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Jana Semerádová

John Cage

Dvořák recordings

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Dear readers,

As you may have noticed, the content of this magazine is not usually governed by various anniversaries. Nevertheless, in a year in which we are commemorating the centenary of the birth (and the twentieth anniversary of the death) of the composer John Cage, I simply could not resist the temptation to produce a Cage-themed issue. It may take you by surprise – what, after all, is Cage doing in a journal about Czech music? Well, as you will read in an article written by Jaroslav Štátný (alias the composer Peter Graham), Cage's influence on the contemporary Czech music scene related to a relatively small number of composers and musicians, yet his impact was all the more profound, not superficial. And owing to Cage's influence (and the custom of thoughtful people in the era of communist dictatorship to seek out interesting art beyond the official structures), today we in the Czech Republic have several contemporary music festivals whose programmes are rather unorthodox and directed beyond the international academic mainstream. The individuals primarily responsible for this are referred to in Štátný's article, yet he neglects to mention that he himself was and still is the spiritus agens of numerous events, human encounters and personal rebirths connected by long or short threads with the Cage phenomenon. Cage's legacy is thus again and again reflected vividly in contemporary Czech music in various, direct and indirect, forms. I feel obliged to point this out, at least in this place.

Pleasant reading

Petr Bakla

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THE EARLY-MUSIC SCENE IS STARTING TO GO GLOBAL, SAYS JANA SEMERADOVÁ

The flautist, musicologist and artistic director of the highly acclaimed Baroque ensemble Collegium Marianum shares with us her observations of the current early-music scene and gives us an insight into the reservoir of her ideas and musical dreams.

What are you focusing on at the moment?

The hottest theme of late has been the launch of the twelfth cycle of Baroque Soirees, our concert series. The opening concert featured the music of the composers who served at the court of Frederick II. We strive to present music that isn't often played on stages but deserves attention, even though it concerns well-known composers, such as Johann Joachim Quantz, for instance. When I want to compile an interesting programme, I don't make it up of pieces that are known. I have to seek out the compositions and sometimes even transcribe them.

The 13th edition of the Summer Festivities of Early Music, organised by Collegium Marianum, is coming up soon. For this year's festival, we have chosen the theme of Metamorphosis, the metamorphoses in music between the 13th and 18th centuries viewed from various angles: from metaphor and theatrical transformation in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* to the stylistic metamorphosis in Galant music. And the main crowd-pullers will be programmes in the spirit of Hispanic ebullience: Batalla and Fandango. The other apices of this year's programme will be a concert given by the celebrated Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, a musico-dramatic performance



PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER 2x + COVER

to the motifs of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* presented by the international Compagnie Scapinove, and the concluding gala evening dedicated to English Baroque music.

How do you, as an active interpreter, manage to keep abreast of musicological research? How much of your time does it take up?

Well, it's out of my hands really – when I have an idea of a certain programme, when I aspire to perform something that hasn't yet been played, I can't say in advance how much time it will take to sift through the archives, transcribe, score, write a critical account. Many a time it concerns material that I can't just copy, I have to correct the mistakes before it gets to the music stands. This work definitely takes up more than 50 per cent of the total time. The music preparation itself comes at the very end and isn't that demanding – and it's the greatest satisfaction, confirmation that all the previous efforts have been worth it.

So, the situation is the opposite to that of a performer of a standard concert repertoire, the greatest part of whose time is taken up by exploring with the instrument, since the sheet music is ready.

And, on top of that, there is the interpretational tradition; we know what the composer's intention was. In the case of earlier music, all the problems are compounded by the necessity to know the period treatises. And many a time these bring contradictory opinions. The mentioned J. J. Quantz, for instance, and C. P. E. Bach: although members of the same orchestra, their opinions of interpretation differ.

Which modern-time discovery are you most proud of?

We have performed pieces by a number of Prague composers who lived and worked here in the 18th century and their foreign colleagues whose music was played here and many of whom visited Prague; Antonio Caldara and Giuseppe Tartini, for instance. Recently, we have managed to draw attention to Jan Josef Ignác Brentner and František Jiránek. Ten years ago, no one knew Brentner, but today his music is performed frequently. I hope this will be the case of Jiránek too. We have recorded a CD of his flute, violin and two bassoon concertos, and still have in store plenty of music waiting to be performed.

So Supraphon's Music From Eighteenth-Century Prague CD project is continuing...

We are about to record a disc of chamber compositions featuring Jiránek and a number of unknown names. We have again invited the Italian bassoonist Sergio Azzolini.

When you delve deep in the archives and unearth an unknown piece that shows promise, do you, as an ensemble, have a "patent" on it or is there an amicable exchange process between early-music ensembles?

We are not rivals in this field, we co-operate with each other. Once a piece is recorded, nothing stands in the way of providing the sheet music to a colleague who can further propagate the composer's name throughout the world. Yet we don't provide freshly scored new compositions we are preparing for recording, and everyone respects that. Now there are already musicians interested in Zelenka's Sepolcro, which we have cultivated since the existing sheet music contained plenty of errors.

Is there still anywhere worth seeking dusty scores from the 17th or 18th century?

Archives, collections and libraries have yet to be mined out. I began writing a list of compositions that I have transcribed since the time I was studying at the conservatory and in Holland, and I can tell you it's a pretty lengthy one! Previously, I transcribed everything by hand, from 2000 I intensively visited archives and had sheet music sent... The passion for prospecting, the feeling I got when holding in my hand a true "nugget" was for me much more exciting than solo playing or practising the flute. So for five years I spent the nights manually transcribing sheet music, sometimes while in bed even. When the possibility of transcribing it by means of a computer program came along, I continued for a while, but it was no longer

such an exciting experience for me. In the past, Vivaldi's contemporaries, for example, would transcribe his scores. And that is how one learns best, comes to understand the way of thinking. Although you can play back everything on the computer immediately, it's not such a direct experience.

You were at the birth of an institution that doesn't have a parallel in our country. Collegium Marianum – the Týn Vocational School. How do you recall the beginnings of this family enterprise?

Collegium Marianum was my father's brainchild, back in the 1980s at the time when my siblings and I were at nursery school and primary school. There was an evening school within the Týn Cathedral, led by Professor Korejs – chants were sung, lectures were given. It had a special charm, a little bit of the flavour of the forbidden... I have always been drawn to historical music, even though when I was studying at the conservatory I was in love with contemporary music. I considered Baroque too simple, I didn't see in it the grace and truth that later on would so bewitch me.

Then I started at the conservatory in The Hague. By that time, the Týn Vocational School was already up and running. In the 1990s, everything was rather directed towards Renaissance and Gothic, medieval plays were performed. And I really loved it. I soaked up the stimuli of the movement aiming for authentic interpretation. And ultimately I cast anchor in Baroque, where I feel the most at home, since it is a sphere in which nothing seems unnatural to me.

And how did the ensemble come together?

The Týn School grouped together people who had studied abroad, who were experienced "Baroquists", and gradually we began playing more. We became an ensemble representing this educational institution. This all was mainly instigated by my sister and, later on, my brother too, who over all those years organised matters and made all the dreams, be they my father's or mine, come true. I usually came up with the idea of an amazing project which came to fruition owing more to immense enthusiasm than money.

Did you have the feeling that you were pioneers in our country at the time?

Not really – at the time, such ensembles as Musica Florea were in full swing. Not that even then was I thinking of us as competitors; we were in the same boat. The Týn School was a place where perhaps all the musicians who are now doing Baroque music as professionals appeared at one time or another, either as pedagogues or otherwise. By the way, Collegium Marianum started with Václav Luks.

You also studied early-music theory and performance practice at the Faculty of Arts...

It was an extremely wide-ranging syllabus, beginning with the Middle Ages and going right through to the 20th century. I am keen on musicology, above all the endeavour to reveal the original form of music. Playing a Baroque instrument is not only about learning the period fingering and ornaments. It is a complex matter.



I was getting into Baroque step by step, initially rather through the sound, which is not ostentatious and complies with the period ideal. This is what fascinated me about it – the numerous question marks that have to be resolved. Our conception is not only based on our experience and feeling, which, naturally, is also important, it is also engendered from knowledge of the literature and period information. We strive to comprehend it through the logic of the musician of the time's thinking.

What do you find interesting about the Baroque musician's mentality, and what is it that makes the audience like the music so much?

Those who listen to Baroque music seek it for its diversity: they come to know new instruments, it offers something uncommon. Many hear in it some of the veracity, the original message, while others only perceive the Vivaldi “big beat”, which appears to be similar to our modern-day sentiment. Yet as regards taste, we simply cannot compare ourselves with the people of that time. We have to know in which particular space the respective composition was played, who commissioned it and for what type of audience – when all this is put together, it is not so complicated. We perform this music through our notion, otherwise it is not possible. Now I am saying something different to that which is stressed by the early-music movement...

So beneath the layer of the information contained in period tracts and treatises, at the bottom there is something akin to a universal musical instinct, which prevents us from playing unnaturally...

Exactly. And in this respect, period instruments provide an immense support. When we listen to Bach performed by a symphony orchestra and by a period chamber ensemble, everyone can hear the difference. And it is not just about the phrasing and sound – it is the overall awareness of which notes are more,

and which less, important. This is impossible to implant into a symphony orchestra. Yet we do influence each other: symphony orchestras can no longer ignore the knowledge brought by the early-music movement. Or take the Baroque flute. It has, for instance, some tones more vibrant than others, and the choice of the key is connected with this. When a composer wrote a movement in E major, he knew very well how it would sound and which tones would be blurred. Yet not every ear is prepared for this...

By means of costumes, candles, dance, music and gesture your projects create the illusion of the past. Is it reconstruction? Authenticity? Playing at Baroque? What type of experience does the audience take away?

Why then have they in Dresden reconstructed the Frauenkirche? Many grumble that it is not exactly the same as it was in the past. It is because we want to look at it, to get a vivid picture, it fascinates us. And in a certain sense, Baroque opera is like architecture. We are enraptured by the flying machines, the trap doors, even though we know that someone is pulling the wires. In Český Krumlov the machinery wheels are turned by human hands, nothing is controlled by computers. And we are fascinated by it today, just as people were fascinated in the past, by the interplay of all the elements that chime in with the music. When a Baroque aria is accompanied by the corresponding gestures, we realise that there is a certain naturalness peculiar to the respective period. There's a beauty there which I myself continue to find in the music of this era.

Your Collegium Marianum has entered the European context. What is the current focus of this scene?

Although newer possibilities of performing historical music are constantly being sought, I often have the feeling that the primary intention of the early-music movement is being abandoned. It's as though we have tried out everything and no longer have to turn to the sources to the same extent. But that's not the case – not everything has been completely worked up. The question of instruments, for instance. The cello, on which a great part of the Baroque repertoire is played today, has very little in common with the original bass instruments, of which there was an immense amount, of various forms, sizes and with different holdings...

Early music has been becoming more and more a part of the musical education within the system of the conservatory type, being an extension of modern instrument study. By doing this, we are abandoning its essence – the fact that it was mainly taught in an individual and exclusive master-pupil manner. Today's musicians who strive to get as close to the period thinking as possible should pursue the same path as the musicians centuries ago – otherwise they will remain mere interpreters. Or is it utopian to expect today's player to compose, improvise? Jazz musicians are able to do it after all, yet it is not quite common in our area.

How expensive is early music? Can it pay its way without subsidies?

We ask for grants, we receive support from Prague City Council and the Ministry of Culture. If we didn't, we wouldn't be able to implement

the programmes that I keep coming up with. Our ensemble is not provided with continual support, as is the case of ensembles in, say, France, where they are subsidised by their region, can rehearse all year long and then offer acceptable conditions to organisers of concerts, although French ensembles are still much more expensive than Czech ones. When I conceive a project, I have to invest my own money in it, do it at my own risk. Here in the Czech Republic, we do not have a large market, even though I have to admit that the number of enlightened festivals including early music in their programmes has been growing. Nevertheless, there are also organisers who are still put off by the notion that Baroque ensembles are expensive and do not pay off. All the members of our ensemble are freelance musicians without the background of a permanent orchestra engagement, which would cover the period when an event is under preparation, when we are rehearsing every day. I don't even bother counting how many hours it all takes. I could pay greater attention to promotion, but I have a very skilful team that sees to it. Media "coverage", the effort entailed by selling many projects abroad – for this, you need a manager working flat-out, 24 hours a day. When, ten years ago, we were giving concerts abroad, the organisers addressed us and asked for, actually wanted, Czech music from us. Nowadays, they are interested in a big name – the soprano Hana Blažíková, for instance. And, which is to be regretted, there is not such a great interest in discoveries. Organisers simply do not want to take a risk, it is better for them to include in the programme some tried-and-tested Bach with an outstanding interpreter, one that can draw an audience. It is starting to go global. But I have no intention of giving up transcribing music and offering new compositions.

We have somewhat omitted your flute – you have received awards as a soloist, on the stage you appear like a virtuoso par excellence...

Actually, I am an atypical flautist – I enjoy everything possible, not merely my instrument. I perceive it rather as a vehicle for expressing that which I want to say through music. Perhaps it's to do with the certain distance with which I approach the instrument. I could say that I learnt the basics at the conservatory. I mastered them relatively quickly and then I could begin devoting to my dreams. Hence, while in The Hague, I transcribed music for choruses, operas, Zelenka. I was more interested in that than I was in the instrument itself. But I do love the flute, it seems to be part of my body when I'm playing it, I don't feel there's anything not in harmony. Of course, it can betray me sometimes owing, for instance, to the weather. But it is the same with the body. The flute is for me a means how, without any great speculating about the technique, I can play a composition as I imagine it. I myself get a thrill from it, as the music speaks. Interconnection with the audience is of the utmost importance for me.

What is your dream?

My dream is for music to be performed in Prague as much as possible, the music that was once played here. Or, for instance, Bach's cantatas during the course of the ecclesiastical year, every single Sunday, as they were performed in the past – rehearsing in the morning, playing in the evening for the joy

of the performers and the audience. Perhaps it is not unfeasible... Now we have superlative instrumentalists in all instrument groups and, above all, singers. Interconnecting music and space is what I aspire to – it is not ideal when concerts are performed at the presbytery. The original practice of singing and playing in the choir loft is well-considered and the large organ is essential for the overall connection of the sound of all Baroque instruments. It may not meet with full understanding on the part of the audience, who will not be able to look at our clothes and observe our movements, yet this is how it was done in Bach's time, played in greater honour and for the glory of God...

Jana Semerádová

studied at the Prague Conservatory, the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, and the Royal Conservatory of The Hague (in the class of Wilbert Hazelzet). She has won international competitions in Magdeburg and Munich. She is the artistic director of Collegium Marianum, compiles the dramaturgy of the concert cycle Baroque Soirees and the international Summer Festivities of Early Music, built upon a combination of musical and dramatic arts and taking place in the authentic milieu of Prague Baroque halls. She has carried out extensive research in Czech and foreign archives and studied Baroque gesticulation, declamation and dance. Jana Semerádová has an extensive discography, with the recordings made with Collegium Marianum featuring prominently in Supraphon's acclaimed "Music From 18th-Century Prague" cycle. Moreover, she regularly records for Czech Television and Prague Radio. As a soloist, she has appeared on prestigious European stages and at renowned festivals (Bachfest Leipzig, Mitte Europa, Musikfestspiele Potsdam, Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, Festival de Sablé, Innsbrucker Festwochen, Prague Spring, Tage Alter Musik Regensburg, Vantaa Baroque, the Konzerthaus in Vienna and Berlin, Palau de Música Barcelona) and regularly performed with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Wrocławska Orkiestra Barokowa, Batzdorfer Hofkapelle, Ars Antiqua Austria and modern_times1800.

