

Ivo Kahánek
Historically informed
performance
Musical education
Tyrrell - Janáček

2 | 2008

František
Ondřejek, Voita-
ch Vladimír Poček,
Vladimír Poček,
Lívka – piano
(Ondřejek), a
Prague Radio Or-
chestra, Ota-
kar Bašák (Rharso-
Bohème), Fran-
tišek Štrobka (Coun-

PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ © OSTRAVA DAYS



www.musica.cz

general partners >

O₂



KKCG

IRINA LUNGU

CHAVA ALBERSTEIN

LES ARTS FLORISSANTS & WILLIAM CHRISTIE

JULIA FISCHER

JOEL FREDERIKSEN & ENSEMBLE PHOENIX MUNICH

JIRÍ PAVLICA & HRADIŠŤAN

TENORES DI BITTI

FRANÇOIS COUTURIER QUARTET

MARTIN GRUBINGER

LENKA DUSILOVÁ

CLARINET FACTORY

RABIH ABOU-KHALIL

KAREL HOLAS, RADEK POBOŘIL



strings of autumn

JAZZ and CLASSIC, TRADITION and EXPERIMENT

13th International Music Festival
Prague, Sept. 28–Nov. 19, 2008

for the thirteenth time across musical genres

main partner >

PRIVAT BANK AG
der Raiffeisenlandesbank Oberösterreich

partner >


INTERCONTINENTAL
PRAHA

co-presenters >

Národní divadlo



NÁRODNÍ MUZEUM

N.A.D.A.C.E.
VIZE 97

media partners >

ČESKÉNOVINY.CZ

ČESKÝ ROZHLAS

AWK

HARMONIE

LIDOVÉ NOVINY

přehled



THE PRAGUE POST

TÝDEN

XANTYPA

www.strunypodzimu.cz



Dear Readers,

The second number of Czech Music Quarterly has a thematic focus on the performance of early music in the Czech Republic, or to be more precise it is devoted to individuals and groups who are involved with what is known as “authentic” or “historically informed” performance. The boom in authentic performance is a European-wide (if not a global) phenomenon and so it is not surprising to find it in this country as well. Indeed, many Bohemian and Moravian towns have the kind of atmosphere that cries out for the authentic interpretation of early music in original, “authentic” settings and contexts. The music and the “spirit of the place” complement each other marvellously, and this is naturally attractive for audiences. What is more, in many periods of history the Czech Lands have been an important crossroads of repertoire exchange, and so in the local archives it is still possible to make new and fascinating discoveries, which enthusiastic musicians (who are often also erudite musicologists) are bringing back to life. One fine example is the modern premiere of Vivaldi’s opera *Argippo*, written for the Sporck Theatre in Prague.

Wishing you a beautiful summer

CONTENTS

The pianist Ivo Kahánek:
“Emotion that isn’t lucid
doesn’t have the right effect”

Iva Oplištilová

page 2

On Czech Musical Education

Pavel Kloub

page 12

Historically Informed Performance
in the Czech Republic

Jindřich Bálek

page 18

Vivaldi Returns to the Prague Stage

Jana Spáčilová

page 30

With Kateřina Chroboková on Purity
of Style and Going beyond Genre

Jitka Kocůrková

page 33

Life and Work or Work and Life
or Just Work?!?

Miloš Štědroň

page 39

Reviews

page 47



Czech Music Information Centre
Besední 3, 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic
fax: +420 257 317 424, phone: +420 257 312 422
e-mail: info@czech-music.net; www.czech-music.net

Czech Music Quarterly is issued by the Czech Music Information Centre
with support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the Czech Music Fund.

Editor: Petr Bakla, Producer: Petra Hníková
Translation: Anna Bryson-Gustová
Graphic design: Ditta Jiříčková

DTP: HD EDIT. Print: Tiskárna Macík. ISSN 1211-0264 MK ČR E 7099

Price and subscription (shipping included): Czech Republic: one issue Kč 60, subscription (4 issues) Kč 200
Europe: one issue € 6.25, subscription (4 issues) € 25.

Overseas countries: one issue \$ 9, subscription (4 issues) \$ 36 or respective equivalents



PHOTO © IVO KAHÁNEK

EMOTION THAT ISN'T LUCID DOESN'T HAVE THE RIGHT EFFECT

It is just under a year since the young Czech pianist **Ivo Kahánek** made his very successful debut in the Royal Albert Hall, performing Bohuslav Martinů's *Piano Concerto no. 4 "Incantation"* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The recording is now offered as a download by the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon company. He is preparing for solo recitals in Rome and Tokyo. What has so impressed the public, the critics and the producers about Kahánek? In this interview he offers insights into his piano world.

You gave your first interview to Czech Music Quarterly shortly after winning the Prague Spring International Piano Competition in 2004. How do you feel that your position has changed since then?

As I already guessed back then, the Prague Spring helped me a lot, in many respects. Back then I was just one of those talented promising students who have managed to shine at a competition, whereas now I have the sense that I've played a few times at least in various important concert halls, with large orchestras, and people already know my name, and I've already been invited to work with some concert organisers and orchestras on a more regular basis.

Has it changed your approach to compositions, to performance? For example do you now feel more freedom in your approach?

I've been forced to a certain change of approach simply by the fact that the sheer amount of work means that I have much less time. On the one hand this is a negative change, but it's also positive because I've had to learn to work more productively. But as far as approach to a piece is concerned, that hasn't changed much, because I've always tried to develop my own musical idea of a piece in as precise a way as possible and to do everything I can to embody it in my interpretation. And it never made any difference whether I was going to play it at a competition or in some small village on an upright piano.

What I meant was having to think about the people on the committee judging you and so on.

Of course. It's true that if you play Beethoven at a competition in Germany, for example, then you really have to take care to keep perfectly to the ur-text and make sure that all the ornaments are done just as they should be. Of course it's the same elsewhere, but still, if you're going to play it in Spain you inevitably feel a little freer. You need to know the recordings, to know the international trends, but in the end it is always just you, alone, and the music.

You mention listening to recordings – are there some particular musicians you regard as ideal?

I've never thought in terms of having one or two models, of saying to myself that I want to play like Richter, for example. But as representatives of the highest standards that a pianist and artist can reach, apart from Richter I could mention Emil Gilels or Wilhelm Kempf, Dino Lipati, and among contemporary pianists Muray Perahi, for example, or Emanuel Ax. When I listen to recordings of a piece I don't know or heard long ago and I'm supposed to be playing it in the foreseeable future, then I might say to myself that one of them is fantastic, brilliant. But then I submerge myself in the piece and no longer listen to the recordings, so as not to be influenced. And then, after intensive work, when I have another listen to the recording I considered completely peerless and superb, I still like it and in some ways it still seems peerless to me, but it's rare that I think – "I would subscribe to that to the very last note." I experienced that most recently with the Tchaikovsky *Concerto in B minor*, for example, which I've already played many times.

Pianists are always coping with the problem of the instrument. Do you feel that you are finally developing a distinctive sound of your own that you can ultimately get out of any piano?

It's really difficult with the piano. Taking the other aspects like the technical aspect, the time aspect, style and so on – then by comparison the sound aspect is something that takes the longest to crystallise, a whole lifetime. And so I wouldn't yet venture to claim I already have my own sound at this time, that someone could put on a record and say after ten bars that this is clearly Kahánek. I've always tended to darker colours, to a sort of more honeyed sound, and earlier I even overdid it. In my first years at the academy Professor Klánský tried to get me to create a counterweight to it, so my sound palette would be complete, and I wouldn't get stuck in those darker colours.

Could you tell us in a few words what is important for you – some people are abstract, some go for the sound as a whole, others for the structure...

In my view it's important to approach a work from as many points of view as possible. Not just the ones I have a natural tendency to take. As an example – I was doing Martinů's *Incantations* for a London Proms concert, and so apart from learning it for myself I naturally listened to all the existing recordings I could find, and went through the orchestral part, borrowed the manuscripts,



PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER

read about Martinů including some scholarly literature and made a formal analysis of the piece. But even before this I'd been taking the notes and depending on the idea I had at the time writing into them – I don't want to say stories exactly – but associations, moods that run through the music. When I did a formal analysis a week later, I was marking which themes were which, and where the different kinds of intervals were, with fix marker, and suddenly I was completely jumping for joy, because where I had written “hell” as the mood, on formal analysis I found that there was one tritone after another. And I thought – yes, I'm on the right track. But generally everything has to cohere. I can't say I go just for the sound and otherwise nothing, that isn't enough. For me the emotion and also the muscular experience of the music is always natural.

Do you find one particular make of piano more sympathetic than others?

Well, Steinway, probably like all pianists. We could have a debate on whether Bösendorfer has better basses or the tuning on a Yamaha holds better, but Steinway produces instruments of consistent quality and is a compromise in the best sense of the word. It sings the high notes superbly, the bass notes are refined, the instrument is balanced, mechanically reliable, and the sound goes into the hall. If I have to characterise the piano I like best, then I always prefer the kind that I have to go deeper into, that I have to pull everything out of, one that doesn't immediately do big dynamics of itself, and has a rich middle register – rather than those instruments that you only have to touch and it all lights up.

You were saying that communicating emotion is what is characteristic of your play, but when I was listening to your recordings it occurred to me that your interpretation is first and foremost very lucid, very clear for listeners.

A lot depends on whether the recordings you heard were live or studio. When you record in the studio – whether for CD or radio, the work is always a little



PHOTO © IVO KAHANEK

more rational than work before a concert appearance. Even with those top quality microphones and state-of-the-art methods, a recording highlights some things and suppresses others. What's more, with a CD listeners can choose a place and play it over and over again, and so demands on the technical quality of a recording are higher than with live performances. The concert is an artefact that happens and there it ends. But lucidity is important there too. Emotion that isn't lucid doesn't have the right effect on listeners.

When you are playing on the platform, communicating, is contact with listeners a consideration in how you play?

I think I'm more the type to establish contact than the type who structures the piece just so and then always presents it in completely the same way down to the last detail. Obviously you don't deviate much. Even though my experience is that different audiences and venues inspire me in very different ways.

Do you particularly like any composers on account of the texture of their compositions? I am thinking here of such poles as the polyphonic Bach and Messaien with his colour.

I've always tried to be the most universal possible kind of pianist. On the other hand, as far as style is concerned then it's always been romantic music that appeals to me most. Whenever I have just wanted to play something to myself, it tended to be Chopin rather than Bach. But that's something that changes, even to the point of surprising me. I've just had a three to four-year period of being literally mad about Mozart. The older I get, the more I admire the more "objective" composers, such as Bach or Mozart. But I don't think texture is the decisive factor. It's more to do with memory, above all manual memory. Every human being has different sorts of memory in different proportions. I have a friend

who was always a little apprehensive about playing those Liszt types, and things that very extreme in terms of technique, but he would play you a Bach fugue even if he hadn't looked at it for five years. I'm less uneven in this respect one way or the other. It should be said that playing a Bach from memory is always a big challenge. The programme the brain uses like a computer at that moment is very complicated and it's easy to skip back accidentally if anything goes wrong. As far as the manual aspect is concerned, certain composers are generally unpopular. These are the kind that had a certain musical idea and refused to subordinate it to the realisation. Intellectually this is definitely the right attitude, but while with some composers this has resulted in a still "playable" even if difficult pieces for the pianist, with others it hasn't. Take Czech music for example: I can compare the piano music of Vítězslav Novák and Bohuslav Martinů. Both are masterly composers, and this is great music, not instruction pieces. Although Novák was a good pianist, a lot of his things are virtually impossible to realise, especially the sound idea that you sense there, while with Martinů, who was rather a bad pianist, there are few things that the hand really can't cope with or that are unnatural. So the question is where the difference lies.

And as regards the exploitation of the possibilities of the piano, its full sounding potential?

What's remarkable about Mozart, for example, is how few notes he needed to get the instrument to display all its different shades and nuances. Beethoven on the other hand was fantastically good at placing things in keys and registers. He managed to set chords that look over-thickened in precisely the right register. If you transposed them a third lower, it would be too much. Of course the ideal of romanticism – Chopin, and then Debussy, who managed to go even further in terms of colour. By contrast, there are composers with whom the realisation of the sound idea is harder. I've already mentioned Novák. Some Janáček pieces are relatively difficult in this sense too. For example, *On an Overgrown Path* was originally written for harmonium, and that too plays a role. Only today compared to the piano the recording on the harmonium sounds in some ways comic. The problem is that Janáček has a lot of things in the middle registers. In terms of character these range from narration to roar to groaning, and in practice this is often in what is completely the same register of the piano, and so it is sometimes a problem to get those character elements out of the instrument. Chopin's spread pattern of singing soprano, bass for colour and an accompaniment in the middle that varies in colour and strength is by comparison very easy to handle.

In an earlier interview you said that you looked forward to the time when you would be established as a pianist and would have more opportunities to play modern music. Is that already happening now?

It's happening to quite a degree. Recently I've been playing modern music more often in chamber ensembles – for example my concert last year with the oboist Vilém Veverka, which we called *Duel*. There we played composers like Luciano Berio or Antal Doráti, and among Czechs Luboš Fišer, for example. But there is

a rather prosaic problem. Any young pianist who is making a career and is under thirty still has to keep showing that he is a pianist, and artist, that he is universal and so on. And what's more he has to build up the widest possible repertoire. Modern pieces are tough to work up and maybe you will be performing them just once and never again. So in this phase of your career you sometimes have to calculate a touch prosaically.

So you are gravitating more to the idea of being a universal pianist than to specialising in something?

I think that it's the only option, because the competition is huge and the more I can offer the more chance I have of engagements. Apart from that, I've really learned that concentrating on one sort of music, however beautiful – in my case it was Chopin, sooner or later starts to tie you down.

Compared to other instruments the piano has certain limitations – tempered tuning, the way how the tone is produced. Has there ever been a time in your life when it wasn't precisely the instrument through which you wanted to express yourself?

In that respect I never had a single doubt. Of course, there have been periods when I was intensely keen on another instrument as well. The cello, or wind instruments, the clarinet for example. But it never went as far as me thinking I would rather play that – I don't think that ever happened. Whatever chamber music you play, in 90% of cases it's the pianist who needs the longest time to get the material into his fingers and head, to absorb it. I am not talking about the refinement of the performance. That is always just as difficult with all the other instruments. But when we are learning a trio, how long it takes for the trio to actually learn it always depends on how fast I learn my own part. With few exceptions the cello and violin are able to learn it in just a day or two.

You have said that you like pieces that are technically on boundaries, that these don't cause you problems. At the moment the trend is for playing virtuoso transcriptions. What is your view of this?

It depends which transcriptions you are talking about. Bach, for instance – that is absolute music. You can play Busoni's transcriptions of the Choral preludes maybe even on the cimbalom and it's still something incredible. On the other hand, some Liszt transcriptions of Mozart operas are just technical exhibition for the sake of exhibition and that isn't something that appeals to me so much. There are pianists who built a career on this kind of thing. I understand it but it isn't enough for me, and I wouldn't go in for it.

Do you compose, or would you want to write some transcriptions of your own?

No, I haven't tried that yet, but I would like to produce a cadenza of my own for a classical concerto. When you listen to recordings, for example of Mozart concertos with the most famous pianists, a lot of them insert their own cadenzas and they are even better than the ones printed in the score.



PHOTO © IVO KAHÁNEK

It is probably hard to keep within the bounds of the style, isn't it?

Yes. I had to cope with that recently when I was playing Mozart's *Concerto in D minor*. In the first movement there is a very well-known Beethoven cadenza. I had to decide whether to play it like Beethoven or like Mozart. By the way, in this concerto Professor Klánský provided me with his own cadenza. It is in the third movement and is written for the left hand, which is a wonderful trick, and what is more it sounds terrific, because he knows how to write it into the proper register.

That was a very nice gesture on the part of the professor.

It's a beautiful gesture.

Which of your professors had the biggest influence on you?

In fact I haven't had so many of them. In first place I must mention Ivan Klánský at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and Professor Toaderová at the Conservatory, because I spent many years with both of them. But I would also mention master classes – for example I was in Spain with Alicia de Larrocha. Her approach, her idea of sound, and her idea of melody was a great inspiration to me. You are there just for a week or two, so the teachers are hardly going to change your entire view of music, but it is more a question of you sensing something in particular teacher and getting something out of it. He might for example tell you something about that this or that kind of trill and so on, but

the most important thing is that you take something from the life fluid of the teacher and then develop it in some way. I remember a lot about Professor Kämmerling's courses in Germany. He focussed strongly on technique, on the practical aspect of the thing. Later I applied his methods, which are very well thought out, both to myself and my occasional students.

So you teach?

Occasionally at the Academy – as a doctoral student I teach instead of Professor Klánský, when he is on tour, for example. I enjoy it very much and it helps me a lot with my own play. Chiefly in tackling the problem of the time it takes to prepare a piece – the fact that you have to tell a pupil what he should do straightaway speeds up your own preparation.

