



Václav Luks

Contemporary music ensembles

Marko Ivanović

St. Wenceslas cult in music



Dear Readers,

among the articles in this issue you will find the next instalment of our series giving an overview of Czech chamber ensembles and orchestras. This time Wanda Dobrovská's article focuses on ensembles specialising in contemporary music. One of the past articles in the series (see CMQ 2/08) was on ensembles devoted to performing early music, and so the title interview with one of the leading Czech figures in this field, Václav Luks, is in its way a sequel too.

In the last issue we included an article about Martinů's work, Memorial to Lidice. The text touched on the phenomenon of St. Wenceslas in the Czech music tradition, and so we decided to return to this interesting theme and consider it in the depth that it deserves. An article by Viktor Velek, a musicologist who specialises in the subject, deals not only with the famous St. Wenceslas Chorale itself, but also with the way that the perception and cult of St. Wenceslas has changed over the centuries, often in quite unexpected directions.

With seasons greetings, and looking forward to our next meeting when the first issue of 2009 comes out.

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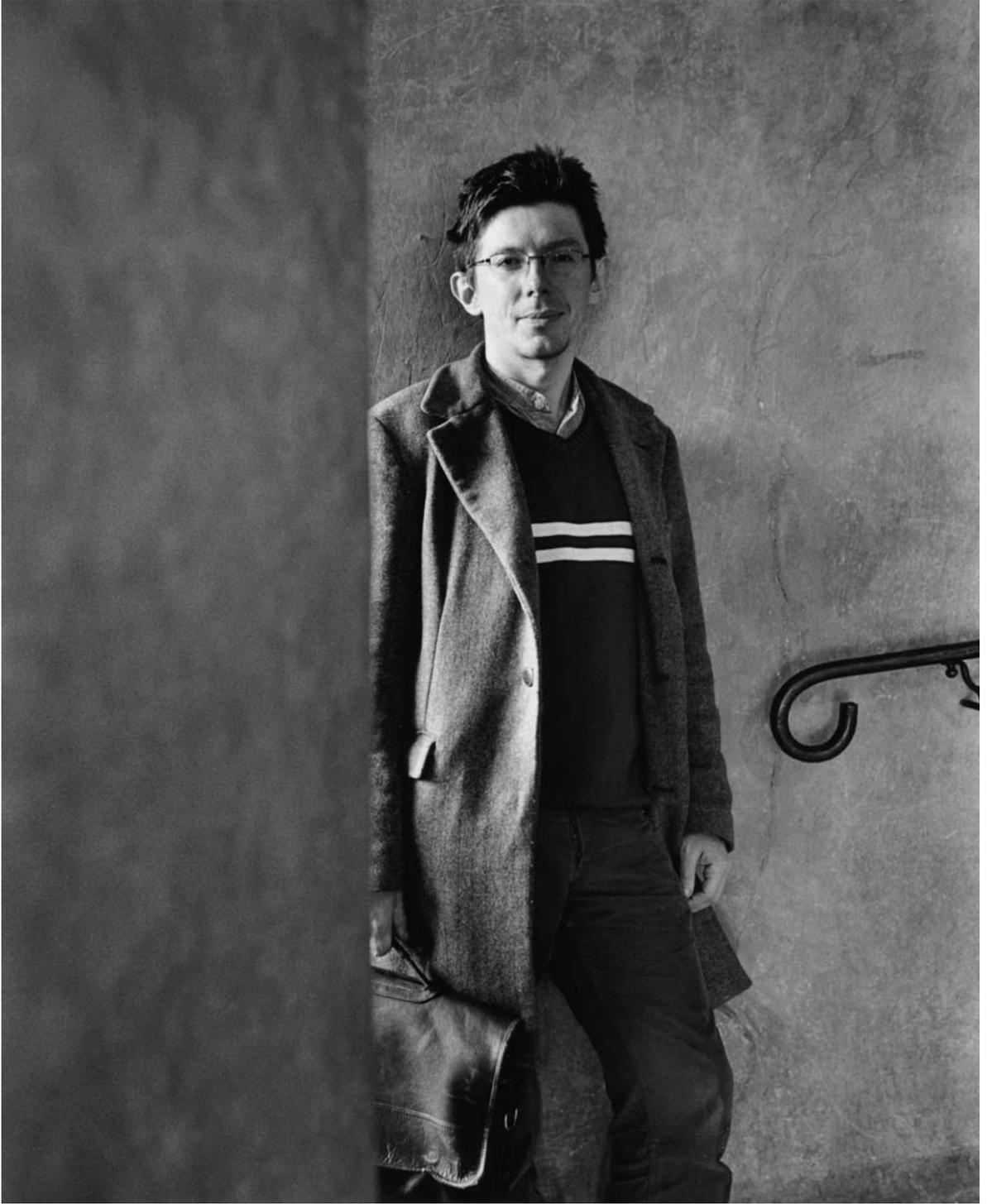


PHOTO: BERNARD LESAING

VÁCLAV LUKS: I DON'T WANT TO MAKE COMPROMISES

Back when historically authentic interpretation was still in its infancy in the Czech Republic, Václav Luks (born 1970) hitch-hiked to Switzerland to take the admission exams for the renowned Schola cantorum Basiliensis. Since then quite a few years have passed and today we find the harpsichordist, horn player and conductor in the middle of a period of hectic activity – intensively rehearsing and performing with his ensembles, the Collegium vocale 1704 and the Collegium 1704 Orchestra, which he founded in 1991 and which he has raised to the ranks of top European ensembles in the field. Until the end of the year he will be going back and forth on a “musical bridge” between Prague and Dresden – which is a concert series taking place in parallel in both cities. Last year he recorded an award-winning CD of Zelenka’s *Missa votiva* for the French label, with which the Collegium has an exclusive contract. The ensemble is now also deep in preparations for a production of Händel’s opera *Rinaldo*. The opera is being staged in co-production with the National Theatre in Prague, the French opera houses in Caen and Rennes and the Grand Theatre de Luxembourg. It will be premiered on the 4th of April 2009.

How long have you been involved with the early music scene?

From the beginning of the 1990s, when I was still a student at the Plzeň Conservatory. It was only after my return from Basle, where I studied harpsichord and figured bass with Jörg-Andreas Bötticher and Jesper B. Christensen, though, that I became intensively involved in the field here. Everything then took off in a really big way in 2005, when our big project BACH – PRAGUE – 2005 drew a lot of attention.

Do you think that Czech ensembles are today comparable with other European ensembles despite the fact that there was an information vacuum about historically authentic performance for so long here?

That’s more a question for organisers and producers, because the best Czech musicians guest perform in European ensembles and are as good as the

musicians abroad, but with most of the Czech organisers they don't get the same terms as when they play under the name of a foreign ensemble. In the west I can't complain: serious organisers aren't interested in whether we are local or from somewhere else. Maybe in some respects we are already better than some famous foreign groups. The problem is just that in this country we are always seen as people who are "catching up" with something, and for the locals here to acknowledge that we're good we first have to make a name for ourselves abroad.

You've recently provided the public a very strong argument in this context. Your recording of Zelenka's Missa votiva for the French label Zig-Zag Territoires was among the ten best-selling classical CDs in France, and won the Mezzo Channel's Coup de coeur...

We didn't expect success like that. It's usually the rule that to be a commercial success a recording needs a composer, or group or soloist with a famous name. If an unknown ensemble records the Four Seasons or Cecilia Bartoli records unknown arias they can look forward to success. But we didn't meet either criterion. Although he is the only 18th-century Czech composer who has some kind of international reputation, Zelenka is hardly comparable in popularity to Vivadi, and we are not an ensemble with a name that can compete in France with the French groups like Les Arts Florissants or Les Musiciens du Louvre. But now our CD is selling better than theirs, which is a big surprise. On the German market we are the only French title in the first twenty.

Might that also be because the Germans see Zelenka as one of their own composers?

Definitely, and another reason is the strong base of choral groups, which are at a high level in Germany. Most of them have already encountered Zelenka, and when a new recording of his music comes on the market it finds a large public.

Had the Missa votiva ever been recorded before?

Yes, in Germany 15 years ago, but it's not very impressive... it was just an average recording in its time, and even back then people were playing Baroque music differently than on that recording...

How much time do you devote to searching in the archives and how much do you rely on what has already been published or recorded?

Our idea is clear. We know we can't try to break through in Germany with Bach and in France with Charpentier, and so we try to play Czech repertoire. Our recording company Zig-Zag Territoires is also trying to create a distinctive "face" for us as performers of music by Czech composers. And Zelenka is "in" on the international scene right now. We have signed a contract for a minimum of one CD annually and our next titles will be Zelenkian too. There is still enormous scope for discoveries, and so it's not as if we're just banking on one name, borrowing scores and playing. The older editions of Zelenka's pieces are not reliable, and so we're creating our own editions, which are based on the sources in the Saxon Land Library in Dresden. Fortunately, this is a top-level institution in its resources and readiness to co-operate. The great majority of all Zelenka sources are to be found there.



PHOTO: LUBEK SOJKA

We are working with the Czech Radio publishing house too, and I think this kind of collaboration has a great future in terms of a very promising and meaningful link-up between publishing note material, concerts and recordings. The idea is that a note edition would be produced, the programme would be rehearsed, recorded and performed live, the concerts would act as promotion for the CDs and the CDs would be an advertisement for the new title. This is probably the way the field of early music has to go, because independent recording of CDs is getting ever more difficult and hard to finance. There's a need to join forces.

*Was this the way that you recorded the *Missa votiva* at the festival in Sablé?*

The *Missa votiva* is actually a live recording. The plan was to record the concert and then the next day do extra recording for corrections. Only it turned out that the acoustics of the church were altered so much by the absence of people that only a bit from the concert could be used. So we more or less completely recorded the whole piece, more than an hour long, the next day – the conditions were tough, and the instrumentalists and singers had to grin and bear it.

Perhaps you could say some more about the composer Jan Dismas Zelenka. What is it about his music that attracts you?

The fact that Zelenka's life is shrouded in mystery is an attraction in itself. We know nothing about his youth – only that he changed his Christian name Lukáš [Luke] – the name of the evangelist – to Dismas, the name of the thief crucified at the side of Christ. Did he perhaps suffer from a sense of guilt? We know that he probably owed his initial musical education to his patron the Freiherr Hartig, around 1710. He was thirty at the time, and in his day it was extremely unusual



for anyone to start studying music at so advanced an age. He wasn't a virtuoso on any solo instrument, he played the double bass and he spent most of his life at the court of the Elector of Saxony in Dresden. His music is unusual and distinctive like his odd career. To me he seems like a composer who didn't quite belong to his time - with his individual almost romantic profile and the way his music has dimensions that are way ahead of his contemporaries. For example in 1720 he wrote a series of trio sonatas for 2 oboes, bassoon and continuo - they are pieces that demolish all the boundaries that existed in this genre - in terms of difficulty, complexity, dimension etc. - until Bach's *Musical Offering* turned up. His music is original, and you recognise it as Zelenka's after a mere three bars. That's even true of his early pieces. His first known piece - *Via Laureata* (the music has not survived), was written as a commission from the Prague Jesuits in 1704 - which is why that date appears in the name of our ensemble.

So have no personal documents associated with him survived?

We don't even have a portrait of him. The one that is often claimed to be his likeness is just the detail of a violon player from an engraving of a ceremony at the court of Augustus II. There is no personal correspondence either - all that has survived are letters in which he asks for a pay increase, the grant of a title and suchlike. He probably taught, but we know nothing about his pupils. It seems as if he was ashamed of teaching. You might deduce that he lived rather on the margins of society, but this is contradicted by the recent find of a panegyric poem written by the forgotten writer Johanan G. Kittel on the Dresden Orchestra, which was considered the best in Europe in its time. The poem devotes many lines to the court capellmeister Hasse, and then to Habenstreit, a player on the pantaleon or dulcimer, which was a very fashionable instrument in the period. There follow a number of verses devoted to Zelenka, in which Kittel praises his profundity, taste and counterpoint and



speaks of his world fame. At the end there is a fine piece of wordplay: “Keep, as is worthy of thy name, thy green fame” (with the explanatory note that “Zelenka heisst auf Deutsch grün”).

Three men with the title “Kirchencompositeur” appear on a list of employees of the Dresden court. In first place is Zelenka, in second place Tobias Butz, and in third place Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach’s title was merely honorary, however. Like Zelenka he applied for the post of capellmeister but received only a “consolation prize” title. It was Johan Adolf Hasse who got the job. I can’t help wondering how Bach’s music would have turned out if he had been given the position, since he would have had to write operas!

Did Zelenka ever meet Bach?

I’m sure he did. Bach visited Dresden, played the organ there, and dedicated his famous variations to his pupil Goldberg in the service of the diplomat Karl von Keyserlingk. It was there that his celebrated duel with the Frenchman Louis-Claude Marchand took place. His son Wilhelm Friedemann worked in Dresden – and was probably one of Zelenka’s pupils. It would be strange if he’d never met J.S.Bach. What is more, W.F.Bach was Zelenka’s neighbour, living across the street from him. We know that Bach owned a copy of Zelenka’s Magnificat and many other manuscripts from Dresden.

Obviously Bach is a very frequent part of repertoire elsewhere than in Germany. But your ensemble was the first to present the Matthew Passion and the Mass in B Minor in Prague after a very long gap. Are you planning more Bach concerts?

We regularly play Bach concerts. Just now we’ll be playing the *Christmas Oratorio* at the Bratislava Music Festival, and again at the very end of the year in Prague and in Dresden. The *St. John Passion* is waiting for us at the beginning of next year and the *Mass in B Minor* again at the end of the year.

You are now working mostly as a conductor and organiser. Do you have any time left for the harpsichord?

I do, and from next year I want to do more chamber projects where I can take part as a harpsichordist. I am also planning a recital on two keyboard instruments with Monika Knoblochová, but that will be more a salon-style event.

So does that mean you are going as far as somewhere at the beginning of the 19th century?

Somewhere around Schubert is where I stop as a performer. Historically later music needs another performer and different equipment. I don't think such "excursions" would be a good thing. A musician best understands the music he encounters on a daily basis – otherwise the result could be as confused as when an orchestra that mainly plays Late Romanticism embarks on Bach.

But Baroque performance isn't a matter of a set of fixed, unchanging rules...

The very worst thing that can happen is when someone puts on a recording and says, "My God, but that's historically authentic!" I don't like pigeon-holing styles into "romantic" and "authentic" performance. Many performances from the 1930s are in my view closer to the composer's idea than what was produced by the early music scene in the 1990s. In the last decades development was so headlong in all aspects that we got too far away from our roots in music. It's not a matter of trying to play by rules but of trying to understand the music – then we have a vast amount of space for interpreting the music in a way that makes it work. For example in Berlin I heard Bach's *Mass in B Minor* conducted by Hans-Christoph Radermann, the director of the RIAS Kammerchor, and realised that his interpretation was actually romantic, even though he was working with a chamber choir and ensemble of historical instruments. Tempos, rhetoric gestures, structuring – many things were just as they had been done decades before. What you hear there is simply the German tradition. But because he understands Bach's music and brings his concept a hundred percent to life, it is excellent. I would do it quite differently, but I acknowledge that it's good. Unlike Karajan's Bach recordings where you can hear that he didn't understand Bach's music.

You've already touched on the issue, but what does an early music ensemble in this country need in terms of conditions in order to be able to function?

Problems of sheer material survival are on the agenda day in and day out, but no ensemble either here or abroad is spared that. I can't complain, since we get funding from the Prague City Authority and from the Ministry of Culture. It's as much as can be expected for a minority genre inside a minority genre. Sometimes economic reality is very tough indeed but I don't want to make compromises at the expense of quality. That is why we put money from the profitable foreign projects into the loss-making ones. It's not a sustainable strategy in the long term, since we can't let concert organisers get used to us subsidising their events. We will only appear with work of a quality that we're



willing to sign our name under, even at the cost of limiting the number of our concerts in this country. Fortunately we're in a situation where the calendar is filling up and we won't have any dearth of work in the coming years. My goal isn't to get rich through music, to do music like a business - which is certainly possible - but I want to make quality music and not to be waking up in the middle of the night all the time for fear of debts.

