czech music

quarterly magazine

3
2006

Karel Husa

Czech Chamber Ensembles

Milan Grygar

Music of the Bohemian Middle Ages

International Chamber Music Festival
EuroArt Praha

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FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

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Malostranské náměstí 13, Praha
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Opening Concert 19. 9. 2006 Praha 20. 9. 2006 Trutnov 21. 9. 2006 Jičín	**Brigitte Fournier**, Soprano (Switzerland) **Ivo Kahánek**, Piano **Stamicovo kvarteto**	**D. Milhaud:** String Quaret No. 1 **E. Chausson:** Chanson perpétuelle op. 37 – *Czech premiere* **O. Schoeck:** 3 Songs **J. Turina:** Las musas de Andalucía – *Czech premiere*
16. 10. 2006 Domažlice 17. 10. 2006 Praha 18. 10. 2006 Brno	**Jing Zhao**, violoncello (China) – *Award for the Winner of the ARD Munich Competition 2005* **Stamic Quartet**	**P. Vranický:** Quintet in C Major **X. Gang Ye:** Nine Run for Cello solo – *Czech premiere* **A. Borodin:** String Quintet
21. 11. 2006 Praha	**Škampa Quartet** **Kateřina Soukalová - Váchová**, Clarinet (*Winner of the Prague Spring Competition 2002*)	**I. Krejčí:** String Quartet No. 4 in E Major, Op. 50 **H. Sutermeister:** Capriccio for Clarinet **D. Shostakovich:** String Quartet No. 3 **W. A. Mozart:** Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet, KV 581
12. 12. 2006 Praha 13. 12. 2006 Liberec	**WORLDS BEYOND TRIO Daniel Schynder**, Saxophone (USA / Switzerland) ; **Kenny Drew Jr.**, Piano (USA); **David Taylor**, Trombone (USA) **Stamic Quartet**	**J. C. de Arriaga:** String Quartet No. 3 "From Berlin to New York – transatlantic bridges to music"; **G. Gershwin, K. Weil, D. Schnyder**
16. 1. 2007 Praha 15. 1. 2007 Kralupy nad Vltavou	**Faust Quartett** (D) **Stamic Quartet**	**J. C. de Arriaga:** String Quartet No. 1 in d Minor **G. Kurtag:** 12 Mikroludien for String Quartet **J. S. Svendson:** String Octet, Op. 3 – *Czech premiere*
20. 2. 2007 Praha 23. 2. 2007 Chrudim	**Trio Concertino** **Kaspar Zehnder**, Flute (Switzerland)	**D. Shostakovich:** Piano Trio No. 1 in E Minor **C. Diethelm:** Pan – *Czech premiere* **H. Gagnebin:** Quartet for Violin, Flute, Cello and Piano – *Czech premiere* **W. A. Mozart:** Prague Symphony, KV 504 (*authorized version by J. N. Hummel*)
20. 3. 2007 Praha 21. 3. 2007 Jičín	**Amedeo Modigliani Quartet** (France) – *Winner of AFAA Declic and Young Concert Artists New York* **Vladimír Leixner**, Cello	**R. Schumann:** String Quartet No. 1, Op. 41 **K. Beffa:** Quelques cercles – *Czech premiere* **G. Onslow:** Quintet for two Cellos – *Czech premiere*
17. 4. 2007 Praha 18. 4. 2007 Děčín 19. 4. 2007 Jablonec nad Nisou	**Javier Echecopar Mongilardi**, Guitar, Baroque Guitar (Peru) **Stamic Quartet**	**A. Vivaldi:** Concerto in D Peruvian Baroque music for Guitar – *Czech premiere* **J. E. Mongilardi:** Suite Barroca Andina – *World premiere* **C. G. Lecca:** Dansas tradicionales Andinas – *World Premiere*
21. 5. 2007 Nové město n. M. 22. 5. 2007 Praha 23. 5. 2007 Olomouc 24. 5. 2007 Ostrava	**Alexander String Quartet** (USA) **Stamic Quartet**	**J. Kern:** Melody for String Quartet **W. Peterson:** Quartet No. 2 „Jazz Play" **J. Adams:** Selection from the Book of Alleged Dances **M. Plachká:** String Octet – *World premiere* **B. Martinů:** String Sextet
11. 6. 2007 Havlíčkův Brod 12. 6. 2007 Praha 14. 6. 2007 Jablonec nad Nisou	**Okazaki Keisuke**, Violin (Japan) – *Award for the Winner of the ARD Munich Competition 2005* **Ivo Kahánek**, Piano **Stamic Quartet**	**D. Shostakovich:** Piano Quintet in G Minor, Op. 57 **M. Ravel:** Tzigane **T. Takemitsu:** Distance de Fee – *Czech premiere* **E. Chausson:** Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet in D Major, Op. 21

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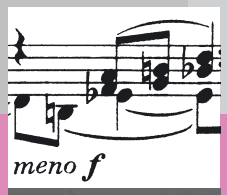
contents

3/2006



editorial

Dear Readers,

Czech Music is of course a magazine devoted to music – given its title it could hardly be anything else. Only there have been disputes over the definition and content of the word "music" for quite a long time, and the 20th century has more or less condemned the various categorical statements of the type "this is music and this isn't" to oblivion or ridicule. Why am I talking about this? Milan Grygar is someone whose inclusion in a magazine about music might raise a lot of eyebrows, but in my view he belongs in such a magazine much more than routine "exemplarily musical" cliche-mongers. Certainly, Milan Grygar is first and foremost a famous artist. This is an apparently self-evident (and of course true), but it conceals one very important dimension of Grygar's work- sound. With his acoustic drawings Grygar has moved into an area that might be identified as sound art, although even this categorisation is somewhat lame. This is not all, however, since if we bear in mind that in the music of the 20th century it is the originator of the idea-instructions that lead to the sounding music who is considered the composer, then there is no reason not to consider Grygar a composer too. All the more so when composers, as is well-known, usually *do not create music* but *write notes.* In this sense in a large part of his work Grygar is a composer–*creator of scores* par excellence.

I would also like to draw attention to the interview with the Czech-American composer Karel Husa on the occasion of his 85th birthday (coincidentally, Husa and Grygar are of the same generation) and Lukáš Matoušek's article on the music of the Bohemian Middle Ages. I think the present issue of Czech Music is full of variety, and wish you pleasant reading.

Until the next issue...

PETR BAKLA
EDITOR

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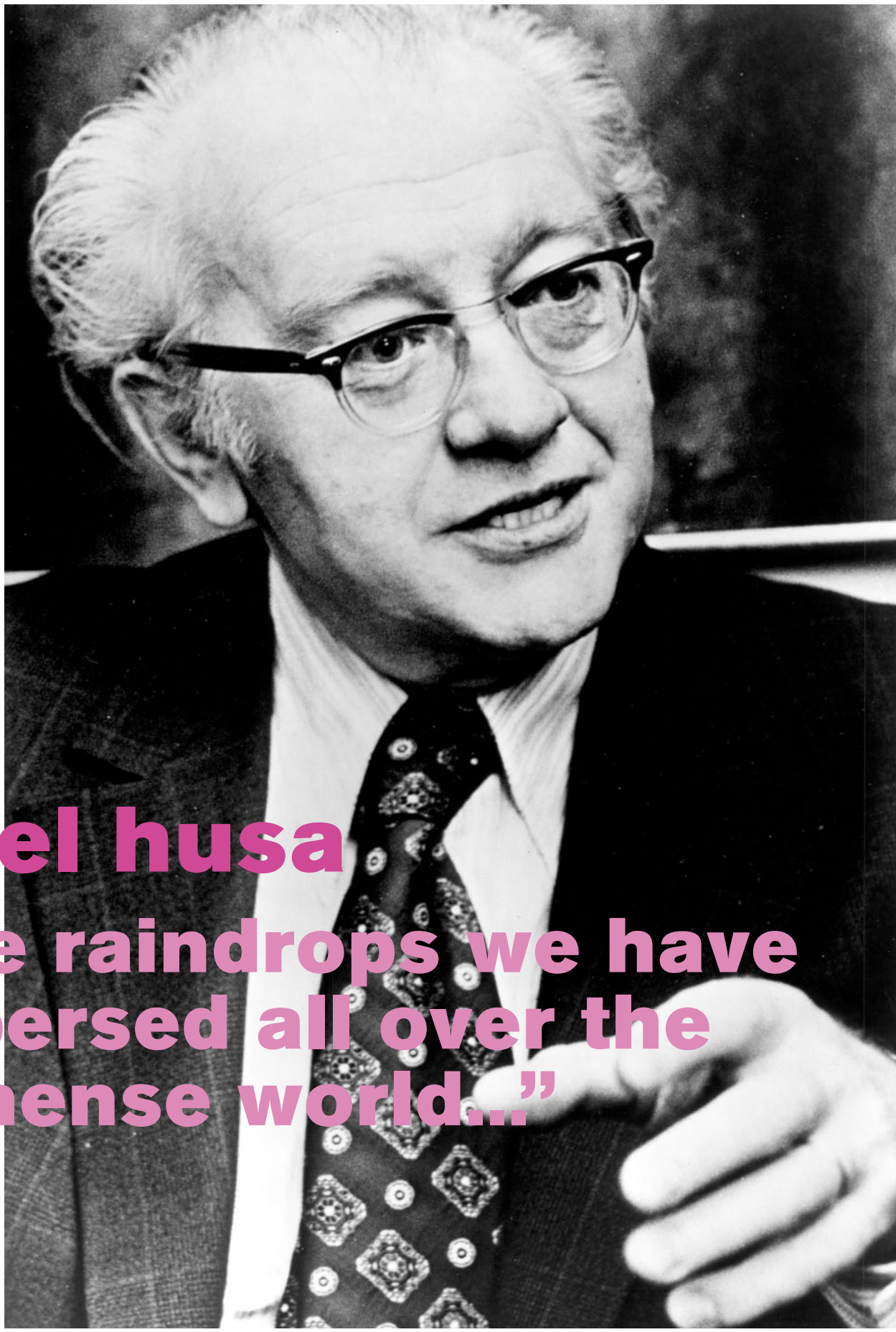


karel husa

“like raindrops we have dispersed all over the immense world...”

The Czech composer, conductor and teacher Karel Husa celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday on the 7th of August this year. Born in Prague and trained at the Prague conservatory, he went into exile abroad after the communist putsch of February 1948 (since 1959 he has been a US citizen), and as a result his work was practically excluded from Czech musical culture at home for the next forty years. What is still the most-detailed post-war Czech (Czechoslovak) music encyclopaedia, published in 1963, includes a 35-line entry on "Karel Husa", in which no data are given after 1948. Practically the same data, and no more, are given in the *Small Encyclopaedia of Music* of 1983 (!). Since November 1989 just a few occasional articles and one analytical study on the composer have appeared in Czech... Even though Husa's achievements as composer and conductor have won him a Pulitzer Prize for his *3rd string quartet* (1969) for example, the Friedheim Prize awarded by the Kennedy Centre (1983), the American Academy of Arts and Letters Prize (1989), the Grawemeyer Prize (1993), and full membership of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1997). In the nineties he was at last honoured in his native land as well, with a Medal "For Merit of the 1st Degree for important artistic activity contributing to the renewal of democracy"(1995), and an honorary doctorate from the Music Faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts AMU (2000). Husa's output now consists of almost 90 compositions, many of which have been performed in this country since the beginning of the nineties but many of which (including important works) still await their Czech premieres. In this respect our debt to Karel Husa (and to ourselves) still remains to be paid in full.

JAROMÍR HAVLÍK

Tell us about your path to music and especially to a career as a composer. We know that originally you wanted to study engineering at technical school.
When I was eight years old, my parents gave me a violin a Christmas gift. My mother said: "When you are an engineer, you will enjoy playing music with your friends after a day's work." So I simply assumed I would study engineering one day. In 1939 I entered the civil engineering school in Prague, but after several weeks of classes, in November when we, students protested against killing of Jan Opletal (also a student), the occupation authorities closed all universities and technical schools. The Conservatory of Music though remained open, as the closure concerned only the schools of "highest teaching". In 1941 I passed the examination and was accepted into the Conservatory's second year of composition class, after about a year and a half of private studies *with professor Jaroslav Řídký*. (I can say that I am a better composer than I would have been engineer; my mathematics was not as good as my music theory, therefore I think my bridges in the Czech Republic would not have lasted for long!)

What did the Jaroslav Řídký School give you? It is well-known that Prof. Řídký was a very conservative artist with a great respect for tradition, whereas from the start you gravitated towards modern forms of expression.
Prof. Řídký made me a composer, for which I am deeply grateful. He gave us student-composers a very solid technique in theory, form, orchestration, which I definitely needed. I would compare music composing to learning of an instrument: you have to be technically best prepared so that you can be comfortable in "whatever comes your way". Since 1937 I was interested in art, I saw most of the theatre productions of the Czech E. F. Burian (see CM 4/2004), I also studied painting and went to exhibitions of modern Czech art in Prague, and I also had a wonderful teacher in my high school, Jan Škoula, singer and manager of the magnificent male choir Smetana, who taught us about poetry (including living poets), so I definitely was interested in new, living art. When in conservatory, it was difficult to learn scores of Stravinsky, Bartok or any new French, Russian or American art, all was forbidden during the Second World War (and called "decadent art" by Goebbels). So mostly it was the new Czech art, that was available and then, naturally, the classics.

I once heard from your friend Jan Hanuš that under the Protectorate you were co-opted into the Přítomnost (Presence) Musical Society and helped to get it through the tough years of the war and occupation. How and why did the then chairman of Přítomnost, Alois Hába, turned to you and Jan Hanuš?
I was not a functionary of Přítomnost during the Protectorate years. Only after the war; I was assisting the secretary Ing. K. Hanf, who suddenly died at the end of 1945 and I was asked to continue his work until the summer of 1946, when I left for Paris. I of course knew Jan Hanuš, who was already a known young composer during 1939-45, and also, as member of the publishing house Fr. A. Urbánek. It was at the concert of the students of Jaroslav Řídký that he heard my *Sonatina for piano* and recommended that it be published. I also knew Prof. Alois Hába (see CM 3/2005) from the Conservatory and concerts in Prague. His Quarter-tone theory intrigued me and I also bought the German publication of it. After the war, when he became the director of the Theatre of 5th May and resumed his function in Přítomnost, he allocated a room to Přítomnost in the Theatre in 1945.

Several of your early pieces were received with lively interest and the critics praised you highly as a promising composing talent. Which of your pieces from this early period do you still rate most highly?
The already mentioned *Sonatina for piano*, published in 1947 by Fr. A. Urbánek; unfortunately, it was suppressed after I did not return in 1949 from Paris. AMP/G. Schirmer published it later in New York; also the *Sonatina for Violin and Piano* (1959), which is published by the same company (AMP/GS). Perhaps also the *Sinfonietta for chamber orchestra*, premiered in Prague by the Symphony Orchestra of the Czechoslovak Radio, conducted by Karel Ančerl, in Prague in 1947, and which I have not heard live yet. For sentimental point of view I remember my *Overture for grand orchestra,* which I had the privilege to conduct myself twice in the spring of 1945. It was the first time I conducted a work of my own with a first rate professional orchestra; this was an unforgettable moment.

After the war you transferred to the newly opened Academy of Perfoming Arts (AMU). How long did you actually study there? If I'm not mistaken you soon won the French scholarship and went off to Paris to study.

Marseille, Christmas1946 (left)
With Jaroslav Řídký, 1946
With George Solti and the trumpetist Adolph Herseth, 1988 (above)

When the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague was opened in the fall of 1945 I immediately enrolled, and again Prof. Řídký was my teacher and chair of my committee. I spoke with him about my desire to study in Paris for a few years, a project he entirely approved. In the spring of 1946, Charles Munch conducted twice in Prague and his artistry fascinated me. Among other works he conducted works by Messiaen, Martinů and Ravel. What amazed me then and also later, was that this famous conductor had a habit of performing at least one new work in every concert! (A habit he kept practically all his life.) That same spring (1946) I applied for three fellowships: French, Russian an American (to study with Arthur Honegger or Sergei Prokofiev or Bohuslav Martinů). I received the French first. The Russian was not – at the end – offered and the American was already reserved. When the French letter arrived, my mother, who loved French culture and dreamed of Paris, said: "Why don't you go to France for one or two years, then visit my sisters in the U.S. and in about three years return home?" So, in September 1946 I left for Paris. Practically I studied at the AMU for only two years. Prof. Řídký arranged my diploma of graduation someway "ahead of term" in 1947.

What did you gain as a composer in Paris with Honegger and other teachers? What and how did you study in Paris compared to your previous training as a composer in Prague? Paris was most probably more open to modern and the most modern currents in music. How did you react to that?

Paris was musically rich: we heard not only the French musicians but, constantly, artists from all over the world (few weeks after my arrival the Czech Philharmonic with Rafael Kubelík and Pierre Fournier gave a great performance of Dvořák's *Cello concerto*), Furtwängler, Kleiber, Koussevitzky, many orchestras (Václav Talich was on the program of the Société des Concerts but did not come). Among composers Stravinsky, Martinů, Petrassi, Malipiero, Hindemith, Copland and the French masters Honegger, Milhaud, Messiaen, Poulenc, Fl. Schmitt an others.

Honegger was open to all possible ideas, Nadia Boulanger insisted on most solid construction and Milhaud (whose seminar I also attended) was an incredibly warm and sophisticated man of the world. There were important people in all the arts: Eluard, Aragon, Sartre, Malraux in writing, the painters Braque, Picasso, Matisse, Chagall – my reaction to the new was enthusiastic! After my arrival in 1946 I heard the premiere of Honegger's *Symphonie liturgique*, than Messiaen's *Turangalila*, Boulez's *First sonata for piano*, Leibowitz, concerts of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, read French poetry (let me say so that I do not forget: the Czech poetry is magnificent, but unfortunately it cannot be – or hasn't been – translated well), and visited not only the Orangerie but many smaller galleries (Kupka's and Šíma's paintings). I always wanted to learn the great works of Berlioz, Debussy, Ravel, Roussel as a conductor before I returned to Prague. I attended rehearsals of Charles Munch, took private lessons from André Cluytens, entered the Ecole normale de musique and the Conservatory, and obtained diplomas in this field.

How did you react when the communists took power in February 1948 and what happened then?

My passport was due to expire at the end of August 1949. A few months before, I received a fellowship from UNESCO to continue studying in Paris. The consent of the Czechoslovak government was needed. The response I received from the Czechoslovak embassy in Paris was for me to return before the expiration of the passport to Prague or lose my citizenship. I felt I still wanted to learn and see more "of the world". I was also getting invitations to attend performance of my music and guest-conduct in other European countries, but could not accept, as my original passport was valid only for France and prolonged every year. I decided for exile (and read at the same time – buy chance – the magnificent poetry by St. John de Porse, the French, then living poet, called "Exile".) Nadia Boulanger recommended me for an assistantship with Serge Koussevitzki to Tanglewood in summer 1950 (which I wasn't able – in last minute – to attend, due to a serious blood illness). I became a refugee, received legal papers from the French government, including a passport valid for any country. Also, the French ministry continued to support me with a monthly bourse for the following few years.

What were the compositions with which you first "broke through" in France? Which had the greatest impact?

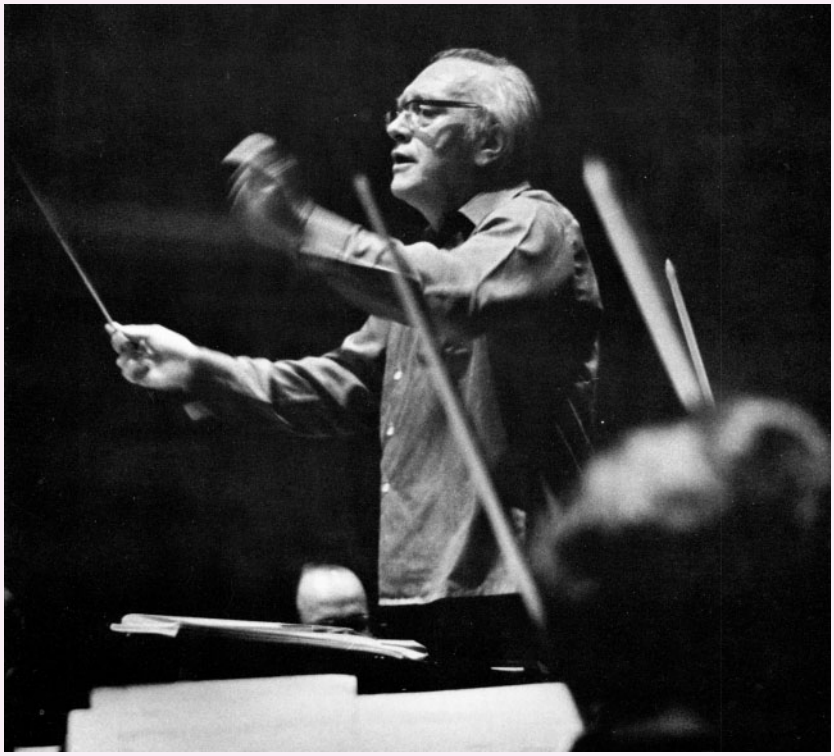
In 1947 the director of the Triptyque, Pierre d'Arquennes programmed the *Piano sonatina*, followed by violin-piano work, *First string quartet, Sonata for piano* and other compositions followed. Also, the French radio in broadcasts and public concerts performed all the above compositions, as well as the *Divertimento for string orchestra* in a concert for the ISCM in 1949. And in 1950 I attended a performance of my *First string quartet* by Haydn Quartet in Brussels, as part of the ISCM festival. This was probably my most important success until then, as it opened up many possibilities in numerous countries. Several compositions were performed soon in Belgium (among them the premiere of the *Concertino for piano*), German, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland and USA.

The *Second string quartet* was premiered at the UNESCO Tribune by the Parrenin Quartet, who also put it on the programme of their American tour. Dr. Heinrich Strobel commissioned the *Portrait for string orchestra* for the Donaueschingener Musiktage in 1953. The same year the French radio-television broadcasted the *Evocations of Slovakia* (for clarinet, viola and cello).

After February 1948 your music was no longer performed in Czechoslovakia. What effect did that have on you as an

artist and as an individual, a Czech, who had been forced into exile by the circumstance? Did you have information about what was going on in your native country? Were you able to keep up correspondence with friends at home (as far as I know, you corresponded a great deal especially with Jan Hanuš)?
I understood that by not returning home in 1949 I ensured that my music would not be performed in Czechoslovakia. We have been a nation of exiled musicians for hundreds of years: Benda, Stamic, Vaňhal, Mysliveček, Rejcha, even Smetana and Martinů to name composers only. The Czech poet Karel Toman said in a poem: "Like raindrops we have dispersed all over the immense world..." I received regular letters only from my sister after 1949 were coming regularly only from my sister, but they spoke less and less about the political situation and mostly about the family and sometimes the musical life. By 1952 no friends dared to write – I understood perfectly, it wasn't easy. Only Jan Hanuš, a dear friend, important composer, pacifist and religious man, continued to write for over fifty years. His spirit was always encouraging, understanding, positive, human. The Czech musicians should look into his oeuvre; it is all there.
In 1949 I wrote to the Ministry of Education in Prague saying that I needed a few more years to complete what I was trying to achieve before returning (no answer). However, events make decisions too: in 1952 I married a French person, and nearly became a French citizen, but the invitation to teach for three years at Cornell University changed our plans, and my wife Simone, I and our children became American citizens. It was this country that gave me an enormous chance and help in my profession. When leaving France in 1954, I said to Nadia Boulanger: "We will return in the years..." She answered: "You know, life makes its own decisions." And she was right.

I personally consider your *1st symphony* to be an important work of the mid-1950s. It is very dramatic, even tragic. Were the tragic events of postwar Czechoslovakia reflected in it?
Although I didn't intend to include the war years (1939-45), nor post-February 1948 events (the year of communist putsch in Czechoslovakia; ed. note) in my first symphony (as I did openly in the *Music for Prague 1968*), it definitely mirrors those times. I slowly assimilate events around me, so when after three years of happiness and freedom, I once again found myself in a difficult situation (and my native country too), there are reflections of the past war (2nd movement) but also, I think, a symbol of freedom – at that time I especially admired Chagall's colors and birds – so I see the flute solo before the start of the 3rd movement, and the whole movement, as the "romantic ideal" of hope. I also wanted to explore some new colors in orchestration.



Why did you move to the USA?
In 1953, numerous possibilities of guest-conducting came up, especially after the release of Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* and Brahms' *First symphony* recordings in Paris, such as principal guest-conductor of the Monte Carlo Symphony Orchestra, as well as invitations from several European countries. At the same time a letter came from Cornell University inviting me to apply for the position of a theory and composition teacher. I have always felt that my first interest was composing, and so I applied and in September 1954 my family and I left for France for the USA for three years. I enjoyed teaching (and later also conducting the University Orchestra) and although busy, the position allowed me to write music and guest-conduct in parts of the world, also performing my own works. I retired after 38 years at Cornell in 1992 and never regretted teaching young people; in fact, I learned so much too! I also taught a seminar in composition at Ithaca College (1967-86).

Did the American (and specifically university) environment have any substantial effect on your composing style? As far as I know, you had already had experience with twelve-tone music and used microtones (quarter-tones), as well as other elements of material and techniques of contemporary music in the course of the 1950s. What new elements did being in the US bring to your thinking as a composer?
My interest in trying new possibilities started already in Paris. I realized I could not continue composing by only repeating what I knew; I needed to expand, explore and find some new paths. Beethoven, after his two symphonies, wrote the third, considerably different, Debussy changed his style completely after meeting Mallarme and painters-impressionists, Stravinsky after Petrushka and Firebird, and so did others. Hearing Messiaen's works, Stravinsky's concerts (including Oedipus Rex), conducted by Stravinsky and narrated by Jean Cocteau, visiting Darmstadt and Donaueschingen, and hearing Sandor Vegh's interpretation of all Bartok's quartets (some with the quarter-tones), and as well as the same composer's *Solo violin sonata* by Menuhin and many of Schoenberg's and Webern's works, made me try to experiment: in the *Poem for viola and orchestra* and *Mosaiques for large orchestra.* By the way, *Mosaiques* (1961) is all about Prague: Bells – Tragedy Spring – Charles Bridge – Snow. An aspect that I thought about a lot in America was to write music for young people who have learned instruments, but chosen another profession in university. There are millions of them, and mostly, they play old (Baroque, Classical and some Romantic) music. Hindemith and others have tried too. One is surprised by their interest in new music, and they are interested – here, in American schools – in playing music of today. And I admired Bartok for writing easy music for piano.

Which of your works of the American period do you yourself regard as key? In this country we generally think of your *Music for Prague 1968* and the *3rd String Quartet*, for which you won a prestigious Pulitzer Prize. What other important works would you identify yourself?
I think the *Concerto for orchestra*, *Apotheosis of this Earth* (in both versions, i.e. for

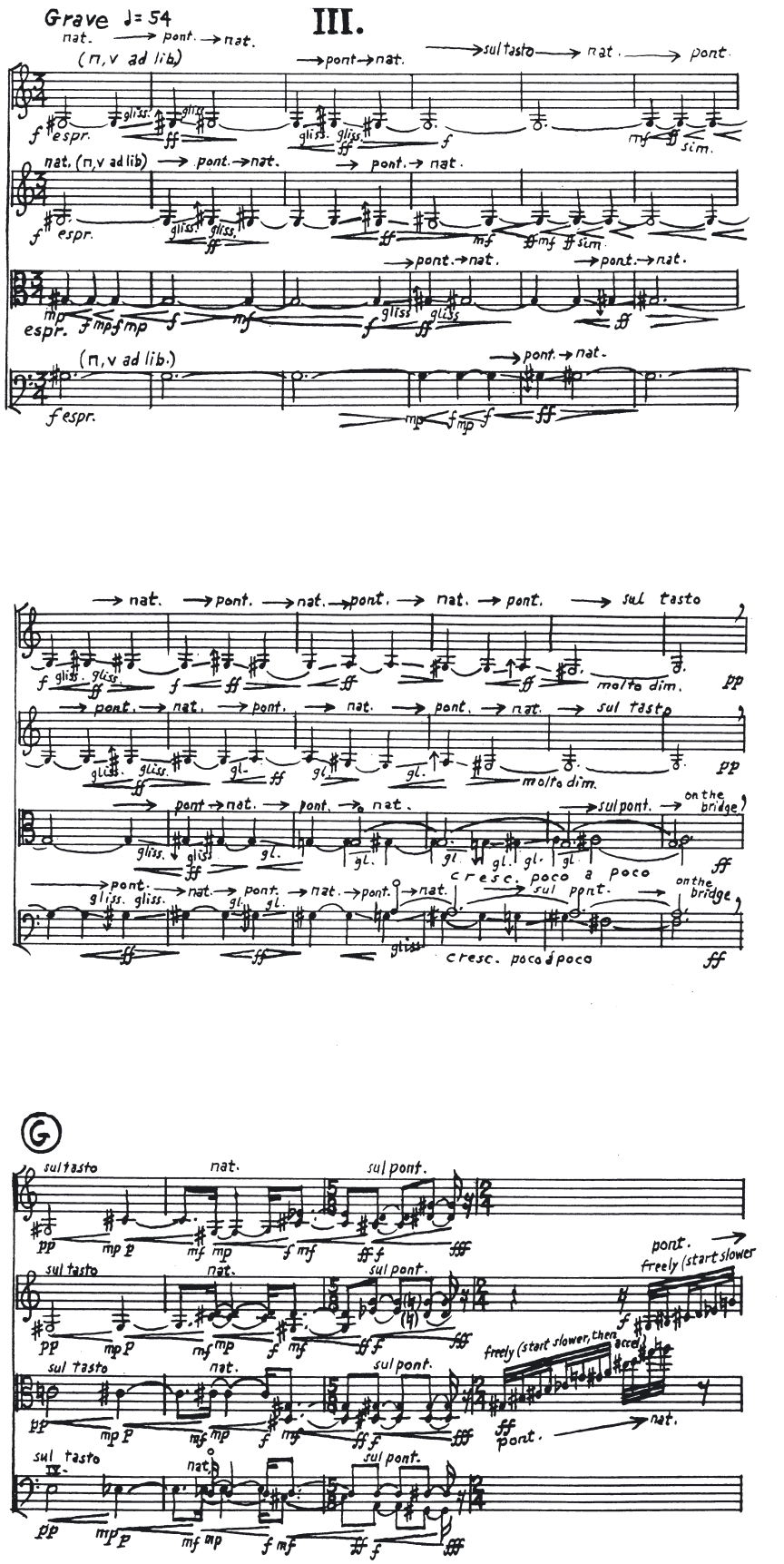
wind ensemble, and Orchestra and choir), *Concerto for violin, Concerto for violoncello, Concerto for wind ensemble,* and among chamber compositions the *Landscapes for brass ensemble, Piano sonata no. 2* and *Sonata a tre* or *Violin sonata.*

After 1990 after long decades your music finally returned to the Czech concert hall. Are you satisfied with performance of your work in the Czech Republic to date? Which of your works has not yet been performed here?