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ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK'S "THIRD LIFE": DVOŘÁK'S WORKS IN POST-1989 AUDIO AND AUDIO-VISUAL COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS

After the first audio recordings of music by Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) and following the accession of stereophonic audio technology, the third most significant milestone in the history of recording Dvořák's music took place at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when the boom in the recording industry culminated and in the wake of the break-up of the bipolar world the recorded-music market considerably extended. In global terms, the fall of the Iron Curtain led to the removal of political and economic limitations, which in turn resulted in performers and producers from the former Eastern Bloc, including Czech, gaining recognition on the international recorded-music market. This article deals with the last two decades/quarter-century in the history of Dvořák recording activities, a period that has brought many changes.

Sound legacy of the mono and stereophonic eras

During his lifetime, Antonín Dvořák's works lived a dual life – first in Dvořák's mind, subsequently in private salons, concert halls and opera houses, which they evidently only entered after the composer had reached thirty years of age. Whereas in Dvořák's mind his music lived in the form in which he composed it, and in private and public music institutions during his lifetime in a form that could to a certain extent be corrected by the artist himself, following his death it took the path of free interpretation, which was only canonised by the second generation of Dvořák's pupils (most notably Václav Talich), who managed to put

a distance between the interpretational tradition of Dvořák's contemporaries (Hans Richter, Hans von Bülow) or the first generation of his pupils (Oskar Nedbal, Arthur Nikisch). Dvořák's works entered their third life in a manner similar to that of the oeuvre of all his predecessors and descendants at the moment of the accession of audio and audio-visual technology, an undoubtedly positive aspect of which was the relatively rapid democratisation of artistic music and its being soon made accessible to a wide group of listeners, a feature that Dvořák would undoubtedly have embraced. Yet one of its indisputably negative impacts was the reduction and ultimately almost complete extinction of domestic amateur or semi-professional music-making, which during Dvořák's lifetime and the first few decades after his death was the basic platform for the dissemination of his works beyond music centres, and not only in the Czech lands.

Thus we can only regret that Dvořák – unlike his contemporaries and members of the next generation of composers – died (in May 1904) shortly before the German company Welte, using Welte-Mignon reproducing pianos, recorded the composers Grieg, Mahler, Strauss and Saint-Saëns playing. Although primitive in comparison with the ascending audio recording technology, the Welte-Mignon reproducing pianos, fixing play on a paper strip, were able to maintain the composer's ideas of interpretation, at least as regards the tempo and, partially, dynamics of the keystroke. And since Dvořák was not, nor could have been, addressed by the company, no audio recording of his playing has been preserved, while the oldest recordings of his works, frequently in foreign, commercially lucrative recordings, only date from the years shortly after his death: prior to 1910, the oldest gramophone recording of the *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, in a quartet version for piano, flute, violin and cello, was made; in 1914, Paolo Gruppe and Hans van der Burg recorded the Rondo in G minor for Cello and Piano, Op. 94, and three years later, in February 1917, the first Dvořák orchestral work, the second movement, Largo, of the New World Symphony in E Minor, Op. 95, was recorded in New York with the local philharmonic orchestra and its artistic director, Gustav Mahler's successor Josef Stránský (1872, Humpolec – 1936, New York City), conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra between 1911 and 1923.

With more than 250 commercial recordings identified by the author of this text, the New World Symphony



is clearly the most frequently recorded Dvořák work and was also a work on which, alongside minor compositions often recorded in foreign adaptations (*Humoresque*, Op. 101/7, *Slavonic Dances*, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Op. 55/5, etc.), the attention of performers and gramophone companies was focused in the following decades too: in 1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1934, 1936 and 1937 it was featured on recordings made by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Sir Ronald Landon and the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, Hamilton Harty and the Hallé Orchestra Manchester, Erich Kleiber and the Berlin Opera Orchestra, Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and George Szell and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. At the same time, in the 1920s and 1930s the first chamber and smaller orchestral compositions were recorded, including the *String Quartets* in E flat major, Op. 51 (1928, the Czech Quartet; 1938, the Léner Quartet), in F major, Op. 96 (1928, the Czech Quartet; 1929, the Ševčík-Lhotský Quartet; 1933, the Léner Quartet), G major and A flat major, Opp. 106 and 105 (1933, the Prague Quartet), the *Piano Quintet* in A major, Op. 81 (1930, Olga Loeser-Lebert, the Léner Quartet; 1934, Arthur Schnabel, the Pro Arte Quartet) and *Carnival*, Op. 92 (1927, the Hallé Orchestra Manchester, Hamilton Harty; 1928, the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra, Eugen Goossens; 1929, the London Symphony Orchestra, Albert Coates). In the second half of the 1930s, the catalogue of Dvořák recordings was extended to include recordings of the *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78 (1937, the Queens Hall Orchestra, Henry Wood),



the Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 53 (1936, Menuhin; 1939, Kulenkampf), the Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104 (1928, Feuermann; 1937, Casals), and, above all, the first Talich recordings of Symphonies Nos. 6–8, the Slavonic Dances, Opp. 46 and 72, and Carnival for the HMV label in 1935 (Opp. 46, 72, 88, 92) and 1938 (Opp. 60 and 70). I could continue enumerating the mounting Dvořák gramophone recordings in geometric succession yet, since this text is primarily conceived analytically and is chronologically concentrated on the period after 1989, I will confine myself to several basic statements relating to the decades prior to the break-up of the Eastern Bloc. A cursory glance at the statistics kept by the author of this article, numbering some 3,710 recordings of various Dvořák works on LP, CD, VHS and DVD, reveals that while between 1940 and 1949 at least 66 commercial recordings were made, in the next decade this figure was more than 158, while in 1960–1969, 1970–1979 and 1980–1989 at least 183, 276, 396, respectively, commercial recordings of Dvořák compositions were made. Naturally, the actual number of commercial recordings was much higher – in the case of 854 data items, i.e. almost one quarter of the total, the author's statistics lack more detailed dating. Thus, we face the absence of a detailed list of (ideally) all or at least the majority of the ascertainable commercial Dvořák recordings – yet 958 data items about recordings that originated in 1990–1999 and at least 654 audio recordings produced after 2000 clearly document the significance of the fall of the Iron Curtain and the subsequent entry of Czech, Czechoslovak and other interpreters from the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain to the production of recordings featuring Antonín Dvořák's works. Yet the statistics indirectly confirm the designation of the last decade of the 20th

century as being the culminating epoch for the audio and audio-visual recordings market. The advent of new recording and information technologies after 2000, and the concentration of the recording industry's capital, including the liquidation of significant record labels as well as small recording companies, made the period around 2000 a turning point not only as regards the production of recordings of Antonín Dvořák's works, which enjoyed growing interest on the part of producers and clients of the recording industry.

Our look back at the release of commercial recordings of Antonín Dvořák's music before 1989 should also include several milestones in the history of Dvořák commercial audio recordings.

Whereas in the 1920s and 1930s, in accordance with the possibilities of the available recording technology, commercial recordings mainly featured shorter and medium-duration works, after 1950 the first recordings of full-length compositions began appearing. Accordingly, in 1952 Dvořák's opera *Rusalka*, conducted by Jaroslav Krombholc, was recorded for the first time (Josef Keilbert's recording four years previously was originally a radio recording and was only commercially propagated after Krombholc's recording), in the same year Václav Talich recorded *Stabat Mater*, the first Dvořák oratorio recorded in a studio, while the accession of stereophony in the second half of the 1950s accelerated the origination of Karel Ančerl's co-production recording of the *Requiem* for Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft and Supraphon in 1959. In the stereo era, the first complete recordings of Dvořák's symphonies were made which, notwithstanding the existence of older recordings of Dvořák's first four symphonies with the Prague Symphony Orchestra conducted by Václav



Neumann (1957–1959) and Václav Smetáček (1959), represented an essential turning point in the history of reception of Dvořák's works, enhanced by the indisputable and still acclaimed artistic qualities of the recordings featuring the complete symphonies dating from 1963–1966 (Kertész) and 1965–1971 (Rowicki). Only in 1971–1973 were the complete recordings of Dvořák's symphonies with Rafael Kubelík and Václav Neumann released, which, alongside the first set of Dvořák's piano works featuring Radoslav Kvapil (1967–1970), were soon followed by the co-production recording of Dvořák's string quartets with the Prague Quartet (1973–1977) which, according to the Dvořák Complete Critical Edition, is still the one and only recording without a single deletion.

Significant projects of the past quarter-century

When evaluating the Dvořák discography over the past twenty years or so, let us first look back at key projects in the area of symphonic and orchestral works. We can observe that older complete symphony recordings were joined by new complete recordings of Dvořák's symphonies (Steven Gunzenhauser, Naxos, 1990; Libor Pešek, Supraphon/Virgin Classics, 1987–1996; Julian Kovatchev, Real Sound, 1995; Vladimír Válek, Supraphon, 2000–2003; Ivan Anguélov, Oehms, 2001–2004), which, paradoxically, in comparison with the older recordings made by Kertész and Rowicki, ignore the composer's repetitive passages and in the case of the not yet completely released set of symphonies recorded with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and Zdeněk Mácal (Octavia Records, 1997–2007) even reach for the oldest Simrock edition (3rd symphony). I do not think that any of the mentioned complete

recordings of Dvořák's symphonies attain the quality of the older complete recordings made by Kertész, Kubelík, Rowicki and Neumann between 1971 and 1973 (first released on CD in 2012), but at the same time they should not be overlooked as uninteresting or just documentary. Although the anniversary Dvořák year of 2004 was an opportunity missed by the recording industry, evidently affected by the crisis of the recording business itself (with the exception of Warner Classics, which in three parts released its best recordings of Dvořák's music, none of the large labels implemented a major recording project or at least a complete re-edition of Dvořák recordings from its catalogues, including the Czech label Supraphon), at least Naxos succeeded in completing the project of its, for the time being, one and only complete recording of Dvořák's orchestral and symphonic works, and on 17 CDs featuring a number of performers made it available in 2004 (a parallel project aimed at completing Dvořák's chamber works has yet to be completed).

More satisfactory is the view of the chamber works within Dvořák's immense oeuvre. In the 1990s three projects of complete recordings of Dvořák's quartet pieces were implemented: first, after the benchmark recording by the Prague Quartet, the task was undertaken by the Panocha Quartet (1983–1999), then the Stamic Quartet (1989–1993) and, after 1995, the New Vlach Quartet, whose complete recording has not been finished owing to the illness of a member of the ensemble. At least the Panocha Quartet managed to produce a recording exemplary in many respects. In the 1990s, Dvořák's rather neglected piano works were paid attention to on two occasions; first in 1995–1999 by Stefan Veselka, a Czech pianist living abroad, and in 1997–1998, far less successfully, by the Ukrainian Inna Poroshina.

For the first time in the history of the recording industry, they recorded the complete Dvořák piano works (the older, Kvapil set is not complete on CD, it lacks Dvořák's pieces B. 3, 128a, 156, 158). After 2000, the Czech music labels, Supraphon in particular, succeeded at least in one respect in keeping up with the dramaturgically more progressive foreign labels, when in 2002 the first complete recording of Dvořák's works for cello and piano was made with Jiří Barta and Petr Čech, including the until then unrecorded original version of Dvořák's Cello Concerto in A major, B. 10 (1865).

Dvořák's vocal music and operas at the centre of attention

The past two decades have, however, brought significant progress when it comes to two segments of Dvořák's oeuvre: in the case of the boom in recordings of one-part songs, this resulted from the establishment of small labels that could afford to produce commercial recordings of chamber compositions and songs, and as regards the rising number of commercial recordings featuring Dvořák's oratorios and cantatas, it was caused by the growing interest in Dvořák's spiritual works. A prime example of post-1989 production of Dvořák albums based on progressive dramaturgy is the recording made by the defunct Studio Matouš, which in 1995 and 1997 released two CDs featuring basically unknown Dvořák songs, mainly dating from his early period. By the way, some of the compositions recorded in 1995 by Milada Čechalová, Stanislav Předota and Adam Skoumal have not been re-released (Evening Songs, The Orphan, Rosemary, Two Songs, B. 142). Typically, the market in the years around the centenary of Dvořák's death was flooded by financially less demanding song recordings. In 2000 a valuable song album was recorded by Dagmar Pecková, in 2003 another by Bernarda Fink, in 2004 one by Martina Janková, while in the same year Orfeo d'Or recorded and subsequently released a Dvořák song marathon from the 2004 Salzburg Festival (Barbara Bonney, Michele Breedt, Thomas Hampson, Georg Zeppenfeld). Noteworthy too is the currently one and only complete recording of Dvořák's choral compositions by Brilliant Classics, which in the form of a re-edition of older recordings strives to complete the Dvořák works in its catalogue.

While as regards the symphonic, chamber and song repertoire we can talk about continuity and evolution in recording of Antonín Dvořák's music, after 1989 a turning point occurred (not only in the Czech environment) in the area of albums

of full-length oratorios and cantatas, resulting from the changed socio-political situation and the awakened desire for a spiritual, or at least long-absent, genre whose frequent recording in the 1990s was enhanced by the boom in the last decade of the 20th century. A mere cursory glance at the dates of individual recordings supports my assumption: nineteen of the twenty-seven commercial recordings of Dvořák's oratorio *Stabat Mater*, Op. 58, were made after 1989 (including Naïve's 2007 rarity recording presenting the original seven-part 1876 version of the work), and similarly, with the exception of one, all the recordings of *The Spectre's Bride*, Op. 69 (1 : 5) and *Saint Ludmila*, Op. 71 (1 : 2) were made after 1989, when also the majority of commercial recordings of the *Requiem*, Op. 89 (7 : 9), and *Te Deum*, Op. 103 (3 : 10), were produced. Accordingly, at least when it comes to the frequency of performing and recording Dvořák's full-length oratorios and cantatas, the past two decades mark a clear turning point, as also evidenced by the interest in Dvořák's oratorios in their original versions (in addition to Naïve's recording of *Stabat Mater*, worthy of mention is the currently one and only complete recording of *Saint Ludmila*, Op. 71, made by Orfeo d'Or in 1999 with Gerd Albrecht conducting). Evidently the most significant segment of Dvořák's oeuvre in the case of which the recording activities over the past two decades/quarter-century have contributed to its full rehabilitation and international reputation is his operas, to date recorded on forty, mostly commercial, audio and audio-visual albums made between 1948 and 2010. Since 1989, seventeen Dvořák opera recordings have been released, to say nothing of older commercial recordings mostly drawn from the burgeoning Czech and foreign radio archives. With the exception of Dvořák's first opera, *Alfréd*, whose concert performance and its possible recording in the Dvořák anniversary year of 2004 at the State Opera Prague conducted by Gerd Albrecht was ultimately abandoned after the conductor had explored the autograph score, today all Dvořák's operas are available to listeners; in the case of *Dimitrij*, in two versions, 1882 (Gerd Albrecht, Supraphon, 1989), and 1895 (Karel Nedbal, Beno Blachut Society, 1946). Undoubtedly, the growing interest in Dvořák's works beyond the dramaturgic mainstream, the partial revaluation of the aesthetic categories of 19th-century music theatre in the spirit of the postmodernist equalising of the human, i.e. also opera, stories and narration, as well as the favourable economic situation allowing for the implementation of expensive opera



projects, facilitated the materialisation of the first recordings of the combined 2nd and 3rd versions of the King and Charcoal Burner (Gerd Albrecht, Orfeo d'Or, 2005), the complete Stubborn Lovers (Jiří Bělohlávek, Supraphon, 2003), almost (with minor deletions) the complete operas Vanda (Gerd Albrecht, Orfeo d'Or, 1999), Dimitrij (Gerd Albrecht, Supraphon, 1989) and The Jacobin (Alexander Voloschuk, Fone, 2001; Gerd Albrecht, Orfeo d'Or, 2003), and new recordings of The Devil and Kate in 2003 (Bohuslav Gregor, a non-commercial recording made by the National Theatre in Prague) and 2007 (Gerd Albrecht, Orfeo d'Or). Naturally, the most frequently recorded Dvořák opera is his penultimate lyrical work, *Rusalka*, whose new recordings dating from 1997 (Alexander Rahbari, Koch Discovery, CD), 1998 (Charles Mackerras, Decca, CD), 2002 (James Conlon, TDK, DVD), 2007 (Richard Hickox, Chandos, CD), 2008 (Franz Welser-Möst, Orfeo d'Or, CD), 2009 (Jiří Bělohlávek, Glyndebourne, CD) and 2010 (Tomáš Hanus, C major, DVD) were partly released on audio discs, partly on DVDs. With the exception of Dvořák's final opera, *Armida*, which following its unsuccessful recording made by Gerd Albrecht – paradoxically, the most renowned interpreter of Dvořák's operas and a great champion of them over the previous two decades – in 1995 (Orfeo d'Or) is still awaiting a complete recording, Dvořák's musico-dramatic works are available on discs and, at least in the case of *Rusalka*, are a sought-after part of the dramaturgic plans of opera stages worldwide. At this juncture, we should also highlight the crucial role played in the promotion of Dvořák's operas by foreign artists and labels – with the exception of the operas *The Stubborn Lovers* and *Dimitrij*, all the post-1989 recordings have been implemented

either abroad or by foreign labels, and following the Czech Republic's Supraphon, whose catalogue currently includes eight recordings of Dvořák's operas, the most extensive catalogue of Dvořák's operas (containing some seven recordings) is that of the German label Orfeo d'Or. Positive is the fact that all recordings of Dvořák's operas over the past twenty-five years have been made in the composer's mother tongue and most of them with minimal, mostly the composer's or authorised, alterations.