It looks as though you've found a home from home in Dresden. What is the aim of your "Musical Bridge"?

In Dresden we have a wonderful public and we also play a repertoire associated with the city. There are several early music ensembles and choirs working there and we certainly aren't trying to compete with them. Quite the opposite! I think it would be interesting to expand the series and invite the Dresden ensembles to Prague to give reality to the symbol of the bridge. That is our long-term aim.

You've introduced an unusual enlivening element at your Prague concerts - you invite people from outside the music world to take part in discussion.

The intimate atmosphere of St. Lawrence's Church is a real invitation to dialogue. I was inspired by the former factory in Berlin where the Akademie für alte Musik rehearses and organises a similar kind of production - the concert-interview. I wanted to enliven the evenings - when the guest has something interesting to say it gives the audience food for thought and maybe also attracts a different sort of public. I hope it will liven up a little. In Germany people are used to discussing things and joining in debate, but with any luck people in this country will become more confident and forthcoming too.



PHOTO: XENIA LÖFFLER

What is in store for you in the coming months?

A great deal, so just at random... The premiere of Händel's *Rinaldo* will be at the beginning of April, and in the next season the production will be staged in Caen, Rennes and Luxemburg. We shall be appearing at festivals - the Prague Spring, Le Chaise Dieu, Sablé, Sully et Loiret and other places in France. We shall be recording a new CD for Zig-Zag Territoires - Zelenka's oratorio *I Penitenti al Sepolcro del Redentore*. We are the resident ensemble at the St. Wenceslas Festival in Ostrava and next year we shall be presenting Haydn's *Creation* there.

Václav Luks

(born in 1970 in Rakovník) is one of our most prominent musicians in the field of early music. He is said to be the best continuo player in the Czech Republic, and is also an excellent performer on the natural French horn. A graduate of the Plzeň Conservatory and the Schola Cantorum in Basle (in harpsichord), he directs the Collegium 1704 Ensemble, was a co-founder of the Swiss brass ensemble Amphion, and regularly appears with the Akademie für Alte Musik in Berlin and the La Cetra orchestra in Basle. For a time he taught figured bass play at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, and continuo and chamber music at the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Hochschule in Leipzig, and has also been a leader of courses in early music at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno. His artistic career has reflected his adventurous spirit, evident for example in his ambitious project BACH - PRAGUE - 2005 involving performance of the great Bach works: the St. Matthew and St. John Passions, the Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio. His discography includes for example recordings of the works of Henrico (Henrik) Albicastro (Pan Classic), Jan Dismas Zelenka (Supraphon) and Jiří Antonín Benda (Arta), which have won critics' awards at home and abroad. Since 2007 the ensemble Collegium 1704 has been recording exclusively for the French label Zig-Zag Territoires. In addition to his concert activities Václav Luks engages intensively in the study of historical music sources for Bohemia, Austria and Germany, cultural links in Central Europe and sources of figured bass play.



**WHO PLAYS CONTEMPORARY
MUSIC IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC?**

PHOTO: EVA KESSLOVÁ

Berg Chamber Orchestra

For music to be “contemporary” it is not enough for it to have been written recently; it also has to express something of the pulsing cultural spirit of its time. At first sight of the score, or first listening, it has to be clear that this is music that could not have been written at any time but now – of course with some latitude allowed for impulses coming from the last decade, or even decades, where these have remained or re-emerged as an active inspirational element in music. On that first listen, the instruments used, the sound material, the compositional technique, are all audible. But often it is only on a second listening that that the specific way of thinking essential for the “contemporary” character of contemporary music, can be heard. As in the case of historically authentic interpretation of early music, so too for performance of new music, specialised ensembles have proved their worth, and in their very existence and profile these ensembles tell us much about the situation of contemporary music in the music-culture community.

In the Czech Republic there are at present around ten chamber ensembles that have chosen contemporary music as the focus of their professional life. Some are “occasional” groups, others permanent, but at the centre of each one of them we typically find a strong and determined person – a composer or musician – who has acted as a magnet for kindred souls. Here we shall look at the permanent groups.

MoEns was formed in 1995 – under the name Mondschein Ensemble – with the aim of bringing to Czech musical life a stable music ensemble that would systematically engage in the professional performance of contemporary music. In its way it cleared the path for other groups founded later, even if these were orientated to different repertoires and many of them failed to put down lasting roots. In its time MoEns was venturing on virgin territory, because the wider public in the Czech Republic had no more than a fragmentary knowledge of international contemporary clas-

Contemporary music in the Czech Republic

A look at the history of performance

Viktor Pantůček

After 1948 the Czech Republic, already weakened by the experience of occupation and war, faced another fateful upheaval as the whole cultural and social system came under the control of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and its political masters in the Soviet Union. From as early as March 1948 inconvenient people were being pushed out of cultural life to be replaced by reliable artists loyal to communist ideology. As a result, all-powerful political organs could be gradually built up to dominate social, cultural and artistic life. Not only were Unions established for the individual branches of the arts, but the cultural institutions and bodies were politically run by reliable cadres. The whole world of the arts was gradually compelled to adopt the idea of “socialist realism” and anyone who did not agree with it was banned from appearing publicly.



MoEns

Vulgarised Smetanian Romanticism became the basis for approved musical models, and in music the “contemporary” was talked about only in the context of “party consciousness”, “people’s art”, “engagement” and “comprehensibility”. Obviously this was a hostile environment for contemporary music, let alone its performers. Most of the inter-war ensembles ceased to exist. New ensembles were mainly workers’ choirs, orchestras for people’s and variety music, and ensembles designed to generate average and very often sub-average traditionalist music in the spirit of socialist realist principles. Some string quartets (the Novák, Ostrava, Janáček) and the **Czech Nonet**, which had an unbroken tradition of promoting contemporary music since its founding in 1924, were among the few exceptions.

A relaxation in totalitarian social control with important effects in the arts including music did not come until the later 1950s, following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR and Khrushchev’s revelation of Stalin’s crimes. Among artists and likeminded composers we can initially see spontaneous projects, rather in the spirit of practical jokes, such as the

sical music, and so the ensemble focused on the presentation of the fundamental works of the “classics” of the post-war modern movement in music and its successors and the contemporary composers whose music was usually played at international contemporary music festivals, and on encouraging new work by Czech composers, especially those of the 1960s and 70s generation. In its long-term concert projects it presented music by M. Kagel, S. Reich, G. Kurtág and L. Andriessen, for example, and current trends (the New Complexity movement) or the new music of selected regions (Lithuania, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Germany). Over the years MoEns has premiered several dozen new works, mainly by Czech composers. It regularly appears at contemporary music festivals in the Czech Republic (The Exposition of New Music, New Music Marathon), and has performed at international festivals in Germany, Austria, England, Canada etc. It has recorded composer profile CDs of the music of Peter Graham and Miroslav Pudlák and the anthology *The End of the 20th Century in Czech Music*. The moving spirit of the ensemble is the composer and conductor Miroslav Pudlák (b. 1961), who together with the clarinetist Kamil Doležal, violinist David Danel, cellist Milada Gajdová and composer and pianist Hanuš Bartoň forms the core of the group. On the Czech music scene MoEns has the reputation of a solid, trustworthy group that does excellent work for contemporary music. Its name – MoEns – is a shortening of the original name of the group, which the composer Peter Graham used as the title for a piece written as a commission for the ensemble.

www.musica.cz/moens

The **Berg Chamber Orchestra** is the same age as MoEns but took rather longer to establish a reputation with the public. It was formed by the conductor Peter Vrábel (b. 1969), who has remained its artistic director to this day. The orchestra has developed its profile on the basis of a post-modern vision of the tolerant co-existence of contemporary and classical music, and so its concert programmes combine works by classical and romantic composers and composers from the beginning of the 20th century alongside recent and entirely new pieces. Its concerts are often multimedia in conception, involving elements of movement or video, and are held in a whole range of classical and alternative venues. It had a great success, for example with concerts in the historical Prague water purification plant, today an eco-technical museum. The orchestra also appears at jazz festivals, plays for theatre productions and records film music. Lively contact with the public is an intrinsic part of its image. For each season it prepares around ten concerts, and an innovation in its last season was the regular presentation at every concert of one new piece by a young Czech composer and at the end of the season a competition for the most successful piece premiered by the Berg Chamber Orchestra. This project was useful as well as successful and the orchestra will be repeating it in the current season.

www.berg.cz

The ensemble **Konvergence** was formed by a group of like-minded composers of the same generation led by Ondřej Štochl (b. 1975) in 2002. The group's aim is similar to that of MoEns – to present works by young Czech and international

formation of the “Šmidří Brass Band” for events put on by the Šmidrové art group, and then composers' private experiments with tape and aleatoric music. And eventually, already at the beginning of the 1960s, the emergence of the first ensembles designed to present absolutely contemporary new work.

One of the first impulses was the formation of the **Chamber Harmony** under the direction of conductor Libor Pešek, which from 1960 included not only 20th-century classics but also the premieres of pieces by Czech composers with contemporary views, above all Jan Klusák, in its concerts at the Theatre on the Balustrade. Thanks to its second violin, Dušan Pandula the Novák Quartet too became ever more orientated to new music. In 1959 in Brno the bass clarinetist Josef Horák was the prime mover behind the founding of Musica Nova ensemble at Brno University, which presented works of the “Darmstadt” school in its repertoire, while later, in 1963, the **Studio of Composers** ensemble was founded under the direction of conductor Radim Hanousek. In Bratislava the violinist and composer Ladislav Kupkovič co-founded the ensemble



Berg Chamber Orchestra



Konvergence

composers plus music by important 20th-century composers whose music is still relatively unfamiliar to Czech audiences. It shares with the Berg Orchestra a strong interest in cultivating feedback from the public. Konvergence plans its concerts with exceptional care to ensure that they are musically unified in spirit; drawing up the programme for a concert is always entrusted to just one of the members of the group so that it will reflect his or her distinctive individual viewpoint. The ensemble comprises two violins, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, piano and when necessary it is joined by one or more of its stable circle of guest performers. Each year it puts on its own concert series of around eight concerts, and it has also performed at festivals of contemporary music in the Czech Republic (The Exposition of New Music, Forfest, Prague premieres) and abroad (Germany, Slovakia). Since its founding it has undergone several changes in personnel, and currently its core composers apart from Ondřej Štochl are Tomáš Pálka, Michaela Plachká, Marie Sommerová, Pavol Rinowski and Jan Rybář. The ensemble has published a profile CD presenting pieces by members-composers and also works by Toru Takemitsu and Kaaja Saariaho – composers whom, together with Morton Feldman, Jonathan Harvey, Gérard Grisey and others the group regards as major models. In 2009, Konvergence will be performing for example at the Prague Spring International Festival.
<http://konvergence.org/index.html>

The **Ostravská Banda** ensemble was formed in 2005 as the ensemble-in-residence for the biennale Ostrava Days of New Music – a festival founded in Ostrava

Hudba dneška [Music of Today] (1963). After Josef Horák's moved to Prague he helped to form the ensemble **Sonatori di Praga** (1963) and the world famous **Due Boemi di Praga** (1963).

For the development of a more experimentally orientated branch of contemporary music the Prague-based Musica Viva Pragensis ensemble (see also CMQ 1/08) was to play a fundamental role. It was founded by the flautist and composer Petr Kotík, who together with the composers Vladimír Šrámek and Jan Rychlík managed to get the support of some professors at the Prague Conservatory for the new ensemble. Its first concert took place on the 20th of June 1961, but it was from 1962 that its most important activities were to date. The original core of the ensemble consisted of Petr Kotík, the bassoonist and composer Rudolf Komorous, the pianist Arnošt Wilde, the violinist Bohuslav Purgr and the clarinetist Milan Kostohryz. Other names associated with this pioneering ensemble include the composer Zbyněk Vostřák, from 1963 its artistic director and conductor, and then the composer Marek Kopelent, who took over



Konvergence

by the composer, conductor and flautist Petr Kotík (b. 1942), who is also the ensemble's artistic director. Zsolt Nagy, Roland Kluttig and Peter Rundel have been guest conductors. The ensemble consists of 23 musicians from a range of different countries who come together on ad hoc basis - for the biennale or concert tours, but who work with great commitment and intensity. With the foundation of the festival and ensemble Czech-American Petr Kotík has imported a different style of work into Czech music culture. He takes as members of the Ostravská Banda only top musicians who, *"may perhaps turn up two days after rehearsals have started, but unlike average players who come to every rehearsal but have their limits, with these players you can do things that you could never achieve with average musicians."* The Ostravská Banda has appeared in France, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, the Netherlands and the USA, and played at the Prague Premieres contemporary music festival and the Prague Spring international music festival. The core of the Ostravská Banda repertoire derives from Petr Kotík's own background - Ameri-

leadership of the ensemble after Petr Kotík left in 1965. Kotík broke with the ensemble after a split provoked by the performance of his *Music for Three* at the Warsaw Autumn Festival and critical reaction in 1964, and in 1967 he founded his own ensemble **QUAX** with Jiří Stivín, Jan Hynčica and Václav Zahradník. This was a short-lived ensemble that ended when Kotík emigrated after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968. Most of the other ensembles shared the same fate, for not only Kotík but also Rudolf Komorous, Dušan Pandula, Ladislav Kupkovič, Peter Kolman and many others chose emigration as the only way out of an unacceptable situation.

With the rise of Gustav Husák to the position of general secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party at the beginning of the 1970s, the clampdown of the 1950s essentially started again. But some of the ensembles were this time determined not to be silenced so easily, and survived as just about tolerated on the basis of their reputation from the 1960s right up to the Velvet Revolution of 1989. For the whole period



Ostravská Banda

can modernism in music from the circle of John Cage and his successors – but overall it is far wider, including many works of the European post-war avant-garde and pieces by Czech composers.

www.newmusicostrava.cz

Since 1994 a new orchestra – the **Prague Philharmonia** – has been active on the Czech music scene. It was founded by Jiří Bělohlávek as an orchestra of classical type, energised by the youth of its members. As time went by, however – and it didn't take very long – the Prague Philharmonia started to include in its programmes 20th-century and even 21st-century music accessible in terms of its instrumental combination. When Michel Swierczewski (b. 1955) became the orchestra's chief guest conductor, he introduced the subscription series *The Beauty of Today* (*Le bel d'aujourd'hui*), devoted to music of the 20th and 21st centuries. By coincidence at just the same time as Petr Kotík embarked on a similar kind of project in Ostrava, Michel Swierczewski decided to try and use the Prague Philharmonia to create a centre of contemporary music in Prague that would not just educate and acclimatise audiences but would be a magnet for students of music and musicians and visual artists and people in other branches of the arts. The series took off (this year it is in its fifth season) and although Michel Swierczewski no longer has a permanent engagement with the orchestra, he continues to work with it and this year came up with another idea to add to *The Beauty of Today*. This is a new

of “normalisation” as the twenty years before the fall of communist was called, the existence of an alternative, **underground culture** was a characteristic of Czechoslovak society. In music this culture was expressed mainly in experimental rock, which in a sense took over the role that would in normal circumstances have been played by contemporary classical music – it became a space for experiment and an area of relative freedom for creative musicians with a wide range of different aesthetic orientations.