To return in 1990 in Prague and conduct the *Music for Prague 1968* were unbelievable moments. There are naturally works of mine – over 40 – that have not yet been performed. On the other hand, about the same amount have already been played and some of them repeatedly, so I am pleased about it, especially because there are so many composers in the Czech Republic at present, who need their chance to be performed. Also, we currently have a crisis, as attendance at concerts is diminishing. We are unable to capture the young people, many of them prefer "fun" music. And also, today's trend is to put mostly "old" music on programmes. Among my works not yet performed would be the ballet *Monodrama* (about the conflict of artist versus the society), the *Concerto for violin* (written for the 150 years celebration of the New York Philharmonic), *Scenes from the Trojan Women for orchestra*, or *Cayuga Lake for three quartets (string, wind and brass), piano and percussion, Three Moravian songs for mixed choir,* and eventually *An American Te Deum for choir, baritone solo and orchestra*, but I am sure that is a very difficult project.

Have you been following the Czech music scene since November 1989? How do you rate its current standard? Which contemporary Czech composers have caught your attention?

I do follow with great interest what is happening in my native country. I always felt that although the country is small, its composers are a "power-house". The world may not know that Bendas and Stamic, Reicha or Dušek were Czechs (emigres), but they certainly know Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček and Martinů are. In addition, masters such as Novák, Ostrčil, Vycpálek, Fibich ought to be known – especially Fibich's melodramas, Ostrčil's *Stations of the Cross,* V. Novák's *In Tatras,* Vycpálek's *Of the last matters of a man.* And there are first-class composers of my teacher's generation and my own. Music has been a very important part of Czechs for centuries, in creating, as well as performing music. The amazing number of professional orchestras, choirs, opera houses, quartets, chamber ensembles, soloists and singers, as well as the large number of composers, is impressive. It is a paradox of "our time", that audiences want to read new novels,



String Quartet No. 4 "Poems" (1990), 3rd movement

watch new films and visit galleries of new arts, but want to hear old music!
The young and youngest generations are very active in organizing their own concerts, opera productions and recordings of their works. They realize that in today's strong competitions it is the only way to be heard and recognized. They also have many excellent ideas to "make things happen". Being a composer today doesn't mean only "composing". Many more young people are trying to write music in many more countries so that the competition is much greater than sixty years ago. Reaching recognition is becoming harder and harder; therefore I admire their determination, and wish them all the best! They are, after all, working for the future of Czech music.

Karel Husa

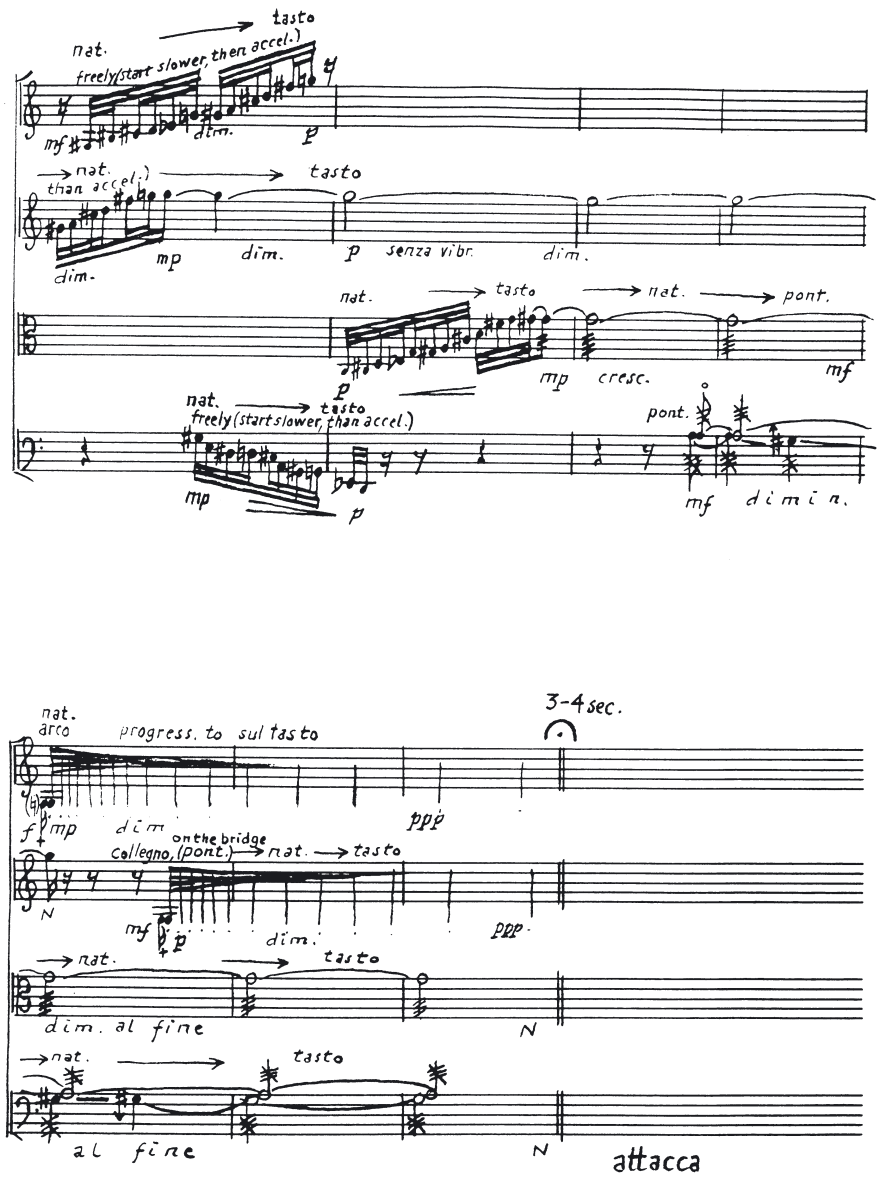
Pulitzer Prize winner in Music, is an internationally known composer and conductor who was Kappa Alpha professor at Cornell University from 1954 until his retirement and also Lecturer in Composition at Ithaca College. An American citizen since 1959, Husa was born in Prague on August 7, 1921, studying at the Prague Conservatory and Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, and later at the National Conservatory and École Normale de Musique in Paris. Among his teachers were Arthur Honegger, Nadia Boulanger, Jaroslav Řídký, and conductor Andre Cluytens.

Husa was elected Associate Member of the Royal Belgian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1974, and to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1994. He has received honorary doctorates from Coe College, the Cleveland Institute of Music, Ithaca College, Baldwin-Wallace College, St. Vincent College, Hartwick College, New England Conservatory, University of Arkansas, Capital University and the Masaryk University (Czech Republic). Husa has been the recipient of many awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship and awards from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, UNESCO, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Czech Academy for the Arts and Sciences, the Lili Boulanger Award, Bilthoven (Holland) Contemporary Music Prize, a Kennedy Center-Friedheim Award, and his Concerto for wind ensemble received the first Sudler International Award. His Concerto for cello and orchestra earned him the 1993 Grawemeyer Award. In 1995, Husa was awarded the Czech Republic's highest civilian recognition, the State Medal of Merit, First Class, and in 1998 the Medal of the City of Prague.

His String Quartet No. 3 earned him the 1969 Pulitzer Prize and, with over 7,000 performances, his Music for Prague 1968 has become part of the modern repertory. Another well-known work, Apotheosis of this Earth is called by Husa a "manifesto" against pollution and destruction. His works have been performed by major orchestras all over the world. Two works were commissioned by the New York Philharmonic: the Concerto for orchestra premiered by Zubin Mehta, and the Concerto for violin and orchestra written for concertmaster Glenn Dicterow and conducted by Kurt Masur. The Concerto for trumpet was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Sir Georg Solti for performance in Chicago and on tour in Australia with principal trumpeter Adolph Herseth. Among his recent compositions are the String quartet no. 4 (an NEA commission for the Colorado Quartet), Cayuga Lake (for Ithaca College's centennial celebration), and Les couleurs fauves for wind ensemble (commissioned by the Northwestern University).

Karel Husa has conducted many major orchestras including those in Paris, London, Hamburg, Brussels, Prague, Stockholm, Oslo, Zurich, Hong Kong, Singapore, New York, Boston, Washington, Cincinnati, Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, Louisville, and others. Every year he visits the campuses of music schools and universities to guest conduct and lecture on his music.

Much of Husa's music is available on recordings issued by CBS Masterworks, Vox, Louisville, Panton, Phoenix, Crystal, CRI, Everest, Grenadilla, Sheffield, and other labels.



czech chamber ensembles

compiled by **JINDŘICH BÁLEK**

This year we mark the 115th anniversary of the founding of the Czech Quartet, an ensemble that represented a breakthrough in the history of Czech chamber music. Of course, chamber music has a much longer history and its roots can be found both in court cappella and in active music making in noble families. The whole 19th century was then characterised by "home" or "salon" music making. It is therefore true to say that alongside choirs, chamber music was the most natural way of making music. A relative long and far from obvious path, however, leads from this tradition to the emergence of genuinely professional groups playing the most difficult pieces at public concerts. And it was in this context that the Czech Quartet represented a breakthrough.

Czech Quartet

It was in the year 1891 that the professor at the Prague Conservatory, Hanuš Wihan, put together a kind of elite ensemble of conservatory students. Here all the founding members of a group that were to be known a few years later came together. They were the violinists Karel Hoffman (1872–1936) and Josef Suk senior (1874–1935), the viola player Oskar Nedbal (1874–1930) and the cellist Otto Berger (1873–1897). On the 2nd of November 1891 they then appeared together, still under the heading of the Czech-German Union for Chamber Music. This was the predecessor of the Czech Society for Chamber Music, formed in 1894, which became as it were the axis of the domestic tradition of chamber music and is today one of the longest-lived still functioning Czech musical institutions. The group did not appear under the name Czech Quartet until 1892, and in the January of the following year they had a triumphal success in Vienna. Instead of just the originally planned one concert on the 19th of January they finally gave four, and in a city where there existed several established and professionally functioning string quartets... And what is even more incredible is that most of the members of the quartet were not yet twenty years old. Another good sign was that even their Czech programme, especially Bedřich Smetana's *String quartet no. 1 in E minor*, was a success as well.

The quartet did not remain the same in membership up to its end in 1933. We should note that the place of the outstanding cellist Otto Berger, who died very young of lung disease, was taken by the father founder of the ensemble at the conservatory, Hanuš Wihan (1855–1920), who was a generation older. Another change came in 1906, when Oskar Nedbal, who later devoted himself more to conducting and composing, was replaced by the viola player Jiří Herold (1875–1934), up to that time first violin of his own string quartet. The last major change came when Hanuš Wihan fell ill and was succeeded in 1914 by the cellist Ladislav Zelenka (1881–1957), himself originally a member of the excellent Ševčík-Lhotský Quartet.

We name the individual members here because each was an exceptional figure in the history of musical performance, and also because some ensembles active today have been named after them. In relation to the concerts of the Czech Quartet we should mention three features that made them so important an ensemble: first, dozens of concert tours of Europe; second, the systematic building up of repertoire; and third, inspiration for other Czech ensembles. As early as the years 1895–7 the Czech Quartet was giving concerts first in Russia and Italy, then in France, and then on tours in England, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Later they added very successful tours to Switzerland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey and also Spain and Portugal. The ensemble returned to all these countries repeatedly, each time with Czech and international repertoire. Before the First World War they travelled with major thematic cycles: a Beethoven Cycle, Dvořák Cycle, and cycle on the development of chamber music. Also important were the regular concerts given by the Czech Quartet under the aegis of the Czech Society for Chamber Music. In 1922 all the members became teachers at the Prague Conservatory; this was of great importance for the training of other musicians, but was also the reason why the next decade of the quartet's activity was not so dazzling as the pre-war era. Although by the end of its life the quartet was more a symbol than a modern ensemble, its preceding achievements are absolutely undeniable.

In the field of chamber orchestras – and of course in many other areas – the key role was played by the best Czech conductor ever, the principal conductor of the Czech Philharmonic during the First Republic and the head of the National Theatre opera during the Second

World War, Václav Talich. After the war when his bitter critic and enemy Zdeněk Nejedlý made it impossible for him to work in the opera or with orchestras, students at the conservatory founded the Czech Chamber Orchestra for him in 1945. The idea of devoting himself to subtle work with a smaller ensemble had in fact been maturing in Talich for some time before, and he soon achieved quite phenomenal success with the young players. Let us recall their performance at the Prague Spring in 1947 and the admiring words of the world-famous cellist Pierre Fournier, who declared that he had never encountered so good a chamber ensemble before anywhere. After the communist takeover in 1948 the authorities and above all the egregious Zdeněk Nejedlý banned Talich from all activities, the players naturally stood by him and the orchestra ceased to exist. But the impulse and the tradition lived on, and so the violinist and conductor Josef Vlach, himself one of Talich's pupils, revived the Czech Chamber Orchestra in 1957. The orchestra was later taken over by pupils of Josef Vlach, in the first rank Ondřej Kukal, and the ensemble has flourished under the same name to this day.

Talich was not the only symphonic conductor for whom conducting a chamber ensemble was of great importance. Here we should mention at least two ensembles that no longer exist today. The first was the Prague Chamber Soloists, directed in the mid-1960s by Václav Neumann, and the second, particularly remarkable, was the Chamber Harmony, with which Libor Pešek likewise gave concerts in the 1960s. The programmes of the latter group were trail-blazing, including new Czech music, what today are already classic works of 20th-century music, and works of classicism.

In the context of post-war history we must mention at least the four most important string quartets and two piano trios. Let us start with the longest lived quartet, the Smetana Quartet that was formed in 1945 and did not definitively end its concert activities until 1989. Most of the time it was composed of violinists Jiří Novák and Lubomír Kostecký, viola player Milan Škampa and cellist Antonín Kohout, but its founder members had included the violinist Jaroslav Rybenský, whose career was cut short by illness in 1955, and Václav Neumann, the conductor mentioned above, who played the viola in the quartet for the first two years. This is one of many instances of the way in which the Czech musical tradition is happily not sharply divided between chamber and symphonic music; it is frequent to encounter outstanding soloists who are also good chamber musicians and the best symphonic conductors know the value of experience with a chamber ensemble.

Partly because of the stability of its membership the Smetana Quartet became a fixed point of reference in chamber music. Its broad-ranging discography covering all the basic works of chamber music can be considered truly representative in many respects. This quartet toured literally round the whole world and repeatedly returned to all the world's most important concert halls, but they also made very popular appearances in even the smaller towns of Czechoslovakia and represent a whole separate chapter in the history of the Czech chamber music. Their teaching activities have also had a major impact on Czech music, since practically all the best Czech quartets of the middle generation went through Prof. Antonín Kohout's class.

The Vlach Quartet, made up of the violinists Josef Vlach and Václav Snítil, the viola player Josef Kodousek and the cellist Josef Moučka, represents a much briefer, but still artistically unusually valuable chapter. Its members were all exceptional, distinctive performers with excellent technical skills, a feeling for style and the gift of lyrical expression. In the period of the ensemble's existence, 1950–1976, they brought an absolutely unique quality to performance of the quartets of Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček and practically the whole of Beethoven's quartet output, to mention only their most important feats.

The third internationally important ensemble of the second half of the 20th century was the Janáček Quartet, which was formed at the Brno Conservatory in 1947 and from 1955 consisted of Jiří Trávníček, Adolf Sýkora, Jiří Kratochvíl and Karel Krafka. Unlike the Smetana Quartet the Vlach and Janáček quartets handed down their names to another generation of players, and so ensembles with the names are still performing today. As the fourth on this very selective list let us mention the Prague Quartet (Kvarteto hlavního města Prahy), founded in 1955 in association with the Prague FOK Symphony Orchestra and consisting of Břetislav Novotný, Miroslav Richter, Hubert Šimáček and Zdeněk Koníček; the ensemble later became independent of the orchestra. Like the others the Prague Quartet underwent changes of membership but in 2001, when it ceased to exist, it had almost three thousand performances and dozens of recordings to its name.

One particularly admirable example of the close relationship between solo and chamber play was, of course, the Suk Trio consisting of Josef Suk junior – violin, Josef Chuchro – cello and Jan Panenka – piano. (Later Jan Panenka's place was taken by the equally outstanding accompanist and chamber pianist Josef Hála.) Their recordings of the Dvořák and Beethoven trios still sound modern today and set standards by which others are judged. The trio first performed in 1951 and continued to give concerts for practically forty years. Another threesome of extraordinary musicians came together in the Smetana Trio, formed in the 1930s: the violinist Alexandr Plocek, the pianist Josef Páleníček and the cellist František Smetana. Their traditions were carried on by today's Smetana Trio, to which we shall return. Compared to quartets trios are much more meeting places for soloists and the members tend to change much more often. Thus for example we encounter the tradition of the Czech Trio, where the leading figure was once again the pianist Josef Páleníček and in its most famous period the violinist Alexandr Polcek or Ivan Štraus and the cellist Miloš Sádlo. The principle of soloists coming together is even more common among wind ensembles.

This has been just the shortest of accounts of how inseparable chamber music is from the Czech tradition of performance. It can even be said that in terms of international recognition and acclaim, it has generally been more prominent than many soloists and orchestras. And this is still true today. The central and the most demanding form of chamber music is the string quartet, which also requires the most stable configuration of performers, while with other ensembles we see a strong tendency for the musicians to be involved in other groups and formations at the same time. The music scene today confirms this picture – a group of renowned quartets or chamber orchestras, and to some extent trios, which moreover have distinguished traditions to build on, and beside them a large number of chamber ensembles of all types, origins and profiles, more or less permanent.

Ensembles specialising in the interpretation of music of earlier periods (such as Milan Munclinger's Ars revidiva, for example), represent a separate chapter, and one which requires separate treatment, as do ensembles specialising in contemporary music. We will return to this theme in some other Czech Music issue.

SELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF CZECH CHAMBER ENSEMBLES

The Panocha Quartet

The Panocha Quartet has been in existence longer than any other still performing in the Czech Republic. In two years it will be celebrating its fortieth anniversary, and the same musicians have been playing in it from the very start: Jiří Panocha – 1st violin, Pavel Zejfart – 2nd violin, Miroslav Sehnoutka – viola and Jaroslav Kulhan – cello. The quartet was founded in 1968 by students at the Prague Conservatory and its first major success was victory in the International String Quartet Competition in Prague in 1975. It has toured in almost all the countries of Europe and overseas, and won important awards: A Gold Medal in Bordeaux (1976) and in 1982 the Supraphon Golden Disc. In 1983 it won the Grand Prix du disque de l'Academie Charles Cros in Paris for its recording of Bohuslav Martinů's String Quartets nos. 4 and 6, but also went on to record his complete string quartets. Its complete recording of the String Quartets of Antonín Dvořák for Supraphon (over seven years), and the quartets of Zdeněk Fibich and Bedřich Smetana, are also of great importance and exceptional musical value. Its harmonious, unusually warm and colourful sound is completely ideal for the Czech quartet tradition. It also regularly performs music by Joseph Haydn, the founding father of the string quartet. One special chapter in its history has been its long-term collaboration with the Hungarian pianist András Schiff. They have not only played piano quartets and quintets with him but have regularly taken part in the festival that Schiff holds in Mondsee in Austria and have been members of his orchestra Capella Andrea Barca. A valuable Mozart recording came out of their collaboration with the pianist Rudolf Firkušný, which unfortunately ended prematurely with his death.

The Pražák Quartet

The Pražák Quartet is one of several top Czech ensembles better known abroad than at home. It was formed at the beginning of the 1970s at the conservatory by Václav Remeš and Vlastimil Holek – violins, Josef Klusoň – viola, Josef Pražák – cello and, as soon became apparent, these

were four equally talented individuals with the same obsession with chamber music. The ensemble gained experience under teachers who in each case were members of the three best quartets that were then at the height of their fame: Viktor Moučka, member of the the Vlach Quartet, Břetislav Novotný, leader of the Prague Quartet and Antonín Kohout, member of the Smetana Quartet. The Pražák Quartet soon acquired a great reputation, taking first prize at competitions in Kroměříž and Evian in 1978 and a year later winning the Prague Spring Competition. In 1986 the cellist whose name the quartet bears had to give up his increasingly successful musical career for health reasons, and his place was taken by Michal Kaňka, excellently trained and with great gifts as a soloist. The quartet continued on its successful path under its old name but with a new impetus. Its repertoire is admirably broad and contains all the great quartet works from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Dvořák to Schoenberg and Zemlinsky. The Pražák Quartet is without doubt one of the handful of ensembles that represent the absolute elite of Czech quartet performance. The media visibility of the Pražák Quartet has been heightened by ten years of collaboration with the French recording company Harmonia mundi (Praga Digitals) – which is also the case of the Guarneri Trio (see below). Its discography covers roughly twenty titles and almost forty pieces of music and shows not just breadth of repertoire, but a marvellous breadth of expressive power in performance. Its recording of Beethoven's Razumovsky Quartets, the first part of a complete edition of Beethoven's quartets, attracted a huge amount of attention.

The Wihan Quartet

Also distinctive and prominent is the Wihan Quartet: Leoš Čepický, Jan Schulmeister – violins, Jiří Žigmund – viola, Aleš Kasprík – cello. It was formed in 1985 when its members were studying at the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (HAMU) and it gave its concerts under the name HAMU Quartet. Within ten years it became one of the most sought-after quartets both at home and abroad. Bringing together four musicians who were equally technically skilled and very much on the same wavelength, it benefited from the start from excellent teaching in the person of Prof. Antonín Kohout. In the course of almost con-

tinuous travel punctuated by concerts at home, the ensemble toured Japan, for example, and appeared several times at London's Wigmore Hall, on one occasion for a concert broadcast by the BBC. After the stage of competitions the quartet embarked on the next stage of constant return to festivals with which it identifies in terms of sentiment and musical philosophy. It makes regular concert appearances not only in many countries of Europe but just as regularly in the USA, Japan and Australia – as do practically all the ensembles listed here. In addition to its large repertoire of quartet literature the ensemble enthusiastically engages in "crossover" music projects, such as appearances with the chanson singer Hana Hegerová and the star of musicals, Jan Ledecký, or paying tribute to the Beatles with a CD of the famous band's repertoire. The ensemble has made recordings for a number of domestic publishing companies (Bonton Music, Popron, Studio Matouš, Arco diva). Recently it finished an outstanding complete recording of Beethoven Quartets for the Lotos company.

The Talich Quartet

The Talich Quartet has gone down in the history of Czech chamber music in two different phases marked by different membership. It was founded in 1964 by Jan Talich, the nephew of the famous Czech conductor Václav Talich. Initially consisting of P. Messiereur, J. Kvapil, J. Talich senior and E. Rattay, it soon won recognition for its brilliant interpretations of Mozart and Beethoven. Its recordings won a series of awards including the Diapasson d'Or, Grand Prix du Disque, Diapasson du siecle, and Supraphon Golden Disc. The ensemble became a leading performer of 20th-century music, for example making a recording of Béla Bartók's String Quartets for Supraphon. In the later 1990s the ensemble membership changed, and it now consists of Jan Talich – 1st violin (who is also the musical director of the Talich

Chamber Orchestra), Petr Maceček – 2nd violin, Vladimír Bukač – viola and Petr Prause – cello, who are continuing in the tradition of their predecessors. In addition to an extensive repertoire of Czech music and classical composers they often play the music of 20th-century composers such as Alban Berg, Arnold Schoenberg, Béla Bartók and Dmitri Shostakovich.

The Stamic Quartet

The Stamic Quartet was founded in 1985. Both the original violinists came from Havlíčkův Brod, the birthplace of Jan Václav Stamic. The original leader Bohuslav Matoušek, who later embarked on a solo career, was replaced by Jindřich Pazdera. The other members are the violinist Josef Kekula, the viola player Jan Pěruška and the cellist Vladimír Leixner. They have a significant interest in Czech classicism, although the core of their repertoire is naturally the string quartets of Smetana, Dvořák and Martinů and a wide selection of works by world composers. In 1986 they won the quartet competition organised by the European Broadcasting Union in Salzburg and in the same year they gave a Salzburg concert that was transmitted to the member states of the EBU, Canada and the USA. Only two years later they won the Grand Prix du Disque de l'Academie Charles Cros Paris for their recording of the string quartets of A. Dvořák (F major, op. 96, G major, op. 106), and in 1991 the same prize for their recording of the complete string quartets of Bohuslav Martinů. At the 1997 Prague Spring Festival they performed the complete quartets of Alois Hába (see CM 3/2005) in three concerts. In 1998 their recording of the string quartets of Leoš Janáček came first in a reader survey of recordings of these works in the British magazine Gramophone. One important milestone in their activities has been the founding of the EuroArt Prague "Stamic Quartet and Guests" festival. It is a regular event to which they invite leading world chamber ensembles and so promote contacts with the top international groups in the field. The Stamic Quartet is also the festival's resident ensemble and gains new ideas and impulses from regular performances with guest groups. From September 2005 to June 2006 what is now the sixth annual cycle of EuroArt Praha presented ensembles that included for example the fresh laureate of the ARD Munich Prize, Quatuor Ebéne, the Kodaly Quartet and the Quarteto Casals. Actually appearing with the Stamic Quartet at joint concerts were the pianist Alex Tharaud, the vibraphone and marimba player Radek Krampl, the pianist Karel Růžička and the clarinettist Steph. Siegenthaler. The second series of the EuroArt Pragie Festival, which is called a Season of Laureates, presents young Czech chamber groups that have been successful in international competitions.

The Škampa Quartet

The Škampa Quartet was founded in 1988 at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts under the supervision of professors Antonín Kohout and Milana Škampa of the Smetana Quartet. Its members, however, continued their studies abroad, for example at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole with Pietro Farulli from the Quartetto Italiano, with the pianist Malcolm Frager, and with members of the Amadeus Quartet and Walter Levin from the Quartet LaSalle. After winning a number of prizes at international competitions the ensemble won first prize at the prestigious global Charles Hennen Competition in Heerlen in the Netherlands. In 1995 it followed up this success with a very successful recital at London's Wigmore Hall, for which it won the Royal Philharmonic Society prize for Best Debut 1993. In October of the next year the quartet became the very first resident ensemble at the Wigmore Hall in history and in 1994–98 it gave dozens of successful concerts there. In addition to making concert tours throughout the world, in May 2001 the Škampa Quartet were appointed "guest professors of chamber music" at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where they continue to teach. They record for Supraphon (their eighth CD contains a modern and very highly rated performance of both Smetana's quartets). They have caused a sensation with their collaborative projects with the experimental folk violinist and singer Iva Bittová (recordings of Romany and Moravian folk music and jazz, and particularly their own arrangement of Janáček's Moravian folk poetry in songs recorded on CD for Supraphon). The quartet regularly takes part in broadcasts on BBC radio, and their "BBC Lunchtime Course" with Melvyn Tan was chosen as the first CD in the "Live from the Wigmore Hall" series of recordings on the BBC international label. The Škampa Quartet also appeared on the BBC programme "Classic Café", broadcast live from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden as part of the celebrations for its reopening. In the words of one reviewer, *"Everything they play, they play with a grasp that corresponds to the time when the work was written. Their approach to performance is based not just on knowledge of one piece or another, but on complete union with it. This is strikingly evident in the recording of the two Janáček quartets, their interpretation of which, as we can judge from comparison with dozens of others, is new in the sense of a kind of "return to Janáček". The quartet players have tracked down a number of Janáček's comments from letters and notes, and interrogated as far as possible all the available sources, including recorded verbal statements about the composer's idea of the content of the work or its performance. A concert programme based on these "journeys of exploration" which they present under the title Janáček and his Moravian roots, is worth mentioning in this context."* Their discography also includes quartets by Haydn, Beethoven and Brahms.

The New Vlach Quartet

The New Vlach Quartet (The Vlach Quartet Prague) continues and identifies primarily with the musical legacy of the famous violinist, conductor and teacher Josef Vlach, leader of the Vlach Quartet. This exceptional musician presided over the birth of the New Vlach Quartet and had a decisive influence on its musical development. The quartet was founded in 1982 and consisted then, as it did until

recently, of Jana Vlachová – 1st violin, Karel Stadtherr – 2nd violin, Petr Verner – viola and Mikael Ericsson – cello. In 2006 P. Verner was succeeded by Georg Haag. Just a year later after its formation the quartet won the prize for the best performance of a contemporary piece at the competition in Kroměříž. In 1985 it then achieved another major success with a prize and laureate's title at the international string quartet competition in Portsmouth in England. In 1988 the quartet was invited by the Hindemith Foundation to Switzerland to take part in international master courses led by the celebrated Melos Quartet. Four years later (1992) it had the chance to discuss and develop its conception particularly of German classics at master classes with outstanding professors - F. Beyer (Münich), E. Feltz (Berlin) and Chr. Poppen (Detmold). In 1995 the quartet was chosen to record the complete chamber works of A. Dvořák on 15 CDs for the label NAXOS. In 1997–1999 the Vlach Quartet was the resident Salamanca-Hall ensemble in Gif in Japan and in 2000 it won the prestigious German critics' "Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik" for its recording of the double album Esquisses Hébraiques with the distinguished clarinettist Dieter Klöcker. All the members of the New Vlach Quartet are also active soloists and in addition to their main activity in the quartet form the core of the Czech Chamber Orchestra (see below).