Are you a supporter of the theory that a pianist can influence a note even after he has struck the key?

Well physically, of course not. But I still think that not everything has yet been described by physics and there are forms of communication that we can't describe, but even so they take place. The spirit of the composer, or of the work, but also of the pianist, is naturally reflected mainly in the notes, the sound and so on, but I think it is also expressed in something we aren't able to describe in a rational way. So I'm not one of those who would vibrate after striking the key, but I think that other forms of communication do exist.

For example Horowitz in Moscow?

Exactly. I was just thinking of that when I was listening to a very old recording and I thought – that was recorded still in wax, and despite being digitalised in comparison with our recordings it sounds as if trams were going by – but even so, even so it completely roots you to the spot. It's clear that the pure sound side is suppressed and distorted, but even so the recording works, and so probably it is the timing side of the interpretation that is the most important. But the other thing is the spirit of that pianist, which was so penetrating that it is still there even in the recording.

And do you think that you can work on that as a performer?

I don't know if I can in a completely conscious way, but by honest step-by-step work yes. The difference between the genius and the merely talented person or the average musician is in the precision of his idea. The sharpness. This is something described by Kogan, for example in his works on teaching. When you tell a person who only has average talent to paint a grating, he'll just paint a generalised one, but if tell a genius to do the same, he'll see it entirely precisely, paint it with every ornament, and with every defect. The only way to work indirectly on the spirit of performance that you mention is to make one's idea as precise as possible.



PHOTO: KAREL JUŠTER

Ivo Kahánek (*1979)

He has taken part in many piano competitions, the most important being his victory in the international Prague Spring Competition in 2004, which he was only the third Czech to win in the history of the competition; he was a laureate of the Concertino Praga competition (1994), the Chopin Competition in Mariánské Lázně (1997), and the Vendôme Prize Competition – Central Europe (2003), and was awarded a special prize in the Maria Canals Competition in Barcelona (2001). He won a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. He has taken place in master courses with Karl-Heinz Kämmerling, Christian Zacharias, Eugen Indjič, Alicia de Larrocha, Imogen Cooper and others. The many festivals at which he has performed include the Prague Spring, the Beethovenfest Bonn, Encuentro de Santander and Ticino Musica. He works with important orchestras such as the Czech Philharmonic, the Orchester WDR Köln, the Prague Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Brno Philharmonic and the Janáček Philharmonic. He records for Supraphon, which he signed a three-year contract in 2007, but also for Cube Bohemia, Czech Radio and Czech Television. His series of debuts in major foreign concert halls opened in London, where he played with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (B. Martinů: Incantation) under the baton of Jiří Bělohlávek in the Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms Festival. The recording has been published by Deutsche Grammophon as a digital download. He regularly works with the cellist Tomáš Jamník (see CMQ 1/07). He is a member of the Trio Concertino, which in 2004 won first prize in the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation competition.

ON CZECH MUSICAL EDUCATION

In any country the quality of the music education system has a direct and long-term influence on the level of national musical life. And even today in a globalised world the notion of “national schools” of play on one instrument or another still makes some sense. Our magazine is mainly concerned with the results of composition and performance, but the precondition – the issue of music education –, is a crucially important problem. This article focuses on basic (elementary) music education, which has a remarkable institutional tradition in the Czech Republic.

Historical Excursus

The conservatory of Europe – this was how one of the enthusiastic readers of the English traveller Charles Burney’s *Musical Traveller* of the 18th Century, which described the teaching of music in the Bohemian rural areas, flatteringly described Bohemia. The teaching of the arts, and especially music, does indeed have a strong and long tradition in Bohemia. Its origins can be dated right back to the 17th century. The teaching of music was the responsibility of cantors, i.e. teachers who had a secondary profession as musicians. They worked in places where there were orchestras and ensembles. They played for dances, listening, and entertainment and at the same time formed smaller orchestras of their pupils. These later became the basis for the chateau ensembles that developed a rich and vibrant musical culture, for example in Roudnice nad Labem, in Jaroměřice nad Rokytinou, in Dolejší Lukavec (today Dolní Lukavice) near Plzeň, Náměšť nad Oslavou and elsewhere. This world of the cantors represents

an important chapter in Czech history, for it was the seedbed from which the whole music-making tradition of the 18th century sprang, and so a background that ultimately made possible the crowning achievements of Czech musicians in the 19th century. From the mid-19th century the development of education in the arts was organised along the lines laid down by the *Imperial Decree no. 309 of the Imperial Law*, of the 27th of April 1850. This was the basis for the establishment of music, dance and other arts schools, while for home teaching no special professional qualifications were required by law and there was no provision for inspection. It was only later, with the *Constitutional Charter no. 121 Coll.* of the 29th of February 1920, that powers of professional supervision were established over all private teaching. In music schools these were exercised by music inspectors, many of whom were active in the development and founding of new music schools. The organisation of teaching, the content of teaching, the composition of the teaching staff and the funding of these schools was very diverse



and not at all standardised. Organisational, managerial and educational standardisation of the municipal and club schools in the arts came about only after 1945. In 1951 all these schools were taken under state control and the work and financial conditions of teachers reformed. One important milestone for teacher training was the *Schools Law no. 186 Coll.* of the 15th of December 1960, by the terms of which the further development and organisation of education in the arts was organised in such a way that the different levels and kinds of schools together formed a coherent system allowing every gifted individual to progress to the highest level. This system enabled pupils to gain basic arts education in “people’s arts schools”, secondary arts education in applied arts schools, higher vocational training in conservatories

and university level arts education in universities/academies with an arts orientation. This structure of arts education has remained basically unchanged to this day and has been the subject of admiration, particularly abroad. We should add, however, that during the period of communist rule it was not actually accessible to all – for example there was discrimination against children of people that the regime regarded as suspect even though this practice was not officially declared.

People’s Arts Schools

Lidové školy umění (LŠU) / *People’s Arts Schools* were a distinctive kind of institution established on the basis of the law mentioned starting in the academic year 1961/1962, and involving transformation of the existing basic music



and basic art schools. Their curriculum was extended to include *literary-dramatic* and *dance* subjects as well as *music* and *fine arts* subjects. This system of four subjects “under one roof” has drawn praise from people in many European countries where these disciplines are taught only in separate special courses and schools.

Starting from the school year 1980/1981 greater differentiation in teaching depending on the gifts and interests of the pupil was introduced into these schools. The new curriculum corresponded to this change, and involved a double track: one for pupils orientated to hobby activity and another for pupils aiming for further specialist studies at higher arts schools. In both, however, greater emphasis was now placed on the practical use of skills gained.

The *Law no. 171/1990 Coll.*, changed the name of people’s schools of art to *basic arts schools* (ZUČ), and finally gave them the full legal status of schools (as LŠUs they had merely been legally “school facilities”).

Thus for more than four decades basic arts schools have been making a strong contribution to cultural life in their localities and playing an irreplaceable role in the training and education of around 20% of the gifted teenage population. During that time the ZUČ schools have won domestic and international recognition for the remarkable performances of many of their instrumental and choral ensembles, and the numerous extraordinarily talented individuals that have come out of them.

Basic Arts Schools in Numbers

While in the school year 1989/90, attendance at the 369 ZUČ school and 173 branches of these schools amounted to 174,610 pupils in musical, dance, fine arts and literary-dramatic subjects, ten years later a further 102 schools had been established with an increase of 55,937 pupils, and the number of branches had more than doubled. Thus at the end of the school year

eight years ago, a total of 230,547 pupils were enjoying the opportunity to learn in one of the four ZUČ disciplines at 821 different places in the republic.

The greatest growth in the number of schools and branches took place in the years 1992–1994, when largely on the model of the Dutch educational system what was known as the *normative funding* of schools was introduced in association with enlargement of the *legal subjecthood (autonomy)* of schools.

In the school year 1993/1994 the number of pupils of dance at ZUČ schools grew by 3,352 pupils, and in fine arts by 3,933 pupils. The schools started to be economically motivated to accept the largest possible number of pupils, and legal autonomy meant that big branches of schools could become independent institutions. Naturally, it was not long before the negative consequences of such a rapid and large increase in pupil numbers became apparent and at many schools there was a failure to keep to the study plans and curricula approved



by the ministry, amount of lessons per week was cut back, and optional subjects (music theory, additional instrument) were decreasingly offered at all. The teaching of chamber play, the presence of a répétiteur in dance courses, extra teaching for highly talented pupils etc. soon became pipe dreams. In many places the privately paying pupil became “our customer the king”, and parents and grandparents started to demand a controlling voice in which their girl or boy would or would not be taught. New teachers were naturally needed to cope with such a great influx of pupils. Fussiness would only have caused problems and so many schools were engulfed by a wave of unqualified stuff (it was no exception for schools to take on as dancing teacher a shop assistant from the local store and for “teaching” in dance to be reduced to aerobics.) According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Training in October 1996, at the ZUČ schools 24% of staff in dance, 20% in literature-drama, 12% in music and 10% in visual

arts out of the overall number of teachers in the subject were unqualified. Unfortunately, not even today have fully effective steps been taken to enable teachers who for whatever reasons have been unable to obtain the proper qualifications to study for them, although increasing numbers of conservatories are offering external courses (Plzeň, Teplice, Pardubice, Brno). Failure to keep to the prescribed weekly numbers of lessons for particular subjects led finally to the alteration of the teaching plans in 1995.

The situation in regard to following curricula is gradually improving. In line with current educational reforms, starting in 2010 all the ZUČ schools will teach in accordance with what are known as *framework (general) education programmes* (RVP), which every school will be able to modify to its needs and conditions in a *school educational programme* (ŠVP). It is anticipated that the reform will make it easier to identify the particular strengths of the individual arts schools, and will increase the motivation and sense of responsibility of teachers for the results of the educational process.

A Half Century of Interest in Individual Subjects and Musical Instruments

Since the establishment of the ZUČ schools the percentages of pupils interested in the different subjects that they offer has remained almost constant: today out of all their pupils (222,517) those interested in music represent 64.7% (143,845 pupils), dance 11.8% (26,244), fine arts 20.1% (44,827) and literature-drama 3.4% (7,601). While those taking *studies for adults* do not constitute a substantial percentage

of the whole, they are important pillars of all the chamber groups and orchestras at the school. Many students at conservatories regularly come back to “their schools” to play and help former fellow pupils in their studies. It should be added that the mosaic of ZUČ schools is augmented by two church (Kroměříž, Prague) and 37 private ZUČ schools that have been included in the *register of schools* (which guarantees for registered schools the possibility of gaining of 80–100% of what are known as *aggregated normatives* from the state budget, depending on quality of teaching).

For the period of their existence all these schools have become an organic part of the great family of basic arts schools.

Today just in music there are 21,137 more pupils at ZUČ schools than there were in all four LŠU subjects in 1961 (i.e. 122,708 pupils) in the whole former Czechoslovakia! Just in Bohemia in 1961, 68,764 pupils attended studies in one of the music subjects at LŠU school.

In 1961 collection of statistics was confined, unfortunately to the aggregate number of pupils playing on stringed instruments (20,709 = 30%), wind





(5,530 = 8%), folk instruments (7,717 = 11%), piano (33,002 = 48%) and singers (1,560 = 2%).

What about these figures today? Out of the overall number of pupils in music in basic arts education (143,845) the number of those learning piano now represents 24%, recorder 15%, guitar 11% (earlier the latter was classified in “folk instruments”), stringed instruments 9%, electronic keyboard and solo singing 7%, choral singing 5%, clarinet 3% and 2% accordion, percussion and trumpet.

Comparing these figures with 1961 we can see a clear downward trend in the interest in stringed instruments, wind instruments and accordion, but an increase in the popularity of guitar, and an entirely new interest in recorder and also in electronic keyboards.

Conservatories and Academies

The already commonplace and colloquial names for conservatories indicate their diversity: *music, dance, drama* (music drama), *jazz*, but also *special* (for young people with sight impairment), *Roma, church or military*. There are eleven conservatories in the category of Music and six in the category of *Dance*.

The traditions of the Prague Conservatory for example, wreathed in the glory of Antonín Dvořák and other important composers and musicians, go back to the beginnings of the 19th century. Today the students and teachers of this prestigious music school are preparing for celebrations of the 200th anniversary of its founding (1811–2011).

Students accepted at the 17 Czech conservatories are in 99% of cases graduates of the basic arts schools. The conservatories offer *middle (secondary) vocational education*, and after four years of study and passing the school leaving examinations (“*maturita*” in Czech), students can go on to university level studies at the *Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (HAMU)* in Prague or the *Music Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU)* in Brno or can continue studying for two years at the conservatory and obtain conservatory graduation, i.e. A *higher vocational education* qualification.

Currently there are 3,606 students attending conservatories, which is roughly the same as the numbers attending *studies for adults* in ZUČ schools. 2,285 students are in the *Music*, 386 in *Singing*, 659 in *Dance* and 276 in *Music Drama*.

In conservatories, unlike in the ZUČ schools, there are no tuition fees. The state is well aware of the importance of arts education and also supports both kinds of school through annual competitions for all branches of the arts.



Collegium Vocale 1704

HISTORICALLY INFORMED PERFORMANCE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

This article offers a brief account of the development and progress of what is known as “authentic performance of early music” over roughly the last two decades in the Czech Republic. The term means performance of Medieval, Baroque and Early Classical Music on period instruments and on the basis of thorough study of period sources. At the international level this approach is associated with conductors like Nicolaus Harnoncourt, John Eliot Gardiner, Philippe Herreweghe, William Christie or Reinhard Goebel and their ensembles Concentus Musicus Wien, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, Collegium Vocale Gent, Les Arts florissants or Musica Antiqua Koeln. All these and other ensembles pioneered a new view of the music of earlier stylistic periods during the 1980s. At the beginning it might have seemed no more than an eccentric experiment by a few enthusiasts, but it gradually gained respect and led to an overall transformation of styles of performance even in ensembles in the traditional mainstream.

If we make a similar list of ensembles of this type in the Czech Republic, we are immediately struck by several remarkable facts. All were founded later than those mentioned above, and most of the musicians concerned are in their thirties. All were founded without much significant help from the established Czech music schools; the individual musicians relied on international music courses, studies abroad, and their own sheer interest and enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the early music performance scene in the Czech Republic is very rich and diverse, and linked up with the

European music scene in many interesting ways. To list the ensembles concerned: they are Musica Florea, Collegium 1704, Collegium Marianum, and also Capella Regia Praha, the Hofmusici, Capella Apollinis, Ensemble Tourbillon and Ensemble In-egal, and in recent years they have been responsible for a very colourful range of early music productions. If we add a list of their artistic directors, we find several very characterful young musicians who are leading their groups to repertory of a distinctive type: Marek Štrýncl, Václav Luks, Jana Semerádová, Robert Hugo, Ondřej Macek, Barbara Maria Willi,

Petr Wagner, and Adam Viktora. Apart from these essentially instrumental ensembles there are a number of vocal groups, among which the Schola Gregoriana Pragensis with its artistic director David Eben (see CMQ 3/04) occupies a special place. This article is not intended to offer musical criticism – we are not going to compare groups or individuals in terms of quality or success, but primarily want to indicate the range and diversity of the early music scene in Bohemia and Moravia. For the same reason we also want to draw attention to the key importance of two major festivals. One is the Conventus Moraviae in Moravia and the other is the Summer Festival of Early Music in Prague, and both focus on the presentation of “early music”. Musicological and civil associations like the Society for Early Music play a role as well. We have no space here to describe in detail all the interesting connections, coincidences and inspirations that have shaped the scene and what we offer is just a concise overview.

It is important to stress that this whole movement has important precursors that require at least a brief mention here: they were first and foremost the ensemble Ars rediviva with Milan Munclinger, and then Musica Antiqua Praha with Pavel Klikar and Miroslav Venhoda and his group The Prague Madrigalists. These provided what were often decisive impulses alongside the foreign influences and studies abroad.

