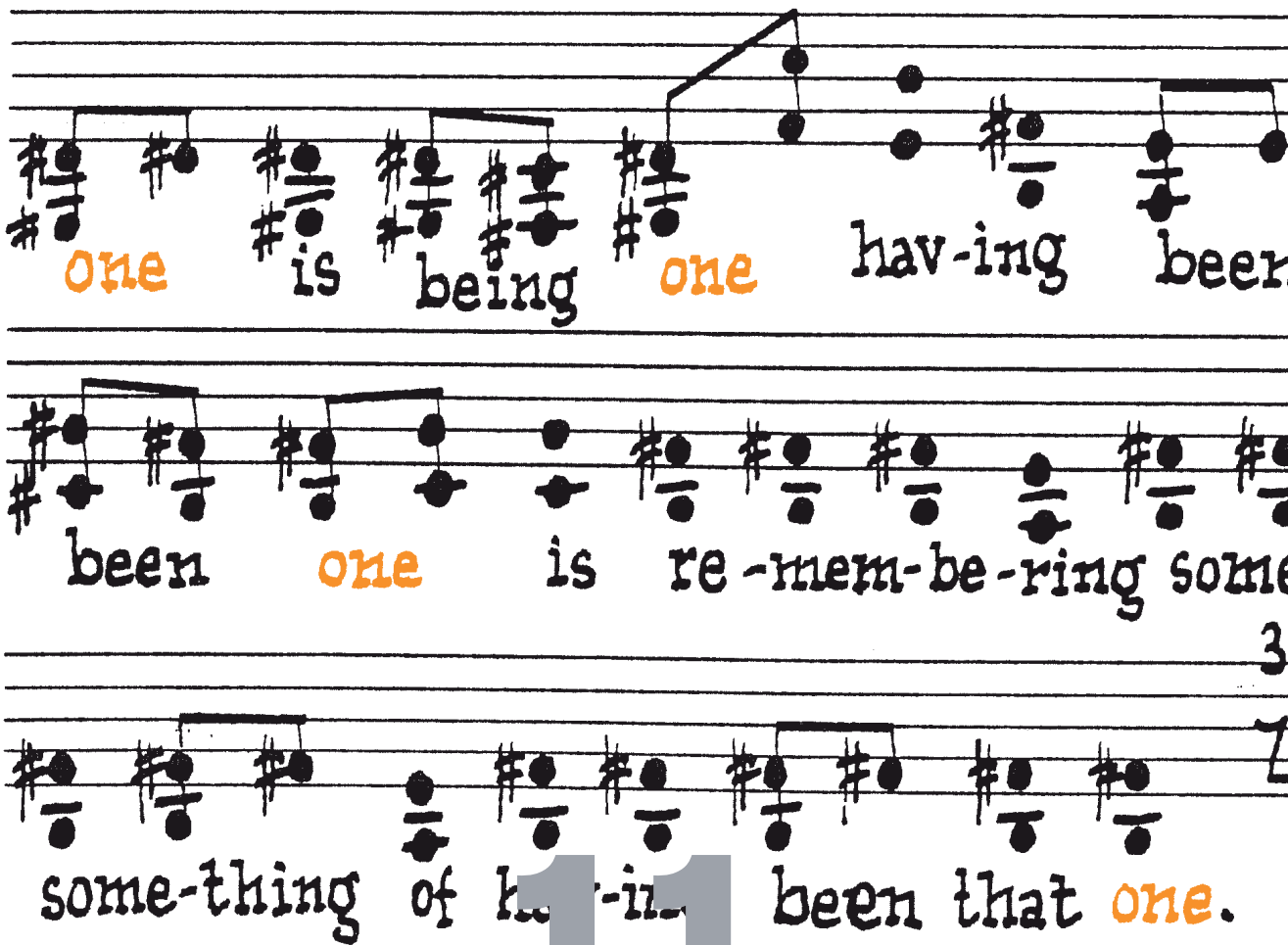
czech music *quarterly*



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Petr Kotík

Czech Philharmonic

Zemlinsky Quartet

The New Dvořák Edition

Národní divadlo

SEASON 2011/12
AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE OPERA

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Conductor: Marek Štryncl
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opera

It has evidently not escaped many lovers of classical music throughout the world that in recent years the leading Czech symphony orchestra has been struggling with problems of various kinds. For those of us who live in Prague it is hard to judge how far the internal problems of the Czech Philharmonic have affected its actual performances and prestige abroad – and the extent to which they have been registered outside the borders of ours state (we can only hope that they have been noticed less rather than more…). This magazine has never sought to sweep the problems and shortcomings of the Czech music scene under the carpet, and if we usually write about the positives in Czech music this is simple because they are more interesting and we believe more relevant for you, our readers. And so even this article on the internal problems of the Czech Philharmonic by the renowned music writer Jindřich Bálek comes at a time when hopes of a turn for the better are in fact higher than ever before.

I would also like to draw your attention to the title interview with the composer, conductor and flutist Petr Kotík. This year the biennial festival of contemporary music Ostrava Days, which Kotík founded, celebrates ten years of its existence. As organiser Kotík has put in an immense amount of work and evidently done more to raise the profile of the Czech contemporary music scene than anyone else. His remarkable work as a composer has therefore perhaps been a little overshadowed by these successes, and so we have devoted this interview primarily to Kotík the composer.

I wish you a beautiful summer

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by Petr Bakla

PETR KOTÍK: AS A COMPOSER, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LONER

Petr Kotík is one of the most original of Czech composers, although it could equally well be said that he is one of the most interesting American composers. Straddling the divide between European and American culture gives his work a peculiar breadth. Kotík's compositions are often long, much longer than is usual, but it is not the duration that imbues them with their undemonstrative, refined monumentality. Being aware of walking on thin ice, I would still say that Petr Kotík is a composer of dispassionate objectivity. Kotík's music is personal, but it is not "about Kotík." Kotík is striving not to impose himself on the listener, or on his music for that matter.

As a composer do you feel you are part of and continuing some kind of musical tradition?

Musical tradition? What do you mean by tradition? A style, a movement? Or, are you asking whether I have been a part of a group of artists? In Prague, a lot of emphasis has always been placed on tradition, but I think the question of tradition is a pseudo-issue. Similarly to the notion of "expressing oneself." I have never been interested in these questions, perhaps because they have no meaning. Everyone, always and everywhere is expressing himself, whatever he is doing. As far as tradition goes, it's automatically part of our personality and reveals itself in everything we do. The way we talk is based on tradition, for example – and the way we talk is the way we think, and the way we think is the way we act. The fact that we use a handkerchief to blow our nose is also a tradition. I don't think about tradition just as I don't think about breathing oxygen. And another thing: people who talk about tradition actually do not mean tradition; they're just parading their intellectual (and cultural) limitations, trying to impose them on everyone else.

What I meant more or less was a certain intellectual and cultural development, i.e. a tradition in the broader sense of the word – if I'm not mistaken you have said that you could not have done in Europe the kind of music you have written since moving to USA. Why not?

PHOTO: OCNM 6x

Naturally, if I'd stayed in Europe I couldn't have done what I've done in America. There are several reasons for that, although actually it comes down to just one thing: the environment in which one lives and works. It is related to what you call "intellectual and cultural development" but I would just call it an environment.

Each one of us is part of an intellectual, artistic and social environment that surrounds us. It provides the context for our existence and to some extent sets limits of what it's possible for us to do. Beethoven wouldn't have created his work if he had stayed in Bonn, just as Picasso wouldn't have done what he did in Barcelona and Dvořák wouldn't have written the New World Symphony and the American

String Quartet in Nelahozeves. In Prague they would have had Janáček locked up in an asylum (as Otakar Ševčík wanted), but fortunately the Brno environment allowed him to create great oeuvre, despite the continuous attempt in Prague, at the beginning of the century, to cripple his artistic output and silence him.

As far as my own environment (or in your words "intellectual and cultural development"), I must admit I've never thought much about it, whether we talk about Prague or New York. On the one hand I've always worked within a relatively narrow circle of composers and musicians – people I have had some understanding with, but on the other hand, I've always stood outside of any group, and that's the case since the start of my professional life. And the circle of my friends has never been local. At the beginning in the 1960s they were, in Prague, Šrámek, Rychlík, Komorous and also Nono and then during my yearly visits to the Warsaw Autumn Festival, I met Rzewski, Cardew, Kotonsky, Xenakis, Tomek, Hiller and others. I continued to make friends during my studies in Vienna (Schwertsik, Cage, von Biel) and this circle expanded later in America. But as a composer, I've always been a loner. Until recently, my work was only marginally accepted by the public. Even people I was close to, for example Rudolf Komorous, often raised their eyebrows when they saw what I was composing and also how I was composing it. I remember my mentor Vladimír Šrámek, when I first showed him my compositional method, he screamed at me: "You don't compose like this! This is no way to compose music!" When the New Music Group was formed in Prague in the mid-1960s – Kopelent, Lébl, Vostřák, Komorous, and others – I wasn't invited to join. I got used to that and never felt bad about it. Of course there were exceptions, for example Lejaren Hiller, at the end of the 1960s, invited me to come to America. There, I found far more people with whom I was able to communicate and who were supportive of my work. In America, there is a tendency to welcome surprises and unusual ideas with much greater openness to it than in Europe. That could be one of the attributes that separates America from Europe.

I'm interested in a shift of style that happened in your music at the beginning of the 1970s after you moved to USA. Apart from the fact that you started to compose for voices, it seems as if your compositions would loose any link with European new music. This link completely disappeared from your work. For example, you have abandoned the so called extended instrumental techniques that you used abundantly in the 1960s. What led you to work exclusively with the conventional, standard sound when writing for instruments? And which elements of your compositional conceptions from the 1960s survived into the 1970s? What did you abandoned and what emerged as new?

You are right, the music I started composing after my arrival in America is different from what I did in Europe. But the reason wasn't my relocation to America. I started to turn away from European new music much earlier, my musical thinking started to change about five years earlier, while I was studying in Vienna (1963-66). As far as the extended instrumental techniques are concerned, I didn't use them consciously as something "experimental" (for example *Spontano* from 1964 uses simple tone material). I never differentiated sound into "standard" and "extended". I'm part of the post-Cagean generation that from the beginning accepted the idea of sound emancipation, introduced by Cage in the 1940s. This approach was always part of my musical thinking. I never considered scratching on the string of a violin as something non-standard. When you add to it my tendency to express myself in a direct and simple way, you'll understand why I simplified the sound by just using conventional techniques.

For European new music in the beginning of the 1960s, what came out of Darmstadt was critical and most important. But already by the middle of the 1960s some young composers – and I was one of them – began to be critical toward Darmstadt. For example, I never traveled to Darmstadt (I was there only once for few days, by Stockhausen's invitation to collaborate on the performance of his *Mixtur*). At the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, when Darmstadt attracted me tremendously, I wasn't allowed to go – I couldn't get an exit visa. From the mid-1960s on, I lost interest. Otherwise I would have gone to Darmstadt every year.

I should mention Kurt Schwertsik, Cornelius Cardew and Frederic Rzewski those friends I felt close to at that time, and of course I greatly admired American composers like Cage, Feldman and La Monte Young. Those were people the Darmstadt scene looked down upon. When I returned from Vienna to Prague my attitude toward new music coming out of Darmstadt was already very negative. With this in mind, I founded the QUaX Ensemble. I worked with QUaX until I left for USA. My turning away from European new music was also the reason why, on my return to Prague in 1966, I didn't get involved in the activities of Musica viva pragensis (Kopelent, Vostřák, but also to some extent Komorous). By that time European new music, the kind Musica viva pragensis performed, no longer interested me.

My decision to relocate to America came as late as in autumn of '69 after the Prague authorities banned QUaX Ensemble from taking part in a concert series (a kind of a festival), planned by the (West) Berlin Akademie der Künste. The festival program was to be focused on Cornelius Cardew's London group AMM and my QUaX from Prague. I was twenty-seven and I realized I was already too old to

Petr Kotík
and the ensemble Ostravská banda

deal with problems like bans on travel abroad and so on, and I realized that the most important thing for me was to have peace and quiet to be able to work. At the end of '69, the cancellation of our concerts in Berlin made me realize that living in Czechoslovakia did not offer this kind of environment, so I had to get out.

I came to USA on a scholarship to work with the new music group at the University of New York at Buffalo (Center of the Creative and Performing Arts), directed by Lucas Foss and Lejaren Hiller. The repertoire that this relatively large and well-funded group was doing was a kind of cross between European and American new music, as it was done at the universities in the U.S., with a little bit of interesting music here and there. It was a disappointment for me. "I was doing more interesting things in Prague", I told my new friends right after I arrived. They agreed with me and this is what led to the start of the S.E.M. Ensemble a few months later. I began to compose intensively for the group. Logically, my pieces no longer had anything in common with European new music. Except for concerts that the S.E.M.

Ensemble gave on our frequent European tours, I lost contact with European new music after coming to America. By chance, I happened to hear some concerts while in Europe, but they mostly put me off to such an extent that I stopped being interested in European new music altogether. Today of course, the situation is completely different. Since the beginning of the 1990s the European scene has been very lively and interesting. But I remember, sometime back in the early 1980s, hearing a concert of young composers at the festival in Witten in Germany that was so awful that I felt that I was attending the funeral of music. All the composers on the program, one after another. When they came to take the bow, they looked avant-garde – from their hairstyles to their stylish shoes – but the music was a set of badly made diluted thirty year old academic clichés. This was my attitude toward European music back then.

I would say that my "shift in style," my critical attitude toward European new music emerged long before I came to America. (Just a small remark: the academic scene at music departments in the U.S. at that time – what gets taught in universities – was completely influenced by European new music, and if I had supported this musical style I would certainly have gotten a good job as a professor at one of the universities). What I would see as the main influence of America on myself is that my "shift in style," was more radical and that without America I wouldn't have written vocal compositions. I can't imagine that the music I started to compose at the beginning of the 1970s would have been tolerated in Europe, let alone supported. The chance that in Europe in the 1970s I would have found singers who would work with me so intensively, studying my extended duration compositions that are so demanding, and performing them without adequate pay – this chance would have been zero in Europe back then, and is probably still today.

You ask what I abandoned and what emerged as new in my music. I have never abandoned anything in my music, and on occasions I still go back to my method of the 1960s. As I'm sure you know, I have never rejected any of my earliest pieces and sometimes still perform them. I constantly come up with new elements, ideas or observations. They result from my experiences, from my continuous work and observations I am making all the time. My American experiences are very important, but so is my work in Ostrava. Without America, my music would certainly be different and the same can be said, to a certain extent, about Ostrava. My interaction with the young generation of composers I meet at Ostrava Days, and the opportunity to work with a large symphony orchestra, for example, are important Ostrava influences. One thing leads to another and it's impossible to give a simple explanation.

You are one of those quite rare composers who keep on insisting that their music expresses nothing, represents nothing, and isn't intended to bring up associations of any kind. Yet all the same you've created so many important pieces in which you set a text – and do so in a way that respects the coherence of the text and ensures its comprehensibility, so the text keeps its meaning. What do the texts you have chosen mean for your? What is actually your reason for setting text to music?

