

14

Jaroslav Krček

Aleš Březina

The Cecilian Music Society

Jaromír Weinberger

f

Czech music at the 2015 PRAGUE SPRING FESTIVAL

12 & 13 / 5

NDR SINFONIEORCHESTER HAMBURG
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Smetana: My Country

19 / 5

PRAGUE PHILHARMONIC CHOIR
& LUKÁŠ VASILEK
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Vocal triptych for mixed choir, baritone solo, two pianos,
electric guitar, percussion and magnetic tape on texts
from the Holy Scriptures and by Kamil Bednář,
in memory of Jan Palach

21 / 5

PRAGUE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
& PIETARI INKINEN
Hanuš: A Relay Race Op. 63
Mahler: Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor

22 / 5

ST PETERSBURG CHAMBER SOLOISTS
Suk: Piano Quintet in G minor Op. 8

24 / 5

JAN OSTRÝ & GUESTS
Sluka: Quartet "A Recollection of the Wanderings
of J. A. Comenius"
Ryba: Quartet in C major

ROMAN JANÁL & BARBARA MARIA WILLI
Songs by F. A. Rössler-Rosetti, J. V. H. Voříšek, J. A. Benda
and J. K. Vaňhal

25 / 5

BERG ORCHESTRA & PETER VRÁBEL
Wajsar: World premiere of a work commissioned
by Prague Spring

25 / 5

AFFLATUS QUINTET
Rejcha: Wind Quintet in E flat major Op. 88/1

26 / 5

PRAGUE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
& MARKO IVANOVIĆ
Korngold - Liška - Šust
Film music selections

30 / 5

CZECH PHILHARMONIC
& JUKKA-PEKKA SARASTE & VILDE FRANG
Korngold: Violin Concerto in D major Op. 35

31 / 5

PRAGUE RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
& MAREK ŠEDIVÝ & JOHANNES GROSSO
Klement Slavický: Rhapsodic Variations
Hybler: Oboe Concerto Op. 26

1 / 6

THE KÜHN CHILDREN'S CHOIR & JIŘÍ CHVÁLA
Ryba: A Gift for Diligent Youth
Teml: The Birds' Little Radio Cantata
Šesták: What is that ringing and tinkling sound?
Hanuš: The Czech Year Op. 24 (Spring, Summer)

2 / 6

ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC
& VASILY PETRENKO
Janáček: From the House of the Dead, suite from the opera

3 / 6

ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC
& VASILY PETRENKO
Dvořák: Symphony No. 7 in D minor Op. 70

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Dear readers

The overarching theme of the last 2014 issue is lesser-known chapters of music history. Dina Šnejdarová deals with one of the remarkable aspects of the “small history” of Czech musical culture in her article on the Cecilian Music Society, probing into one of the forms of everyday musical life of our ancestors and elucidating how their legacy has been linked up to at the present time. Tristan Willems’s text on the erstwhile extremely popular but now largely forgotten composer Jaromír Weinberger, whose life was marked by sheer bad luck, perhaps ushers in a reawakening of interest in this artist, which could be significantly abetted by Willems’s discovery of Weinberger scores until recently deemed lost. And, finally, Lukáš Jiříčka talks to the composer Jaroslav Krček about one of the most intriguing (and currently unjustly overlooked) Czech electronic compositions – Krček’s opus magnum *The Prostitute Raab*.

The Composer Portraits series brings the fourth CD, this time featuring Jiří Kadeřábek’s music.

I wish you all the very best in 2015

Petr Bakla

Contents:

Aleš Březina Capturing the Zeitgeist

by Frank Kuznik

page 2

Czech Philharmonic A triumphant return to the New World

by Frank Kuznik

page 11

Every note must be approved An interview with Jaroslav Krček

by Lukáš Jiříčka

page 14

The Cecilian Music Society

by Dina Šnejdarová

page 20

Jaromír Weinberger Zwischen den Tasten gefallen

by Tristan Willems

page 29

Reviews

page 36



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cover: Jaroslav Krček (photo: Karel Šuster)

ALEŠ BŘEZINA CAPTURING THE ZEITGEIST

In a country brimming with talented composers, Aleš Březina stands out for his versatility, originality and egalitarian approach to his craft. For nearly 30 years, his music has filled Czech cinemas and theaters. More recently he has started to create instrumental works for concert performance which have won admirers in a variety of genres – chamber music, orchestral pieces and choral works. Březina's oeuvre is all the more remarkable for being the product of a self-taught composer who feels no inhibitions about juxtaposing the banal and the brilliant, and finding inspiration everywhere from Igor Stravinsky to Frank Zappa. His collaborations with Robert Wilson have set Březina on a new course in music theater, which he describes in this wide-ranging discussion of his work

You just completed a project that was rather unusual for you.

Yes, I did the music for a series of three movies by Jan Hřebejk for Czech TV called "The Case for Exorcist." I had to accompany the action step by step, second by second – if it moves up, you have to move up with the music, and if it moves down, the music has to move down. This was the first time I was really illustrating a movie with my music, and it made me realize I've been very privileged to be free in composing whatever I wanted for previous movies.

If not illustrate or amplify the action onscreen, what should a good film score do?

The composer shouldn't be an amplifier. He or she should create an additional layer of emotions or information that adds an independent element, a new quality to what you see onscreen. In my view, if you just underline the general mood of what's happening, you might as well stop composing, because that puts the music into a servant role. And I think that's not worthy of a good composer.



PHOTO: L. JANSCH

How do you typically create a film score?

I receive the script long before shooting starts, so I have time to think about some possibilities and discuss them with the director or screenwriter. Once we've agreed on a general direction, then I think about the instruments. Working with Jan Hřebejk on *Líbáňky* [The Honeymoon], for example, we decided to use a cello, which is able to cover all ranges of string music, a bass clarinet, which does the same thing for wind instruments, an electric guitar and keyboards - a piano, Hammond organ and Wurlitzer. Then, while Jan was shooting the film, I started to work on short layouts - not finished pieces of music, but ideas, a few bars. Then I played them for him, and he told me his opinion about them. When the movie was finished, the editor worked with my layouts. When I saw where he used them, I simply worked out the full score, and we recorded it to the finished movie.

How did you get started composing music for films?

I started on command. In 1986, Jan said to me, I am going to study at the film academy and I will make films, and you will be my composer. Because I was the only person he knew who was able to read music, actually. So I wrote the music for all his schoolwork, and we have worked together on most of his major films, like *Divided We Fall*, *Up and Down*, *Beauty in Trouble* and *Kawasaki's Rose*. I also wrote music for some of his fellow students, like Petr Zelenka. I worked with him on his film *The Buttoners*, and years later he directed my chamber opera *Toufar*.

Your music studies were in violin and musicology. Did you intend to become a composer?

No, never. All the things you learn during your formal studies, I had to learn from books and scores. And maybe that's better. A colleague of mine, a very good composer, told me, You are very lucky and privileged not to have studied composition. Because I had a wonderful teacher, and I spent the first 20 years after graduation trying to get rid of his influence. Some of the composers I adore never formally studied music. Stravinsky privately studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, and Martinů had a few lessons with Josef Suk in Prague and Albert Roussel in Paris, more like master classes. I think it's a good way not to become one of the crowd.

What composers have you studied and do you particularly like?

I started with music from the first half of the 20th century – Stravinsky, Martinů, Honegger and a few others. Then I went on to the second half of the 20th century – Ligeti, Kurtág, Lutosławski, Penderecki. And of course Messiaen was a huge source of inspiration. I also read the scores of a number of composers who are not interesting to me, like Stockhausen and Boulez, just to see into their kitchens. Among living composers, I studied the operas of Peter Maxwell Davies, who is one of my favorites. Also among my favorites are two women, Sofia Gubaidulina and Kaija Saariaho. I had a period where I really studied the American minimalists, Reich more than Glass. The music and thinking of John Cage was a source of intellectual inspiration. I've also studied a lot of great popular and alternative music of the 20th century, where definitely one of the major figures inspiring me was Frank Zappa. And I used to listen to a lot of world music, because I like music which you can immediately put in some cultural and geographic context.

Turning to your theater work, you've composed the librettos and music for two chamber operas: Tomorrow There Will Be... and Toufar. What prompted you to work in that genre?

The National Theater wanted a piece for Soňa Červená, and she asked if they would agree to me writing an opera for her. I had never thought of doing music theater. But I felt, if Soňa thinks I'm capable of doing that, I probably am.

Both of the operas deal with notorious incidents during the communist era: In Tomorrow There Will Be..., the prosecution and execution of Milada Horáková, and in Toufar, the torture and execution of the priest Josef Toufar. What drew you to this material?

I was interested in this material because it's very operatic – torture, death, strong stories of individuals who get caught in a huge restructuring of society. Everything

was being reshaped for the next couple decades. How do you deal with that? Do you accept the changes and take an opportunistic way of surviving, or do you try to do something against it, like Horáková did in a very political way, and Toufar did in a very humanistic way?

So it's the dramatic potential that interests you?

And the sense of right and wrong. In both of these pieces it was my goal to put the viewers in a situation where they ask themselves, where would I stand in this conflict? Would I be part of the aggressive masses demanding the death of Horáková? Would I be one of the parishioners who never spoke up when Toufar was taken away? Toufar had no good choices. It was either betray the church and accept the pro-communist state, or betray the state and keep the Catholic faith. He was very conscious from the beginning that he was in a trap, and I think this is very operatic.

Much of the libretto for Toufar was drawn directly from official documents.

I wanted to create a framework of two simultaneous flows. On one side, the Catholic Church, on the other, the communists, speaking two strongly opposite languages, but wanting to achieve the same thing. It was a battle for the soul of the people of Czechoslovakia. Are you going to sell your soul to the communists, or to the Catholics? In that sense, it's not just about Czechoslovakia in 1950.

You also used documentary records in Tomorrow. Isn't it difficult to compose music to bureaucratic language?

My way of composing music is to combine things that people would never expect to be combined, in terms of both musical styles and subjects. People who read the libretto for *Tomorrow* would ask me, is that really an opera libretto? How is it possible to set it to music? And I would answer, for me it's much more possible to set that to music than poems, or something in rhymes. Because that prescribes what you have to do. It gives you the structure, and you just fill in the notes. I would much rather work with text that was never supposed to be set to music, because it gives you total freedom to do what you want.

You also used some unusual instrumentation in the operas. How did you decide on that?

Well, the first thing I ask with every theater piece is how many musicians I can have. With *Tomorrow* they gave me six, so I used harpsichord, violin, cello, bassoon, bass clarinet and percussion. The harpsichord I chose because of the magnificent sound which at the same time can be very dead. It's a tone that gets one beat and disappears. The strings were for sections of the opera that needed a soft sound with a rich vibrato. Percussion is obvious, and the bass clarinet is simply my favorite instrument. For *Toufar* I could have only four, so I used violin, bass clarinet, electric keyboard with some samples and a number of percussion instruments, including a timpani. Since it took place in a church milieu I wanted a good deep organ sound, and the rich sound of a timpani. Of course I would have loved to write for a large orchestra, because you have many more possibilities. But it's good to have a limited number of sounds, because you have to pay much more attention to structure, and how to keep the attention of the audience.



Aleš Březina with Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, Soňa Červená and Jiří Nekvasil

You seem to have captured something in the zeitgeist with these pieces as well.

Yes, at the time I was composing *Tomorrow*, the trial of Ludmila Brožová-Polednová, one of Horáková's prosecutors, was underway. And now *Toufar* is playing at the National Theater while they are exhuming a mass grave, hoping to find his remains as the first step to beatification. It's fascinating to deal with these things that surround you, or surrounded your parents and are now coming out again.

You've done the music for two National Theater productions directed by Robert Wilson: Věc Makropulos (The Makropulos Affair) and 1914. What was it like collaborating with him?

Inspirational. Working with him made me realize how relevant music can be in theater which is not opera theater. What Bob is doing, starting with *Einstein on the Beach* and up to the Shakespeare sonnets, is using music as the driving force in a theater piece. It's not an opera or a drama, it's a form of music theater that I'm definitely going to do more of in the future.

Wilson is known to be very demanding. You yourself had the experience of coming in with music all prepared, only to have him rip it up and make you start over.

Bob knows exactly what he needs. He doesn't know in advance, but as soon as you deliver him your music, he knows exactly, I have to destroy that, I have to use this, I have to elevate this. He uses your music snippets in the same way that he uses words and gestures. If he destroys a song, it's for a specific reason that serves the larger structure. He is merciless, but even toward himself. His best idea, if he sees it doesn't work, or it doesn't serve the work at that moment, or it needs something more simple or more complicated, he is immediately willing to destroy what he produced. That's what I love about Bob: he's so anarchistic. He's a well-organized anarchist.

In 1914 in particular, you produced a work that is thoroughly integrated. It's impossible to imagine any one element - the movement, music, lighting, dialogue - without the others.

I often recall Peter Brook, at the end of his career, saying that he sees the decline of pure forms, like pure theater or pure opera, and the emergence of a synthetic form that mixes everything - dance, music, acting, verbal and nonverbal communication. This appeals to me, because I love using words in a musical sense, and I like using movement in a musical sense. I think it has a real unity. In a way it's like going back to the synthetic theater of Richard Wagner, with no similarity in the music whatsoever, but in the sense of the complexity of the links between the libretto and the music and the staging.

Wagner insisted that he didn't write operas, he wrote music dramas.

Right, he really considered all parts of the theater equally relevant. And in this way, I think Wilson is doing exactly what Wagner did. It might sound heretical to say that, because what Bob is doing has a lot to do with pop culture, and may not seem as artistic. But if you listen to him talk about his ideas, you can see that he is highly educated. He works out of his belly, but he has the intellectual foundation.

Are there any role models for what you hope to develop?

In a recent discussion with students, I called it Total Music Theater. In a way it's similar to what Heiner Goebbels is doing, especially with a piece like *Landscape with Distant Relatives*. And Wilson's work, of course, which has influenced me strongly.

Have you any music theater projects in the pipeline?

I am working right now with Martin Vačkář, who has written a wonderful play called *The Arch of Hope*, about the ship *Exodus* that carried Jewish refugees. It will open in České Budejovice in December 2015. This will be something between a traditional play with music and what I have in mind. A purer example is *Life? or Theater?*, an extremely interesting project based on the paintings of Charlotte Salomon that I am developing with the Canadian actor Alon Nashman and Pamela Howard, an opera director whom I've known for a long time. We spent three weeks in Toronto last summer creating it together with the actors and musicians, which is the kind of experience I had with Wilson. It will be staged at the Canadian Stage Company in Toronto and we hope to travel with it, possibly to the Czech Republic. So over the next few years, it should be possible to see various versions of my music theater.

Recently you've also started composing instrumental pieces for concert performance.

This is something that I started to explore a few years ago, and would like to develop along with music theater. One of the reasons I haven't done much instrumental music is because I am not used to composing something which is performed once, then you have to wait 10 years for a second performance. With music theater, if a piece is successful, you can hear and see it several times a month.

Falling Leaves for piano and chamber orchestra (excerpt from the 2nd movement)

But I find a certain fascination in writing music with no theater advantages. You can't hide behind action, images, lighting, whatever - it's just about the musicians and the audience and your music.

How much have you written?