Also crucial for the origins of the present scene was work of the Society for Early Music already mentioned. This year the Society for Early Music is celebrating the jubilee 20th year of its Summer Music School in Valtice and its history is extremely interesting. It was founded in 1982 by Miroslav Venhoda in the frame of the Czech Music Society as an association for everyone, including amateurs, interested in historically authentic performance of early music. Three years later it organised its first practical seminar in Kroměříž, and in 1989 Valtice became its permanent venue for courses. In the autumn of 2006 with the dissolution of the Czech Music Society and all its components the Society for Early Music was re-constituted as a civil association and defined its main purpose as the organisation of the International Summer School of Early Music in Valtice. In this context Michaela Michaela Freemanová, for many years the chairman of the Society for Early Music, wrote the following in the magazine *Harmonie*: “Up to 1989 the Society operated as

a substitute organiser of many activities that should have been the responsibility of ministry officials and teachers at music schools at all levels: it organised concerts, seminars where recordings were played, meetings for people interested in historical dance, exhibitions of copies of musical instruments, interdisciplinary conferences on the culture of the Renaissance, Baroque and Classicism, and performance courses (the most important were initially held in Kroměříž, but because interest in sacred music was unwelcome to the totalitarian regime, they were very soon banished to Valtice, where the Summer School of Early Music has been operating from 1989 to the present). Only after the change of regime in 1989 did it become possible to organise performance courses and courses in the production of copies of historical musical instruments involving foreign lecturers without problems, and to invite top foreign musicians to the first international festivals devoted exclusively to the historically authentic performance of earlier music and accompanied by exhibitions where the first makers of copies of historical musical instruments in the Czech Republic (some of whom are now world famous in their fields) presented their work juxtaposed with that of foreign producers. At the beginning of the 1990s it seemed as if there was nothing to stop modern trends in performance of earlier music becoming a normal part of the music scene in this country as elsewhere and developing a position equal to that of “classical” performance. In fact, this has not quite happened, since with some honourable exceptions (for example some classes at the Prague and Teplice conservatories, the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in Brno, and the Academy of Early Music at the Masaryk University in Brno), music schools have stuck to the view that foreigners have nothing to tell us, much less teach us, and that the best schools are ours. This means that the Society for Early Music continues to play an important role in organising performance classes. Thanks to freedom of travelling, many of our students have been able to go abroad to prestigious academies specialising in the performance of early music – to Basle, Brussels, Paris and London, so now we already have a number of young Czech specialists in this field...” Let us take a look at the most prominent of these ensembles and individuals.

Musica Florea (see also CMQ 2/2006) has been working under the direction of the conductor and cellist **Marek Štryncl** for what is now sixteen years (founded 1992). Marek Štryncl studied cello and conducting at the conservatory in Teplice and founded the Musica Florea group while still a student. As well as systematically attending many performance courses (Chinon, Basel, Mainz, Valtice, Prague) he studied Baroque cello at the Dresdner

Musica Florea



PHOTO: PETR SKVRNE © SUPRAPHON

Akademie für Alte Musik. He works not only with Musica Florea but with a number of other Czech and foreign ensembles such as Musica Antiqua Praha, Musica Aeterna, Solamente Naturali, and Ensemble Philidor and with the ensembles Collegium 1704 and Collegium Marianum. He also appears as a solo performer. He is a graduate of the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) in Prague, where he studied conducting.

In an interview for Harmonie about the origins of Musica Florea Marek Štryncl said that, *"At the start of the 1990s the paths of early music were so untrodden in this country that people didn't even have the means to form an idea of the direction that it all should take. Nothing was clear, and everything was done in a provisional, pioneering way, 'from scratch'. I had some kind of notion of how people went about authentic interpretation abroad, from recordings and later from the courses I attended, and I wanted to create something similar here – that was a big motivation."*

It is noteworthy that Musica Florea was formed at the conservatory in Teplice in North Bohemia and that many of its founder members still form the core of the ensemble today. Marek Štryncl adds: *"I am really very pleased about that – the core is made up of people who started with me at the very beginning at Teplice Conservatory. They were generally the best players there at the time, both from the technical and musical point of view. At the beginning, experience with the Musica Antiqua group in Prague was a big driving force for me. Then several other colleagues from the future Florea started to play in it too, and just as with me it clearly influenced their decision to devote themselves exclusively to early music."*

Today the ensemble's repertory contains a range

of programmes that can be used to put together several whole highly individual concert seasons. Musica Florea already proved this on the occasion of its 10th anniversary in 2002 when it presented a full series of celebratory concerts that were also a chance to work up new programmes. In these concerts the ensemble performed with Magdalena Kožená, Susanne Rydén, the Boni pueri boys' choir and the Schola Gregoriana Pragensis, but the full list of musicians and ensembles that have worked with Musica Florea is far longer and includes Nancy Argenta, Flavio Olivier, Les Musiciens du Paradis, Orlando Consort, Le Poeme Harmonique and others. In the years 1999–2002 Musica Florea took part in an exceptional production of the opera *Castor et Pollux* by J.Ph. Rameau at the National Theatre in Prague and at Prague Castle it presented the modern premiere of the stage works by J.D. Zelenka, *Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis*, which it later recorded.

Musica Florea regularly gives thematic concerts such as Jean Baptiste Lully and Baroque Bohemia, for example, G.Ph. Telemann and his Viennese "Friends", Prague 1723, Suites and Concertos of the Czech and German Baroque, Nature and the Elements in the Music of A. Vivaldi, or Music of the Kroměříž Archive. The group's readiness to explore new territory is also evident from a number of presentations of works by Antonín Dvořák, including the *Seventh* and *Eighth Symphonies*, and Beethoven's *Eroica* on period instruments.

In what is today the ensemble's quite extensive discography we might highlight mezzo soprano Magdalena Kožená's debut on the Deutsche Grammophon Archiv label, with Musica Florea accompanying the now world famous singer in arias by J.S.Bach. Kožená also appeared on their earlier recording of Jan Dismas Zelenka's *Missa Sanctis-*



Collegium 1704

simae Trinitatis, which won the highest rating from the French magazine Diapason. In 2003 the ensemble won the prestigious Cannes Classical Award at the MIDEM music fair for its recording of J.D. Zelenka's *Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis* (mentioned above). A third CD with music by J.D. Zelenka is a recording of several of his Good Friday Responses. Musica Florea has broadened our view of the music of the Baroque with a recording of Josef Leopold Václav Dukát's *Cithara Nova*, sacred music by Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, concert arias by Johann Christoph Kridel, the *Vesperae Sancti Venceslai* by Pavel Josef Vejvanovský and selected pieces by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer or Johan Ignaz Biber. Their most recent project, which is quite exceptional and has only just come out, is a new recording of all six of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. It was recorded last year by Musica Florea with generous support from Czech Radio and released by Supraphon.

Collegium 1704 was another group formed at the beginning of the 1990s, specifically in 1991. It was founded by **Václav Luks**, the harpsichord player and conductor, who also plays the natural French horn. His musical activities are very wide-ranging. Václav Luks is today one of our most prominent figures in the field of early music. A graduate of the Plzeň Conservatory and the Basle Schola Cantorum (in harpsichord), he not only leads Collegium 1704, but is also a founder member of the Swiss wind ensemble Amphion, and regularly works with the Akademie für Alte Musik in Berlin and the Basle La Cetra Orchestra. Václav Luks's highest profile projects with Collegium 1704 have included BACH – PRAGUE – 2005, when in a Bach jubilee year they present-

ed the *St. John Passion*, the *Mass in B minor* at the Prague Spring Festival, and the *Christmas Oratorio*. It says much about the difficulties of the situation in this country that the planned performance of the *Matthew Passion* had to be shelved in 2005 for financial reasons and lack of interest on the part of concert organisers. Luks and his Collegium 1704 finally played the *Matthew Passion* in 2007 in Ostrava and Opava as part of the St. Wenceslas Festival. The dream of performing all Bach's great vocal-instrumental works in Prague in one year was not fulfilled but the ensemble had nevertheless managed to start a tradition of presenting these works that had hardly existed before in this country. It was in fact specifically for this Bach project that the Collegium Vocale 1704 vocal ensemble was formed in 2005 as a sister body devoted to Baroque music. Its members are leading Czech and foreign singers specialising in the interpretation of early music, who are able to combine the qualities of the solo singer with the flexibility of a member of a choral ensemble. In an interview for Harmonie on the occasion of the Bach – Prague – 2005 project Václav Luks said: *"This is about the fulfilment of a dream I had for years. While still at conservatory I dreamed of presenting the St. John Passion, which back then was a dream from the land of Utopia, of course. I put the idea on the back burner, but when studying abroad I encountered the Bach repertoire incredibly often. In Germany these are obviously standard works. The experience meant that I at first I lost my taste for rediscovering this music because it seemed to me like coals to Newcastle, but when I got back to Bohemia I saw that this repertoire was almost unknown here. Everybody knew names like the Mass in B minor, the St. John Passion, people were taught about them in the schools, but these works were so rarely performed in concert practice that I decided it would be worth presenting them in a series. I wanted our project*

Capella Apollinis
J. Semerádová, B.M. Willi, M. Štryncl



to have an educational aspect, as well, in relation to Czech musicians, and so I thought a juxtaposition of Czech and foreign singers might be very beneficial. The vocal element consists of two-thirds Czech and one-third foreign singers. I hope I managed to mix the voices and personalities in a way that meant our co-operation worked well."

On the situation of early music in this country Václav Luks commented that, "the problem is a little that here the structure of the free music market lacks the one link in the chain that is behind all successful projects and famous ensembles, like the Berlin Akademie für Alte Musik. I mean a producer. A visionary who takes on the task of making the utmost of the ensemble he has to hand. Of course, on the one hand there have to be excellent musicians, ready to work, and sacrifice something, but on the other hand there has to be someone who takes the business on wholeheartedly. This country has music managers and producers, but their work is mostly limited to just arranging concerts as middlemen and taking their fee; after that they consider their work done. But all the ensembles abroad have one person behind them who has made it his mission in life to achieve something terrific with this band of people. Ambitious producers of this type are rarities here. There isn't necessarily any shortage of musicians. For anyone who really wants it, there are specialised schools of early music not far away, and there are already more than a few people here who have gone to study abroad. I don't see any problem there. Instead I see it in the kind of cultural milieu that exists in Prague, for example. The paradox is that the people who devote themselves to early music have come to Prague from somewhere else. They are the musicians around Marek Štryncl, who came from Teplice, and me and the people in my circle who have mostly come from Plzeň. Here in Prague there is a completely different atmosphere. As soon as you

study at the conservatory, and then AMU [the Academy of Performing Arts] and start to perform a little, to get more than a bit of "business", and play here and there, you begin to earn your first money and that's the end of your further development."

Václav Luks also performs as a soloist on the harpsichord and the hammerclavier, and over the years he has organised a number of unique concert programmes. Recently he has been planning a project entitled Prague–Dresden Music Bridge, in which he envisages a whole season of concerts in both cities. The recording of H. Albicastro – *Concerti a quattro op. 7* (Pan Classics), which Collegium 1704 made in 2001 in collaboration with Collegium Marianum, has met with great acclaim. Another CD – of the harpsichord concertos of Jiří Antonín Benda, won awards from Harmonia and Diapason magazines. The ensemble's most recent remarkable recording project is Zelenka's *Missa Votiva* for the French recording company ZIG–ZAG Territoires.

The third Czech early music ensemble with many years of experience and a wide range of activities is the **Collegium Marianum**, led since 2000 by the flautist **Jana Semerádová**. It is unusual for its integral connection with what is a quite unique institution in Bohemia, the Týn Higher Vocational School – Collegium Marianum (also known as the Centre of Historical Arts), which is an accredited external department of the Education and Philosophical Faculties of Charles University. This institution draws on the tradition of two very important elements in the history of education in the Prague Old Town: the Týn School, which was the main centre of secondary education and underwent many changes over the centuries, and the later Rečec University College – Collegium sanctissimae Mariae, which was one of the most famous Old Town student colleges

(founded in 1438). Today it teaches choirmaster-ship in sacred music, monument conservation and the fields of Baroque flute/recorder, violin and cello. The Týn School facilities are also used for the organisation of courses and seminars, with one very important element being regular co-operation with the French festival in Sablé known as the Académie de Sablé à Prague. The Collegium Marianum also has a permanent regular season based in the Týn School known as “Baroque Early Evenings”. These offer a colourful repertoire of Bohemian and other European Baroque music, but also the liturgical year. Collegium Marianum describes itself as a „music and dance ensemble” and many of its projects are staged or partially staged. Thanks to its close co-operation with the French Institute and other organisations of the same type it has been able to establish collaboration with many foreign and especially French specialists on Baroque music and theatre, but it can also take the credit for discovering lesser known authors of the Czech Baroque.

The artistic director of Collegium Marianum, Jana Semerádová, studied in Prague and at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague. In a profile interview in *Harmonie* she commented on the theme of authentic performance: *“The word ‘authentic’ doesn’t exist for me. I try for nothing more than to make music, and with respect for the composer and his work. That means understanding the historical context. The performer has to be the mediator between the composition and the listener. We have to try to present the music “authentically” in the sense of using adequate instruments and the corresponding techniques for the music of any period. It is primarily good taste that together with a knowledge of the sources and the desire to get closer to the sensibility of the period can lead a performer to mediate historical music to the public in a convincing way. I’ve the chance to play with musicians from different corners of the world and thanks to our common musical language and common idea of articulation, phrasing or ornamentation, we didn’t have any special problems. Why is it like that? Maybe the main prerequisite is to be a real musician. And today no one can venture to say whether one such player plays in a historically more authentic way than another. After all, at the end of the day we don’t have a ‘historically authentic’ audience.”*

Jana Semerádová has the following to say on the programmes of Collegium Marianum’s Prague concerts: *“Most of the music comes from archives in this country, and we also include pieces by compos-*

ers who are connected with the Bohemian milieu in some way. In the Baroque period there was a lot of lively coming and going between cultural centres, it was common for musicians to travel to foreign lands for education and work, composers procured copies of the work of their colleagues and this was the way they took over new impulses and musical ideas. Our approach is to put unknown works alongside well-known pieces, to show half forgotten composers in the light of period practice and to put them in context. Probably we won’t succeed in getting foreigners to come to Prague just to hear Brentner or Reichenauer, but our aim is to strive for that.”

Among the events organised by the Týn School, one of the most important and unusual is the Summer Festival of Early Music, which has taken place since 2001 and is the only international festival in Prague to be devoted to early music. The school invites leading European ensembles and prepares one-off projects, especially in collaboration with the French De Sablé Festival. This year’s theme is the “Harmony of Nations” and the guests will include the leading counter-tenor Philippe Jaroussky. The concerts take place not only in the Týn School’s home Baroque library hall in the Old Town but also in such historic and beautiful venues as the Theresian Hall of the Břevnov Monastery, the Chateau in Trója or the Vrtbovská Garden.

In May 1999 the Collegium Marianum ensemble presented the Czech premiere of the opera *Scylla et Glaucus* by J.-M. Leclair directed by the British violinist Simon Standage. In 2000 it performed A. Caldara’s oratorio *Maddalena ai piedi di Christo* with the Swiss violinist Chiara Banchini. As part of the 2001 Summer Festival of Early Music it presented a stage performance of J.H. Schmelzer’s serenata *Hercules und Onfale*. It has given modern premieres of sacred works by A. Lotti and J.D. Zelenka with conductor Andrew Parrott. For the 3rd year of the Summer Festival of Early Music, the ensemble presented the modern premiere of Antonio Caldara’s opera *La Contesa dei Numi*, which was written for staging in Prague in 1723. In July 2003 it performed in the music-dance production *Ballet for the Sun King* directed by the French choreographer Jean-Marc Piquemal. In July 2004 it performed sacred music by J.S. Bach and J.D. Zelenka with the Dutch baritone Peter Kooij. In May 2005 it appeared at the prestigious Tage Alter Musik festival in Regensburg. In the same year it was involved in the unique *Ballet des Nations* project in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia in collaboration with the Polish ensemble *Ardente Sole*, the Slovak *Solamente naturali* and the Hungarian *Aura Musicale*. In the two follow-



Collegium Marianum

ing years the Summer Festival of Early Music was extended to include stage projects, and Collegium Marianum accompanied the French dance company La Compagnie L'Eventail in W. Gluck's ballet Don Juan, for example, and French actors in a production of Moliere's The Impostures of Scapin. In 2006 and 2007 at the International Music Festival in Český Krumlov, the ensemble performed in the unique Baroque theatre at the Chateau of Český Krumlov for a production of the opera *La serva padrona* by Pergolesi and Caldara's *La Contesa dei Numi*.

Apart from collaborating on the CD of J.H. Albicastro's Concerti, Op. 75, mentioned above, the Collegium Marianum has recorded a profile CD entitled Music of Baroque Prague and a companion CD Music of Baroque Prague 2. These two albums present premiere recordings of concerts or arias by Jan Josef Ignác Brentner, Johann Joseph Fux, Antonio Vivaldi, Šimon Brix, Antonín Reichenauer and others. Let us leave a final word to Jana Semerádová: *"Medieval School plays used to be put on at the Týn Schools. Originally these plays were connected with liturgical practice but they were progressively separated off from liturgical space. Through these plays we came to the religious order school drama of the Baroque age, in which music was an important element. We exploited our experience gained from school performances complemented by dance and the spoken word at Christmas, Shrovetide and Easter productions. Later we started to pay special attention to Baroque gestures as well, for this is an essential part of the*



Barbara Maria Willi

art of the singer in Baroque theatre. I personally love dance, especially Baroque dance, which can brilliantly express the musical phrase, accent and direction. Each movement is precisely defined thanks to records of the choreographers of the period, which are the best ones for bringing Baroque music to life. In short, the Baroque should delight the eye and not just the ear."