Are you suggesting that music doesn't express anything? Of course it does. But what is it – that is a different question. Certainly, music does not tell stories or relay some sort of message. Music is expressing itself – music, nothing more and nothing less, just as everything else ultimately expresses itself, whether it is a stone, or a human being or a tree. Naturally, music can be composed or listened to with ideas

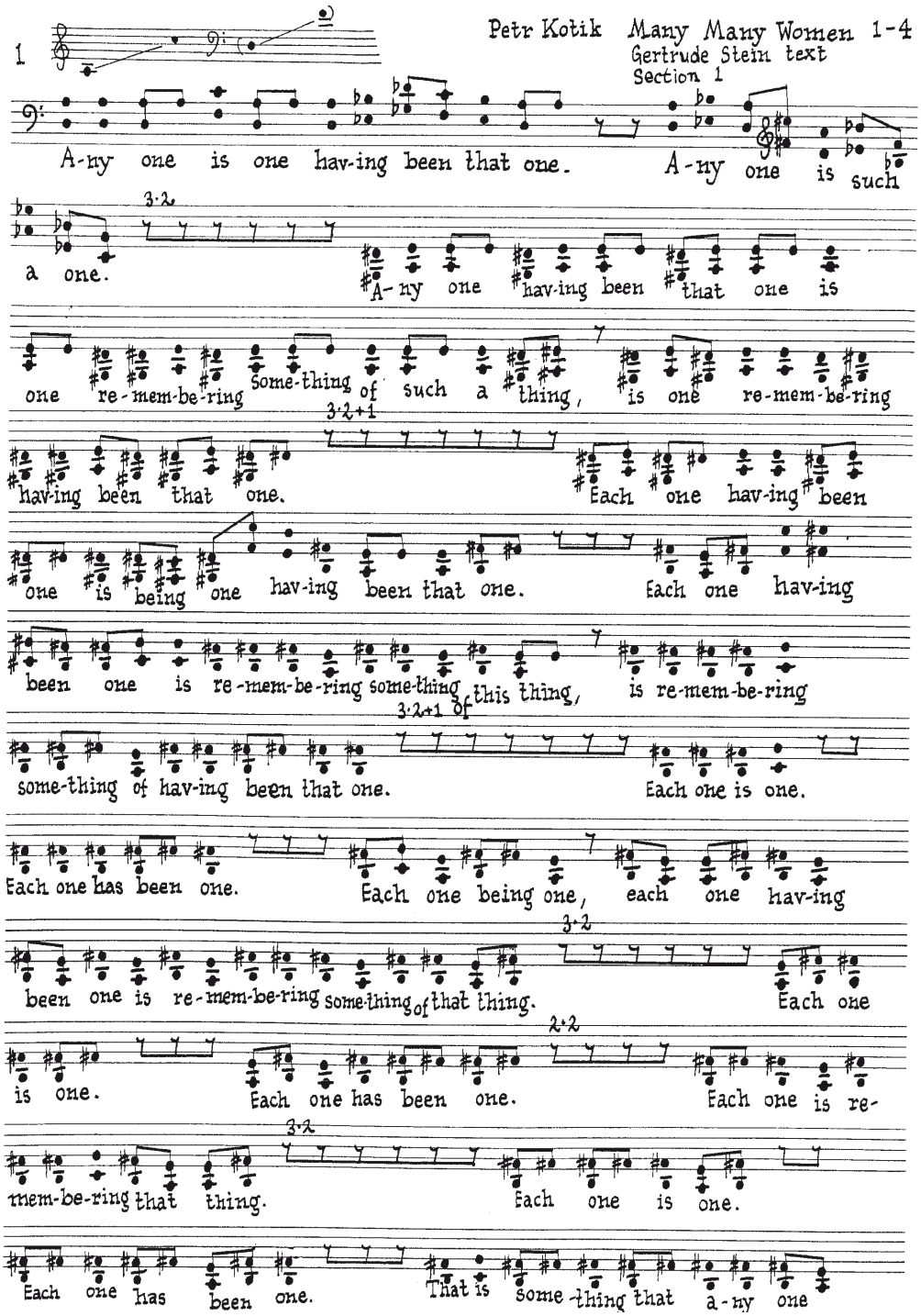
of some program, or a message, but that's another matter altogether. It is a personal view, which is not directly related to music as such. G sharp will always be G sharp and D will always remain D and to claim that this G sharp expresses some sort of content different from the content of that C sharp is just as naive as believing that a thunder storm with hail is a God's punishment. We can believe that, but it does not make any difference to the fact that a storm is a storm and G sharp is G sharp.

Music invokes a situation that can lead to meditation; a personal, poetic and intellectual meditation. It is a field of sound, which we perceive in a time space. Music is not universal, it is always specific, and the ability to "understand" or navigate in this sound field requires education. A real education, that comes through one's own initiative.

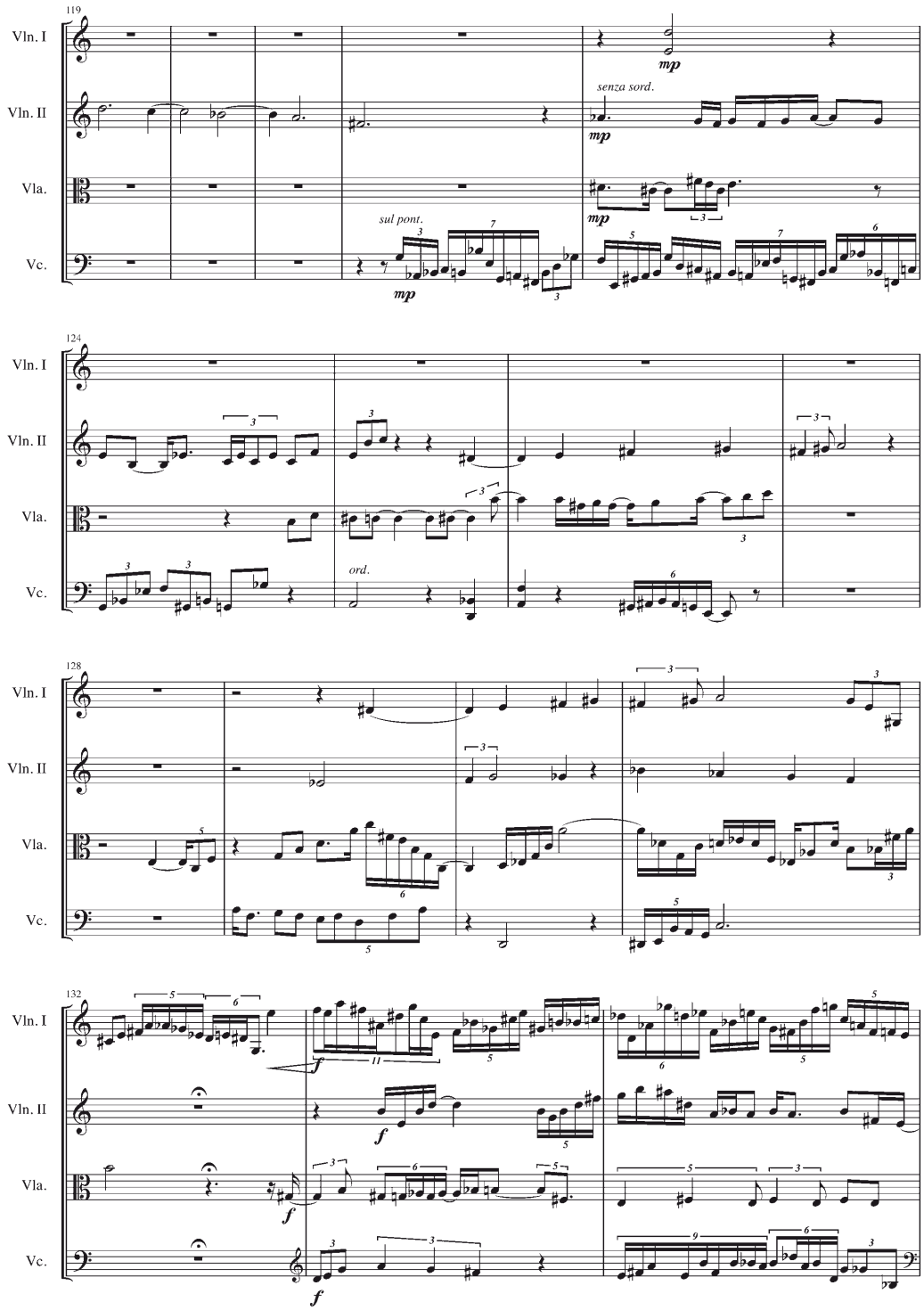
It is true that music as an abstract meditation is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western culture. This kind of music-listening originated in Germany and became the norm in our culture only recently, during Romanticism (in India, musical meditation exists for centuries, if not millennia). In France, for example, up to early 19th century, music was used only as an accompaniment to dancing or singing and the voices used text that expressed some kind of content. Apart from very brief opera overtures Rameau didn't write a single instrumental piece intended for performances with paying public. His orchestral suites are compiled from the dance sections of his operas. In 18th century, the French audiences would not have any idea what to do with purely instrumental music.

When I was confronted with the task of composing music for voice (not as a result of my initiative but because Julius Eastman joined the S.E. M. Ensemble, sometime in 1971 and I had to include voice in my new piece for the group), first I had to find a suitable text (vocal music starts with text, not notes; this is basic, one learns that in a counterpoint class for beginners). Although at the beginning of the seventies using voice without a text was common with composers such as Steve Reich and Philip Glass, I had no interest in doing such a thing. For me, the use of voice without text didn't make any sense. At the time I was on tour with the Buffalo group. We were in Albany, NY and I happened to be walking by a bookstore and as I entered, I saw a small paperback of lectures by Gertrude Stein. I bought the book and when I read a few sentences just before going to sleep that night, I realized that I'd found the text for my piece. And so the choice of text wasn't inspired by some "brilliant" idea; it just happened. What's more, back then I was only just starting to speak English and I only knew English and American literature from Czech translations. Toward the end of the period when I worked with texts by Gertrude Stein, I composed the six-hour long *Many Many Women* (1975–78) for six singers and six instruments. In this composition, as in all the others I composed at that time, not a single note was written with the slightest intention to illustrate the text, lending it color, or expressing its content. I find such an approach simplistic, almost primitive. For me the text and the music are two different entities.

The majority of musicologists believe that everything can be rationally analyzed, that each aspect in composer's work is a result of some deliberate decision, which can be deciphered. I have never understood the premises of musical analysis, it never made



Many Many Women (1975–1978), Section 1



String Quartet No. 1, Erinnerungen an Jan (2007–2009), page 8

much sense. Varèse completely rejected analysis. He claimed it murdered music. The problem is that the effort to find rational explanations creates the wrong frame of reference and that leads nowhere. Feldman started to write uncoordinated scores because of problem he had with his eyes (as a performer, he could not follow the score). This led to a whole new way of composing and performing that became at the time quite important. I myself, I started to write vocal music after meeting Julius Eastman and continued to write it because of the possibilities offered by the New York vocal scene. There are plenty of other, similar examples.

When, after a few years writing for voice I stopped working with Julius, I decided to either find other singers or stop composing for voice. I approached the vocal group Western Wind and few singers from the group agreed to collaborate with me after listening to recordings and looking at the scores. Gradually, these singers found others, which for me resulted in a period of intense working with voices. That lasted up to the beginning of the 1980s. I was not just lucky finding singers; this work was also a result of the high level of singing in New York. For someone to survive as a singer in New York, unless he or she makes it as a soloist, that person has to join one of the many church choirs. There are number of these choirs; practically every larger congregation has its own choir, which is employed several times a week and provides a small but regular income to its members. These choirs sing different material each time, practically without any rehearsal. They get together an hour before the service, go through difficult passages, and the rest is sight-read directly during the performance. These choirs are quite small and every singer is an important part of the whole. It's taken for granted that the singers can sight-read without mistakes. For every choir member, there are many other singers waiting to be called and able to replace anyone at a moment's notice, which means that singers who can't read well and who cannot sing without mistakes will not last very long. In New York, you can find a number of singers who are able to sight-read music as if they were instrumentalists. I can't imagine ever getting so far with my vocal pieces without these New York singers.

I've noticed that you consistently avoid making aesthetic judgments, either on your music or the music of other composers. What kind of criteria do you apply to your own music, what is it that makes a piece "come off" for you, in the sense of satisfying you? (I think people have to have some criteria of quality, if only to be able to recognize when a piece is finished or if it needs to be revised, which you yourself do very often.)

That's right, I avoid making judgments and I regard aesthetics, which concerns itself with the question of beauty, as a form of cultural ideology. This is what I am trying to avoid. The aesthetic concept of beauty is really connected with the idea of what people ought to like (or dislike). I can assure you that one can live and work perfectly well without the need for aesthetics. For centuries artists worked without the need for a theory of aesthetics and did well without it.

Rejecting aesthetics doesn't mean accepting everything. The question is what is it that forms a judgment. I base my conclusions on objective strategies, not on whether or not I like something. Not to mention that what I may like today I may not necessarily like tomorrow, without any consequences. But if I say this chair is

green and the next day I say it's yellow, it would at least mean I was color blind. What draws my interest when I listen to music is its originality and authenticity. Is the composer trying to make an impression on me, is he pandering to the public, or is he indifferent to these matters? There are a lot of details, apart from this, that either interest me or put me off. And then, I'm also interested in the form. Sometimes I encounter pieces that end before they actually began – i.e. they end in the moment when I start to listen with intensity. That irritates me. Having said that, I should point out that one must take one's own reactions with a grain of salt, because one can always be wrong. And then there is the fact that one composer's opinion about another composer is worthless. I discovered that long time ago. If it weren't so, then everything would be easy. One generation would simply identify who from the next generation would take over. This has never happened and when on occasion, an established composer identifies the one who is supposed to become important in the future, that judgment is always completely off.

Paula Cooper Gallery has been in existence for nearly 45 years and is one of the most successful in the world. Paula doesn't represent a single artist that she doesn't personally know well. There is a good reason for this – by looking at a painting, drawing or sculpture, one can come to an unreliable conclusion, especially when it is an unknown artist. A personal relationship is another matter. One can intuitively guess who the artist is and how serious he is – things that are not apparent by looking at the artwork for the first time.

I remember my father (the painter Jan Kotík) once told me that when people come to look at the work at his studio, they are almost always attracted to the weakest paintings, while leaving the strongest work on the side. This is probably why there have always been only a handful of collectors capable of identifying great works at the time they were created, even though all of it was available to the public for almost nothing. Sometime in 1951, when Morton Feldman first visited Robert Rauschenberg's studio and was drawn to one of his "black paintings," Rauschenberg said to him, "Why don't you buy it? I'll sell it for all the money you have in your pocket." Feldman had 16 dollars and some change and took the painting home.

I don't try to avoid my music, but I definitely don't spend time listening to it. And listening to my music doesn't automatically fill me with satisfaction, that's for sure – I don't recall the last time that happened. John Cage once told me that when he asked Duchamp how he came up with the idea of readymades, whether he liked the objects, or whether he related to them is some way, Duchamp answered no – it was neither liking nor disliking them, something in between. Cage believed that this kind ambiguous feeling toward the work– neither positive nor negative – is an indication that it may be a significant piece of art. It made me feel better about the way I look at my music and since then I've stopped worrying about it.

