czech music *quarterly*

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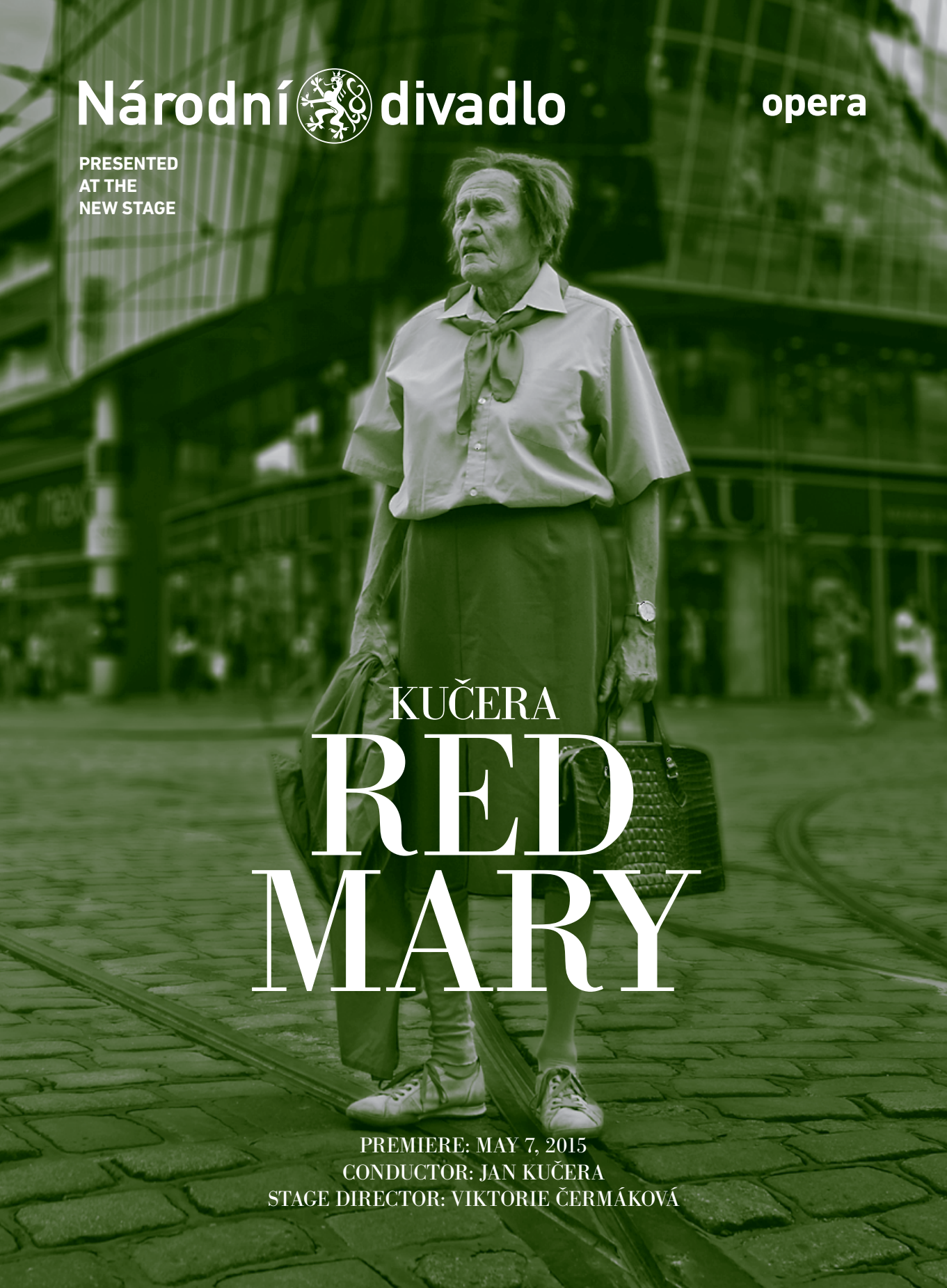
Petra Matějová

Year of Czech Music 2014
Vítězslava Kaprálová
Saint Wenceslas Tradition



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Dear readers

I would like to draw your attention to a new section of our magazine that will become a regular feature – a calendar of events compiled by the music journalist and blogger Boris Klepal. It takes the form of a summary of premieres and significant performances of works by Czech composers in the Czech Republic and abroad, with emphasis being placed on contemporary pieces. We believe that this survey – although possibly far from being complete – will provide interesting information about the current concerts and other events pertaining to Czech musical culture, which is not likely to be found elsewhere. A more comprehensive, and regularly updated, summary will be available on the related website (see the link in the article), whose English version is currently under preparation. You can also use this web interface to alert us to performances that may have escaped our attention and that you deem important enough to warrant inclusion. We will be grateful for such co-operation.

Have a nice spring
Petr Bakla

Contents:

Petra Matějová and her love of Classicism
by Dina Šnejdarová
page 2

The Centenary of Vítězslava Kaprálová
by Karla Hartl
page 11

Looking back on the Year of Czech Music 2014
by Lenka Dohnalová
page 17

Musica nova 2014
by Lenka Dohnalová
page 21

Czech music around the world, in premieres and for every day
by Boris Klepal
page 24

The Saint Wenceslas tradition during the time of the swastika
by Viktor Velek
page 29

Reviews
page 40

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Czech Music Information Centre
Besední 3, 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic
fax: +420 257 317 424, phone: +420 257 312 422
e-mail: info@czech-music.net
www.czech-music.net

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by Dina Šnejdarová

PETRA MATĚJOVÁ
AND HER LOVE OF CLASSICISM

Petra Matějová is dangerous. As soon as you begin discussing Classicism and her instrument, the fortepiano, you start to ask yourself too many questions and can even feel the desire to try out, at least for a while, touch with your fingers the Hammerklavier that was once played by Beethoven, for instance. You may set about seeking a fortepiano teacher, and at home you will spend hour upon hour listening to recordings made on various historical instruments. You simply won't be able to resist the temptation. And it may well occur that whenever you will hear 18th- and 19th-century pieces performed on a modern piano, you will wonder about what kind of music it actually is. I must confess that I have never talked to anyone more excited and more inwardly fulfilled by 18th-century music than Petra Matějová

Why does the era of Classicism so fascinate you?

Mainly owing perhaps to the refinement and equilibrium of the musical form. The three- to four-movement form, but also the song form, reached their apex in Classicism, which served as a source for composers for at least another century. Even though this might sound heretical to some, I have to say that since the time I have been devoting to early music, Classicism for me stretches on until the 1830s or so. Not only Hummel, but also Mendelssohn and Chopin, for instance, are in fact more Classicist than they were perceived for most of the 20th century. The first decades of the 19th century are amazing precisely owing to the tension between the Classicist form and its being boldly infused with emotional content.

PHOTO: DAGMAR KNEŘOVÁ

So you are fond of the little imbalance in the Classicist balance?

Yes, it can be put this way, but I consider the base the refined form of the second half of the 18th century, on which the later music is built. It is thrilling to observe how the stylistic rebirth grew from within: how for many decades to come the form remained the same or merely expanded slightly, while the melodic-harmonic content started to change slowly from the end of the 18th century. We can see it happen in the case of late Haydn, Beethoven of course, and, in a different manner, when it comes to Dussek (Dusík) too.

When did you begin to be attracted to 18th-century music? While at the conservatory?

Definitely earlier, and I'm not actually able to say why. As a matter of fact, the music dating from this period approached me quite early. When I was a child, I liked playing Mozart's pieces, and playing at Mozart, blindfolded, for instance. And when I attended a music school, my teacher, Jana Diatková, introduced me to Antoine Reicha (Antonín Rejcha), and I even played his fugues at competitions, which wasn't entirely common. At the age of 15, at the conservatory, I recorded these fugues for Czech Radio.
In point of fact, I have never been a typical "piano Romantic", for whom music starts with Chopin and ends with Rachmaninoff, and everything around is just part of the curriculum. For a long time, I almost loathed plenty of 19th-century piano pieces, and today I know why. Not every interpretation is natural for the given style, and not every interpretation serves to highlight its positives. As regards Chopin, his music comes across totally differently when it is set within the context of his time and when it is performed in line with the so-called Russian tradition of the generally later, often encumbered piano style.

When did you decide to play the fortepiano?

That was only following my graduation from the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. I went to Paris to study with Eugen Indjic, and somewhere in the back of my mind I had the idea of learning more about the fortepiano. And I encountered the instrument during my very first week in France, totally by chance – if such things can actually happen by chance. I can describe it rationally but otherwise it is in the stars… I went to a concert given by a Czech harpsichordist, and I noticed that her biography also contained a mention of her playing the fortepiano too. So I went to ask her about it and she said: "My fortepiano teacher, Patrick Cohen, is here. I'll introduce you to him." And that was that. I slowly began to touch and feel the instrument, and half a year later I decided to study it.

Why? Was it the fulfilment of your affinity to 18th-century music?

Yes. When I had played the Classicist repertoire on a modern instrument, I told myself that it couldn't be everything. I was curious about whether the music sounded different at the time, and what difference it would make to play a historical instrument. Naturally, it appeared that the difference is huge and that they actually were entirely different instruments, thus it also meant a different way of playing. Plenty of things that in the case of the modern piano must be fought for go smoothly with the fortepiano, they fit together.

What in particular?

Since approximately the middle of the 19th century, piano builders have primarily striven to achieve a long sound, supporting the much desired melodiousness. Yet the 18th century is mainly characterised by speech, rhetoric and articulation, which cannot be matched by an instrument with such a long sustain. When it comes to the historical instrument, the amplitude of every note rapidly goes up and then quite rapidly decays. The note dies away presently, making room for the next notes.

If you play the same thing in the same tempo on the modern instrument, the note culminates much later, because the modern instrument is built in this manner – for a long, melodious note. And the following notes cut short the development of the previous note, as they do not allow it to reverberate completely. So the only way to come close to the original intention with the modern instrument would be to play much more slowly. And this is exactly what occurred in Romanticism! When you look at various editions of, let's say, Mozart pieces in the 19th century, you can clearly see the endeavour to adjust the notation with the aim to meet the current conditions, so that the music will also make sense when played on twice as big, stronger instruments, possessing at least twice as heavy action.

To overstate the case somewhat, does it then mean that when a Mozart or Beethoven piece is performed at a concert on the modern instrument we actually hear a totally different music?

Yes. In my opinion, it is indeed a different music. One of the reasons is that it is in a different tuning. Equal temperament, applied on modern instruments today, somewhat flattens out music, making the keys too similar, and the tension between them, with which the composer works, must be compensated by something else, prevailingly by dynamics only. In Classicism, we do not hear as many distant keys as later on in Romanticism, since the acoustic difference between the main and dominant key alone was immense and sufficient.

What do you have to change when passing from the modern piano to an older instrument? Doesn't it suffice just to sit down and start playing, as the keyboard is the same, the hammers are there too…

No, it really doesn't suffice, even though this frequently is the case. You must change everything. Just take the physical aspect: you cannot bear down on the keys so much, yet neither can you fully disconnect the hand from the arm. Oddly enough, textbooks dating from up to circa 1800 do not mention the weight of the arm, although the context makes it clear that it is taken into account. It just isn't mentioned. But you can't just play deadly from the wrist; it is rather a matter of the arm's weight not playing the major role. But what do we know? It might not have been the case even later on either, only we perceived it so in the 20th century.

What is it, then, that plays the crucial role with the fortepiano?

A sense for fine nuances in the phrasing, and the art of touch and articulation within the entire range. A wide variety of speeds of touch, as it is precisely that which creates the dynamics, not force.

You play a copy of Anton Walter's 1805 instrument, built by Paul McNulty. Why Walter in particular?

I opted for the instrument with regard to my favourite repertoire, which is, as you may guess, the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Compared with older instruments, its timbre is softer, it has five and a half octaves and is thus ideal for Viennese music of the early 19th century. It is especially good for playing Beethoven, Václav Jan Tomášek, some music by Jan Václav Voříšek or Johann Nepomuk Hummel.

Do you also own other instruments?

I also brought back from France an Erard piano, built at the beginning of the 20th century, which represents another type, yet still quite distant from the one we call the modern piano. I have often been afforded the opportunity to play other instruments with my colleagues, either directly at the builders' or in museums.

How important do you consider the composition/suitable instrument relationship? Are you willing to play on your instrument, let's say, any 18th-century piece, or are you of the opinion that the instrument and the selected repertoire should hail from the same period?

I deem the composition/suitable historical instrument relationship crucial, as it is the main attribute of historically informed performance. I really strive to choose a repertoire suitable for the given instrument, otherwise I could just play everything on the "universal" modern piano. Though I also occasionally do perform earlier music on the fortepiano, I do not confine myself to pieces dating from 1800 to 1810. But I avoid playing pieces deviating by several decades, since the instrument was modified every 20 years or so. If I have a choice, I play on each instrument that which is the closest to the time of its origin and that which sounds the best on it.

Do you consider yourself a "purist" in this respect?

No, I don't, but I suspect that others do consider me a purist… Sometimes I make a compromise, for instance, because of the hall in which the composition is to be performed. I think that just as it doesn't make sense to play, let's say, music dating from 50 years later on an instrument from 1800, which in most cases is not possible owing to the range, nor does it make sense to play music dating from the early 19th century on a piano built in the middle of the 19th century. Yet there are musicians who do it and pass it off as "historical" performance. Neither am I tempted to combine early and modern instruments in chamber music, for instance, which occurs too. That is a sort of relativisation, which results in a gradual withering away of the values created by generations of historically informed performance pioneers.

What do you do when you are supposed to play another repertoire on another instrument?

Of course, I first rehearse at home on my instrument, and then I need time to acquaint myself with the particular piano, which in most cases is available for a day or so. I am lucky to have played many different instruments, including those in museums in Paris or Amsterdam, and I can lean on quite ample performance experience, which makes adapting to another instrument easier and faster.

Do you still play both modern and historical instruments, or do the historical prevail?

I still play both instruments. I am interested in all historical types of piano. I am fascinated by some of the instruments from the late 19th century, which afford, for instance, Brahms's music the right dark colour. Furthermore, I am a member of Le Salon 1880, an ensemble within which the organist and conductor Adam Viktora and I perform the erstwhile very popular repertoire for piano and harmonium. Sometimes at concerts I juxtapose 18th-century Classicism and 20th-century Neo-Classicism, performed, naturally, on the respective instruments, which, I think, is extremely inspirational. If the fortepiano does prevail in my repertoire, it may also be due to my striving to offer something original. I am not among the plethora of pianists playing the mainstream repertoire.

The subject of your thesis is the piano pieces of Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek, a contemporary of Beethoven, Schubert, Hummel, Moscheles. How did you come across him? Did you find him or did he find you?

That's a big question. It was probably mutual… It goes back to 10 years ago, when I was seeking material for my profile CD, on which I wanted to include music by a Czech composer. It appeared somewhat natural to me, and perhaps I subconsciously longed for a certain connection with my home when I was abroad… So I began exploring, placing emphasis on my beloved turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, and I came across Voříšek. What I liked about his music was the form still being balanced in the Classicist way, yet the content already "disrupted" by harmonic and other temerities. And when the time came for me to choose the thesis theme, I decided to devote it wholly to Voříšek.

What makes his music interesting?

If we stay within the Classicism-Romanticism categories, I like, as I have said, the Romanticism piercing into the Classicist form in Voříšek's pieces. I find that tension between the form and the content exciting. By the way, compared to Voříšek, Schubert's music was too polished! Voříšek's solo compositions are really loose and passionate. His *Rhapsodies* are more extrovert, more extensive, he evidently wrote them for himself. The *Impromptus*, not Schubert's but Voříšek's invention, are technically simpler. Voříšek's shortcoming, however, was that he would sometimes adhere to the form far too much. The three-section form became fatal for him. When it comes to harmony, Romantic elements sound very tense when played on a historical instrument, with some of the intervals in the period tuning verging on the unusable, which was evidently what the composer intended.

And these experiments are not audible on a modern instrument…

Exactly!

What can you tell us about Voříšek's life?

He hailed from Vamberk, eastern Bohemia, beneath the Orlické mountains, a region incredibly rich in talented musicians. When he was nine and a half years of age, he went to study in Prague, where he was supported by Countess Rosina von Kolowrat. Following her sudden death, Voříšek had to earn his living on his own, as his family were not able to pay for his studies. So from the age of 11 he eked out a living, giving music lessons to his schoolmates. While in Prague, he studied with Václav Jan Tomášek for a short time, in 1813 he moved to Vienna, the major musical centre. He mingled with a group of Beethoven's admirers, and Beethoven himself, the most esteemed composer in Vienna, even complimented him. Yet Voříšek chose the virtuoso Johann Nepomuk Hummel as his teacher, perhaps because he considered himself to be a composing performer more than a composer. What's more, by the time Beethoven had become very eccentric and precious few comprehended that which he composed. Voříšek, as was the case of many of his contemporaries, was particularly fond of his early pieces. It took Voříšek 10 years to attain his desired position in Vienna and he was appointed the imperial court organist. Unfortunately, he did not enjoy his post for long, as he soon contracted tuberculosis and, at the age of 34, succumbed to the disease.

A similarly untimely death to Mozart's…

There are a few more parallels between Voříšek's and Mozart's lives.

Do you mean his being significantly influenced by his father, for instance?

Yes, he played a crucial role in Voříšek's artistic development. His father was a teacher and regens chori, evidently a highly gifted pedagogue. To all appearances, he gave his children splendid training. Voříšek was the youngest son, his elder brother František was a priest and occasional composer, his sister Anna was a very skilful pianist, bearing witness to which is that Voříšek sent her from Vienna a challenging Hummel sonata.
His childhood was comparable to that of Mozart's; he performed as a child prodigy. He walked to the venues of his concerts, we even know that he once trekked to a town that was 250 kilometres distant. His musical talent was immense, but his father wanted his son to have a "proper" job, so later on Voříšek studied law. Nevertheless, music occupied a predominant position in his education. He was so talented and highly effective that he wanted to extend his study of the piano, organ and voice to include violin lessons, which his father forbade, as he considered it too much for the boy. But behind his back, Voříšek took secret lessons from an assistant teacher, rehearsed, and then dazzled his father by playing superbly.

What was Voříšek's nature?

I sense that he was a brilliant, smart person. Slender build, restless, quick witted.

How did he get by in Vienna?

It's incredible how much he had on his plate. He had a considerable number of pupils, worked voluntarily as a clerk, was a member of the prestigious Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, as well as a member of a society performing Renaissance and Baroque music, served as an organist, was an excellent continuo player, appeared at music salons. According to period records, he was a superlative improviser and, when it comes to invention, he allegedly even surpassed Ignaz Moscheles, the absolute star in this respect.

