



1  
1  
3

**Czech Opera Singers**

**Stanislav Bohadlo  
Legendary Supraphon  
Recordings**

prague contemporary music festival

4th year

# CONTEMPULS

4.11. / 11.11. / 16.11. 2011

La Fabrika, Komunardů 30, Praha 7

November 4th

**Eric Wubbels** (USA)  
*Ablinger: Voices and Piano*  
**ensemble recherche** (D)  
Lachenmann, Zemek

November 11th

**Miguel Azguime & Miso**  
**Ensemble** (Portugal)  
*Itinerário do Sal*

November 16th

**Jiří Bárta** (CZ) and guest  
Bryars, Kopelent,  
Pálka, Smolka, Štochl  
**Quatuor Diotima** (F)  
Reich, Srnka

[www.contempuls.cz](http://www.contempuls.cz)



## Contents:

11  
3

### **Stanislav Bohadlo: Nothing compares to Kuks**

by *Dita Hradecká*  
page 2

### **Czech opera soloists – a colourful gallery against the backdrop of the gray rushing motorway of the opera bussines**

by *Helena Havlíková*  
page 11

### **A Bartered Bride world premiere?**

by *Martin Jemelka*  
page 24

### **Looking back at several celebrated historical Supraphon recordings**

by *Jindřich Bálek*  
page 29

### **200 years of the Prague Conservatory**

by *Markéta Hallová*  
page 36

### **Reviews**

page 46

Dear readers,

The decline of the record industry has been a constant topic of debate in musical circles over the past few years. Although there is no doubt that there has been a paradigm shift and that “conserved music” is again beginning to become secondary in relation to the live concert, it remains a sphere of classical music and other minority artistic genres that has tolerably withstood the crisis of the music carriers market – the drop in sales hasn’t been entirely catastrophic. This is relatively understandable: on the one hand, sophisticated long compositions require a certain quality of listening, on the other, we more readily accord them the status of an artefact that deserves a certain handling, i.e. being placed on a shelf for CDs (or even gramophone discs) and not being downloaded from the internet in a compressed form. And above all, although in comparison with pop music successful recordings of artful music sell in relatively small numbers, they continue to sell for years, sometimes decades. In the article on pages 29–35, Jindřich Bálek, our leading music critic and connoisseur, looks back at legendary recordings released by Supraphon, the label that in this country had a de facto monopoly on classical music recordings throughout the “analogue era”. All these recordings are now available in high-quality remastered versions on CD, affording lovers of Czech music (and Czech performers) an abundant supply of splendid audio experiences.

I would also like to draw your attention to the article by Helena Havlíková, our prominent opera critic, about current Czech opera singers, which provides an overview of well-established soloists, rising stars, as well as promising young artists of Czech opera. Some of them have already made a name for themselves on stages throughout Europe, while others may very well go on to earn fame, and you will be hearing about them soon.

Wishing you a beautiful autumn  
Petr Bakla

Cover: Philip Glass – *Les enfants terribles*.  
Prague National Theatre production, photo: Hana Smejkalová



**Czech Music Information Centre**  
Besední 3, 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic  
fax: +420 2 57317424, phone: +420 2 57312422  
e-mail: [info@czech-music.net](mailto:info@czech-music.net)  
<http://www.czech-music.net>

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

Editor: Petr Bakla, Producer: Lenka Hradilková  
Translation:  
Hilda Hearne, Coilin O’Connor (pp. 2-10)  
Graphic design: Ditta Jiříčková  
DTP: HD EDITION. Print: Tiskárna Macík.

ISSN 1211-0264 (Print),  
ISSN 1804-0586 (Online)  
MK ČR E 7099



Price and subscription (shipping included):  
Czech Republic: one issue Kč 60,  
subscription (4 issues) Kč 200  
Europe: one issue € 6.25, subscription (4 issues) € 25.  
Overseas countries: one issue \$ 9, subscription  
(4 issues) \$ 36 or respective equivalents

## Stanislav Bohadlo: NOTHING COMPARES TO KUKS

He has devoted his life to history, and baroque history in particular. His destiny is linked to the place whose genius loci cannot be compared to anywhere else in the Czech Republic or abroad, i.e. the baroque area in Kuks in east Bohemia, a grand project which was the brainchild of Count Franz Anton von Sporck. We caught up with the musicologist Stanislav Bohadlo at the height of the tenth annual *Theatrum Kuks* festival, which he founded and also manages. At this event every year, the baroque hospital, courtyard, church, refectory and even Sporck's tomb are brought to life by theatre and music.

*What led to your interest in history and, by extension, your interest in musical history?*

I have never thought about it, but it was undoubtedly the former *Náchodské listy* editor František Karel Zachoval whom I met in the 1970s. We met in a room at the Otolaryngology Department of the hospital in Náchod. He told me about how he had met with Czech cultural figures, including Leoš Janáček in Luhačovice, how he sat as a model for the legendary sculptor Ladislav Šaloun, and how he met a whole host of artistic personalities from the First Republic. I learned to evaluate and interpret musical compositions and their composers (as well as painters and writers) from my classical guitar teacher at the People's School of Art in Náchod, Viktor Špráchal. I was completely absorbed by my studies on Latin sources in the Minorite archive collection in Wrocław while working on a thesis monograph about Bernard Artophaeus, who was Bohuslav Matěj Černohorský's teacher.

*Your object of interest is baroque and classicism – do you see these as being antithetical phases or is the latter the logical culmination of the former?*

The boundaries and definitions of these two styles have been established after the fact. Usually, the shorter the definition, the less precise it is. What the simplified handbooks describe as a striking and rational exchange of principles and styles



actually comprised a very dramatic quest, blind alleys and, above all, a process. “*The most precise definition of a term is its history*” is how Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht described it a long time ago. As Brno students of musicology we used to listen to him at the annual colloquia. The French define “our” baroque as classicism. I look out the window at Aliprandi’s hospital across the valley. In principle, that is “classically” symmetric, like Sporck’s entire baroque spa. Consequently, I am particularly interested in transitional moments, such as the arrival of the Mantuan Comici Fedeli in Prague in 1627 with a living Monteverdi tradition, commedia dell’arte, and a musically dramatic work – *Trasformazione di Callisto ed Arcade*, which was actually the first Italian “opera” in Bohemia and also in the Habsburg monarchy. Even the individual versions of the texts of the ensemble’s leader G.B. Andreini occupy many ambivalent positions between commedia dell’arte and opera (*Don Giovanni*) or oratorio (*La Maddalena*). It is actually the relationships that are the most remarkable thing, and they often manifest themselves in an inverted manner.



Count Franz Anton von Sporck (engraving from 1735)

*The concept of baroque in this country is still marked by the unfortunate title of Alois Jirásek's novel **Darkness (Temno)**, which was about the counterreformation's re-Catholicisation of the Czech lands and whose historical objectivity is, to put it mildly, substantially problematic. How do you view the 17th century and in what ways do you identify with this period?*

It depends on the points of view, but almost every Bohemian and Moravian town has a baroque face and “onion-shaped” church spires, baroque statues of John of Nepomuk on bridges, baroque church interiors, chapels, chateaux – that’s what we’re raised with from childhood onwards and what we identify with in cultural terms. And we miss it, if we don’t see it in our midst. For example, anyone who spent a year in America like I did will know what I am talking about. The 17th century was still a period when the emperor resided in Prague. It was also a time of great rebirth and world repute, which prevailed after the Thirty Years War. I admire that creativity and vitality, as well as the open window to Europe that it offers.

*Does baroque's literary or spiritual legacy also have some force today? What remains from that period that still resonates in the soul of a person from the 21st century?*

The integration of spiritual and artistic life in both cases. An awareness of one’s mortality and humility. You don’t have to be religious, but you must respect the power of Christian inspiration and its results. Compare that with totalitarianism – has that left anything of note in its wake?

*Baroque music is now all the rage like never before, and there are a number of specialized musical ensembles devoted to it. During “reconstructions” of baroque productions, I frequently have the feeling that what I am seeing is something dead and preserved. I have the impression that it is not possible to recreate what baroque opera and theatre was for audiences of that time. What are you striving to achieve by organising the **Theatrum Kuks festival**?*

On the one hand, it's a great adventure to discover the beauty of baroque works in the expressive media that contemporaries of Monteverdi, Vivaldi and Bach had at their disposal at that time. Anyone who sees a baroque opera in Český Krumlov's chateau theatre is amazed at how differently they see the colours of the costumes, the choreography and stage design, which are perhaps even more colourful than if they saw them under the kilowatt batteries of lights that you get on today's opera stages. And changing scenery is reminiscent of film editing. It also involves a more subtle mosaic of colours, catgut strings, the sound of historical instruments, authentic ornamentation, system of gestures and attributes. But the opera often played the role of background music for social contact in the loggias of theatres. Therefore, no one had an admonishing finger over their lips to hush people up while an opera was being staged. Listening to a spiritual song with dozens of verses is boring after the third stanza according to pop or musical criteria, but this is actually about telling a story or recounting a spiritual lyric. We also perceive the poetry in a different "mood" than we would if we were reading comics or a detective novel. It requires a bit more effort.

On the other hand, it's equally exciting to look for a new interpretation of an old text. After all, Shakespeare is presented in dozens of avant-garde and traditional versions all over the world every year. Theatrum Kuks strives to offer both of these legitimate conceptions of baroque theatre, opera and music as well as presenting them in combined form or in transitional forms, including site-specific performances or open-air productions.

*Kuks Hospital with the Holy Trinity Church*





*From the Theatrum Kuks festival  
(Geisslers Hofcomödianten)*

*In terms of its history and genius loci, is there anything that compares to Kuks as a venue, either in this country or abroad?*

No there isn't. The art historians Pavel Preiss, Jiří Tomáš Kotalík and the recently deceased Mojmir Horyna also said the same thing. This is due to the vision that Count Franz Anton von Sporck brought to fruition as well as the place itself that he "populated" with artistic figures of world renown. On another level, anyone who comes here today sees the sensitive and functional connection between the landscape and the works of these people as a great concentration of the effort of the artistic spirit in a very small space.

*What is the best way of preserving the heritage of this place so that as many people as possible get to know about it without actually commercialising this space at the same time? Are there any plans for how the buildings should be used?*

It is necessary to bring back to this place the work of great artists who, in terms of their international significance, are comparable in their field to Matthias Braun, the actor and playwright Heinrich Rademin, the engravings of Michael Rentz, Italian opera from Vivaldi's circle, Czech spiritual songs - Sporck's so-called "common note" with thousands of verses for singing penitential, "magical," apologist, anti-Jesuit, hunting, and dramatic songs, including the *Dance of Death*, which is ubiquitous here. And it is these fields of activity along with other areas associated with Kuks (balneology, hermitages - living in solitude, bibliophilia, etc.) that have to be studied, developed, and presented here, so that they "simply" complement Braun's statues. The grant project is supported by the National Heritage Institute - only these experts have the exalted responsibility of renovating the hospital, avoiding commercialism, and bringing back an appropriate life to this place.

*What would you still like to enrich the festival with? And what is the biggest hit with audiences?*

In the coming years, we would like to link the festival with other places from Sporck's estate, such as the Hubert Valley, six former hermitages, and the completely overlooked, rare octagonal St. Hubert's Chapel in Starý Ples, which was the first Sporck building in this area, and even predates the construction of Kuks. The number of dramaturgical ideas and unused materials that we have is more than what we are able to put into action. Performances in unusual places attract great attention – on the Elbe, in a lapidary, in the Comoedien-Haus, in the basement of the bathhouse, in a tomb, and in the open air.

*Your endeavours combine academic activities with living art – you established the Geisslers Hofcomoedianten ensemble, where your son and daughter have also made their mark. According to what prototype was the ensemble established? Where do you find your repertoire?*

Initially, a document was found on the staging of a theatrical play from Náchod's Carinthian theatre – *The Kidnapping [Entführung]* by Johann Friedrich Jünger from 1799. Exactly 200 years later, we recreated it in Czech in Náchod and this gave rise to the Arnoldi Acting Troupe. Before the first year of Theatrum Kuks in 2002, I approached this group, which was under the direction of Petr Hašek, and came to them with a Sporck play by Heinrich Rademin – *Amor Tyrannus*. Thereafter, at least one premiere was added every year which comprised an attempt to revive, recreate or newly interpret the widest range of primary theatre texts from Sporck's circle or directly from Kuks as well as an operatic intermezzo from the Antonio Bionni opera *Orlando furioso* (Kuks 1724), Rademin's libretto for oratorios about John

*In the Teatro Pavia, 2010*



of Nepomuk, poems by Sporck's court poet Gottfried Benjamin Hancke, including the versified *Description of Kuks Spa* [*Beschreibung des Kuckus-Baades*], 1722, texts about the devil's notary *Fitzli-Putzli*, Christoph Lorentz Pfeiffer's description of the Kuks astronomical clock *The Christian Clock* [*Das Christliche Uhr*], etc.

*The “new baroque-theatre style” of the ensemble has been successful and you have established international cooperation. What are your impressions of the commedia dell’arte school that has been held?*

I consider it to have been the pinnacle of our efforts to date, because in March young artists from five European countries returned to Kuks in order to study the forms and expressive means of commedia dell’arte here, as well as how it spread from Italy to transalpine countries and the form in which they domesticated it here. Thanks to Rademin, the transformation of Italian commedia dell’arte into German Hanswurst comedy actually took place in Kuks.

*Have you looked at the personality of Count Sporck in greater detail? Was the passion he had for art something normal for the era in which he lived?*

Yes, but in different countries and at wealthier courts. However, his engraving and book publishing projects alone are enough to make you realise that one cannot find anyone quite like him in this country, not to mention other disciplines...

*To what extent and in what ways were the aristocratic seats of Sporck’s time connected? With which countries did he maintain contacts? Can you illustrate this using examples from the disciplines of theatre or music?*

Every year, Sporck received visitors from aristocratic circles in the surrounding area as well as from other European countries. He tried (in vain) to arrange a visit by the empress. Sporck himself and then his daughter systematically translated French religious and educational literature (which was deemed improper by the legendary Jesuit counter-reformer Pater Antonín Koniáš). He was in friendly contact with the Dresden prince elector and the Polish king, as well as with Dresden artists. His hymnological, balneology and bibliophile interests developed out of his relationship with the Nuremberg president and scholar Friedrich Roth-Scholtz. He printed his own books in Šwidnica and he maintained an intimate relationship with his Wrocław friend and advisor Carl Franz Sala von Grossa. Kuks was the place where the Venetian Peruzzi-Denzio opera company established a lasting tradition of Italian opera in Bohemia (1724), which culminated in Vivaldi's *Agrippa* being performed in Prague (1730). He lent music to Ottavio Piccollomini in Náchod, and he sent Italian arias to the Jesuit College in Kutná Hora.

For more than a hundred years, all of the research that was carried out on Questenberg and Sporck wondered whether these music-loving counts in Moravia and Bohemia knew about each other, particularly when they were so heavily involved in Italian opera. Today, following the discovery of Seeman's diary from 1727, we can confirm that Sporck heard František Václav Míča and other Jaroměřice musicians in Questenberg's palace in Vienna. He went to Questenberg's loggia at the Kärtnerthor Theatre and he presumably introduced his host to Heinrich Rademin, who then translated a libretto from Italian to German for him. During one dinner, Maestro Míča, who enjoyed the status of a genuine artist, left

the table without asking permission. Sporck could not get over this, because his Kapellmeister Seeman only had the status of a valet.