My catalog is quite small, partly because I only write on commission. It's not a question of money, it's a matter of knowing who is going to perform the piece, and when and where. I find it difficult to compose if I don't have a clear idea of the conditions. But when I do, it works very well. Karel Košárek asked me to write a piano concerto that he premiered with the PKF - Prague Philharmonia at his Musica Holešov festival, and it received excellent reviews. I wrote a Requiem for the children's choir in Sušice, in which I sang and learned a lot about music, that I was asked to rearrange for the Boni Pueri choir and a large symphony orchestra,

a performance that was recorded and broadcast by Czech Radio. Then Marek Štrýncl asked me to create a third version for *Boni Pueri* and *Musica Florea*, and we invited two very special soloists, Iva Bittová and Vojtěch Dyk, for two performances that sold out at the Janáček May festival and *Concentus Moraviae* festival. We have plans for additional performances in 2015 and 2016. More recently I wrote a piano trio for the Dvořák Trio, a suite of my film music that was very well-received. I've also written orchestral suites of my film music, and a number of short pieces, including a five-minute melodrama for *Soňa Červená*.

Are there any distinctions in your mind between writing so-called serious music and film music?

No, for me it's the same level of seriousness. I have to be really taken by the subject, or the people doing it, and believe in the artistic quality of the piece. Otherwise, I don't see any difference between writing good film music, a piece for the National Theater like *Toufar* or *1914*, or a piano concerto for Karel Košárek. Of course I use different techniques, but it's all equally relevant and exactly the same level of communicating with people.

So you don't consider film scores a lesser form of music?

I love film music. It gives you an opportunity to do things you would never be allowed to do in a concert setting. It's so much fun to write music fitting a 19th-century bourgeois movie, or for a movie set in the 1920s or '30s with a lot of allusions to popular music of that time. Or something in a 19th-century German orchestral style for Jiří Menzel's *I Served the King of England*.

And you see no need to specialize?

Bob Wilson likes to say he works with dancers without being a dancer, and does set design without being an architect, and acts without being a formally trained actor. He just worked with people who helped him develop himself, and he's proud not to be a specialist. I feel the same way. The music world is full of specialists. I think it's a huge danger to our art, and one of the reasons contemporary music is so irrelevant. It's specialists composing music for special performers and special audiences.

But isn't all contemporary art specialized in some way?

If you go to experimental films, or theater performances, or art galleries, you find very eager, open-minded audiences. You don't find that in the field of contemporary music, because it feels like an ivory tower. Specialists can see a huge difference between aleatoric music by John Cage and serial music by Pierre Boulez, but most people, even educated people, cannot. If you see a Tarkovsky film, it's high-level art, very sophisticated, but still understandable for hundreds of thousands of people. Why should composers be less accessible than Tarkovsky?

And this has happened because composers have shut themselves off in a closed society?

I think they started to believe in systems, and forgot that music is not about systems, but about communication. They swear by dodecaphony, or serial technique,

or spectral technique, and forget about music being an exchange of ideas with other people. I'm not against this music, I listen to it a lot and I've learned a lot from it. But I want to communicate.

And where in all this do you ultimately see yourself?

I'm just now starting to assess my work as a composer, so it's hard to say. To return to an earlier point in our conversation, I may end up like Wagner, with instrumental music that is irrelevant, a total creature of the theater. But I wouldn't like that, and hope to keep my output in good balance.



PHOTO: L. JANSCH

Born in 1965, **Aleš Březina** studied violin at the Pilsen Conservatoire and musicology at universities in Prague, Basel and Berlin. He has composed music for more than 20 films directed by Jan Hřebejk, Petr Zelenka, Jiří Menzel, Dagmar Knöpfel, Olga Sommerová and others. He was twice nominated for the Czech Lion Award, and his music for Hřebejk's film *Kawasaki's Rose* earned him a nomination for the 2010 European Film Composer Award. In collaboration with librettist and stage director Jiří Nekvasil he created *Tomorrow There Will Be...*, a chamber opera for Czech mezzo Soňa Červená. From its premiere in April 2008 through June 2013, it achieved 86 sold-out performances in Prague. It also won the 2008 Alfréd Radok Award for Best Music. Since September 2013, the National Theater has been staging Březina's second chamber opera *Toufar*, which also features Soňa Červená. Březina won his second Alfréd Radok Award in 2010 for his music for Karel Čapek's drama *The Makropulos Affair*, staged by

Robert Wilson at the National Theater. In 2012 his music for the National Theater production of Shakespeare's *King Lear* was also nominated for an Alfréd Radok Award. Other notable theater work includes the multimedia piece *Mucha's Slav Epic* (libretto Šimon Caban), which premiered at the Municipal Theatre in Brno in 2010; music for a production of Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro* which premiered at the National Theater in Prague in 2012; and music for the Robert Wilson production *1914*, which premiered at the National Theater in Prague in 2014. His instrumental works include *Falling Leaves for piano and orchestra*, *Agnus dei for three countertenors and string quintet*, *Piano Trio 333*, the piano cycle *Reperkuse*, and several versions of a *Requiem* originally composed for children's choir and small ensemble. Since 1994 he has been the Director of the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague. As Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Bohuslav Martinů Complete Critical Edition, he has prepared a host of compositions by the composer for revised or urtext publications at Czech, German, English, Austrian and French publishing houses. He reconstructed the original version of Martinů's opera *The Greek Passion*, which premiered at the Bregenz Festsspiele in 1999 in a co-production with the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, and in 2000 won the Laurence Olivier Award. He has published studies of 20th century music in Czech and foreign journals, and is the editor of the ongoing series "Martinů Studies" (published by Peter Lang Bern, three volumes to date).

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CZECH PHILHARMONIC

A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO THE NEW WORLD



PHOTO: CHRIS LEE, CARNEGIE HALL

How does Czech Philharmonic General Manager Robert Hanč feel about the orchestra's first tour of the United States in six years?

"I'm not sure how to say it, but I think I'm happy," he says. "And my colleagues are happy, too."

His hesitation is understandable. Hanč was not with the orchestra when it toured the US in 2008, but the legacy of that tour lingers: a no-name conductor, cranky musicians taking long, arduous bus rides to B- and C-list halls, big financial losses. "It was problematic," Hanč admits. "So we were a little worried. We didn't know how this one would go." As it turned out, it went splendidly. Hanč and orchestra Executive Director David Mareček put together an 11-date tour of the US in November that made

the musicians, promoters and audiences happy, and left a trail of positive reviews in its wake. Financially, it will break even, no small accomplishment in a notoriously expensive and expansive country. And it seems safe to say that the orchestra recovered a lot of its lost prestige, especially at the key date on the tour, a Nov. 16 performance at Carnegie Hall.

A glowing review in *The New York Times* the next day described the Czech Philharmonic as “a world-class orchestra that visits New York too rarely these days,” offering compliments on each of the pieces, and taking the unusual extra step of singling out individual players for praise – concertmaster Josef Špaček, principal cellist Václav Petr and oboist Vojtěch Jouza.

The core of the tour program was designed to showcase the orchestra’s distinctive Czech sound and facility with the Romantic repertoire: Janáček’s *Taras Bulba*, Dvořák’s *New World Symphony* and Liszt’s *Piano Concerto No. 2* with soloist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. At two stops in California, the orchestra rendezvoused with the Prague Philharmonic Choir, also on tour in the US, for performances of Dvořák’s *Stabat Mater*. On the east coast, in Annapolis, Maryland, Špaček got to show his considerable skills in Suk’s *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra*. And for the concluding concert, a special performance in Washington, DC commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, the program opened with the “Vltava” from Smetana’s *My Country* and closed with the *New World Symphony*.

Hanč and Mareček originally hoped to be bolder with their programming – even in the US, the *New World Symphony* has become a cliché – but settled on more accessible fare, especially after Sir Clive Gillinson, the Director of Carnegie Hall, specifically asked for the Dvořák. It was not a gratuitous request; the symphony had its world premiere there in 1893, during the composer’s tenure as Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. But even with relatively conservative programming, Hanč felt they had a winning formula.

“At the very first concert in Costa Mesa, the orchestra performed the Janáček beautifully and I knew we would get a really good review,” he says. He was right. The reviewer for the *Orange County Register* wrote, “The orchestra isn’t the first or fifth one that comes to most people’s minds when thinking of the world’s greatest orchestras, but it is assuredly right near the top,” going on to declare the Czech Philharmonic’s strings better than the Vienna Philharmonic’s.

Most impressive were two stories in *The New York Times*, which is two more than most orchestras visiting New York get. This was no accident. Hanč and Mareček hired a PR agency that worked the New York media, arranging interviews and inviting reviewers to the concert. The first story, which ran two days before the performance, was built around an interview with Conductor Jiří Bělohlávek, dredging up his unpleasant stint with the orchestra in the early 1990s and running through the familiar litany of problems – low pay, poor morale, and the notable dearth of non-Czech players (“It’s not because we don’t allow foreign people to apply,” Špaček insisted in a separate interview). At the same time, the story took note of the Czech Philharmonic’s storied history and had some very good things to say about its sound, including Thibaudet’s observation that the orchestra has “really kept its identity.” And as PR flaks in the US like to say, there is no such thing as bad publicity. This seemed borne out in the positive review in the *Times* three days later, which even mentioned Bělohlávek being given the 2014 Antonín Dvořák Prize from the Czech Academy of Classical Music before the concert.

Results on the ground were also encouraging. For the management team, the excitement started outside, on the street. “When we got to Carnegie Hall, there was a poster announcing the Czech Philharmonic and a sign saying Sold Out,” Hanč says. “We were really, really proud.”

Inside, according to Hanč, each piece drew a standing ovation, and the audience called the orchestra back for two encores. Just as gratifying for the managers was the sight of Czech politicians sitting in the audience. “We go to them, we talk to them, we tell them about the orchestra,” Hanč says. “But it’s better when the Minister of Culture sees the Czech Philharmonic perform in this wonderful prestigious concert hall which is full, and where the response of the audience is so warm and enthusiastic.”

Czech politicians were out in force for the final concert on Nov. 17 at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. More ceremony than art, it was an invitation-only warm-up for the unveiling and dedication of a bust of Václav Havel in the US Capitol the following day. The program opened with the orchestra playing both countries’ national anthems, followed by speeches, including one by Madeleine Albright. Finally, the orchestra played the Smetana/Dvořák program.



“It was a different kind of concert,” allows Hanč. “But the cathedral was packed. They had 2,200 seats available, and it was completely full. And the audience was very excited – they clapped and clapped and clapped. So I would say that Carnegie Hall was very important for us artistically, and Washington was very important socially and politically.”

For all that, Hanč and Mareček’s greatest achievement may have been returning to Prague with a group of happy musicians. Though morale has improved considerably under the new management, they are a temperamental bunch who genuinely suffered on the last US tour. This trip was arranged so that the players stayed in the same hotel for all six concerts in California, doing “runouts” to different cities each night. And management provided small amenities like food at the concert halls. “We tried to take care of them, and I think they appreciated it,” Hanč says. “I even got an e-mail from one musician who said, I have been on American tours with several orchestras, including the Czech Philharmonic, and this has been the best one.”

It’s no surprise, then, that Hanč and Mareček are already starting to think about their next US tour. This is part of a larger strategy to restore the orchestra’s international reputation by doing more touring and recording. This season’s travel itinerary started at the Grafenegg Festival in Austria in August and

includes trips to the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Poland and additional spring dates in Austria, Germany and the UK. The orchestra played 36 concerts abroad in 2014, and has an equal number scheduled for 2015.

Hanč and Mareček’s strategy already seems to be paying off. They have a Jan. 6 appointment at Carnegie Hall with Gillinson, whom they literally had to beg for a date on the November tour. Now they have a bit of leverage, and a lot of ambition. “David and I are going to prepare a few proposals, and we’ll be fighting for two, maybe even three concerts,” Hanč says. “It would be great if they would let us do a cycle.”

Beyond Carnegie Hall, they are hoping for expanded programming, higher fees and more A-list halls. “We would love to play at more prestigious venues like Davies Hall in San Francisco, for example, or Walt Disney Hall in Los Angeles,” Hanč says. “Of course, we still have things to improve,” he adds. “But we thought this was going to be our most difficult tour, and in the end it was more successful than other tours we thought were good. So I think we will be back in the US in three or four years’ time.”

Complete US itinerary:

www.ceskafilharmonie.cz/en/#en/tourdetail/United-States-of-America-st23.html

EVERY NOTE MUST BE APPROVED AN **INTERVIEW** WITH THE COMPOSER, CONDUCTOR AND MUSICIAN **JAROSLAV KRČEK**

Jaroslav Krček (b. 1939) is difficult to pigeonhole in a specific genre or deem a representative of traditionalism in music, since a great deal of his oeuvre is simply too experimental for such categorisation. Although Krček focuses on symphonic and vocal music and serves as artistic director of Musica Bohemica, an ensemble focused on historical and folk music, he also possesses a wealth of experience with radio and electroacoustic music, overlapping into *musique concrète*. His *Sonáty slavičkové* (Nightingale Sonatas), featuring electronically treated parts, to a certain degree paved the way for the famous 1971 electro-acoustic music-dramatic composition *Nevěstka Raab* (The Prostitute Raab), one of the most remarkable and best-known manifestations of Czech radio art.

A work that took almost two years (1970–1971) to complete, *The Prostitute Raab* was also given the form of a quadraphonic spatial installation and later on was performed as music theatre. This dramatic composition came into being as a result of editing hundreds of hours of recorded vocal, musical and sonic material and its electronic treatment. Its recording was first released by Chris Cutler in 1986 on the independent Recommended Records label; 1988 saw its first Czech release, by Panton. Within the context of Krček's work, it is necessary to highlight his fruitful collaboration with the somewhat overlooked experimental man of letters and creator of concrete poetry **Zdeněk Barborka** (1938–1994) on *The Prostitute Raab*. For the needs of the challenging piece, Barborka wrote the libretto, in which he drew upon the Biblical story, creating a new language akin to Hebrew and Aramaic.

Although we particularly want to discuss The Prostitute Raab, let us start from the beginning. How did you, in the 1960s, familiarise yourself with electroacoustic music, when it comes to both aesthetics and technology?

I was a pupil of Miloslav Kabeláč's. He was not only a great composer and exceptional person but also a fabulous teacher. He really cared about modern Czech music keeping pace with the rest of the world. As soon as he realised that there was a great chasm in electroacoustic music – at the time, we were already listening to Karlheinz Stockhausen and were acquainted with all sorts of foreign music – he organised a three-day training course at Plzeň Radio, where I was working as a music producer.

I cannot remember precisely, but I would say it was probably in 1961, definitely before 1965. Kabeláč invited



PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER 2x

all the composers he presumed might be interested in electroacoustic music. Yet the classes did not meet with that great a response...

What was the seminar like?

Its main purpose was to inform, by listening to various compositions. There were all sorts of lectures; the university lecturer Svoboda, then the leading Czech cyberneticist, for instance, tried to prove that replacing acoustic instruments with electronic sounds was sheer nonsense. At that time, Kabeláč only aimed at raising interest and presenting unavailable recordings from around the world.