In conclusion, allow me to ask a somewhat provocative question. Given that Voříšek did not consider himself a composer but rather a performing musician who composed a little bit, and was also perceived as such, why revive his music?

One of the reasons is that he was the first to come up with many things. That which today we deem typical of Schubert or, later on, Chopin, can be found many years earlier in Voříšek's work, and I'm not only referring to his being the first to write a piece titled *Impromptu*. Although they did not clearly claim so, they must have known his compositions. I think that Voříšek is a typical example of a person whose ideas were only made famous by others. They further cultivated his ideas. Voříšek failed to do so because, on the one hand, he died so young and because he was busy with plenty of activities besides composing, on the other. One of the theories has it that everything he composed was actually educational material. That is why his oeuvre contains just a single example of each large form. And I think that it is good to acquaint oneself with the work of overlooked composers, if only to know the foundations on which today's mainstream repertoire stands.

PHOTO: ZDENĚK CHRAPEK

For a number of years, **Petra Matějová** *has pursued the path of playing both the modern piano and its historical forms. Her aim is to make each repertoire comply as fully as possible with the sound and performance aesthetics of the periods in which it came into being, which relates in turn to the selection of the corresponding type of instrument. She primarily embraced this performance trend during her six years in Paris, where after graduating from the Academy of Performing Arts and the Conservatory in Prague she specialised in the fortepiano. She has recorded numerous albums featuring both modern and historical pianos for Czech, Slovak and Spanish radio stations, as well as for the French TV channel Mezzo. In 2004 she recorded in Paris a solo CD containing works by Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek, Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Schubert. In 2012 she finished an album of the complete Voříšek piano works for Prague Radio. Petra Matějová has appeared at festivals in France, Spain, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and has given solo recitals and performed within various chamber ensembles in the majority of European countries. Since 1995 she has regularly taught the piano and chamber playing at summer master classes, from 2007 to 2009 she led the pianoforte class within the Summer School of Early Music in Valtice, where she is returning in 2015. Between 2008 and 2013 she taught the pianoforte at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno. In 2014 she completed her doctoral thesis in performance practice, dedicated to J.V.H.Voříšek's piano works, within international "under double guidance" at the Paris Conservatoire and Sorbonne, and at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno.*

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by Karla Hartl

THE CENTENARY OF **VÍTĚZSLAVA KAPRÁLOVÁ**

Vítězslava Kaprálová, c. 1935

PHOTO COURTESY OF © THE KAPRALOVA SOCIETY 4x

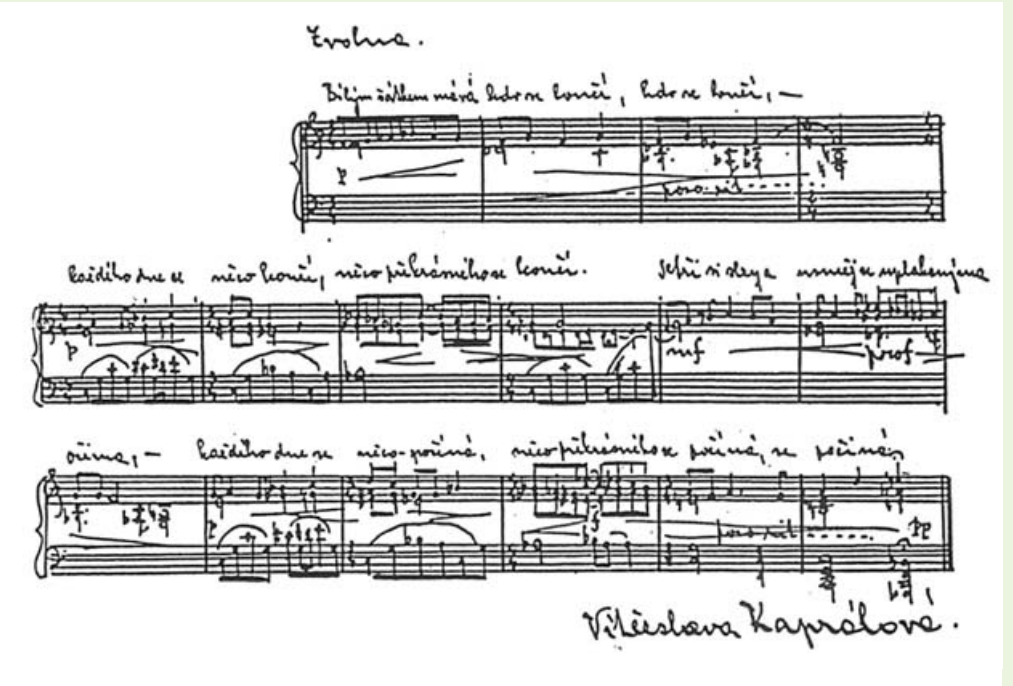
This year marks the 100th birth anniversary of Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915–1940), an important representative of inter-war Czech music. She was regarded as one of the most promising composers of her generation by the foremost Czech musicologist Vladimír Helfert who wrote about her in his seminal study on Czech modern music, Česká moderní hudba, published in 1936.[1] Today, there is no doubt that Kaprálová fulfilled that promise handsomely. Regardless of her untimely passing at the age of 25, she was an exceptionally gifted composer, whose oeuvre has withstood the test of time with admirable ease, proving its relevance for new generations of musicians and music listeners. Despite that her career was cut so short, Kaprálová's legacy is not a mere torso; her catalog includes a respectable number of forty-five compositions, among which there are remarkable works in all genres of music literature: piano, chamber, orchestral, and vocal music.

The cultured environment of Kaprálová's family and its circle of friends, among whom were some of the finest musicians and scholars of the new Czechoslovak republic[2], played an important role in the creative development of young Vítězslava. She also benefitted from the musical offerings of her native Brno, which in many respects measured up to those of the country's capital, Prague. Kaprálová's talent was recognized relatively early and nurtured by her musician parents. Her mother Vítězslava, (born Viktorie Uhlířová, 1890–1973), was a certified voice teacher who studied with Marie Kollarová in Brno and Kristina Morfová at the National Theater in Prague. Kaprálová's father, Václav Kaprál (1889–1947), studied composition with Leoš Janáček and piano performance with Marie Kuhlová and Klotilda Schäferová in Brno. In 1911, he founded his own private music school in Brno, which grew in reputation and continued to attract generations of aspiring pianists throughout the twenties and thirties. (It is worth noting that one of the faculty, the Czech composer Theodor Schaefer, was Kaprálová's first mentor in instrumentation.) Kaprál was an outstanding teacher who never stopped educating himself throughout his life; he perfected his skills at composition under Vítězslav Novák (who was to become in due time also the teacher of choice for his daughter) and his piano technique with Adolf Mikeš in Prague and Alfred Cortot in Paris. Throughout the 1920s, Kaprál also devoted much of his time to piano perfomance: together with his friend Ludvík Kundera, they promoted four-hands repertoire and also performed in concert as a two-piano team. In addition to his performing career, Kaprál worked as a music editor and critic, as a lecturer at Brno's Masaryk University, and since 1936 as a tenured teacher at the Brno Conservatory, where he taught composition.

Music was therefore a natural part of Kaprálová's life since childhood. It was primarily her mother's influence, however, that led to Kaprálová's lifelong passion for art song. Kaprálová's contribution to the genre has indeed been significant: her songs in general and opuses 10, 12, and 14 in particular represent one of the late climaxes of the Czech art song.[3] The song was the most intrinsic genre for Kaprálová – in it, she combined her passion for the singing voice with her love of poetry. Kaprálová had excellent judgment when it came to poetry: she not only had a penchant for high quality poems (one of her favorite poets was Jaroslav Seifert who at the end of his life won Nobel prize for literature) but she also wrote good poetry herself (her first song cycle from 1930 and the orchestral song *Smutný večer* [Sad Evening] from 1936 are believed to be set to her own texts).

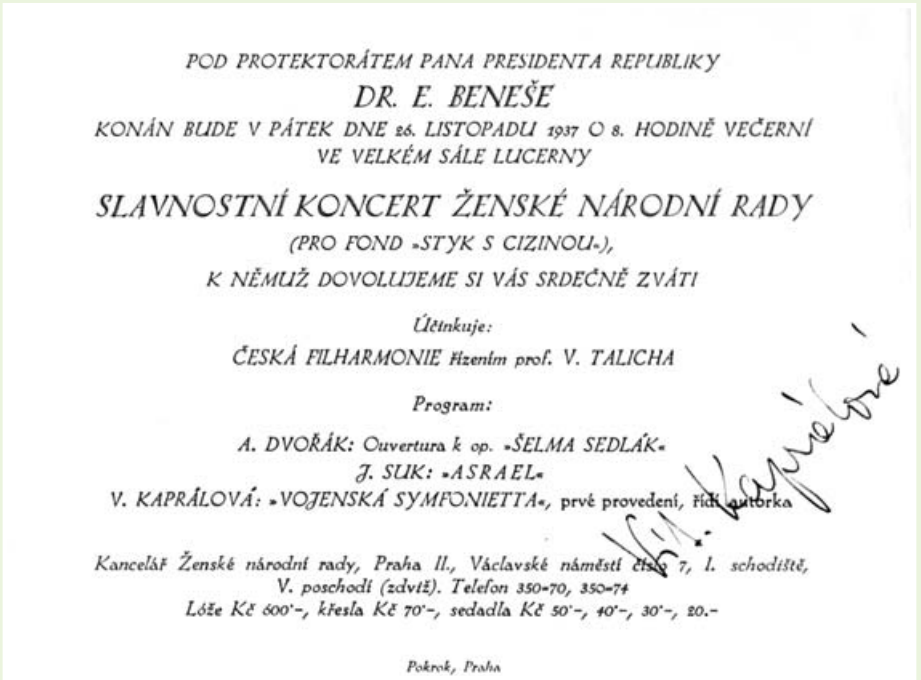
Both parents were very supportive of Kaprálová's interest in music but had rather practical plans for her: she was to take over her father's private music school, which he even named in her honor. Kaprálová had her own plans, however; her mind was already set on composition and conducting, and it was this double major program that she chose for her studies at the Brno Conservatory. It is worth noting that she was the very first female student to graduate from the demanding program in the history of this respectable institution.

At the Brno Conservatory, Kaprálová studied composition with Czech composer Vilém Petrželka and conducting with Vilém Steinman and Zdeněk Chalabala, one of the finest Brno conductors and dramaturgs. Kaprálová wrote a good number of compositions during her "Brno period": one of the earliest was a piano suite that she later orchestrated under the title *Suite en miniature* and assigned it her first opus number. Other noteworthy compositions that followed include Two Pieces for Violin and Piano, op. 3, song cycles *Dvě písně*, op. 4 (Two Songs) and *Jiskry z popele*, op. 5 (Sparks from Ashes), and the remarkable song *Leden* (January) for higher voice and flute, two violins, violoncello and piano, set to words of Vítězslav Nezval, another great Czech poet. The finest among her compositions from the Brno period are, however, the two-movement *Sonata Appassionata*, op. 6 and the Piano Concerto in D Minor, op. 7, with which Kaprálová graduated from the Brno Conservatory both as composer and conductor. Her graduation concert received highly favourable reviews not only in the regional newspapers but also in major dailies. Among them was the German *Prager Tagblatt* whose reviewer expressed his disappointment over the conservatory's decision to present only the first movement of Kaprálová's piano concerto which attested to an extraordinary talent: "Es is zu bedauern, das die Veranstalter nur den ersten Satz des Werkes aufführen liessen, doch auch diese kleine Probe zeigt eine erstaunlich temperamentvolle musikalische Begabung."[4]

In the fall of 1935, Kaprálová was accepted into the Master School of the Prague Conservatory where she continued her double major studies, this time with the best teachers she could find in her own country: composition with Dvořák's pupil, Vítězslav Novák, and conducting with Václav Talich, a chief conductor of Czech Philharmonic and Prague's National Theater. (It is worth noting that in the academic year of 1935/36, when Kaprálová began her studies at the Prague Conservatory, Talich's master class was opened to

Postcard with a facsimile of Kaprálová's manuscript of her song "Bílým šátkem mává kdo se loučí," from the collection Vteřiny, op. 18

only 8 first-year students; even more competitive was Novák's class with just 5 students.[5]) The Master School and the musical life of the country's capital provided a stimulating environment for Kaprálová, in which her natural talent, coupled with her strong work ethic, continued to thrive. By joining the Society for contemporary music Přítomnost (The Presence) and as a regular participant of Silvestr Hippman's musical "Tuesdays" of Umělecká beseda (Artistic forum), she was exposed to contemporary music, both Czech and international. The two societies later also became important platforms for premiering Kaprálová's new works.

During her studies at the Prague Conservatory, Kaprálová composed some of her best known music, such as the song cycle *Navždy*, op. 12 (For Ever) and the art song *Sbohem a šáteček*, op. 14 (Waving Farewell) that she later orchestrated in consultation with Bohuslav Martinů in Paris. Other creations of Kaprálová's "Prague period" include her remarkable String Quartet, op. 8 and her most popular work for piano solo, *Dubnová preludia*, op. 13 (April Preludes), dedicated to Rudolf Firkušný who brought attention to its qualities by his masterly performance several years later in Paris. But one composition in particular brought her the most public attention – *Military Sinfonietta*, op. 11, Kaprálová's graduation work, which was premiered by the Czech Philharmonic under the baton of the composer on November 26, 1937 at Lucerna hall in Prague. It was with the sinfonietta that Kaprálová achieved not only wider recognition at home but also abroad when it was performed at the opening night of the 16th season of the ISCM Festival in London on June 17, 1938. The British premiere of the sinfonietta, in which Kaprálová conducted the excellent BBC Orchestra, was transmitted across the ocean to the United States where it was broadcast by CBS (and it was the name of this corporation – Columbia Broadcasting System –that led to an "urban legend" that the concert was broadcast to Columbia in Latin America). According to the reviewer of *Time Magazine*, Kaprálová not only fared well at the international competition at the festival but she also became the star of the opening concert, and so "to composer Kapralova, who conducted her own lusty, sprawling composition, went the afternoon's biggest hand."[6] Among all the reviews mentioning her performance, Kaprálová would have cherished that of her colleague, Havergal Brian, who in his festival report for *Musical Opinion* wrote: "The first work played and broadcast at the recent festival, a *Military Sinfonietta* by Miss Vitezslava Kapralova of Czechoslovakia, proved an amazing piece of orchestral writing; it was



POD PROTEKTORÁTEM PANA PRESIDENTA REPUBLIKY

DR. E. BENEŠE

KONÁN BUDE V PÁTEK DNE 26. LISTOPADU 1937 O 8. HODINĚ VEČERNÍ
VE VELKÉM SÁLE LUCERNY

SLAVNOSTNÍ KONCERT ŽENSKÉ NÁRODNÍ RADY

(PRO FOND »STYK S CIZINOU«),

K NĚMUŽ DOVOLUJEME SI VÁS SRDEČNĚ ZVÁTI

Účinkuje:

ČESKÁ FILHARMONIE řízením prof. V. TALICHA

Program:

A. DVOŘÁK: Ouvertura k op. »ŠELMA SEDLÁK«
J. SUK: »ASRAEL«
V. KAPRÁLOVÁ: »VOJENSKÁ SYMFONIETTA«, prvé provedení, řídí autorka

Kancelář Ženské národní rady, Praha II., Václavské náměstí číslo 7, I. schodiště, V. poschodí (zdviž). Telefon 350-70, 350-74
Lóže Kč 600·–, křesla Kč 70·–, sedadla Kč 50·–, 40·–, 30·–, 20.–

Pokrok, Praha

Invitation card with Kaprálová's signature

also of logical and well balanced design."[7] But it is unlikely that she ever read it.

Kaprálová travelled to the ISCM festival in London from Paris where she had lived since October of the previous year. She arrived in Paris on a one-year French Government scholarship to advance her music education at the École Normale de musique, initially hoping to continue her double major studies: conducting with Charles Munch and composition with Nadia Boulanger. However, her knowledge of French was not good enough to study with Boulanger; and so she decided to enrol just in the conducting class, because with Munch she could also communicate in German. She also accepted an offer of private consultations with Bohuslav Martinů, who was by then established in France and well respected both in Paris and his native Czechoslovakia. Kaprálová met Martinů in Prague; they became acquainted on April 8, 1937, during Martinů's brief visit to the capital, where he arrived to negotiate with Václav Talich the details of the premiere of his new opera *Julietta* at the National Theater.

In Paris, Martinů became first Kaprálová's mentor, later also her friend, and, at the end, her soulmate. From the very beginning, he was generous with his contacts and time; and, besides hours of free consultations, he also opened quite a few doors for Kaprálová. Soon after she arrived in Paris, Martinů introduced her to a circle of composers who were members of Triton, a Parisian society for contemporary music, whose concerts (there were seven to twelve of them per year, concentrated in the period of January–May) Kaprálová diligently attended. He entrusted her with the task of conducting his Concerto for Harpsichord and Small Orchestra, H 246 on June 2, 1938 in Paris, just two weeks before her well-received ISCM Festival appearance. He also facilitated the publication of her *Variations sur le carillon de l'église St-Étienne du Mont*, op. 16, which he much admired, by La Sirène éditions musicales (whose catalog was bought after the war by Eschig that still list Kaprálová's original edition in their piano catalog).

In the fall of 1938, Martinů spent much time and effort to secure another stipend for Kaprálová so that she could return to France. The rapidly worsening political situation and separation from Kaprálová were the roots of his anxiety projected into his *Double Concerto*, H 271 for two string orchestras, piano and timpani. Martinů finished this score on the very day of the Munich Agreement. During the same time, Kaprálová continued to work, back home, on her Partita for strings and piano, op. 20, in which Martinů, as he put it himself, "interfered more than he would have liked but both (*he and Kaprálová*) looked at it as a learning exercise (*for Kaprálová*)."[8] However, he did not interfere in her *Suita rustica*, op. 19, commissioned by Universal Edition London, which Kaprálová composed in just three weeks during late October and early November 1938. Neither did he interfere in her Concertino for

Violin, Clarinet, and Orchestra, op. 21 (1939), the last movement and orchestration of which Kaprálová later set aside and did not finish. (At the beginning of this millennium, Brno composers Miloš Štědroň and Leoš Faltus were entrusted with the task of finishing the concertino's orchestration so that it could be recorded for a television documentary about Kaprálová. The concertino had its world premiere on January 10, 2002 in Hradec Králové and its Prague premiere on November 26, 2014 – on this occasion, it was performed by Czech Philharmonic at Prague's Rudolfinum.)