*Are there still any mysteries or blank spots in the history of Kuks?*

There have been reports that Giacomo Casanova was treated for repeated gonorrhoea at Kuks in 1766, but no source could be found to corroborate this.

*You yourself live in Kuks – has this setting had an influence on your own understanding of history? In other words, are emotions and personal experiences also part of an historian's work?*

How could they not be? It is actually a kind of triad. First you experience some work, artist, personality or situation. Then you live through a proverbial “detective novel” while studying and researching, particularly in archives. And eventually, you formulate a text or exposition so that you interpret the facts, put things into contexts and – as the historian and writer Zdeněk Kalista pointed out – you become a poet, or, in the words of the historian Dušan Třeštík, you “invent” history.

*You teach musicology – what do you demand from your students above all else? What approach do you want them to take? What, in your opinion, is the main task of future generations of musicologists?*

Thanks to grants and the availability of sources all over the world, future generations should work on collected editions of the works of our composers. On an international level, they should publish thematic catalogues and create monographic syntheses, with the ambition of English versions, of all our important composers. Two monographs by the American scholar Daniel E. Freeman provide the template for this – *The Opera Theatre of Count Franz Anton von Sporck in Prague and Josef Mysliveček “Il Boemo”: The Man and His Music*.

*Your scholarly endeavours have focused on Czech figures in Italy, and you yourself have resided in that country. What is it about Italy that ensured it gave the world so many outstanding artists, and what does the country offer the perceptive traveller today?*

To lighten the mood a little bit, I would quote Jan Werich who said: “In a country where it is always warm and the skies are always blue, people don't have to do anything except make works of art.” It is worth it to learn Italian and then to just go there. And the best thing is to combine travelling with studying in Italian libraries and archives. There are still so many subjects and we have a long way to go before we exhaust the potential of Italian archives.

*You yourself travel a lot. How has getting to know foreign cultures changed and enriched you?*

When I was teaching in Nebraska as a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence, I would give my American students the following advice: learn foreign languages, travel and make use of the huge amount of relevant sources on the internet. All of these things open up new worlds for us. As Mark Twain once wrote: “*Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.*”



*What direction do you want to take with your research in the future? Will you be more likely to delve deeper into existing fields of study or will you broaden its scope?*

Together with Pavel Svačinka, Michaela Freemanová, Marc Niubo, Dr. Allan Badley from New Zealand and Prof. Paul R. Bryan from the United States, we have established the International Johann Baptist Vanhal Society. We would like to create a complete thematic catalogue of his work as an essential basis for all subsequent Vanhal presentations.

I am also preparing the translation and publication of Sporck's biography in verse from 1720. I also hope that the ruin of the bathhouse on the riverbank in Kuks will rise like a phoenix from the ashes and be transformed into the Rentz Museum of Baroque Printing, which will pay homage to Giovanni Giacomo Komárek, "Boemo," the Roman master-printer and music printer from Hradec Králové and, of course, Michael Rentz as well as Sporck's musical and non-musical printed materials. Please keep your fingers crossed for us!

### **Stanislav Bohadlo**

*was born in 1953 in Náchod, where he attended grammar school. He graduated from the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University in Brno, where he studied history and musicology. He wrote his thesis on the correspondence of Josef Mysliveček, and his research has focused on the 17th and 18th centuries. He is head of the Baroque Studies Section at the University of Hradec Králové. He works as a lecturer in languages and as a publisher. He has travelled to many countries. He lectures on the conference circuit and also devotes his time to dramaturgical and organisational activities.*

# CZECH OPERA SOLOISTS

## A COLOURFUL GALLERY AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE GREY RUSHING MOTORWAY OF THE OPERA BUSINESS

**Few countries in the world can pride themselves on having as extensive a network of opera theatres as the Czech Republic does. It is not common that in a city the size of Opava or České Budějovice (fewer than 100,000 inhabitants) people can attend opera performances at a local bricks-and-mortar theatre with its own permanent professional opera company. According to [www.operabase.com](http://www.operabase.com), in terms of the number of opera performances calculated per million inhabitants, the Czech Republic occupies seventh position among the opera empires of the world.**

The majority of our opera theatres in a country that throughout its history has been buffeted by, as well as profited from, the co-existence between the Czech and German nations, originated at the end of the 19th century. And the network has been successfully maintained up to the present day. As regards the national culture, these ten opera theatres (two of which are in Prague) are part of the family silver of the Czech Republic, even though amid the current financial situation its maintenance in an active (and attractive) condition has become increasingly difficult - each of these theatres has its own orchestra, soloists and chorus, which must be secured in financial, artistic and personnel terms. Unfortunately, in comparison with foreign theatres those in the Czech Republic have been underfinanced over the long term, and this fiscal dearth must be taken into account when evaluating their artistic results.

With regard to the fact that all Czech opera theatres have traditionally been of the repertory variety, meaning that they perform a different opera virtually every day, the requirements for ensuring appropriately good soloists are high, and the wear and tear from routine operation significant. There are many professionally active singers, yet despite this the current generation does not contain many soloists who have managed to establish themselves abroad. There are certainly many reasons for this, but let us try to pinpoint at least the major ones, those that are most likely identical in the case of all those who would like to build up an international career.

## A Czech or international career?

Undoubtedly, talented singers are born in every generation – what is important, however, is whether their talent is discovered in time, whether they are afforded the appropriate musical education (which is currently one of the major problems of the Czech education system) and, above all, whether they are lucky enough to encounter a suitable pedagogue (whom they today, fortunately, can also find beyond the Czech Republic too), and, above all, whether they possess a sufficiently strong will, diligence and stamina, and whether they have a financial background to be able to develop their talent. And, naturally, the luck that they come across an opportunity to present their abilities. The stock phrase “chance favours those prepared” still holds true – and an understudy role may become the springboard for building up a career.

Other possibilities for drawing attention are afforded by voice competitions, both in the Czech Republic (the Antonín Dvořák International Voice Competition in Karlovy Vary) and abroad. There is also the Czech “voice exchange”, which unfortunately often reveals that the schools’ pursuit of subsidies, which within the current system are paid per student, should have limits so as not to exploit the credibility of fame-eager children or, more often, their ambitious parents. Unfortunately, the Czech Republic lacks an “opera studio” – a space where young singers can try their hand at opera theatre practice under experienced tutors. Although there are “graduation performances” at music schools, these are not sufficient for acquainting the students with the practical work and operation of, especially, repertory theatres.

If a young singer arouses public attention, proves himself/herself amid the merry-go-round of opera theatre operation or wins a competition, he/she must overcome yet another obstacle – the system of managerial/agency representation of singers, since today it is practically impossible for a singer to “represent” himself/herself in the global opera industry. Having luck with a good pedagogue is comparable with having luck with a good manager or agency that decides what productions /recordings the singer can be offered for and, in collaboration with the media, supports and nurtures his/her career. The general practice is that if talented singers appear “in the regions”, they begin rotating in other regional theatres too, are subsequently engaged at a larger theatre and, if they prove their qualities, gradually gain a reputation abroad too. Repertory theatres place great demands on soloists, with young singers in particular having difficulties resisting being cast in roles for which they have yet to mature or which are absolutely beyond their category – there are too many examples of situations when a promising voice has not endured such a burden.

Nevertheless, there are also singers who are simply not interested in being engaged abroad – mainly for family reasons, since it is no easy task to build up an international career and raise a family at the same time.

## “Legends” past and present

We are not going to focus on the Czech singers who in the past went on to earn global fame, singers of the calibre of Ema Destininnová, Karel Burian, Berta Foersterová-Lautererová, Marie Jeritzky, Pavel Ludikar, Leo Slezak or Jarmila Novotná. Neither will we write about the generation whose everyday life was controlled by the monstrous Communist machinery, with its attendant censorship, snitching and bullying that determined their career possibilities (Marie Podvalová, Libuše Domanínská, Milada Šubrtová, Naděžda Kniplová, Ludmila Dvořáková, Beno Blachut, Ivo Žídek, Antonín Švorc). It is pointless to speculate how the professional careers of our opera singers would have developed under “normal” conditions and what recognition they would have gained amid free competition. Their voices and vocal techniques were at the top level (yet the Communist propaganda machine limited their repertoire by, for example, rejecting Puccini as a Western formalist). After all, bearing witness to their sterling qualities are the offers they received from abroad and their earning great acclaim in countries where a Communist party membership card wasn't worth the paper it was written on.

And the introductory “Hall of Fame” of our gallery of Czech singers will “merely” sum up a group of contemporary soloists who were appearing until recently or are still appearing on such prestigious opera stages as the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, La Scala, the Vienna and Bavarian State Operas, as well as performing at festivals in Salzburg, Glyndebourne, Bayreuth. First and foremost, these include “Queen” **Gabriela Beňačková**, a soprano with a “Slavonic tear drop”, whose conception of Janáček roles (*Jenufa*, *Katya*), Smetana's *Mařenka* and Dvořák's *Rusalka*, which have also been captured on recordings, are truly exemplary. Since the end of the 1990s, her career has shifted from the opera stage to the concert hall. The mezzo-soprano (and Czech swimming champion) **Eva Randová**, *Fricke* in Boulez/Chéreau's “Ring of the Century” in Bayreuth, the *Witch* and *Foreign Princess* in Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Janáček's *Kostelníčka*, has recently terminated her active opera career too.

**Magdalena Kožená** has built her illustrious professional career upon well-considered refinement of her possibilities (and limitations), applying her bright, pliant mezzo-soprano primarily in the repertoire of Baroque operas and “talking intimately” with the audience by intertwining many layers of the text and music meaning. In comparison with Kožená's Apollo-like nobleness, **Dagmar Pecková** is a mezzo-soprano of “animal” bacchantic ferocity and vivacity, bringing to bear the compact sonority of her full dark voice. **Peter Straka** began his career at the Zurich Opera by appearing in Harnoncourt/Ponnell's famous cycles of Monteverdi and Mozart operas, with Janáček roles being among the most sought after and model in his extensive tenor repertoire. After overcoming a difficult period following his emigration, **Jan Vacík** established himself at the Bavarian State Opera, portraying expressively acute tenor roles of inwardly complicated, ruffled characters for a number of years. **Štefan Margita** first won global recognition in Geneva as Kudrjáš and although at Prague's National Theatre they predicted for him a limited career Janáček roles proved to be ideal for him. The Zurich Opera is a stage on which the soprano **Martina Janková** has performed with increasing frequency, above all, in Mozart roles of sharp-witted, charming and go-ahead maidservants. Most of these soloists not only work but also live abroad, having emigrated before 1989 (Jan Vacík) or legally moved there. They abandoned permanent engagements in the Czech Republic long ago (if they

ever entered into one), one of the reasons being that their talent was not recognised (Dagmar Pecková), and only rarely or virtually never do they appear on Czech opera stages (Magdalena Kožená).

We would like to provide detailed portraits in the gallery of Czech opera singers of those who at the present time are already renowned, acclaimed and further developing their success. And also draw attention to the soloists who are now just building up their position on the wider international scale or have started promisingly. Since the majority of them work in the aforementioned repertory system of Czech opera theatres and they have for the most part encompassed, or soon will have, a large standard range of roles in their respective vocal categories, their profiles would be reminiscent of a respectably long yet somewhat dull “telephone book”. Let us present them through the “lens” of a role typical for them or a role in which they recently excelled, one in which their art can twinkle.

## Eva Urbanová and others (not only) from *Katya Kabanova*

**Eva Urbanová** should actually have been included in the previous chapter about soloists whose global renown already has firm roots. Yet she differs from this group primarily due to the fact that she has remained faithful to the theatres in her homeland. Her outstanding feature is the volume and stoutness of her soprano, one capable of grand dramatic expression. The roles she has portrayed of late include *Salome*, and thanks to her mature voice she negotiated the “trap” Strauss set for sopranos not as a spoil girl but a victorious queen pursuing her objective at any cost. Urbanová’s latest triumph was the role of Wagner’s *Kundry*: she hardly ever gets to leave the stage during the National Theatre production, and within the complex layers of the reformed sinner, from witchlike ferality to devoted repentance, she manages to maintain the intensity of the inner tension throughout the performance, both as a singer and actor. Today, Eva Urbanová is also an ideal creator of the wise Princess *Libuše* in Smetana’s festival opera from Czech mythology. When she sang the role at a performance taking place at the former open-air theatre in the Šárka forest park in Prague, she afforded the famous prophecy of the future of the Czech nation a dimension impossible to attain at a bricks-and-mortar theatre. The characters Urbanová has enriched with every new staging include roles in Janáček’s operas. Her art of tender yet vibrant pianissimos (used even in less usual places) and stately fortes, her modelling of the text while retaining a splendid lucidity, colourfulness and firmness of voice served as the basis for her portrayal of *Kostelníčka* as an inwardly complex, stern, hard, relentless, as well as vulnerable woman with a soul aching from the harsh sorrows of life. In Robert Wilson’s strictly stylised production of *Katya Kabanova* at the National Theatre, Urbanová matured into a *Kabanicha* in whom she concentrated the sonority and timbre of her voice to express despotic hypocrisy, dark authoritativeness in stark contrast to Katya’s fragile, lonely gloom-riddenness and the futile endeavour to take off and break away from narrow-minded egocentric selfishness.

Let us devote this entrance hall to the Czech singers’ gallery to the entire team participating in Wilson and Netopil’s production of *Katya Kabanova*, behind whose curtain we peeped in Czech Music Quarterly 3/2010 through interviews with those who had a hand in its staging.

In this production, **Christina Vasileva** expressed in a truly spellbinding manner Katya’s vulnerability in long phrases and heights, which she is able to draw into breath-taking pianissimos without her soprano losing its sonority and colourfulness. In her performance, the futile defiance of this fragile woman crushed by those around her and the insolvability of her amorous feelings penetrate to the very marrow. In the wake



*Eva Urbanová*  
*Christina Vasileva*

*Aleš Briscein*  
*Kateřina Jalovcová*  
*Jaroslav Březina*

of *Violetta*, *Desdemona*, *Rusalka*, *Mimi* and *Butterfly*, Vasileva has extended her repertoire to include *Katya*, another role in which her captivating, ardent soprano and ability to express the deep emotions truly excel. And owing to this, she has also brought “another” view of *Tosca* and *Leonora* in *Il trovatore*, who as performed by her are not fulminatory dramatic heroines but vulnerable fragile women defying their fate in vain.

Vasileva’s portrayal of *Katya* compatibly combined with the youthfully lightened and crisp tenor of **Aleš Briscein**, for whom currently *Boris* is an ideal role in that he gracefully applies the vibrancy, cantilena and plasticity of his lyrical tenor – even though Wilson constricted this character into a stylisation of a beau-monde dandy. Briscein has grown into a singer who as, for instance, Janáček’s *Laca* makes splendid use of his physique and dramatic flexibility, being able to express both his vainglorious fanfaronade and cowardly flight from responsibility. In a Paris production, he portrayed Smetana’s *Jeník* (The Bartered Bride) as a merry, mettlesome, smart and nimble boy deeply in love with Mařenka yet at the same time thinking pragmatically and rationally. In Dvořák’s *Rusalka* at the National Theatre he identified himself with the conception of the *Prince* as a desperado oscillating between love for two antithetical women. Aleš Briscein, however, is also an outstanding musical singer, which he also demonstrated as Bernstein’s seeking *Candide*.