The Kubín Quartet

The remarkable and distinctive tradition of Moravian chamber ensembles, which started with the Moravian Quartet and continued particularly with the above mentioned Janáček Quartet, has found a worthy heir in the form of the Ostrava Kubín Quartet: Luděk Cap, Jan Niederle – violin, Pavel Vítek – viola, Jiří Zedníček – cello, which was formed in 1972 when its members were studying at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in Brno. Their teacher was Adolf Sýkora, a member of the Janáček Quartet. After the usual stage of participation in various competitions, the quartet was deservedly given the opportunity to appear in major concert halls in most European countries. They then made Ostrava their base and decided to promote the chamber works of the composer associated with this region, Rudolf Kubín and to take his name. The quartet has given concerts all over Europe and presented the full range of quartet repertoire in its programmes. Great credit must go to an ensemble that for three decades has formed awareness of chamber music in one region and so carried the torch of continuity for more than one generation of listeners. Its discography includes an exemplary recording of the quartets of Leoš Janáček and also Vítězslav Novák's String Quartet in D major op. 35, and the string quartets of C. A. Nielsen and K. Ditters.

The Kapralova Quartet

The only Czech string quartet made up entirely of women was founded in 1995 initially with the name Venus Quartet (Rita Čepurčenko, Simona Hurníková – violins, Světlana Jahodová – viola, Margit Klepáčová – cello). The quartet differs markedly from the usual pattern in having been formed not while its members were studying but roughly ten years later, when they were already mature performers in their thirties. After two years working together the quartet travelled to a festival in Israel, then appeared in Paris and subsequently made a concert tour of Spain. In 2001 the ensemble won 3rd Prize when they entered a recording in a competition organised by Radio de France and the success substantially increased their fame and popularity. As a result, the Vítězslava Kaprálová Society based in Ontario in Canada, approached the Venus Quartet and suggested that the all-female ensemble change its name to that of the world famous Czech woman composer. If we want to characterise what is distinctive about the music of the Kapralova Quartet, however, it is certainly not simply that it is a female quartet. The strong profile of quartet leader Rita Čepurčenko, the first woman to be concert master of the FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra, sets the tone, artistic standard and emotional quality of the whole group. Abroad the quartet records for FCE Lucemburg, and at home for the Czech companies Arcodiva and Music Vars.

A THREESOME OF YOUNG QUARTETS

The Pavel Haas Quartet

Consists of the violinists Veronika Jarůšková and Kateřina Gemrotová, the viola player Pavel Nikl and the cellist Peter Jarůšek. They are laureates of the Prague Spring Competition 2005 and winners of the Premio Paolo Borciani. V. Jarůšková and Peter Jarůšek studied in Bratislava and in 1995 moved to the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, where they completed their training. Peter Jarůšek played for five years in the internationally successful Škampa Quartet, while in 2002 Veronika Jarůšková founded the Pavel Haas Quartet. The Pavel Haas Quartet, named after the outstanding composer and pupil of Leoš Janáček, has existed with the same members since 2004. Since its founding it has been invited to the prestigious Academia di Musica della Quartetto in Florence and in 2003 it also appeared in London's Wigmore Hall with the Škampa Quartet playing Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's Octet op. 20. It won the prestigious Rimbotti Prize at the competition in Fiesole by Florence, part of the prize being an important concert in the Teatro della Pergolla. In April last year, quite soon after the competition, the quartet used an opportunity provided by the ProQuartet study programme to start working with Walter Levin, a member of the LaSalle Quartet. Together with the Bemewitz and Zemlinsky Quartet and with other young ensembles they then took part in performance of all the Beethoven quartets in Basle and Milan under Walter Levin's direction. (See also CM 4/2005)

The Bennewitz Quartet

The Bennewitz Quartet was founded in Prague in 1998 and its members are top instrumentalists of the upcoming generation. It consists of Jiří Němeček, Štěpán Ježek – violins, Jiří Pinkas – viola and Štěpán Doležal – cello and after studying at Prague's Academy of Performing Arts they have gained valuable experience at master courses and a number of prizes at international competitions. The quartet has the honour to bear the name of the important Czech teacher and violinist Antonín Bennewitz, who was the first director of the Prague Conservatory. His teaching legacy is one of the corner stones of the Czech school of violin playing. In 1999 the Bennewitz Quartet took part in the interna-

tional Beethoven's Hradec competition in Hradec nad Moravicí, where it won 2nd Prize. In December of the same year the young performers attended master classes led by Mstislav Rostropovich. They have also taken part in many international master courses in Reichenau in Austria, studying under members of world-famous quartets. They concluded their studies with a period in Spain in the years 2002–2004 with Reiner Schmidt, a member of the Hagen Quartet. They have also participated in the courses directed by Walter Levin, a member of the LaSalle Quartet in Basle. They were finalists of the ARD Munich competition in 2004 and won the competition in Osaka in 2005.

The Zemlinsky Quartet

This ensemble is one of the youngest successful Czech quartets. The Zemlinsky Quartet (previously performing as the Penguin Quartet) consists of František Souček, Petr Střížek – violins, Petr Holman – viola and Vladimír Fortin – cello, and since it was formed in 1994 it has been carrying forward the rich tradition of the Czech quartet school. It won 3rd Prize and the Prize of the Public at the international string quartet competition in London (2006) and is a laureate of the Prague Spring international string quartet competition (2005). During their studies at the Prague Conservatory and later at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, the ensemble was taught by members of renowned Czech chamber groups – the Prague Quartet and the Talich, Kocian and Pražák Quartets. It has also taken part in master courses both at home and abroad. Current consultants to the quartet include the Kocian Quartet's cellist V. Bernášek and the Pražák Quartet's viola player J. Klusoň. Currently the quartet is studying with the leader of the LaSalle Quartet, W. Levin, at the Musikakademie Basel (Switzerland) where next year the members of the ensemble will also be working as his assistants.

The Guarneri Trio

The Guarneri Trio Prague is composed of three internationally recognised players: Ivan Klánský – piano, Čeněk Pavlík – violin, Marek Jerie - cello. Formed in 1986, it is now without doubt one of our top ensembles and has a very wide repertoire, although it inclines more to Romantic than to more modern music and includes works by Antonín Dvořák and Dmitri Shostakovich. All three of the trios by Ludwig van Beethoven and the trios of Franz Schubert are part of the core repertoire, and also Smetana, Martinů, Suk and Luboš Fišer. They have made some milestone recordings for Supraphon, including a complete set of the trios of Beethoven and Shostakovich for the French label Praga. As is usual with outstanding piano trios, all the players also have solo careers. The marvellous sound of the ensemble is linked to its name: Č. Pavlík plays an instrument made by Guarneri del Gesu from Luigi Tarisio's collection and M. Jerie plays a cello made by Andrea Guarneri in 1684. The pianist Ivan Klánský, considers solo and chamber play to be "the ideal combination": *"You learn to think in different dimensions and colours. What is more I then master the easier parts of chamber music fast and to a good standard. The technical and musical difficulty of Chopin concerts and Prokofiev sonatas has prepared me so well that I don't have any problems with Dvořák's Dumkas or Smetana's piano trio. Today the ratio of chamber music to solo performance in my case is about seven to three."*

The Smetana Trio

The predecessor of today's Smetana Trio (Jana Vonášková-Nováková – violin, Jan Páleníček – cello, Jitka Čechová – piano) was the famous trio of the same name in the 1930s, which was renamed the Czech Trio in 1945 and consisted of the pianist Josef Páleníček, the violinist Alexandr Plocek and the cellist František Smetana. After Smetana's emigration he was replaced in the ensemble by Miloš Sádlo. Their models of the time were no less than the ensemble of great names Cortot-Thibaud-Casals. In 1992 the pianist's son Jan Páleníček, after years of playing in the Ars Trio (renamed the Czech Trio after the death of Josef Páleníček in 1992), founded a new trio that took over the title Smetana Trio from the hands of former members of the original ensemble, Prof. Václav Snítil, Stanislav Apolín and Josef Hála. Musical education in Czech schools supplemented by studies abroad has been a typical feature of the artistic growth of the ensemble. On the model of the former Smetana Trio, they conceive their concerts as combinations of trio and solo pieces. Jana Vonášková-Nováková studied at the Prague Conservatory with Jindřich Pazdera and in March 2000 won the Talent of the Year competition carrying the prize of a year's study at the Royal College of Music in London. She then won an Orpheus Scholarship, which allowed her to continue studying under Felix Andrievsky. She took part in master courses given by Robert Szreder, Sherban Lupu and Joshuy Epstein. In 2000 she emerged the absolute winner at the Lublin international competition for young violinists (2000) and a year later she was award-

ed a European Prize in Strasburg. She has been a member of the Smetana Trio since 2003. Jitka Čechová graduated from the classes led by Jan Novotný and Petr Toperczer, and continued with postgraduate studies in Paris under Eugen Indjic and Vitali Berzon in Freiburg, as well as master courses with Rudolf Kehrer, Eugen Indjic and Lazar Berman. Jan Páleníček was trained under Saši Večtomov and Miloš Sádl, and his musical development was then enhanced by contact with Paul Tortellier and in chamber music with Josef Vlach. Today in addition to playing in the trio he teaches at the conservatory and at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Among Smetana Trio's many CDs for different recording companies we should at least mention his most recent Supraphon CD of works by B. Smetana, J. Suk and V. Novák (2005), which won prestigious awards from the French magazines Diapason and Le Monde de la musique and which the British BBC Music Magazine rated best recording of the month for August 2005 in the field of chamber music. This year he won this British magazine's second prize for Dvořák's trios recording.

The Czech Clarinet Quartet

The Czech Clarinet Quartet is a remarkable example of a completely original ensemble that is breaking down barriers between genres and styles while at the same time ably performing the established repertoire of classical music of all the principal stylistic periods. Bass clarinettist and tenor saxophonist Petr Valášek has exceptional improvisational and multi-instrumental gifts that have led him to work mainly with jazz musicians. He is joined by the clarinettist Vojtěch Nýdl, who is a member of the Prague Chamber Philharmonic and the Afflatus Wind Quintet (see below), Luděk Boura who is a member of the orchestra of the State Opera in Prague who plays clarinet and basset-horn, and Jindřich Pavliš, clarinettist of the Prague Chamber Philharmonic. The members of the ensemble often stress that in the music of recent years, genre, ethnic and psychological boundaries no longer apply, and that the musicians who earlier combined folk music, jazz, and rock were showing the way forward. The members of the Czech Clarinet Quartet are musicians of this kind. The group consists of three clarinets and bass clarinet, with an E-flat clarinet or Mozartian basset-horn used in some pieces. They have developed a repertoire chosen from the widest possible range of epochs and styles (from the Renaissance to Jazz and modern music) which they arrange for their instruments themselves. The players' perceptiveness, excellent technique and feeling gives them lightness and ease in jazz moods, urgency and depth in classical parts, and a spiritualised and ethereal quality in medieval Jewish songs. Their own compositions and the premieres of works by contemporary composers give their repertoire another dimension. Some of their programmes have also involved collaboration with other top Czech performers (they recorded the CD "Tenerife Blues" with the jazz singer Jana Koubková). It is worth mentioning their rare capacity for improvisation even in treatment of the classics, showing the influence of jazz and recently exploration of the potential of electronics applied to classical music. The Czech Clarinet Quartet is an original, lively and successful ensemble, as is clear from the invitations that they receive from important festivals. The instrumental piece Orlík from their CD Ozvěny z kamene [Echoes of Stone] was the winner at the International Songwriting Competition, organised from Nashville in the USA.

The Czech Chamber Orchestra

The Czech Chamber Orchestra adopted the name of the ensemble founded by Václav Talich which existed in the years 1946–1948 (see above). Josef Vlach, the first violin in the orchestra, Talich's pupil and colleague and leader and founder of the Vlach Quartet, took up Talich's idea again after ten years, and in 1957 became the teacher and director of the new orchestra. As teacher, violinist and conductor, Josef Vlach trained generations of young musicians who were to become performers in leading Czech orchestras and chamber ensembles and to carry forward his and Václav Talich's musical ideals. The musical director of the Czech Chamber Orchestra, Jana Vlachová and its conductor Ondřej Kukal base their work on the belief that the chamber orchestra should work on the same principles as the string quartet. In 2002 the CCO (ČKO) started to work with the German conductor Andreas Weiser as well, and it was with Weiser that it made a successful trip to Luxemburg where it collaborated with the "Theatre mimo magique" (France) on a work by the contemporary composer Phil Glass, presented at the Prague Spring 2004, at the festival in Saint Etienne and on other occasions. In the 2004–2005 season the orchestra accepted a generous offer from the management of the Czech Philharmonic and presented 4 concerts as the core of the Philharmonic Chamber Music Subscription series. The orchestra has a wide repertoire from Baroque and Classicist pieces to contemporary music. The Czech Chamber Orchestra works closely with the Jan Neruda High School in Prague, accompany graduates of its music classes at school concerts and support young musicians starting out on their careers.

The Prague Chamber Orchestra without Conductor

As the name suggests the orchestra is distinctive for frequently performing without a conductor. It is an experience that creates a very different kind of sympathy and solidarity among the players, with each relating not to a conductor's baton but to the ensemble as a whole. They also play pieces for larger ensembles without a conductor, including high classical music and 20th-century music. The PCO (PKO) was formed on the initiative of players from the first benches of the Czechoslovak Radio Symphony Orchestra in Prague at the end of the 1950s (it has been an independent ensemble since 1965) with the aim of concentrating specifically on older music, which requires a smaller ensemble. Repertoire possibilities for this kind of chamber orchestra open up mainly in the music of Classicism (Haydn, Mozart, early Beethoven), but extend back into the epoch of the High Baroque (Bach, Händel, Vivaldi), and forward into Early Romanticism (Mendelssohn, Schubert) as well as being abundant in 20th-century music (Britten, Honegger, Prokofiev, Stravinsky). The music of the early Czech masters, of course, represents a whole chapter in itself, including such composers as Michna, Zelenka, Stamic, Benda, Dušek, Mysliveček, Vaňhal, Koželuh, Vranický, Rejcha, Jírovec and Voříšek. Over the fifty years of its life so far the orchestra has recorded innumerable titles for Supraphon, Denon, BMG, Decca, Telarc and other labels and many of its records have won important awards. For many soloists, playing with the PKO provides a tempting opportunity not just to perform their own part but to try the experience of leading the orchestra. This method of work, entirely commonplace in the past, does not appeal to every soloist, however, and in these cases the task of co-ordinating the orchestra is taken by the concert master. In the PKO the concert master has a key role as the musical leader who gives the play of the whole ensemble its final form. Currently the PCO is led by concert master Antonín Hradil.

The Talich Chamber Orchestra

The Talich Chamber Orchestra is a strikingly young ensemble which was formed in 1992 on the initiative of the violinist Jan Talich junior, great-nephew of the legendary Czech conductor Václav Talich. While originally a violinist, he has devoted a large part of his professional career to conducting an orchestra that consists of successful graduates of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and laureates of many competitions at home and abroad. Today the Talich Chamber Orchestra

ranks among top chamber ensembles on the international scene. This is partly thanks to work with leading conductors such as Sir Charles Mackerras. The TCO (TKO) also performs with our best soloists and with major soloists from abroad like Shlomo Mintz (violin) or Michel Lethiec (clarinet). It has recorded CDs for Czech and foreign companies (including French EMI Records) and is currently engaged in its own CD projects. In the Czech Republic its recordings include a CD collection containing works from the Baroque to the 20th century, from Bach's Brandenburg Concertos to Strauss's Metamorphoses and Schoenberg's Transfigured Night. Its concert season combines older and contemporary pieces in a well thought out manner. For the 250th anniversary of the birth of W.A. Mozart the TCO recorded a new CD of pieces for violin and orchestra, with Jan Talich taking the solo part.

Virtuosi di Praga

The Virtuosi di Praga Chamber Orchestra was founded by the violinist and conductor Oldřich Vlček in 1990 and soon became a top ensemble on the international scene. The originally small group developed into a body that has been the partner of stars like Plácido Domingo, Igor Oistrakh, José Cura and Mstislav Rostropovich. The orchestra has a wide-ranging repertoire from Bach and Vivaldi through Vejvanovský, Mysliveček, Mozart, Haydn, Rossini, and Beethoven right up to the music of the 20th century. It often performs with leading Czech choirs (The Prague Philharmonic and Prague Chamber Choir), and has presented great oratorio works such as Haydn's The Creation, Händel's Messiah or Acis and Galatea, Bach's Mass in B minor or the St. John Passion under the baton of Petr Schreier. The orchestra has recorded more than 170 CDs for a wide range of labels including Supraphon, Orfeo, Discover, Claves and Koch International. It is the holder of two Supraphon platinum discs for most successful classical music recording of the 1990s and gold discs from Discover, Supraphon and Lupulus. Virtuosi di Praga is the resident orchestra at the Pontes International Music Festival.

Chamber Ensembles Connected with the Czech Philharmonic

The large number of ensembles that have been formed from members of the Czech Philharmonic provides a good example of the way in which chamber and orchestral play naturally complement each other. Something similar can be observed with other orchestras, since like music schools the orchestra is the most natural place for the birth of these ensembles even if their activities are at the same time limited by players' obligations to the orchestra. If we look, for example, at a recent publication to mark the 110th anniversary of the Czech Philharmonic (*Yvetta Koláčková et al., The Czech Philharmonic 100 plus 10*), we find that many of the first instrumentalists are recorded as members of more than one chamber group as well.

The concert master Bohumil Kotmel was a member of the ensembles Czech Chamber Soloists, the Bohuslav Martinů Piano Quartet, Pro arte antiqua and the Sextet of Czech Philharmonics. The second concert master of the CP Miroslav Vilímec limits himself "just" to violin repertoire with piano accompaniment, with his brother Vladislav Vilímec as accompanist. The notable Duo di basso consists of the first CP cellist František Host and the first double-bass player Jiří Hudec. In 2004 the CP cello group followed the example of other major international orchestras and formed the independent ensemble Virtuosi di basso, for which there is also an extensive repertoire. The viola player Karel Špelina was an outstanding chamber musician as is the current first viola of the CP Jaroslav Pondělíček. The orchestra is also fertile ground for the formation of duos of different instruments; let us mention for example the popular combination of harp and flute and the Duo Boušková – Novotný or Englichová – Machat (although Englichová is not a member of the CP).

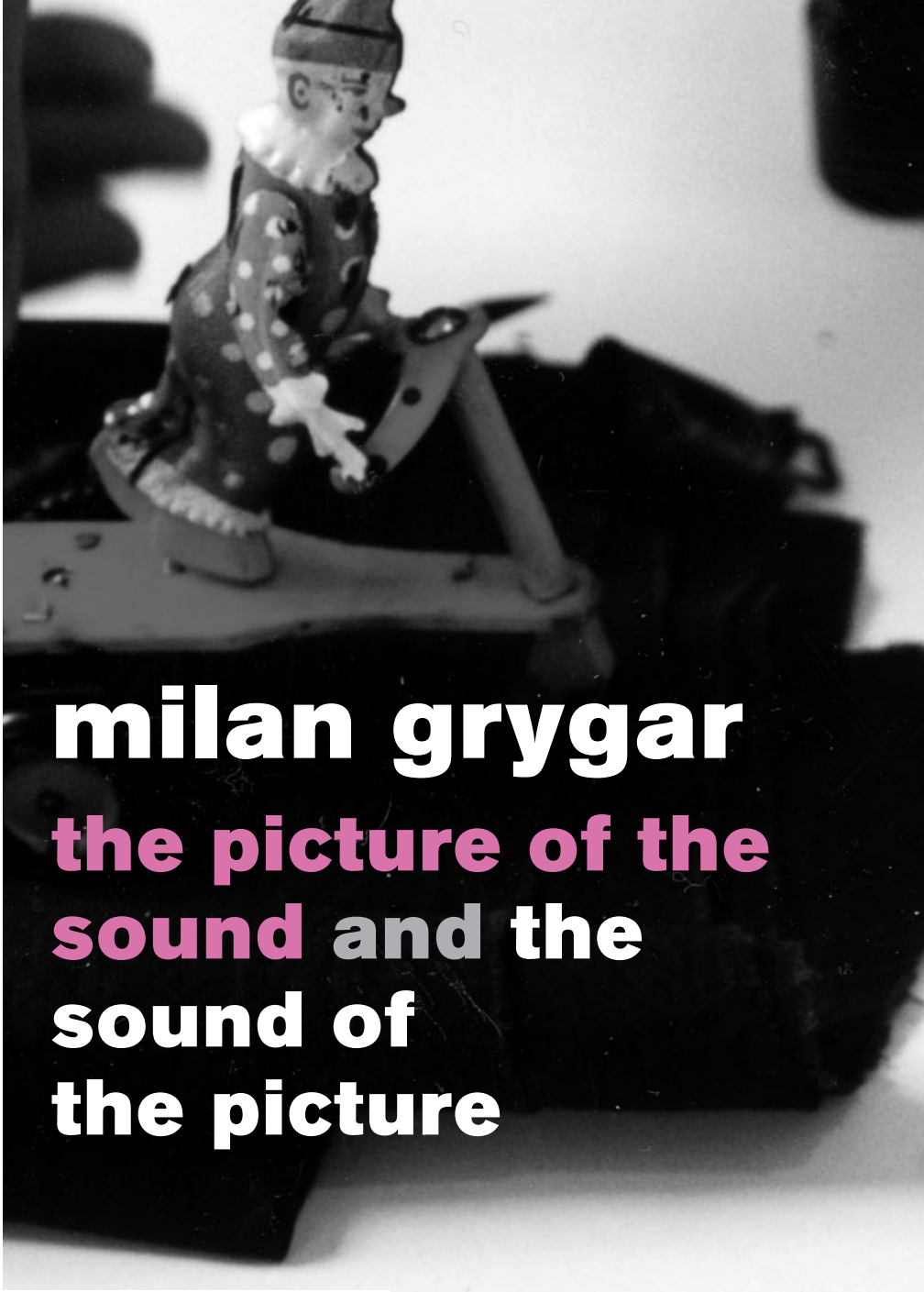
The activities of wind players in chamber groups are even more conspicuous and have a long tradition in such groups as the Czech Philharmonic Wind Quintet and Wind Octet, and also the Czech Nonet, the Academic Wind Quintet, the Prague Wind Quintet, the Czech Philharmonic Harmony, the Czech Wind Harmony, the Harmony Rudolfinum, Ars instrumentalis pragensis, the Collegium musicum pragense, the Prague French Horn Trio, the Czech Horn Quintet and others. Here we also find ensembles devoted to early music, like the Prague Baroque Ensemble and Ars revidiva. Among wind groups whose members are also orchestral players, two have a quite outstanding reputation: In modo camerale and above all the Afflatus Quintet. These are a little different in the sense that they were formed before their members joined the orchestra.

The Afflatus Quintet is the only Czech ensemble ever to have won the prestigious ARD Competition in Munich (September 1997). Statistics show the large number of successful concerts given by the Afflatus Quintet at home and abroad (Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, Hamburg, Brussels, Paris, Japan, international festivals in Finland and Switzerland etc.) A number of CDs already show the breadth of its repertoire: Taffanel, Milhaud, Ibert, Francaix, but also Rejcha, Foerster, Dvořák, and Haydn, Hindemith, Blumer, Klughardt or Maurice Ravel – Revolution 21 as well as W.A. Mozart of course. Taking just a brief view of its listed repertoire we find more than fifty pieces by thirty composers, starting with Mozart and ending, for example, with Jan Klusák (see CM 4/2004) or Ligeti. Contemporary composers are even writing pieces directly for the Afflatus Quintet. All its members (flautist Roman Novotný – CP, oboist Jana Brožková – CP, clarinettist Vojtěch Nýdl – Prague Chamber Philharmonic, bassoonist Ondřej Roskovec – CP, and horn player Radek Baborák – Berliner Philharmoniker) are united in the view that playing in the quintet is very difficult compared not only to play the orchestra, but also to play in other chamber groups, but it is precisely the challenge that appeals to them. All of them see chamber play as a welcome complement and indeed opposite pole to orchestral play.

In modo camerale was formed when its members were still studying at the Prague Conservatory and in 1984 the ensemble won its first laurels at the Concertino Praga competition for young musicians. It collaborated successfully first with the pianist Tomáš Víšek, and subsequently Daniel Wiesner. It consists of the oboist Jana Brožková, solo oboe of the CP and also a member of the Afflatus Quintet, the clarinettist Ludmila Peterková, who is also engaged on a solo career, and the CP bassoonist Jaroslav Kubita. Their recordings

of French music and of the chamber works of Bohuslav Martinů, which won them an award from the French Diapason magazine, are particularly remarkable. They are laureates of the competition in Osaka and hold the prize of the Czech Society for Chamber music, among other awards.

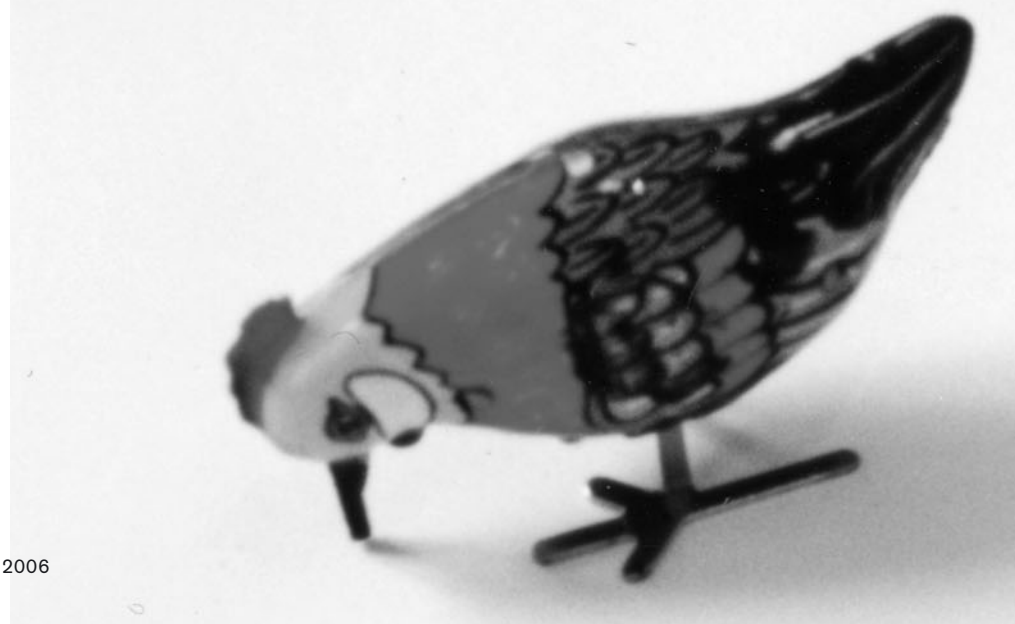
It will be clear that this article is not intended to offer an exhaustive list, but simply to give readers an idea of the breadth and diversity of the Czech chamber music scene today. There are many other ensembles of high quality besides those that have been described above. Among piano trios, for example, we might mention the *Prague Trio* or the *Bohemia Trio*, and among the younger generation the remarkable *Trio Concertino* or *ArteMiss Trio*, as well as trios consisting of another instruments such as the *Belle Epoque* with flute, cello and piano. Among string quartets we might mention the *Martinů Quartet*, the *Doležal Quartet*, the *Kocian Quartet*, the *M. Nostiz Quartet*, the *Apollon Quartet*, the *Herold Quartet* or *Kubelík Quartet* or the continuing tradition of the *Janáček Quartet* and the *Moravian Quartet* with entirely different musicians. In the case of wind instruments we shall find other less usual instrumental combinations: the *Czech Saxophone Quartet* or the *Czech Horn Quartet*, the *Brno Brass Band* and so on and so forth. We could of course continue with many other examples. As well as a great tradition, which to some extent still remains to be mapped, Czech chamber music has a tremendously interesting and colorful present and much can be expected of it in the future.



milan grygar

the picture of the sound and the sound of the picture

HANA LARVOVÁ



The work of Milan Grygar (born 1926) involves an original conception, unique in Czech art, of the relationship between picture, sound and space. It resists established classifications in terms of style or generation, and shows closer links with the ideas of art circles elsewhere in Europe and in the USA than with the domestic scene.

Milan Grygar first had a significant impact on the development of Czech art back in the mid-sixties with a specific concept of the relation between visual art and music. This concept led him to combine the realisation of visual art work with the phenomenon of sound and its existence in space. On this basis in the course of the following years he was to take his own solitary and entirely original path of development, one that in a highly individual way crossed or at least touched aspects of the work of the post-war avant-garde in Europe and America. In the interpretation of Gyrgar's works we cannot help but see certain links or parallels with the musical principles and art realisations of John Cage, for example, and in the mode of musical transcription of certain drawings and scores there are links with the principles of serial music, or – from outside the art or musical field – even with some forms of experimental poetry.