The Triton concerts and the thought-provoking discussions with Martinů were some of the elements of Kaprálová's new environment that further stimulated and accelerated her creative development: during the two years she lived in Paris, Kaprálová produced almost as much music as during the five years in Brno and two years in Prague. The pinnacles of her first "Parisian period" (October 1937–May 1938) include *Variations sur le carillon*, op. 16 and her (unfinished) reed trio. Another work that Kaprálová composed in Paris during this period, the large orchestral cantata *Ilena*, op. 15, is important in the context of her own oeuvre. Its musical ideas occupied Kaprálová's mind as early as 1932. When she finally began working with them, however, she found the music rooted in the post-romantic idiom from which she had already moved; consequently, she felt ambivalent about the composition and finished it only because Martinů valued it. Unfortunately, she did not complete its orchestration. (It was finished only in 2007 by Martin Kostaš, as part of his graduate studies requirements at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, so that *Ilena* could receive its world premiere on May 31, 2007 in Brno.) During her second Parisian period (January 1939–May 1940), Kaprálová was even more productive. Soon after her return to Paris in January 1939, she composed two works honoring the memory of Czech writer Karel Čapek, whose passing during Christmas 1938 was mourned by the nation: the Elegy for violin and piano, and the melodrama *Karlu Čapkovi* (To Karel Čapek). On March 15, 1939, German armies marched into the streets of Prague. In addition to the occupation of her homeland, Kaprálová had to deal with a personal crisis in her relationship with Martinů; in anguish, she turned to the only solace afforded to her – music. The result was the Concertino for Violin, Clarinet, and Orchestra, op. 21. It reflects much of the composer's mental state at the worst period of her life; she even scribbled on the score "Job 30:26" – a telling reference to the Book of Job (Y*et when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness*). The Concertino, with its bold ideas and modern musical language, was to be Kaprálová's last major work; only two high points were to follow: the song cycle *Sung into the Distance*, op. 22, and the *Deux ritournelles pour violoncelle et piano*, op. 25, her last composition.

The German occupation of Czechoslovakia changed Kaprálová's life literally overnight. As a return home was not an option, Kaprálová was now facing the arduous task of earning her own living; she no longer received financial aid from home (as financial transactions were subjected to new, strict rules), nor her stipend. During the final year of her life, Kaprálová spent much of her precious time on small commissions in an effort to support herself (one of them was the lively *Prélude de Noël*, an orchestral miniature that Kaprálová composed for a Christmas program of the Paris PTT Radio). Throughout the spring of 1939, Kaprálová was trying to obtain a scholarship at the Juilliard School so that she could relocate to the United States (in the company of Martinů). Nothing came of the plan, however; and at the end of summer 1939, Kaprálová entirely depended on assistance of several of her friends and a few benefactors (the most generous among them was Jewish-Czech entrepreneur Pavel Deutsch to whom

Kaprálová and Martinů (with Zdena Duchoslavová and Jaroslav Křička), Tři Studně, Summer 1938

she was introduced by Martinů; she also received two financial contributions from Czech ex-President Edvard Beneš to whom she once dedicated her *Military Sinfonietta*). Lacking regular income, Kaprálová joined the household of her artist friends who found themselves in a similar position and decided to pool their resources to get through hard times (one of these friends was her future husband Jiří Mucha). She also joined the efforts of the Czech community in Paris that organized activities for and around the newly formed Czechoslovak Army. Soon she became heavily involved: from founding a choir and writing reviews for *La Cause Tché*coslovaque to composing music for the radio (Paris PTT Radio), stage (together with Martinů she composed stage music for a theater group) and even screen. (The latter concerned most possibly a commision facilitated by Kaprálová's friend, film actor Hugo Haas, who at the time worked on two films in France: *Mer en flames* by director Léo Joannon, in which Haas played a leading role; the film was released in 1945 under the title *Documents Secrets*; and the film *Ils se sont rencontrés dans l'eau*, whose script Haas co-authored.[9]) In the last months of her life, Kaprálová also resumed her studies at the *École Normale* (whether she was taking class with Boulanger remains inconclusive), adding to her already busy schedule. In April 1940, less than two months before her death, she married Jiří Mucha. In early May, Kaprálová exhibited the first symptoms of her terminal illness. Since Paris was threatened by German invasion, she was evacuated by Mucha to Montpellier, near his military base in Agde, on May 20. By then Kaprálová was already seriously ill; and, following several weeks of suffering, she succumbed to her illness on June 16, 1940.

Despite the amount of research amassed over the decades, there are still many questions in the Kaprálová historiography that remain unanswered. While there is not a single text on the composer that would fail to mention her relationship with married Martinů (some authors do not even shy away from analyzing and evaluating it!), in fact we know very little about it. One thing is certain, however; that it meant a great deal to both of them, and when, in the end, Kaprálová gave it up, she did it out of consideration for her parents, with whom she had lifelong loving relationship. Kaprálová's relationship with Mucha also raises more questions than answers.Would she have married him under different circumstances than in her difficult situation in 1940? Even the cause of Kaprálová's death is a mystery, despite the official diagnosis of miliary tuberculosis. It does not fit all that well with the symptoms and the nature of her sudden and acute illness, and is also undermined by the documents found in several private and public archives.[10] The questions that are more important, however, are those concerning the composer's oeuvre. One remains a complete enigma: Kaprálová's opus 24. The composer's correspondence might (or might not) offer some clues: in January 1939, Kaprálová wrote to her friend Rudolf Kopec that her mind had been pre-occupied for some time with musical ideas for a new work she would like to entitle České oratorium (Czech oratorio); in May 1939, she wrote to her parents about her intention to compose Sonatina for violin and piano; in another letter to her parents, from March 1940, she announced that she was about to compose "a smaller thing for orchestra" she would like to entitle *Krajiny* (Landscapes). Did she reserve the opus 24 for one of these compositions? Had she ever begun composing any of them? We might also never discover another of Kaprálová's works, the second of her Deux ritournelles, although we know that she at least finished the sketch. Another piece of lost music is Kaprálová's Two Dances for Piano, op. 23, of which only an unfinished sketch of one dance survived. Perhaps these autographs will resurface one day, as did the orchestral score of *Prélude de Noël*. But whether they will be found or not, we have been fortunate to have the rest of Kaprálová's oeuvre: the vital body of works which never fails to surprise and move us.

Karla Hartl is founder and chair of the Kapralova Society, and co-editor of the *Kapralova Society Journal* and ***The Kaprálová Companion***, the first English monograph on the composer, published in 2011 by Lexington Books. Her new book ***Dopisy domů*** (Letters home) – an edited collection of Kaprálová's correspondence with her parents – will be published this year by Amos Editio in Prague.

1 Vladimír Helfert, Česká moderní hudba. Studie o české hudební tvořivosti (Praha: Editio Supraphon, 1970), 303. A reprint of the first edition published in 1936 by Index, Olomouc.
2 Czechoslovakia became an independent democratic republic on October 28, 1918.
3 Jindřiška Bártová, "Kaprálová in the Context of Czech Music." In The Kaprálová Companion, ed. Karla Hartl and Erik Entwistle (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 13–25.
4 "Konzerte," a review signed by initials W.H., Prager Tagblatt, June 20, 1935, 6.
5 Výroční zpráva Pražské konservatoře za školní rok 1935/36 (Praha: Pražská konservatoř, 1936).
6 "International Egg Rolling." Time Magazine, June 27, 1938. Available online content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,759885,00.html
7 Havergal Brian, "The Nature of Modern Music. Contemporary Music Festival," Musical Opinion, July 1938, p. 858.
8 Přemysl Pražák, ed., Vítězslava Kaprálová, studie a vzpomínky (Praha: HMUB, 1949), 127.
9 Karla Hartl, "Vítězslava Kaprálová: An Annotated Life Chronology." in The Kaprálová Companion, ed. Karla Hartl and Erik Entwistle (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 151n85.
10 Ibid, 153n95.

by Lenka Dohnalová

Looking back on the Year of Czech Music 2014

2014 was another year in which music-lovers in the Czech Republic and numerous other countries worldwide commemorated significant anniversaries of major Czech composers, primarily Bedřich Smetana (1824–84), Antonín Dvořák (d. 1904), Leoš Janáček (b. 1854), Josef Suk (b. 1874), and another about 60 music creators and performers, including the centenary of the birth of the conductor and composer Rafael Kubelík, whose legacy was commemorated at the opening concert of the Prague Spring festival; the centenary of the birth of the pianist and composer Josef Páleníček, a superlative interpreter of Janáček's and Beethoven's music; and the 20th anniversary of the death of Jarmila Novotná, a soprano of Czech origin and former soloist of the Metropolitan Opera. [1)]

Anniversaries are a natural basis of Years of Czech Music, whose tradition dates back to 1924. A year is a long time, hence a well-formulated approach resulted in the formation of a partially co-ordinated network of organisers, whose projects were supported by state financial assistance (to the tune of approximately CZK 50 million in 2014). Furthermore, the Year of Czech Music included projects that during the course of 2014 spontaneously joined the collective promotional framework without state support. The common denominator was using the logo, a triangle with a glowing heart, or the designation "Year of Czech Music". The artistic auspices of the project were assumed by the mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kožená and the chief conductor of the Berliner Philharmoniker, Sir Simon Rattle. The Honorary President was Jiří Bělohlávek, music director of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra.

The "Year" took the form of a celebration of Czech music, with a significant role being played both by the projects implemented by major professional organisations – theatres, orchestras, festivals, galleries, publishers and the media – and events held within local communities, amateur and educational programmes (other partners of the project were the ministries of education and foreign affairs, as well as the department for local development). The subtitle of the Year of Czech Music was "creativity and co-operation", thus events complying with this motto were particularly supported in financial and promotional terms. The Year did not aim to bring a higher quantity of Czech works but rather to improve the conditions for performance, present overlooked and new titles, cycles, find new connections and establish new, previously non-existing meaningful co-operation, a case in point being the National Gallery's participation in the exhibition *Vivat Musica!* (partnership with the Czech Museum of Music, Prague Spring, etc.), which provided a historical summary of musical iconography from its collections.

During the course of 2014, we at the co-ordination centre registered approximately 2,000 projects and events (performances, concerts, exhibitions, conferences, publications and documents), which explicitly endorsed the Year of Czech Music and obtained public subsidies from Czech sources, including those directed abroad. The most noteworthy of them was the *Czech Dreams 2014* project, which took place in a number of countries in the second half of the year. Moreover, we registered another approximately 3,000 events that were mainly focused on the Czech repertoire, even though

abroad they were mostly covered from local sources and spontaneously responded to the respective anniversaries. This monitoring was interesting too, as it provided us with the information about the projects' natural background. To give a few specific examples: the Budapest Festival Orchestra, headed by the conductor Iván Fischer, built their tour of Germany and the USA (New York) solely on Antonín Dvořák's music (a total of six symphonies and concertos!), and, in collaboration with the Czech Philharmonic Choir and Czech singers, gave concert performances of *Rusalka* in Budapest and Bruges. For his part, the young Czech conductor Jakub Hrůša (b. 1981) not only guided the *New Year Concert Opening the Year of Czech Music,* on 1 January in Brno, and the official *Concluding Concert of the Year of Czech Music,* at the O2 Arena in Prague on 17 December, but also throughout the year performed the Czech repertoire, including 20th-century music, with a number of foreign orchestras – the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, in which he is currently formally the main guest conductor, the Dallas Symphony in the USA, the Philharmonia Orchestra in the United Kingdom (also featuring the young Czech pianist Lukáš Vondráček), the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Helsinki, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France together with the Prague Philharmonic Choir in Paris, and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Australia. The Czech Philharmonic, led by Jiří Bělohlávek, based the programme of its tours of Europe, China and the USA on the Czech repertoire too.

As regards productions of Czech works staged abroad, media attention was primarily drawn to the performance in January of Dvořák's *Rusalka* at the Komische Oper Berlin, the traditionally conceived version at the Metropolitan Opera, starring Renée Fleming, as well as the piece's acclaimed premiere at the Wiener Staatsoper, musically prepared by Jiří Bělohlávek. To all appearances, in 2014 *Rusalka* was the most frequently staged Czech opera (followed by Janáček's *Jenufa*). Noteworthy among the projects within the Year of Czech Music directly supported from public sources was a National Theatre in Brno production, directed by Jiří Morávek, which was commissioned by the organiser of its May premiere at the Royal Opera House Muscat in Oman. Another remarkable staging of *Rusalka* was a successful performance of its chamber version (musically adapted by the Slovak composer Martin Lejava), directed by Daniel Pfluger, in Biel, Switzerland. Significantly participating in the organisation of the latter project was the Swiss conductor Kaspar Zehnder, who over the long term has collaborated with Czech orchestras. The Biel production of *Rusalka,* which was a prominent part of the *Czech Dreams* festival, thus ushered in the possibility of staging the opera at smaller theatres. The aforementioned reveals that numerous foreign projects were carried out with the participation

PHOTO: SABINE BURGER 2x

Chamber version of Antonín Dvořák's Rusalka Biel, Switzerland

of Czech artists, particularly conductors, and ensembles, particularly the Prague Philharmonic Choir and the Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno.

When looking at the projects that took place in the Czech Republic itself, worthy of mention when it comes to those ongoing include recordings; for instance, the first-ever recording of Dvořák's opera *Alfred* (Arco Diva), with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra (see CMQ 3/2014), and the recording of Dvořák's complete symphonies and instrumental concertos, made by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek (Decca Classics) and supplemented by a documentary directed by Barbara Willis Sweete (see CMQ 3/2014). Mainly in connection with this recording, Jiří Bělohlávek received the *Prize for Promotion of Czech Music and Antonín Dvořák's Works* within a concert given by the Czech Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall (see CMQ 4/2014). Other fascinating recordings are of the original (1927) version of Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, made by the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Prague Philharmonic Choir, conducted by Tomáš Netopil (Supraphon); the recording of Josef Páleníček's piano concertos, marking the centenary of the composer's birth, made by the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra and the soloist Jitka Čechová (Triart Management); and the finalisation of an 8-CD set featuring Bedřich Smetana's complete piano works by Jitka Čechová, a connoisseur of his music (Supraphon).

The Arts Institute prepared, in collaboration with Czech Television, a documentary mapping the Year of Czech Music, titled *Through the Landscape of Czech Music*, published the book *Classical Music Performers in the Czech Republic – The Young Generation*, which provides a catalogue of talented young classical music performers (ISBN 978-80-7008-338-3), as well as new samplers pertaining to minority and independent pop music: the CD *Czech Music Crossroads*, documenting the first-ever showcase within the international world music, jazz and alternative music festival Colours of Ostrava, and the CD *Diaries/Dreams/Nightmares, the current Czech indie, electro and experimental scene*, by which the Arts Institute has proceeded in the conception of gradual mapping by means of samplers the genres of Czech music (it also re-issued the popular *Anthology of Czech Music and Contemporary Czech Jazz*).

When it comes to interesting new arrangements of well-known compositions performed in the Year of Czech Music, I would like to highlight Jiří Teml's orchestration of Dvořák's *Love Songs,* commissioned by Magdalena Kožená (the piece was presented at the opening concert of the Year of Czech Music on 1 January), and Sylvie Borodová's orchestration of Dvořák's *Gypsy Songs,* initially intended for the baritone Thomas Hampson yet owing to his illness sung in a version for soprano by Gabriela Beňačková, a superlative performer of the Czech repertoire. As for chamber versions, they included the aforementioned adaptation of *Rusalka* and the older chamber version of Janáček's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, performed in Jonathan Dove's 1998 arrangement in Brno by the Chamber Opera of the Music Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts.

The Year of Czech Music also saw premieres of new operas. These included Martin Smolka and Jiří Adámek's extraordinary semiotic "spoken opera" *The List of Infinity*, performed by the superb theatre group Boca Loca Lab within the intriguing second edition of the *New Opera Days Ostrava* (co-organised by the Ostrava Centre for New Music and the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava). Other notable new titles were Ivo Medek and Markéta

Dvořáková's chamber opera *Alice in Bed*, presenting an updated conception of Alice in Wonderland, and Sylvie Bodorová's *The Legend of Catherine of Redern,* which was premiered in Liberec. Also significant within the New Opera Days Ostrava was the staging of a work by Rudolf Komorous, a Czech composer based in Canada, where he has gained a position of style-creator, which hosted the European premiere of his opera *No no miya*, co-produced by the Arts Institute. Noteworthy too was the National Theatre production *1914,* initiated by Aleš Březina and Soňa Červená, and directed by Robert Wilson, which was soon staged abroad too, in Slovakia, Hungary and Austria. At the end of the year, the National Theatre in Prague hosted the world premiere of Alois Hába's opera *The New Land,* written between 1934 and 1936, depicting Soviet collectivisation in the Ukraine and laying bare the attendant violence and social engineering. Dealing with a political subject too was the opera by the prematurely deceased Czech-Chinese-Canadian composer Andrew Yin Svoboda *Martin Středa – A True Opera Monodrama from the Jáchymov Hell,* directed by Rocc and premiered by the recently formed company Opera povera. Also falling into the group of projects based on a political theme is an exhibition prepared by the National Museum-Czech Museum of Music and installed at the Vítkov Memorial in Prague, titled *Politics and Music*. Divided into several sections mapping the history up to the present time, the exhibition is relatively modest yet possesses great potential for extension.

As for more traditional operas, welcome was the attention devoted to Zdeněk Fibich, a composer whose oeuvre is currently being discovered owing in part to recordings released by Arco Diva, and his grand opus *The Fall of Arkun*, which, after an interval of more than 80 years, was staged at the National Theatre in Prague, with the music being prepared by the American conductor John Fiore. The productions of Hába's *The New Land* and Fibich's *The Fall of Arkun* indisputably require better conditions for the preparation of the performers and the audience alike, since they are no longer familiar with the works' context in practice. When it comes to Fibich's opera, I highly recommend that you watch Fiore's extensive, five-part account on YouTube. [2]

Attention was also drawn by critical versions of compositions and historically informed performances: for instance, the aforementioned *Glagolitic Mass* presented in its 1927 version, and the historically informed performance of Dvořák's *Symphony No. 1*, delivered by Marek Štryncl in the authentic milieu in Zlonice within the Dvořák Prague international music festival. Of similar stylistic excellence was a concert made up exclusively of Jan Dismas Zelenka works given by Collegium 1704 and conducted by their artistic director, Václav Luks, at the Baroque Theatre in Český Krumlov within the local international music festival. By the way, in 2014 Štryncl and the Musica florea ensemble premiered in Valtice his extraordinary mobile Baroque theatre piece *Florea Theatrum.* [3]
Added value was also possessed by cycles, including the *Dvořák Song Marathon*, featuring all of Dvořák's songs, in Ostrava (see CMQ 2/2014), and the *Weekend of Czech Chamber Music* within the Prague Spring, a series of Dvořák's symphonies performed at the Dvořák Prague festival, etc.