Soon afterwards - again, I cannot recall the exact time and year - Kabeláč organised at Prague Radio a six-month course, which took place once a week. Lectures were given by Eduard Herzog, Miloslav Kabeláč, Vladimír Lébl, but the main thing was that two sound engineers were already present at the classes. Before long, one of the sound engineers, Václav Zamazal, would become a colleague of mine at the Supraphon label, and we are still in contact today.

As for me personally, it inspired me to compose the *Nightingale Sonatas* as my graduation work, in absolute secrecy at Supraphon with people I knew. Prague Radio has never been in possession of the piece, I am the only one who has it and much later it was released in London by Chris Cutler, who wanted it for a disc as a supplement to compositions by Georg Katzer and Sigmund Krause.

What did the Plzeň Radio studio for experimental music look like?

It was simply a large room, fairly well equipped by Czech standards, with recorders with at least three

tracks, as well as, for instance, seven or, at best, eight tracks, it had high- and low-pass filters, I think even a reverb unit, and of course, generators of various characteristics. At this Plzeň laboratory - and I assume it was a rarity on a global scale - plenty of recordings were made for the international Prix de musique folklorique du radio Bratislava competition. For many of its editions, the Plzeň studio had the primacy among all the stations when it comes to prize-winning recordings. Most of them were made by me or my younger brother Josef. At this laboratory, we arranged folk songs by means of all those machines. In this respect, some of them were even highly valued internationally. So the laboratory was immensely useful for folk music too.

Nevertheless, the experimental line was then suspended for political reasons.

It may beggar belief, but it wasn't actually! It just wasn't given the green light to the full. All the same, the studio could be used, and the radio paid for it.

But the avant-garde and experimental trend of Czechoslovak music was damped down following the 1968 Soviet military intervention...

The Prague office was abolished and Herzog was sacked as an extern, thus it no longer had its special workplace, but no one directly banned it. The laboratory functioned normally until the 1989 revolution or the 1990s!

To return to the mentioned seminars - which of the foreign composers influenced or inspired you the most? Your work bear traces leading back to musique concrète - not only when it comes to applying such elements as the gas burner,

but also at the level of composition, in the overall principle of arriving at the resulting form.

We mainly listened to Stockhausen, his *Gesang der Jünglinge*, among other things, and at the time we were naturally influenced by the Poles too, Witold Lutosławski in particular. By the way, Lutosławski was a great friend of the Kabeláčs and Kabeláč often put on his music. Then there was the entire domain of aleatoric music; all of us, Kabeláč's pupils, really wanted to take our bearings in work with controlled chance. As regards experimental music, we were probably most familiar with the French. Kabeláč had some contacts there, his latest pieces were performed in Strasbourg, he even invited some French people over here in the 1960s to give lectures. When it comes to electroacoustic music, it was first and foremost a matter of personal courage. Only after I had made *Raab* did I come to realise how great a risk I had taken. I was, of course, tremendously lucky to work at Supraphon, having exclusive access to all the technology and technicians. Even at the time when the studio at Plzeň Radio was neither completed nor approved I was able to try out there various things, either simply for myself or because as a radio employee I had to do something for a radio play, which, more than actual music, needed some kind of sonic accompaniment... There I acquired quite useful skills.

At the radio you worked as a music producer and also as an editor...

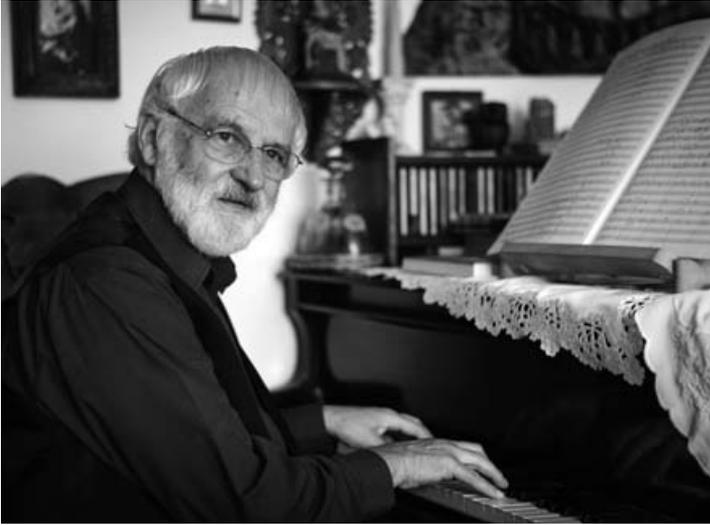
I was a music producer for no fewer than six years, then I left and joined Supraphon. Plenty of people worked in Plzeň - Karel Ostrčil, and even Miloslav Kabeláč, who created there the wonderful piece *E fontibus bohemicis*. At the time when I made *The Prostitute Raab*, Zdeněk Lukáš conceived his *Nezabiješ!* (Thou Shall Not Kill!), an approximately half-hour composition to Zdeněk Barborka's stunning text. Of all the world's history according to the Bible, the Old Testament, Barborka only picked the information about who killed whom. The lyrics start with the words: "Cain killed Abel", and then it goes on and, of course, it is a long list, and the piece concludes with the words: "someone killed Vladislav Vančura". About that time, in 1966, 1967 or 1968, I was approached by Dr. Herzog, who was my chief producer at Supraphon, as well as a part-time Czech Radio editor specialised in this experimental music. He told me: "I have some money, Jaroslav. Do something great!" And so *The Prostitute Raab* came to life. It was really financed by the radio and I got one hundred thousand crowns - converted to the current rate, today it would be more than a million. I immediately went to see my friend, the musician and poet Zdeněk Barborka, who suggested

that we treat the Biblical legend of Rahab the harlot and the tumbling down of the walls of Jericho. I myself worked on it for a long time and tried out what quadraphonic sound, which at the time was being introduced in Europe, could do.

I recall how some Englishmen came over here to train us, invited by someone from Supraphon, and we let them listen to *The Prostitute Raab*. It took the wind right out of their sails and they duly realised that there was nothing they could teach us. A similar situation occurred about 10 years ago, when I was invited to the Austrian Culture Centre so as to listen to a global rarity, a piece in a made-up language. I burst out laughing, since I had done it more than 30 years previously. Interesting compositions were created here and no one abroad knows about it. During the time of the former regime, it was difficult to establish and build up of a radio electroacoustic studio. But we eventually succeeded and the communists approved it. I think they simply didn't want to be cast in a bad light, as they knew that similar studios existed or were springing up in the West and East alike. Yet it is sad that after the revolution the studio suddenly perished. As for foreign music, I'd like to tell you another interesting thing. A long time after I had received an award from Geneva, Eduard Herzog came up to me with a piece titled *L'Apocalypse de Jean* by the French composer Pierre Henry and said: "Jaroslav, just listen to this, it would seem that you two know each other. He splendidly works with the text, the sounds too, it is totally different to your stuff, yet actually the same." It is simply the synchronicity that runs around the world. One salient example: someone in Russia invents the light bulb, and virtually concurrently it is invented by someone in America - at the same time, but the one who registers it and has it patented first is the inventor. So even though I too am an inventor, I had not registered it. Yet the other one has made a bomb out of it.

What was your collaboration with Barborka like? Did you work on it together, or did he first prepare a scenario and you approached it as a ready-made piece?

Yes. Barborka created a scenario. First of all, a *vox conductus* or a guide, a text in Czech, of which, however, I only made use of a small part, approximately one-tenth, and subsequently the text in a made-up language. At the time, he was dealing with concrete poetry, hence he was very keen on working with me. Nevertheless, some of the pages only contained scattered letters and I had to make out what to do with it. Plenty of improvisation was necessary. It was simply a leap in the dark.



At the time, I too was interested in concrete poetry. And when I met Zdeněk Barborka at Plzeň Radio, it was only natural to turn to him with the idea of a made-up language. Another impulse was that I had fallen asleep at a few classical opera performances because I didn't understand the singers. So I told myself that it would be good to make an opera, but in a different way. And it struck me that if I were to manage to stage purely musically a situation, for instance, someone wanting to kill someone, it would not matter whether I said that I would kill someone or whether it could be expressed by an entirely senseless word. Enlightened in this manner, I presently addressed Barborka. I initially wanted him to write a text for an opera based on an Andersen fairy tale, yet he suggested that I set the legend of Rahab. And I liked the idea. I had a clear intention: I wanted the opera to need no explanation, for everything to be expressed emotionally. At the time, I also intensely co-operated with the Prague Madrigalists, superlative singers. We recorded *Raab* together at the Rudolfinum. To be precise, the recording began at the radio, yet the studio burnt down, and so we moved with the machines from the electroacoustic laboratory to the Supraphon studio in the Karlín district of Prague, and made recordings at the Rudolfinum. Those were actually golden times. Nowadays, we would have to shell out some 120,000 crowns for renting out the hall for a two-hour concert, whereas then it was free. We invited the actor Radovan Lukavský, recorded with him the character of the narrator and subsequently assembled it on a twice-weekly basis over the period of 11 months.

Did Barborka structure his text directly as it is heard on the recording?

In part.

Did he suggest alternation of the Biblical story and the texts in an artificial language?

No, I had to make it up myself. Some of the text's passages were applied literally, elsewhere I had to improvise. I treated the singers as a drama director: I explained to them what they were expected to express. I said, for instance: "*Try to express it emotionally and use some of the words you see on the paper before you.*" Each scene was supposed to have a specific emotional nature, but we also tried out different variants, seeking the ideal expression together. We employed all sorts of things – the sound of the gas burner or a cymbal, from which we made various loops by means of filters. For instance, a tape was put on two players and this was fed from a third player by a loop, which went round and round. The result was played and again recorded, so it multiplied and layered... Or we had several recordings of creaks behind a viola bridge and we built short passages of such sounds, cut in all sorts of ways, and mixed it with other material, such as human voices. We twiddled for 13 months and by the time we had finished felt sad that it was over.

All this was carried out in the presence of Dr. Herzog, who was immensely keen on it. He translated the Czech part of the text into French and even sent the piece (regrettably, only its stereophonic version) to an international radio and television composition competition in Geneva, where we won a prize.

Did you approach Barborka's text with a definitive compositional plan in mind, or did the work with the made-up language compel you to improvise and seek the ideal form?

Intuition played the major role. In the main, I prepared it myself from frequency to frequency, always working

out what to do next, and we simply put it on trial. We threw out plenty of things. Or arrived at something by chance. The technician was just playing the tape and slowing it down, and I decided to use the resulting effect and add a gong to it.

But did you have a definite compositional plan at all? In the sense that you knew: the narrator will be here, a longer sonic area will follow?

I knew in advance that the piece would be divided into three sections, which was determined by the libretto itself. I knew that the first part would be set in Jericho, awaiting the destruction foretold, the second in the conquerors' camp, and that the third part would be a scene of downfall. The outline may have afforded us the opportunity to play with that which was at hand to a greater degree, to seek. We recorded, for instance, a gas burner, which fizzed too loudly, so we transposed the sound by an octave and the result was wonderful. A great role was played by Pavel Jurkovič and the madrigalists. They splendidly mastered fipple flutes, so we naturally applied them, in various manners. Another important contribution was made by my great friend Karel Špelina, concert master of the Czech Philharmonic viola section. I wrote for him some regular notes, according to which he played, but I also asked him to record a few improvisational effects for us. We at Supraphon had a device that was able to modify the pitch simply by speeding up or slowing down the tape recorder. Or by merely moving the knob I could now and then adjust the deep bass, roaring there as Joshua, and the effect was really immense. When I needed to add reverberation, I made use of the Rudolfinum corridor, in which we placed two speakers, played the music back and recorded it, etc. All that today we can simply create in comfort by the computer, was done on our knees at the time. It stood and fell with transposition, editing and mixing ideas.

And the time you had available must have played a role too. Absolutely! Who would be willing to pay you for 11 months' work today...

You recorded 450 hours of material for the piece's needs. Did it largely concern recordings of variants of the composition's fragments?

Yes, variants of the same fragments. Then we picked and cut them. We also experimented with combined tape players, turned on in various speed modes – we had old Telefunken machines, offering three speeds.

To what extent did you sort out the dramaturgic and compositional structure with the librettist Zdeněk Barborka?

He gave me free rein, we were friends. When it comes to the original narrator's text, for instance, I only retained one-tenth of it, just to make the audience get the gist of what was going on, at the beginning of each part. Yet his text is beautiful, I think it would be worthy of publishing in its entirety.

Did you have any objections or remarks as to how the made-up language, inspired by Aramaic and Hebrew, sounded?

If only you could see some of the pages he gave me for inspiration! Just imagine a page with four hundred loosely scattered letters. Zdeněk took, for instance, the words "sword" and "blood", jumbled up their letters and drew up an entirely new poem. I, of course, knew that they were "sword" and "blood", that it had to possess the nature of that which sounds there – the *chshshsh* sound of the cutting sword and then the *rrrrrr* when blood gushes out. I simply tried to make the singers give this subtext to it. You know, Barborka himself looked like an ancient Hebrew prophet – he was tall, bearded, had an odd nose.

Did you use the text as a kind of score?

The piece does not have any score. There was a description I wrote, which, regrettably I had to give to the radio instead of an actual score, and I have never been given it back, and unfortunately I didn't make a copy. Only that what I have in my head has remained.

Has The Prostitute Raab been staged or presented as an installation in a quadraphonic version, and was it ever broadcast during the "Normalisation" era?

After we had received the award in Geneva, an exhibition of radio-technology took place in Prague, where Sony displayed its new quadraphonic device. We borrowed it and subsequently, in January 1971, the Theatre of Music, which at the time belonged to Supraphon, hosted two evenings during which the full version was heard. The interest it aroused was so enormous that the programme had to be repeated. Later on, a few more, semi-private listenings were held at the Supraphon premises. Also planned was a presentation on the steps of the National Museum in Prague, but since it concerned a religious theme, a spineless radio editor simply banned it. And that was that. Until one day, by an incredible chance, I still

have no idea how, the piece got to Chris Cutler, who went on to release *Raab* in England. In the late 1980s, the composition was released by the Panton label, but it was not broadcast until after the 1989 revolution. During the “Normalisation” era, it was presented three times, and later on it was staged by my daughter, an opera director.

Was it released by Cutler’s ReR Megacorp label unofficially?

I asked the Copyright Protection Association for permission, so as to be able to export it, which I received. A few years on, Panton felt ashamed and released the piece too, but only on vinyl.

Frankly speaking, I for myself also find interesting a certain essential dramaturgical change, when you flip the vinyl discs. I know it wasn’t intentional, but still and all it is a great caesura even within the entire Raab.

To my ears, the second and third parts really stand out. It simply engendered successively. Without the first part, there wouldn’t have been the experience that led us further. You know: a child is born to you, so you let it live and go and give birth to another one. It can always be trimmed, but many a time that is not the point. The most valuable experience for composers is the one that simply shifts them forward.

But when you were working on the quadraphonic version, you probably had to count with the fact that it wouldn’t be performed frequently and would be in the form of a one-off installation for an evening of listening. Didn’t you feel this to be somewhat restricting?