Wilson’s production was also enriched by **Kateřina Jalovcová** as an energetic *Varvara* and **Jaroslav Březina** with his almost caricature-like rebellious *Kudrjáš*.

Kateřina Jalovcová was outstanding in the Liberec production of Puccini’s *Edgar*, which received the critics and audience prizes at OPERA 2011, a unique festival of all



*Simona Houda-Šaturová*  
*Katarína Jorda Kramolišová*

Czech opera companies. In this drama abounding in extreme emotions, which the stage director Martin Otava conceived as the story of a twisted man who makes a cruel joke above his fictitious coffin so as to find out whether he is faithfully loved by the constant Fidelia or the passionate *Tigrana*, she enchanted the audience as a provocatively cruel, calculating woman. With her velvety dark mezzo-soprano, Jalovcová has flawlessly rendered roles as diverse as *Miss Růža* (Smetana's *The Secret*), a weather-beaten woman who has experienced many a disappointment in her life, and *Annio* (*La clemenza di Tito*), a young man whose friendship and love undergo a grave test.

Jaroslav Březina also sang the titular role in last year's premiere of the original version of Janáček's *The Excursion of Mr. Brouček (to the Moon)* at the National Theatre in Brno. Březina struts around and idiotically totters while giving a masterful vocal performance portraying the vainglorious and mercantile Prager, a lover of beer and his own comforts, thundering against everyone and everything in his vicinity. He truthfully rendered a typical petty bourgeois Czech, a philistine with reactionary opinions, indulging himself in boozing with the improvidence of a well-provided good-for-nothing, in his narrow-mindedness not able to cross his own shadow. Jaroslav Březina possesses a quality which is not overly frequent with tenors – a great comedic talent (an excellent *Vášek* in *The Bartered Bride*) – and thanks to his musicality also perfectly masters roles in contemporary operas (the *Monkey* in Klusák's one-act *Report for the Academy*).

## Others already known

### Lyrical and dramatic coloraturas

Today, **Simona Houda-Šaturová** ranks among mature coloratura sopranos. Her refined vocal technique truly comes into its own in long-winded arias and sprightly coloraturas; she is able to express depth and render fine nuances. Not aiming at superficial effect, she can move the soul. She recently excelled as *Ariadne* in Bohuslav Martinů's opera. Martinů conceived the Minotaur labyrinth as a philosophical metaphor of the human mind, where instead of the bestial Minotaur Theseus meets himself. Martinů composed this deliberation on the mysteries of love with elegance, lightness, as well as nostalgia. The titular role with its final lament is challenging not only vocally but also requires an understanding of the psychology of unexpected, abrupt changes in the moods of a girl in love, striving to find a way in her own labyrinths. Simona Houda-Šaturová above all imbued Ariadne with emotional depth.



*Helena Kaupová  
Dana Burešová*



*Pavla Vykopalová  
Petra Šimková Alvarez*



Ideal too for her deliciously sprightly soprano are Mozart roles – the Marquise and the “pretended” gardener *Violanta Oresti* (*La finta giardiniera*), the captive Trojan Princess *Ilija* and *Konstanze*.

**Katarína Jorda Kramolišová** has established herself as a distinctive dramatic coloratura soprano noted for a soft, fervid voice capable of passing over to determined stoutness and strength. Her *Norma* was not a depersonalised Antique heroine; the singer forcibly portrayed the High Priestess and mother wracked by love and revengefulness, even able to kill her own children, as a woman unable to face the injustice committed against her by the person closest to her. We sympathise with the vexation of the tortured and at the same time are impressed by the grandiosity of the High Priestess. In the role of Mozart’s *Vitellia* (*La clemenza di Tito*), she created an overbearing, passionate woman cynically exploiting her admirer Sesto by convincing him to assassinate the Emperor and anxious about being revealed.

### **Sopranos, not only heroic**

**Helena Kaupová** and **Dana Burešová** have trod in the footsteps of Gabriela Beňačková. Possessing voices of a darker timbre with the ability to emotionally depict various characters on the “boundary” between the lyrical and dramatic soprano, they convincingly portray roles of the Czech opera repertoire – *Jenufa*, *Rusalka*. Unlike in the case of their conception of *Mařenka* as a self-confident, determined woman, **Petra Šimková Alvarez** in the Ústí nad Labem production of the original version of Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride* with spoken prose portrayed *Mařenka* as a full-blooded village “girl” in love, and gave the character a humorous touch, especially in the scenes with *Vašek*. This role can also serve as an example of the marked artistic development of **Pavla Vykopalová**. While maintaining her multilayered characteristics, the singer imbued the pure Czech character not only with adolescent charm and ardent feeling but also clever wit and healthy energy. From *Karolka* in Janáček’s *Jenufa*, Vykopalová has progressed to singing *Jenufa* herself at the National Theatre in Prague. Although, owing to a more serious approach to this role in the beginning she deprives herself of the contrast of youthful avidity, her “sorrow” sounds authentic and *Jenufa*’s forgiving *Kostelníčka* possesses a forcible human depth.



*Richard Haan  
Vladimír Chmelo  
Adam Plachetka*



*Anda-Louise Bogza*



The soprano **Anda-Louise Bogza** is a sought-after (and not only by Czech opera stages) singer of dramatic roles of the Italian repertoire. By portraying *Minnie*, she has enriched the extensive verist collection of opera heroines, thereby linking up to Ema Destinnová's interpretational legacy as regards expressive acting and vocal technique. Her *Minnie* is a valiant fighter, as well as a practical woman bravely enduring the discomfort of her life in the company of harsh uncompromising men and longing for happiness and love.

### **Baritone villains and seducers**

**Richard Haan**, who has swum the English Channel, has portrayed a plethora of "villains" with his dark baritone. Most recently, in the production of D'Albert's *Tiefland*, staged at the National Theatre in Brno, he created the landowner *Sebastiano* as an arrogant creature with a greed for money and sex. **Vladimír Chmelo** began as a lyrical baritone and owing to his free-flowing singing with broad-ranged legato has become a sought-after interpreter of the Italian and French repertoire in nobly positive, comedic, as well as scheming and power-greedy roles, including *Posa*, Rossini's *Figaro*, *Rigoletto*, *Luna*, *Roderigo*, *Jago* and *Macbeth*. He also applied bel canto as the basis for Smetana's *Vladislav* (*Dalibor*), whom he depicted as an introvert ruler tormented by his responsibility for the fate of his country.

**Adam Plachetka** became a soloist of the Vienna State Opera before reaching the age of thirty. His portrayal of a plethora of Mozart characters (*Masetto* and *Giovanni*, *Figaro*, *Guglielmo* and *Nardo*) is based on a solid breathing technique, sprightliness and pregnant declamation, which he enriches with wit, charm and a Terfel-esque ingeniousness and multilayered modelling of the meaning of both the music and text.

### **Tenor of the Czech repertoire**

Although starting out as a lyrical Mozart tenor, today **Tomáš Černý** is a first-class interpreter of Janáček, Smetana, Dvořák and Martinů roles. He makes use of the advantage of being a native speaker with a perfect sense of declamation. This applies to his portrayal of *Jeník* (*The Bartered Bride*) as an earthy, experienced man who, on the other hand, is not "ashamed" to express his ardent love for Mařenka, as well as *Laca*, in whose character, especially in Jiří Kout's charismatic staging at the National Theatre,

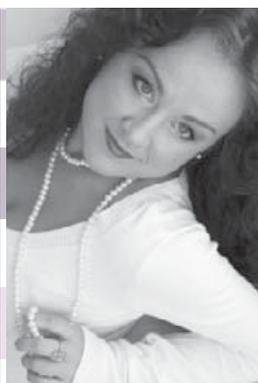
he gets to the roots of Janáček's speech melodies in all their nuances, ranging from pure emotionalism, amiable warmth to fierce curtness, crude rusticity leading to the final catharsis of forgiveness and hope. The touchstone of Černý's vocal and human maturity is the shepherd *Manolios* in Martinů's *The Greek Passion*, who undergoes a long journey from questioning his being entitled to play Christ in the *Passion Play* through the vexatious temptation of passion for the gutsy Katerina to becoming a man of inner strength who after negotiating pitfalls finds a meaning of life in serving others. In the role of *Loris* in the Ostrava production of Giordano's *Fedora*, Černý coherently encompassed the emotional spectrum of a man driven by wrath, hatred, love and despair.

### Versatile mezzo-sopranos in both skirts and trousers

**Jana Sýkorová** is renowned as a mezzo-soprano with an extensive repertoire, ranging from early music to world premieres of contemporary operas (Laurent Petitgirard's *The Elephant Man*). As *Azucena*, she gradually escalates the expression in obsessive visions of leaping flames of the executioner's stake, attains contrast in idyllic reminiscences of the peaceful Basque mountains and gradates her performance with the Gipsy's triumphal fulfilment of revenge. **Zuzana Šveda** too is able to embrace various roles, from a brilliantly sung seductive and cunning *Isabella* in Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri* through Massenet's romantic *Charlotte* to contemporary opera. In Tutino's adaptation of Nichols's TV film *Wit* she suggestively rendered the intimate psychological drama of *Vita*, an emancipated, self-confident professor of English literature specialising in the metaphysical poetry of the Elizabethan poet John Donne. Through the hardship of advanced cancer, she arrives at a purgatorial compassion face-to-face with the majesty of death. "Breeches" mezzo-soprano roles are the domain of the young **Hannah Esther Minutillo**, a splendidly talented singer and actor who has performed on prestigious stages as Mozart's *Idamante*, *Cherubino*, *Sesto*, Strauss's *Octavian*, as well as Janáček's amorous *Fox* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*).



*Tomáš Černý*

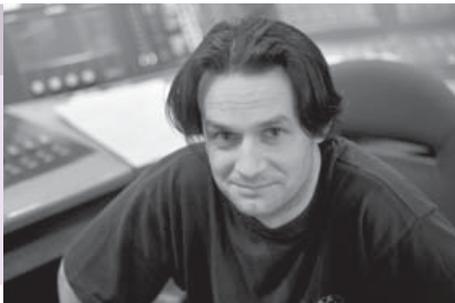


*Jana Sýkorová  
Zuzana Šveda  
Hannah Esther Minutillo*

## Rising stars

We will conclude our guided tour of the gallery of Czech soloists with the youngest generation of singers who are now waiting for the door to open to a wider international acclaim. The Czech opera event of 2011 was the production of Phil Glass's *Les enfants terribles*, performed within the unique Prague Quadriennial set-design exhibition at the former kitchen of the psychiatric hospital in Prague-Bohnice. The success of the production, musically prepared by Petr Kofroň and directed by Alice Nellis, was also contributed to by **Alžběta Poláčková**, who appeared in the role of *Lise*. The creators unwound on the stage an extremely suggestive intimate psychological drama of the relationship between Paul and Lise, brother and sister, who are not able to cope with the confusion of adolescence, the necessity to find real partners and despite attempting to disaffiliate can neither live together nor without each other. The circular inner world of the siblings, with their perverse playing at seeking the limits of emotionally hurting each other, ultimately collapses and swallows them in a black hole. Singing Glass's demanding repetitive musical structures and performing complicated movements (including a wild dance with a hospital bed, running up and down steep stairs, playing badminton while singing), Poláčková was able to comprehend Lise's complex development from a careful tender through a cynical tough girl, charming model, attractive bride to a malicious manipulator with the lives of other people. A stroke of genius was entrusting the double role of *Dargelos* and *Agathe* (originally written for mezzo-soprano) to the counter-tenor **Jan Mikušek** (see the interview in CMQ 2/2010), who with his superlative performance brought to the production the hard-to-render yet significant element of incendiary sexual perversion.

**Anna Klamo** excelled in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, staged by the Ústí nad Labem Opera, managing to endow the role of the mechanical doll *Olympia* with a surprisingly witty comical hyperbole. And she had the courage to sing the part of Delibes's *Lakmé* (what's more, in a daringly revealing oriental costume!). She can be an attractive, exotic, graceful priestess, a movingly dedicated loving girl, as well as a desperate woman who is able to sacrifice her life for forbidden love. Klamo distributed her ringing, lightly sprightly soprano in such a manner that she had enough strength not only to sing the two most famous musical numbers but also master the entire extensive role with aplomb.

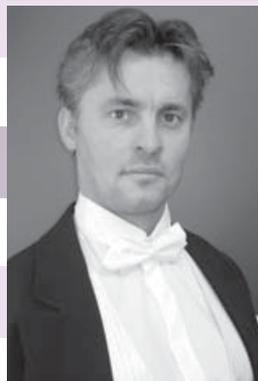


*Jan Mikušek*  
*Alžběta Poláčková*



*Anna Klamo  
Jana Šrejma Kačirková  
Aleš Voráček*

*Barbora Polášková  
Jakub Kettner*



**Jana Šrejma Kačirková** dazzled not only within the Prague Spring festival at a concert of young National Theatre soloists in a larky romp through the brilliant aria of Bernstein's *Cunegonde* but also as *Nedda*, being an equal partner to José Cura in *I Pagliacci* staged at the unique Revolving Theatre amid the magical night-time atmosphere of the Český Krumlov Castle. The tenor **Aleš Voráček**, who portrayed *Don Ottavio* in last year's performance of *Don Giovanni* on this stage, excelled in this production as *Beppe/Arlecchino*.

In **Barbora Polášková**, the Olomouc Opera acquired a promising talent. The young mezzo-soprano based her conception of *Carmen* on her fortes: at first glance, she looks like a winsome innocent girl (with a pliant voice), yet she actually makes canny use of that which can win men over and is able to produce an evil "snarl".

Following his portrayal of Massenet's Albert (Werther), **Jakub Kettner** drew attention in another opera by the French Romantic: in the multilayered role of the earthy antipode to the scorned noble-minded idealist Don Quixote, the continually grumbling servant *Sancho Panza*, a pithy and quick-witted commentator on his master's foolish acts and devoted companion with a grasp of the sorrows and dreams of the Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha.



*Svatopluk Sem*  
*David Szendiuch*  
*Jan Štáva*



The baritone of **Svatopluk Sem** rises to even the highest registers with lightness. He has the flexibility to acquit himself well in the light conversational position of opera buffa (*Julian* in Paisiell's classicist *Gli Astrologi immaginari*) and the more dramatic expression of the painter *Marcello* in Puccini's *La Bohème*, whom he imbued with male decisiveness and jealousy. The bass **David Szendiuch** convincingly rendered in the early Verdi work *Attila* the contradiction between the dauntless commander, wise ruler and a man buffeted by "normal" human passions. A comedic talent has emerged in the bass **Jan Štáva**, who has excelled in Mozart works (*Leporello*, *Ossin*), as well as contemporary operas, to which he adds the energy of youthful enthusiasm. He is also a member of the alternative Opera Diversa company.