Plenty of other interesting projects could be listed, yet the present text's scope simply does not allow for it. Nevertheless, we would like to mention at least a few events for children, made with children, and amateur activities. Today, the majority of Czech orchestras, theatres and festivals devote to children in an interactive way. In the Year of Czech Music, in June the Czech Philharmonic held a concert together with Primary Art School pupils and talented young soloists on Hradčany square in the Prague Castle district, while the Janáček Brno festival organised for children the workshop *Meet the Cunning Little Vixen*. In collaboration with the Move Association and the Musica nova international competition, the Arts Institute produced compositional classes for children and the acoustic creation competition *Czech Ear*[4] (see the separate article in this issue). High-quality amateur activities were mainly overseen by the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS), with the most interesting ones including the gathering of the global amateur choir *World Voices*.

In conclusion, we would like to extend thanks to all those who approached the tradition and challenge of the Year of Czech Music in an open and creative manner, imbuing it with refreshment, reflection, co-operation and support. [5]

1 When it comes to defining "Czechness" in music, back in 2012 we launched a specialist discussion by holding the *National Identity/ies in Czech Music* conference and subsequently publishing the proceedings, available at www.yearofczechmusic.cz/download/what_means_czech_in_music.pdf. We will welcome further contributions on this topic.
2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCv1gCjVeEs and the following 4 parts.
3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js2iYiT01Ug
4 ucho.sitespecificart.cz
5 For more information, visit www.yearofczechmusic.cz and https://www.facebook.com/rokceskehudby

by Lenka Dohnalová

MUSICA NOVA 2014

Let us create more eco-friendly art. Sound may function both as a narcotic and a remedy…

I have just finished listening to the composer and theoretician Denis Smalley's splendid new lecture, *Spatiality in acousmatic music*, in which he highlights the necessity of a phenomenological contextual approach to creating music – the composer should bear in mind that music does not engender in a vacuum but is a part of other contexts.[1] Shortly before, I had been listening to a few new works by the representatives of the youngest generation in the domain of experimental electronic, industrial, dark, laptop, glitch, etc., as well as commentaries that, owing to their vocabulary, are difficult for a wider group of listeners to comprehend. The listening rather off-balanced me psycho-physiologically. Next I read several invitations for festivals and competitions pertaining to electroacoustics for this year – one of the scheduled topics is *Fear and Sound*,[2] for instance. Intriguing and of the moment. Or formal instructions for composers: "… *each work must necessarily fall into one of the four competition categories"* (i.e. sound art, sonic research, soundscapes, digital art).[3] The categorisation by the *Sonic Arts Award*, which formulated the invitation, indisputably reflects the discipline's real development. Electronic music has been profiling itself in terms of style and genre, particularising. In my opinion, such explicit categorisation ("*must necessarily fall into one of the four categories"*), which today is quite frequent, programmatically enhances the technological and intellectual approach, instead of the holistic creative one, specific for art. We all need more reflections on contexts, as Denis Smalley says.

About a decade ago, I thought that composers of electroacoustic music and its listeners would make use of technologies as one of the additional, already matter-of-course tools for creation, yet it is evident that the potential of technologies and sound alone will always be so fascinating for part of the young generation that it will require time to get it across and truly understand it as a tool that can be both harmonising and risky.[4] Consequently, we decided to turn to the youngest generation (without a lower age limit), also with the aim to bridge the abyss that exists between individual creators and champions of various styles of this type of music and draw their attention directly to the source, i.e. to extend their practical experience with sounds of various origins and kinds. Thus, within the Year of Czech Music, and in collaboration with the Move Association, we carried out a project I titled "Czech Ear". Its aim is to teach children how to listen to all sorts of sounds, to teach them how to identify, record and process them in a creative manner in the form of tiny compositions. By cultivating the discriminatory ability towards auditory stimulations, it reduces the need to increase the overall intensity of acoustic signals. This aspect is at least as important as creative work with technologies. The younger group included 10-year-old children, who had never previously devoted to this type of activity and then worked within it for a mere two months. Their results were evaluated by an international jury in a special round of the Musica nova competition. And they were remarkable indeed. The children are still interested in the work and they now perceive sounds that, as they themselves put it, they did not even register before.

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The Musica nova sonic art competition has retained just two categories: studio creation and live creation. In the case of the latter, the "line" of a composition is fundamentally borne by the voice, instrument or "tools" (the body with sensors, for instance), mediated by human gesture live, i.e. by that which the human body manages in real time. This, of course, does not mean that it cannot contain partial components prepared in advance. We continue to see in practice that these two categories have aesthetics distinguishable by hearing. Our themes, "rhythm", "colour" and "topos" for 2014, are only of an inspirational nature, they are not compulsory. Our priority remains artistic quality, the work's inner motivation. The given themes are not meant technologically, but philosophically.

Some 83 compositions by participants from 26 countries were presented within Musica nova 2014, the competition's 23rd edition. The concert of the laureates took place on 9 December 2014 at the Alfred ve dvoře theatre in Prague.

Placed first in the category of studio, i.e. pure electroacoustic, music was the young British artist Manuella Blackburn with her minutiosely elaborated piece TIME WILL TELL. Manuella Blackburn specialises in acousmatic music, working with both the virtual and real space (spaces), focusing on attaining a contentually fully-fledged sound. Her idiom reveals a respect to that what is audible in the real, interesting work with spatiality in detail and the whole alike, a high technical quality, sense of gesture and theatricality, not to mention humour. She also composes music for dance and is a member of the Manchester Theatre in Sound (MANTIS), which evidently provides her with useful practical experience.
Honorary mentions in this category went to Canada's Valérie Delaney, for her piece LA CAVERNE AQUATIQUE, and Brazil's Alfredo Ribeiro, with CHRONICLES OF LIFE AND DEATH. Valérie Delaney too mainly composes acousmatic music, and has also created film scores. Her work synthetically simulated various spaces of aquatic caves in an extremely imaginative and forcible manner. Although Alfredo Ribeiro has not received as technologically excellent training and does not possess as great technical skills as the two aforementioned young women, he mastered the overall narrative form as a practical musician (double-bass) and also a composer of instrumental music, with his material being considerably more explicit, made up of various recordings of specific sounds. The finalists in this category are well known to specialists. In her composition, HIDDEN VALUES, Natasha Barrett (UK/Norway), another representative of the British acousmatic school, opted for a philosophical approach ("hidden" are the values of some quotidian inventions, such as the umbrella, lock or screen). The piece by the older German composer and musicologist Clemens von Reusner resembles poetic monochromatic fine drawings. With his work, TOPOS CONCRETE, responding to the competition's invitation, he symbolically sonically treated materials of various landscapes (stone, sand, water, wood…). FLORES OF FYNBOS by the USA's Robert Scott Thompson is a whimsical three-part composition evoking by means of sonic synthesis an extremely poetic image of various shapes and fragrances of the botanical world.
In the instrumental category, the first prize was awarded to the piece MACHINE GUN by the Greek duo Myrto Korkokiou and Apostola Loufopoulose. Myrto Korkokiou is a flautist. Their joint composition was gripping owing to the distinct rhythm and vivid gesture, which sonic art often lacks. Similarly, Roderik de Man, today already an established composer, always modifies his utterance on the basis of being inspired by a particular instrument and instrumentalist, in this case a combination of guitar, pan flute and electronics in LES EXTREMES SE TOUCHENT. Honorary mentions in this category were received by the Canadian of Czech origin Teresa Hron and the UK's Monty Adkins for their piece LEPIDOPTERA for flute and electronics, and Portugal's Joao Pedro Oliveira for TITANIUM, combining the sound of the piano and electronics in the manner typical for his idiom (sonic waves, accents with auras). Another finalist in this category was Martin Klusák (born in 1987), with his site-specific composition Z-E-N for shakuhachi, strings and live electronics, structurally connected with the architecture of the Church of Our Lady Victorious in Bílá Hora, Prague (a pilgrimage site built by J. B. Santini), where it was premiered on 8 October 2014. The finalists also included Mario Mary, with his DOUBLE CONCERTO, Brazil's Flo Menezes, with TRANSSCRIPTIO, and Japan's Akiko Ushijima, with her sonically and stylistically intriguing piece INSTAN´STILLATION for bass flute and electronics.

The first prize in the competition's Czech round went to Martin Klusák, for his aforementioned Z-E-N, while the second prize was received by Jakub Rataj (born in 1984), for his composition JEDEN (One) for ensemble and electronics.

The contestants in the Czech Ear section included both independent creators and primary school pupils, who worked under the guidance of tutors from the Move Association according to the project's dispositions,[5]

namely, in a group for children aged 10 and above, and individuals, aged 15 or above.

During the two months, the children learned how to recognise and seek out interesting sonic sources, which they, in their own words, had not previously been able to perceive at all, and ultimately even became fond of. They learned to record them, got to know the software, and ultimately created their own short pieces.
The category of children up to 12 years of age was won by 10-year-old Oliver Brown, with the compositions KOSTEL, CHODNÍK, LIJAVEC (Church, Pavement, Sheets of Rain), second prize was shared by 10-year-old Josefína Zachová, with her piece VZPOMÍNKY NA PRÁZDNINY (Memories of the Summer Holidays), and 11-year-old Jakub Burian & Mayton, with the miniatures in the dance electro style CHERNOBYL and REINCARNATION. We did not exclude any style from the competition, with one of the aims of Czech Ear being to cultivate the style of music close to children, thus levelling out the gap between stylistic groups and children's current taste and the standard school curriculum.
The category of children above 12 years of age was won by 17-year-old Jan Hubáček, with the composition NAPĚTÍ (Tension), second came Dan Smejkal, another boy fond of dance electro, with the pieces PŘÍJEMNOST (Pleasantness) and INTERSECT.
The Czech Ear competition, which brought a breath of fresh air, as well as, evidently, a scent of the future, into the work of the Musica nova jury and the concert, is set to continue.

Contact: lenka.dohnalova@artsinstitute.cz

Manuella Blackburn

1 Acousmatics etymologically refers to the Pythagorean practice, thus also, potentially, to the spiritual potency of sound.
2 www.bocs.org.uk
3 www.sonicartsaward.it/
4 This subject is part of the psychophysiology and ecology of electroacoustic music and sound effects. It encompasses an intricate set of issues that should not be overlooked by sonic creation making use of amplifications and absolutely newly structured sound.
Sound not only affects the auditory organ and can do irreversible damage to the ear, the intensity and reshaping of sound into comprehensive layers also directly impacts the neurovegetative balance and thus, consequently, the metabolism at the cellular level. What is more, when sound attains high intensity, on the basis of correspondence with the density of bodily organs and fluids in the body, the frequency spectrum directly acts resonantly on specific parts of the body.
5 ucho.sitespecificart.cz

Myrto Korkokiou

Martin Klusák

by Boris Klepal

CZECH MUSIC AROUND THE WORLD, IN PREMIERES AND FOR EVERY DAY

AN OLD CZECH SAYING HAS IT THAT: "EVERY CZECH IS A MUSICIAN". WE ARE IMMENSELY PROUD OF OUR MUSIC, AND WE BELIEVE THAT THE ENTIRE WORLD LIKES IT TOO. THE QUESTION, THOUGH, IS HOW MUCH THE WORLD REALLY CARES ABOUT IT, AND HOW MUCH WE OURSELVES CARE ABOUT IT. THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF PREMIERES OF PIECES BY CZECH COMPOSERS AND SIGNIFICANT PERFORMANCES OF CZECH MUSIC ABROAD STRIVES TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION.

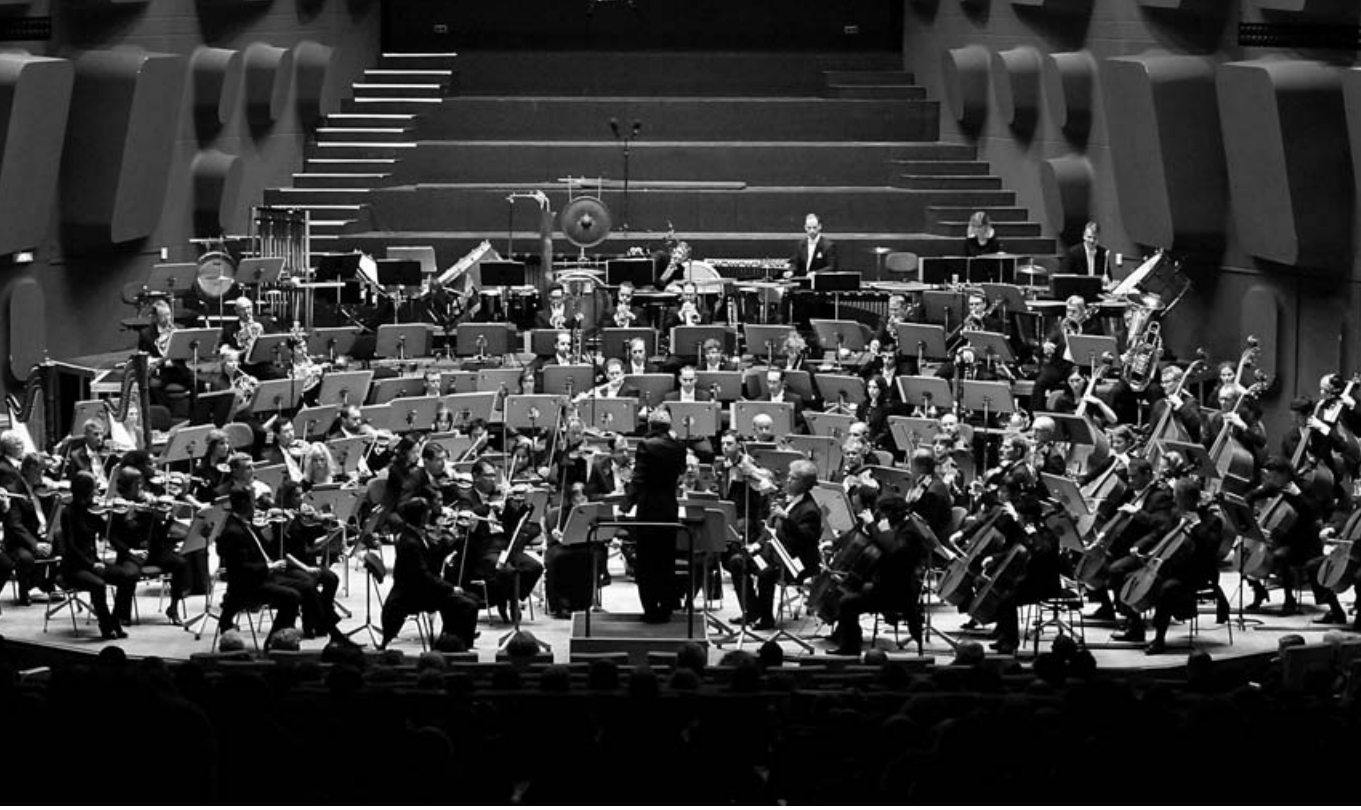
An old Czech saying has it that: "Every Czech is a musician". We are immensely proud of our music, and we believe that the entire world likes it too. The question, though, is how much the world really cares about it, and how much we ourselves care about it. The following summary of premieres of pieces by Czech composers and significant performances of Czech music abroad strives to answer this question.

A calendar of events associated with Czech music started to be compiled upon the initiative of the Czech Music Information Centre in Prague, the publisher of this journal, and the idea primarily gave rise to the essential question of what such a calendar should actually include. It should be a summary of performances that are in any way extraordinary, which we right at the beginning delimitated as the instruction "not paying attention to each and every New World Symphony". More important, however, is to determine what to include in the survey, not that which should be disqualified from it in advance. By no means do we intend to diminish anyhow the significance of Antonín Dvořák, with our objective rather being to find that which is remarkable in Czech music right now. That which is able to win recognition on both the domestic and international scale, without being supported by the long-term tradition, the popularity among long-time subscribers to symphonic concerts and mechanical programming. The New World Symphony is indeed a beautiful piece, one of the most frequently

played symphonies there is, but this very fact also conceals the reason why we do not include its performances in our calendar. It has long been the world's property, part of the core repertoire of symphony orchestras, just as Beethoven's Fifth or Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique". It ranks among the works in the case of which the composer's nationality has almost vanished from the general consciousness, or at least precious few actually perceive it as relevant.

But why include Smetana's The Bartered Bride and not include the New World Symphony? Even large opera houses today make do with four to five premieres within a season, with each of them thus being a special event. Symphonic programmes can be rehearsed within three days, whereas it takes two to three months to prepare an opera. Accordingly, we include all the productions of Czech operas in the summary (leaving aside the question of whether performances of Smetana's The Brandenburgers in Bohemia and Libuše at Czech theatres should be considered special events – yet this is uninteresting in global terms, and it would seem that no one in the Czech Republic overly misses the operas). Furthermore, we also include world premieres of works by Czech composers in the Czech Republic. We include performances of pieces – chamber and orchestral alike – by contemporary Czech composers at concerts abroad, if they are events at least partially worthy of mention. The "mention-worthy" bar is set relatively low, yet we do not note down every student production, concerts in semi-domestic auditoriums or every performance given at every private view (for the time being, at least). An important role is also played by the dramaturgical context: we do not count the New World Symphony independently, but it definitely belongs to our summary as part of performances of Dvořák's complete symphonies.

The rules are not set in stone, and we are grateful for any suggestions, ideas and tips. For now, the respective website is misleadingly titled "Music blog", even though there is no blogging going on. In point of fact, it is more a survey than anything else. The address is blog.musica.cz/ and the data are being entered continuously. My working title, ***Czech Music Everyday***, paraphrases the name of the magazine you are reading. I would be pleased if the poetic hyperbole were to become a reality. Czech Music Quarterly will publish abbreviated summaries for the past three months. The present, first, summary, however, is an exception, as it stretches back to last September, the beginning of the concert season.

