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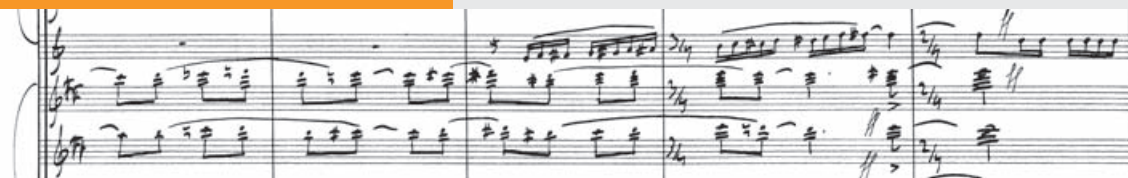
Tomáš Janník

PKF – Prague Philharmonia

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Czech Lute: new discovery

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ



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Dear readers,

I would like to draw your attention to two texts, brief yet reflecting the impressive musicological work carried out by two of our regular correspondents: Petr Daněk and Viktor Velek. The most recent fruit of Velek's systematic research into the music of Czech minorities abroad is an extensive monograph on the Vienna-based Lumír society. CMQ has previously published an article on the music of our Viennese compatriots (see Issue 2/2009), now we bring an interview with Velek in which he talks about his new book. Michaela Žáčková Rossi has reviewed Petr Daněk's new book on historical music prints, while in the next article Daněk himself gives an account of his momentous discovery in this field. I would also like to highlight Frank Kuzník's text on the 20th anniversary of one of our most exciting and agile orchestras, the PKF - Prague Philharmonia. And discophiles will undoubtedly savour Martin Jemelka's erudite review of the recently released CD sets featuring Rafael Kubelík's recordings.

The attached disc within the Music Information Centre's *Composer Portraits* series presents music by Hanuš Bartoň.

Have a nice summer,
enjoy reading and listening
Petr Bakla

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TOMÁŠ JAMNÍK: “AS A MUSICIAN, I LIKE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ROLES I FIND MYSELF IN.”

The cellist Tomáš Jamník, winner of the 2006 Prague Spring competition, has been known to music lovers both in the Czech Republic and abroad for years now. In addition to being a phenomenal instrumentalist, a typical trait of his is constantly having a smile on his face. Although he takes his career very seriously, he also approaches it with a distance, which is evident from his blog. Last year was an important one for him in many respects. He reached the age of 30, started a family and... But let him tell us more.

Thirty isn't exactly long in the tooth, but could you try to take stock? Have things gone as well as you expected?

I am not the type to pay great attention to anniversaries, yet I do feel that I am currently experiencing a watershed in my life. Almost precisely on the stroke of reaching the age of 30 I completed my doctorate studies in Prague and postgraduate training in Berlin. At the same time, my wife Eva and I had a daughter, so it actually is appropriate to talk about a change. If I look back, I can say that I have been doing very well, for which I thank my guardian angels, who have accompanied me thus far.

Do you perceive your career as continuous or has it had any crucial milestones, leaps forward?

I think that everyone wishes to move forward in his/her life and career, and everyone can succeed with a little bit of will and patience. The word “patience” is

befitting, as one would expect more of those leaps forward, but it is not so simple. A crucial milestone was the Prague Spring competition in 2006, which opened to me the path to a solo career. Other turning points included my being accepted to all the educational institutions, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, where I spent two years as a grantee.

Have you ever passed through periods of doubts or even felt like abandoning your musical path?

When I was a child, I already somehow sensed that I would stick with the cello. That, however, doesn't mean that I have never had doubts as to my decision. I knew that if I wanted to earn my living by music I had to have the best of results. In 2005, when I was preparing for a competition in Paris, I was practicing for hours and hours on end, doing exercises and even forced myself to take a cold shower every morning. And then I dropped out in the first round. At that time, I didn't feel like playing at all, and I left my cello in the case for a few weeks. But my failure didn't discourage me and in 2006 success arrived.

You say that you set your objectives. Could you reveal what they are, and within what time frame you have planned to achieve them?

Just like perhaps every artist, my life rhythm is not divided into years but seasons. I always strive to roughly outline a season at least one or two years in advance. My current goals mainly relate to my career as a soloist – I have realised that this is precisely what I want to do and what I enjoy most. In addition, I also have ideas of various projects, which I have so far managed to implement surprisingly well.

Berlin is a good base for musicians. Is there still anything you miss there? Do you ever intend to come back to the Czech Republic?

I will now somewhat contradict that which I said a while ago, but my wife and I have no plans in this regard. We enjoy both of the beautiful cities, Prague and Berlin alike. When the roads are clear, we are able to get from one home to the other within three and a half hours – and without violating the traffic rules. It may sound like wishful thinking, but I still hope that a future government will build the lacking motorway section. Then travelling will be much easier.

What would the music scene in particular have to be like so as to attract you back here?

I have always been attracted to Prague. But I will frame the question on a general level – why doesn't Prague allure foreign students the way Berlin does? I think one of the main reasons is opportunities. The system in Germany is such that if you are at least a fairly good student-musician, you are afforded the possibility of being paid enough to cover your monthly expenses. It entails, among other things, a superb scheme of copious scholarships. What is more, every second orchestra in Germany – and perhaps every single one in Berlin – has its own orchestra academy, which nurtures its potential future players. The system in Germany above all thinks more of foreign students.

You have completed your doctorate studies at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Not all successful musicians have such ambition. Why did you decide to study for a doctorate, and how has it enriched you?

Taking the decision was absolutely natural. Whenever I explore a composition, I do it thoroughly: I study the autographs, I strive to ascertain as much as possible about the background of its coming into being, and the like. I was about to make a recording of the two Antonín Dvořák cello concertos, including the “unknown” No. 1 in A major. And when recording is involved, I study even more thoroughly, so I plunged into research. I gathered a great quantity of previously unprocessed documents, I drew up for the needs of the recording plenty of diagrams mapping the work’s structure. So at the beginning of my studies I had a large part completed, and all I needed to do was to put it in order and write it down neatly.

Did you strike upon something that surprised or intrigued you during your exploration?

During my research, I immersed myself in the archive of the renowned Dvořák connoisseur Jarmil Burghauser. I wanted to decipher the genesis of his orchestration of the Concerto in A major, as there are considerable differences between the 1976 recording of this version and the 1977 printed edition, though they should logically be identical. I spent several days at the archive in Nelahozeves, putting together one by one fragments from the correspondence, which gradually revealed a powerful, astonishing human story. A great role in it was played by the cellist Miloš Sádlo. Throughout my research, I had to restrain my enthusiasm, as I was certain of being one of the first, if not actually the very first, to uncloak this story. Moreover, owing to my discovery everything made great sense.

You seem to have a penchant for writing – I really enjoyed reading your notes on the tour of Japan, as well as your most recent essay about “faith in music”. Do you intend to continue writing, even steer towards more extensive forms?

Writing for me is a perfect means of relaxation. When writing, I feel the energy of the text and seek to arch it as though working with a music composition. I am worse off as regards speaking – I would like to master the spoken word in the ways some good conductors are able to guide a rehearsal. Writing may perhaps serve to somewhat compensate for my shortcoming in speaking.

A question arises – do you read a lot? What genre do you prefer?

I’m not the most voracious of readers, but I do manage to get through a few books a year. I used to read much more while I was a secondary school student. I’ve always relished the fantasy genre. The style of Terry Pratchett, who died in March, has always motivated me for my own writing. One of my great life themes is J. R. R. Tolkien; my obsession began when my parents read *The Hobbit* to me as a boy. At the time, I wasn’t sure whether hobbits really exist or whether it was just a fairy tale. Today, fortunately, I know that they do exist. But I have recently neglected fantasy stories. Now I read a lot of specialist books, and I try to read in foreign languages as much as possible.

You now devote to the Chamber Music Academy. What principle is the project based on? Whose idea was it, and when is the first Czech edition scheduled to take place?

The Chamber Music Academy is based on the principle applied by Germany's Villa Musica foundation, and it is simply genius. Students of music and professional artists, generally university teachers, member of renowned ensembles or soloists, come together on the stage. It is an absolute win-win situation for all the participants – the students are afforded the opportunity to gain practical experience on stage, while the teachers get to liven up their concert season with training, and the audience can see with their own eyes how perfectly this combination works. In addition, there is a preparatory phase taking place in interesting venues. In Germany, the academy participants have been assigned a whole chateau, where they live, rehearse and eat... In the Czech Republic, we have found a no less luxurious alternative, at the Gallery of the Central Bohemia Region in Kutná Hora.

Has the specific programme been set, do you know which works will be studied?

The programme for the next season is ready and it will soon appear on the website. As the first edition is borne in the spirit of Czech-German co-operation, it is primarily focused on Czech and German music. In general, the programme is made up of pieces that employ less typical instrumental configurations, ranging from trios to nonets.

How does the Academy function in financial terms, who seeks out sponsors, etc.?