## Conclusion

The portraits in the contemporary Czech opera gallery we have hung and illuminated do not give the complete picture. Tomorrow, a bright new talent may emerge, while some of today's rising stars could fade away. The Czech Republic has a population of 10.5 million. It would be foolish to convert the number of gifted singers to a coefficient enabling us to gauge, for instance, the number of outstanding singers per 100,000 inhabitants in order to evaluate the international success rate of Czech singers compared with those from Italy, Germany, France or the USA. We should bear in mind that in addition to the quality of voice, dramatic art, as well as the type, there are other factors that decide about success – marketing, advertising and the alchemy of the recording studio. And certainly there is a difference if someone performs at the MET, in Bayreuth or on other prestigious stages – and whether he/she sings the lead or minor role, whether on just one or repeated occasions.

If we are to compare generations of Czech singers, it would appear that today's soloists approach their career more pragmatically than those active during the legendary 1960s "golden era" of the Prague National Theatre. We must admit that an engagement at this "Czech MET", which was previously the highest goal (and, at the same time, one of the few opportunities to travel abroad with impunity), has lost its "fatal" attractiveness for the contemporary "globalised" generation of singers. The profession of opera soloist entails hard work and today the route to the destination is more winding, with plenty of pitfalls, detours (albeit alluring), potholes, crashes and crack-ups along the ever-faster and increasingly crammed motorway of the contemporary opera business.

# SEASON 2011/12

## AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE OPERA

### Premieres

#### **ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK** **THE JACOBIN**

**Conductor:** Tomáš Netopil  
**Stage Direction:** Jiří Heřman  
**Sets:** Pavel Svoboda  
**Costumes:** Alexandra Grusková  
**Premiere performances:** 8 and 9 October 2011  
at the National Theatre

#### **MARKO IVANOVIĆ** **ENCHANTIA**

**AN OPERA FOR CHILDREN  
AND THEIR PARENTS**  
**Libretto:** Ivan Arsenjev, Petr Forman and Radek Malý  
**Conductor:** Marko Ivanović  
**Stage Direction:** Petr Forman  
**Sets & Costumes:** Matěj Forman, Andrea Sodomková  
**Premiere performance:** 14 January 2012  
at the National Theatre

#### **BENJAMIN BRITTEN** **GLORIANA**

**Conductor:** Zbyněk Müller  
**Stage Direction:** Jiří Heřman  
**Sets:** Pavel Svoboda  
**Costumes:** Alexandra Grusková  
**Premiere performances:** 3 and 4 March 2012  
at the National Theatre

#### **W.A. MOZART** **DON GIOVANNI**

**Conductor:** Tomáš Netopil  
**Stage Direction:** Lukáš Trpišovský a Martin Kukučka  
**Sets:** Jakub Kopecký  
**Premiere performances:** 9 and 10 June 2012  
at the Estates Theatre

### Concerts

#### **MAGDALENA KOŽENÁ**

**Conductor:** Andrea Marcon  
**Orchestra:** Collegium 1704  
19 and 21 October 2011  
at the National Theatre

#### **OPERA GALA CONCERT**

**Eva Urbanová** (soprano), **Ivan Kusnjer** (baritone),  
**Luděk Vele** (bas)  
**Conductor:** Robert Jindra  
National Theatre Orchestra  
22 November 2011  
at the National Theatre

#### **ADVENT CONCERTS 2011**

**Soloists of the National Theatre Opera**  
**Conductor:** David Švec  
National Theatre Orchestra  
27 November; 4, 11 and 18 December 2011  
at the National Theatre

#### **MOZART'S BIRTHDAY 2012**

**Radek Baborák** (horn)  
National Theatre Orchestra  
27 January 2012 at the Estates Theatre

#### **GOOD FRIDAY CONCERT**

**Conductor:** Marek Štryncl  
**Orchestra:** Musica Florea  
6 April 2012  
at the Estates Theatre

**H**ad June's Graz semi-staged production of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* presented within the Styriarte festival not been undersigned by Nikolaus Harnoncourt, the headline of this review would be an instance of pure and simple journalistic gimmickry. Yet on Friday 24 June 2011 and in the five subsequent performances (my review is of the 26 June performance) the Smetana opera most frequently staged abroad was presented by the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (COE), the Arnold Schönberg Chor and a first-class international ensemble of soloists without a single Czech singer, and what's more in Emanuel Züngel's literally authentic translation which, although made in 1869 upon Smetana's commission, hasn't been heard on stages in the German-speaking world since being replaced by newer translations by Max Kalbeck, Kurt Honolka and Walter Felsenstein.

# A Bartered



Accordingly, in the summer of 2011 Smetana's opera buffa, precisely corresponding in terms of both action and music with this year's festival motto "*That which is easy is difficult*" (Johann Joseph Fux, *Gradus ad Parnassum*), was performed in Züngel's authorised translation for the first time in Graz, where it could have been staged back in 1871. (In the autumn of 2010, after Kalbeck's and the newly acquired literal translation had been compared, it was not yet clear in which version the opera would be performed. Fortune favours those prepared, and an incidental

# Bride world premiere?



PHOTO: WERNER KMEITSCH, STYRIARTE 4x

purchase in an internet auction of the 1872 printed piano score led the festival's artistic director, **Mathis Huber**, to Prague's Smetana Museum, the custodian of the autograph score with the composer's own noting down of Züngel's German libretto, which, unlike the newer translations, doesn't play down the fraught social background of the opera's action.) The semi-staged production of *The Bartered Bride* was entrusted to the director, set and light designer rolled-into-one **Philipp Harnoncourt**, who purged the action of all folkloric associations

and, while maintaining the basic plot, concentrated on dramatically objective acting, and in the austere interior of the Helmut-List-Halle placed on the stage parts of an 85-year-old Caterpillar truck from the wagon-works in Gotha, Germany - the truck for 36 persons with the diameter of 16 metres, renovated on several occasions, had lain at the depot for two decades before becoming the solitary set item of the Graz production. The countryside's lack of timelessness was underscored by the costumes designed by **Elisabeth Ahsef**, ranging from the



contemporary (Jeník) through the classic (Marie) to the vintage (the chorus, Mícha's wife Háta). The first post-premiere performance at the Helmut-List-Halle, which I attended on Sunday 26 June 2011, opened with the overture, albeit in a decidedly slower tempo than that which we in the Czech lands have been accustomed to since at least Ostrčil's time (and none of that Ančerl brio!). On the whole, softer and protracted tempos characterised Harnoncourt's musical exploration, built on the contrast of earthy dances (who else would have put them across with such tremendous verve as he?) and subdued (the Jeník and Marie duet in Act 1) or at least slower (the Kecal and Jeník duet in Act 2) performance of vocal numbers. However, similarly to the overture of the Salzburg *Le nozze di Figaro*, by means of precise articulation Harnoncourt in a seemingly paradoxical manner achieves the same effect as if he played the overture and the famous hits in the fastest possible tempo. His choice of slower tempos, and not only in the dances, was wilful: "*All the dances became faster in the 20th century*," Harnoncourt said during the Saturday ORF radio public broadcast which the Helmut-List-

Halle audience had the opportunity to attend. In the media, he then repeatedly expressed his conviction that the acceleration of the tempos rigorously prescribed by Smetana is connected with the work's interpretational shift in the direction of comic opera and operetta. Serving as a sturdy buttress for Harnoncourt's musical exploration were the chorus, prepared by **Erwin Ortner** and his assistant **Michal Kucharek**, and the COE itself, whose performance was not only traditionally inspired but also, and above all, differentiated in terms of dynamics and tempo.

The Marie-Jeník duo was portrayed by **Dorothea Röschmann** and **Kurt Streit**. I was quietly confident that casting Röschmann in the lead female role would prove to be the correct choice, yet her dramatic and, primarily, vocal performance surpassed all my expectations. Röschmann's Marie may have passed the age of thirty, her biological clock was evidently ticking and she must have been waiting for Jeník a long time – such dormant passion, poignancy and sheer insistence was palpable in her aria "Bricht du je den Schwur der Treu" ("If I should

ever learn”). Her splendid, dark-hued and maternally decisive voice then truly came into its own in the aria “O welch ein Schmerz, o welch ein Qual” (“Oh What Grief!”). Yet Röschmann could also be deeply lyrical too, namely in the duets with Jeník and, especially, Vašek, whom, out of compassion, she would perhaps even learn to like. Kurt Streit, possessing a timbre totally differing from that of typical Czech Jeníks, more a man with a past than a canny fellow, inevitably stood in Röschmann’s shadow. Nevertheless, with the exception of a slight intonation vacillation and missing out part of the text, his performance was forcible and reliable, yet in comparison with the other soloists the least resonant in the acoustics of the Helmut-List-Halle and in the ensembles and the dynamically more exposed orchestral passages. Definitely the youngest KecálI have ever beheld, more an insurance agent or cosmetics dealer in



a mauve shirt and anthracite-coloured waistcoat than a retired man of the world with a host of successful marriage settlements to his name, was sung by **Ruben Drole**. Even though I have to admit I didn't find him overly convincing as Papageno or in Beethoven's oratorio Christ on the Mount of Olives, to mention at least roles of his in previous collaborations with Nikolaus Harnoncourt, as Kecal he was truly excellent both in terms of vocal performance, including flawless execution of dangerous depths, and dramatic presence, which the audience duly appreciated. He was nimble not slick and his eloquent convincingness was bolstered by efficient manipulation (he was even acquainted with hypnosis). Vašek: sandals, white stockings, short trousers, a velvet jacket, a dicky bow, in Act 3 a gingerbread heart on his neck – rather a city boy than the village idiot. The tenor **Markus Schäfer** as Vašek gave the performance of his life. Absolutely precise in depicting the character, moving in the scenes with Marie, and it's little wonder that he fell for the black Esmeralda, **Bibiana Nwobilo** – after all, all the men on the stage and auditorium alike were casting glances at her.

**Heinz Zednik** as the Ringmaster: could the role have been better cast? He evidently relished his part, when speaking and singing in Czech or German. Although he may no longer be able to rely on his voice in the way he once could, he savoured the role and entertained the audience. A frequent stumbling block in Czech productions is the casting of the roles of the parents of the main characters, yet in Graz their selection was paid as much careful attention to as the lead roles. While **Elisabeth Kulman** (Ludmila) and **Anton Scharinger** (Krušina) were superlative when it comes to intonation, declamation, timbre and dramatic performance, **Yasushi Hirano** (Mícha) lagged behind a little bit. But that which **Elisabeth von Magnus**, the conductor's daughter and director's sister, showed in the mini-role of Háta would warrant a separate review. Not every woman would be prepared to don, albeit only on stage, such a wig, dark-pink dress and handbag as she did and create an inspired study of an excessively concerned and evidently hysterical mother – anyone with such a mum would turn out like Vašek... And she remained in character even during the curtain call, when alongside **Nenad Marinković** (the Indian) and the Czech dancers **Kateřina Černíčková**, **Barbora Dastychová**, **Honza Malík**

and **Radek Šula**, prepared by the ethno-choreologist and choreographer **Daniela Stavělová**, she reaped deservedly ravish applause. In the dances and minor roles the dancers acquitted themselves admirably in historically faithful performances of Czech dances, which they strove to teach the chorus too (a stroke of genius in eschewing the clumsy staggerings of the chorus members or unbecoming stylisations of ballet dancers so often seen on Czech stages). Yet in addition to the reliable chorus, the flexible and sonically intoxicating orchestra and the soloists, the applause and ovations in the end belonged above all to Nikolaus Harnoncourt, who had duly transformed *The Bartered Bride* into a lyrical gem, the *Leonora* of the Czech countryside, in the wake of *My Country* another apotheosis of Smetana's sublime music. Those Smetana devotees who couldn't make it to the Styriarte festival must regret it, or at least hope against hope for an early release of a DVD. I'm sure that they too would be of the opinion that Röschmann's Marie and Schäfer's Vašek have set benchmarks that are unlikely to be surpassed any time soon.

*Reprinted with the kind permission of Harmonie magazine*

## LOOKING BACK AT SEVERAL CELEBRATED HISTORICAL SUPRAPHON RECORDINGS

When today we regard the past sixty years of music recording, we can observe an interesting paradox. There are a large amount of old recordings that remain vital and are still listened to – and alongside them many new, technically superior ones that only rival them partially. It's as though the long period when producing a disc was a technically arduous process resulted in much more artistically distinctive albums. And these have never been as easily available as they are now.

The recording industry, however, in a way mirrors concert life – it was the long artistically distinctive epochs against which we continually gauge today's concerts and new recordings. Our notion of compositions is transformed by comparing various approaches – and some of them simply occupy a more enduring position. There were golden eras of various artists; we are currently living in a golden era of historical recordings. The time of their origination roughly coincides with the period of the communist totalitarian regime in the former Czechoslovakia, when the nationalised label Supraphon practically had a monopoly on classical music recordings. Looking back at the legendary recordings that emerged in Czechoslovakia is thus like taking a stroll through the catalogue of this very company, which is currently thriving largely owing to the possibility to release the gems from its archives in re-edition on CD (e.g. Ančerl Gold Edition, Talich Special Edition).



## Václav Talich

Recordings that “can be listened to without any special training and connoisseurship” began originating back in the 1950s. Some of the recordings have attained a sort of aura – and it is interesting to look back at them from various angles. When doing so, we attain a deeper understanding of the Czech interpretational tradition – our erstwhile domain. We can arrive at that which served as a model which entire generations drew from through exploring Václav Talich’s recordings. Few of the distinguished Czech performers of the second half of the 20th century were unaffected by Talich’s personality. And his recordings remain a peerless source of knowledge, even though Talich never considered any of his opinions to be final – he recorded with creative engagement yet never deemed the artistic result to be definitive.

Today, hardly anybody can even begin to imagine the arduous circumstances under which the “cornerstones” of the Czech interpretational tradition came to life. Just bear in mind that from 1948 to 1953 Talich was not even allowed to perform in public in Prague! His seminal recording of Smetana’s *My Country* was made in 1954 in relation to the Prague Spring festival, in the last year of the conductor’s public activity! At first listen, this recording seems to be perhaps too pedestrian – only with repeated encounters do we discover its unique internal finesse. Similar is the case of the 1950 recording of Dvořák’s *Slavonic Dances* – on the one hand, the individual dances sound like small musical poems, with slower tempos, but that internal finesse and musical forcibility is present everywhere.

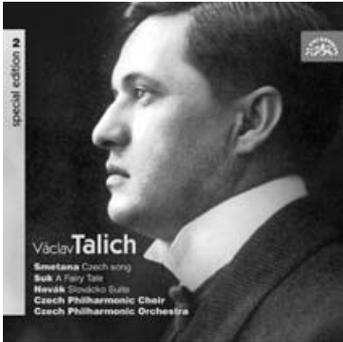
Several paradoxes relate to Talich’s recordings too. One such was drawn attention to by the Czech critic Bohuslav Vítek: “*For years, the misguided opinion that Talich is more lyrical and slower in tempo than younger conductors has been deeply rooted. It is difficult to say on the basis of what this distortion and error occurred. One has merely to compare two recordings of Dvořák’s Serenade for Strings in E major – Talich’s and Karajan’s, made thirty years later. Talich did not make this 1951 recording with the Czech Philharmonic, as was customary, but with hand-picked players from various Prague orchestras. The result is a splendid dynamic recording – extremely dramatic in the faster sections and touching yet not melancholic in the lyrical passages. It is pure, vital Dvořák in all his quintessential attributes. Karajan – by the way, a great admirer of Talich – created in 1981 with the Berliner Philharmoniker the antipode, more akin to the world of Tchaikovsky and the Northern composers. And we could find similar examples when it comes to recordings of Dvořák’s symphonies, as well as other works.*”



Prior to recording Dvořák’s *Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9* in 2005, Sir Charles Mackerras said that his model is much more the pre-war Talich, i.e. the London recordings made at the end of the 1930s. Exemplary post-war recordings of *Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9* again incline to the classical form, a clear tempo order and great transparency. And there are another two recordings of Dvořák’s music that warrant a special mention: the *Cello Concerto in B minor* with Mstislav Rostropovich, and *Stabat Mater* – each of them for different reasons.

