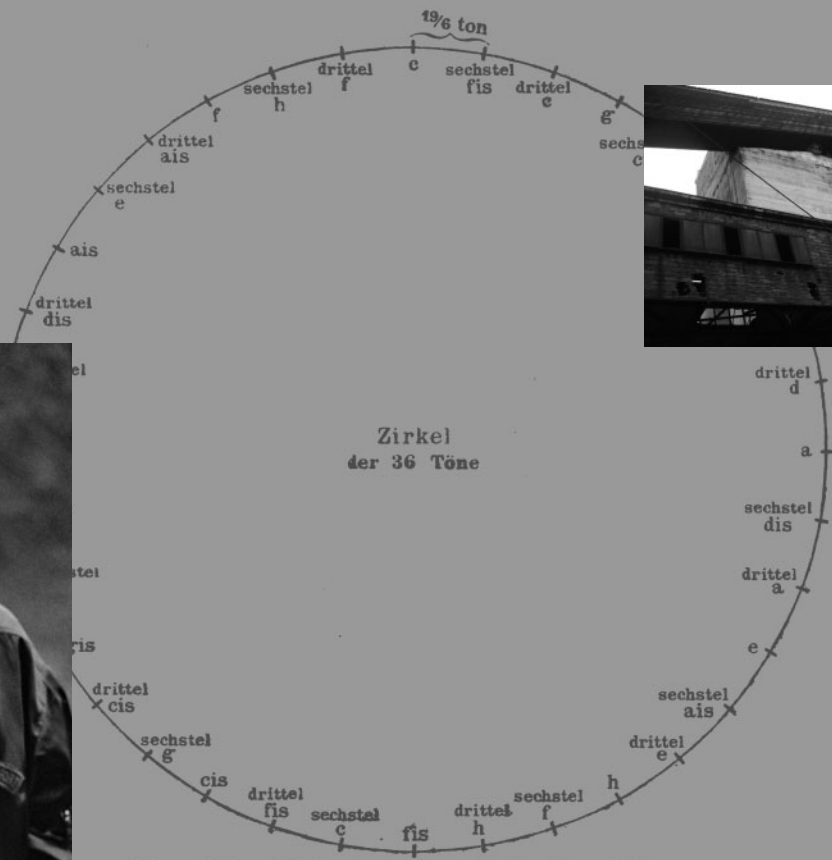
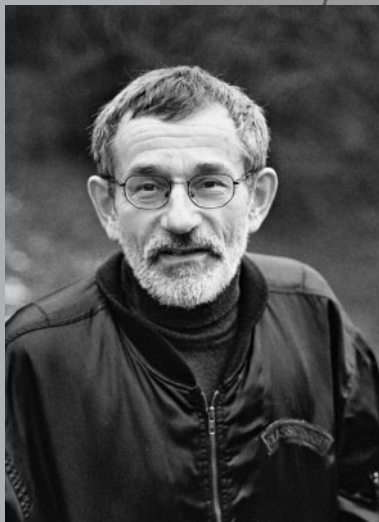


czech music

quarterly magazine

Die Leitern im Sechsteltonsystem.

245



Ein „Drittel“ ist um einen Drittelton höher.

Ein „Sechstel“ ist um einen Sechstelton höher.

Es ergänzen sich im Sechsteltonsystem folgende Intervalle auf den Umfang einer Oktave:

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Miloš Štedroň

Alois Hába

Martin Smolka

2005

13 . abonentní sezóna Českého národního symfonického orchestru 2005/2006 v Rudolfinu

I. koncert

Pondělí 17. 10. 2005, 19.30 hodin
SKRJABIN, RACHMANINOV, LISZT, ČAJKOVSKIJ

ČNSO/Daniel Raiskin
Enrico Pace & Yingdi Sun, klavír

II. koncert

Středa 9. 11. 2005, 19.30 hodin
MITCHELL, BAKER, BRAHMS

ČNSO/Paul Freeman
Jiří Novotný, trombon

III. koncert

Sobota 17. 12. 2005, 19.30 hodin
LA PARADA

Jan Hasenöhrl & hosté
Paul Freeman, Václav Hudeček a další

IV. koncert

Středa 11. 1. 2006, 19.30 hodin
BEETHOVEN, ČAJKOVSKIJ, RACHMANINOV

ČNSO/Paul Freeman
Jaroslava Pěchočová, klavír

V. koncert

Středa 1. 2. 2006, 19.30 hodin
VERDI, BRITTEN, ROSSINI, RESPIGHI

ČNSO/Marcello Rota
Jaroslav Březina, tenor
Zdeněk Tylšar, lesní roh

VI. koncert

Středa 1. 3. 2006, 19.30 hodin
„MOZART GALA“

ČNSO/Jan Chalupecký

VII. koncert

Neděle 2. 4. 2006, 19.30 hodin
RAVEL, RIMSKIJ-KORSAKOV, MUSORGSKIJ

ČNSO/Marcello Rota
Lubomír Legemza, klarinet

VIII. koncert

Středa 3. 5. 2006, 19.30 hodin
MARTINŮ, BERNSTEIN, BEETHOVEN

ČNSO/Paul Freeman
John Walz, violoncello
Chicagský dětský sbor/Josephine Lee

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czech music

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editorial



Dear Reading

Alois Hába certainly deserves the amount of space we have devoted to him in this issue. He was a highly distinctive experimental composer and music theorist and a no less important teacher. One of the few 20th-century Czech composers to have entered „major“ musical history as a matter of course, Hába is a respected figure especially in the German-speaking world and was so even in the period before the Second World War. His name is traditionally linked primarily with microtonal music. This was a field in which together with a number of other composers Hába was an undoubted pioneer, but his importance cannot be reduced to this activity alone. In this issue we have also included a portrait of the contemporary composer Martin Smolka, who is likewise intensely interested in microtones and uses them in his work. It would however, be rather too simple to present Smolka as some - albeit distant - successor to Hába. Smolka is a „child“ of the post-war avant garde, for which work with microtones was already quite an ordinary phenomenon and which came to them first and foremost through interest in the timbre element of music. If there is any respect in which Smolka is a successor of Hába's, it is probably simply that his work is gaining ever greater respect abroad. We are pleased that we can contribute to this with our magazine.

Wishing you a beautiful autumn

PETR BAKLA
EDITOR

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to the ritual

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Alois Hába

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**every era has
to give new
substance to the
ritual**

an interview with miloš štědroň

Miloš Štědroň (*1942) is one of the most important Czech musicologists and composers of today. His main interest as a musicologist is Leoš Janáček (he has written numerous musicological studies, and for example contributed to the reconstruction of Janáček's unfinished Danube Symphony), but also the Renaissance and Mannerism (he is the author of the first Czech monograph on C. Monteverdi). As a composer he is associated primarily with the circle of Brno composers influenced by the principles of New Music in the 1960s, and one particular point of interest in this context is Štědroň's involvement in "team compositions". He is also a sought after composer of stage music.

I shall start with what is perhaps a rather tired old question: what about the whole supposed musicality of Czechs? Are Czechs really particularly musical in some way? Or is the old saying, "If you're a Czech, you're a musician" just a myth we've constructed about ourselves?

I'd say yes to both questions. Yes it's a myth, but it's based on what has been a great deal of musical activity. Mikuláš Bek's book, *The Conservatory of Europe* which is essentially a sociological study of Czech musical culture, offers an enlightening answer. Bek describes how in the 1770s Charles Burney travelled across Europe, from Holland through France and England to Vienna, and all round Bohemia before returning through Germany. It was Burney who supposedly said that Bohemia was the conservatory of Europe. In fact, of course, he could never have said that, because in his time the conservatory didn't exist as an institution, except in Italy as an orphanage. Nonetheless, there was something about the idea. If we look at it historically, we see that the first defining moment for Czechs in music came during with the radical religious Hussite movement in the Middle Ages. The Hussite movement spread music more broadly across society, democratised it. In this sense Marxist interpretations were partly correct, since before that time there had never been laicisation and secularisation on the same scale, or such an advance in literacy among ordinary people. Another moment "in the stars", to put it metaphorically, came with the Baroque, with the breakthrough into Late Baroque, when it became clear that what most suited Czechs was the model of a melody or melodic line accompanied by something less complicated, more lucid.

How do you explain it?

It is hard to say. Some nations are more susceptible to melody, while some are more inclined to multiple lines. Of course this is a dangerous generalisation, more just a sort of theory. Among northerners what has always predominated is a feeling for structure. We can see this with the Low Countries, the Burgundians, the Northern French, people from Belgium and Flanders, who wherever they went managed to organise perfect polymelodic music involving many voices – five, seven or even more. The Italians added the poly-choral element but in fact in Italy considerations of melody always prevailed and were always the clearly dominant factor. The Italian approach suited the Czechs better and it is interesting that Italian influences have been more in evidence here than French influences, even back in the reign of Charles IV when you would have thought that the Luxembourg connections would have meant the import of the musical culture of France.

Let us go back to the Baroque. What happened then?

Here what is important is the transition from the Baroque to Classicism. Someone once said that Classicism is Baroque without ornament, that all the decorations were stripped off the facades so that only the strict lines remain... This may mean on the one hand create something like a barracks, but it may also be very light, airy architecture – and if I compare music to architecture, which is an old idea, architecture is music in stone. In my view the model of the Late Baroque and Classicism particularly suited the Czechs. All over Europe the Baroque was attractive in music because the basic line of the melody, two violins or two trumpets, could be immediately reproduced and com-

municated by ear and to do so didn't require any great education or skill. This was why initially "Czech musicality" expressed itself in a rather mediocre way and only after 1600 did the phenomenon acquire features that made it comparable with the major musical diasporas. I mean that after the Netherlanders and Italians Czechs become the biggest group of musical migrants. In this sense Havlíček was right when he said that they filled up every corner of the world. But Czechs do not create great concepts, or do so only in exceptional cases. For example J. V. Stamic, who revolutionised High Classicism period by pushing through the sonata form and modern orchestra. J.A. Benda was another Czech who made a contribution of this magnitude. But generally Czechs have been migrating musicians who adapt perfectly to the local style, are in no way provocative but simply develop that style. A model 1.B Class, in fact, marvellous musicians, skilful composers and excellent fillers of the norm.

Which are the other periods when Czech music reaches a peak?

If we are going to talk about national Czech music, then it is something that emerges from the second phase of the Czech national revival, after 1848. All this is perfectly described by Vladimír Macura in his absolutely epochal book *Znamení zrodu [The Sign of Birth]*, which shows how the National Revival had two phases. In the first phase it was a kind of game developed by a few dozen intellectuals, but after 1847 the masses became involved, and this produces crucial episodes such as the "discovery" of the Zelená hora and Králův Dvůr Manuscripts, the supposed cycles of Old Czech poems from the 9th and 13th centuries that were unmasked as forgeries at the end of the 19th century. The wheels of nationalism start to turn because the tracks have already been laid. At first the Austrian government smiles, because it believes on past form that the phenomenon is trivial. But the smile on its face disappears when it sees the funeral of Rubeš. A poet whom everybody knows from his *Mlynářova opička [The Miller's Monkey]* or *Čech a Němec [The Czech and the German]* or some little verse dies, and František Palacký gives the order, more or less a political appeal, for his memory to be honoured. Suddenly forty thousand people turn up, the rain is pouring down but Palacký speaks for a whole hour and everyone listens. Suddenly ideology, something completely new, enters the game. And we might perhaps see that as the fateful moment for Czech music as well, which becomes national in spirit. Czech musicians cease to be migrants, and are now people very much bound to a particular cultural instance. Smetana is a tragic but great example of this kind. Here we have a phenomenal world talent, and if he had chosen

the path of the Romantic composer freely travelling and spending five years in Paris, and maybe ten years in some German centre, he would certainly be three times more famous than he is today. But he chose the path of Czech opera and gave himself up wholly to the nation. He devoted himself completely to the services of something that he didn't actually understand very well. This is crystal clear if we look at the ideas that inform his music, I mean his view on what he was actually setting to music. Significantly these we noticed by Adolf Hitler with his distorted vision, who praised *Má vlast* [My Country] and considered it absolutely the most perfect chauvinistic glorification of landscape, history, nation, race and so forth. He wanted to hear it played authentically; he got his way, and the conductor Václav Talich was later nearly charged with collaboration. But what could he have done?

How has Czech music developed since the later 19th century?

Interestingly, in music there was no great break in music at the end of the 19th century. This was unlike the situation in literature, when the 1890s and the "omladina" movement brought a new view, with many young writers no longer believing that we were one nation but seeing the internal differences, parting company for good with the Young Czech political movement and, for example, in many cases finding the iconic national poet Vrchlický no longer acceptable. In music the situation was not so polarised. There was a relatively smooth transition between Dvořák and his pupils. The latter were modernists, of course, but Czech modernists, a more traditional sort of modernist. On the other hand, Suk had such a mimetic talent that he could be regarded by the Viennese avant-garde as a composer sometimes close to atonality and significantly only Josef Suk, Leoš Janáček and Ladislav Vycpálek were taken up by the Society for the Private Performance of Music – the most avant-garde outpost in Vienna. Suk was thought to have affinities with the Viennese because some of his compositions were written in several polyphonic layers, and in that sense were similar to Mahler, Mahler at his most modern. But then along came Janáček and changed everything. An outsider arrived, a solitaire, and became a great hit. After *Jenůfa* each of his operas was eagerly awaited and he overshadowed all the other Czechs.

We shall come back to Janáček later. Now let's turn to more personal matters. You come from a well-known family of musicians. Do you remember from your childhood any melody that had a great effect on you and perhaps even influenced your later direction?

I don't remember any specific melody, but I lived in a very musical environment. My father's friends would come to our house and play, mainly trio sonatas or at least two violins and piano. Apart from that my mother taught at music school and at the conservatory, and so her pupils would meet at our house and play too. It was my uncles who

started my musical training. Vladimír, born in 1900, was a lawyer but he had concurrently studied at Josef Suk's master school. In fact he was had even been Suk's favourite pupil. He had great talent but somehow he dissipated it. He constantly sat about in various coffee-houses debating what he would do, until in the end he didn't do anything much. He wrote the most in the Fifties, when he was "put out of action" as a judge because he wasn't a party member, and so he fell back on music: he ended up at the Prague conservatory where he played for ballerinas, and he was satisfied. He was a great influence on me. He was a bon vivant and confirmed bachelor and I used to go and visit him in Prague, where he educated me in artistic taste. My other uncle, Bohumír, was a professor at the Philosophical Faculty, a pupil of Vladimír Helfert, an outstanding pianist, an excellent lexicographer, a scholar, a pedant in the best sense of the term, very strict with himself but very friendly to other people. Bohumír taught me from when I was six and it was a real drilling. When I was nine or ten my mother couldn't bear to watch it any longer and took me to her old professor, the seventy-year-old Mrs Holubová, who had originally been appointed by Leoš Janáček to the organ school. She venerated Janáček, but in that very Czech sort of way. She used to say, "Janáček is a complete genius, but he spoils everything with that abruptness of his, the way he cuts everything off. It's terrible, it always annoys me when I hear it in the Glagolitic Mass, the way he cuts a thing short, when maestro Novák would have developed it, would have made it a great passage. (Well, yes, but then again that is precisely what is distinctive about Janáček). She was a graduate of the Prague Conservatory, and she boasted that she had ridden in a tram with Dvořák. She always told me the story of how she had been sitting there and Dvořák had got on and she had stood up and said, "Maestro, please be seated". He had said, "Sit down". She had replied, "I cannot sit". And he had thumped with his cane and said, "Sit down this minute!" She was a fantastic woman, very nice, but at the same time very exacting. First she saw me as a pianist but then she recognised that I might have gifts as a composer, and guided me in that direction. And then there was my other uncle Jan, an outstanding violinist who had a great career ahead of him but didn't have the push to make it and so ended up in Vyškov, where he directed the Haná orchestral association.

So that was the background I came from. All my uncles would come and visit us, at Christmas and at Easter, and their influences mingled and interacted in me.

You haven't yet mentioned your father...

My father wasn't a professional musician. He played the violin and viola very well but he worked as the secretary of the Cyril and Methodius Savings Bank. Janáček had been a regular visitor to the bank. He always used to come to my father and say, "Good morn-

ing, do you know Mr. Chlubna?" And my father would always answer, "Of course, Maestro, I shall call him for you immediately". He always asked whether father knew him. Osvald Chlubna was Janáček's right hand, and I myself got to know him well when I was studying, when he used to come to the Janáček Academy and curse us for being moderns. In seminars we almost came to blows with him. Then came 1968 and the Soviet tanks arrived. Chlubna ran into me at the time and said, "Let bygones be bygones. Now we must all unite and defend our national culture." It was a very First-Republic sort of attitude, but it gave me the shivers because it made me realise that things were really going to get rough.

What were your student years at JAMU [The Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno] like?

First I completed studies at the Philosophical Faculty, then I went to Pardubice for a year and did my national service as a signals man, but even before I went for a talent test at JAMU. By that time in 1961 and 1962 I was already in touch with the composers Miloslav Ištvan, Josef Berg and Alois Piňos, who kept encouraging me in the idea that I just had to go to JAMU. When I came back from military service I already had a place in the Moravian Museum as an assistant in the music department and I directed the Theatre of Music [Divadlo hudby]. On the basis of the talent test I was admitted to the Janáček Academy and became a regular student of composition there up to 1969. But I have very happy memories of the Theatre of Music too. It was an institution that I made in my own image. I got my friends involved with it, the Brno Surrealists, Pavel Rezníček, and Jiří Veselský appeared in it as well, and Arnošt Goldflam, Karel Fuksa, and of course that cult figure of Bohemian Brno life Jan Novák. I invited Mirek Kovářík, too, who produced a sort of mini-festival of poetry.

At JAMU you experienced a very potent set of teachers. The composition teachers were Miloslav Ištvan, Josef Berg, and Alois Piňos. Ludvík Kundera was rector at the time...

It was a truly starry period. But Berg wasn't at JAMU. He taught for just a short time, because teaching caused him such serious physical problems – a kind of stigmata – that he had to stop. He always overdid the preparations for his classes and it took up too much of his time. Ištvan and Piňos were complete revelations and it was very good that Ludvík Kundera, Milan Kundera's father, was rector. He was an unusually educated and cultivated man. He had studied in Germany and admired Beethoven, but Janáček was a huge influence on him. Then he had been in the Czechoslovak Legions in the First War and had gone through the whole legion experience in Russia. For me he was always a classic example of the syndrome of the Czech nation, combining German culture and Russophilia. He had a perfect mastery of both languages. He also wrote a book in Russian, *The History of the Music of the*

Czechoslovak People, which came out in Yekaterinburg in 1919.

Ištvan and Piños were polar opposites, friendly and mutually respectful at the time but later their paths diverged sharply. Both were absolutely ideal teachers. It is very difficult to teach art; it means imposing some kind of artistic doctrine and often turning it into a compulsory text and testing students to check they agree. But both Ištvan and Piños were hugely liberal at a time that wasn't liberal at all. They taught for much longer than was required, sometimes six or seven hours at one go. We would sit in the pub but not drink at all, maybe a glass or so of wine at most, or would go to their flats. We were in close contact with them, we all used the familiar form of address ("ty" not "vy", as in French "tu" not "vous") and created things together. The atmosphere was completely different from in Prague, where there was a big distance between teachers and students and a rigidity that became even worse under Normalisation [the freeze after the 1968 invasion]. This meant that the leading Prague and Bratislava composers sent their offspring to Brno for their training, and Brno managed to keep up a decent standard even in the Seventies. Music is something that it is hard for ideology to infiltrate. They could ban concerts, or order up concerts to celebrate the revolution or whatever, but essentially it was the composers who created the content. And Ištvan and Piños were completely uncompromising.

So you mean that from the point of view of music the Sixties were more dynamic in Brno than in Prague?

Yes, but it was marked by what you might call the "curse of Brno", which is hard to explain. Usually I say it is a matter of the relationship between Czech and German identity in the area. In Prague the polarisation of Czechs and Germans was unambiguous. After the October Diploma there were Czechs and there were Germans, and anyone who wanted to be both at the same time was denounced by both sides. In Brno it was more complicated. Up to 1890–1900 there were Czechs living here but the German town hall tried to stop more Czechs moving in from the suburbs. Brno had ninety thousand inhabitants at the time and wanted to protect the German majority of around fifty thousand. In Prague the turning point had come in 1880 – the Germans and Jews suddenly realised that they were surrounded by Czechs. The Josefina doctrine effectively paid off and nobody then had any doubts that Prague was a Czech city. And another factor was that in Brno the working class was forced into bilingualism by the German owners. There was only one Czech school in the place. So clear national polarisation came late, only after 1900. There is always that last straw that breaks the camel's back; that's the law of quantity changing into quality. The last straw in Brno was the carpentry worker Pavlík, who was killed in 1905 when he was demonstrating for a Czech university. A worker demonstrating for a university!!!



Janáček wrote a wonderful sonata on the theme. Blood was spilt and there was no going back. Up to that time the Czechs and Germans in Brno had always quarrelled, brawled and then always come together again in support of some idea. After 1905 it was no longer possible for Czechs to go to the German theatre. The divorce was final.

What effects did this have for the atmosphere in Brno, what you call the curse?

Generally a kind of embarrassment about the fact that actually there is a double or triple culture here. It is most obvious in the architecture, because in order for Brno to be given a Czech face something absolutely new had to be found. That was the reason for Functionalism. It was clear that this was something new, Czech, beautiful. This is the principle on which I would explain the specific character of Brno. The modern started here practically from scratch, much more so than anywhere else.

At the end of the Sixties you were part of the birth of another Brno legend – the Goose on a String Theatre [Divadlo

Husa na provázku], where you created the stage music for many productions. How can music influence a stage production? Or what generally is the relationship between the dramatic and musical element?

Music can of course have great psychological power, but in theatre the main problem is that it is stigmatised by being used for the transitions. When there's a scene change, then there's music. There's a constant danger of someone talking while it's playing, the audience chatting, in short, a danger of the music being just a backdrop. Or else it's the accompanying element to movement, to dance, which then turns into ballet or mime. But today musicians, and also directors and ultimately even actors want there to be a song or something more. So music is being liberated from the stage of spoken drama and becoming something that is moving in the direction of opera or musical. At the Goose on a String Theatre [later Theatre on a String] each director had his own approach to music. Zdeněk Pospíšil cared a great deal about music and wanted to do musical. Of

course he didn't know quite how to do it, but he created *Balada pro banditu* [Ballad for a Bandit], which was a work of genius in its time. Peter Scherhauser on the other hand needed music as rhythmic emphasis, as atmosphere. But it was Scherhauser who had the idea that the Theatre on a String might do opera. Of course – a peculiar sort of opera, but Chameleon at the Theatre on a String meant more to me than an opera I would do in a classic opera house. The atmosphere there was marvellous, and it was a joy to write for people like Mirek Donutil, Mojmir Maděrič, Jirka Pecha who couldn't read music, Iva Bittová... there was a real electricity between them all the time. On the one hand they worked together, but on the other there was a certain competitive tension between them, which led to great performances. It was all a great joke for them, because they had no knowledge of opera and so they performed the way they imagined opera might look. What emerged was actually a parody of opera. I also did *Balet Makábr* [Ballet Macabre]. I must say I would like to go back to Chameleon, though, because I think it is perfectly written, probably one of Ludvík Kundera's best plays. The story of Mr. Fouché, who was not wicked or cynical, but just didn't have a character at all.