The old-new face of Dvořák's music in “authentic” conception

Whereas in most areas of Dvořák's music after 1989 record companies linked up to older albums and continuously and geometrically developed the extending store of Dvořák recordings, in the late 1990s one segment of recording activities experienced a brand-new approach to interpretation of Dvořák's works, for a number of practical reasons mainly limited to their audio recording. When in 1998 the Czech pianist Radoslav Kvapil recorded on Dvořák's Bösendorfer piano the *Dumka* and *Furiant*, Op. 12, as well as the three piano cycles *Silhouettes*, Op. 8, *Suite in A major*, Op. 98, and *Humoresques*, Op. 101 (Alto, 1998), his novel recording foreshadowed a new approach to Dvořák's work, this time from the perspective of informed interpretation of old music on period instruments, which with an approximately ten-year time lag in comparison with other Romantic 19th-century composers found its way to Dvořák's works too. To date, approximately thirty such recordings, mostly of foreign provenience, have been made, treating Dvořák's piano, chamber, symphonic and vocal-orchestral works compositions in the form of representative probes.



Whereas the Czech music journalists, without having the possibility of comparing, in large part enthusiastically received the, in my opinion, more experimental than interpretationally fully-fledged and implicitly forcible recordings of Dvořák's orchestral works (B. 99 and 114, Opp. 25, 70, 78, 88) as performed by Musica florea conducted by Marek Štryncl and the foreign critics pointed out fundamental conceptual shortcomings in the recording of the New World Symphony made by Le Chambre Philharmonique and Emmanuel Krivin (2008, Naïve), when it comes to Dvořák's chamber music, several recordings were produced that, in the opinion of the present author, can be considered truly referential and, perhaps, even breakthrough. I personally consider groundbreaking in the history of Dvořák interpretation the recordings made by L'Archibudelli (Sony Music) and Antiquarius Quartet Prague (Arta), which in 2001 and 2002 extremely successfully handled Dvořák's mature chamber pieces for strings Opp. 40, 77 and 97, and 51 and 96, and allowed for a new view of their sonic form and interpretation as regards articulation and phrasing. Similarly singular is an album featuring Dvořák's piano works made by the Belgian pianist Jan Michiels (Eufoda, 2003), who for the recording of a representative selection of Dvořák's piano works used an 1884 Bösendorfer piano too. When leaving aside the, in my opinion, speculative and anachronistic recording of Dvořák's Mass in D major, Op. 86, more reminiscent of Renaissance polyphony than Romantic sacred music (Adam Viktora, Nibiru, 2001), there is one recording that stands out among the current crop of discs made by informed performers of early music – the remarkable 2005 Requiem, which alongside soloists established in the early music

world and the ensembles Capella Weilburgensis and Kantorei der Schlosskirche Weilburg was made by the conductor and organist Doris Hagel (Profil-Edition Günter Hänssler), a recording that completely affirms the idea of interpreting Dvořák's Romantic music using period instruments and with regard to the period performance practice. As a result of the attention paid to it by ensembles and interpreters playing period instruments or their copies, Dvořák's music has fully established itself in an area of interpretation that in the years and decades to come will evidently be a fully-fledged, albeit not quite common, alternative to the standard interpretation of the composer's chamber and symphonic works using modern instruments. From this perspective, it would seem that within the future development of Dvořák interpretation recordings made by standard symphony orchestras conducted by specialists in authentic performances practice will be more influential. I have in mind Sir John Eliot Gardiner's recordings with the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra in Hamburg (Opp. 39, 78, Deutsche Grammophon, 1992), the recently released discs made by Roger Norrington with the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stuttgart (Opp. 70, 88, 92, 95, Hänssler Classics, 2008, 2010) and, above all, Nikolaus Harnoncourt's recordings with the Concertgebouw Royal Orchestra in Amsterdam (Opp. 33, 70, 88, 95, 107–110, Warner Classics, 1997–2001), supplemented by the recordings of Stabat Mater produced in Munich (Sony Music, 2007) and the Slavonic Dances made in Graz (Warner Classics, 2000–2001), which in many respects are groundbreaking and undoubtedly rank among the most interesting recording projects of the past two decades. In my opinion, interpretation of Dvořák's orchestral and symphonic



works by standard symphony orchestras with modern instruments and the application of period performance instructions is the path that returns Dvořák's music to the composer's authentic ideas and enriches the audience's experience in both sonic and conceptual terms.

The past and future of recording Dvořák's music

In connection with the recordings of Dvořák's music that have originated amid authentic performance practice striving to revive the interpretational tradition of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, another significant segment is worth mentioning: the commercial propagation of remastered archive recordings from the mono and early stereophonic periods, capturing the performances of artists close to Dvořák's contemporaries. In addition to a number of partial recordings of chamber, orchestral and symphonic works and operas (e.g. Keilberth's 1948 radio recording of *Rusalka*), I feel obliged to mention more extensive edition series, be it those presenting Talich's recordings of Dvořák's music in the period preceding World War II (most recently, Supraphon) or extremely precious radio recordings (in the autumn of 2011, Czech Radio 3 Vltava broadcast the remarkable recording, miles off the Talich tradition, of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dance*, Op. 46/3, made in 1929 by the Radio Journal Orchestra conducted by Oskar Nedbal). In this respect, the most praiseworthy appears to be a Naxos Historical edition, which alongside selected Talich recordings re-released the seminal recordings made by Emanuel Feuermann (1928/1929), Yehudi Menuhin (1936), Nathan Milstein (1951), Erich Kleiber (1929nn) and Arturo Toscanini (1945). Radio and record company archives seem to be

inexhaustible; hence one can only wish that archive recordings were released on a much greater, not merely representative, scale. Besides discophiles, this would certainly also be welcomed by performers themselves, who would thus get to the forgotten creations that originated at a time closer to Dvořák's, today experimentally evoked by recordings using period instruments.

It may appear that the more than 3,700 commercial recordings of Dvořák's works documented by the author of this article are an integrated set of interpretational recordings of Dvořák's oeuvre, naturally, with certain discrepancies caused by the popularity of some of Dvořák's pieces (I have found more than one hundred commercial recordings in the case of Opp. 88, 90, 95, 104 alone). Despite the extreme popularity of Dvořák's music and the frequency of its performing, there are still compositions and areas of Dvořák's oeuvre that should be recorded, at least for the sake of their documentation: to date, we are still lacking a complete recording of Dvořák's songs, a legacy unrivalled in 19th-century Czech music as regards its extensiveness and variety, with Dvořák's operas *Alfred* and *Armida* too still awaiting landmark recordings. František Ferdinand Šamberk's recording of the scenic music to the play *Josef Kajetán Tyl*, Op. 62, should also be made available, at least as a re-edition, to say nothing of a complete recording of Dvořák's original works or orchestral and chamber adaptations for piano four hands (recordings of Dvořák's Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8 and symphonic poems are lacking too), which could serve as useful study material for performers of Dvořák's music, as well as an attractive diversification of the collections of Dvořák discophiles eagerly awaiting new additions to the extensive range of commercial Dvořák recordings.

THE INTERNATIONAL MARTINŮ CIRCLE

The International Martinů Circle consists of members from around the world and includes musicians, scholars, and anyone with a love of Martinů's music. They are joined together by this common interest and work to promote the performance, study, and appreciation of his music.



I was first exposed to the music of Bohuslav Martinů while a college student preparing his *Quatre Madrigaux* (H. 266) for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon. I was fascinated by this piece and began listening to recordings of other works, each one furthering my love for this beautiful and exciting music. My college library only had a copy of the Šafránek biography and very few scores and recordings, and professors knew little beyond some key works. I felt as if I had stumbled upon a secret treasure, but I had no one to discuss it with.

It was then that I found the website of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation (<http://www.martinu.cz>) and the International Martinů Circle. Suddenly I was connected to the center of Martinů scholarship and advocacy. The newsletters offered the latest research and events, and I was now linked with other Martinů enthusiasts both in the United States and around the world.^a

The International Martinů Circle (IMC) was founded in 2005 and acquired legal entity in 2008; it is funded by membership dues and financial support from the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation. Working closely with the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague, the primary goals of the IMC are to promote the performance, study, and appreciation of the music of Martinů. Our members include major universities,

publishers, performing musicians, and individuals from countries throughout the world. We are proud to have mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená as our patron, and conductor Jakub Hrůša as our president.

The IMC collaborates with the Martinů Institute to publish the *Martinů Revue* (formally the *Bohuslav Martinů Newsletter*) three times a year. It includes interviews, research articles, reviews, concert listings, and other items of interest regarding Martinů. The IMC also issues to members an annual CD of festival performances and historical recordings not available commercially.

IMC members perform and sponsor concerts of Martinů's music, most recently as part of the two-year Martinů Revisited project. Especially notable were the efforts of Geoff Piper of Luxembourg, who arranged many concerts and a recording of *The Opening of the Wells* (H. 354) in English for the first time (Stylton RS-5206211). Mr. Piper was also responsible for a concert by IMC members in the Martinů Foundation Hall in collaboration with the Czech Martinů Society. In partnering with other groups, the IMC helped sponsor the recent recording by Jana Wallingerová and Giorgio Koukl of unpublished Martinů songs (Naxos 8.572588).

By establishing contact with musicians and scholars in different countries, many discoveries have also been

made. Gregory Terian of the United Kingdom, who in his time as Chairman not only greatly increased the size and scope of the IMC, but also has been very active in communicating with members and seeking out new items and resources. His contact with members led to the discovery of previously unknown items, including the original score and recording of the Cello Concerto No. 1 (H. 196, 2nd Version) and the premiere recording of the Symphony No. 2 (H. 295). Over the years, members have found and contributed numerous recordings, scores, correspondence, and photographs; all of which expands our knowledge and understanding of Martinů and his music.

I would be remiss not to mention the outstanding support we receive from the Bohuslav Martinů Institute and offer special thanks to Aleš Březina, Jana Honzíková, Zoja Seyčková, and Lucie Harasim Berná for their hard work and assistance.

The International Martinů Circle is not only a composer's organization, but also a circle of friends, brought together by a common interest and love for the wonderful music of Bohuslav Martinů. We are always seeking new members to join with us



Bohuslav Martinů

as we expand and continue the excellent work of our organization. For more information, please visit <http://www.martinu.cz> or write to incircle@martinu.cz.

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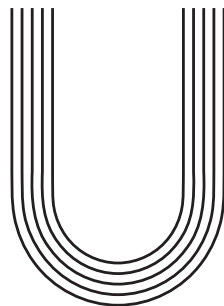
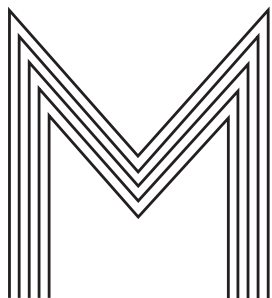
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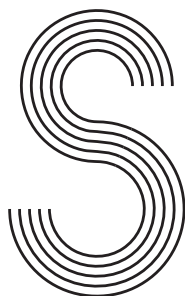


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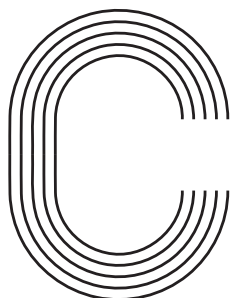


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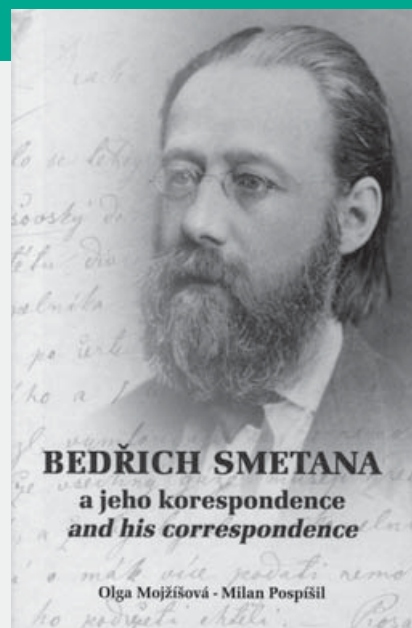
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THE COMPLETE SMETANA CORRESPONDENCE EDITION FINALLY ON THE HORIZON

The first considerations of a complete Smetana correspondence edition date back to 1919. The project was initiated by the Committee for the Erection of a Monument to Bedřich Smetana in Prague, which by then had existed for ten years. Besides a statue, the intention was to create a “spiritual monument” too – a complete edition of the composer’s oeuvre, including his diaries and correspondence, which was aimed to serve for further propagation of knowledge of Smetana’s personality, work and time. The bronze monument in front of the Bedřich Smetana Museum at Novotného lávka in Prague was finally unveiled in 1984, some seventy-five years after the foundation of the Committee. The “spiritual monument”, however, has yet to be built.



All those interested in Smetana’s work (musicologists, musicians, listeners, etc.) are eagerly awaiting the completion of the “spiritual monument”. Today, if you were to seek a catalogue of Smetana’s works at prominent libraries’ music departments worldwide, in most cases you would not be able to find one. In the best case, you would burrow through an almost 120-year-old publication, the first-ever annotated catalogue of Smetana’s compositions, which was published (in Czech) in Prague by Karel Teige in 1893. This slim book is dwarfed on the shelves by the catalogues of works by other great composers. The dimensional contrast with these bulky tomes speaks volumes. And similarly marked is the contrast between Teige’s catalogue and the current state of Smetana research. For various reasons, the two most recent catalogues, Bartoš’s (1973) and Berkovec’s (1999), have to date remained in manuscript form.

Unlike in the case of a catalogue of Smetana's compositions, work on Smetana's correspondence has significantly advanced over the past few years. Between 2005 and 2011, a team based at the Bedřich Smetana Museum led by Olga Mojžíšová and Milan Pospíšil worked on the project *Critical Edition of Bedřich Smetana's Correspondence and a New Scholastic Catalogue of the Sources as Its Necessary Starting Point*.

The project's methodological foundations and its current results are a great promise that Smetana's correspondence will at last be published within a complete critical edition. Over the past three years of the project, the preparatory phase was rounded off and the current results summed up in three publications, which thoroughly describe the history of publishing and collecting Smetana correspondence from the end of the 19th century up to the present day. Yet they above all provide a summary of all the currently known Smetana correspondence, including that missing. Last but not least, the publications deal with the editing issues and methodology of the entire project.

And now the actual edition of the correspondence is being prepared on these foundations. By publishing partial outputs of the future complete edition of the correspondence, the editors have also submitted for discussion their conceptions of this edition.