Zdeněk Pololáník: A Night Full of Light, 13. 9., 29. 11. 2014, 5. 4. 2015. The Moravian Theatre in Olomouc restaged Zdeněk Pololáník's opera, based on Paul Claudel's play Annonciation de la Vierge Marie. **Martin Smolka: Semplice**, 19. 9. 2014. Warsaw, Warsaw Autumn, MusikFabrik, Arte dei Suonatori, conductor: Stefan Asbury. **Martin Smolka: Per divina bellezza**, the section Alma redemptoris mater, 21. 9. 2014. Beethovenfest Bonn, St. Evergislus-Kirche Brenig, Singer Pur. Premiere of the 4th part of Martin Smolka's cycle for vocal sextet. **Leoš Janáček: Jenufa**. Theater Augsburg, Premiere: 20. 9. 2014, reruns: 23. 9., 26. 9. , 28. 9., 3. 10., 9. 10., 19. 10., 5. 11., 8. 11., 28. 11., 20.12. 2014 and 4. 1. 2015. A new production, directed by Peter Konwitschny. The May 2014 production of Jenufa was staged in Essen, conducted by Tomáš Netopil and directed by Robert Carsen, on 25. 10. and 22. 11. 2014. **Martin Smolka: Euphorium**, 4. 10. 2014. Boston Court, Pasadena, Gnarwhallaby. **Ondřej Adámek: Dusty Rusty Hush**. 10. 10. 2014, Strasbourg, Palais de la musique et des congrès, Musica 2014 festival. Peter Hirsch, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. The same festival also featured other Adámek compositions: on 28. 9., Lo que no'contamo (String Quartet No. 2) – Quator Tana; on 2. 10., Nôise –

Ensemble Intercontemporain, Matthias Pintscher; on 3. 10., Endless Steps – Bamberger Symphoniker, Jonathan Nott. **Jaroslav Krček: Clothes the World Has Never Seen**.
12. 10. 2014, Budapest, Erkel Theatre. Jaroslav Krček's opera was performed in Szeged, together with Gábor Kerek's Parody. **Leoš Janáček: Jenufa**. Staatsoper Hamburg, 16. 10., 23. 10., 26. 10., 29. 10. and 1. 11. 2014. **Leoš Janáček: Katya Kabanova**. Südthüringisches Staatstheater – Das Meininger Theater. Premiere: 17. 10. 2014, reruns: 19. 10., 22. 10., 2. 11., 8. 11., 23. 11. 2014 and 15. 1., 6. 2., 21. 2., 12. 4. 2015. A new Meiningen Theater production. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**, German translation: Eberhard Schmidt, revision: Hendrik Müller. Mecklenburgische Staatstheater Schwerin. Premiere: 17. 10. 2014, reruns: 19. 10., 23. 10., 28 11., 26. 12. 2014 and 9. 1., 16. 1. 2015. **Hans Krása: Verlobung in Traum** (Betrothal in a Dream). Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe. Premiere: 18. 10. 2014, reruns: 23. 10., 25. 10., 14. 11., 12. 11., 17. 12. 2014 and 6. 1., 15. 1., 21. 1. 2015. The theatre in Karlsruhe staged Hans Krása's almost forgotten opera to mark the 70th anniversary of the composer's death. **Leoš Janáček: The Makropulos Case**. Premiere: 19. 10. 2014, Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich. Further performances: 26. 10., 29. 10., 1. 11. 2014 and 2. 7. 2015, within the Münchner Opernfestspiele. The opera was explored and conducted by Tomáš Hanus, the role of Albert Gregor was portrayed by Pavel Černoch. **František Emmert: Nirmal hridaj**. 21. 10. 2014, Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Brno. Premiere: the cycle's new version. **Bedřich Smetana: The Bartered Bride**. Premiere: 23. 10, reruns: 24. 10., 18. 12., 19. 12. 2014, 24. 1., 25. 1., 24. 3., 25. 3., 4. 4., 5. 4., 20. 5., 21. 5. 2015. Dresden, Staatsoperette. A new production. **Aleš Březina: Kawasaki's Rose**. 26. 10. 2014, Nové Město nad Metují Chateau. Premiered at the F. L. Věk Festival by the Dvořák Trio. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**, Marián Lejava's chamber version. 31. 10. 2014, Stadttheater Biel, Switzerland. The performance was part of the project Czech Dreams.

Bedřich Smetana: The Bartered Bride, Münster, Grosses Haus. Premiere: 1. 11. 2014, reruns: 12. 11., 16. 11., 5. 12., 20. 12., 27. 12. 2014; 4. 1., 6. 1., 16. 1., 20. 1. and 12. 2. 2015. A new production. **Hans Krása: Brundibár**, Oper Halle. Premiere: 5. 11. 2014, reruns: 6. 11., 9. 11., 11. 11. 2014, 11. 1., 14. 1., 17. 3., 21. 4., 24. 6. 2015. A new production. In Suffolk, an older production of Brundibár was revived in two

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Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Ondřej Adámek, Peter Hirsch

performances by London's Mahogany Opera Group, on 8. and 9. 11. 2014. **Leoš Janáček: The Diary of One Who Disappeared**, Staatsoper Berlin, Schiller Theater. Premiere: 7. 11., reruns: 8. 11., 14. 11., 16. 11., 22. 11., 23. 11. 2014. Staged together with Francis Poulenc's La Voix humaine. **Bohuslav Martinů: Mirandolina**, a Bayerische Staatsoper production, performed on: 8. 11. (Ingolstadt), 10. 11. (Ingolstadt), 11. 11. (Ingolstadt), 19. 11. (Schaffhausen), 30. 11. (Lindau) and 2. 12. (Aschaffenburg). **Tallinn: Dvořák, Haas, Martinů, Kalabis**. Antonín Dvořák: Silent Woods, Rondo for cello and piano, Roman Haas: Bach Metamorphoses for two cellos, Bohuslav Martinů: Sonata No. 3 for cello and piano, Viktor Kalabis: Rondo Dramatticco for solo cello, Antonín Dvořák: Piano Trio No. 4, Dumky, for violin, cello and piano. Tallinn, Estonia, Hopner House, 9. 11. 2014. Petr Nouzovský – cello, Sigrid Kuulmann-Martin – violin, Andreas Lend – cello, Irina Zahharenkova – piano. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**. 14. 11., 16. 11. 2014, Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts, New Orleans. **Ondřej Adámek: String Quartet No. 2**. 15. 11. 2014, Berlin, Radialsystem V, Sonar Quartett. **Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival: Cígler, Smolka, Kotík**, 21. 11. 2014. The opening concert of the festival paid tribute to Christian Wolff's 80th birthday, but also featured three pieces by Czech composers. Ostravská banda played under the baton of Petr Kotík. Petr Cígler: Über das farbige Licht der Doppelsterne, Martin Smolka: Autumn Thoughts, Petr Kotík: Nine + 1. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**. Premiere: 27. 11., reruns: 29. 11., 2. 12., 4. 12., 7. 12., 10. 12., 12. 12., 14. 12. 2014. Rome, Teatro dell'Opera. A new production. **Pavel Zemek: Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra**. 28. 11. 2014, Prague, La Fabrika. Vilém Veverka – oboe, PKF – Prague Philharmonia, conductor: Marko Ivanović. A composition commissioned by the Contempuls festival. **Viktor Ullmann: Fall of the Antichrist**, the libretto written by the composer. Premiere: 31. 10. 2014, Moravian Theatre in Olomouc; the opera is still in the repertoire. The Olomouc production was the first staged performance of Viktor Ullmann's Fall of the Antichrist in the Czech Republic (in the original wording).

Leoš Janáček: From the House of the Dead. Berlin, Schiller Theater. 7. 12., 10. 12., 13. 12., 17. 12., 21. 12. 2014. **Bohuslav Martinů: The Epic of Gilgamesh** (world premiere of the Critical Edition version, performed in the original English). 11. and 12. 12. 2014, Janáček Theatre, Brno. Brno Philharmonic

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Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno. **Alois Hába: The New Land**. 12. 12. 2014, National Theatre in Prague. A semi-staged performance and world premiere; the opera, written in 1934–36, was banned in Czechoslovakia. **Martin Smolka: Annunciation**. 12. 12. 2014, Musica Viva, Herkulessaal, Munich, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, conductor: Peter Rundel. Premiere. **Bedřich Smetana: The Bartered Bride**. 14. 11., 23. 11., 6. 12., 20 12. 2014; 18. 1. 2015. Schwerin, Staatstheater. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**.
15. 12., 17. 12., 19. 12., 21. 12., 23. 12., 27. 12., 29. 12. 2014; 1. 1. 2015. Lyon, Opéra de Lyon. **Petr Kotík: Master-Pieces**. New York, Paula Cooper Gallery, 17. 12. 2014. The opera's American premiere was performed by S.E.M. Ensemble. **Sylvie Bodorová: The Legend of Catherine of Redern**. World premiere: 19. 12. 2014, reruns: 27. 12. 2014, 29. 1. and 24. 2. 2015. Liberec,
F. X. Šalda Theatre.

Miroslav Srnka: No Night No Land No Sky. 18. 1. 2015, Prague, Rudolfinum. PKF – Prague Philharmonia, conducted by Jakub Hrůša. Premiere of the revised version. **Leoš Janáček: Katya Kabanova**. 20. 1., 22. 1., 24. 1. 2015. Dijon, Auditorium. The production, accompanied by the Czech Virtuosi orchestra, featured the soprano Andrea Daňková and the mezzo-soprano Kateřina Hebelková in the lead roles. **Miroslav Srnka: docudrama 01 – orph & eury**. 23. 1. 2015, Berlin, Festival Ultraschall, ensemble recherche. The wind trio was given its world premiere. **Leoš Janáček: The Cunning Little Vixen**. 23., 25., 27., 30. 1. 2015, Hamburg, Staatsoper. The music was prepared by Tomáš Netopil, the lead role portrayed by Adriana Kučerová. **Leoš Janáček: The Cunning Little Vixen**. 23. 1., 27. 1., 29. 1., 31. 1.; 5. 2., 7. 2., 10. 2., 12. 2., 28. 2.; 6. 3., 18. 3., 20. 3. 2015. Helsinki, Opera Helsinki. **Martin Smolka: Die Puppe**. 24. 1. 2015, Nuremberg, Tafelhalle, ensemble Kontraste, conductor: Frank Strobel. Music for a silent film. **Leoš Janáček: Katya Kabanova**. 25. 1., 27. 1.,
30. 1. 2015. Toulon, Théâtre Municipal. **Martin Smolka: Entr'acte**. 27. 1. 2015, Champigny-sur-Marne, Salle Morlet. 2e2m, conductor: Pierre Roullier. Music for René Clair's 1924 silent film. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka.** 27. 1. 2015, St. Petersburg, Mikhailovsky Theatre. **Petr Bakla: September**. 29. 1. 2015, New York, Brooklyn, Roulette. String Noise (Pauline Kim Harris and Conrad Harris). World premiere.

Leoš Janáček: Jenufa. 1. 2., 6. 2., 17. 2., 20. 2., 20. 3., 24. 3., 27. 3. 2015. Stuttgart, Oper Stuttgart. The role of Laca was sung by Pavel Černoch. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**. 5. 2., 13. 2., 15. 2., 21. 2., 27. 2. 2015, Frankfurt, Opernhaus. **Sylvie Bodorová: Symphony No. 1, "Con le campane"**. 7. 2. 2015, Fairfax, George Mason University Center for the Arts. Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, Christopher Zimmerman. American premiere. **Ondřej Adámek: Endless Steps**. 7. 2. 2015, Dijon, Auditorium.
SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg, Lothar Zagrosek. **Miroslav Srnka: Tree of Heaven**. 9. 2. 2015, Helsinki, Helsinki Music Centre. Zebra Trio. Finnish premiere. **Leoš Janáček: Jenufa**. 14. 2., 21. 2., 24. 4., 2. 6. 2015. Bratislava, Slovak National Theatre, New Building. **Bohuslav Martinů: Juliette**. 14. 2., 17. 2., 19. 2., 22. 2., 24. 2., 27. 2., 1. 3., 4. 3. 2015, Zurich, Opernhaus. **Leoš Janáček: The Makropulos Case**. 14. 2., 15. 2. 2015. Helikon-Opera, Moscow. **Hans Krása: Brundibár**. 16. 2., 17. 2., 18. 2., 19. 2., 20. 2. 2015. Dijon, La Minoterie. **Petr Bakla: Uniplanar**.
17. 2. 2015, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Brno. Brno Conservatory Ensemble. Premiere of the version for 4 clarinets. Miroslav Srnka: Engrams. 24. 2. 2015, Brussels, BOZAR, Royal Brussels Conservatory, Quatuor Diotima. Belgian premiere. **Petr Bakla: I Am Standing on a Hill**. 25. 2. 2015, Yerevan, Cafesjian Center for the Arts. Hayk Melikyan – piano. World premiere.

Martin Smolka: Per divina bellezza, Part 1, Aspro core. 9. 3. 2015, Singer Pur – unerHÖRT!-Reihe, Redoutensaal, Erlangen. Singer Pur. Premiere. **Viktor Ullmann: The Caesar of Atlantis**. 11. 3., 12. 3., 13. 3. 2015, Dijon, Grand Théâtre. **Leoš Janáček: Katya Kabanova**. 13. 3., 15. 3., 18. 3., 20. 3., 22. 3. 2015, Boston, Boston Lyric Opera, Shubert Theatre.

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by Viktor Velek

THE SAINT WENCESLAS TRADITION DURING THE TIME OF THE SWASTIKA

The title page of the song by which Alois Cmíral celebrated the protagonists of the Prague Uprising (May 1945)

The musical form of the thousand-year development of the Saint Wenceslas tradition has been presented in our periodical in the article *Sancte Wenceslae, ora pro nobis! The cult of St. Wenceslas in music* (CMQ, 4/2008, pp. 34–47). The current 70th anniversary of the end of World War II provides an appropriate opportunity to pause and focus on how the era of darkness was reflected into the major Czech national tradition, firmly related to state representation.

Neděle Venkova

SVATÝ VÁCLAVE,
ORODUJ ZA NÁS...

Dr. J. K. Vyskočil

In commemoration of the 1010th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Wenceslas (1939), the patron is asked to protect the nation

The musical form of the thousand-year development of the Saint Wenceslas tradition has been presented in our periodical in the article *Sancte Wenceslae, ora pro nobis! The cult of St. Wenceslas in music* (CMQ, 4/2008, pp. 34–47). The current 70th anniversary of the end of World War II provides an appropriate opportunity to pause and focus on how the era of darkness was reflected into the major Czech national tradition, firmly related to state representation.

The month of September – primarily the 28th, the date of the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Patron Saint Wenceslas – is pivotal within the context of Czech history. Yet in 1937, 1938 and 1939 the anniversary was marked by sinister events. First, on 14 September 1937, the death of President T. G. Masaryk and his subsequent funeral, accompanied by the sound of the ancient Saint Wenceslas hymn. Then, 30 September 1938, when the Munich Agreement was concluded. And finally, 1 September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and World War II started. The development of the Saint Wenceslas tradition in this period has been interpreted in two totally different ways. It was co-opted by the lackeys of the new Fascist regime, on the one hand, and the patriots and democracy advocates, on the other.

"Saint Wenceslas – the golden treasure of the german holy roman empire"

The supporters of Fascism and the annexation of Czechoslovakia to Germany made use of the Saint Wenceslas tradition to justify the annihilation of Czech independence. They claimed that St. Wenceslas's compromising appeasement policy towards the German ruler was the only possible way of retaining sovereignty, albeit limited. According to a more servile interpretation, the German King Heinrich I promised Wenceslas "protection", which was finally provided by Hitler's Reich.

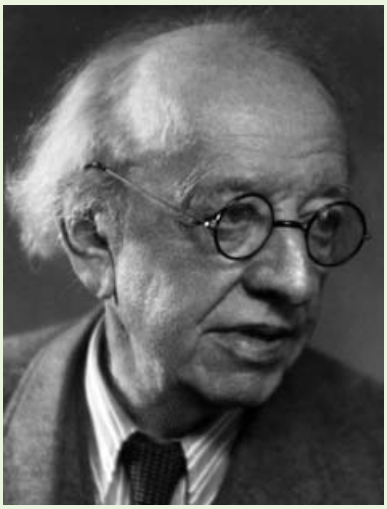
The Nazi collaborators asserted that the Czechs were supposed to play a special role in the process of creating a Fascist Europe, since they were the closest Slavs to the Germans. They also presented Germany as the liberator of the Czechs from their dependence on the Bolshevik Soviet Union and France.
Moreover, the tradition was abused in the form of awarding the National Prize of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia for cultural and artistic activities (the Saint Wenceslas National Prize).
In 1944, to mark the second anniversary of the assassination of the Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich, the accolade the Saint Wenceslas Eagle (Honorary Shield of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia with the St. Wenceslas Eagle) was introduced so as to honour exemplary collaboration with the Reich. In addition, both awards also served to compromise leading Czech public figures (a case in point being the world-renowned conductor Václav Talich).
The Saint Wenceslas tradition was perverted until the very end of WWII. Recruitment of young Czech men to the Saint Wenceslas Volunteer Corps was still taking place in March and May 1945. St. Wenceslas was depicted on the Kč 5,000 Protectorate note. When it comes to Adolf Hitler's opinion of utilising the Saint Wenceslas tradition for ideological purposes in support of the Nazis, he considered it "ridiculous formalities". Yet the Führer's approach was rather exceptional, as the top Reich representatives themselves took it with the utmost seriousness, bearing witness to which was their support for the project of a second, pro-German, film on St. Wenceslas, *Prince Wenceslas,* which, however, was ultimately abandoned owing to the artists demanding more money and obstructing its implementation by all possible means.

The Saint Wenceslas chorale under the collaborators' command

The 1939 Saint Wenceslas issue of the magazine Náš rozhlas (No. 38, p. 6) published an article titled *On the Saint Wenceslas Chorale*, which also presented the idea that an intervention from above (e.g. through the bishops' conference) should result in unification of the various existing melodic variants, substantiating the requirement by political reasons: "*With respect to the constant calling for the spiritual integration of the nation, in the very spirit of the Saint Wenceslas tradition, it is indeed strange that the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, one of the most precious legacies of our ancestors, is sung differently in Bohemia and Moravia. In the spirit of this unifying Saint Wenceslas idea, it would perhaps be appropriate for the church authorities to agree on a uniform melody.*"
The text of the Saint Wenceslas hymn too was made use of for the sake of misinterpretation of the Saint Wenceslas tradition. One of the ardent Nazi collaborators, Protectorate Minister Emanuel Moravec, often exploited it to promote his conviction, with the most salient example being the speech he gave on *St. Wenceslas Day* on 28 September 1942: "*The Saint Wenceslas Chorale has always been sung by Czech crowds at the times of uncertainty, when weak, incompetent governments were in power. It was a prayer for Czech strength. [...] The Saint Wenceslas tradition is primarily a political tradition. The Saint Wenceslas Chorale was a state honour. It was a church hymn only in the second place. At the times of distress and confusion, the chorale was sung by the Catholics and the Hussites alike. When restoration of order in the country and the return of the Czech lands to the union of the Empire was concerned, our ancestors called 'Our Prince'!*"[1]

"Think of the Chorale, ye of little faith, think of the Chorale!"