You mentioned *Ballad for a Bandit*, which is now a popular classic, and its songs are regularly sung around camp fires. What does it mean for a composer of modern classical music when his songs become part of popular culture? Isn't there a kind of contradiction about it?

Yes there is, undoubtedly, and I am aware of it. In the 1970s we all retreated from the avant-garde, as it were. The rapid movement of the 1960s came to an end. John Lennon or someone else said that the seventies were worth shit and in some ways that was true. Naturally we turned away from the avant-garde. We didn't for example have the same kind of conscious view as the German composers who deliberately turned against the avant-garde, against the remorseless expressiveness of the new music and looked for a larger synthesis, a road to a new simplicity. We only learned about that later. But many of us instinctively sensed it and inclined towards historicism. Not that we completely gave up avant-garde things, but we worked on two or three levels in parallel. We cultivated the New Music almost ritually, because for us it retained the attraction of the 1960s and we didn't want to betray that; whenever we did a chamber piece we would go back to its principles, but even then new things were getting into it. In my case this was theatre and of course in the theatre there was a yelling director who didn't want to hear a word about some New Music or other. He yelled that he wanted songs, songs for people. The second line, but that was one that I founded myself voluntarily, was historical music. I realised how superficial my approach to music had been when I hadn't had the historical dimension, and so I sub-

merged myself in the period around 1600 and studied it in great detail. The result was that after fifteen years I wrote a book about Monteverdi. Then I went back another hundred years. This way I got addicted to music of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century. It was what you might call my other face. Of course I felt the contradiction with doing songs for the theatre, but I took the prospect of theatre songs as a new sort of reaction to the avant-garde, and thought I would try it, since I had never done it before. I had never written Country, and suddenly here it was with *Ballad for a Bandit*, and Pospíšil shouting, "Do you know how to do a Western?" So first I listened to all the westerns and then I produced my own idea of a western. Naturally I know that as soon as something is too popular or too easy on the ear, it's dangerous. And so in the case of *Ballad* I haven't succumbed to some great enthusiasm. In fact I tend to be suspicious and tell myself that it is very odd that it is so catchy and still remembered. But you must remember that *Ballad for a Bandit* aspired to be a musical. If – but neither Pospíšil nor I myself realised it – if there had been more dancing. A musical needs to be very much dance drama, and that element is rather lacking in *Ballad*.

Now that we talk of musical – what is your view of the boom in musicals in the 1990s in Czech Republic? What is the basis of the appeal?

It's a matter of visual appeal. It's the visualisation of music. If you look back on the last 20 years, what you see is that music has become terribly visualised. Every group must have clips, and if they don't they might as well not exist. They have to present themselves in some way, and so they put on different costumes and create an image, which then determines fashion. But musical is above all a huge commercial commodity – as I've often written – it is instant opera for the poor. Nobody can get into the grand operas these days. Just take a look at what happened in Britain when the Labour Party, after winning the elections, wanted to get their new MPs their traditional seats at the opera. It was impossible because the seats had already been taken by the lords. Sometimes you can get into a *matinée* there, but no one has a chance of getting into the premieres. The rise of the musical was an attempt to somehow exploit the financial capacity of the middle- and lower classes, to get money out of them. Rock-n-Roll achieved the same thing starting in the sixties. The young had plenty of money, because after the war they were in apprenticeships and had regular incomes, and so they could buy a record every week or at least every month. Everything is perfectly calculated. A lot of smart people in this country grasped the opportunity and started to do musicals. Amazingly this merry-go-round is still turning and making money, which is something I can't understand. Yes, I can see a number of attempts at innovation, one cannot write it all off as mindless, and there are some major artistic

and what you might call intellectual or text investments. But the mortal sin of Czech musical is that it lacks irony about itself. I am an admirer of Webber's Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, for example, where at one point the action stops and the protagonists entirely challenge the principles that they embody. Joseph is supposedly dead and his father weeps for him, he is comforted by a girl and together they dance in front of the curtain, and suddenly Joseph takes off his dark glasses and says, "Let's get on with the plot. I'm dead, but nothing is happening." It is a tremendous lightening up of the atmosphere, and if someone did it in *Dracula* (successful Czech musical – editor's note), half the audience would definitely understand and the piece would acquire another dimension. But in this country musical is treated like an opera around 1800, except that opera around 1800 was done a little better. Perhaps it is the revenge of history. In history it what usually happens is that once grand styles come back in lightened up and boiled down forms. This can be the case with musical as well, following the rule that what comes first as tragedy comes back a second time as farce.

Let us take the situation from the opposite side now – what is the situation of classical music today?

Naturally it is a minority genre, but what isn't a minority genre? Only mainstream pop. Rock music and folk rock are already minority affairs today. Jazz is very definitely in the position of a minority genre. Unless it goes for something of the kind that Jaromír Hnilička tried, for example, when he did a jazz mass at Petrov. Ordinary believers came too, and people who were interested in paraliturgical music, but they were not jazzmen of course. In other words, I think we are seeing a huge process of syncretism, which reminds me of Late Antiquity and the Early Christian period. Those were times when religion didn't exist in pure form, many people believed in various different cults and combined them in all kinds of ways. Today the media throw so much information at us that we couldn't actually be non-syncretic if we tried. This is why classical music no longer exists in pure form. When I look at the young generation of composers I can't see even one who is a purely classical composer. Earlier, composers used to come out of the conservatory or studies with some master and if then Mr. XY wrote an operetta, they would want to banish him from the avant-garde. Today everyone says, yes, he has to make a living. Of course he studied at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, but now he plays in a band or makes clips or ten different things at the same time. And occasionally he writes a symphony. His intentions are serious, but he thinks on five different tracks. And so we get synthesis.

Can one say what the classical music public of today is like?

Probably not, because the public changes. It is a complete minority, but if some appealing external element is added, classical music

can attract a lot of people. One example might be the Ostrava Days, a festival of avant-garde music that the well-known avantgardist Petr Kotík, born in 1942, decided to hold. He deliberately held it in industrial Ostrava, in an environment we might consider completely acultural. But it worked perfectly. He combined avant-garde music with industrial conditions, which was a terrific idea and the response was very good. This shows that it is possible to get a broader public to listen to classical music, but the music must have some new, non-traditional packaging.

You mean by providing the audience with some key to interpretation, some potential explanation that will make the music more accessible?

Yes, or else a special performance. For example when a cellist like Jiří Barta plays, or violinist like Pavel Šporcl. Šporcl attracts a certain public that admires him because he is an excellent violinist, looks unconventional, doesn't play in black tie and so on, and so basically he can play anything, and his public will swallow it, to a certain extent. I say to a certain extent, because if he decided to play the Schönberg's violin concerto he would have problems in the long term, because people would start complaining everywhere that he was playing something peculiar. Or he would have to play in some exclusive setting, package it in some special way.

I think the same thing can be observed with "high-brow" literature, which today seems to need a "para-story" if it is to appeal to a broader readership.

But does classical music still retain an odour of exclusivity, snobbery?

Of course, old people who behave as people used to behave in the concert hall come to our concerts too. It is more a kind of ritual than anything else. Ultimately we all came to this ritual by what you might call a snobbish route. We were taken to the theatre, sometimes at six, or at ten, or at fifteen, and there we saw the audience and learned when to applaud and when not to, and it was the same at concerts. Many people have ritualised it to the extent that concerts have become a social imperative for them – we just have to be there. Naturally at JAMU it is different. When there is a concert there, the students form another kind of audience. Probably what is important is to mix environments. To do concerts among pictures and so on. Every era has to give new substance to the ritual; there is no permanent recipe.

Could one generalise and say that the perception of art is an essentially ritualised matter?

To a certain extent yes, because when a perception is collective, everyone is going to watch how his neighbour reacts. With individual perception the situation is slightly different. There I don't have to make any pretence, and I am not bound to any external response. One example: I went to a musical that I averagely enjoyed and I was averagely satisfied. The performances were quite good. And the

people who were there, probably businessmen because the tickets were very expensive, expressed crazy enthusiasm corresponding to the price of the tickets. The enthusiasm was enormous. And so you see that even para-stories like this influence the perception of a work.

You spoke about syncretism, but don't you have the feeling that the opposite trend exists as well, that artistic genres are getting further and further away from each other, and that for example contemporary music communicates far less with art or contemporary literature?

Syncretism is to some extent a case of the "wish being father to the thought", of course; we want it to be like that. But I would say that the position may actually have improved in music, in relation to the visual arts for example, when you think of "graphic music", "visual scores" and so on. Earlier music was a purely acoustic matter but since 1950, with the existence of graphic music, it has not been possible to ignore the visual side. Nonetheless it's true that a very high level of specialisation is occurring inside the individual branches of the arts. This is perhaps comparable with specialisation in the sciences after the positivist era. But here too there is a different level, because interdisciplinary are developing that are far more important. Physical chemistry is emerging between physics and chemistry, and is more important than the classical disciplines... Interdisciplines are also emerging inside music, bringing it closer to the visual.

What is the situation in relation to literature? Does contemporary opera for example use contemporary prose as libretto?

I'll answer on the general level. Opera is actually something that began from literature and then moved further away from literature. The first opera librettos were written by great poets, but then people took over who turned them out as if on a production line. From the point of view of craftsmanship they were very good, but they devaluated the great words. The great word "love" was constantly on the lips of singers, and so nobody any longer much believed in it anymore. That was the situation from 1690/1700 to 1750. After a period like that, however, innovation always comes along in one form or another. Around 1800 we find types appearing who don't trust the established art of libretto and rightly find it stale, and they look for a literary opera. Which means that they read. Obviously it depends on what they read. They may read banalities, or great literature. That was the case with Beethoven. He always became enraptured with something and wanted to do it as an opera and then looked around for someone who would do it for him. This is the process of the literarisation of opera. And the process continued in a very steep curve that culminates in Wagner. Wagner is the ideal example of poet and musician combined. And I deliberately put "poet" first,

because his Collected Writings are very impressive. Today, however, there is no unequivocal answer. It is very likely that opera is using literature for inspiration. There are plenty of cases. Recently for example an opera based on Beckett was staged in Prague. Think how many times Švejk has been done as an opera. But of course the quality of the results is a different matter. Today the composer needs to have a good literary knowledge, to be widely read and able to find his or her own way. Abroad you find an ideal combination in Steve Reich and Beryl Korot. They are married, Reich composes and Korot writes terrific texts.

A few years ago the philosopher Václav Bělohradský claimed that opera was a genre as dead as poetry...

That's nothing new. People have been saying that since 1600. And I think opera has basically come to live with the situation and reckon with it. Opera always has to be hitting a crisis to show once again that it is not in crisis. Since 1900 there has been enquiry after enquiry designed to discover whether opera is in crisis. Of course it is. Opera is a museum. People go to the Metropolitan Opera as they go to a museum. There they consider Puccini to be modern opera and Janáček is considered some peculiar anomaly. Some operas are deliberately museums, museums that have fantastic subsidies and attract vast numbers of visitors. Opera in general probably lives for the past, because it shows how many great achievements were accomplished then. When you compare what was written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with what was written in the twentieth century, then it is clear that the impulse of the past predominates. On the other hand, directors today in general try to innovate – to dress operas in new costumes, to put them in different settings. Recently I saw a Twelfth Night that was updated to the period 1900–1915. It was extremely interesting. Of course, it shifted the work to a different level entirely. It doesn't bother people who already know the text and it can potentially attract a larger public by appeal to the popularity of a certain period, style of costumes and so on.

You have mentioned Janáček, and of course his operas are a model example of the combination of literature and music. Milan Kundera has written that Janáček discovered the world of prose for opera, and even the world of realistic prose, and that he rejected stylisation and discovered the acoustic world outside music. What do you see as unique about Janáček?

It is one of the great ambitions of musicologists – to explain how Janáček wrote his operas. Actually we don't know much about it and one might ask whether it will help us a great deal when we do know. But his achievements, his contribution, are something else. Milan Kundera has expressed it very well, but Janáček was not the first to discover prose, and he was following the French naturalists. Specifically he made a detailed study of Gustav Charpentier, who

wrote the opera *Louise*. This is a story from Bohemian life, from the street, where we hear the jingles of milk-sellers and bakers and so on. Evidently this attracted Janáček, because he did something similar. He knew that opera could no longer speak in a stylised idiom that had originated some time at the beginning of the seventeenth century and drawn on the tradition of Petrarca and Dante. That idiom had slid into the hands of mass producers who strikingly resemble today's Musical librettists and the original power of the words had been lost. Prose libretto therefore definitely helped opera to come closer to reality, to naturalism. Janáček, originally a great proponent of formalism, suddenly started to talk about the need for truth to take precedence over beauty. This means that ugliness too is justified. It also looks as if he started to look for ugliness. Furthermore prose creates irregular shapes that made it possible to go beyond the stereotypes of aria and recitative. Janáček called this "formative splinters", which is his term, and he put the opera together from these splinters. The melodies of speech, which he recorded on a systematic, daily basis in the street, are another thing. Today we no longer believe that this was a scientific enterprise. I would say it was a more literary project. Arne Novák, when he wrote about his *feuilletons* – *Milenec a nevolník okamžiku* [The Lover and the Serf of the Moment] was sharply insightful on this point. Few Czech writers – and here Janáček may be considered a writer – chose this form of splinters. Perhaps the smallest form that Janáček used in his *feuilletons* is precisely a kind of speech melody splinter. He then composes a sketch or *feuilleton* out of melody splinters and this isolated melody is actually a kind of entity. It was through these phenomena that Janáček got to know the world. And this is evident in his operas too. One other aspect is also interesting from the literary point of view. In his third opera – *Jenůfa* – Janáček for the first time altered the libretto, improving on Preiss's original in terms of dramatic effect and in some instinctive way arrived at the Aeschylean principle. It is something first noticed by the English. The Aeschylean principle involves one figure playing many other figures and entering into them. We find this in all of Janáček's operas – one character replaying, quoting another: a monologue that works like a dialogue. The *Kostelníčka* in *Jenůfa* says, "It will be soon. But in the mean time I have to go through a whole eternity a whole salvation. What if I took the child away somewhere... Then they would pounce on me, on *Jenufa*. You see her. You see her. You see her, *Kostelníčka*." And now she plays the future situation over to herself. This principle is used randomly, appears once or twice, but it can entirely dominate as in the case of the last opera *Z mrtvého domu* [From the House of the Dead], where it is the principle that generates the action. The characters are already waiting only for death in a concentration camp and they narrate their memories. The

memories are far stronger than their current state. They tell how they killed someone or what happened to them, what wrong has been done them or how they have arrived here through injustice, and as they do they play different characters. And it becomes clear that this monologue / dialogue is far more powerful than if there had been ten of these characters present with each playing only himself. And one more thing: in *Destiny* and *Jenůfa* veristic opera plays a major part. *Jenůfa* is essentially ancient tragedy, and its novelty and great modernity lies in the fact that Janáček has set it in a highly specific time and place. In the spirit of verism he has replaced the universalism at which Late Romanticism had arrived – the world as myth, the world as the universe, as we see for example in Wagner. This can be played anywhere, on a boat or in a military base and suchlike. In the case of verism, however, the setting matters a great deal; it matters that it is a mill that is so and so many kilometres from *Hrubá Vrbka*. Verism work with the concrete, unique setting and ritual is important here. An ancient tragedy repeats itself: jealousy, murder, love, hate and so on, but these are differently packaged, in this case in the garb of folk costume, the garb of ritual, the garb of the dance of recruits.

Another musical phenomenon that you have been concerned with and that is linked with literature is that of singing poets. What form does this phenomenon take today?

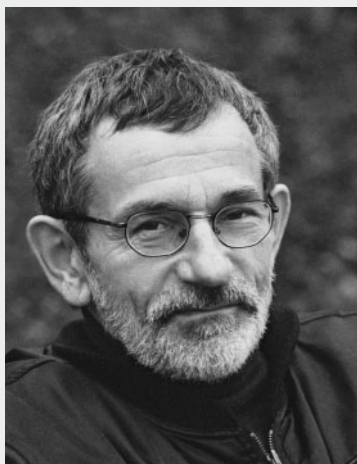
A *musicus poeticus* is someone who essentially works with both levels, with music and with poetry or the word. This tradition developed very strongly in humanism, i.e. from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century. In this period the poet was able to write some musical form and combine it with poetry. It was the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that were crucial, however, because this was when people who had a need to combine music with text emerged as a clear group especially in the universities and the intellectual sphere. But even well before this, in the fourteenth century, when the new mensural notation was developed, suddenly it was possible to write music down in a far more complex way, to structure it. Some people composed in a way that shows they were not even very interested in the question of whether a piece could be sung at all, and were just excited by the range of possibilities of what could be invented on the page. With the sixteenth and seventeenth came the development of a vast field of *figurics*, rhetorical figures in the sense of pre-composed situations that it was useful to know for particular kinds of verbs of motion, for particular kinds of numerical and spatial relations and so on. There are several dozen such figures and they can either be used conventionally as they were intended or else individualists can try to bend or break them using anti-figures. This means they begin to use them in other ways, which everyone notices. Around the year 1600 this led to the rise of what was known as the modern and

a rift – *musica antica e moderna*. And in Italy a *seconda prattica* – other practice, developed. The popularisation of art, which is most evident at the beginning of the Baroque and in the Middle Baroque, acted as a major factor for conserving style. In the decorative arts or in literature and music, we are not sure in the Renaissance what is schlock and rubbish and what is high art. But in the Baroque we can be completely certain. We can see the artisan making cherubs and shrine figures on a production line. The equivalent in music is the broadside ballad. This is the projection of high art onto the ordinary market where it is sold for money. The trend on the other hand means the fall of *musica poetica*. Bach is still a *musicus poeticus*, which means that he knows exactly how to treat verses. After Bach, from the 18th century, the roles divide. There are composers and there are poets. You can see it today in Czech pop and folk. There are poets who are quite clearly a long way from being great musicians and fit some quite decent or adequate poetic figure to some empty music.

Last year we celebrated a major Janáček Anniversary. Do you think this will attract more attention to his work? I almost have the sense that Janáček is more popular abroad than in this country.

Janáček really is performed abroad more than he is here. The Janáček "boom" abroad is quite marked. But when he is performed in a better than average way here he draws great attention – for example Wilson's Prague production of *Destiny*. The jubilee year 2004 – a hundred years from the Brno, local premiere of *Jenufa* – was a reminder that today Janáček is attracting the greatest directors, choreographers and stage designers, and is being sung by the best singers and staged in the most famous opera houses in the world. We are witnessing new interpretations of his operas. *Jenufa* as the problem of unwanted children, social and other inequalities. In the same way Wilson's breakthrough production of the opera *Destiny* – as a probe into the composer's biography – broke through an earlier indifference to the piece. And *Výlety pana Broučka* [The Excursions of Mr. Brouček], that excellent burlesque on a Czech or indeed any other *petit bourgeois*, just like *Liška Bystrouška* [The Cunning Little Vixen], one of the most "ecological operas" of the 20th century. Its brilliant dynamism and colourfulness predetermine it to become the opera-ballet of our era, and a Paris production had just this concept of it. From the House of the Dead is the opera of the black 20th century – the century of gulags and concentration camps and escapes from them. This opera cries out for film or television adaptation. The main thing, however, is that we shall not be able to follow just some "one obligatory" tradition. New and different traditions are already emerging. And it is possible and likely that they will attract a larger number of admirers than the previous one.

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Prof. PhDr. et MgA Miloš Tůdroš, CSc (*9. 2. 1942)

Musicologist and composer. He studied musicology at the Philosophical Faculty of Brno University and composition at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts. In the 1960s he led the Theatre of Music in Brno and was one of the founders of the Theatre on a String [Divadlo na provázku], where he composed music for many productions (including *Balada pro banditu* [Ballad for a Bandit] (M. Uhde, 1975), *Pohádka máje* [Fairytale of May] (M. Uhde, 1976), *Cameleón aneb Josef Fouché* [The Chameleon or Josef Fouché] (L. Kundera, 1984) and so on). With Parsch, Růžička and Medek he has worked on "collective compositions" based on the Czech experimental music of the 1960s.

Since 1972 he has taught at the Institute of Musical Science at the Philosophical Faculty of Masaryk University. There he specialises in Renaissance and Baroque Music, and 20th-Century Music with a focus on the works of Leoš Janáček. He is the author of many academic studies published in learned journals in this country and abroad. His books include *Claudio Monteverdi* (1985), *Josef Berg – skladatel mezi hudbou, divadlem a literaturou* [Josef Berg – A Composer Between Music, Theatre and Literature] (1992), *Leoš Janáček a hudba 20. století* [Leoš Janáček and the Music of the 20th Century], *Paralely, sondy, dokumenty* [Parallels, Probes, Documents] (1998). As a composer he works with Iva Bittová.

the hába "school"

VLASTA REITTEREROVÁ



Alois Hába and Karel Reiner

We must exercise a certain caution when using the word "school" in the sense of a musical movement. Admittedly it is now conventional in music history to employ terms like the "Low Countries", "Neapolitan" and "Venetian" schools to characterise particular trends in music of the Renaissance and Baroque, the "Mannheim" and "Viennese" school for the Classical period, and the "Second Viennese School" for the circle of Arnold Schönberg and his followers (not to speak of the "national schools" that appear everywhere in the literature), but the most recent historical analysis has challenged this blanket use of the concept. The fact is that the definition and application of the term "school" is very changeable and relative, like historical knowledge itself. When a new musical phenomenon appears, it is either rejected or accepted by those contemporaries who encounter it, but neither rejection nor acceptance is the result of truly objective aesthetic judgment; since this is impossible when the phenomenon is so new. The initial experience is not, therefore, the criterion of subsequent evaluation. If the new phenomenon is to any degree accepted, however, what follows is a phase in which efforts are made to universalise and stabilise it, and at this point the distinguish marks of the new phenomenon become a measuring rod, and the first "continuers" appear. Only then, as the new movement starts to identify its own historical position, does a search for "forerunners" ensue, subsequently enabling us to talk of a "school", a "personal style", the "style of a generation" or "epoch" and so forth. Bearing all these caveats in mind we find that it is

both possible, and impossible, to talk of anything like a "Hába School". In his attempts fully to integrate microtones into European musical language and give them a place equal to that of traditional tonal and harmonic techniques, Hába remained an isolated *solitaire* in the history of European music, but as we shall show, he was not without his continuers. His rejection of the classical romantic doctrine of musical forms and his promotion of "athematism", was supposed to open the way to absolute creative freedom and emancipate the composer from dependence on a given compositional canon. Some considered this to mean the loss of a firm footing, not a negligible aspect of the creative process of composing (whatever the extreme avant-garde may have thought), and perhaps even less negligible when it comes to the reception of the music by the audience. On the other hand theory is one thing and its application another. Hába himself was not a purely microtonal nor a purely athematic composer. His musical talent was spontaneous and his music was never contrived.

It was another feature of Hába's personality that he managed to gather around him a very large circle of kindred spirits. These included his pupils in the strict sense of the word, i.e. those who attended his courses in microtonal music at the Prague Conservatoire, and his "pupils" in the broader sense, i.e. people who met him at his innumerable lectures (at home and abroad), who worked with him in musical associations and societies, and studied his articles in the music journals and books.

