical expression onwards: "*In terms of stylistic progression, his place is before Smetana or at least with Smetana. At that point he would have been highly up-to-date. In this stylistic backwardness lies the whole tragedy of the Fibich phenomenon in modern Czech music.*"

The leading position of Zdeněk Nejedlý as Minister of Education and Culture in the governments of the Czechoslovak Republic after the 2nd World War, and the fact that Vladimír Helfert was no longer alive, led to a kind of compromise middle position which around the mid-20th century was adopted by the public as well. The prevailing idea was of a sort of

authoritative triumvirate of founders of modern national music, i.e. Smetana – Dvořák – Fibich. As a result, the 100th anniversary of Fibich's birth in 1950 brought over-inflated celebrations of the composer and uncritical performance of his pieces in almost all state musical institutions. Fibich was presented here with all his weaknesses and Czech musical life was oversaturated with his pieces. It became clear that his music did not represent an oeuvre of even quality, compact in style or consistently original. This led to a general turning-away from his work; long and probably even unjust. In the 1960s and 70s he was rarely played and numerous attempt to revive his mature music in full for many years met with failure. The opportunity came again with another major anniversary – the 150th anniversary of his birth and 100th of his death – in the year 2000. The razzmatazz was limited compared to the celebrations of 1950. Many of his works had been printed for the anniversary fifty years before, but publication activity was much more modest in 2000. Nonetheless, advance in recording technology and the repertoire range on recording media offered new possibilities. New recordings of Fibich's chamber and piano pieces came out on CD. Some of his operas were staged, and even his stage melodramas were presented at the National Theatre, although the production showed that the latter were conceived for a more resonant and slower, epic romantic acting style. The modern restrained idiom worked badly, whether in terms of time co-ordination with the music, comprehensibility and the dynamic balance between the orchestra and the stage. The electro-acoustic amplification of the acting performances using contact microphones produced a distinct feeling of alienation; in the end the cycle was not presented in full. Five years have now gone by since this last major anniversary and Fibich's music has once again in large part vanished from Czech musical life. Once again it is evident that the concept of the three classics-founders of Czech modern music is faulty. The work of Smetana and Dvořák has proved a self-evident, durable part of cultural legacy and been integrated into musical life throughout the world. It continues to be played and recorded,



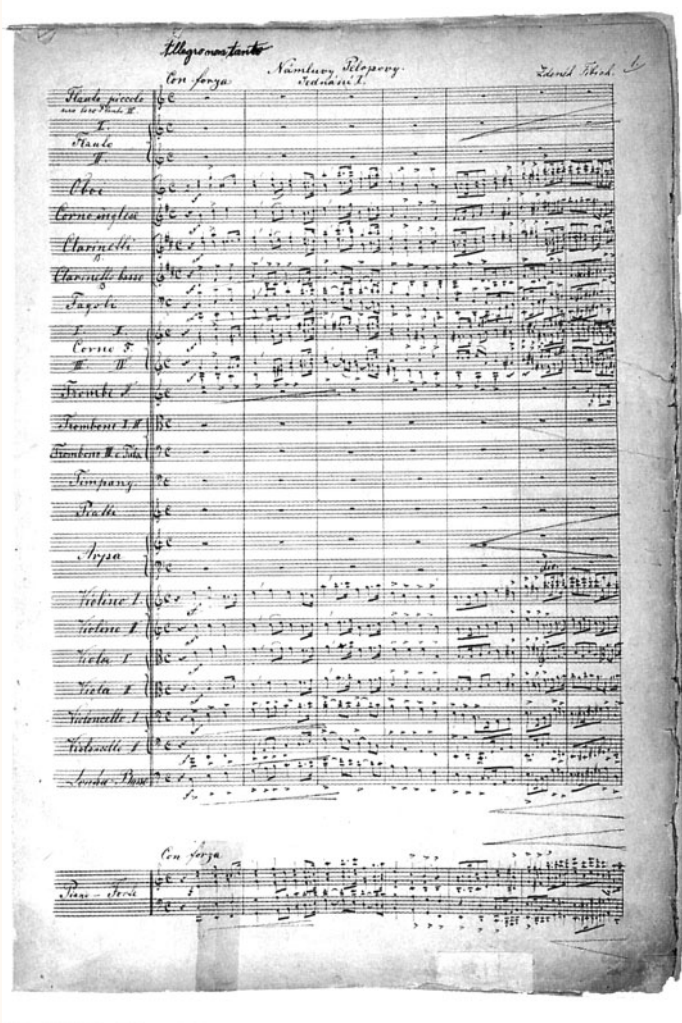
Karel Benický *Josef Václav Frič* *Karel Komárek*
Antonín Dvořák *Josef Kármán* *Zdeněk Fibich*