First, Olga Mojžíšová and Milan Pospíšil published the book *Bedřich Smetana's Correspondents* (Prague 2009, LVIII + 134 pp.), the very first catalogue of addressees and senders of Bedřich Smetana's correspondence. Individual persons, and institutions, that were in written contact with Smetana are allocated brief entries, also stating the respective years in which their correspondence with the composer took place. The introductory texts are published in parallel in three languages: Czech, English and German. In the following year, the *Hudební věda* journal (2010, Vol. 47, No. 1) published a set of four studies focused on several key topics. In two studies, Mojžíšová and Pospíšil dealt with the history of publishing Bedřich Smetana's correspondence and the current critical edition project. Two literature scholars, Marek Nekula and Lucie Rychnovská, analysed Smetana's Czech within the period context, while Jiří K. Kroupa provided

information about the database processing of this correspondence. At the end of 2011, Olga Mojžíšová and Milan Pospíšil's Czech-English book *Bedřich Smetana and his Correspondence* (National Museum, Prague, ISBN: 978-80-7036-306-5) was published. It is an extensive, annotated catalogue of Smetana's correspondence. Although the designation "catalogue" is not actually in the publication's title, when it comes to the content and structure of the book this term is apposite. After all, the authors themselves characterise their book as a catalogue right in the introductory texts.

The catalogue's extensive scope (XXXII pages of introductory text + 478 pages + 16 pages of facsimile supplements) is primarily determined by the relatively high number of correspondence communications. As the authors write, at the time of the catalogue's compilation their database included a total of 2,288 of these communications. In addition to letters and postcards, also termed as "correspondence communication" are telegrams, visiting cards with inscriptions, empty envelopes with an address documenting the existence of a letter, etc. Most frequently, they work directly with fair copies of letters, yet besides these they also have to use drafts, copies or published letters. Moreover, the catalogue's size swelled as a result of the parallel English translation. The publication's bilingual form is designed in a very elegant, well-arranged and economical manner. The headings of the correspondence communications are written in a uniform format comprehensible to the readers of the Czech and English texts alike. An annotation in Czech and the same annotation in English follow. After all, these brief and cogently formulated annotations alone document the high professional competence of the catalogue's creators. All the introductory texts are fully translated too. The catalogue itself is not conceived chronologically but alphabetically, by addressees and senders, respectively. It is divided into the correspondence sent and the correspondence received by Smetana, while each part is further divided into correspondence with institutions and persons. Letters in the case of which the addressee or sender have not been determined are placed at the end

of the respective sections. Chronological sequencing is only applied in the case of a large number of letters sent to a single addressee or from a single sender. In these cases in particular, the alphabetical order appears appropriate and extremely illuminating. All the letters sent by Smetana to a single selected addressee can be found in chronological sequencing in one place. The example of Franz Liszt can serve as an illustration. Of the twelve letters Smetana sent to Liszt, today we have eight available, with the remaining four missing. The content of the preserved letters is in the annotations, while in the case of the missing four letters a source referring to the respective letter is stated. The section relating to the correspondence received by Smetana (persons) includes nine of Liszt's letters to Smetana, of which seven have been preserved and two are missing. According to the current knowledge, the correspondence between Smetana and Liszt amounts to a total of 21 letters (15 preserved, 6 missing). Moreover, the index of persons contains further mentions of Liszt in other letters (one of them comprising Liszt's inscription). The number of topics that can be explored owing to the annotated catalogue is considerable, since in addition to the index of persons the book also contains indices of organisations, places and Smetana's works. Nevertheless, it would be possible to read even more from the precious materials contained in the catalogue. It is not possible, for example, to seek a letter merely by its date, or letters from a certain period of time. Thus the catalogue does not provide answers to questions relating to with whom and about what Smetana corresponded in 1855 or, say, March 1874. Theoretically, the four existing indices could be joined by another one, a chronological list of all the letters with references to the respective pages, yet the scope of such a list would be simply enormous. The catalogue's alphabetical conception is not ideal; it is rather unbalanced for the user. Whereas two tools (an index or simple seeking of a name in alphabetical order) can be used for seeking the names of senders or addressees, no tool is available as regards the temporal aspect. If the catalogue had been arranged chronologically, it would not have lost any of its existing functions (we would still find all

the names of persons and institutions by means of the indices) and the advantage gained in the form of the chronological aspect would also make for a book much more attractive for the readers. Yet chronological sequencing is planned for the complete critical edition currently under preparation. The edition, made up of several volumes, is intended to be conceived as mutual correspondence. All the current divisions into correspondence sent and received, persons and institutions evidently served as an important auxiliary instrument, which the authors adhered to in the case of the annotated catalogue too. The sheer quantity of the findings resulting from the enormous amount of work done on the catalogue is worthy of admiration. The publication is the fruit not only of the efforts exerted by the two authors themselves but also those of the numerous researchers, museum employees, collectors and various Smetana devotees who over several generations have worked towards a single goal: the building of a "spiritual monument" to Smetana's legacy. Their editorial decision-making often took place under the pressure of the questions from which we in the 21st century have shifted away: How to do it in such a manner as not to taint the idealised image of the national giant? How to treat the correspondence written in German? What to do with Smetana's unflattering Czech spelling? What to do with the incomprehensible notes made towards the end of the composer's life? The two musicologists Mojžíšová and Pospíšil linked up to the work of their predecessors with deep respect, humility, not to mention excellence. They have summed up all the current knowledge pertaining to the history of collecting and publishing Smetana's correspondence. At the same time, from the very beginning they conceived the project in such a manner that the resultant complete edition would be fully in accordance with the contemporary international requirements placed on critical editions of musicians' correspondence. When it comes to the transcription principles in particular, compared to the older, much looser practice they have significantly changed in the direction of diplomatically faithful transcription of the original. Considerable shifts have also been made in the area of heuristics, while a large

number of letters previously only known from copies or photocopies have been acquired for the Bedřich Smetana Museum's collections over the past few years. The authors refer to the never-ending gathering of sources in the Introduction to their catalogue (p. XX): *"Yet the summary of Smetana's correspondence, as currently recorded in the catalogue and as will also be offered by the future printed critical edition itself, will never be considered definitive, since it is always possible to expect the emergence of new source knowledge and entirely new documents of written contacts between Smetana and his Czech and foreign contemporaries."* In this connection, it is worth mentioning that some of the previously discovered letters allegedly written by Smetana have ultimately proved to be fakes.

Let us hope that the catalogue will now be thoroughly studied by researchers, archivists, collectors, and everyone else with an interest in the Smetana correspondence. Until recently, it was fiendishly difficult even for a specialist interested in the history of 19th-century Czech music to find out whether this or that letter has been recorded in the Smetana literature or not. It was necessary to leaf through countless books, editions and journals. Now the catalogue finally provides the possibility to ascertain whether this or that letter is known about or whether it has so far escaped the researchers' attention.

The complete critical edition of Bedřich Smetana's correspondence can now finally be seen on the horizon. The editors have yet to say when we will have the opportunity to browse through the first volumes. What is significant, however, is that judging by the amount and, most notably, the quality of the work they have done so far we can safely assume that they will bring the entire project to fruition. If the complete critical edition is successfully implemented, it will become a momentous source of deeper knowledge of 19th-century European musical culture and an extraordinarily inspirational impulse for the appropriate evaluation of Smetana's oeuvre within the European context.



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DIABOLUS IN MUSICA BOHEMICA ET SLOVACA

*THE RECEPTION OF JOHN CAGE'S MUSIC
IN THE CZECH LANDS AND SLOVAKIA*

JOHN CAGE AND WE CZECHS AND SLOVAKS. DURING HIS LIFETIME, THE COMPOSER VISITED CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON TWO OCCASIONS. HOW HAS THE RECEPTION OF HIS MUSIC CHANGED IN OUR COUNTRY? WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF HIS IDEAS? HOW IS HE PERCEIVED TODAY? THE CENTENARY OF JOHN CAGE'S BIRTH AND THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE STOCK.

JOHN CAGE

From Gorodinsky to Ostrava miners' lamps and the Exhibition of Experimental Music

John Cage's music was most probably first mentioned in Czech in Viktor Gorodinsky's pamphlet *Music of Spiritual Poverty*, translated from the Russian original (Moscow-Leningrad 1950) and published in 1952. The text is written from the vantage point of the then official Zhdanov aesthetics and casts a scathing glance at American music in particular, although in effect it does not spare any of the Western composers. The name of John Cage appears in the pamphlet several times, with the artist being presented as an extreme example of musical decadence:

John Cage goes much further than his modernist teachers. He "prepares" – if we can express it this way – musical material and seeks entirely unusual sounds, yes, totally unknown in the sonic nature of the world. (p. 26)

Accordingly, Cage's sin is in his seeking of new sounds, his abandoning of the common tonal material and established forms. Gorodinsky views Cage's efforts through the prism of his party task: to discredit, ridicule and condemn everything that does not accord with the requirements placed on music creators by Soviet power. He does so with a self-assurance that sees no need to be supported by specialist knowledge, as was after all customary when fulfilling such tasks:

Cage has no conception of creation whatsoever. He confuses it with the "mathematical principle", with simple calculation, mathematical operations with top [sic!] tones playing the major role in his compositions. (p. 27)

The malevolent description aims to evoke in the reader the impression that Cage's music – here, Gorodinsky is evidently referring to his works for prepared piano – represents something impertinent and unacceptable:

It goes without saying that Cage is an atonalist in the fullest sense of the word. It would seem that his works do not bear the slightest traces of tonal logic. Cage's music treats the most peculiar acrobatic skips over two, three and even four octaves, while in the notation they can be graphically divided at the distance of a mere semitone. Yet they will sound within the range of two to three octaves. Thus, as the French would

put it, Cage is "more royalist than the king", more atonal than Schönberg. (p. 28)

Gorodinsky's pamphlet is a typical example of a Cold War pronouncement, with mockery of the enemy's musical culture being applied with the aim to convince the public of the overall wickedness of the USA. In point of fact, what the music is actually like is less relevant than the place it comes from:

In musical America there is everything, for every reactionary taste – musical obscuranists, shrouding themselves in clamorous formalistic radicalism, ultra-modernists of all shapes and sizes, atonalists headed by Schönberg himself, Stravinskyites with Stravinsky "himself", musical surrealists with Virgil Thomson, barmy jazzists, ultra-urbanists' and, finally, musical speculators-adventurers – the Whiteguardist rascals: the radio liar Nikolay Nabokov and the conductor of the "Don Cossacks choir", a certain Nikolay Kostrukov. (p. 29)

John Cage is only used here to serve as a lurid example of the total musical decay caused by the "putrescent social formation":

Yet Cage is neither a circus freak nor a mere eccentric. Cage is a symptom of the times, one of the most apposite and most typical manifestations of the perverse, nauseatingly monstrous "aesthetics of Americanism" – and not only musical, since musical aesthetics and musical taste do not evolve separately from the social development. (p. 28)

It is difficult to say how many people read this rather slim treatise. Perhaps it would not even be worth mentioning if it did not usher in the manner in which matters were judged and if the aesthetic standards implemented by it had not basically (purged of the ideological coating) persisted in our country for a very long time. The feeling of being threatened by music that does not meet the assumed expectations of the established conventions has always played a relatively significant role in Czech musical culture. Also resulting from this is an anxious guarding of the "borders of music" which, albeit not delimited by any law as such, are precisely, although individually, sensed. Up to the present day, the endeavour to dwell in the safe territory of acknowledged creators of the standard repertoire has remained an unwritten yet generally meticulously adhered to covenant

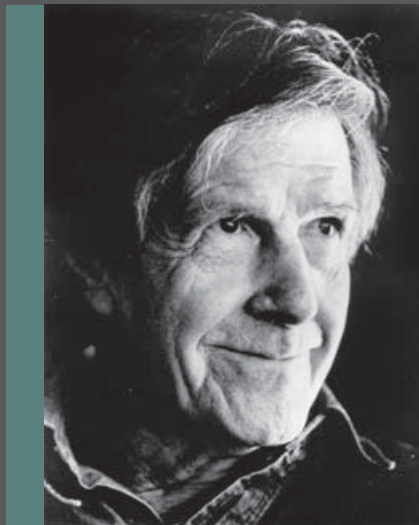
1 A word of a meaning unclear within the music context, most likely used so as to escalate the account of abhorrent phenomena (note: J.Š.).

of Czech musical education at all grades, as well as regular concert life.

Over the next decade, the “Iron Curtain” functioned relatively reliably and precious little information about the musical development in the West got to our country. And if any such information did happen to come through, it was usually considerably filtered. Higher knowledge was only gained by exceptional individuals possessing good foreign language skills, such as, for example, the composer Jan Rychlík (1916–1964), a remarkably erudite figure with a great breadth of interests. His artistic development was focused on New Music and indicated singular treatment of its stimuli and even – in the case of the *African Cycle* dating from 1962 – pre-emption of certain tendencies of Minimalism, which only later appeared in the USA. Rychlík’s promisingly evolving work was violently ended by his premature death. Rychlík knew about Cage and was aware of the historical connections that link his indeterminist and mutually combinable compositions to the compositional principles of the Renaissance, as he put it in his study *Prvky nových skladebných technik v hudbě minulost, v hudbě exotické a lidové*, (Elements of new compositional techniques in the music of the past, in exotic and folk music), which was published posthumously, within the volume *Nové cesty hudby* (New Ways of Music, SHV, Prague 1964).

The beginning of the 1960s brought in a period of slight thawing, with travel abroad being difficult, but possible for at least some. In 1960 and 1961 the composer Jaromír Podešva made a study tour of the USA, England and France. He first reported of his experiences in the article *Hudební Amerika v kostce* (Musical America in a nutshell)². He refers to Cage’s works in a derogatory manner, linking up to the Gorodinsky model.

In this period, the composer Ctirad Kohoutek, a pedagogue at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, was considered a certain authority when it came to knowledge of New Music in the West. In his book *Novodobé skladebné teórie západoevropské hudby* (Modern Compositional Theories of Western European



JOHN CAGE (1912–1992)

Music, SHN, Prague 1962), he reproduces the description of the compositional method used in *Music for Piano* 21–52 and brands Cage an “extreme”. He gives him rather short shrift by providing a quotation from Podešva’s article and concludes with the following evaluation:

At this moment, however, we are far from music and the arts in general. We view Cage’s experiments mentioned above as one of the excesses of today’s Western music. (p. 81)

In the second, extended edition (1965), Kohoutek pays greater attention to Cage, but only because in the chapter *Extrémy. Tvořící a reprodukční atrakce* (Extremes. Creative and reproductive attractions) he wanted to denounce this type of expression, one which, in his opinion, compromises the whole area of Western music. With reference to Heinz-Klaus Metzger he writes:

John Cage and a handful of his acolytes are thus not representatives but rather exceptions. Cage and his school (Morton Feldman, Earle Brown and Christian Wolff) are boycotted in America and shut out of the official musical life. (p. 214)

2 PODEŠVA, Jaromír: *Hudební Amerika v kostce*. in: *Hudební rozhledy* XIII/1960, p. 894.



Thus it could be said that owing to these authors Cage's name acquired in our country a meaning similar to the medieval term "diabolus in musica". He was a composer known by his reputation, in the best case from German translations of a few texts, and on the basis of this tabooed – hardly anybody was actually familiar with his music itself.