Entry into Musical Life

Alois Hába was undoubtedly one of the most influential people in Czech music in the period between the two world wars. He was a composer, theorist, organiser, propagator of modern music and a teacher. Active in music clubs and societies, he used them as a platform for applying and promoting his views. In the world of Prague associations he developed this activity first and foremost in *Přítomnost* [*Presence*], becoming its chairman at the beginning of the 1930s, and in the Czechoslovak section of the International Society for Contemporary Music, ISCM. In both societies he had the deciding voice in the most critical years, when political and national conflict was becoming ever more intense. Hába always remained a convinced member and representative of his nation (one could even say his ethnic group) and he also remained a convinced supporter of international co-operation without regard to linguistic, racial, religious or other barriers. In the mid-1930s his tolerance did not make life easy for him. As Hitler's Germany became ever more aggressive he was often accused of tolerating "Jews and Germans" around him – a double criticism fired by the Czech nationalism and anti-semitism that grew in direct proportion to the nationalism and racism of the Nazis.

Hába's class at the Prague Conservatoire contained a lively mixture of nationalities; over the years it was attended by students from the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia (from 1929 Yugoslavia), Lithuanians, Turks, Poles, Bulgarians and others. Hába taught for ten years at the Conservatoire on the basis of an annually renewed permission to hold "courses in microtonal music". Microtonal music was not a separate subject in the curriculum, but was considered a department of the composition class and could only be taken by students who had already taken the usual obligatory composition subjects. Not until 1934 was Hába appointed a professor of composition at the Conservatoire.

When he started his courses at the Conservatoire he already had the first practical tests of his ideas behind him. He must have been immensely gratified when his quarter-tone quartet (*String Quartet no. 2* op. 7) was performed by the Havemann Quartet in Berlin and especially when another quarter-tone quartet (*String Quartet no. 3* op. 12) was performed by the Amar-Hindemith Quartet at the ISCM festival in Salzburg in 1923. At the orchestral part of the ISCM festival in 1924, held in Prague, Hába had been able to present a quarter-tone piano, newly made by the August Förster firm and built according to Hába's design, as part of the subsidiary programme. During just five years, when Hába moved from theoretical exploration of the possibilities of microtones to their practical application in

composition, he had managed with the help of performers to prove that music of this kind was possible.

Hába's graduation piece in Franz Schreker's composition class in Berlin (*Ouvertura* op. 5) was well constructed, effective, melodically inspired, and harmonically and instrumentally rich, but it did not venture beyond the post-romantic style. The gulf between this piece and the *String Quartet* op. 7 that he wrote practically at the same time is a gulf between two different musical worlds. Yet Hába's creative development had its own logic. It was the result of an encounter between a unique individual talent and the unique creative conditions offered by the period immediately after the 1st World War. Creative enthusiasm was a reaction to ordeal, and the young generation of artists bore a genuine resemblance to a phoenix risen from the ashes (the comparison was frequently made). The Czechoslovak republic too had arisen from the ashes of the Habsburg Monarchy. Its musicians, artists and writers felt the need to show that they could give it its own, unique, competitive and modern art. Hába's internationalist sentiments combined perfectly with the inheritance of his roots in the Moravian countryside, and with the social sensitivity and breadth of culture through which he transcended these rural roots.

An Example of Courage

Hába's path to teaching the theory of composition was undoubtedly made easier by the teacher training that he received at the pedagogical institute in Kroměříž before he decided to set out on a composer's career. Music teaching was at that time an obligatory part of teacher training and he was also able to test out his music teaching skills in practice during a period in Vienna. It has recently come to light that in 1918/19 he taught violin and musical theory at a private music school (Schallinger-Schule) where pupils of Franz Schreker, including Felix Petyrek and Heinrich Knöll also taught. Hába undoubtedly obtained the job – just like a post as an editor at the Universal Edition – through the good offices of Franz Schreker, who was accustomed to helping his pupils improve their material situation in this way.

Hába gave his first lecture on the new possibilities of music in Prague in 1921 at the Prague Conservatoire. Even at this early stage he already found enthusiasts who were later to work with him among the young conservatoire students. He impressed them as a man of courage unafraid to venture into uncharted territory. For **Miroslav Ponc**, for example, a pupil in Bedřich Wiedermann's organ class, his meeting with Hába meant a radical change in his whole attitude to the musical world. Hába's own brother **Karel Hába** became one of his students, as did the later leading figures of 20th-century Czech music **Miloslav Kabeláč**, **Klement Slavický**, **Václav Trojan**, and among others **Jaroslav Ježek**, famous primarily for his work with the "Liberated

Theatre" of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich, and the author of countless enduring songs with jazz rhythms that he wrote for the latter's plays. Jaroslav Ježek had another side as a composer, which found expression for example in his *Sonata for Violin*, performed at the International Society for Contemporary Music festival in Florence in 1934. Pieces by Hába's pupils (from at home and abroad) appeared quite often on the programmes of ISCM festivals, but the circumstances of the inclusion of the Ježek sonata were exceptional. The international jury had originally chosen Hába's *Toccata for Piano* for the festival, but the success of Ježek's sonata when premiered in Prague shortly beforehand led Hába to ask the jury to change the programme. In a gesture that must still be rare, to say the least, in the history of music festivals, he withdrew his own piece and recommended Ježek's composition instead.

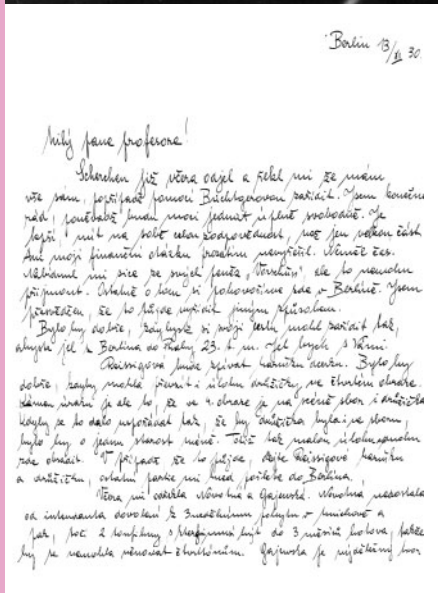
Over the quarter-century of Hába's career as a teacher first at the Conservatoire and after the 2nd World War for a short period at the newly established Academy of Performing Arts (created out of the former master school of the Conservatoire), more than a hundred musicians of whom we have some record passed through his classes. If we were to add all of those who encountered Hába at lectures in the societies where he presented new pieces, at his appearances abroad and so on, the real number of people influenced by Hába would be much higher. Not everyone who in some way experienced Hába's training became composers, and many chose other musical professions. These included for example **Karel Ančerl** (1908–1973), later head of the Czech Philharmonic (1950–68) and after his emigration in 1968 of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Ančerl was a highly versatile musician: he studied conducting with Pavel Dědeček and at the Conservatoire master school with Václav Talich, and composing with Jaroslav Křiček and Hába. Under Hába's supervision he wrote a quarter-tone *Music for String Orchestra* and after graduating (1930) went on to an even tougher test in the field.

The Opera "Mother" in the Hands of a Pupil

On the 7th of May 1931 Hába's quarter-tone opera *Matka* [*Mother*] received its world premiere in Munich under the baton of Hermann Scherchen. The production of this opera, which has remained the only one of its kind to this day, was a risky undertaking. In his vocal music up to that time Hába had tried out quarter-tones only in his *Suite on Interjections of Folk Poetry* [*Suita na citoslovce lidové poezie*], which had been performed, also under the direction of Hermann Scherchen, in Frankfurt am Main in 1924. When Hába met with Scherchen at the ISCM Festival in Liege in 1930, he told him (so Hába related later), that he had just completed a full-length quarter-tone opera. Scherchen enthusiastically replied "Really? Then we'll put it on next year in Munich at the



Karel Ančerl and his letter to Alois Hába



music festival", and immediately sent a telegram to the intendant of the Munich Theatre Fritz Büchtger. The telegram he received by return read "Hába's opera impossible, big worries as it is". But Büchtger added "please send more detail!" and so his telegram was not an unambiguous refusal. What Hába had not revealed to Scherchen, however, was that he was already negotiating for a production in Frankfurt am Main (in November 1929 Hába had already commissioned the Prague journalist Viktor Joss to translate the libretto into German for this purpose). The conductor Hans Wilhelm Steinberg was working in Frankfurt at the time, and Hába knew him well from his time at the Prague German Theatre. Together with the intendant Josef Turnau, Steinberg had been pushing through a progressive repertoire; in February 1930 Schönberg's opera *Von heute auf morgen* was premiered here, with Hába attending. As it happened, when Hába talked to Scherchen about the opera the negotiations in Frankfurt were not going well, and so he left Scherchen a free hand. When the management of the Frankfurt Opera learned about this, they were not slow to show their displeasure to Hába. Finally it was Fritz Büchtger, urged on by the enthusiastic Scherchen, who expressed a willingness to

take the risk and so it was Munich that won, especially thanks to financial assistance from important patrons of the arts, the brothers Hans and Werner Reinhart of Winterthur. The very busy Hermann Scherchen needed an assistant, however, and the post was filled by Karel Ančerl. As is evident from the interim reports that Ančerl was sending Hába from mid-September 1930 from Berlin where opera rehearsal were taking place, the twenty-two-year-old fresh graduate was forced to look himself for singers able and willing to take on the difficult work, have special practice sessions with them (at the beginning with a normal semitone piano) and often tackle the almost impossible.

"Dear Professor! Scherchen left yesterday and told me I had to arrange everything by myself, or if necessary with help from Büchtger. In fact I'm glad, because I shall be able to act with complete freedom. It is better to carry the whole responsibility than just a major part of it. He hasn't yet sorted out the finances of my position either. He hasn't had the time. He offered me a "Vorschuss" from his money, but I couldn't accept that. [...] Yesterday Novotná and Gajewská cancelled. Novotná hadn't obtained permission for a three-week stay in Munich from the intendant, and she's going to shoot 2 films that have to be ready in 3 months, and so she doesn't have time for quarter-tones [...] It doesn't matter, since in 2 days I'll have other singers. There are plenty in Berlin, and there must be some good people among them. What is unpleasant, is that instead of rehearsing I shall have to do the rounds of Berlin for another 2 days." (13th November 1930)

Ančerl's letter is the one proof we have that the later world star Jarmila Novotná, who in 1929–33 was a soloist at the Berlin State Opera, was approached with a view to engaging her for a role in the premiere of *Mother*. The films he mentions were probably *Požár v opeře* [Fire in the Opera] (in the original *Barcarola*, 1930, directed by Carl Fröh-

lich) and *Žebravý student* [The Beggar Student] (Bettelstudent, 1931, directed by Victor Jansson).

"Dear Professor! Finally I've got more concrete instructions / arrangements from Scherchen. I flew about after him for a full 3 days before I could get a quiet moment with him to talk over our business. He has left everything to me, including the casting of the individual roles. He just gave me the names of singers, and introduced me to the director [...] who will introduce me to all the Berlin people involved and will work for the thing, since you know that a prima-donna wouldn't even look at a little repetiteur from Prague [...] When I've filled some of the roles here and set up rehearsal guidelines I shall go to Munich to Büchtger to look for the other singers and orchestral players. [...] Please send me the material for the singers to Berlin, since I can't start the rehearsals until I have parts. Scherchen thinks it will be difficult to rehearse just from the parts [...] Please write to Förster and ask him to arrange for me to have a quarter-tone harmonium at my disposal at any time, and if necessary be able to have it moved wherever I need it. [...] I hope I shall be able to do everything the way I envisage it. I shall need to work from morning to night, but you can rely on me." (21st September 1930)

"Dear Professor! The situation is becoming rather clearer. [...] We ought to have two instruments here, one in Munich, and Scherchen would have to get a quarter-tone upright piano. Maybe the orchestra will be from Munich too, and so an upright could come to Munich. This will be sorted out very soon, since I shall have to go to Munich probably as soon as the day after tomorrow. This is because the singers want to know something about the financial side of the whole thing, and so I need to speak with Mr. Büchtger, who is in charge of the whole thing, as soon as possible. (I don't want a revolution between Meistersingers). [...] I rehearse for 6 hours and search for singers for 8 hours. I hope it won't go on like this for too much longer [...] For the moment I'm rehearsing with semitone pianos, but it's lethally difficult work and then everyone complains that it's straining their voices. I can believe it, because they don't hear the real sound, but have to derive it all from the semi-tones, and so they strangle all the quarter-tones. I've turned into the complete singer, just imagine how often I have to sing 2–3 bars in advance for the singers! Whenever I go I sing quarter-tones, but I already know how." (28th September 1930)

"I can't find an contra-alto for the love of God. Scherchen is coming to Berlin on the 4th of this month, and I hope he will help me find a chorus, or at least tell me how I ought to set about finding one here." (2nd December 1930)

"Today I had my first opportunity to speak with Scherchen properly about everything. Just imagine, he had a whole hour. I think everything will be different now. The thing is this: suddenly something prompted

me to ask him if I could study conducting with him. I explained to him that I had time in the evenings and so on. I think that the idea appealed to him, and he seems to enjoy teaching very much. [...] We really do need to start rehearsals with the orchestra. It's already December. Especially when you consider that around Christmas we won't be able to do anything, or with the choir for that matter, since as you know yourself Christmas is all celebrations here and no work at all. At any rate you can see that I'm not downcast. I'm sure, and I guarantee you that if the ensemble can just be put together, then by the end of April the opera will be rehearsed to tip top standard. [...] It's strange that all my singers understand me well except Debüser [Tiny Debüser, who sang the title role]. Today I had to call her 3x yet again. [...] But I won't bore you with that, since tomorrow I shall really take a firm line with her (she is being terribly sweet now, just because Scherchen is here." (4th December 1930)

"The string ensemble is almost complete, only no one wants to do anything more before the end of the year." (15th December 1930) "My hope that I would get a quarter-tone harmonium in my flat hasn't been fulfilled [...] Scherchen was supposed to conduct today, but he didn't turn up. [...] What am I supposed to do with Zelenka's designs? [...] I shall write to Zelenka and send him a plan of the Munich theatre as soon as I get it from Büchtger." (5th January 1931)

The Czech stage designer František Zelenka (1904–1943) designed the stage for the Munich premiere, but his sober stylisation, which was typical of many Czech stage designers of the interwar period, failed to find favour with Fritz Jessner of the New Theatre (Neues Schauspielhaus) in Königsberg, today Kaliningrad, who was directing there. Hermann Scherchen was also working in Königsberg at the time, and the idea was to present *Mother* with his orchestra there. Jessner's preference was for realistic village decor, but this was not in line with Scherchen's concept of the production and so the direction was finally taken up by the director of the Prague National Theatre Ferdinand Pujman. The result was that Ančerl had to cope not only with the musical side of the production (including supervision of the transport of quarter-tone instruments), but with other aspects as well.

"I had some words with Tini [Debüser] on the importance of her role, and told her what I thought of her approach to rehearsals, and so now she is working somewhat better, and keeping me waiting only for" an hour. [...] To be honest, I'm worried about her; she is too frivolous in her attitude, and doesn't take the whole thing as seriously as she should. I shall give it another week, and if she doesn't improve I shall stop working with her. [...] I have put the chorus together in almost final form. There will be 12 people. So many people have



Quarter-tone clarinets
German type (left), French type
(right)

Quarter-tone piano

A postcard Hába used to explain
his microtonal accidentals (to his
brother Antonín)



expressed an interest now that I could form a 16-strong choir, but I think that 12 is enough, since if there were more I am not sure I would have them all ready in time. The work is going really well now and progress is being made. I hope and trust you will be satisfied when you hear it all. It is wonderfully beautiful preparing such a new thing. I never thought I would be able to get right into the spirit of it so fast. Büchtger still hasn't sent me a plan of the stage." (12th January 1931)

In finding and choosing the choir he was helped by the Professor of the Berlin Music High School (Hochschule für Musik) Georg Schünemann, who knew Hába personally. When Hába had been studying in Berlin he had had Hába's works performed at school concerts, provided him with school musical instruments and allowed him to study phonographic recordings.

"Today Büchtger wrote to me telling me not to go to Munich, because 1) Meilie [Max Meilie, the singer of the main male role] doesn't want to rehearse, because Scherchen hasn't yet written anything positive to him, and 2) there isn't an orchestra yet. You don't have to write to Scherchen about that, because today I wrote him a long letter explaining everything in detail. I think that now he will really do something when he sees what is at stake. Here in Berlin things are now going very well. I rehearse every day with 8 to 10 singers. Now the only element missing in the choir is tenors, and I hope I shall get hold of some this week. [...] How do you see the 4th scene in the choir? I've already tried it in several different ways, but it has never worked out well, because either the basses growl something indistinct or else they yell at the high end. [...] The choral parts ideally suit women. But

I hope that when I've got over the intonation problems with the men, plenty of other things will come right as well. Debüser is giving me trouble again. [...] I wonder whether it wouldn't really be more sensible to throw her out. Lately Scherchen wanted to do it, but didn't and that was my fault. What do you think? I can't devote much attention to her now, because I have plenty of work with the others and without me she doesn't do anything. [...] What is the situation with financial matters? I would like to know so that I can get Büchtger to write to singers, and he doesn't want to do that until he knows where the funds are coming from." (18th January 1931)

"The whole situation looks less than wonderful because it doesn't seem to me as if Scherchen and Büchtger are taking care of anything – at least I still haven't heard anything. [...] I don't know if I can rehearse the strings in Munich, I don't know if I have performers at my disposal, and I don't know what the state of affairs is with wind players. You yourself know very well that if everything is going to come together, I just have to finally get a chance (it's the end of January after all!) to work properly. [...] I have already asked Büchtger to write to singers several times. So far he has done nothing at all. The singers are absolutely in the right, because they simply must be told at least the date and roughly the financial conditions. [...] Still, they are all working very hard and conscientiously. [...] I don't know anything about Meilie. [...] Debüser browbeats me, but I browbeat her as well. I am already doing the 7th Picture with her, and I think it would be a pity to start again from scratch with someone else. I can cope with it, but Scherchen ought to take more interest in the thing. I'm still lacking tenors



Karel Reiner



Alois Hába

for the choir. I've exhausted all the sources and don't know where to get hold of them. [...] As far as the singers are concerned I can guarantee that I'll have them ready by mid-April, but I can't answer for the orchestra, because I don't have one yet." (24th January 1931)

"So far I don't have tenors, but I'll find some [...] Debüser has improved. I wonder for how long. On Wednesday there was an interesting concert here. They played Schönberg's Suite op. 29 for violin, viola, 'cello, 3 clarinets and piano, and then Hindemith's String Quartet op. 32 and Stravinsky's Octet. After Schönberg all the rest seemed to pale. Never before had I felt that kind of difference, but the Hindemith and Stravinsky went down better." (30th January 1931)

"Yesterday Scherchen was here and Büchtger came as well. Scherchen finally sorted everything else, asked for the addresses of the singers and wants to write to them all himself... He set a date for rehearsals in Munich. Rehearsals will begin on the 22nd of April and by that time he wants everything to be ready. Confound it, I'll be sweating. He wants you to come to him in Wintherthur for about ten days so that he can work with you at least 6 hours a day on your opera. [...] He immediately made a firm contract with Meilie. [...] Büchtger has himself talked to some of the singers, especially those who were giving me trouble. It looks as if finally everything will now come together. Next month the Munich dance ensemble will start to rehearse the ballet. I have to be repetiteur with them. Otherwise I have to assist with Stravinsky's Oedipus Rex, Honneger's Antigone and probably with Milhaud too. This really speeds up my work tempo, but it doesn't matter, since I'm learning a lot. I shall certainly cope." (23rd February 1931)

We do not have any more reports from Ančerl to Hába on the course of rehearsals for *Mother*; perhaps his work tempo became so tough that he had no time to

write any. Most probably this exceptional experience was something that helped Karel Ančerl resolve his own personal dilemma: he entirely gave up composing and became a master conductor. With Hába he shared a tireless commitment to work and an undying faith that things would eventually turn out well. These attributes helped him to survive the horrors of imprisonment in the Terezín concentration camp, where he founded and led an orchestra. After the war he joined Hába in the Great Opera of the 5th of May, which occupied the building of the former New German Theatre (today the Prague State Opera) and Hába became its director. Karel Ančerl also took part in the production of the Czech premiere of *Mother* on the 23rd of May 1947, this time directing it himself.

Karlik

The job of repetiteur during rehearsals for the Czech production of *Mother* in 1947 was taken on by another of Hába's pupils, **Karel Reiner** (1910–1979), familiarly known to everyone as "Karlik" ["Charlie"]. He too was someone who divided his interest between various different branches of music. For many years he not only composed but also was an active pianist and one of the first players on the quarter-tone piano. The first performers of Hába's quarter-tone pieces included above all his own pupils at the conservatory, not only Reiner but also Jiří Svoboda, Arnošt Střížek, Táňa Baxantová, and the later conductor of the Scottish Orchestra and Victoria Symphony Orchestra in Melbourne and musical director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra Hans Walter Süsskind. Outside the circle of Hába's students his interpreters included Jan Heřman and most notably Erwin Schulhoff. Reiner – like Schulhoff – also wrote on the theme of play on the quarter-tone piano: "Not even in the performance of semi-tone music is one particular technique sufficient. [...] Chopin demands a different technique than Beethoven, Mozart a different technique than Liszt, Bach a different

technique than Schönberg, Smetana a different technique than Suk or Janáček. In these circumstances it is clear that a similarly limited technical-piano training is even less sufficient for play on the quarter-tone piano. [...] Play on the quarter-tone piano has ceased to be the acrobatic privilege of individuals and has become the basic starting point for understanding the common foundation of all piano technique. [...] The complete piano oeuvre of Alois Hába [on semitone and quarter-tone piano] provides us with some of the greatest milestones in the development of contemporary pianistic art." (Rytmus [Rhythm] 4, 1938–39, pp. 51–53).

Reiner's help was invaluable in saving the threatened 13th ISCM festival in 1935. The festival had been supposed to take place in Karlovy Vary, but a number of unfavourable circumstances exploited by the nationalist campaigns of the Sudeten German party unnerved the town councillors and preparations for the festival collapsed. But within less than six weeks of feverish activity the festival was saved. One of the people who devoted themselves twenty-four hours a day to correspondence and telephone calls, used their diplomatic talents to the utmost and refused to give into depression, was Karel Reiner, and not simply because he was supposed to perform at the festival, playing a *Piano Concerto* by another of Hába's pupils, the Slovenian composer Slavko Osterc. (At this festival Karel Ančerl conducted Hába's symphonic fantasia *Cesta života* [The Journey of Life].)

For two years Reiner (a qualified lawyer) acted as repetiteur and composer in the avant-garde theatre of Emil František Burian, for whom he created or arranged a number of stage music compositions, for example for a production based on Karel Hynek Mácha's great romantic poem *Máj* [May], or in collaboration with E. F. Burian for the production *Haškovy noviny* [Hašek's Newspaper], for the play *Mistr Pleticha* on an anonymous text from the 15th century (all in 1935), for a production of *Procitnutí jara*

[*Spring Awakening*] by Frank Wedekind, the dramatisation of Karel Hynek Mácha's *Kat* [*The Hangman*], Pierre Auguste Caron Beaumarchais's *The Barber of Seville*, Burian's adaptation of Václav Kliment Klicpera's *Každý něco pro vlast* [*Everyone does Something for His Homeland*], Burian's dramatisation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and for *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Büchner (1936). He also published articles in music magazines, undertook organisational work and looked for his own musical idiom.