From today’s perspective, the recording of the cantata *Stabat Mater* suffers from sonic technical limitations, primarily as regards the chorus. Nevertheless, we would be hard pressed indeed to find a performance imbued with such inner melodiousness. Rostropovich recorded the *Cello Concerto in B minor* many times, yet this was his first great encounter with the piece. The young and technically outstanding Russian player arrived in Prague and Talich duly revealed to him the specificities of Dvořák’s musical world. It related not only to the characteristic melodiousness but also the symphonicity, the proportion between the orchestra and the solo part. On several occasions, Rostropovich said that this first mono recording of his was the best. I am not sure whether this holds true in all respects, yet it bears witness to an extraordinary relation to Talich’s musical feeling.

Josek Suk was one of Talich’s favourite composers, as well as a close friend. Accordingly, it is no accident that at least two of Talich’s recordings of Suk’s works have remained insuperable in a way: *Asrael* and the *Serenade in E flat major*. The string serenade possesses an unrivalled gentleness, a youthfully virtuosic spirit, yet in the apices an almost symphonic breadth. The recording of the symphony *Asrael* is also one of the finest and most valuable in Talich’s archive. It is an example of a modern conception of a gigantic



score peerlessly overarching the whole whose effect is completely engrossing. Seldom is the relation between architecture and emotionality so precisely balanced, and seldom do these two aspects complement each other with such power.

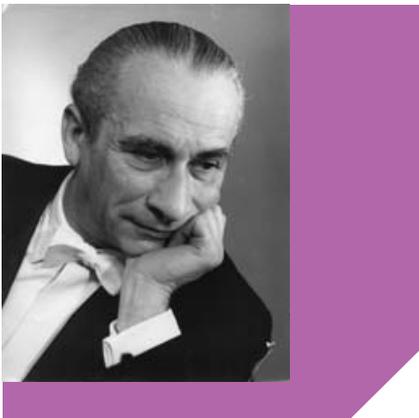
Another unique recording is that of Suk's symphonic poem *Ripening*, made in 1955 and Talich's very last recording. As Bohuslav Víttek put it in his reminiscences: "*Talich demanded an unprecedented number of rehearsals, during which he polished every detail. Although meeting all the requirements of the unsatisfied Talich, the Philharmonic players felt drained. Therefore, when Talich finally wanted them to play the work in one breath, they secretly asked the sound engineer František Burda to switch on the tape recorder. When playing it back, they convinced the startled yet satisfied conductor that he should consider this "secret" recording definitive. And precisely owing to the fact that it was a recording of a long passage performed without a break did a historical document emerge. In it we are afforded the opportunity to savour Suk's Ripening in its compactness, which cannot be said in the case of other recordings of this work.*"

And what about Talich's international repertoire? His recording of Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique"*, can be compared to that of Suk's *Asrael*. Few other recordings can boast of such a dramatically and humanly mournful first movement with a breathtaking struggle. At first listen, his Mozart recordings appear to be historical documents – yet Talich is among the Czech conductors who appreciated Mozart's significance for the culture of orchestral performance and attained incomparable softness and equanimity. If he could have recorded more, he would have easily approximated Bruno Walter. When it comes to the recordings of Baroque music, today, at the time of a long-established paradigm of historically informed performance, we can raise certain objections, yet Talich's recording of Bach's *Concerto in D minor* with Sviatoslav Richter still possesses an extraordinary power and does not contradict the spirit of Bach's music.

## Karel Ančerl

Karel Ančerl, chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra from 1950 to 1968, has experienced an even greater renaissance of popularity among listeners. Undoubtedly, this is partly due to the improved quality of the recording technology available. But why is the listener's admiration so intensive even after so many years? Contemporaries like priding themselves on having experienced Ančerl's era with the Czech Philharmonic first-hand, but at the time they found his being at the helm of the orchestra a matter of course. In terms of their artistic conception, a number of his recordings significantly differed from the then relatively recent recordings made by Talich. The main reasons why Ančerl's recordings were received with such enthusiasm were initially seen in stereophony. Years passed and unexpected situations occurred. Technically perfect recordings were increasingly lacking a certain singularity. Many asked what was the point of recording compositions that had already received the Ančerl treatment!

Let us begin with Ančerl's conception of a work that should be the cornerstone of the repertoire of every chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic – Smetana's *My Country*. His special domain was rigorous adherence to the tempo. Ančerl's *My Country* flows in a thoroughly thought out tempo current, devoid of any sentiment and romantic flare. This notwithstanding – and perhaps precisely owing to it – *Šárka* and *Tábor*, for instance, issue forth with a forcible expression, *From Bohemian Fields and Groves* with effulgence, and the sometimes overly elegiac *Vyšehrad* with a natural and completely unencumbered hymnic quality. In a similar sense, we can also talk about other Ančerl recordings of Romantic works, above all, those by Dvořák and Brahms. The realm of absolute music, primarily symphonies, was more befitting for him.



In programme pieces, he first and foremost emphasised their inner architecture, with the extra-musical content being in its service. It is not so usual after all for a Czech conductor to so truthfully render the musical world of Brahms's symphonies. Ančerl's ability to perfectly outline and build up a grand symphonic plane is also evident in Shostakovich's *Leningrad Symphony*. Truly exceptional too is his exploration of another two symphonies by the same composer: the grievous and energetic *Fifth* and the brilliant *First*.

Ančerl respected composers' original scores with an unusually high degree of thoroughness and carefulness. He shunned interventions and retouches, and this is what makes him more modern than Talich. Titles still considered exemplary have been re-released in an exquisite, technically perfect remastered form. When it comes to Czech music, these first and foremost include the recordings of Leoš Janáček's *Sinfonietta* and *Taras Bulba*, and Bohuslav Martinů's works. A certain "modernisation" is evident throughout. Ančerl belonged to the generation of artists who, especially in their youth, defined themselves in opposition to Romanticism. Gradually, however, he found his way to it and hence today it is more appropriate to talk about a different form of Romanticism. We can rightfully object that his Dvořák should be more melodious and more lyrical – yet Ančerl's take on it has a beautiful sound, clear contours and vivid, immediate emotional intensity.

True gems are the recordings of two sacred works: Dvořák's *Requiem* and Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*. The disc featuring Dvořák's *Requiem* with the four finest cantata singers of the time even eclipses the later recording made by Wolfgang Sawallisch. If I had to choose a single title from the entire edition, it would most likely be this *Requiem*.

The value of Ančerl's recordings of 20th-century classical works has increased in the course of time too. We may even claim that Stravinsky in particular (*Oedipus rex*, *Symphony of Psalms*, *Les noces*, *Cantata*, *Mass*), even though he has not otherwise been overly domesticated, lives in our country through Ančerl's recordings. In the case of Bartók and Stravinsky, there have been recent interpretations which are perfect in terms of sound yet leave the listener cold. When today we listen to *Le sacre du printemps* as performed by American orchestras, it is a sonic firework, yet the image of pagan Russia has evaporated. Nothing similar can be observed with Ančerl. The rationalistic virtuosic conception has been enforced in the case of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* too, an approach that leaves the piece's inner content aside. Ančerl rendered the spirit of Bartók's late works dating from the war period in a superb way, owing in large part to his own traumatic experiences. He ingeniously rendered the Romanticism of Sergey Prokofiev, as well as the other typical traits of the 20th-century classics – primarily through his work with rhythm.

In my opinion, however, the most remarkable of the recordings of solo concertos are the two featuring Sviatoslav Richter. The recording of Sergey Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 1* is truly spellbinding. And the recording of Tchaikovsky's *Concerto in B flat minor* occupies a special position even in Richter's illustrious discography, mainly owing to the buoyant and modern conception, which gives the concerto a totally different face. The legendary pianist recorded the piece on another two occasions: the recording with the Leningrad Philharmonic conducted by Yevgeny Mravinsky can be deemed more conservative, while his third recording, with Herbert von Karajan, is, notwithstanding all the music qualities, too affected and monumental, as though it were the most



challenging of all the composer's works. Tchaikovsky composed the concerto when he was thirty-five years of age, hence Ančerl's recording is due to its vigour actually the most authentic one! Noteworthy in Ančerl's discography too are four classic and perhaps even benchmark recordings by the young Josef Suk – the violin concertos by Dvořák, Mendelssohn and Bruch, and Suk's *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra*.

Supraphon's Ančerl edition contains more than twenty independent preludes, overtures and symphonic poems. They are characterised by the blending of a magnificently colourful orchestral sound, elaborate forethought and imagination. Not even in the case of extremely popular pieces does Ančerl aim at attaining external effect; he approaches everything with the same artistic faithfulness. And some of his recordings, such as, for instance, those of Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* and the Overture to *The Bartered Bride*, are simply peerless. Ančerl's life had a number of tragic aspects – during World War II, which he spent in the Terezín ghetto, he lost all his family members; he went through a tumultuous time after the war; and the suffering he endured had lifelong negative impacts on his health. Yet his art represents order and stability, always radiating optimism. Therein lies greatness and a true unimpassioned heroism. The 1950s in the former Czechoslovakia were a period during which practically all fields of culture experienced a significant decline. And owing to Karel Ančerl, the Czech Philharmonic succeeded in maintaining its artistic level. All the titles of Supraphon's unique Ančerl Gold Edition are of a high standard, none of them discredits the interpreters. The commercial pressure called for an unearthing of virtually everything that Ančerl ever recorded. Although the real "Gold" series should have been slimmed down, it is anyhow salutary that everything he recorded could be re-released.

## Václav Neumann and other conductors

Václav Neumann, Ančerl's successor at the helm of the Czech Philharmonic, enjoyed great popularity among audiences and the orchestra members alike. To date, he has not been allocated any "Gold" re-edition, yet his recordings have been steadily released for many years.

Seminal is his album of the complete Mahler symphonies, and rightly so. Naturally, Neumann's feel for Mahler's music underscores his connection with the Czech musical tradition, yet the conductor also had a special sense of the characteristic Viennese elements. Of his complete Mahler, I above all cherish the first five symphonies, those which Neumann performed at concerts most frequently.

Although there is no reason to question Neumann's mastery of Dvořák's music or his approach to Smetana's *My Country*, it is somehow more difficult to find that unforgettable singularity than it is in the case of Talich and Ančerl.

And there are another two distinguished Czech conductors of global significance whose recordings can be found in the Supraphon catalogue but have perhaps been paid less attention than they deserve. The conductors in question are the young **Libor Pešek**, with his noble yet at the same time lyrical approach to Josef Suk and Antonín Dvořák, and **Jiří Bělohlávek**, who at the beginning of the 1990s made the first-ever Czech complete recording of Johannes Brahms's symphonies and previously both *Serenades* and both piano concertos with Ivan Moravec as a soloist.



## Chamber ensembles and soloists

Chamber music occupies a significant position indeed on the map of Czech music and this has naturally reflected in recordings too, and not only of the Czech repertoire. For a long time, the only flagship chamber music ensembles were the Smetana Quartet and the Suk Trio, and rightly so in a way. Yet the chamber music scene has always been variegated. Their contemporaries included, among others, the **Vlach Quartet**, who were not afforded as many recording opportunities and could not appear frequently on stages worldwide, mainly for political reasons. However, their recording of Dvořák's *Quartet in G major, Op. 106* is matchless due to its sheer ardour. The Vlach Quartet are able to detect melodiousness even there where other interpreters do not commonly seek it. This certainly holds true about their recording of Beethoven's early quartets.

Back in the 1980s, the enormous success of the **Smetana Quartet** in Japan resulted in co-production recording projects. Nevertheless, these "late" recordings by the Smetana Quartet are among those less available - primarily due to the fact that Supraphon only possessed the publishing rights for Eastern Europe. Consequently, today's re-editions above all feature the ensemble's older recordings, with the most remarkable being of Beethoven's late quartets. And the older recording of Smetana's quartets is deemed to be a certain classical conception.

When it comes to Antonín Dvořák, there is good reason to reach for the recording by the one generation younger **Panocha Quartet**, who have been afforded the opportunity to record for Supraphon Dvořák's complete chamber works using digital technology. This ensemble has also taken a novel approach to, among others, Haydn. On the other hand, in the case of string quartets it is a pity that a relatively small label such as

Supraphon cannot record this exclusive repertoire with several ensembles concurrently. This would create a far more interesting picture, whereby we could compare albums made by the **Wihan, Talich, Škampa** and **Pražák Quartets** released on the same label... The situation today is similar. Supraphon garners accolades with recordings by the **Pavel Haas Quartet**, but we must seek out their peers of a comparable level, such as the Bennewitz Quartet and the **Zemlinsky Quartet**, on CDs issued by other labels.

As regards the piano trio genre, we must first and foremost mention Josef Suk, Josef Chuchro and Jan Panenka - the **Suk Trio**. The ensemble's line-up changed several times over the years, but this was perhaps the most balanced and best co-ordinated configuration. Both of the repertoire cornerstones (Dvořák's and Beethoven's trios) as performed by them are still worthy of attention for their combining sonic roundness and colourfulness of instruments, as well as a sense of the classical form and clear contours. The Suk Trio's legacy has been linked up to in an original manner by the **Guarneri Trio**, made up of Čeněk Pavlík, Marek Jerie and Ivan Klánský. Unfortunately, they have only recorded with Supraphon a small part of their repertoire.

The solo works of each of the mentioned Suk Trio members deserve our attention too. The most famous is, of course, **Josef Suk**, and many of his recordings of Czech music represent milestones. These include Dvořák's *Violin Concerto* and chamber compositions, Suk's *Fantasy in G minor*, as well as lesser-known Czech repertoire works. The distinctive full tone, musicality and technical reliability are the characteristic traits of all his recordings of the international repertoire, and it is always inspiring to revisit them. As regards **Josef Chuchro**, especially worthy of mention is his recordings of Beethoven's cello sonatas and Dvořák's *Cello Concerto*. And **Jan Panenka**, a refined pianist with a splendid touch, is an ideal interpreter

of the classicist repertoire. He was always a superlative partner to soloists. I must, however, point out that Panenka's recording of Beethoven's piano concertos has been unjustly overlooked.

A precious phenomenon among pianists is **Ivan Moravec**. His recording of Chopin's *Preludes* is still unrivalled in a way. Yet Moravec has also made superlative recordings of works by all the composers he has devoted to throughout his life with unique precision, including Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, the Impressionists, and this holds true as well in the case of his solo albums and recordings of piano concertos with orchestra. It is laudable that Supraphon has gradually added to its catalogue Moravec's older American recordings made for small labels. Perhaps no other Czech pianist has imbued with such singularity even the most basic piano repertoire works, pieces that have been recorded on countless occasions! Unfortunately, there is not enough space here to analyse them, but one thing has to be said: Moravec is simply an amazing artist.