With regard to the fact that when it comes to music the Czech lands had always been strongly influenced by Germany, at the beginning of the 1960s too Czech composers looked in this direction, focusing on the Second Viennese School and its continuation, represented by Karlheinz Stockhausen. At the same time, Bartók was still topical for many composers, as were Prokofiev and Shostakovich, while new stimuli were also brought by the "Polish School" headed by Lutosławski and Penderecki. Cage's conceptions, which were practically only known from Podešva and Kohoutek, were not overly attractive owing to their sheer radicalism. After all, the majority of Czech composers have always given preference to holding prudent approaches and moderate taking over of stimuli from outside. The nature of Czech musical life itself was not overly well-disposed to experimentation. There were exceptions, however: the Prague composer Rudolf Komorous (1931), a superlative bassoonist, was sent to teach from 1959 to 1961 at the Beijing conservatory. During his stay in China, Komorous, who back in the 1950s was linked to the milieu of visual artists (he was the only musician to become a member of the Šmidrové, a Dadaism-inspired group) and had a penchant for unconventional musical ideas, arrived at a vision of music that was very close to Cage's conception. In a letter dating from 1960, he wrote: *Sometimes I imagine a composition that would be silence, only semi-occasionally interrupted by music.*³ Following his return to Prague in 1961, Komorous joined *Musica viva pragensis*, an ensemble that at the time was being formed upon the initiative of the composer Vladimír Šrámek (1923–2004) and the flautist Petr Kotík (1942), then a conservatory student. The new ensemble was shielded by the authority of the Prague Conservatory professor and clarinetist Milan Kostohryz

In 1963, Panton published Jaromír Podešva's book *Současná hudba na Západě* (Contemporary Music in the West), which earmarks for Cage a position in the mockingly toned "Tragicomic supplement". Instrumental effects from his compositions, taken out of context, are described in a somewhat amateurish manner, yet complemented by drawn caricatures. Podešva's book was immediately subject to criticism on the part of the young composers of the time and a lively debate about the book ensued on the pages of the journal *Hudební rozhledy*. Yet the polemics did not relate to Cage himself but the generally low degree of earnestness and considerable subjectivity of the book, which in the main provided a distorted picture of the selected topic.

³ Quoted according to the programme of the Agon ensemble for the autumn 1991 – spring 1992 concert season. Published by NTS – Konserva/Na Hudbu, Prague 1991, p. 6.

AEON (1961)

hudba
JOHN CAGE
WINTER MUSIC

MERCE CUNNINGHAM

CAROLYN BROWN

DEBORAH HAY

WILLIAM DAVIS

SANDRA NEELS

VIOLA FARBER

BARBARA LLOYD

STEVE PAXTON

ALBERT REID

Klavír: DAVID TUDOR

Hraje MUSICA VIVA PRAGENSIS

Tanec epického charakteru. Jeden zúčastněný plešuje druhý. V jednom místě, kdy šlápnou tanečnické na kůži, udělá druhý druhý šlápnutí, který dle okamžitého klavírního stisku napoví, jakou manipulací tanečníci a hudebníci, tanec a klavír, mohou být postaveny různými způsoby. To znamená, že tanec může být předveden v krátké nebo delší době a více nebo méně předložitelný a správně a pořadí epizod může být měněno při každém představení. Tato díla byla poprvé předvedena v Montreal Festival Society v červnu 1961.

Hudebním podkladem je Adas Esplanade with Winter Music (akusticko-elektronická verze) od Johna Cage. Vlastní skladba je pro správnou paměť mikrofonů a výsledný zvuk, je upravený a přehráván. Orchestralní hudba je transformována na malou hudební skupinu, s níž jednotlivé body obíhají okolo slunce.

CRISES (1960)

hudba
CONLON NANCARROW
rytmická studie č. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 a 8
pro klavír

MERCE CUNNINGHAM

CAROLYN BROWN

VIOLA FARBER

SANDRA NEELS

BARBARA LLOYD

Dramatický tanec, soustředěný ve nejvyšší míře mezi mužem a ženou. Vystupují dva tanečníci, jeden muž a jedna žena. Jednou z nich je Merce Cunningham, druhý je jeho partner. Ples stěží vyjde z rukou, když se Merce Cunningham myslí, že se stane tak, že různé státy, jako „je se stalo“ a „je to znamená“.

Tento balet vznikl jako pár s Violou Farber, poprvé byl proveden v r. 1960 v New London (Connecticut). V tomto baletu se stává tanec formou se životem. Rauschenberg se rozhodl představit taneční tanec jako přechod z jednoho do druhého.

ANTIC MEET (1958)

hudba
JOHN CAGE

„Dovolte mi, abych vám řekl, že právě absurdní je na světě příliš potřebné.“

(Ivan Karamazov)

MERCE CUNNINGHAM

CAROLYN BROWN

SANDRA NEELS

VIOLA FARBER

BARBARA LLOYD

STEVE PAXTON

Klavír: DAVID TUDOR

Hraje MUSICA VIVA PRAGENSIS

Předehra
Pokoj pro dva
Sálekna hra
Sporty a zábavy č. 1
Sporty a zábavy č. 2
Ze společnosti
Bakchus a jeho průvod
Sporty a zábavy č. 3
Cíle
Na odchodu

První představení bylo na americkém tanečním festivalu v Connecticut Colleges v New London v r. 1948 a od té doby se stalo úspěšným číslem v Cunninghamově repertoáru, díky jeho blízké spolupráci a bohatosti tanečních prvků.

Skladba Johna Cage byla provedena poprvé v r. 1958 a dirigoval ji právě Merce Cunningham. Sólistu je David Tudor.

Kostýmem je tmavý trikot, k němuž jsou přidávány různé části oděvu a přednády.

JOHN CAGE – hudební ředitel

DAVID TUDOR – klavírista

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

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AND

DANCE COMPANY

NEW YORK

MUSICA VIVA PRAGENSIS

PROGRAMME FOR THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM
DANCE COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE IN PRAGUE



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
DAVID TUDOR, MERCE
CUNNINGHAM, THE
INTERPRETER FRANTIŠEK
FRÖHLICH, JOHN CAGE,
THE MUSICOLOGIST
VLADIMÍR LÉBL, CHATTING
AT THE THEATRE OF MUSIC
IN PRAGUE

(1911–1998). *Musica viva pragensis* played a significant role on the Czech and international scenes up until 1973, when it was forced to cease its activity (for more, see CMQ.1/2008).

Komorous was remarkable in his arriving at considerations very similar to those of Cage, yet entirely independently of him – he drew upon similar Chinese sources to those relevant to Cage too.

Komorous himself put it as follows:

New Music makes it possible to give sound back its authentic value and introduce silence into music. And this forms the basis for my compositional work. I do not want to break up music by pauses; for me, a musical composition is a time of silence interrupted by music. Composing in this manner is only possible because an isolated tone returned to its essence is able to bear a great semantic load. Naturally, a considerable tension originates between tones burdened in this way.

*A composition's formal solution is then similar to a structure from pre-stressed concrete: reinforcements are not necessary, everything redundant destroys the lucidity of the piece and the purity of work.*⁴

If Rudolf Komorous went beyond the Czech milieu owing to his experience from China, then Petr Kotík (1942) is a type extremely atypical



SIGNATURES OF JOHN CAGE, MERCE CUNNINGHAM AND DAVID TUDOR IN A COPY OF JAROSLAV BUŽGA'S MAGAZINE DIE REIHE ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR PRAGUE PERFORMANCE

⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

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BRNO, 31. BŘEZNA — 4. DUBNA 1970

Úterý 31. 3. 1970

Koncertní síň JAMU 17 hod.

Přednáška o integraci v experimentální hudbě
dr. Vladimír Léb, ČSc.

Josef Berg — Bruno Cempírek: *Uměnovědný dialog*
předvádí Josef Berg, Bruno Cempírek a ing. Alois Piňos

Studio Čs. rozhlasu DUKLA 20 hod.

VEČER JOHNA CAGE

Hudba: *Sonatas and Interludes*

Water Music
realizuje Peter Roggenkamp (Hamburk)
The Marrying Maiden (z magnetofonového záznamu)

Texty: *Indeterminacy*

Erik Satie
hovoří dr. Miloš Stědraň a Arnolt Parsch
Where are we going? And what are we doing?
z magnetofonového záznamu hovoří John Cage

Diapozitivy Henmara Presse zapůjčeny s laskavým dovolením
hudebního vydavatelství C. F. Peters Corporation, New York

PROGRAMME FOR THE EXHIBITION OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC FESTIVAL AT THE END OF MARCH/BEGINNING OF APRIL 1970

too. He grew up in an artistic environment, his grandfather Pravoslav Kotík and father Jan were accomplished painters. At the time, Jan Kotík was one of the Czech artists with the widest range of vision, as is after all documented by his extremely knowledgeable articles published back in the 1950s. During his first visit to Prague, Luigi Nono visited him at his studio, hence the young Petr Kotík had first-hand information about the New Music. Cage's opinions, with which he familiarised himself from *Darmstädter Beiträge zur neuen Musik*, were close to him and he has always shared them.

In 1964 the painter Jan Kotík and his wife Pavla attended the Biennale in Venice, where they saw a performance given by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. The Kotíks were impressed by the performance and established contact with Cage and Cunningham, which gave rise to the idea that this programme should also be presented in Prague. At the time, their son Petr was studying in Vienna and since in the Merce

Cunningham Dance Company's itinerary the Austria capital followed after Venice, he participated as a musician in Cunningham's Event #1, playing next to Cage and David Tudor. Owing to Mrs. Kotíková's single-mindedness, the performance in Prague was successfully carried out, with the participation of Petr Kotík and other members of *Musica viva pragensis*, who subsequently accompanied the Americans in Warsaw too.

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company's world tour lasted all year long and was extremely challenging in many respects. Success was followed by misunderstanding, beautiful experiences by frustration and obstacles to overcome. After arriving in Prague, the dancer Carolyn Brown noted down in her diary ⁵: *What a terrible disappointment! We're in an ugly, dreary hotel. Dirty, with no hot water or even heat. [The elevator didn't work, either.] My room looks out on an air shaft. It was raining when we went out to dinner – to a "club", also very dreary & ugly, with non-descript food and very expensive.*

⁵ Quoted according to: BROWN, Carolyn: *Chance and Circumstance. Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York 2007

The city, what we've seen of it, is ugly. The whole atmosphere is so DÉPRESSING! One really wonders how the human spirit can survive. We will dance in a Congress Hall – 3000 seats on a flat floor. People won't be able to see anything. (p. 412)

Prior to the performance, Cage visited a mushroom exhibition, where he met Dr. Jiří Hlaváček, chairman of the Czechoslovak Mycology Society, and the next day they went to pick mushrooms in the woods by Karlštejn castle. Cage allegedly turned up for the trip in jeans torn above the knee – a foretoken of a fashion that would spread much later.

The performance in Prague was not attended by many composers; at least there are not many first-hand accounts of it. According to Hlaváček's testimony, those present included Karel Krautgartner, leader of the Czechoslovak Radio Dance and Jazz Orchestra, a musician possessing a wide range of vision and impeccable taste, who was enchanted by the music. To all appearances, the audience's interest reflected the fact that it concerned a performance of contemporary American art. The more informed spectators mainly included visual artists for whom Robert Rauschenberg, who had just won the Venice Biennale painting award, was a figure known at the time.

For reasons never explained, the Czech agency's advertisements and the posters around town omitted the names of both Cage and Rauschenberg, probably the only two names known to the Communist regime. Did John and Bob represent the dangerously decadent and revolutionary artistic pollution of the West? Of course it was a foolish precaution; word of mouth proved far more effective than the state advertisements. Artists from miles around Prague came to see the performance and speak with John, Merce and Bob. We were the first American dance company to perform in Czechoslovakia since the war. People were curious, hungry for something new, and they filled the Congress Hall of Science and Culture to capacity. Advertised as "American Ballet in the Style of West Side Story," our program must have been baffling to the huge audience, which nonetheless responded warmly to what little they could actually see. (p. 413)

The audience's interest was truly immense. As Merce Cunningham recalled, some spectators even climbed up the spotlight stands and hung there in clusters. Only when Rauschenberg

needed to change the lighting did they climb down obediently – before proceeding to climb up again.

Not only Cage's music was presented at the performance. The composition for the first dance (*Story*) was created by Toshi Ichinyanagi; for the second (*Crises*), a selection from Conlon Nancarrow's *Studies for Player Piano* (1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 6) was played from a tape. The dance *Story* actually replaced the originally planned *Aeon* (featuring Cage's *Atlas Eclipticalis* and *Winter Music*), which was withdrawn owing to an unsatisfactory stage. Thus, the Czech musicians only performed with Tudor the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* for the dance *Antic Meet*.

The following day, the artists had some leisure time and Carolyn Brown had the opportunity to amend her first impressions of Prague:

*On the third day, the sun came out, and with it a fresh view of Prague and the realization that it was, after all, a very beautiful city. All it took was to cross Smetana's River Moldau over the Charles Bridge into the historic old town, explore its streets and byways, its churches, and be taken to a very nice restaurant high on a hill near the castle. That evening, after a cocktail party in the company's honor at the American Embassy, David Vaughan, the Lloyds, and I had taste of true Czech culture, Smetana's 1868 three-act opera *Dalibor* in the stunning Baroque [sic!] National Theatre. My gloom lifted. For a day.* (pp. 413–414)

Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg and Tudor also participated in a debate at the Theatre of Music guided by Vladimír Lébíl (see photo). Besides several minor and not overly informed reviews in the newspapers, the journal *Hudební rozhledy* ran a relatively extensive article written by Josef Bek (19/1964, pp. 838–839). The author drew attention to the essentially different starting points of Cage's work, to his linkage with Erik Satie, the inseparability of music from the ambient sonic world. He highlighted the characteristic aspect of the collaboration between Cage and Cunningham – unexpected tension and the shock effect:

A joyful atmosphere is present, resulting from the creative vigour, which is also the main source of the aesthetic enjoyment. Seeking a leading idea or theme would be a futile effort, yet the munificent choice, which is the basic element of the creative act, is afforded to the audience too. The disunity of the "resultant impression" is prepared in advance.

If the critics take exception to it, they reveal their lack of knowledge. (p. 839)

During his stay in Prague, Cage bought from the fee paid in Czech crowns the sky atlases he would later use when composing his *Etudes Australes* and *Etudes Boreales*.

The next day, following the inevitable confusions, the Americans were flown in a *ghastly, bumpy two-engine prop plane* (Brown) to Ostrava, the industrial mining city in North Moravia, where they gave their second performance, this time without Czech musicians. If the Prague performance was shocking for an unprepared audience, with a fragment of them knowing the protagonists at least by reputation, the Ostravans, for whom the Merce Cunningham Dance Company were akin to unexpected visitors from Mars, received the exotic experience with a customary casualness and created in the half-full auditorium of the Antonín Dvořák Theatre a loose, spontaneous atmosphere.

As Carolyn Brown recalled:

Ostrava, the “Pittsburg of Czechoslovakia,” may have been a coalmining town, but it had a handsome old theater (sadly in need of repair) just across the street from a good hotel that had private baths with hot water, an elevator that worked, and a decent restaurant – everything to make weary dancers happy. But Ostrava was a bleak place for those living there. There was no electricity in the stores in the daytime – in any case, there was next-to-nothing to buy, not even magazines. Our dresser in the theater marveled at the quality of our Kleenex and our makeup.

In the Ostrava program, we women suddenly had become Slavs: we were Brownova, Farberova, Hayova, Lloydova and Neelsova. What fun! The performance that night was unmemorable except for an architectural feature of the stage that Bob and Merce put to imaginative use. A scenery-loading ramp at center stage led down to doors opening onto the street behind the theater. Story began as the curtain rose on an empty stage, stripped to the walls; in Rauschenbergian eerie semidarkness, Merce enters from the street and moves slowly up the ramp through the gloom. “It felt like Kafka, appropriately enough, a long uphill push through the dark.”⁶ Merce’s description was equally appropriate for what it felt like to be on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. Onstage, at curtain call, each of us was presented with a bouquet of flowers and a tiny miniature coalminer’s lamp – to light one’s way in the dispiriting,

dismal Soviet darkness? That, too, seemed appropriate. (p. 414)

Musica viva pragensis subsequently accompanied the Americans in Poland at the Warsaw Autumn festival, at a rather whimsically timed noon performance. The scandal caused at their own concert by Petr Kotík’s *Music for 3 – In Memory of Jan Rychlík*, resulted in the ensemble’s very existence being threatened, a crisis Kotík averted by leaving it. Shortly afterwards, he established the new QUaX Ensemble and in 1969, after the cultural situation had worsened in consequence of the political changes (the invasion by the Warsaw Pact forces and the end of liberalisation tendencies in Czechoslovakia), he decided to move to New York.