Like Ančerl, Karel Reiner was Jewish, and Nazism had a devastating effect on his life. Reiner went through a number of concentration camps and by a miracle managed to survive not only the "final solution" but also typhus and a death march. He came from a German-speaking family. His father had been the cantor in the Jewish community in Žatec in North-west Bohemia in what was known as the Sudetenland. From the end of the 1920s this originally merely topographic name had acquired political significance, especially after Hitler's rise to power in Germany. From the mid-1930s Hitler's supporters strove to "ethnically cleanse" the area of Czechs and to become part of Germany. Reiner, who deliberately declared himself Czech-speaking, settled in Prague. While he considered himself a Czech, at job interviews he was often asked why he didn't join "the other side": for Germans he was already a Czech and for Czechs he was still a German. For the Nazis he was a Jew with no longer any rights at all.

Even after the war Reiner had a difficult time. It was impossible to revive severed bonds and restore the institutions and organisations of the pre-war period. Politically speaking, the first three post-war years saw Czechoslovakia becoming increasingly dependent on decisions made in the Soviet Union. While the inter-war avant-garde in Czechoslovakia had been broadly left-wing and had seen in the Soviet Union the only power capable of defeating Nazi Germany, after the war left-wing orientation meant the loss of freedom and artistic liberty and subjection to ideological diktat. It took Karel Reiner several years to realise that by adapting to the demands for "communicability, simplicity and melodic character" promulgated by Socialist Realism, he was losing his own identity. When he refused to abandon "formalist" composition, he started to be undesirable for the future development of socialist culture. There followed years in which his music was scarcely ever performed. Once again, he was afflicted with the feeling that he "belonged nowhere", for the last time when after 1968 he condemned the Soviet occupation and resigned from the Communist Party, which he had joined soon after the war. In all the trials that he encountered in his life and in his efforts to defend his moral credit Reiner drew strength from the principles that he had come to embrace through his association with Alois Hába.



Viktor Ullmann



An Education in Freedom

Hába's influence on his pupils related not just to music, but also to overall outlook in life. In the 1920s – and perhaps even earlier, during his studies in Vienna – Hába had been introduced to the anthroposophical teachings of Rudolf Steiner. In the light of Steiner's theories he saw the role of the artist in society and musical compositions as a duel between contradictory elements and an attempt to achieve equilibrium. In this respect he influenced Karel Reiner, who also espoused anthroposophical doctrines, and affected the spiritual orientation of another of his pupils, **Viktor Ullmann** (1898–1944). Viktor Ullmann was the son of an Austrian officer, a Jew who had converted to Christianity. His native language was German, and he grew up in Vienna, fought in the First World War (from which his father returned an invalid) and started to study law before deciding on music and attending Arnold Schönberg's composition class. In 1919 he moved to Prague and thereafter his life (apart from the years 1930–33) was bound up with the cultural milieu of the Czech capital. We do not know precisely when and where he first met Hába, and it is possible that they became acquainted in Vienna just after the war. Ullmann first took a sceptical attitude to Steiner's ideas, but in the end studied them in detail and was so enthralled that for a time he gave up composition. Hába acted as Ullmann's sponsor when the latter joined the Anthroposophical Society and Ullmann himself called his new step in life, for which he credited Hába, the "conversion of Saul into Paul". In Stuttgart he purchased a debit-ridden anthroposophical bookshop, but this soon went bankrupt and in 1933 Ullmann fled from his creditors to Prague (not from Hitler, since at that time he was protected from German discriminatory laws by his status as Austrian citizen and Christian). Radical decisions had not brought Ullmann good fortune, but as he himself said, fortunately he

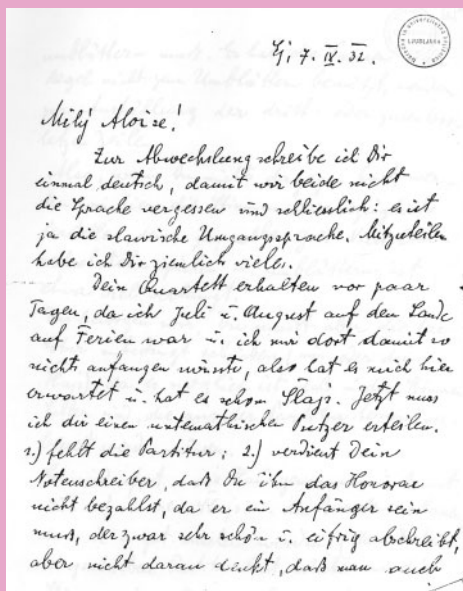
still had music. A new distinctive phase in Ullmann's composing career began in the mid-1930s.

Hába and Ullmann remained close friends. Ullmann's search for all kinds of creative possibilities also (already at a relatively mature age) brought him to Hába's microtonal class at the Prague Conservatoire (1935–37). His graduation piece was a *Sonata for Quarter-tone Clarinet and Quarter-tone Piano*, of which only the clarinet part has survived. Subsequently he never used quarter-tones in his music. It can be said that in this piece he reached the boundaries of an experiment that helped him to find a musical idiom in which elements of historical forms are balanced by great freedom of tonality and effective use of timbre. There are also grounds for supposing that it was Hába who introduced Ullmann to the folk song that has left its traces in his *Piano Sonata no. 2* and *Slav Rhapsody*.

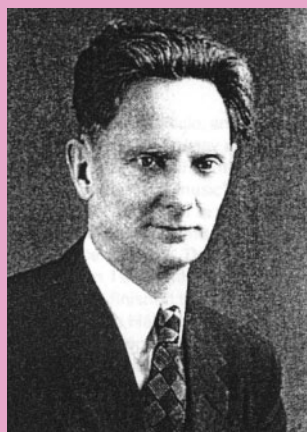
Viktor Ullmann the composer has been rediscovered since 1975, when his one-act opera written in Terezín *Císař z Atlantidy* (*Der Kaiser von Atlantis – The Emperor of Atlantis*) was first performed in Amsterdam, but in a new orchestration (the original form has been in performance since the 1990s). Many of his pieces have, alas, been lost. The works that remain have become without exception part of the concert and opera repertoire. In 2006 there are plans finally to present the long delayed first performance of Ullmann's opera *Pád Antikristův* (*Der Sturz des Antichrist – The Fall of Antichrist*) on a Czech stage (the world premiere, as yet without successors, was produced in 1995 in Bielefeld).

Ullmann's *The Fall of Antichrist* was written in 1935. It has its counterpart in the output of Alois Hába, in the form of his never performed opera *Příjd království Tvé* [*Thy Kingdom Come*] of 1942.

Ullmann's opera was based on a play by the anthroposophist poet Albert Steffen about



Slavko Osterc's letter to Alois Hába



Jeronimas Kacinskas

Excerpt from Hába's
Harmonielehre
Twelfth-tone system
accidentals and scales

the struggle of technocracy (the Technician), demagogy (The Priest) and free creative life (the Artist) with despotic desire for power (the Regent). The Artist prevails over the Regent and by his conviction and faith liberates his "brothers" – the Technician and the Priest – and the whole of mankind. Hába in his opera on his own libretto written with the help of Ferdinand Pujman, places social classes in opposition, allegorised into a duel between the anthroposophical symbols Lucifer and Ahriman. Ullmann's music for the *Antichrist* is tonal, with long declamatory passages but also melodic sections with the great orchestral apparatus of the post-Romantic inheritance. Hába's opera is written in a sixth-tone system, i.e. in an even more finally nuanced idiom than his opera *Mother*. To have produced a work of this kind, with no chance that it would be performed, in the midst of the war, under the rule of a system that branded his music as "degenerate" (entartete) and banned anthroposophy, was the rebellion of a spirit that refused to be overcome. This rebellion of the spirit was also evident in the work of Viktor Ullmann in Terezín, where he composed, took part in concerts and wrote music reviews. In the latter he never conceded that standards of performance might be judged more tolerantly in the improvised conditions: "We have listened to and loved the *Magical Flute* from childhood. Many still have Mahler in their ears, others Richard Strauss, Schalk, Walter, Zemlinski; we have heard the leading international singers of Mozart, seen the stage design of great artists and preserved the memory of the soft, incomparable sound of the tenderly accompanying orchestra. Is it possible that we may be allowed to express

criticism of a production that is to this memory what a second stage rehearsal is to a dress rehearsal? A production that the conductor is not even allowed to conduct – and why not? – and that has to be accompanied by a more than problematic piano? [...] While Gustav Mahler was in the provinces, he kept his promise: not to present Mozart and Wagner there!"

Modern Music between Nations

Among his pupils from the former Yugoslavia, the one with whom Hába kept up probably his liveliest correspondence was the Slovenian Osterc, who was in any case only two years his junior. **Slavko Osterc** (1895–1941) had arrived in Prague in 1925. In some ways he shared a starting-point in life with Hába. Apart from the fact that both had originally been supposed to become teachers and had to struggle to beat a path to art, they had both had the same teacher, Vitězslav Novák, at the beginning of their careers as composers. In addition, Osterc had also been trained by Karel Boleslav Jiráček and gone through Hába's microtonal department. Later he was himself to pass on his experience when teaching composition at the conservatory and Academy of Music in Lublyana. Hába's contacts with Osterc related not just to exchanging news about their compositions but above all to the activities of the ISCM. Osterc was a member of the ISCM international jury in Paris in 1937 and played an important role in promoting Czech composers there. He managed to arrange

a matinee of quarter- and sixth-tone music outside the main festival concerts and won votes for most of the pieces proposed by the Czech section. After negotiations in the jury he informed Hába that:

"[...] now to details, mainly about the L ad 1/6 matinee. The jury allowed it, but doesn't want to be responsible for the programme, because the pieces have not been submitted to them. In my view that is perfectly all right. You can therefore start to negotiate with the French section. But [the leader of the French section Jacques Ibert] has already been lamenting that there isn't enough money. And so at the moment that would be the one vulnerable point. But I know you and I am sure you'll find a way over this.

Naturally our internal work: putting together and presenting a programme – will be difficult. [...] Kačinskas's Nonet looks like the only piece for the moment, but of course you are better informed about everything! It hasn't been possible to push through Bartoš, Polívka and Koffler, because Bořkovec also sent a piece and Martinů too, outside the section, and so I was already rather anxious about Reiner. The situation was that apart from me no one was enthusiastic about Reiner (it's a modern jury!!!, that was why Koffler was dropped – just because he writes in modern style) and I invested all my energies in pushing for Reiner and even got unanimous agreement for him, which makes me truly happy for Charlie's sake. As far as orchestral pieces are concerned, then it is

↑	Erhöhung um einen Zwölftelton
↑	Sechstelton (2 Zwölfteltöne)
↑	Viertelton (3 Zwölfteltöne)
↑	Drittelton (4 Zwölfteltöne)
↑	5 Zwölftelton
↑	Halbton
↑	7 Zwölftelton
↑	2 Drittelton
↑	3 Viertelton
↑	5 Sechstelton
↑	11 Zwölftelton

↓	Erniedrigung um einen Zwölftelton
↓	Sechstelton
↓	Viertelton
↓	Drittelton
↓	Fünfzwölftelton
↓	Halbton

Demnach lassen sich die drei Grundleitern (die 18stufige Dritteltonleiter, die 36stufige Sechsteltonleiter und die 72stufige Zwölfteltonleiter auf folgende Art notieren:

1. Ganztöne

2. Dritteltonleiter

3. Sechsteltonleiter

4. Zwölfteltonleiter

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Nocturnal quartet — premiere interpretation
XI. ŠMYČCOVÝ KVARTET
 V ŠESTINÓTOVÉM SYSTÉMU

1

ALOIS HÁBA, op. 87
 (* 1895)

I. Allegro energico

Violino I
 Violino II
 Viola
 Violoncello

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II
VZRUŠENĚ – CON AFFEZIONE

Allegro vivace

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you, Žebre and Rosenberg, that was unisono [...]” (25th December 1936 from Paris)

And Hába's reply: „You have put up a brave fight and I'm just as curious about the whole programme as I am about the hue and cry that I expect for L and 1/6 matinee [...] For me and Reiner it will be a little hard to live with the jury decision, even though we are both delighted by it! Because at home the “financial reward” for pieces keeps going – to the others! Reiner and I at least have recognition abroad! If at least Bartoš's piece had been accepted, as I strongly hoped, it would all be alright. But this way – just Hába and his most faithful pupil – Dr Reiner, there will be bad blood.” (26th December 1936)

Just by way of explanation: František Bartoš, Pavel Bořkovec and Vladimír Polívka were not Hába's pupils, but Vladimír Polívka had taken part in presenting some of Hába's piano pieces. The Polish composer Józef Koffler was a pupil of Schönberg and is considered to be the first Polish composer to use twelve-tone music. He fell victim to the Nazis, who murdered his entire family. The Slovenian composer Demetrij Žebre studied with Hába in the mid-1930s. The Swedish composer Hilding Rosenberg, regarded as a “romantic modernist”, was a member of the jury along with Alfred Casella, Wladimir Vogel, Nadia Boulanger and Ernst Křenek in the year that Hába gave up his place at the festival to Jaroslav Ježek. The programme of the microtonal matinee consisted of works by Hába and his pupils Karel Reiner, the Slovak Julius Kowalský and the Englishman Frank Wiesmeyer. *Inventions* by Bohuslav Martinů, who was living in Paris at the time, was not performed at the festival.

Jeronimas Kačinskas (born 1907) from Lithuania, studied with Hába in the

years 1929–31 and became his zealous supporter. For many years he tried vainly to get the teaching of microtonal music introduced in Klaipėda. He wrote his *Nonet* for the Czech Nonet, which premiered it. It was not, however, performed in Paris, and Hába was finally to help get it played at the next festival in 1938 in London (just like the piece by Koffler), when he was once again a member of the international jury. Kačinskas later found temporary exile in Czechoslovakia after escaping from Lithuania after the occupation of the Baltic states. He spent some time in a refugee camp in Lednice in Moravia.

“Degenerate Formalist”

The Nazi regime classified Hába as a “degenerate” composer, and for the communist regime he was a “formalist”. After 1948 he was deprived of his place as director at the Great Opera of the 5th of May and of the chance to go on teaching. With only two years to go before he reached pensionable age, Hába naturally defended himself, albeit in a fashion that today we might consider undignified, if not hypocritical. He wrote the following to the Dean of the Academy of Performing Arts Antonín Sychra:

“I have composed, and still composing and intend to go on composing. Among my latest compositions a number were highly rated at the [communist] Composers' Union plenary meeting, and not in any formalist sense. Likewise my 7th String Quartet op. 73 and youth song *Jarní země* [Spring Earth] won prizes in the last year. I am now working on a *Wallachian Suite* for orchestra and plan a series of other works inspired by the life of the people and the present. [...] Considering these circumstances it is my view that if my work as a teacher is currently considered undesirable, a certain account should at least be taken of my work as a composer

and present creative orientation.” (8th July 1951)

Hába had never been embarrassed to approach people in the highest places with his requests, and did so this time as well. He wrote in his own case to the Minister of Education Zdeněk Nejedlý: “I have been teaching in this field for 28 years. In 1933 – after my illegal visit to a theatre and music conference in Moscow – the then Ministry of Education wanted to suspend my teaching activities at the State Conservatory of Music. [...] During the Second World War the teaching of composition in the L and 1/6-tone system was threatened by the Nazis for both artistic and political reasons. This did not surprise me. I used even my L and 1/6-tone compositions to fight for a better future for working people. You yourself wrote about my cycle of L-tone male choral pieces *Pracující den* [The Working Day] (on a poem by J. Hora), dedicated to all working people for the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the USSR [...] The L and 1/6-tone system may also be employed for artistic expression of the kind that you spoke about at the last congress of Czechoslovak composers [...] Apart from this, on the 1st of February 1950 I signed a socialist contract with the Rectorate of the Academy of Performing Arts in which I undertook that in addition to my existing teaching duties I would act as permanent advisor to composition students for the writing of mass songs, choral works, cantatas, operas and other socially oriented music.” (July 1951)

The document is one that speaks for itself as a witness to the times. Hába's attendance at the International Olympiad of Revolutionary Theatres in Moscow in 1933 definitely cannot be called illegal; incidentally, one result of this visit had been to re-establish, or perhaps initiate

Hába's *String Quartet no. 11, op. 87* in sixth-tone system (left)
String Quartet no. 16, op. 98 in fifth-tone system (excerpt from 2nd movement; right)

a closer link with Hanns Eisler, whom we have mentioned above. The paradox of Hába's argumentation and the folly of the Fifties is the fact that in the *String Quartet* op. 73, which he speaks of in the letter to Sychra, Hába managed to smuggle in the Czech Christmas carol *Narodil se Kristus Pán* [Christ the Lord is Born]. Four years later, in the same way, his *Concerto for Viola* contained a version of the song of St. Michael, who as the angel who weighs the souls of the dead is one of the central symbols of anthroposophy.

In 1956 Hába attended the Summer Courses of Contemporary Music in Darmstadt, but faced with the Darmstadt experimentalists the former enfant terrible of the interwar period emerged as a defender of the "good old times". Nonetheless, when he was asked to give a lecture to musicology students at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University in Greifswald in 1963, it was he who provided the East German students with some contact with events in Western music. He made an impact in the GDR particularly by demanding that music teaching concentrate just on music itself, its structure and specific meaning independent of philosophical systems that ultimately always manifest themselves as ideology. According to one of those present at the lecture Hába defended freedom of choice of musical material, without "expressing an opinion on questions of socialist realism and dogmatic definition, as if these questions did not exist for him". (*Gedanken zu Alois Hába*, 1996, pp. 95–97).

To be a successful teacher a person needs to remain a pupil throughout his or her life. This was the case with Hába. He kept up with events of all kinds (not just in music), studied historical systems of harmony and the music of non-European cultures and towards the end of his life even wrote a fifth-tone string quartet with a very concise structure, something quite new in his output.

Many Languages, One Music

Apart from those already mentioned, important pupils of Hába included Dragutin Colić, Dragutin Cvetko, Radoslav Hrovatin, Marjan Lipovšek, Ljubica Marić, Pregrad Milošević, Maks Pirnik, Milan Ristić, Pavel Šivic, Franc Šturm and Vojislav Vučković from the former Yugoslavia, from Bulgaria Vasil Božinov, Atanas Grdev and Konstantin Iljev, Jan Wiczorek from Poland, Kazim Necil Akse and Halil Bedi Yenetken from Turkey, Mykola Kolessa from the Ukraine and many others. The English violinist and composer Frank Wiesmeyer (already mentioned above) later took the professional name Georg Whitman and did a great deal to propagate Czech music in England.

In his *Česká moderní hudba* [Czech Modern Music] (1936) Vladimír Helfert defined Alois Hába as "the most extreme wing in the development of Czech modern music, [...] a phenomenon that has advanced the furthest in terms of evolution but at the same time represents the European standard of our music". The way in which the generation that did not come into direct contact with him on "the school benches" still responds to Hába as teacher has been summed up by the composer Alois Piňos in 1993 (*Opus musicum* 1993, pp. 277–284): „Nobody composes thoroughly in a microtonal system like Hába, but the impulses he gave have lived on, for example in the now dead leading representative of the 'Brno School', Josef Berg, and also Josef Adamík, František Emmert, Peter Graham, Marek Kopelent, Václav Kučera, Arnošt Parsch, Alois Piňos, Rudolf Růžička, Martin Smolka, Miloš Štědroň and others. Hába has his heirs (but not mere copiers) abroad as

well. The Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas, for example, admits his influence, although (as Haas himself says) 'my way of seeing Alois Hába is – to put it cautiously – very individual.' "

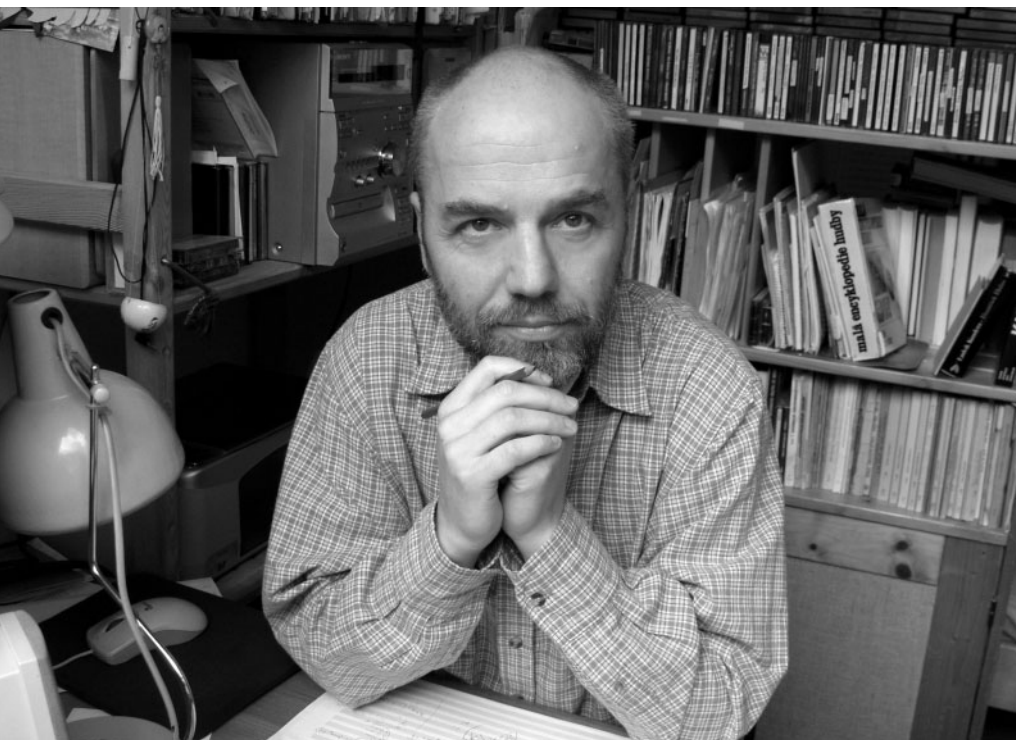
Insofar as the authentic responses of Hába's pupils have come down to us, summarising how they saw the value of his teaching, they echo the opinion of Mykola Kolessa, who wrote to Hába on the occasion of his seventieth birthday: "Your works and the creative methods to which you introduced us [...] in your very interesting lectures and creative discussions, have left deep traces in me, even though I haven't in fact used the quarter-tone system in my own work as a composer. Even today, after such a long time, I like to recall your teaching methods, which are a great help to me in my activities as a composer and teacher." (26th July 1963)

martin smolka **a microsentimental** **composer**

PETR BAKLA

"Wherever I mention that I use quarter-tones, sooner or later someone brings up the name of Hába. But I came to micro-intervals as part of the common equipment of post-war New Music and didn't concern myself much with Hába". We would be hard put to it to find any other composer in contemporary Czech music who has focused as systematically, conspicuously and successfully on the use of microtones as Martin Smolka (*1959). The basic idea behind his approach to microtones is in fact relatively simple and in itself not so uncommon. Smolka does not introduce "new tones" into the tempered system, but just "detunes" intervals as a means of emotional expression.