Except for very old pieces, I listen to my music with a certain intensity and tension. Pieces I wrote many years ago seem to me like someone else's works and I can listen to them with detachment, but pieces that are recent –I listen to those intensely. The process of composition, i.e. the path from nothing to the finished score is complicated and, at least in my case, it differs from one piece to another. I wrote *Many Many Women,* for example, with a pen. I didn't have to correct a single note. (Feldman also used to write with a pen. It made him concentrate harder.) But there are pieces, for example my string quartet from 2007, or my orchestral compositions

Petr Kotík with Kaija Saariaho and the Janáček Philharmonic

(from 1998–2005), which underwent several corrections. At the moment I'm working with the Janáček Philharmonic on a forthcoming performance of my piece *Fragment* and once again I've revised it slightly in two spots.

There is a certain direction I follow that leads me to the moment when I feel that the composition is finished. I work with a number of approaches to create the composition, from the processes of controlled chance to graphical drawings. In the final phase, and that may be the most important thing, I correct and edit the material I've produced so far. I have realized that in this phase what I'm really trying to do is to eliminate banalities. What constitutes a banality is a personal thing. What sounds banal to me might be interesting to someone else. But that's the way it is.

One might perhaps say that a composer's thinking takes place in an imagined triangular field defined by three points: system – intuition – chance. Where – in relation to these points – are your strategies as a composer heading?

Every one of us has a different approach, this is the reason why it is so difficult for one composer to criticize another. For you, the compositional process oscillates between the three points you have mentioned. Mozart would probably tell you that for him there are only two points: chance and the critique of what has come out of it. Using intuition must have been something natural for him, and not just in music – the age of Enlightenment (i.e. rational thought) was only just beginning – and compositional system played no role at that time. It was well established and there was no need to take it into account.

What is essential for me is to have a vision or an idea of what the new piece should be. It is sometimes so specific that it includes musicians who will perform it and the hall where the performance will take place. In the end, it may not turn out the way

I imagined, but that makes no difference. I need these specific images to get the right working impulse. My pieces for orchestra, *Fragment* and *Asymmetric Landing* were written for the orchestra I have in New York, so they use a relatively modest number of players. The idea of using two vibraphones was inspired by a piece by Alvin Lucier that I conducted at that time. On the other hand, *Variations for 3 Orchestras* was composed with the idea of the Janáček Philharmonic performing it and that's why it incorporates a large number of musicians. The whole strategy with which I approach composing depends on my vision of the resulting piece. The emergence of the final score is a continuous problem-solving process, where I have to find a way how to realize my vision economically and efficiently.

The process of chance is an integral part of my method, not something that stands separately. Chance operations I use have a direction and are partially controlled. I then take the result and proceed to work on my own. The way I compose could be called a game. It's a kind of a dialogue between the results of my method and my reaction to it, intuitively correcting, editing and introducing other elements in a quasi-improvised way. This result can be further processed by the method, which can set off a chain of more intuitive interventions. It's like moving a piece on the chessboard – a predictable move leads to an unpredictable reaction, which requires further action, etc.

You say that roughly from about the early 1990s, the centre of your interest became working with orchestra. What attracts you so much to the orchestra? If we take into account all the organizational and personal difficulties (not having adequate rehearsal time, the orchestra musicians having their own ideas on how proper music should be like), writing for orchestra can be a quite frustrating experience for a non-conformist composer like you. What rewards do you draw for this trouble?

Every one of us is either attracted or feels indifferent to something. It is really not possible to rationalize it. My involvement with orchestra and conducting, the way it all evolved wasn't simple and happened quite late in my life, when very few people would think of starting something as large-scale as that. Let me briefly describe it. And as to facing difficulties and problems, I never consider that when I decide to embark on a project, when I decide to do something. This may be the result of – and lots of people who know me say so – the fact that in my decision making, I fail to be "reasonable," which often gets me into unpleasant situations. I certainly don't think I am being courageous by behaving like this. When I start to plan something, I have to have first of all a clear vision of what I want this to be and where it ought to lead. And then there is my latent optimism and lack of "common sense." I don't make quick decisions, but when I commit myself to something, I go ahead and do it, regardless of what it may cost.

I began to work with orchestra almost twenty years ago and over those years I've become a conductor and come to a clear understanding of what orchestra is really about. It is a large ensemble, consisting of individuals that function as a single homogeneous organism. An orchestra is, in the first place, a professional entity – neither avant-garde nor conservative – and to be functional it depends on hierarchy of relationships and on the collective efforts of everyone, from the conductor to the last player in the string section. To perform as an orchestra musician is very demanding, and every minute that an orchestra is in session is not just financially very costly, but also requires a great deal of concentration and work from everyone

involved. The available time for preparing a performance depends on specific possibilities and these are different in each situation. Generally speaking, in today's environment, there is never enough rehearsal time, especially for studying new compositions. However, giving up isn't an option. Instead of a large number of rehearsals, one can program repeated performances for a new piece. The second, third time, the orchestra can already perform very well.

From a very early age, it was clear to my family and also to myself that I would become a musician. To this day, when I hear music, it is never an analytical listening. I perceive music as a succession of sounds, without a natural feeling and understanding for the principles of classical harmony that revolve around cadence. With this handicap, at the time that I began my life as a musician, I couldn't even think of studying composition. By the time I discovered the possibility of composing without regard to harmony I was already a very good flutist and doing music meant performing chamber music. Very often, the flute playing assumes the role of the first violin – it has to lead the ensemble, giving cues, tempos and so on. This is only a step from conducting.

From the time I was little, I was taken by my parents to the Czech Philharmonic concerts conducted by Karel Ančerl and Karel Šejna, and later, when I was studying at the conservatory, I used to go to concerts sometimes every day of the week. Although most of the concerts were orchestral, I was never interested in the orchestra as such. The sound of the late romantic orchestra was utterly uninteresting to me – the vibrato, the phrasing and all the clichés and pretensions to make a performance "musical" appalled me. Not that I rejected the orchestra practice, or had anything against it; it just didn't interest me the least. The lack of interest in the orchestra continued until I was fifty.

In 1991 I was asked to record *Atlas Eclipticalis* by John Cage for the German label Wergo. It was to be the first recording with all the 86 instruments. *Atlas* is a piece that consists of 86 solos and they can be performed together in any combination, including a solo performance. Up to then, *Atlas* had only been performed with a partial instrumentation. Just as it isn't necessary to have all the instruments, it is not necessary to play everything each part contains; only a section of the music can be used. My recording was done with a third of the players and we made three recordings, each time with a different material. Then, I mixed these three recordings into one, ending up with the sound of the complete 86-piece orchestra. The final mix sounded so stunning and it surprised me so much, that I decided to organize the complete orchestra and perform *Atlas Eclipticalis* at Carnegie Hall in the autumn of 1992 as a tribute to Cage, celebrating his eightieth birthday.

I was working on this concert for several months and apart from raising the funds (the budget was almost 100,000 dollars) I rehearsed with every musician separately. You can imagine how many rehearsals it took! When Cage unexpectedly died in August 1992, I asked David Tudor to perform Winter Music with us. This piece has been played simultaneously with Atlas Eclipticalis when Cage and Tudor performed *Atlas* back in the sixties. David Tudor was one of the most prominent pianists of his day and Cage's closest collaborator, but he had not appeared publicly as a pianist for 20 years. Instead, Tudor started to do electronic music. He practically invented what was later called live electronic music. At Carnegie, we performed *Atlas Eclipticalis* in two-hour version, not just with all the instruments but the whole piece from the beginning to

the end. It was in fact the premiere of the complete work, and also, thanks to the appearance of David Tudor, the concert became an international sensation, with listeners and reviews from across the U.S. as well as Europe and Japan.

An orchestra of 86 musicians does not sound like an enormous ensemble, but in this case, it includes nine percussion players, each with a large setup, three sets of timpani, three harps, three tubas and so on. We had a hard time fitting everyone on stage, despite the enormous size of the Carnegie Hall podium.

To stand in Carnegie Hall, in front of such an orchestra for two hours and conduct this wonderful piece totally changed my relationship to orchestra and from that moment on I considered nothing more important than to work with orchestra. This was the beginning of my conducting career and also, it resulted in me starting to compose for orchestra. Since the beginning of my professional life (and I mean the time when I was still at the conservatory and founded Musica viva pragensis), I have been continuously encountering organizational and personal troubles (to use your words). I have never paid any attention to such things and a prospect of facing more problems never discouraged me from doing what I believe is the right thing to do. After the debut of my New York orchestra at Carnegie Hall, it has never even occurred to me to worry about the difficulties I might be facing by continuing to organize and perform with an orchestra. But that's how it is with everything that I do.

(Translated by Anna Bryson and further edited by Petr Kotík)

Petr Kotík (*1942)

Composer, conductor and flutist. He studied in Prague (flute) and in Vienna (composition and flute). At the beginning of the 1960s founded the first Czech ensemble for new music Musica viva pragensis. His career was fundamentally influenced by his meeting with Vladimír Šrámek, who opened the way for Kotík to "be a composer" – Šrámek showed him how it was possible to think in categories other than the classical harmonic-melodic system, for which Kotík didn't have any interest or understanding at the time. In 1969 Kotík settled in USA, where in 1970 he founded the S.E.M. Ensemble (in 1992, S.E.M. expanded into an orchestra entitled The Orchestra of the S.E.M. Ensemble). For many years Kotík collaborated with John Cage, mainly performing his music (from the mid-1960s to Cage's death) as well as with other American experimental composers. Kotík's own music, however, developed autonomously without traces of imitating other composers. During 1970s, the basis of Kotík's work was free combination of independently composed voices or pairs of voices led in perfect intervals (parallel fifths, fourths and octaves). A striking linearity is also characteristic of Kotík's later works, already written into the standard score. Kotík has never been interested in the concept of psychologising the structure of musical form; his music is conceived more as an "object to be observed," he does not seek to manipulate the listener's emotions and his aim is not to "astound" with showy acoustic gestures – in this respect Petr Kotík's affinity with the American experimental scene is evident, although the character of Kotík's music is different form what one might expect from this association. Among his best-known pieces are Many Many Women (1976–78) on a text by Gertrude Stein, Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking (1978–81) on texts by R. Buckminster Fuller, but also the orchestral works Music in Two Movements (Fragment and Asymmetric Landing, 1998–2002) and Variations for 3 Orchestras (2005). In 2000 Kotík founded the Ostrava Center for New Music, and a year later the first biennial Ostrava Days took place. Currently it is the largest and most important festival of contemporary music on the Czech scene, and Kotík is its artistic director. Since the mid-2000, Kotík has been living on an alternating basis in New York and Ostrava.

by Jindřich Bálek

IS THE CZECH PHILHARMONIC SUCCEEDING IN STARTING A NEW ERA?

Recently the situation in the Czech Philharmonic seems to have been developing in a positive direction. But what are the reasons for the problems and the somewhat indecipherable conflicts of the last twenty years? There is no easy way of answering that question, but it is still a good thing to make the attempt from time to time. We therefore offer a kind of summary and brief recapitulation of the events that music lovers throughout the world have become vaguely aware of, and that we hope and trust will not be repeated. The errors of the past may also be a useful stimulus to thought on what needs to be changed for the future.

The final subscription concert of this Czech Philharmonic season offered an experience that was in its way symbolic – with regard both to future prospects and hangovers from the past. The Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck conducted Dvořák's *New World* remarkably well and in the first half the young Czech violinist and since September the new concert master of the Czech Philharmonic, Josef Špaček, took the solo part in Barber's *Violin Concerto*. Musically it was a very fine experience, but it was noticeable that the audience in the packed Rufolfinum hall was one that clapped after every movement of the Dvořák Symphony – which is something that probably ought not to be happening in a subscription series. This brings us to our first theme: does the orchestra still possess its own enduring "subscriber" public?

The next theme concerns the conductor Manfred Honeck himself. Alas it is typical that in the coming season this sympathetic Austrian, much respected in Prague, will be conducting just one concert. He used to be a permanent guest conductor with the CP and his concerts were among the most successful. A few years ago he was offered the post of principal conductor, but in the end he gave precedence to an offer from Pittsburgh, from an orchestra with a less august tradition but much greater economic resources, which is supported in all possible ways needed to put it in the top rank by its institutional umbrella

organisations. In Prague Honeck at least remained Principal Guest Conductor, but the rather long period of instability and rapid succession of directors of the last two decades has resulted in a situation in which sought-after conductors, who plan several years in advance, conduct the Czech Philharmonic only when they just happen to find a free date.

The third theme is more optimistic – or at least might be a source of hope. The performance of the New World Symphony was excellent and once again highlighted a key fact: it is the crowning works of Czech music that ultimately keep the orchestra's head above water – and on the global not just the domestic scene. When the orchestra played the New World at Prague castle a few weeks earlier as part of a benefit concert for Japan, the venue was sold out and 2 million crowns could be sent to a humanitarian account. What other Czech cultural institution can boast such cachet? And yet another piece of good news: the violinist Josef Špaček, son of one of the members of the Czech Philharmonic, may well prove truly strong and excellent in the post of concert master – a promise of change in the overall face of the orchestra, which many have complained is at best tired and at worst bored stiff and fed up. Of course, when you hear a good concert you tend to say: what's the problem?

I wouldn't want to write the history of the last two decades of the Czech Philharmonic as just the history of problems. In any case, it is important to realise that persistent problems rarely have a single cause. If we want to understand the events of the last twenty years, it is not enough to focus only on music and the approach to its performance. We have to grasp that the Czech Philharmonic is not just an orchestra but above all a traditional institution connected in dozens of ways to the overall cultural and social-political situation. The problems of the Czech Philharmonic can be viewed in four basic perspectives: 1) As the consequence of a situation in which culture has become marginal to public interest. 2) As the outcome of the incompetence of the Ministry of Culture as the orchestra's main funding body and organising institution. 3) As a reflection of the lack of good directors and cultural managers. 4) As a story of eternally unsatisfied orchestral players and consequence of excessively frequent changes of conductor. If the situation of the leading Czech orchestra is to change for the better on a long-term basis, then something fundamental must happen in all these areas. The situation today is definitely more hopeful than before, even though on the other hand we cannot be certain that the hope will be fulfilled.

The situation in society

Many problems arise simply from the fact that culture has been relegated to the margins of social interest. The budget of the Ministry of Culture is a mere 0.5 percent of the state budget and the pay rates of orchestral players are calculated on a scale similar to that of civil servants. In the media you will find no information at all on many cultural institutions; in most cases they are underfunded, lack social prestige and so also lack the necessary corrective social feedback represented by healthy critical but also competent interest from journalists (reviewers etc.).
No one works well in this atmosphere and as is well known, paradoxically before 1989 the Czech Philharmonic had more of a place in the sunlight of social interest and prestige, when as a cultural representative of the state it also enjoyed certain privileges that it no longer has today. The new political elite has been fumbling and uncertain on the role of cultural institutions, and dealing with them either in a very amateur way or just with a view to profits and political point-scoring.
All the same, a general sense of the exceptional character of the tradition of the Czech Philharmonic has not disappeared, and so it attracts more attention than other Czech orchestras. But unfortunately, not usually on account of the music.