The German Villa Musica foundation has promised large financial support for the implementation of major Czech-German projects. But, of course, everything couldn't be carried out if money were not provided by the Czech party as well. In this regard, we have approached partners greatly interested in the project. One of the main partners is the Central Bohemia Region, the partnership region to the Rheinland-Pfalz federal state, in which Villa Musica is based.

What can the students expect from the scholarship?

The students have everything covered. Put simply, on the Monday they get on a bus, all they need is some clothes, a toothbrush and the instrument. The rest is taken care of, from accommodation to transportation to concert venues, etc. The students do not receive fees for their performances, yet if we enumerated the total cost per student, otherwise covered by the scholarship, we would reach a sum precious few would be able to afford. Over time, the menu of projects will be extended, and I also hope we will be able to offer other interesting bonuses to the students. We are intensely working on all that.

Why are the Germans actually interested in collaborating on the project with the Czechs? Was it your doing?

I received a scholarship from the Villa Musica foundation from 2007 to 2010, and throughout that time I was dreaming about connecting the German and Czech cultural milieus. Sometime in 2012, I addressed the foundation's management and



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we began negotiating. Last year, I created a team with Marie Vítová Dušková and Lenka Malá, with Aleš Březina [see CMQ 4/2014] also having played a significant advisory role since the very beginning. In September 2014, we hosted the Germans in Prague and signed the first agreements. At that time, I took a breath, and I am really grateful that fate has allowed me to work with such splendid people.

You yourself will serve as a tutor. Do you like teaching?

The projects I have experienced at Villa Musica have been the nicest moments with music. So all the time I was driven by the idea that something similar would take place again. I like teaching, but what I like even more is interacting with young people. For a few years now I have worked as a supervisor at a summer camp for children. The young always make me reassess things. Yet I am also aware that I have a lot to pass on to them, hence it is a mutually beneficial business.

What will be the outputs for the public?

The main output will be a concert tour of a number of towns. It is the fundamental pillar of the Chamber Music Academy. In practice, students are not given many opportunities to thoroughly rehearse a chamber repertoire and present it at three or more successive concerts. This is yet another brilliant aspect of the entire system.

What has the response been like on the part of the students – have they applied?

Yes, the students have been interested. I have been convinced of the project's success since the very beginning.

Your most recent CD (featuring Dvořák's trios), recorded for Supraphon, was released in 2013. Do you plan a new album? What would you like to record?

I am planning a new recording. This time, I would like to reach beyond the Czech repertoire, which I have mapped quite well. I have been focusing on Romantic works with piano, which have somehow intrigued me.

What performances are you scheduled to give over the next few months? Do you plan your concerts yourself or through an agency?

In the next few months, I will be appearing at the concluding concert of the Pardubice Music Spring festival, where I am to perform a Dvořák concerto with the Prague Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Heiko Mathias Förster. That same week, I will play Dvořák on another three occasions, at the Rudolfinum, where with Petr Kadlec and the conductor Marko Ivanović I will present Dvořák to students within the Czech Philharmonic's educational series. By the summer, I am scheduled to give a few recitals in Berlin. I will appear at several beautiful festivals, playing together with my colleagues from the trio at the Dresdner Festspiele, Styriarte Graz and Mainzer Musiksommer. I will also perform as a soloist at the Prague Spring festival in John Tavener's piece for cello and mixed chorus. Invitations to appear at concerts have arrived owing to the for the time being functioning combination of my own forces and the music agents with whom I have been collaborating.

What is the most decisive aspect in receiving invitations? Do your victories at competitions help, is it your impressive CV featuring education at prestigious schools, or is there anything else that affects the concert organisers in choosing you in particular?

The name is decisive quite often. Which is logical, as the organiser does not want to risk an empty auditorium. Therefore, I am grateful to all the organisers who trust in the performers even when they are not overly renowned.

You have experience from working with orchestras, chamber ensembles, as well as performing as a soloist and teaching. How would you ideally divide your time among these activities? In other words, what are you most fond of at the moment?

I have tasted a bit of everything, and all of them are wonderful musical worlds. At the present time, however, I am really interested in methodology, since I want to improve myself, and while pursuing this endeavour I occasionally generate ideas that could perhaps serve to help my younger colleagues.

You are said to prepare three new concertos with orchestra every year. It would seem that by now you have mastered the complete repertoire. Or are there any essential pieces left for you to explore?

I have yet to learn several works from the core repertoire. And I also devote to the non-traditional repertoire, there is always something to discover.

When you have the opportunity to play with an orchestra, what do they want from you most frequently?

Most in demand is the Dvořák's concerto, of course. It is incredible how popular this work is. Of late, I have also frequently played Schumann's cello concerto or the two concertos by Haydn. But I like promoting lesser-known works too, so I play Bohuslav Martinů's concertos, and this season I also gave several performances of Myslivoček's Cello Concerto in C major.

What qualities do you most treasure in people with whom you play chamber music? With the pianist Ivo Kahánek, for instance, you have performed for many years. You must be on the same wavelength...

The musical expression is the most important. I want my co-players to inspire me, just as I in turn strive to inspire them. I really cannot complain of my chamber partners in this respect. Ivo and I have formed a duo for more than a decade, and I have more and more often realised that such symbiosis is not a matter of course. He is a superlative pianist and I am happy that he still likes plunging with me into the deep waters of the cello repertoire.

Tomáš Jamník

(b. 1985) hails from Prague. He began playing the cello at the age of five, initially guided by Mirko and Martin Škampa. He studied at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, where last year he received a doctorate (his thesis was dedicated to Dvořák's concertos). He further extended his education at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Leipzig and the Universität der Künste in Berlin, with Jens Peter Maintz, whom he also assisted.

Crucial in the beginning of his career was his collaboration with the Prague Student Orchestra, where he had the opportunity to perform under the baton of Jakub Hruša, Marko Ivanović and Ondřej Kukul, as well as appear as a soloist on stages all over Europe. In 2006 he won the 58th Prague Spring international competition, in 2011 he advanced to the final and received a special prize in the Pierre Fournier Award competition in London.

In 2012, Tomáš Jamník debuted with the Czech Philharmonic, in 2013 he made a month-long tour of Japan with the Brno Philharmonic. He has performed with orchestras in Israel, New York and Spain, and appeared at chamber concerts at the BASF Kammermusik Ludwigshafen, Autunno Musicale Caserta, Ticino Musica, Kyoto International Music Students Festival and elsewhere. From 2010 to 2012 he was a member of the Karajan Academy in Berlin. As a scholarship recipient, he participated under Sir Simon Rattle in a host of Berliner Philharmoniker concerts and chamber recitals.

Tomáš Jamník, in tandem with the pianist Ivo Kahánek, has recorded for the Supraphon label too highly acclaimed CDs, featuring music by Janáček, Martinů and Kabeláč (2007) and Martinů, Sluka and Eben (2008). In 2010 his album with the complete works for cello and orchestra by Antonín Dvořák was released, which he recorded with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tomáš Netopil.

PASSING THE BATON

PKF – PRAGUE PHILHARMONIA EMBARKS ON A NEW ERA WITH PLANS TO CONQUER THE WORLD

Jakub Hrůša's 10-year tenure with PKF – Prague Philharmonia was officially over. The last pieces had been played, sparkling versions of Haydn's *Sinfonia Concertante for oboe, bassoon, violin, cello and orchestra*, and a trio of concert overtures by Dvořák. Flowers and gifts were brought out, hugs exchanged and speeches made, including one by Hrůša in which he thanked the audience, then turned to the orchestra and said, "I thank you all too – even more."

Called back for a final encore, Hrůša raised his arms for a fiery send-off. But a surprise awaited him. Concertmaster Jan Fišer jumped up and led the players in a piece of their own devising: the finale of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony (*No. 45*), in which the players famously walk off the stage, one by one. The musicians nodded or waved to Hrůša as they left, some smiling and others with obvious regret, until only two violinists were left to play the closing notes.

It was an emblematic gesture from Prague's youngest and most versatile orchestra – fresh, inspired and with obvious affection for the equally young conductor who grew up with them over the past decade. At a reception afterward, Hrůša confessed to being genuinely surprised by the musicians' valediction, adding that another powerful memory of the performance will stay with him. It came just after intermission, in an emotional swell

early in Dvořák's *In Nature's Realm*. "It was such a wonderful moment," he said. "I wished time could have stopped."

In more ways than one, the June 14 concert at the Rudolfinum marked the end of an era for the orchestra. It was also the closing performance of PKF's 20th season, a milestone that few would have predicted in the early 1990s, when the forerunners of the ensemble had run out of funding, sponsorship and places to play – everything but the love for the music and irrepressible spirit and that have become part of the orchestra's DNA.