Martin Smolka appeared on the Czech music scene in the Eighties, when together with the composer Miroslav Pudlák he founded the *Agon* ensemble. Later the composer and conductor Petr Kofroň joined the group and *Agon* soon became the most important ensemble for contemporary music in Czechoslovakia. Not only did long-term co-operation in *Agon* provide the composers with a platform for performance of their work and for experimentation, but *Agon* also functioned as (almost the only in Czechoslovakia) mediator of the repertoire of world avant-garde music. Somewhere at the beginning of Smolka's career as a composer we can find, to a greater or lesser extent, the influence of essentially all the important movements and aesthetics of post-war music. In general, the 1980s were a time when the earlier fierce "irreconcilability" of "opposite" movements was a thing of the past, and this was doubly



true in communist Czechoslovakia. In the suffocating atmosphere of the hegemony of the officially privileged pseudo-modern music, which fumbled about somewhere between Vítězslav Novák and Shostakovich, practically any kind of music outside this circle was the object of attention and authentic interest, and all the more so because it was not an easy matter to get recordings or printed scores and there was no danger of "saturation". In Smolka's music (as in the music of many of his contemporaries), we have generally little difficulty in identifying the influences of Post-Webernism, Minimalism, American experimental music (above all M. Feldman) and the Polish School. The latter was itself essentially a synthesising and borrowing phenomenon and especially in its later period eclectic. Added to this we find an interest in "across the board" tendencies to experiment with natural tuning and a "flexible" concept of the pitch, especially in the music of Harry Partch and Giacinto Scelsi; for Smolka's development, however, this tuning systems were less fundamental than certain expressive techniques and idioms that are peculiar to the music of this circle. (As he himself says, his use of microtones is not based on any theoretical system).

All these influences never entirely disappeared from the work of Martin Smolka and at different periods they have been more or less evident, but much more often as abstracted principles rather than adopted mannerisms. Smolka's music is original and in no sense plagiaristic or derivative (at the very least from the end of the 1980s). What then makes "Smolka Smolka"?

For Smolka what is characteristic is the typically European strategy of basing musical structure on contrast, i.e. de facto thinking in the „sonata" categories of first subject – second subject: slow – fast, merry – sad, thun-

deringly – softly and so on. Smolka's pieces are almost regularly built out of internally homogenous form segments, of which there may for example be only two in the whole composition or in which on the contrary many contrasting segments may follow in very quick succession, in extreme cases even in bar after bar. Development techniques are usually suppressed, seams between the form segments acknowledged, and the basic principle is repetition. These attributes make Smolka's music accessible for audiences, since the structure and direction of his compositions is apparent on a first listen and thanks to the high level of redundancy (everything usually comes back several times), the listener can take in the music sufficiently without needing to hear a piece again. Of course, with music of this kind there is always a risk that the music will not bear further listening at all and the composer will be shown up as a mere purveyor of routine, but Smolka generally manages to come up with fresh ideas that balance the rather schematic treatment.

Martin Smolka is a composer of innovation and experiment, whose "discoveries" are mostly related to the exploitation of bizarre sources of sound (very undertuned strings, old gramophones, non-standard percussion instruments and so forth) and (to return to our central theme) the possibilities offered by microtones. It is nonetheless true that all his innovations and experimentation virtually always take place in the framework of the method described above for the "securely" structured form and are essentially systematically subordinated to the goal of finding new ways of projecting expressive contrast. Smolka's music is practically never emotionally neutral, and two basic modes are typical here (the reader will I hope forgive me the cheap metaphors): 1) crackling exuberant merri-

ment, musical box tunes and the sounds of the junk shop, typical noises of civilisation, folk or brass band, if possible playing off key, and 2) wistful memories, painful longing, the echo of the sounds of mode 1, nostalgia. In this context perhaps we could say that Smolka the composer is not very interested in undirected "pure research"; what Smolka is looking for is for yet more ways of getting himself and the listener into the desired mood, to brighten up or to move. This also applies to pieces that involve stylisation of sounds heard in the real world. Especially at the beginning of the 1990s Smolka focused on the timbre aspects of music, and he talks about some pieces as "sound photographs" (for example *L'Orch pour l'Orch* of 1992 is partly a "portrait" of a shunting yard); despite Smolka's fascination with some real sounds (locomotive brakes, ship sirens and so on), however, they are selected through the prism of expressive charge, and stylised in a particular emotional direction.

In his use of microtones, we see the same basic pragmatism and subordination of technique to goal that we noted in relation to his preferred mode of structuring pieces and choice of musical elements (and the direction of his "research" as a composer) on the basis of emotional potential. The main feature of Smolka's approach to micro-intervals is its economy – deviations from standard tuning (and so deviations from established performance practice) are justified only when they are prominent and immediately recognisable to the ear, and this happens if they carry some expressive, emotional charge. On his sources of inspiration, Smolka explains that: *"My most important starting point was concrete sound experience, and I started with experiments aiming to mimic the sounds of nature and civilisation. And then I found out that many of my early musical fascinations were caused by microtonal mis-tunings, often unwanted and unregistered. For example I was charmed by the interference of some piano chord and didn't know that it was caused by the poor tuning of a neglected instrument, or I was spellbound by the emotional power of a blues singer and didn't realise that he was actually tugging at my ears (and soul) with notes just under pitch. In jazz orchestra recordings of the 1920s pretty well all the wind instruments have a sliding wail – the longer notes start under pitch and are then gradually tuned up to it. Or the singers of blues, spirituals and gospels – they sing mainly the notes of the accompanying harmony with its thirds, fifths and sevenths pitched just under the tone and then tuned up, or sometimes not tuned right up as the note is held. Chords that are rendered slightly out of time in a similar way, whether exposed harmonically or in melody, can be found in recordings of Central European folk music where this music has been handed down from generation to generation uncontaminated by music from the media (does this perhaps count as at least one attitude in common with Alois Hába's folklore*

inspirations? Author's note). *This kind of gural music could sometimes accompany a whole song with a tonic in which the major third was hopelessly flat and was flat for the whole piece! I believe that there is a wonderful expressive power in these natural microtonal situations. In these out-of-key thirds I feel pain, bitterness, weeping and unfulfilled longing.*" The key principle behind Smolka's treatment of microtones is therefore *the out of tune* and "detuning" of this kind always retains its link to the "in tune". It is only possible if the reference point of the properly tuned is immediately present. For Smolka, therefore, it is not "new notes" that are important (i.e. tones as independent steps expanding the number of tones in standard tuning), but out-of-tune intervals, and this is the direction that Smolka takes in his actual strategies as a composer. (Here we might point out a distant analogy with J.M. Hauer's approach to twelve-tone music: for Hauer the starting point was not the 12 chromatic tones, but the 12 intervals.)

Detuned thirds (or sixths) and octaves (or unison) appear to be by far the most effective elements in terms of expressive possibilities and immediate recognition by the ear. The great majority of Smolka's microtones fall precisely into this category. When he alters other intervals (for example fifths) microtonally, he usually does so in the framework of common chords and a reference tone creating a third (sixth) with the altered tone or a prime (octave) is usually close by. Especially Smolka's more recent pieces (ca from 1998) strikingly draw on the expressive possibilities of traditional melodic phrases and harmonic progressions, but microtonally deformed: *"In the choral piece Walden, the Distiller of Celestial Dews, in the 3rd part called Indians I exposed a B Minor triad in several quarter-tone alterations. It was like illuminating one object with various different spotlights. Here detuning the common chord served as an expression of pain in line with the text, the passage in Thoreau where he describes how the Jesuits tortured the Indians who didn't want to give up their faith, but the Indians still expressed unparalleled love for their enemy and forgiveness. The melody that appears between the detuned common chords and interacts with them towards the end as they tend to rise, finally opens out into tempered B Major, which has a radiance that represents the Indian forgiveness.*

From the point of view of classical harmony we have a remarkable paradox here. Throughout the piece there is a triad, but we are liberated from its quarter-tone tension by chords of four or more notes – the special radiance of the quiet B Major is enhanced by an added second, sixth, seventh and even a fourth. (Just for the sake of completeness – as even higher purging

$\text{♩} = 120\text{MM}$ Appassionato

INTERLUDIUM

[♩ = ca. 50]

above: string unisono from *Remix, Redream, Reflight* (2000)

below: Interludium for string quartet from *Missa* (2002)

with permission of Breitkopf & Härtel

comes at the end with a two-note motif from the soprano, which turns into E through the ordinary cadence progression V–VIII."

"Our ears are so accustomed to tempered tuning that they react to detuned intervals with a desire to put them right, to get to proper tuning – the detuned tones then function like the leading notes in classical-romantic harmony. In the orchestral composition *Remix, Redream, Reflight* a pathetic string unisono dominates. Here quarter-tones play the role of the leading notes, and in an exemplary, direct way. The ascending modal melody has a simple, predictable structure and so every inserted quar-

ter-tone massively gravitates towards the neighbouring step of the given mode." (see example)

(Another typical Smolka's technique is the stepped filling of a narrow interval such as a second with microtones ascending or descending, which creates the impression of a hesitant glissando trying to hold itself back.) While his alterations are usually quarter-tonal, Smolka also quite often uses sixth-tone alterations (for example in the *Three Pieces for Retuned Orchestra* the instrumental sections of the orchestra are divided into sub groups that are detuned by a sixth in relation to each

other), but much less often eighth-tones or even tenth-tones (on ordinary instruments these can only be played very approximately). Obviously the intonation of quarter- and sixth-tones is not usually entirely precise, which normally adds to the interest of the sound result (one of the reasons why Alois Hába was not entirely successful in his microtonal efforts was evidently the unnaturalness of "tempered" quarter-tones and so on.). For example, in places where a unison is prescribed, the imprecision can lead to slight deviations from pitch and so a characteristic roughening of the timbre; quarter- and sixth-tone fingerings in woodwinds have the same timbre effect.

See also

<http://www.bostonmicrotonalsociety.org/>



MARTIN SMOLKA

Born 1959 in Prague, Czech Republic. Studied composition at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts (with J. Pauer, C. Kohoutek), but found private studies with Marek Kopelent more important.

His work has won him recognition both at home and abroad. He has written commissioned pieces for ensemble 2e2m, Arditti Quartet, Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart and others) and his works have been chosen for performance at other important festivals (ISCM World Music Days, Hoergaenge, Tage Neue Musik Stuttgart, Klang-Aktionen Munich etc.). Very successful was his opera *Nagano*, staged in the National Theatre in Prague in 2004.

In 1983 he co-founded Agon, a group specializing in contemporary unconventional music in which he worked as artistic director and pianist until 1998. In the course of Agon projects he has also carried out research (quarter-tone music by the pupils of Alois Hába, the 1960s music in Prague etc.), and the realization of graphic scores and conceptual music (the works by John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Daniel Goode and Milan Grygar).

He co-authored the book *Graphic Scores and Concepts*.

Recently he has been teaching composition at Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno. Since 2000 his new works have been published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

Selection of works:

Music Sweet Music (1985/88) for ensemble and soprano

Music for Retuned Instruments (1988) for ensemble

Ringling (1989) for percussion solo

The Flying Dog (1990/92) for ensemble

L'Orch pour l'orch (1990) for orchestra

Rain, a Window, Roofs, Chimneys, Pigeons and so ... and Railway-Bridges, too (1992) for large ensemble

Rent a Ricercar (1993/95) for ensemble

Trzy motywy pastoralne (*Three pastoral motifs*) (1993) for tape

Euforium (1996) for 4 instruments or ensemble

Three pieces for retuned orchestra (1996)

Lullaby (1996–7) for trombone, guitar and ensemble

8 pieces for guitar quartet (1998)

Autumn Thoughts (1998) for ensemble

Lieder ohne Worte und Passacaglia (1999) for ensemble

Blue Note (2000) for percussion duo

Walden, the Distiller of Celestial Dews (2000), text H. D. Thoreau, for mixed choir and percussion

Remix, Redream, Reflight (2000) for orchestra

Houby a nebe (*Mushrooms and Heaven*) (2000), Czech text P. P. Fiala, for non-opera alto and one or two string quartets

Geigenlieder (2001), German texts Chr. Morgenstern, B. Brecht for violinist-narrator and ensemble

Nagano (2001–3), opera in 3 acts, libretto J. Dušek, M. Smolka

Observing the Clouds (2001/3) for (youth) orchestra and 3 conductors

Missa (2002) for vocal quartet and string quartet

Tesknice (*Nostalgia*) (2003/4) for chamber orchestra

Discography:

Music Sweet Music – CD AGON, Arta Records, Prague 1991

Music for Retuned Instruments, 2 CD Wittenberger Tage für neue Kammermusik 1991, WDR Köln, 1991

Rain, a Window, Roofs, Chimneys, Pigeons and so ... and Railway-Bridges, too – 3 CD Donaueschinger Musiktage 1992, col legno/SWF Baden-Baden, Munich, 1993

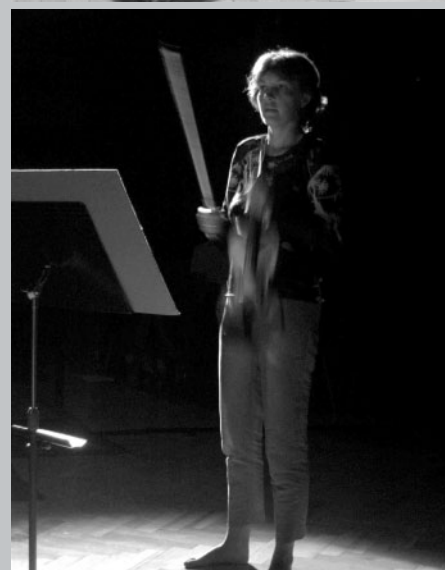
A v sadech korálů, jež slabě zrůžověly for solo voice, 1987 – CD Na prahu světa, Happy Music, Prague 1996

Rent a Ricercar, Flying Dog, For Woody Allen, Nocturne – 2 CD AGON

ORCHESTRA – The Red and Black, audio ego/ Society for New Music, Prague, 1998

Euforium, Music for Retuned Instruments, Ringling, Rain, a Window, Roofs, Chimneys, Pigeons and so ... and Railway-Bridges, too audio ego/ Society for New Music, Prague, 1999

Walden, the Distiller of Celestial Dews – 4 CD Donaueschinger Musiktage 2000, col legno/SWF Baden-Baden, Munich, 2001



ostrava days of new music 2005

Although he has lived mainly in the United States since the end of the Sixties, Petr Kotík, the composer, flautist and leader of the New York S.E.M. Ensemble, is a very important figure in contemporary Czech music. When in 2001 he came up with the project of a biennial Ostrava Days event and the idea of founding a Centre for New Music in Ostrava, many people (including myself) rather doubted that any enterprise of this kind had any prospects of success here. Kotík conceived the Ostrava Days as a "Second Darmstadt", in all seriousness and with all the implied ambition.

Events have proved Kotík right, and he has literally done wonders together with his small production team headed by Renáta Spisarová. The Ostrava Days Institute – three-week (!) composition courses focused on work with orchestra (!) has come into existence, and composers and performers with international reputations have been coming to Ostrava as lecturers. Kotík persuaded the Janáček Philharmonic to participate, an orchestra with which he has several times successfully performed difficult works of the post-war avant-garde as well as entirely contemporary pieces (before and after the launch of the Ostrava Days). His invitation was accepted by the Arditti Quartet, an ensemble specialising in contemporary music and considered among the best quartets in the world. The Days culminate in a weeklong festival involving more than ten concerts. Even in its very first year the festival immediately became practically the most important festival of contemporary music in this country in terms of choice of music and scale. The Ostrava Days 2001 was an unequivocal success.

This year saw the third Ostrava Days festival; the project has abandoned none of its ambitions and has in fact tended to grow. The industrial city of Ostrava, struggling with high unemployment and other problems, is perhaps one of the last venues we would expect for such an event, but it clearly appreciates and supports "its" festival. The Institute is regularly attended by more than 30 young composers, largely from abroad (the registration fee is a hefty 2000 USD, but scholarships are provided). Apart from P. Kotík the OD Institute permanent lecturers are the legendary composers Alvin Lucier and Christian Wolff, while many other leading figures can already be considered

long-term collaborators with OD. They include the composer Phill Niblock, the composer Zsolt Nagy, the members of Kotík's S.E.M. Ensemble pianist Joseph Kubera and percussionist Chris Nappi, the baritone Thomas Buckner and others – and the list is far from complete. In 2001 and 2003, participants in the Ostrava days included such prominent composers as Jean-Yves Bosseur, Tristan Murail, Frederic Rzewski, Somei Satoh, Martin Smolka and Rebeca Saunders. This year the role of "chief star" was taken by Louis Andriessen, and the musicologists Makis Solomos and Volker Straebel were invited. It is no exaggeration to say that OD is an event of international stature.

The Ostrava Days Festival is more ever more attractive. In addition to the Janáček Philharmonic (which actually in the end turned out to be the weakest link), a now traditionally large number of distinguished and lesser known ensembles and soloists performed at the festival, and above all a significant number of usually young musicians (some from the ranks of students at the OD Institute) specialising in contemporary music. The international group (The Ostrava Band) of these musicians formed for the purposes of OD, flexibly metamorphosing from the various necessary chamber ensembles to an ensemble of more than twenty members, this year ensured that the standard of performance at the OD was very good, which was no always the rule in previous years.

I shall choose from the best moments of the festival: the opening concert presenting the *Atlas Eclipticalis* (together with *Winter Music*) by John Cage – the Janáček Philharmonic with many additional musicians is divided up spatially into three orchestras, into the cool beauty of the sounds generated in accordance with astronomical maps the Ondruš miners' brass band suddenly breaks in with its two "numbers". A greeting from Charles Ives? The outstanding Soozvuk Ensemble led by Marián Lejava, Lejava's beautiful piece *The Gloaming Sessions*. The dark organ recital by Christoph Maria Moosmann with music by M. Feldman, H. Holliger, O. Messiaen and E. H. Flammer. Alvin Lucier's new piece, *Explorations of the House* – Lucier has dusted off an old trick of his: the orchestra plays a few bars of Beethoven, the recorded sound is reproduced into the hall and once again recorded, and after several repeats the resonance of the hall changes Beethoven into abstract

PETR BAKLA



Ostrava Conservatory

electronic music. The Canadian string quartet Quatuor Bozzini – add a pioneering repertoire to the usual superlatives (perfect ensemble play, absolute identification with the text and so forth). The leader of the quartet, Clemens Merkel, later brilliantly performs one of Luigi Nono's last pieces, *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura*. The almost family atmosphere at the night performance of an extract (cca two hours) of Erik Satie's *Vexations*. Andriessen's *La Passione*, Xenakis's *Ata* for large orchestra, Ives's Piano Sonata no. 2 („Concord, Mass. 1840–1860“) performed by Heather O'Donnell, the violinist Hana Kotková with Berio's *Sequenza VIII* (see photo), Petr Kotík's *Variations for 3 Orchestras* and so on. I could go on in the same fashion for much longer, because practically every concert was a real event.

Although the festival is the most conspicuous and for the general public the only accessible part of OD, the meaning of the enterprise should not be "reduced" to the festival. The three-week meeting of all the participants in the "Days", both "maestros" and "pupils", composers and performers, and enthusiasts, generates a very special atmosphere in Ostrava. If the words had not become too much of a cliché, it is an atmosphere we would call creative and companionable. All the events take place close to each other. The Institute uses the premises of the recently renovated conservatory, the evening concerts are held in the nearby City of Ostrava House of Culture, and everyone is accommodated in a few adjoining hotels. Unlikely people gathering in an unlikely place; as if the city had been taken over by a conspiratorial spirit. Two years from now when you encounter a legend of the New York experimental school in Ostrava in the afternoon with a hot dog in his hand, making for the tram, you will appreciate what I mean.



Karel Ančerl – Gold Edition (Vol. 32)

Stravinsky: Les Noces, Cantata, Mass
 Libuše Domanínská, Barbara Robotham – soprano,
 Marie Mrázová – mezzo soprano, Ivo Židek, Gerald English – tenor, Dalibor Jedlička – bass, Zdeněk Kožina, Ján Marcol, Peter Toperczer, Arnošt Wilde – piano,
 Prague Philharmonic Choir, choirmaster Josef Veselka, Czech Philharmonic, Karel Ančerl.
 Production: Vít Roubíček. Text: Eng., Ger., French, Czech.
 Recorded: 1964–1967. Published: 2004. TT: 65:44. ADD.
 1 CD Supraphon SU 3692–2 211.

in cooperation with the magazine

HARMONIE

Ančerl recordings of Stravinsky in the Sixties are among the best that he himself and the **Czech Philharmonic** with him ever recorded. In my view they will in a sense represent the centre even in the several dozen recordings of the "Gold Edition". Ančerl's interpretation is characterised by something that I would call "disciplined elemental force". While discipline and elemental force are opposites, they can complement each other and Ančerl knew how to achieve this whenever he had to transform a score into sound. In *Les Noces* the vocal soloists of the **Prague Philharmonic Choir (PPC)**, four pianists and the percussion section of the Czech Philharmonic create a realistic musical scene of the marriage ritual, but today we would probably demand more attention to Russian pronunciation. The performance of the *Cantata* is particularly effective. It was written very close to *The Rake's Progress* and its Neo-classicist idiom in combination with the English text is strongly reminiscent of the music for the opera. Both soloists are brilliant, **Barbara Robotham** with a dark-toned soprano and **Gerald English** with a light, easy tenor. In the mass the PPC presents itself in the best light, the individual voice groups are well balanced and the choir is acoustically in equilibrium as a whole. The recording is accompanied by a four-language (English, German, French, Czech) translation of the text for *Les Noces* (unfortunately the Russian in which it is sung is missing) and a Latin text of the mass.

VLASTA REITTEREROVÁ



Antonín Dvořák The Complete Symphonies

The Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek.
 Production: Czech Radio, Daniela Růžková. Text: Eng., Ger., French, Czech. Recorded: 2000–2003.
 Published: 2004. TT: 50:49, 51:41, 74:42, 76:58, 72:27, 38:21. DDD. 6 CD Supraphon SU 3802–2.

All the nine Dvořák symphonies in this recording by the **Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra** with **Vladimír Válek** can be rated highly for several reasons. One is the project itself. Supraphon could easily have chosen from the existing recordings of Dvořák symphonies and perhaps added one or two new individual recordings if the quality or interpretation on an old one failed to suit. Instead it decided on one orchestra and one conductor. Apart from the live recordings of the 5th and 7th Symphonies from the Rudolfinum, all were made in the recording studio over a relatively short time from October 2000 to October 2003. As far as power of performance is concerned, they testify to a unified interpretative concept and the very high standard of the radio orchestra at the time. A great deal of credit must also go to the musical directors Milan Puklický, Jan Málek, Igor Tausinger and Jiří Gemrot, the sound directors Jan Lžičar, Jaroslav Vašíček, Miroslav Mareš and the assistants to the sound master Jan Šrajcr and Václav Maršík. In terms of interpretation the first three symphonies are a particular challenge; they are full of the musical ideas with which Dvořák was always brimming, but at this stage in his career he was still too prodigal in the way he presented them. Symphonic movements of this kind are difficult to hold together. But Vladimír Válek manages it admirably. With the "well worn" symphonies, on the other hand, the danger is that of routine, and Válek triumphantly avoids it. Although I have no idea what precisely he intended and whether such "transcendence" is at all possible, it seems as if he is interpreting the early symphonies as the works of a mature composer, and approaching the mature works as if for the first time. This allows him to bring the sense of inevitability and lucidity that we discern in the last three symphonies to those chronologically earlier works and to give a surprising freshness to those last symphonies. The set is well equipped with a booklet and accompanying text by **Jaroslav Holecěk**, which contains all the essential information in four languages (unfortunately in the German version the Prozatímní divadlo – Provisional Theatre appears as Vorläufiges Theater, a mistake that has occurred in previous Supraphon texts. For clarification: in bilingual Prague the usual name was Interimstheater and there is no reason to change it) and profiles of the orchestra and conductor (booklet edited by Daniela Růžková). As is clear from the attached logo, the recording has been partially funded by the Prague Radio partner Hotel. There ought to be more such businessmen.