Ministers and directors

One of the basic problems lies in the antiquated mechanisms of decision-making and competences. The director of the Czech Philharmonic is appointed by the minister of culture, mostly on the basis of the recommendation of a selection committee which,


PHOTO: P. HAJSKÁ

The Rudolfinum Hall, seat of the Czech Philharmonic

however, he has no obligation to respect. The minister can also dismiss the director of the CP at any time. The Czech Philharmonic is a state budget organisation. A particular minister can help in many ways but can also do a great deal of damage, and the long-term calls from the cultural community for a properly qualified minister, junior ministers and civil servants have gone unheeded.

It is a general truth in the musical world that it is even harder to find a good director than a good conductor. Unfortunately the ability to lead a big institution in the cultural sphere demands experience that is hard to acquire in Czech conditions. The director of the Czech Philharmonic has a managerial position, but one with the salary and contract of a senior civil servant. He is statutorily responsible for everything but his real powers are not great. In the eyes of players and part of the public he is judged responsible for things over which in reality he has no influence. Directors are also expected ideally to have two things that are in practice mutually incompatible: international experience, contacts and outlook – and at the same time knowledge of and respect for antiquated Czech regulations. Experience has taught us, however, that it is not a good thing for the director of the Czech Philharmonic to have the powers of a private company manager: his

budget comes out of the pockets of tax-payers and he should not be able to make decisions that could definitively destroy the institution.

The orchestra and its conductors

Analysis of the orchestra itself and its players is the most difficult theme and relatively the most subjective. Very critical opinions provoke the most emotive responses. The CP has gained the reputation of rebels who are never satisfied, but also the reputation of an orchestra that dislikes adapting to the wishes of the conductor and is losing a professional approach to its work. The point most frequently made here, of course, is that the pay rates are too low to motivate players to first-class performances and force them to augment their income by taking all kinds of other work which then erodes what they can put into their CP performance.

All over the world, over the last twenty years principal conductors have been tending to stay in particular positions for ever shorter period, and have been travelling more. In this period the Czech Philharmonic has suffered particularly from having had no conductor ready to work with the orchestra systematically and intensively, including on core works of repertoire. In the euphoria following the return of democracy at the start of the 1990s, the players voted to have Gerd Albrecht as their principal conductor and not Jiří Bělohlávek. Naturally having no desire to wait around, Bělohlávek resigned from the position immediately in 1992, although Gerd Albrecht did not arrive to take over until 1993. This result was the first interregnum, characterised by a certain amount of anarchy and disputes exacerbated by weak directors. In the years 1990–1995 around five directors came and went.

In the newly open world after the change of regime, many thought that the Czech Philharmonic would have better opportunities and prospects with a foreign conductor. But the unbounded democratic spirit of the 1990s failed to produce good decisions and above all a good atmosphere in the orchestra. Internal and medialised disputes over the principal conductor Gerd Albrecht led in 1996 in his premature resignation, while the rights of the orchestra to vote on its principal conductor were removed from its statutes. Another interregnum ensued and the season relied on permanent guest conductors. Renewed calm and long-term vision were expected from both Vladimír Ashenazy, who was principal conductor in the years 1998–2003, and his successor Zdeněk Mácal (2003–2007). Both genuinely brought this for a while, but Ashkenazy was not at all interested in prolonging his contract and Mácal prematurely resigned for reasons that were not transparent from outside. Officially his decision was explained as a reaction to negative coverage in the papers, but as the author of the criticism concerned I can only laugh. Could any element in today's Czech press be more pitifully marginal than music reviews? The situation prompted yet more speculation on disputes between the director and the conductor, the conductor and the orchestra, and among the players themselves.

Czech Minister of Culture Jiří Besser and the conductor Jiří Bělohlávek signing the contract

PHOTO: MKČR

PHOTO: PETR HORNÍK

Members of the CP protesting

More to the point, the hitherto successful director of the orchestra Václav Riedlbauch wanted to find a new principal conductor fast – and Elijahu Inbal accepted the offer. Riedlbauch had been director of the CP from 2001 and in his first years there brought some stability to the institution. Inbal's appointment in 2007, however, coincided with the culmination of the biggest dispute between the players and the director – which was over interpretation of the new law on authorial rights. According to it the authorial rights belonged to the institution as a whole and not to individual players, which had been possible under the earlier law. The players accused Riedlbauch of wanting to take all the decisions himself without their input, and found many ways to show how little they trusted him. Although his first period in the post had been marked by stability, the end of his second period recalled the stormy nineties. Essentially, Riedelbauch was defending the standpoint of the Ministry of Culture against the players, but the minister gave him insufficient backing – and for almost a year the CP players boycotted recordings and radio broadcasts.

Chronic disputes and the long search for solutions

In 2008 the then minister of culture Václav Jehlička (although not bound to do so by law) finally announced the advertisement of the post of director of the CP. The minister was probably counting on a re-application from the existing director Václav Riedlbauch, but for personal reasons the latter finally decided not to put himself foward. The appointment committee eventually announced that no suitable candidate had applied and recommended that there be a repeat selection process to which Vladimír Darjanin might eventually apply. Despite this recommendation the minister simply immediately appointed Darjanin to the position.

After his appointment Vladimír Darjanin declared that he would never have stood as candidate against Riedlbauch and hinted at an agreement between them. The hand-over did not, however, go entirely smoothly. The political situation re-dealt the cards: Mirek Topolánek's government fell and Václav Riedlbauch became the minister of culture in Jan Fišer's provisional government.

In the meantime Darjanin had presented his new team in the management of the Czech Philharmonic. From the start he was a great favourite with the players, generously promising salary raises and trips to play on prestigious podiums. On the organisational side, however, he soon started making a great many rash and hasty changes. For inexplicable reasons in the middle of the season he dismissed the team that was organising successful concerts for students,

PHOTO: ČRo

David Mareček, new director of the CP

he outraged colleagues by his arrogant behaviour, and let it be known through the media that he thought the new principal conductor Inbal was too old for the job and he would be looking for someone else. Even those journalists who had not considered Inbal an ideal choice could not endorse such behaviour: if we make a contract with someone, we should not be questioning it even before the individual has had time to start fulfilling it. From the outset a major problematic point was that Darjanin was both director of the Czech Philharmonic and organiser of the new Dvořák's Prague Festival, which he had founded two years earlier. This, in addition to his inability to submit a balanced budget for the upcoming 2011–2012 season to the ministry of culture or to orientate himself in the rules applying to the operations of a state budget organisation, formed the grounds for his dismissal by the minister of culture Riedlbauch. The piquant spectacle of the former director of the Czech Philharmonic firing his immediate successor naturally prompted speculations in the public and roused passions among the players. "An unsuccessful former director revenging himself on his successful successor," was how many philharmonic players explained it.

It is nevertheless obvious that on becoming minister of culture Riedlbauch had no desire to fire Darjanin, and even when he later expressed dissatisfaction with some of the latter's actions, he would add that as former CP director he actually had "tied hands". He only decided to dismiss Darjanin as late as May 2010, when he had already been in the government for almost a year. This indirectly confirms the seriousness of the reasons for his unpopular decision to dismiss Darjanin. The latter skillfully exploited the unpopularity of the former director with the Czech Philharmonic, and so the otherwise vacillating players

immediately got up a petition and appeared at the director's side at an emotional press conference, demanding that the minister resign forthwith and the director stay on. Unfortunately, on the same wave of emotion on the day of the minister's decision they failed to play the second of two planned subscription concerts; the unsuspecting audience in the Rudolfinum Hall was faced with nothing but a reading of the petition. This episode, when the players turned their anger at the minister against their public, including many subscribers and foreign guests, was perhaps the unhappiest moment in the whole affair. Only it did not stop there.

Minister Riedlbauch's next step cannot be regarded as wise. To the post of interim director of the CP he appointed Václav Kasík, at that time the recently dismissed director of Czech Radio, and an untalented and incompetent man. This naturally increased the disgust of the Philharmonic musicians, who could now rely on more rational arguments. So at the stormy end of the 2010 season the players held protest concerts on the steps of the Rudolfinum with the placard, "We're not a back-hander sinecure for Mr. Kasík!". In June there were elections, the provisional government was dissolved and Jiří Besser became the new minister of culture.

Besser, who remains minister of culture today, is extremely unpopular with the cultural public and as the former mayor of the small town of Beroun and long-term functionary of the hockey club he is an easy target of often justified criticism. As regards tackling the situation in the Czech Philharmonic, however – a task he took up immediately after his appointment –, there is little to object to in principle in the steps he has taken. He quickly forced the interim director Kasík to resign, and in his place as new (interim) director installed his deputy minister Radek Zdráhal. Immediately in September he advertised for applications for a new director, and the successful candidate was the promising young David Mareček, up to that time director of the Brno Philharmonic. Together they approached the conductor Jiří Bělohlávek and brought off a feat that a few months before no one would have believed possible: shortly before Christmas they announced that from the next season but one the new principal conductor of the Czech Philharmonic would be Jiří Bělohlávek.

The minister made it clear that he intended to accept Bělohlávek's conditions for taking up the position, including demands for administrative changes and pay increases for the orchestral players. The signed agreement, however, for the moment concerns only artistic duties and number of concerts; we do not know the definitive form of the organisational changes and this will be the outcome of negotiations involving all sides. Will the principal conductor have the power to fire players or at least a right to demand this? Will new employment contracts differ in their terms to the current ones? Will the director at least in some situations be more powerful than the unions? Will it prove possible to create conditions favourable to long-term work on artistic growth in a friendly atmosphere? These are all questions that as yet remain unanswered. For the moment the prevailing atmosphere is that it all simply has to work out.

At all events, today the Czech Philharmonic is in a situation where hope of a better future is greater than in past years. Of course we are not at point zero, but it is less and less possible to rely on a glorious past and building a better future is a long haul. Healthy long-term planning of seasons is starting from scratch, however. The upcoming 2011 – 12 season is the result of the "provisional government" and whether the future will be brighter is still just a question of good faith. There is no doubt that under the artistic and personal aegis of Jiří Bělohlávek many things will go better, and I consider it a great human gesture that he is returning to the Philharmonic in this situation.

Many people are inclined to say that this kind of thing could only happen in this country. And most probably they are right. How can we achieve consistent above-average artistic performances when in terms of management and administration we often can't even bring up our standards to average? The world fame of Czech music is what has been saving the necks of Czech orchestras, but Antonín Dvořák really can't be expected to do it all on his own.

by Šárka Motalová

FREE RECONSTRUCTION OF FIRST EVER OPERA *LA DAFNE* HAS WORLD PREMIERE

PHOTO: JANA HALLOVÁ 3x

The Janáček Opera of the National Theatre Brno concluded the 2010/2011 theatre season in unconventional spirit – with a free reconstruction of *La Dafne* of 1598, regarded as the first opera ever. It was first performed in front of her Serene Highness the Archduchess of Tuscany in Florence, where it had been created in the circle of artists meeting in the palace of Count Corsi. Ottavio Rinucci's libretto on a story from Ovid's Metamorphoses has survived to this day. Only a few fragments of the music, by Jacopo Peri and Jacopo Corsi, have been preserved.

The idea of staging this work in a way inspired by the 16th century but also firmly connected with the present was the brainchild of the director and stage designer Rocc. "I have been playing with the idea of presenting this opera on stage since 2006 at the latest," says the author of the project. "La Dafne is an interesting theme concerning the beautiful nymph Daphne. It was clear to me that given the absence of surviving materials

a period reconstruction would be unthinkable. La Dafne is in a certain sense a lost work. My idea was that we could present a free reconstruction in the spirit of the surviving libretto with an eye to the present day. 400 years ago works were created as co-operative team efforts. On this basis I approached two composers: Vít Zouhar (*1966) and Tomáš Hanzlík (*1972, see CMQ 2/2007). Both compose operas on Baroque librettos. They call themselves neo-Baroque minimalist composers."
The authors and producers situated the new title on one of the stages of the Brno National Theatre – in the Mozart Festival Hall of the Reduta Theatre. One of the composers, Tomáš Hanzlík, explains: "We knew that the opera would not be classic proscenium-arch type production, but more a celebratory evening. We knew that there would be five singers and a small instrumental ensemble on stage." In the choice of stage design Rocc did not want literally to evoke the environment in which the work was originally presented, but just to allude to the mode of performance in the 16th century. "At that time the audience was not strictly separated from the performers," Rocc explains, "in our case the viewer's contact with the singer will sometimes be really very close." During the performance the audience is directly drawn into the drama.
"In the course of composition we had a sort of introductory rehearsal to get to know the singers," recounts composer Tomáš Hanzlík as he tells us more about how the production emerged. "All the National Opera Brno soloists engaged for Dafne would be able to make good livings from performing early music. They are very flexible. The quartet Andrea Priechodská (Daphne), Jana Wallingerová (Venus), Petr Levíček (Apollo) and David Nykl (Messenger) is augmented by the young German counter tenor Stefan Kunath (Ovid, Amor)."
At the time when La Dafne was first performed the stagers used improvised simple technology. "We are not modifying the Mozart hall in any way," says the director Rocc, "The atmosphere is provided by the form." The space is using chairs with white covers, and by the balcony of the Mozart Festival Hall there are five small stands for the singers (the soloists also sing as a choir). In front of the stands the "orchestra" is sited, i.e. an organ positive, cello, theorbo and a drum. The action takes place throughout the whole room, and the story line is further conveyed to the audience by the mime Satiro (Sergej Sanža). The lighting has been chosen with a view to the season of the year – candles enhance the light of sunset, directly behind the backs of the performers.
The production had its premiere on the 25th of June, followed by two further performances. In the new season La Dafne will be presented on the 29th and 30th of September 2011.

www.ndbrno.cz/opera/la-dafne

“THE BEST BRAHMS QUARTET IS FROM ZEMLINSKY”

Appearances at the Prague Spring, Concentus Moraviae, the EuroArt Praha Festival – for the Zemlinsky Quartet these are only a few stops on tours all over the world. Last year they won a competition in Bordeaux in France and before that they came third in London, where they also won the public’s prize. The quartet was formed back in 1994 (as the Penguin Quartet) and since 2005 (when it won 2nd place in the Prague Spring Competition) it has rejoiced in the name of the Austrian composer, who – as not everyone realises – wrote quartets as well. The quartet consists of František Souček, Petr Střížek, Petr Holman and Vladimír Fortin. I talked with the viola player Petr Holman.

You have just been performing in Japan; what was the occasion?
We were in Tokyo for a pretty original festival called Folle Journee, which translates as something like „Mad Day“. It’s an originally French project first organised in Nantes, and the idea is that in just one big cultural centre with a lot of concert halls concerts are played for a whole week from morning to night. In France for example 290 concerts were played over five days! In Tokyo the venue is even bigger and being able to play there was great publicity for us, because over the week there are so many outstanding ensembles performing and it is incredible how many people come to the concerts. I’ve a feeling that this year the event attracted more than a million!