In the remarkably short time since, PKF has managed not only to survive, but blossom into the most distinctive orchestra in the country. By any objective measure, its accomplishments are considerable. Alone among Prague orchestras, it offers a full range of programming that includes a symphonic concert cycle, a chamber music series, a contemporary music series, and special concert programs for children and families. It has become the "go-to" orchestra for visiting singers, providing support this past season alone for Diana Damrau and Nicolas Testé, Juan Diego Flórez, Simon Keenlyside and Sonya Yoncheva. It has recorded more than 60 CDs with major names like Anna Netrebko, Eva Urbanová, Magdalena Kožená,



Jakub Hrůša's farewell concert, 14 June 2015

Jean-Guihen Queyras and Isabelle Faust. And it is regularly on the road, blazing new trails into Asian and Mideastern markets. Qualitatively, the orchestra is characterized by a high standard of musicianship in the tradition of Viennese classicism, playing Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven with clarity, purity and a keen balance of technical precision and spirited enthusiasm. The players listen to each other and have a reputation for being open-minded, willing to accommodate new music, ideas and conductors. No other orchestra in the Czech Republic handles a repertoire ranging from Mozart to Messiaen with such exactitude and enthusiasm. All this from what is essentially a chamber orchestra that can expand or contract to fit the size of the piece and the stage. PKF's versatility is exactly what persuaded veteran French conductor Emmanuel Villaume to take the position of chief conductor and music director starting in the 2015/16 season. "What was decisive for me, first and foremost, was the commitment from both the musicians and the administration to the highest level of music-making in a flexible setting," he says. "Versatility is part of the identity of the orchestra, and this ability to do very different things is in my opinion an incredible richness. Frankly, it can be boring to be pinpoint, always doing the same thing. You get jaded. And this orchestra is definitely not jaded."

The godfather of the orchestra is Jiří Bělohlávek, who was still fresh out of a bad experience as chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic in 1994, when he agreed to assemble and run a chamber orchestra funded by the Ministry of Defense. The conductor had been working with a group for a Supraphon recording of Eva Urbanová, the New Czech Chamber Orchestra, which became the core of the new ensemble. That orchestra included the Giovanni Virtuosi, a group of Czech musicians who had played in the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester, a European project organized by conductor Claudio Abbado. After the project ended, the Czech players banded together to perform together throughout Bohemia and Moravia, and were brought to Bělohlávek by one of his students, Tomáš Hanus, then a violinist with the group and now a successful conductor. Auditions for additional players were held at Prague's Academy of Performing Arts, where the young hopefuls included French horn player Radek Baborák, who broke the tension by walking in and asking, "Does anybody here have a horn?" (Baborák went on to become a principal horn player with the Czech Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic.) Once he had all the players he needed, Bělohlávek named the new ensemble the Prague Philharmonia and began rehearsals that lasted months. Finally,



Jan Fišer, concertmaster



he felt ready to debut the group on November 17, 1994, the fifth anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. As it turned out, the orchestra had to make earlier appearances – for the gala reopening of Žofín Palace on September 24, and at a gala concert marking the anniversary of the founding of the first Czechoslovak Republic at Prague Castle on October 28.

On November 17, the Prague Philharmonia made its official debut at Prague Castle's splendiferous Spanish Hall with a program of Suk's *Serenade in E-flat major*, Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante for Four Winds* – featuring soloists Jurij Likin (oboe), Ludmila Peterková (clarinet), Tomáš Františ (bassoon) and Radek Baborák – and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 2*. According to the orchestra's official history, "The audience was rather stiff, made up mainly of politicians. Yet also present were ordinary music-lovers who were curious about the new orchestra. The applause was torrential and sincere."

The reception was equally enthusiastic as the orchestra toured the country throughout the rest of the 1994/95 season, building audiences and winning awards. This did not stop the Ministry of Defense from cutting its funding in the fall of 1995, just as the new season was getting underway. Bělohlávek and his players pressed on, confident they would find some way to survive. Early in 1996 the orchestra became one of the first nonprofit organizations approved for operation as a "public benefit company," and in successive years won funding support from the Ministry of Culture, City of Prague and private donors.

Bělohlávek continued as chief conductor until 2005, when he passed the baton to Swiss conductor and flutist Kaspar Zehnder and installed one of his protégés, Jakub Hrůša, as principal guest conductor. After three seasons Hrůša was promoted to chief conductor and music director, taking the helm of the orchestra at the tender age of 27. His rapport with the players was such that his contract, originally due to expire at the end of the 2012/13 season, was extended for an additional two years.

Hrůša's tenure was marked by an expansion of the orchestra's repertoire, with lesser-known Czech works and contemporary pieces added to the symphonic programs, as well as ambitious touring and recording, and continuing refinement and cohesiveness in the orchestra's style. "The superb quality of the ensemble in the field of Classicism and Neoclassicism was kept and polished," he says. "The institution evolved nicely and matured considerably – not a little, I think!"

One of the high points of Hrůša's time on the podium came in May of 2010, when the orchestra was chosen to play the opening concert of the Prague Spring festival, a groundbreaking event recorded live and released on Supraphon. "I had many beautiful experiences with the orchestra," Hrůša says. "But that performance of *My Country* was, symbolically, one of our explicit climaxes."

On the business side, major improvements started in the summer of 2006 with the appointment of Radim Otépka as managing director. He has been with the orchestra since it was founded, a double bass player in Giovanni Virtuosi who gradually took on administrative duties and then won a competition for the top position. Along with an acute sense of immediate funding needs, he brought a long-range vision for the orchestra to the job. "I understood that, for the future of the orchestra, it was necessary to extend our activities in the education and artistic

fields,” Otépka says. “The first problem was how to expand the orchestra while keeping the high level of playing.”

This was solved by starting an academy that takes musicians fresh out of school and trains them in the PKF style, in essence recruiting them while they are still young and enthusiastic, and guaranteeing the ensemble a steady supply of new players. On the audience side, Otépka also started a youth movement, expanding the orchestra’s programming for children to include performances in schools and creating the Notička Children’s Club, which teaches youngsters not just about music, but art and culture in general. “The fascinating thing is, this club now has 250 children,” says Otépka, who likes to boast that the members have become versed in esoteric subjects like a Japanese tea ceremony, but at the same time is absolutely realistic about the club’s value and *raison d’être*. “Very young people will bring us money in the future, because 20 years from now, they are going to be our clients.”

When Otépka started thinking about a replacement for Hrůša, one of the first people he talked to was

Emmanuel Villaume. The orchestra first worked with the conductor in 2008, recording the “Souvenirs” CD with Anna Netrebko. The musicians liked him, so he was invited to guest-conduct the following season.

After Hrůša’s contract was extended, his replacement was postponed, but Otépka felt he had found a potential partner. “In our conversations I found that Emmanuel and I had a lot of the same feelings and ideas about the orchestra,” Otépka says. “I think he will do some good artistic work, especially with the strings and winds, and I think he will bring us some interesting business opportunities.”

That is an understatement. Villaume is an accomplished and well-traveled conductor who is currently music director of The Dallas Opera, chief conductor of the Slovak Philharmonic and former chief conductor and artistic director of the Slovenian Philharmonic. He has conducted in many opera houses in the US and Europe, including the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden and Deutsche Oper Berlin, and at special events like the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. For 10 years, he was music director of the prestigious Spoleto Festival



The orchestra with their new chief conductor, Emmanuel Villaume



With Mischa Maisky, 18 January 2015

USA. In short, Villaume knows a lot of people in the classical music business.

After intensive discussion with the musicians, Villaume was offered the job and his appointment was formally announced at a press conference in New York last October. The site was ostensibly chosen for convenience – Villaume had just finished conducting the Richard Tucker Gala at Lincoln Center, and Hrůša and Otépká were in the US at the time. But the location, and the choice of a non-Czech conductor, sent a clear signal that the orchestra, recently renamed PKF – Prague Philharmonia, had its sights set well beyond Prague.

That ambition, and the value of Villaume's contacts, became clear just two months later, when the orchestra spent New Year's Eve in Oman, playing a pair of concerts at the Royal Opera House in Muscat, where Villaume has personal friends on staff. The ruling Sultan of Oman is a fan of Western music, and spared no expense in creating an opulent palace for the performing arts to attract orchestras and touring ballet and opera companies, which he pays handsomely to perform. "Oman is considered one of the most desirable destinations for classical musicians today," Villaume says. "Without being too indiscreet, the fees are very desirable. Basically, they can pay anything they want."

Returning from a Japan tour six weeks later, PKF stopped in Oman again, this time for a concert

with soloist Mischa Maisky previously arranged by an agency. The orchestra will be in Oman on New Year's Eve again this year with singer Sondra Radvonovsky, with other tours on tap for the coming season in Italy, Germany (three times), France and China. And that, according to Villaume, is just a warm-up. "Although the Prague Philharmonia is very respected internationally within our industry, it's not necessarily known to the wider public," he says. "So we have several Asian tours, a US tour and several European tours planned. We are going in all directions. I will do some of the tours, but we are also trying to build tours with other conductors. It's very important for the orchestra to tour as much as possible, with or without me."

Closer to home, Villaume's influence is already clear in next season's dramaturgy, which features Bohuslav Martinů as one of the main composers. After learning that Martinů spent some of his formative years in Paris, Villaume decided to explore lines of influence by including French contemporaries like Debussy, Ravel, Albert Roussel (one of Martinů's teachers) and Maurice Emmanuel. There is also a rich vein of French music running through the chamber music programs. And an impressive list of guests and soloists includes Villaume's friend Matthias Pintscher, making his Prague debut conducting a program that includes one of his own works, *Ex Nihilo*.