Cage’s music was again heard in this country in 1970 at the Exhibition of Experimental Music in Brno, where the German pianist Peter Roggenkamp performed *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano and *Water Music*. Moreover, the same concert featured electronic incidental music to Jackson MacLow’s play *The Marrying Maiden*, as well as Czech translations of Cage’s texts *Indeterminacy* and *Erik Satie* and, finally, the voice of the composer himself, giving the lecture *Where Are We Going? And What Are We Doing?*, was heard from an audio tape. The evening of 31 March 1970 would for a long time to come be the last opportunity to hear Cage’s music performed live at a public concert. The culture policy of the Husák regime had totally different priorities.

From “normalisation” to normal

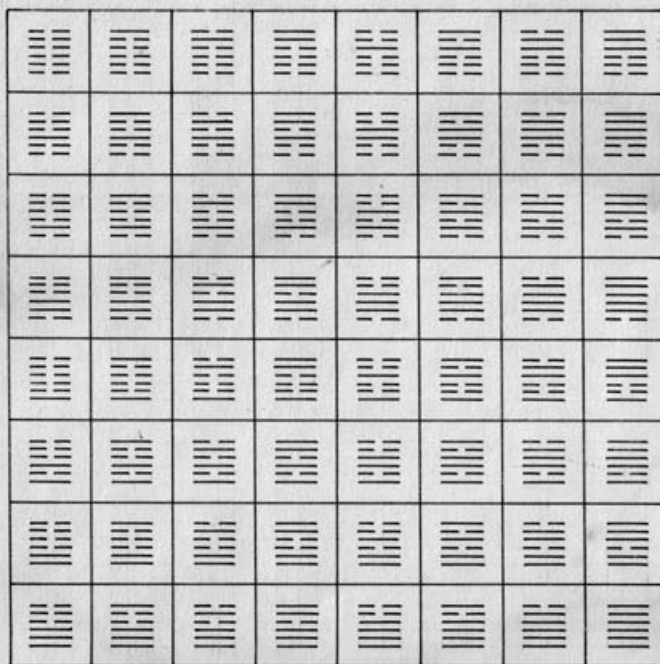
The long period of “normalisation”, as President Husák’s Neo-Stalinist regime euphemistically termed the cementation of the totalitarian state, brought with it a significant inhibition of all efforts for unconventional musical expression. Many domestic composers vanished from the repertoire, while many foreign ones (Cage in particular) were never included. Although the onset of “normalisation” was relatively swift, this wasn’t the case everywhere. The volume *Nové cesty hudby 2* (New Ways of Music 2)⁷ published

6 Cunningham, “Story (Part II)”, 20.

7 HERZOG, Eduard (ed.). *Nové cesty hudby 2*. Prague – Bratislava: Editio Supraphon, 1970.

FIRST PAGE
FOR JOHN CAGE

Milan Adamčiak
1967



MILAN ADAMČIAK: FOR JOHN CAGE (1967), 1ST PAGE OF THE SCORE

in 1970 contains Vladimír Lébl's essay *O mezích družích hudby* (On boundary types of music), which refers to Cage with respect and deals with his conception of music as theatre. In 1969 and 1970, four issues of the journal *Konfrontace*, edited by Lébl, were published too; Issue 3 contained a translation of Cage's text *History of Experimental Music in the United States*. Yet Cage's work was again mainly known merely by hearsay, albeit this time recordings and other information got through more frequently. Notably, Cage's ideas were much more willingly embraced by visual artists than musicians. By the way, in the 1970s the fine arts scene formed a relatively coherent community. Instead of meeting at exhibitions, artists spent their time at studios where while working they often listened to recorded music, with many of them managing to put together impressive



MILAN ADAMČIAK AND JOHN CAGE

record collections. It was also a time when Czech and Slovak painters had a heightened interest in chance and indeterminacy. When in 1992 the Slovak aesthetician and curator Jozef Cseres was preparing in Bratislava an exhibition of Cage-inspired graphic works, he had plenty to choose from.

In 1983 the young Prague composers Petr Kofroň (1955), Miroslav Pudlák (1961) and Martin Smolka (1959) established Agon, an ensemble which in addition to their own works and compositions by their generational peers got down to performing pieces by foreign composers, mostly in thematically focused series. John Cage's music occupied a significant position in the ensemble's repertoire. Between 1987 and 1997, Agon performed (often on multiple occasions) Cage's compositions *Sonata for Clarinet*, *Three Pieces for Flute Duet*, *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*, *Amores*, *Music for Marcel Duchamp*, *Four Walls*, *Six Melodies*, *String Quartet in Four Parts*, *Ryoanji*, *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (soloist András Wilhelm, later on Martin Smolka, also in the version for some instruments without the piano), *Bacchanale*, *Fontana Mix*, *In a Landscape*, *The Perilous Night*, *Suite for Toy Piano*, *Two Pastorales*, *Variations I* and *Ten*.

A memorable event was András Wilhelm's concert and lecture at the Bell House in Prague on 1 November 1990, at which he performed Cage's pieces for prepared piano and together with Agon presented the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*. The concert, connected with tasting of macrobiotic food and a display of bonsais, attracted an unexpected amount of people – so many in fact that it was necessary to protect the bonsais (which according to the original plan were to be placed on the presumably empty seats). A notable project of the Society for New Music, which associated Agon and like-minded artists, was the publication *Grafické partitury a koncepty* (Graphic Scores and Concepts)⁸, which documented Agon's concert cycle. John Cage is represented by his composition *Variations I*, prepared for performance by Martin Smolka (actually the only piece of Cage's *Variations* worked out by a Czech composer). Remarkable is the fact that even though Smolka selected music material deliberately distant from Cage's aesthetics,

the resulting impression – with long pauses and isolated sonorities – is still typically Cagean.

We should also highlight the extremely vital activities of Milan Adamčíak in Slovakia. Adamčíak (1946) was a member of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and from 1977 to 1989 also taught at the University of Performing Arts and the Faculty of Arts of Komenský University. Although a member of the Communist Party, thus shielding his own and his colleagues' activities, he otherwise endorsed the approach of the experimental avant-garde and his work was strongly influenced by Cage. Adamčíak mainly created graphic scores and concepts, and even made his own instruments to play his music. He was an ardent experimenter and independently arrived at a number of original expressions of a conceptualistic nature back in his youth in his home town, Ružomberok. Adamčíak possessed an extraordinary charisma by means of which he was able to impress the young generation. And it was he who acquainted them with Western avant-garde and experimental music, with John Cage occupying a privileged position in his lectures. Moreover, Adamčíak and his young followers founded the legendary Transmusic Comp., which grouped together the future Slovak musical elite around the principle of free improvisation and musical playfulness. It included the composers Martin Burlas, Peter Machajdík, Daniel Matej, the conceptualist and performance artist Michal Murin, Oľga Smetanová (today the director of the Music Centre Slovakia), and the composer and pianist Peter Zagar. The visiting members included Lubomír Burgr, Juraj Ďuriš, Marek Piaček, Ivan Csudai, Eduard Krekovič and other musicians.

Some time later (1990), Adamčíak and Michal Murin founded the Society for Unconventional Music (SNEH), which organised various events straddling the border between performance art, intermedia and happening.

Even earlier (1988), the VENI ensemble (still functioning) was established in Bratislava. It is the most significant Slovak ensemble for new music through which a number of musicians have passed and within which a number of other ensembles were formed. Its founder,

8 KOFROŇ, Petr – SMOLKA, Martin: *Grafické partitury a koncepty*, audio ego, Miracle7, Votobia, Society for New Music, Prague 1996

Daniel Matej, focuses on experimental and unconventional types of music and in his dramaturgy he has paid great attention to Cage and his circle (Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff, Earle Brown). A charismatic personality capable of passing on his infectious enthusiasm, Matej has attained that Cage's music and opinions are now understood as entirely comprehensible and, in a way, normal.

From the very beginning, the VENI ensemble was linked to the New Music Evenings festival, another project initiated by Daniel Matej. The festival existed from 1989 to 2009 and over that time welcomed numerous world-renowned musicians. In 1992, John Cage himself appeared at the festival.

1992 – Joy and bewilderment

The year 1992 marked a certain turning point in the reception of John Cage's music in Czechoslovakia. The artist's impending eightieth birthday shifted him into a group of venerated composers; he became a symbol of the musical avant-garde, a figure respected on a wider scale. Several events focused on his music were held in Prague. In May 1992, the agile Hungarian Cultural Centre, at András Wilhelm's request, organised a symposium dedicated to John Cage's significance and connected with a performance of Budapest's Amadinda Percussion Group at the Prague Spring festival featuring Cage's compositions for percussion. The symposium was chaired by András Wilhelm and was visited by the prominent Cage specialists Paul van Emmerik from Amsterdam, Martin Erdmann from Bonn (who also performed in Prague as a pianist) and Stefan Conradi, a representative of the Frankfurt-based publisher C. F. Peters and an interpreter of Cage's music himself. It was an extraordinary event, one without precedent in Prague. The symposium itself and the Amadinda Percussion Group's performance met with an enthusiastic reception. In the meantime, an even greater event was under preparation in Bratislava, one that represented the culmination of Cage festivities in our – at the time still united – state. The New Music

Evenings festival made the Cage anniversary its dramaturgical centre of gravity and Daniel Matej persuaded Viera Polakovičová, the then head of the Music Information Centre, to invite the great man himself. Surprisingly, Cage accepted the invitation (ultimately, it was revealed that his fee requirements were on the whole modest in comparison with the fairly mediocre concert stars) and in June he spent 24 hours in Bratislava. Cage was accompanied by Laura Kuhn, a student who was working on a thesis dedicated to his work.

John Cage was welcomed as a true celebrity in Bratislava and may have found himself amid a social whirl greater than he was used to – all sorts of people wanted to speak to him, shake his hand, take a photo together. On the first day, he didn't even have time to go to the toilet. At Bratislava's Reduta (the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra's hall), Cage presented a new version of his lecture *Composition in Retrospect* and answered the audience's questions. When, in conclusion, Viera Polakovičová asked him what he would wish the Slovak nation, who were just about to set out on an independent path and have their own government, Cage paused for a long time before proclaiming: "You don't need a government, you need an intelligentsia!"

In addition to the obligatory VENI ensemble, Agon and the Prague Percussion Group, John Tilbury, Bernhard Wambach, András Wilhelm, Ulrike Brand and Martin Erdmann also appeared at the festival as interpreters of Cage's music. The German musicologist and pianist Martin Erdmann also led in Bratislava a workshop for students within which he taught them how to interpret Cage's compositions, primarily those for prepared piano. He managed to arouse enthusiasm among the young pianists, with whom Erdmann gave an immensely successful concert at the University of Performing Arts. The most talented of Erdmann's pupils proved to be Eleonóra Slaničková, who would remain faithful to the prepared piano – fifteen years later (under the name Nora Skuta) she recorded her version of the *Sonatas and Interludes* (Hevhetia 0011-2-131), one of the finest interpretations there is of this wonderful piece.

9 Letter to Daniel Matej (New York, 19 January 1993).

To mark Cage's visit, the Slovak National Gallery displayed Cage's scores, while Jozef Cseres installed in the Slovak Radio vestibule the aforementioned exhibition, featuring Milan Adamčiak, Milan Grygar, Svetozár Ilavský, Otis Laubert, Milan Maur, Ladislav Novák, Eduard Ovčáček, Marian Palla, Miloš Šejn, Dezider Tóth, Jiří Valoch, Jan Wojnar and other artists.

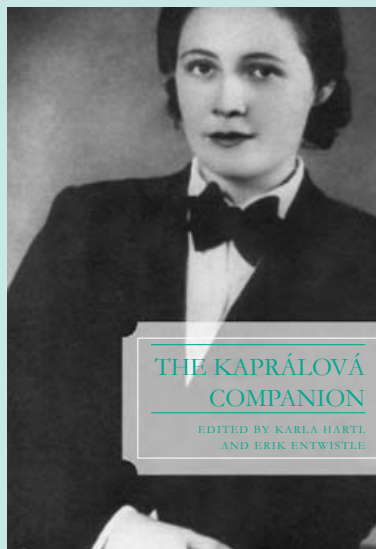
In some respects, Cage's second visit to Czechoslovakia may have compensated for the certain discomfort and rather bizarre situations he had endured the first time around. In Bratislava he was welcomed as a world-renowned composer and shown great respect. Numerous events were held in his honour. At a press conference at the Slovak Radio, he talked about how he liked Chinese and Japanese ink paintings, above all dry brush strokes, whereby the area that is supposed to be black also contains a great amount of white – he used this as an example to explain the yin and yang principle. Everything harbours its opposite, sometimes represented quite boldly. In his music, Cage also strove to accept things that he didn't like. For instance, he wrote the composition *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* for twelve radios in response to the omnipresent radio, which had always discomforted him. He liked talking about how important it was for him to accept the results in the situation he created, how important it is to

accept life as it is. Ultimately, this visit afforded him an opportunity to do so:

In the late afternoon we arrived in Bratislava, the end of our exhausting journey across Germany and Austria lasting almost 24 hours. After two press conferences, one private viewing, numerous interviews and meetings, we had 45 minutes left to eat a dodgy macrobiotic dinner in the cave-like hotel canteen.

A waitress, the only person in the room apart from us, proudly seated us nearby a concert grand. As soon as we tucked into our meal and began leisurely talking about the experiences of the day, a pianist of a considerably pretentious demeanour began playing a mix of American popular melodies. During the second refrain of "New York, New York" à la Frank Sinatra, John cast aside his fork. "I cannot eat here," he said with disgust. I waved over at the waitress. "Could you please ask the pianist to stop playing?" John asked. She gazed at him in disbelief: "Why, don't you like music?" John, without twitching a muscle, said: "No." In no time, the waitress approached the pianist and whispered John's request in his ear. The pianist finished his golden oldie, peeping at us frowningly all along, and then exasperatedly ran off to the kitchen.

After the room had quietened down, we resumed eating. Before long, a local radio broadcast boomed from the loudspeakers in the restaurant. This time we were exposed to an ear-shredding barrage of heavy-metal hits. I steelled myself for a fight, set aside my fork and looked at John, expecting the worst. But that which I saw took me by surprise: John was smiling, almost blissfully. With a spark in his eye,



Hartl, Karla and Erik Entwistle, eds. *The Kaprálová Companion*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. ISBN 978-0-7391-6723-6.

"A remarkable book! Since her death at age twenty-five in the midst of WWII, Kaprálová's brilliant musical legacy and story have fallen through the cracks. But now this book brings her music, in all its variety and power, to the fore. This collection, by a range of distinguished scholars, offers insights and investigation into Kaprálová's creative work and life. Nothing short of a revelation!"

–Liane Curtis, Brandeis University

he looked up and pronounced merrily: “Now, this is much more interesting.”⁹

The almost eighty-year-old Cage appeared in Bratislava like a Taoist sage, serene and equanimous, with his answers to questions (in Merce Cunningham’s words) “always marvellous”. Intellectually, he gave a youthful impression, his smile radiated content. He looked as though after assuming a macrobiotic diet he would live for ever. Thus all the greater was the bewilderment at the news of his sudden death on 18 August. The concert to mark Cage’s birthday at that autumn’s Melos-Ethos festival thus turned into a remembrance ceremony. The American artist Morgan O’Hara implemented there the installation *Open Cage*, during which she filled the concert hall with bird cages. Gene Carl performed the complete *Sonatas and Interludes cycle*. The Slovak composer and mathematician Miro Bázlik, whose ideals are significantly different from those of Cage and who initially did not feel like listening to the piece, said afterwards that: “It was really beautiful...!”

In the 1990s, besides occasional performances given by Agon and VENI, Cage’s music was seldom heard in our country. Yet recordings became generally known and the composer (at least through some of his works) became part of the wider musical awareness – of course, more in the area of alternative music than in the academic world, where his compositions are still taboo in training of instrumentalists (with the exception of percussionists).