The art of Milan Grygar is many layered. His conception has a fixed, rational order determined by the principles of geometry and its structures. Within this order Grygar strives for the authentic formulation of a purely autonomous work that is not itself a depiction of anything and itself becomes a source of meaning. He thinks it out on the basis of systematic exploration of the mutual determinants of the acoustic and visual image. By integrating sound with line in the unity of space and time Grygar creates bonds that he then modifies into different, often very contrasting relational analogies.
This conception was preceded, in Grygar's early work of the fifties, by an interest in the tradition of modern painting defined by cubism and abstraction. Soon, however, he began to focus in his paintings on the composition and structure of the individual coloured surfaces, and in 1963 this line of development culminated in compositions of

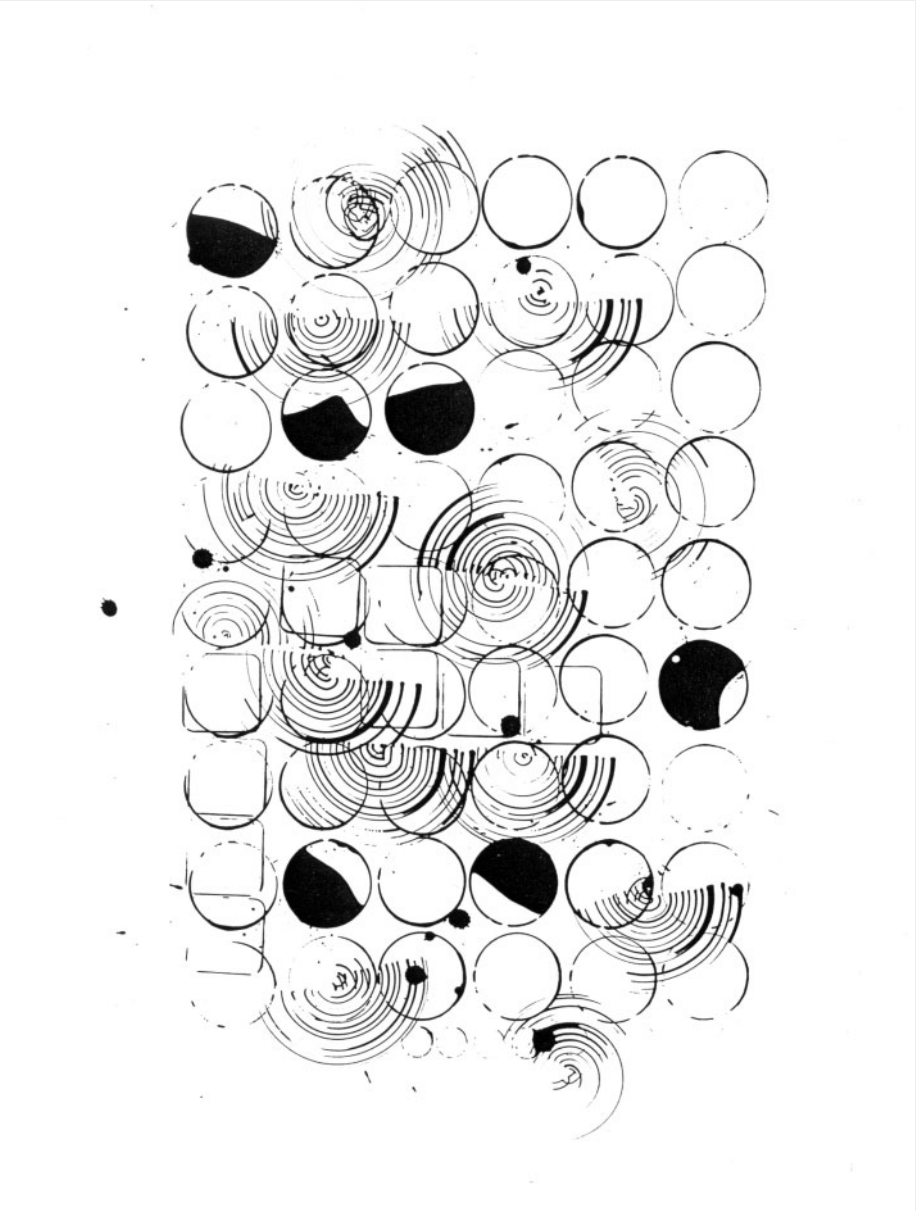
Acoustic drawing (performed in 2001)

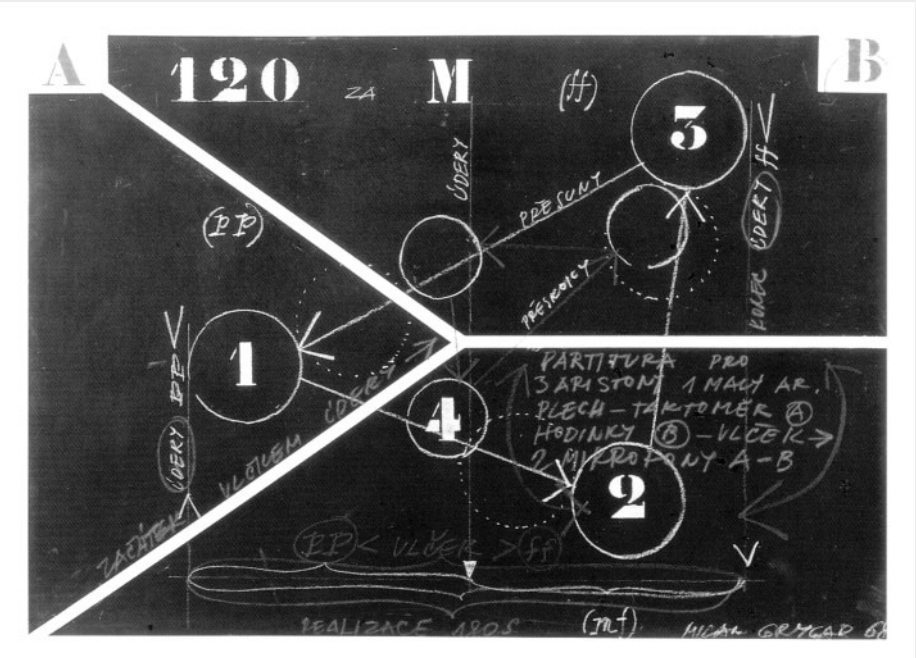
a geometrically abstract type in the form of colour structures of abstracted signs.
At this stage Milan Grygar concentrated on drawing, and it was systematic work with this medium, and emphasis on its character as process and elemental creative gesture, that led him to an interest in the phenomenon of sound. He was looking for a form of drawing that would enable him to express the presence of sound in the picture. A solution occurred to him more or less by chance – while drawing he realised that the process actually had a dimension of sound in the sense of being audible. He pressed on, exploring ways of how to integrate the sound into the realisation of the work on a permanent basis.
In 1965 Grygar created his first acoustic drawings, with sound incorporated into their realisation. To confirm the presence of sound, it needed to be reproducible. Grygar therefore recorded the process of the making of the drawing on tape. The newly defined two-dimensional acoustic-visual form of drawing gave it the new dimension of sound-time. The sound recording became the equivalent of the drawing in temporal correspondence with the process of its making, and so became the "reading of the drawing aloud". Synchronic perception was no longer a condition, since the two elements could exist independently of each other. Grygar used unconventional means of drawing: a wire comb, slivers of wood, a metal box and other objects. Using these he created black-and-white structures of geometrical type, which could be differently arranged on a surface to produce innumerable variations on a composition always based on strong visual contrast between the graphic signs.
A year later Grygar substituted mechanical instruments for his own direct authorial hand in his drawings. With these, the sound recording became independent and equal in value to the drawing itself. Thanks to the simultaneous action of sound-producing objects the acoustic drawings also became "polyphonic". His repertoire of art media was very simple: drawing and sounding parts – toothed wheels, screws, little axles, and sometimes clockwork children's toys – a little frog, chicken, wolf and so on. These objects Grygar would soak in ink and then propel or set in motion in various orders and at various places on the piece of paper, where they created their own visual records in the form of characteristic circles, lines and points as the rhythmic traces of their movement. A key aspect of these realisations was organised chance, introduced "by the play of regular laws, the alternative of the possible, certainty and uncertainty, order and disorder." The French musicologist Jean Yves Bosseur points out the connections between Grygar's "impersonal method" and the methods used by John Cage in sets of engravings for the Crown Point Press in San Francisco in the years 1978 to 1992. This Cage project is an original example of the aesthetic exploitation of an originally functional piece of musical notation in visual art. For Grygar, mechanical

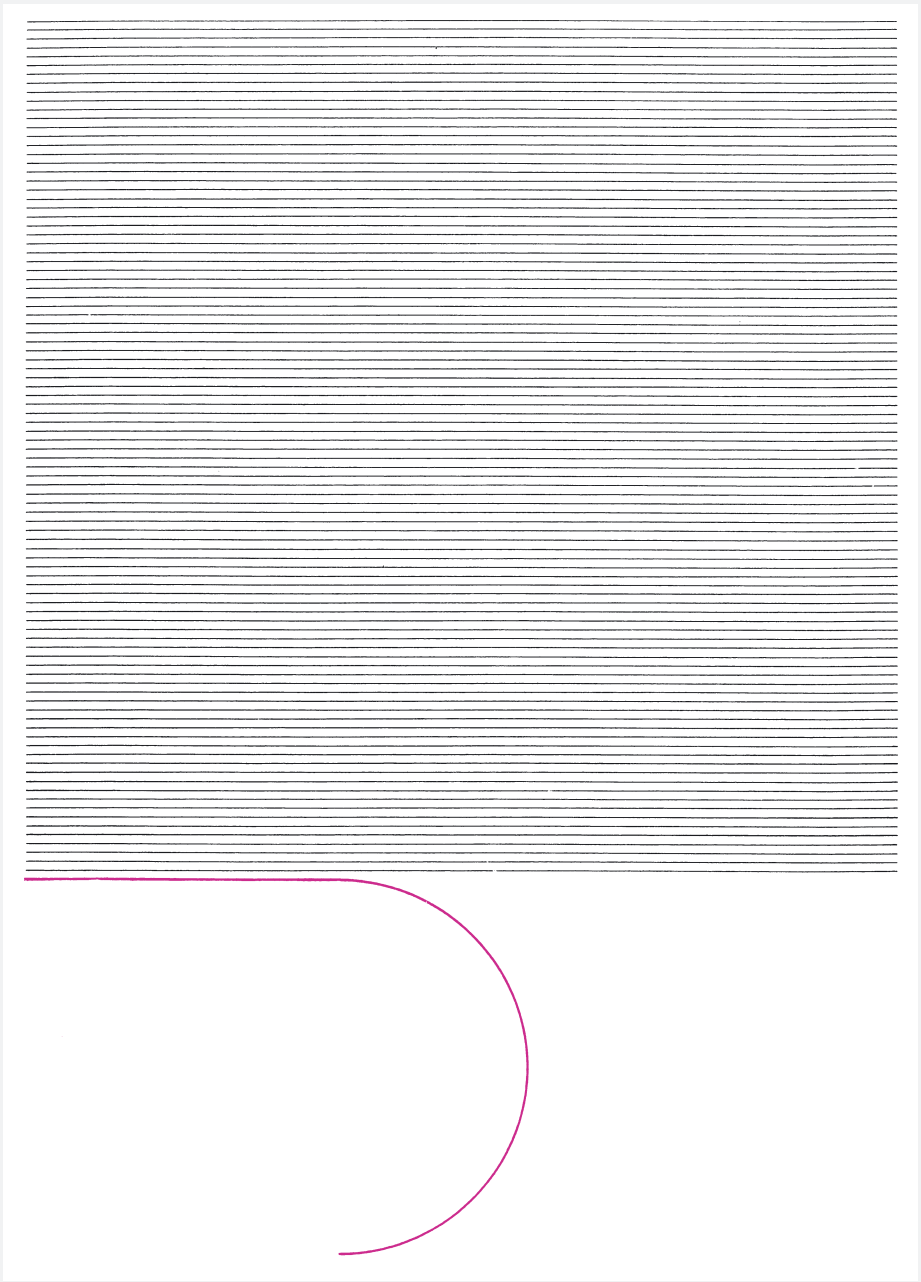
Accoustic drawing (1966)
a glass, wire comb, metal box, 88x62,5 cm (right)

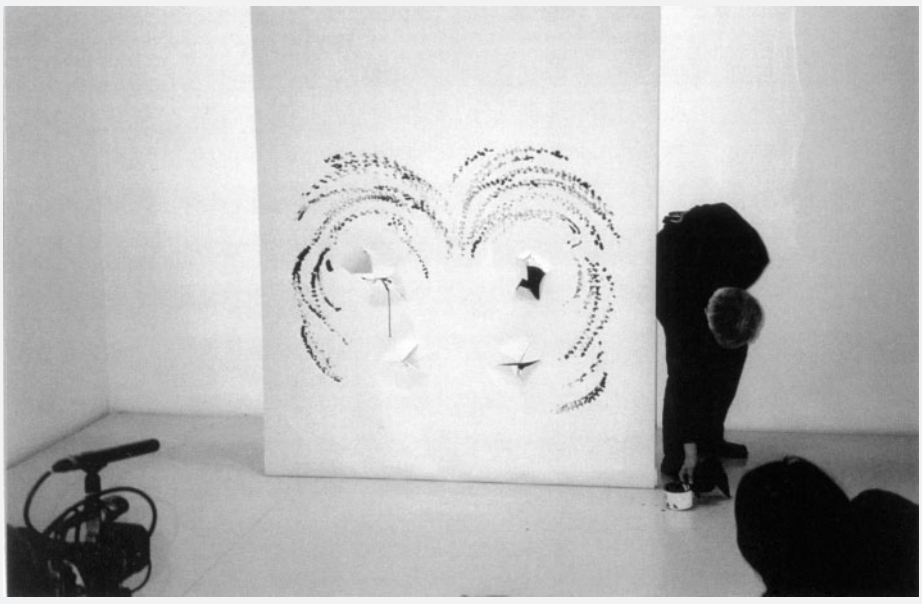
Black score (1968)
score for three barrel organs, one small barrel organ, plate, metronome, watch, spinning top, two microphones, 50x72cm (below)

drawings and other visual-acoustic projects were staged acts that he documented in photographs and on film.
In the tactile acoustic drawings in which Grygar became engaged from 1969, he combined sound and the action of the human body in an entirely original way. The drawings were made almost without the checking function of sight, Grygar followed his touch and hearing. The surface of the future drawing was created by hanging up a long roll of paper that would reach right down to the floor. During the process the author would remain hidden from the sight of the onlooker, who would see only his feet and hands stuck through holes in the paper. The realisation of the drawing always took the same form – rhythmic movements of the fingers of both hands as they conveyed ink to onto the empty surface of the paper. The final act of the process, in which "the human body became interconnected with the surface of the paper" was the tearing out of the part of the paper inside the drawing. Through this "opening up" the drawing acquired a new spatial dimension taking the dematerialisation of the aesthetic act even further. The element of chance made it possible to bind together the meaning of the drawing, sound and gesture in the moment of the drawing's creation, which the author recorded photographically.
At the end of the seventies Grygar followed up his acoustic drawings with a large number of score cycles based on the priority of the visual graphic record, now not necessarily conditioned by actual acoustic elements. In other words, this was no longer a question of a parallel visual and sound record. The drawn scores were essentially more or less precise instructions for musical performance and offered various propositions for performance. These related to the choice of sound element, its location in space, the direction of its movement, and its course over time. These dispositions involved distinctions between different kinds of score – layout scores (see the Black score), scores-patterns, colour scores and architectonic scores. Some of them were actually musically performed, abroad mainly by Erhard Karkoschka and Jean Yves Bosseur, and in this country by the Agon Orchestra, Peter Graham, Kamil Doležal, Jiří Stivín and others.
Other variants consisted of linear scores, sound-plastic drawings and drawings of illusive spatial figures in which Grygar continued freely to paraphrase the possible combinations of sound elements. He expressed them in small interruptions, usually marked in colour, to the regular linear composition or configuration of elementary geometrical forms. With their emphasis on the specific composition of the visual elements that cre-









ated surface structures of subtly shaped lines, sets of straight lines or geometric forms on a white background, these scores bring new aesthetic qualities into Grygar's drawing.

The end of the eighties brought a radical change. Milan Grygar returned to painting. In 1987 he embarked on his first cycle of black paintings with coloured linear elements in complementary colours. Their unmistakable poetics were based on the contrast between the monochrome surface of the painting and the luminescent lines. There were concentrated paintings of the same size, containing red, green or blue straight lines or sectors of a circle that materialised light and movement in space and time. The closed set of seven black paintings, Polemics with a Square, which he painted a year later, was a variation on these, and a set of white paintings that Grygar called Geometric Scores was conceived on the same principle. In these he was carrying on ideas from the linear scores that had come earlier. Here the role of the linear elements was take over by two elementary geometric forms, white and black, sometimes red and white, composed into the white surface of the picture, and fulfilling the function of bearers of the acoustic events. Like the black and white pictures, they were conceived as propositions for potential musical performance.

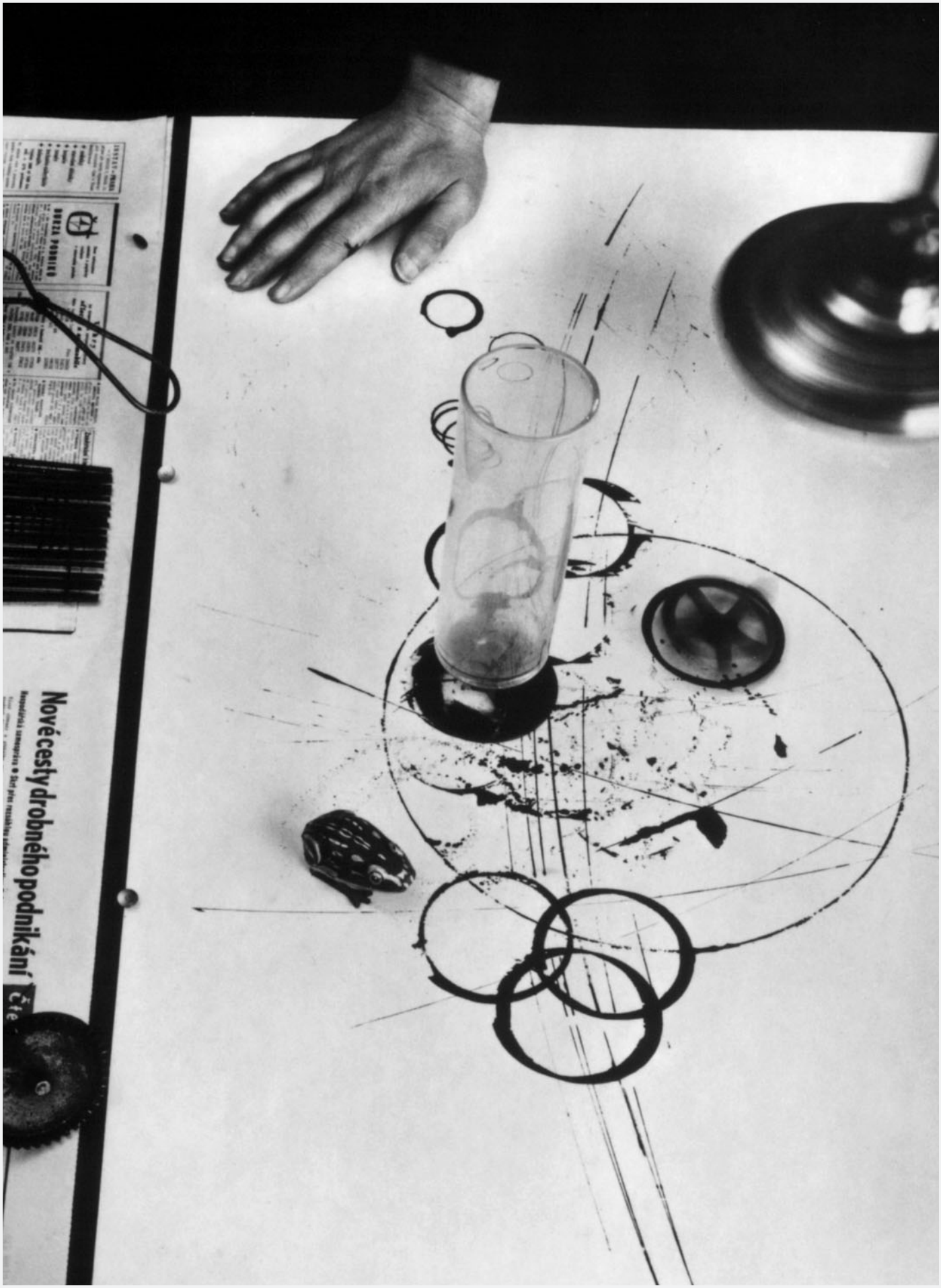
Since 1996 Milan Grygar has been working on a large and not yet complete set of pictures that he calls Antiphonies. Antiphonies are pictorial transpositions of sound events, and of course their acoustic (musical) character is expressed in the very title. They are in a mixture of small and large sizes. The reduced brushwork of the compositions consists of monochrome geometric figures or lines in a combination of white or red and black, which articulate the sound. Colour has appeared in the most recent pictures. Antiphonies are becoming constructions of monochrome colour segments, combined in ways that summon up different spatial relationships. Among his currently most recent work we also find Paintings – Scores, which are informed by the same principle as Antiphonies, but the presence of a new compositional element – plastic vertical lines – is changing the aesthetic value of the painted surfaces. Paintings-Scores suggest the possible direction in which Grygar's individual conception of visual-acoustic form may find new embodiment.

At the beginning of next year the Gema Art Publishing house will be bringing out a superb publication on Milan Grygar, summarising his work.

Linear score (1976), 88x62,5 cm (above)

Performance of an tactile drawing (The Drawing Center, New York, 2001; see cover as well) (left)

Grygar is performing an acoustic drawing (1969)


Nové cesty drobného podnikání

ervín schulhoff

a musician without prejudices

Ervín Schulhoff (1894-1942) was an important figure in the Czech avant-garde between the wars. His entire life was spent switching between Czech and German cultural environments. In his time it was mainly as an outstanding pianist that he was highly regarded, and the music that he actually wrote received due recognition only later.

ŠÁRKA KREJČÍ

He composed 7 completed symphonies, the ballets *Olegala* and *Náměsíčná [The Sleepwalker]*, the opera *Flammen (Plameny - Flames)* and several concertos for different instrumental combinations (e.g. *Concerto for piano and small orchestra, Double concerto for flute, piano and string orchestra with two french horns* or the *Concertino for string quartet and winds*). His jazz oratorio *H. M. S. Royal Oak* was the culmination of the Jazz Wave in Bohemia. Schulhoff devoted a major part of his output to the piano, composing 5 piano sonatas, 2 piano suites and many other, often Jazz-influenced cycles (e.g. *Partita for Piano*, *Esquisses de Jazz*, *Cinq Études de Jazz*, *Hot-music* or *Suite dansante en Jazz*). His most notable works of chamber music were his two string quartets, *Sextet for two violins, two violas and two cellos,* his second *Sonata for violin and piano, Sonata for flute and piano,* and *Hot-sonata for alto saxophone and piano.*

Schulhoff was not only an unusually gifted musician, but one who considerably broadened the range of his creative personality through his unceasing interest in current events in culture and society. He kept up with the most progressive trends in the cultural life of his time and tried to support them with his own activities as a composer, performer and music organiser. He was open to all the newly emergent movements in the arts. For an artist of his type the inter-war period provided an inexhaustible source of creative impulses, and these he incorporated into his own musical idiom to a greater or lesser extent.

Musical Education

Schulhoff came from a Prague Jewish family. He was born in 1894 in the Lesser Town. In the spirit of family traditions he was brought up German-speaking, but from the beginning of his artistic career he was in contact with Czech cultural circles. Especially in the 1920s and 30s in Prague he collaborated with many Czechs from various branches of the arts (e.g. with the conductor Václav Talich, the composers Karel Boleslav Jirák and Alois Hába (see CM 3/2005), the poet Vítězslav Nezval and the artist Zdeněk Pešánek). His great-uncle Julius Schulhoff had been a well-known piano virtuoso and composer. His maternal grandfather, Heinrich Wolff, an outstanding violinist, was the concert master of an opera orchestra in Frankfurt am Main. Together with the family's affluence, these musical roots provided the naturally artistically disposed Ervín Schulhoff with an excellent environment for developing his gifts and studies from early childhood.

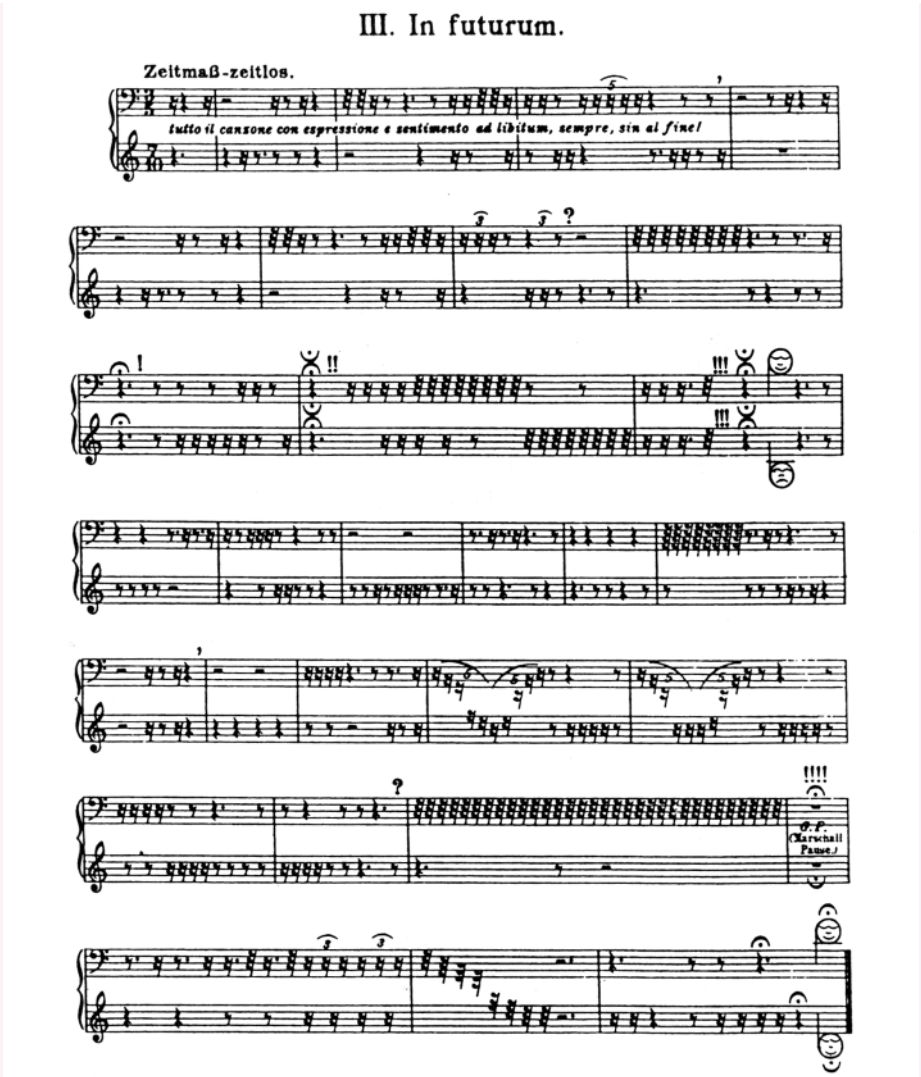
His unusual musical talent became apparent very early. At only seven, on the recommendation of Antonín Dvořák, he started to study the piano privately with Jindřich Kaan and from 1904 at the Prague Conservatory. He studied for a short time in Vienna, but was dissatisfied there and so in 1907 went to Leipzig. Here he also began to take an interest in composition, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the German tradition and modern techniques in harmony in Max Reger's class. It was also while in Leipzig that he came across more recent Russian work in his study of piano literature, and was particularly captivated by the music of Alexander Skriabin. After finishing music studies in Leipzig (1910) he embarked on his first concert tour of Germany as a pianist, launching it in Berlin with a performance of Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto – according to the critics of the period it was a colossal success. Schulhoff completed his musical education with three years of study in Cologne. In the summer of 1913 he went to Paris and visited Claude Debussy, who was a strong influence on him at the time and from whom he wanted to learn as much as he could. He was disappointed, however, because the great "modernist" demanded a thorough-going respect for the rules of harmony. In the same year Schulhoff won the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Prize for piano performance in Berlin. His promising musical career and development was interrupted by the war for several years, since Schulhoff immediately joined up and remained in the Austrian army until the end of the war.

A Born Avantgardist

After the war he went to live with his sister in Dresden, where he encountered the Austrian-German avant-garde movement and became actively involved in cultural and social life. The post-war atmosphere of revolutionary enthusiasm suited him. Like the other members of the Dresden Group he embraced the Dadaist programme. He was convinced that Dada ideas could be exploited in music as well, and he chose jazz, which was just at that period reaching Western Europe from America, as the means to do so. Schulhoff could use it to shock, and create a "sensation", something that always attracted him. The music critics of the time, however, condemned him for superficial effect-seeking modishness.

The attempt to express the Dadaist programme in music was expressed in two different ways in two of Schulhoff's piano cycles, *Five Picturesques* and *Zehn Themen (Ten Piano Pieces).* In the first case Schulhoff used elements of jazz, the current craze of the younger generation and embodiment of the zeitgeist, to arousing, shocking effect. The 3rd Part "In futurum" is a typical Dadaist squib, composed of nothing but a quantity of different rests and agogic signs, which meant that for a successful performance the player had to be someone with a feeling for practical jokes who could sit down at the untouched keyboard and project the appropriate experience. The piano cycle *Zehn Themen* is more loosely linked with Dadaism. As far as musical language is concerned, in these pieces Schulhoff adopts an atonal idiom. Once when Schulhoff invited the painter Otto Griebel round to his Dresden studio and played him his most recent piano pieces, it struck both of them that by combining the expressive potential of music and fine art they could create a new artistic form. This inspired Griebel to produce 10 lithographs in

which he tried to create a free parallel to the musical work.
In Dresden Schulhoff also engaged in music organisational work. He came up with a plan for a cycle of "progressive concerts" devoted to present as yet unknown works by contemporary composers for the 1919-20 season. The first season was supposed to be focused on the works of composers from Schönberg's circle. The aim of these evenings of contemporary music, as the composer wrote in his plan, was *"to support Dresden musical life, enlighten its public and introduce the musical revolution to them."* This plan undoubtedly shows the influence of the Second Viennese School. Schönberg's Society for the Private Performance of Music had been founded in 1918 likewise with the aim of promoting new musical endeavours. The German Expressionists also embraced a revolutionary conception of music and believed that it could be a means to spiritual enlightenment and salvation. Nonetheless, there was a fundamental difference between Schönberg's and Schulhoff's attitude: Schulhoff did not take such a sceptical view of the public. He did not aspire to a "pure" artistic approach regardless of public reception. He did not consider the gulf between art and society to be so ominous. The fact that it was to Schönberg School that he appealed, even though it took an entirely different stylistic direction to his own, is a measure of his impartiality and open-minded attitude to different aesthetic movements. For Schulhoff, the idea of artistic revolution was not limited to a particular national culture, and every artist had the potential to take it further.