So it's a kind of multiplex of concert halls?
You could put it that way. But the audiences are maybe even bigger than in a cinema, it's a really unusual sight. Every year the festival has some overall orientation, this time for example it was the great composers of Late Romanticism, and so we played quartets by Brahms, Zemlinsky and even Dvořák, and then sextets by Brahms and Schoenberg with the Pražák Quartet.

You've just been playing Schoenberg again in Vienna...
Yes, the Second String Quartet at a concert for the Schoenberg Foundation – this extraordinary work has a soprano in the third and fourth movements, and we performed it with the outstanding German singer Anna Maria Pammer.

You have appearances in many interesting places in your calendar. How does a young quartet progressively make it in this way?
It happens gradually, but overall it's a combination of several things: of course you have to play well, but also meet the right people – an older established quartet, good teachers and naturally agents... The most important people for us have probably been the Pražák Quartet and among teachers from abroad Walter Levin, the leader of the LaSalle Quartet for many years; he's a phenomenal teacher.

What about the agencies?
We decided we didn't want just one "general management", and so we have different agencies for different geographical areas. We have one agency in North America, one for the German-speaking countries, another for the French-speaking countries and so on... and now for example we're negotiating with agents for Spain and Portugal. In some ways we're only just now taking off... I guess we can still be classified as a young quartet. And if you win a competition, that gives you another impulse forward – thanks to winning in Bordeaux we got to better places in France and gained a new agency in Holland. And for example in Germany a few years ago we went to one agency that was only starting out but was developing an excellent profile; we're enthusiastic about the collaboration. And so from Japan we went straight to the traditional festival in Schwetzingen, which is a very prestigious event in Germany.

What about the Czech Republic?
Here we're represented by the agency EuroArt Praha. It was founded by the cellist Vladimír Leixner, an outstanding man, very gentlemanly, but he knew exactly what was needed. Generally – I don't like to say it, but

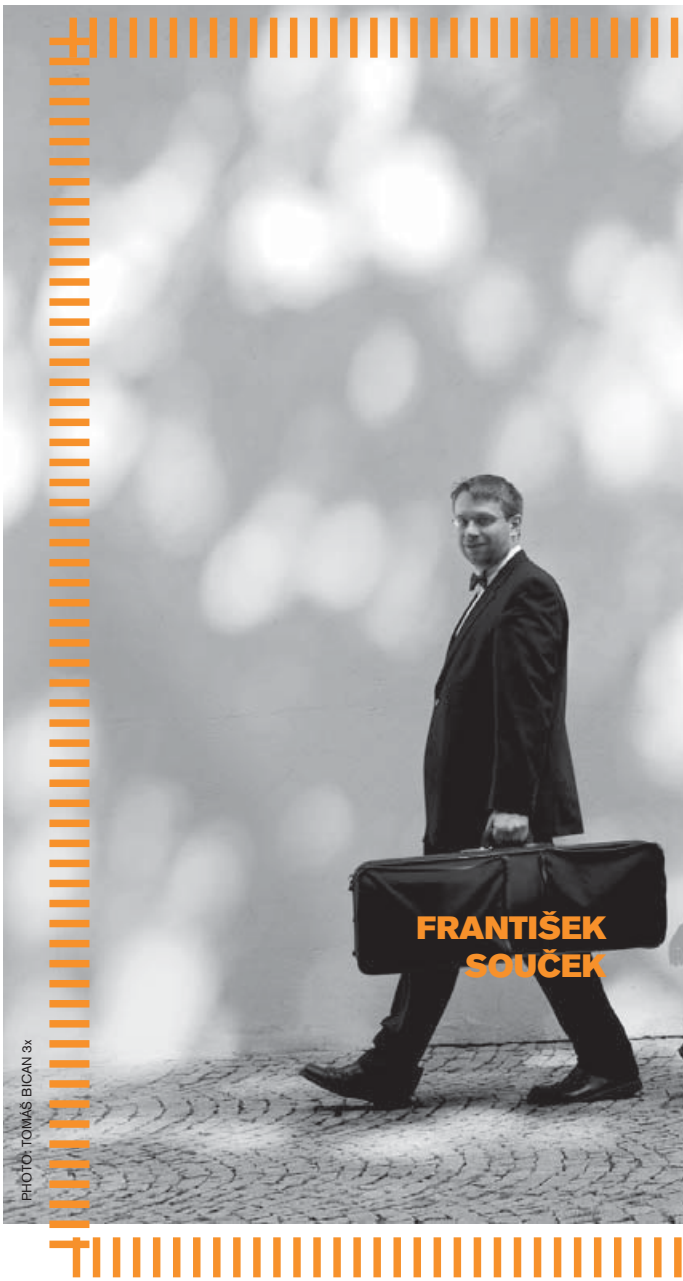


PHOTO: TOMÁŠ BIČAN 3x

a quartet that only played in this country wouldn't make enough to live. But of course we want to play here, and often accept fees that are several times lower, and the more foreign contacts we have, the more glaring this becomes. In fact it's getting harder and harder, but like the other quartets we always try to come to some agreement with Czech concert organisers.

But is it really true that the best fees are at the most prestigious venues? Or are they places that trade on their reputations, the fact that musicians want to play there, and so you have to earn the money somewhere else?

Certainly there are places like that. For example by US standards the fees are relatively low in New York City. It's just a prestigious matter to play there, and many people go there even for free just to be able to perform and get known there. All the agents are aware of this and have to accept it – though then again, it's a chance for them to invite the right important people to the concert. But even here there are exceptions, that's clear.

So what happens when you return for another performance?
If they invite you again, then it's either to the same or often to a better concert series. We are already

beginning to go back to places and we're playing in some concert halls for the second or third time. Our favourite place is Hawai, for instance, which probably isn't surprising (laughs). We've just been there for the second time and the next invitation is for a two-week tour involving not just concerts but also events in schools, courses, children's concerts; last time for instance we also played at the Hawaii Waldorf School and joined in one rehearsal with their children's orchestra.

If you count all your wives and children as well, then how big is the whole ensemble today?

At the moment there are fourteen of us. Four players plus four wives and a total of six children. By the way, all our wives are musicians. I don't think it's essential but it's a great help if a partner understands the musical traveling. And so far it's worked out. We travel quite a lot, but on the other hand when we're back home, then we really are at home. I know from my own experience that we're in a better situation in that respect than a successful banker, for example. Even with the travelling I often spend more time at home than someone like that.

You mentioned important teachers...

First and foremost it's Walter Levin. He is eighty-six now and a kind of world quartet guru – probably

eighty percent of quartets have studied with him at one point, and he's trained up an incredible number of ensembles. Incidentally, the legendary Alban Berg Quartet were his first pupils... It's said of him that as leader of LaSalle Quartet he wasn't the most brilliant of violinists, but as a teacher he is outstanding and the list of his pupils is incredible. We used to go to study with him in Basel, where whole quartet academies are organised, over around four years. In one year, for example, together with a few other young quartets we rehearsed and several times publicly performed all Beethoven's quartets. At the beginning we learned a lot from members of the Kocian Quartet, but then I have to mention above all the Pražák Quartet – who are still our mentors; what is known as a „fifth ear" is very important. To this day we still go to them from time to time to play something...

Of course, in the quartet you aren't all the same – do you have a division of roles?

That always somehow crystallises in every ensemble. It mostly ends up with the viola player being the organiser (laughs). The first violin ought to play the best, and so he needs most of all to practice, and as far as possible not to be roped into anything. And then for example our second violin is excellent at cooking – and musically in our group he is very much the force behind the emotional aspect of the thing. We draw his attention to a number of technical matters, but on the emotional side it's him who provokes us. It tends to be all one to cellists – but for example our cellist has created and runs our web pages.

Do you go to concerts? Do you listen to recordings?

In my view those are two different things. I would regard going to concerts as more important. Just like in any other profession – you have to know what is actually going on in your field. In this sense quartet life is a little unrewarding, because we don't usually meet other quartets on our travels, and only rarely have the chance to play at a festival where we can stay for maybe seven days in one place and there are other ensembles playing. But for quartet players these are favourite events just because we can meet colleagues and friends there. For example just now only one of us managed to find time to go to the Casals Quartet concert in Prague, and I turned up later at least to say hello after the concert... Recordings are a different matter. It's instructive to listen to the interpretations of different quartets, but when you have to play something, you need to gradually form your own opinion, and this shouldn't depend too much on other recordings.

Which are your own favourite quartets?

I think we're from the same tribe as the Pražák Quartet; we try to honour the score, but at the same time we want it to have our own hallmark, and above all we want the audience to like it – which ultimately is the main goal of any musician. If someone comes to a concert, it ought to give him an experience to remember. This isn't always a matter of technical perfection – I've heard perfectly played but very boring performances, while at other times I might have some technical reservations, but enjoy the concert wonderfully. I think that in this respect the Pražák Quartet is in a league of its own and for us they are a big example of the direction our quartet ought to take.

What about the composer whose name you have taken – Alexander Zemlinsky?

In his time Zemlinsky was considered a rather mediocre composer, but his development is extraordinarily interesting. He was an excellent teacher (incidentally, he was Schoenberg's only teacher), and also a great conductor – in his sixteen years in Prague he did a marvellous amount of work with a lasting impact. Zemlinsky started out in the romantic style – his well-known Lyric Symphony, it was all a little like Star Wars music, and his first quartet falls into this period too. I always say that it's the best Brahms quartet. Then in the next three quartet opuses you can see Zemlinsky evolving – he gradually transforms himself in the direction of the style of the Second Vienna School but just ultimately did not get as far as his lifelong friend Schoenberg. Zemlinsky's second quartet is Late Romantic and has a strong affinity with Suk's second quartet – also a half-hour one-movement affair on the very boundary of romanticism. The third and fourth quartets have a lot in common – but here we are already in a more modern sphere, sometimes slightly reminiscent of Bartók, but at other times we find cantabile melodies, colours, new sound possibilities. But for its time it continues to be relatively classical; Zemlinsky wasn't a born experimenter, and that is something we share. His is beautiful music-making for the listener, and in this sense we are entirely happy with the choice of name.

Are you in contact with the Alexander Zemlinsky Foundation in Vienna? How does it work?

It's a very well-run organisation with excellent people on its board. Incidentally, I think Zemlinsky's second wife lived right up to 1991, and so there are still some direct personal links there with the composer's closest family, as well as a very clear mission as to how the foundation must work and use the funds earned from copyright

from the performance of Zemlinsky's works. In 2005 when we were changing the name we decided to try and get this name officially from the Zemlinsky Foundation, and so we went to Vienna taking all our materials, CDs, reviews and recommendations, and it worked out. Then we developed a beautiful working relationship with the foundation, and we are very grateful for it – we play at the foundation's events, and the foundation is forthcoming when we here and there ask for support for one of our projects. The foundation even gave us one of its two awards for promotion of the work of Alexander Zemlinsky.

Are you also recording Zemlinsky's work?

Yes, of course. We have already recorded all the quartets: two have already been published and the other two will be released very soon. And recently a CD came out containing the cello sonata, two pieces for string quintet and a beautiful little piece for soprano and string sextet – all on the French label Praga Digitals.

You have also recorded early Schubert and Dvořák quartets. What did you get out of that?

That was the publisher's idea. They were looking for a way of introducing and presenting us on the market and in both cases it was ultimately a good choice. But it wasn't easy work, especially in the case of Dvořák. There is plenty of beautiful music there, but many places that are unclear in terms of form and not entirely transparent. As is well known the early quartets are incredibly long; we respected all the recommended cuts of the Burghauser critical edition (which makes our recording unique), and in this way we reduced some works to an acceptable length – but even so it was very hard work and a lot of playing. We came to appreciate the choice of repertoire even more when we won the Diapason d´Or for the Dvořák, and an unexpectedly large number of organisers wanted to include the early Schuberts in their concert programmes. There are eleven of these quartets: a few are played more often, but not every quartet has the others in its repertoire. Once again this helped to open doors for us.

www.zemlinskyquartet.cz

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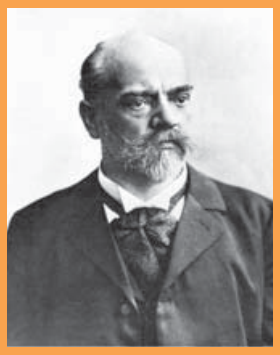
Jan Kachlík



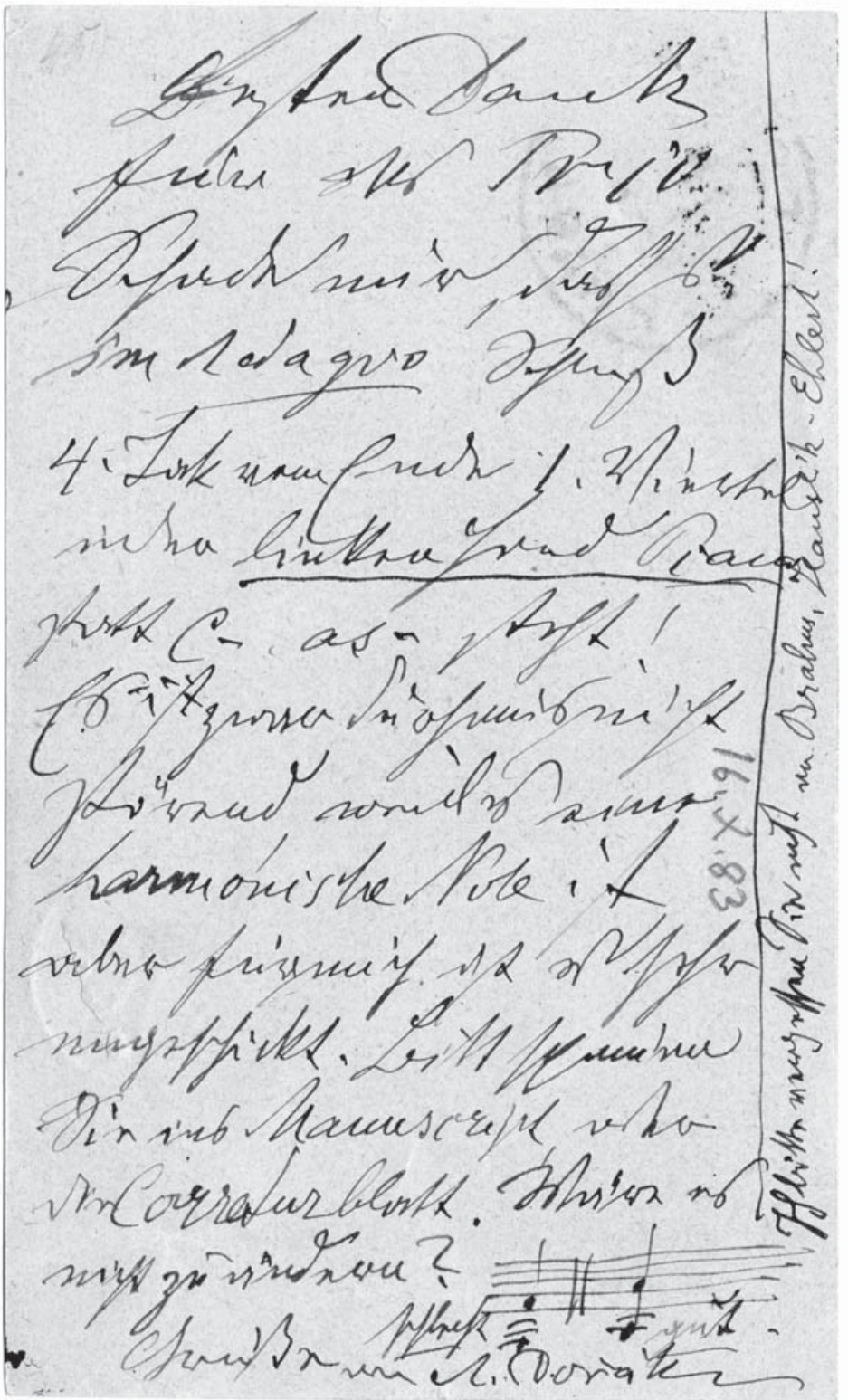
"IT ISN'T AT ALL RUINOUS [...], BUT TO ME IT IS VERY AWKWARD."