VLASTA REITTEREROVÁ



Gottfried Finger Compositions for Viola da Gamba

Petr Wagner – viola da gamba, Ensemble Tourbillon. Production: Vítězslav Janda. Text: Czech, Eng. Recorded: 1/2005, Waldorf School, Příbram. Published: 2005. TT: 54:04. DDD. 1 CD Arta F10137 (distribution 2HP Production).

The recording of a hitherto never recorded piece by a well-known composer is not such a rare event and so it is not unusual to find the catchy slogan "world premiere recording" on the back of a CD. But this CD is something different. It is not just a newly discovered piece of music that has its world premiere here, but a newly discovered composer and his whole oeuvre. This musical portrait of the Moravian composer Gottfried Finger is no small event for admirers of early music and above all for lovers of the viola da gamba. Finger, a native of Olomouc, first served for a short time in the Archbishop's Capella of Archbishop Lichtenstein-Castelcorn, but he soon found Central Europe too small for ambitions that he pursued, immediately finding favour and a place in the London Chapel Royal. In England he composed a great deal of stage music including what was evidently the largest and most costly opera performance of its time, the *Virgin Prophetess*. Finger later left England and went to Vienna, although he did not stay there for long. His production of Eccles' opera *The Last Judgment* in Vienna went down in musical history as the first performance of an English opera in continental Europe. Apart from holding posts in the service of the Prussian Queen Sophie in Berlin and as Kammermusiker and later Konzertmeister to Duke Charles Phillip of Neuberg, he travelled all around Europe. In his last years he settled in Mannheim, where he was one of several who laid the foundations of the "Mannheim School". It would be unrealistic to expect a breakthrough in music history and nobody could claim that Finger was a major peak in European culture. His output ranges from very original musical ideas to the borders of triviality. Yet it cannot be denied that he was an important phenomenon of his time. The initiators of the project **Petr Wagner** and musicologist **Robert Rawson**, who actively shares in the recording as the second gamba player, together with other members of the **Ensemble Tourbillon**, have taken great pains with the recording. The CD has been very creatively conceived as far as the sound colour of the instrumentation

is concerned, and works with the specific features of the sonata da chiesa and sonata da camera, variations, suite and with contrast between ensemble and solo passages. In the first sonata we already appreciate the imaginative approach to sound colour: the gamba is accompanied by an organ positive, a second gamba, archlute and theorba, which gives place in the course of play to the Baroque guitar. The entire set develops in similar permutations of the continuo. Each piece is differently instrumented, and this gives the recording its own highly individual character. The vibrant performance reflects not just the evident pleasure that the players take in the music but their clear musical concept of the work and feeling for lightness and wit. The listener may congratulate himself that he is filling up a gap in musical history with this CD, but first and foremost he won't be bored listening to it.

JAKUB MICHL

The attempt to rehabilitate the third of Gluck's reform operas on Calzabigi's libretto has undoubted value just in itself. *Paris and Helena* has lagged chronically behind *Orpheus* and *Alceste* since its first production in the Vienna Burgtheater on the 3rd of November 1770. Yet Gluck had been at great pains (and emphasised in the prologue) to base the opera on the musical contrast between the rough and sharp Spartans with their brusque rhythms and the subtle Trojans with the soft lyricism of melodic arches. He had tried to give the part of Paris the urgency of amatory passion in his conquest of an honourable woman, firmly resolved to do her duty as a wife before her antagonistic suspicions are overcome not just by the insistence of Paris but by Amor, who as a confidante of beautiful Helena has been charged with seeing that the promise of the God Aphrodite is fulfilled. What are the problems in this opera, which seem to have continued to dog it despite all the subsequent changes in opera styles both from the point of view of composition and staging? Stretched out over five acts the action is rather thin, and the wrathful appearance of the goddess Pallas Athena in the first scene of the last act, warning that the affair between Paris and Helena will cause many years of war, does not go far enough to enliven a simple schema in which only three characters are involved. What is worse, of these three characters only Helena undergoes any development, from stubborn rejection to enamoured harmony. The opera is also weighed down by many celebratory, anthemic dances and choral passages that only increase the overall impression of disengaged, almost officious distance. Despite a series of arias, ensembles, choral passages and instrumental numbers, long sections are taken up by melodically very flat recitatives that soon begin to seem tiresome. And the use of woman's voices in soprano registers for all the roles (Gluck wrote the role of Paris for soprano castrato) is too monotonous, as well as doing little to lend credibility to male passion for the most beautiful woman in the world.

In this recording we find **Magdalena Kožená** as Paris and conductor **Paul McCreesh** with the **Gabrieli Consort and Players** doing their best to overcome these handicaps. Magdalena Kožená has many years of experience performing parts in Gluck's operas. Indeed it was precisely this role that she took in 1998 in a production of the opera at a festival in Drottningholm, and Paris's aria from the second act even provided the title for her CD recital of Gluck, Mozart and Mysliveček arias conducted by Sir John Eliot Gardiner (and directed by Robert Wilson). She has sung *Orpheus* at the Théâtre de Châtelet in Paris and taken part in Minkowsky's *Armida* for Deutsche Grammophon. Kožená does not dazzle by brilliance of technique for its own sake, a temptation to which Cecilia Bartoli, whose repertoire is similar, sometimes succumbs. The strength of Kožená's interpretation (always based on a technically entirely reliable mastery of the part) lies in the intensity of the marriage of text and music, in fine modelling, nuanced to the smallest detail, of the scale of expression from a whisper full of anxiety to fiery explosions of erotic feeling not only in the musical numbers, but also in recitatives. At the same time Kožená retains a sense of balance and never slides into mannerism or over-the-top exaltation. We have a sense of a kind of confidential urgency, an intimacy, with which she as it were "speaks" directly into our souls. In this she has the full support of the orchestra, which also tries to extract the maximum contrast from Gluck's music, and of the choir with its well-balanced and integrated sound. While in the role of the persuasive Amor the English soprano **Carolyn Sampson** enhances the colour of the music and the overall liveliness of the recording with her clear, light soprano, the choice of **Susan Gritton** as Helena, despite all her great experience with roles in Händel, Purcell and Mozart, overloads the opera with high notes that are sometimes excessively shrill (the closing aria of Act 4 *Lo potrò*) and a relative lack of compatibility with the other voices, evident particularly in the trio *Ah lo veggio* in Act 4.

Although the recording tries to get the most out of the score, it seems that Paris and Helena is destined to remain a work that helps to complete the picture of Gluck as an opera composer but does not embody the full richness of his imagination or the principles with which he advanced the development of opera.

HELENA HAVLÍKOVÁ

A representative of the young generation of Czech harpsichordists, **Monika Knoblochová** has a great deal to be proud of despite her youth. She has a very broad repertoire ranging from early music to the most recent works and she has already won a number of prizes for performance, among them 3rd Place in the Prague Spring Competition in 1999, together with a special prize for the best performance of Bohuslav Martinů *Harpsichord Concerto*.

And it is Martinů that dominates this CD, released this year by Supraphon. Apart from the already mentioned *Concerto for Harpsichord and Small Orchestra*, *Two Pieces for Harpsichord*, *Sonatas for Harpsichord* and *Two Impromptus for Harpsichord*, the album also contains Martinů's chamber *Promenades for Flute, Violin and Harpsichord*. All this is complemented by Manuela de Falla's *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin and Cello*.

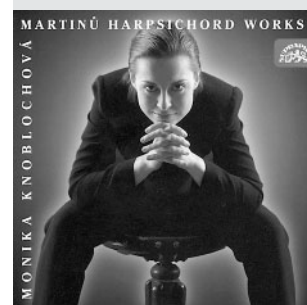
Reviewing a performance from a promising young talent is always an extremely sensitive matter. As we all know, prizes at international competitions are not in themselves automatic guarantees that musicians will make the top



Christoph Willibald Gluck

Paride et Elena

Magdalena Kožená, Susan Gritton, Carolyn Sampson, Gillian Webster, Gabrieli Consort & Players, Paul McCreesh. Production: Christopher Alder. Text: Eng. Ger. French. Recorded: 10/2003, All Saints Church, London. Published: 2005. TT: 79:42 + 66:41. DDD. 2 CD Archiv Produktion 00289 477 5415 (Universal Music).



Bohuslav Martinů*Music for Harpsichord***Manuel de Falla***Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin and Cello*

Monika Knoblochová – harpsichord, **Lenka Kozderková-Šimková** – flute, **Vladislav Borovka** – oboe, **Karel Dohnal** – clarinet, **Václav Fůrbach** – bassoon, **Adéla Štajnochrová, Daniela Oerterová, Eleonora Machová** – violins, **Vojtěch Semerád** – viola, **Tomáš Stražil** – cello, **Jan Buble** – double bass, **Jana Vychodilová** – piano, **Michal Macourek** – conductor. Production: Monika Knoblochová. Text: Eng., Ger., French, Czech. Recorded: 7/2004, Church of St. Kunhutay, Bamberg. Published: 2005. TT: 59:06. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3805–2.

ranks of world performance and find a place in wider public consciousness. That is something only time will tell. The fact is that Monika Knoblochová has brought us a fresh, carefully constructed and extremely agreeable recording. Thought and precision are also evident in her play. Yet however hard and long I listened to it, I couldn't help feeling something was missing, and what was lacking was that essential surge of musical energy, immediacy and real persuasiveness of expression. Furthermore, as far as the other instruments are concerned, especially in the *Promenades* the impression was spoiled by uncertain intonation in places and a not entirely acoustically satisfactory violin (in this context I was reminded of Martinů's *Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola*, played with precisely that disarming energy I was looking for by the violist Jitka Hosprová and violinist Veronika Jarůšková on the Rhapsody album of 2002).

In any case, lovers of harpsichord music (and not only specialists) should not overlook Monika Knoblochová's album. It comes with a booklet containing a commentary by **Aleš Březina**, who offers expert information on the background to the writing of the various pieces.

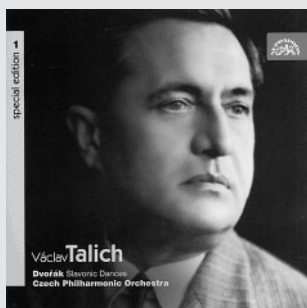
SVATAVA ŠENKOVÁ

**Stamic Quartet***Czech String Quartet Discoveries*

Stamic Quartet. Text: Czech, Eng. Recorded: 11/2004, 1/2005, Protestant Church "U Jákobova žebříku", Prague. Published: 2005. DDD. 1 CD Stamic Quartet – www.stamicquartet.cz

The Stamic Quartet is indisputably one of the best Czech quartets and has a major reputation abroad as well as at home. It celebrated its 20th anniversary in the autumn with a surprisingly ambitious project. No Best of..., no Dvořák, Beethoven or other composer with assured marketing potential, but three very little known and little played works by the "Terezín" composers (as the composers imprisoned in the Terezín Ghetto during the War are now called). These are complemented by Janáček's 1st String Quartet "Inspired by Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*", and it is interesting (and one of the useful insights provided by the album) to find that in many respects the other music on the CD involves a response to Janáček. The Stamic Quartet plays brilliantly, especially Schulhoff's rustic 1st String Quartet. It has unbelievable elan and marvellous moments of articulation. The brilliantly profiled String Quartet by Hans Krása in no way lags behind. Pavel Haas's 3rd String Quartet by Pavel Haas is distinctive for moments of genius and some lapses. The Stamic Quartet have managed to get almost the maximum out of these works. In the Janáček we can appreciate the way in which the piece has been fully assimilated by the players, a clarity of conception that in no way means a loss of drama and raw expressiveness, but deliberately moulds the passionate cantabile of the work. I could, however, wish for a more engaged and luminous tone in the first violin. Given the nature of the CD I shall break with my usual practice and explicitly praise the sponsor, which was a co-initiator of the project. The firm I.Q.A. is a pike in the pharmaceutical generics market, but would deserve praise just for the comment that "Hans Krása is ... as important as the discovery of a new drug". Musically and visually the CD is a pleasure, although it is slightly annoying to find some unnecessary faults – there is no legend for the track numbers, the overall length of the CD is not given, and the simplistic emphasis on Janáček on the cover.

LUBOŠ STEHLÍK

**Václav Talich – Special Edition 1***Antonín Dvořák: Slavonic Dances*

The Czech Philharmonic, Václav Talich. Production: Jana Gonda, Petr Kadlec, Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., French, Czech. Recorded: 1950. Released: 2005 (remastering Stanislav Sýkora and Jaroslav Rybář). TT: 78:19. ADD Mono. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3821–2.

The problem of modern renovation of old and older recordings is one that has been confronted in various ways since the very beginnings of digitalisation. It is an exceedingly difficult task and involves far more than just repairing damaged sections or removing hum and crackle from the original records or tapes. It is enough just to emphasise the high or low frequencies too much, add hall to the original mono-picture too thickly, or even to enlarge it in an attempt to achieve a kind of pseudo-stereo, and we find ourselves in a completely new, artificially created environment which in no way corresponds to the unique atmosphere of the original recordings. Today's experienced restorers abroad and in this country (for all of them let us mention the sound masters Stanislav Sýkora, whose studio digitalizes records specially for Supraphon, and Miroslav Mareš of Czech Radio, who is rescuing the rich archives there), have gone through all of this and learned to create a result in which authenticity and a modern sound are both essential conditions. This year Supraphon crowned their admirable Supraphon Ančerl Gold Edition and now they have launched a major Talich project. It has been opened with a unique recording – Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* made in the summer of 1950 in the Domovina Studio in Holešovice. This was the second recording of the cycle under the baton of **Václav Talich**. The first had been made for His Master's Voice in London in 1936 and thanks to RCD it is now also available in digital form on CD. There is an absolutely basic difference between the two recordings. The pre-war version is much more sparkling, sharper in tempo, and focuses more on the dance quality of the individual scores. The now newly released and in recent decades generally known recording of 1950 radiates a much deeper, more lyrical power, in which of course the original dance energy has not been lost, but there is an equal stress on the emotional aspect and the individual inventions are more elaborately worked. Each of the sixteen scores thus acquires its own unique character as well as the distinctive Talich touch. The Dvořák specialist Otakar Šourek was reportedly present at the recordings and annoyed his close friend Václav Talich by pointing out the increased length of the recording compared to the first. It is actually precisely because of these distinctive features that even years later this musically brilliant recording has retained its exceptional stature. Some passages are so ravishingly effective that we would vainly look for something as memorable in other more recent recordings (for example the return of the main theme in the fourth dance, and the slowed tempo of the middle section of the ninth!). Supraphon is releasing this recording for the third time on CD, i.e. it is the third digital reworking. In the first in 1988 (Crystalcollection) the original hum of the tape was left and some hall was added. This means that while the orchestra is very colourful and readable in the individual instrumental sections, it is rather misleading in the sense of great "spaciousness". The present version is nearer to the original. The hum of the tape has gone entirely, the overall sound picture is more homogeneous and with no disturbance of any kind, although a price is paid for this in terms of less luminous high notes and more prominent details (until the end of the Fifteenth the percussion is almost inaudible except for the kettle drums). Every reconstruction requires a degree of painful compromise – this is one of them. The design of the CD and above all the informative text by **Petr Kadlec** in the booklet are models of their kind! Let us hope the other CDs in this extremely welcome edition will be just as good.

BOHUSLAV VÍTEK

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Antonín Dvořák

SLAVONIC DANCES op. 46, First series

Arranged for three instruments and piano

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) originally wrote the first set of Slavonic Dances op. 46 for piano duet. It was composed in spring 1878, and still in the same year it was orchestrated by the composer for large symphony orchestra. The present arrangement, which is destined for the standard piano quartet, is tuned to the needs of the established performing practice offering up to twelve optional instrumental combinations. Piano is employed here as a harmonic and rhythm base over which perform three melodic instruments as well wind instruments (flute, clarinet, bassoon) as stringed instruments (violin I, violin II (or viola), cello) and their mutual combinations. The author of adaptation of Slavonic Dances for universal instrumentation is Martin Hybler.

H 7836, ISMN M-2601-0337-5, 100/24/24/24 pages, price 35 EUR

Miloslav Kabeláč

MOTIFS FROM EXOTIC LANDS op. 38

Miloslav Kabeláč (1908–1979) started employing himself with the problematics of music cultures standing out of Europe after the World War II. Inspiration by this music can be found in his works quite often, however, the most outstanding work of this kind is the piano cycle Motifs from Exotic Lands op. 38 from 1958–1959. In the composition art the author intended to work up musical thoughts and feelings, which are very different from the European ones. The composer used both original ethnographical components and also components independently created in this spirit. Some motifs can be geographically identified and others just nearly reflect bigger areas (to choose out of ten motifs, e.g. Indian, Javanese, Eskimoan, Central African etc.). Motifs from Exotic Lands are being published for the first time according to the autograph, respectively as 4th volume, V. series of Complete Critical Edition of Miloslav Kabeláč's Works edited by researcher Zdeněk Nouza. There are author's notes about the approximate length at the end of each piece as well as pedal markings.

H 7906, ISMN M-2601-0341-2, 28 pages, price 13 EUR

Josef Suk

MELODY

In 1892 the only eighteen years old Josef Suk (1874–1935) contributed by his Melody to a collection of simple pieces for violin (for two, three or four violins, and for violin with piano accompaniment) called "The Young Violinist" which appeared in Prague Publishing House Jos. R. Vilímek (several books a year). This composition is short, gracious and technically not difficult for young violinists and is being issued in the original form for two violins on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Suk's death. It is even better known to the Czech musical public from editings for different instrumentations (for violin and piano or for solo piano). The autograph of the composition is missing – editor of the new edition, Zdeněk Nouza, based his work on the original, well prepared edition from 1892. The bowings are Suk's own (he was an excellent violinist), fingerings are though not available, since the piece can be played by violinists of varying technical proficiency – first position would suffice; if necessary, however, a fuller, richer sound would be gained with greater mastery of the instrument.

H 7951, ISMN M-2601-0351-1, 8 pages, price 5 EUR

Bohuslav Martinů

FILM EN MINIATURE

Since the creation of Puppets, the Martinů's ability for joining didactical purpose and valuable artistic performance was very much obvious. The Puppets indeed create a special midpoint between instructive and concert compositions. Moreover, children's world was given a few more nice piano pieces that became popular for education – Film en miniature though belongs to more demanding pieces. Martinů (1890–1959) completed this work in Paris in 1925, the cycle relates, however, to native Polička (names of particular pieces contain topographic addresses connected with both Vysočina and also Paris). Film en miniature consists of six compositions: opening Tango originating in rhythms of habanera dance, Scherzo, Berceuse, Valse, Chanson and Carillon.

H 5709, ISMN M-2601-0338-2, 20 pages, price 12 EUR

Jiří Matys

STRING QUARTET No. 6

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H 7944, ISMN M-2601-0318-4, 24 pages, price 15 EUR



profiles

alois hába

(21st june 1893 – 18th november 1973)*between tradition and innovation*

In the general perspective of music history, Alois Hába is usually characterised as one of the leading protagonists of the Central European inter-war avant-garde that moved between Vienna, Berlin and Prague. In the specific context of Czech music he likewise has the reputation of an exemplary innovator but is considered to have been strongly rooted in tradition as well. Hába is known primarily as a tireless propagator of microtonal and athematic music, for which his own term was “liberated music”. In this music he added more subtle quarter-, fifth- and sixth-tone intervals to the semitone system and abandoned up traditional treatment of motifs. Hába’s dream of the unlimited possibilities of new music lasted roughly twenty years (1919–1939) and found expression in a series of pieces that oscillate between the diatonic and bichromatic system. He wanted to introduce the public to the new tonal systems by using newly constructed instruments, and we might see his progress in this respect as a step towards the institutionalisation of his own innovations as a composer. Finally, Hába was a tireless organiser who helped to ensure that works of new music were regularly presented in Prague concert halls. Many of Hába’s pieces provoked a great deal of controversy in their time, and the listener

today will certainly be able to judge his output (103 opuses) more objectively. Today we can see Hába’s creative impulses against the background of a broader pattern of cultural history, in which shorter periods of destruction of existing artistic norms always give way to periods of creative synthesis.

Alois Hába (21st June 1893 Vizovice – 18th November 1973 Prague) entered Czech musical culture at a time when the “lived inheritance of folklore” had come to be recognised as something of genuine potential value for high culture. Attempts at the authentic expression of musical roots no longer meant a degrading provincialism, as had still to some extent been the case when the Czech musicologist Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962) expressed highly critical views of the work of Leoš Janáček and Vítězslav Novák. Nejedlý the aesthete condemned Novák for “falsified quotation” of folk song, in the sense of its use in the structure of his works as a musical symbol at a different level. Janáček he saw as a typical regressive composer, and claimed to see in the opera *Jenůfa* a striking similarity with the earlier romantic aesthetic of the 1860s, when the character of the work was deliberately determined by quotation from folk songs and the desire to get closer to the taste of the



wider public. In fact, Nejedlý was much more generous in his criticism of Novák’s music, seeing it as at least a higher stage of response to folk material. Nejedlý’s critical opinions on the treatment of folk music have a very clear rationale, in line with the changing ideas of the time on the function of folk culture within a national programme. At this point, at the beginning of the 1920s, Nejedlý distinguished between folk culture and the taste of the broader public. In his view the audience, the wider public culture, was essentially conservative, and a progressive composer ought not to pander to its tastes. Despite the trials that this might involve, he should resist the pressure of the public and develop his own individual artistic identity. Art for the people should not be an art of lower quality that made few demands on its listeners.

When another Czech musicologist, Vladimír Helfert (1886–1945) in his book *Česká moderní hudba [Czech Modern Music]* (1936) tried to define Hába’s place in the evolution of

Czech music, he praised the positive significance of the composer's folklore inspirations. Helfert believed that in Hába, after Janáček, the Czech musical scene had acquired a composer whose starting-point was not romanticism and whose sensibility was partly defined by his origin. Some passages in Hába's music have an undeniable similarity with Eastern Moravian melodic types, but Hába does not falsify folklore or demean himself by trying for the required "folky" effect, i.e. the admixture of the "folk" remains something more essential than contrived. Although regional roots play an important role in Hába's music, the composer never imitates or parodies folk music. As one of the most radical representatives of the Central European aesthetic avant-garde between the wars, Hába expressed his individual style by drawing on the well-springs in the sense of his own lived experience of folklore, but then reformulating this inspiration at the most universal levels – *microtonality, atonality, modality*. Furthermore, at the very moments when we are aware of the composer's "inclination to folklorism" we can also hear, like a base note, his critical reaction to the Late Romantic idiom of Hába's great teachers. In a number of other commentaries Helfert was to continue to insist of the importance of Hába's work for Czech music, seeing his work and that of Bohuslav Martinů as the two opposed, defining poles of its future development.