Music is not Philosophy
"An important work of art ought to create epochs and should never be created by epochs – and by and large it does not matter what kind of work it is or what area it represents. Ultimately this always holds true, despite all excesses and despite the loud trumpetings of various sects to the effect that they are going to "abolish art", and overthrow every valid principle and natural law just in the cause of sensation, since the more they do this, the greater the advertisement that they unwittingly provide for the work of arts they reject." These are the words that Schulhoff uses to start his article *Revolution and Music* of 1920, which he evidently wrote more for himself than with the aim of publication. It is a set of reflections on the problems of contemporary art. Like every artist at the beginning of his career he was seeking a path for his own work. He supported avant-garde movements since he refused to submit to established conventions, but at the same time he disagreed with mere experimentation for the sake of experiment. *"In recent years nothing has been going on in music than constant experimentation without results, which has led to greater and greater nonsense!"* The essential feature of Schulhoff's attitude was that he was trying to find a way to a wider public, and unlike the Schönberg School he did not wish to write just for a narrow circle of the initiated. He stresses the importance of rhythm, *"because people dance, have always danced and dance even today with the same ecstatic enthusiasm for absolute rhythm."* He wanted to reduce the gulf between art music and commercial music. *"The task of music is above all to summon up physical bliss, even ecstasy, through rhythm; it is never philosophy, it springs from the ecstatic state and finds it expression in rhythmic movement! Only a bourgeois could believe that music is philosophy, because with his conventional linguistic formulas he inclines more to aestheticism than to naked reality."*

Return to Prague
It was with these revolutionary ideas that in 1923 Schulhoff returned to Prague, where he had the chance to become actively involved in a cultural life that was developing rapidly in every field. In the field of music the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state provided the impulse for a great many innovative trends that had a major impact on the educational system, institutional base, academic and journalistic activity and live musical production. Prague between the wars became a wonderfully congenial place for musicians responding to the most recent developments in the European avant-garde. Contacts between Czech music and international music brought stimuli that evolved during the 1920s into three main creative lines: expressionist, neo-classical and constructivist. In addition, elements of folklore, dance music and jazz appeared in the work of a number of Czech composers.
All this meant that after moving back to Prague Schulhoff could carry on without dislocation in the direction set by his Dresden and Berlin experiences. His basic attitude as an artist, which placed him among supporters of the avant-garde approach, consisted at the most general level of resistance to any kind of convention. He tried to find new sources of inspiration to make his own musical idiom distinctive, and to link up art music and entertainment music. He experimented with a new tonal system and sought to tackle traditional forms in a new way. His complete openness and impartiality with regard to every movement enabled Schulhoff to exploit the very diverse possibilities of the stylistic ferment of his time.
In Prague Schulhoff was extremely active both as a pianist and as a composer. In addition, in the years 1924-26 he followed Max Brod as a music correspondent in the Prague newspaper *Prager Abendblatt*. At the same time he repeatedly tried to obtain a post as a teacher in the German Musical Academy in Prague, but these attempts were unsuccessful. Later he

had a short period at the Prague Conservatory teaching play of scores, figured bass and later also instrumentation, which particularly interested his pupils, the composers Miloslav Kabeláč and Klement Slavický.

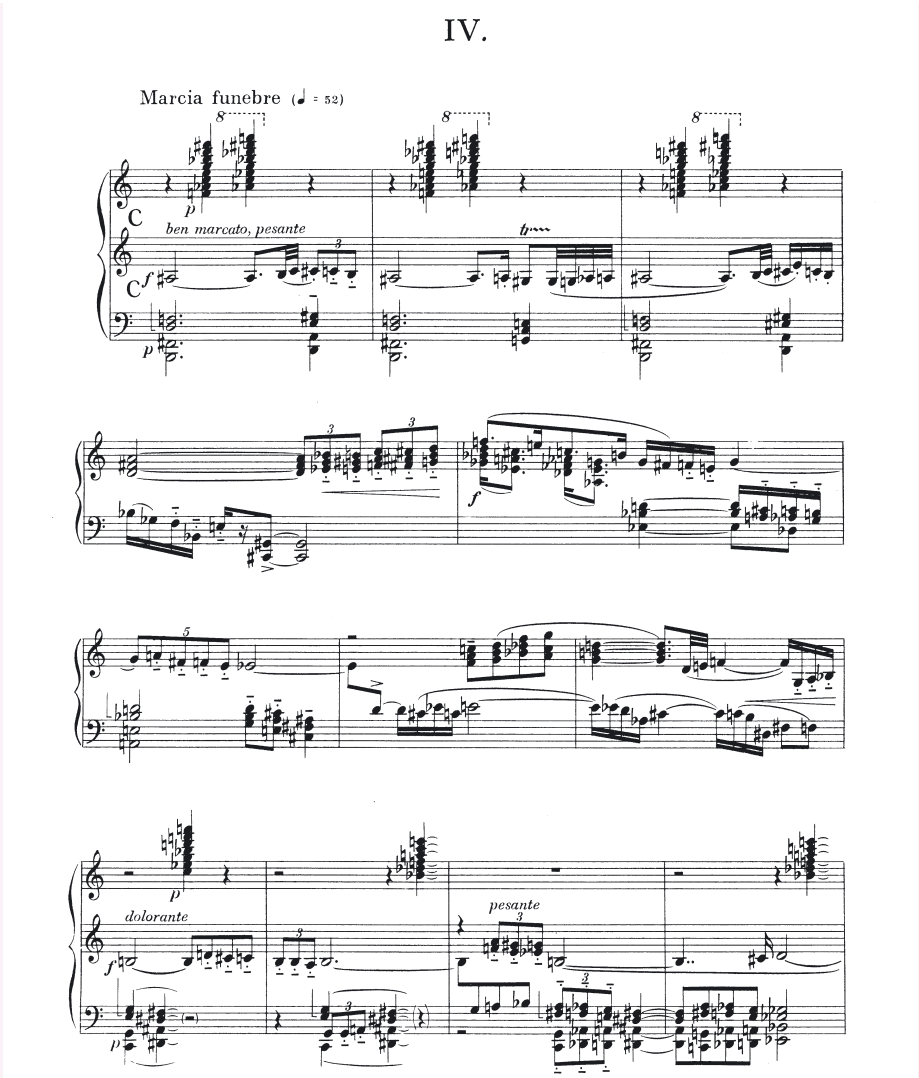
Universal Pianist

Throughout his life Schulhoff devoted a great deal of time to his career as a pianist as well as his composing. He appeared as both a solo pianist and a chamber player in Czechoslovakia and abroad, in concert halls and in radio studios. The critics of the time reserved their praise for his achievements as a performance and tended to be negative about his compositions. They agreed that as a pianist Schulhoff was exceptionally technically skilled, had a phenomenal musical memory and was an excellent sight-reader. Certainly there is no other explanation for the huge breadth of his repertoire, which included works from practically all stylistic periods up to the most recent piano music, including quarter-tone music. His repertoire also extended into the field of jazz and popular music, where Schulhoff made good use of his outstanding talent for improvisation. With these gifts he was very much the type of universal "serviceable" pianist much in demand with the rapid development of radio after the 1st World War. This type had to have an extensive and diverse repertoire from the established and still "living" tradition of piano music and also to be able to present premiere of new domestic and foreign works at short intervals and short notice.

As has been noted, Schulhoff was always interested in the latest artistic movements and kept an open mind about them. In the mid-1920s, i.e. shortly after the construction of a quarter-tone piano, he became one of the first pianists to play the instrument. In 1925 he presented some of Hába's quarter-tone pieces at a concert in Prague and in the following year he published an article entitled *Wie spielt man auf dem Vierteltonklavier? (How is the quarter-tone piano played?)* in Auftakt magazine. In 1928 he took part in an experiment with a "colour piano", which added lighting effects to the music and was designed by Zdeněk Pešánek and built by the Petrof company; he played Scriabin on the instrument.

The flowering of Prague cultural life between the two world wars offered Schulhoff a wide platform for his abilities. We should at least mention the three major concerts at which Schulhoff was able to present his own pieces. In 1924 he appeared for the first time at the Prague Society for the Private Performance of Music. The programme included the premiere of his recently completed *1st piano sonata.* In the same year Prague hosted the 2nd year of the ISCM Festival, at which Schulhoff and Ervína Brokešová played the composer's *Sonata for violin and piano* (1913). Schulhoff then performed his *1st piano sonata* again at another of the festival concerts. He continued to give concerts up to the end of the 1920s, not only in Prague but in many German towns, in Paris and in Holland.

His work with the radio was another major activity that he pursued tenaciously. He



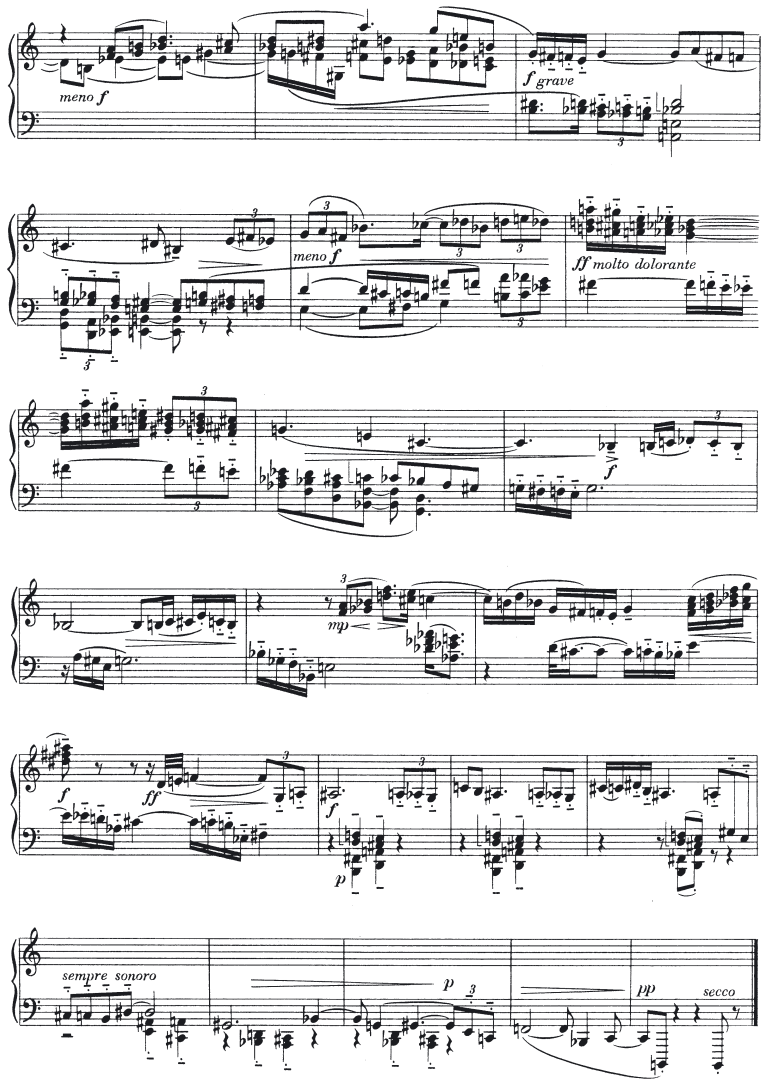
3rd piano sonata (1927), 4th movement

appeared in live broadcasts, made studio recordings, and composed and arranged his own pieces and those of others for radio. He worked with Czech (Prague, from 1935 Ostrava and for a short period Brno) radio stations and radio stations abroad (BBC, WDR Köln and other German studios). With Oldřich Letfus he founded a piano duo (Prager Piano-Duo), which appeared once or twice a week in the Prague Radio Station during the 1930s. The programme would include popular music by Czech composers and various arrangements. Schulhoff himself composed around 20 pieces for these broadcasts, in most cases only writing down one piano part while the other player was supposed to improvise.

Musical Polyglot

Given the many-sided interests of Schulhoff the pianist it is not surprising that Schulhoff the composer tried to exploit all the possibilities offered by various different movements in music. In his own output he adapted impulses from Late Romanticism, Impressionism, Dadaism, dance music and jazz, folklorism, Expressionism, atonality and constructivist tendencies. Of all these styles, the one that emerges most strikingly and consistently in Schulhoff's work is Neo-classicism, its sober idiom evidently being the closest to his heart. We find the first Neo-classical traces in his work as early as 1912-1913. In the cycles *Suite for violin and piano* and *Variations and fugue on a Dorian theme of the composer's own*, Schulhoff used some dances from a Baroque suite. The timing is interesting when we remember how much later it was that works like Prokofiev's "*Classical Symphony*" (1917) or Stravinsky's ballet *Pulcinella* (1919) appeared – works considered to be among the first examples of Neo-classicism. These early pieces by Schulhoff are a clear indication of how, even before Late Romanticism had lost its hold, a new direction was slowly and unobtrusively emerging, and one that would be fully developed in the 1920s by a number of leading composers (apart from Prokofiev and Stravinsky, the Paris Six, for example, and in Bohemia Bohuslav Martinů and the Mánes Music Group).

The most important part of Schulhoff's output was written in the years 1919-32. It was then that he developed his own modern and stylistically individual idiom. At this point he himself



considered that he had reached musical maturity, a view reflected in the fact that he did not give numbers to his first two piano sonatas written in the preceding period (1912-19) and so his *1st piano sonata* (1924) was in fact his third. In the last decade of his life (1932-42), very much dominated by symphonic work, Schulhoff's leftwing political stance led him to try to transfer the principles of socialist realism to music.

If I call Schulhoff a musical polyglot, what I have in mind is his ability to express himself using the languages of various different musical styles. In his or her lifetime every artist naturally tends to go through a series of phases of development, which may either grow out of each other smoothly or proceed by contradiction and rejection. What is typical for Schulhoff, on the other hand, is the mixing of current, often very contradictory trends within the same developmental phase, or even within a single work. It is remarkable how logically these "different musical languages" find their place within extremely closed cyclical forms.

The Art of Meaningful Contrast

The string *Sextet*, in which Expressionism and Neo-classicism – the two fundamental stylistic movements of the day – are mixed together, occupies a special position in Schulhoff's chamber music of the 1920s. Schulhoff completed the first movement at the end of April 1920 in Dresden, where he had been intensively studying Schönberg's techniques of composition. In this movement he clearly embraces Expressionism, evident both in the exalted, very emotive expression, and in the character of the tone material and its arrangement. Here he tends to use dissonant intervals, and alternate progressions in seconds with large intervals. Often the effect is close to atonality, but in the course of the whole movement the impression of a certain tonal centre is created. The other three parts of the *Sextet* were not written until four years later in Prague (April-May 1924). In these movements Schulhoff chose a simpler structure. In contrast to the preceding polyphonic treatment of the parts, a homophonic approach prevails. Neo-classical orientation most strikingly affects the 3rd Movement, in character a lightened up dance. The remaining two parts are slow, intellectually serious movements, and contain more exalted passages returning to Expressionist sensibility.

The string *Sextet*, in which two completely opposed lines of stylistic development interact in a completely natural way, is not the only example of Schulhoff's "polystylistic" approach. We find a similar mixing of different contemporary trends in the *1st piano sonata* as well, for example. Schulhoff has integrated the classical four-movement cycle into an unbroken musical current. In the introductory and final thematically linked sections he emphasises above all the rhythmic and timbre elements, and this is undoubtedly connected with his views on the importance of rhythm as a means of freeing up natural human responses (see his article on *Revolution and Music*). In the second part he exploits ideas derived from Schönberg's compositional technique, while the third part is spiced with elements of ragtime. Once again, approaches that are apparently incompatible are set side by side and even integrated into the same line. The point is that in order for the charm of contrast to work successfully, it cannot be employed just for the sake of contrast, and this is something that Schulhoff was very well aware of. To convey more serious ideas he chose a more complicated musical language, while to lighten the mood he took inspiration from modern dance or folklore. What is essential is that he knew how to integrate these heterogeneous languages meaningfully into a balanced whole.

Recordings in the Supraphon Schulhoff Series:

Works for Piano:
Schulhoff – Jazz Inspired Piano Works (Tomáš Víšek)
Schulhoff – Sonatas and Suites for Piano (Tomáš Víšek)
Schulhoff – Piano Cycles 1919-1939 (Tomáš Víšek)

Chamber Music:
Schulhoff – Complete String Quartets (Kocian Quartet)
Schulhoff – Complete Violin Works (Ivan Ženatý, Josef Hála)
Schulhoff – String Sextet, Divertimento, Duo (Kocian Quartet, Jan Talich, Evžen Rattay)
Schulhoff – Concertino, Divertissement, Bassnachtigal, Symphonia germanica, Sonata erotica (Pavel Foltýn, Pavel Peřina, Emanuel Kumpera, Novák Trio, Luboš Fait, Ivan Kusnjer, Tomáš Víšek, Diana Stone)
Schulhoff – Cello Sonata, Flute Sonata, Hot-Sonata (Jiří Bárta, Pavel Foltýn, Štěpán Koutník, Jan Čech, Tomáš Víšek)

Vocal Music:
Schulhoff – Songs (Olga Černá, František Kůda, Jan Jouza)

Orchestral Music:
Schulhoff – Symphonies No. 1 and No. 2 (Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek)
Schulhoff – Symphonies No. 3 and No. 5 (Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek)
Schulhoff – Symphonies No. 4 and No. 6 (Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek)
Schulhoff – Piano Concertos (Jan Simon, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek)

monika knoblochová

“there are lots of pieces still waiting for me”

MARTA NĚMCOVÁ

The harpsichord player Monika Knoblochová is one of the most striking representatives of the young generation of Czech musicians. Her field of active professional interests is unusually broad; in addition to the traditional harpsichord repertoire of early music she includes an admirable number of pieces from the 20th- and even 21st century in her programmes, appears in a number of chamber ensembles specialising in both Baroque and modern music, and has started performing on the hammerklavier (fortepiano) as well in recent years.

Monika, the first musical instrument that you studied was the piano, and we know that for a long time you had ambitions to study percussion as well. What ultimately led you to the harpsichord?
When I was studying piano at the Prague Conservatory I already had a special fondness for Baroque music, which for me meant above all J. S. Bach. And at the same time I liked the sound of the harpsichord. I actually started playing harpsichord only in the last two years at the conservatory, where it was a compulsory subject for pianists. But what provided the decisive impulse for me were the courses taught by the American harpsichordist Lucy Hallman-Rusell; after those I decided to devote myself entirely to harpsichord. My first steps – even before I joined Prof. Giedré Lukšaité-Mrázková’s class at the Prague Academy of Performing arts – were to study in consultation form with John Toll in Dresden and at the same time studies with Prof. Hallman-Rusell in Würzburg.

The harpsichord repertoire, orientated mainly to 17th- and 18th-century music, can seem much narrower than the piano repertoire, which has the whole Romantic period (not to mention 20th-century music) as well. Don’t you sometimes miss the modern piano and the music that can’t be played on the harpsichord?
The harpsichord repertoire actually includes music of the 20th and 21st centuries, although I didn’t get it until later. Romantic pieces never appealed to me very much, not even at the time when I was playing modern piano. As I said, my favourite composer was Bach, and then nothing much until the impressionists. Once I really did miss the piano, and that was at the very beginning when because of the difference in touch and musical thinking Professor Toll recommended I stop playing the piano entirely for a year. Back then I would sometimes escape back to the piano, to Ravel, into another class for at least ten minutes. In that phase I missed the piano, but later I didn’t.

After beginning in Dresden and Würzburg you continued with harpsichord as your main instrument at the Music Faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts (HAMU). The hammerklavier, which has recently become another professional interest of yours, isn’t taught at any of the Prague music schools. How and where did you first get interested in the instrument?
When you put the question in that way, the answer is rather surprising. In fact I first encountered the instrument here in the Czech Republic, at the Academy. In the nineties the school had a hammerklavier on loan – an original instrument of 1785 made by the Czech builder Dohnal. The academy had it restored and then invited Christoph Hammer to Prague as a lector for master classes. During these classes I completely fell under the spell of the hammerklavier and started to learn this instrument as well. The next year I organised Christoph Hammer’s classes myself and for pleasure I got myself a hammerklavier at home as well.

As a result you seemed to have been giving pleasure to the public as well. Is there great interest in hammerklavier concerts?
Sometimes I get the feeling that I’m getting more play from the hammerklavier than the harpsichord. My first public concert was a performance of Schubert’s *Winterreise* with the singer Petr Matuszek, and next year I would like to do Beethoven’s *Variations for cello and piano*, for example. The hammerklavier also gives me more opportunity to propagate old Czech music. Me and the recorder-player Jana Semerádová are performing pieces by J. A. Benda, J. L. Dusík, V. Jírovec and others at concerts. Since many early Bohemian composers lived abroad, I think these are attractive programmes for foreign concert organisers as well, because they bring together the music of Czech emigrants and pieces by their colleagues living in the same environment.

So you now have your own hammerklavier at home as well as your own harpsichord?
Yes, it’s a copy of a Walther instrument of 1795, built by Gebrüder Kobald in Holland. And I also have an original square piano

built before 1830 by Louis Kulmbach, but unfortunately it isn't in a completely ideal state. It's not possible to play it much at present and it's waiting for a few small repairs.

What about the harpsichord?
I also have two harpsichords, both from the German builder Michael Scheer. The first was an Italian virginal based on one by G. Pertici from the end of the 16th century. After a few years I got myself a second two-manual instrument. It's a copy of a century-younger harpsichord of French type made around 1770 by Benoist Stehlin. It was because I wanted an instrument of French type that would be different from those very common copies of instruments by the famous 16th-century French builders Taskin or Hemsche.

How do you get so many instruments into a Prague flat?
With difficulty! The small Italian virginal lives under the big French instrument at the moment and I'm looking for a bigger flat.

So far we have only talked about originals or copies of old keyboard instruments. But you are one of the very few performers today who systematically uses not only copies of historical instruments but also the modern pedal harpsichord, which did not appear on concert podiums until the beginning of the 20th century. What is about this instrument that attracts you so much?
For the music of the 20th century and beyond I really unreservedly prefer a modern instrument. I take the view that while for earlier music the most important means of expression is articulation, for modern music what is fundamental are changes of colour. Thanks to pedal control of the registers the modern instrument is capable of these rich colour transformations, while copies of historical instruments can't manage easy changes of register and so lack some of these colours. The sound that the composer had in mind is also always an important starting point for me, and in the 20th century this was mainly associated with the modern pedal instrument. Another thing, of course, is that there are relatively few truly acoustically beautiful and melodious modern harpsichords, for example those made by the Gobel firm. This means that there are a large number of acoustically rather poor harpsichords among modern instruments and this has led to a lot of prejudice against the modern pedal harpsichord in the music community. But the existence of some really excellent examples shows that the problem isn't the instrument as such, but just a problem of good or bad construction. One solution for me would be to combine the tone of a good copy of a historical instrument with a pedal mechanism equipped with the sixteen-stop range of the modern harpsichord. That would allow me to combine Baroque and contemporary repertoire at concerts.

I assume then that it was the question of the kind of sound that the composer had in mind what was behind your choice of instrument for your recordings of the complete harpsichord works of Bohuslav Martinů and Manuel de Falla's *Harpsichord concerto*, released last year by Supraphon...
Yes, for that recording I used an original harpsichord made by the Pleyel company in 1939 in Paris. Since Martinů wrote his first harpsichord music, i.e. the *Two pieces for harpsichord, Concerto for harpsichord and small orchestra* and *Promenades for flute, violin and harpsichord* during his time in Paris in the thirties, using this harpsichord meant that we came genuinely very close to the instrument's sound of his time. As far as I know, this is so far the first and only complete recording of Martinů's harpsichord works on a "period" instrument. By the way, several years ago I had the chance to play Martinů pieces on a Pleyel harpsichord directly in France, at Versailles.

Getting hold of an original Pleyel harpsichord of the thirties in a state good enough for recording must have involved al kinds of difficulties and taken up a lot of your time and energy...
Yes indeed. The idea of playing Martinů pieces on an original Pleyel harpsichord was one that I had together with the musicologist Aleš Březina, who is an expert on Bohuslav Martinů. Mr. Březina gave me an enormous amount of help when I was looking for an instrument and supported me at moments when I was on the point of giving the whole difficult task up. I myself did a lot of research and sent out lots of letters in an attempt to track down preserved Pleyel instruments, but for a long time without finding any satisfactory instrument. It was only in the last phase that I managed to find another Pleyel harpsichord in a museum of musical instruments in Berlin, but it was in an absolutely dreadful state and unusable for our purposes. Finally I found the only possible instrument in the private collection of Mr. Neupert in Bamberg. It turned out to be in a playable state and Mr. Neupert was willing to loan it to me for the recording, but there didn't seem to be any suitable acoustic space for recording chamber music in Bamberg and we didn't want to move the instrument too far. In the end, the Protestant Church of St. Kunhuta, close to Mr. Neupert's firm, came to our rescue and it was there that the whole recording was made. I produced the recording myself as well, for example arranging accommodation for the members of the ensemble, and in the end I even tuned the instrument myself, so I can say that the CD really did take a lot of my energy. But I'm in no way complaining. I should add that the recording would never have been made without the financial support of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation and Czech Music Fund.

Of course, your repertoire of 20th-century music is hardly confined to the works of Martinů and de Falla. Which other composers do you play at your concerts?
From the first half of the 20th century I have piece by the Prague German composer Hans Krása on my programme. In 1999 I played his *Chamber music for harpsichord and seven instruments*, which is one of the first modern pieces for the harpsichord written in our country. When it comes to contemporary Czech composers I enjoy playing pieces by Marek Kopelent, for example *Per Aminko* which he wrote specially for me, but also the older *Bijou de Boheme,* and then Jiří Teml (specifically *Commedia dell'arte, Diptych, Shakespearean themes*, the melodrama *Divadlo svět [Theatrum mundi]*), Viktor Kalabis (*Příhody Sisyfovy [Sisyphus episodes]*) and Michal Macourek (*French suite, Preludes, Scherziana, Siaram*). I have also recorded most of these pieces for Czech Radio. The music of Jiří Gemrot appeals to me and so I am planning to perform his piece *Hry [Games]*, which I have been supervising and preparing for publication.

And what about foreign composers?
I have played harpsichord music by L. Andriessen, G. Ligeti, T. Takemitsu, and M. Ohana. I like lots of pieces and there are lots still waiting for me.

You have premiered a number of contemporary pieces and some of them were even written specially for you. Which side

does the impetus come from? Don't you sometimes find that composers are prejudiced against the harpsichord as an instrument that belongs just to the past?
No, I've never met negative prejudices among composers. What annoys me is more the attitude of quite a few professional musicians who reject contemporary music without even trying to get to know it. Which side does the impetus come from? It's about even; sometimes I approach composers, and sometimes they offer my pieces themselves. For example, recently Jiří Teml promised to write me a harpsichord concerto which will be presented as part of Prague Premieres Festival 2008, Jiří Gemrot is writing a harpsichord sonata for me.

What is your attitude to early music and what is known as "authentic performance"? Do you study the literature and period textbooks on music?
Of course I do, studying the literature is a source of inspiration for me. But otherwise I am guided first and foremost by my own musical feeling, and I try to put it all together.

During your studies you went to several schools and master courses in the Czech Republic and abroad. Have you observed any major differences between Czech and foreign institutions?
What was important for me was to realise that differences between individual schools are not at all definable in terms of some contrast between "our" schools and "foreign" schools, with the consequent idea that our schools are inferior or backward. The decisive factor is always the personalities of the people teaching at the schools. There are great differences between schools abroad as well, and far from all of them have yet solved the issue of an early music department in a satisfactory way. In any case, you just can't compare schools focused exclusively on the study of early music, like the centres in Basel or The Hague, with schools that are orientated to the study of modern instruments, which is the case of most European higher academies including HAMU in Prague. Schools that specialise in early music naturally have better resources, better equipped libraries, but because of the heavy schedules of teachers, you may well find yourself basically studying your main subject almost by yourself. For studying harpsichord as a solo instrument, however, the most fundamental factor remains the personality of the professor of your main subject. Here I would very much like to stress the enormous commitment to students shown by Professor Giedré Lukšaité-Mrázková at HAMU and her detailed work in all aspects of harpsichord play, such as touch, articulation, construction of form and so on. At the same time I think the Prague school is equipped with good instruments. The question is just whether there are enough of them. What I see as a disadvantage, however, is the fact that HAMU doesn't have even a small department of early music, although this is now usual at many European schools.

Apart from solo play we often hear you in all kinds of chamber groups, both with singers and with instrumentalists. Do you see chamber music as an obligatory supplement to a solo career, or is it also something in which you realise yourself?
I very much enjoy chamber music, and certainly no less than I enjoy solo play. I like meeting good musicians, and I regard chamber music as a unique opportunity for musical communication. The circle of people I work with has stabilised recently, but I also like contact with other musicians.

Can you name some of them for us?
For many years now I've been working with the recorder-player Jana Semerádová, who specialises in both Baroque and Classicist recorder music. We appear together under the name Duo Seraphim, and have a whole series of joint concerts behind us as well as a competition in authentic performance in 2003 in Munich. I also play with the cellist Petr Nouzovský, and recently did a CD recording of J.S.Bach's three sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord with him for Cube Bohemia. We've done many joint concerts and over this year we have been recording the complete Vivaldi sonatas for cello and basso continuo for Czech Radio. When it comes to singers, I work very well with the mezzo-soprano Markétá Cukrová. She and I are spending a lot of time finding and rehearsing songs by V. J. Tomášek, who is a remarkable but very rarely performed Czech composer. I also spend a great deal of time with the ensemble Collegium Marianum. Jana Semerádová is its musical director and it specialises in the authentic performance of old music and Baroque dances. Apart from that, roughly eight years ago I founded the ensemble Resonance with Michal Macourek and Petr Pokorný – it focuses mainly on contemporary music, but is not afraid to make excursions further back into the 20th century.

With all this activity do you have any time and energy left for other activities associated with a harpsichord's career, such as continuo play in orchestras or accompanying recitatives in opera?
I absolutely love orchestra. I'm most happy solo playing with an orchestra. Apart from the concertos I've mentioned already, my repertoire includes several J.S. Bach concertos and also the concertos by J. A. Benda, C. Ph. E. Bach, D. Milhaud, H. M. Górecki, and M. Macourek. But I also get a lot out of playing figured bass inside the orchestra. Not long ago I found out what rehearsal and performance of an opera really means in a production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the music festival "(Ne)vinná degustace Mozarta" in Znojmo.

Have you begin to feel any yen to pass on your experience to younger colleagues? Are you tempted to take up a teaching career as well?
At the moment I have one private harpsichord pupil, and this year I have had my first opportunity to lead a harpsichord class, at courses in early music in Rajnochovice. I can certainly see myself wanting to teach in the future, but at the level of conservatory or academy rather than with smaller children at music school.