In the 1980s there was once again a gradual thaw, the result of the changing situation in Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union itself. This meant that new trends could once again begin to spread into the former Czechoslovakia and a number of bands emerged from illegality and took on a semi-official status. The mid-1980s also saw the formation of new ensembles that have continued to play a unique role in the Czech contemporary music scene right up to the present day. In 1983 composers Miroslav Pudlák and Martin Smolka together with the composer Petr Kofroň formed the **Agon Ensemble**. From the start it focused on production



ensemble named **Prague Modern** (with Michel Swierczewski as artistic director) – it is a group that it is too young for us to attempt any assessment as yet (its first concert was on the 30th of September 2008), but it certainly deserves all our best wishes for future success. Prague Modern is taking part on the Beauty of Today subscription concert series and at the same time – in collaboration with the music faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts – it is presenting a separate chamber concert series with a different programme involving an emphasis

on young Czech composers whose works it will perform. The core of the ensemble consists of musicians from the Prague Philharmonia and their guests.

www.pkf.cz

The **Fama Quartet** is another ensemble hatched from the Prague Philharmonia. It was founded in 2005 by the violinist David Danel (b. 1974), who also plays in the MoEns ensemble and is a member of the Ostravská Banda ensemble. In the 20th century the Czech Republic was often known as

of contemporary music, above all music connected with the “New Music” movement of the 1960s. It has played an important part in promoting Czech music, with a repertoire that includes pieces by composers actually involved with Agon, such as M. Kopelent, J. Klusák, J. Adamík, P. Graham, and M. Šimáček, but also forgotten pieces by Z. Vostřák, R. Komorous, or Josef Berg. Since the start of the 1990s the ensemble has presented important works of the world avant-garde in its concerts and concert series (from early twelve-tone, to microtonal music, to pieces by John Cage or Iannis Xenakis), the work of composers orientated to rock or jazz, and also experimental projects (Graphic scores and concepts). American minimalism also has an important position in the ensemble’s repertoire. Recently Agon has almost entirely shifted its focus to collaboration with rock groups (e.g. The Plastic People of the Universe).

In 1985 two students of composition at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno – Zdeněk Plachý and Ivo Medek – formed the ensemble **Art Inkognito**, which mainly presented the works of Brno composers

a quartet superpower – a reputation that it gained thanks to a number of top quartets whose main repertoire, however, was classical quartet music. By contrast the Fama Quartet concentrates on the quartet repertoire of the 20th century and up to the present. It has been appearing in the concert series of the Prague Philharmonia including the Beauty of Today series, and was the first Czech Quartet to present Karel Husa's *String Quartet No. 4 "Poems"*. In the Czech Republic it has performed at festivals organised by domestic associations of composers, at the Contempuls festival and has made guest appearances in the Essen Philharmonic YOUrope Together project and a festival of classical music in Afyon in Turkey. Currently it is engaged in the project *A Musical Bestiary* – which includes commissioning of new pieces inspired by J. L. Borges.

It usually takes a new ensemble some time to find its own identity and the kind of recognised place in its own cultural environment that makes it a group to be reckoned with among the organisers of concert programmes and a group whose every new project is a signal to people tuned to the same or similar interests that – hey, something interesting is in the air! MoEns, the Berg Chamber Orchestra and Konvergence all now have behind them long years of hard work testing out and formulating their visions in various different arenas of musical practice – at concerts and in the studio. The packed halls at concerts of the Berg Chamber Orchestra shows that the ensemble already has its own faithful audience that follows it wherever it goes – literally, in fact, because the Berg Chamber Orchestra moves from concert hall to concert hall



PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER

during the season. This is an integral part of its identity, a strategy that has proved its worth and has helped to forge bonds with the public. It takes the ensemble from the Hall of the Czech National Bank to the Kampa Museum of Modern Art, from a synagogue to a former factory, and of course the various classical concert halls. Konvergence, whose venues are typically more intimate, has found “its” platform in the charming Chapel of St. Lawrence in the historical centre of Prague – it is a deconsecrated chapel that is the club concert hall of the Prague Spring International Music Festival. Not far from here is the music faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts, which has two concert halls where MoEns and the new Prague Modern and Fama Quartet ensembles often hold their concerts. It can always be said that contemporary (classical) music deserves to be played more often and more performers should be specialising in it. Nonetheless, the fact is that in the Czech Republic contemporary music is doing – quite – well.

(Daniel Forró, Zdeněk Plachý, Ivo Medek, Peter Graham), but also some international contemporary music. Originally an eleven-member orchestra comprising guitar, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, two percussionist and vocals, it became ever smaller. At its last concert in 1990 the programme consisted primarily of pieces for percussion, one composition for solo piano and one for the instruments together. This was one of the reasons why the percussion section of Art Inkognito then broke away from the ensemble, with Dan Dlouhý and Adam Kubíček, together with Josef Bláha and Martin Opršal founding the **DAMA-DAMA Central European Percussion Ensemble**. This ensemble specialises in the works of 20th-century world composers, and also Brno composers including some of the performers themselves. The original Art Inkognito ensemble was dissolved and reformed as the ensemble **Ars Incognita**, which remains successful to this day. In 2000 the **Ensemble Mariján** for improvised music was formed, again with the involvement of the composer Ivo Medek, in cooperation with Jan Kavan and Markéta Dvořáková.

MUSICA NOVA 2008

November 2008 saw the 17th year of the international electro-acoustic music (EA) competition MUSICA NOVA. It attracted 76 entries from 23 countries in its two categories: pure EA (Category A) and the combination of a live element with EA (Category B). Multimedia compositions are excluded from the competition because they are too varied in approach, technique and scope to be effectively compared. The competition concentrates on the artistically purely musical genre in which the artistic qualities of the music and technical know-how appear in concentrated form. No preference is given to any particular style.

The concert of winning pieces was held on the 12th of December in the presence of the winners - Elizabeth Anderson (USA, 1st Prize in Category A), Yota Kobayashi (Japan, 1st Prize in Category B) and Richard Müller (CR, 1st Prize in the Czech Round of the competition). The programme also included pieces by others who were placed or given special awards: Roderik de Man (Holland, *Hear, Hear!*), Kyong Mee Choi (Korea, as co-author with Timothy E. Johnson, USA - *Tense Strength*) in Category A, Michal Rataj (CR, *Silence Talking*) in Category B. The other finalists included Martin Bedard (Canada), Clara Maïda (France), Yutaka Makino (Japan), Dohi Moon (Korea), Fred Szymanski (USA) in Category A; Takuto Fukuda (Japan), Kyong Mee Choi (Korea), Marie Samuelsson (Sweden), Lissa Streich



(Germany) in Category B. In the Czech Round the others were Jiří Ospaník, who won the special prize for the youngest composer, Petr Pařízek and Michal Rataj.

The concert and competition was as usual organised by the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music with support from the Ministry of Culture, Prague City Authority and the Czech Music Fund and the OSA (copyright protection organization) Foundations. In Czech Music Quarterly we regularly report on the competition, and let us just add that the competition is not anonymous and the commentaries of the composers concerned are a valuable part of the event. This year we followed our usual custom of asking the winners about the advantages, pitfalls and prospects of the genre.

The Category A winner **Elizabeth Anderson** is an American living in Belgium, where she moved to continue her EA music studies. She then took her doctorate with the well-known Denise Smalley at the City University in London (her dissertation is published on www.ems-network.org). She has won a series of prizes in the USA, France, Belgium, Italy and Sweden. She won MUSICA NOVA with an octophonic piece entitled *Protopia*. Her main strategy in composition is the creation of spatial contrasts. In her lengthy answer to our question she emphasised the need for composers not to underestimate the time and the honesty required for a work to mature, even though the flexibility and user-friend-

liness of the technique may seem to make things easier for them: *“In the past, much time was needed to accomplish compositional tasks with analogue techniques, but this time allowed compositional ideas to be born and mature. Since sound material is now easily recorded, created, modified and superposed, the composer must resist the temptation to hurry through a piece, and thereby lose commitment to the creative process and all that it entails. (...) Acousmatic composition involves the creation of new sounds, and to construct a viable form for a piece takes its time and these compositional stages can hardly be compressed.”*



Elizabeth Anderson (left)
Yota Kobayashi (right)

The Category B winner **Yota Kobayashi** from Japan (born in 1980), was educated in Canada and at Simon Fraser University with the famous teacher in the field Barry Truax, and won with his composition for flute and EA Tensho. His views were similar to those of Elizabeth Anderson: *“...new technologies should not be confused with the fundamental requirement of knowledge and skills. For instance, with recent score program and a sampler, we can get an immediate audible feed back...In fact, I have seen many music students who tend to put notes intuitively rather than theoretically not being able to play keyboard. In this sense, such technology might be double-edged sword and a risk to those students who do not like to learn voice-leading, harmony, instrumentation etc. If they are used by sensible and knowledgeable composers and sound designers, new technologies would not risk our creativity but might allow us to go beyond the creative horizon.”*

Naturally, the best solution is intuition based on knowledge. We can agree that as more technical possibilities become available, a greater gap can open up between the broadly acceptable average work, which more people are achieving today because of the greater sophistication of the tools and musical “ready made” resources that the tools offer, and the top work of genius, which will also be a rare solitary “revelation”.

As Elizabeth Anderson also said in her answer, *“In the 21th centry, the only limits in acousmatic composition are those placed by composers on themselves.”*

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CONTEMPULS 2008

At last Prague has its own contemporary music festival worthy of its name! In the rather conservatively orientated cultural life of the city, an event of this kind has been conspicuous by its absence for years. But now, despite the financially enforced modesty of the new festival's publicity campaign, the audiences that it attracted have challenged all the tired old nostrums of concert organisers about "what people want". *People* have turned out to be much more full of curiosity and much more open-minded than all the self-appointed experts on their tastes liked to think. And the festival has also proved that good, enthusiastic performance can overcome every prejudice and successfully put across music of any kind.

Emanuele Torquati

The fact is that for years the Prague public has been confused and disorientated about contemporary music by the problematic way in which new Czech music has been presented, i.e. by a rather narrow and in many respects distorted picture of what “contemporary” music means. Of course, from time to time – but in fact very rarely – there have been excellent concerts by foreign musicians, but a genuine non-partisan festival, unburdened by the personal interests of one group of composers or another, has never before existed here.

The **CONTEMPULS Festival**, held over three days (9th, 21st and 22nd of November) has given the public a chance to compare various different currents in contemporary music and to hear works by composers who are never, or vanishingly rarely, heard on Czech podiums. A focus on composed music for conventional instruments also set the festival apart from the many events on the alternative scene that has a long tradition in this country and even today continues to provide a certain functional substitute for contemporary classical music.

The festival was organised by the Czech Music Information Centre. Its programme planners, Petr Bakla and Miroslav Pudlák, decided to stress music from abroad and try to give the local audience a taste of world standards rather than offer the often expected promotion of domestic music. Behind this decision was their conviction that “the best thing for Czech music is to be included in a festival of international scope”, and that what Czech music needs most of all for its development is the confrontation with world trends that is criminally neglected in concert life and indeed in the whole of our musical education system. By the way –



musikFabrik



Tomáš Ondrůšek

do any of our famous concert musicians and renowned music teachers take any systematic interest in the world repertoire?

While in other fields a situation like this one would be unthinkable (imagine a department of physics that ends the course with Newton!), in music almost no one in so-called “professional circles” bats an eyelid at it... Challenging tasks lie ahead of

us and in this the public can play a decisive role – so long as they are well enough informed.

The organisers’ choice of performers proved a happy one. The Italian pianist **Emanuele Torquati** was fascinating for his deep submersion in the music and capacity to convey the music of very different composers persuasively. Likewise the

recital by the German ensemble **musikFabrik** left nobody in any doubt about the quality of the music and the performance.

The percussionist **Tomáš Ondrůšek** is the only teacher at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague who intensively devotes himself to contemporary pieces by world composers (is this perhaps because he grew up and studied in Germany?).

The Spanish **SMASH Ensemble** with guest flautist **Klára Nováková** (Clara Novak) presented us with music by tried and tested composing stars (Tristan Murail, Brian Ferneyhough, Salvatore Sciarrino) and also with a rich cross section of the work of contemporary Spanish composers.

The Prague **FAMA Quartet** showed that an excellent and promising ensemble can emerge even in



Aki Kuroshima (FAMA Quartet)



Rohan de Saram



SMASH Ensemble



Czech conditions. The musicians (David Danel, Aki Kuroshima, Emi Ito and Balázs Adorján) captivated the audience particularly in a spatially conceived, microtonal piece by the Austrian Georg Friedrich Haas. The high point of the festival was undoubtedly pro-

vided by the cellist **Rohan de Saram**, whose performance was a real spiritual experience. His profound insight into the music, sovereign mastery of the instrument and huge concentration gave listeners a night they will never forget. Overall, then, the first year

of the new festival worked out very well. Let us hope that it will put down strong roots in Prague musical life and wish the organisers the strength and imagination to go beyond even the high standard that they have established this year.

MARKO IVANOVIĆ: AT FIRST THE OPERAS CHOSE ME

A modern opera in the Czech Republic? Take a look at the programme and it's very likely that Marko Ivanović will be the conductor. Smiling, and full of unbounded energy, he is very clear and definite in his ideas and views. This interview gives you a chance to hear his opinions both as a conductor and as a composer.

I would like to start by asking you about your work as a conductor, above all of modern opera.

I'm not just interested in modern opera, but in modern music generally. I studied composing as well as conducting, and so contemporary music and art are close to my heart, and I see my work a little as a service to this unjustly neglected branch of classical music.

Did you have the chance to work on modern music projects from the start? How did you get into it?

Actually more or less by accident. At the beginning I had several opportunities to rehearse and conduct chamber opera pieces, generally as part of independent production projects. I created some of these opportunities for myself. And as time went by I worked my way up to a more professional, established level. I did the Czech premieres of Arvo Pärt's *Passion* and Steve Reich's *Music for 18 musicians* for the Prague New Music Marathon festival, and then Miroslav Kabeláč's *Mystery of Times* with the Prague Symphony Orchestra. At the National Theatre, where I now have a permanent engagement as conductor, all the projects I've worked on have been modern, in fact – whether Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River*, which had never been presented in the Czech Republic before, or completely contemporary titles like the jazz opera, *A Well-Paid*

Walk, or Aleš Březina's opera on the political trials, *Tomorrow there will...*

Are you involved in the choice of repertory? Do some of the ideas on what should be staged come from you?

With the operas I've just mentioned, it was more a case of them choosing me. In the case of the independent projects my input on what to stage was greater. With my colleague Martin Cikánek I even once tried to create an opera venue in Prague that would present only chamber operas – we called it Pocket Prague Opera. But it eventually turned out to be impossible without some permanent source of funds. We managed to put on a two-opera project called “Two Times Martinů”, consisting of the two one-actors *Tears of a Knife* and *Ariadna*. Both are surrealist pieces but still very different, which struck me as fascinating. In the end financial pressures meant that we could only put on two reprises. It became obvious that in its way chamber opera is much more financially demanding than large-scale opera.

What is the situation with the public?

Of course I can only speak about the Czech Republic now. The public here is pretty conservative about contemporary music, but not quite so conservative about contemporary theatre. And so I can say that if an opera is good or the subject is interesting, it



usually draws big audiences. One example is Aleš Březina's *Tomorrow there will...*, which is constantly sold out, and attracting great interest in it all over the country.

You are now working at the National Theatre, and that is a really conservative institution. Doesn't the orchestra there resist contemporary projects?

I'm only in my third season there, and in fact the only contemporary piece that I've done with large orchestra is the jazz opera *A Well-Paid Walk*. The orchestra found it a real "treat" – one reason of course is that it is the border between classical and popular.

Do you think you've already been "labelled" as a conductor who is going to push modern opera at the National as well?

It's hard to say. The theatre management has its own repertory planning concepts and a certain line and obviously it has to honour the National Theatre's mission to conserve national values. So it's clear that breakthroughs and experiments can only be one of the services that this theatre company offers. For the moment it looks as if these really risky projects will be more or less a sideline.