Alois Hába was born in Vizovice in Moravia into the family of a folk musician. In this region he was able to experience folksong and music in its authentic forms, and his theoretical and biographical writings often allude to folk inspirations as a unique and major source of his original work as a composer. In the autobiographical sketch *Můj lidský a umělecký vývoj* [*My Human and Artistic Development*], which by his own dating was written at Christmas in 1942 (printed in 1993), and later in the text *Mein Weg zur Viertel- und Sechsteltonmusik* of 1971, he stresses the importance of inherited musicality, gradual acquaintance with the traditions of artificial classical music and then the further development of his own original musical language, that of "liberated music". With the caveat that this is a necessarily stylised picture of his own search for artistic identity we have no reason not to believe him. We can also take his account of his life as a more general contextual commentary on the advantages and shortcomings of "peripheral" culture in relation to the culture of "the centre". Wallachia and Slovácko, which by his time were permeated by various different levels of musical culture, provided the necessary dose of authenticity but at the same time the necessary degree of knowledge of "serious" artificial music. As Hába himself insisted at many points, practical "music-making" in his father's ensemble and his first-hand lived contact with folk music was of essential value for him. For example he recalls that "*At dance entertainments and folk festivals we used to play not*

only composed dances but also dance songs that the dancers would sing for us to copy and follow immediately. Some of the folk musicians still knew how to perform in the old fashioned way, i.e. to sing with ornaments deviating from the usual semitone system. These people would want us to play them just as they sang them, which meant we had to "catch" unusual intervals, mainly on the violin. My perfect pitch made it easier for me, but it didn't always work to the full satisfaction of the singers-dancers. Once – in Vsacko I think it was, the singer, a lad built like a mountain, wanted to smash our bass with a two-litre glass because I didn't manage to play his song on the violin the way he sang it. He really scared us. Afterwards at home we learned the different intonation deviations of the folk singers."¹ In a text of a different kind, Hába's *Neue Harmonielehre* (1927), we encounter a similar description: "*The question of whether and why quarter-tone music is justified is one that belongs in the field of psychology. In my case it was to do with my father and brothers playing with my perfect pitch in childhood. They would sing, whistle and play me notes that didn't belong in the semitone system to try and trip me up and show that I couldn't identify every note. First I would sing, whistle or play on the violin the nearest correct note in the semitone system and then I would produce the note offered me for identification, and I would find that the given note was lower or higher than the nearest note in the semitone system. That was what later led me to stylise the intervening notes into a quarter-tone system.*"²

The point of this kind of account is clear: Hába slipped his memories into texts of various different kinds in order to stress the unique nature of his own style. When at various points he reminds us that "*there was music all around him throughout my childhood*", this is an indirect allusion to a unique experience with music, the essence of which has determined the composer's later musical expression. Hába also talks about this childhood music as pure unpretentious play and at the same time a livelihood, with the implication that the development of his aesthetic attitude to form in music was not a matter of some whimsical rarified detachment but derived from the active, ordinary and real. Regardless of some abstract criterion of beauty, the value of such music is determined by its setting in the concrete situation in which it is created or reproduced. It is also very significant that Hába draws our attention to his perfect pitch, his sharpened perception of sound, since this is one of the sources of what he often declared to be the realism of "liberated music". An ear for fine deviations of intonation became something that allowed him to identify scarcely audible phenomena, the most subtle expressive nuances of played and sung music. Hába was exceptional for his absolutely sure recognition of these signs, these flexions or modal and microtonal deviations. And the specific "alien tones" that he perceived were deeply rooted in his cultural background, which means that he was not talking about errors or deviation

from us, but about a typical phenomenon associated with a particular type of musical idiom. The ability to perceive such tones within the limits of normal performance made Hába highly adept at seeing all kinds of phenomena as the expression of the specific musical thought of a given cultural region.

If we want to explain the principle of the qualitative transformation of folklore roots in Hába's life, however, we need to find the point at which he started to cultivate and develop this inherited element. In looking at Hába's work we may also ask how far his choice of techniques, material and mode of treating that material was influenced by his later studies, or else whether his use even of the methods that he subsequently adopted through studies was subject to the kind of rules that predestine the direction taken by artists, rules that we acquire outside the field of art as it were unconsciously even before we start to create. In this context it will suffice to consider the tradition of the "culture of the centre" which Hába both accepts and rebels against. His journey from the periphery of the Eastern Moravian region, which led through teacher training college in Kroměříž (1908–1912) and a short period of work as a teacher in Bílovice in Slovácko (1912–1914), took Hába first to Prague (1914–1915), then to Vienna (1917–1920) and to Berlin (1920–1923). In his case the progress through important centres of European culture genuinely corresponded to the artistic "progress" of the young composer on his "journeyman travels". Studies with Novák and Schreker in Prague and his Berlin meeting with Ferruccio Busoni were undoubtedly important moments in Hába's artistic growth. Apart from new experience and knowledge, however, what he acquired above all was the hallmark and reputation of a noteworthy innovator and propagator of the new avant-garde trends. In the spirit of the collective creed of the avant-garde young generation Hába both joined the current of the most contemporary modern movement and at the same time increasingly developed his specific creative identity.

Hába's first real teacher of composition was Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949). Hába joined Novák's master course in 1914 without having graduated from the conservatory. With his sheer perseverance and hard work, and with the essential encouragement of the humane and tactful Novák, the enthusiastic autodidact filled in the serious gaps in his training as a composer. Novák insisted that his pupils acquire a perfect mastery of traditional musical forms and classic treatment of themes. He also encouraged interest in folk songs and their compositional principles. At this period none of Novák's pupils had so close a relationship to folk culture as Hába, but he needed to enrich his experience of folk music by the kind of critical examination that would allow him to explore its musical organism more deeply and consciously. Hába studied with Novák for just under a year. In this short time he mastered the rules of compositional technique and crowned his studies with the composition *Sonata for Violin and Piano op. 1*.

Successful completion of his studies paved the way for the young Hába to enter Prague cultural life, but on the day of his twenty-second birthday he had to give up this promising prospect and join the Austro-Hungarian army. He spent the first years of the war on the Russian front, from where he was recalled to Vienna to organise a collection of military songs for army purposes together with Felix Petyrek (1892–1951) and Béla Bartók (1881–1945). His first contact with radically innovative ideas in new music can clearly be dated to January 1917, and in this case precise dating has considerable explanatory value. Towards the end of January Hába, as a student of the Vienna Officers' School, attended a performance of the opera *Die Schneider von Schönaun* (1916) by the Dutch composer Jan Brandts-Buys (1868–1933) and at the same time read in the Viennese press about a showcase evening of quarter-tone music by the German composer Willy von Möllendorf (1872–1934), held in the *Tonkünstlerverein* in Vienna. Immediately after the opera visit, Hába, keen to compose similar music, wrote to Brandts-Buys asking for lessons in composition. Brandts-Buys was too busy to agree, but on his recommendation Hába was taken on for a while as a pupil of the important Viennese musical theorist Richard Stöhr (1874–1967), who trained him in harmony and strict counterpoint. The encounter with quarter-tone music was fateful for Hába's future orientation as a composer, despite the fact that he only learned of the Möllendorf evening at second hand, through a newspaper article: "*In 1917 I read in the German music magazines that W. Möllendorf was campaigning for the introduction of the quarter-tone system. It was the most progressive idea for the further development of European music. I realised that with my experiences of Eastern Moravian folk singers I had a firm melodic foundation for the creation of quarter-tone music.*"³

What then did innovation of tone material mean for Hába? It meant that he could turn to his own inherited values in the role of the herald of new ideas. In Hába's case the desire for originality combined with the attempt to preserve the riches of the culture from which he came. Hába first tried out his idea of "unusual music" in February and March of 1917 in his unfinished *Suite in the Quarter-tone System in Three Parts*. The piece remained incomplete in a piano part. In the same year he also composed an orchestral *Ukrainian Suite*. He included neither in the numbered list of his works. In 1918 Hába entered the Vienna *Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst* as a private student in the class of Franz Schreker (1878–1934). Under Schreker's expert supervision he composed his first numbered works, *Sonata for Piano* op. 3, *String Quartet* no. 1 op. 4 and *Overture for Large Orchestra* op. 5, and *Six Piano Pieces* op. 6. The last two pieces in particular are excellent demonstrations of how perfectly Hába mastered the traditional craft of composition. The piano pieces also reveal an attempt to use the up-to-date compositional techniques expounded above all by the Schönberg

School. With the establishment composer Schreker – and what is more in Vienna, where classical values for a long time represented an aesthetic boundary that could not be breached – it was almost impossible to compose using unusual techniques and in systems that had, at best, uncertain futures. Nonetheless, in the spring of 1920 Hába presented his teacher with his first quarter-tone *String Quartet* op. 7. Schreker greeted the work with amazement (*Was? Vierteltonstreichquartett? Mensch, sind Sie verrückt geworden?*), but recommended the piece for publication by the renowned Vienna publishing house *Universal Edition*. The new work was then rehearsed under Hába's direction by the Havemann Quartet and presented in Berlin in the autumn of 1921. To this mosaic we may also add a piece from the biographical memoirs of Ernst Křenek (*Im Atem der Zeit. Erinnerung an die Moderne*): "*Later Alois Hába appeared, undoubtedly the most original composer among us young men. He was a Czech chauvinist and probably took an active part in the Czech resistance movement. He too wore a military uniform, even an officer's uniform I think, but later he boasted that he had been under police observation because of his revolutionary activities. But that was not consistent with his position in the army. He composed a piano sonata or a string quartet and was the only one of us who at that early stage expressed a certain antagonism to Schreker's teaching and his compositional style.*"⁴

Leaving aside the derogatory and perhaps unjust depiction of Hába as a Czech chauvinist and fanatical nationalist, Křenek's account of the composer presents him as one of the most original students in Schreker's class and also one of the toughest critics of the compositional style and teaching methods of his Viennese teacher. Despite many sharp comments and repeatedly expressed reservations, however, Hába's relationship with Schreker was probably less one of struggle than of mutual respect. As a prominent and experienced teacher and composer, Schreker offered his students the opportunity to acquire the necessary technical skills for mastering musical material, did so in the spirit of up-to-date developments in music and at the same time allowed his students a reasonable level of creative freedom.

In the autumn of 1920 Franz Schreker left for Berlin to take up the position of director of the Berlin *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik*. His most faithful students followed him, including not only Alois Hába but also, for example, Ernst Křenek, Max Brand, Karol Rathaus and Jascha Horenstein. Berlin, where Hába lived from mid-1920 to Easter 1922 and with intervals until the summer of 1923, was another decisive stage in Hába's life. He arrived in Berlin as a self-confident composer already starting on his career but nonetheless still in the process of finding his own expressive language. Although he faced financial problems in Berlin, a major centre overflowing with important protagonists of the avant-garde in all branches of culture offered him a golden opportunity for contact with the latest artistic

movements. In his biography Hába puts the emphasis on his search for creative methods of his own. He comments: "*I sensed that I would not be able to go on composing as I had hitherto, i.e. using the principle of repeating and varying motifs and varying or combining principles of form that were already well-known and used. [...] But no ideas came. I had serious fears for my further creative development. [...] Now thrown back just on my own resources, voluntarily renouncing the help of grand musical tradition, I experimented by improvising on the violin just for myself, as I used to play to myself on the violin as a boy at home in the dark hour before the lamps were lit in the evening. I gave myself up to the melodic flow, surge, climax and precipices. I created lively and slow sections and structured them by immediate feeling. In improvisations on the violin there was no time to think of repetition or variation on melodic ideas or of repeating or varying longer sections. Now it was a matter of capturing spontaneous creativity not just with my hands on the instrument, but in musical thought and in notation.*"⁵

These lines have, of course, undergone the inevitable authorial self-censorship and are highly stylised. The state depicted is supposed to correspond to the character of the avant-garde artist who wants to go his own way and lives through an indescribable creative rebirth. Nevertheless, by something like the path he describes Hába certainly found another element that was to be one factor determining his "liberated music" in the future: this factor is *athematism*. The first of his works using this technique are the quarter-tone *Fantasia for Solo Violin*, op. 9a and *Music for Solo Violin* op. 9b, the quarter-tone *String Quartet* op. 12, *The Choral Suite* op. 13, the quarter-tone *String Quartet* op. 14 and the sixth-tone *String Quartet* op. 15. Their experimental quality apart, even after many years these works remain a clear confirmation of the composer's exceptional creative powers. A striking feature of this period is his attempt to exploit to the full the possibilities of the new tone systems. Hába embarked on new music with panache and enthusiasm and if some attributes of his style were later to be singled out as typical of his work, they originated in this period. In the years 1923–1927 he wrote the majority of his pieces for quarter-tone piano, among them five suites and ten fantasias. The character of this period as one of maximum technical innovation is underlined by the fact that between the piano Suite op. 10 (1923) and his *Fantasia for Cello and Quarter-tone Piano* op. 33 with one exception Hába wrote no pieces in semitones. Hába also contributed to the invention of new instruments. For example he designed a three-manual keyboard for quarter-tone harmonium and piano, and in 1925 the firm *August Förster* built a quarter-tone piano on his initiative.

Athematism

An expression often used in connection with Hába's music is *Musik der Freiheit*, or more

precisely *Musikstil der Freiheit*. (This expression appeared for the first time in Hába's article *Casellas Scarlattiana – Vierteltonmusik und Musikstil der Freiheit*, 1929.) The phenomenon *Musik der Freiheit* is one that invites connection and comparison with a number of theoretical concepts of the Central European avant-garde that explicitly appeal to forms of aesthetic liberation. If Hába's liberated music is often taken to mean the possibility of free treatment of sound material, its technical side is often associated with the expressions *microtonality* and *athematism*. The second, in particular, deserves a short commentary. In athematism Hába found a potential for free creative expression that bears some resemblance to Schönberg's technique of *musical prose* – a melodic idea released from the rules of the periodical structure. When Hába talks about athematism, he very often also mentions Schönberg. In 1934, on the latter's sixtieth birthday, Hába alludes to Schönberg's technique of "the strictest thematic treatment" (twelve-tone music) but in the same breath recalls the importance of Schönberg's "free athematic style" (*Schönberg und die weiteren Möglichkeiten der Musikentwicklung*, 1934). In his article *Harmonické základy dvanáctitónového systému* [*The Harmonic Foundations of the Twelve-Tone System*] (1938) Hába repeats this idea when he talks about Schönberg's opera *Erwartung*, which is composed – with the exception of a very few thematic passages – in a free non-thematic style, without the support of the "basic form". Many of the texts in which Hába mentions athematism are supposed to serve as explanations of his own goals as a composer. Hence they involve elaborate metaphors and surprising verbal combinations in them. Seeking to formulate the basis of the "non-thematic style", Hába often gropes for similarities between social development, spiritual movement and the form of the work of music, and refers to values and signs that say something about the overall character of the time and its intellectual climate. In his book *O psychologii tvoření* [*On the Psychology of Creation*] we read that, "[...] a need for change and movement quite evidently penetrates our consciousness from the musical expression of the present time. Today man is intellectually more mobile, and this mobility is also expressed in a faster modulation of sound. The more conscious the law of motion and change governing the human mind becomes, the more distinctly it manifests itself in artistic expression and especially in music. Harmonic drones have disappeared from music, because the sense of stability has progressively vanished from spiritual life. The sense of reminiscence, return to the impressions and scenes of the past has also gone. The human spirit today is concentrated on the concept of "forward", the conquest of new knowledge and the creation of new forms of living. In music this reorientation is manifest in a turning away from the concept of reprise (not repeating longer parts of musical form). Musical expression has not yet, however, emancipated itself from the repetition of details. The task of the youngest

generation and next generations is to carry out this developmental rebirth fully and to construct a completely new musical style on the principle of "not repeating and thinking ahead, always forward."⁶

What exactly is Hába's athematism then? If we want to understand it better, the preceding quotation is not a sufficiently clear answer. First of all we need to say that the expression "athematism" is itself somewhat unfortunate. It would be a mistake to think of Hába's "athematism" as music without themes. The composer merely abandons traditional ways of treating motifs and themes. The definition of a musical structure as "non-thematic" therefore means excluding imitation in the general sense – the repetition of the preceding presentation; i.e. the modification and development of musical ideas. Here some of Hába's instructions for performance are relevant. According to these the performer must distinguish between "more prominent and less prominent melodies". The idea is that the "more prominent melody" should be brought out in performance, and so the composer no longer needs to repeat such passages in the original form or in variations.

To grasp Hába's concept of athematic style is also important to remember that athematism, which many other authors in a range of commentaries often describe in terms of the microstructure of the work, primarily influences the work in its overall form. Hába wanted to produce forms with a new distinctive content that would not be simply transferable into a pre-established schema. The themes used in the framework of the overall form are not supposed to connect up the separate parts of the work and create the feeling of a traditional form. Minor reminders and returns are not relevant for the construction of the form from this point of view. It is no accident that the pieces of this period are often named *fantasia*, *suite*, *toccata*. While in the 1920s Hába appears as a radical opponent of traditional forms and the traditional mode of treatment of motifs and themes, from the 1930s we can observe a certain tendency towards "closed forms". This return was never radical enough to allow us to speak of clear schemas, but the composer nonetheless tries at least in a general way to revive the principle of some older approaches to form. In addition to the more frequent juxtaposition of contrasting sections we can see more frequent returns to harmonic centres or the repetition or variation of minor motif sections. The first notable piece to betray this change is the *Fantasia op. 19*, which with certain reservations corresponds to the scheme of the sonata form, and later the *Toccata quasi una fantasia*, op. 38.

In Hába's case we can clearly identify the motives that led the young composer to consider athematism or microtonality to be important compositional techniques. Berlin offered Hába a wide range of opportunities to pick up new ideas that would then form part of the theoretical background of his *Musik der Freiheit*.

Among the composers who inspired him one frequently mentioned in the literature is **Feruccio Busoni** (1866–1924). In Berlin Hába encountered Busoni's ideas in the second, reworked edition of his book *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music* (*Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, 1907, 1916). Later he occasionally attended the celebrated discussion circles that Busoni ran in his Berlin apartment, where the young composer was familiarly nicknamed *Ali-Baba* by his host. In wider musical circles Busoni had the justified reputation as a leading supporter of microtonal music (and new music in general), but in fact he was extremely hostile to quarter-tone music, seeing the third-tone and sixth-tone system as far more natural and promising for future use. Busoni's views eventually inspired Hába to compose his sixth-tone *String Quartet* op.15.

Yet another influence was at work here in Berlin, and that was the boom in ethnomusicology. The introduction of the sound recording, and invention of the phonograph, pitchmeter and gramophone records, had been vastly increasing the potential of the new musicological discipline. The deputy director of the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik* Georg Schünemann (1884–1945) arranged for Hába to visit the *Phonogramm-Archiv*, part of the *Psychological Institute* of Berlin University, where the composer could find other fundamental rationales for his own music. The Berlin archive contained a very large quantity of recordings of non-European music; the infinitely reproducible songs, instrumental pieces and spoken word could scarcely have left a composer of Hába's kind unmoved. Comparison of recordings of the music of distant cultures opens up the possibility of identifying fundamental common factors despite diversity. Of course, one of the most useful recommendations when listening to "unusual" non-European music, is that the listener should try as hard as possible to avoid established stereotypes of perception and conventional methods of study, but in Hába's case the new experience seems to have led him less to an understanding of "objective differences" than to an attempt to derive general conclusions and look for common constants. Perhaps it was here that an opinion to be found repeatedly in Hába's later writings first took shape.

The different kinds of music of distant cultures were in his view just different variants and different evolutionary stages of one and the same thing. The different types of musical production share audible features that are hard to explain in terms of pure cultural convergence or the evolutionary kinship of different cultures. On the other hand, comparison led Hába to the belief that the a priori categories of European music relating to methods and techniques of musical structurings were not necessarily eternally valid. Theoretical and historical relativisation of this kind undermines the claims of the "grand musical tradition". There was no reason why different types of music, hitherto regarded as incommensurable, should not be subjected to the same kind of judgement. Hába declared that "After

an exhaustive and feverish process of searching I gradually came to realise the abstract kinship between my own work and folk music and old chorale; I recognised that my spiritual expression was united by close affinity with the distinguishing sign of the human spirit that manifests itself in all nations.”⁷⁷

Hába's apprenticeship years, which culminated in Berlin, were something he could capitalise on at home, where many of his experiences acquired the attractive hallmark of complete novelty. In 1923, therefore, Hába returned to Prague for good. He started to teach at the Prague Conservatory in the same year and in 1925 managed to persuade the school authorities to allow him to open a class in quarter-tone and sixth-tone composition. In 1934 he was made a regular professor there. Hába's class attracted the pupils of other composers as well, who wanted to get to know the latest methods of composition. In his seminars Hába introduced his pupils to the methods of his own compositional work. The principles by which such music could be brought to real life were to be demonstrated with the help of materials gathered in a newly established phonograph archive. Hába's class soon developed an international reputation. Apart from Czechs and Slovaks it was attended by Germans, Southern Slavs, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Lithuanians. Hába trained a number of pupils who also tried to compose in microtonal systems: his brother Karel Hába, Rudolf Kubín, Václav Dobiáš, Miroslav Ponc, Karel Reiner and Southern Slavs Osterc, Ristič, Iliev, and others.

The first years following Hába's return to Czechoslovakia were by no means easy. Probably the most serious difficulties were associated with the reception of his microtonal work. While in the Prague German *Association for the Private Performance of Music* he found important support and facilities, thanks to which several of his quarter-tone pieces reached the Prague festivals of the *International Society for Contemporary Music* (ISCM; 1924, 1925), the Czech section of this organisation showed no interest in his work. (the same syndrome was behind the fact that at the Prague ISCM festival in 1925 Bohuslav Martinů was classified as a member of the “foreign” French school). Quarter-tone and athematic music was felt to be a symptom of the stalemate in avant-garde art. Not even Hába's introductory lecture before each concert could change this opinion. The untrained listener heard such music primarily as chaos and “rough, naturalised expression”. In the eyes of critics Hába's “liberated music” was part of the destruction of the organic unity of the work, and the author's theoretical ideas were often considered symptomatic of a crisis of values and essential negation of traditional culture. Furthermore, for an important group of Czech critics Hába's music failed to fit well into their concept of the evolution of Czech music, because it sounded calculated and “un-Czech”. The feeling that Hába did not suit the native scene was aggravated by his supposed and real ties to German music, and

implicitly to the compositional techniques of the Schönberg School. Many of the polemics exploited a tried and tested smear technique, consigning the condemned to the categories of alien, speculative, inappropriate or empty artistic as against idealist art, against music that respected the native and authentic (unutilised) tradition.

The prospects for the performance of the compositions of Hába's and his pupils were transformed in 1927. In this period Hába, together with the music critic Mirko Očadlík (1904–1964), took up leading positions in the *Spolek pro moderní hudbu* [Modern Music Club]. One crucial factor here was the affiliation of the Club to the ISCM, in which Hába could now exercise a major influence. The Club's publicity organ was the magazine *Klíč* [Key], in which it he published critical articles on modern music. In 1935 he transferred his activities to the *Association for Contemporary Music Přítomnost* [Present], and was elected its chairman. He also published in the magazine *Rytmus* and helped to create its profile. He took an important part in the organisation of the ISCM international festival in Prague in 1935, when he sat on the international jury, as he was later to do in 1932, 1938, 1958 and 1961. (In 1957 Hába was made an honorary member of the ISCM for his services, an honour previously granted to his teacher V. Novák.) Hába's name appeared on the international scene in other connections as well. Together with his assistant, the composer and pianist Karel Reiner (1910–1979) in 1932 he accepted an invitation to the International Congress of Arab Music in Cairo to give lectures and demonstrations of quarter-tone music. (Others who attended this conference included Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith and the ethnomusicologist Erich von Hornbostel). Hába also took an active role in musical education. He realised that it was not enough just to train a new generation of composers when an adequately educated public is just as essential to musical life. In any case Hába believed that music cultivates the human being and that – in line with Steiner's anthropology – it helps man achieve the true spiritual experience of humanity. He was also convinced that music's educational effect will protect music itself from degradation into “mere entertainment” or “technical game”. Education for music and by music was the theme of a number of Hába's lectures. Together with Leo Kestenberg (1882–1962) Hába helped to found the *Society for Music Education* (Prague 1934) and later to plan the 1st International Music Education Congress (Prague 1936). (The *Society for Music Education* was the precursor of the *International Society for Music Education*, which was formed in 1953.)