Monica, although it is clear that in your relatively short career to date you have done an amazing amount, you still have the greater part of your career ahead of you. Could you reveal at least something about your plans for the near future?
This time with Jana Semerádová, I'm planning to record another CD, of chamber music by the 19th-century Czech composer Vojtěch Jírovec. I am looking forward to a concert with Resonance as part of Prague Premieres Festival 2007, I want to publish a new solo CD, and I shall be appearing at a series of festivals. Next year I shall also have a solo recital at the Prague Spring Festival. It will include early and modern music, but I'd prefer to keep the programme a surprise.

MONIKA KNOBLOCHOVÁ
She became seriously interested in the harpsichord after finishing piano studies at the Prague Conservatory. In 1998-2004 she studied harpsichord at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in Prof. Giedré Lukšaité-Mrázková's class and in consultation with Prof. Z. Růžičková. She also gained a great deal of experience studying in academies and on master courses abroad, spending a period at the Hermann-Zilcher-Konservatorium in Würzburg and at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague, and also at the Dresden Akademie für Alte Musik and the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. This year in June she crowned her studies with a soloist's diploma at the Hochschule für Musik in Prof. Ch. Schornsheim's class. The young harpsichordist has also won a number of awards at prestigious competitions. In 1999 she won 3rd Prize at the Prague Spring International Competition and the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation Prize, and two years later she was a finalist in the Oberösterreichischer Solistenwettbewerb International Harpsichord Competition, which brought her an inviatation to join a master harpsichord class held as part of the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival. In 2002 she won the Czech Republic's Davidoff Prix for most promising young musician with the makings of a successful international career. In 2003 together with the Baroque recorder player J. Semerádová, she was awarded 3rd Prize at the Grosser Förderpreiswettbewerb in Munich, and the B. Martinů Society Prize at the Young Podium Festival in Karlovy Vary. She regularly records for Czech Radio, and last year Supraphon released her CD of the complete harpsichord works of B. Martinů and M. de Falla's *Concerto for harpsichord*.

LUKÁŠ MATOUŠEK

the music of the bohemian middle ages

Today we are seeing ever more interest in historical or “early” music and its “authentic” performance. This has been moving successively further and further back into history, so that the initial interest in the Baroque period has led to the Renaissance period and now we are reaching the Middle Ages. There are perhaps two main impulses behind the present admiration for this era of musical history. One is fascination with non-musical aspects of medieval culture, admiration for Gothic and Renaissance architecture, the fine art of these periods and their literature. (It is paradoxical that Gothic architecture often tends to be associated with Baroque music, so that concert performances of great Baroque works are more often given in Gothic cathedrals than in Baroque churches, while various films about Gothic architecture are given Baroque background music). The second impulse is the growing interest in sacred and liturgical singing, and above all Gregorian chant (plainchant). More generally (maybe prompted by the “heroic” stereotype of chivalry) there is a now established fashion for displays of swordsmanship and brawls in “period” costume accompanied by “period” music. From here it has been but a step to concerts of Medieval and Renaissance music in “period” costume, although one must inevitably wonder about the notion of “period” when programmes cover 300 years a major cultural transition.

It needs to be remembered first and foremost that the Middle Ages represents an extremely long period (roughly a thousand years). Originally the term was supposed retrospectively to cover a rather despised “middle” era between Antiquity and the Renaissance with its ideal of recovering and resuming continuity with the Classical World. Pejorative connotations apart, the Middle Ages indeed differed its in ideals from Antiquity and the Renaissance. The music of the Middle Ages (as we see it today) differs markedly from the music of the Renaissance and it is as peculiar to lump them together as to lump together Renaissance and Baroque music or Baroque music with musical Classicism.

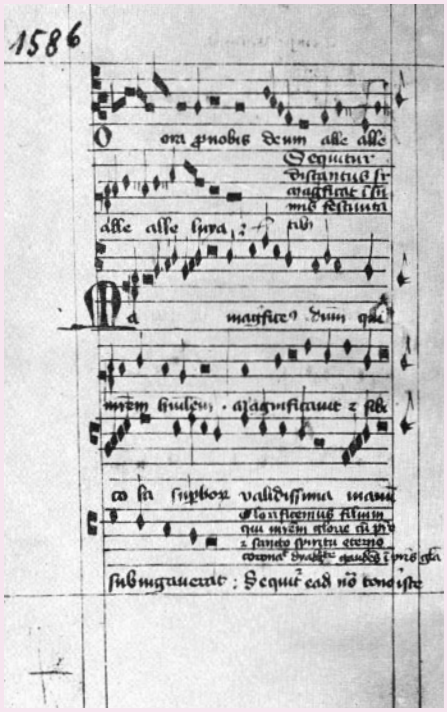
The whole period between Antiquity and the Renaissance was the era of the rise and consolidation of feudalism, in terms of the social hierarchy, political entities and state formation, and at the same time of the emergence of the universal (European) supremacy of Christianity governed by the Roman Church. The Europe of this era saw the emergence of a society in which culture and art flourished in a way that had no equivalent elsewhere in the world. Music was a part of this culture, and it was precisely in the Middle Ages – the second half – that music was changing and evolving (above all with the birth and development of polyphony) in a way that has had no parallel in the later course of music history. It is only a slight overstatement to say that all subsequent development has been simply the elaboration of the impulse given by the Middle Ages. The fact that by contrast the concept of composition as we know it today began to form only in the Renaissance period (another reason why Medieval and Renaissance music cannot be lumped together) has created distortions of perspective and makes it even more important that we should try and understand Medieval movement in its own historical context, free of modern constructs and imposed categories.

King Wenceslas II among the minnesingers, illumination from the Manesse Codex, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. Germ. 848, fol. 10a (in: T. Volek – S. Jareš: Dějiny české hudby v obrazech)

The Minnesinger Heinrich von Meissen known as Frauenlob, who served at the court of King Wenceslas II. Illumination from the Manesse Codex, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. Germ. 848.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Bohemian Lands (or Czech Lands as they came to be known in the modern period – in Czech there is no distinction!) were an integral political part of Europe in the Middle Ages, and in the High Medieval Period (which will be the focus of this article), often enjoyed a political influence that extended beyond Central Europe. Here it is essential to remember that in the Middle Ages territorial boundaries and groupings constantly changed according to the power and holdings of particular rulers and so extensive foreign territories often came under the control or influence of the Bohemian state (Bohemia, Moravia and part of Silesia), sometimes for very long periods of time. We should also be aware that in the Middle Ages the borders between states were not as unambiguous or closed as they are today and that there were other "borders" and "cross-border communities" that undoubtedly had a great influence on the diffusion of culture in Europe. These included the boundaries of church territories (dioceses, and archdioceses), and the spheres of influence of religious orders organised at international level. Close contacts between the monasteries of individual orders definitely played a major role in the "transmission" of cultural influence over great distances, while on the other hand geographically neighbouring areas might have different kinds of liturgical music. The Cistercians and Premonstratensions were quite tightly bound to their centres in France (Citeaux, Prémontré), the Minorites and Poor Clares in the Bohemian Lands belonged to Bavarian-Bohemian-Polish provinces, while the Benedictines had looser ties and so on.
In the period of emerging Bohemian statehood, the Czech Lands were influenced by the general political and cultural developments taking place in the rest of Europe. In the 9th century Christianity reached Bohemia and what is known as Greater Moravia from the West, with the line of influence reaching back via the Bishopric of Passau and Regensburg to the Frankish Empire. In the third quarter of the 9th century (863 – 885), Byzantine influence and a liturgy in the Slav language reached Greater Moravia for what was to be a short period through the mission of Constantine and Methodius (It is interesting that in the 14th century Charles IV tried to revive the eastern liturgy in Old Slavonic not just by donation to the Sázava Monastery but also by founding the Monastery "Na Slovanech" – "At the Slavs" in Prague.) Christianity had at this early stage gained a greater hold in Moravia than in Bohemia (where the Přemyslid Prince Bořivoj accepted baptism only at the end of the 9th century), and so pagan sources evidently continued to play more of a role in musical culture in Bohemia in the subsequent century. With the disintegration of the Greater Moravian Empire in the 10th century the power of the Přemyslids was on the rise, and with it came a renewal of ties with Western Europe. At the end of the 10th century the Přemyslids (who were to rule until the 14th century) consolidated their grip on Bohemia and Moravia with the slaughter of the rival Slavníkovci (995) and later Vršovci clans. From this time on, the power of the Christian Church grew rapidly. Bishoprics were set up in Prague (973) and later in Olomouc (1063), and a plethora of monasteries and other church institutions followed. While in the 11th century pagan ceremonies still survived, the 12th century saw the complete victory of Christianity, which was henceforward the main source of universal ideology. Until the mid-14th century, when Charles IV managed to get an Archbishopric for Prague (1344), the Bohemian church was subordinated to the diocese (and later archdiocese) of Mainz, where the princes of Bohemia even had to go to have their coronations recognised. In the 13th century the power of the Czech Premyslids (successively Wenceslas I, Přemysl Otakar II and Wenceslas II) increased to the point where they came to influence the politics of all Europe, and this naturally opened up many channels for cultural influence. Another political highpoint for the Bohemian Lands, also bringing cultural stimuli from the outside, was the reign of the Bohemian King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (whose father was a Luxemburg and whose mother a Premyslid) in the 14th century. After his death (1378), conflicts and crises overtook the church, political life and society in general. Musical culture in Bohemia, which by this time had evolved a distinctive identity, had many different layers and was responsive to trends in Europe as a whole, was severely hit by the explosion of the Hussite Revolution in the first half of the 15th century.
From the 13th century the nobility increasingly consolidated its position in its struggle with the monarch over political power, but the struggle was bitter, taking up so much of its energy that this may be one reason that a courtly style of life, with the emphasis on luxury and pomp and therefore the cultivation of culture, did not emerge here in quite the manner so typical of West European courts. We have records of the existence of a courtly musical culture only in the case of important Bohemian rulers and a few Bohemian nobles. German minnesingers evidently served in the royal court of the last Přemyslids, Wenceslas I, Přemysl Otakar II and Wenceslas II (from the second third of the 13th to the beginning of the 14th century). From 1236 Reinmar von Zwetter stayed for some years at the court of Wenceslas I, whose praises he enthusiastically sang. Other minnesingers who came to Bohemia included Sigeher, Friedrich von Sunburg, Ulrich von dem Turlin, Heinrich Cluzener, Ulrich von Etzenbach (he was even brought up in Bohemia



Record of the two-part version of Zacheus arboris and the song Jesu Criste ščedrý knieže [Jesus Christ, Bounteousl Prince], Trnava manuscript, Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, cod. lat. 243, fol. 66r

The oldest Czech three-part motet Magnificemus Dominum, Vyšší Brod, monastery library, cod. 42, fol. 158v (discantus)

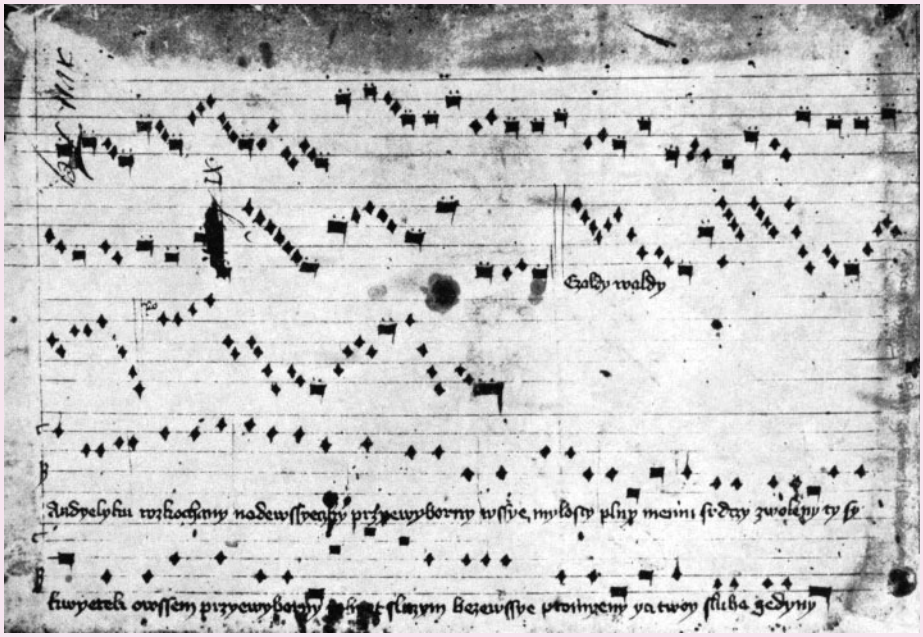
and spent most of his life there), Neithardt von Reuenthal (whose work was still remembered a century after his death – he died in 1240 – not only by the chronicler Petr Žitavský, but also later in a spirit of criticism by Master Jan Hus), Tannhäuser (who was in Prague around 1250) and Heinrich von Meissen known as Frauenlob (who in 1286 celebrated the dubbing of Wenceslas II knight, and in 1305 lamented his death). Wenceslas II himself composed outstanding love songs, three of which have survived (unfortunately only the texts) and he is himself depicted among other minnesingers as an important patron of musicians in the famous codex of the Lords of Manesse. Until 1358 the Prague court of King John of Luxemburg and later his son Charles IV was home to Heinrich von Mügeln (whom King John respected as an outstanding player on the fiddle) or Müglich von Prag. The Salzburg monk Herman was in Prague in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg Olbram at the end of the 14th century and it was from here that he wrote a musically exquisite love letter to Freudensal near Salzburg.

It is intriguing that the presence of German minnesingers in Bohemia and the major patronage they enjoyed from the Bohemian kings (above all Přemysl Otakar II, who after the end of the Hohenstaufen line on the male side aspired to the imperial crown and hoped that the propaganda of the minnesingers would improve his image in the German lands) ultimately left so few traces in original Bohemian music. German minnesang was directly inspired by the music of the North French troubadours. Indeed many songs even by famous minnesingers (for example *Under der linden* by Walter von der Vogelweide) simply give a new text to an original trouvère melody (this is known as a contrafactum). The Bohemian love songs of the Middle Ages are by contrast under the influence of the Southern French troubadours, who differed from the Northern French trouvères not just in their use of a different language (Occitan), but chiefly in their greater emphasis on the lyric, and more pronounced employment of the basic principles of the chivalric concept of love and typical forms of the courtly lyric. Northern French trouvère poetry developed as a somewhat modified offshoot of the South French troubadour tradition roughly a century later. We know that the love poems that have come down to us were sung, although in many cases the melody has not been preserved. Many dozens of known Czech medieval love songs have survived as texts, but only in exceptional cases do we know the melodies (*Dřevo sě listem odievá [The Tree Robes itself in Leaves]*, *Andělíku rozkochaný* , *Jižť mne všie radost ostává*, while the melody to *V Strachotině hájku* can be reconstructed on the basis of another song). It can be assumed that the influence of the South French troubadours reached Bohemia by the "southern route". We know that just as the Occitan love song spread to the north where it provided the basis for the trouvère tradition, it also made it way across the Pyrenees to the south (where it strongly influenced the circle of King Alfonso X "El Sabio", himself an exceptional poet and musician), and also south-east into Italy (above all to the circle of the royal court of another exceptional poet, the King of the Two Sicilies and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, who in 1212 issued the Sicilian Bull granting the Bohemian rulers the hereditary title of king). From there the tradition of original troubadour song spread north to the Austrian Alpine Lands, some of which were annexed to the Bohemian Crown for 27 years by Přemysl Otakar II, who installed Czech officials in high positions and so attracted bitter complaints from the Austrian Lands population that Czech was to be heard everywhere instead of German. This then is the route by which the troubadour influences probably reached Bohemia, and literary analysis of Czech love songs reveals that these were the sole models. Indeed, here experts can even trace the archetypes of forms that must have existed but have not survived in the South French sources (song *Ach, toť jsem smutný i pracný*).

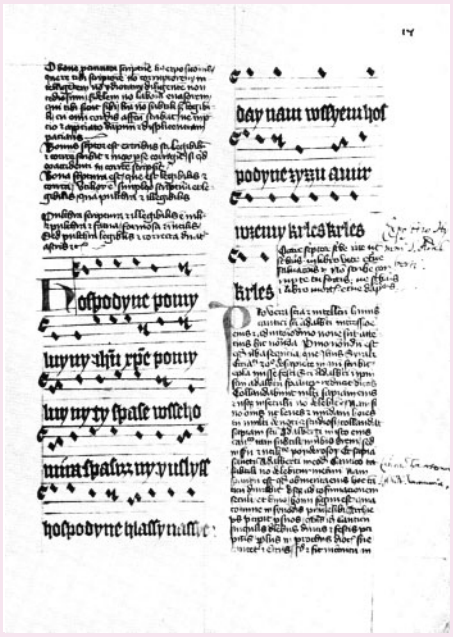
After this general introduction we should now turn our attention to the different areas of music and their specific forms in the Bohemian Lands.

LITURGICAL SINGING

In the 9th century liturgical singing still contained a great deal of the Slavonic chant that Constantine and Methodius had created after their arrival in Moravia in 863 by translating Greek and Latin liturgical texts into Old Slavonic and adapting the melodies concerned. In its time the comprehensible language of the Slavonic liturgy facilitated the creation of new liturgical texts and evidently melodies too, but this was also a period when more Latin chant started penetrating into Bohemia. In the 10th century the Slavonic rite was gradually pushed out (and in Moravia too) by the Latin rite and Latin plainchant. For some time this was still simply imported, and indeed we have no records of new liturgical songs being written in Bohemia for the whole 11th century. Even the chant for the feasts of the Czech saints – St. Wenceslas, St. Vojtěch (Adalbert) and St. Ludmila – was originally used in foreign general chants about martyrs. The oldest Czech hymn *Hospodine pomiluj ny [Lord Have Mercy on Us]* is considered to have originated in the 11th century, but was originally an abbreviated free translation of the Litany for All Saints. This litany ultimately became a song, a kind of state anthem throughout the entire Medieval period (in



Two dance melodies (the second with the marginal note "czaldy waldy") and the Czech song Andělíku rozkochaný [Sweet Little Angel].
Written down on the front pastedown of the Vyšehrad Collection of Tomáš of Štítný, Prague, National Library, XVII F 9 (in: T. Volek – S. Jareš: Dějiny české hudby v obrazech)



The oldest written down version of the song Hospodine, pomiluj ny [Lord Have Mercy on Us] Prague, National Library, Tractate of Jan of Holešov, III D 17, fol. 15r
(in: T. Volek – S. Jareš: Dějiny české hudby v obrazech)

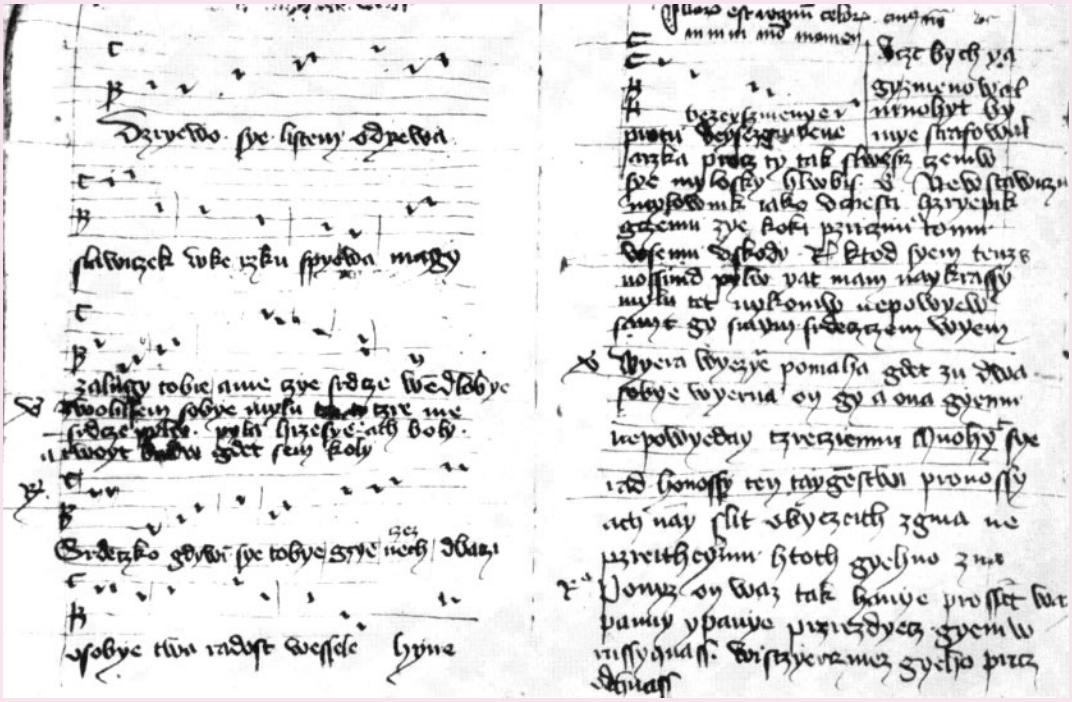
the time of Charles IV it was part of the coronation service), but remained in memory for centuries thereafter. In a similar way the somewhat later song S*vatý Václave, vévodo české země [St. Wenceslas, Prince of the Bohemian Land]* became a second state anthem, so popularised that at the beginning of the 16th century it was still serving as a cantus firmus for an exquisite three-voice setting.

The 13th century saw an important reform of liturgical chant in the Prague diocese on the initiative of the enlightened Dean Vít (from 1234 a canon, and in 1241 – 1271 Dean of St. Vitus). He ordered a large number of manuscripts to be made (of which unfortunately only a fraction have been preserved), and founded a group of boy singers – bonifantes, to assist at divine services. All the surviving manuscripts from Vít's reform are written in what is known as Late Lotharingian notation, out of which developed the monumental Czech rhombic notation typical of Czech musical manuscripts of the Luxemburg and post-Hussite periods (i.e. up to the 15th century). According to Dr. Hana Vlhová, the author of the most recent musicological research on the subject, Vít's activities may be summed up in the following terms: *"The most decisive step towards "reform" was the systematic introduction of the new notation across the whole diocese. He was not only responsible for the clear organisation of the basic choral repertoire, but also did not hesitate to introduce into the liturgy new elements that faithfully reflected the latest trends in monophonic liturgical chant. His aim was to bring Prague and its diocese into line with current European developments."*

In the 14th century many new chants start to appear, most devoted to honouring the Czech saints. Many of these new chants were created out of older tried and tested melodies, a practice entirely common and legitimate at the time. When the Austrian preacher Konrad Waldhauser came to Bohemia in 1360, after his sermon everyone sang the famous German Christmas song *Christ ist erstanden*, which has a melody derived from the no less famous Christmas sequence *Victime paschali laudes*. The Czechs sang this song using the text *Buoh všemohúcí vstal z mrtvých žádúcí*, which became one of the most popular songs of the pre-Hussite period and has also been preserved in a version for two-voice organum. There also existed a Latin version of this song with the text *Christus surrexit, mala nostra territ*. It is interesting that in 1399 the priest of the Prague Týn church tried to prohibit the Czech version of this song. This caused great outrage and Archbishop Olbram had the priest imprisoned. We also know another very popular Czech sacred song from the end of the 14th century; this is *Jesu Criste, ščedrý kněže*, with a melody that is a modified version of the German hymn *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist*. Nonetheless, one of the composers of the time, the Archbishop of Prague Jan of Jenštejn (in this service 1380 – 1396) created a number of original compositions (most intended for Marian feasts and the feast of Corpus Christi) with charming new melodies. Thanks to his influential position (he was a cardinal and spent the last years of his life in Rome – a codex containing all his important pieces can be found in the Vatican Library) managed to get some of them included in the liturgical canon. His sequence *Ducet huius cunctis horis*, written for the Feast of the Visitation (he got it into the church calendar in 1386), was eventually to be used throughout Central Europe and even in Italy. Some of his chants were so popular that Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) included them in Czech translation in his Kancionál český – Czech Hymn Book (1659) two centuries later. In his youth Jan of Jenštejn studied in Paris, and brought back a superb 13th-century illuminated bible with many pictures of musicians and musical instruments, which is today kept in the library of the National Museum in Prague under the title of the Jaroměř Bible.

SACRED PLAYS

Starting from the 12th century there are surviving records of medieval sacred plays, which developed as dialogues from tropes connected with the Easter introit. From this early period we know the scene of the angel appearing to Mary at the tomb of Christ, the scene of the apostle John and Peter at the tomb of Christ, and the scene of the appear-



The Czech love song Dřievo sie listem odievá [The Tree Robes itself in Leaves]. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 4558, fol. 24v – 25r (in: T. Volek – S. Jareš: Dějiny české hudby v obrazech)

ance of Christ to Mary Magdalene. It became a tradition in the Bohemian Lands to present these Easter plays as part of the service, and from the earlier 14th century Easter plays were performed with inserted Czech translations. This is the period from which we already know lyrical plancti (laments) of Our Lady under the Cross (for example the superb planctus *Pláči mému hodina*). It is a time when dramatised bible scenes spread from the passion plays to other church feasts. Instrumental music was added, and the scenes gradually moved away from their purely church purpose, acquiring humorous and satirical episodes, scenes in hell with demons and Lucifer, so that in the end, already banished to the area in front of the church, they were the subject of repeated bans by the Prague Synod from 1366. It is also the period from which the oldest recorded melody of a secular song in Bohemia comes – the comic Czech-Latin song of the assistants to a mountebank selling ointments to Maries on their way to the Holy Sepulchre, *Seď vem přišel mistr Ipokras*.

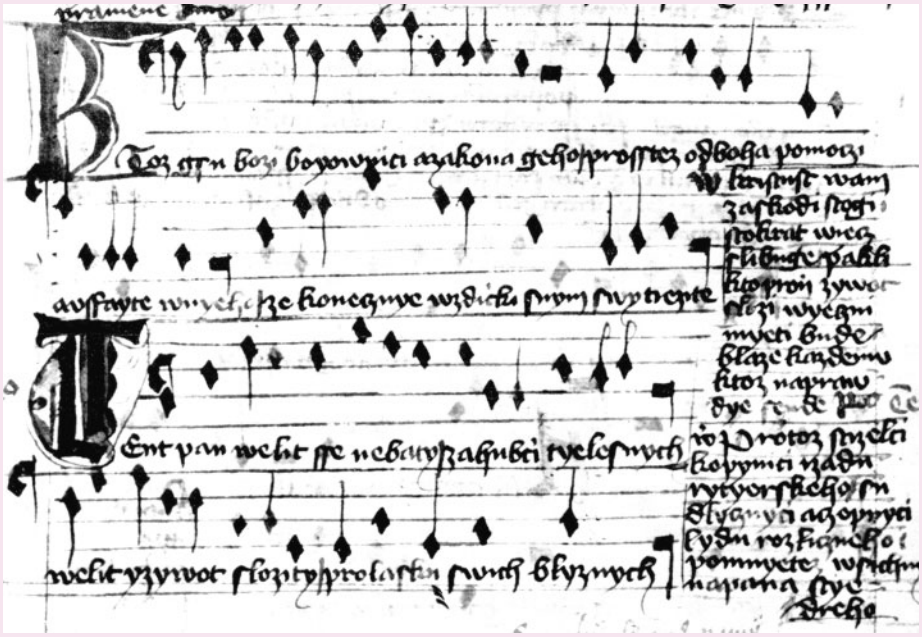
NON-LITURGICAL COMPOSITIONS

In the 14th century, alongside Latin non-liturgical compositions that are most probably from the tradition of student songs (*Prima declinatio, O quantum solicitor*, or the Latin-Czech carol *More festi querimus*) there begin to appear on the one hand Czech translations of original Latin lais (*O, Maria, matko božie [Oh Mary, Mother of God]* or *O, Maria, matko milostivá [Oh, Mary, Gracious Mother]*), and also Czech translations of excerpts from liturgical chants (*O salutaris hostia – Ó spasitelná oběti* or *O lux beatissima – Ach, světlosti blažená*), and on the other hand original Czech songs (for example *Otep myrry*, which is a paraphrase of an excerpt from Solomon's Song of Songs). At the turn of the 14th/15th century, we also see new political and polemic songs (e.g. *Pravdo milá, tiežem tebe* or *Slyšte rytieři boží*) produced in the circle of the Prague Bethlehem Chapel where Master Jan Hus preached. It is interesting that the repertoire of Czech songs of the high Middle Ages (e.g. *Dies est leticie, Jesus Christus nostra salus* among others) spread to the rest of Europe partly through students and graduates of Charles University, and partly through the "travels" of members of the religious orders. This is the explanation of the fact that for example many of the *Piae cantiones* still known and sung in Finland today (first published in 1582) were originally songs from the Czech medieval repertoire.

At the turn of the 14th/15th century, many songs that originally expressed only intimate piety were transformed, mainly in the towns, into expressions of religious and political movements. The song *Ke cti k chvále napřed buožie* for example, was sung against simony. It is interesting to find the melody of the Latin song *Imber nunc caelitus* employed at the beginning of the 15th century for a number of different, mutually antagonistic songs, some with slanderous and mocking texts but others that are serious, both Hussite (*Čechové pomněte*, *Němci jsú zúfalí* and *Ó svolánie Konstanské*), and anti-Hussite (*Omnes attendite*, *Stala sě jest příhoda* or *Ó svolánie pikardské*). At this time other Hussite songs were produced and spread on a mass basis among Hussites and their supporters, and it is recorded that when the Hussite army advanced against the enemy singing these songs, the anti-Hussite crusaders, often very superior in numbers, would flee without joining battle. These were the songs *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci [For We are God's Warriors], Povstaň, povstaň, veliké město pražské [Arise, Arise, Great City of Prague], Dietky v hromadu se senděme, Slyšte rytieři Boží* and so on. After the death of the great Hussite general, Jan Žižka of Trocnov (1424), it was rumoured that he had ordered his body to be flayed after his death and his skin stretched on a drum to be carried in front of the troops. This was a legend spread by Aeneas Silvius Picolomini. It is worth recalling here that the song *Ktož sú boží bojovníci* was used from the 19th century in many and varied symphonic works and operas (the best known are the last two parts of Smetana's My Country) and we can find the song *Dietky, v hromadu se senděme* in Janáček's opera The Excursions of Mr. Broucek. On the other hand, the Hussite movement crippled the development of all forms of art (including music) in Bohemia for several decades, illustrating the truth of the old Latin proverb *Inter arma silent musae*.