We mentioned harpsichordist **Barbara Maria Willi** in our introduction here in connection with the ensemble **Capella apollinis**, but her importance for early music goes much further than the activities of this chamber group. She was born in Germany, studied harpsichord in Freiburg and in Strasbourg, harpsichord and hammerclavier with Kenneth Gilbert and performance practice in early music with Nikolaus Harnoncourt at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. She also drew ideas and inspiration from master courses with such leading musicians as Jesper Christensen, Jos van Immerseel, Gordon Murray, Elizabeth Chojnacka and Christopher Stenbridge. Currently she is a senior lecturer at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno (JAMU) where she has founded and leads the harpsichord class. Apart from teaching at JAMU she invites many leading players on period instruments from abroad for the season of concerts, "Barbara Maria Willi presents". This year the season will be taking place for the fifth time. Barbara Willi's work and impact is a beautiful example of the possibilities brought by a more

integrated Europe and meeting between musicians of different schools and nationalities. Some time ago she herself told a Harmonie reporter that "I have never regretted my decision to live in Brno. In the western world there exist various prejudices against the Czech Republic and other countries, including in the field of early music, like 'Well, they don't know how to do it yet, they haven't yet advanced that far'. Objectively that simply isn't true. I've met people who apologise for having assumed that I couldn't play well when I work here. The most important thing I try to pass on to students is that they should develop their feeling for style, be aware of freedom and realise that the final decision is up to them. In no case do I want them to play just like me. I want them to find themselves."

Let us come back to the Capella Apollinis ensemble founded in 2002 as a trio. In a relatively short time the ensemble rehearsed and performed a range of forgotten pieces from Moravian and Bohemian archives, for example pieces for soprano and orchestra from the Moravian Land Museum. Later the ensemble expanded to include more regular members and also started to work with a number of important figures from the domestic and international music world: Martina Janková (soprano), Jiří Bárta (cello), Magdalena Kožená (mezzosoprano), Sergio Azzolini (bassoon) and Ai Ikeda (bassoon). The festival held in 13 Moravian towns and known as *Concentus Moraviae* is an exceptionally important event for the early music scene. *Concentus Moraviae* was founded in 1996 and early music formed part of its programmes from the beginning.

One of the principles of the event is to hold concerts in smaller Moravian towns that often have very valuable historical monuments and unique concert venues. In the 13 years of its existence, guests of the festival have included for example the Ensemble Clement Janequin, Huelgas Ensemble, Collegium Vocale Gent, Musica Antika Koeln, and Capilla Flamenga. What is beyond dispute is that in the field of early music the Concentus Moravia festival has for years been far in advance of all the concert organisers in Prague. Barbara Maria Willi has been programme planner for the festival in 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2008. Her exceptional experience and broad education, outlook and imaginative approach, has made the festival a very special event of European stature. In 2002 the main theme of the Concentus Moravi^{ae} festival was “Moravia and Vienna in the Period of the Baroque and Classicism – Early Music of the Moravian Nobility”. In the jubilee year 2005 she was involved in the project “Flemish Tempest”, when Moravia welcomed all the leading ensembles specialising in Franco-Flemish polyphony, while the broader thematic line was “Migration–Emigration, foreigners in European music history”. A year later the theme for the 11th Concentus Moraviae festival was “Great Composers and their Friends and Enemies”. The festival programmes conceived by Barbara Willi often juxtapose well-known and little known works of the same time and style. This year, 2008, her programme planning for the Concentus Moraviae festival focuses on the musical life in the Visegrad region from the Middle Ages up to the Congress of Vienna. The theme “Early Music from Visegrad” will be tackled at a number of different levels. It will present Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Polish composers, map the musical life of what were then the principle cities, and present the early music performance scene in the countries concerned today. One important body in this context is a joint project in which all the musicians from these countries will be involved – the Visegrad Baroque Orchestra.

The Hofmusici ensemble (originally named the Cappella Academica) was founded in 1991 by the harpsichordist and conductor **Ondřej Macek**. The ensemble’s focus on Baroque opera staged in period style led in 1995 to the start of collaboration with the Český Krumlov Chateau Baroque Theatre Foundation. The German-Latin name of the ensemble (Hof-musici, literally

“Court Musicians”) is derived from the usual term for capellas in the service of nobles on the territory of the former Habsburg Monarchy in the period of the High baroque. The Hofmusici devote themselves systematically to the performance of unknown pieces from Bohemian and foreign musical archives presented as modern premieres. These are often presented in the historically authentic surroundings of Baroque chateaux, recently for example in Vranov nad Dyjí. Since it’s founding the ensemble has performed for example the operas of Johann Adolf Hass (*La Semele*), and of Antonio Caldara (*Scipione Africano il Maggiore* and his oratorio on St. John of Nepomuk, *Oratorio di San Giovanni Nepomuceno*), as well as programmes of Baroque sacred music from the Český Krumlov archives. The ensemble’s most recent new project and indeed one of the biggest events in the field of early music recently has been Antonio Vivaldi’s opera *Argippo*. Ondřej Macek managed to track down a Vivaldi opera previously considered lost and the ensemble presented its modern premiere in the Spanish Hall of Prague Castle on the 3rd of May 2008. Originally performed in Prague in the autumn of 1730, *Argippo* was specifically written for Prague and Vivaldi most probably conducted it there himself, since while there is unfortunately no direct evidence, we know that he stayed in Vienna and in Prague in the years. The opera *Argippo* was previously known only from a period print of the libretto kept in the Prague National Library, and the music was thought not to have survived. At the end of 2007, however, Ondřej Macek succeeded in finding a major part of the missing work in Regensburg in Bavaria. It was contained in an anonymous manuscript sheaf of Italian opera arias of the 1730s. The discovery was recognised by the academic committee of the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi in Venice and presented in front of a specialist audience. (See the separate article in this issue).

The ensemble **Capella Regia Praha** was founded in 1992 by the harpsichord player **Robert Hugo** (its name was taken from Karel Václav Holan Rovenský’s famous collection of Czech sacred music of 1693). Its repertoire consists mainly of Czech and Central European Baroque music of the 17th and 18th centuries, with a special stress on Baroque sacred dramas (oratorios – J. D. Zelenka, G. Carissimi, A. Graghi, etc.) and their staged performance. For example, the ensemble has performed Carissimi’s oratorio *Jephthe* in the theatre in Český Krumlov Chateau. As early as 1992 it recorded Adam Michna’s Requiem,



Hofmusici in Český Krumlov Chateau theatre

and in 2002 Jan Jakub Ryba's *Czech Christmas Mass* (with Magdalena Kožená). It has also recorded two masses by Adam Michna of Otradovice: *The Missa a 7*, the *Missa Sancti Wenceslai* and the *Officium Verspertinum* by the same author. Apart from this, Jan Dismas Zelenka's *Penitenti al Sepolcro del Redentore* and *Three Good Friday Oratorios* of 1709, 1712 and 1716, which Zelenka wrote for the Prague Clementinum. In 1998 the ensemble presented the new world premiere of Antonio Draghi's oratorio *Abbele di Boemia ovvero san Wenceslao*. At the Prague Spring Festival in 2004 Robert Hugo with the Capella Regia Praha presented in new world premiere a reconstruction of the oratorio based on Czech mythology about Libuše and Přemysl, *Praga Nascente da Libussa I Primislao* with music by Antonio Denzio, A. Vivaldi and others. The Capella Regia has appeared in the Music at Prague Castle concert series with newly discovered pieces performed in the Prague Cathedral of St. Vitus and also, for example, with pieces from Benedictine monasteries, especially the works of Gunter Jakob.

The **Ensemble Inegal**, founded in 2000 by its artistic director, **Adam Viktora**, a conductor, organist and choirmaster, has contributed several

recordings to the early music scene. These include a CD of sacred pieces by Ignác Brentner, and J.D. Zelenka's *Il serpente di bronzo* which won a prestigious Diapason d'Or award. The ensemble's most recent CD is Zelenka's *Missa Purificationis Beatae Virginis Mariae* and his Loretan litanies *Consolatrix afflictorum*. Ensemble Inegal's repertoire ranges from the Renaissance to Romanticism, and the ensemble appears in a different line-up of musicians depending on the particular programme (inegal = not the same). Apart from Zelenka, it has recently presented several pieces by the forgotten composer of Baroque Bohemia, Mauritius Vogt – his Loretan litany and the cycle of arias *Vertumnus Vanitatis* on the theme of the vanities of this world. The ensemble has also presented a free reconstruction of the first opera production in Bohemia, which was originally staged in 1627 at Prague Castle in honour of the coronation of Ferdinand III as King of Bohemia. Ensemble Inegal has embarked on its own concert series entitled the Bohemian Musical Baroque – Discoveries and Surprises. Adam Viktora is also actively interested in the music of the Italian Renaissance and has, for example, presented a reconstruction of festival vespers in St. Mark's Basilica in Venice from the period when Claudio

Monteverdi was capellmeister of the basilica, with psalms arranged by Rigatti, Cavalli and Monteverdi himself.

The **Ensemble Tourbillon** was formed in 1998 on the initiative of the Czech viola da gamba player **Petr Wagner**. Bringing together musicians from different countries, it represents the European early music performance tradition. It performs Czech, French, German, English and Italian music of the 17th to the early 19th century (C. F. Abel, C.Ph.E. Bach). In size it varies from just four players (2 baroque violins, viola da gamba, theorba or harpsichord) to a large vocal and instrumental ensemble. It has played and recorded the *Sonatinae*, *Balletti scordati*, *Aria et variationes* by Gottfried Finger and the world premiere of works for the viola da gamba by Charles Dollé – *Pieces de Viole avec la Basse Continüe* (Paris 1737). Petr Wagner also gives concerts as a soloist and is today the best Czech viola da gamba player. He attracted great attention with his programme Angel and Devil, which juxtaposed compositions by the two famous French da Gamba players Marino Maraiso and Antoine Forquerayo.

The **Societas Incognitorum** is a Brno choral ensemble led by **Eduard Tomašík**. Its name can be translated as the Society of the Unknown and has its historical roots. Initially the ensemble concentrated mainly on the music of leading Renaissance and Early Baroque composers like Gesualdo, Hassler, Monteverdi, and Schütz. Later it began to seek out and discover composers whose life and work are closely connected with Bohemia and Moravia but have remained entirely unknown to the modern public, including academics. The ensemble has recorded 4 CDs: From the Musical Treasury of the Kroměříž Chateau; A.V. Michna of Otradovice (recorded with the Schola Gregoriana Pragensis); B. M. Černohorský's *Laudetur Jesus Christus* (recorded with the Hipocondria Ensemble); Forgotten Jewels of Early Baroque Moravia. In almost all cases these are modern world premieres.

At the end we should mention a choir specialising in music even older than that of the ensembles already described. This is the **Schola Gregoriana Pragensis** founded by **David Eben** in 1987. In the first two years of its existence it was only

permitted to sing at church services, but since 1989 it has also been recording intensively and frequently giving concerts at home and abroad. It is concerned both with the semiological interpretation of Gregorian chant on the basis of the oldest sources from the 10th–11th century and with the performance of Gregorian chants in the Czech choral tradition including early polyphony. Wide-ranging study of the medieval sources enables the choir to include many unique newly discovered pieces from the 13th to the 15th century in its programmes. Its discography is quite extensive, but here we should at least draw attention to the titles *The Liturgical Year*, *Rosa mystica*, *Kodex Eranus*, *Antica e moderna*, *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudenz – Maestas dei* (the world premiere of a newly discovered composer on the border between Gothic and Renaissance), *Ach, homo fragilis – Secular Medieval Lyrics* and *In Pragensi Ecclesia – Christmas in Prague Cathedral in the Time of Charles IV*. The choir's artistic director David Eben studied at the Paris Conservatoire (Conservatoire Nationale Supérieur de Musique et Danse de Paris) graduating in 1991 in the field of conducting Gregorian chant and in the following year he worked as conductor of the Choeur grégorien de Paris. At the same time he often visited the Solesmes monastery, the centre of research into Gregorian Chant, for study and specialist consultation. David Eben researches and teaches at the Institute of Musical Science at Charles University's Faculty of Philosophy and the Arts.

In conclusion we can say that despite a number of gaps and shortcomings in the institutional and financial infrastructure, the early music scene is one of the most interesting phenomena of Czech music in the last two decades. It is now in many aspects inter-linked with developments in the field in Europe and is making its own individual contribution. Its future is open, and it is full of promise, and full of brilliantly accomplished work. At the same time it is of course a logical picking up of the threads from the "old times" when the Czech Lands were a completely natural, integral element of the culture of Europe.

VIVALDI RETURNS TO THE PRAGUE STAGE

After almost three centuries Prague welcomed back an honoured guest – the Baroque cavalier known as *Argippo*. An opera written specifically for the Prague public by the famous Venetian composer **Antonio Vivaldi** in 1730 was performed at the beginning of May in the Spanish Hall of Prague Castle. Until recently the opera was thought to be lost, but much of the work was found last year by the harpsichordist and musicologist Ondřej Macek. His discovery was recognised by the specialist public at an international conference in Venice and he went on to prepare a new premiere of the reconstructed opera for this year's 330th anniversary of Vivaldi's birth.

Antonio Vivaldi was well-known as an opera composer in Prague in the 1720s and 30s. The impresario of the theatre company here, the Venetian Antonio Denzio, was a friend of **Vivaldi's** and many of his singers had performed before coming to Prague in the Venetian premieres of **Vivaldi's** operas under the composer's direction. **Vivaldi** also acted as an agent for Denzio, sending him the scores of new operas across the Alps and recommending singers.

Of the six **Vivaldi** operas that Denzio staged in the Prague Sporck Theatre, one opera apart from *Argippo* is also known to have been performed here and nowhere else. This is *Alvilda, Regina de'Goti* (1731), but it is a pasticcio, i.e. A work consisting of arias of earlier Vivaldi operas, and evidently put together without any input from the composer. The case of *Argippo* is quite different, for only three arias known from other **Vivaldi** operas appear in the text of the libretto, which is today in the Prague National Library. Two of the three – “Gelido in ogni vena” and “L'incerto tuo pensiero” – come from the opera *Siroe, Re di Persia* (Reggio nell'Emilia, 1727). The music for the latter has not survived, but **Vivaldi** used the first of the two arias in the second version of his *Farnace* (Pavia, 1731). The third aria is “In bosco romito”, which was first sung in *L'Atenaide* (Florence, 1728). In fact, the use of only three arias taken from earlier operas represents a complete minimum in **Vivaldi's** practice. The texts of the other sixteen arias are unknown from elsewhere, which shows that **Vivaldi** did indeed compose his *Argippo* for Prague. What is more, the most recent research by the leading scholar of Italian



Ondřej Macek

opera Reinhard Strohm backs the idea that the celebrated Venetian probably also conducted the premiere of the work himself.

In the search for the music to *Argippo* (its Prague score has not survived or at least has not yet been found) the key strategy was to follow the subsequent movements of Denzio's opera company. In the Baroque period it was usual for arias from popular operas to travel with their performers right through Europe, and so it was a reasonable assumption that some parts of *Argippo* might be found in music sources that had a connection with singers who had come from Prague. The next foreign venue where Denzio's company had appeared was Regensburg in Bavaria, where in 1733 the Prague opera performed two titles: *Filindo* and *Il Condannato Innocente* (in both cases pasticcios compiled by the company's impresario). And two

of the singers who had appeared in *Argippo* three years before – i.e. the tenor and impresario himself Antonio Denzio and the mezzo-soprano Anna Cosimi – took part. The idea of a connection between Prague and Regensburg through the Denzio company turned out to be the major step forward in the search for the lost note material. An anonymous sheaf of arias, seven of them corresponding in texts to arias from the libretto of the Prague *Argippo*, was found in the *Fürst Thurn und Taxis Hofbibliothek* in Regensburg. Study of the music confirmed that the author could have been none other than Antonio Vivaldi.

More proof that these were arias from Vivaldi's *Argippo* was provided by analysis of all the known librettos on this theme. The author of the original libretto was Domenico Lali, and by the standards of the 18th century it was musically

arranged only rarely. The first opera on the libretto was written in 1713 in Naples by Francesco Mancini under the title *Il Gran Mogol*, and there also exists an *Argippo* from the pen of Andrea Stefan Fiore (Milan, 1722) and two Venetian versions by Giovanni Porta of 1717 and 1722. As was usual at the time, the libretti differ in the different musical arrangements: only parts of the arias are the same, some appear only in two operas, some only in one. A careful comparison of all the versions led to a crucial finding: the texts of three arias in the anonymous Regensburg manuscript appear only in one other source, and that is the libretto of Antonio Vivaldi's Prague *Argippo*. These are the arias "Io son rea dell'onor mio" (Zanaida, II/6), "Mi sento nel core" (Silvero, III/1) and "Che farai? Perdonerai!" (Osira, III/8). This rules out the possibility that the arias could have come from one of the other musical arrangements of *Argippo*. In any case, the score of Porto's *Argippo* has been preserved in Dresden, and its music has nothing in common with the arias from Regensburg.