This appeal from František Halas's poem *Praze (Tórzo naděje)* [To Prague (Torso of Hope)] splendidly documents the pro-democracy forces' approach to the Saint Wenceslas tradition and their loathing of its massive misinterpretation on the part of the collaborators. Symbolism, that of Saint Wenceslas in particular, was embraced by artists of all ilks, with musicians being no exception, so as to voice their refusal, resistance and disapproval.
Later on, the misrepresentation was recalled by Lubomír Peduzzi (1918–2008), composer and biographer of the Jewish composer Pavel Haas, who was murdered in Auschwitz: *"There used to be periods in our history during which reactionary elements strove to make use of these properties of Wenceslas's (by the way, not sufficiently historically documented) [non-aggressiveness, conciliatoriness, servitude to the German monarch] with the aim to create a tradition fundamentally inimical to national and state independence. Yet this tradition was not the people's tradition and did not go down well with the people themselves. Against the Prince conceived in this manner, the people conceived the ideal of a valiant and combative ruler, a powerful protector of the nation against all the wrath of the enemies."*[2]



Vítězslav Novák

When it comes to music, the misinterpretation did not fall on fertile soil.[3] As regards the number of new compositions during the war, the Saint Wenceslas tradition was reflected similarly to 1929, the year of the millennial anniversary of Saint Wenceslas's martyrdom. The pieces come across patriotically and nationally, which at first glance is revealed by the selected lyrics, while the music itself contains numerous quotations (to be devoted to later).

"And when even the Word was silenced, when merely allegories could be a source of clean water to thirsty lips, then music spoke the most to the heart of the people."[4] Many a thing, including folk-literature elements, was deemed an allegory and hidden message. For instance, the article penned by an anonymous writer, titled *Saints Wenceslas and George in Songs* and published on the fifth page of the morning issue of the daily Lidové noviny on 24 September 1939, comprised four texts of Saint Wenceslas folk songs, one of them perhaps indicating the end of the war, or at least the return of the Czech exiles:

Bagpiper's Song
When Wenceslas comes back from the front, I'll play my bagpipes for him,
He and his beloved will whoop by our pub.
I'll give him a florin, or four, he'll harness his foals,
Adorn them with ribbons, drive them beyond Blata.

The music created during WWII is abounding in hidden meanings. Attentive listeners were addressed by musical quotations of folk songs and themes from art pieces. Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949), for instance, quoted in his *De profundis* a fragment from his own *Ballad of Jan Neruda's Soul;* Otakar Jeremiáš (1892–1962) cited, besides the Hussite and Saint Wenceslas hymns, an extract from Smetana's opera *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*. Frequently quoted too were sacred songs, since their lyrics could be interpreted in two ways. A new dimension was afforded to compositions to religious texts – motifs of resurrection, suffering, death, faith in a better future were projected into everyday life situations. Plenty of non-liturgical works were performed in churches, including, J. B. Foerster's *Hymn*, Bedřich Smetana's *Prayer* and Antonín Dvořák's *Stabat mater*.

An act of collaboration or an act of courage?

The parallel existence of two contradictory interpretations brought about a unique situation. Neither the listeners nor the composers and performers, or even the censors, were certain as to how to construe public performances of pieces with undisguised Saint Wenceslas content or the coming into being of such works.

The collaborating Protectorate administration was well aware of the tradition's patriotic interpretation, as was the government in exile: the Saint Wenceslas legacy was also made use of by the President in exile Eduard Beneš for agitation among Czech expatriates in the USA. The censors were conscious of the fact that in the late 1930s the Saint Wenceslas Chorale was amply quoted by Czech composers with the aim to bolster the people's courage to rise up against the occupiers. That is why both the older and newer censors vigilantly monitored Saint Wenceslas compositions, albeit without being certain of how to define their pro- or anti-regime nature. These works could not be modified by changing their titles or putting a ban on them. For instance, Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9*, "*From the New World",* was only performed under its ordinal number, while the word "new" was deleted from Vítězslav Novák's *Valley of a New Kingdom*. Totally prohibited, however, was Josef Suk's piece *Towards a New Life* and all compositions quoting the Hussite war song *Ye Who Are Warriors of God*, which was traditionally understood as anti-German.

A tough nut to crack for the censors were the articles dedicated to the history of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale. Nothing could be objected to as regards content presented apolitically, and pure science devoid of ideology strengthened the patriotic circles. New contributions elucidating the tradition can be found in the proceedings *Saint Wenceslas in Czech Film,* compiled from the Czech press in September 1940 by Josef V. Křiklava. In addition to articles falling into the category of pro-Fascist deformation of the Saint Wenceslas subject, it also contains ideology-free, valuable musically focused texts devoted to the Saint Wenceslas Chorale.

Quoting the Saint Wenceslas Chorale as a symbol of resistance and defiance

The issue of musical quotations in the compositions created during WWII was dealt with by Bohumír Štědroň in his study *Czech Music in the Time of Tyranny:*

"Should a national musical quotation happen to appear in a work by our composers as a fragment or randomly without being treated more deeply, the national aspect is to the detriment of the artistic value, with an excessive use of national quotations sometimes resulting in the revivalist significance surpassing the artistic value. Even the best of ideas and symbols are futile if not congenially balanced by great artistic value. The majority of the Czech compositions with a national tendency dating from the time of tyranny are artistically valuable, thus making their meaning even more eminent."[5]

Thanks to Štědroň, we also have an authentic testimony to the dual forms of the Saint Wenceslas musical tradition during WWII: "*The musical art embraced him [Saint Wenceslas] too, namely, by means of the Saint Wenceslas hymn, especially with regard to the fact that Hussite motifs were out of the question. The Saint Wenceslas Chorale was permitted, with the erroneous assumption that it would enhance the idea of the Czech lands belonging to Germany, whereas by singing it the people sought consolation in difficult times, as well as a firm hope for rediscovery of our freedom. The Saint Wenceslas Chorale resounded in all churches, thus serving to replace the national anthem, Where Is My Home, which was only allowed to be sung in combination with the German anthem. The Saint Wenceslas hymn was thereby given back the nature of the former coronation national anthem, as it used to possess in days of yore, since it was sung, for instance, during the voting for the Hussite King Jiří of Poděbrady."*[6]

In connection with quotations of the Hussite and Saint Wenceslas hymns, Štědroň resuscitated the older question of whether it was suitable to use the two concurrently: "*In the time of tyranny, some composers applied symbolism with greater caution, mingling as they did two ideas in their pieces: the Hussite and the Saint Wenceslas. If we realise that precious few of these symbolically national compositions – be they with quotations of the Hussite or the Saint Wenceslas hymn – were actually performed, we will deem this combination of the two hymns as symbols less courageous. [...] The main reason why we doubt the justification of using both of the hymns is the fact that this practice gives rise to obscurity of symbols, especially when the two hymns are crumbled into several fragments. A considerate and moderate integration of the two would not be objectionable, as the Romantic composers frequently put together two motifs."*[7]

Otakar Jeremiáš

Typology of research strategies

How to divide a set of compositions that seems to be relatively homogeneous at first glance? Possible ways are outlined in the following paragraphs, focused on the aspects of when, in what form, with what title, to what literary work, etc. Only future research will show whether the Saint Wenceslas theme was also treated during WWII by Czech composers living abroad. For the time being, I am only familiar with the *Symphonic Prelude and Fugue to the Saint Wenceslas Chorale* by Josef Vlach-Vrutický (1897–1977), the second work dedicated to Saint Wenceslas by the artist based in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Sources differ as regards the piece's year of origin, stating 1939 and 1941.

It would be easier if we had each of the compositions available. We know a number of them just indirectly, from newspapers, proceedings, books, radio programmes, etc. The motivation for their being written can only be safely determined when we possess their creators' statements, e.g. in correspondence or memoirs, or when there is a basic literary text with a clear content. Precious few pieces bear a subtitle or dedication. A certain role is played by when, where and for whom this or that piece was performed. At this juncture, however, we have entered the domain of hypothesis. The most problematic is to interpret church-oriented works – which of them were written with a political subtext, which of them were supposed to be just an ordinary component of religious services?
The presence of quotations of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale is only possible to document in the case of preserved pieces, or those we know from description, which represents the limit for the endeavour to come to know the manner of the compositional work and choice of the chorale's melodic variant.
The year of origination of a few pieces is known. Yet this fact bears merely partial and, basically, insufficient witness to the division of the compositions, for instance, prior to and after the assassination of the Reich Protector Heydrich. As has been indicated above, even though Saint Wenceslas was officially a trouble-free symbol, no performer could be sure as to how his delivery of a Saint Wenceslas piece would be judged. And composers were no better off in this respect. This situation led to various practices.

Part during the war, the complete composition after the war

Some pieces were only performed in part during WWII. The Prologue (in the version without the text) of the cantata *We the Czechoslovak Nation* by Josef Plavec (1905–1979), for instance, was played during the time of the Nazi occupation as the symphonic poem *From Era to Eternities,* first at Prague Radio on 7 March 1940 on the eve of the composer's 35th birthday and then on 18 January 1944. Its complete, and definitive, version was only performed after the liberation: on 17 July 1945 and on 28 October 1945, on the latter occasion directly broadcast from the festive session of the parliament, the National Assembly. The second part of the *Cantata 1945* for solo soprano and baritone, mixed and large orchestra, one of Josef Bohuslav Foerster's lesser-know opuses, on which the composer started to work in 1943, was performed in the spring of 1944 at the Hus Church in Dejvice, Prague. The piece was completed in September 1945, published a year later, and only performed in its entirety on 14 February 1946, at the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House in Prague.
Some of the "Saint Wenceslas" compositions written during WWII were only played in public following the end of the war. Cases in point are the cantata *Free* by František Suchý (1902–1979) and his *String Quartet No. 2*. The cantata *Song of the Homeland* (1939–1941), by which Otakar Jeremiáš linked up to his previous anti-Fascist pieces, is the climax of this type of work, and in 1941 it was awarded 1st prize in the Melantrich competition. The Saint Wenceslas element is episodic in the monumental piece, which was premiered on 7 March 1946 on the day marking the 96th anniversary of the birth of President T. G. Masaryk by Prague Radio, with Jeremiáš himself conducting. Initially, Lubomír Peduzzi intended to use his *Do Not Let Us Perish* (1942, the second song from the cycle *The Spirit of the Land Sings*) as his graduation work at the conservatory, yet owing to its patriotic nature, indicated by the title itself, he presented his *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1943) instead.

Under different titles

Desiring public performance, some composers even changed the titles of their works. The *Revolutionary Overture* (Op. 39) by Rudolf Karel (1880–1945) was played as *Overture,* and under that name was premiered on the radio on 14 December 1941.
A cantata for female chorus, double chorus and solos, composed in 1939 by Vojtěch Bořivoj Aim (1886–1972), originally bore the title *By Suffering and Serfdom Towards Glory*. Sometimes, the words "towards glory" were replaced by "towards victory". The composer changed the initial provocative name to the neutral Latin *Cantata – Dialogi et chori*; after all, the piece bears this title in its 1946 edition.

Combination of quotations

Only comprehensive acquaintance with the music material allows us to have an idea of the work

Josef Bohuslav Foerster

with the quotations from the Saint Wenceslas and Hussite hymns, or other quotations. They appear in, for instance, the mentioned pieces by Otakar Jeremiáš (*Song of the Homeland*), V. B. Aim (*By Suffering and Serfdom Towards Glory*), as well as by Vladimír Štědroň (*Prayer*), Ladislav Svěcený (*String Quartet No. 2*) and Josef Plavec (*We the Czechoslovak Nation*), who, according to Bohumír Štědroň, combines the two hymns in the male chorus *In Thy Name* (1945) with yet another one, *Lord, Have Mercy on Us*.[8] In his *Symphony No. 1, "Choral"*, Jaroslav Doubrava even added the Czech national anthem to the two hymns. In the *Fantasy on the Old Czech Chorale,* Jeremiáš intended to enhance the symbolism by putting in the famous Saint Wenceslas Chorale, as a quotation of a little-known fragment from the Hussite hymn would have gone astray. Combining quotations was nothing new, yet there was a certain shift at the semantic level. Antonín Dvořák, for instance, in his *Hussite Overture* (1883) applied the two hymns with the aim to highlight the combative and lyrical themes. As regards war-time compositions, we can observe their increased symbolic dimension augmented by the period's atmosphere. The very seriousness of the social situation is that which may serve as an argument against the earlier opinion of Zdeněk Nejedlý, who considered the exposition of both of the hymns within a single work absolutely inappropriate, and duly rebuked composers for doing so.

Analysing these types of pieces is no easy task. In some compositions, the chorale is significantly deformed, only detectable by an experienced listener (analyst). The route of "encoding" was pursued by the aforementioned Otakar Jeremiáš in *Song of the Homeland* and by V. B. Aim in his cantata *By Suffering and Serfdom Towards Glory (Victory)*, Lubomír Peduzzi in *Do Not Let Us Perish*, as well as by J. B. Foerster in his *Cantata 1945*, who underlined by the chorale the words "Hallelujah" and "This is the Land of Heavens…"

Musica sacra

It would seem that the least risk was taken by the composers whose Saint Wenceslas pieces fall within the sacred category. Can singing of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale in churches only be interpreted as a clear demonstration of concealed resistance? Giving a negative answer is supported by the fact that the top Catholic dignitaries did not anywise boldly intervene against the Saint Wenceslas tradition's Germanisation. In the wake of the Munich Agreement, the Catholic Church played a role in the state more significant that it had previously, and to an increased degree referred to the first Czechoslovak Republic as a one-off deviation from the historical development of the Czech people, as an experiment and aberration targeted against the Church, actually responsible for the Munich settlement. Following his taking up the office of President of the post-Munich Czech-Slovak Republic, Emil Hácha paid tribute to Saint Wenceslas's remains, kissing his skull, kneeling before the standing Archbishop of Prague, Karel Kašpar.

The affirmative answer draws upon the premise that the tradition may have been perceived by the top clergy and the public in a diametrically opposite manner. This is, after all, indicated in Bohumil Černý's account of the time and environment in the study *Die Kirche im Protektorat 1939–1945* (The Church in the Protectorate 1939–1945): *"When the oppression and brutal violence were increasing, the Church and the clergy sought refuge in a certain 'reading between the lines', in analogies and similes in the national history abounding in similar experience. Whereas in the first phase of the German occupation packed churches resounded to the singing of the national anthem and the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, following their banning organists dexterously wove the anthem and the Saint Wenceslas Chorale*

into preludes." (In: SEIBT, Ferdinand: *Bohemia Sacra. Das Christentum in Böhmen 973–1973*. Düsseldorf 1974, p. 351)

Generally prevailing is the perception of sacred Saint Wenceslas pieces as patriotic works. In terms of form, composers stuck to the tradition. One of the popular forms was the mass. For instance, in 1939 Stanislav Mach (1906–1975) wrote his *Missa in hon. S. Venceslai in F* for mixed chorus and organ/orchestra, which he published in Hradec Králové at the beginning of WWII. Older, dating from 1937, is the *Missa in honorem sancti Venceslai* by Adolf Kramenič (1889–1953). Also popular was the graduale/offertorium *Beatus Vir*, composed in the Saint Wenceslas spirit by Bedřich Antonín Wiedermann (1883–1951) and Otto Albert Tichý (1890–1973).

The words "meditation" and "fantasy" frequently appear in the titles of the Saint Wenceslas pieces written during the war. Yet not always were they directly related to the church milieu, a case in point being the oft-played *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale "Saint Wenceslas"* by Josef Suk (1914). Compositions with the word "meditation" in the title were created by František Bureš (1900–1959, *Meditation Fantasy on the Saint Wenceslas Chorale* for organ, March 1939), and Josef Císař (1894–1983, *Meditation on the Saint Wenceslas Chorale* for baritone, male and mixed chorus, organ accompaniment, September 1939). Pieces with the word "fantasy" in the title were composed by Josef Žemla (*Saint Wenceslas. Fantasy on the Saint Wenceslas Chorale* for piano and voice, published in 1940, yet the date of completion is not known) and Otakar Jeremiáš – when it comes to the number of alternative titles, his *Fantasy on the Old Czech Chorale* has no parallel among Czech compositions.[9]

The quantity also resulted from the fact that later on Jeremiáš scored the nonet piece for orchestra and organ, which he embarked upon on the basis of the great response to the work back in 1939 (it was premiered on 27 October 1939 on the radio). When recording the piece on to a gramophone disc, a curious situation occurred – there was no organ at the recording hall, hence Jeremiáš promptly scored its part for another orchestra. This version is captured on disc No. G5060. A more recent recording (DM5699), made by the State Philharmonic Brno, already contains the organ.

A meditative nature is also possessed by pieces titled "Prayer" or "Invocation". These include Vladimír Štědroň's *Prayer* for baritone and piano, Jiří Pomahač's three-part chorus *Prayer to Saint Wenceslas* (most likely dating from 1939) and Adolf Cmíral's cycle *Three Old Czech Prayers to Saint Wenceslas* (1939). The Saint Wenceslas Chorale is contained in Cmíral's *Balbín's Invocation for the Czech People* (1938–1939) for children's or female chorus, organ and wind instruments, which was broadcast by Prague Radio in the last weeks prior to the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia and during WWII was occasionally performed in churches, with Josef Plavec conducting.

Literary texts

Another possible way of classifying the compositions, in this case the vocal ones, is their division according to the literary texts they were based on.

Very frequency set was Karel Toman's poem *September,* which in 1938 served for J. B. Foerster to create a male chorus of the same name. Noteworthy is the fact that he did not quote the melody of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale in a passage with its text, even though it directly suggested itself. On the other hand, Lubomír Peduzzi in his piece *Do Not Let Us Perish* retained the unity of the hymn's text and melody. In 1938, Miroslav Krejčí (1891–1964) composed a mixed chorus and gave it the simple title *Song of Saint Wenceslas. September* is also the name of one of the two parts of V. B. Aim's cycle *Two Prayers* (Op. 54, 1939).

A truly singular Saint Wenceslas piece dates from the time of the Prague May Uprising, the final days of WWII: Cmíral's song *No Fear!* for one voice or homophonic chorus with organ (piano) accompaniment, built on František Halas's poem *To Prague*. It was neither the first nor the last setting of this text, containing the appeal "*think of the chorale, ye of little faith…"* In the wake of the war, the Saint Wenceslas dimension was further emphasised by the selected visual reference on the sheet music cover, dominated by the statue of Saint Wenceslas, the symbol of Wenceslas Square in Prague. Cmíral's piece de facto celebrates Prague's defenders.

In 1942, Leoš Janáček's pupil, the composer and conductor Osvald Chlubna, completed the male chorus *Saint Wenceslas, Pray For Us* (Op. 53a) to Rudolf Medek's lyrics, and dedicated it to the 50th birthday

of Jan Šoupal, conductor of the Choir of Moravian Teachers.
Jarmil Burghauser (1921–1997) based his *Ballad Written to Saint Wenceslas* on a text by the Czech literary classic Jaroslav Vrchlický. He began working on the six-minute piece back in 1940 and, pursuant to the personal motto on the portal of the Music Information Centre, finished it in 1981![10]
In 1942, Vítězslav Novák included in his cycle *Five Mixed Choruses* (with the alternative title *Five Songs*) fragments of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale's melody in the penultimate chorus *Prague* (text: František Branislav).