Of course, being fixed on the tape, not having the prospect of a fully-fledged live performance, is indeed restricting. Although we strove to combine the presentation with some mime performance, the “Normalisation” thwarted the intention. Only after the 1989 revolution did my daughter stage it, and in a very interesting form. It was clearly challenging, since the recording goes on and you have to fill it with people who don’t open their mouths. It was simply a mime-stage performance, with the sets and props, etc. playing their role too. Nevertheless, it has remained – and most likely will remain – primarily a work for the ears.

Why did you choose Radovan Lukavský to portray the role of the narrator?

For me, Lukavský was an artist who was not only able to declaim wonderfully, immensely suggestively, he always

had, above all owing to his nature, his view of life, an affinity to spirituality.

Working on *Raab* was our first yet not last collaboration. He also participated in my greatest, or at least most acclaimed, work, Symphony No. 3, titled *Jan Amos*. In 1992, the year of Komenský’s anniversary, Bělohávek performed it with the Czech Philharmonic and recorded it for Supraphon. I simply cannot imagine anyone reading *Raab* any better.

Did Herzog play any role in this seeking? Was he just someone who occasionally dropped by to listen to it or did he have any critical suggestions concerning the dramaturgy?

No, he did not voice any critical suggestions. He really only appeared every so often, would light a cigarette, listen, and say: “Just keep it up, boys!” And leave. When it was finished and we organised a few semi-private listenings, it was evident that he was impressed. On the instant, he decided, translated the text into French and sent the piece to Switzerland. At the time, the positive circles were great fans of it. As was Kabeláč, who even almost bowed, which was simply incredible, as he hardly ever praised anything...

What did you actually learn from Kabeláč?

Honesty: meaning that every note must be approved. And if you don’t agree with it, you shouldn’t put it there. For many years, every Saturday a few other people and I would go to see Kabeláč to study dodecaphony, serial technique, punctualism, aleatoricism, which was really tough post-graduate training indeed. And Kabeláč did it all selflessly, free of charge. He didn’t want anything in return, only telling us: “How you will compose is your business, but you have to pass through this. There was no time for it at the conservatory, not that I could have taught it anyway.” I have simply plenty of reasons to be eternally grateful to Kabeláč. When, at the age of 71, he died, I bid my farewell to him with a violin concerto, or, more precisely, a sort of 15-minute meditation on a Kabeláč motif. He taught us how to work with the structure, motif, often using the example of folk songs. Naturally, another two models were crucial too: Janáček and Bartók. I had had a penchant for arranging folk music previously, yet he really gave me the kick-start. Kabeláč highly revered folk music.

THE CECILIAN MUSIC SOCIETY

Ústí nad Orlicí is a seemingly inconspicuous small town situated 150 kilometres east of Prague. A centre of the weaving and drapery industries for hundreds of years, it was even dubbed the “Manchester of the East” in 19th-century Bohemia. Today, this tradition is no longer pursued, yet the town has retained a musical continuity, an inseparable part of which is the Cecilian Music Society, one of the oldest Czech music associations. Still thriving today, it has played a vital role in the musical development of the entire region, survived wars, reforms, and even the Communist regime. The society has existed for more than 200 years.

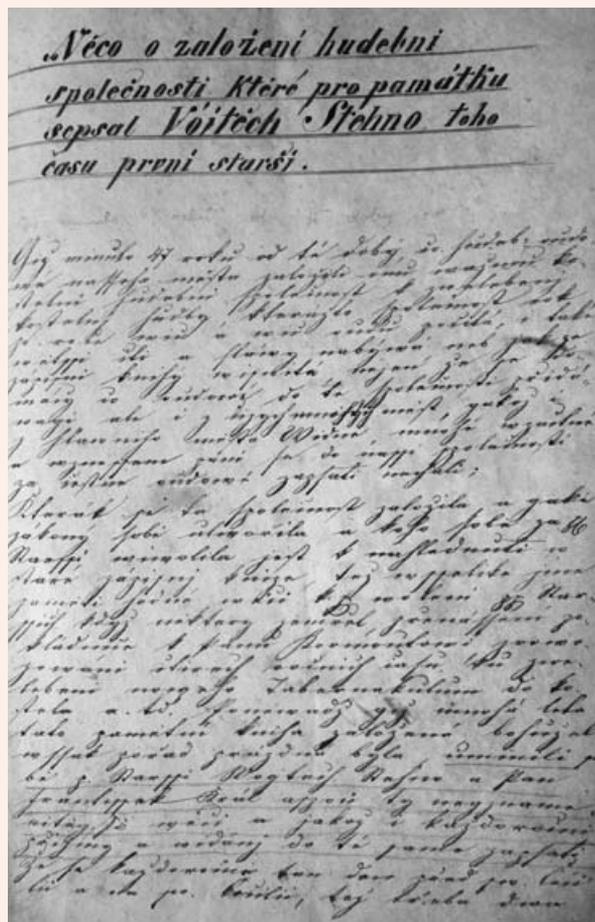


PHOTO © ARCHIVE OF THE CECILIAN MUSIC SOCIETY IN ÚSTÍ NAD ORLICÍ

The Cecilian Music Society's first chronicle, dating from 1803

Predecessors

An association as solid, effuse and vigorous would hardly have developed were it not for the deep roots dating back to the activity of the local literary brotherhood. The operation of this fellowship of educated citizens in Ústí nad Orlicí (in the Czech lands, these brotherhoods mainly practised Gregorian chant and polyphonic sacred vocal music in the 15th and 16th centuries) is documented owing to a 1588 manuscript Gradual, in which songs are written down in Czech. Originally, the local men of letters were Utraquists, spiritual descendants of Jan Hus, who believed that the Eucharist should be received under both forms. In the wake of the Thirty Years' War, the European religious and power conflict between adherents to Roman Catholicism and advocates of the Reformation, they were forced to turn into an entirely Catholic group (that is why, among other things, songs about Jan Hus are, regrettably, damaged in the Gradual). The members included the regens chori, who at the time was always the headmaster of the local school, as well as the organist (in Ústí nad Orlicí, from at least 1613 on). Concurrently with vocal music, instrumental music developed in the town too, which in compliance with the period tradition was gradually incorporated into church services until it became a natural part of them. Initially, instrumental music was probably taken care of in part by the brotherhood too, yet later on there were two totally independent groups. A more precise picture dates back to the middle of the 18th century, when the priest, later on the first dean of the Ústí nad Orlicí church, Jan Leopold Mosbender (1693–1776) arrived in the parish. An admirably diligent man, he not only initiated the building of a new church and placement of a statue of the Virgin Mary in the town square, in 1747 he totally reorganised the choir and gave it a new name: the Brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Mosbender modified and extended the rules of functioning of church music, including in them the obligation to consult the priest in advance as to what would be sung at divine services, so as to keep it sufficiently Catholic, as well as the requirement for the singers not to leave the choir loft during the services, to go regularly to confession, and other regulations. However inappropriate these requirements may seem today, the number of the brotherhood's active and passive members was increasing. At the time, however, the choir was sidetracked. Vocal-instrumental music, i.e. figural masses, was performed during the main divine services, with the brotherhood only singing rorates (Advent



An entry from the Cecilian Music Society's first chronicle, made by the first elder Vojtěch Stehno

songs). And those who carried out Sunday figural masses became direct predecessors of the Cecilian Music Society. Circa 1745, they called themselves an Artistic Society or Musical Choir, and it was a free association of music-loving citizens without any fixed rules. They were fully independent of the brotherhood – they were hired to perform at the church services – and in all likelihood possessed their own instruments. The choir was completely, let us say, physically, divided at the moment when the brotherhood moved for good to the “literary” pews in the church's parterre. (The literary brotherhood probably continued in the tradition of singing rorates and passions up until the early 1980s.) Prior to the actual establishment of the Cecilian Music Society, in the 1770s, the Ústí nad Orlicí church

underwent further changes. On the one hand, a new church was constructed – including the building of a new organ – on the other, the rule of Emperor Josef II and his enlightenment reforms started. A change of major significance for churches was the 1784 ban on playing of instrumental music (except for Sundays and major feast days) and the abolishment of literary brotherhoods in 1785, which encompassed confiscation of their properties by means of liquidation committees. That at least was what the respective decree stipulated, yet the practice was different. The Ústí nad Orlicí brotherhood concealed their property, even cutting out the respective pages in their ledger of accounts. The subterfuge turned out to be worth the risk and their association could function on. And similar was the situation when it comes to instrumental music, which to all appearances continued to be performed at the Ústí nad Orlicí church. It survived the reforms, yet very nearly – according to the period documents – perished owing to dissensions among the local musicians. And these schisms were one of the reasons for the foundation of the Cecilian Music Society.



Vojtěch Stehno

Music associations and the birth of the Cecilian Music Society

We do not know when precisely a few persons in Ústí nad Orlicí began considering the establishment of a music society. Perhaps sometime near the end of the 18th century, when the bourgeoisie in Europe were gradually emancipated, and aristocrats' orchestras were disbanded, music was also played beyond closed circles (with opera living an independent theatre life) and its performers had to seek new possibilities of earning a livelihood. At the time, music associations initiated by townsfolk began to spring up (often in collaboration with the gentry) with the aim to hold regular concerts, frequently fulfilling charity purposes as well. A crucial role in this respect was played by the immense popularity enjoyed by non-liturgical-bound oratorios, particularly Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* (The Creation) and *Die Jahreszeiten* (The Seasons), which was conducive to that which we deem absolutely natural today yet was entirely novel for 18th-century listeners: repetition of an older work at subsequent concerts.

Proof of the aforesaid is the origination of the Tonkünstler-Societät (1771), the oldest concert society in Vienna, which also served as a pension fund for the relatives of its deceased members. Coincidentally, it was founded by Florian Leopold Gassmann, a native of Most, Bohemia. (By the way, Gassmann's pupil and successor was one Antonio Salieri.) Their concerts mainly presented Haydn's oratorios. Other societies sprang up in the fashion of the Viennese society; for instance, in Berlin (1801) and St. Petersburg (1802), and from approximately the middle of the 18th century music academies were founded in Innsbruck, Graz, and elsewhere. The Czech lands can take pride in the first Music Academy having been established as early as 1713, in Prague, yet it only functioned for four years. The preserved records document the existence of the aforementioned Artistic Society in Ústí nad Orlicí four decades later, and in 1771 the Collegium musicum was set up under the aegis of the Bishop of Olomouc. Typical of the Czech lands was that the main concert life was for a long time to come very closely connected with churches.

In 1803, the Tonkünstler Wittwen-und-Waisen Societät (Society for Musicians' Widows and Orphans, known as the "Societa") was founded in Prague after the Viennese model. Its protector was Count Johann Wenzel Sporck, and only professional musicians could become full members (others could be honorary or contributory members). Unsurprisingly, the programmes of their first concerts featured Haydn's oratorios. A few months later, on the feast day of St. Cecilia, 22 November 1803, a gathering of the



PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER 2x

The Cecilian Music Society in 1933 (middle: Jan Mazánek; to the right: Chaplain Václav Boštík)

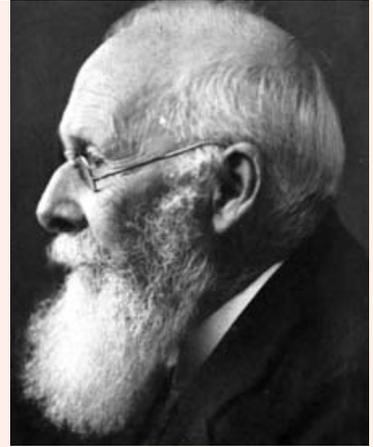
local music-loving intellectuals took place at a school in Ústí nad Orlicí, which resulted in the establishment of the Cecilian Music Society, whose aim it would be to raise the quality of the sacred music performances at the town's church. The meeting was initiated by: Jan Zizius (burgher, baker, organist, former member of the literary brotherhood, Jan Jahoda, Sr. (originally a draper, then a re-trained teacher and regens chori) and Jan Stehno (burgher, draper, according to the period news the best violinist in the town). On that very day, the participants also approved the articles of the Society, evidently drawn up by the teacher Jahoda. The meeting was added gravity and significance by the presence of the first municipal councillor, Václav Kozel, who presided over it and was elected the association's commissioner (from 1795, Ústí nad Orlicí was a free town with its own self-administration, under the patronage of Prince Alois of Liechtenstein). The articles were adopted without reservations, and on that day the Cecilian Music Society was entered by 29 former members of the Artistic Society, who were joined by another four applicants. Any man proving musical skills, especially the ability to play an instrument, could become a member. When it comes to women, who performed at the church and other concerts, they were not allowed to join the association until 1972. In addition to active members, the Cecilian Music Society also had passive, merely contributory,

as well as honorary members. It was managed by a commissioner - financial director - and two elders (the Vienna-based Society for Musicians' Widows and Orphans and the literary brotherhood in Ústí nad Orlicí had these functions too), and there were also an accountant, a scrivener and a "hand" (assistant), a post assumed for some time by every new member. The Society committed itself to holding an annual celebration of St. Cecilia's Day, providing a requiem mass for every deceased member and, in line with current financial possibilities, supporting widows and orphans of deceased members on St. Cecilia's Day. Furthermore, fines were levied for late arrivals at divine services, manifestations of disrespect towards the management, as well as fights and squabbles.

First successes

Initially, the Cecilian Music Society solely devoted to vocal-instrumental sacred music, with chamber pieces being played at the members' homes. Although the standard of musicianship was probably very good, it did not venture to give a larger public concert until about a decade had passed. The first public performance, which took place in the house of one of the local benefactors, the pharmacist Jan Andres, featured Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* and was conducted by the honorary member Karl Pitsch, an organist, pianist and composer, who later on became

organist at the St. Nicholas Church in Prague's Lesser Town and director of the organ school in Prague. The concert was a great success. Consequently, in 1828 the Society's membership extended to 52 and its prestige slowly began to grow. At the time, the musical life in Europe was becoming increasingly professional by means of schools and other institutions (the Prague Conservatory launched its activity in 1811) and many nations within the Habsburg Monarchy, including the Czech, strove to attain emancipation. One of the national revivalists in Ústí nad Orlicí was a commissioner of the Cecilian Music Society, Jan Alois Sudiprav Rettig, whose wife, Magdalena Dobromila, was responsible for the local Czech library (she was the author of the best-known Czech cookery-book). The Czech national revival culminated around the middle of the 19th century, when the Cecilian Music Society performed Haydn's *The Seasons* (1842) and started to expand - its members founded several chamber associations and, in 1862, the male choir Lumír, focused on secular revivalist vocal music (it perished circa 1869). The Cecilian Music Society and Lumír had their very first joint performance within a charity concert in August 1862, at which they also presented the first Czech symphonic poem, *The Taborite*, Op. 60, for solo viola and obbligato male chorus, by Alois Hnilička (1826-1909), whose father, František, served as regens chori and organist of the Ústí nad Orlicí church ensemble - it goes without saying that both of them were members of the Cecilian Music Society. A talented and considerably active musician, Alois Hnilička, similarly to his peers, was trained as a child at the Augustinian Monastery in Brno and, after his voice broke, returned to Ústí nad Orlicí, where his father taught him how to play the organ. He subsequently attended the organ school in Prague and a teacher-training course. He composed numerous sacred pieces for the Cecilian Music Society, which also premiered in 1851 his oratorio *Paradise Lost*, based on a Czech translation of John Milton's eponymous epic poem (the young violinist Antonín Bennewitz, a native of the nearby village of Přívrat, and later on a noted director of the Prague Conservatory, also appeared at the concert). Noteworthy too is that Hnilička was awarded a special prize for his cantata composed for the foundation of the National Theatre in Prague and was acquainted with Antonín Dvořák, to whom he dedicated his *String Quintet in C minor*, Op. 126. Unfortunately, Hnilička did not find in Ústí nad Orlicí a suitable job and thus moved to assume the post of organist in Chrudim, where he was among the initiators of the still active Slavoj choir.