It is not unusual for musicologists or artistic directors of various early music groups to announce the discovery and performance of a long lost opera and then, when we actually look at the programme text or recording booklet, what we actually find is that only one act of the original opera has been found (in recent times we might mention Vivaldi's opera *Motezuma*, for example), or even that the opera has been entirely recomposed on the

basis of more or less convincing guesswork. It is true that not even in the case of *Argippo* has Vivaldi's original music been found in full, but unlike many other cases an exceptionally high percentage of the whole has been discovered. A whole seven of the eight arias of the Prague libretto were identified in the Regensburg libretto, which with the two arias to which we know the music from other Vivaldi scores („Gelido in ogni vena" and "In bosco romito") represent a full half of the opera!

To reconstruct the work it remained to find music for nine arias and two choral passages. The method adopted is known as re-texting, which was common in the Baroque period and is in fact still employed with success today. The rigorous process of choice was governed by a range of criteria, not just purely musical considerations (can this convincingly support the text of the Prague libretto? Does the music correspond to the emotion of the text? Does the character of the aria fit into the overall musical-dramatic structure of the work?), but above all musical historical criteria. After study of the complete operatic works of Vivaldi kept in photocopies at the *Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi* in Venice, the most promising approach turned out to be analysis of the sources north of the Alps. The most important source was the collection of Vivaldi arias in the *Sächsische Landesbibliothek* in Dresden. For the most part this is a Vivaldi autograph containing twenty-five arias from his operas of the years 1726–1732, including the two ari-

as from *Atenaide* and *Siroe* (subsequently in *Farnace*), which appear in *Argippo* too. Much the greater part of the missing music was replaced from this source. For some arias the congruence between the new text and the music is so convincing that it is in fact quite likely that this was how the arias actually sounded in *Argippo*.

The discovery of the score identified as part of Vivaldi's only Prague opera and the planned production of *Argippo* attracted a great deal of interest especially from specialists on Vivaldi – here we should mention at least the musicologist Michael Talbot and the director and new editor of the Ryom's Catalogue of Vivaldi's works Frederico M. Sardelli. Ondřej Macek's experience in the field of Italian opera, and the expertise of a team that has already collaborated for many years on the revival of forgotten works of the Baroque epoch with authentic historical staging practice (Zuzana Vrbová – direction and Baroque gestures, soloists Jana Bínová Koucká and Pavla Štěpničková and others) guarantee an excellent musical and theatrical experience. Vivaldi's *Argippo* was performed in the Spanish Hall at Prague Castle on the 3rd of May. In June the opera will be staged in the chateau theatre in Český Krumlov and in the autumn the work will be performed for the first time in history in Italy, in Venice.

With kind permission of the magazine Harmonie

WITH KATEŘINA CHROBOKOVÁ

ON PURITY OF STYLE AND GOING BEYOND GENRE

The organist and harpsichord player Kateřina Chroboková has performed at many prestigious music festivals abroad, and works with important ensembles and conductors. She has taken part in many international master courses with famous musicians. Kateřina has given concerts at international organ festivals in the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, England and Scotland. She has worked with the Janáček Chamber Orchestra, and with the Olomouc Moravian Philharmonic she gave the world premiere of E. Skoczek's *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* at the 2006 International Organ Festival in Olomouc. Last year she appeared with the renowned Anima Eterna Orchestra conducted by Jose van Immerseel in Brussels and Brusges with a performance of B. Martinů's *Harpsichord Concerto*. Her repertoire includes music from different stylistic periods. She is an enthusiastic performer and popularizer of contemporary music, which she presents at festivals at home and abroad in co-operation with composers and other musicians. She has been teaching at the Janáček Conservatory and Grammar School in Ostrava since 2004. She has also been invited to teach at international courses for organists – Oundle for Organists in England and the University of Glasgow in Scotland.



After studying organ at the Janáček Conservatory in Ostrava you started to study at the Janáček Academy in Brno. Soon after that your musical studies took you abroad. Where precisely and with which teachers?

Halfway through my second year at JAMU I was chosen for a scholarship at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht in the Netherlands. After finishing my scholarship with professor Jan Raas I was accepted as a regular student in the Tweede Fase (*equivalent of master's course - editor's note*). Since then I have moved around to various parts of Europe and as far as friends and professional contacts are concerned, I feel I'm a European.

What have you got out of studying abroad?

Studying abroad opens up new horizons for you, for example showing you different approaches to performance. For organists this is very valuable experience. Every country has its own specific stylistic development and specific instruments. To understand a certain musical style or the works of a particular composer properly you need to know the character and potential of the organs that were built at the time concerned and have personal sound experience of them, which means knowing how the instrument for which the composer was writing actually sounds. Use of register and the interpretation of individual pieces follows from that knowledge. Renaissance or Early Baroque pieces, such as the works of Frescobaldi, for example, are written for organ in meantone tuning. Meantone tuning produces a greater or lesser tension in different intervals, and the composer can deliberately exploit this – a technique that does not work on a modern instrument with equal temperament.

The Netherlands are particularly famous for their unique instruments from the Baroque period, and most of them are in an excellent state

of repair. Did you have the chance to get to know any of them?

There are a whole range of such instruments, and so it is hard just to pick one. I greatly admire the instruments of A. Schnitger, who built organs in Holland and North Germany. Another marvellous instrument is the organ of 1655 in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, on which I had a chance to give a concert. It was made by the German organ-builder H. W. Schonat and later enlarged by J. van Hagerbeer. Its pipes are protected from dust by what are known as wing doors, which were constructed in the 17th century and only a few of which have survived. They are opened when the organ is played and on their inner sides there are superb frescoes by J. G. van Bronckhorst, a contemporary of the great Rembrandt van Rijn. The Nieuwe Kerk stands right in the centre of Amsterdam on the Dam square beside the royal palace and its interior is no longer used for church services. Various exhibitions and concerts are held there, but also for example the weddings of members of the royal family and the coronation of Queen Beatrix took place in it. In Holland there are other cases of churches being deconsecrated and used for various cultural and social purposes. There are also outstanding organ builders in Holland who make instruments in the style of historical organs. I have played on a wonderful instrument made by the Vershueren firm in the abbey of Averbode in Belgium.

You have also studied in Belgium...

Yes, in Leuven with Reitz Smits. He became a huge model for me. He is incredibly erudite in the field of organ and harpsichord and at the same time is an outstanding musician and a man of great integrity. He is trying to get good organ literature into concert repertoires, he has an imaginative approach to concert programming, isn't afraid to present pieces by lesser-known composers and organises all kinds of interesting





projects for example in co-operation with contemporary composers.

What is important to you in performance?

Perfect mastery of the craft, an understanding of style, a knowledge of the sources... All of that represents the work of a lifetime. But at the same time it's a priority for me that the interpretation should be clear, that it should have pulse and energy and that people should feel the pleasure in the play. I draw inspiration from other musical genres as well - I'm interested in jazz, world music, pop... Some musicians in these genres possess not just talent but a high level of technical skill and a feeling for complex

polyrhythms that quite a few classical musicians might well envy. I love what Jos van Immerseel said about his first concert violinist Midori Seiler: "She plays with feeling for the particular style and with the energy of a gypsy."

Jos van Immerseel is the conductor of the famous orchestra Anima Eterna. You are the only solo player from the Czech Republic who has ever appeared with them (editor's note: the orchestra has been nominated for a BBC Prize for a recording M. Ravel). What was it like working with them? I read on the internet that your performance of Bohuslav Martinů's Harpsichord Concerto was a great success.

For me it was terrific experience. In his ensemble Jos has players that outside Anima Eterna perform as soloists or are also members of other top orchestras on the international scene today. He chooses people whose musical sensibility is akin to his own, and so even though the orchestra is basically composed of soloists, the spirit of team co-operation is fantastic, and there is a relaxed atmosphere, just pleasure in play, which is so important for the final result. The chance to work with top musicians in a beautiful band is the dream of every enthusiastic musician.

Anima Eterna is famous for the fact that all the musicians play on period instruments.

Yes, they use instruments that were played at the time when a given composer lived and composed. Today people usually think of “period instruments” as Baroque instruments, but in fact the Anima Eterna almost never plays the repertoire of this epoch. Now it is concentrating on music by composers of the end of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. The instruments of this period, especially the wind instruments, are strikingly different from modern instruments. Both in colour and in intensity of sound. Another thing is that in most of the orchestras of the first half of the 20th century string players used gut strings. The sound balance and the whole acoustic affect is quite different from performance on modern instruments.

After finishing a master's degree in organ you started to study harpsichord, going back to the Janáček Academy of Performance Arts. What led you to study this instrument?

While I was still in Utrecht I had harpsichord as a second instrument in parallel with my organ studies. In Holland it's usual for organists to be harpsichord players as well. It means that you expand your radius of activities and you also get experience playing with other musicians. I knew that in studying harpsichord I would have to master playing basso continuo, but mastering basso continuo play and chamber and ensemble experience in general is very beneficial even for players as soloists. I wanted to go on studying harpsichord at home and I was also very impressed by Barbara Maria Willi, who teaches

harpsichord at JAMU in Brno. She is a great inspiration to me as a musician and a human being. She has a huge feeling for stylistic purity and on the other hand a great sense for going beyond the limits of genre, which is something that impresses me about her. She has given me a great deal as a teacher and a human being and at the same time provided me with space for myself. That was exactly what I needed at that particular stage.

You are now studying basso continuo with the renowned Jesper Christensen at the Schola Cantorum in Basel. What prompted you to that decision?

Basso continuo is a technique of accompaniment according to a numbered bass. Since in practice a harpsichord player makes a career more as a chamber musician than as a soloist, the knowledge of this accompaniment technique is essential. At the same time it gives you huge freedom, because through it you get to know with the often repeating harmonic “standards”. You develop a reflex that enables you to recognise typical progressions immediately and play them automatically. Both in continuo and in solo pieces. This is what I try to explain to my students when I „persecute” them, forcing them to practice continuo exercises over and over again.

I've heard that Christensen is known as the “guru of the basso continuo”...

Jesper Christensen is truly world famous in his field. Apart from solo play, for roughly the last thirty years he has been intensively studying historical sources concerned with basso continuo and period interpretation. He bases his basso continuo play on the “musical language” of each particular composer, which he knows through and through. For example, when tackling basso continuo in Corelli's sonatas we applied the typical treatment of voices that Corelli uses in his orchestral pieces. In the Schola Cantorum I had the chance to hear instruments that are not usually taught at other schools, even those with a similar focus – for example the zink (a form of cornet), the dulcian, the shawm. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the school is also

a great inspiration for me – apart from European students there are Brazilians, Columbians, Japanese and others studying there.

You not only work in the field of early music, but also take an intensive interest in contemporary music. Some composers have even dedicated pieces to you, you have presented a number of world premieres of music by contemporary authors, and you appear with various contemporary groups. In March last year at the Exposition of New Music in Brno you performed a piece for two harpsichords and percussion dedicated to you by Petr Cígler with Barbara Maria Willi and Tomáš Ondrůšek (see CMQ 1/2005). What new projects are you engaged in?

In the near future I will be making two appearances at an international multi-genre festival in Mexico City. One concert will present Baroque pieces and the other will consist of music by Olivier Messiaen to mark the centenary of the birth of this great French composer and organist.

Your debut CD has come out in April. You recorded it in Belgium on an old Baroque organ. Why that instrument particularly? Can you tell us more about the content of your first recording?

I had the honour to appear at the prestigious organ festival in Haring in Belgium, where famous organists like Gustav Leonhard or Ton Koopman have played, for example. After the concert I received an offer to record a CD on the organ there. It is a very precious instrument of 1778 from the workshop of the Van Peteghem family of organ builders. The organ comes from the rococo period, but in terms of disposition it corresponds to the French High Baroque. This is why I chose pieces for the recording that sound best on this instrument and tuning. These are works by composers like Clérambault, Muffat, Gallupi, Vaňhal and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

With kind permission of the magazine Harmonie

We offer:

- sheet music of all genres from Czech and foreign publishers
- composers' monographs, academic music publications
- several thousand titles available in our shop
- our own brand of music paper, copy books and pads
- specialized music journals
- Internet store with over 300 000 titles
- mail-order and delivery services
- complete services for music orders for organizations and individuals

Contact:

Barvič a Novotný bookshop
Česká 13, 602 00 Brno, Czech republic
•
Open daily
Mon–Sat 8.00 – 19.00, Sun 10.00 – 19.00
•
Tel. + fax:
(+420) 542 215 040, (+420) 542 213 611
•
e-mail: hudebniny@barvic-novotny.cz
•
www.hudebniny.com

We are looking forward to your visit to our shop or our on-line store.

BARVIČ a NOVOTNÝ
KNIHKUPECTVÍ • 1883 • SPOL. S R.O. BRNO



LIFE AND WORK OR WORK AND LIFE OR JUST WORK?!?

Reflections inspired by John Tyrrell's

Janáček – Years of a Life, Volume 1

The lonely blackbird (1854–1914)

(Faber and Faber, London 2006, 971 pp)

and Volume 2 *Tsar of the Forests (1914–1928)*

(Faber and Faber, London 2007, 1074 pp).

The title I have chosen expresses the first line of thought that occurs to the reader of Tyrrell's massive monograph. In my view, we would be hard put to it to find in current world musicology a more detailed, precise and perfect conception for the history of the music of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, a more comprehensive, precise and perfect conception than Tyrrell's.

LIFE AND WORK OR WORK AND LIFE OR JUST WORK?!?

After the definitely unsuccessful post-modernist "synthesis" by Meinhard Saremba (Leoš Janáček. Zeit-Leben-Werk-Wirkung. Bärenreiter Kastel-Basel-London-N.Y.-Prag 2001), to mention one of the most recent attempts at a "major" Janáček monograph, Tyrrell is something quite different, offering as he does the biggest and most detailed academic analysis to date of Janáček's life, compositional methods and artistic character. So much is evident after only a quick look at both volumes. Our purpose here is to try and set the monograph in the Janáčekian context and above all to offer some brief comments on its methodological premises. After Max Brod, whose long essay written while the composer was still alive was the first of a series of Janáček monographs, the most valuable is definitely Helfert's unfinished work (*Leoš Janáček.*

Obraz životního a uměleckého boje. I. V poutech tradice [Leoš Janáček. The picture of a struggle in life and art. I. In the fetters of tradition]. Brno 1939). Helfert's approach was informed by the spirit of a modernised historical positivism, and aimed to explain Janáček's personality in terms of his environment and historical situation. The post-war period saw a series of other monographs (Jaroslav Vogel, Jan Racek, Hanns Hollander and many others), in all cases academic biographical accounts more or less interlarded with consideration of the music depending on the musicality of the authors (Vogel and Hollander are definitely superior to the other attempts of the time). Subsequently the further development of musicological production showed a move in the direction of problem-orientated analysis; attention

was shifting from the life to the work. In Czech musicology this process culminated in a Smetana monograph that expressed its academic credo in its title *Dílo a život Bedřicha Smetany* [*The Works and Life of Bedřich Smetana*], when this new approach was applied particularly by Jaroslav Jiránek and Jaroslav Smolka, and then equally by Karel Janeček. Independent of this methodologically and academically fruitful shift, we find attempts to produce monographic views of part of the composer's output or even individual works in the Janáček literature as well. Bohumír Štědroň reconstructed the genesis of *Jenůfa* and the English musicologist Paul Wingfield wrote a book about the *Glagolitic Mass*. Both before and after, a series of other "work-orientated" essays and books came out. The original Helfertian

or more precisely historical positivist approach to academic narrative, i.e. a chronological account with note taken of the fundamental results of stylistic and structural phenomena continued – authors often returned to it who in other cases adopted an analytical view. Here I would like to mention Svatava Přibáňová's monograph, *Leoš Janáček* (Horizont, Praha 1984), which is one of the most precise, reliable and comprehensive views of the life and work of the composer. Interestingly, the contemporary principle that is today so widely accepted and is even an emblem of our age, i.e. *the work before the life* ("the work is always cleverer than the author, so let us explore primarily the work") came out of Janáček's circle. Milan Kundera, the major international proponent of precisely this principle, grew up in a milieu with which Janáček was intimately connected. How does John Tyrrell react to all this in terms of method? I shall try to ignore the personal contact side of things and forget for a moment that I was one of the first Czechs to welcome him when he came here to embark on his research, that for years we saw each other on a daily basis and spent dozens of hours talking about Janáček and other topics.



For a moment at least, this is not relevant. In my view Tyrrell chose the method of a historian who seeks to interpret facts soberly, relying on a great inner musicality and musical insight (which as we well know many musicologists lack and so relegate themselves to the role of musical officials and statisticians), but as it were constantly putting the direct musical response off to prevent the book being swallowed up by his emotions. This is just an a priori claim that I shall try to explain individual point by point, so as more or less to confirm it. In the same a priori way we can say that Tyrrell's books have done more for Czech culture than

many a Czech cultural historian. I emphasised this point when I proposed to the academic board and rector of Masaryk University that Tyrrell should be awarded an honorary doctorate – a suggestion that was accepted. In John Tyrrell, Czech culture has the advantage of a person who looks at it with intimate knowledge of its great and small problems but is at the same time "extra muros" – this is a great piece of luck, something like Janáček's good fortune in the case of Max Brod.