We can symbolically round off our stroll through the Supraphon back catalogue with the live recording of the Prague Spring 1990 opening concert. *My Country* featuring **Rafael Kubelík** conducting the Czech Philharmonic is a truly memorable recording, one combining a superb musical tradition and a key historical moment. It is also interesting within the context of Kubelík's four older recordings made in Chicago, Vienna, Boston and Munich. If we want to understand the role music may play at significant historical moments, we simply cannot afford to overlook this recording. And I can also recommend another one, through which we return to the beginning of this article. This year Supraphon finally released the unique recording of the live performance of *My Country* at the National Theatre on 5 June 1939, conducted by Václav Talich. Fortunately, it has been preserved in the archives of Radio Norway, because at the time it was broadcast to several European cities. It is the strongest possible encounter between music and a historical moment that I know, one comparable with the remarkable pre-war concerts given by Arturo Toscanini.

Autumn 2011

## Music Bridge Prague — Dresden

**Collegium 1704**  
**Collegium Vocale 1704**  
**Václav Luks / conductor**

**28. 10. 2011 Prague**  
**29. 10. 2011 Dresden**  
**H. I. F. Biber, G. Finger,**  
**J. Pachelbel, A. Kühnel**  
Capriccio stravagante

**11. 11. 2011 Prague**  
**12. 11. 2011 Dresden**  
**F. Couperin, M. Marais, J.-F. Rebel**  
Le Parnasse français

**31. 12. 2011 Prague**  
**1. 1. 2012 Dresden**  
**J. S. Bach**  
Magnificat D dur BWV 243  
**J. D. Zelenka**  
Te Deum D dur ZWV 146

[www.collegium1704.com](http://www.collegium1704.com)  
[info@collegium1704.com](mailto:info@collegium1704.com)  
(cz) +420 773 99 1704  
(de) +49 173 3 877 588

#### With kind support of



partners



#### Media Partners

Opera PLUS

ČESKÝ ROZHLAS



czech music quarterly



DRESDNER NEUESTE NACHRICHTEN



dresdenticket.de

#### Tickets

**Prague:**  
300 & 250 CZK  
Serial Ticket: 960 & 800 CZK

**Dresden:**  
15 & 10 EUR  
Serial Ticket: 48 & 32 EUR

Reduced price 50 %:  
children, students, retirees

[www.ticketpro.cz](http://www.ticketpro.cz)  
[www.dresdenticket.de](http://www.dresdenticket.de)

From 6.30 pm in the concert hall  
info@collegium1704.com  
gsm: +420 773 99 1704 (Prague)  
gsm: +49 (0)173 3 877 588 (Dresden)

[www.collegium1704.com](http://www.collegium1704.com)

czech music | anniversary

by Markéta Hallová

# 200 years of the

**Precious few cultural institutions in the Czech Republic can boast of having operated – and virtually within the intentions of the original mission – continuously for some two centuries. One such is the *Prague Conservatory*, which this year is celebrating its bicentenary. The school is also exceptional owing to the fact that it was very the first institution of its kind to be founded in Central Europe.**

The school's foundation was preceded by music conservatories that had been established since the 16th century in Italy, above all in Naples, Venice, Palermo, Milan and Bologna. These, however, were of a rather different nature. Music, especially singing, was taught there previously within churches and cathedrals, as well as hospitals and asylums which helped not only the sick but also the needy, primarily orphans. The schools in Venice were not called *conservatorio* but *ospedale* (hospital). Among those who worked at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice was Antonio Vivaldi, who taught the violin. At the end of the 18th century, a French conservatory, the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique in Paris, founded in 1795 and still functioning today, introduced rigorous musical tuition. And this school would serve as inspiration for the conservatory in Prague. Distinguished figures always taught at the Paris conservatory: Cherubini, Auber, Boieldieu, and later on the Czech musician Antonín Rejcha, whose pupils Hector Berlioz and César Franck went on to earn fame. But let us return to Prague's very own conservatory. It launched its operation in 1811, even earlier than the conservatory in the Austro-Hungarian imperial capital Vienna (founded in 1817 by Antonio Salieri).

# Prague Conservatory



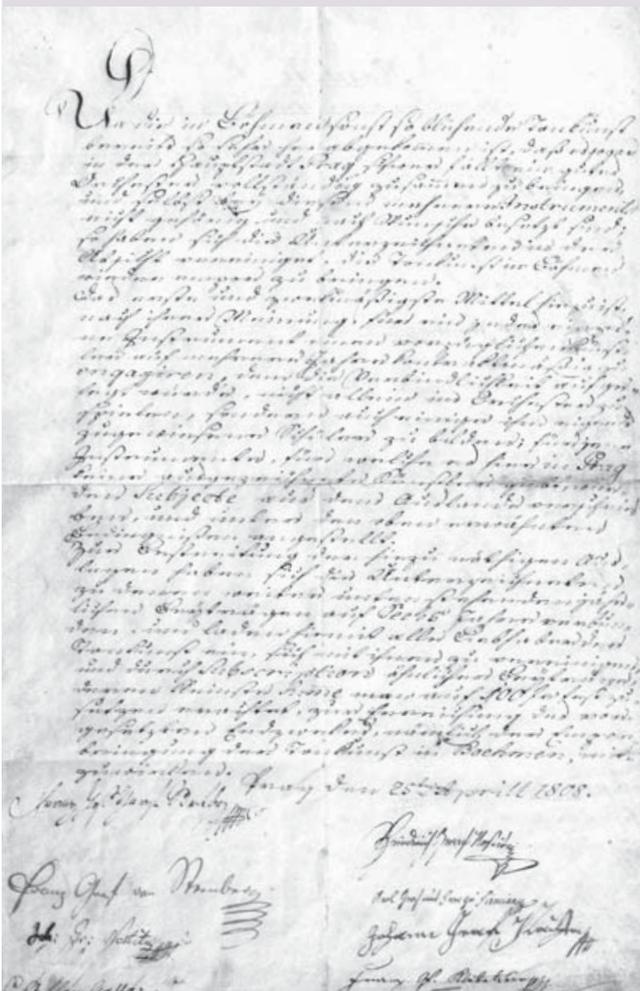
*Current seat of the Prague Conservatory*

# 200 years



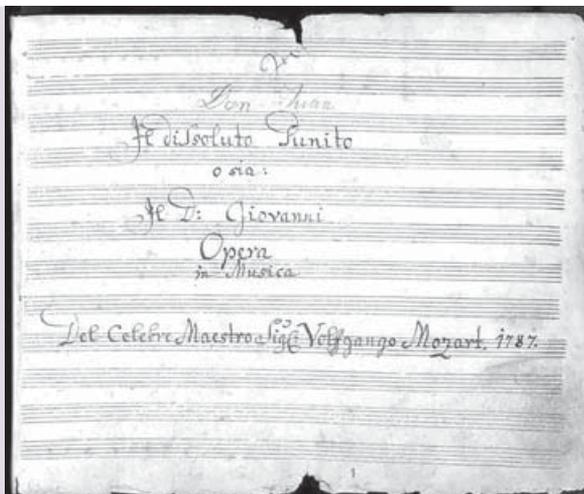
Count Jan Nostitz-Rieneck,  
one of the founders of the Prague Conservatory

Foundation charter of the Prague Conservatory



The Prague Conservatory soon created a teaching methodology of its own and thus became a model for the prestigious conservatory in Leipzig, founded in 1843 upon the instigation of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, its first director. Besides the founder himself, such luminaries as Schumann, Gade, Moscheles, Joachim and, later, Max Reger taught at the school. The Leipzig conservatory became a powerful rival to its Prague counterpart.

The impulse for setting up a conservatory in Prague was provided by the patriotic aristocracy living in Bohemia, who refused to put up with the general decline of musicality (quite understandable at the time of the Napoleonic wars). In 1808 they issued a proclamation, highlighting the necessity to organise musical life and musical education of performing artists in Bohemia, dated 25 April and signed by eight nobles: Count Jan Nostitz, Count František Josef of Wrthba, Count Bedřich Nostitz, Count František of Štenberk, Count Kristian Clam-Gallas, Count Karel, Master of Firmiana, Count Jan Pacht and Count František of Klebelsberk. The document includes the following passages: “Since music, which once so thrived in Bohemia, is at so low an ebb that even in the capital, Prague, it is no easy matter to put together a good orchestra in the complete number, in which the instruments would be cast in an appropriate and desirable manner, the undersigned have joined together with the aim to revive music in Bohemia (...)



Period copy of the score of W.A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, conserved at the library of the Prague Conservatory

This call was soon joined by other aristocrats, and two years later, on 31 March 1810, the *Association for Music Revival* in Bohemia was established. Its members were mainly drawn from noble families, but it was also joined by other benefactors (later, for example, the architect Josef Hlávka). Within the intentions of the previous proclamation, this German-Czech association founded and for more than a century would administer and finance the music conservatory in Prague. One of the school's great advantages was that over the first eighty years of its existence the *Association* did not require tuition fees; hence, the opportunity to study at the conservatory was also afforded to poor pupils who, naturally, were in turn expected to be talented and diligent.

The first president of the *Association for Music Revival* in Bohemia was Count Jan Nostitz, not only a music promoter but also an active composer (by the way, his palace in Prague is currently the seat of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic). The conservatory classes began on 24 April 1811, initially in the teachers' households, since it was not possible to find an appropriate building (negotiations about several proposed addresses, including, for instance, the Monasteries of Saint Havel and Saint Jacob, broke down). The school's first residence, one that it would have for more than seventy years, was the Monastery of the Dominican Order at Saint Giles' in

Prague's Old Town. Some of the scenes in Miloš Forman's celebrated film *Amadeus* were shot in the premises of this church and monastery. The long seeking of a building to house the conservatory in Prague also resulted in some rather amusing confusion. For example, shortly after the school's origination Franz I, the art-loving Emperor of Austria, wished to pay it a visit while he was in Prague, yet owing to a lack of information was given the wrong address. He was driven to the two mentioned monasteries originally proposed for the conservatory yet searched for the school in vain and duly returned to Vienna. The Monastery at Saint Giles', although proving to be too cramped, remained leased to the conservatory until the completion of the exquisite Neo-Renaissance Rudolfinum, where the school moved in 1884, thereby also acquiring a large and small concert hall. (The Rudolfinum, with its Dvořák and Suk Halls, is today the seat of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra).

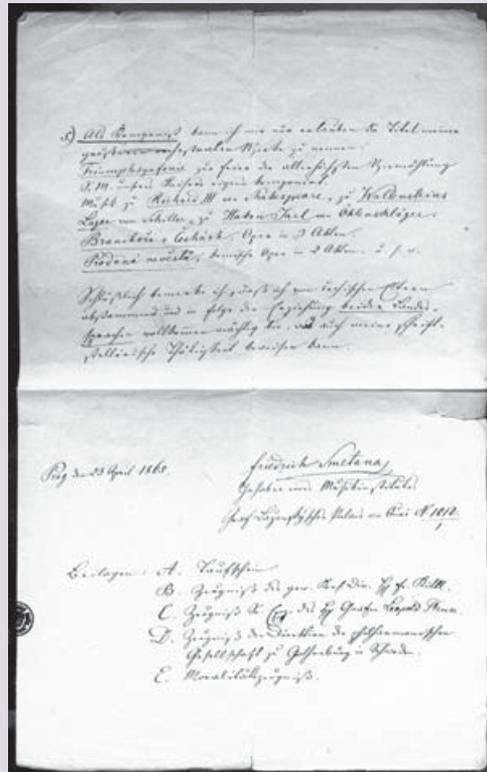
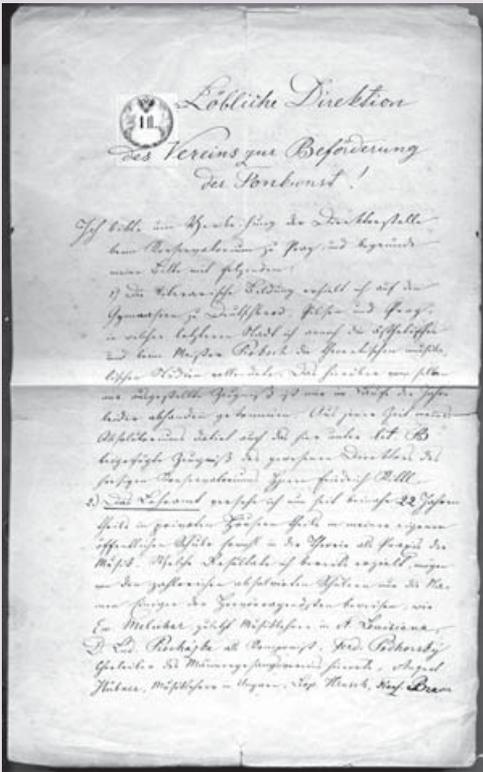
As has been mentioned, the school was originally founded with a view to forming a complete orchestra and therefore it initially only educated instrumentalists (from 1811). Only later did it begin training singers (from 1815) and composers (from 1890). Eventually, it started to nurture the talents of actors (between 1919 and 1946), conductors (from 1929), students of musical drama (from 1969) and dance and ballet (1946-1980).



Antonín Dvořák



For more than a century after its foundation, the conservatory was a private school. Following the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 it was nationalised (and would remain in state hands from 1919 to 2000); since January 2001 it has been administered by Prague City Council. Over the two hundred years of its existence, it has had twenty-two directors, most of them renowned composers, as well as distinguished instrumentalists. The most famous director



Bedřich Smetana's application for the post of the director of the Prague Conservatory



*Jiří Bělohávek and the Prague Conservatory orchestra, opening of Prague Spring 2011*

was undoubtedly Antonín Dvořák (1901–1904), while the lawyer, pianist, musicologist and promoter Václav Holzkněcht (1946–1970) was perhaps the most popular director in the modern era.

The first director was the composer Bedřich Dionýsius Weber, who headed the school for thirty-one years. He had a legal background, possessed excellent organisational skills and was also an accomplished composer, music theorist and inventor. He instigated, among other things, the construction of the valve system in the French horn, and later in trumpets too, and devised a lever system for tuning the timpani. During his tenure, the conservatory in Prague was visited by the then nineteen-year-old Richard Wagner, for whom the orchestra, conducted by Weber himself, premiered his recently completed *Symphony No. 1 in C major*.

After the first instrumentalists had been trained, the orchestra made up of Prague Conservatory students earned respect and acclaim from the very beginning of its existence. The first public performance took place on 15 February 1815. The preserved positive evaluations of the first concerts include an enthusiastic reception by the

composer and pianist Carl Maria von Weber, who at the time was conductor and director of the Estates Theatre in Prague, and later laudatory comments about the school under its second director, Jan Bedřich Kittl, from the generally admired Paris Conservatoire graduate Hector Berlioz during his visit to Prague in 1846. The school's archives contain letters bearing witness to prominent musicians expressing an interest in performing with the Prague Conservatory Orchestra, among them the renowned pianist Clara Schumann (widow of the famous composer Robert Schumann), the celebrated pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, as well as the famous violinist and later on director of the Musikakademie in Berlin Joseph Joachim, and many other artists, including Ferenc Liszt, who visited Prague on several occasions and in 1858 conducted the Prague Conservatory Orchestra performing his *Piano Concerto in E flat major* (with Liszt's pupil Robert Pflughaupt playing the piano) and symphonic poem *Tasso*. Liszt esteemed the school's next director, Josef Krejčí, an organist and composer of mainly sacred pieces, particularly his *Mass in A minor, Op. 25*, which Krejčí dedicated to Liszt (naturally,

only after having received his written consent, which is still preserved in the conservatory correspondence records). For some time, the Prague Conservatory Orchestra was the only orchestra in Prague.