The orchestra will also be venturing beyond its home hall, the Rudolfinum, to play concerts at Lobkowitz Palace and Forum Karlín, the sleek new concert hall outside of city center. Though it is largely untested for classical concerts, Villaume has rehearsed with the orchestra there and likes the sound, as well as the implicit message a new location sends. "It's a very interesting venue that lends itself to a different kind of concert experience," he says. "It has brilliant acoustics, and it's in a different neighborhood.

So I'm looking forward to performing and meeting the faithful PKF audiences there, and also maybe some new audiences."

For Otépka, the new venue solves a practical problem. Because the Rudolfinum is in such high demand, it's almost impossible to get commitments for concert dates there more than a year in advance. This in a business where the most popular artists typically schedule appearances three or four years in advance. "If you call those people to ask if they're available for next season, they will say to you, 'Are you normal?'" Otépka says. "We're not leaving

the Rudolfinum, we will still have our main concerts there. But Forum Karlín will allow us get many of the artists we can't get now. And the sound of the orchestra in this hall is really beautiful."

As for the players, they just seem to get better and better. In Hruša's farewell concert, the Haydn *Sinfonia Concertante* was like an echo of the orchestra's first official concert 21 years earlier, with four soloists stepping up from the ranks of the ensemble. Violinist Jan Fišer, oboist Jan Souček, bassoonist Tomáš Františ and cellist Lukáš Pospíšil gave an exquisite performance, technically sharp and emotionally sweet, offering a reminder that like the very best orchestras, this one is built on the outstanding talent of individual players.

PKF will be lucky to keep Fišer, who is currently one of the finalists in the competition for a new assistant concertmaster at the Czech Philharmonic – and said to be the favorite of Jiří Bělohlávek, brought back as chief conductor and music director by new management in 2012. But as mark of accomplishment, this is a good problem to have.

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EUROPEAN RECORD LABELS AND THE CENTENARY OF RAFAEL KUBELÍK

The Year of Czech Music, held at regular 10-year intervals, is mainly dedicated to noteworthy anniversaries of the composers linked with the Czech lands by their place of birth or work. They usually overshadow distinguished performers without whom the legacy of Czech creators would have remained on music paper, yet as “mere” interpreters they must put up with being somewhat sidetracked in the collective memory of the music-loving public. A case in point in the Year of Czech Music 2014 was Rafael Kubelík (1914–1996), who, like many other conductors in the past, was both a creative artist and compelling performer [see also CMQ 3/2013].

It is not that Kubelík was not commemorated within the Year of Czech Music 2014, as it was simply not possible to overlook him as a renowned musician whose work has been firmly fixed in the consciousness of the audiences. Yet, unlike foreign labels, the Czech music companies forbore the opportunity to present Kubelík's not overly ample recordings made on Czech soil within a complete, or at least representative, box set. Besides the small number of his discs, Czech labels are trammelled in implementing Kubelík

projects by the fact that, with the exception of the legendary *My Country* (1990, Supraphon), his most recent recordings, dating from the early 1990s, are not the intellectual property of Czech recording companies. And whereas Czech Radio and Supraphon met the demand on the part of Czech listeners by referring to older projects of repeatedly released albums (Supraphon 4080-2), foreign labels did not forgo the Kubelík centenary and marked it with several, reasonably priced compilations.

Kubelík monuments from the mono era

Rafael Kubelík: Complete Masterpieces (Bartók, Brahms, Bruch, Dvořák, Hindemith, Janáček, Mahler, Martinů, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Mussorgsky, Schönberg, Smetana)
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Wiener Philharmoniker
 10 CDs (1946–1959) Documents (The Intense Media) 600038

In 2013 and 2014, the Kubelík anniversary was marked by two compilations, each encompassing 10 CDs, within **The Intense Media's** archival series **Documents**, relatively cheap yet only providing basic information. In February 2013, the label released the box set titled *Complete Masterpieces*, featuring Kubelík's recordings made between 1946 and 1959 with the **Czech Philharmonic Orchestra** (Janáček, Martinů), the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** (Dvořák, Hindemith, Mussorgsky, Schönberg, Smetana), the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** (Bartók, Dvořák), the **Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra** and the **Wiener Philharmoniker** (Mahler), and, most notably, the **Philharmonia Orchestra** (Brahms, Bruch, Martinů, Mendelssohn, Mozart). The collection contains recordings



of diverse audio and performance quality, with the worst of them actually being those made by the Czech Philharmonic, of Janáček's *Sinfonietta* and Martinů's *Symphony No. 4* – making evident the technical progress attained by the orchestra during the subsequent decade under Karel Ančerl. Nor do the recordings of Mahler's *Symphonies Nos. 1* and *5* made in Vienna (1954) and Amsterdam (live, 1951) suggest that Kubelík would turn into a noted Mahler interpreter, yet his recordings in Munich for Deutsche Grammophon and Orfeo d'Or are still inspiring. On the other hand, the two recordings with the Philharmonia Orchestra, of Bruch's *Violin Concerto*, with the soloist **Ida Haendel** (1948), one of the first the conductor made in exile, and of Brahms's *Piano Concerto No. 1*, with **Solomon** (1952), serve as engrossing examples of Kubelík's emotional engagement at concerts with the soloists, whereby he created for them a sonic background imbued with an almost Baroque affection. Yet more aesthetically obsolete than Kubelík's accompaniment are the technical dispositions of the two soloists, particularly in the case of Solomon, handicapped by a miserable instrument. Still inspiring can be deemed Kubelík's approach to the then modern compositions (Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* and *Two Portraits*, Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, Schönberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*), whose ardent delivery comes as a surprise in comparison with today's mainstream objectivism.

When it comes to at least Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943), it is a recording of a high documentary value, one of the oldest, standing its ground alongside the peerless recordings of Ferenc Fricsay (Deutsche Grammophon). Eclipsing the hurried and sonically unexceptional takes on Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Dvořák's monolithic *New World Symphony*,

the performance apices of the 2013 compilation are the recordings of the Overture to Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1952), in which, while retaining absolute audio transparency, Kubelík ventured on an unprecedented tempo, and of Smetana's *My Country* made in Chicago (1952), the first of the series of the conductor's recordings dating from 1959 and 1967 (Vienna), 1969 and 1983 (Chicago), 1971 (Boston), 1974, 1975 and 1984 (Munich), 1976 (Cleveland), 1990 (Prague) and 1991 (Tokyo). The unsentimental, objectively majestic, sonically transparent and extremely agogically vivacious *My Country* recorded in Chicago, with a dramatically condensed *Tábor* and *Blaník* or an heightened *Šárka*, is a true gem that makes it possible to overlook the poor graphic design, the absence of a booklet, as well as the occasional inaccuracies in the recordings' chronology (on the sleeve, Martinů's *Double Concerto* is mistakenly ascribed to the Czech Philharmonic).

Kubelík's second home

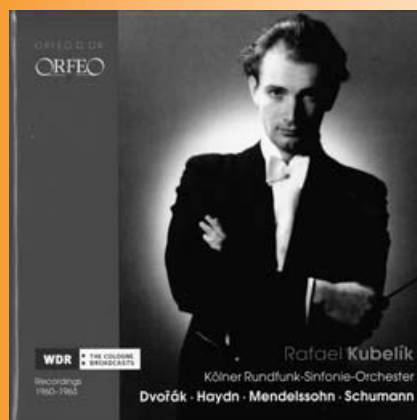
Rafael Kubelík: Legendary and Rare Recordings (Bartók, Brahms, Dvořák, Janáček, Schubert, Smetana)
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra,
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Wiener
Philharmoniker
10 CDs (1945–1959) Documents (The Intense Media) 600182

In October 2014, another 10-CD box set was released within the Documents series, this one focused on the pieces by Dvořák and Brahms recorded during Kubelík's frequent visits to the **Wiener Philharmoniker** towards the end of the mono era in the middle of the 1950s. The composer's tenure with the Czech Philharmonic is represented by



the recording of a passionate account of Smetana's symphonic poem *Hakon Jarl*, which is more exalted than Šejna's more recent recording, made with the same orchestra in 1957 (Supraphon). Kubelík's years in London are represented by the oft-released recordings of Dvořák's *Symphony in G major, Op. 88* (1948), and *Scherzo capriccioso, Op. 66* (1949), and the Overture and dances from Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* (1951) with the **Philharmonia Orchestra**. In my opinion, the creators of the compilation could have been more consistent and, instead of the recording of Dvořák's *Cello Concerto* with the same orchestra (1948), included the piece's later recording made with Pierre Fournier and the Wiener Philharmoniker (1954), so as to make the set of Kubelík's accounts of Dvořák's works in Vienna more compact. Even though in the shadow of Fournier's recordings with the conductors George Szell (1961) and István Kertész (1967), it is nonetheless a valuable creation. The collection also features distinct recordings of Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* with the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** (1951), which is yet another example of Kubelík's emotionally exalted take on modern music, and of Schubert's *Symphony in C major* with the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** (1959).