Neue Harmonielehre

Hába's own theoretical texts have very much conditioned the way in which his music has been understood. The most important of these texts came out as early as the 1920s: *Harmonické základy čtvrttónové soustavy* [The

Harmonic Principles of the Quarter-tone System] (1923), *O psychologii tvoření, pohybové zákonitosti tónové a základech nového hudebního slohu* [On the Psychology of Creation, the Laws of Tonal movement and on the Principles of the New Musical Style] (1925) and *Neue Harmonielehre des diatonischen, chromatischen, Viertel-, Drittel-, Sechstel- und Zwölfteltonsystems* (1927). These works were largely directed to offering explanations and justifications. They have been treated as a supposed interpretative key to Hába's music, as texts that could help to settle disputes on its direction. In many cases, however, interpretation of these texts has not proved helpful in this respect. Most of the opponents of Hába's microtonal music have focused their critics on the mechanical division of the tempered system into smaller intervals. Hába himself actually conceded the possibility that division into third-tones or sixth-tones was more suitable from the point of view of natural voice capacity, and admitted that microtone intervals were not natural distances but a mere stylisation of the natural system. On the other hand he forcefully defended the right of the composer to choose his own language of expression. At a time when discussion of Hába's work was conducted in the categories *natural – artificial* (system), Vladimír Helfert defended the view that it would be better to debate Hába's music in terms of the concept of *artistic reaction* versus *progressive music*. In the latter context “liberated music” emerges an expression of a specific kind of musical thought: “I confess that as yet I have not been convinced that quarter-tone music has a future. But one of Hába's arguments is of fundamental weight, and that is his creative act – his music. We do not have the right, and in fact we have no way of doing so, to doubt the authenticity of his quarter-tone musical imagination. The courage with which Hába and his pupils fight for this new form of imagination deserves respect. They are fighting for something that today is extremely unpopular as well as technically difficult. They place themselves in an exposed position for something from which they can expect no material success. Hába's musical gifts are such that he would have not the slightest trouble producing music in some more popular, ingratiating style. But he doesn't do it. Hába pursues his own creative vision with a courage and pugnacity that recalls the creative discoverer. And it is in this that the power of his argument consists, at least for anyone who looks at the thing calmly and without prejudices.”⁷⁸

The most famous of Hába's theoretical works is probably the *Neue Harmonielehre des diatonischen, chromatischen, Viertel-, Drittel-, Sechstel- und Zwölfteltonsystems*. (Arnold Schönberg praised it when in a letter to Hugo Leichtentritt of 1938 he recommended it as an important German language treatment of new music). The book was written as early as 1925. The author himself translated the originally Czech text into German and after revisions by Erich Steinhardt, the book was published in 1927 by the Leipzig publishing house Kistner & Siegel. In the 1960s, still under the

composer's own supervision, the book was translated back into Czech by Eduard Herzog, but the Czech version was not to be published until 2000 under the title *Nová nauka o harmonii diatonické, chromatické, třetínotónové, šestínotónové a dvanáctínotónové soustavy* [A New Theory of the Harmony of the Diatonic, Chromatic, Third-tone, Sixth-tone and Twelfth-Tone System]. On the 251 pages of the original edition the author gives an account of the melodic and harmonic foundations of the diatonic and chromatic system (pp. 1–134), the quarter-tone system (pp. 135–198) and finally the remaining microtonal systems (pp. 199–251). In several places Hába refers to the Ancient Greek musical tradition, to Zarlino and Rameau, and finally describes himself as the heir to the world Czech musical tradition (Skuherský, Stecker, Novák, Janáček).

The value of the textbook increases when considered in historical context, and above all by suggesting a relationship to the work of Arnold Schönberg. Much of what Schönberg had already formulated (mainly in the *Harmonielehre*, 1911), appears in Hába in modified form. Hába contests many of Schönberg's ideas but at the same time appeals to them. As early as 1927 (resp. 1925) Hába was also reacting to Schönberg's twelve-tone music. Despite his sympathy for the new theories, and despite his constant stress on the value of Schönberg's music, Hába tries to achieve a distinctive individual concept of his own and his own interpretation of Schönberg's musical thought. One notable piece of evidence of this relationship is a copy of Hába's *Neue Harmonielehre*, annotated by Schönberg, to be found in the *Arnold Schönberg Center* in Vienna. We might ask whether Hába's textbook might usefully be defined as an attempt at a theory of Schönberg's music. The answer must be a definite no, but his book is a valuable map of Hába's view of the great composer and the annotated copy a fascinating document of Schönberg's corrective responses to Hába's view. Schönberg is the composer most frequently referred to in the book, and Schönberg's annotations relate exclusively to comments on himself. Hába's efforts to define his own different identity and at the same time find a common language with Schönberg are very evident in his evaluation of dissonances (and likewise harmonic dissonances), and in his emphasis on the exceptional importance of the scale or row. The second part of the book, which is devoted to microtonal systems, Schönberg left without a commentary. (In any case he had already expressed his attitude to quarter-tones in his own *Harmonielehre*.)

Hába first of all develops the basic premise of the traditional *Stufentheorie*, in which chords constitute key and are based on the respective scale. Examining these principles he restates some of the conclusions of Riemann's *Funktionstheorie* – according to which the notes of the scale become the material for the construction of the chords that represent the three main functions (T, S, D). The premise is then stretched to extremes with the claim

that the abolition of these “controlling functions” will grant the necessary freedom to the whole system. A single chord built of six thirds is presented as the image of freed relations in the order. This radical option is exploited to the full: when Hába sets out the possibilities for the maximum construct exploitation of the different tone systems, he speaks of seven-tone chord in diatonics, twelve-tone chord in chromatics, twenty-four tone chord in the quarter-tone system and so on. Hába does not go on in his *Harmonielehre* to describe chord progressions or rules of treating the voices, because in this respect almost everything is permitted – instead he explores the possibilities for building chords.

The rules given for the “free construction” of chords, however much they might seem to be the result of creative individuality, are not determined just by free decision and are not an independent act of the human psyche, but respond to the historical state of technical and aesthetic norms in. The idea of the interchangeability of the horizontal and the vertical makes it possible to bring interval progressions usual for melody into the chord. Thus chords are convertible into a row and vice versa: the notes of the row can be sounded simultaneously. And just as there are no rules for the creation of melody, there is no need to formulate any recipe for the construction of chords. According to Hába the sound qualities of the new music are unequivocally based on the introduction of sharp dissonances. The author's specific recommendation then relates to “unusual sounding triads” containing a minor second. Despite this freedom of thought many of the examples given in the textbook remain mere construct possibilities, which are not of course excluded, but for which the composer found no broader practical application. The chords built of seconds might be regarded as a proposal for their actual use and nowhere in the textbook is there any prohibition on employing them, but they can also be considered an abstract model that demonstrates the material possibilities of the system (diatonic, chromatic and microtonal). While Hába concedes the possibility of maximum density of the chord, he at the same time appeals for sobriety.

The possibility of free octave transpositions allows the inclusion of a number of seconds into a chord and the construction of new chord dissonances. It might seem that Hába was trying to take to extremes Rameau's idea of chord inversions, which entailed the notion that all subsequent forms of the triad are merely variants of the one same chord and have the same root (*centre harmonique*). This is not the case, however, and here we find the apparent contradiction of the *Neue Harmonielehre*. Hába sees each of the chords as an independent and unique form. Adding any other tone to the chord means its transformation in terms of structure and significance: the transposition of one tone changes the character of the chord. Hába likewise avoids octave doublings because every such “strengthening” gives the relevant tone or chord an importance that does not correspond to its real position in the

structure of the musical phrase. (In Hába's later expositions harmonic doubling acquires the metaphorical meaning of “halting” or “finality”.)

Lengthy passages of the *Neue Harmonielehre* deal with the importance of newly constructed tone rows. When Hába talks about them (series of five, six or eleven tones), he in the same breath explains his own concept of tonality and his rejection of potential “atonality”: every piece is tonal, because its sound material is part of a series under all circumstances. Perhaps just on account of this inescapable aspect scales and rows become a major theme of Hába's textbook. In the framework of twelve-tone chromatics (and with an eye to the principle of symmetry), Hába creates 581 different scales, differing in the number of tones and interval structure (the number of these series is not supposed to be finite). Instead of describing different harmonic situations the author draws attention to unusual possibilities for creating scales, to their new features and the uncommon charm of the melodies that result. (If we are curious about the inspirations behind Hába's approach here, we shall find an answer in a number of tucked away places. For example the author refers to the modal peculiarities of folk music, which are recognised and exploited by several domestic composers. The theoretical work of Ferruccio Busoni may also be another source of Hába's interest.)

Hába also points out the possibility of replacing the traditional hierarchic relationship by other rules in chromatic (microtonal) music. In Hába's case the notion of *Tonzentralität* is the way he solves the question of the notional relational centre. Its use may be considered the key principle in Hába's work as a composer, because it is this that gives his music its specific order. Here Hába has come up with his own approach to the organisation of twelve-tone material, one conceived on the principle of the relatedness of tones and chords to one tone centre. What we are speaking of here is a kind of texture in which the centre is conveyed by other than harmonic means. In this case the *tone* has the functional significance of central chord (tonic) and this role is expressed by relationship to surrounding chords and tones. Translated into the language of Hába's theory this means that any chord can be based on any tone of the chromatic scale and this tone becomes the centre for the relevant chords; or also, that all the remaining tones of the row may be related to every tone considered a centre. In later texts Hába enlarges this possibility. It is not just individual tones that can be tone centres, but also tone clusters, which “harness” the main tone to a minor second. *Tonzentralität* as a way of looking at musical structure is in a certain sense an auxiliary approach supposed to show the internal connections between distant harmonies. The introduction of this principle is designed to allow more complex harmonic phenomena to be analysed in a lucid way. *Tonzentralität* simplifies a rather complicated argument concerning alterations or some passing-note harmonies.

We can regard Hába's *Neue Harmonielehre* as an attempt to explore and encapsulate the developmental trends of music in the first quarter of the 20th century together with an attempt to express his individual style, his own concept of *Musik der Freiheit*, which can only with great difficulty be translated into a general rule governing the chord construction and chord progressions. *Musik der Freiheit* is not however something accidental, and certainly not something negative. This kind of music too, as the author tries to demonstrate in his writings, should be a matter of form and order. In its basic principles Hába's *Neue Harmonielehre* faithfully reflects trends in music in the Twenties, a period of important transformations of style, and so it is no accident that in his textbook Hába redefines or abandons established terms in harmony theory, as well as he tries to find new possibilities for creating chords that correspond better to the needs of the new music. Why are individual chords and more extensive harmonic passages not formed as freely as melody – according to Hába through free development of fantasy – or why does the theory of harmony bound by quantities of fixed rules fail to meet the trends of contemporary music? Hába asks these questions at a time when the search for “new” principles of melody and harmony was becoming more intense. In this case, however, the path that he takes and the way that he argues as he pursues his goals is perhaps more important than the finished results.

The Opera Matka (Mother)

Hába sought to embody his notion of a new “liberated music” in a genre with a sufficiently high profile to publicise an emergent style; opera would be a demonstration of the viability of quarter-tone and athematic music. In the period 1927–29 he composed the quarter-tone opera *Mother* on his own libretto. The work was first performed in German on the 17th of May 1931 in Munich with Hermann Scherchen conducting. (The opera was not presented in Czech until 1947 and then 1964 in Prague).

Hába composed this opera after several earlier opera sketches. *Mother* is a realistic work, with “realist” understood in the widest sense. The story is set in the composer's native Walachia. The text of the libretto is written in Moravian dialect. The local colour is then enhanced by a number of folk scenes (funeral weeping, a lullaby, wedding song). Despite this, as is the case with other important operas in the same vein (for example Janáček's *Jenůfe* or in Burian's *Maryša*) Hába is not composing a “folklore opera”. Although the work has clear references to folk setting, this is supposed to enhance the raw reality of the work. The plot of the opera is simple. After the death of his first wife the peasant Křen finds a new bride. This is Maruša, a girl from the neighbouring village, who just like the peasant's first wife has to take on a great deal of work in the cottage and care for her step-children and own children. For the composer, Maruša Křenová seems to repre-

sent his spiritual and sensual ideal of the rural woman and mother. While the practical and energetic farmer brings up all his children to work in the fields and the household, the mother takes care of their emotional and spiritual development. She wins for the most talented a right to higher education, while her youngest son, the future farmer, stays at home to support her. The twenty-three years that the opera covers are divided into ten scenes – scenes of ordinary everyday life. They are stripped of all the contrasts, stylisations and paradoxes usually employed to create dramatic tension and movement towards a denouement. Hába's style of opera might be compared to reportage. Instead of stylised focus, Hába enlarges the sphere of his work to cover the entire field of life, thus cancelling the difference between “ceremonial/festival art” and the “art of the everyday”. The lack of theatricality is sometimes interpreted as deliberate and innovative, but in many respects the work perhaps aims wide of experiment. Moreover while the use of the quarter-tone system on the one hand secures the opera Matka a special place in world opera repertoire, on the other its specific requirements make it a piece for which few companies would have the resources.

Two further stage works show that Hába was thorough and consistent in his aims here. In neither is the epic pathos of building a new world stylised, but in both it is to be discovered in daily reality. Hába devotes himself to progressive social issues in his (semitone) opera *Nová země* [*New Land*] (1935–1936; libretto written by Ferdinand Pujman based on the book by Soviet author Feodor Gladkov). After the premiere of the opera overture, in which there was a quotation from the Internationale, preparations for the staging of the opera in the Prague National Opera were halted. The official reason given was the threat of workers' demonstrations. The struggle for a better future, linked with the coming of Christ in the framework of the anthroposophical ideas of Rudolf Steiner, is an idea presented and developed in the author's last opera, composed in sixth-tone system, *Příjd' království Tvé. Nezaměstnaní* [*Thy Kingdom Come. The Unemployed*] (1937–1942). This work was likewise never staged.

The lack of positive response to Hába's stage works was not accidental. What it was about the composer's approach that was behind these failures? First of all Hába's stage works do not observe the conventions usual for the genre. Although Hába's *Musik der Freiheit* would be hard to imagine without the strong inspirational influence of the theoretical work of Ferruccio Busoni, Hába seems to have taken no notice at all of his views on opera. Busoni saw opera as a stage genre in which play was the central issue. It was an idea later to be brought to life by Igor Stravinsky in *Histoire du soldat* and by Bohuslav Martinů in several of his works. It seems to have bypassed Alois Hába. Although the expression *Musik der Freiheit* might suggest a notion of the fortuitous and the playful, this is not entirely the reality. Hába's understanding of opera was clearly quite different from Busoni's. The world

of Busoni's operas in contrast to Hába's opera aesthetics is modified, stylised to the point of unlikelihood, which is why it retains harmony, order, balance, organic coherence. Hába on the other hand abandons the ground of “operatic fiction” and lets himself be carried away by the idea of return to authentic representation of lived reality. Ideas that in their time must have sounded provocative (and are still just as provocative today), express a faith in reality, in revolutionary social change, which necessarily leaves its mark on art. While this is an oversimplification, we are clearly dealing here with notions taken from interwar proletarian art, heavily spiced with the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. Hába formulated his own philosophy of opera in the article *Zvukový film a opera* [*Sound Film and Opera*]: “What sort of life content should modern opera express? The different elements of the internal and public struggle of mankind today for a new style of life on earth. Fairytale and historical subjects must give place to new themes. There is a need to see and depict the moving forces of social struggle, which is the greatest drama involving many personal tragedies and comedies. There is a need dauntlessly to announce with artistic deeds as well as others that Christ has risen from the dead in the will of the world proletariat. There is a need to read “the signs of the times” and draw the right social and artistic conclusions.”⁹

In the course of the 1920s and 30s Hába earned a reputation for himself in broader cultural consciousness as an original composer, teacher and tireless organiser. This creative growth was interrupted by the fascist occupation, when together with many other avant-gardists he was classified and banned as an exponent of “entartete Kunst” [“Degenerate Art”]. After the 2nd World War he was appointed head of the Great Opera of the 5th of May (1945–1948) and also became professor of composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (1946–1949). Towards the end of the 1940s, however, a spontaneous reaction against the First Republic and to the recent war created a new social situation. Following the communist coup of 1948 Hába was exposed to the attacks of the ideological spokesmen of Socialist Realism and in 1951 his composition class was dissolved. The post-war social elite, which decided on the character of production, no longer had any interest in work that was full of elemental revolutionary unrest, apparently incomprehensible, resistant to rules and guidelines. Hába's refusal of an offer to join the Communist party contributed to his exclusion from social and cultural life. His own concept of socialism derived from Steiner's anthroposophy had nothing in common with the Soviet vision of (real) socialism. Anthroposophy, a doctrine that found many supporters and passionate opponents throughout the century, was of enormous importance for Hába, providing him with spiritual and moral support in times of crisis. He followed its principles in his readiness

to interact with people of all religions and convictions, and anthroposophy also provided inspirations for his musical theory and practice. (Hába had been introduced to anthroposophy by Felix Petyrek, who in 1926 took him to the *Goethena*, the headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society in Dornach in Switzerland. From 1927 Hába was an active member. He lectured regularly at the Dornach Free University for Spiritual Science, and several of his works were premiered in the Goethenau.)

In the years 1949 - 1953 Hába's works were not played or published, but he himself continued to compose, writing both semitone and quarter-tone music. He was rehabilitated in 1953, and thereafter worked only as a composer. The last twenty years of Hába's life were an extraordinarily fruitful period. Many musicians were ready to perform his earlier and new works, above all the Hába Quartet under its leader Dušan Pandula. Hába's pieces were abundantly published and the composer invited to lecture and to attend the performance of his works abroad. His name appeared again at the ISCM international festival in Prague in 1967. He used his influence and contacts to help young composers who often identified with his legacy, although they took a cautious attitude to some of his aesthetic conclusions. In the final phase of his career Hába composed as many as 40 new works. These were mainly chamber pieces, and when he wrote larger-scale works, concertos. Hába continued to write in various different tone systems, whether traditional (e.g. the *String Quartet no. 7* "Christmas", op. 73; 1951), quarter-tone (*String Quartet no. 14*, op. 94; 1963), fifth-tone (*String Quartet no. 16*, op. 98; 1967) or sixth-tone (*String Quartet no. 11*, op. 87; 1957). Even at this late stage Hába never gave up an experimental and open-minded approach, and he repeatedly tried to get to respond to revived impulses of twelve-tone music and Weberian serialism.

After surveying his career, we may tentatively suggest some conclusions about Hába's place in the context of Czech and Central-European music. First and foremost it is clear that he was a composer who became involved in the Central European musical avant-garde very much "from the outside", from a Moravian region with a predominantly folk tradition. The strong individuality and originality that he began to show during his stay in Vienna became a respected reality in Berlin. In terms of the expressive canon of 19th-century music the position of "other, outsider" had been negative, a pure liability, a status overlapping with that of "dilettante" in the sense of exclusion from professional advancement. Now the situation had turned around – at least in Berlin if less in Vienna – and the position could be one of special privilege. (Vienna is generally regarded as a place with great respect for tradition and conservative views). To be different

was now to have an exceptional status. Suddenly the attribute of otherness became an undeniable advantage. In a sense the change reflected the new democratic era, since it was a status that could be claimed by anyone, regardless of social background. Novelty and difference were transformed into attributes that could bring participants in the common "project of the new" closer together while at the same time representing another scale by which they could define their distinct identities and differentiate themselves. Hába was sensitive to the various individual developmental trends but did not identify himself wholly with any one of them. Despite his sympathy and affinity for the new theories, and his repeated stress on the value of the influence of Novák, Busoni and Schönberg, Hába sought to create a style all his own. For Hába art is undoubtedly a field of creative freedom, where a work is born as the result of the active activity of a unique, irreducible individual. Nonetheless, Hába shared with the rest of the Central European avant-garde the striving for explicit definition of the principle of redundancy. It is clearly a striving to render musical language more precise, to rid it of the last trace of the decorative and the rhetorical. Hába's project was also characterised by a distinctively sharp struggle against traditional ways of treating material that forced the composer to surrender his own individuality. Another feature of Hába's type as a composer was that fact that he shared only marginally in the future development of European new music; from the point of view of the "culture of the centre" as a historical rather than just geographical concept he ultimately remained at the periphery. The character of his work excludes him from the community of "established composers" and makes him once again an "outsider".

There are a number of different reasons why this should be so. Hába's "liberated music" is known only through a few theoretical works that came out mainly in German, a few recordings and relatively inaccessible scores. This has naturally limited an understanding of the whole Hába phenomenon. Usually Hába is characterised as a tireless propagator of microtonal and athematic music. These mere assertions, however, do not of themselves have any precise content and in fact problematise any proper conception of Hába's music; for example, pieces composed with microtones in fact represent less than a third of Hába's output as a composer. Of course, it remains an open question whether the change in the conditions for the reception of Hába's music will make for major change in the way he is viewed. While in the 1920s Hába in his works took significant steps beyond the canon of traditional music by using unconventional sound material, in the period after the Second World War the leaders of the modern movement of the time rejected him for alleged traditionalism (and in some cases for technical inadequacy). Here the criterion of musical value was above all the developmental novelty (innovativeness) of Hába's music between the wars, perfectly corresponding to the "spirit of the time". His retreat from his well-known posi-

tions was then interpreted as inability to express that "spirit of the time" in an appropriate way. Hába therefore came to occupy only a marginal position among the "classics" of modern music who made major contributions to the "artistic values" of European music and helped to create the main stylistic trends. The rationale of assertions of this kind is based on the historical conception of the rise of the modern. If we focus our attention on important moments of development (athematism, microtonality), we necessarily push everything else about this music into the background. Such music becomes a mere signpost to future development. Thus just like technical discoveries Hába's music necessarily becomes obsolete for future generations. Not even the ideas of "liberated music" could escape this process of ageing and Hába's name was reduced to a mere encyclopaedia heading, becoming a synonym for microtonal and athematic music.

LUBOMÍR SPURNÝ

¹ Alois Hába, *Můj lidský a umělecký vývoj*, in: *Sborník k životu a dílu skladatele* (ed. J. Vysloulžil). Vizovice 1993, p. 50.

² Alois Hába, *Neue Harmonielehre des diatonischen, chromatischen, Viertel-, Drittel-, Sechstel- und Zwölfteltonsystems*. Leipzig 1927 p.135.

³ Alois Hába, *Můj lidský a umělecký vývoj*, p. 51.

⁴ Ernst Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit. Erinnerungen an die Moderne*, München 1999, p. 157.

⁵ Alois Hába, *Můj lidský a umělecký vývoj*, pp. 52–53.

⁶ Alois Hába, *O psychologii tvoření, pohybové zákonitosti tónové a základech nového hudebního slohu*, Praha 1925, p. 36.

⁷ Hába, *O psychologii tvoření, pohybové zákonitosti tónové a základech nového hudebního slohu*. Praha 1925, p. 38.

⁸ Vladimír Helfert, *Hábova Nová nauka o harmonii (Na okraj Hábovy nauky o harmonii)*, in: *Hudební rozhledy*, III–1927, p. 148.

⁹ Alois Hába, *Zvukový film a opera*, in: *Klíč*, II–1931/32, p. 60.