Prague Conservatory students left – often shortly after graduation – to work all over the world. A host of players have performed within world-renowned orchestras and chamber ensembles; a good many soloists have been popular stars of their time, yet a number of them have been forgotten. But all of them have served as ambassadors for the school worldwide and living proof of the excellence of the musical education it provides. The Prague Conservatory was brought particular fame by the renowned violin school, with the Josef Slavík – Ferdinand Laub – František Ondříček – Jan Kubelík – Jaroslav Kocian line being especially noteworthy. The school continued to produce outstanding violinists (the recently deceased virtuoso Josef Suk was taught by Kocian, among others). Many of the school's graduates have gone on to secure lucrative engagements abroad or participate in extensive tours. Yet some have left their homeland under duress, be it for safety reasons or – before World War II – owing to racial persecution, and after 1948 and again after 1968 primarily for political reasons.

As regards the violinists who earned acclaim abroad shortly after the Prague Conservatory was founded, particularly noteworthy were Josef Slavík, nicknamed “the Czech Paganini”, for whom Franz Schubert composed his *Fantasia in C, Op. 159*, and the Russia-based violinist Ferdinand Laub, whom Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky considered the finest violinist of his era and in honour of whose memory he wrote his *String Quartet No. 3, Op. 30*. František Ondříček (who premiered Dvořák's celebrated *Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53*, and to whom the composer dedicated his *Romance in F minor, Op. 11*) experienced a great career, while the violinist Jan Kubelík (the father of the renowned conductor Rafael) garnered global success.

When it comes to singers, especially noteworthy are the superlative 19th-century soprano Henrietta Sontag, the legendary

Verdi interpreter Tereza Stolzová (Giuseppe Verdi composed *Aida* and *Requiem* with her voice in mind) and Gustav Mahler's personal favourite, the soprano Berta Lautererová-Foerstrová (the wife of the composer Josef Bohuslav Foerster). Moreover, the school educated the soprano Ludmila Dvořáková, a famed Wagner interpreter, and the contemporary alto Dagmar Pecková. The most celebrated conductors trained at the Prague Conservatory include Karel Ančerl, Rafael Kubelík, Václav Smetáček, Václav Neumann and Jiří Bělohlávek. The virtuoso pianist Rudolf Firkušný, who lived in the USA after World War II, was another alumnus. Among the composers who studied at the Prague Conservatory were two creators who were mainly famous for their operettas: Franz Lehár (who actually studied the violin at the school) and Rudolf Friml (studied the piano). Other noteworthy composers include Bohuslav Martinů (who studied the violin and organ, and later on, albeit briefly, composition with Josef Suk), Jaromír Weinberger (composition with Vítězslav Novák) and Karel Husa (composition with Karel Řídký), who emigrated in the 1950s, has garnered the most prestigious honours of modern times and this year celebrated his ninetieth birthday. Among those who left their homeland following the Communist takeover was the oboist Jiří Tancibudek (oboe with Václav Smetáček), for whom Bohuslav Martinů composed the *Concerto for oboe and small orchestra* (1955).

Numerous Czech artists in possession of a Prague Conservatory education have worked abroad as pedagogues, primarily in Vienna, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, the former Yugoslav republics, as well as the USA and Japan. In this connection, we must mention perhaps the most influential of all: the phenomenal violinist Otakar Ševčík, who created a challenging method for practicing the instrument, who earned global renown with his singular and demanding teaching style at the Prague and Vienna Conservatories, as well as numerous master classes worldwide, most notably in America and England. He nurtured the talent of almost five thousand students both at home and abroad!

The Prague Conservatory has also been attended by students from countries beyond



Alois Hába



Autograph of Hába's opera *Mother*

the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, (after 1918) the Czechoslovak Republic and (after 1993) the Czech Republic. They have hailed from Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Lithuania, France, as well as from the USA, Japan, China and South Korea.

A tremendous surge in interest in studying at the Prague Conservatory was recorded after it was joined by Antonín Dvořák (1891), again following his return from the USA (1895) and in the years when he held the post of director. Owing to the accomplishments of the Maestro, the composition department of the Prague Conservatory was called the “Dvořák composition school”. The most gifted of Dvořák’s students included Josef Suk, Vítězslav Novák and Rudolf Karel, who subsequently taught at the school themselves, Oskar Nedbal, Julius Fučík and others. After Dvořák’s death, a number of composition students were attracted by his pedagogic successors.

A somewhat peculiar phase in the development of the Prague Conservatory composition school was the tenure of the composer Alois Hába in the 1920s and 30s. The classes given by this pioneer of microtonal music allured students focused on various genres. Several special

instruments (quarter-tone grand piano and upright piano, harmonium, trumpet, clarinet, guitar) were made according to Hába’s designs. These instruments, which have been preserved up to the present day, were intended for performance of his own compositions and the works of his followers, mostly former pupils.

The Prague Conservatory had great merit in “raising the bar” when it comes to interpretation of string quartets, primarily owing to Antonín Bennewitz, professor of the violin and chamber play, and later on long-standing director during the Conservatory’s “golden era”. In the 1890s, former students of his formed the Bohemian (later “Czech”) Quartet – original lineup: Karel Hoffmann, Josef Suk, Oskar Nedbal, Otto Berger – which remained at the apex of contemporary interpretation until disbanding in the 1930s. The ensemble garnered acclaim in numerous countries worldwide and inspired several composers to create pieces especially for them, cases in point being string quartets by Dvořák, Suk and Vítězslav Novák). The Czech Quartet have inspired and continue to inspire many ensembles made up of Prague Conservatory graduates; to name but two: the Smetana Quartet and the Panocha Quartet.



*The Prague Conservatory's new concert hall*

The success of the Bohemian Quartet also instigated the origination at the school of numerous chamber ensembles of different configurations, including a number of brass ensembles.

At the beginning of 1919, with the creation of an independent department, the Prague Conservatory extended the tuition to encompass drama and later on musical drama students, who have gone on to grace theatre stages and also appeared in film, radio and television productions. Following the end of World War II, the school also opened its doors to dance and ballet students, yet in 1980 the dance department was closed down and an independent school established (the Prague Dance Conservatory). Over these 35 years, this Prague Conservatory department honed the skills of truly

distinguished artists, among them the mime artist Ladislav Fialka (who performed alongside the legendary Marcel Marceau), the choreographers and dancers Pavel Šmok and Jiří Kylián, the world-renowned leading light of the Netherlands Dans Theater. Former students of ballet at the Prague Conservatory dance department also include the current King of Cambodia, Norodom Sihamoni, who has the fondest memories of the school.

Today, the Prague Conservatory has more than 550 students, 39 of them foreign. Its main building is situated in Na rejdišti street, nearby the historically significant Rudolfinum. This anniversary year, the school acquired a new concert hall (with substantial support from Prague City Council). The current director of the Prague Conservatory is the composer Pavel Trojan.

Dear readers,  
on page 41 of the previous issue of CMQ in Jan Kachlík's article "The New Complete Edition of the Works of Dvořák Stimulates New Research" we erroneously gave a music notation example from Antonín Dvořák's *Dumka, Op. 12, No. 1*, Prague edition, dating from 1893/1894. The correct notation example is as follows:



We apologise to our readers and the author.  
Petr Bakla, *editor-in-chief*

## We offer:

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

## Contact:

Barvič a Novotný bookshop  
Česká 13, 602 00 Brno, Czech republic

•  
Open daily  
Mon–Sat 8.00 – 19.00, Sun 10.00 – 19.00

•  
Tel. + fax:  
(+420) 542 215 040, (+420) 542 213 611

•  
e-mail: [hudebniny@barvic-novotny.cz](mailto:hudebniny@barvic-novotny.cz)

•  
[www.hudebniny.com](http://www.hudebniny.com)

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

**BARVIČ a NOVOTNÝ**

KNIHKUPECTVÍ • 1883 • SPOL. S R. O. BRNO

# Prague Symphony Orchestra



## October 12 and 13

Smetana Hall of Municipal House, 7:30 p.m.

**Jiří Kout** | conductor

**Serge Zimmermann** | violin

**Claudia Mahnke** | mezzo-soprano

**Steve Davislim** | tenor

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN:**

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Op. 61

**GUSTAV MAHLER:** Das Lied von der Erde

## October 19 and 20

Smetana Hall of Municipal House, 7:30 p.m.

**Zdeněk Mácal** | conductor

**Kateřina Chroboková** | organ

**FRANCIS POULENC:**

Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani in G minor

**GUSTAV MAHLER:** Symphony No. 6 in A minor

## October 28

Smetana Hall of Municipal House, 5 p.m.

CONCERT FOR THE REPUBLIC

**Łukasz Borowicz** | conductor

**BEDŘICH SMETANA:** My Country

## November 9 and 10

Smetana Hall of Municipal House, 7:30 p.m.

**Jac van Steen** | conductor

**Lucie Fišer Silkenová** | soprano

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY:** The Hebrides, overture, Op. 26

**RICHARD STRAUSS:** Four last Songs

**JEAN SIBELIUS:** Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43

**TICKETS** On-line: [www.fok.cz](http://www.fok.cz)

PSO Box Office Municipal House, nám. Republiky 5, Praha 1

Tel.: +420 222 002 336, [pokladna@fok.cz](mailto:pokladna@fok.cz)

fok

**Bohuslav Martinů****A Wreath of Carnations.  
Songs Vol. 1**

**Jana Wallingerová - mezzo-soprano,  
Giorgio Koukl - piano.**

Text: English. Recorded: Mar. 2010.

Released: 2011. TT: 79:28. DDD.

1 CD Naxos 8.572588.

In May 2011 Naxos released a little gem on the global market, a real treat for admirers and connoisseurs of Bohuslav Martinů's music. The almost eighty-minute disc "Martinů Songs 1" presents Martinů's early songs dating from 1910–14, 1917, 1925, all of them previously unreleased and, with a few exceptions, unrecorded. Over the past four years, owing to the collaboration of the pianist **Giorgio Koukl** with Naxos, Bohuslav Martinů's complete piano oeuvre has been distributed globally. The label has decided to follow this up by releasing the vocal works. Although Naxos released a disc comprising Martinů's songs from the 1930s and 40s back in 2005 (Olga Černá – voice, Jitka Čechová – piano), the Koukl edition (3 CDs are planned) should exhaustively document Martinů's early songs that have not won such general recognition as, for example, *Songs on One Page* and the *New Chap-Book*. And very much doubt whether even the most hardened Martinů aficionados will be familiar with all the songs featured on this CD since they only exist as the composer's autographs, mostly preserved in the archives of the Bohuslav Martinů Centre in Polička. Accordingly, their release was preceded by truly diligent research work. In co-operation with the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague and the Polička Centre, the pianist Giorgio Koukl began gathering copies of Martinů's manuscripts before plunging into reconstructing the scores and texts. The result is a CD with forty-one songs to folk lyrics and texts by famous and less-famous authors (J. W. Goethe,



H. Heine, A. E. Mužík, R. Mayer, Detlef von Liliencron, etc.).

Martinů's laboratory of early vocal works still reverberates with his Romantic and Impressionist models, but also fascinating traits of his own style, while in the "later" cycles we can already hear clear references to his own operas and cantatas. I find the most remarkable the ballad *A Wreath of Carnations*, which gave the CD its title, the cycle *Six Simple Songs*, as well as the humorous miniatures *The Gnat's Wedding* and *Czech Riddles*. Giorgio Koukl's piano accompaniment is flawless: it does not compete with the song and at the same time foregrounds the specificities and wealth of the composer's "piano" idiom. The mezzo-soprano **Jana Wallingerová** is an accomplished and award-winning opera singer and her interpretation of Martinů's songs is professional, her diction precise, which is a great forte with the completely unknown Czech texts on the CD, with the cycle in German (Goethelieder) and the songs in French (e.g. *La nuit*) being less comprehensible. The conception of songs to texts by Romantic authors (H. Heine, J.V. Sládek, A.E. Mužík) is laudable. The folk and children's songs would, however, have come across much better had they been sung with less drama and more naturally. The CD's dramaturgy is so diverse that it would require greater expressional gradation and more emphatic nuances. The complete version of the booklet, including Czech and English lyrics, can be found on [www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com). Unfortunately, several numbers in the sequence of compositions are erroneously printed in the brief booklet. We can only hope that these miniature Martinů songs will be printed too so that they can become part of the pedagogic literature and some of them at least incorporated into the repertoire of professional singers.

Lucie Harasim-Berná

**Kinsky Trio Prague****Czech Chamber Music  
(Foerster, Novák, Janáček,  
Fibich)**

**Lucie Sedláková Hůlová - violin,  
Martin Sedlák - cello, Slávka  
Pěchočová - piano.**

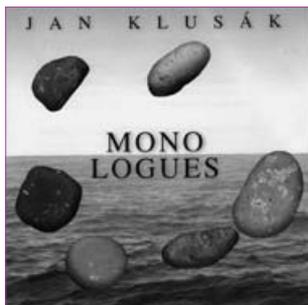
Text: Czech, English, German, French.

Recorded: Oct.–Nov. 2010, Martinů Hall, Prague. Released: 2011. TT: 71:26.

DSD. 1 CD Praga Digitals

PRD/DSD 250 80.

On their second CD, the **Kinsky Trio** present an extremely interesting repertoire: they solely play pieces by Czech composers and, what's more, those that are seldom performed on a concert stage. The recording opens with J. B. Foerster's *Piano Trio No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 38*. This gracious work with a surprisingly vital first two movements and a melancholic final movement is played with extreme sensitivity, a gentle lyrical expression and youthful sincerity. The following *Trio No. 2 in D minor, Op. 27* by Vítězslav Novák has the secondary title "*Quasi una Ballata*". The demanding one-movement piece is noteworthy for its dramatic course, as well as evident links to folk music, and suggests a number of possible interpretations. The Kinsky Trio do not base their conception on dramatic juxtapositions but, above all, the poeticism, epical character and colourfulness of Novák's music, "recounting" his ballade rather as a mysterious fairy tale. This approach becomingly prepares the ground for the next work – Janáček's *Fairy Tale for Cello and Piano*. Janáček connoisseurs will certainly be surprised by the recording, since the cellist **Martin Sedlák** and the pianist **Slávka Pěchočová** present this composition in the original four-movement version, as it was recently reconstructed by Jiří Zahrádka. When it comes to its execution, I can only comment that it is indeed fairy-tale-like, with the lucid "pizzicato" 2nd movement being



one of the most beautiful passages that can be heard on this disc. The project culminates in Zdeněk Fibich's *Trio in F minor*. The romantically effulgent piece places great demands on the interpreters: the piano part is in many places akin to a piano concerto (in the first movement, the composer even prescribed a small cadence for the piano), but the string instruments are afforded significant space too. The artists play this work with admirable lightness and zip, very plastically and emotively. The young ensemble have truly presented themselves in the best light on this CD. And so, regrettably, I must add that whereas the recording itself meets the strictest standards, this cannot be said of the booklet. Although its front page is adorned by J. B. Foerster's nice picture of a "Landscape with a Brook", the accompanying texts contain so many errors and "flights of fancy" that one is inclined to doubt whether they have been edited at all.