POLYPHONIC LITURGICAL MUSIC

Let us now go back a little and consider the situation with regard to polyphonic liturgical music. The first records of liturgical pieces of organum polyphony in Bohemia are from the end of the 13th century, although they are known in other places from the 11th and 12th century. It is therefore possible that the principle of organum improvisation was used in the Czech Lands before the first compositions of this type were actually writ-



The oldest written down version of the Czech Hussite war song Ktož jsú boží bojovníci [For We are God's Warriors] in the Jistebnice Hymnal. Prague, Library oft he National Museum, II C 7, pag. 87

ten down. Moreover, organum pieces may in fact have been written down earlier, as it is suggested by the will of the Dean Bartoloměj of Olomouc in 1268, in which he leaves the church a new two-volume matutinale with organums, valued at two silver talents (*matutinale novum in duobus voluminibus cum organis*). In addition to the word *organum*, the word *discantus* was in general use for improvisation using a second (upper) voice over a plainchant melody. It was only in the Notre-Dame epoch (around the turn of the 12th/13th century) that a distinction began to made between the organum, involving melismata above the longer notes of the plainchant melody, and discant, where the voices are rhythmatised according to certain rhythmic models. In the Bohemian Lands in the course of the 14th century we can identify the gradual development of organum (and discant) polyphony from improvised to ever more complex composition, and at the end of the 14th century we can also identify the influences of mensural form of rhythm from the field of non-liturgical music (according to period testimony, these kinds of rhythm were known among educated musicians well before, by the end of the 13th century), and in the first third of the 14th century they began to spread among "laymen and pharisees", i.e. beyond the environment of clerical and church singers. Evidence supporting the theory that complicated polyphony of the French type had already arrived in Bohemia at the turn of the 13th/14th century is provided by fragments of a manuscript containing Latin sacred motets from the last third of the 13th century and used as flyleaves in a codex of theological tracts. In a catalogue of books belonging to the Opatovice Monstery in the period before the mid-14th century we also find a *"liber discantorum operis Pragensis"* (i.e. Prague Book of Discants – collection of polyphonic mensural pieces of the newer type and of Prague provenience). The short three-voice motet "discantus super Magnificat" using the text *Magnificemus Dominum*, written down in the Vyšší Brod Manuscript no. 42, may serve as an example of such a discant piece and can be dated to the beginning of the 14th century. We also have evidence for the use of mensural polyphonic compositions in divine service in Bohemia from the second half of the 14th century, including a number of orders of the Prague Synod that repeatedly forbid the singing of "rondels, or wanton cantilenas" during the mass. From this period there survive several polyphonic liturgical pieces (most frequently settings of the Credo and Sanctus) that indicate links with both older and more recent polyphonic practice. We may therefore conclude that from the end of the 13th century and above all in the 14th century, polyphony came to be employed as an enrichment, if still a marginal element in liturgical (vocal) music in the Bohemian Lands, although in other sacred and in secular music at the time it was already simply taken for granted in the Bohemian Lands as elsewhere in Europe.

In Bohemian polyphonic music, liturgical and non-liturgical pieces survive that employ the technique of exchange of voices. The principle here is that the melody of the 1st phrase (in the first voice) was sung at the same time as the melody of the 2nd phrase (in the second voice). When the first voice reached the 2nd phrase, the melody of the 1st phrase was sung in the second voice. Thus the voices crossed over and for the listener (so long as the voices were not distinguished in timbre), the effect was of the repeat of the same musical passage. It was only the text that carried on in both voices. If the structure of the first part was for example, A B A B, the second part necessarily had the structure B A B A. This tradition originally derived from the music in the French monastery of St. Martial. At the beginning these small pieces exploited the recommended intervals of early organum. The Bohemian St. Wenceslas *Martir Dei Wenceslaus*, for example, uses precisely the principle described above. It was also, of course, natural to sing the piece as a canon. Later, pieces using exchange of voices in most cases no longer took the previously given plainchant melody as the initial basis, and the voices were newly invented. Czech works that can be placed in this category include, for example, the benedicamens *Procedentem sponsum*, *Johannes postquam senuit*, and *Zacheus arboris*, which was later to be sung in rhythmatised form for at least another century. The typical cross-over of voices in pieces using the technique of voice exchange also influenced many other songs created in the 14th century, for example the Easter benedicamen *Surrexit Christus hodie*, the Christmas hymn *Ježíš, náš spasitel [Jesus, Our Saviour]*, and the New Year song *In hoc anni circulo* and so forth.

NON-LITURGICAL POLYPHONIC MUSIC

Non-liturgical polyphonic music, not bound to the improvisation of the old organum, developed into difficult and often complex pieces in which improvisation was no longer possible and for which well-trained musicians were needed. Conditions for the performance of such polyphony in Bohemia were not ripe until the turn of the 13th/14th century, and it was from the mid-14th century that this non-liturgical (and often secular) polyphony started to take root and spread in Bohemia to an important degree. One reason was significant expansion of the community of clergy in orders, convent houses and parishes, and another was the rising number of students at schools and from the mid-14th century at the newly founded Prague University as well: this process increased the supply of talented musicians. It is interesting that in the mid-14th century the Augustinians in Roudnice nad Labem were allowed to divide their dormitory into separate cells so that the monks could devote more time to studies and the cultivation of arts. At this period the influences of new music in the *Ars nova* style were reaching Bohemia from the main centres of Europe (France, Italy) and the secular forms were being taken up even among monks. One monk dedicated a two-voice piece to his fellow brother with the comment that it was "the most beautiful" rondellus.

SECULAR COMPOSITION

In addition to response adoption of the *formes fixes* (fixed forms), in secular composition the use of a generally simply *conductus* became widespread in Bohemia. This meant the setting of a poetic religious or moralising (sometimes very sharply moralising) text with the basic voice (tenor) no longer taken over from plainchant but newly created, and the upper voices over the tenor being composed monorhythmically (note-against-note) in briskly rhythmatised form. Preludes and interludes without text testify to the performance of conducti with instrumental accompaniment as well. Also dating from this period were two-voice pieces that were response adoptions of improvisational practice, jauntily rhythmic and sung by students as well (for example the light-hearted two-voice song celebrating the end of the feasts of Saturnalia *En, aetas iam aurea*). Another form to be taken up in Bohemia from the 14th century was the motet. Unlike the French motets with secular French texts, the Czech motet often had not only Latin texts, but sometimes a liturgical text in the tenor (for example *Veni sancte spiritus* or *Alma redemptoris mater*), although motets with non-liturgical texts (e.g. *Christus surrexit* or *Omnis mundus iocundetur*) were more common. We can deduce that the complex structured French isorhythmic motet was also performed in Bohemia from records relating to the university and also from a three-voice isorhythmic motet of Czech origin, *Ave coronata – Alma parens*. Yet another form became quite widespread in Bohemia; this was the cantilena song in which the main melody was placed in the upper voice while the tenor (or sometimes contratenor) bottom line in slower motion is not texted and so most often performed instrumentally as an accompaniment to the melodic line of the upper voice. Pieces that combined the patterns of the conductus and cantilena song were relatively popular and widespread in Bohemia. The untexted introductions, interludes and conclusions had a melismatic cantilena structure (and were most often played instrumentally) and the text parts, which were sung, had a syllabic conductus structure. It was these forms of song that were to continue to be played in the following century, and sometimes lived on in rather modified form, often as contrafacta (with new texts) into the Renaissance period.

Contrafacta had been a usual way of producing new pieces in liturgical singing (see the translations of liturgical chants and hymns) and the situation was the same in other areas. In many sources we find pieces preserved with a sacred text but in a form (or reminder of the beginning of the original secular text) that clearly indicates their secular origins. In most cases the original secular form has not survived. Such songs were widespread throughout Europe including Bohemia and the tradition of contrafacta

Musician playing on the fidula, Jaroměř Bible. Prague, Library of the National Museum, XII A 10, fol. 41r

Musician playing one-handed flute and a drum, Jaroměř Bible. Prague, Library of the National Museum, XII A 10, fol. 87r

continued up to the beginning of the 16th century. We can identify a certain boom in contrafacta in Bohemia in the Hussite period (first half of the 15th century) when many hymns and liturgical pieces (including plainsongs) were translated into Czech. This Hussite tradition (including services in the national language probably started in 1416 in the Bethlehem Chapel by Jakoubek of Stříbro) continued even after the Hussite wars in the practice of the Utraquist Church.

SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

Medieval schools, and above all universities, were indisputably bearers of learning and culture. Charles IV's founding of a university in Prague in 1348 helped to increase the educational level of Czechs, above all those who had no opportunity to study at foreign universities. The basic level of university education were the seven free arts (*septem artes liberales*), with music having a place in the main "quadrivium" together with arithmetic, geometry and astronomy. The *Ars musica*, however, was a purely speculative subject. It was based on the doctrines of Boethius from the beginning of the 6th century, in which all elements of music were mathematically subordinated to the abstract comparison of the numerical relations found in music with the cosmic universe, so that music could serve as a symbolic reflection of the divine order. Of course, since the times of Boethius, other theoretical treatises had been written that came closer to genuine musical theory and deepened musical understanding and knowledge. At the time of the founding of Prague university many new theoretical approaches were already being taught at Paris university; Boethius's *Quadrivium* is still included in the oldest catalogue of the Prague university library of 1370, but 18 years later the teaching was already based on the new work *Musica speculativa* by the professor of mathematics at Paris University Johannes de Muris, "creator" of the new metric and rhythmical system of *Ars nova* and its precise form of notation, which became the basis not only of what is known as the mensural notation of the 14th century, but essentially of the notation system used (after various modifications) to this day. Václav of Prachatice wrote a commentary on Muris's work at the beginning of the 15th century.

Yet *musica theorica* said nothing about the practical side of music. This was more the realm of the *musica practica*, which was cultivated outside the framework of the prescribed university syllabus. At this time the educated and thoughtful students and professors at Prague university "took up" the Paris tradition, as is shown not just by Václav of Prachatice's commentary, but also by a versified treatise on mensural notation that was compiled for Prague students as early as 1369 and was evidently one of the oldest treatments of French mensural theory in Central Europe. Another treatise (in prose) that like others of its kind contained descriptions of the main musical forms of the time can probably also be traced back to Prague around the year 1400. In several of these treatises there are references to specific pieces of French *Ars nova* that were generally known and probably formed the basis of the repertoire sung and played in the communities of men of learning and students at Prague university. Among them are compositions that represented the

Typical European position holding the psaltery to the chest. Spain, turn of the 13th and 14th century, Tarragona, cathedral (above)

Women playing the fidula hung on a strap and the psaltery, held in typically "Bohemian" fashion. Velislav Bible, ok. 1340, Prague, National Library, XXIII C 124, fol. 72r, detail (left)

height of the avant-garde at the turn of the 14th/15th century (the musical theory of the day calls it the *Ars subtilior*). In addition to French pieces there were also pieces of Italian and Central European (demonstrably Czech) origin in the "university" repertoire. And it is precisely in the 15th-century pieces of Czech origin that we can find traces of the *Ars subtilior* style (e.g. *Compangant omnes iubilose* or *Palmiger a vernulis*).

THE MUSICIANS

The medieval town was an important phenomenon conditioning musical life. The inhabitants of towns were surrounded by a greater quantity of different musical sounds than the inhabitants of monasteries, noble residences or the countryside. The bells of the town churches chimed, the tower musicians announced all kinds of events from the outbreak of fires to the approach of visitors, while the town drummer with his piper announced news and the proclamations of the town corporation. Town (professional) musicians played at other events as well – feasts, processions, receptions of important visitors, courts, executions – and also just for pleasure. Foreign students formed part of the population with the permanent inhabitants (especially in Prague after the founding of Charles University), foreign merchants and traders would come and go, as would seasonal labourers (above all after the outbreak of "silver fever" at the beginning of the 14th century), while there would be an influx of people from the countryside and even foreign lands when larger markets were held. On these occasions the towns would be places where music of many different styles and from different parts of Europe mingled. Naturally, apart from the permanent "professional: musicians, there would be itinerant musicians visiting the towns when major "events" offered them the chance of making money or even finding a longer-term "engagement", and so it is not surprising that novelties in musical development in all genres should have been spread in this way as well.

There were also musicians at royal and noble courts. Hunting and military signals, fanfares at tournaments and feasts were certainly part of court life, where people could also listen to the music of the itinerant musicians known as joculatores, histriones, spielmans, jongleurs, goliards and so on. In the first quarter of the 12th century the Czech Prince Vladislav I gave land to *his joculator Dobreita by name*, and in 1176 Prince Soběslav II provided an endowed income for his joculator Kojata, who as *Kojata histrio* (fiddler) is also mentioned in the necrologue of the Benedictine monastery in Podlažice. When a secular musician (joculator) lives out his life in a monastery, can we not perhaps take this as one of many indications that monasteries were not entirely closed to secular song? We also find mentions of joculators in 13th-century sources, while for the 14th century we already have quite a lot of concrete information. The minnesinger and outstanding fiddle player Heinrich von Mügeln lived at the courts of King John of Luxemburg and later of his son Charles IV until 1358. Around 1352 the Emperor Charles IV had two pipers, Svach known as the Golden Hand and Mařík, both referred to as masters (possibly they were only the best musicians from a larger ensemble) and around 1360 he had two favourite trumpeters, Jan and Velek, whom he paid generously and whose playing always lifted any of his sombre moods and filed him with zest for work. At the same time he is said to have received an illuminated manuscript with 58 scenes from the life of wandering musicians. The existence of a larger group of musicians connected with the royal court in Prague is also strongly suggested by the fact that Charles named one of them (evidently the principle master of the guild of musicians) the king of fiddlers (*rex histriorum*) and praised his art in the decree of appointment. In an entry made sometime in the years 1374 – 1380 in the Cancellarium of the Bishop of Olomouc Jan of Středa (Johannes Noviforensis), we read of a fiddle player Philippus and a Jesco, playing *ala Boemica*. Jan of Středa sent both these musicians, called family table companions and servants in the document, to his *"person most dear, his blood relation Klára"* in Kroměříž on the occasion of her wedding. This was a grand and exceptional gesture, since few – he said –

Psaltery in the hands of King David, held in typically "Bohemian" fashion, Boskov Bible.
Olomouc, State Scientific Library, M III 3, fol. 252v

Psaltery in the hands of King David, held in typically "Bohemian" fashion, Bible of Sadská.
Prague, Library of the National Museum, XII A 19, fol. 285r

Psaltery held in typical "Bohemian" fashion, Breviary of the Provost Jan of Roudnice.
Prague, Library of the National Museum, III C 1, fol. 17r

were truly worthy to hear such masterly play. At the same time he reminded the newly weds not to forget the two musicians and their fee in their marital bliss. From the very end of the 14th century we have reports that King Wenceslas IV employed the trumpeter Jan (1396) and the piper Hanuš Blutmar (1398). The Moravian margraves Jan Jindřich (1349 – 1375) and Jošt (1375 – 1411) also had their trumpeters and pipers of both Czech and German ethnicity.
It is generally known that Guillaume de Machaut, probably the greatest French poet and composer of the 14th century, worked in the service of the King of Bohemia, John of Luxemburg (1310 – 1346) as the king's secretary. It would, however, be a mistake to believe (as earlier Czech scholars did), that Machaut influenced Czech music of the first half of the 14th century with his work. The reality is different. In the first place King John himself never stayed long in Bohemia (Prague Castle was not even inhabitable at the time), since in his European-wide policy and his attempts as the "last knight" to be involved in all kinds of battles and political negotiations he was constantly moving all over the continent (Machaut complained about this wandering life with the king). In the second place Machaut does not even appear to have been with the king during all the periods when he actually was in Prague. It is estimated that over ten years Machaut could only have spent a mere 12 months in Prague. Furthermore, he wrote most of his music after 1340, when with the king's intercession he obtained the very advantageous prebend of a cannon in Rheims, where he spent the rest of his life until his death in 1377. After John's death in the Battle of Crécy in 1346 Machaut moved into the services of John's daughter Bonne, the sister of Charles IV and wife of the Duke of Normandy (later the art-loving King Jean le Bon). If Machaut's music reached Bohemia, it could only have been together with other French repertoire after the founding of Charles University (1348), and not at the time when he was in the service of John.
From the 13th century we also have records of schooled and paid cathedral singers. These were clerics with voice training and assured incomes (*clerici prebendati*), which were directed by a cantor. When the Archbishopric of Prague was established (1344) Charles IV also generously endowed a large choir of 24 mansionaries (resident canons) for the Prague Cathedral of St. Vitus, which became the model for other choirs of mansionaries founded in other parts of Europe. Apart from the male choirs, choirs of "good boys" were established on the model of the Prague St. Vitus Boys' choir of bonifantes (mid-13th century) in Prague at Vyšehrad and at St. Gallen's, and then in towns of Litoměřice and of Žatec . In Moravia at the same time these boys' choirs were called "poor boys who attend the choir". It is evident that the standard of the cathedral singers was the business not only for the cantors, but from the mid-14th century the subject of archbishop's ordinances and inspections. The Bishop of Olomouc Jan of Středa (Johannes Noviforensis) lent his favourite singer to the Abbot of Velehrad but soon missed his beautiful voice so much that he asked for him back.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

The Czech sources contain mentions not only of musicians accompanying song but of instrumental music as well. We have already mentioned some musicians in court and town service and should now add some other information relating to the concrete performance of instrumental music.
In 1092 at the enthronement of Břetislav II, boys and girls played on pipes and drums on the route taken by the ceremonial procession. In 1112 the Polish Prince Zbigniew brought a group of musicians (*simphonia musicorum*) playing on citharas and drums to Bohemia. In 1255 Queen Margaret, the wife of King Přemysl Otakar II, was welcomed *"with great jubilation and with different kinds of musical instruments"*. The Abbot of the Zbraslav Monastery, Petr Žitavský, described in the Zbraslav Chronicle how people rejoiced when the young heir to the throne Wenceslas returned to Prague from imprisonment in Sacony on the 24th of May 1283. Naturally the occasion could not have lacked music, and so apart from leaping jesters, drums were beated, citharas played, the voice of the trumpet rang out melodiously, the lyre was plucked,

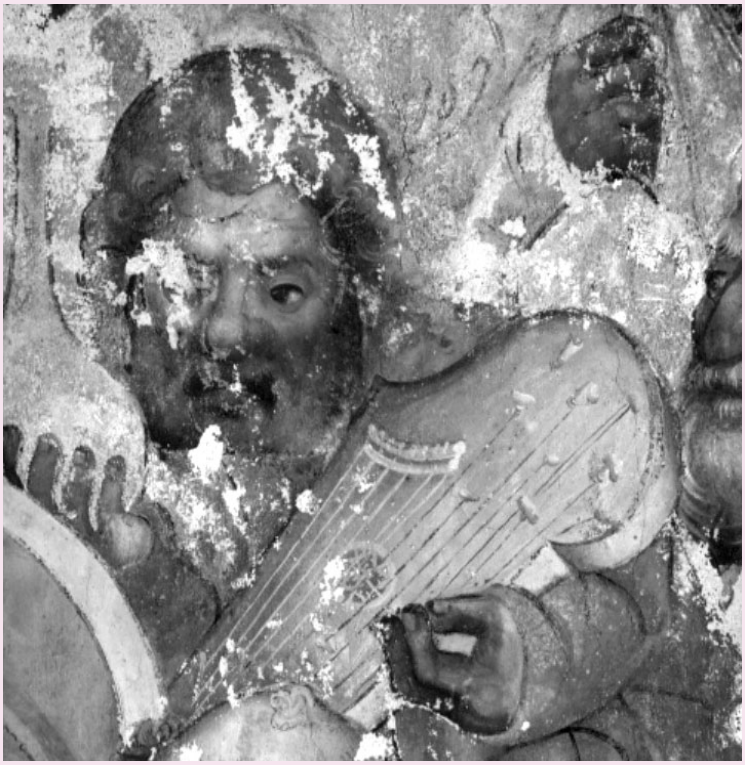
Psaltery in the hands of King David, held in typically "Bohemian" fashion, Psalter of Hanuš of Kolovraty. Prague, National Library, Osek 71, fol. 2v

Psalter Harp, Liber viaticus of Jan of Středa. Prague, Library of the National Museum, XIII A 12, fol. 9v

the bagpipes exulted and the organ sang. (*Tympana tanguntur, cytharae quoque percuntiuntur, voxque tubae resonat sonitum, lyra tacta resonat, mox mimi saltant, gaudet chorus, organa cantant*). When Wenceslas II was crowned Bohemian King in 1297, the same chronicler (who as the king's confessor was also probably a direct witness of the event) described great celebrations that naturally included musical instruments sounding with "wonderful sweetness" (*tympana, nabla, chori, tuba, sambucique sonori, rotta, figella, lira resonant dulcedina mira*). Henry of Carinthia's arrival in Prague in 1308 was likewise an occasion for music. The same chronicler recorded the rejoicing at the election of a new king who found favour with everyone: *"One sang, another played on the cithara, another beat on the drums, another sounded the lyre"* (*Iste melodizat, alius cithara citharizat, tympana pulsabat hic, ille lyra resonabat*) and after the coronation of John of Luxemburg in Prague in 1311 an exultant throng played *in tubis, cytharis et organis, tympanis et choris et in omni genere musicae*. When the King of Cyprus Pierre I de Lusignan visited the Prague court of Emperor Charles IV to try to win the emperor's support for his intended crusade (in the preceding year the emperor had already exploited him and his whole curious entourage at his marriage to his fourth wife Elizabeth of Pomerania in Cracow) Guillaume de Machaut described all the festivities at Charles's court in his *La Prise d'Alexandrie* (The Conquest of Alexander) and listed 25 different instruments played. Possibly to give the event a greater sheen (after all, Pierre I had himself commissioned the poem for his own celebration), Machaut was simply putting down all the instruments he could think of, since he had not himself actually been present, but he knew Prague and Cracow (and also Charles IV in his younger years) very well, and so the whole description (written three years later) may be generally reliable. It is clear that many musical instruments and many pieces popular throughout Europe were played.

What was the instrumental music of medieval Bohemia like? Probably it was very similar to the instrumental music of the High Middle Ages in the rest of Europe. Given that there are plenty of mentions of instrumental music in the sources, but comparatively very few surviving pieces in written form, we are justified in supposing that instrumental music was for the most part improvised. It consisted partly of instrumental preludes and interludes for sung pieces (most often polyphonic) which were also accompanied by musical instruments (for example the Czech Christmas two-voice song from the turn of the 14th/15th century *Stala sě jest věc divná [A wondrous thing has happened]* alternates text and non-text passages – and the non-text passages were almost certainly played on musical instruments). There were also polyphonic pieces without text, which were evidently designed from the start for instrumental performance (like for example Machaut's Hoquetus "David" written in the form of an isorhythmic motet) or separate dance pieces that were usually improvised. From the end of the 14th century (but outside the territory of Bohemia, although one of the manuscripts is today kept in a Prague library) we also know instrumental paraphrases of popular vocal pieces (preserved for example in the codices Faenza 117, "Reina" or the Prague National Library XI E 9), in which the originally sung discant part is richly adorned, while the "accompanying" tenor (and sometimes contratenor) remains in almost unaltered form. Evidently these were written down versions of usual improvisations on well-known songs in the *Ars nova* or *Ars subtilior* style. It is highly probably that this was the way in which musicians played in Bohemia too. On the basis of some 14th-century sources there are grounds for thinking that in Bohemia too at this time more vivid melodic upper voices were being improvised for the more tranquil "dance" tenor, as in the 15th century in the case of the French basse danse or the Italian bassadanza. Some pieces of this king may have been given sacred texts and may even have been sung in church, making them the source of Master Jan Hus's outrage when he condemned wanton cantilenas as *more conducive to dance than to religion.* One example might be the well-known Czech song with the charming Marian text *Flos florum inter lilia* in which the secular song *Ach du getruys blut von alden soln* is concealed

Angel playing the Ala, Karlštejn Castle, roof of the staircase of the Great Tower (working restorer's copy from the end of the 19th century). The two systems of strings are clearly visible.



Ala clearly showing the two systems of strings in the hand of an elder of the Apocalypse in a wall painting at the Karlštejn Castle, Chapel of the Holy Cross

in the tenor. The popularity of this song is strongly suggested by two other songs (*Que est ista* and *Quem elegit*, which is even known in the Czech variant *Zhlédniž na nás*) that have melodies very close to that of *Flos florum*. Independent dance pieces (likewise only very rarely surviving in written form), were most probably also improvised. Some well-known melody or part of it would certainly have been used as a theme, and the musicians would then improvise rhythmic (or even melodic) variations on it. We know two such dance melodies from Czech sources (one even in two independent noted versions). The words *czaldy waldy* appear on one, and this may be a garbling of the Turkish *saldy maldy*, meaning to start dancing.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

A great many of the musical instruments that are known from medieval written and iconographic sources all over Europe were used in Bohemia as well. They were in most cases instruments that scarcely differed at all throughout Europe, even in cases when an instrument was not European in origin but came from the Near East for example (e.g. the *rebec, lute, quinterne*). Nonetheless some instruments (mainly those used more rarely) showed certain regional marks. In the medieval sources we find a whole series if names for musical instruments that suggest a specific territorial origin, e.g. *musette d'Allemaigne, cornet d'Allemaigne, l'eschaquir d'Engletre, chevrecte d'Esclavonnie, cythara teutonica* and *cythara anglica, rabe morisco, guitarra morisca* and *guitarra latina, guitarra sarracenica, cor sarrazinios, cornet sarrazinoas,* but also the *ala bohemica* or *fleüthe de Behaingne*. These were not frequently used names, and I tend to think that they were secondary in the sense of intended to characterise the foreign origin of the instrument in another place where it was used. Nonetheless, these names still suggest that musical instruments in the Middle Ages were not distributed evenly across Europe, but that many had their particular regions, or characteristic construction elements or methods of play typical for certain areas. Let us therefore take a look at this issue in relation to the medieval Bohemian Lands.

The ala Bohemica is the instrument generally known as the Bohemian Wing. In medieval written records the adjective "bohemica" appears in a single source. In the Cancellarium of the Bishop of Olomouc Jan of Středa, mentioned several times before, we read of Jesco, playing the *ala Boemica*. In another place in the same source the same Jesco is mentioned as a player on the *ala*, i.e. without the *Boemica*. Given that no other source known today calls the instrument anything but *ala* (or ele and suchlike), we are justified in agreeing with the organologist Pavel Kurfürst that in the Olomouc source the adjective "boemica" is meant simply to indicate or stress the provenance of the instrument, and not as its real title. For this reason we also recommend the use of the title **ala** (wing) instead of the incorrect name ala bohemica (Bohemian Wing), introduced into the literature on instruments by Czech scholars of the 19th and 20th century and evidently taken over from them by the other authors. The ala (wing) existed for a relatively short time. All depictions of it fall into the period between 1300 and the 1370s, while written mentions can already be found in the 13th century and continue to the beginning of the 15th century. The peak in number of sources (pictorial and written) is quite brief, perhaps the 30 years between the 1340s and 1370s. The great majority of all known evidence for the existence of the ala (wing) points to Bohemia and so we can reasonable consider it to have been Bohemian, even if we reject the use of the adjective "bohemica" in the title of the instrument. There are grounds for thinking that the ala spread beyond the Bohemian lands, since the cultural contacts of the territories under the Luxemburgs, and especially in the reign of Charles IV (1346 – 1378) with the whole of cultural Europe at the time have been demonstrated by historians of art.

Another medieval instrument that is considered by Czech scholars (above all Alexander Buchner and Pavel Kurfürst – on the basis of 19 iconographic sources of mainly Bohemian origin) as Bohemicum is the **psaltery harp.** The psaltery harp has been identified by research to date as having

Psalter Harp, Breviarium benedictinum of the Rajhrad Monastery. Brno, National Library, R 394, fol. 1r

existed over the period roughly between the end of the 13th century and the third quarter of the 15th century. I have managed to assemble around eighty iconographic documents from the 14th and 15th century, in which Czech and foreign (mainly German) illustrations are more or less equally represented. This evidence leads me to the conclusion that the psaltery harp was an instrument used all over Central Europe. Clearly we must abandon the rather nationalist perspective of some Czech specialists in the history of instruments and recognise that the psaltery harp was at the very least a Central European instrument in the larger sense.

An interesting "instrument" on which the views of contemporary musicologists differ is mentioned in the written sources of the 14th century. Jean Lefévre twice mentions a *fleüthe de Behaingne* and Guillaume de Machaut a *flaüste brehaingne.* I am convinced that this is a mirliton and not some kind of "Bohemian flute". This is because the old French meaning is "infertile" or "sterile" flute (eunuch – flute) and has nothing to do with the wind instrument flute since it is an instrument in which a membrane resonates with the voice in just the same was as when we "play" on a comb. This means that when Lefévre and Machaut set it beside the musette d'Alemaingne or cornet d'Alemaingne we should understand them not as doing so to distinguish the provenance of these instruments from this "flute" but just as a way of getting the same rhyme into the verse.

Nonetheless, after undermining illusions of specific Bohemian origin in two cases I have at least one comfort for the disappointed Czech heart. This is the mode of play on the psaltery in the Bohemian Lands in the Middle Ages. The psaltery was an instrument that had numerous modifications of form, the outlines of which were derived basically from four geometrical figures – square, rectangle, triangle and trapezium. The most common instrument was in the form of a "pig snout", i.e. a trapezium with the shorter edges bent inwards. The psaltery had strings stretched parallel to the longest edge of the instrument above the whole soundboard. The player would most often hold it pressed to his chest so that he had the longest string at the top (under his chin) and would proceed downwards (towards the waist) when playing the shorter strings, i.e. higher notes. This way of holding the instrument is confirmed in abundant iconographic sources and also in written records. Another known way of holding the psaltery was to play the instrument on the lap, the deeper strings being by the player's waist and the higher strings progressively further away towards the knee. In both methods of holding the instrument the player could play with both hands (more often with a plectrum of bird feathers, but also with fingers or a combination of both). Iconographic sources occasionally show it held in the opposite way, with the shorter strings closest to the player, but this is rare and may be considered an anomaly or license on the part of the artist. In all cases, however, the instrument is held in a way that means that the strings are horizontal (perpendicular) to the axis of the player's body.