Volume One

The first volume is divided into four large sections. The first has the title *A Late Starter* and

covers the years 1854–1880, i.e. from the composer's birth to his completion of studies in Leipzig and in Vienna. The second section *The Young Professional* considers the years from Janáček's return from his studies in Vienna in June 1880 to the completion of the opera *Šárka* in 1888. The third section *The Black Ribbon* (covering the years 1888–1903) follows Janáček's transformation into a folklorist, and family life, and ends with the death of his daughter Olga in 1903. The fourth section *In the Mists* (1903–1914) follows Janáček from *Jenůfa* to his sixtieth year.

I shall briefly describe the inner subdivision and structure of these sections because they are important for the concept of the monograph. The first section includes the parts: Images of Janáček; Nations and languages; The Janáčeks; Hukvaldy, Childhood (1854–1865); Brno I (1860–1914); From schoolboy to schoolmaster: Brno 1865–1874; Pavel Křížkovský; Pan-Slavism I; Early professional life: before Prague (1872–1874); Musical studies: Prague 1874–1875; The Schulzes; What is in a name? Leo, Lev and Leoš; Musical studies: Leipzig 1879–1880; Musical studies: Vienna 1880.

The second section consists of the sections: June 1880–December 1881; Janáček as teacher, Janáček as music theorist; 1882–summer 1884; The Organ school; Antonín Dvořák; Autumn 1884–summer 1888; Hudební listy; Janáček's

knowledge of opera I: up to *Šárka*; Janáček's first opera: *Šárka* in 1887–88.

The third section entitled *The black ribbon* consists of the chapters: Summer 1888–90; Janáček as music ethnographer; Folk dances in the orchestra and on the stage; Folksong accompaniments as Janáček's workshop; 1894–95; 1896; What Janáček learnt from The Queen of Spades; Pan-Slavism II; 1897–99; Speech Melody; On the Overgrown Path; 1900–1901; Music as Autobiography I; Janáček's finances I: to 1903 (by Jiří Zahradka); 1902–February 1903; What Olga died of (by Stephen Lock).

The fourth section – *In the mists* – consists of the chapters 1903 (March–December); Spas, especially Luhačovice; Louise and the hidden agenda; 1904; The missing link: *Jenůfa* in 1904; Betes noires I: Karel Kovačovic; Janáček at fifty; 1905; Music as autobiography II; 1906; The Bezruč choruses; 1907; 1908; Betes noires II: Zdeněk Nejedlý; 1909; Pan-Slavism III; 1910; Janáček's knowledge of opera II (1890–1914); 1911; 1912; Janáček's illnesses I (by Stephen Lock); 1913; 1914 a) January – 28. July; Janáček's finances II (1904–1914, by Jiří Zahradka); Janáček at sixty. The text is followed by notes, bibliography, general index, index of Janáček's compositions and index of his literary works.

Tyrrell has filled in most of the

gaps in Helfert's work caused by a lack of sources and the limitations of the information database. As a chronicler he is wonderfully objective and does not allow himself to be swept away in support of either side on the disturbed ground of German and Czech Brno. It is surprising that given all the perfect documentation of musical activities no clear attempt has been made to identify some kind of "point zero" for the emergence of Janáček's original style. We all know that it developed sometime between the 1880s and the period of the composition of the cantata *Amarus*, but practically no one has tried to come up with any kind of quantification. We find a run-up to it in, for example, Thomas Adés's study "*Nothing but pranks and puns*", *Janáček's solo piano music* (In: *Janáček Studies* – edited by Paul Wingfield, Cambridge University Press 1999, pp.18–35, especially pp.18–20). Like Adés I tend to the view that the beginnings of Janáček's originality are most evident in the piano miniature that he developed in the piece *Na památku [In Memory]* of 1886–87. Especially the ostinato rhythmic figure of the sharp dotted rhythm (a double-dotted quarter note with a semi-quaver, or sometimes the inversion of this rhythm, once known as the "lombard rhythm"), may be of folk origin and could have arisen from Janáček's excellent knowledge of the then fashionable "czardas note", as

spread by migrant ensembles. Tyrrell has carried out a remarkable amount of historical research and tracked down in Moravia many things that we know only from the study of the sources of a later period. Personally – as someone influenced by the strongly sociologically orientated methodology of the 1960s-1990s, I would have put more stress on something like the range of characteristics typical of different representatives of culture born at roughly the same time. These kinds of comparison can help us to identify the differences in the typology of the Czech, German, Jewish and Moravian intellectual – for example if we compare Janáček, Masaryk and Freud. We have quite a lot of extant correspondence for these intellectuals (at least with Janáček and Freud), and so the possibilities are considerable. Tyrrell offers a fascinating line of thought with his analysis of the Schulz family, based on the marriage of a Czech in the earlier Utraquist tradition with constitutional nationalist aspirations to a German – the prototype of the co-existence of Czechs and Germans in Brno and everywhere else in a similar situation in the Bohemian Lands. Personally I think that many nuances of these relationships inside mixed families of this kind were not fully considered and understood even by the actors themselves, and this makes it

even harder for us to understand them after so many years and in so different a situation. I shall just mention one or two of the points on which I disagree with Tyrrell. After recent research the etymology of the word “šalina”, “šarina” in Brno no longer looks so clearly derived from the often cited title of the company Elektrische Linien, and on the etymology of *duma* and *dumka* more evidence could have been adduced, as in the case of Palacký’s conception of Austroslavism. Before p. 481 of Vol. 1, the photographs of Zdeněk Nejedlý and Frantošek Bartoš have been mixed up and on page 45 the well-known scientist from the Old Brno Monastery Franz Thomas or František Tomáš Bratranek is wrongly presented as Theodor. But these are negligible slips in so huge and complex a text. Let us now take a similar look at the structure of the second volume.

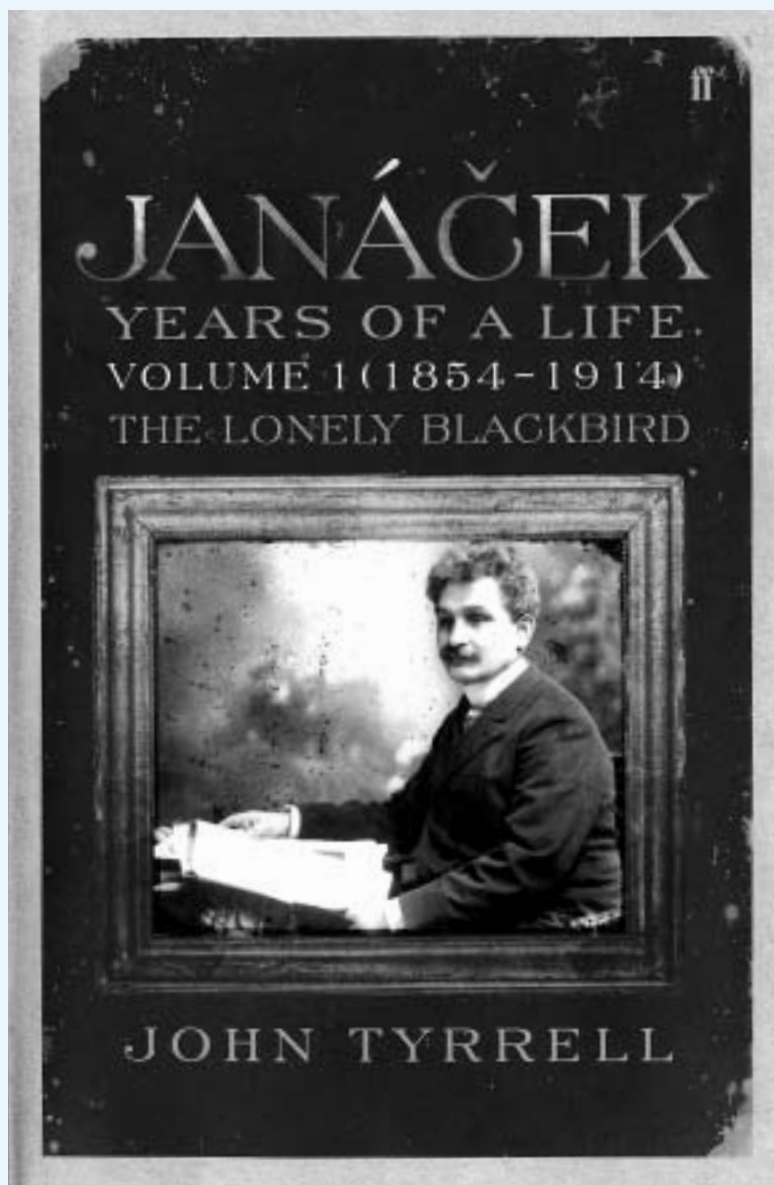
Volume Two

The whole long 2nd volume is divided into three parts entitled respectively *Storms* (1914–18), *Calm* (1919–26) and finally *Written in fire* (1927–28). A resume of their individual chapters, will highlight Tyrrell’s overall concept. Part 1 *Storms* opens with a chapter An interview in time of war. This is followed by six chapters with simple chronological arrangement: 1914 b) July–December; 1915; 1916 a) January – 28 May; 1916

b) 28 May – 9 July; 1916 c) 10 July – 3 September; 1916 d) 3 September – 31 December; Max Brod – friend and meddler; Why Brouček took so long I; 1917 a) January – June; 1917 b) July – August; 1917 c) September – December; Why Brouček took so long II; 1918 a) January – 17 February; 1918 b) 18 February – July; Did Janáček really have gout? (by Stephen Lock); Janáček and programme music; 1918 c) July – December; Janáček’s finances III (1915–18, by Jiří Zahrádka); How Janáček composed opera.

Part 2 *Calm* again follows chronology, and as follows: 1919 a) January – June; 1919 b) July – December; Brno II: 1914–28; 1920; 1921 a) January – June; 1921 b) July – December; 1922; 1923; 1924 a) January – June; 1924 b) July – September; Janáček at Seventy; Janáček’s view of himself; 1924 c) October – December; 1925 a) January – June; 1925 b) June – December; Music as autobiography III; 1926 January – April; 1926 b) April – May; 1926 c) June – July; Janáček’s finances IV by Jiří Zahrádka; 1926 d) August – December.

Part 3 *Written in Fire* carries on chronologically – 1927 a) January – April; 1927 b) April – August; – and continues with the chapters Janáček and Modernism, and then 1927 c) August – November; Pan-Slavism IV; 1927 d) November – December. Among



the high points of the work – to be mentioned again below – are the chapters Janáček's knowledge of opera III (1914–28), Janáček and the leitmotif, The conventions of Janáček's opera and Genre in Janáček's opera. The monograph concludes with following chapters: 1928 a) January – March, Music as autobiography IV: The Kamila connection; 1928 b) March – April; 1928 c) April – June; 1928 d) July – August; Janáček's death – by Stephen Lock; Janáček's finances V: Janáček's estate and last will (by Jiří Zahradka) and he usual notes, indexes, lists and bibliography.

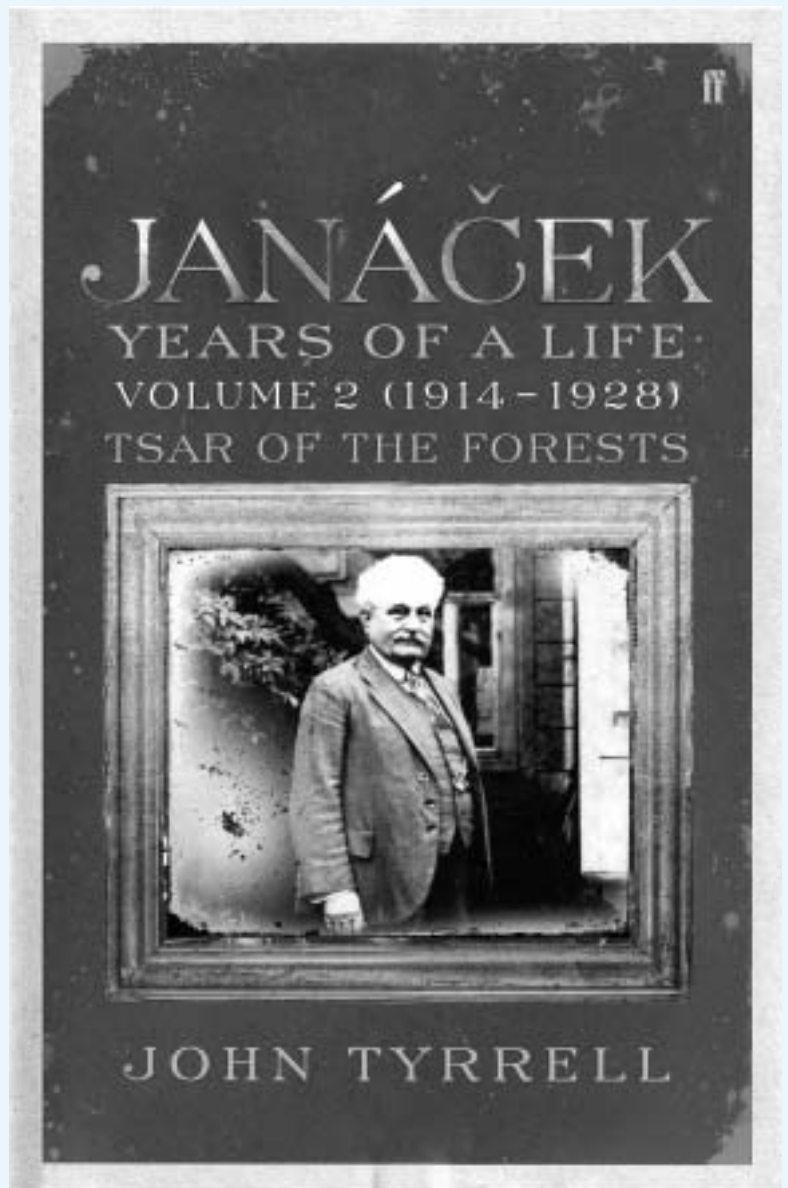
After reading the monograph we realise just how versatile a talent was required for such a task. Tyrrell is not just a perfect historian of the epoch, place and work of his subject, but also a perfect analyst, who is able to embody his results in concise and definitive judgments. This mastery of synthesis can be seen throughout the book, but we become most sharply aware of it as we finish the book.

Marginalia to the Monograph

In this article I can only confirm all the positive aspects of the book and I am pleased to be able to say that it is a work of extraordinary importance (which by the way should be translated into Czech as soon as possible).

Although at first it seems rather stereotypical, Tyrrell's method turns out to be the best for the task. I myself incline to a structuralist interpretation, but I acknowledge that in the case of Janáček, where the music is often autobiography, the choice was prudent and has guaranteed to the balance of the whole. At first sight there seem to be very few note examples in the monograph, but this is not true. The author is the master of the analytical abbreviation; everything that he offers has the hallmark of information that has been verified and presented to the reader in a form that renounces emotional accentuation in advance.

It is a good thing that John Tyrrell is the author of this book. Apart from his forty-year study of Janáček's work, simply looking at the book I see that the treatment of the Czech question is such that while fully respecting regionalism the theme becomes a universal matter. Whether the author asks about the specifics of the phenomenon of Czech opera or simply explores different aspects of his lifelong love, Janáček, the advantage of this major English monograph is evident. The author is not part of the Czech milieu and the information given in this way has a much broader and more objective impact. If any Czech



considered himself predestined to writing such a monograph, he had the same time conditions as John Tyrrell, and let them slip.

After this preamble, all my other notes relate just to specific points and are not intended as major overall judgments.

Tyrrell has solved a great many chronological and other problems that we cannot deal with in a review because it would otherwise grow to giant proportions. The strange numbering of some of the chapters bothers me – for example in Vol. 2 the key chapters on Janáček's stylistic conventions, the leitmotifs of his operas and genres are accompanied by wrong numbering. The reader naturally can find everything easily according to the chapter titles. Once again I fully appreciate the brilliant style of an author who has a gentle sense of irony about himself, his hero and the other characters of these tales. Tyrrell has to be read carefully – you will often understand a great deal only on a second or later reading. I continue to admire the courage of the publishing house – and Faber and Faber is definitely a leading international publishers – for embarking on such a big project. On the other hand, its willingness to back so detailed an artistic biography undoubtedly testifies to the universal meaning and importance of the Janáček phenomenon.