"Saint Wenceslas"

Plenty of pieces titled simply *Saint Wenceslas* came into being during WWII, yet it is only possible to determine whether they concern the chorale's harmonisations or are works based on another music material in the case of those we are familiar with more thoroughly.
As regards Stanislav Mach's male chorus bearing this name, we only know that it is a setting of a poem by Josef Václav Sládek. The opus number indicates that it was written sometime around 1940.
Karel Moor (1873–1945) composed his piece for three trumpets, four trombones and tuba back in 1938.
We only know the name of the compositions by Josef Bradáč (1900–?, a four-part chorus, broadcast on the radio on 28 September 1940), František Chodura (1906–1981, a mixed chorus dating from 1940), Václav Vačkář (1881–1954, a more obscure piece; according to the opus number, 289, we can assume it was written during the war), Antonín Srba (1881–1961, a male chorus from 1942) and Otakar Šín (1881–1943, a male chorus, c. 1942).
New harmonisations of the chorale were created by, for instance, Václav Trojan (1907–1983, in the collection *Chapbook of Folk Songs,* dating from 1939), Rudolf Wünsch (1880–1955, a mixed chorus published in 1944) and Jan Seidel (1908–1998, published in the *Chapbook of Folk Songs and Rhymes* (1944) and the collection *The Nation in Song* (1940).
Prince of the Czech Land! (A New Saint Wenceslas Song – Saint Wenceslas Motif) is the title of a work that Jaroslav Křička composed in 1939–1940. Křička's biographer, Jiří Dostál, gave the following account of the piece: "*The mentioned trilogy 'To My Country' is particularly accomplished, and within it again the 'Saint Wenceslas Motif, by whose originality he takes hold of the Old Czech song, one so often exploited by music composers.*"[11]

Chamber and orchestral music

Intriguing Saint Wenceslas compositions can be found in these genres too. The earliest group includes the aforementioned *Symphony No. 1, "Choral",* which Jaroslav Doubrava plunged into back in 1937 but, owing to his working on the oratorio *Message,* only finished in 1940. The two works are akin owing to the integration of choral elements. In addition to the Hussite hymn *Ye Who Are Warriors of God* and the Czech national anthem, the Symphony also features the Saint Wenceslas Chorale.
Pavel Bořkovec wrote his *Nonet* for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, cello and double-bass at the end of 1940 and the beginning of 1941, completing it on 24 February 1941. With the piece, the composer responded to the current political events: *"In Bořkovec's oeuvre, such a quotation represents a rare exception, and it appears that during the time of occupation virtually every Czech composer wished to make his art as close to the general feeling as possible, expressing by music something non-musical, patriotically encouraging."*[12]
Ladislav Svěcený and Jaroslav Francl reflected the Saint Wenceslas spirit in their second string quartets, both of them quoting the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, and Svěcený also the Hussite hymn.
The attribute *in the old style* aptly describes *Piano Concerto No. 1 (in C)* by Josef Páleníček (1914–1991), created in 1939 and 1940. The *Moravian Rhapsody* by Rudolf Kubín (1909–1973) too quotes the Saint Wenceslas Chorale. The composer began working on the piece in 1942 and finished it on 6 March 1943; it was premiered in Brno by Jaroslav Vogel on 7 February 1944.

Saint Wenceslas pieces by composers interned in Nazi concentration camps

In the present article, I will not deal in detail with the Saint Wenceslas works by the Jewish composer Pavel Haas, who was persecuted during WWII and died in Auschwitz. They have been devoted relatively great attention by Lubomír Peduzzi, hence I only give a brief summary. Haas made use of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale back in 1927 (the song cycle *The Chosen One*), in the *Wind Quintet* (Op. 10), in the *Overture for Radio* (Op. 11, 1931),

in *Psalm 29* (1931), in *String Quartet No. 3* (Op. 15) and, in combination with the Hussite hymn, in the *Suite for Oboe and Piano* (Op. 17, 1939). During the time of the German occupation, Haas worked on his *Symphony*, which he failed to complete and whose torso contains quotations of both the Saint Wenceslas and Hussite hymns, the Nazi *Horst-Wessel Lied,* a motif of Chopin's *Marche funèbre*, as well as Hebrew motifs. The Saint Wenceslas Chorale also permeates Haas's cycle *Four Songs on Chinese Poetry* (1944, for bass and piano).
Another persecuted composer, Karel Mařík (1882–1956), interned at the concentration camp in Brno in 1941 and 1942, quoted the chorale in his 1940 chorus *Saint Wenceslas*.

Pieces with an overtly anti-occupation nature

A clearly anti-regime character is possessed by František Suchý's cantata *Free* and the opera by Iša Krejčí (1904–1968) bearing the eloquent title *Darkness*, referring to Alois Jirásek's eponymous historical novel. Krejčí wrote the opus in 1944 and revised it in 1951. By the way, also based on Alois Jirásek's prose was the yet to be performed opera *Jiří of Poděbrady and Kunštát* (Op. 52, 1941–1942) by the Brno composer Osvald Chlubna, quoting both the Saint Wenceslas and Hussite hymns.
Another work of this ilk is the aforementioned cantata *We the Czechoslovak Nation* by Josef Plavec, who originally intended to write it for 1938, the 20th anniversary of Czechoslovakia, yet owing to the subsequent events only finished it in 1944. Similarly to Jeremiáš, in his cantata for mixed chorus, large orchestra, organ, solo soprano, male narrator and small male recitation chorus Plavec quoted the Saint Wenceslas and Hussite hymns, as well as the *Internationale*. In the wake of Reinhard Heydrich's assassination and the subsequent harsh German repression against the Czechs, Plavec extended the piece by another movement.
Of a defiant nature too is Vítězslav Novák's *Saint Wenceslas Triptych*. In the first years of the Nazi occupation, the composer remained rather aloof from all the events, with a certain lethargy of his being particularly evident in 1939–1941. Yet his awakening was all the more intense. Novák's works dating from this period are among the most weighty of his entire oeuvre. Besides the symphonic poem *De Profundis* (1941) and the *May Symphony* (1943), replete with various quotations, his triptych, growing from the theme of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, is of major significance. In his book, Miloš Schnierer cites the opinion of a German officer: "*Ein schönes Werk, aber stark politisch gefärbt.*"[13] Novák wrote the triptych upon the instigation of the Vyšehrad capitulary Antonín Stříž, "tailored" for the organist B. A. Wiedermann, who duly met the composer's requirement to perform it promptly and premiered it on 5 March 1942 at the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House in Prague. The piece is still immensely popular among organists, and it has been said that it can only be played on the instrument at the Municipal House. Subsequently, Novák created a version for organ and orchestra, which was first publicly performed on 8 October 1942 in Prague, followed by Brno on 7 October 1943. The dedication to "Msgr. Dr. Antonín Stříž" may give rise to the assumption that it is a sacred piece, yet this is not the case. The work was highly assessed by Bohumír Štědroň: "*With his Saint Wenceslas Triptych, Novák enriched Czech music ideologically, formally, as well as owing to technical mastery. In comparison with Josef Suk, who in his Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale "Saint Wenceslas" for string quartet or string orchestra created a work that at the time of the first world war was supposed to be a sort of prayer, setting hope on the patron of the Czech land, Novák ideologically perceived Saint Wenceslas not only as the patron of the Czech land, but also the prince and ruler. [...] In terms of form, our music has not to date had as great an instrumental work grown from the foundation of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale. The choice of toccata, ciacona and fugue, which within a single current in a richly diverse manner treat a fragment of the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, is novel in Czech music.*"[14]
The highest price for his resistance activity was paid by Rudolf Karel. In 1943 he was arrested and imprisoned, first in Prague-Pankrác and subsequently in Terezín, where he died on 6 March 1945. His *Revolutionary Overture* was mentioned above in connection with its changed title. Karel worked on the piece from 1938 to 1941, prior to his being interned: "*With the overture, I protested against the abuse of the Saint Wenceslas tradition at the time of the so-called second republic and occupation. It features the antagonism between Boleslav, as the opponent of Wenceslas's policy, and Wenceslas, as an alleged champion of friendship with the Germans. The symbol of Saint Wenceslas, the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, resounds here in the original form, made amply ring á la Charles. The Boleslav motif is created*

independently, without a symbol, encounters the Saint Wenceslas Chorale, yet totally prevails in the end."[15]

Karel Hašler (1879–1941) too paid for his patriotism with his own life. During the time of the Protectorate (or even shortly before), his older song *Saint Wenceslas Asks the Prague City Council* was extended by two "updating" stanzas:[16]

"Hail to you, father Masaryk!"
cheered the crowds at one time,
now just a few Prussians
yell "Heil" to Hitler.
When Henlein sputters
German here,
my mare prances,
almost throwing me off.

When the Germans roughly prattle,
a stupid pack,
I will sneeze at serving you
as a patron.

As is evident from the previous paragraphs, the subject is far from being thoroughly explored. The question of which of the possible approaches would appear as the most appropriate will only be answered as a result of long-term and detailed research, for instance, within a specialised thesis.

1 MORAVEC, Emanuel: O lepší zítřek. Prague, 1943, p. 261.
2 PEDUZZI, Lubomír: *Vlastenecká symbolika posledních děl Pavla Haase*. In: Sborník JAMU III. Brno, 1961, p. 76.
3 Yet the seed of misinterpretation was deeply rooted. A fairly recent case in point was the parliamentary debate on approving the public holiday which since 2000 has commemorated Saint Wenceslas, yet bears the name Day of Czech Statehood. The then Prime Minister, Miloš Zeman, in particular referred to servility and collaboration.
4 PEDUZZI, p. 77.
5 ŠTĚDROŇ, Bohumír: *Česká hudba za nesvobody*. In: Muzikologie, Vol. 2, Prague, 1949, p. 115.
6 ŠTĚDROŇ, p. 107.
7 ŠTĚDROŇ, p. 119.
8 ŠTĚDROŇ, p. 119.
9 *Choral Overture – Choral Fantasy – Czech Chorale – 1938 – Fantasy for Nonet – 1938 (Czech Chorale for Nonet) – The Lord Commands Not To Fear*
10 www.musica.cz/cz/composers/show?itemId=15
11 DOSTÁL, Jiří: *Jaroslav Křička*. Prague, 1944, p. 109.
12 ŠTĚDROŇ, p. 124.
13 SCHNIERER, Miloš: *Svět orchestru 20. století I*. Brno, 1995, p. 236.
14 ŠTĚDROŇ, p. 128.
15 ŠTĚDROŇ, p. 123.
16 OBRAZOVÁ, Pavla – VLK, Jan: *Maior Gloria – Svatý Václav*. Prague, 1994, p. 220.

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reviews

Sergey Taneyev

The Complete Quintets

Martinů Quartet (Lubomír Havlák, Libor Kaňka – violin, Zbyněk Paďourek – viola, Jitka Vlašánková – cello), Olga Vinokur – piano, Jitka Hosprová – viola, Jiří Bárta – cello.
Text: English, German, French, Czech. Recorded: 2013, Martinů Hall, Academy of Music, Prague (Op. 30); 2014, Domovina studio.
Released: 2015. TT: 2:04:40. DDD.
2 CDs Supraphon SU 4176-2.

The music of Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev (1856–1915), the centenary of whose death we are commemorating this year, is not overly known in our country. Is, then, releasing an album of his quintets too risky an undertaking in marketing terms? Well, I don't think so. On the one hand, it is fabulous music; on the other, today it is fashionable to dust off forgotten, scarcely performed works dating from between circa 1600 and 2000.

Taneyev's music is so forcible that it enchanted me at first listen. Comparing him with Tchaikovsky would not be appropriate. Whereas Tchaikovsky's scores often flirt with the atmosphere of the Great Russian empire sentiment, with clear-cut outpourings of emotion, in his time Taneyev represented in Russia the less-championed trend of liberal European artists – intellectuals. What is more, as a friend of mine remarked, he opens up (sometimes literally) colourful, fairy-tale worlds. (Not accidentally, Scriabin and Rachmaninoff were among his grateful pupils.) Upon first acquaintance with the scores, one may get the impression of their being "congested", with as many notes in a single bar as possible, and as many bars in a single movement as possible, but following closer examination this begins to strike one as actually a complex yet well-considered intention. Taneyev's quintets are dynamically, agogically, structurally bountiful. At the same time, they yield an incredible melodic wealth; all you have to do is decipher and correctly interpret the difficult parts. Taneyev was a highly erudite man. Similarly to Hindemith, Stravinsky or Shostakovich later on, he thoroughly studied the music of the past – the works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms in particular – and found in them both inspiration and guidance. No wonder, then, that his pieces possess a solid order and often reflect historical forms, a case in point being his splendid fugues.

The **Martinů Quartet** first recorded the piano quintet, with **Olga Vinokur**, then decided to undertake the other Taneyev quintets. Even though the string quintets are compositionally virtuoso, the piano one made the strongest impression on me. By and large, if you prepare yourself for the pieces being relatively extensive, you will undoubtedly experience great pleasure listening to Taneyev's music.

The Martinů (formerly Havlák) Quartet, in my opinion one of the finest Czech ensembles, and also ranking among the best quartets on a global scale, play with astonishing zest. And they invited superlative guests along to the studio. Vinokur is an equal partner and their chime appears to be one hundred per cent. (I only had the feeling, possibly erroneous, that her piano is not perfect as regards the quality of sound.) Fully integral parts of the whole too are the cellist **Jiří Bárta** and the violist **Jitka Hosprová**, who have confirmed their sense for chamber music on numerous occasions. On the whole, I consider the performances of all three quintets the ideal, I simply cannot imagine any better! Taneyev's music will never touch the hearts of a mass audience, as does that of Tchaikovsky, it is rather more suitable for informed and seasoned listeners, yet those who set aside time for it definitely won't be disappointed. The recording of Taneyev's quintets is a gem both when it comes to its dramaturgy and execution.

Luboš Stehlík

Jitka Hosprová

Hindemith – Music for Viola

Jitka Hosprová – viola, Jitka Čechová – piano, Prague Chamber Orchestra.
Text: A, N, F, Č. Recorded: 2014, Studio Domovina and Martinů Hall, Music Academy, Prague.
Released: 2014. TT: 61:21. DDD.
1 CD Supraphon SU 4147-2.

Paul Hindemith's instrumental works are not among the pillars of the repertoire of Czech soloists, which is regrettable, as it is truly exciting, structurally intriguing and melodious music. And, in addition, rewarding for the players. An ardent admirer of the great masters of the past, Hindemith most frequently applied the sonata form, which served as the basis for pieces for an unusually wide spectre of instruments. Whereas the violin, piano, flute, clarinet, trumpet, oboe and horn are regularly employed, the alto saxophone, alto horn, organ, harp, English horn and tuba rank among those used less frequently. Hindemith composed the highest number of sonatas – eight – for his beloved viola. A true master of the instrument, which he played in the Amar Quartet, he knew it thoroughly, as is palpable in every phrase. Czech artists have made few recordings of Hindemith's viola sonatas, one of them being that of *Op. 25, No. 1*, for ArteSmon, stylistically purely performed by Jan Pěruška. Stylistically and technically brilliant too is the interpretation of **Jitka Hosprová**, who by dedicating an entire disc to Hindemith has demonstrated her enthusiasm and courage, as there are few such titles even within the global context. The CD's compositional climax is the Sonata for *Solo Viola, Op. 25, No. 1*, while the apex in terms of performance is, in my opinion, the *Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11, No. 4, i*n the case of which the identification with the "Romantic base"

is total. The account of the piece by Jitka Hosprová and her partner **Jitka Čechová** is world-class indeed (their take on the final movement is particularly fascinating). The viola version of the *Trauermusik*, with very good support from the **Prague Chamber Orchestra,** puts an emphatic full stop to the project.

Jitka Hosprová proves to be not only a courageous (this also applies to the label), but also a mature instrumentalist. If I were to focus solely on the tonal expression, I would certainly find more distinguished artists who have recorded Hindemith's music (Kim Kashkashian, Nobuko Imai), yet she plays the music with great veracity.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Hindemith was considered by some a provocateur, while others deemed him an innovator. Sadly, in 2015, Jitka Hosprová's project can still be perceived as provoking and unusual. (After all, the situation in the case of Janáček is, unfortunately, not much better.) Nevertheless, the "anti-pigeonhole" concept could arouse interest both at home and abroad… Jitka Hosprová, Supraphon and the recording team certainly deserve credit.

Luboš Stehlík

Antonín Dvořák

Slavonic Dances

Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Otakar Jeremiáš – conductor.

Text: Czech, English. Recorded: 1939, Prague, Apr.–Oct. 1940, Prague, Na Rokosce. Released: 2014. TT: 73:25. DDD. 1 CD Radioservis CR0711-2.