and to arouse enthusiasm and honour for its originality, imagination and perfect composition. Fibich's work comes no where near them in terms of response or frequency of performance. If these indices were precisely quantified, they would show his comparative status to be a mere fraction of the others.

We cannot, however, dismiss Zdeněk Fibich as a poor or even bad composer. He was an educated composing professional, as is strikingly clear when we compare him to other Czech composers who were his contemporaries, and whose music has long been forgotten. Bedřich Smetana himself several

times named Fibich as the best younger Czech composer immediately after Dvořák. When in the spring of 1874 Smetana refused the request of Vilém Blodek's widow that he should complete Blodek's opera *Zítěk*, or when he refused to produce new choral works for Hlahol in December 1876 or the libretto for an opera *Ahasver* was offered him in February 1879 by Josef Václav Frič, he always recommended Dvořák and Fibich instead. Bedřich Smetana, of course, knew only Zdeněk Fibich's work of the 1870s and 80s. This was when he was still a promising young man, and his music did not yet show the problem that Vladimír Helfert was to characterise

as *tragic stylistic backwardness* (see above): although he took up aspects of Wagner's innovation in opera, his musical style remained largely within the ambit of Schumann's idiom, and a few elements of the so-called Tristan harmony were more or less exceptions in his work. That backwardness is also strikingly apparent in his musical responses to the impulses of literary decadence. Elsewhere in the world and among other Czech composers this was linked with impressionist or late Romantic innovation in melody, harmony and other aspects of musical expression. Nejedlý and his followers believed that some sides of Fibich's piano



Autograph of the melodrama *Pelop's Courting* (1889)



Program for the premiere of the opera *Bukovín* in 1874

stylisation were foreshadowings of impressionism, but they were always only techniques known from Chopin, and came nowhere near the stylistic innovations of Debussy or Ravel. The music that he wrote on the model of Smetana makes a sympathetic impression as an expression of patriotism and a warm attitude to Smetana himself, but these works are merely derivative. Fibich never had the ambition here to move beyond Smetana and does not do so even unconsciously. Nejedly's fabrication about the priority of the entry motif of Smetana's *Vyšehrad* in Fibich's symphonic poem *Záboj*, *Slavoj* and *Luděk* is quite unfounded. Zdeněk Fibich's most valuable contribution thus remains his lively sense for the Romantic ballad and the musical expression of natural lyricism. These remain the fixed stars of his

work of all periods. In this sense it is comparable with the music of other traditionalists-balladeers and elegiacs in other countries, composers like Camille Saint-Saens, Emanuel Chabrier, Ernst Chausson, Gabriel Fauré, Eduard Elgar, Carl August Nielsen, Alexander Glazunov and many others, who thanks to the expansion of the repertoire of the major recording companies and the hunger in musical life for unknown romantic pieces are today still in play. Among these Fibich certainly belongs as a full-value partner, but not with the likes of Smetana and Dvořák. These are not only more original and inventive, but direct their music much more strongly forwards, convincingly fulfilling the period ideal of the creation of new forms of musical expression.

JAROSLAV SMOLKA

profiles

jan dismas
zelenka(16th october 1679 – 22nd-23rd december 1745)

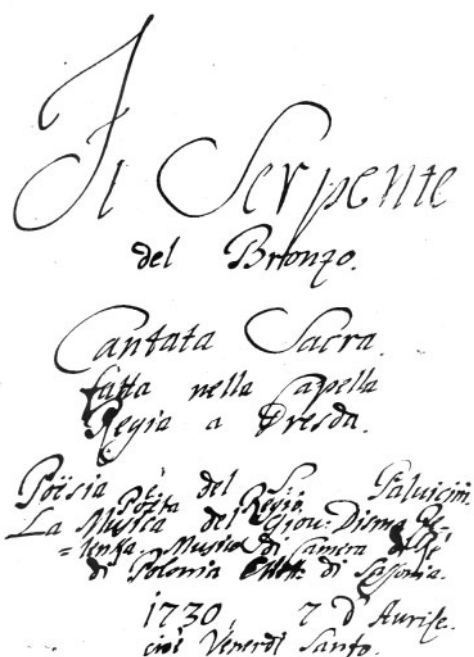
Jan Dismas Zelenka and His Style of Composition