The teacher Jan Mazánek (1851-1937)

The heyday

The Cecilian Music Society was at its peak from the 1860s to the 1880s. (Conducive in this respect was the generally relaxed political and social atmosphere in the wake of the issuance in 1860 of the October Diploma, in which Emperor Franz Joseph I abandoned Absolutism and promised to adopt a new constitution.). At the time, the musical life in Ústí nad Orlicí was more bountiful than it had ever been before or ever would be again. Apart from the mentioned political and social circumstances, other factors that had a positive impact on the Society's thriving were the regular trips made by the local craftsmen, to Vienna in particular, where they had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the local music scene, and the migration of some of the town's figures beyond the municipality. Owing to these journeys, they established contact with Johann Ritter von Lucam (1807-1879), a major figure of Viennese musical life, who in 1841 became an honorary member of the Cecilian Music Society and, in addition to several laudatory letters, sent in 1842 to the association an allegoric picture with a portrait of Haydn and scenes from *The Creation* (the painting is still maintained in the Society's archives). Another honorary member - and an Ústí nad Orlicí native - Jan Fortunát Khunt entered the Benedictine Monastery in Prague and borrowed both from his own monastery and from the Strahov Premonstratensian Abbey Archives music materials to copy, or even bought sheet music and donated it to the Society.

What type of music was played at the Ústí nad Orlicí church at the time? Mainly performed were sacred compositions by W. A. Mozart, Joseph Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven, J. N. Hummel, works by the Czech musician and pedagogue Václav Jan Křtitel Tomášek (1774-1850), Václav Jindřich Veit (1806-1864), with Antonín Dvořák's and Bedřich Smetana's opuses too



Anna Heranová (1880–1927), the first female organist in Ústí nad Orlicí



Dean Václav Boštík (1897–1963)
© archive Michal Sklenář



Jaromír Lahulek (1892–1959), director of the savings bank and organist

gradually becoming a natural part of the repertoire at public concerts. Frequently played too were pieces by the Society's active and honorary members: the aforementioned Alois Hnilička; the priest, violinist and composer Josef Stehno (1778–1835), whose father, Jan, was one of the association's founders; the violinist and lawyer Josef Sýkora, Jr. (1804–1838); the organist and pedagogue Josef Cyril Sychra (1859–1935), who worked in Mladá Boleslav and in his time was deemed the best living sacred music composer in Bohemia. Nowadays, these composers are virtually unknown, even to the domestic audience, the bulk of their works have not yet been published, awaiting rediscovery in the archives. Divine services were greatly impacted by the Cecilian Reform movement (to which the Cecilian Music Society is only linked as regards its being named after St. Cecilia, which got to the Czech lands circa 1874 and found its platform in the magazine Cyril. Endeavouring to abridge and "purify" church music, the reformists advocated a return to Renaissance polyphony and the Gregorian chant. Coincidentally, the first Czech Cyrillic festivity took place in Ústí nad Orlicí itself. This, however, may be misconstrued, since the reform met with only a partly positive response in the town. In the beginning, it gave rise to a rupture in the Cecilian Music Society (the majority of its members boycotted the Cyrillic festivity), yet the musicians ultimately reached a compromise: the Advent and Lent periods would be solely given over to the Gregorian chant and music by the composers recommended by the reform (Claudio Casciolini, G. P. da Palestrina, Franz Xaver Witt), as well as the Czech Cecilian composers Josef Förster, František Zdeněk Skuherský and J. C. Sychra. On other occasions, vocal-instrumental music would be performed as customary previously. The main event of the Cecilian Music Society calendar was the celebration of St. Cecilia's Day,

which over the course of the years transformed into a monumental three-day feast. A precise picture of how it proceeded is given in the records in the association's commemorative book. The celebration began on the eve of St. Cecilia's Day, on the town's square, by the statue of the Virgin Mary, where festival intradas and overtures were performed. Afterwards, the musicians moved to the local inn to give speeches, accept new members, play chamber pieces and have dinner together. The next morning a ceremonial mass was served, followed by a lunch and subsequent music-making (for instance, overtures, choruses from Haydn's oratorios), followed by an evening dance party, after the festivities had been joined by the ladies. The third day was dedicated to the checking of accounts, collection of membership fees and, finally, performing music and singing. Compositions for the annual celebrations were particularly carefully selected, most notably in 1903, when only works by Ústí nad Orlicí natives were played: František Pecháček, Leopold Jansa, Alois Hnilička, Václav Felix Skop, Josef Cyril Sychra, František Špindler and Jaroslav Kocian (1883–1950), the most famous local musician and a violin virtuoso, who conducted the performances. The event was preceded by a robust press campaign (reports on the preparations were published every 10–14 days); in August three identical concerts (for local, non-resident and poor audiences) were held, and the festivities only concluded at the end of November. At the time, the Cecilian Music Society had some 118 members, 64 of them active, and its archive contained almost 1,400 pieces, by 294 composers. This occasion also saw the publication of the *Memoirs of the Cecilian Music Society in Ústí nad Orlicí* by the member Josef Zábrodský, an extremely comprehensive book, which has served ever since as a valuable source for researchers.



The Cecilian Music Society in 1953

third from left: Norbert Fišer; further left: Jaromír Lahulek, Antonín Šimeček, Dean Václav Boštík; second from right: the organist Antonín Malátek

Entering uncertainty

Precisely at the turn of the 20th century, the Cecilian Music Society began undergoing a root-and-branch transformation. A certain role in this respect was played by the boom of the manufacturing industry, as well as the declining prestige of the Catholic Church. All of a sudden, people had far less time for extra-work activities, the membership did not grow and the interest in the Society waned. Furthermore, the lack of money resulted in the shortening of the annual Cecilian celebrations to two days, the attendance rules being tightened up and, out of necessity, the obligation to pay the musicians for playing at the funerals of the deceased members was introduced. At the time, the Society's buttresses were the teacher Jan Mazánek (1851–1937), a passionate fan of amateur theatre and champion of the Cecilian reform, who initiated the establishment of the Lukes choir and, by self-sacrificing copying, augmented the music archive; and the organist and regens chori – and Mazánek's pupil – Petr Kocian (1864–1931), who served the church ensemble over the period of 40 years. Worthy of mention too is the first-ever Ústí nad Orlicí female organist, Anna Heranová (1880–1927), who headed the local piano school.

We cannot say with certainty to what extent the watershed year of 1918, which saw the end of World War I, the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and the subsequent foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, influenced the activities of the Cecilian Music Society. In the new, democratic state, the Roman Catholic Church found itself in a complicated situation. People perceived it as the extended hand of the unpopular Habsburg authority (one of the episodes bearing witness to the general abhorrence was the tearing down of the Marian Column on the Old Town Square in Prague a week after the Czechoslovak Republic's origination was declared; another display of animosity was the removal of crosses from schools, etc.), the Catholic Church failed to adopt a modernised approach from within and introduce Czech as the liturgical language, and ultimately, in 1920, there was a schism, which led to the formation of the national Czechoslovak Church (today, the Czechoslovak Hussite Church). The number of Catholics markedly decreased. Ústí nad Orlicí was part of the diocese whose bishop, Josef Doubrava, was in 1918 a keen advocate of the new state. Upon his order, masses were held in honour of the establishment of Czechoslovakia, and so it came

to pass that the Cecilian Music Society, which had always been patriotic and Czech-speaking, performed on 10 November 1918 at a mass for the well-being of the fledgling Czechoslovak state, which featured the *Mass in D minor* by Václav Emanuel Horák (1800-1871), the *Prayer for the Czech Nation*, to a Josef Václav Sládek poem and with music by František Špindler, and the now officially acknowledged state anthem *Kde domov můj* (Where Is My Home?). All the endeavours of its leaders notwithstanding, in the following years the Society rather trod water than thrived; in 1928, it only had 57 members, of whom 21 were active. Its operation was solely confined to performing church music (figural masses were merely played on anniversaries and major feast days) and the Cecilian festivities, at that time far more modestly conceived. Public concerts in the town were taken charge of by the Lukes choir and the newly established Free Orchestral Association, which was also joined by members of the Cecilian Music Society. Petr Kocian was succeeded in the post of the church ensemble's Kapellmeister by the superlative wind instrumentalist Norbert Fišer (1882-1956), the organist was Jaromír Lahulek (1892-1959), director of the local savings bank and one of the town's most active citizens (athletics coach, amateur actor, stage director, occasional conductor, initiator of the construction of a new theatre, part-time oboe and bassoon teacher, prolific composer). In 1934, new life was breathed into the Ústí nad Orlicí parish by the newly appointed dean, Václav Boštík (1897-1963), who, just like the first dean, Jan Mosbender, was a man of great vision who possessed the will for its implementation. Having a clear idea of what type of music should be played at the church, he began vigorously pursuing his conceptions. Within three years of having assumed his post, he chaired the Society's meeting (in 1945, he was named its honorary member), took care of the organ repair and also participated in the local political life. Boštík, however, could never develop his activities to the full. For the first time, he was interrupted in 1939: in the spring, Czechoslovakia was invaded by the Germans, the Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren was established, and in the autumn World War II broke out. Boštík joined the local resistance organisation, which in 1942 was, unfortunately, revealed and the dean was duly imprisoned, first in Pardubice, then in Dresden, Prague, Terezín and, finally, at the concentration camp in Flössenburg. In the spring of 1945, he and the other prisoners were driven to Dachau and en route were liberated by the US Army. After the war, in May 1945, he returned to Ústí nad Orlicí, where he was welcomed as a hero and respected citizen. In the meantime,

the Cecilian Music Society had celebrated its 140th anniversary. In 1943, Czechoslovak Radio broadcast a programme about it, based on the script by the Ústí nad Orlicí writer Marie Rollerová (daughter of the former regens chori Petr Kocian), which also included music performed by the association members, who even recorded a gramophone disc on the occasion. After coming back to the town, Dean Boštík was again active; the citizens elected him a member of the Municipal People's Committee and Council (he only resigned after the bishops had issued a call for the clergy to remain apolitical), he co-operated with outstanding architects and also attended the Society's rehearsals. In effect, he became the association's patron and benefactor (he paid for, among other things, the putting together and extension of its music archive). As recorded by the devoted parish chronicler Ludmila Ehlová, Boštík's dream was to put into practice the ideas of the Cecilian reform, yet his plan was disapproved of by many members of the Society. They again sought a compromise, with the result being negative for instrumental music. During the Advent and Lent periods, instruments (including the organ) would have to keep silent altogether, while in the rest of the liturgical year the Ordinary would be sung monophonically, the Proper polyphonically, and, with the exception of the traditional Christmas carols, instruments would only be played on special occasions. By adopting these rules, the Cecilian Music Society largely returned to the tradition dating back to the literary brotherhood.

From totalitarian fetters to freedom

The activity of the Society was suspended for the second time in February 1948, in the wake of the Communist coup. This meant the termination of democracy in Czechoslovakia, followed by decades of totalitarian rule, which finally came to an end in November 1989. The Communist dictatorship de facto doomed the Churches, the Catholic in particular, to extinction. In the beginning, the new power acted brutally (show trials, capital punishment, imprisonment, forced isolation, abolition of the Catholic press, elimination of church schools, etc.), but after 1953 the government chose more moderate yet more malicious tactics: exerting permanent pressure on individuals. Priests became public employees, could only work if approved by the state, which assumed continuous control of them by means of newly established authorities, ecclesiastic life was totally excluded from the public space and presented as a withering, unnecessary anachronism. The Cecilian Music Society survived the totalitarian era owing, on



The Cecilian Music Society in 2013

the one hand, to its never becoming an association in the legal sense (thus it did not need any official “stamp” to continue its activity) and owing to Dean Boštík, who meticulously oversaw all that happened in the church, on the other. While confined within the church’s walls, the municipal authority tolerated the ensemble; difficulties only occurred in the case of the regens chori Antonín Šimeček, concurrently the director of the local music school, who ran the choir in partial secrecy, until in 1959 he resigned for material reasons. Two years later, surprisingly at the time when the Communists in Czechoslovakia had loosened the reins, Dean Boštík was divested of the governmental approval to execute clerical service (on the basis of a trumped-up charge of faulty book-keeping). His successor was not interested in music and the Cecilian Music Society experienced a critical period. Yet it managed to weather the storm, underwent generational change and started to pursue the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council. From 1972 on, the Society could accept women as members. Another stimulus was brought by a new priest. In 1978 the Ústí nad Orlicí parish was taken over by the 30-year-old Josef Kajnek (today, assistant bishop in Hradec Králové), who was an ardent supporter of the revision of the liturgy as implemented by the Second Vatican Council. In this connection, he brought the Cecilian Music Society to the attention of the priest Josef Olejník (1914–2009), a distinguished composer of Czech liturgical music and connoisseur of the Gregorian chant. Co-operation with Olejník played a vital role in the Society’s further evolution and mainly developed owing to its new management, entrusted to Oldřich and Marie Heyl (the government rescinded its permission for Josef Kajnek to perform his job in 1984). The violinist, violist and organist Oldřich Heyl (1952–2010) was an ardent champion of Olejník’s hymns, worked on

the congregation’s active involvement in divine services and moved the choir, clad in white robes, from the organ-loft to the side altar.

In the wake of the “velvet revolution” in 1989, the Cecilian Music Society revived its performances beyond the church too, continued to co-operate with Josef Olejník, of whose works it gave world premieres, and established collaboration with another noted liturgical music composer, Petr Eben (1929–2007). It introduced such new traditions as the choir’s summer seminars and the St. Cecilia Sacred Music Festival for church singers and organists. In 2002 the Society released the recording *Via Crucis*, featuring a programme of Easter contemplations and music. Its 200th anniversary was marked by a special mass and concert, which culminated in the performance of Jaroslav Kocian’s *Festive Mass*, and commemorated by an exhibition on the Cecilian Music Society’s history and a conference on the musical tradition in Ústí nad Orlicí, both held in co-operation with the municipality. In 2007, the helm was assumed by the organist, chorus master and musicologist Cecilie Pecháčková, who has been a member of the Cecilian Music Society since 1985. The choir mainly sings at Sunday masses and on feast days, and it has also performed abroad (in the twin town of Massa Martana, Italy, and during the National Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2013). The core of its repertoire is formed by a cappella pieces, including works by Josef Olejník and Petr Eben, as well as Jaroslav Kocian and Josef Bohuslav Foerster (1859–1951), the latter of whom was also an honorary member of the association. The Cecilian Music Society abides by the amended original 1995 articles, and currently has 22 performers. Nowadays, it is again an integral part of the cultural life in Ústí nad Orlicí, regularly singing at the packed church in an active, vital parish, where it can freely develop.