Not as many complete recordings of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46, B. 83 (1878), and Op. 72, B. 147 (1886–1887), were made in the mono era as one might expect, but prior to the accession of stereophony individual Slavonic Dances were among the composer's most frequently recorded pieces. The most noteworthy, in addition to the best-known discs, Jirák's (before 1948), Malko's (1953), Kubelík's and Rodzinski's (1955), are the three complete recordings made by Talich and the Czech Philharmonic (1935, 1950, 1955), which document the conductor's keen interest in the compositions, to whose "taking out from the smoke and scents of ballrooms and restaurants" he significantly contributed. Yet the Dvořák biographer Otokar Šourek teased Talich, who with the Czech Philharmonic and the Radio Journal Orchestra also made an engrossing live radio recording of the second series, Op. 72, during the time of the Protectorate (1939), that with increasing age he opted for slower and slower tempos. At the same time, Talich's accounts lost dance rhythm, rather getting closer to characteristic programme pieces, and thus being more similar to Dvořák's Legends than spontaneous dance stylisations. Although today the rhythmicality and concealed folk inspirations of the Slavonic Dances have been rehabilitated (Nikolaus Harnoncourt), in Talich's era they were somewhat overlooked in favour of ingenious minor compositions and dance stylisations, subduing Dvořák's image as a folk creator. In the Czech lands, Talich's recordings overshadowed other accomplishments of the monophonic era; hence, every released disc comes as a surprise, a case in point being the recently reissued 1928 recording of Slavonic Dance Op. 46/3, conducted by Oskar Nedbal (Radioservis CR0668-2), whose authenticity of the interpretational approach could only be matched by Talich. Czech Radio took a long time until it made available to the numerous discophiles the complete 1940 recording of both the Slavonic Dances series made by the **Prague Symphony Orchestra** and **Otakar Jeremiáš** (1892–1962, from 1929 to 1945 chief conductor of the Radio Journal Orchestra), which was released years ago by France's Dante Productions (yet with the assignation 1943). Jeremiáš's studio recordings, supplemented by the overture My Home, Op. 62, for the incidental music for Šamberk's play Josef Kajetán Tyl, are a valuable alternative to Talich's creations and yet another gem from the Czech Radio archives (with the most recent re-released treasure being the fragmental recordings of the String Quartets, Opp. 34, 51 and 96, made by the Czech Quartet in 1928–1929; Radioservis CR0723-2). Comparing Jeremiáš's creation and Talich's 1935 studio recording made in London (HMV, most recently Naxos Historical 8.111331) directly suggests itself, as it cannot be gauged against Talich's live recording, which came into being in the spring of 1939 under absolutely unusual circumstances, and which also features the Radio Journal Orchestra, extending the Czech Philharmonic (Supraphon). In comparison with Jeremiáš, in his first recording of the complete Slavonic Dances Talich opted for a more objective and more stylised approach, his tempos are more concise, and the rhythm and accents more ponderous. Yet Talich's recording does contain a number of inspired moments (the heavy introductory chord of dance Op. 46/2), even though it has minor deletions (Dance Op. 46/6 lacks the first bar!). But many more cuts were carried out in Jeremiáš's recording, lacking all the repeated passages (Talich recorded Dance Op. 72/8 in its entirety, for instance). Jeremiáš chooses contrastive and rather vivid tempos, pregnant rhythmisation, he points phrases and generally enlivens the pieces' microstructure by rich agogics (it suffices just to compare the cello solo in Dance Op. 46/4 with the one on Talich's recording). I myself would give preference to Jeremiáš's album owing to its unrestrained virtuosity, which, in my opinion, is closer to dance than Talich's elegant characteristic pictures. Radioservis's present re-release is praiseworthy in all respects. The CD will certainly find its listeners, not only among Dvořák discophiles, still waiting for Jeremiáš's recordings of the Hussite (Esta) and Carnival (Ultraphon) overtures, to say nothing of Smetana's My Country recorded during the time of the Protectorate.

Martin Jemelka

Franz Xaver Richter

Requiem

Lenka Cafourková Ďuricová – soprano, Markéta Cukrová – alto, Romain Champion – tenor, Jiří Miroslav Procházka – bass, Czech Ensemble Baroque, Tereza Válková – chorus master, Roman Válek – conductor.
Text: English, German, French, Czech.
Recorded: 2014. Released: 2015.
TT: 64:04. DDD.
1 CD Supraphon SU 4177-2.

The recording of Franz Xaver Richter's *Requiem*, *Sinfonia con fuga and De profundis clamavi* pleasantly surprised me, owing to the interesting dramaturgy, the musicians' generally forcible performances, as well as its sound quality. I deem it extremely important that works by Classicist composers be undertaken by artists possessing a wealth of experience with Baroque music. In this case, however, the "Classicist" label is not entirely accurate. If the CD contained Richter's vocal pieces, created 40 years earlier, it would present the climax of late Baroque, yet the featured works are much more akin to those of J. D. Zelenka or F. I. Tůma than, for instance, Josef Mysliveček and the Mannheim composers. Baroque aesthetics dominate in the first piece, the three-movement *Sinfonia con fuga*, in the case of which seasoned listeners may have the feeling that they have already heard similarly conceived music, but do not mind listening to it again. The setting of Psalm 129, *De profundis clamavi*, is, in my opinion, the apex of the CD, expressing the mourning tone in the most urgent manner and over wider areas. The third, and final, piece on the CD, the Requiem, somewhat yields to the period taste. It is scored for trumpets, horns and timpani, and although the brass instruments are damped by the "con sordini" prescription, their use shifts the work into a slightly "vaudeville" position. In addition, the structure of the text forced the composer to take to shorter musical sections. The album does not show Richter as an innovator, revealing him rather as a creator exploiting the fading glory of the Baroque titans, with his pieces coming across as anachronistic, which, however, should not reduce our joy at listening.

The conductor **Roman Válek**, who has already accomplished numerous praiseworthy projects, particularly in the domain of Baroque music, took up the challenge of recording with his customary vehemence. As usual, he entrusted the **Czech Ensemble Baroque Choir** to his wife, the chorus master **Tereza Válková**, and invited along for the ride interesting soloists, including the superlative alto (or mezzo-soprano) **Markéta Cukrová,** with her appealing timbre and performance. The tenor Romain Champion possesses a velvety timbre, which is extremely fitting for mourning tones. Yet the soprano **Lenka Cafourková Ďuricová** tackles her part with unnecessary force, as though being unable to tame her vocal material, here and there sounding too abrasive as against the alto and tenor. The bass **Jiří Miroslav Procházka** may have a colourful, operatically led baritone, yet it would seem from the recording that he is still seeking to establish his relationship to early music and its aesthetic laws. The choir's performance is unified and balanced, but I do feel compelled to voice my objections to their articulation, particularly when it comes to the higher registers in the soprano group. The orchestra, though, is simply splendid, owing in large part to **Marek Štrync**l, who from the cello channels the energy of the whole basso continuo section.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight the top-notch work of the recording engineer, **Aleš Dvořák**, who can be compared with his foreign colleagues and whose sense of sonic plasticity elevates the recording to a higher category. The CD's greatest shortcoming (as is usually the case of Supraphon) is the graphic design of the booklet and its content. The non-committal image on the sleeve fails to give any clue as to how it relates to the works featured on the album. The photos inside are overexposed, with the result being that the faces of the ensemble members are difficult to identify. There is no information about the soloists, and the inner graphic design comes across as old-fashioned and slapdash. It would seem that the Supraphon management have yet to come to understand that in the era of the internet good music cannot be sold in shoddy packaging. All in all, the booklet decreases the CD's overall impression by a point.

Čeněk Svoboda

Miloslav Ištvan Quartett

Composers of Group A Pololáník, Berg, Ištvan, Novák, Piňos

Miloslav Ištvan Quartett: Lukáš Mik, Jan Bělohlávek – violin, Stanislav Vacek – viola, Štěpán Filípek – cello.
Text: Czech, English. Recorded: Studio 1, Czech Radio, Brno. Released by: Czech Radio, Radioservis a.s., 2014. TT: 70:00. DDD.
1 CD Czech Radio, CR0673-2.

The Brno-based **Miloslav Ištvan Quartett** was established in 2008 as a string ensemble specialised in compositions dating from the second half of the 20th century and contemporary music in general. Since that time, the young musicians have recorded three compelling discs featuring pieces by Brno composers. The first CD was dedicated to the complete quartets of Miloslav Ištvan (Pavlík Records, 2010); the second, double, album presented the complete works of the still undervalued Czech composer Jan Novák (Radioservis, 2012). The present disc, titled *Composers of Group A*, was recorded by Radioservis in 2013. The cre-

ative "Group A" was founded in the spring of 1963 within the Union of Czechoslovak Composers and associated the composers Jan Novák, Josef Berg, Miloslav Ištvan, Alois Piňos and Zdeněk Pololáník, and the musicologists Milena Černohorská and František Hrabal. The letter "A" referred to their being the first-ever distinct group of composers founded in Czechoslovakia. As Miloslav Ištvan himself said at one of their first concerts: *"The group explicitly veers away from all the artistic conventions, distorting and confusing the clear view of reality. We veer away from the academic formalism… we take stock of the creative and opinion differences of every single one of us…"* The group was visually presented by the painter Dalibor Chatrný. In addition to concerts, it also held various performance art events, audio-visual projects, team compositions and other enterprises. It existed until the end of the 1960s and initiated the regular Exposition of New Music.

Placing Group A's chamber music on the market is yet another great dramaturgical accomplishment of the Miloslav Ištvan Quartett. Even though two of the featured pieces were included in the ensemble's two previous discs, they are faithfully performed again, albeit more maturely, in a manner revealing the players' better familiarity with them. The first of the works – the *String Quartet* by Zdeněk Pololáník (1935) – was written in 1958, when the composer was studying at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, at a time prior to the group's formation. Zdeněk Pololáník is a prolific, inventive artist who has created numerous orchestral, chamber and sacred pieces, as well as incidental, film and TV music. His four-movement quartet, revealing an inclination to Neo-Classicism, is a very fresh, imaginative work. The second work featured on the disc is the 1968 one-movement *String Quartet* by Josef Berg (1927–1971), one of the Brno Renaissance figures. Although a rather inconspicuous introvert, he served to provide the group with new impulses and challenges. He had a bold affinity to literature, theatre and Latin. The string quartet, which he wrote three years before his death, is an ungraspable work of a fragmental nature, a difficult-to-perform 17-minute piece in one movement. Another one-movement quartet, the shortest on the recording, is *Gloomy Landscape for String Quartet – In Memory of the 1939–45 Victims* by Miloslav Ištvan (1928–1990), dating from 1975. The singularity of this Brno-based composer's music rests in the application of the montage technique principles and the permutation form, which, however, nowise curtail his exceptional invention, as proven by this very piece. Jan Novák (1921–1984) created his three-movement string quartet *Quadricinium Fidium* in 1977, when he was already living in exile. The piece, evidently influenced by Janáček and Martinů, is noble, witty, brilliantly written. His keen interest in Latin and non-traditional theatre is what Jan Novák had in common with Josef Berg and Alois Piňos.

The last track on the CD is the one-movement 1993 *String Quartet No. 3* by Alois Piňos (1925–2008), the most ardent modernist among the Group A members. Owing to his technical education and orientation, he had the closest relation to new compositional techniques, particularly dodecaphony and serialism. He attended several summer classes in Darmstadt and wrote theoretical studies on tone groups and their use in composing. His quartet, inspired by textural music techniques, working with micro intervals and aleatoric elements, is purely atonal, athematic.

As for the CD's dramaturgy, we could object that none of the featured pieces was created at the time of the ensemble's actual existence, and thus it does not bear a trace of authenticity, but this is beside the point. The creative Group A considerably stimulated the dissemination of New Music, championed modern art, stood up against socialist realism and falsity. This gave rise to the origination in Brno of a platform that served for another few years and even survived the "Normalisation" in the 1970s. And we can be grateful to the present recording for affording us the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the work of Czech modernist composers. The Miloslav Ištvan Quartett has again proved to be an artistically mature ensemble. Although the pieces on the CD differ in terms of style, as well as the requirements placed on the musicians, the album as a whole comes across as compact, thanks in particular to the players' brilliant, brisk delivery, understanding of the compositions and their messages, all supported by superb technique. And what is more, their interest in performing unknown contemporary compositions and scarcely played music, which they do at a high standard. This is the way how to return contemporary music to concert stages, albeit a very demanding endeavour that will last for a long time to come. The path taken by the Miloslav Ištvan Quartett is not an easy one, but it is possible and necessary. *"Art is an exciting adventure in unexplored areas… it is a means to achieving the widest emotional and intellectual development of the human personality…"* So said Miloslav Ištvan at one of the first concerts held by Group A, and I think that this is precisely what the quartet proudly bearing his name aims to achieve.

Lenka Nota

Petr Eben

Chamber Music for Oboe

Marlen Vavříková – oboe, Radana Foltýnová – piano, Ivana Dohnalová – harp, Václav Vonášek – bassoon, Grand Valley Winds (Christopher Kantner – flute, Marlen Vavříková – oboe, John Varineau – clarinet, John Clapp – bassoon, Richard Britsch – horn).

Text: English. Recorded: 2013. Released: 2014. TT: 78:54. DDD. 1 CD Toccata Classics TOCC 0195.

Petr Eben is one of those composers whose music can accompany us from childhood to old age, even until our days have come to an end, ranging as it does

from pieces for children to the *Mass for the Dead*. He perhaps devoted to every single genre, and did so in a well-balanced, inventive and singular manner. The recording of his complete chamber works for oboe etches in the picture of the composer, whose inspiration was uniform and settled over the long term, yet variegated as regards its treatment, always possessing spirit and sometimes humour; refined compositional work but at the same time containing something indefinable, something that could be termed "pure Czech musicianship". The CD, initiated by **Marlen Vavříková**, a Czech oboist living in the USA, is an accomplishment of a high artistic and encyclopaedic value. It offers up Eben's works for simple listening, as well as research, and, what's more, the majority of the pieces have been recorded for the very first time. Marlen Vavříková understands Eben's music very well; their mutually beneficial consonance is palpable. Her ardent performance, fullness of tone and beautiful cantilena turn the compositions into pure listening enjoyment. The pieces on the CD are not sequenced chronologically, reflecting instead the alternating moods and gradually expanding instrumental configurations. Starting with the duets with piano, or harp, the listener is led to a trio with bassoon and, finally, to a wind quintet.

The featured works date from between 1950 and 1997, the whole period of Eben's creative life. When listening to the oldest sonata and the 1995 piece *Appello*, the 45 years that passed between them are not markedly felt. The first movement of the *Sonata for Oboe and Piano*, Op. 1, titled *Militare*, is energetic, evoking military trumpet fanfares by both the melody and the oboe register. The one-movement *Appello* is more dissonant, less harmonically lucid, yet just as vigorous and poignant, even containing a fanfare element too, but it also meets its original purpose, as a composition written for the 1996 Prague Spring Competition, serving to test the technical abilities of both the player and the instrument to the full.

The album starts with the most recent work, *Miniatures* (1997), a characteristic piece, which within the range of one minute depicts some six contrastive, yet brilliantly captured moods. The oboe melodies are altogether older, with the piano accompaniment, originally improvised, added later. I can actually also imagine the oboe being played on its own, as in the case of Britten's *Metamorphoses*. In stark contrast with the military spirit of the first movement of the following **Sonata for Oboe and Piano**, already mentioned above, is the Pastorale and the final *Ballabile* in fast tempo. The piano accompaniment of **Radana Foltýnová** nicely underlines the moods, is specific, clearly legible, albeit remaining soft even in the energetic passages.

In the next piece, *Duettini*, Op. 28 (1963), the harp replaces the piano and ushers in another cycle of characteristic pieces. The first two, inspired by polka and waltz, come across as a sort of folk dance suite, yet the following duettini are coaxing, concertante, headstrong and rhythmic, each of them speaking absolutely clearly, directly, without cheap descriptiveness. They are musical mini-tales for smart children of all age categories. The wind instrument part is not specifically intended for the oboe but for a soprano instrument, yet a version with flute has been recorded by Kateřina Englichová and Jan Machat. The aforementioned Appello is succeeded, again contrastively, by the *Amoroso* (1975), with the motif of lonely desire being expressed by a recurring tone. Owing to its nostalgic character, the Amoroso somewhat surpasses the whole album, but it is indeed a beautiful piece and Marlen Vavříková's take on it is extremely emotional. The following Ordo modalis, Op. 30 (1964), made up of five parts, *Intrada – Air – Rigaudon – Sarabanda – Giga* da caccia, evokes the old suite, with the accompanying instrument again being the harp. **Ivana Dohnalová** negotiates the potential pitfalls of her part with craft and grace. It is the one and only composition that had previously been released on CD.

The Music for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, Op. 52 (1970), is of a virtuoso nature and untraditionally contains an oboe cadence right at the very beginning. The parts of the two wind instruments also blend together with the piano, with the result being a sort of permanent interference. The piece is prevailingly atonal, but so pleasant to listen to that you may not even realise it. A cadence of the bassoon, played by **Václav Vonášek**, occurs at the very end.

The concluding wind quintet, performed by the **Grand Valley Winds**, is a certain dramaturgical anomaly. Although the oboe is indeed present, it does not play a special role as against the other instruments. It would seem that the work somewhat serves to stretch the album's duration, but far from gratuitously, being rather a pleasing culmination and encouragement, arousing interest in discovering more of Eben's music.

The sleeve of the booklet and the CD print are truly awful, amateurish, slapdash, it is better not to look at them. The contents, however, are far better in both cases. The booklet provides a brief analysis of the works and gives a nice account of the composer's relationship to the oboe. The text was penned by Marlen Vavříková and the Petr Eben biography written by Martin Andersson.

Boris Klepal

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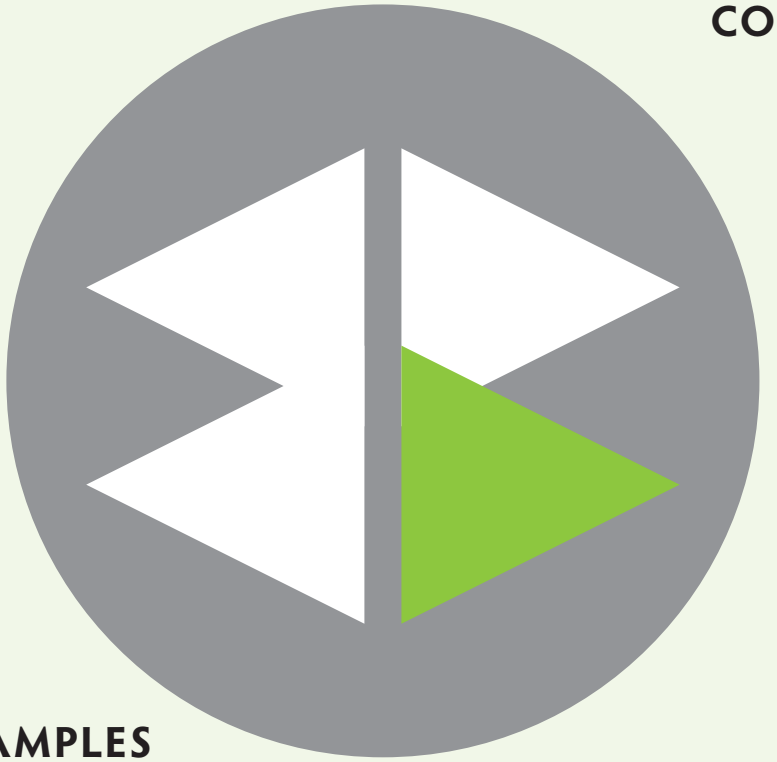

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Pedro Eustache – ethnic woodwind instruments
Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno, Brno Philharmonic Orchestra,
conductor John Debney

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CREDO OF MASTER JOHN

Bedřich Smetana: Blaník – from the My Country cycle
Josef Suk: Praga op. 26, symphonic poem
Antonín Dvořák: Biblical Songs Op. 99
Jaroslav Krček: Credo of Master John,
Premiére of the cantata for baritone, mixed choir and orchestra
Adam Plachetka *(Biblical Songs), Roman Janál (Credo of Master John)*
Kühns' mixed choir, Prague Symphony Orchestra, conductor David Švec

Under the partonage of President of the Czech Republic the 57th Smetana's Litomyšl International Opera Festival is jointly organised by the Pardubice Region, the City of Litomyšl and Smetana's Litomyšl Endowment with financial help from the Czech Ministry of Culture and in co-operation with the National Landmark Institute, Litomyšl Castle and Bohemian Heritage Fund.