The aesthetic qualities and value of the music of *Jan Dismas Zelenka* (16th October 1679 Louňovice pod Blaníkem – night of the 22nd to 23rd of December 1745 Dresden) were all but unknown to modern musical life for much of the 20th century. When an edition of the Bohemian composer's chamber and orchestral works came out and the top Swiss oboist *Heinz Holliger* made them famous by his masterly interpretations, Zelenka's music suddenly attracted an avalanche of interest on international scale. It was a final vindication for the handful of enthusiasts in Bohemia and Dresden who had been trying for decades but without much success to convince the world of Zelenka's exceptional contributions to music. Today he has been accepted and ranked alongside *J. S. Bach*, *Händel*, *Vivaldi* or *Telemann* as a major Baroque composer. The discovery led to enormous academic interest and grants from German universities and foundations, resulting in numerous editions of his music, biographical documents, a thematic catalogue, two major international conferences and lengthy collected papers, two books and other publications.

Zelenka received the basic elements of his

musical education from his father *Jiří*, the choirmaster and organist in his native village. His views and outlook were probably also influenced by the local Roman Catholic priest *Jan Komenský*, nephew of the most important figure of the Czech Reformation and Bishop of the Bohemian Unity of the Brethren, *Jan Ámos Komenský* (*Comenius*). We do not know whether this priest brought up his charges in a purely Catholic spirit, or told them about the stirring reformationary past and its ideas and symbols, and whether these ideas might then have influenced Zelenka's attitudes and faith. After the young musician moved to study at a Jesuit gymnasium in Prague he did or said something that was considered very wrong. Was this transgression something to do with doctrine, or did it reveal the homosexual orientation that has been suggested by the important Dresden scholar *Wolfgang Reich*, or was it something else? We don't know. All that is certain is that he carried with him a sense of guilt throughout his life and it strongly informed his music. Fortunately the Jesuits recognised his extraordinary talent as well as his guilt and gave him opportunities to compose and perform, but he did not go on to study at university. In 1704 he composed the music for the Jesuit

school play *Via laureata* and then we know nothing of events in his life or other works until 1709. In this year he was accepted into the service of the Count *Josef Ludvík Hartig*. Evidently on the latter's initiative or at least with his consent, and on the recommendation of the Jesuits, the young musician was selected for a special mission abroad – to write Catholic church music at the court of the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, who had only recently converted to Catholicism. Probably in 1710 he became double bassist and later court composer of Roman Catholic sacred music in Dresden. The young Czech soon proved his talents here and his very first *Mass for St. Cecilia in G major* was a success. King *Augustus II the Strong* sent him to study composition in Vienna under J. J. Fux and possibly to Italy as well. Although his task was primarily to compose vocal instrumental church music, he soon showed himself an original and highly ingenious composer of orchestral and chamber music. In Vienna his orchestral *Capriccios* with thrilling concertante french horns had already been a great success. His six *Sonatas* with leading oboe part, created soon after his return to Dresden around 1720, are dazzling pieces. At the coronation of the Habsburg *Charles VI* as King of Bohemia in Prague 1723 Zelenka also excelled with his *orchestral suites and concertante works* and music for the ceremonial St. Wenceslas play *Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis*. Nonetheless, it is sacred music that forms the greater part of his output, and it was particularly in sacred music that he showed his mastery of polyphony and his feeling for emotional and philosophical depths, for the expression of humility and awe in the face of divine power. He created almost 30 masses, some of them long and major – festival masses with trumpets and kettle drums such as the *Easter in D major* or the Christmas *Mass for the Birth of Our Lord in D major*, and some deep and reflective such as the *Mass of the Holy Trinity in A minor* or parts of the probably unfinished series *Six Missae ultimae – God*



Manuscript of *The Copper Serpent* (front page)

the Father in C major, God the Son in C major and All Saints in A minor. Among Zelenka's four requiems the most important is the last in D major for the exequies of King Augustus II the Strong. He also wrote dozens of very various Psalms, the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah, the oratorios *The Copper Serpent*, *Jesus on Calvary*, and *the Penitents at the Tomb of the Redeemer*, ten cycles of litanies, two *Te Deums* and much else.