In Bohemian art we encounter the psaltery held in one hand, and with the strings vertical (parallel) to the axis of player's body, so that the player can use only one hand for his play. Sometime in the years 1459 – 63 Paulus Paulirinus de Praga in a description of play on a psaltery singular stated – "it is struck with a *quill* held in the *hand*" ("*cum penna percutitur tenta in manu*"), thus confirming the reliability of the pictorial records. There also exist depictions of psaltery players who hold the instrument with the strings parallel to the body and try to use the hand that holds the instruments to play it as well, but this hand could only reach a few of the nearest strings and so we can assume that this was not the ordinary form of play. We can find the roots of the vertical method of holding the psaltery in play on the ala, which was in any case an offshoot of the psaltery nd was used precisely in Medieval Bohemia. We can therefore consider the holding of the psaltery in a position in which the strings are parallel to the axis of the player's body as typical for the Bohemian Lands.

CD Recordings of Bohemian Medieval Music (extract):

Ach, homo fragilis, Supraphon, SU 3623
Anno Domini 997, Supraphon, SU 3288
Gothic Music in Bohemia, Studio Matouš, MK 0026
Music of Charles University I, Studio Matouš, MK 0003
Music of Charles University II, Studio Matouš, MK 0005
In Pragensi ecclesia, Supraphon, SU 3191
Rosa mystica, Supraphon, SU 0194

*The author of the article, the composer **Lukáš Matoušek,** is deeply involved in medieval music both practically as the music director of the ensemble Ars cameralis with which he performs medieval music, taking a great deal of note material directly from historical manuscripts, and as a scholar, above all in the field of medieval musical instruments.*

Talich's *Má vlast*, a recording of 1954 that has now been digitalised, is above all historical testimony to the musician and his era, to the changing reception of the work, to shifts in its emotional place in national culture, and to the increasing quality of orchestral performance. Despite the admirable way in which the recording has been cleaned, in the rather tinny monophonic sound one can clearly hear and recognise the limits of the recording technology, and despite the legends with which the Czech Philharmonic is wreathed, when listening to the "fat" brass tones, the very thin tone of the oboe or the over-prominent strings one cannot but reflect critically on the half century that divides us from the then standard of the orchestra. *Má vlast* was crucial for Václav Talich; he returned to it again and again throughout his life, presenting it with the Czech Philharmonic many times in every season, both in Prague and on domestic tours. It was not a work just for special celebratory occasions as it is now, but much more part of everyday consciousness of national identity and the roots of society. We should also remember how Talich used to present *Má vlast* at the beginning of the occupation and Second World War and the emotional response of audiences, then how and why he played it in the Reich, and how he later suffered for alleged collaboration after the liberation. We must remember the critical scepticism that he attracted because of his broken health at the time of his short return to the Philharmonic, the time when this recording was made. All of this is hidden somewhere in the studio recording of *Má vlast* made in the June and July of 1954. Shortly afterwards Talich was to conduct it for the last time.

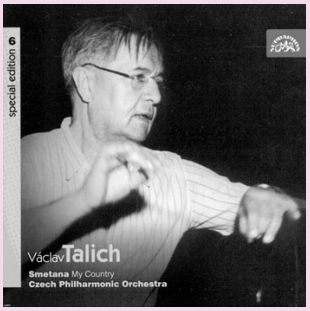
Perhaps rather than "hidden", we could say that all this is on the one hand in some way reflected in the recording, but then again naturally not in an obvious audible way. We listen and reflect on the usual tension between the pure interpretation of notes and the insertion of other meanings into the music. What is certain is that Talich's late conception of *Má vlast* is not idyllically comfortable. It is evident that what we hear is important music, with its own special and striking epic quality and pathos. It is also clear that the conductor was not holding back from great contrasts in dynamics, expression and in tempos, that he was not afraid of agogics, accelerandos, expansive sound, mystery and an almost frenzied excitement – in other words romanticism with all that it involves. His performance is anything but restrained or detached – it manages to be explosive, but also at other points rendered almost surprisingly calm. The conductor's conception can be more easily recognised in the different turning-points in the music and transition sections than in its overall course in the long sections. It is the conception of a musician who was not so much wrestling with every note as working comprehensively with the many possibilities of what to stress emotionally, where to place weight and meaning.

If Ančerl's *Má vlast* is already as international as his other recordings, Kubelík's historic recording of 1990 is epically exultant, and various versions by some other contemporary conductors are beautifully balanced, then Tallich's is above all balladic. Talich'a Má vlast on the 1954 recording is full of contrast and struggle, with one climax in the part *Z českých luhů a hájů [From Bohemian Meadows and Glades]* and another in the Hussite Chorale. It is music that evokes the breadth of imagined film shots, music that has the quality of historical and operatic fantasy, it is rarely lightened, but is heroic and rhapsodic in an interior rather than superficial way; it is definitely not absolutely objective, pure music, but on the contrary a music that is entirely programmatic, although not in the sense of the description of events so much as in the programmatic character of idea, design and goal.

Talich and the Philharmonic – this is above all a legend, alive in memories and handed down feelings, given by his personal charisma and his relative contribution to a standard of play that was originally, in the early years of the 20th century, still much lower than we can easily imagine today. With the Philharmonic Talich plays *Má vlast* as it is written and as it is usually played, without curious excesses, but to the full, truly symphonically. The release of the historic recording is a record of the struggles of a great artist. When we listen to the disk, however, rather than excitement over ravishing details what comes to mind is the question of how to distinguish between what is the real sound of the orchestra and what are the limitations imposed by the recording, and how to distinguish between what is timeless and what is only conditioned by its time.

Technology today works miracles, but the fact that something is an artificially digitalised recording is still always inevitably revealed at the end, in the moment when there is suddenly an empty silence...

PETR VEBER



Bedřich Smetana
Má vlast – My Country

Czech Philharmonic, Václav Talich. Production: Jana Gonda, Petr Kadlec, Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 6-7/1954, Prague Rudolfinum. Released: 2006. TT: 75:04. ADD mono. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3826-2.

Johannes Brahms
Piano concertos no. 1 in D minor op. 15, no. 2 in B flat major op. 83

Ivan Moravec – piano, Czech Philharmonic, Jiří Bělohlávek. Production: not stated. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 10/1989 and 9/1988, Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2006. TT: 48:18 + 50:15. DDD. 2 CD Supraphon SU 3865-2.

In the last two months of 2005 Supraphon displayed a list of the most successful titles from its catalogue on its web pages and gave visitors to the page the chance to pick six recordings that they would like to see released in a new edition. To the delight of all the admirers of the art of Ivan Moravec, Jiří Bělohlavek and the Czech Philharmonic, this title was one of the recordings that made it to the winning "Best of the Best" six. Here we have the chance to hear a truly exceptional performance of two of the most popular romantic piano concertos. From the very first bars it spellbinds us with its poetry and incredible lucidity of sound. In intimacy of expression, transparency and detailed treatment these "symphonic poems with piano" almost recall chamber music. In the minds of listeners and performers Brahms is usually associated with a certain intellectual seriousness to which sombre colours are better suited, but Ivan Moravec and Jiří Bělohlávek bring so much light and air and so many subtle nuances of colour to this recording, that like it or not we start to wonder whether our conventional view of Brahms as a "dark and overcast" composer might not be at the least unjust. The quality of this excellent Supraphon project is enhanced by an erudite accompanying text from Jarmila Gabrielová. And so the only blemish is the artwork of the booklet jacket. The post-modernist concoction of a portion of keyboard on a plate is in Brahmsian dark colours, but otherwise it misses the spirit of this exceptional recording in every respect.

VĚROSLAV NĚMEC

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Complete Symphonies

The Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vladimír Válek. Production: Vít Roubíček. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 2/2003 (no.1), 10/2004 (no. 5), 1–2/2005 (nos. 2, 4, 6), 4/2005 (no. 3). Released: 2005. TT: 79:15, 76:01, 40:24, 41:57. DDD. 4 CD Supraphon SU 3862–2.

The release of a complete set of symphonies by a single composer provides a unique opportunity for exploring his symphonic work as a whole. In the case of Petr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the greatest Russian symphonic composer of the 19th century, a project of this kind is particularly desirable. Although his first three symphonies have many demonstrable charms, we encounter them only rarely in the repertoire of symphony orchestras. The complete set not only offers listeners an excellent chance to get to know these works, but also a great opportunity to get sense of the successive phases of Tchaikovsky's development. When a project of this kind is combined with a high standard of performance by orchestra and conductor and a high quality digital studio recording, one can only be pleased and grateful.
The Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra and its conductor offer us Tchaikovsky symphonies that sound very fresh. The impression of freshness is produced above all by the unusually fast tempos. These suit the music in many places, but in other places, we can only be a little sorry that effective tempo contrast has been sacrificed to the overall rapid momentum. Possibly the conductor Vladimír Válek was under pressure in some passages because of the time capacity of the compact disk. The first disk, for example, with the First and Sixth Symphony, contains almost eighty minutes of music, which is only slightly less than maximum capacity. One cannot help sighing and thinking that Peter Ilyich did not reckon with the capacity of the future compact disk – everything could have been played as it should be and the overall impression might have been even better. Nonetheless, the performers are definitely to be praised; even in these brisk tempos they play very precisely and with feeling, and so the dance character of the Third, the moodiness of the Fourth and the urgency of the Sixth Symphony are all properly conveyed to the listener.
The complete set of 4 CDs in an elegant gift box is accompanied by a brief but very pithy and erudite commentary from the pen of the producer Vít Roubíček. Perhaps only in the case of the Fourth Symphony some listeners might be helped in their appreciation of the music by a more detailed insight (preserved in the composer's correspondence) into the programme of the whole work.

PETR CH. KALINA

Petr Eben
Faust, Mutationes

Gunther Rost – organ. Production: not stated. Text: Ger., Eng. Recorded: 27. – 29. 11. 2001, St. Martin, Memmingen. Released: 2002. TT: 64:13. DDD. 1 CD Ursina Motette 12911.

Petr Eben is without doubt one of the most important contemporary Czech composers, not only in the field of sacred music, but above all in music for organ. He has drawn international interest and won world-wide acclaim for his deeply individual work, and for the most part it is foreign recording companies that have been producing CDs of his entire organ output. This most recent version comes from Germany. The challenge has been taken up the young organist Gunther Rost, a pupil of the celebrated masters G. Kaunzinger and Marie-Clair Alain. With his fresh performance, lightness of touch and "insouciance" he is persuasive on all counts. Precise technique, virtuosity, precision of rhythm, clarity of articulation, feeling and a sense for optimal registering, i.e. for changing the colour of the sound for each piece and its various parts. In short, it is an achievement deserving of superlatives, and an overarching musical understanding and musicianship set the seal on it. Few people could be left cold either by Eben's music itself or by Gunther Rost's performance of it. The story of *Faust* and the polarity of good and evil that it involves is expressed by the organ in classical stylisation on the one hand and the trivial orchestrion sound on the other. *Mutationes* for two organs can be played on just one instrument, as in the case in the next recording on the first CD in the complete set. The second CD contains only one composition, the major philosophical cycle *Job*. Emphasis on the meaning of human suffering is characterised by the harsh sound of the organ, but also by the tender flute registers. The organist is excellent in the way he always separates out themes, citation of plainsongs and Czech sacred songs from the flow of the music. The words of a narrator, who quotes from the Old Testament Book of Job between the different sections, is part of the cycle. The last CD contains the next two cycles – *Sunday Music* and *Laudes*, and also

A Festive Voluntary and *Two Choral Fantasias*. Rost's commentary including hand written note extracts from the themes, chorales and songs, further information and the disposition of the different organs, is an important and praiseworthy element of each booklet. There is also useful information on the composer and performer.

Recording of the complete organ works of Petr Eben is far from complete with the issue of these three CDs. Several pieces are missing, and so we can look forward to further recordings.

JITKA KOCŮRKOVÁ

Hiob
Gunther Rost – organ. Production: not stated. Text: Ger., Eng. Recorded: 21. – 22. 3. 2002, Tonhalle, Zürich. Released: 2002. TT: 60:22. DDD. 1 CD Ursina Motette 12921.

Sonntagsmusik, Laudes, Zwei Choralfantasien, A Festive Voluntary
Gunther Rost – organ. Production: not stated. Text: Ger., Eng. Recorded: 24. – 27. 11. 2003, Neubaukirche der Universität Würzburg. Released: 2005. TT: 73:35. DDD. 1 SACD Ursina Motette 12934

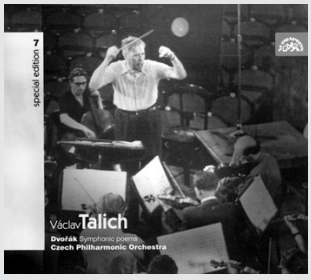
Jitka Čechová opens the second CD of her Smetana project with her showpiece, the cycle *Dreams*. She deserves admiration both for her brilliant Lisztian technique and her ability to shape and model the macrostructures of the music while at the same time (as we have come to take for granted in her case) to pay perfect attention to detail. Wonderfully ripe rubata combine here with a marvellous rhythm that gives Smetana's music unusual panache (the electrifying *In front of the Castle* and *Festival of Czech Country People*). After this grand introduction the pianist soothes us with the seven *Album Leaves* of 1848-53 and *Andante in E flat major* of 1855, pieces that Smetana never published in his lifetime. In the case of four of them he provided no tempo instructions, which means that their performance has differed markedly from pianist to pianist. Jitka Čechová basically follows the tempo instructions given in J. Novotný's revision. All the pieces are convincing in tempo and charming in mood colour. The following *Four Polkas* (*E major, G minor, A major, F minor*) from the beginning of the 1850s were likewise never printed in the composer's lifetime, but we know that Smetana intended to publish them. Listening to Jitka Čechová, we can be in no doubt that they are just as good as the popular cycles "Three Salon Polkas" and "Three Poetic Cycles". In the polkas in E major and A major we can also appreciate Smetana's masterly work with individual voices and the no less masterly way in which Jitka Čechová treats them in these dance stylisations. The concluding *Wedding Scenes* of 1849 is a real treat for the listener. Although the piece could easily tempt pianists into a certain showiness, Jitka Čechová keeps all three movement of the cycle intimate in expression. The opening *Wedding Procession* sounds like an easy and spiritedly march, the second movement *Groom and Bride* is conceived as a dialogue between a female and male voice. In the last movement, *Wedding Revels* the polka middle section is particularly noteworthy, and not just because Smetana used this music in the introduction to the Bartered Bride. Jitka Čechová is well-known for her sovereign skill in the use of piano colours, and in this "orchestrally" conceived section she uses it to literally magical effect.

VĚROSLAV NĚMEC

Bedřich Smetana
Sny [Dreams], Album Leaves (B major, B flat minor, Toccatinas in B major, G major, G minor, E flat minor, B flat minor), Andante in E flat major, Polkas (E major, G minor, A major, F minor), Wedding Scenes

Jitka Čechová – piano. Production: Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 10-12/2005, Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2006. TT: 69:35. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3842-2.

Dvořák's symphonic poems continue to provoke a certain amount of controversy. There are those who claim that they lack real dramatic power and fail to be as convincing as Smetana's poems, and that certain passages are distinctly problematic in composition. I myself do not consider these doubts justified, although everyone has a right to his opinion! I strongly agree with those who believe without reservation that these four pieces belong to the best traditions of Czech music. A great deal, however, depends on the interpretative view of the performer. Listening to a wide range of very different interpretations we find that it is here that the whole problem lies! Václav Talich manages to extract the great musical riches of these Dvořák scores, bringing to life scenes full of drama, but also lyricism and love – erotic and maternal, sincere and false. Admittedly, he never presented these poems as a complete set – one of them was always missing in his programmes. And even Talich showed a certain lack of faith sometimes – for example (at least in this recording) he cut the three-part musical description of bringing back to life of Dornička in *The Golden Spinning Wheel* to one, and truncated the wedding scene after the beginning of the same poem. With all respect to the great director, these retouches, while made with the best intentions, now seem more or less embarrassing. The contrast represented by the perfectly expressively worked though complete versions by Chalabala or Kubelík makes this very clear. Despite this, Talich must take a great deal of the credit for the popularity of these often unjustly under-rated pieces! He loved them passionately and insisted on putting them in his concert programmes. The recording of the poems he made for Supraphon at the turn of the 1940s/50s was a major step. He also included them (apart from The Golden Spinning Wheel) on one of his first "return" concerts with the Czech Philharmonic at the Prague Spring in 1954 (this recording also exists on CD). The recording of *The Water Goblin* was made first – in 1949 and not yet on tape, while the remaining three poems were recorded in 1951 using what was already more modern technology, as is audible in this edition as well. For years to come it was the only recording of Dvořák's poems broadcast on the radio and available on records – on old brittle standard records, and then on LPs, except for *The Water Goblin* which was never brought out on LP! With the advent of stereo these records entirely disappeared from the market, since the new recording by Chalabala appeared in 1961, and for many years Talich's recordings of Dvořák's poems were unobtainable. It was only with the first edition on CD in 1993 that all four once again shone in their full beauty and became a reminder of the greatness of Talich's art.



Václav Talich – Special Edition 7

Antonín Dvořák
Symphonic Poems based on ballads by K. J. Erben – The Water Goblin, The Noon Witch, The Golden Spinning Wheel, The Dove

The Czech Philharmonic, Václav Talich. Production: Jana Gonda, Petr Kadlec, Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., French, Cz. Recorded: 14. 7. 1949, Studio Domovina, Prague (Water Goblin), 4. 4. 1951 (Noon Witch), 20. 3. 1951 (Golden Spinning Wheel), 2. – 3. 4. 1951 (Dove) Rudolfinum, Prague. Released 2006. TT: 76:27. ADD mono, digitally remastered. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3827-2.

This CD was one of the still famous "postal" series (so called because of the reproductions of postage stamps on the booklets) consisting of more than 100 compact discs successively published to mark the 100th anniversary of the Czech Philharmonic. The current new edition presents these works in new digital versions – the quality remains roughly the same as in the "postal" edition, but the Water Goblin has come out rather better because in the first edition the technological possibilities for treatment of the old recording were more limited. One of the themes considered with reference to critics of the period by the editor and author of the text in the booklet, Petr Kadlec, is Talich's capacity to structure scores in terms of sound. This talent is one of the reasons for the success of these sometimes under-rated Dvořák scores.

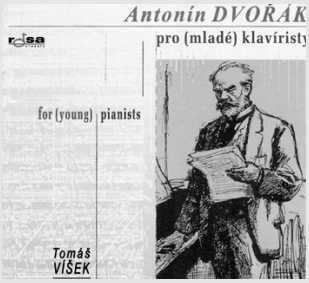
BOHUSLAV VÍTEK

Jan Dismas Zelenka
Il Serpente di Bronzo

Alex Potter, Petra Noskaiová, Hana Blažíková, Peter Kooij, Jaroslav Březina, Ensemble Inégal, Adam Viktora. Production: not stated. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: 8/2005 Rothmayer Hall of Prague Castle. Released: 2005. TT: 67:20. DDD. 1 CD Nibiru 0146-2211.

Adam Viktora has created a delicious and refined feast for every listener with his recording of *The Bronze Serpent*, one of Jan Dismas Zelenka's three great passion works. The composer himself called it a spiritual cantata, but it is actually an oratorio based on one episode from the 4th Book of Moses (Numbers) and "sinning" against the genre probably only in the sense that it has only one movement. Today the work itself is not particularly well-known; it was presented in modern concert performance not so long ago thanks to Robert Hugo, but no printed edition has yet appeared and like all Zelenka's major works it makes considerable demands on singers and musicians. Zelenka's composition, dated 1730, does not require excessive comment or analysis to be appreciated – the composer takes the theme of contemplation of the crucified Redeemer and imbues it, in intimate drama, with all the tones of his rich, distinctive imagination to create one of his best works. Adam Viktora has treated it with the respect and attention it deserves, both in his choice of singers and his careful treatment of every detail of Zelenka's rich score. The introductory choral immediately ravishes the listener with its typical Zelenka drive and the corresponding commitment of the whole ensemble. The orchestra gives virtuoso performances and it is hard to know which to praise first, the strings (relatively strongly represented) or the woodwind, the dramatic accompagnato *Mosè contro di me* or the charming trialogue of oboes, bassoon and alto (Alex Köhler) in the aria *Vicina morte*, or again the dynamic but sensitive, pliable continuo. The soloists are international and very balanced in quality. Any listener with even a little knowledge of the field will certainly be interested in the presence of the brilliant Bach interpreter Peter Kooij. To be absolutely honest, the "di sdegno" genre of the aria *Potrei sovra degli empi* is not entirely congenial to the this singer's natural temperament, and so the raging Old Testament Jahve inevitably has less of a choleric presence than the composer probably intended. Nonetheless one can only take off one's hat to the singer's achievement (the accompagnato *Ah, Mosè* is exquisite), since Zelenka's bass arias are among the most difficult that he ever wrote for voice. Listening to Petra Noskaiová, you can do nothing but savour her velvet mezzo-soprano and overall soulful, intelligent performance, and you will certainly be unable to resist the metallically sweet soprano of Hana Blažíková, whose brilliant performance is doubly praiseworthy when you remember that she joined the recording at the last moment as a replacement for the sick Gabriela Eibenová. Jaroslav Březina is perhaps almost above praise, but what can one do face to face with the recitative *Autor della natura*, the most beautiful of the whole recording? I believe, by the way, that it could have been particularly this degree of expression that, had it been "omnipresent", would have shifted this recording from the merely brilliant to the staggering category. To live up to my reputation as a critic, let me tell all patient readers that in the booklet they will find a fascinating commentary and translations of the text, but that if we overlook the arrangement (translations following each other and not in parallel with the original) and a few minor typos, only one thing is really puzzling: Why has such an excellent recording and such enthralling music been clothed in grey? The title and indeed the beautiful engraving used on the cover surely cries out for fiery, truly bronze colour, that would allow the recording to flame and shine out on the record shop racks!

MARC NIUBÓ



Tomáš Víšek
Antonín Dvořák for (young) pianists

Tomáš Víšek – piano. Production: Tomáš Víšek. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger. Recorded: January and February 2005. Released: 2005. TT: 77:39. DDD. 1 CD Rosa RD 1318 (distribution Rosa).

Recordings like this have real point and meaning. Tomáš Víšek has already established a reputation as a seeker and a pioneer, never hesitating to enrich his repertoire with works that few others have the will to struggle with, and getting them included in concerts and in recordings. Antonín Dvořák's piano works have a reputation for being unplayable. Tomáš Víšek does not deny that in many respects they need a lot of time and effort if the results are to be effective, but he is one of the few who are not afraid of the challenge, although even he might find life easier without Dvořák the piano composer. A second and related aspect is the goal that Víšek sets himself and pursues. This time it was to find something in Dvořák's piano output that would help to overcome distrust and prejudice about unplayability and so win young pianists over for Dvořák ("young" here is a relative term that Víšek puts in inverted comments to emphasise that he is not talking about pieces for beginners). He has chosen 37 short pieces, among them many that are entirely unknown (he has reconstructed *Presto in E flat major* from the manuscript and also finished *Presto in E Minor*), including five premieres. In chronological scope they range from the Dvořák's first preserved piano piece *Forget-Me-Not* written when he was thirteen, to his last ever piano piece and also his best known, the *Humoresque in F sharp major*. They are also very diverse in type and significance, from trivial little pieces (although not in the pejorative sense of the word) to unjustly forgotten gems, such as *Silhouettes* or *Poetic Moods*. Finding, choosing and rehearsing the pieces were all stages of the road to realising the idea. Another was finding sponsors (four main and another seven) and so on. The sound quality of the recording is outstanding; it was recorded in the Municipal Theatre in Turnov on a Petrof piano. Tomáš Víšek himself wrote the accompanying text, which is knowledgeable, full of information and brilliantly formulated.

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sat 16.09. **Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra · Pierre Boulez · conductor · Luisa Castellani · mezzo-soprano** · Arnold Schönberg · Kammersinfonie Nr. 2 · Anton Webern · Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen op.2 · Anton Webern · Das Augenlicht op.26 · Anton Webern · Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen op. 2b · Pierre Boulez · Cummings ist der Dichter · Matthias Pintscher · Monumento V · Austrian premiere · Luciano Berio · Calmo **sun 17.09.** **Pilgrimage** · pilgrim station I · Erin Gee · solo · Erin Gee · Mouthpieces and Yamaguchi Mouthpieces · pilgrim station II · Latvian Radio Choir · Erin Gee · solo · Erin Gee · Mouthpieces I, II, IV, VII, choir version · world premiere · pilgrim station III · Barbara Romen and Gunter Schneider · Klang spüren - Kassian Erharts interaktive Bewegungsklangschalen · pilgrim station IV · Latvian Radio Choir · Kaspars Putnins · conductor · Arvo Pärt · I am the true vine · Felix Resch · Horizontale Verschiebungen · Miroslav Srnka · Podvrhy · Günther Andergassen · Vokalisen op. 48 · Austrian premiere · pilgrim station V · Latvian Radio Choir · Sigvards Klava · Kaspars Putnins · conductors · Martin Smolka · Walden · Anne Boyd · As I crossed a bridge of dreams · Peteris Vasks · Litene · Santa Ratniece: Maze · György Ligeti · Lux aeterna · Martins Vilums · Le Temps scintille · Martin Smolka · Slone i smutne · world premiere **tue 19.09.** **Friedrich Achleitner · Arno Ritter** · reading and discussion **wed 20.09.** **Windkraft · Charlie Fischer · percussion · Peppie Wiersma · percussion · Christian Dierstein · percussion · Ernesto Molinari · clarinet · Manuel de Roo · guitar · Dennis Russell Davies · piano · Maki Namekawa · piano · Kaspar Singer · cello · Anders Nyqvist · trumpet · Walter Voglmayr · trombone** · Haimo Wisser · Drehungen for percussion and piano · world premiere · Olga Neuwirth · spazio elastico · Austrian premiere · Haimo Wisser · Der große Macabre, Suite 1991 · Fischer-Molinari-Duo · Irrlicht · Michal Nejtek · Frame Dreams · world premiere · **Late night concert · Maki Namekawa & Dennis Russell Davies · piano** · Dmitri Schostakowitsch · Sinfonie Nr.4 c-moll op. 43, adapted for piano for 4 hands by Schostakowitsch **thu 21.09.** **Tiroler Kammerorchester InnStrumenti · Gerhard Sammer · conductor · Michael Cede · flute · Harald Pröckl · accordion** · Hubert Stuppner · Der treue Troubadour · world premiere · Eduard Demetz · silent foot · world premiere · Felix Resch · TransParent · world premiere · Werner Pirchner · Soirée Tyrolienne **fri 22.09.** **military music corps Vorarlberg · Karl Gamper · conductor · Andreas Broger · alto saxophone** · Peter Eötvös · Paris – Dakar · Murat Üstün · Membran · world premiere · Eduard Demetz · Primordiale for brass and percussion · world premiere · Jorge Sánchez-Chiong · trapos / Sexy Pony & Civil Disobedience · world premiere · Charles Ives · Country Band March **sat 23.09.** **film in talk** · DAS LINKE DING, documentary film about the European lefty by Margit Knapp and Arpad Bondy · afterwards round table with the czech expert in fair trade Jiri Silny · **MoEns Prag · Bohemia Saxophone Quartett · Miroslav Pudlak · conductor** · Hanus Barton · Ohne Regeln · world premiere · Marek Kopelent · „-------- ---- -- - 8421“ · world premiere · Martin Hybler · Oligarch Globalisateur · world premiere · Miroslav Pudlak · Babel Dances · world premiere **sun 24.09.** **International Ensemble Modern Academy · concert · Benedict Mason · composition, choreography and space concept · Sian Edwards and Franck Ollu · musical supervisors · Cathy Milliken · stage director** · Benedict Mason · felt/ebb/thus/brink/here/array/telling/ · Austrian premiere **mon 25.09.** **Jáchym Topol · reading · Eva Profousova · translation · Tomas Ondrusek · percussion** · Martin Smolka · Ringing · Milos Haase · Ormai · Peter Graham · Secreta · David Lang · Anvil Chorus · Iannis Xenakis · Psappha **tue 26.09.** **International Ensemble Modern Academy · final concert** · Harrison Birtwistle · Ritual Fragment · Galina Ustwolskaja · Octet for two oboes, four violins, timbales and piano · Steve Reich · Eight Lines for ensemble · Wolfgang Rihm · Gesungene Zeit for violin and orchestra · John Cage · Atlas Eclipticalis **wed 27.09.** **Ensemble Wiener Collage · Erich Urbanner · conductor · Alfred Melichar · accordion** · Erich Urbanner to his 70th anniversary · Zdzislaw Wysocki · Etüde op 65/24 for accordion und doublebass · world premiere · Etüde op. 65/18 for flute, clarinet und viola · world premiere · Etüde op. 65/9 for violin, clarinet und bassclarinet · Etüde op 65/1 for clarinet, horn, violin und violoncello · Bernd Richard Deutsch · Variationes for clarinet, accordion, violin, viola and doublebass · world premiere · Johanna Doderer · Für Akkordeon und Streicher 1 · world premiere · Erich Urbanner · Duo for accordion und double-bass · Erich Urbanner · concert for accordeon und nine instruments **thu 28.09.** **Elisabeth Schimana · electronics · Cordula Bösze · flute · Lena Golovasheva · terpsiton** · Elisabeth Schimana · Schimana on Tesar · world premiere · Elisabeth Schimana · 4:3 **fri 29.09.** **STANDSTILL · Young Sounds & Theater** · apprentices from MPREIS, IVB, IKB and GE Jenbacher · presentation of the outcomes of workshops · Thomas Kasebacher · Philipp Moll · supervision · pupils of the Glasfachschule Kramsach · glass sounds & percussion · The Next Step · supervision · afterwards pupils and apprentices on turntables
sat 30.09. **Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien · Martyn Brabbins · conductor · Erin Gee · vocals** · Erin Gee · Mouthpiece IX · world premiere · Joanna Wozny · loses · world premiere · Dai Fujikura · Stream State · Austrian premiere · George Benjamin · Dance Figures · Austrian premiere