THE NEW COMPLETE EDITION OF THE WORKS OF DVOŘÁK STIMULATES NEW RESEARCH

Asked which Czech composer is the most famous throughout the world, the most performed and so on, I think most people would say – Dvořák! And if we were just to ask people to name a handful of the most famous composers generally, I doubt that Dvořák would fail to figure in plenty of the responses. After all, he is regularly to be found close to the top of hit parades of the world's composers, whether in terms of the number of performances of his best-known works or literally in the hit parades of sales of recordings or broadcasts by radio stations. Naturally, in the hit parades what appear are works like the *New World*, the *Cello Concerto in B minor,* the seventh *Humoresque* or the *American Quartet*, and not the great majority of his pieces. But in this respect Dvořák is no different from the other great classical composers.
These too are known mainly for just a few of their hits. In what then does Dvořák differ from the greatest composers of all time? The simple answer is: we know much less about him.

Compared to the literature on Dvořák, the specialist literature on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and others is not only more extensive but richer in themes. The current state of research on Dvořák seems to lag behind scholarship on the works of other composers comparable in importance, and this is reflected in a whole range of unaddressed themes and in the rather antiquated methods brought to bear on the subject. The reasons for the situation are many, and backwardness is also apparent in the basic conditions of scholarship, starting with the sources (some important funds are still uncatalogued), and the vexed issue of digitalisation, which unfortunately has still failed to arrive as far as Dvořák sources are concerned – this dismal state of affairs (with a few small exceptions) applies even to the

Dvořák's postcard to Fritz Simrock from 16th October 1883 (bellow and opposite)



[1] Among the earlier reports on this project, realised at the Department of Music History of the Ethnological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, see at least J. Gabrielová: *Antonín Dvořák From the Point of View of Contemporary Musicology and The New Complete Edition of his Works*. In: Czech Music Quarterly 2007, no. 2, pp. 32–35. This article continues on from the text cited and for this reason a considerable amount of basic and still valid information on the NDE project is not included here.

composer's autograph scores, not to speak of prints, copies and so on.

The project for a new complete edition (The New Dvořák Edition, NDE), which was conceived in Prague in 1999 on the basis of wide international discussion, has naturally been very much affected by this situation – much more so than its initiators originally intended[1]. On the other hand, the NDE project has prompted a range of subsidiary research projects that are bringing and will bring new findings on Dvořák's work in the long term, so creating the basis for a new "complete new edition" to replace the "old" and unsatisfactory one. The number and scope of as yet unaddressed or inadequately tackled themes contrasts sharply, however, with the small number of specialists who have been devoting themselves to these subjects on the appropriate academic level.

This diagnosis of certain backwardness in research is definitely not meant to apply to preceding generations of Dvořák scholars, who on the contrary deserve great honour. Without Boleslav Schnabel Kalenský (1867–1913), Otakar Šourek (1883–1956), Jarmil Burghauser (1921–1997) and many others who did so much to initiate and develop Dvořák research, we would be in a much worse position today. Nor should we overlook the important researchers from other countries who have contributed by their view of Dvořák from outside and their valuable archival studies in funds abroad. To stand for all let us mention John Clapham (1908–1992) and at least some of his successors, including such distinguished figures as Michael Beckerman, Klaus Döge, Hartmut Schick, and Jan Smaczny.

With the exception of most of his operas and a few other pieces Dvořák's music is relatively easily accessible. Almost all his works have been recorded, many of his pieces exist in dozens of different recordings made using scores and sheet music of all kinds, from the first prints to modern "urtext" editions which with greater or less success try to correct mistakes and other shortcomings in the preceding editions. Most of the recordings have been made on

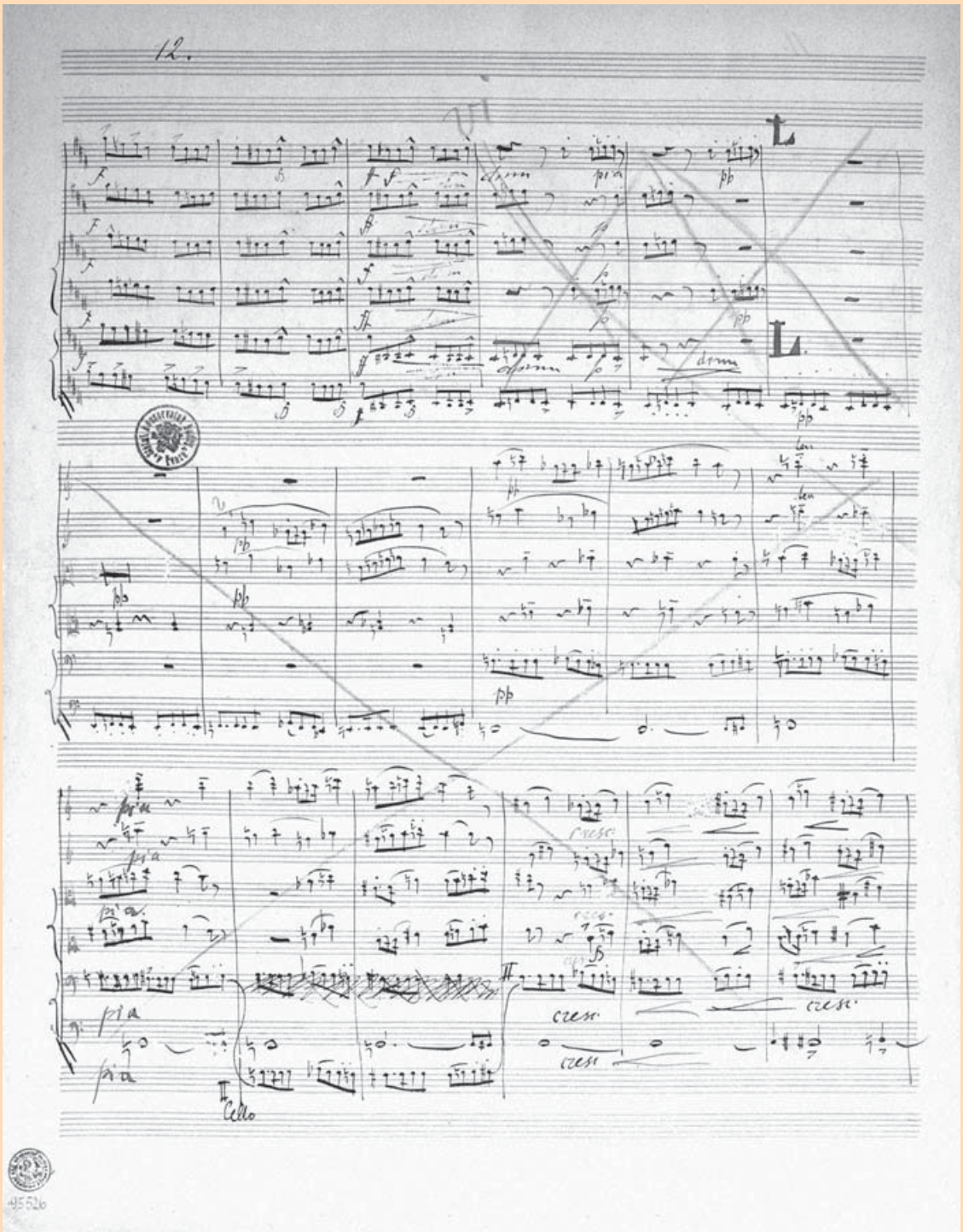
the basis of the Complete Critical Edition. This came out from 1955 in installments until at the end of the 1990s it was decided that rather than completing or revising it (roughly a tenth of the works remained to be published), a new complete edition would be embarked on.

The works of composers at the top of the "hit parade" today are already mostly accessible in second, new complete editions that compared to the first "old" editions (always meritorious but at the same time outdated) offer a more authentic picture of a composer's music. Usually several decades and in some cases as much as a century elapsed between the completion of an old edition and the beginning of the new. In the interval a large amount of research was produced on which the new edition usually drew abundantly. The peculiarity of the case of Dvořák and the pitfalls of having one edition follow hard on the heels of the first lie largely in the absence of this scholarly productive interlude.

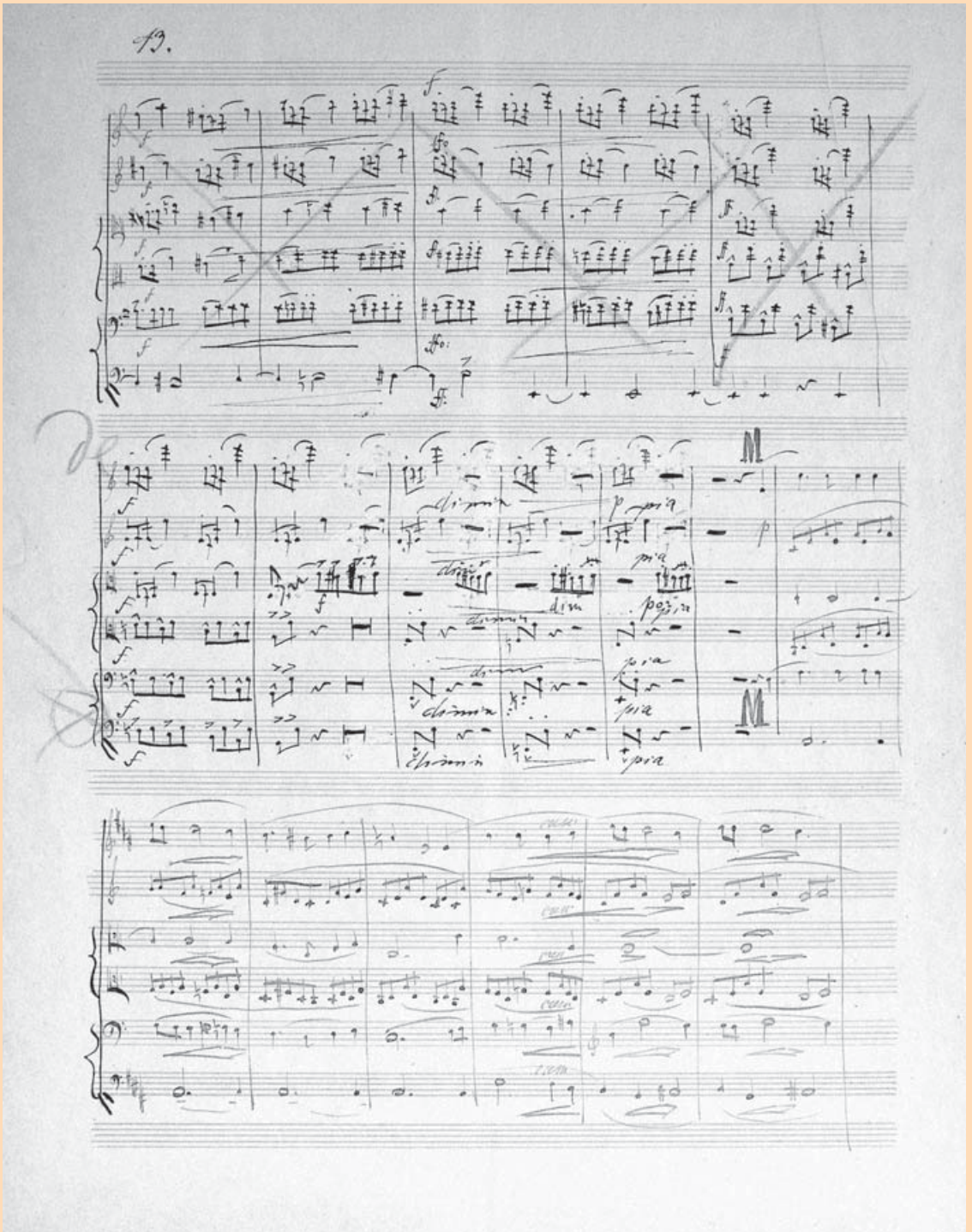
Comparable publishing projects on the works of other composers have usually started from the very foundations, i.e. pilot projects aimed at drawing up heuristics, catalogues and databases of selected groups of sources, studying the period reception of the works and so forth. Only on these foundations has the actual business of preparing and editing the volumes and then publishing them begun. The project of the New Dvořák Edition was not founded and grounded in this sense. One major reason was that the question of how to proceed with publication of Dvořák's oeuvre was raised at the end of the 1990s not by musicologists but by the publisher. On the other hand we have to admit that in the initial phases of the project the musicologists underestimated the character and size of all the gaps identified and the pain of Dvořák scholarship. It was only in the course of work on the first volumes that the impossibility of pragmatically speeding up the necessary research, limiting it to a few steps, or skipping it and simply publishing without the appropriate grounding in new findings became apparent.