JAROMÍR WEINBERGER

ZWISCHEN DEN TASTEN GEFALLEN

One of the best known and loved composers of the first half of the 20th-century, Jaromír Weinberger is only known today as a footnote lingering on the edge of our musical consciousness. The reasons for this are many – some were attempted systematic erasures of his existence by not one nor two, but three political regimes while another was completely self-inflicted. To understand Weinberger's journey to near oblivion, we must place ourselves in the times and locations into which he was cast – for that world has not existed on both geo-political and artistic maps for well over a century. Only then can we have a context, to understand his mindset, his decisions (both personal and professional) and ultimately the path from which he was never to return.

Prologue - A Personal Journey

What began as a simple curiosity has turned into one of the largest musicological finds of recent years. I have spent the last six years traveling between Jerusalem, Prague, Bratislava, Berlin and the US in search of the composer Jaromír Weinberger. While researching Weinberger's Saxophone Concerto for a possible performance, I discovered that the orchestral materials were unavailable from the publisher. Furthermore, the printed piano reduction of the work contained so many errors that it was practically unusable. This was due to Weinberger's death in 1967 and his widow's need for

funds. The edition was put out posthumously, under protest, by the publisher under this pressure.

After locating the orchestral materials in a basement in South Dakota, I soon realized that the parts and the piano reduction did not correspond to each other.

This was due to the fact the Weinberger wrote the reduction first and told the commissioning saxophonist Cecil Leeson that he would score the work when a performance was pending. Due to the Second World War, this occurred seven years later. In the meantime, the composer revised the score, adding and subtracting material. I have reconciled all materials so that they now match

as well as editing the piano reduction so that more of the orchestral material is present, thereby being more useful to the soloist's concept of what is going on around them.

I became curious to find out more about this composer's output only to find that only a handful of works were still in print. Before Weinberger arrived in the United States as a displaced person due to World War II, he was a victim of Nazi oppression. His music publishers in Berlin, Vienna and Prague had been nationalized, thereby freezing his royalty income and as a Jew, all his staged works had ceased to be performed, thus ending his grand rights income. Many of his publishers were forced out of business and outside of a few copies of his smaller works in various libraries, everything else seemed lost.

Several years ago, I unearthed five boxes of manuscripts, sketchbooks and documents which represent over 80% of the composer's complete oeuvre. Along with these musical items are over 1,000 letters written between 1909 and 1939. These have never before been seen and yield much missing insight about the composer, his works and family and the political situations of the era. They also provide information on possible performances and materials as many records by various European musical and performance organizations had been destroyed. Hailed as 'The New Mozart', Weinberger was publishing works from the age of nine, performing in public and conducting concerts by age 12. His early works have a decidedly 'French' quality to them which then settles into the Nationalistic style of Smetana, Fibich and Suk which we recognize as his style in his Post-War career.

These materials turned up in a most unlikely location and the simple fact that they survived in the first place is a minor miracle. When the Nazis occupied Prague in 1939, they seized Weinberger's home. At this time, several burglaries occurred and most of the contents of the house were removed. Where these materials went, I am not sure, but they evidently remained nearby. When the Soviet army expelled the Nazis, they could have destroyed these same materials as well and again they were spared. They arrived at their present location in 1962 without documentation; it was only by chance that I learned of their existence in autumn 2011 as I had previously visited and checked this source site several times. Since then I have corrected and edited not only these manuscripts, most which have never

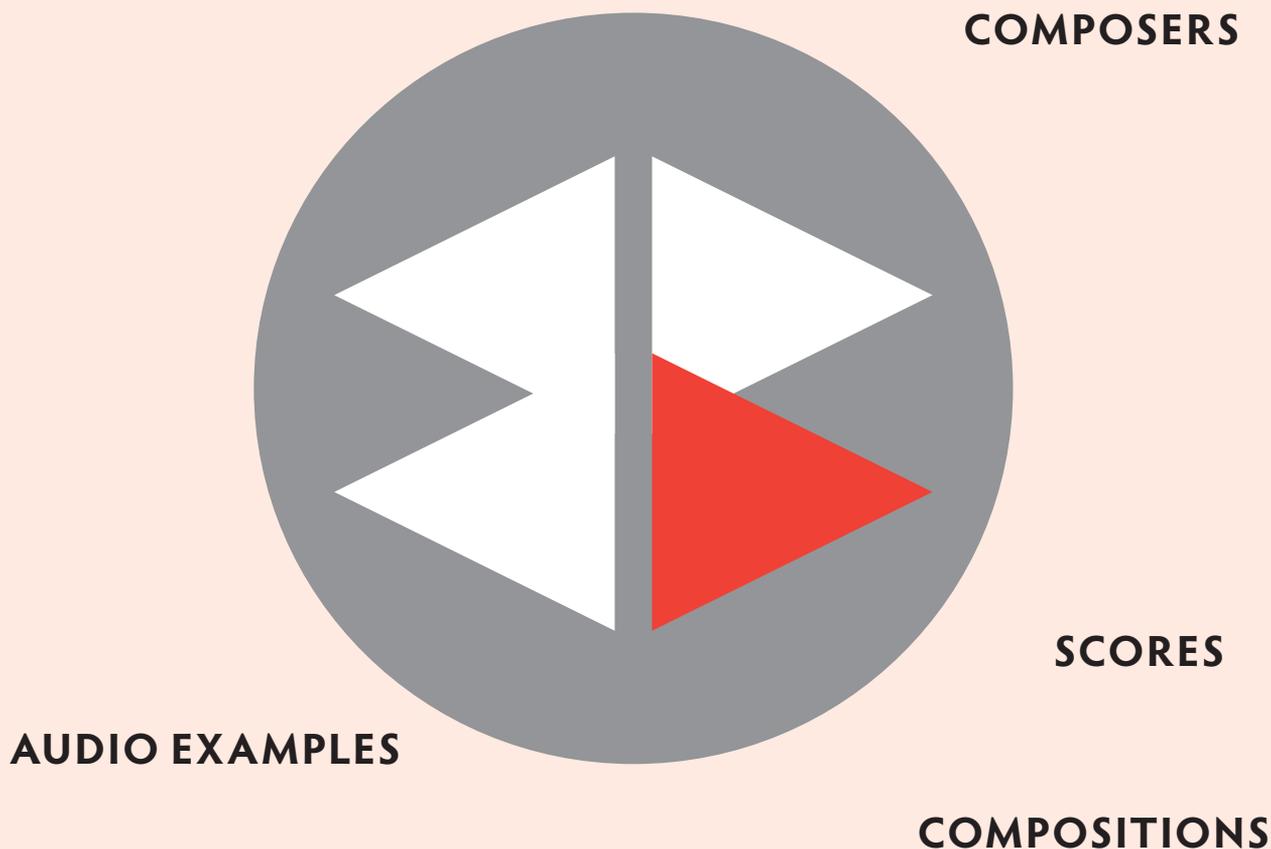
been published before, but also all of the previously published works as well.

It is well documented that Weinberger's relationships with his publishers was tenuous at best. They released his materials with numerous errors and omissions (which they never rectified). This led to him dissolving all ties to them and trying his hand at self-publishing in the early 1960s. Based upon the materials I have found, we really never knew this man's contribution to his art. His craftsmanship was impeccable, his ideas fresh. He was not the 'one-hit wonder' (his opera *Švanda the Bagpiper*) we have remembered him as. It is time that we revisit this master.

Background

Weinberger was born on the 8th of January 1896 in the Jewish Quarter known as 'Josefov' in Prague. He was the second and smaller child to be delivered of twins. His sister Božena (who would become a student at the Conservatory and a fine pianist and composer herself) was born moments before. Their elder sister Bedřiška was born previously in 1892. As a small child, he and his sisters spent most of their time in Sedlov, which lies in the Kolín district of Bohemia some 60 kilometers to the east of Prague. It is here that the Weinbergers had lived and farmed for generations. Jaromír's father, Charles, was himself born in Sedlov. At the time of his birth, Jaromír was a subject of the Kingdom of Bohemia, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and remained so until 1918, when a new state, Czechoslovakia, was formed. This factor, above all others, shaped his behavior and decisions. The Empire also had personal implications to all Czech people – the Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Imperial throne, was married to the Czech countess Sophie von Chotek, and they lived in Bohemia at Konopiště Castle, located near Prague. It was both the Archduke and his Czech-born wife who were assassinated that fateful day in Sarajevo, triggering the start of world war. With armistice and the formation of a new country, Prague was chosen to become its capital. Of all the composers from this region at this time, Weinberger is among the few who stand in line with the tenets of Smetana, Dvořák, Fibich and Novák in terms of what we call in music Nationalism. It was far more important to him than even religion. A colleague of Weinberger's in many ways, Erich Wolfgang Korngold (who was himself born in Brno, Moravia) was once

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quoted as saying: “We always thought of ourselves as Viennese, it was Hitler who reminded us we were Jewish.” If you are seeing a pattern here, you are not mistaken – here are two (of many) ‘Czechs’ with Germanic names, who spoke German but considered themselves ‘Czech’. Most cities within the Empire had several names – one in the vernacular and one in German. For example, Brno was also known as ‘Brünn’, Bratislava as ‘Pressburg’. Even in Mozart’s day, Prague was a bilingual city and many people switched their names (or spellings) from Czech to Germanic (or better defined as ‘Slavic’ and ‘Teutonic’ to keep nationality out of the equation) and back as suited their situation.

Early Years

Weinberger’s musical talents were discovered when, at the age of four, a piano was given to his family by his Aunt Charlotte, who was moving to Cleveland, Ohio, with her husband, Richard Rychtařík, a well known stage and set designer. I mention this particular relationship as it will have significance several decades later. Jaromír’s mother Rose (nee Fautelová) came from a musical family, some of whose members were well known artists in their time in Prague. Although the Weinbergers were far from comfortable financially, this factor supported the decision to provide a musical education for the young boy. Jaromír had perfect pitch and used this to pick out folk tunes on the piano that he had heard and liked to improvise on them. Several teachers were employed, the first being Jaroslav Kříčka, who himself would become well known as a composer. As Jaromír entered school, the decision to send the children to a ‘Czech’ school was taken as well as the choice of using Czech, not German, in the home as was standard practice in Jewish homes at that time. He had many friends and enjoyed collecting butterflies, played some sport and participated in other activities like any other child, often to avoid practicing the piano. With Kříčka’s encouragement and assistance, Weinberger published a volume of short piano pieces at the age of nine and the following year premiered some of his choral arrangements as conductor. His progress was steady and when Kříčka left to take a post in Russia, Václav Talich became Jaromír’s tutor. He began to write songs and held a concert in which he also accompanied the singer. He became the talk of Prague and the public began to take an interest in Weinberger.

This manifested itself in two, opposite, directions. Some people were happy and encouraged that a native son of Prague would help restore pride in the city. Others, however, felt that ‘this Jewish boy’ was taking the opportunities away from ‘proper’ citizens and that his rise would instigate a Zionist plot. As Weinberger’s popularity increased, so did the anger and tactics of his detractors. As we will see later on, most of this aggression was not internally born, but enflamed by the policies of Nazi Germany. While a very good student at school, his math skills never developed, for no other reason than he did not find it interesting enough. Language, however, came easily to him as he already spoke Czech, German, some Hebrew and Esperanto – all this by the age of 14.

It is now that he was accepted to the Prague Conservatory, studying piano with his private tutor Karel Hoffmeister and composition with Vítězslav Novák. Although Weinberger hated practicing the piano, he was a good student and was encouraged by his mentor to become a concert soloist. Jaromír declined this track as he knew he was physically not strong enough for the rigors of concert touring which would also interfere with his first love, composition.

Upon graduation from the Conservatory in 1915, Jaromír wrote to the composer Max Reger at the Leipzig Conservatory, asking for a place in his class. Reger was so impressed with Weinberger’s submissions that he recommended him for a full scholarship. The two became very close, with Weinberger frequently being invited for dinner either at a restaurant or at Reger’s home. Jaromír was to be one of Reger’s last students before the elder composer’s death.

Career

With Weinberger’s return to Prague in 1916, he devoted himself solely to composition. In order to support himself, he wrote tirelessly, everything from concert works and theatre music to popular and cabaret revues. Again, although many opportunities presented themselves, he received negative reviews by certain publications (with anti-Semitic overtones) and work became sporadic. Conversely, it is now abroad that Weinberger’s reputation blossoms. Performances in Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg and Moscow all receive glowing reviews. While good reviews are manna for the ego, they do not pay the bills. Disappointed with this outcome, Jaromír

decides to look to academia for a steady paycheck. Through a colleague, the violinist Otakar Ševčík, he receives an appointment to teach in America at the new Ithaca Conservatory of Music in New York, which he gladly accepts.

There had been a strong attachment between America and the new Czechoslovakia due to US war efforts. Anyone who has wandered around the streets of Prague will notice the names of American presidents on the sign posts. Weinberger, who was highly literate, also enjoyed American authors such as Poe, Whitman and Bret Harte (all three authors later became subjects on which Weinberger wrote music). There has been much misinformation on the point of Jaromír's 'American Years'. The fact is that he stayed for only one year (1921-1922), although he did try to secure other appointments. As this never occurred, he returned home to accept a teaching post in Hungary, but again only stayed a short time. Once again, searching for a stable, secure position, he was offered a post in Bratislava, working as a dramaturge for Oskar Nedbal. While he was able to compose in his free time, the salary was not sufficient and he left after one year. I will mention a work that was written during this time in Bratislava, the opera *Kocourkov* (Schilda), which Nedbal premiered in Vienna and was such a success that the composer Mascagni, who attended the premiere, showered praises upon its composer. This work was considered lost – until now. I have in my possession the full score, which has been edited and made into a complete set of performance materials. It is a truly brilliant, funny work that in many ways overshadows Weinberger's next opera, his signature work, *Švanda the Bagpiper*. Newly translated into German, *Švanda the Bagpiper* launched Jaromír on an international career. Its success not only brought many more opportunities, but much needed financial independence. His successes continued over the next decade. However, they coincided with the rise of political and social turmoil. The anti-Semitism that was being used by the Nazi regime as a propaganda tool was also rising within the societies of other European countries, including his own. More and more, government officials, opera directors, orchestras and so on began to further distance themselves from him, feeling that if they associated with Weinberger (or any other Jewish composer) it would damage their own careers. Weinberger was politically astute and saw what the future would hold. He was also not shy about making his sentiments known to his colleagues –

many of whom thought that he was paranoid. With this thought, he decided to move abroad.