Zelenka's creative talent was undoubtedly stimulated and refined by acquaintance with earlier and contemporary European music in Saxony and in Vienna. His studies with J. J. Fux were very important for him, as were his experiences of outstanding performers and large court orchestras. The Vienna court orchestra was conducted by Fux and Antonio Caldara, and for many years Zelenka himself had the chance to work with the court ensemble in Dresden and to watch all the others who conducted it from his position as double-bass player. As double-bass player he rehearsed and played in the premiere of Fux's coronation opera *Costanza e fortezza* in Prague in September 1723, and it was here that he himself stood at the head of a large ensemble to rehearse and present his ceremonial St. Wenceslas play. These experiences were a great stimulus to his creative gifts and speeded up and channelled the development of the talent he had showed since his Prague years. The masterly skill and distinctive character of his work is the result of a unique coincidence of different kinds of source and inspiration. The foundation of Zelenka's musical idiom

was the style of the Central European High Baroque. Around 1700 the older style of Renaissance vocal polyphony still survived in Prague, and in Vienna, where Fux was one of those who favoured it. We may assume that he taught Zelenka the elements of style as thoroughly as he expounded them in his textbook *Gradus ad parnassum* (1725). And this was not just a matter of Palestrina's style but of the expressive language, colourful combinations of distant chords and chromatic treatment of voices typical of mannerism and often, for example, of Girolamo Frescobaldi. It is no accident that among the many pieces that Zelenka transcribed and brought to Dresden was Frescobaldi's collection *Fiori musicali*, and no accident that in the 1730s he parodied ricercars in unusually melodically and harmonically intense ways, giving them a text and instrumentalising them for choir and orchestra. Especially in the musical expression of pain, regret and humility before the majesty of God, for example in the musical arrangement of the mass *Credo*, various points in the requiem, in numerous Christmas pieces including oratorios, psalms etc. Zelenka manages to exploit the impulses of Mannerist music in the service of an extreme expressiveness. Fux also provided him with a thorough training in Baroque polyphony, and Zelenka became a master of canons, fugal counterpoint variations and so forth. In addition he learned the Venetian style with its concertante idiom à la Vivaldi, while from the 1730s he was confronted with the Neapolitan opera style also applied to sacred music, which was already distinctive in its gallant mode and simplified in a Classicist spirit. He seems to have used it in *Eight Arias* on Italian texts in the cantata *Serenata*, and we can also find its traces in some places in oratorios from the mid-1730s. Zelenka evidently adopted it to improve his standing at the court, since this kind of music appealed to the young Elector and King Frederick Augustus II. To no avail, since the king still appointed a direct representative of this style, Johann Adolf Hasse to the head of the court kapell, and Zelenka was only allowed to stand in for him when he was away for long periods. Indeed, Zelenka was never to be appointed kapellmeister. Particularly for the style of his late masses and other sacred music works, Prof. Thomas Kohlhase has coined the term „mixed sacred style“, by which he means the internally contrasting alternation and intermingling of all the style elements mentioned within single individual works.

Research into the sources and form of Zelenka's style has one unexplored aspect, which some authors avoid altogether while other authors simply make assertions of general kind about it without trying to get to grips with it in any more concrete way. This is the Czech element and wellspring of Zelenka's music,

the issue of what it was in his native tradition that influenced his unique and individual musical idiom. Foreign musicologists who have written on Zelenka's *Capriccios* and *Sonatas* or characterised his music in general, have speculated that the composer's musical imagination owed much to his native environment, a definably Slavonic and specifically Czech folk musicality. We Czechs are of course highly sensitive to this element, but it is very hard to identify and formulate it precisely. This is because the popular musical cultures of the lands of Central Europe in the Baroque era were so closely inter-related and mutually entwined that when we take any one musical idea or even idiom it is impossible to say exactly whether it is Czech, Austrian or South German, and sometimes well-known popular melodies identified with one area or another turn out to have equivalents beyond the immediate borders of that area. Of course, specifically Czech, Austrian, German and Polish music does exist, but there is a great deal of overlap and mutual influence, and sometimes, for example, you hear something of French origin sounding irresistibly Czech.