The bulk of the compilation is naturally given over to Kubelík's Dvořák (1956–1957) and Brahms (1957) studio recordings with the Wiener Philharmoniker for London (Decca). Standing out in the set is his 1955 account of Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, characterised by a vigorous tempo, sharp rhythm, bristly sound, as well as verily curt in articulation and phrasing, which, in my opinion, is among the conductor's most intriguing recordings. Kubelík's creation of Brahms's *Symphonies* shocks with the bold lyrical charge with a palpable tinge of melancholia, yet



the final movements are presented in extremely buoyant tempos. Kubelík's interpretation of Brahms in Vienna is more akin to Schumann and Mahler than to the admirers of Brahms from the ranks of the Second Viennese School, coming across more as a Romantic than a prophet of the early 20th-century harmonic experiments. The collection also contains Kubelík's recordings of Dvořák works in Vienna, among which the old-worldly sentimentally sounding *New World Symphony* and *Symphony No. 7* (did anyone understand the piece better than Kubelík?) are outmatched by the recording of the two series of *Slavonic Dances*: virtuoso, rhythmically pointed, nuanced as regards the tempos, melancholically gracious, highly transparent with the delicately sounding woodwind section. Owing to Janáček's *Sinfonietta* and Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* alone, the modest financial outlay on this set would definitely pay off.

Surprising qualities of Kubelík's guest performances in Frankfurt

Rafael Kubelík: Dvořák, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Schumann
WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln
 3 CDs (1960–1963) Orfeo d'Or MONO C 726 143 D

A worthy gift on the Kubelík anniversary was given by Germany's Orfeo d'Or, a company possessing a huge audio archive, which includes recordings of Kubelík's guest appearances at the Salzburger Festspiele and of his creations as the music director of the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks in Munich. The 3-CD pack, presenting live performances between 1960 and 1963, features virtually unknown recordings from Kubelík's collaboration with the **WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln**.



In addition to the impressive technical quality and their great value for audiophiles, noteworthy too is the compilation's dramaturgical conciseness, combining as it does compositions by Haydn, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Dvořák. The release of the set also deserves praise owing to its containing Haydn's *Symphonies Nos. 101* ("The Clock") and *102*, whose rhythmic pulsation, the tempo-rhythmic development of the slow movements, the spirited finales and, at the time of recording, singular rhythmisation of the otherwise cumbersome minuets allow the listener to take a remarkable excursion to the era that saw the actual birth of historically informed performance of Haydn's works. Striking too is Kubelík's respecting the repeated sections, the dialogical passages of the first and final movements and the roles assigned to the individual instruments (the almost solo timpani, the sobbing oboes in the introduction to *Symphony No. 101*, the cello solo integrated into the tissue of the parts in the second movement of *Symphony No. 102*). Besides Kubelík's account of the Haydn pieces, praiseworthy too are the recordings of Mendelssohn's overture *Die Hebriden*, *Op. 26*, somewhat burdened in tempo, and of the ritually conceived *Symphony No. 5 in D minor*, *Op. 107*, known as the "Reformation", with the solemnly slow first and final movements. The symphony's finale is seldom heard rendered in such a majestic manner, and Kubelík's handling of Mendelssohn's metamorphosis of the Protestant musical ethos is both awe-inspiring and moving. As regards Schumann, it would seem that Kubelík was of the same blood group, as indicated by the three engrossing recordings, of the *Piano Concerto*, the *Cello Concerto* and *Symphony No. 3* (Rhine). The conductor found an ideal partner in **János Starker**, similarly

emotionally flaring, with a sense for the soft oscillations of Schumann's Romantic psyche, which is forcibly rendered by Starker and delicately commented on by Kubelík. In spite of giving great scope to the soloist, it is impossible not to hear that Kubelík had no doubts as to the artistic qualities of Schumann's *Cello Concerto*. The solo part in Schumann's *Piano Concerto* was undertaken by **Claudio Arrau**, whom Kubelík drove forwards by an excited accompaniment and smoothed down the, to my taste, hard touch, dissimilar to the currently standard softer playing. When it comes to the *Rhine Symphony*, I can imagine it being delivered in a more limber rhythm, yet the festive fourth movement and the performance given by the woodwind section places the orchestra up there alongside the more renowned German radio orchestras from Munich and Hamburg.

The pearl of the compilation is the recording of Dvořák's *Piano Concerto in G minor* with Rudolf Firkušný, dating from February 1960. The sheer quantity of the recordings made with the feted pianist between 1946 and 1990 and his interest in this overlooked Dvořák work notwithstanding, I have never deemed the overly refined Firkušný an ideal interpreter of the piece, especially as regards the highly emotional opening movement, yet with Kubelík at the helm he duly abandoned his nobly objectivising approach to the first and final movements and let himself be drawn into active participation in the agogic and dynamic surf in the first movement, intimate narrative in the second, and gave a soulful performance of the finale. It is good that the recording, affected by Kubelík's penchant for faster tempos (which Firkušný was not always able to keep up with), has been released. The creation is just as convincing as the more recent recordings made by

Richter (Kleiber), Schiff (von Dohnányi) or Aimard (Harnoncourt), who, unlike Firkušný, reached for the original version of the solo part.

Kubelík's recordings for His Master's Voice

Rafael Kubelík: The Complete HMV Recordings (Bartók, Beethoven, Berlioz, Borodin, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Gluck, Janáček, Martinů, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Nielsen, Schubert, Smetana)

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Wiener Philharmoniker
13 CDs (1937–1983) Warner Classics MONO/STEREO
0825646319015

Alongside Orfeo d'Or and Deutsche Grammophon, with the latter confining itself in 2014 to re-releasing Kubelík's readily available recordings (479 2689), the most extensive archive of the conductor's recordings is in the possession of EMI Classics (Warner Classics), the heir to His Master's Voice, which paid ample tribute to the Kubelík centenary with a 13-CD box set featuring intriguing creations of his dating from 1937 to 1983, and furnished with an extraordinary booklet. The oldest recordings contained on the compilation were made in London (1937) and Prague (1946) with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, including the London accounts of Smetana's symphonic poems *Vltava* and *From Bohemian Fields and Groves*, and the cycle of Dvořák's programme overtures *In Nature's Realm*, *Carnival* and *Othello*, and Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, recorded in Prague and produced by the legendary Walter Legge. Although the performance of the **Czech Philharmonic** on the studio albums lags in technical terms behind the creations of the other orchestras, it is imbued with a sonic ardour and an impressive transparency of the middle parts. Legge was also behind a number of recordings Kubelík made with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** during the first years of his living abroad, of which the anthology includes his deliveries of Dvořák's *Symphonies No. 7* (1951) and *No. 8, Scherzo capriccioso*, the absorbing recording of Martinů's *Double Concerto*, the account of Mendelssohn's overture *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt*, and a set of spirited renditions of overtures to Mozart's operas (1951–1952). In addition to Martinů's *Double Concerto*, whose sonic whirlwind is unmatched by any of the oldest recordings (Šejna for Supraphon), noteworthy too is Dvořák's *Symphony No. 7*, whose dramatic, ferocious

rendition and emotional charge is miles off many Biedermeyer creations of the present time.

In the late 1950s, Kubelík and the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** made in London a series of, in part mono, in part stereo, recordings, which are also featured on other compilations marking the conductor's anniversary (Bartók, Schubert). The recordings of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, Schubert's *Great Symphony*, Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, Dvořák's *Third Slavonic Rhapsody* and *Scherzo capriccioso*, Janáček's *Taras Bulba* and Martinů's *Frescoes of Piero della Francesca*, dating from 1958 and 1959, conceal many a surprise for the listener, be it the sonically delicate universe of Viennese music of the first third of the 19th century, Brahms's old-worldly, agogically loose dances, or the intoxicating compositions by Martinů and Janáček. The most compact in terms of interpretation are Kubelík's studio creations of the Mozart and Tchaikovsky symphonies, recorded with the **Wiener Philharmoniker**. The deliveries of the *Haffner*, *Linz*, *Prague* and *Jupiter Symphonies*, as well as *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (1961), bear witness to Kubelík's congenial partnership with the orchestra, who, compared with other contemporary recordings, were led by the conductor in transparent sound and lightened rhythmicisation. Yet perhaps even more engrossing than the Mozart symphonies is Kubelík's sonically delicate and melancholically tinted conception of Schubert's *Symphonies Nos. 3 and 4*, and *Unfinished Symphony* (1960). The majority of the recordings came into being during Kubelík's frequent successive appearances in Vienna, yet they do not bear the slightest trait of haste or superficiality, quite the contrary. In all these compositions, Kubelík was rivalled by recordings for Deutsche Grammophon made by his contemporary Ferenc Fricsay, who may have attained a greater tempo-rhythmic elasticity and sonic transparency, yet Kubelík and the Wiener Philharmoniker succeeded in gaining a singularly exalted expression and unsentimental Slavonic melancholia, with prime examples being the accounts of Tchaikovsky's three paramount symphonies, recorded in January 1960, which had previously only been released on CD by Testament. They, even more than in the case of Borodin's *Heroic Symphony*, reveal Kubelík's understanding of the 19th-century Russian symphonic canon. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to claim that the Warner Classics compilation is the greatest surprise of 2014, the year marking Kubelík's centenary, as it serves to prove his indisputable mastery, which made him one of the most original conductors of the second half of the 20th century.