Emigration and a New Start

While Weinberger was aware of the situation confronting Europe, it was always his plan to return home. With this thought, he never traveled further away from Prague than was absolutely necessary. The next decade saw Jaromír and his new wife, Hansi (later known as Jane), moving no fewer than seven times before their final emigration to America, where there were another seven changes of residence before finally settling in Florida. Despite the uncertainty of the future, these were also fruitful years for the composer. Operetta after operetta flowed from his pen, each one a success – each one providing much needed income, or so he thought. It is here we must pause to explain the situation of theatre music, especially in Europe. When a composer writes music for the theatre (opera, operetta, musical, etc.) the fee arrangements differ from concert music. While opera is inherently more expensive to produce, it also has more income potential in repeat performances. Therefore, a composer's usual fee would be a percentage of the box office per performance. While this is not a guaranteed or steady amount, it still awards the composer a better yield. Although these works were lucrative, Weinberger's publishers (mostly German and Austrian firms) were either being nationalized or closed down because of their relationships with Jewish composers. Due to this fact, Jaromír never received his performance fees and his money was beginning to grow thin. From Austria, they moved to southern France, still hoping to be repatriated. This was not to be. From there, to Paris. As the German military advanced west, so did the Weinbergers. Next they fled to London, where performances of *Švanda the Bagpiper* were taking place. The Weinbergers tried to stay but were not given a visa. Again, his performance fees were not being paid and Jaromír took work for the BBC, writing incidental music and advertising music under a pseudonym for a small salary. Finally, an invitation came from New York in 1939 for him to prepare a ballet from music of *Švanda*. He accepted and was greeted with warmth and praise as the public remembered the triumph of *Švanda* at the Metropolitan Opera a decade before. Commission after commission came across his desk and he produced a collection of work that

was 'Handelian' in scope. This reception however, was short lived, as two years later America entered the war. As before, Weinberger was not being paid his royalties and to further add injury, when the war was over, any and all payments he should have received were being held by the Department of Alien Property of the US government. This began a long and expensive legal battle that took its toll on Jaromír's financial and physical health.

Decline - The Post-War Years

Following years of financial and legal battles over his copyrights and royalties, the loss of interest in his works and the decline of income, Weinberger's health, which had never been robust, began to fail rapidly. Due to financial restrictions, the Weinbergers decided to move to less expensive quarters and rented the house that they had previously rented during the summer to escape the heat and pollution of New York City. They spent the better part of a decade in upstate New York in the town of Fleischmanns, approximately two hours north of the city, which had a good bus connection as they did not own a car. So began Weinberger's self-imposed professional and social exile, which progressively grew worse with each passing year. He had learned that his mother and older sister, with whom he had had no contact since the war began, were interned and murdered in the gas chambers at Treblinka. His wife's health was not good either and required surgery, which had complications and required over a year to recover from. All of this was too much for Weinberger to handle and caused him to suffer a nervous breakdown, for which he was hospitalized himself. Eventually, a neighbor of the Weinbergers invited them to spend a winter with him in St. Petersburg, Florida, to help their mutual recovery. They finally accepted in December of 1948 and were so taken with the area that they decided to relocate there as the weather and the expenses could help them survive. At long last, a small settlement was decided in their favor concerning Weinberger's royalties, enough to pay for a small plot of land and the building of a pre-fabricated house. Jaromír was always keenly interested in photography and turned the garage into his darkroom. Besides portraits and landscapes, he photographed all of his manuscripts before sending them to various publishers for consideration. Outside of the time he spent in the garage, Weinberger spent the better part of the day

in the breezeway connected to the house, where he would sit on a metal garden chair chain-smoking and waiting for the post to be delivered. For the last five years of his life, Weinberger never left the inside of his home. From 1956 until 1963 there was enough money and health for the Weinbergers to travel to Europe during the summers. It was a bittersweet experience for the couple, for while they were in familiar surroundings, especially in Austria, Weinberger could not travel to, or have contact with, his homeland.

Upon his return from the last holiday in 1963, a heartbroken Weinberger, now accepting that his music was of no interest to a world that had previously loved it, stopped composing completely. He lost interest in photography too. His eyesight began to fail, and he underwent two surgeries and suffered another heart attack.

Jaromír suffered now from insomnia, which also affected the rest of his mental and physical health. He suffered from deep depression, ate little, lost weight and his doctor hospitalized him for three weeks. It looked as if his mental status had improved but that was only a temporary relief, and he was hospitalized again. After his release, he continued to be nervous and sleepless. It was then revealed that he was suffering from brain cancer. I will now allow this article to conclude with a quote from a son of one of Weinberger's nephews, Jehuda Poláček, who had spoken with Hansi Weinberger shortly after Jaromír's passing. I can think of no better way to conclude:

"In the hospital yet again, Jaromír tried to play piano, which he used to do only when he composed. When he got home, three weeks before his death, he sat at the piano from the morning to the night and without interruptions played beautiful music. He only stopped to ask Hansi whether she liked it but, when she wanted to tape-record his playing, he did not allow it. He stated that it would take away all his inspiration. Hansi had the impression that Jaromír wanted to externalize all the music he heard in his mind during those three weeks. Then came August 8, 1967. It looked to Hansi as any of the normal days. Jaromír, as usual, could not sleep during the night. Hansi had to leave to do some shopping. When she shortly afterwards returned, Jaromír was lying on the floor of the living room – dead. He had swallowed more than a hundred sleeping pills. On a small table were two large, empty glasses and a short note: *'Dearest Hanička. I could not sleep until 5 am, so I took the pills. Please let me sleep. Love, your Jaromír.'*"

Allegretto grazioso ♩ = 98

The image displays the first system of a musical score for a Sonata for Flute and Piano. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto grazioso' with a quarter note equal to 98 beats per minute. The piano part (bottom staves) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with slurs. The flute part (top staff) enters in the second measure with a melodic line. The second system shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment and the flute's melodic development, including a triplet in the flute part and a dynamic marking of *p* (piano).

Sonata for Flute and Piano
(edited by Tristan Willems)

Epilogue

These recently rediscovered titles, as well as the collected works of Jaromír Weinberger, will soon be published, beginning in autumn 2015. These will also be recorded and released through Toccata Classics.

The pianist Lada Valešová will be recording a 5-CD set of the Complete Piano Music of Jaromír Weinberger. The British organist Paul Wilmot will begin recording Weinberger's complete organ works in January 2015.

At present, Tristan Willems is authoring two books about Weinberger, *The Collected Letters of Jaromír Weinberger*, as well as a full biography. Both books will be published by Toccata Press in London.

Tristan Willems

received his formal music education at Northwestern University, where he studied with members of the Chicago Symphony, obtaining the first degree ever granted from that institution in Woodwinds Performance. Subsequent studies were taken at the Conductors Institute. His career has touched virtually all facets of the music industry; he has performed and composed for the theatre, been a member of various orchestras in the United States, Europe and the Middle East (performing on bassoon, clarinet, flute, oboe and saxophone), is the author of over 600 compositions and arrangements, has been vice-president of Jeffrey James Arts Consultants (an arts management firm), and founded 4-Tay, Incorporated (recording company).

From 1994 until 2002, Willems was Music Director and Conductor of the Britten-on-the-Bay Festival Chorus and Orchestra in New York. In 1994, he founded the Adolphe Saxquartette and has performed and commissioned many works in that genre the world over. Willems or the quartet have been invited to multiple World Saxophone Congresses and performed at several of the North American Saxophone Alliance Conferences. Willems has taught public school music and has been on staff at several colleges and universities, serving as professor of conducting, music business, and applied woodwinds. As a conductor, soloist, arranger and orchestrator, he has worked with and recorded with the Slovak Radio Orchestra, the State Philharmonic Košice, A Pena Kammersveit, the Budapest Symphony Orchestra and the Czech National Orchestra. Presently, he lives, teaches and conducts in Oppland, Norway.

Dagmar Pecková**Dreams**

Dagmar Pecková - mezzo-soprano.
Prague Philharmonic Choir,
PKF - Prague Philharmonia,
Jaroslav Brych - choirmaster,
Jiří Bělohlávek - conductor.
 Text: English, Czech, French,
 German. Recorded: Aug. 1995,
 Sep. 1999, Domovina studio, Prague.
 Released: 2014. TT: 2:40:44. DDD.
 2 CDs Supraphon SU 4171-2.

The feted Czech mezzo-soprano's retrospective profile presents a representative selection of her vocal artistry recorded from 1995 to 1999. In the booklet, **Dagmar Pecková** openly professes her affinity to the composers whose music markedly shaped her international career: "*Mahler and Wagner; two composers who have influenced my entire career. They were discovered for me by Jiří Bělohlávek. Thanks to my thorough knowledge of German, I was able to pierce into the darkest nooks of the songs' verses and identify with them to a degree that made it possible for me to pass them on. We can return to these songs – dreams – at any time, and they will never cease to surprise us with their unutterable perfection.*" The musical guarantee of all the cherry-picked pieces by Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler and Luciano Berio, recorded at the Domovina studio in Prague, is the world-famous conductor **Jiří Bělohlávek**, steering the **PKF – Prague Philharmonia**.

The first CD includes Richard Wagner's *Fünf Gedichte für eine Frauenstimme* (Five Poems for a Female Voice), "*Wesendonck Lieder*", written in 1857 and 1858, which are thematically fortified by Gustav Mahler's *Fünf Lieder nach Gedichten von Friedrich Rückert* (Five Songs Based on Friedrich Rückert's Poems), created in 1901 and



1902. The melancholic vocal miniatures, in which lyrical romantic images are connected with sorrowful visions of challenging life situations, are brightened by Dagmar Pecková's vivid voice, beautifully arched phrasing and a cultivated sense for rendering the atmosphere. Jiří Bělohlávek conducts the masterpieces with great understanding and in refined technical precision, and together with the singer provides an extraordinary, highly concentrated performance.

The first disc also contains Mahler's bewitching *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer), composed in 1884 and 1885, as well as selected pieces from the extremely popular collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth's Magic Horn), dating from between 1892 and 1898. Pecková sings these more dramatic texts, with the dimension of personal dialogues of a man cut adrift by circumstances and disillusioned with his human fate, soulfully and colourfully. Bělohlávek imparts the performance both with clear-cut contrasts and delicate transitions, and the orchestra splendidly expresses both intimate feelings and powerful drama.

Johannes Brahms's masterly *Rhapsodie für Alt, Männerchor und Orchester* (Rhapsody for Alto, Male Choir and Orchestra), Op. 53 (1869), opens the second CD. Under the choirmaster Jaroslav Brych, the **Prague Philharmonic Choir** sing passionately, wonderfully gradating the music and content in the delicacy of characteristic themes. The orchestra is an outstanding partner to the singer's lovely performance. The second disc also features Mahler's tragic and sorrowful *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children), composed between 1901 and 1904, as well as the poetic *Fünf frühe Lieder* (Five Early Songs), arranged by Luciano Berio, whose variable moods are rendered on the album with great sophistication. In the booklet, the Supraphon label and Dagmar Pecková extend their thanks to Mr. Dean Brabec and the company Arthur D. Little for their generous support that made the recording possible. The album, providing a retrospective of the renowned Czech mezzo-soprano's

accomplishments in the second half of the 1990s, will certainly please all her fans. The double album is rounded off by Luciano Berio's *Folk Songs for Voice and Orchestra* (1925), splendidly chiming with the other featured works. The overall dark, harrowing and distressed atmosphere permeating the two CDs notwithstanding, it is a great pleasure to listen to them, particularly Mahler's songs, as superbly delivered by Dagmar Pecková.

Markéta Jůzová

Jan Dismas Zelenka**Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae**

Damien Guillon - alto,
Daniel Johannsen - tenor,
Tomáš Král - bass,
Collegium Marianum,
Jana Semerádová - artistic director.
 Text: Latin, English, German,
 French, Czech. Recorded: 2014.
 Released: 2014. TT: 74:15. DDD. 1 CD
 Supraphon SU 4173-2.

Zelenka's *Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae* have been relatively frequently performed at concerts, yet to date have only been recorded on four occasions. Written in 1722 and 1723 for the Catholic Church of the Royal Court of Saxony in Dresden, the Lamentations were intended for the liturgy of the Service of Shadows during Holy Week. The Tenebrae religious ceremonies are served in twilight, at the beginning of a new day according to the old time measurement, on the eves of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The texts are from the Old Testament's Book of Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah. In Zelenka's setting, the reference to the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587-6 BC is divided into three sections – the three Wednesday



Lamentations are based on 1:1-14 (How doth the city sit solitary – The Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up); the three Thursday Lamentations on 2:8-15 (The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion – Is this the city that men call: The perfection of beauty, the joy of there whole earth?) and 3:1-9 (I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath – He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked); the three Friday lamentations on 3:22-29 (It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not – He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope), 4:1-6 (How is the gold become dim! – [Sodom] was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her) and 5:1-11 (Remember, o Lord, what is come upon us – They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah).

Each day of the Lamentations opens with the words "Incipit Lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae" (Here begins the Lamentation of Jeremiah the Prophet), independently set are the Hebrew letters starting the individual verses, and each Lamentation ends with the exclamation "Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum" (Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God). In the setting, the Hebrew letters are amply melodiously ornamented, the subsequent verses, in the form of dramatic recitatives, invite contemplation, which is broken by the urgent final call. Poignancy is perhaps the most apposite term to characterise any of Zelenka's sacred and secular pieces. It is worthwhile listening to them while concurrently following the texts; the composer's work with the word is remarkably detailed.

It is interesting to compare the reviewed CD with the recording of the *Lamentations* released by the Hyperion label in 1991, which features the counter-tenor Michael Chance, the tenor John Mark Ainsley and the bass Michael George, accompanied by The Chandos Baroque Players. This performance is somewhat more "secular" than that of Collegium

Marianum, one of a more ecclesiastical nature (this is especially audible when comparing the voices of Michael George and **Tomáš Král**, with Král's delivery being less piercing, softer, and therefore, in my opinion, more suitable for this type of repertoire). On the Supraphon album, in the second Friday Lamentation the ensemble employs the chalumeau, prescribed by the composer himself, brilliantly played by **Igor Frantiřák** (the instrument is not heard on the older recording – at the time when it was made the chalumeau was far from being commonly played by ensembles specialised in performing early music on period instruments; for that matter, is still not common today). The chalumeau is a woodwind instrument of the clarinet family, appearing in the 18th-century organological terminology as "vox humana". Not incidentally did Zelenka apply the chalumeau to underline the utmost agony, which is omnipresent in the texts of the Good Friday Lamentation, with two human voices wailing – the male alto and the chalumeau in the alto register. The *Lamentationes* are splendidly performed by **Collegium Marianum** under the ensemble's artistic director, **Jana Semerádová**. The booklet includes the texts from the Bible in the original Latin, as well as in English, German and Czech. The excellent accompanying comment, penned by Václav Kapsa, is also translated into French. The booklet provides information about both the ensemble and the soloists, and has an attractive sleeve, featuring Giovanni Bassano's painting *Placing Christ's Body into the Tomb*, owned by the National Gallery in Prague. A note in conclusion: If anyone feels the need to meditate, this recording affords the most suitable music for doing so – unwinding with Zelenka's Lamentations is much easier than when listening to the amorphous, artistically light-weight mass of common "chill-out" CDs, which instead of meeting their proclaimed purpose rather serve to irritate the attentive and informed listener.

Michaela Freemanová

Zdeněk Fibich

Orchestral Works, Vol. 2

Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Marek řtílec – conductor.
Text: English. Recorded: Prague, Studio Gallery, Oct., Nov. 2012.
Released: 2014. TT: 63:36. DDD. 1 CD
Naxos 8573157.

Orchestral Works, Vol. 3

Czech National Symphony Orchestra, Marek řtílec – conductor.
Text: English. Recorded: Prague, Studio Hostivař, Mar., Apr. 2013.
Released: 2014. TT: 72:27. DDD. 1 CD
Naxos 8573197.