Zelenka's orchestral *Capriccios* are a typical case in point, and there are also strikingly Czech aspects in his six *Sonatas*. Intonations reminiscent of Czech music are scattered through his orchestral works and in various places in his sacred music as well. Czech and common Central European attributes appearing in the music are primarily matters of melodies and movement identified in Czech music with a number of distinct genres. Zelenka sometimes seems to draw on the melodic archetype of a broad ascending-descending melodic arch identifiable in Czech music from the Hussite *Paternoster* of the earlier 15th century and appearing frequently in Czech folk music of a later date. It was intensively developed in Czech choral and hymnal tradition both Protestant and Catholic and is strikingly evident for example in the music of Bohuslav Matěj Černohorský, J. D. Zelenka's most important Czech contemporary. It is not accidental that, for example, the strong melody of the first choral fugue of the St. Wenceslas play, *Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis* to the words *Dextera tua Domine*, has affinities with the first fugue theme of Černohorský's *Laudetur Jesus Christus* and the subjects of his organ fugues. Zelenka sometimes draws on the lyricism of the Czech folk song, and also has something in common with Christmas carols; three parts of his Christmas *Missa Nativitatis Domini in D major* are pastoral in character. Zelenka uses simple, almost folksong melodics in his canons, and his fast instrumental movements, especially those that have a dance element, sound strikingly Czech. None of the movements of his *Sonatas* are actually named after specific dances, but they have definite resonances of dance

music, especially Czech folk dances, particularly in the rapid last movements. Some of their themes are at heart close to Czech folk instrumental idiom, but not of a kind that we can document until roughly fifty years later. All kinds of traces of Czech folk musical feeling and tradition can be found in Zelenka's work, although they do not play a major constitutive role in his compositional style.

There is an essential drama and theatricality about Zelenka's music, and it appears that this was a feature of his work even before he deepened his education as a composer by studying with J. J. Fux in Vienna. We can ground this judgment in more than just the fact that the first of Zelenka's known works was music for the Jesuit school play *Via Laureata, magnis virtutum*. As early as 1709 he wrote *Music for the Holy Sepulchre Immisit Dominus pestilentiam*, which includes the dramatically very effective alto aria *Recordare, Domine, testamenti tui* with chamber instrumental ensemble. In its central recitative part the instruments are vividly used to express the clamour of destruction. It is an example of Zelenka's tendency to dramatic and directly programmatic musical expression of emotion even before his departure for Dresden.