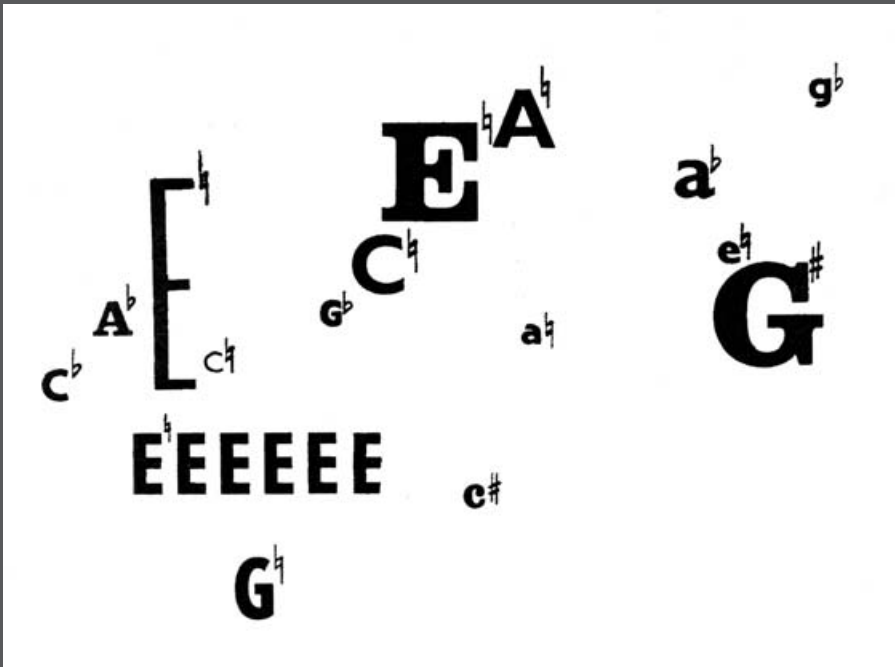
Virtually the only place in our country where Cage’s music is systematically cultivated is Ostrava Days, a holiday institute for New Music related to the festival founded by Petr Kotík in 2001. Kotík has always championed Cage’s legacy as a composer, and as an interpreter collaborated with him on multiple occasions. With regard to Kotík’s opinion that compositions must be played repeatedly, certain works have returned to the musician stands. Over the decade of Ostrava Days’ existence, the following Cage pieces have been performed: *Aria* (2001, 2011), *Atlas Eclipticalis* (2005), *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (2001, 2003, 2007, 2011), *Fontana Mix* (2011), *Imaginary Landscape No 2* (2009), *Imaginary Landscape*

No 3 (2009), *Third Construction* (2009), *FOUR*⁴ (2009), *Music of Changes* (2003), *Ryoanji* (2003), *Winter Music* (2005).

As is evident from this summary, the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* has been part of the festival’s standard repertoire and its performance practice has matured over the course of time. A platform has been created for reception of Cage’s music, with the composer considered a “classic”, and it has shown that the audience too accept him with an understanding much wider than at any time previously.

My Cage

I myself first became aware of John Cage’s music from Jaromír Podešva’s book *Contemporary Music in the West*, which my father (at the time a district methodologist for musical education at primary schools) brought home as a novelty from some seminar. I was eleven years of age and read everything I found at home. I was not used to questioning anything, hence I swallowed the fact that somewhere in the USA lived a certain oddball who for unknown reasons composed sheer nonsense – the way in which Cage’s music was presented in our country did not make it possible to understand it otherwise. Some time later, still a schoolboy, I heard on a radio programme in which the composer Pavel Blatný played all sorts of musical curiosities an extract from Cage’s piece *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*. From the book I was aware of what I could expect, yet I was taken by surprise by the fact that I actually liked the nondescript sound that suddenly emanated from the radio set more than the classical, and even popular, music I knew at the time. Although I had a long way to go, this experience ultimately led me – as the Pole Star leads the traveller – to a deeper interest in contemporary music. Step by step I began finding out that Cage’s music was very different to the manner in which it had been presented. I realised how important it is to verify information through my own experience. When I was studying at the conservatory (1970–75), I sought out recordings, books, articles – I lounged about libraries, devoured the magazines that were published here in the 1960s, ploughed



PETER GRAHAM (AKA JAROSLAV ŠŤASTNÝ): GET OUT OF WHATEVER CAGE (1992), EXTRACT FROM THE SCORE

through German and Polish texts in such journals as *Melos*, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and *Ruch Muzyczny*, which were still distributed to the University Library, and strove to learn as much as I could about the music that wasn't heard either on our stages or on the radio, yet of whose existence I was aware. Of vital importance for me was Vladimír Léb's essay *On boundary types of music*, in which Cage's efforts are explained as serious artistic endeavours. Important too were Lothar Knessl's "Studio Neuer Musik" programmes on the Österreich 1 radio station, broadcast every Thursday night after eleven. As this new world was unveiled to me, I became increasingly fascinated by John Cage's work – it seemed to me that virtually everything that had emerged in music had somehow sprung from him, that his ideas were the basis for other composers who may do totally different things but without his stimuli they would never have come to fruition.

Therefore, I decided to devote my conservatory thesis to Cage's personality and music. I wanted to correct various erroneous allegations about Cage that were disseminated in our country without anyone having proper knowledge of anything. The conceptual artist and theorist Jiří Valoch, who possessed a directory of artists from around the world, provided me with Cage's address. I duly wrote to Cage and received a kind reply from him. I even managed to track down Dr. Jiří Hlaváček, chairman of the Czechoslovak Mycology Society, who had met Cage during his visit to Prague in 1964 and had gone mushroom-picking with him. Moreover, I began corresponding with Petr Kotík, whose S.E.M. Ensemble I had heard on Knessl's radio show (I wrote to the University of Buffalo, hoping that he would receive my letter). I acquainted myself with Kotík's former pupil, the American flautist Sue Stenger, who came to study in Prague and

gave me Cage's books *Silence, A Year from Monday* and *M. (Writings '67- '72)*.

My thesis was rewritten on a typewriter by my friend Magda Klimešová, who gave a copy of it to her Prague friend Pavel Büchler (today a photographer and conceptual artist living in Britain) and through him it circulated in transcripts around Prague. I defended my thesis at the Brno Conservatory without any major problems – its scope was above-standard, and as regards the content, no one knew what to say... After several years, during which I had failed to gain information about John Cage's most recent work, I was informed that the philosopher Petr Rezek would be giving a lecture about the composer in Prague. At the time, I couldn't get to Prague, hence I asked the composer Petr Kofroň, who lived in Prague, to go there and find out what was new. He didn't make it to the lecture either, but he had met Rezek previously and the philosopher had confessed that he himself did not know much about Cage and drew his information from a thesis written by someone years ago at the Brno Conservatory... Then I realised that there were not that many people interested in Cage in Czechoslovakia.

When at the end of the 1980s Petr Dorůžka was preparing a volume of texts on various unconventional phenomena in 20th-century music, later on published under the title *Hudba na pomezí* (Music at the Borderline)¹⁰, he decided to conceive Cage as the central figure and include my thesis (which he knew from samizdat copies) in his book. Hence, I extended it with a postscript and several commentaries on randomly selected compositions.

Cage's work has always been highly inspiring for me in the sense of its openness to various possibilities of creating music, unusual sonic outcomes and various types of compositional forms: until the very end of his life, he would come up with new solutions of how a composition may look, what effect it can yield. His oeuvre, opinions and his singular approach to composing encouraged me to seek my own path. He continues to be my model of unceasing curiosity, creative power, vitality and preparedness for new discoveries.

When I actually got to meet Cage in 1992 in Bratislava, I was surprised how similar he was to his photographs – only smaller and more stooped by age. He looked like a being from another world, composedly and flexibly accepting everything that was going on around him. Yet when he was asked about something, he always paused for a long time and then gave a highly pertinent answer. To commemorate his eightieth birthday, and after his death, I wrote a number of articles in which I strove to present my understanding of his work and his approach to music and the arts in general. They probably contain a lot of errors and wrong conclusions. The Cage I presented is most likely not overly real; he is Cage as I apprehended him. I still cannot say I actually understand him, that I know everything about his music. Yet I take it in his sense: when he talked about Duchamp or Joyce, he too stressed that it is their very mystique that interested him.

Over the course of time, Cage ceased to have the flavour of exclusiveness in our country. Recordings and other materials are relatively easily available – the composer has become just another commodity. And the mass expansion of the internet has brought about an end to musical taboos. Cagean ideals, so provocative at one time, have been lightly absorbed by younger generations, who do not see any problem in them. Cage's dreams, which he proclaimed in his manifesto *The Future of Music – Credo*, have become a reality. Today, by means of computers we produce en masse something that corresponds to his dreamt-of "all-sound music" – from professional to entirely amateurish levels. Application of electronic means is now a matter of course. Mixing anything with anything is the current mainstream.

When the publisher Tranzit asked me to translate Cage's book *Silence* into Czech, initially I refused: who would be interested? Those who were really interested had already read it in the original, others would never read it anyway... Ultimately, and with substantial assistance from my friends Matěj Kratochvíl and Radek Tejkal, I plunged into it and completed the translation with the invaluable help of Iva

10 Panton, Prague, 1990.

Oplštilová and Jennifer Helia de Felice.
The work was challenging yet inspiring – it seemed to me that these ideas are still topical and, fifty years down the road, perhaps even more generally comprehensible.

Just like other artists, Cage teaches us now to perceive the life we are living. The attention he pays to sounds of any origin, to silence in which something resounds all the time, his emphasising of anarchy and accident has influenced the way we view the world on a wider scale. Much of it is applied to music, even by people who may never have heard of him. Unfortunately, precious few follow Cage's example when it comes to his strict self-discipline and endeavour for elimination of the ego from creation... This somewhat shifts his influence on to a level he may not have desired: the superficial impression takes over, and the substance remains elusive.

The centenary of the birth of every major composer is somewhat precarious: the name becomes a symbol, the work shrinks to easily digestible bite-sized chunks of several compositions, the name gains a certain respect and is uttered more frequently. Come the next year, it will be someone else's turn, and it will with a clean conscience be consigned to a dumping ground, which is called culture. Unless the name falls into oblivion, the selfsame process will repeat itself a century later.

I feel a little bit sorry about this in the case of Cage. I have always had the feeling that he somewhat surpassed the standard as a composer. It is, however, possible that his efforts to transform human thinking and behaviour by means of music were too utopian. So far, all utopias have failed at the precise moment when they were accepted by the majority, which simply isn't able to step off the beaten path. How will it turn out his time?

We extend our thanks to Jaroslav Bužga and Rudolf Růžička for providing the pictorial materials.

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20. 11. 2012
Roman Fireworks
Roberta Invernizzi

18. 12. 2012
Mass in B minor
J. S. Bach

Prague, Rudolfinum Hall, 7.30 pm

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Ticketpro, www.collegium1704.com



**Jan Křtitel Vaňhal
Petr Fiala**

**Stabat Mater
Song of Sister Anežka
and Brother František**

Hana Škarková, Ivana Valešová – soprano, Lucie Hilscherová – alto, Ivana Valešová – recitation, Martin Jakubíček – organ, Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno, Czech Chamber Soloists, Petr Fiala – conductor.

Text: Czech, English. Recorded: 25 and 26 February 2011 at the Hus Church in Brno (Stabat Mater) and 28 April 1992 at the Saint Augustine Church in Brno. Released: 2011. TT: 1:07:16. DDD. 1 CD Radioservis CR0566-2.

The year 2011 was noteworthy for the many interesting projects relating to early music, with the recording of Jan Křtitel Vaňhal's oratorio *Stabat Mater* indisputably occupying one of the most prominent positions. Its exceptionality rests not only in its extending the very small number of albums featuring music by Czech composers from the second half of the 18th century but also in the actual repertoire chosen. To date, mainly instrumental compositions have been selected from Vaňhal's relatively extensive oeuvre for performance at concerts and recording. Yet during his creative life Vaňhal also wrote vocal-instrumental sacred music. And listening to this exceptional music makes us aware of the composer's true greatness. Born in Nechanice, Bohemia, Jan Křtitel Vaňhal (1739 – 1813) received his musical education from Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf in Vienna, where he began studying in 1760. The most acclaimed of Vaňhal's compositions were the symphonies, which in 1771 were even lauded by the prominent music historian Charles Burney. Vaňhal's oeuvre is extensive

indeed. In his *Künstler-Lexikon*, G. J. Dlabacz lists two operas, one oratorio, 26 masses, approximately 100 symphonies, as well as other works. Bearing witness to the popularity of Vaňhal's music too is the fact that a large number of his pieces were published during his lifetime. As was the case of the majority of his contemporaries, when creating sacred works Vaňhal turned to the previous era of Baroque, to its heightened emotionality, drama and compositional techniques, including, for instance, the frequent application of counterpoint. And the oratorio *Stabat Mater* is no exception in this regard. It is intended for female voices accompanied by an orchestra and organ playing the part of the basso continuo. Here we can see a certain linkage to G. B. Pergolesi's and Antonio Vivaldi's compositions. The text is divided into twelve parts, each of them set to music in the form of arias, duets and choruses. The **Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno** and the **Czech Chamber Soloists** deliver the oratorio with a humility and intimacy permeating the work from beginning to end. The tempo contrasts chosen by the conductor **Petr Fiala**, owing to which the recording possesses a considerable dramatic cadence, are praiseworthy indeed. A superlative performance was given by the orchestra; although playing modern instruments, they eschew the 19th-century interpretational mannerisms.

Moreover, the orchestral accompaniment is noteworthy for its precise interplay with both the choir and the soloists. The solo parts were undertaken by **Hana Škarková** (soprano) and **Lucie Hilscherová** (alto). Both singers captivate the listener with their heartfelt delivery and velvety voices, unburdened by excessive vibrato. They primarily apply their vocal mastery in the demanding coloratura soprano aria *Eja Mater* and the meditative alto solo *Fac me plagis*. In my opinion, the most successful part of the oratorio, in terms of both composition and performance, is the duet with the chorus *Fac me cruce*. The entire piece ends with the chorus *Amen*, composed as a great vocal-instrumental fugue, which presents

Vaňhal as a skilful contrapuntist of the second half of the 18th century. The CD is supplemented by a recording of a not overly extensive oratorio titled *Song of Sister Anežka and Brother František* created by the conductor and composer Petr Fiala (1943). Set to a text by Zuzana Nováková-Renčová, the piece was composed to mark the canonisation of St Anežka (Agnes) of Bohemia. The work's basic theme is a fictitious dialogue between St Francis of Assisi and St Agnes. In Fiala's setting, Agnes's part is recited (**Ivana Valešová**) and interlaid with soprano arias (**Lea Vítková**), while St Francis's answers are sung by a male chorus. The whole oratorio is accompanied by the organ. The execution of Fiala's oratorio is at a high level indeed (I feel obliged to point out Lea Vítková's accomplished solos and the work's choral finale, inspired by the Saint Wenceslas Chorale). The dramatic intention of the recording's creators was to present two sacred compositions dating from different stylistic epochs in a high-quality interpretation. And even though the two pieces are thematically different, they have succeeded in fulfilling this intention. It is possible that the listener may yearn for at least one short composition on the recording, one in which the Czech Philharmonic Choir could come across as a whole, yet I believe that the new CD will find many fans. It definitely deserves to.

Petr Slouka



Fryderyk Chopin Scherzi, Etudes, Mazurkas

Ivan Moravec – piano.