But doesn't that kind of role bother you?

No, definitely not.

You're now teaching film music at the Academy. How did you get into that?

I've always been interested in the relationship between music and theatre. Ever since conservatory in fact. When I was still studying there I got the chance to do some singing coaching at the theatre faculty of the Academy in dance lessons and thanks to that I made contacts with a lot of my contem-

poraries from the theatre and drama sphere. I'm still reaping the benefits of this collaboration in the form of opportunities to work on theatre and film projects and I really enjoy it.

How can anyone actually teach film music?

It's really a seminar on film and stage music where the students have to get involved in real work on theatre or film music for a project at least once a semester. The seminar is supposed to serve as feedback on their approach as composers. Obviously everyone has to find an approach of their own, everyone is different, and every film or theatre director is different and makes different demands, but there are certain general principles that I try to hand on to the students from my own experience.

Such as?

It's not a simple question – so for example: classical-romantic music, or music in combination with drama very often operates with a leitmotiv. That means that a particular melody is associated with a particular character, and appears when he comes on stage, and appears again in some new variation when he comes on again. In simple terms there's a link there. Over the years I've discovered that in film a typical sound colour works far more than a typical melody or leitmotiv. The audience, which is more concentrated on the visual and perceives the music as background, does not register the melodic link on a first hearing, while the sound of a specific instrument makes much more of an impression. So if the sound of the guitar is assigned to a character, it becomes a much more expressive symbol than if the same melody is played here on the guitar, there on the trumpet and so on. Colour is a more primary component of sound than pitch.



Do you sometimes confront the problem, even just for yourself, that your music actually shouldn't distract the audience's attention?

You have to identify the places where the music has simply to serve, where it has to be subordinated to the action, but there are other places of course where the music is given space and where it is actually up to the composer to intuit how at that moment he can enhance the director's intention. Sometimes directors have a very clear idea of what they want from the music but they never have it a hundred percent worked out. There is always some room for the composer to make use of his own imagination and come up with something that the director has maybe been looking for in the cutting, in the expressions of the actors, in other techniques, not realising that the particular effect could be achieved by music.

What is it like in opera? How much room do directors give you as conductor?

I've very often witnessed the way that work on an opera goes on two levels. One is the musical and the other the directing. They are separate at the beginning and then the two sides start looking for compromises. I don't much like this approach. The director has a concept, and only at the rehearsal stage asks the conductor for the tempo to be faster here because the direction needs it, and then the conductor says, "okay, but my idea was that musically it would be different at that point". And then it's a matter of who gives ground, and who has the more forceful arguments.

So the director doesn't always have the final voice, then?

Opera is precisely where it's a contentious issue. That's why there are often arguments there. The conductor Bohumil Gregor and his attitude to Leoš Janáček was legendary in that respect. His idea of how a Janáček opera ought to look wasn't just limited to the musical side, but to the complete performance and form of the whole work. So for example when the famous Czech director and mime Ctibor Turba was invited to direct *The Cunning Little Vixen*, he came up against the complete resistance of the conductor to anything that in any way deviated from his ideas, and in the end the director just backed out and wanted nothing more to do with the production. The conductor just threw out many of the director's ideas during rehearsals. I think today the situation is more the other way round, and it tends to be the conductor who gives way to the demands of the director. That's quite appealing perhaps, but at the same time you need to remember that in opera the music is so dominant that it actually rules out certain directorial approaches by its very nature. So for example in my projects I'm always glad to meet the director before rehearsals start and to consult with him about the initial conception, to make sure that we are all pulling in the same direction in the course of rehearsals.

How does the choice of singers affect matters?

Obviously every singer has different physical characteristics and a different colour of voice. This gives



PHOTOS: KAREL SJUSTER 4x

rise to other contentious issues – the director has a certain idea of how the character should look and the conductor has an idea of how his or her voice should sound.

Let's get back to the contemporary chamber opera projects. Who makes up the ensemble?

Mostly it's put together on an ad hoc basis. Players from the theatre company and players from various Prague orchestras.

And what about the orchestral concerts of contemporary music?

It's true that this is a less well-known repertoire for Czech orchestras. The players don't know how to approach music like this; it's an alien world for them. They can catch hold of musical idioms that they know from the ordinary classical-romantic repertoire but as soon as they are faced with some different aesthetic, one they're not used to, then you can get an increasingly grudging attitude. Because – let's face it – contemporary music is difficult. Either it's transparent – which means that it seems simple to the listener but that also means that it has to be played with all the more precision, or else it's very complicated and it isn't easy for players to find their bearings in it. And of course the predominance of discord comes up against our anthropological limits – this means that if someone plays music based on strong dissonances for four hours, for example, his or her hearing naturally gets tired. What's more, if the players have the sense that this is a piece that they're going to play

just once and never go back to, then of course they take it is a necessary evil. It's a different situation with orchestras who have experience with the contemporary repertoire, or in some cases were actually formed to specialise in it. For example the Berg Chamber Orchestra or the Agon Orchestra. Though naturally their very existence is constantly under threat for lack of funds.

But the Berg Orchestra is doing well, isn't it?

Yes, thanks to very capable management and also partly to the fact that their repertoire isn't strictly focussed on the most contemporary music – their range is a little wider. And I think they've managed to create a real audience base.

The way they put together concerts is excellent. Everyone finds at least one piece to their taste and goes away satisfied.

They seem to have managed to identify the taste of the contemporary Czech listener without having to compromise and kowtow.

What's your attitude to their multimedia projects?

I believe that multimedia is the mark of contemporary art. For example today we don't talk about opera but about "music-stage work" just because the attempt to synthesise in the sense of combining different genres that were separate up to the 20th century is very hard to categorise. This trend applies to some extent to contemporary concert production as well. I see lots of unexploited possibilities in the combination of different genres.

How much did your school prepare you for the problems that you have to tackle as a conductor?

I think the way conducting is taught at the Prague Music Faculty of the Academy is pretty good. Unlike abroad, where conducting studies are specialised from the beginning, for example conducting for choirs, conducting orchestras – in this country there's a marked universality of approach. One professor teaches choir technique, one teaches opera repertoire including the practical side – what conducting recitatives involves, for example, or rehearsing opera – and another devotes himself to teaching orchestral repertoire.

And what about conducting from proportional notation, not by bars?

Aha, you're talking about contemporary music. It's true that I found out for myself how to conduct and interpret completely contemporary music. And I'm still seeking and learning, because every piece is actually an original and that's precisely what I enjoy about it.

Seeking for the key. Presumably it is mainly your job to do that for an orchestra...

Well I try. We look for it together. We look for some ideal colour, we look for a shared solution that would be ideal both for the orchestra and the performance of the piece.

So you aren't the authoritarian, directive kind of conductor?

It depends on what aspect you mean. By the way, next season I'm supposed to be starting as principal conductor of the Pardubice Chamber Orchestra and there we'll see, because this is going to be a quite different sort of work for me than anything I've done so far. When you are a guest conductor, then for psychological reasons you don't want to get too involved in things like the tuning of the orchestra, operational habits and so on. But for a principal conductor this is a duty. He is expected to be responsible for the sound of the orchestra as such, for example, which the guest conductors can then like or dislike. I'm terrifically looking forward to it.

So this will be the first time it will be your orchestra.

Yes. The orchestra is very sympathetic, quite young and plays very well. It's a chamber orchestra of the Prague Philharmonia type, with a more Mozartian profile. This means that there will be more room for detailed work there.

And the repertoire?

That's mainly the responsibility of the director Mr. Střítecký, who offered me the post. But we shall discuss everything together. We understand each other well, among other things because he too has a strong inclination to newer music.

Let's move to Ivanović the composer. You write music in an immense range of styles, where would you locate yourself?

I seem to be a postmodernist in orientation, which means that for me there exist no fixed aesthetic rules that I wouldn't cross in any circumstances. If a certain kind of music serves what it is I want to say, then I just use it. Of course, that's far from meaning that I just fling things together without rhyme or reason. Naturally there has to be a certain unity. But I enjoy combining what is generally regarded as popular and what is generally considered not popular at all. When I was still teaching at middle school I often used to provoke my students by asking what serious or classical music really was or wasn't. I brought them recordings of borderline underground things – for example *The Passion Play* by the Plastic People of the Universe. It's the sort of piece where the question keeps coming up – what is popular and what is no longer popular. Is Mozart's minuet serious classical music when it was composed as music for entertainment, or is a half-hour composition by Jethro Tull still popular music? Was it written just to divert people? This is still an open question for me. I regard repugnance for beat and percussion, for bass guitar, to be a very oversimplified view, which I'm always trying to break down.

And ethno?

That too. In my time I once even had an ethno-band, Balkan... In this sense I'm a plebeian. Good music is good music. If a musician is really good

and well-grounded, then he can appreciate both an hour-long symphony by Mahler and a perfectly written piece for brass band.

How do you stand with colleagues who go for a purely classical line?

It's a matter of choice. I spent a long time wondering if I should specialise in some way. Lots of people kept telling me that it's better to have a clear established pigeon-hole, so that people are clear about you – yes, Ivanović, classical music and that's it. But I'm just not that sort of person. I enjoy all kinds of different things. I used to worry constantly over whether I should develop my profile as a composer or as a conductor, but now I don't worry about it, because I've found that this doubleness is in its way unique, at least in the Czech Republic, and I'm trying to exploit it.

Marko Ivanović

Born in Prague in 1976. He studied at the Prague Conservatory and then at the Academy of Performing Arts in the fields of composing and conducting. In 1999 he studied on scholarship at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht.

*As a composer of classical music he co-operates regularly with leading Czech performers in the field (the Agon Orchestra, the Moens Ensemble, the Berg Chamber Orchestra), and his compositions have been presented at a number of concerts and festivals at home and abroad. Many of his pieces have been recorded by Czech, German and Austrian radio stations. His piece *The Lunatic's Morning Suite* (2003) was included in an Austrian monograph by S. Niedermayr and Ch. Scheib "European Meridians" (Saarbrücken, 2004) on the contemporary music of Eastern and Southern Europe. The production of his graduation opera *The Girl and Death* won the OPERA 2003 Festival Prize. He often composes stage, radio and film music. He has worked for example with the Brothers Forman Theatre, Studio Dva, city theatres in Ostrava, Český Těšín and Zlín, and with the directors J. Vejdělek, C. Turba, H. Kofránková and A. Vrzák. Marko Ivanović teaches a seminar on stage and film music at the Department of Composition at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts.*

As a conductor he has worked with various Czech and foreign orchestras: the Prague Symphony Orchestra, the Prague

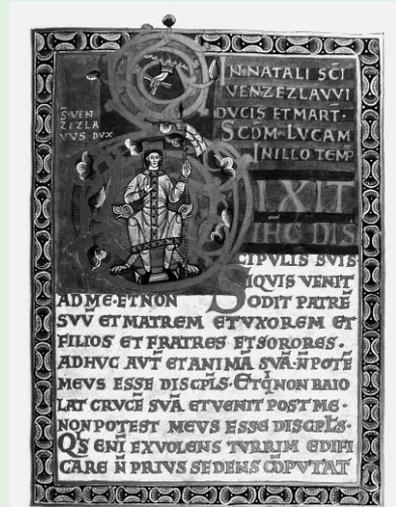
*Chamber Orchestra, the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic, the Sudecka Philharmonic (Poland), the Toyama Academy Orchestra (Japan) and others. In 2003 he won the G. Fitelberg International Competition for Young Conductors in Katowice in Poland. Marko Ivanović has worked with the Prague National Theatre, originally on an external basis (Ph. Glass: *Beauty and the Beast*, M. Nyman: *Man and Boy: DADA*, B. Britten: *Curlew River*). In 2006 he joined the NT on a permanent engagement. He has worked there for example with the director Miloš Forman on a production of the jazz opera *A Well-Paid Walk*, for which he also created a new instrumentation. In the 2009/10 season he will be taking up an appointment as the principal conductor of the Pardubice Chamber Orchestra.*



Swaty waczlawe wewodo
 czelke zemie kmeze nals proszany
 boha swateho ducha krysteleyson. v
 Spomocy my twe zadame smilug
 sie nad nam vtiels smutne ot wed
 wile zlee Swaty waczlawe xpeleyso
 n chesket gest dworstwo krasne blaze
 to mu ktoz tam puogde zuvot wietzy
 ohen iasny swateho ducha xpeleyso
 Maria matko zaduczne tys kralow
 na wsemoluczne proszany zakrze
 ctiany sweho Syna krysteleyson v
 By gby dredi czelke zemie racz pom
 meti naswe plemne nedayz zalymuti
 nam ywuzem Swaty waczlawe x.

SANCTE WENCESLAE, ORA PRO NOBIS! THE CULT OF ST. WENCESLAS IN MUSIC

Wenceslas – it is a name borne by many famous men in Czech history right up, but in the case of the most famous ruler of the Přemyslid dynasty (his dates are probably 907–929 or 935) it is always prefaced with two titles – Prince and Saint. We know something about the facts of his actual “first” life mainly from accounts in church legends, which cannot be considered wholly accurate or trustworthy. These legends form the earliest level of his “second life”, i.e. his cult. It is not so very different in general features from the cults of other European princes and kings who were canonised, but the cult of St. Wenceslas is completely unique in terms of the extent and meaning of its role in the musical culture of the nation.



*The Vyšehrad Codex (ca. 1086)
St. Wenceslas appears in the initial D*

The presence of St. Wenceslas in secular and “church” culture has been and remains the reason why he is held in a general honour not based so much on historical facts as on the symbolism of his story. In the story St. Wenceslas appears as a prince who has a fundamental meaning for Czech statehood: in consolidating the state on the map of

Europe he preferred diplomacy to war, and when war was unavoidable he fought alone man to man and spared the troops; he encouraged the Christianisation of pagan Bohemia and preserved both the Western and Eastern liturgies; he was himself a pious Christian who took down gallows and freed slaves, a warrior against the pagans and so on

and so forth. Especially given the shortness of the young prince’s life, this characterisation is almost certainly more the later ideal of the hagiographers than a real historical account, but in medieval thought the ideal played a particularly significant role. According to the oldest legends Wenceslas was brutally murdered at the instigation of his pagan

Sva - tý Vá - cla - ve, vé - vo - do Če - ské ze - mě, kně - že náš,
 pros za ny Bo - ha, sva - té - ho Du - cha! Kri - ste - le - y - son!

*Saint Wenceslas, duke of the Czech land(s), prince of ours,
 pray for us to God and the Holy Ghost. Kristeleyson! (the first stanza)*

mother Drahomíra by his brother Boleslav, while some current historical interpretations suggest that there may have been some kind of less conspiratorial dispute resulting in his death.

The Conditions for the Development of the Cult and its Context

Fratricide, the struggle between paganism on one hand and Christianity, diplomacy, education and alliance with Western Europe on the other, and last but not least the feudal tributary relationship of Wenceslas to the ruler of the Eastern Franks: these are the main aspects of permanent interest in Wenceslas. In the field of music the Wenceslas legend is not the oldest church-national tradition, but unlike the older tradition of Cyril and Methodius, the St. Wenceslas music tradition has developed without a break from the 10th century to this day. This has given it the leading position among all the Czech national traditions that have found expression in music (including the St. Vojtěch, Hussite, Czech Brethren and Nepomuk traditions). Its meaning and expressions have been deeply involved in the development of national identity and relationship with the German-speaking population, the moulding of Czech statehood, church life, political life,

and the interpretation of history, and in all branches of the arts as well as music. It has also become a permanent part of the traditions maintained by Czech minorities abroad.