“MY BEAUTY ENRAPTURED GOD”

**Newly discovered original prints
of instrumental ritornellos extend
the best-known Czech Baroque music
collection, *Loutna česká / Czech Lute* (1653)**

Loutna česká / Czech Lute is considered the best-known early example of Czech Baroque music, a collection of songs dating back to 1653. It was written by Adam Václav Michna of Otradovice (circa 30 June 1600 – 16 October 1676), a composer, poet and musician, who spent all his life in the town of Jindřichův Hradec, south Bohemia. The collection is made up of 13 songs in Czech, linking up to each other as a cycle, most likely for home and private performance, even though their content is of a sacred nature. The songs depict the marriage of the human soul in three phases of this ritual: during courting, betrothal and the wedding feast. Similarly to the compositions from Czech Baroque hymn-books, the songs in *Czech Lute* are strophic, each of them underlain with verses that, in a singular language, abounding in colloquial words, phrases and idioms, metaphors and quotations from the Bible, depict the particular stories of the spiritual marriage. The collection possesses a great historical value and significance, both in musical and literary terms. In the history of Czech culture, it is the very first to contain “ritornello songs” in Czech. And it is also exceptional as regards the content, as the texts are imbued with a peculiar erotic mysticism with folk elements. Furthermore, the collection is

remarkable owing to the fact that the individual songs start with ritornellos, instrumental preludes. The songs featured in *Czech Lute* have been part of the Czech musical culture for centuries. They were included in the numerous printed popular hymn-books by Václav Holan Rovenský and Matěj Václav Šteyer, yet they have also been copied and disseminated among both professional and, above all, amateur singers, often without their being aware of the songs’ initial function.

Czech Lute was discovered in the 1920s by the musicologist Emilián Trola. The collection found was not complete, since it only comprised a transcript dating from the second half of the 17th century of a simple part of the organ basso continuo and a single vocal part of all the songs. In addition, Trola identified a print of the organ part of the entire collection at the library of the Strahov Monastery in Prague. In 1943, he put these incomplete sources together as the first edition, or rather a reconstruction of the collection, in which he merely included songs, since he did not have sufficient sources for the instrumental preludes. After the end of World War II, the organ part discovered at the Strahov Monastery went missing for a long time.

In the 1960s, another source for Michna's collection was found in Soběslav, South Bohemia: a printed particell, which contained two vocal parts of the songs and their organ accompaniment. This print served as the basis for a new edition in 1984 of the collection's vocal parts by Martin Horyna, which gave rise to numerous interpretations and arrangements, including Michal Pospíšil's attempt at completing the interludes and instrumental parts (1998).

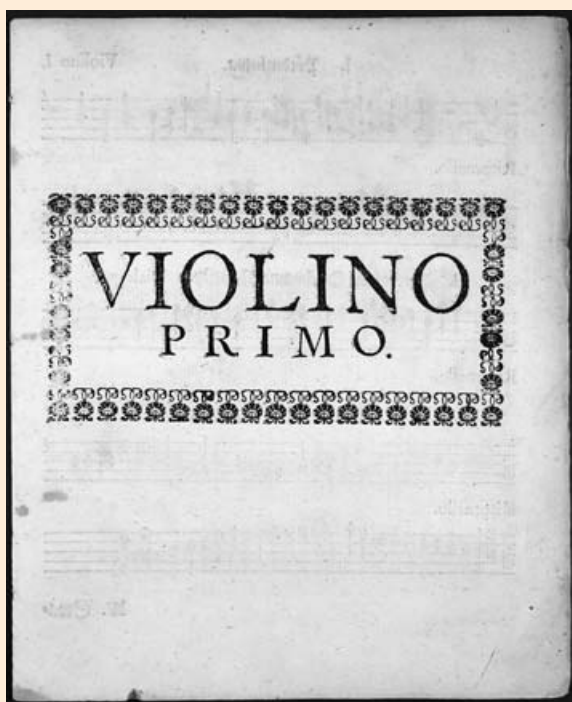
The Regional Museum in Slaný, near Prague, also maintains the book collection of the former local Franciscan Monastery, currently used by the Barefoot Friars. The numerous volumes of great historical value include an extremely precious convolute of three vocal polyphony music prints dating from the early 17th century, containing the repertoire of polyphonic Magnificats by Italian composers (Nuremberg, 1600), works by Hieronymus Praetorius (Hamburg, 1602) and Martin Langreder (Passau, 1602). In January 2014, the author of the present text discovered in the bass volume of this convolute the first violin (Violino primo) part for Michna's *Czech Lute*. It is a unique document, the likes of which has not been found in any other archive or library in Europe. The discovered source belongs to the set of instrumental parts, which together with the mentioned particell, today deposited in Soběslav, constituted the complete collection. The first violin part is made up of two 31 x 19 cm sheets, which are printed on both sides and folded, so its resulting format has the dimensions of 15.5 x 19 cm. The source contains the first violin part, or rather the upper melodic part for all the ritornellos that opened the individual songs of the collection, as well as for two songs (Nos. XI and XIII). The violin part is written in the G clef. The final ritornello, and the final song, is scored for the first viola (but can also be played by the violin) and written in the alto clef. In the violin part, the ritornellos are marked with Roman numerals and the titles of songs, whose modern transcription is as follows:

- I. Foreword
- II. The Calling of a Spiritual Bride / Dialogus
- III. The Glorious Gift of the Mother of God
- IV. Wedding Ring
- V. Virgin's Love

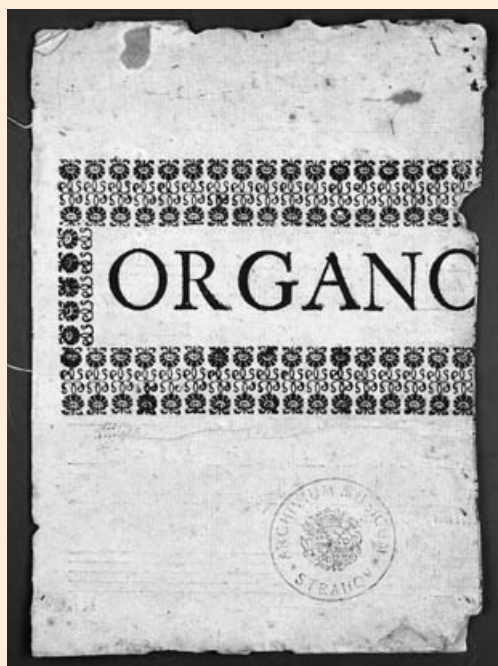
- VI. Farewell to the World
- VII. Spiritual Wedding Purgation
- VIII. Spiritual Dowry
- IX. Angelic Friendship
- X. Bridal Wreath
- XI. Wedding Day. Virgins, Begin Singing
- XII. The Fight Between the Soul and the Body
- XIII. The Grief of the Foolish Virgins. Pitiful Slumber

The newly discovered first violin part is a source essential for complete understanding and reconstruction of Michna's *Czech Lute*. Together with the print of the organ part, which was recently found in the written personal effects of the former Strahov Monastery archivist Romuald Perlík, it clearly defines the melodic-harmonic basis of the ritornellos, at the same time disclosing a lot about the use of instruments in all the songs of the collection. The notes made in the discovered first violin part reveal that the instruments, with the exception of the fundamental bass accompaniment, which is applied in the entire collection, and the ritornellos, only played along with the vocal parts in song No. XI, *Wedding Day*, in the case of which "Canto & Violino" is prescribed. The instrument is stated in the singular, hence we can assume that this song was merely accompanied by the first violin. On the other hand, song No. XIII, *The Grief of the Foolish Virgins*, bears the instruction "Canto & 3 Violae", thus it is evident that in this ritornello and song three violas (string instruments) were employed, but it is also highly likely that "just" three violas played, accompanied by a keyboard instrument. Accordingly, the use of instruments in Michna's *Czech Lute* was in fact far more moderate than was previously presumed and performed.

The newly discovered source for *Czech Lute* has been musicologically processed and included as an independent item in the collections of the Regional Museum in Slaný. A new edition of the entire work is currently under preparation. *Czech Lute* has been explored by the Prague-based Baroque Ensemble Inegál, whose artistic director, Adam Viktor, has newly reconstructed the entire cycle, which was performed at two concerts in Prague and at the place where the new source is maintained, the chapel of the Piarist Monastery in Slaný. A new recording of *Czech Lute* in its entirety was made in the chapel and, three months after the source's discovery, promptly released by the Nibiru label. The new finding has



above: Extract from the violin part notation
left: The title page of the first violin part, 1653
right: A Mascarón placed at the end of the violin part



The title page of the organ part, 1653

significantly contributed to our knowledge of Czech early Baroque music, thus extending our notions about Adam Václav Michna's compositional style.