One aspect which I do not agree with and which I consider to be an inadequately thought out

part of the monograph is the passage on *Janáček as Theorist*. Tyrrell generally takes over the internationally cited monograph by Michael Beckerman *Janáček as Theorist* (Pendragon Press, NY 1994). I personally think that despite its elegant form this book is only an attempt at identifying Janáček the theorist. Beckerman seems to have wanted to stake a claim to this lucrative theme, but his treatment ignores the results of Czech music theory (Blažek, Řehánek, Volek) and starts entirely from his own research. This is a pity, because Janáček's theoretical work needs to be more comprehensively considered in combination with his literary legacy, which is already well accessible. Unfortunately Beckerman's book remains the primary source of information not in Czech, and the vacuum of Janáčekian theoretical ideas and their link with his music is not satisfactorily addressed and explained. The same could be said of the treatment of the question of speech melodies.

Conclusion

Tyrrell's monograph is an outstanding musicological feat. It throws light on Janáček in a way that no Czech book could do, for obvious reasons. Its quality and imaginative power will be a spur to further studies and we Czechs now confront the immediate task of ensuring that it is translated and translated well.

John Tyrrell entered the world of Czech Janáčekian musicological literature at the end of the 1960s when he wrote two fundamental articles for the Moravian Museum journal (ČMM LII 1967 and ČMM III-LIV 1968–69) on the Beginning of a Romance and the Excursions of Mr. Brouček – in the former he provided documentary evidence on the genesis of the opera or more accurately singspiel and in the latter he addressed question of librettists and chronology. I do not have space here to list all Tyrrell's innovations in Janáček scholarship, but will mention at least the most important. His article for the revue Opus musicum, "On Linkage of Words to Music in Janáček's Operas" (OM I-1969, no. 8, pp. 227-232), and particularly his next article for this journal, "How Tomášik became a Bass" (OM V-1973, no. 7, pp. 201-203) were definitely thought provoking and unusually inventive. Tyrrell's book-article collection on Katya Kabanova (Cambridge Opera Handbooks, CUP, Cambridge 1982) brought an essay on Janáček's attitude to the viola d'amour – a fundamental contribution to the problem of sound colour in the composer's work. I could carry on in the same spirit to the edition of Jenůfa in what is known as the Brno version of 1908 (editors: Ch. Mackerras and J. Tyrrell, UE, Vienna, undated. (1997?)) and to his other Janáček books and finally the two-volume monograph. In this remarkable series of titles there is however one that is particularly valuable because of its universal character, this is the book Czech Opera (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988) and its Czech translation in the series Opus musicum (Brno 1991-1992).



Antonín Dvořák
Concertos
 Cello Concerto in B minor
 op. 104, Piano Concerto
 in G minor op. 33,
 Violin Concerto in A minor
 op. 53, Romance in F minor for
 Violin and Orchestra op. 11, Rondo
 for Cello and Orchestra op. 94,
 Mazurka for Violin and Orchestra in
 E minor op. 49,
 Forest Calm for Cello and
 Orchestra op. 68

Zara Nelsova - cello, Rudolf Firkušný -
 piano, Ruggiero Ricci - violin,
 Saint-Louis Symphony Orchestra, Walter
 Susskind - conductor.

Text: Ger., Eng. Recorded: 1974, 1975.
 Released: 2006 (licence VOX Records
 for Membran Music). TT: 73:51, 55:51.
 ADD Stereo. 2 CD Membran Music.

This double album of Dvořák instrumental concertos at first sight looks like just another gift set, but thanks to the names of violinist **Ruggiero Ricci** and pianist **Rudolf Firkušný** it will also interest the more exacting listener. And also the name of the conductor should catch the listener's eye. In the Czech Republic Firkušný, as a Czech emigrant, still seems to suffer hard luck here in terms of available recordings and titles. Here people tend to encounter them just by chance on some unknown label and are then surprised by how good they are. His interpretation of the *Piano Concerto in G minor* is refined, subtle and vibrantly musical. And it is precisely this cultivated musician, identified with Czech music in heart and soul, that we had the chance to hear at the beginning of the 1990s after his return from emigration. In the *Violin Concerto in A minor*, the world famous violinist proves worthy of his fame and plays Dvořák with a beautiful tone. In many passages the listener will be enchanted by his mature conception and performance ideas. The cellist **Zara Nelsova**, a respected soloist and teacher born in Canada who taught at the Juilliard School, is a comparative unknown. In the world-class competition on the CD her interpretation of the cello concerto sounds careful, soft and

very sensitive. There are stronger versions, but this one is engaging and stands the test. The richness and genius of the score is of course an advantage for the performer. If we compare these three Dvořák instrumental concertos in terms of popularity, the cello concerto, which is played and loved by all the world-class players, emerges with a clear lead. It is followed at some distance by the violin concerto, chosen only by some, and in third place in terms of interest and appeal comes the piano concerto, which demands from musicians a special attitude and an exceptional amount of artistic input if listeners are to go on listening right through to the end. The advantage of the CD set is that these two less immediately listener-friendly pieces are performed by major names on the music scene.

Apart from the concertos, from the violin repertoire the double album contains the *Romance in F minor* and the technically difficult, superb *Mazurka in E minor*, and for the cello the *Rondo in G minor* and *Forest Calm* – and this is a great enrichment. The **Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra** plays tolerably and the conductor **Walter Susskind** (1913–1980) has an unusual feeling for Dvořák's melodies and structure. This is no accident. Susskind was born in Prague, where he studied composition with Suk and K. Hába, played in the Czech Trio and worked with Georg Szell at the New German Theatre. He left for London in 1938 and made a significant international reputation. The artistically pretty jacket and the booklet correspond to the gift set image, and the text section gives quite detailed information about the pieces, but it is a pity that it says not a word about the performers and the circumstances of the recording in 1974 and 1975. Yet with often recorded pieces it is the performer on which the most depends, and behind at least two of these stands a very interesting piece of history for Czech listeners. Nonetheless, in the flood of re-editions there are already more than enough reasons to go for this album.

Jindřich Bálek



Jiří Antonín Benda
Concerto in G major, Concerto
in D major, Concerto in F major,
Concerto in C major

Edita Keglerová - harpsichord,
 Jan Hádek, Jana Chytilová - violin,
 Michal Dušek - viola, Ondřej Michal -
 cello, Michal Novák - double bass.
 Production: 2HP Production. Text: Cz.,
 Eng. Recorded in November 2006, Waldorf
 School in Příbram. Released: 2007. TT:
 60:33. DDD. 1 CD Arta F10153.

Few composers have been as acclaimed in their time as **Jiří Antonín Benda** (1722–1795). Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart in his book *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* of 1784 praised Benda as one of the best composers who had ever lived – as one of the creators of his epoch. He is thorough without pedantic precision, high and low, serious and witty. Benda wrote a series of sonatas, sonatinas and concertos for keyboard instruments, seven of which were printed. His musical idiom was influenced in significant ways by two partially overlapping movements that played a major role above all in the German literature of the time, but also found expression in music – *Empfindsamkeit* and *Sturm und Drang*. After the outstanding 2005 recording of Benda's four harpsichord concertos performed by Václav Luks and the ensemble Collegium 1704, we now have an album containing other musical treasures from Benda's pen. These are another four harpsichord concertos, but this time the major key dominates (*concertos in G major, D major, F major and C major*). They are performed by the harpsichord player **Edita Keglerová** and the **Ensemble Hipocondria** in chamber setup (two violins, viola and cello doubled with double bass). The major key context means that these concerts do not gravitate towards the dark chaos of *Sturm und Drang*, but move on the borders between the gallant style and *Empfindsamkeit*. The *empfindsamer Stil* (literally the "sensitive style"), distinguished above all for seriousness, intimacy, profundity and melancholy, was brought to its high point by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (his fantasia without bar lines is a textbook example). Benda knew his work very well, since for a time both composers had been working in Berlin at the court of the King of Prussia Frederick II. It is in



Benda's *Concerto in F major* (e.g. the similar mode of sequencing in the 3rd movement) that we find the most points of similarity with Bach. In fact all the slow movements of the recorded works are characteristically in the *Empfindsamkeit* style, and it was these second movements of Benda's concertos – and his sonatas too – that won him most praise in his day. They are characterised by sudden changes of emotion, which the composer achieved for example by formal subdivision or through contrasts in the dynamics or rhythm. Benda knew how to compose both for amateurs and very virtuoso music (often for his own needs). Clearly the most virtuoso, but the simplest of the concertos in terms of expression, is the second *Concerto in D major*, in which Benda shows a fondness for broken chords (especially in the first movement). Edita Keglerová copes with all the pitfalls of Benda's music and emerges with more than honour. She brings off the virtuoso element of the harpsichord part with excellence. A few passages seem just a little flat in expression, but they are rare. She holds the concertos together as a whole very well, which, given the marked degree of subdivision and variation in the musical text, is not always easy. The other players are considerate and very sensitive partners for the soloist. The new recording of Benda's concertos can then be fully recommended – apart from its undoubted qualities (which also derive from an authentic approach to the musical material), because the listener deserves finally to be able to get to know in greater breadth the creative legacy of a composer of Jiří Antonín Benda's indubitable quality.

Jana Perutková

Bedřich Smetana The Bartered Bride

Lucia Popp – soprano,
Siegfried Jerusalem – tenor, Karl
Ridderbusch – bass, Alfred Šrámek –
baritone, Gertrude Jahn – mezzo soprano,
Walter Fink – bass, Czesława Slania – alto,
Heinz Zednik – tenor, Erich Kunz –
baritone, Gabriele Sima – soprano,
Chor und Orchester der Wiener
Staatsoper, Adam Fischer.
Director: Otto Schenk.

Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Sp., Chinese.
Recorded: live, April 25th 1982, Vienna
State Opera. Released: 2007. TT: 155:00.

Picture format: NTSC/Colour/4:3. Sound
format: PCM Stereo/DTS 5.1. 1 DVD
Deutsche Grammophon 073 4360.

Up to now the only available DVD of *The Bartered Bride* has been the Czechoslovak TV studio production of 1981, published some time ago by Supraphon. The musical qualities of the latter are undeniable, but cannot make up for the kitschy design and static visual form and the absence of the feeling of witnessing a real, live performance.

Now we finally have an alternative, although not one of Czech provenance. Deutsche Grammophon has for the very first time published the recording of the production by the Vienna State Opera in 1982, which is already a historic document of a time when the ordinary opera-lover in our country didn't even have a theoretical chance of comparing the Czech approach with opera in the West.

In Vienna the Bartered Bride was performed in Max Kalbeck's German translation, which may rather upset the Czech listener, but if (remembering that for the German-speaking public it must have enhanced the dramatic effect) we just bear with the unaccustomed phrasing, and so with the fact that the villagers welcome the spring rather than a fair and that Jeník claims not to come from the "Moravian borders" but to have been christened by the Vltava, we will enjoy an effective lyrical comedy. This can in many respects inspire us especially today, when in an attempt to rid *The Bartered Bride* of earlier symbolism of the joyful socialist present, Czech directors have been going to the other extreme and replacing attention to real characterisation with superficial grotesquerie (meanwhile abroad the production is being updated with various better or worse results).

The important Austrian director Otto Schenk's approach here is classic in the sense that he works with village reality, respecting the approximate period and setting. He does not reject idealisation of the village setting, but he does not succumb to empty festiveness, and tries to put typical peasants of flesh and blood on stage. Rolf Langenfass's stage design presents a small village square with a tree in blossom and a water tank, and folk costume is retained, if not in too well-ironed a way.

A certain over-acting is evident in some roles, including Kecal as played by the important Wagnerian bass, now dead, Karel Ridder-

busch, but overall the opera is presented realistically and credible, including the witty scenes by the comic players – their principal sung by the then 73-year-old baritone **Erich Kunz**. The cast included some singers who are still active and highly rated today and whose careers have been inseparable from Vienna: the tenor **Heinz Zednik** in the role of Vašek does not overdo the comic aspects or succumb to trivial grotesque, while the baritone **Alfred Šrámek** is a sympathetically downtrodden Krušina. The bass **Walter Fink** (Micha) is still one of the Vienna State Opera soloists. The Zagreb-born **Gertrude Jahn** provides an energetic youthful Ludmila (here Katinka) while the role of Háta (Agnes) is taken by the Polish alto Czesława Slania. Given this strong ensemble the performances of the two protagonists in the roles of Mařenka and Jeník (or Marie and Hans) stands out all the more remarkably. The Slovak star soprano **Lucia Popp** (by this time in exile having been banned at home) and the German tenor **Siegfried Jerusalem** will be a real discovery for many. Popp (who died in 1993) is a true village wench "blood and milk", energetic, vibrant, charming and sweet, with a superbly clear, passionate soprano. Jerusalem is a sympathetic swain, boyish and kind, but also roguish and a bit of a lady-killer, with his dandy cap and his hands in his pockets. Jerusalem was later to make a major career as a Wagnerian tenor (three years before the Bartered Bride he had made his debut in Vienna as Parsifal), and it is evident that purely vocally the part of Jeník no longer suited his voice well: his singing is less relaxed and easy than that of his stage partner, and several faults can be detected from he recording, especially in the high registers. But generally this couple succeed in being hugely authentic, appealing and human, combining wit and seriousness and showing how full-bloodedly and naturally the roles of Mařenka and Jeník can be played. The conductor was the young Hungarian **Adam Fischer**, for whom the Bartered Bride was his first premiere at the Vienna State Opera. The orchestra play for him with great refinement and energy. Fischer was later to guest conduct on other important world stages, and to conduct the whole Wagner Ring cycle at Bayreuth. He still comes back to Vienna today.

Věra Drápelová



Antonín Dvořák
String Quintet in G major with
Double Bass op. 77, Piano Quintet
no. 2 in A major op. 81

Laurène Durantel – double bass, **Kathryn Stott** – piano, **The Škampa Quartet**: **Pavel Fischer**, **Jana Lukášová** – violin, **Radim Sedmidubský** – viola, **Lukáš Polák** – cello.
 Production: Petr Vít. Text: Cz, Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: March 2007, Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 71:26. DDD.
 1 CD Supraphon SU 3909-2.

If we take a careful look at the recording activities of the **Škampa Quartet** we find that apart from special productions that interestingly cross the boundaries of the originally classical genre (for example Janáček with Iva Bittová) and other tasks requiring ordinary recording practise (various string quartets by world masters), the quartet has gradually been building up a model catalogue of the basic works of Czech chamber repertoire. These always take the form of individual projects, but each is very carefully thought out and prepared. Like other Czech quartets the Škampang sometimes work with other colleagues as a way of opening up the repertoire possibilities. Thus in this case an album of two Dvořák quintets has now been added to the ensemble's line of excellent recordings of Czech and world quartet music. The colleagues participating on this CD lend it a special angle of interest; they are the already renowned French double bassist **Laurène Durantel** and the also internationally well-known English pianist **Kathryn Stott**. International collaboration of this kind makes possible a wider and more sensitive choice of fellow performers, guaranteeing the closest possible consistency of style. In this case and this context the most successful piece is the *Quintet in G major* with double bass. Laurène Durantel plays with great refinement and intimacy – he fits absolutely perfectly with the Škampang and the passages where the double bass has the chance to go further than accompaniment are particularly delightful! The whole sound design is excellently balanced – there is absolutely no danger of haziness of the lower frequencies. Renowned for her collaborative projects with leading world instrumentalists and ensembles, here Kathryn Stott displays her outstanding

gly good technique and experience in the interpretation of chamber music. Compared to the very sober double bass in the *Quintet in G major*, the piano in the *Quintet in A major* makes a more robust, and therefore a more individualist than team-orientated impression in the passages where it is not to be dominant. Perhaps some things could be remedied by sound direction. The romantic sensibility of the pianist is also less earthy and more salon in character than that of her colleagues. The members of the Škampa Quartet are absolutely the most convincing to the ear – both in individual performance (for example in the cantilenas of the 1st violin and viola in the 3rd movement of the *Quintet in G major*), and in perfect homogeneity, especially in the exquisite, lyrically inward typically Dvořákian passages (the secondary theme of the *Quintet in G major*, or the theme in the Trio of the 3rd movement of the *Quintet in A major* or the quietening before the close of the piece!). And last but not least we have the opportunity to savour innumerable charming, perfectly worked details (the elegant secondary theme of the 1st movement of the *Quintet in G major*). An unambiguously successful recording far above the average and unlikely to date for decades! The building up of a modern archive of representative pieces of Czech chamber music interpreted by the Škampa Quartet continues, and goes from strength to strength

Bohuslav Vitek

Václav Talich
Talich Special Edition 16
(Benda, Dvořák, Suk, Tchaikovsky)

The Czech Philharmonic, The Orchestra of Prague Soloists, The Slovak Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Václav Talich.

Production: Jana Gonda, Petr Kadlec, Petr Vít. Text: Cz, Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: 1950-1954, Rudolfinum, Domovina Prague, Great Hall of the Government Building in Bratislava. Released: 2007. TT: 73:36. ADD.
 1 CD Supraphon SU 3836-2.