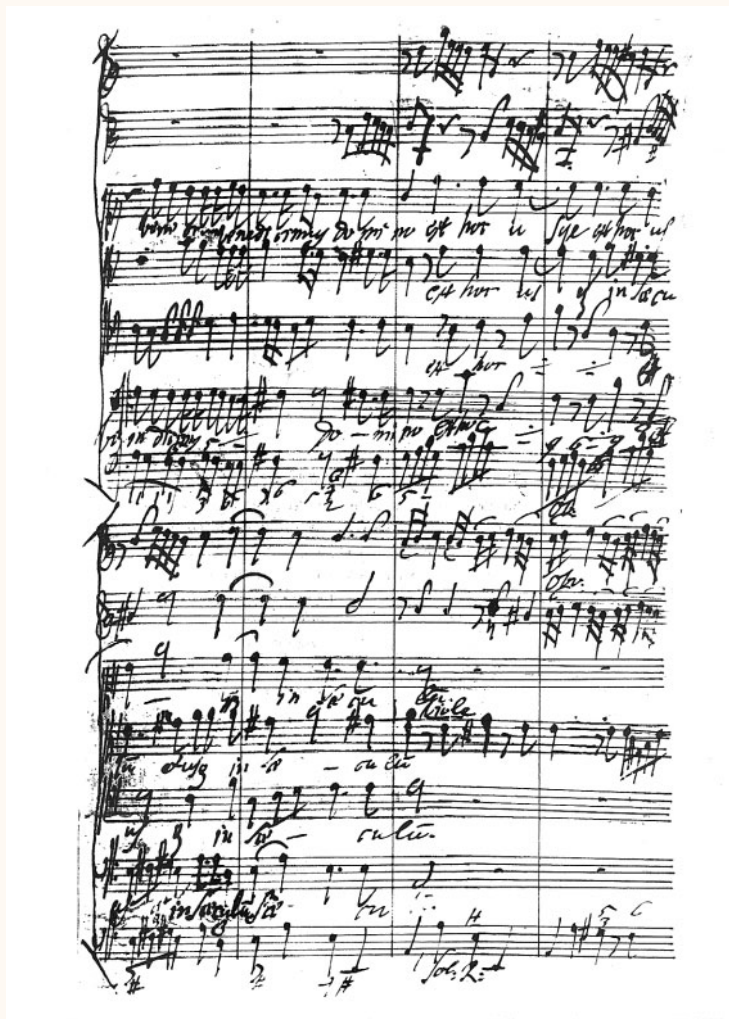
There are many instances of musico-dramatic ideas in Zelenka's output. They include the use of violin tremolo to express the shaking of the earth in *Psalm 113 In exitu Israel D minor*, the depiction of the timbres and stylistic qualities of the instruments named in the text of *Psalm 150 Praise ye God the Mighty*; the evocative descriptions of situations and settings in a dark, mystical sinfonia for the oratorio *I Penitenti al Sepolchro del Redentore*, and the depiction of human character, for example in the mimicking of the painful breaths of a hypochondriac in the sinfonia *Hypocondria*. We find an instrumental characterisation of states of the human mind in two movements of the *Capriccio no. 5 G major* of 1729: *Il contento* (Content), serene and with Czech elements, and *Il furibundo* (Furious) with a wild turbulent unison of all the violins. One particularly remarkable example of the depictive element in Zelenka's music is *Psalm 129 In convertendo ZWV 91*; here the text on conversion (of godless people and enemies of the Lord), inspires the composer to write canons in inversion, i.e. with „converted“ testimonies. We find such touches, representing non-musical content, situations and so forth, in other pieces as well, but the theatrical quality of Zelenka's music is best documented in his major works on dramatically conceived libretti, the St. Wenceslas play *Sub olea pacis et pama virtutis*, the oratorios, and the cantata *Serenata*.

The most impressive and unique value of the music of Jan Dismas Zelenka lies in his expressive profundity and authenticity, the interior depth of his musical testimony, but of

course the Baroque was the epoch of grand gestures and emotions, and in this sense Zelenka was entirely a son of his time. Like Baroque statues and paintings, cathedrals and palaces, his music, and especially his great sacred works, i.e. the *festival and mourning (requiem) masses, oratorios, litanies, Psalms, the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Magnificat and Te Deum*, are highly charged testimony to the meaning of the texts and original emotional interpretations of their mysteries. Far from formal or conventional in spirit, they are always deeply experienced and unique in terms of the intensity with which their message is conveyed. Of course, liturgical and biblical texts offer a range of different moods and nuances of expression in the celebration of God, Christ and the saints. Zelenka often polarises their musical expression. At one pole he emphasises joyful celebration and trust, sometimes to the point of the childishly naive; this is the source of the exalted style of his *Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Osanna and Benedictus, Magnificat, the Te Deum*, and *Psalms* with their glorifications of the Lord and protestations of trust, the celebratory exclamations in the *Litanies* often with trumpets and choral and instrumental coloratura, the shifting texture of poly-

phonic parts that may be complex, but always exultant. At the other pole is the musical expression of the pleas for forgiveness and sins, the remorse, the images of pain and suffering, visions of punishments, despair and death derived from texts focused on the word *Miserere* (even when surrounded by the joyful visions of the mass *Gloria* or psalms and other texts), the depiction of the crucifixion and entombment of Christ in the mass *Credo* and the pleading verses of the *Agnus Dei*, the visions of the Last Judgment and eternal damnation, the *Dies irae* and despairing weeping in the *Lacrimosa* and other sections of the *Requiem* and so on. It is particularly in such images that the expressive power and energy of Zelenka's musical imagination resides. Here the composer opens up and addresses the Lord from the depths of his soul. You may also believe in God, but you need not, since a sensitive person not just of Zelenka's time but of our own can still hear in his music the trembling of the deepest layers of the human psyche, the authentic voice of human guilt, pain, despair and hope. I am convinced that this is the essence of the art of Jan Dismas Zelenka.

JAROSLAV SMOLKA



Manuscript of *The Copper Serpent* (excerpt)