At the present time, the following period sources relating to Adam Václav Michna's *Loutna česká / Czech Lute* collection (1653) are available:

- **The particell of the vocal part**, printed in 1653, Hussite Museum in Tábor, Blata Museum in Soběslav.
- **The organ part for the entire collection**, "Organo", printed in 1653, Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov, personal effects of Romuald Perlík.
- **The first violin part**, *ricercari*, accompaniment to the songs, "Violino primo", printed in 1653, Regional Museum in Slaný.
- **Manuscript of the soprano part**, Matěj Devotí's copy from 1666, East Bohemia Museum, Chateau, Pardubice.

Extract from the organ part notation

Petr Daněk's new book

DANĚK, Petr: *Historické tisky vokální polyfonie, rané monodie, hudební teorie a instrumentální hudby v českých zemích do roku 1630 (se soupisem tisků z let 1488–1628 uložených v Čechách)* [Historical Prints of Vocal Polyphony, Early Monody, Music Theory and Instrumental Music in the Czech lands before 1630 (Supplemented with a list of prints published between 1488 and 1628, now in Czech collections)].

Clavis Monumentorum Musicorum Regni Bohemiae, Series S (Subsidia), V. Prague, KLP – Koniasch Latin Press 2015.

Czech music historiography certainly cannot boast of regular issuance of books, with the main publications being prevalently confined to musicological studies in proceedings and specialist magazines, as well as critical or other editions. Recent grant projects, however, aim to aid the publication of research books, and several major music-history works are now being completed.

In light of this situation, all the more significant is Petr Daněk's new monograph dedicated to historical music prints in the Czech lands until 1630, enriched with a remarkable catalogue of preserved printed copies dating between 1488 and 1628, which is of great value for further research. The book was published by KLP - Koniasch Latin Press in co-operation with the Association for Central European Cultural Studies and with financial support from the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. For three decades, the publication's author has been a distinguished, versatile figure of Czech musical culture, working as a musicologist, pedagogue, performer, translator, programme director and manager. Petr Daněk has dedicated his scholarly and performance activities to Renaissance music, research into and making accessible new sources. The present book is the fruit of his lifelong interest in music prints of the late-Renaissance period, covering in a lucid catalogue more than 300 separate titles of prints of vocal polyphony, early monody, music theory and instru-

mental music, preserved at Czech libraries, museums, archives and other institutions. In the previous decades, printed music sources contained in Czech collections were partially processed owing to the RISM (*Répertoire International des Sources Musicales*) international project. In the 1960s, they were also mapped by Jaroslav Bužga, Jan Kouba, Eva Mikanová and Tomislav Volek in the *Průvodce po pramenech k dějinám hudby. Fondy a sbírky uložené v Čechách* (Guide to Music History Sources. Archives and Collections in Bohemia; Prague, 1969). Daněk's new, revised catalogue, extended with plenty of new and unique items, is limited to Bohemia, since the Moravian sources have largely been compiled by Theodora Straková. Such research was no easy task half a century ago, and it is still fraught with pitfalls today, as the collections of historical music prints have been undergoing constant transformation in line with new discoveries owing to the ongoing filing of sources at libraries and the use of new technologies (as well as random discoveries), on the one hand, and, unfortunately, losses and dislocations within property transfers, on the other. Hence, the author has focused both on new searching through and checking the collections of central libraries in Prague (the National Library, the National Museum Library, and the Czech Museum of Music archives) and beyond, including parish, monastery, chateau and private collections. Bearing witness to the demanding nature of such research,

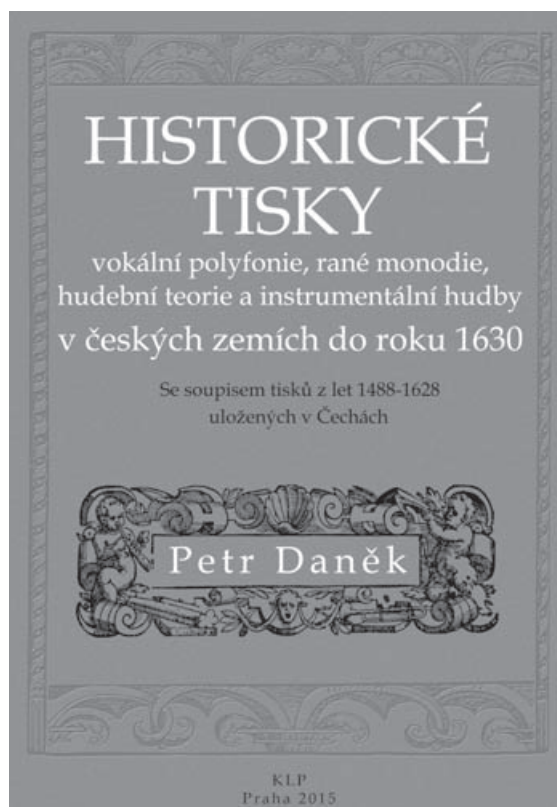
and its virtually being never-ending, is the fact that at the present time over 1,100 libraries, book collections and archives are registered in the Czech Republic, with some of them not being accessible.

The core of Petr Daněk's book is thus the catalogue of printed music sources preserved in Bohemia, with reference to the RISM and stating of the Czech institutions which maintain the particular prints. A very useful aid for the users – historians and musicians alike – are the location numbers, under which the respective volumes can be retrieved (this data is absent from the RISM).

The catalogue itself is preceded by a preface explaining the criteria of selection and treatment (the list does not include, for instance, hymn-books, psalters and occasional music), the current state of the mapping of collections, the methodology, as well as the reasons why some of the materials could not be explored and incorporated into the catalogue. A book conceived in this manner would alone be a groundbreaking work, for which Czech musicology has waited for decades, yet the author has even more to offer. In the following chapters, he concentrates in detail on several selected topics relating to Renaissance score reproduction in the Czech lands.

The first chapter focuses on the development of printing vocal polyphony music in Bohemia between 1500 and 1630. The workshop of the most important music printer in Bohemia prior to the Battle of Bílá Hora (1620), Jiří Nigrin (Georgius Nigrinus), is the subject of the second chapter (also containing a separate list of his production), which is loosely linked up to by an account of reproductions of music scores by the Rudolfiner-era composer and singer Franciscus Sale. For almost 40 years, Prague was the seat of the court of Emperor Rudolf II, therefore it is evident that the prints included in the Czech collections are not merely of Czech provenience (both when it comes to the compositions and printers), but they also contain unique gems, reproductions of works written elsewhere, opuses by the most distinguished musicians of the second half of the 16th century. The next chapter is dedicated to the previously unknown, newly discovered reproduction of Orlando di Lasso's motets dating from 1580. The penultimate chapter centres on the fate of the extensive music library of Vilém and Petr Vok of Rožmberk, while the final one deals with another comprehensive collection of printed sheet music of Czech provenience, which has ended up abroad: this one, unlike the Rožmberk collections, was recently transferred to the USA.

The book is furnished with ample footnotes, a list of the literature used, an index of printers and publishers, an index of composers, musicologists and



editors, and an index of persons. A great bonus for the reader is an opulent pictorial supplement: facsimiles of the approximately 120 most beautiful title pages of Renaissance music prints which makes of Petr Daněk's book a truly exquisite compendium, providing extremely useful information to musicologists, historians and researchers pertaining to the evolution of printing, as well as musicians. What is more, the publication will indisputably also be an essential guide for librarians and museum staff of both Czech and foreign institutions. Into the bargain, Petr Daněk's specialist book is highly readable, with its profound content and pictorial supplement giving a magisterial account of the music reproductions in the Czech lands in the period of the Renaissance to all lovers of early music, as well as history and literature.

In conclusion, I would like to add that although the publication is written in Czech, it is useful for foreign scholars too, as it offers an extensive résumé in English and the majority of the data is accessible in the indexes and bibliography. The summary of music prints and the facsimiles of more than a hundred title pages also make the book intriguing for specialists and connoisseurs who cannot read Czech.

150 YEARS OF HISTORY AND AN IMPULSE FOR THE FUTURE: VIENNA-BASED LUMÍR CHOIR RISES FROM THE DEAD

INTERVIEW
WITH VIKTOR VELEK



PHOTO: MARTIN SUCHÁNEK

The roots of the Czech musical culture are firmly linked with the institutions that were largely founded after 1860, in the wake of the adoption by Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph of the October Diploma. As this federalist constitution allowed for the development of public life, it comes as no surprise that the very first societies that came into being at the time included choirs, for instance, the famed Hlahol in Prague. An overlooked chapter of history is the numerous choral societies established by Czech compatriots abroad, even though they played an immense role in maintaining their national identity. Consequently, what these oldest societies in the Czech lands and abroad have in common is not just the time of their origination but also, and primarily, their having been forgotten. Some of them have merged with the aim of staying alive, others perform sporadically, some merely exist on paper, while a host of them have become

extinct. Nevertheless, now and then some of these “dinosaurs” attract attention. The Vienna-based Czech choral society Lumír, celebrating this year its 150th anniversary, is an interesting phenomenon.