While continuing with the preparation of selected works and volumes for publication, therefore, the NDE project has been engaging ever more systematically in basic research. The *work in progress* approach has been difficult and demanding in all aspects, but it does have certain benefits. Questions arising from the on-going preparation of the edition have been stimulating systematic research on particular problems. The number of important current working questions is now high; let us present at least a few examples:

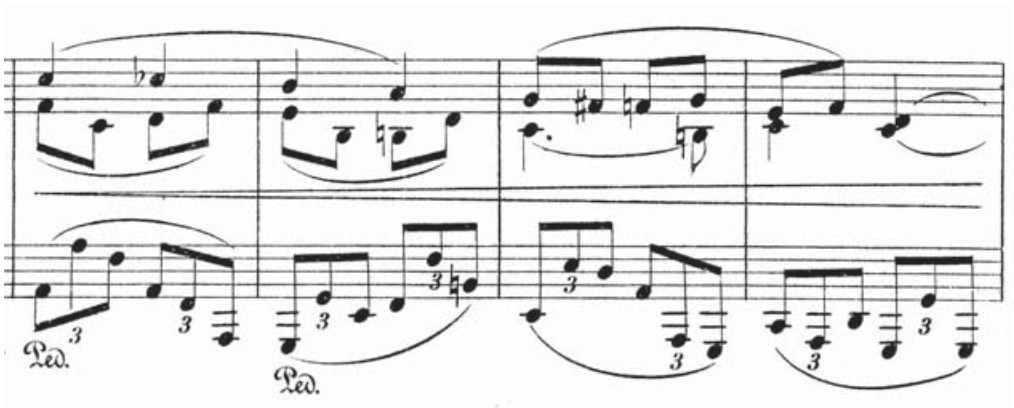
Why did Dvořák use some peculiar notation symbols in his autographs? What was their meaning? Why do many of the individual



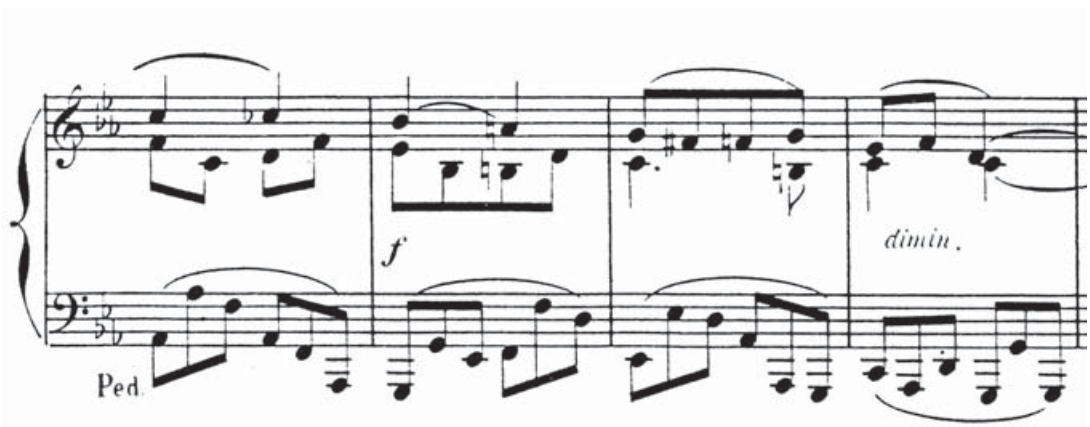
Dvořák revised his String Sextet in A major op. 48 shortly before its printed score was published by Simrock (1879). The reason for the revision was not self-criticism on the part of the composer, but comments by Simrock's editor Robert Keller. Dvořák's readiness to comply (as attested by a se-



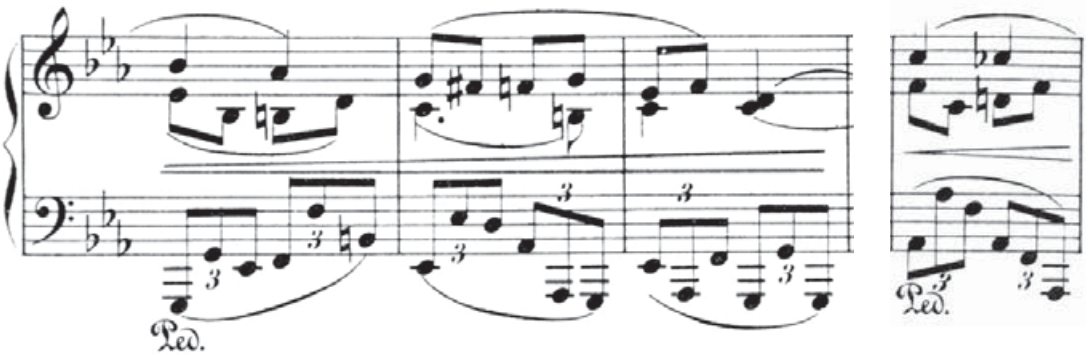
ries of cuts of whole passages in the autograph score) was undoubtedly a reflection of his then position as a composer just starting out on his career. In cases like this the New Dvořák Edition allows us a rare opportunity to see those passages of a piece that the composer himself cut out.



Prague 1885



Paris 1885



Prague 1893/1894

Dumka op. 12, no. 1 (bars 41–44) in different editions printed during the composer's lifetime. Until recently no one had tried to identify the divergences between the different printed scores that came out in the composer's lifetime (e.g. the different notes in bars 42 and 44 or differences in dynamics and phrasing). The growing numbers of newly catalogued editions prompted more and more questions. Which edition had been produced under the composer's supervision and which not? What were the materials on which each publication had been made? Which of them shows the highest level of authenticity?

peculiarities vanish in the print edition? What in an autograph may be regarded as sloppiness and what as deliberate? Who were the transcribers of a Dvořák work? Who wrote out the parts for orchestra players, opera singers? Who is concealed behind this or that cipher? Is this or that transcription reliable? Was it authorised by the composer? Can we or can we not find the authentic form of the composer's work in it? Who produced the piano vocal scores of Dvořák's operas, symphonies and other pieces? What was their quality? The authorship of more than thirty arrangements and four-handed arrangements is attributed directly to the composer, but in half of these cases we have no way of convincingly proving this. Why has the subject of Dvořák's arrangements been so little researched? Which books and scores did Dvořák read? What was in his library? What do we know about it? How many times did this or that piece come out in print in Dvořák's lifetime? Was it the composer who made the changes in the next edition or during proofing, or are they the work of the music editor in the publishing house?

Specialised studies on these and similar themes have yet to be produced in Dvořák scholarship, and so the NDE has started to engage in research of this type systematically. In addition to published outputs (see www.antonindvorak.org) internal databases and so on are being created. Our colleagues abroad are also contributing to research on various themes. One example of such fruitful collaboration was the holding of an international symposium *Das Schaffen Antonín Dvořáks aus der Perspektive der heutigen Musikphilologie – Werk, Aufführung, Überlieferung* in june 2008 at the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz in Germany. The collected papers from the symposium will be published this year.

The identification, listing and assessment of the first and early prints, which with the autographs comprise the most important sources for the composer's oeuvre, form a separate chapter of Dvořák research. It is becoming clear that the history of the publication of individual works is often no less rich and complex than the history of birth of these works. Not only were numerous changes made in the course of the printing process on the basis of discussions between the composer and music editor, but several times mistakes were discovered after publication.

"Simrock borrowed the parts of the G major quartet from us and has used them to have all the print errors corrected in all the parts that he had in the store-room", Josef Suk and Oskar Nedbal told Dvořák in a letter from Berlin (24th Oct. 1896). Finding a corrected edition mentioned in the letter and comparing it with one that contains "print errors" is not at all easy and involves detective rather than simply musicological work, for it would be naive to assume that Simrock, Dvořák's Berlin publisher, clearly labeled the corrected copies to distinguish them from the earlier uncorrected ones. To do that would have been to admit the error and would have been poor publicity. The strategy was indeed successful – differences between copies of apparently the same edition only began to be noticed during systematic research on the first and early prints more than a century after the deaths of Simrock and Dvořák.

In the autumn of 1883 Simrock printed Dvořák's *Piano Trio in F minor op. 65*. The composer confirmed receipt of the authorial copy with the words: "Warm thanks for the trio. It is just a pity that at the end of the Adagio, in the 4th bar before the end, in the first crotchet in the left hand of the piano, there is an A flat instead of C. It isn't at all ruinous, because it is a harmonic note, but to me it is very awkward. Please take a look at the manuscript or proof. Would it be possible

to change it?" Simrock reacted immediately (17th October 1883): "[...] why can't you look more closely at the final proof? You must always play a piece like this over again before it is printed! I shall have the A flat erased from the copies in the store and replaced by a C, and shall also have the plates corrected."

A whole series of such exchanges and other relevant problems can be found in the history of the publication of individual pieces by Dvořák. The editors of the old complete edition did not engage with the history of publication and similar themes. They chose a more straightforward and practical approach, but unfortunately the result was not just plenty of "awkward A flats" instead of correct Cs, but above all an overall somewhat distorted, tidied up picture of the composer's work.

If we imagine Dvořák's complete output as a mountain massif, we might say that in making the landscape accessible, the editors of the old complete edition built beautiful but rather artificial tourist viewing points. What is more, in line with their aesthetic criteria they used modern techniques to smooth and refine the massif itself: they replanted illogically located trees, moved some untidy boulders away, planted greenery where it seemed to be lacking, ironed out unevenness in the terrain and supplied missing signposts and place names. By contrast, the new phase of exploration of the massif is not taking the marked hiking trails and is keeping careful diary records of all the mysteries. Let us hope that the resulting gradual opening up of the authentic form of the "Dvořák National Park" will be at least in part as wild and adventurous an experience for visitors from the whole world as it is for the researchers who are currently engaged in discovering its hidden splendours.

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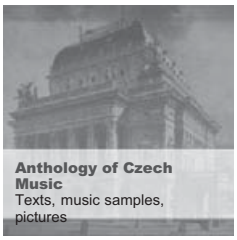

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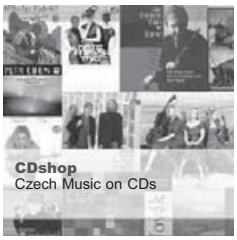

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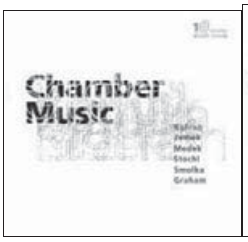

Ivan Poledňak, Musicologist an

We regret to announce that Monday,
musicologist, publicist and teacher Iva
music psychology, aesthetics, theory a
the Department of Musicology FF UP, Olomouc, and Charles University in Prague a.o.), he also contributed significantly to the several volumes of the Encyclopedia of Jazz and Modern Popular Music. In 2004 he published a comprehensive biography on Czech contemporary composer Jan Klusak. Last farewell to be held on Wednesday 14 October 2009 (11.00) in the great ceremonial hall of the crematorium in Prague-Strašnice.

Bohuslav Martinů Revisited 2009

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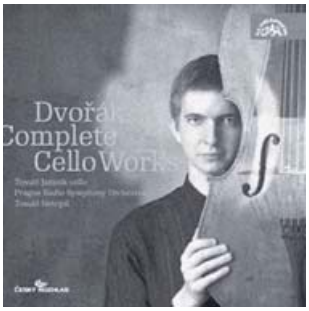

Antonín Dvořák

Concerto for Cello in B minor op. 104, Klid lesa [The Peace of the Forest], Rondo in G minor, Concerto for Cello in A major

Tomáš Jamník – cello,
Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra,
Tomáš Netopil – conductor.
Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr.
Recorded: Studio Domovina Prague, June/Sept. 2010. Released: 2010.
TT: 46:09, 43:33. DDD. 2 CD
Supraphon SU 4034-2.

In a recent interview (Opera+, 4th August 2010), **Tomáš Jamník** admitted that many people call his play „very lyrical" while he himself has been forced to realise that „in many works excessive lyricism is a disadvantage, and in some even a definite error". I confess that the first thing that occurred to me while listening to this recording (although I only recalled the interview subsequently), was that this young cellist had an exceptional lyrical approach. For example the entry of the solo part in the first movement is usually played almost „brutally", but Jamník holds back in such places, which actually intensifies the expressive melodic power of the instrument in subsequent passages. In the case of Dvořák's pieces he has therefore been able to capitalise on his „disadvantage" and at the same time show that the question of lyricism does not consist in slow tempo and the „drawing out" of phrases (as is evident from comparison with the eight recordings accessible to me just now), but in the modulation of tone, which Tomáš Jamník brings off in cantilena in a way that it is truly beautiful and – however clichéd this formulation may sound – infused with romantic feeling. It is clear that in this context he is at one with the conductor **Tomáš Netopil**, who provides him with all the space he needs for his melodic arches. The treatment of dynamics, colours and the tempi is brilliant here. Dvořák is supposed not to have liked the cello much – and to have said that the instrument squeaks in the upper register, grumbles in the lower and when playing in the middle register, no one can hear it. Yet it was for cello that he wrote his first instrumental concerto: admittedly this was a piece written at the wish of a friend, and as **Jan Kachlík** writes in the highly informative and stylistically very fine accompanying text, later „the composer would definitely be displeased with it" and would like to have „thoroughly reworked" it. All the same, Dvořák's last instrumental concerto was also for cello, and as we know it is one of the most beautiful concertos for cello ever written. The early *Concerto in A major* of 1865, which eventually seems to have found little favour either with Dvořák or its commissioner Ludvík Peer, was composed only in a version with piano accompaniment (it was found twenty years after Dvořák's death), and comes from the same period as his *1st Symphony „Zlonice Bells"*. It is testimony to the rapid flowering of the composer's talent at this period, when his ambitiousness of form was not yet fully matched by complete mastery of the principles of the form. His spontaneous inventiveness is not yet channelled in a disciplined way, although there are very beautiful and worthwhile moments in the concerto and it would be unjust to dismiss it as immature juvenilia. Jamník and Netopil's recording with the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra may well help to rehabilitate the *Concerto in A major*. They have chosen the orchestration by Jarmil Burghauser, which is closer to Dvořák's original material and his mode of orchestration than Günther Raphael's reworking of 1929, and they have also added some modifications and cuts of their own. In this version Dvořák's debut in the concertante field certainly need not remain a mere curiosity. The two minor pieces on the CD – the *Rondo in G minor* and *Klid lesa [The Peace of the Forest]*, originally for cello and piano and later instrumented by Dvořák give the impression of having been written for Jamník's „lyrical string", which the conductor and orchestra respect and support.

Vlasta Reittererová

Jan Dismas Zelenka

Officium defunctorum ZWV 47Requiem in D ZWV 46.

Collegium 1704,
Collegium Vocale 1704,
Václav Luks – conductor.
Text: Eng., Fr., Ger. Recorded June 2010. Released: 2011. DDD. 2 CD
Deutschlandradio Kultur, Accent, ACC 24244.