The Ancient Slavonic and Latin Period

The musical component of the cult of St. Wenceslas is an element that has for centuries reflected the overall development of the cult while at the same time helping to mould it. We find musical elements from the earliest period of the Wenceslas cult. The canonisation of Wenceslas and promotion of his cult beyond the borders of Bohemia required the creation of a suitable liturgy for the celebration of his memory. The development of the St. Wenceslas Latin officium involved a complex of adopted and new elements that bore the strong personal imprint of Archbishop Jan of Jenštejn, but may well have been influenced long before his time by another famous supporter of the cult - Bishop Vojtěch (Adalbert) of the Slavníkov line. In addition to the dominant share of well-known Latin liturgical traditions and legends, we have to take into account traditions of the Old Slavonic liturgy. Both western and eastern Christianity regarded St. Wenceslas as a martyr for the faith. Slavist

specialists are familiar with the Old Slavonic form of the Latin St. Wenceslas officium, known as the *Service in Honour of St. Wenceslas (The Service concerning St. Wenceslas)*. One important part of this is the *Canon to St. Wenceslas*. Although it survives only in Russian sources, we cannot rule out the possibility that it originated on Czech territory soon after the death of St. Wenceslas and may have been an influence in the genesis of the Czech hymn to Saint Wenceslas. The hymn to Saint Wenceslas, known as the *St. Wenceslas Chorale*, occupies first place among medieval pieces of music associated with St. Wenceslas. Together with the Hussite chorale *Kdož jsú Boží bojovníci [Ye Who Are God's Warriors]*, and the Czech anthem it is clearly the most important musical symbol of Czech culture. It is a living monument continually reinterpreted for the whole period of the development of the tradition, a monument of fundamental importance both for Czech literary and musical history and for European culture in general. While the older song *Hospodine, pomiluj ny! [Lord, Have Mercy on Us]* is still an Old Slavonic monument, the St. Wenceslas Chorale is the most important element in the earliest group of distinctively Czech songs. At the same time it shows the mixing of the older tradition of sacred song in the vernacular



The St. Wenceslas Antiphon
Adest dies laetitia in the antiphonary
of the Convent of St. George in Prague
(late 13th century)

and the Latin Gregorian chant. The first known record of the text is quite late, appearing in a commentary relating to the year 1368 in the chronicle written by the Canon of the Prague Chapter Beneš Krabic of Weitmil, and the first record of the melody comes from as late as the 1470s. Nevertheless there are many indications that we can date the hymn back to the mid-13th century. Catholic-orientated researchers have had a tendency to try rather uncritically to attribute authorship of

the song to one of the bishops or archbishops of Prague, but if this had been the case Beneš would have been unlikely not to have mentioned it in his chronicle. The St. Wenceslas Chorale presents other mysteries beside obscurity of authorship and dating. There is the question of the precise scheme of repetition of verses, that of the conscious or unconscious melodic affinities with the chant *Media vita in morte sumus* by the St. Gallen monk Notkerus Balbulus Balbulus (ca. 840-912) and that of the dating of other verses. These mysteries have clearly helped to attract the constant interest of scholars in this medieval hymn.

The First High Point of the Tradition - the Reign of Emperor Charles IV

It is paradoxical that we find just the one mention of the St. Wenceslas Cult in the Chronicle of Beneš in the period of its first great flowering under the Emperor Charles IV (1316-1378). Beneš reports that on the basis of miracles associated with the tomb of St. Wenceslas, Archbishop Jan Očko of Vlašim granted 40-day indulgences in 1368 to all those who made confession in penitence, did appropriate penitence and carried out a good deed by singing the hymn, sung since time immemorial, in honour of St. Wenceslas. The close connection between the song Saint Wenceslas and Czech statehood emerge, rather unexpectedly, in sources from the end of the Hussite Wars (1436). Charles IV had only included the song *Hospodine, pomiluj ny!* [Lord, Have Mercy on Us] in his new order of ceremonies for the coronation of the Bohemian King, and so according to my own research the singing of the



St. Wenceslas Chapel of the St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague

Saint Wenceslas at elections and coronations of the kind was an expression of the spontaneity and euphoria of the Czech-speaking population.

From the Přemyslid Eagle to the Hussite Chalice

Inclusion of the song as one of the four Czech sacred hymns that were permitted by the Prague Synod on the 15th of June 1406 played a major part in preserving it in living repertoire. The first concrete place in which it is known to have been sung was the Bethlehem Chapel, where Master Jan Hus preached in the first years of the 14th century. The text of the song was used as an argument by the leading formulator of the Hussite

programme Mikuláš Biskupec of Pelhřimov, and also an admittedly somewhat vague remark to be found in a writing by Jakoubek of Stříbro probably concerns the St. Wenceslas hymn. Generally, the Hussite period can be seen from one angle as the beginning of the struggle over which of the warring parties would identify more with the St. Wenceslas tradition and so strengthen the legitimacy of its position. This struggle continued even into the following period of relative peace between Catholics and Utraquists, and we find references to the St. Wenceslas hymn in several works of literature. The increase in the number of verses to nine in the 15th century testifies to its contemporary

relevance, and in the following centuries it extended to as many as thirteen! It is from the end of the 15th century that the polyphonic arrangement of the chorale in what is known as the *Speciálník královéhradecký* hymnbook comes – the compositional technique required a minor alteration of the introduction of the text to *Náš milý svatý Václave* [Our Dear Saint Wenceslas].

The singing of the chorale at the signing of the Compacts (the agreement between the Council of Basle and Hussite representatives in 1436) on the 5th of July 1436 in Jihlava, its singing at the coronation of Albrecht II as King of Bohemia on the 29th of June 1438, at the election of George of Poděbrady on the 2nd of March 1458 and at the coronation of Matthias Corvinus as Bohemian King in 1471 – these are the first events showing the formal state function of the song and its role as a kind of precursor of the national anthem. More or less every ruler of Bohemia identified with the St. Wenceslas tradition. The Jagiellon epoch is considered the second period of flowering of the tradition after the reign of Charles IV.

The Tradition as Part of the Habsburg Pietas Bohemica

The special relationship of the Habsburgs to St. Wenceslas was prefigured by the singing of the hymn at the election of Ferdinand I to the crown of Bohemia on the 24th of October 1526. We find music connected with St. Wenceslas in the interim period 1526–1648 especially in the field

Polyphonic arrangement of the St. Wenceslas hymn in M.B.Bolelucky hymnbook (1668)

of Jesuit school drama productions and motets. The form of the school drama and Jesuit theatre was unthinkable without musical accompaniment, but this has only been preserved in rare cases. The purpose of these productions was to strengthen Catholic feeling but also the legitimacy of the Habsburg claim to the throne of Bohemia. One typical example of this trend is the well-known St. Wenceslas “melodrama”, *Sub olea pacis*, by Jan Dismas Zelenka of 1723. Among the St. Wenceslas motets we should mention above all the anonymous *Hymnus de sancto Wenceslao* (probably of 1580) based on the chant *Dies venit victoriae*, and the motet *Haud aliter pugnans* by the master of vocal polyphony

Adrian Willaert (ca. 1490–1562). In the text of the motet Willaert’s employer Ferdinand I is conceived as the heir of St. Wenceslas in the fight against the pagans, i.e. the Turks. It is possible, however, that the text is also a reference to the power struggle between Ferdinand and his brother Charles V.

The hymn *Saint Wenceslas*, and also the earliest layer of different hymns to St. Wenceslas, can be found in hymnbooks and collections of songs before 1620, but the genre was to experience its greatest flowering only with the end of the Thirty Years War (1648). We encounter the text of the song, St. Wenceslas and brief



The so-called Olomouc record of the St. Wenceslas hymn (late 15th century)

descriptions of its history in most Catholic hymnbooks and practically all the books of the Baroque devoted to the saint. In non-Catholic sources we find the choral more as melody for contrafacta and historical songs. The hymnbook for Moravian Lutherans entitled *Písňe chval božských* [*Songs of Divine Praise*] by the Silesian Tobiáš Závorka Lipenský (ca. 1554–1614) of 1602 contains a hymn with the supertitle *Den pamatujem svatého Václava, rytíře ctného, křest'ana Bohu milého* [*Let us remember the day of St. Wenceslas, virtuous knight, Christian beloved of God*] – a hymn that appears nowhere else!

In the course of the 17th century there is no doubt that the Catholic church showed more perseverance in the fight over St. Wenceslas. The saint's cult together with the cult of Mary and John of Nepomuk were made the basis of the policy of recatholicisation in which music played an important part. Several chronicles mention the fondness of Ferdinand III for the cult. In one illustration in Jan Tanner's book *Heiliger Weeg von Prag nacher Alt-Bunzel...* (1680) Ferdinand is singing the St. Wenceslas chorale together with Archbishop Arnošt of Pardubice. Emperor Leopold I (King of Bohemia 1657–1705), however, was the Habsburg who did the most for the St. Wenceslas tradition. In his reign St. Wenceslas pieces were written at the court in Vienna, and this support for the tradition motivated a number of Czech composers to do the same, with Leopold himself setting an example by writing his own St. Wenceslas music. In addition to the resonant names of the Viennese court musicians (Antonio Bertalli, Antonio Draghi, Antonio Caldaro) here we should above all men-

Excerpt from the section of St. Wenceslas songs in the Karel Holan-Rovenský hymnbook (1694)

tion Šimon Josef Machaonský, Heinrich Ignaz von Biber, Adam Václav Michna of Otradovice and Pavel Josef Vejvanovský. The multilingual Baroque provided the impetus not only for Latin translations of the chorale, but also for translations into German. The first surviving examples are three language versions (1643–1645) in a book by Daniel Vojtěch Himlštejn alias Jiljí / Aegidius from St. John the Baptist, who worked in the Augustinian Monastery of St. Wenceslas Na Zderaze. The St. Wenceslas hymns found singers above all in the lay choral brotherhoods, some of whom depicted the saint in hymnbooks, or in the form of altar statues, and some by taking his name for their societies. Among many dozen hymns in these books those by A.V. Michna of Otradovice have the greatest artistic value. We find the highest number of St. Wenceslas songs in the hymnbooks of Jan Ignáz Dlouhoveský, Matěj Václav Šteyer, Václav Karel Holan-Rovenský, Jan Josef Božan, Karel František Rosenmüller and Antonín Koniáš (the latter otherwise notorious for burning Czech non-Catholic books).

With the increasing success of recatholicisation and the rise of the Enlightenment the Habsburgs in the 19th century felt less of a need to identify with the St. Wenceslas tradition. In Czech society, however, the need for such identification persisted. In the history of Czech music this is documented both by surviving and only indirectly known works, for example by Josef Leopold

O S. Apostolich wábec. 417

1 radostně triumfiruj / Boha oslawuj. 1
 2 ďábla pŕŕty yzle skutky / zkazyli zle plesty. 2
 3 přŕkladŕ dobrŕch nechali / Těbe otvřeli. 3
 4 přŕmluwau swau pomahati / proste proste swati. 4

Clar: I. *Gatě ic.*
 Clar: II. *Gatě ic.*
 Alt- Trom: *Gatě ic.*
 Tenor Trom:
 Organo. *Gatě ic.*

O S. Wáclawu. *Gato: Den hñewu dem:*

Wáŕ Wáclawe kniže náš/wěrnŕ Zástupce náš/tobě Čechowě woláme/pomocy žádáme.
 Dediči čeŕŕ Země/wzpomeŕi na swě plémě/w těžŕch bŕdách postavené/ze wšech stran ŕaužné

Swatŕ Wáclawe nám milŕ / Wáclawce ŕlomonili / zajeti naše Nepřáteli / k našŕ zbaubě smřŕ.

Odvratŕj od swěho lidu / hlad a ginau bŕdu / chraŕi nás od Raciřŕŕŕŕ Noty / od ŕucha, drohory.
 Wpros o Swatŕ Wáclawe / nám powěřiŕj zdrauw / oŕŕŕŕhez lid wŕug poddanŕ / od Morowě ranp.
 Swatŕ náš Drodowŕnice/Boji Witowŕnice/orobŕg za swau milau/Wlasti/odwratŕ wŕŕŕŕŕŕŕŕ ŕraŕŕ.
 Sebŕnė máme dauffaŕnj / w roem orodowaniŕj / krece gŕy chraŕnil na zemŕ / chraŕnj p na Nebi.

D a a

Václav Dukát, Kryštof Karel Gayer, František Xaver Brixl, Jan František Novák, František Václav Habermann, Jan Evangelista Antonín Tomáš Koželuh and others. These were in most cases masses and musical pieces used in the liturgy, i.e. above all the gradual and offertorium. The connections between the St. Wenceslas cult with the Marian cult forged in the Baroque were extended to include the cult of St. John of Nepomuk,

726 Písně

nemáže spásobiti: a Sussně tehdy mág Kryšte / twág blas žádám slyseti: mé potěšeni gšitě / nerač mne oslyseti. a Ašpoň gedno slowjčko / rač ke mně promluwiti / twau střelan mé střelčko/raň / deg za sebau giti.

Na den Swateho Wáclawa Knjzete a Dědice Czešského a Mucedlnsta Božjho.

Gako: Gatofo tom Prorocy: Třebo: Krystus přiflad pokory.



Dyž let osm set bylo / čtyři dewa desát / W Czechách se wygastilo / počalo wšseplesat / Swlažená rosau Boží / wydala země kwět / do skala z Uebe Sboží / zarado wal se swět.

¶ Kwět ten swatý Wáclaw byl / wyrost z kmene Krysta / wšsemu světu diwný byl / nedal šablu mšsta. K° Kwětna owotce nosil / wjry Katolické / neprawosti wdusl / w wlasti swé Pohanské. ¶ Byl Lidem, Bohu mily / y Swatém Angellm / gehož wždydy bránili / proti nepřátelám. K° Ctnosti swatě milowal / střel se pobožnosti / mšy swatě

One of the St. Wenceslas songs included in the Šteyer hymnbook (1683)

St. Vojtěch (Adalbert) and SS Cyril and Methodius. Symbiosis with Marian elements is well documented for example by St. Wenceslas hymns in the hymnbooks of pilgrims to the Austrian pilgrimage shrine of Mariazell. Legend tells that this place of pilgrimage was discovered by the sick Moravian margrave Jindřich in 1184 thanks to an apparition of St. Wenceslas, whom the margrave had prayed to for help together with the Virgin Mary. A quite different, secular cult was that of the connection between the Czech nation and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - and even here the St. Wenceslas music tradition finds a place among the numerous real or alleged bonds between the two. One of the most affecting stories is that of the Czecho-Viennese composer Jan Emanuel Doležálek (1780-1858), who claimed that as a young boy he had seen Mozart weeping at

the tones of the St. Wenceslas chorale in the church in Golčův Jeníkov. What is known as the Vincislao/Venceslao-operas have a controversial place in the tradition: the famous librettist Apostolo Zeno inserted the story of the Polish rule of the Bohemian Přemyslid king Wenceslas II (1271-1305) into the scheme of Italian opera seria. The action is historically very inaccurate, but a number of researchers have seen an allusion to the murder of St. Wenceslas by his brother Boleslav in the fratricide motif. These operas are therefore sometimes put in connection to other musical works with St. Wenceslas themes.

Romanticism Shakes the Foundations of the Tradition

In the 19th century the Czech national revival, internal political events, secularisation and the antagonistic trend in relations between Czechs and Bohemian

sewšsedh střáhli / wšseliké bezbožnosti / a Swětských manosti / rač došlli radošti / Amen.

O Swatym Wáclawu:




Waty / Wáclawe / Wg



wodo Czešské země / Knjze



nás / pros zany Boha S° Duchu / Krysteleyson. ¶ Uebestřer gest dwořstwo krásně / blaze tomu kdož tam půgde wjwot wěčný oheň yasný S° Ducha / Krysteleyson. Pomocý my tve žádáme / smilug senad námi / wtrěš smutné / zajeň wšse zle / Swatý Wáclawe / Kryceleyson.