Another important contribution to our knowledge of the legendary Czech conductor! Admittedly, this recording of Suk's Serenade is quite well-known. It came out several times



in re-editions on vinyl, and later even twice on CD – once in the well-known Supraphon "postal" edition (but there it was very distorted by new artificial reverberation), and then in the ambitious EMI Great Conductors of the 20th Century edition. Until the release of the recording by Josef Vlach and his new Czech Chamber Orchestra in 1981 it was considered the only one and was still being played as a tradition on the radio on Christmas Eve afternoon until quite recently. It is hard to define quite what has made it so special and so superb to this day. In comparison with other chamber orchestra recordings it perhaps offers a thicker sound (Talich recorded with a "forest" of strings), and the conception is in any case more philosophical (the coda of the 1st movement, the trio of the 2nd movement, the whole 3rd movement), and in some places more dramatic (the 4th movement). We can therefore rejoice once again at this new re-edition of the recording, this time perfect in technical treatment! In the same year, 1951, and only a few weeks after the Suk Serenade, Talich recorded Dvořák's string Serenade. This recording is considerably less well-known, even though it appeared on one of the first CDs released in this country, in 1988 (Supraphon Great Artists Series). Few people know what is concealed behind the title, **Orchestra of Prague Soloists** and it is a pity that the booklet fails to tell us. The recording of the Dvořák Serenade is proof that even if great attempts are made to choose the best of the best chamber and orchestral players (at that time Talich took huge pains to select the very best chamber and orchestral players in Prague, and then spent several weeks rehearsing with them intensively – even individually or in small groups!) the result is not necessarily better than if an established top orchestra is used. I do not know why Talich did not record the Dvořák serenade – like Suk's – with the **Czech Philharmonic**. While the Dvořák Serenade in this version is technically absolutely perfect, it sounds much more pragmatic than the Suk. The complete surprise on the CD is provided by two minor pieces by Petr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – the well-known *Andante cantabile* and an orchestral version of *Songs without Words* originally written for piano (the booklet does not give the name of the arranger, although it clearly is not Tchaikovsky's original). Listening to it I feel that there is a certain gap in our view of Talich. The time when he worked in Slovakia after



being branded persona non grata in Prague is a time that we speak of simply as one of banishment, forgetting the tremendous artistic results that he achieved in an unbelievably short time in Bratislava. He built up a first rate Slovak Philharmonic and did so, once again, by concentrated chamber work. The colourful, typically Talichian Tchaikovsky (technically of a very high standard) with the **Slovak Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra** fully demonstrates the fact. Unfortunately the only reminder of Talich's former Czech Chamber Orchestra is the recording of Benda's *Symphony in B major* which he made with selected members of the Czech Philharmonic as late as 1954. The CD booklet takes note of Talich – master of chamber interpretation and his outstanding but alas only short-lived Czech Chamber Orchestra. Although the Benda symphony is the only element from the original repertoire of this legendary ensemble on the CD, the reminder is very useful and necessary.

Bohuslav Vitek

Václav Talich
Talich Special Edition 15
(Mozart: Concerto for Violin and
Orchestra in D major K 218,
Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra
in A major K 622, Serenade for Wind
Instruments in E Flat Es K 361/370a
Gran Partita)

Jiří Novák – violin, Vladimír Říha –
clarinet, Czech Philharmonic, Václav
Talich. Production: Jana Gonda, Petr
 Kadlec, Petr Vít. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr.
 Recorded: 1954–1955, Prague, Rudolfinum,
 Domovina. Released: 2007. TT: 79:18.
 ADD. 1 CD Supraphon 3835-2.

It has been said more than once that despite the age of the recordings and the time in which they were made (when people were not yet very concerned about the issue of authentic concept and performance) Talich's Mozart recordings remain very interesting. In their time, i.e. in the 1950s, they not only sold very widely on LPs, but were regularly broadcast on the radio – often as the only recordings of the pieces concerned. For many years

they were indeed the norm governing the interpretations of other Czech performers. For example, **Talich** provided the basic inspiration developed by Josef Vlach with his new Czech Chamber Orchestra and in many respects this tradition has survived to the present day. This compact disk shows us Talich's Mozart on two levels. Figuring on the first are the two concertos, which belong to the set of what are today already legendary Supraphon studio recordings. *The Serenade* was recorded live at one of the few concerts that Talich conducted after his return from political banishment. Even after all these years the recording of the violin concerto impresses with the homogenous sound of the **Czech Philharmonic**, dominated by the luminous tone of **Jiří Novák**, the former concert master of Talich's original Czech Chamber Orchestra and leader of the Smetana Quartet. This recording is more proof that he was an outstanding soloist and it is surprising that he devoted himself purely to chamber music and appeared only occasionally as a soloist. The conception is very dramatic and vital in some parts, and the very supple tempo of the slow movement is appealing. At that time there was still a strong tendency to romanticisation – heavily loaded places in the orchestral passages await us especially in the finale. It is a pity that a distant noise is audible on the recording. The documentation does not indicate the author of the cadenzas. The *Clarinet concerto* is today a truly legendary recording. In its restrained tempo it is reminiscent of the Karel Böhm's conception of the piece. Even after so many years the recording is technically very good, although very occasionally we can hear the sound of the movement of the tape, which is hard to remove. The tone of the unforgettable representative of the Czech clarinet school, **Vladimír Říha** is beautifully rounded, and the accompaniment of the large ensemble on the thick side, but with entirely tasteful nuances of colour! The recording of the concert performance of the *Serenade in E flat major* by the Czech Philharmonic and Václav Talich in 1954 is a great rarity. In 1950 Supraphon produced a studio recording of the piece with what was known as the Prague Wind Chamber Association, which had also rehearsed it under Talich's supervision. The philharmonic performance is very energetic, surprising with sharpness of engagement, undoubtedly ravishing for the audience, and its perfectly worked through



expression. The occasional noises from the hall are distracting, but detract very little from the great value of this document. The recording of the speech made by Václav Talich to the young people at the concert where this *Serenade* in E flat was performed is another "newly discovered" valuable document that this useful edition brings us.

Bohuslav Vitek

František Ondříček
Legendary Violinist and Composer
Raff: Cavatina. J.S.Bach: Air.
Ondříček: The Bartered Bride,
Fantasia on a Theme op. 9, Scherzo
capriccioso op. 18, Rhapsodie
Boheme op. 21,
Ondříček / Smetana: Skočná op. 15.
Slavík: Concerto in A minor.

František Ondříček, Vojtěch Frait,
Alexander Plocek, Vladimír Polívka
– piano (Ondříček), Prague Radio
Orchestra, Otakar Pařík (Rhapsodie
Boheme), František Stupka (Concerto).
 Editors: Miroslav Vilímec, Eva Sedláková.
 Text: Cz. Eng. Recorded: before the 1st
 World War (recordings of F. Ondříček),
 1941. Released: 2007. TT: 59:02. AAD
 Stereo. 1 CD Jan Kubelik Society SJK-006.

What do you think of when you hear the name **František Ondříček** (1857–1922)? Perhaps just the dry fact that he was a fellow traveller in life with Jan Kubelik although a generation older, perhaps his unmistakable face with his mane of hair and attractive moustache, perhaps the story of how after seeing the remains of Paganini in 1893 he always carried a morbid talisman, a screw from Paganini's coffin, in his violin case... His is an almost mysterious legend because no one knows how he actually played. Of course this is not entirely true, since here we are reviewing a unique recording of his performance, but it is only a pale reflection of his art. Testimony to his qualities is to be found in his relatively few, but nonetheless good original works for violin, and in his pupils – the most important of whom is the main protagonist of the commemorative



album from the Jan Kubelik Society. The society has now managed to bring another project to fruition – a treat for collectors and experts. Finally we can recognise the validity of the claim in the history of music that Ondříček was a different type of violinist to the rather ascetic Joachim. Ondříček definitely had a juicy tone (see Raff and Bach), was not afraid of vibrato and must certainly at the peak of his career, the turn of the 19th/20th century, have radiated huge charisma. His pupil **Vojtěch Frait** (1894–1971), concert master of the Czech Radio orchestra, was also a brilliant violinist. He performs all the Ondříček pieces on his record. It is a pity that it probably wasn't possible to bring the masters to life more sensitively. The recordings from 1941, when recording technology was definitely no longer in its infancy, sound almost as if from the times of Emil Berliner (unfortunately this mainly relates to the *Fantasia on a Theme from the Bartered Bride*). When I had listened to the record several times, I regretted that it did not include a top contemporary recording of Ondříček's music at least as a symbolic counterweight (or continuation). It looks as if our virtuosos, orchestras, producers and recording companies have no interest in this music, despite its undoubted quality. (By the way, his *15 Artistic Etudes* are equal to the much hymned and ad nauseam performed Paganini *Capriccios*.) The end of the album belongs to the violinist **Alexandr Plocek** (1914–1982), a pupil of Otakar Ševčík's and highly rated in his time. Today he is mentioned in music history primarily as a co-founder of the pre-war Czech Trio and Prague Quartet. His solo ambitions were considerable, and justified by his talents, but they were not fulfilled on the international scene. Despite his own opulent cadenza his performance of Josef Slavík's concerto is excellent, entirely masterly (especially considering that in 1941 the benefits of cutting were still unknown), and the sound quality is the best on the whole CD. This Tribute to Ondříček will probably appeal only to the "elite" of violin fans, but anyone who buys it will have a valuable archival piece of Czech history in his collection. It is a pity that there was no time (or money?) to produce a better quality modern form using the original masters and so to give the whole album the unified imprint of the top technology of the first decade of the 21st century.

Luboš Stehlík

Antonín Dvořák
Serenade in E major for String
Orchestra, op. 22, Serenade for
Wind Instruments, op. 44
Josef Suk
Meditation on the St. Wenceslas
Chorale, op. 35a

Prague Chamber Philharmonic,
 Jakub Hruša.

Production: Petr Vít.

Text: Cz, Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: 3.-5. 7.
 2007. Released: 2007. TT: 60:56. DDD. 1
 CD Supraphon 3932-2.

I think it is no mistake to feel that this third **Jakub Hruša** recording with Supraphon has turned out to be the best. The first, of Dvořák's Waltzes, is debatable in terms of selection of music, while the second struggles in places with the necessity to get a bigger sound than is natural for the **Prague Chamber Philharmonic**. It is only with this third title that everything seems exactly as it should. Dvořák's *String Serenade* is an exceptionally appealing work in itself and many recordings of the 1990s rely simply on its popularity. The recording by the Suk Chamber Orchestra, for example, is a textbook example of a poor interpretation lacking any kind of concept, and so the mere fact that on this new recording the conductor has a clear idea of all the sound layers and tempos and the overall structure is a cause for rejoicing. The conventional Czech myth says that thinking the piece out in this way takes away from spontaneity and that Czech musicians often do not believe that one can play precisely and with immediacy at the same time. Jakub Hruša, however, offers a conception that links up the classicist and the romantic in Dvořák's serenade. It is classicist above all in the overall transparency of sound and the precise tracing of every part. It is Romantic in its expression and in the treatment of tempo, and in both the listener comes into his own. One of the most interesting features of the new recording is the natural, logical and yet imaginative treatment of tempo. The third movement, for example, starts at almost headlong speed, then slows down strikingly before the music broadens out a few bars later – before the end of the movement everything once again almost stands still, and

is then followed by a fast brilliant conclusion. In all the cantilena passages the romantic expression is underlined, but the individual structural and compositional detail is not neglected. I must say that as a contrast to this recording I shall enjoy listening to one of the romantics of the old school, headed by Kubelik, whose musical sensibility is about something else. But with a work so often recorded it is appealing to find that the young conductor does not in fact want to be different and claim an individual approach of his own at any price. At the same time let us add that Bělohlávek's recording, strongly classicising in approach and entirely exceptional in purity of sound and intonation, is indeed different enough... More than malicious tongues suggest when commenting on the similarity of the gestures of the two composers. The recording of the *Serenade for Wind Instruments* gives the impression of vibrant, brilliant and entirely relaxed music-making. And for the Prague Chamber Philharmonic wind section it is the best visiting card as far as sound and virtuosity is concerned. While in the recording of the string serenade you could have the sense that the rational element has the upper hand in some passages, in the wind serenade the feeling immediately vanishes. The two serenades are complemented by Suk's *Meditation on the St. Wenceslas Chorale*, where the heroic choral side has been marvellously brought out as well as the interior meditative aspect. The text in the booklet, where instead of analyses we find an interview with the conductor, full of clever insights, is also fresh and lively.

Jindřich Bálek

Josef Suk
Symphony in E major
Antonín Dvořák
In Nature's Realm, Carnival

Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK,
 Tomáš Netopil.

Production: Petr Vít. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger.,
 Fr. Recorded: live, October 2007, Smetana
 Hall, Prague. Released: 2008. TT: 69:36.
 DDD. 1 CD Supraphon 3941-2.

Tomáš Netopil's first record with Supraphon confirms all the good reviews and impressions of his concerts and raises



great expectations about where the talented conductor is heading – and strong wishes that he should work more often with our orchestras. I am delighted that the recording of the *Symphony in E major* by Josef Suk and the two symphonic poems by Antonín Dvořák should sound just good as the live concert at which they were made. And given that there was no more rehearsal time than usual, the result is almost incredibly good. This is only the second recording of the Suk symphony, which the composer wrote at twenty-five. On what was for a long time the only recording, of 1982, the fifty-two-year-old Václav Neumann plays Suk's symphonic prologue almost as if it were the *Epilogue*. It is not just that he uses rather slower tempos, but that his approach shows greater heavy-handedness, symphonic pathos or to put it another way more wrinkles, painful experience, age. It is only now with Netopil's recording that the listener realises what really suits this music. All the themes have a peculiar spark and elegance, the expression is lyrical and at the same time finely cultivated. Not that we can attribute the difference between the older and the new recording just to the difference in the age of the performers. Neumann has the advantage of a studio recording and the rather better sound of the Czech Philharmonic, if we consider the difference in overall terms – but all the same he pays little attention to details and relies on a monolithic symphonic flow. Even on this live recording, Netopil separates out the voices much more audibly, emphasises some places with a minor and precisely estimated change of tempo, and articulates the different tracts of the music lucidly, readably and with an eye to the overall structure. The early but still very carefully thought out score never becomes cumbersome here, but is lively and very convincing in terms of musicianship. We could hardly ask more of a recording debut. And how beautiful everything would sound if the orchestra was able to rehearse as long as necessary. What may be lacking in the quality of the sound itself is made up for here by the persuasiveness of musical conception. This can also be said about the Dvořák concert preludes, where the competition is incomparably greater. In the prelude *In Nature's Realm* everything starts from complete calm and gradually gathers way, while in *Carnival* the music begins in an extremely fast tempo and the contrast of the

middle section is emphasized. According to a joke that one could apply to all our orchestras, the **Prague Symphony Orchestra** could play brilliantly if it's an important matter, but it's never been important yet. And so it's a pleasure to listen to a new recording in which it's important from the very first bars.

Jindřich Bálek

Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga Three Quartets (D minor, A major, E flat major)

**The Stamic Quartet: Jindřich Pazdera,
Josef Kekula - violins,
Jan Pěruška - viola,
Vladimír Leixner - cello.**

Production: Josef Kekula, Tereza Kramplová. Text: Eng., Cz. Recorded: 3/2007, Czech Radio. Released: 2007. TT: 67:14. DDD. Stamic Quartet.

Music journalism and musicology today has honoured Arriaga (1806–1826) with the very ambitious epithet, "The Spanish Mozart". The reason would seem to be the shortness of his life. He died at the age of nineteen when studying at the conservatory in Paris of a combination of tuberculosis and overwork, but many of his twenty-nine works show that he had an extraordinary talent and it is tragic that he was not able to develop his gifts in mature form like Mozart or Mendelssohn. The string quartets that he wrote at seventeen (his first opus work was composed in 1817), are a remarkable mixture of genius (melody, clear pre-Romanticism), eclecticism (Rossini, Cherubini, Haydn, Mozart) and patriotism (the influence of Andalusian music). These works are rightly considered to be on the level of early Schubert. All three quartets need to be heard several times. On a first listening you may be bothered by what seems like a certain superficiality, and mashing up of good ideas by the addition of unnecessary notes. But on a deeper listening the splendour of this music emerges, its magical sentiment and melancholy, and sometimes unexpected harmonies. Unfortunately I only managed to find the recording by the Sine Nomine Quartet for purposes of comparison, and so can say

no more than that on this level the **Stamic Quartet's** interpretation is clearly the more interesting. The sound is balanced, and the recording will satisfy even the most exacting lover of quartet music.

This exceptional title is also special for being a tribute to the work of cellist **Vladimír Leixner**, who shortly after the recording fell seriously ill and died the same year. The project would certainly not have been realised without the support given by Arriaga's native city Bilbao, the Spanish Embassy, Czech Radio and a number of other sponsors. The only thing that worries me is distribution, since a special recording without a catalogue number and publisher in fact has no distributor, and given the unusual and excellent character of the recording it would be a pity if the Stamic Quartet were to sell it only at its concerts and if it were unable to compete with other recordings.

Luboš Stehlík