The most recent addition to the Zelenka discography of the ensemble **Collegium 1704** is this CD of the *Officium defunctorum ZWV 47* and *Requiem in D ZWV 46*. Both these pieces were written in 1733 on the occasion of the state mourning for the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland Frederick Augustus I, known as the Strong, who had died on the 1st of February of that year in Warsaw. To become King of Poland Frederick Augustus had to convert to the Catholic faith. At the elector's court in Dresden, however, the Catholic funeral services had to be preceded by Protestant rituals – so in Dresden the exequies for

reviews

the dead prince were held two and a half months after his death. For these Zelenka wrote three nocturnes (night prayers – invitatorium, lesson and responses on words of the psalms and texts chosen from the biblical Book of Job), performed on the 15th of April in the court Catholic church before the royal „castrum doloris" (not at night, but in the afternoon) and a requiem that was performed the next day. In the nocturnes una voce passages without accompaniment alternate with passages in which the instruments only support the voices, and solo numbers with rich instrumental accompaniment. Their movingly melancholy but by no means cold atmosphere, so typical of the Baroque, contrasts with the almost exultant instrumental introduction to the Requiem. The mass dedicated to the memory of the dead prince is also a celebration, thanks for his life and his expected resurrection. Here the instrument expressing pain and grief is the chalumeau – the instrument that best corresponded to the period idea of the "vox humana". This predecessor and for a time contemporary of the clarinet is often to be found in Zelenka's music (in Dresden and also in Vienna the chalumeau enjoyed great popularity), complementing the human voice in dialogic mode in emotionally intense passages in his sacred works and the school play Sub olea pacis, which he composed in 1723 for the coronation of Emperor Charles VI as King of Bohemia. Zelenka's almost painterly treatment of instrumental sound and his striking contrasts of colour and light are more reminiscent of Handel than of Bach but in terms of composition are entirely original. Their effect on the listener is similar to the visual effect of a masterly Baroque altar painting seen at close quarters: it is floating in the air, but not distanced from the listener or viewer. The Officium defunctorum and Requiem have survived only in fragmentary form in the Saxon Land Archive in Dresden and in the collection of Václav Jan Tomášek in the Czech Museum of Music in Prague. Their reconstruction for the purposes of this recording was carried out on the basis of existing materials by **Václav Luks.** The result is compact and coherent, and an outstanding recording. The list of performers printed at the end of the booklet just before pages reminding us that the recording was made with the support of the Festival de Musique de Sully & du Loiret and the Festival de La Chaise-Dieu, is worth attentive reading: it is a showcase of the best Czech musicians specialising in authentic performance of early music, starting with the conductor and soloists (**Hana Blažíková, Markéta Cukrová, Tomáš Král, Marián Krejčík**, the tenor from abroad **Sébastian Montl**), the choir (where in the spirit of the time when the pieces were written all the soloists also sing) and the orchestra led by **Lenka Torgersen** (most of the wind players are from abroad; the chalumeau is played by **Christian Leitherer** well known in the Czech Republic from a series of recordings and concerts). The booklet contains the texts of the pieces in four languages (Latin, English, German and French) and as many as three commentaries on them. The first, written by the leading German Zelenka specialist **Gerhard Poppe**, is devoted to the funeral ceremonies in honour of Frederick Augustus the Strong and their period context. The second, focused on Zelenka's approaches to composition and the reconstruction of the two works, is by Václav Luks. The third, concerned with the history of the officium defunctorum is from the pen of the singer **Hassan El-Dunia**, who as a member of the choir Schola Gregoriana Pragensis has a great deal of experience with its medievals roots. The technical standard of the recording is excellent: just one more reason for purchasing this CD.

Michaela Freernanová

Antonín Dvořák

Čert a Káča
The Devil and Kate

Michelle Breedt (Kate), Olga Romanko (Princess), Peter Straka (Jirka), Peter Mikuláš (Marbuel), Arutjun Kotchinian (Lucifer), Carsten Sabrowski (Devil's gatekeeper/ Devil's guard), Brigitte Schweizer (Chambermaid); Prague Chamber Choir, Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra of the West German Radio in Cologne, Gerd Albrecht.
Recorded Nov./Dec. 2007, released 2008. Text: Eng., Ger.
TT: 113:27. 2 CD
Orfeo C 777 082 H.

One of the positive paradoxes of Czech musical life and gramophone industry, and also a proof of the European importance of Czech opera, is the fact that the leading Dvořákian opera specialist today is the former principal conductor of the Czech Philharmonic **Gerd Albrecht** and that for years the publisher of the most recent recordings of Dvořák's operas has been the German label Orfeo d´Or. The most recent fruit of the co-operation between the conductor and the firm is this recording of *The Devil and Kate*, made in co-production with West German Radio in Cologne at the end of 2007. Albrecht started on the recording, staging and concert presentation of Dvořák's operas twenty years ago, when he made a benchmark recording of the first version of Dvořák's *Dimitrij* for Supraphon, with flawless casting of all the roles. By contrast, uneven casting, debatable cuts and the far from perfect play of the Czech Philharmonic disfigured his live recording of *Armida* for Orfeo (1995) and so this opera is still waiting for a definitive

recording. Armida was followed ten years ago by an excellent recording of Vanda that earned the quarterly German Gramophone Critics' Prize, and shares with the recording now reviewed the same choir and orchestra and also trio of singers in leading roles. Albrecht returned to Dvořák's operas in 2003 and 2005, when he made excellent recordings of The Jacobin and *The King and the Charcoal Burner* in Cologne, the studio recording of the latter opera winning the MIDEM prize. I should also mention the Hamburg recording of *The Wedding Shirt* (1991) and a complete recording of *St. Ludmila* (1999).

In this most recent example of Albrecht's encounter and struggle with Dvořák's operas, the title role of Kate is sung by **M. Breedt**, who is one of the permanent singers in Albrecht's Dvořákian team. She appeared in The King and the Charcoal Burner, Vanda and St. Ludmila and with every new recording her reputation as a Dvořákian singer and her command of Czech pronunciation grows. The role of the princess is taken not by the earlier advertised A. Denok but by **O. Romanko,** whom at the very least as regards pronunciation I found more convincing than in the title role of Vanda, in which she was unable to get rid of a heavy Russian accent. The role of shepherd is interpreted by the Zlín-born long-term member of the Zurich opera **P. Straka**, whose Jirka is close to Janáčekian roles in the declamation and non-cantabile side of his performance – which is something that is all to the good of the production. The role of Marbuel is entrusted to **P. Mikuláš**, who does not have the same ability to thunder diabolically as R. Novák in J. Pinkas's legendary recording (1981), but otherwise raises smiles and commands respect. **B. Schweizer** is a mistaken choice for the role of Chambermaid, but the demonically looking Armenian **A. Kotchinian** and **C. Sabrowski** are excellently cast in the roles of Lucifer and the Devil's Gatekeeper/Guard. The performance of the Prague Chamber Choir rehearsed by **J. Brych**, the Radio Choir rehearsed by **P. Ahmannem** and the Radio Symphony Orchestra from Cologne can be considered very good, especially in the ensemble and dance scenes.

The complete opera recording comes with a booklet that contains the libretto in Czech, German and English, a brief resume of the plot and portraits of the soloists and ensembles, but above all an accompanying text in which the author **M. Struck-Schloen** compares Jirka to Figaro and gives a provocative social and national analysis of the background to the libretto, not forgetting to emphasize the unique form of this opera in Dvořák's opera output or its genetic affinity with the early operas of Janáček. The booklet has not managed to avoid some sins against Czech diacritics, but these are fewer than usual, and there are a few factual errors.

For me the main handicap of the recording is a number of incomprehensible cuts that we find neither in Chalabala or Pinkas's recordings, nor in usual operatic stagings. In my view The Devil and Kate is a perfect jewel of an opera, which is waiting to be liberated from the clutches of morning school or afternoon family performances; it is a gem with literary and musical qualities that were already noticed by the critics when it was first presented, a work that is exceptionally tightly constructed, terse and conversationally snappy like few others, and abridgments and alterations should be considered criminal. I believe in the good intentions of Albrecht who has been fighting for at least the minimal concert presentation of Dvořák's operas beyond our Western borders, and so I am all the more puzzled by the cuts in the overture and of bars 243–249, 769–783 and 1273–1286 in the 2nd Act and bars 482–490, 535–555 and 678–682 of the 3rd Act. These sound forced and illogical even just on the ear, let alone in stage performance. The recordings of The King and the Charcoal Burner, Vanda and the Jacobin were all without cuts, and so I simply do not understand the conductor's decision to make these pointless interventions. This I regard as the only – if quite major – shortcoming of a recording that boasts excellent performances by the soloists and wonderfully singing choirs and an orchestra that you will savour in the ensemble, dance and closing scenes.

Martin Jemelka

Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague

Gunter Jacob

Capella Regia Praha, Robert Hugo.
Production: Matouš Vlčinský. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 2009. Released: 2009. TT:79:32. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3971-2.

Gunther Jacob is an unjustly half-forgotten composer of the first half of the 18th century, who achieved his prominent position among the Bohemian composers of the time by the route usual at the period for poor but musically talented boys. From Krajková near Sokolov, where he was born, he went as a chorister first to the Monastery in Kladruby and then to the Old Town Benedictine monastery in Prague. Here he started to compose as well as sing in the choir. In 1709 he joined the novitiate here, and became music prefect and later archivist of the monastery.

He studied law and theology at Prague University and in 1714 he was ordained as a priest. In later years he worked as a teacher in the service of Countess Lažanská in Manětín.

In 1728and 1729 he visited Vienna, where he was received at court. Apart from his other duties as a Benedictine monk he taught music – his most famous pupil was František Benda. Jacob's compositions were of more than local importance – copies of them have been preserved throughout Central Europe, and not only in hand-written manuscripts, but in published form printed in the Bohemian Lands and abroad. His first published work, *Anathema gratiarum,* a collection of psalms for the whole liturgical year, was written as an expression of gratitude for his recovery from the plague; it came out in Prague in 1714. Jacob's *Acratismus pro honore Dei* – a set of masses and requiems, was printed in Nuremberg in 1725. Interest in Jacob's music evidently sprang from his original compositional style, which on this new recording is demonstrated not just by his sacred work *Dixit Dominus* (from the collection *Anathema Gratiarum*, a setting of Psalm 109, in which he used natural French horns – instruments not yet commonly employed in Bohemia), *Missa Dei Fili*i (from the collection Acratismus pro honore Dei) and the St. Adalbert offertorium *Laetetur omne saeculum* (1719, likewise with French horns), but also by the song *Vezirius Turcicus*, with which Jacob celebrated the victory of Eugene of Savoy over the Turks in 1717. This "extra" fascinatingly documents both Jacob's versatility as a composer (many of the composers of sacred music of his time also wrote purely secular pieces for purposes of entertainment), and the skill of Robert Hugo, head of the Capella Regia Praha, who has managed a very effective reconstruction of a piece that has only survived in fragmentary form (this skill is essential to the work of musicians seriously concerned with early music today, and Robert Hugo has already demonstrated it in previous projects). The recording is supplemented by three concertos by Jacob's important German contemporary, the Bavarian Benedictine composer Valentin Rathgeber, from the collections *Chelys sonora* (Augsburg 1728) and *Sacrarium Quadriformae* (Augsburg 1738). In the recording of the *Missae Dei Filii* the second concerto, in the style of the time of its composition, replaces the offertorium.
Like all the top Czech early music ensembles today, **Capella Regia** consists of soloists: its members include for example **Hana Blažíková, Barbora Sojková, Petra Noskaiová, Sylva Čmugrová, Hasan El Dunia** and **Tomáš Král**; each of these musicians has already made many solo appearances not only at home but abroad. The same applies to the instrumental ensemble of the Capella Regia, whose concert master on this recording is the distinguished German violinist **Daniel Deuter;** one of the best Czech specialists on Baroque plucked instruments, **Jan Krejča**, plays the theorbo, while two of our best known Baroque horn players – **Václav Luks** (otherwise artistic director of the ensemble Collegium 1704) and **Miroslav Rovenský** play the natural French horns. The technical standard of the recording is high, and the booklet contains both an interestingly conceived, information packed text by Robert Hugo and the texts of the pieces *Dixit Dominus, Laetetur omne saeculum* and *Vezirius Turcicus.* This album deserves a place in the collection of anyone who is interested not just generally in the music of the 18th century, but in what is currently happening in the field of historically authentic performance in the Czech Republic.

Michaela Freemannová

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- The main activity of OSA is the collective rights management.

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Lípa Musica

International Music Festival

16th September – 15th October 2011

OPENING CONCERT
Friday 16th September at 7 p.m.
Crystal Culture Centre, Česká Lípa
The National Theatre Prague Chamber Orchestra
Eva Urbanová – soprano
Rastislav Štůr – conductor
„Opera Gala Concert" – B. Smetana, A. Dvořák, G. Verdi, G. Puccini, F. Cilea, P. Mascagni

Saturday 17th September at 8 p.m.
Church of St. Barbara, Zahrádky
„Concert with candles"
Franz Schubert – „The Poet and the Night"
Stanislav Předota – baritone
Petra Matějová – hammerklavier
Josef Pejchal – narrator
(hammerklavier: copy of the Anton Walter & Sohn, 1805 – Paul McNulty, Divišov, 2007)

Sunday 18th September at 5 p.m.
Church of St. Cross, Nový Oldřichov
Liběna Sequardtová – oboe
Jaroslav Tůma – organ

Thursday 22nd September at 7 p.m.
Basilica of All Saints, Česká Lípa
Old russian songs of 15th and 16th century
Drevnerusskij Raspev
Anatolij Grindenko – conductor (Russia)

Friday 23rd September at 7 p.m.
The Town Theatre, Jablonec nad Nisou
Old russian songs of 15th and 16th century
Drevnerusskij Raspev
Anatolij Grindenko – conductor (Russia)

Saturday 24th September at 7 p.m.
Basilica of Virgin Mary,
Filipov u Rumburka
Old russian songs of 15th and 16th century
Drevnerusskij Raspev
Anatolij Grindenko – conductor (Russia)

Sunday 25th September at 7 p.m.
Church of St. Salvator (Dušní Street), Prague 1
Old russian songs of 15th and 16th century
Drevnerusskij Raspev
Anatolij Grindenko – conductor (Russia)

Wednesday 28th September at 7 p.m.
Jirásek's Theatre, Česká Lípa
Visegrad Night – special event with four pianists from Visegrad Group
Ivo Kahánek (Czech Republic),
Matěj Arendárik (Slovakia),
Istvan Lajko (Hungary),
Łukasz Trepczyński (Poland)

Thursday 29th September at 7 p.m.
Chruch of St. Lawrence, Jezvé
„St. Wenceslaus Tribute Concert"
Ensemble Inégal
Marián Krejčík – baritone (Switzerland)
Hannes Rux – trumpet (Germany)
Adam Viktora – dirigent

Friday 30th September at 7 p.m.
The Town Theatre, Železný Brod
The Eben Brothers Band - Bratři Ebenové

Saturday 1st October at 7 p.m.
Crystal Culture Centre, Česká Lípa
The Eben Brothers Band - Bratři Ebenové

Sunday 2nd October at 5 p.m.
Basilica of St. Zdislava, Jablonné v Podještědí
Clarinet Factory
Clarinet Factory Orchestra
„Good meditation"

Lípa Musica for chidren
Focus on the region musicians
Thursday 6th October 6 p.m.
Church of Virgin Mary's Birth, Česká Lípa
Music School Česka Lípa, Children's Choir Česká Lípa – Petr Novák (choirmaster)
„Kids and Music"

Lípa Musica for children
Friday 7th October 9,30 a.m. and 11 a.m.
Jirásek's Theatre, Česká Lípa
Naive Theatre Liberec
„The Little Swan Lake"
A puppet-musical fairy tale on motives of ballet by P. I. Tchaikovsky

Focus on the region musicians
Sunday 9th October 5 p.m.
Church of Virgin Mary's Birth,
Kravaře v Čechách
„Baroque Music in region of Česká Lípa"
North Bohemia Philharmonic Choir
Josef Zadina – choirmaster

Friday 14th October 7 .p.m.
Church of St. Bartholomew, Hrádek nad Nisou
„Komm, süsses Kreuz"
Music from Archives of Berlin, Leipzig, Wien and Kroměříž for baritone and viola da gamba
Ensemble Tourbillon
Tomáš Král – baritone
Petr Wagner – artistic leader, viola da gamba

CLOSING CONCERT
Saturday 15th October 7 p.m.
The Town Theatre, Nový Bor
Johann Sebastian Bach: Brandenburg Concertos
VENTI DIVERSI ENSEMBLE
Martin Petrák – artistic leader

Tickets for the festival can be ordered online at www.lipamusica.cz