The St. Wenceslas hymn in the Jan Paminondas-Horský collection (1596)

Germans all led to the emergence of different approaches to the St. Wenceslas tradition, which were then reflected in music. Compositions orientated to the church were still being written (e.g. by František Zdeněk Skuherský, Josef Cyril Sychra, Karel Douša, Eduard Tregler, Josef Nešvera, Jan Nepomuk Škroup, Václav Emanuel Horák and others), while there were numerous adaptations of the Wenceslas Chorale for organ or choir à capella (e.g. by Josef Foerster, Josef Krejčí, Jan August Vitásek, Josef Leopold Zvonař, Karel Bendl, and August Wilhelm Ambros). In the hymnbooks and hymn collections the Baroque set of St. Wenceslas hymns continued to predominate with the impetus for a new repertoire coming only much later, with the St. Wenceslas millenium in 1929. The National Revival involved a reassessment of the interpretation of



Ferdinand III and Arnošt from Pardubice singing the St. Wenceslas hymn (1680)

the theme of Wenceslas as presented by Catholic and Habsburg circles. A new view of the original legends developed – including new scenarios of the death of St. Wenceslas. The architect of the murder (Wenceslas’s mother Drahomíra) and the murderer himself (Wenceslas’s brother Boleslav) were no longer seen merely as “villains” and attention was directed to deciphering their motives. Only Romanticism could have brought a reversal of this kind, evident for example in the opera *Drahomíra* by Richard Šebor and František Škroup, where the role of St. Wenceslas fades into the background and it is Drahomíra and Boleslav who dominate the action.

The 19th century also had a taste for synthesising traditions – for example we see the emergence of a picture of St. Wenceslas as the leader of the mythical knights of Blaník, who according to legend will ride out of the mountain of Blaník and save the Bohemian Lands in their hour of greatest peril. In some sources St. Wenceslas leads an army together with the Hussite general Jan Žižka. Even before 1848, however, the Moravian censors had replaced the names Hus and Žižka in Klácel’s often musically arranged poem *The Voice from Blaník* with the names of St. Wenceslas and St. Vojtěch. This was an early sign of the way in which the Hussite and St. Wenceslas traditions were to be set against each other in terms of politics and religion, and so pieces that mixed musical citations from the two traditions were to prove controversial (for example the Antonín Dvořák’s Hussite overture of 1883 or Ladislav Prokop’s orchestral-vocal pictures *The Old Town Market* of 1912). The year 1848 appears as the last moment of nation-wide honour for St. Wenceslas, which then disappeared with the defeat of the revolution directed against the absolutist government and disappointment of the hopes raised by the national programme. In this revolutionary year St. Wenceslas was almost everywhere: at the instigation of the leading journalist and writer Karel Havlíček Borovský, the Horse Market was turned into (Saint) Wenceslas Square, the composer Václav Bohumil Michálek wrote the *St. Wenceslas March* for the armed corps of the St. Wenceslas Brotherhood, and the chorale was sung at great masses on (Saint) Wenceslas Square, at



Calixtin pavis with the text of the St. Wenceslas hymn and the Hussite song “Lord God, give freedom to the ones who love you”



Above:
St. Wenceslas riding a horse.
Lithography by J. Trentsenský
(Vienna, ca. 1850)

Below:
St. Wenceslas by Antonín Slaviček
(1870–1910)



“Historical songs about Saint Wenceslas” (1717)

the opening of the Slav Congress, at the send-off and return of the delegation to Vienna and on other occasions. In one very long broadsheet ballad St. Wenceslas even brings the knights of Blaník to Prague. An anti-German paraphrase of the chorale replacing the original *comfort the grieving, drive away all evil with the words, drive out the Germans, foreigners*, is usually dated to 1848 too, but as the Germanist Arnošt Kraus has shown, it was definitely printed a few years earlier. The way in which the St. Wenceslas tradition broke the bounds of church and religious context is best illus-

trated by the once very popular song *Exult in Joyous Hope* (*Hopes have been fulfilled*). This was a kind of musical equivalent of the famous Králův Dvůr and Zelená hora Manuscripts, fake ancient Slav epics “discovered” in 1817 and 1818 in order to encourage Czech national self-confidence in the face of the German nation and its old literary epics (for example the *Niebelungenlied*). Believed to be authentic for many years, the Hussite song actually invented by the concert singer and occasional composer Josef Theodor Krov (1797–1859) ends with a fragment of the melody of the St. Wenc-

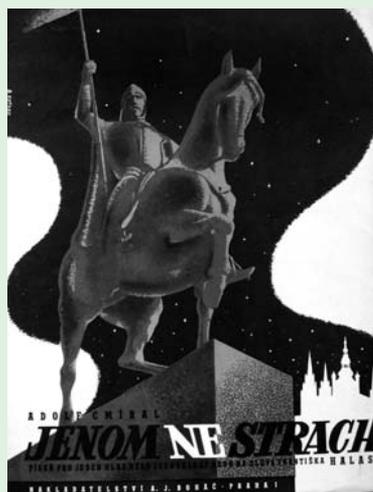
eslas Chorale and the heroic text, *Let us love each other! Let us be united! Let us make ready! Let us take a stand! And let us not surrender! Amen, May God will it! Pray for us St. Wenceslas, Protector of the Bohemian Land!* The song caught the attention of Franz Lizst, who based a masterly piano paraphrase around it.

Czech failure to achieve the political-cultural rights that Hungary as well as Austria enjoyed after 1867 in the monarchy, the increasing divergence between the interests of Czechs and Bohemian Germans, and the interpretation of St. Wenceslas as a weak pro-German monarch together with increasing secularisation meant that the St. Wenceslas tradition was coming to be seen in Czech society as a reactionary anti-patriotic relic of the Baroque while the Hussite tradition was ever more the point of reference in the search for a national political programme. In music this turning point was not so striking as it was in literature, for example, but a comparison of the numbers of new pieces with St. Wenceslas and Hussite themes is still more than eloquent. Outside the church sphere the tradition narrowed simply to the St. Wenceslas Chorale, which was sung with nostalgia as a historical element for example at the opening of the Ethnographic Exhibition in 1895. Some composers were capable of composing music in the St. Wenceslas tradition both for church and concert performance. An important role was played by new poetic texts on St. Wenceslas themes, with the most frequently musically arranged verses being

those by Jaroslav Vrchlický, Josef Václav Sládek, Vladimír Hornof, and in the first half of the 20th century by Xaver Dvořák, Jaroslav Dušek, Karel Toman, František Žák and others.

The Tradition in the Light of Freedom, Occupation and Liberation

During the 1st World War, mythical and symbolic messages became more intense in treatment of the St. Wenceslas Chorale. Afraid of stirring up of national passions, the government sometimes prosecuted some expressions of the St. Wenceslas tradition (including the singing of the chorale) under certain circumstances. At other times it exploited the symbol (for example the wartime “Wenceslas Loan”), although we might consider the omission of the St. Wenceslas Chorale from school readers to be repressive. The birth of the new independent republic in 1918 was celebrated by some new St. Wenceslas songs, and we can find St. Wenceslas musical elements in the circle of the Czech legionaries. The chorale appears with great urgency in the *Meditation on the St. Wenceslas Chorale* (1914) by Josef Suk and the *Czech Rhapsody* (1918) by Bohuslav Martinů. Catholic circles, and especially the writers Otakar Březina and Jakub Deml criticised the government for not making the St. Wenceslas Chorale the national anthem. Only the St. Wenceslas Millenium celebrations in 1929 at least partly overcame the deep differences between Catholic and non-Catholic circles on the meaning and future of the St. Wenceslas tradition for



Above:
St. Wenceslas on the Hradec Králové
National Guard standard (1848)

Below:
“Have no fear” by Adolf Cmíral (1945)

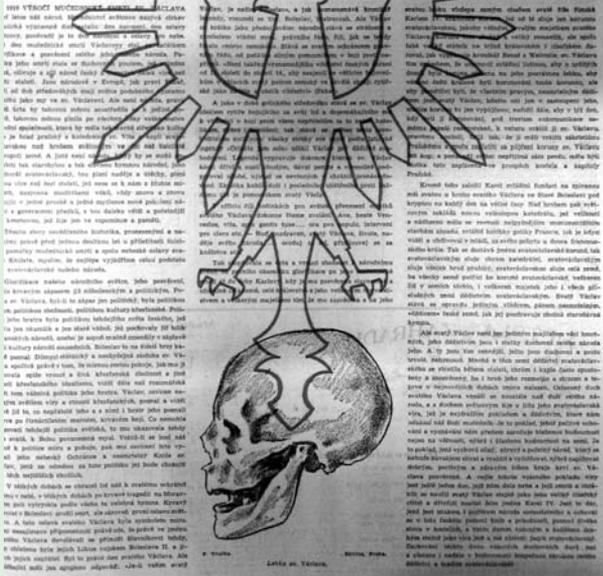
Neděle Venkova

PRÍLOHA VENKOVY — 24. ZÁŘÍ 1939.

767

SVATÝ VÁCLAVE, ORODUJ ZA NÁS...

Dr. J. K. Vyskočil



Paradigm of the St. Wenceslas cult changes (1939)

the new Czechoslovak nation. This important jubilee inspired dozens of new musical compositions, most of them church-oriented, with masses predominating (e.g. by Jaromír Hruška, Antonín Hradil, Miroslav Krejčí, František Suchý, Vojtěch Řihovský, Jindřich Vojáček, and Stanislav Mach) and smaller liturgical pieces, chorals, cantatas, oratorios, organ pieces etc. In 1937 a volume entitled *Wenceslasian Musical Elements* came out in the St. Wenceslas Bulletin series. In this volume Dobroslav Orel summarised all the evidence up to the 16th century, but neither in his nor any other publication was there an adequate assessment of the development of the musical form of the cult. Nonetheless, interesting and often previously

unknown information about Wenceslasian music can be found in most of the books published for the St. Wenceslas millenium celebrations. The major film *Saint Wenceslas* with music by Jaroslav Křička and Oskar Nedbal unfortunately had little impact because it was premiered six months after the millennium celebrations and was not presented with the sound, even though such movies were already being screened in Prague.

In the period following the Munich Agreement anti-republican circles started to present the Wenceslas tradition in a less anti-German, and after the occupation in an entirely pro-German way. St. Wenceslas was represented as the “first conscious herald of Czech understanding with the Reich”, and the Protectorate minister Emanuel Moravec often referred to the St. Wenceslas Chorale. Yet while the tradition was officially supported, its former patriotic anti-German dimension (e.g. the singing of the chorale at the funeral of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in September 1937 or at demonstrations in favour of maintaining independent statehood) lived on among the population. In music this schizophonia was expressed in caution – some composers hid a quotation from the chorale by weaving it into a complex of polyphonic parts, while others left their St. Wenceslas compositions “in the drawer” or incomplete (e.g. *Cantata 1945* by Josef Bohuslav Foerster). Official performance (e.g. Vítězslav Novák’s *St. Wenceslas Triptych*) provoked debate on whether such

pieces mobilised resistance to the occupiers or backed up Nazi misinterpretation. In the work of Jewish composers (Pavel Haas, Viktor Ullmann), pieces with Wenceslasian and Hussite themes suggested the extent to which this group of the population identified with Czech history. After the liberation, the Wenceslasian works composed during the war as well as new works were performed, but in the flood of new music this group had no special profile or importance. At the same time, with the transfer of the Bohemian Germans from Czech territory a whole area of the cult disappeared – in music this had involved ten German St. Wenceslas hymns. Nonetheless, some composers from the transferred group have come up with musical arrangements of the theme (Widmar Hader, Andreas Wilscher, Constantin Mach) and the St. Wenceslas tradition is still alive today in the community in Germany.

The Second Half of the 20th Century

After 1948 and the communist take-over, the tradition was taken up first by spiritually orientated composers living in “internal exile”. These included Jan Evangelista Zelinka the younger, Stanislav Vrbík, Theodor Pařík and Jaroslav Křička. Some composers, for example Ladislav Vycpálek, managed to make the theme publicly acceptable by combining it with the Hussite theme, while others chose the path of identifying it closely with folk music (e.g. Václav Trojan), or the legend of the Blaník knights. One major ex-

ception was Boleslav Vomáčka’s pro-regime opera *Boleslav I* of 1957 – Boleslav’s murder of his brother is seen in a positive light, as an act necessary for the preservation of the state. The idea was obviously to create a historical parallel to February 1948 and legitimate the communist coup. It was not until the thaw at the end of the 1960s that broader interest in St. Wenceslas revived. It was expressed demonstratively following the death of Cardinal Josef Beran in 1969. The funeral took place in Rome, but crowds in and in front of St. Vitus’s Cathedral in Prague interrupted a meeting of functionaries of the Communist Party Central Committee in the nearby Spanish Hall of Prague Castle by singing the St. Wenceslas Chorale. Once again, the most new pieces in the tradition were written in the circle of spiritually orientated composers (for example Oto Albert Tichý, Petr Eben, Stanislav Vrbík and Jan Laburda). Among the compositionally most progressive of these was the treatment of a quotation from the St. Wenceslas Chorale in the “multi-quotation” piece *České letokruhy* [Czech Annals] (1973–1975) by the Brno composer Alois Piňos. The technique of episodic hidden quotation was also used for example by Jindřich Feld (*Fantasia drammatica per orchestra sinfonica* from the turn of the years 1968/1969). The Wenceslas pieces by composers living abroad (e.g. Bedřich Janáček, Antonín Tučapský, Václav Nelhýbel, and Jaromír Weinberger) represent a special chapter, and one that remains relatively unknown to the Czech

public. The same is true of pieces by the children of Czech emigrants, with the Czech-American composer and music publisher Joel Blahník occupying first place among them. At the end of the 1980s and after 1989 the St. Wenceslas theme has been appearing more often, and not only in the field of classical music (e.g. Petr Eben, Milan Slavický, Jan Déd, Svatopluk Jányš, Pavel Prošek, Zdeněk Lukáš, Jan Hanuš, Jan Šimíček, Vladimír Svatoš), but also on the ballad and rock scene. Since 1989 several dozen pieces of various kinds have appeared. In terms of genre the most progressive have been from the pen of Vladimír Hirsch and Michal Rataj, while the story of St. Wenceslas has been brought to life in the popular form of musical by Václav Brom and Richard Pachman.

Conclusion

Even despite the unfavourable conditions of the socialist period of Czech history, the Wenceslasian musical tradition retained the power to motivate composers to write new works and listeners to hear them. There is no doubt that today composers find the tradition more accessible than the mainly secularised general public. Ignorance of the St. Wenceslas Chorale became apparent during the demonstrations in November 1989 during the Velvet Revolution, when only the older generation sang the hymn, and two decades the situation is no better. In school music education only a short paragraph and note extract is devoted to the St. Wenceslas Chorale.



Jan Dismas Zelenka
Missa votiva e moll ZWV 18 (1739)

Collegium 1704 & Collegium Vocale 1704, Václav Luks.

Text: Eng., Fr. Recorded July 2007, Church of St. Louis du Prytanée de la Flèche, La Flèche, France. Released: 2008. TT: 71:06. DDD. 1 CD Zig-Zag Territoires ZZT080801.