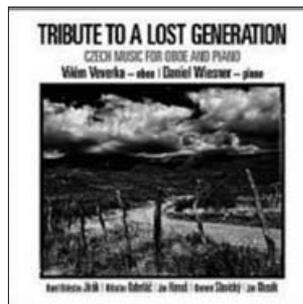
Following its performance in Vienna, Eduard Hanslick wrote of Fibich's *Symphony No. 2* that "it has German features and reveals the good German schooling Fibich received at the Leipzig Conservatory". The feted critic praised the well-mastered form, stylistic unity and rhythmic virtue, and, although considering the melodic invention insufficiently diverse, highlighted the piece's forcible logic of structure (the first performance in Vienna took place eight months after the Prague premiere owing to Hans Richter, and Hanslick himself had championed Fibich from the very beginning). The Prague critics reviewed the symphony in a similar way (naturally, not openly mentioning the German features), writing that, in comparison with the *First*, "the sinuous Romantic lines [...] have been replaced by certain Beethovenian themes". The Czech critics too commended the consistency of the thematic work, orchestration, the formidability of the structure. That which Hanslick considered a lack of diversity is, in fact, the symphony's monothematic principle, with the central theme appearing in all its movements. The well-crafted structure,

however, may not impress at first listening – is it the reason why Fibich's *Second* has so scarcely been performed at concerts? The most intriguing is the lyrical slow movement, which represents that which we most value in Fibich today. The piercing start and gradation vaults, the triumphant conclusion of the finale (according to the Fibich connoisseurs, an exclamation of the composer's love for Anežka Schulzová) could easily result in tumultuous pathos, yet, to his credit, **Marek Štílec** did not lead the **Czech National Symphony Orchestra** in this direction. The conductor honours the logic of the symphony's structure, letting the charms of the instrumentation ring out. The other two pieces on the CD are *At Twilight* and the *Idyll* for clarinet and orchestra, featuring music so famous that it almost made Fibich a composer of a single "hit" – such can be the fate of a great moment of inspiration.

Zdeněk Fibich successfully faced up to the forms of "absolute" music, as well as extra-musical subjects. The symphonic poems featured in the third volume of his orchestral works bear witness to a thematic sphere that was also drawn upon by the other Czech composers of Fibich's generation. Shakespeare, manuscripts, the romantic universe of ballads and natural motifs appear in the music by other creators of the time. In 1873, when he wrote *Othello* and *Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk*, Fibich was twenty-three years old and had no model in Czech programme music he could lean on (Smetana only completed his *Vltava* a year later and actually conducted the premiere of *Othello*). The two symphonic poems duly reflect his seeking the approach to converting stories into tones. In the case of *Othello*, the task was easier and the result makes it evident, while the mythological nature of *Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk*, based on the Manuscript of Dvůr Králové, constrained him and led to archaisms, with the story's fragmentation reflecting in the disparate form. Yet it also contains tones that can be denominated as "Smetanaesque", although at the time they were far from being as generally discernible as they are nowadays. The piece

Toman and the Wood Nymph, composed in 1878, relates to Fibich's penchant for ballads, which a few years later gave rise to his concertante melodramas. The tone poem *The Tempest* is a reverberation of the composer's captivation by Shakespeare's play, which three years previously bore fruit in the form of an eponymous opera. The "symphonic picture" *Spring*, dating from 1881, is thematically akin to a number of other similarly inspired compositions; Fibich's piece was ensued by Dvořák's Overture *In Nature's Realm*, Foerster's symphonic poem *Springtime and Desire*, etc. Fibich's *Spring* was premiered together with Dvořák's *Symphony No. 6* (performed first) and Smetana's *Richard III*. As regards Fibich's work, the critics came to the conclusion that "*the Czech musical diction has already become entirely natural to him*". In this connection, we should bear in mind that at the time, just like Dvořák and Smetana, Fibich was continuously monitored from the vantage point of a (very vague) notion of the pure character of Czech music. Under such "supervision", it was not easy to compose and – as, after all, is always the case, in any era – the bold individuality of the creator is proven by his tackling the discrepancy between his own sentiment and the public "requirements" in such a manner that the respective work can stand its artistic ground in the future. When exploring Fibich's scores, the conductor Marek Štílec and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra fully embraced the composer's musical thinking, which is evident from the recording. Nevertheless, I think that they failed to get to the core of the ruffled structure of *Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk*, with the eruptive dynamic waves more breaking than uniting it; yet it is difficult to judge to what degree Fibich himself is to blame.

Vlasta Reittererová



Tribute To A Lost Generation

Czech Music for Oboe and Piano

Vilém Veverka - oboe,
Daniel Wiesner - piano.

Text: Czech, English. Recorded:
Studio Martínek, Prague; Prague
Radio, Studio 1; Suk Hall,
Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2014.
TT: 69:34. DDD. 1 CD
Radioservis CR0691-2.

The recording was released within the Year of Czech Music and it is praiseworthy that this year-long project, repeating after decades, does not only devote to towering historical figures, since excessive highlighting of a composer's significance can many a time be actually counter-productive. The present CD comprises pieces by Czech creators whose life and work were one way or another affected by the political directives on the part of the Communist culture authorities. And they were far from alone – the music silenced or put under pressure would make for an extensive collection indeed.

The album takes the form of a recital by the superlative Czech oboist **Vilém Veverka** and includes pieces that came into being between 1954 and 1986, all of them written to commission from or directly for specific performers. By 1954, when Karel Boleslav Jirák composed the *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Op. 73, he had been living in the United States for seven years. The piece, rewarding for the instrumentalists, is followed by the 1955 *Sonatina*, Op. 24, by Miloslav Kabeláč, who was keen on non-European cultures, whose elements he often employed in his works; this piece too applies oriental elements and contrastive areas, oscillating between concentrated contemplation and defiance. Jan Hanuš's two-movement *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, Op. 61, and Klement Slavický's *Suite* are works by two representatives of the same



generation and both of them were written with regard to the artistry of the performers for whom they were intended; Hanuš composed for his son, then still a student, Slavický for the virtuoso oboist František Hanták. The CD concludes with Jan Klusák's *Priápeia per oboe*. The two final works are indeed the album's dramaturgical climax. Slavický's gripping *Suite* affords the opportunity to make use of the oboe's entire potential, while Klusák's *Priápeia* is intended for a "space with a long reverberation", thereby underlining the performer's artistry. It was recorded at the Suk Hall of Prague's Rudolfinum, which may not have the most agreeable atmosphere or provide the best acoustics for concerts, yet in this case played its role to the full. The recording has turned out right in all respects: the idea, repertoire selection, as well as the artists' stellar performances.

Vlasta Reittererová

Leoš Janáček Glagolitic Mass

The Eternal Gospel

Andrea Danková, Alžběta Poláčková
- soprano, **Jana Sýkorová** - alto,
Tomáš Juhás, Pavel Černocho - tenor,
Jozef Benci - bass, **Aleš Bárta** - organ, **Prague Philharmonic Choir, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Lukáš Vasilek** - choirmaster, **Tomáš Netopil** - conductor.

Text: English, German, French, Czech. Recorded: 2014. Released: 2014. TT: 58:20. DDD. 1 CD
Supraphon 4150-2.

The new recording of Leoš Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* is mainly justified as it concerns a reconstruction of the original version, which in all likelihood was presented at the cycle's premiere in December 1927.

Somewhat debatable, however, is the fact that in his reconstruction the musicologist Jiří Zahrádka did not respect the rules of the *Fassung letzter Hand* (the last preserved stage of revision) and went back to the time before Janáček had revised the work following its premiere. In this connection, Milan Kundera's essay "You're Not In Your Own House Here, My Dear Fellow" comes to mind. In an interview with the conductor Tomáš Netopil, published in the CD booklet, Zahrádka reasons that his version was not originally intended for performance but only for research and musicological purposes, with the aim to demonstrate Janáček's creative process. Another factor he mentions is the controversy surrounding the work's previously published, allegedly premiere, version. At the end of the interview, Zahrádka adds that he was genuinely enthusiastic when he heard his version and leaves it up to the listeners themselves to decide which Janáček they prefer. Frankly speaking, although the *Glagolitic Mass* is probably the very first Janáček piece I (similarly to Tomáš Netopil) came to know when I was young, I am not sure whether I would be able to identify the changes at first listen. Only in the CD's description do we learn that, as against the known version, in the *Introduction*, following the chaotic middle section, a greater contrast is attained by the reoccurrence of the brass fanfare. In the fourth part, *Věruju* (Credo), we get to hear the full orchestra in the form of three sets of timpani, organ and the choir soloists, which were later on eliminated for practical and performance purposes. In the revised versions, even the choir, despite its robust solo role, loses the very impressive and exposed climax at the conclusion of the fifth part, *Svet* (Sanctus). There are also greater or lesser degrees of interference in various passages of the work.

Nevertheless, the interpretation intrigued me more than the actual changes in the texture. Firstly, I was captivated by the almost racing tempo of the *Introduction* and the very nimble delivery of some other sections, which, however, complies with Janáček's original prescription. Furthermore,

I wonder about the choice of the soloists: although the soprano **Andrea Danková** is a seasoned performer of Janáček operas, her tremolo is at variance with my expectations that the part be sung simply and ethereally. I always eagerly await the passage "*Slava vo vyšších Bogu...*" (Glory be to God on high), in whose apex Gabriela Beňáčková has set a frostily light flat tone. Slightly struggling too is the tenor **Tomáš Juhás** in the part's higher registers, which, however, are in abundance in Janáček's mass. Otherwise, the recording was made with the utmost care, the **Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra**, under the baton of **Tomáš Netopil**, did a very good job (with, perhaps, the exception of the end of the *Introduction*, with the violins not sounding absolutely purely in the high register).

The recording of *The Eternal Gospel* is, in my opinion, far more engrossing. Everything is as it should be and, what's more, evidently owing to the work of the sound engineer, the listener can understand every single word sung. Superlative are the performances of the two soloists, the soprano **Alžběta Poláčková** and, particularly, the tenor **Pavel Černocho**. In the final analysis, and somewhat surprisingly, I myself find the well-balanced and precise recording of *The Eternal Gospel* more interesting than that of the *Glagolitic Mass*, although the latter is a return to the work's original version. What is certain, however, is that with this CD Tomáš Netopil has profiled himself as a distinct Janáček interpreter. On all accounts, I would like to recommend the title to all those interested in Janáček, at least for the possibility of comparison, or simply for the joy of savouring his ferocious, unfettered music.

Martin Flašar



**Bohuslav Martinů
Cello Sonatas 1-3**

**Works by Sibelius
and Mustonen**

**Steven Isserlis - cello,
Olli Mustonen - piano.**

Text: English, German, French.
Recorded: 2014. Released: 2014.

TT: 78:15. SACD. 1 CD
BIS Records BooIIZ29LM.

Seldom indeed does it transpire that the performer also writes the text for his recording's booklet. Yet **Steven Isserlis** has managed both tasks with aplomb. Over the past two years, the world-renowned British cellist has devoted a lot of time and energy to Czech music, Dvořák and Martinů in particular. As he said in an interview for *Martinů Revue* 3/2012: *"I shall be recording Martinů's three cello sonatas for the second time. The reason for re-recording the sonatas (apart from the fact that I love them more and more as I get older) is that this time the recording is with Olli Mustonen, who is as much a fan of Martinů as I am. We have played the sonatas together many times over the years, yet it seemed natural to record them along with Olli's own sonata. In fact, Olli specifically asked that when we got around to recording his sonata it be coupled with Martinů."*

Olli Mustonen is not only a pianist; he is a composer and conductor too. The CD also contains the Finnish artist's own cello sonata (2006) and Sibelius's elegiac piece *Malinconia* (1900) for cello and piano. Cello sonatas are among the most significant of Martinů's chamber pieces and as such have been recorded many times, largely by Czech performers, but the new disc made by Isserlis and Mustonen is an enrichment (not only) for lovers of Martinů's music. Martinů wrote his first cello sonata towards the end of his Paris era (1939) and it was premiered by Pierre Fournier and Rudolf Firkušný (before the Nazi forces invaded France). The piece is diverse in terms of expression, fraught with inner tension, with a dramatic introduction in the first movement, which is, however, based on the classical sonata form. A dreamy piano solo opens the slow movement. The final movement, of a toccata nature and featuring a jazzy piano accompaniment, forms the climax of the work, which can be deemed the best of the three Martinů cello sonatas. The second sonata came into being at the beginning of the composer's stay in the USA (1941) and is

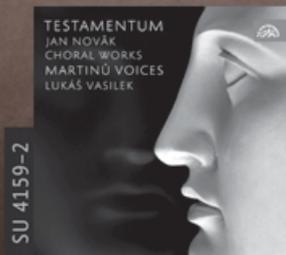
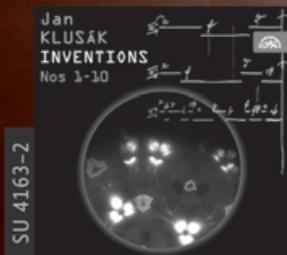
dedicated to his close Czech friend Frank Rybka. Pivotal is its second movement, of a pensive, meditative, even dreamy character. The third sonata (1952), in memory of the cellist and conductor Hans Šindler, is the "most Czech" of the three. Instead of a Romantic cantilena with great vaults of phrases in all three movements, Isserlis and Mustonen bring to bear greater lightness, frolicsomeness, Classicist levity (particularly palpable in Olli Mustonen's piano). Their entire mode of playing is rather built upon the rubato principle. All three sonatas may be interpreted on the basis of the composer's specific life situations, with the consequent tendency to render some of their movements overly dramatically, romantically and pathetically. Yet it would seem that Isserlis and Mustonen are very well informed as to the aesthetic principles Martinů adhered to, aiming to shift away from subjectivism, to express an artistic idea as naturally as possible and to cast off the weight of Romanticism. The two artists deliver the sonatas playfully, with ease, abruptly changing moods within a small area. When it comes to the first movement of the first sonata, for instance, they opted for a considerably fast tempo, but it actually does it good. The technical standard of the recording is high and the interplay of the two instrumentalists is perfect. In conclusion, I would like to add that prior to making the recording Steven Isserlis explored Martinů's autographs and period sources in great depth, closely collaborating with the Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague. I highly recommend the CD and hope that the Swedish label BIS Records will soon find a distributor in the Czech Republic.

Lucie Harasim Berná



Leoš Janáček
Glagolitic Mass, The Eternal Gospel /
September 1927 version
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Tomáš Netopil
Prague Philharmonic Choir /
Lukáš Vasílek

Jan Dismas Zelenka
Lamentatio ZWV 53
Collegium Marianum /
Jana Semerádová
Damien Guillon — tenor,
Daniel Johannsen — tenor,
Tomáš Král — bass



Jan Klusák — Inventions
PKF — Prague Philharmonia,
Prague Radio
Symphony Orchestra etc.

Jan Novák — Choral Works
Martinů Voices,
chorusmaster Lukáš Vasílek
Clara Nováková — traverse flute,
Jan Vobořil, Petr Hernych,
Kateřina Javůrková,
Zdeněk Vašina — French horn

Sergey Taneyev
The Complete Quintets
Martinů Quartet
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STAGE DIRECTOR: IVAN KREJČÍ
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