Text: English, German, French,
Czech. Recorded: November 1989.
Released: 2011. TT: 56:57. DDD. 1 CD
Supraphon 4059-2

In 2011, Supraphon released a Chopin album featuring **Ivan Moravec**, some twenty-two years on from the previous one. The small yet dramaturgically agile American label Dorian released the disc, recorded in November 1989 at the legendary Troy Hall, New York State, at the beginning of the 1990s. As to the reasons why Czech labels were not interested in a recording of the greatest living Czech pianist for almost a quarter of a century, we can speculate about two: either it was not an overly remarkable accomplishment or the contrary is true, in which case such a delay is difficult indeed to understand. The latter reason is the more plausible, as we find out after listening to just a few bars of the introductory *Scherzo in B minor*. Despite the pianist's singular approach to the score, Moravec's Chopin sounds completely natural, since it is primarily Chopin deeply felt, authentically rendered. You may find yourself startled by certain passages, for instance, in the lyrical oases of the *Scherzi*'s middle parts by the crinkled rubato, or by the unusual tempo, yet you ultimately come to realise that such an irregular account fits absolutely organically within the whole of Moravec's well-considered conception, with the result being convincing. The pianist's lifelong challenging approach to exploration, during which he trims every detail of a composition for years on end and does not present it to the public or go into the studio until he is completely satisfied with his execution, is crowned with absolute success when it comes to Chopin, a composer close to his heart. The high tonal refinement, the sensitive as well as dramatically edgy treat-

ment of dynamics, the immense diversity of Moravec's colourful tonal values – these are the fortes that can be best applied in Chopin. The complete block of the four *Scherzi* gives the impression of a monolith; they are permeated with a common approach and performed with a remarkable sense of balance between intellect and emotion. Chopin's *Scherzi* are traditionally the domain of the very greatest piano masters – and there is no doubt that Moravec's voice is not drowned out in this diverse polyphony of various conceptions. Quite the contrary: he wins over many fans owing to his highly original approach. When listening to the two *Études from Opus 25*, we are captivated by the profound contemplation running through the *Etude in C sharp minor*, which in Moravec's interpretation becomes a moving story, abounding in tonal-harmonic tension, as well as the sheer poetry of the paramount pianism with which he embellishes the simple melody of the right hand in the introductory *Etude in A flat major*. And it is a pity that the couple of "large-hand" études have prevented Moravec from ever mustering up the courage to make an integral recording of the two opuses. Yet I have left the best till last. Moravec's *Mazurkas* are a gem, ranking up there alongside the few top-notch interpretations in history. Perhaps only Benedetti Michelangeli, Rubinstein and Horowitz can be spoken of in the same breath as Moravec. And there are days when I would rank Moravec at the very top, at least in the case of some, especially the rustic, *mazurkas*. The selection on the recording, however, is somewhat limited, one not fully documenting the mastery Moravec has attained in interpreting the *mazurkas* throughout his life. Nevertheless, this CD makes us understand why this Czech pianist was selected as one of the greatest 20th-century pianists in the gargantuan Philips piano anthology. The title should be a welcome addition to any record collection, not only owing to Moravec's mature mastery but also its exceptional audio qualities, which even serve to augment his performance. The Troy Savings Bank Hall, built in 1870, is



Leoš Janáček The Cunning Little Vixen

Elena Tsallagova (Bystrouška, the Vixen), Jukka Rasilainen (Forester), Michèle Lagrange (Forester's Wife / Owl), Hannah Esther Minutillo (Fox), David Kuebler (Schoolmaster), Roland Bracht (Parson), Paul Gay (Harašta), and others.
Paris Maitrise Children's Choir, Chorus and Orchestra of the Opéra national de Paris, conductor: Dennis Russell Davies.
Recorded: Oct.–Nov. 2008. TT: 101+20 (documentary). NTSC 16.9, PCM Stereo, DD 5.1, DTS 5.1, subtitles: English, French, German.
1 DVD Medici Arts 3078388.

At the present time, Janáček's works are among the most sought-after in the 20th-century repertoire, with the operas being the most frequently performed part of his oeuvre. This is

Ivan Žáček

confirmed not only by a cursory glance at the dramaturgical plans of opera stages throughout Europe but also the growing number of DVD recordings featuring the Hukvaldy native's musico-dramatic works. In 2009, the recently released Bělohávek recording of Katya Kabanova from the Teatro Real Madrid (IRA Musica) was joined by a live recording from the Opéra Bastille of the production of The Cunning Little Vixen, made in late-October, early-November 2008. For plenty of understandable reasons, Janáček's seventh opera enjoys the favour of record labels and DVD producers, hence those interested can choose from among four recordings, with the previous three starting with the legendary 1965 archive recording of a performance at the Komische Oper Berlin, directed by Václav Neumann (Arthaus), through the 1995 recording of the outstanding production at the Opéra national de Paris explored by Sir Charles Mackerras (Arthaus) to the animated film of the opera with Kent Nagano as music director (Opus Arte). A significant role in the most recent DVD of the opera performed in Czech is played by the sets created by **Nicky Rieti** and the costumes designed by **Elizabeth Neumuller** – they captivate you immediately after the curtain has risen. Notwithstanding the contemporary nature of the sets and costumes, the production's visual aspect is mobile, impressive and gracefully witty. Rieti did not set the action of Janáček's opera deep in the woods and the countryside but in a landscape affected by industrialisation (one cannot overlook a railway track in a sunflower field with a couple of electricity pylons), in which people and animals simply cannot avoid living next to each other. Neumuller clad the animal characters in becoming human costumes, while the instinctive behaviour of the human protagonists is accentuated in a balanced manner. The choreography was entrusted to **Françoise**

Grés. The conductor, **Dennis Russell Davies**, who despite the occasional heavy-handedness of the orchestral performance and unnatural articulation at several junctures in the score requiring knowledge of Czech, managed to create a sonically colourful and dynamically sensitive background to the performances of the international ensemble of soloists. The stage director **André Engel's** conception of The Cunning Little Vixen is both entertaining and moving. His grasp of Janáček's libretto is exemplary, he treats the text with the utmost precision, eschews adding unnecessarily commenting motifs or characters (an unwelcome trend that has afflicted many a recent production), and besides the central idea – Bystrouška is an embodiment of the Forester's final amorous spark and the Vixen's death results in his losing his mind – the action is embellished with dozens of witty details: a hedgehog hurrying along with full shopping bags in the first scene, and a number of cues, be it a reference to the French Revolution at the end of Act 1, to the appearance and behaviour of men of the cloth, or a hint at the communist resistance embodied by the character of the Schoolmaster. One of the greatest fortes of the recording is the superb casting of both the lead and minor roles. **David Kuebler**, **Roland Bracht** and **Paul Gay** (Schoolmaster, Parson and Harašta, respectively) deliver convincing vocal and dramatic performances. Yet when it comes to Czech declamation, they rather fall short of **Elena Tsallagova**, **Jukka Rasilainen** and **Hannah Esther Minutillo** (Bystrouška, Forester and the Fox). Whereas the Czech mezzo-soprano Minutillo has had ample experience with portraying the Fox (she also appears in the DVD featuring Mackerras's production), the Russian soprano Elena Tsallagova from Vladikavkaz debuted in the role, and to great acclaim. The pint-sized singer possesses a self-assured vocal and dramatic presence and negotiates the Czech very well (unlike the majority of her compatriots singing Czech operatic roles), purged of the thick Russian accent. Similarly forcible is the For-



ester as portrayed by the Finnish baritone Jukka Rasilainen who, although not as moving as Richard Novák in the insuperable second Neumann recording for Supraphon, has the correct degree of masculinity and sings the role flawlessly. In the final analysis, I highly recommend the recording of Janáček's opera The Cunning Little Vixen made in the autumn of 2008 and released by Medici Arts, and hope that the production entertains and moves you as much as it did me.

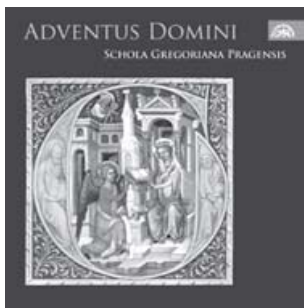
Martin Jemelka

Václav Talich Live 1939 Smetana, Dvořák

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra,
Radiojournal Orchestra,
Václav Talich – conductor.

Text: Czech, English, German, French.
Recorded: 5 and 13 June 1939, National Theatre, Prague, live. Released: 2011, digitally remastered. TT: 77:00, 41:50. DDD. 2 CDs Supraphon SU 4065-2.

Radio archives conceal a copious amount of documents frequently possessing an undreamt-of testimonial power. The 1939 recording of Smetana's *My Country* is one such, and thus serves as an unequivocal answer to those casting doubt on the ability of music to convey feelings and sentiments, its capacity to bear witness to period events, and a performance being able to interpret more than that which is written in the score. I had the great fortune to hear this recording, which miraculously has been preserved in the Norwegian Radio archives, back at the time when the Swedish musicologist Carl-Gunnar Ahlén unearthed it there. And from the very first notes it became evident to me (without knowing exactly why) that the recording was made under special circumstances. The finale of Blánik



itself evoked the image of that which we were taught at school: the *Blaník* knights headed by Saint Wenceslas storming out of the mountain to come to the aid of the tormented country. Although we were not taught that they would gallop forth to the strains of a Hussite song, the image was so vivid that my inkling as to the recording having been made on a special occasion was duly confirmed. The music itself was followed by frenetic applause and cries, while someone even began singing the national anthem, "Where Is My Home", and the rest of the audience joined in. The words of the radio announcer provided the explanation. It was a recording of the direct radio transmission of the 5 June 1939 concert within the Prague Musical May festival given by the **Czech Philharmonic** and the **Radiojournal Orchestra** conducted by **Václav Talich**. Three months following the Nazi invasion, it served as a clear show of defiance. The concert was broadcast from Prague to Paris and Oslo, and in Norway it was recorded and preserved, including the atmosphere. As the announcer's concluding words confirm: "We hope that the listeners abroad heard well..." with a light yet unambiguous stress on the "well". At the same time, the recording also contradicts the customary opinion that recordings are mere "preserve", depleted of spontaneity. Here spontaneity is present in spades, as is also the case of the second recording, made at a Prague Musical May concert on 13 June of the same year, of the second cycle of Dvořák's **Slavonic Dances**, which was broadcast to many more countries. No matter that the recording is mono, that it rattles and that the horns "slip", it still gives one the creeps, especially in light of the fact that after Nazism was defeated the conductor who devised the Prague Musical May and together with his orchestra showed exactly what he thought was stigmatised by being indicted of collaborating with the Nazis. Well, this isn't background music but a reminder, a memento. Thank you, Mr. Áhlén...

Vlasta Reittererová

Schola Gregoriana Pragensis **Adventus Domini** **The Advent Rorate mass in Czech** **15th-16th century hymn-books**

Schola Gregoriana Pragensis, David Eben - Artistic Director.

Text: Czech, English, German, French.
Recorded: 20-22 October 2011, Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, Milevsko. Released: 2011. TT 59:13.
DDD. 1 CD Supraphon 1 SU 4071-2.

Schola Gregoriana Pragensis (see CMQ 4/2011) have dedicated their fifteenth disc (the twelfth released by Supraphon) to Advent music, and this time the dramaturgy was conceived not by the ensemble's artistic director, **David Eben**, but its long-time member **Hassan El-Dunia**. Under the title *Adventus Domini*, the album presents compositions intended for Rorate, early-morning Advent masses in honour and praise of the Virgin Mary, which were extremely popular in the Czech lands and often sung by literary brotherhoods. The central strain of the *Rorate coeli*, according to which the mass is called, is heard fourth, as a chant as well as a motet for three voices. A total of twenty-five pieces, divided into five main thematic sections, hail from Catholic and, above all, Reformation sources in 15th- and 16th-century Bohemia, i.e. from the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Various homophonic and polyphonic, Latin and Czech songs actually showcase the best and most intriguing repertoire, while they are not reconstructed Rorate. Hence, even the same liturgical songs, yet of a totally different musical nature, appear next to each other. The result is a rounded, multifaceted picture of Advent music. Attractive for the listener is the alternating of flowing areas of the chant, catchy rhythmically bold and melodically distinct song tunes, and colourful polyphonic concords. Although appreciating the purely homophonic lines of the chant, I personally was more intrigued by the songs and, primarily, polyphonies. As regards

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the former, mainly those that are still sung today (for instance, *All ye faithful Christians* and *Let us all sing joyfully*), and of the latter *Joyful singing*, *Kyrie In adventu Domini* and the two *Sanctus* songs. Naturally, the ensemble's typical sound is recognisable for the experienced ear. I for one always savour the mutually balanced and consistent voices, some possessing a more distinct colour. The vocal ensemble of Europe-wide renown has been at the top of its game for a long time now, and this recording has not failed to meet the high expectations. The new CD recorded by Schola Gregoriana Pragensis not only brings a wonderful musical experience but also the awareness that even at the present time, one that is not overly given to looking back into the past, we are still able to link up to the traditions of our ancestors.

Jana Slimáčková

Vítězslava Kaprálová
Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 7*,
Three Piano Pieces, Op. 9,
Variations sur le carillon de l'église
St-Étienne du Mont, Op. 16,
Sonata Appassionata, Op. 6

Alice Rajnohová - piano, *Bohuslav
Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra,
Tomáš Hanus - conductor.
 Text: Czech, English. Recorded: Piano
 Concerto (live) Nov. 2010, House
 of Arts, Zlín; other compositions: June
 2011, Congress Centre, Zlín.
 Released: 2011. TT: 53:32. DDD. 1 CD
 Radioservis CRO577-2.

This representative selection of piano works by the most intriguing Czech female composer of the first half of the 20th century opens with the *Piano Concerto in D minor*, Op. 7, with which in 1935 the twenty-year-old Kaprálová graduated from the Brno Conservatory. In chronological terms, it is preceded by the two years older *Sonata*

Appassionata, Op. 6, placed at the very end of the disc. *Three Piano Pieces*, Op. 9, from late 1935, dates from the first few months of the composer's studies at the Prague Conservatory, while *Variations sur le carillon de l'église St-Étienne du Mont*, Op. 16, was written during her final, Paris-linked creative period. **Alice Rajnohová** has devoted to Kaprálová's piano works for a number of years and it is evident that the composer's world is close to her – when listening to the CD, I had the constant, very pleasant feeling that the pianist and the composer were on the same wavelength. Alice Rajnohová performs the Piano Concerto with exceptional élan and understanding, with her playing evoking the mindset of the twenty-year-old Kaprálová, bursting with energy and sheer joie de vivre. The first movement abounds in so many ideas – both compositional and interpretational – and so much is going on in it that you have an impression reminiscent of film music. The slow movement takes you by surprise with its brevity and darkness, which is in splendid contrast to the playful yet rhythmically engrossing final movement. Zlín's **Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Tomáš Hanus**, play with great zest and with an exuberance as youthful as that of the soloist. With regard to it being a "live" recording, the orchestra's sound is captured splendidly, yet it is possible that in the case of a studio recording and a more appropriate arrangement of microphones it would have been even more rounded. In comparison with the grand-scale conception of the Piano Concerto, the pieces for solo piano represent rather more intimate works. Yet in them too Kaprálová offers a copious amount of expression and mood contrasts, and it is true bliss to listen to how smoothly and sensitively Alice Rajnohová is able to graduate them. Notwithstanding the compositional diversity and variety and bearing in mind the fastidiousness (and many a time compactness) of the instrumental texture, Rajnohová's interpretation as a pianist is exceptionally pure and limpid, which may be one of the reasons why all the compositions – including the most complex – as performed

by her are perfectly lucid and clear in structural terms. The booklet featuring Daniela Zichová's very nicely designed cover contains high-quality and interesting texts written by Alice Rajnohová and Jan Hlaváč, as well as brief profiles of all the interpreters. It comes, however, as something of a surprise that Radioservis was not able to make marketing use of the fact that the Piano Concerto and Three Piano Pieces are in fact "world premiere recordings" and that it did not highlight this on the cover, or at least on the track list. The CD's release was sponsored by Canada's Kapralova Society and we can safely assume that Alice Rajnohová's recording will rank high among the projects the company has supported.

Věroslav Němec

Benjamin Britten

GLORIANA

Conductor: Zbyněk Müller

Stage director: Jiří Heřman

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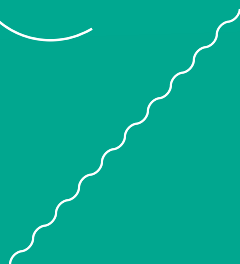
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