Collegium 1704 and Collegium Vocale 1704 under the artistic direction of Václav Luks, offers us another CD in a series of remarkable recording of Zelenka's music, and this time it is not a Czech production but recorded and published abroad. *Missa votiva* (1739), one of the Zelenka's longest musical arrangements of the mass ordinarium, was among the composer's late works. In the years 1738–1739 Zelenka was ill and fell almost silent as a composer. The mass recorded here was a musical expression of thanks for his recovery and was evidently played in the Catholic court church in Dresden in July 1739. For half a century more than two dozen of its musical parts were lost in the Saxon Land Library in Dresden, while the piece was also partially preserved in the archives of the Prague Knights of the Cross. Subdivided into twenty sections, the mass embodies the compositional techniques of the time at a sublime level. It exhibits all the attributes of Zelenka's music, above all the masterful counterpoint, instrumental texture, inter-penetration of passages of solo singing and tutti, chromaticism, musical-rhetorical figures and even the citation of chorales. As far as the performances are concerned, praise is the order of the day. While Czech ensembles unfortunately sometimes seem to feel that a sufficiently period interpretation excuses sloppy or even absent musical craftsmanship, nothing is overlooked in Luks' direction, and what is more – something that precisely shows the "solid basis in musicianship" – the whole performance gives a secure, tranquil impression even in the fast passages. The listener can savour the plasticity of sound and tempo, well-thought-out overall conception of the work and various details of the performance. On might only say that the voices of the soloists from the Collegium Vocale 1704 could have been more to the fore in the acoustic perspective.

These are experienced singers of early (and other) music – the soprano **Hana Blažiková**, the alto **Markéta Cukrová**, the tenor **Tomáš Kořínek** and above all the owner of a melting bass, **Tomáš Král**, who gives a brilliant account of himself in a separate aria. In terms of quality the performance is comparable with outstanding foreign recordings, and so it is no wonder that a French recording label should have decided to release this recording from last year's Festival de Sablé.

Jana Slimáčková

Ludwig van Beethoven
Concerto in C Major for Violin, Cello, Piano and Orchestra, op. 56

Johannes Brahms
Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 77

František Novotný – violin,
Michal Kaňka – cello, **Rumi Itoh – piano,**
Prague Philharmonia, Jiří Bělohávek – conductor.
Production: Vít Roubíček. Text: Eng., Ger. Recorded: Jan. 2003, Nov. 2002. Released: 2008. TT: 75:13. DDD. 1 CD Radioservis CRO399-2.

With a rather unusually long gap between recording and release, Radioservis has issued a CD that it can be proud of. It doesn't have many titles like this – titles which can really compete internationally. (It's a pity that the CD booklet couldn't have been correspondingly impressive, but this was probably because of economic limitations). **František Novotný** and **Michal Kaňka** have already made a number of important recordings with this label. The pianist **Rumi Itoh** is not yet generally known in the Czech Republic despite lively contacts with Czech musicians. The unifying force in the project is without a doubt **Jiří Bělohávek**. At the most universal level one can even find correlations between the two works, despite the great care devoted to purity of style (There is, after all, a chronologically immense gap of 70 years between them). The Beethoven corresponds to my idea of a fully complementary work, i.e. more a kind of "concertante symphony" than a "concerto grosso". Novotný captivates me the most

here, although the cellist in no striking way lags behind him. It is the pianist who is rather overshadowed in terms of tone. Both the solo triologues and the effective tutti gradations are enchanting.

The choice of the Brahms shows that Novotný is unafraid of comparison with world stars (I can't find a better recording here). I find the chamber paradigm of the recording a particularly fortunate aspect. The conductor has wisely based his approach on the character of the orchestra and respected the natural talents of the soloist. In doing so he has perhaps sacrificed drama at some points, but he definitely picks up points in the lyrical passages, which sound fantastic. František Novotný is a precious Moravian jewel, unfortunately not yet fully appreciated by the media.

Luboš Stehlik

Petr Eben
The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart for Organ and Reciter

Irena Chřibková – organ,
Martin Stropnický – recitation.
Production: Libor Mathauer. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger. Recorded: Apr. 2008, Basilica of St. James, Prague (organ), June 2008, Studio Domovina, Prague (recitation). Released: 2008. TT: 68:58. DDD. 1 CD Rosa Classic RD 1695.

Petr Eben (1929–2007) was fascinated by Comenius's famous book for most of his life, and from 1991 to June 2003 he played celebrated improvisations on the theme in many different countries. (In this country his performance with his son Marek is well-known). The enthusiastic reception of these improvisations forced the composer to codify them in a note record, although a certain freedom of interpretation is left to the organ. The world premiere of the codified work took place in 2002 in Göteborg, but the Rosa label has been the first to record this work, which is in my view a work of genius. The four-part cycle interspersed by recitation of the timeless text illuminates Comenius, evokes the atmosphere of the book and works not just with its own thematic material but for example with Comenius's chorales (the Amsterdam Hymnbook)



and Moravian folk melody, but in fact Eben goes even further, beyond the horizon of the literary model, reaching harsh and celestial heights. In other words, the text is the inspiration for the unbounded imagination of the composer. My feeling is that not a single note is superfluous, and that Eben's musical language in this opus, which retrospectively takes in his whole life, is maturing into the freedom, lucidity and intimacy that Shostakovich for example reached by a different route, or to which Penderecki was probably moving. Throughout his life what was important for Petr Eben was to express an idea, and to this he subordinated both technique and form. And for Eben the organ, which he loved and through which he probably most liked to communicate with the world, was the most suitable instrument for giving material form to his deeply rooted spirituality. I believe that inspirations from art also played a role in the conception of the cycle. Eben's *Labyrinth* is the most evocative swan song that I have heard in recent years and this composition is yet more confirmation in my mind that Eben was the most expressive Czech composer of the last thirty years. If the qualities of this extraordinary piece are to be fully conveyed to listeners, it has to be performed by experienced and spiritually open artists. Fortunately **Irena Chříbková**, who plays brilliantly, and **Martin Stropnický** with the power and expressive capacities of his voice, are artists of this kind. (I am very glad that despite for all the ethos and emotional character of the text Stropnický's performance is sober and free of the exaggerated pathos that one often alas hears in actors reading Comenius.) The Rosa label has released *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* exactly one year after the death of the composer. What is more, the music is played on the organ of the church where the final leave-taking with Eben was held.

Luboš Stehlík

**Ensemble Moravia
Hindemith, Berg, Schumann,
Brahms**

Ensemble Moravia: Igor Františák - clarinet, Eliška Novotná-Gazdová - piano. Production: Igor Františák. Text: Cz., Eng. Recorded: Oct. 2006, concert hall of the House of Culture in Vítkovice, Ostrava. Released: 2007. TT: 52:07. DDD. 1 CD PRO Records 102.

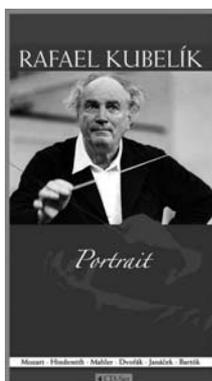
Projects in which the name of the outstanding Ostrava clarinetist Igor Františák figures are always distinctive for their interesting choice and arrangement of repertoire. This CD, which offers listeners a representative selection of pieces for clarinet and piano by four important German and Austrian composers, is no exception. Igor Františák is partnered here by the Ostrava pianist Eliška Novotná and we should add that this is not their debut album as a duo – seven years ago they made an excellent recording of Martinů's *Clarinet Sonata* for the Slovat Records label. It was already clear back then that this was an extremely fruitful combination of talents, and their new CD together offers further confirmation. In their interpretation Hindemith's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* literally lives and breathes good humour, the music flows limpidly and airily, with a peculiar light suggestion of melancholy. In Alban Berg's *Four Pieces op. 5* the two musicians cast almost incredible spells in sound: the colours of the two instruments merge into each other in such imperceptible and refined ways that we often have the sense that there is only one instrument playing. It is very rare indeed to hear so pregnant a performance of these Berg "pianissimo trifles". We also find perfect interplay and shared feeling for colour in the superbly "sung" or perhaps "narrated" *Fantasiesstücke op. 73* by R.Schumann. Here the clarinet often approaches the human voice in colour, while the piano is unmistakably Schumannesque in diction. The recording is crowned by the Brahms *Sonata in F minor, op. 120/1*, one of the composer's last works. The sonata places unusually high demands on the technical and expressive powers of both instrumentalists, but Igor Františák and Eliška Novotná are both so technically brilliantly equipped that they sound as if they at no point had any need to worry about technical problems. If in the Schumann *Fantasiesstücke* I had the sense that the clarinet was taking on the colour and expression of the human voice, in this piece it is the piano that seems to be doing so as well. Brahms's *Sonata* emerges as an intimate dialogue between two friends walking in a park on a sunny autumn day. The translucent mist in which Brahms music is veiled has countless subtle nuances of colour of the kind that we might expect from Debussy rather than the "sombre" Brahms. And the slow movement, in which we are aware simply of the calm and quiet passage of time, is among the most beautiful experiences that this recording provides.

Věroslav Němec

**Magdalena Kožená
Songs My Mother Taught Me
(Dvořák, Eben, Janáček,
Martinů, Novák, Rösler,
Schulhoff)**

Magdalena Kožená - mezzo soprano, Dorothea Röschmann - soprano, Malcolm Martineau - piano, Michael Freimuth - guitar. Production: Marita Prohmann. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: March 2007. Released: 2008. TT: 70:04. DDD. 1 CD Deutsche Grammophon 00289 477 6665.

We have reason to rejoice at every new title that **Magdalena Kožená** publishes with one of the most important of recording companies. And when the title in question involves a number of lesser-known works of Czech music, what is more in song repertoire, the occasion deserves even greater recognition. For me the clear high point of the new CD is the marvellously expressively treated cycle, *Fairy-tale of the Heart* by Vítězslav Novák. Indeed, it is my impression that the closer the pieces are to the genre of artistic songs, the more entirely perfect is the result. This also goes for Petr Eben's cycle *Songs for the Lute* with guitar accompaniment. While these have folk motifs and are based on old texts in four languages, the whole cycle is very tightly integrated and unified by carefully conceived stylisation. On the new CD these two cycles are framed in a selection from *Gypsy Melodies, Moravian Two-Part Songs and Evening Songs* by Antonín Dvořák, *Moravian Folk Poetry in Songs* by Leoš Janáček, *National Songs and Dances of the Těšín Region* by Erwin Schulhoff and Bohuslav Martinů's *Little Songs on Two Pages*. Beside each other here we have very different kinds of folk inspiration, with Dvořák's famous song *Když mne stará matka [When My Old Mother]* following straight after the Janáček and two *Moravian Two-Part Songs* in duet with **Dorothea Röschmann** inserted between the Novák and Martinů. In my view this CD definitely includes pioneering titles, but in terms of comparison with singers of the same category, superlatives are not always in order. One cannot help remembering that on her brilliant CD *Anne-Sophie von Otter* has all the *Gypsy Melodies*, naturally in German,



**Rafael Kubelík – Portrait
(Mozart, Hindemith, Mendelssohn,
Berlioz, Smetana, Dvořák, Mahler,
Janáček, Bartók, Schönberg)**

**Philharmonia Orchestra, Chicago
Symphony Orchestra, Wiener
Philharmoniker, Czech
Philharmonic, Rafael Kubelík –
conductor.**

Text: Eng., Ger. Recorded: 1946, 1958,
1950–1954, Chicago, London, Vienna.

Released: 2008. TT: 67:08, 70:22,
49:38, 69:28. ADD.

4 CD Membran Music 231668.

On the cover of this newly released “portrait” of **Rafael Kubelík** (1914–1996) we find a well-known photograph of the conductor taken when he was around seventy, but all the recordings on this CD are much earlier, from the years to 1946 to 1954 when Kubelík was forty. The choice of composers certainly corresponds to the music for which Kubelík was famous: these are the Czech composers Smetana, Dvořák, and Janáček, then Mozart and Mahler – and two classics of the 20th century, Hindemith and Bartók. They are mainly recordings made in the first years of Kubelík’s life as an emigrant, when he was working in London and Chicago. In the context of his extensive discography these are interesting historical documents, but it must be said that a truly representative “portrait” would have to include some more recent recordings. He conducted titles like Janáček’s *Symfonieta*, Mozart’s *Prague Symphony* or Mahler’s *First* several times, and the later versions are even better technically and musically. The Chicago recordings, which are here represented by Mozart’s *Prague*, Hindemith’s *Symphonic Metamorphoses*, Bartók’s *Music for Percussion and Celeste* and Schönberg’s *Five Orchestral Pieces*, have been among the least accessible of his recordings in this country and show the brilliant standard of this American Orchestra. Behind the recordings of the Kubelík with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** in London was the famous EMI producer W. Legge, who put this orchestra together from the best musicians directly for recording purposes, and then had

them record the most albums with the young Karajan, not yet in Berlin, and Otto Klemperer (both covering practically the whole basic repertoire.) Kubelík got his chance here too, and the high level of the players is evident in the *Overture and Dance from The Bartered Bride*, the *Overture to Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Dvořák’s *Eighth*. The recording of Janáček’s *Symfonieta* of 1946, recorded for EMI but still with the **Czech Philharmonic** in Prague, is particularly valuable historically. It is probably the first ever recording of this piece! And then we have what is evidently Kubelík’s first recording of Mahler, the *First Symphony* with the **Vienna Philharmonic** of 1954 – an interesting probe into the history of the “Vienna sound”. Kubelík’s more famous more recent recordings are relatively easily accessible on the Orfeo and Deutsche Grammophon labels, while these older recordings were published in the Testament series, but also by DECCA and EMI, and the American recordings originally came out on the Mercury label. They are moving documents of the conductor’s passionate musicality and refinement. This album cannot, however, substitute for an encounter with some of the more recent recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic or the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and this whole set cannot be considered an ideal portrait of Kubelík, but simply as an interesting view into the archives. The author of the accompanying text is anonymous, but gives a solid summary of the basic and fundamental issues. It would seem to be a reasonable guess that the authors of this compilation were simply looking around for recordings where they would have no technical difficulties or problems with copyright. As far as I know, this is the case with all the titles in this series and by this recording company. Sixty years ago people in Europe played so well that it is still interesting today. But not all the creations are so unique, and it is logical to turn to more recent recordings as well.

Jindřich Bálek

but wonderfully performed. Or there is the joint CD from B. Bonney and A. Kirschlager for Sony that includes a complete set of the *Moravian Two-Part Songs* – which is completely phenomenal and even won the Echo Klassik Prize. And Bernarda Fink made more of an impression on me in her capacity to capture Dvořák’s subtle lyricism and immediate emotional sensitivity. This is perhaps the most difficult aspect of Dvořák’s songs for the performer. The listener is often left asking whether operatic emotion is not overdone – a pitfall that makes the songs hard and potentially unrewarding for the singer. Then there is the choice from Leoš Janáček. If a singer with an operatically trained voice ventures into the field of folksong, there is always a bit of a risk – not everyone may care for the result. And I cannot help thinking that the choice on the album *Love Songs* of 2000 sounded more natural in the lyrical passages and rather more brilliant in the fast passages. The folksong *Kebych bola jahodů* would be better in my view as a distinctively individual bonus than as the introductory piece. And Schulhoff’s song *Pasala volky* is transformed here into no more than a witty theatrical etude. In this context even the overall title *Songs My Mother Taught Me* seems slightly misleading, for the CD gives the impression of vocal virtuosity rather than the “maternal touch”. The CD booklet might also have given us something other than sympathetic personal declarations of faith from the singer and a few basic pieces of information. Altogether the album raises a series of more general questions: ought we to rejoice that out one real world-famous singer has managed to smuggle a few pieces by Eben, Novák and Rösler into the Deutsche Grammophon catalogue, or lament that this singer is practically out of the price range for any Czech organisers or producers? Some of the repertoire compromises of the album perhaps make this question even more urgent. Otherwise, Malcolm Martineau is a great pianist and here we can speak not just of accompaniment, but of genuine shared creation of the individual songs. His remarkable musical empathy, poetic musicality and feeling are a very strong aspect of this recording. Magdalena Kožená lives up to the extraordinarily standard that she has set herself, and this is an entirely exceptional title on the world gramophone market.

Jindřich Bálek



Bohuslav Martinů
The Complete Music for Violin and
Orchestra 2-4 (Concerto da camera
H 285, Concerto for Violin and Piano
H 342, Czech Rhapsody H 307A,
Suite concertante H 276, H 276A,
Rhapsody-Concerto H 337, Violin
Concerto No. 1 H 226,
Violin Concerto No. 2 H 293)

Bohuslav Matoušek - violin and
viola, Czech Philharmonic,
Christopher Hogwood.