Věroslav Němec

## Jan Klusák

### Monologues

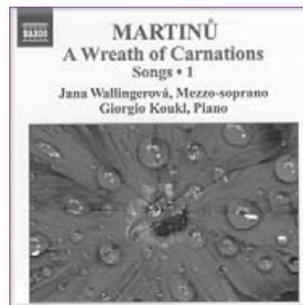
Lada Fedorová - violin,  
Sylvia Georgieva - harpsichord,  
Vilém Veverka - oboe, Jan Hora  
- organ, Jitka Hosprová - viola,  
Lucie Kaucká - piano.

Text: Czech, English. Recorded: June and July 2009, Suk Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague; July and Sep. 2009, Reduta, Olomouc; Oct. 2009, Martinů Hall, Prague. Released: 2009. TT: 65:53. DDD. 1 CD JK XXI Prague 0078-2.

**T**his dramaturgically interesting recording comprises a cross-section of works from the oeuvre of Jan Klusák, one of the most accomplished contemporary Czech composers of his generation. Comparing compositions for solo instruments which originated over

almost half a century shows and reveals many intriguing facts. One of them is that the integrity of Klusák's musical language has been retained over the long period of stylistic development. Although heterogeneous in compositional and material terms, all the pieces featured on the recording adhere to the principle of thorough structural design, palpable to varying extents yet always present. All of them are absorbing for the listener and, I assume, appreciated by the performers too – this may sound like a cliché, but a cliché can also be true. The composer reveals that which inspired him to write his early pieces in the booklet, which provides some useful information. It is interesting to follow how his own musical sentiment emerges from the melting pot of inspirations and how he faces up to his models. Perhaps the most intriguing such confrontation, and for me the most beautiful music on the disc, is the *Aria from Partita in Sol per clavicembalo*, dating from 1957. The quasi-Baroque character of this slow movement is delicately undermined by an unusual leading of inner voices: the descending leading notes in minor key are resolved the other way around than one would expect, i.e. ascending – and the whole gives a very nice and refreshing impression. The most extensive pieces on the CD are the two string compositions: *GaDe, Fantasy for Violin* (1996/2003) and *Ubi vult per viola sola* (1987).

Whereas the formally discontinuous violin fantasy suffers from a slight exhaustion of material in the last third, the viola piece is another apex of the recording, owing in large part to the extremely precise, sonically and architectonically excellent interpretation of **Jitka Hosprová**. Perhaps the only aspect of the disc that one could take issue with is the overall sound design. All the instruments are recorded rather from afar, with a significant participation of the surrounding space, yet, unfortunately, with the absence of details that microphones placed close to the instruments would provide. The composition *Priápeia per oboe* (1986) is primarily intended to be performed in



a space with a long reverberation (with the aim being oversounding of individual notes of the melody), but it was recorded in the Suk Hall of the Rudolfinum, and the artificial reverb (what's more, with the disturbing lower hum) does not sound totally natural. On the other hand, I must laud its interpretation (the superlative **Vilém Veverka**). And the entire recording too for that matter.

Michal Nejtěk

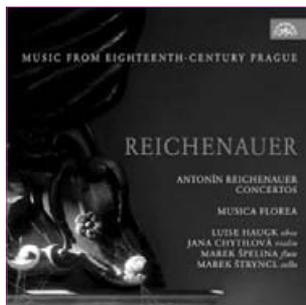
## Bohuslav Martinů

**Etudes and Polkas, H. 308 (selection); Butterflies and Birds of Paradise, H. 127; Sonata for Piano, H. 350; Album Leaf No. 1, H. 222; Borová, H. 195 (No. 7 Moderato); Black Bottom, H. 165; Victory March of the R.U.R. Sports Club in Polička, H. 129bis**

### Michal Mašek - piano.

Executive Producer: Michal Mašek.  
Text: Czech, English. Recorded:  
Feb. 2011, Teldex Studio Berlin.  
Released: 2011. TT: 65:16. DDD.  
1 CD EMI Records / Morpheus Art  
Catalogue No. 50999 0 269162 6.

**T**he young musician Michal Mašek is one of the most exciting pianists of his generation and each of his projects bears the hallmark of singularity and high professionalism. This also applies to his latest artistic accomplishment, released by the prestigious EMI label and laconically titled "Mašek / Martinů", in which Michal Mašek strives to link Martinů's musical and visual legacies. The slim volume of an attractive "handbook" format features a representative selection of Martinů's drawings, while the enclosed CD comprises Mašek's recording of Martinů piano pieces. These compositions are presented within a surprisingly variegated stylistic and genre



spectrum. Mašek begins his recital with a selection of nine numbers from the cycle *Etudes and Polkas*, today ranking among the most frequently performed and most popular Martinů works. With Mašek's delivery, the individual pieces sound truly bewitching, like dreamy poetic images, and one would be hard pressed indeed to single out one in particular as the most splendid. Perhaps the tender "Christmas" *Pastorale*? Or the *Polka in A* with its piquantly pointed syncopation? The subsequent cycle bearing the "Art Nouveau" title *Butterflies and Birds of Paradise* dates from Martinů's period of enchantment with Impressionism. While in the *Etudes and Polkas* I already admired the beautiful sound of the piano, when listening to the finely opalescent colours of the *Butterflies and Birds of Paradise* I hadn't the slightest doubt that Michal Mašek plays a truly superb instrument and is able to bring out its stellar qualities to the full. The apex of the recording, however, can be considered Martinů's *Piano Sonata*. Mašek plays it in an extremely inspired manner, applying great imagination, with an amply graduated sound and a lucidly structured form. Following this ideationally and interpretationally challenging work, the pianist serves up four delightful encores. The *Album Leaf* (1923), the seventh part of the *Borová* cycle, the jazz-infused *Black Bottom*, played with evident zest, and, in conclusion, a bonus track and true rarity: the world premiere recording of the *Victory March of the R.U.R. Sports Club in Polička*, written by Martinů in 1921 in honour of the Polička football team. The book in which the CD is enclosed will delight Martinů aficionados as much as Mašek's superb recordings themselves. It not only provides all the relevant information pertaining to the recorded pieces but also, and primarily, approximately three dozen high-quality colour copies of Martinů's drawings, which present the composer as an adroit and nimble-witted chronicler of various current events. Ondřej Klos's book design warrants special attention. Such resourceful and refined graphic art is usually the exclusive

preserve of deluxe bibliophile publications (by the way, this project of Mašek's has a bibliophile nature since all the prints are numbered). When browsing through the book, I repeatedly discovered new enlivening and refreshing details, and was really fascinated by what Ondřej Klos was able to conceive with, for instance, a simple red dot (in the colour of the EMI logo), which is a sort of visual "leitmotif" running through the entire project. In the postscript, Michal Mašek writes that Bohuslav Martinů's music fascinated him back in his childhood and that the pieces featured on this recording are among those he most cherishes. The project may thus be perceived as the young pianist's "tribute" to one of the most distinguished Czech music creators. And as such it is definitely one worthy of attention.

Věroslav Němec

### Antonín Reichenauer Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague Concertos II

Musica Florea,  
artistic director - Marek Štryncl;  
Luise Haugk - oboe, Jana Chytilová  
- violin, Marek Špelina - flute,  
Marek Štryncl - cello.

Text: Czech, English, German, French.  
Recorded on 5 and 6 Feb. 2011,  
Domovina studio, Prague. Released:  
2011. TT: 63:40. DDD. 1 CD  
Supraphon Music SU 4056-2,  
the World Premiere Recording edition.

**W**ithin the *Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague* edition, Supraphon has released the second disc featuring instrumental music by Antonín Reichenauer (ca. 1694–1730). This until recently virtually unknown musician was a court composer of Count Morzin, evidently the organist at one of the churches in Prague and, for a mere month, the organist at the parish church in Jindřichův Hradec.

His compositions have been prepared for recording by the music historian Václav Kapsa who, despite lacking the archive sources, has acquired a copious amount of crucial knowledge of the musical culture in early 18th-century Bohemia and written an erudite foreword. The CD features half a dozen Reichenauer pieces that have been preserved in Dresden, Saxony, and Wiesentheid, Bavaria. This is the very first recording of them, as performed by **Musica Florea**, headed by the ensemble's artistic director, **Marek Štryncl**. Reichenauer's music enchants the listener right away, with the introductory *Sonata in D major* (rather a sinfonia, unusually with trumpets and timpani) at many junctures resembling his colleague Vivaldi. Some of the movements captivate with remarkable compositional details, and some of the melodies truly stick in your memory. In addition to the sonata, the CD contains the *Overture in B flat major* (with two oboes and a bassoon) and four solo concerti for various instruments – oboe, cello, violin and flute (originally for oboe). Musica Florea are one of the finest Czech early music ensembles, their interpretation is precise, technically certain and historically knowledgeable, albeit sometimes with excessive "extra" dynamic changes. For my taste, the ensemble have chosen overly fierce, even curt fast tempos. Musica Florea invited distinguished soloists to participate in the recording. The German oboist **Luise Haugk** has a gentle floating tone (I was above all enchanted by the concerto's first and final movements). The Germany-based Czech violinist **Jana Chytilová** excels with an extremely melodious, sonically plastic and very musical execution, while the flautist **Marek Špelina** sensitively shades the nature of individual movements, with his fantasy and cantabile performance of the slow movement being truly delightful. The ensemble's artistic director, Marek Štryncl, played the cello with a reliable technique, exuding tender tone. In a nutshell: the new disc of Reichenauer's works is highly recommended.

Jana Slímačková

# OSA Partnership

The OSA Partnership project is an initiative contributing to the good reputation and goodwill of OSA in the public by means of informing people about OSA activities, educating them in all of the aspects of copyright infringements and protection of composers, lyricists, publishers in terms of their rights and interests. Last but not least is this a platform for making creative musical works composed and performed by Czech authors and music artists accessible and publicly available not only in the Czech territory but worldwide.

## OSA Partnership Agenda

**OSA Life** – OSA as a partner in life music performances (festivals, concerts, music series)

**OSA Helps** – OSA as a partner in charitable projects

**Co-production with OSA** – OSA as a partner especially in producing, publishing or making available of musical works in a form of audio or audiovisual recordings, sheet music publication and distribution

**OSA Talent** – OSA as a partner in organizing creative musical workshops, competitions or concert performances focused on the creation of young talented musicians and supporting them in scholarship programs and recording

**OSA Premieres** – OSA as a partner in presentations of new musical works

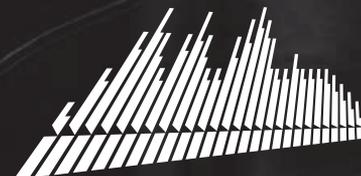
## Czech collective management organization for performing and mechanical rights of musical works with or without lyrics

### OSA - Ochranný svaz pro práva k dílům hudebním, o. s.

- Founded by the authors in 1919.
- The first constitutive meeting was held on 9th October 1919.
- One of the co-founders of OSA was a popular composer Karel Hasler. One of its first directors was the son of the composer Antonin Dvorak.
- The current legal status is a civic association representing more than 7000 domestic and more than 1,000,000 international rightholders (composers, songwriters, publishers).
- The main activity of OSA is the collective rights management.



[www.osa.cz](http://www.osa.cz)



Radio Autumn

# International Music Festival Radio Autumn

4|10&gt;1|11&gt;2011

**Prague - Rudolfinum Hall**  
Dvořák | Mozart | Bruckner | Schubert

[www.radioautumn.cz](http://www.radioautumn.cz)

**04 | 10 | Tue | 7.30 pm | Archa Theatre**

## ARS ACUSTICA

**Babel Prague – Festival of Improvisation and Sound Adventures**

### Steve Reich

Pendulum Music  
performed by THE ARTBREAKERS

### Pauline Oliveros

solo improvisation | accordion & electronics

**Klaus Filip | Toshimaru Nakamura |  
Andrea Neumann | Ivan Palacký**

The Quartet improvisation | world premiere

Tickets prices: 290 CZK (sale from 1|9 to 3|10),  
390 CZK (at the day of concert)\*

\* tickets available only at Archa Theatre

**08 | 10 | Sat | 7.30 pm | Rudolfinum | Dvořák Hall**

### Anton Bruckner

Symphony No. 8 in C Minor

**HESSISCHER RUNDfunk  
SINFONIEORCHESTER**

**Paavo Järvi | conductor**

Tickets prices: 490, 390, 190, 90 CZK

**09 | 10 | Sun | 7.30 pm | Rudolfinum | Dvořák Hall**

### Carl Maria von Weber

Oberon – Overture to the opera

### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Concerto for piano No. 23 in A Major

### Franz Schubert

Symphony No. 9 in C Major „The Great“

**HESSISCHER RUNDfunk SINFONIEORCHESTER**

**Paavo Järvi | conductor**

**Khatia Buniatishvili | piano**

Tickets prices: 490, 390, 190, 90 CZK

**17 | 10 | Mon | 7.30 pm | Rudolfinum | Dvořák Hall**

## TRIBUTE TO CLASSICISM

**Concert of Laureates of Concertino Praga  
International Radio Competition 2011**

### Joseph Haydn

Symphony No. 7 in C Major „Le Midi“

### Johann Nepomuk Hummel

Concerto for trumpet in E-flat Major

### Carl Stamitz

Concerto for flute in G Major Op. 29

### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Concerto for violin No. 5 in A Major

**PILSEN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

**Tomáš Brauner | conductor**

**Walter Hofbauer | trumpet**

**Veronika Blachuta | flute**

**Jan Mráček | violin**

Tickets prices: 390, 250, 150, 90 CZK

**18 | 10 | Tue | 8.00 pm | Chateau of Hluboká**

**Castle concert in cooperation  
with Slovak Radio**

Partner of Evening



**01 | 11 | Tue | 7.00 pm | Rudolfinum | Dvořák Hall**

**Beneficiary concert supporting  
SMILE FOR LIFE project**

### Antonín Dvořák

Slavonic Dance No. 9 in B Major op. 72

Slavonic Dance No. 10 in E Minor op. 72

### Camille Saint-Saëns

Concerto for piano No. 2 in G Minor

### Antonín Dvořák

Symphony No. 9 in E Minor „From the New World“

**PRAGUE RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**Petr Vronský | conductor**

**Jan Simon | piano**

Tickets prices: 390, 250, 150, 90 CZK

**Tickets sale:** on-line on [www.radioautumn.cz](http://www.radioautumn.cz), [www.bohemiaticket.cz](http://www.bohemiaticket.cz) and in Czech Radio Retail Store, Vinohradská 12, Praha 2, Mon–Fri 9.00 am–6.00 pm, Rudolfinum, box office No. 4, Nám. Jana Palacha 1, Mon–Fri 10.00 am–6.00 pm. **Tickets prices 90–490 CZK.**

Organisers



Financial support



Partners