Production: Simon Perry, Zdeněk Zahradník. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr.
 Recorded: 2001-2005, Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2008. TT: 64:35, 68:49, 54:10. DDD. 3 CD Hyperion CDA67672, CDA67673, CDA67674.

The mere fact that the British Hyperion label has managed in less than a year to publish four CDs and so to enrich its catalogue – in a deliberate and very visible way – with the complete works of Bohuslav Martinů for violin and orchestra, is in itself very interesting. **Bohuslav Matoušek**, who in 2000 already recorded a four-CD complete set of the same composer's works for violin and piano with a Czech label, but to international acclaim, has literally fought his way through to his next, this time symphonic complete set, having to go through the whole process twice – once as initiator and essentially producer of a project that Supraphon then abandoned after the first CD, and a second time with a new company. Martinů will definitely not be lost in the Hyperion catalogue (the firm is clearly stronger and more far-sighted than Supraphon), where this admirable complete set is the major artistic achievement that he deserves, and no mere curiosity. It's a good thing that he has found a home there. CMQ (1/2008) has already reviewed the first part with the three double concertos from the turn of the 1930s/40s (for flute and violin and twice for two violins): as an exceptional recording, full of lucid and good-humoured music, infectiously light-footed and juicy, often radiating a unique palette of colours. From the beginning there could be no doubt about Matoušek's beautiful, chaste but at the same time suitably energetic and power-

ful sound – the same superlatives could be used for all four CDs in the project. Over the last year the remaining three titles have come out in succession. The series, which will evidently be coming out in a boxed edition for the Martinů jubilee, is unified by the style of the covers with reproductions of four different pictures of birches. They also have in common Matoušek's enthusiastic, highly individual and unostentatious erudition and the conductor's tried and tested, unifying and integrating understanding. It is to be expected that this model, durable performance will prove a standard for many years to come – and one hopes that the CDs will also lead to the inclusion in more ordinary repertoire of some hitherto less frequently played works. The second CD offers the *Concerto da camera*, written during the war for Paul Sacher and his Basel Chamber Orchestra. With its similar neo-Baroque stylistic grounding and its instrumental profile and sound, the piece perceptibly develops the line established in the *Double Concerto for Two String Orchestras, Piano and Timpani*, also written for Sacher – but this work is much more dramatic. Unlike most of the music in the complete set the other work on the second CD – *Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra* – dates from the 1950s. The difference is evident in the more massive symphonic sound, thematic material, development of the musical flow, typical sequences of chords, and correspondingly longer lyrical episodes. Here **Karel Košárek** is an equal partner. The *Czech Rhapsody*, the third item on the second CD, is an exception in the project because it is not an original opus but an orchestration of what was originally a chamber piece (violin and piano). It should be stressed, however, that Jiří Teml accomplished this in a very faithful spirit, perfectly mirroring the orchestral colours and techniques of Martinů as well as small typical details including for example his judgement in the use of a snare drum. Teml did not attempt any kind of mixing with his own ideas or updating with a contemporary aesthetics, but humbly served without giving the impression of plagiarism. Violinists can therefore be grateful to him for providing another rewarding concertante piece – a one-movement, ten-minute impressive piece with a marked element of virtuosity. Here too, then, Bohuslav Matoušek has space to deploy all his understanding of the music of Bohuslav Martinů in ideal proportions and constant transformations – cantilena, dazzling technique,

playfulness, characteristic use of syncopation, and a complexity in which the listener nonetheless never gets lost. The third CD is unique in two respects. It offers both versions of the piece entitled *Suite concertante for Violin and Orchestra*, and also a rare but masterly example of Matoušek's play on the viola. To look first at the two works with the same name: these are in fact quite different compositions and we do not know why the violinist Samuel Dushkin did not present the first version and why he asked the composer for a new piece. In this country Matoušek has premiered both versions – in 1999 he gave the first European performance of the second version and in 200 the first performance of the newly discovered first version. The CD does not, however, contain the fifth movement of the first version, which has so far been found only in uninstrumentated form. Aleš Březina, established for many years now as our key Martinů expert and the author of the remarkably substantial context illuminating accompanying text for all four CDs, inclines to the view that in this case it would not be a good thing for another composer to orchestrate the movement. In the first version that has a markedly complicated structure the second movement (*Meditation. Largo*) seems to come from another world. Matoušek ravishingly captures its poetry and perhaps its grief too, it is a beautiful cantilena in a pleasant deeper register. He rises in the same way to all the demands of the innumerable transformations in the movements with fast tempos. The two-movement *Rhapsody-Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*, a superb late work that is unique in the Czech composer's output for the use of this solo instrument, here emerges unambiguously and without exaggeration as the most beautiful of all Martinů's violin concertos. Matoušek's approach to the instrument is entirely unaffected, so that we forget about all the jokes made at the expense of violists, and all the derogatory comments about its limited sound, clumsiness and so on. Here (thanks also to the recording team of course) the viola is a resonant bearer of extraordinarily effectively melodious music, a voice with just a light nostalgic undertone, an instrument as mobile as the violin. The orchestra accompanies it with exceptional intensity of expression, and many places are truly glowing. The fourth CD, released in the autumn, completes the set with recordings of the *1st and 2nd Violin Concerto*. The first concerto from the composer's more down-to-earth period of the 1930s abounds

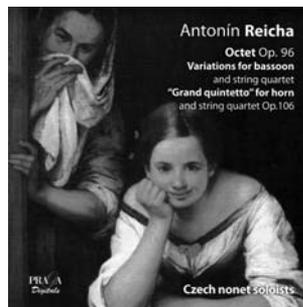


with unsentimental melodiousness, but still more in the frequent alternation of solo and orchestra with syncopated friskiness, staccato energy, light mischievousness and in the slow movement an intensifying singing quality. The second could not be more different! It is more symphonic, more fanciful here we here cantilenas and bucolic repose as for example in the *Oboe Concerto*. The recording has also managed to capture its quality of polyphonic multiple belts, its impressionist colour and the overflow of that colour. The conductor, who has a strong interest in 20th-century music, especially the Neo-Baroque and Neo-Classical, but whose background is in crucial ways anchored in early music, certainly doesn't have as much symphonic experience as some orchestral and operatic matadors. But he has other experiences and a musicality and breadth of vision that he has managed to exploit at the conductor's desk of the Philharmonic in an extraordinary way. Although it was perhaps a little surprising that he was engaged for the project given the contexts in which he is best known, the choice was not just an excellent move, but a triumph. To put it simply, Matoušek and **Christopher Hogwood** have shown a rare gift for making this music exceptionally accessible. Their conception gives the impression of complete agreement; it is entirely persuasive, pulsating, motoric and subtle, precise and distant from affectation. The intonation of the soloist is a hundred percent sure, the difficulty is not accentuated, everything breathes with good humour, trembles and dances as it should. Here the violin is the crystal line growing through the orchestral tissue with brilliant freedom and sometimes emerging out of it with a kind of pathos. In this complete set Martinů himself emerges as a composer who need have no difficulty in winning over listeners. And Bohuslav Matoušek has accomplished the task of a life time, for which he deserves admiration and honour.

Petr Veber

**Alfred Schnittke:
Chamber Music**
(Piano Trio, A Paganini for Solo Violin, Madrigal in memoriam Oleg Kagan for Solo Cello, Sonata for Piano No. 1)

The Janáček Trio (Helena Jiříková – violin, Marek Novák – cello, Markéta Janáčková – piano).



Antonín Rejcha
Octet op. 96, Variations for Bassoon and String Quartet, "Grand Quintetto" for French Horn and String Quartet

The Czech Nonet (Romana Zieglerová – violin, Vladimír Kroupa – viola, Simona Hečová – cello, Radovan Heč – double bass, Jiří Skuhra – flute, Aleš Huštoles – clarinet, Vladislav Borovka – oboe, Pavel Langpaul – bassoon, Vladimíra Klánková – French horn).

Text: Eng., Fr., Ger. Recorded: Apr. 2007, Studio Domovina, Prague. Released: 2008. TT: 70:44. DDD. 1 CD Praga Digitalis PRD/DSD 250 244 (distribution Classic).

Text: Eng., Fr., Ger. Recorded: Nov.-Dec. 2007, Martinů Hall, Prague. Released: 2008. TT: 74:51. SACD. 1 CD Praga Digitalis PRD/DSD 250 248 (distribution Classic).

For its second CD the young **Janáček Trio** has set itself a fundamentally more ambitious goal than for its first (Dvořák, Suk, Mozart). This is an album devoted to a single composer of the 20th century. In four chamber pieces written by Alfred Schnittke in the 1980s each member of the trio presents himself or herself as soloist, and then in the *Piano Trio* the ensemble comes together on a more equal ground. The pieces are difficult not just technically but in terms of expression. The listener is of course indifferent to whether a piece is difficult to play if the difficulty is just for difficulty's sake. In this respect the most communicative piece is *A Paganini* for solo violin, a spectacular but in no way meretricious piece on the level of Berio's *Sequenzas*. The hardest part of the Schnittke pieces presented on the CD is not their technical problems, but how they are understood and conveyed on the level of expression. This is a music full of "echoes" – the composer himself spoke of the polystylistic nature of his music. The performer, and with him the listener, is forced to cross a choppy terrain in which there is no time or space for rest and the only option is to keep going. The form is not held together by stylistic anchorage, but by the integrating overview of the performer. The ten-minute and longer pieces (or movements) demand the maximum concentration and at the same time detachment – personal engagement would mean disintegration. The music acquires meaning through its supra-personal attitude, the necessity – from which there is no escape – to rise above the masquerade of impulses and remain above them, to find something that has been quite profaned, even rejected in music but here is suddenly in a rare moment substantiated – i.e. "objectivism", pragmatism, neutrality. I don't know whether it is the Janáček Trio that has made me realise this, or whether Schnittke's music is simply written in a way that always makes such an approach inevitable, but either way there is an extremely spiritual message involved. As music that is both profound and also highly musical in content, all the pieces on this CD are also excellent elements in a fresh and unconventional repertoire.

Wanda Dobrovská

It is no accident that the Prague-born Antonín Rejcha (1770–1836), a protégé of Joseph Haydn and friend of Ludwig van Beethoven, should be one of the great figures of Czech music of the earlier 19th century. The inexorable filter of history has tested the quality of his music many times. He was rooted in Classicism, but responded with enthusiasm to the early phase of Romanticism, although its influences were reflected in his music unobtrusively and are most audible in the field of harmony, rhythm and metre. His enchanting chromaticisms are to be found for example on this album from the **Czech Nonet**. This marvellous ensemble – a great export article of Czech music – was founded in 1924 (!) and a succession of top musicians have passed through it. The current members of Nonet fully live up to the reputation of their predecessors. The musicians have a chance to show their widest range of expression in the *Octet* of 1807. Their homogeneity of tone, balance instrumental virtuosity and painstaking choice of tempos is admirable. (Bringing the violinist **Romana Zieglerová** in to perform with the ensemble was a very happy decision) The bassoon *Variations* (around 1818) and the horn *Quintet* (around 825) are fine pieces with imaginatively effective passages, but are rather overshadowed. The recording also has an excellent technical standard (direction: Jaroslav Rybář).

Luboš Stehlik



PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ © OSTRAVA DAYS

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The 16th Leoš Janáček International Competition

extra-ordinary member of the EMCY
(European Union of Music Competitions for Youth, Munich)



in **voice** 7 – 12 September 2009
Concert Hall, Faculty of Music of JAMU, Brno

1. The international interpretative competition is announced for voice. The applicants cannot exceed **28 years** of age on the opening day of the competition.
2. The competition consists of three rounds. The third round will be held in cooperation with a professional orchestra.
3. The competition repertoire:

1st Round

- a) 3 songs by Leoš Janáček of your choice (it is possible to include a part from "The Diary of One Who Disappeared")
- b) 1 aria or song, 17th – 18th century
- c) 1 folk song adapted by a composer from the performer's country (length of performance: 10 – 15 min)

2nd Round

- a) 3 songs by at least 2 composers: F. Schubert, R. Strauss, G. Mahler, H. Wolf, B. Martinů
- b) a song cycle or a part of a song cycle by a Czech composer written after 1950, length: 10 minutes at least; foreign participants can perform a work of art (written after 1950) by a composer of their country
- c) 1 concert or opera aria by W. A. Mozart of your choice (length of performance: 20 – 30 min)

3rd Round

a) own choice of one aria from operas by Leoš Janáček or Bohuslav Martinů from the following repertoire:

tenor	"The Cunning Little Vixen"	- scene of Schoolmaster from Act II "Bud'to mám těžšíště pohyblivé"
	"Fate"	- aria of Živný
	"The Greek Passion"	- aria of Manolios from Act IV, Scene II
bass	"The Cunning Little Vixen"	- final scene of Forester
		- scene of Harasta from Act III "Dež sem vandroval"
		- scene of Priest from Act II
soprano	"Jenůfa"	- aria of Jenůfa "Kde to jsem" (until the words "Matko milosrdenství")
	"The Cunning Little Vixen"	- scene of Bystřouška, the vixen "Kradla jsem"
	"Káfa Kabanová"	- final scene from Act III
	"Osud"	- aria of Míla from Act I
mezzo/alto	"The Cunning Little Vixen"	- scene of Zlatohrbítek, the fox "Nejsu lhář"
	"Jenůfa"	- scene of Kostelníčka from Act II "Co chvilá" ("In a Moment")
	"The Miracles of Mary"	- aria of Paskalina

b) one cantata or oratorio aria of 19th or 20th century of your choice from the following repertoire:

tenor	A. Dvořák	"Saint Ludmila"	- aria of Bořivoj No. 30 „O cestu ukaž mi...“
	L. Janáček	"Amarus", III	- „Prchly dny a léta...“ until the words „A v trávě hrála rosa...“
	A. Dvořák	"Saint Ludmila"	- aria of Peasant No. 10 „Sem rychle vesny květ...“
bass	A. Dvořák	"Stabat Mater"	- IV. Basso solo „Fac, ut ardeat cor meum...“
	A. Dvořák	"Saint Ludmila"	- aria of Ivan No. 12 „Do prachu s vámi...“
	A. Dvořák	"Saint Ludmila"	- aria of Ivan No. 20 „Já neklamal se...“
soprano	A. Dvořák	"Saint Ludmila"	- aria of Ludmila No. 14 „O dovol, o dovol...“
	A. Dvořák	"Bridal Shirt"	- aria of Bride „Žel bohu, žel, kde můj tatíček...“
mezzo/alto	A. Dvořák	"Stabat Mater"	- Alto solo IX – „Inflamatus“
	A. Dvořák	"Saint Ludmila"	- aria of Svatava No. 18 „O, v jaké šeré lesní stíny...“

c) an opera aria by G. Puccini or G. Verdi of own choice

All compositions must be performed by heart, in original key and in original language.

4. Prizes:
 - 1st prize CZK 100,000
 - 2nd prize CZK 70,000
 - 3rd prize CZK 40,000

The jury can give special awards for the best interpretation of the chosen compositions.

The financial awards above are subject to tax and/or other possible deductions in accordance with laws and regulations valid in the Czech Republic.

5. Legibly filled-in and signed applications together with a copy confirming paid administration fee have to be sent in by **29 May 2008**. Administration fee is CZK 1800 (not returnable). By 29 May 2009 it's also necessary to send curriculum vitae and photo of participant (integral part of application) by e-mail at the address: polaskova@jamu.cz

All information: <http://hf.jamu.cz/english/leos-janacek-international-competition/>

The competition will take place thanks to financial support from: Statutory City of Brno, Region of South Moravia, Ministry of Culture CZ