We discussed it in an interview with the musicologist Viktor Velek (b. 1977), a renowned researcher into national music traditions, along with the musical life of ethnic minorities, the preservation of archival documents, performing forgotten works and the collection of historical recordings.

*A few weeks ago you published the book **Lumír 150**. How would you describe its genesis?*

The primary impulse was to write “something” to mark the 150th anniversary of Lumír, the Czecho-Slavic choral society in Vienna. I have explored its history for some time, yet owing to my sense of detail

and the short time given for implementing the project, I refrained from the possibility of making an almanac mapping its activity chronologically. Though the book does present the society's history, it is in the form of more than 20 monographic chapters dedicated to individual choir masters. Their activities not only splendidly document the society's evolution, it also gives an unusual account of the history of the Czech minority in Vienna. At this juncture, I would like to point out that Czechs and Moravians formed the largest ethnic minority in Vienna for more than a century, and by circa 1900 their number totalled approximately 300,000. At the time, Chicago, Prague and Vienna were the cities inhabited by the greatest Czech enclaves. And the necessary precondition for the project, finance, was provided in part by the Federal Chancellery of Austria and the Faculty of Arts of Ostrava University.

Can the book also be deemed and, above all used as, a nominal music dictionary?

Absolutely. The chapters combine the form of dictionary entries and monographic studies. They are independent wholes and need not be read from first to last, although I would recommend it for the sake of understanding the context. Unlike in the case of a dictionary, I did not have to take the route of shortcuts and selections from the works, focusing instead on giving a comprehensive account. I strove to describe everything in a manner that would be interesting for amateurs and musicologists alike. The book contains the standard requisites, such as footnotes, an index, an outline of methodology, etc. If a particular choir master was also a composer, the respective chapter is rounded off with a structured summary of his works, with references to the institutions that maintain the scores. Owing to the limited scope (564 pages) and the number of copies, I could only include musical incipits in the case of some of the figures. We should bear in mind that, with a few exceptions, the pieces composed by the respective choir masters are totally unknown, thus today's Lumír actually sings their revivals and a truly unique repertoire, possessed by no other choir in the world.

That sounds interesting. But I will ask a provocative question: what is the quality of these compositions?

Their quality varies but we should view them from a different angle. The significance of these

compositions at the time of their origin and now differs. In the past, it was necessary to sing something national and concurrently suitable for the vocal possibilities of the Lumír members in specific years. The composers could often have written more complex and more modern music, but they had to bear in mind the limitations on the part of both the choir and the audience. After all, those who wanted modern music were afforded in Vienna multiple opportunities for its creation or consumption. Today, the compositions primarily possess a historical, documentary value, providing a perfect retrospective. The differences in quality are significant: while some of the choir masters only harmonised folk songs, others seemed to be more competent. The pieces of Jaromír Herle, for instance, do not fall far short of Josef Bohuslav Foerster's works. Initially, Lumír was a handicraft, later on a clerical-trade society. The first choir masters were enthusiastic amateurs who were able to lead untrained amateur singers. Over the course of time, there were a growing number of those who could harmonise songs, as well as those who were also musicians, chorus masters, composers, music writers and organisers. Accordingly, over the 150 years of the society's existence, the level of its choir masters changed, as did the requirements of the repertoire and the quality of the choir masters' own creations. But all of them had in common the idea of patriotism, and all of them diligently worked for the choir, dedicating to it a lot of energy and time. A choir cannot do without a choir master, therefore, in a certain sense, all of the choir masters were equally important. A new chairman or treasurer can be found easily, yet a choir without a choir master usually perishes.

The mentioned Jaromír Herle was from 1899 to 1921 assistant chorus master of the Hofoper; Josef Ferdinand Skalický was a pupil of Anton Bruckner; Robert Volánek was a superlative Kapellmeister... How are they today perceived in Austria?

I assume they are, regrettably, still underestimated. If they are included in the Austrian Music Dictionary (Österreichisches Musiklexikon), the entries often do not mention their work for the Czech minority, they are only referred to as Austrians. And when it comes to books of the "music history of Vienna" type, they do not contain a single chapter on the music of the local Czech community. And Lumír was able to perform demanding works (by, for instance,



*„Slyšme zpěvem na Dunaji
jako Lumír v českém kraji“*

Viktor Velek

LUMÍR 150

Sbormistři	Chorleiter
českoslovanského	des tschechoslawischen
zpěváckého spolku	Gesangsvereines
„Lumír“ ve Vídni	„Lumír“ in Wien

K 150. výročí založení spolku
Zum 150 jährigen Jubiläum der Gründung des Vereines

Foerster, Novák, Kovařovic, Musil, Smetana, Malát), including entire operas! Moreover, the choir also appeared on the radio and at large vocal festivals in Prague. That is one of the reasons why my book is bilingual: written in Czech in the left column and in German in the right. In general, the Czechs living in Vienna are somehow between the two nations. They were “our compatriots abroad” for the Czech and Moravians, and a “foreign element” for the Viennese. The Czech-Viennese culture thus belongs to both nations, and neither of them at the same time.

Eight is a fateful number in Czech history. As regards the period you have mapped, it mainly concerns the years 1918 (the establishment of Czechoslovakia), 1938 (the Anschluss, annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany), 1948 (the assumption of power by the Communists in Czechoslovakia), 1968 (the Prague Spring). How did they reflect in the society's history?

After 1918, a number of compatriots moved from Austria to Czechoslovakia, and the society almost became extinct. It was rescued by the self-sacrificing choir master Jaroslav Jindra, an official at the Czech legation and ardent promoter of Czech culture abroad. During World War II, Lumír survived in a sort of exile within, it could not perform in public. The society – as well as the entire Czech minority in Vienna – suffered a crushing blow in 1948, in the wake of which the natural migration between Czechoslovakia and Austria ceased. Lumír's members grew old, the choir's standard dropped, with the minority's decreasing interest in singing. The emigrants from Czechoslovakia who arrived in Vienna after 1968 had to deal with existential problems and were not attracted by the denizens' societies. Following the death of the last choir master in 1985, Lumír only existed formally and would remain in hibernation for more than two decades.

Lumír celebrated the anniversary with the book and on 21 March it held a gala evening at the Czech Embassy in Vienna. What was the route to the society's reincarnation?

In 2008, I began devoting to the society's history, mainly owing to one of the last Lumír members, Josef Koutník, who trusted me and opened to me its archive. Then I started to write and give lectures about the society's illustrious history, compile archival documents and, thanks to an Austrian grant, reconstruct the Czech music scene in Vienna

from 1840 to 1939. This aroused interest on the part of a few compatriots, who duly decided to revive the choir's activities. A great role in this respect was played by Pavel Koutník (Paul Koutnik), a composer, musician, and currently the society's chairman. The post of choir master was assumed by Johannes G. Schwarz, my former schoolmate from the Vienna Music Institute. At the present time, Lumír is a mixed choir, with the majority of its members being women, and – just as 150 years ago – it is starting from scratch as an amateur ensemble, singing simple choruses, merely for pleasure. They also organise chamber music evenings, sing at masses... by and large, they adhere to their tradition. Minority societies in general tend to die out, yet Lumír had new life breathed into it. And I am pleased that it all began with theoretical, musicological work.

In conclusion, let us return to your book. Such a voluminous and difficult-to-compile publication does not come into being every year. How will you recall working on it?

That's a tricky question. I will perhaps recall the hundreds of hours of work, the frequent travelling to explore archival documents and literature, the stress relating to the printing deadlines... the usual things. I will certainly experience the sentimental feeling of satisfaction from having put a wreath on the graves of all the former choir masters. And I will remember meeting the individual choir masters' relatives. Some of the families highly revere their grandfathers and great grandfathers, while others were surprised to hear about their ancestors' activities. Yet now I rather think of whether to publish a reissue, as the first edition has virtually sold out. The cover also features the reference “Musica Bohemica Viennensia, Tomus I”, which indicates my future plans, that is, to again write something about the history of Czech-Viennese music.

VELEK, Viktor: *Lumír 150: sborníček československého zpěváckého spolku „Lumír“ ve Vídni = Chorleiter des tschechoslowawischen Gesangsvereines „Lumír“ in Wien.*

1st edition. Třebíč: Apis Press, 2015. 564 pp. Musica Bohemica Viennensia; t. 1. ISBN 978-80-904925-2-3.

photo on p. 27:

The book's author at a presentation at the Austrian Cultural Forum (Prague, 16 June 2015), which also featured excerpts from compositions by chorus masters of the Lumír society.

CZECH MUSIC FROM MID-MARCH TO EARLY JUNE

THE PRESENT SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT PERFORMANCES OF CZECH MUSIC BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD LINKS UP TO THE FIRST CALENDAR OF EVENTS, PUBLISHED IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE OF CZECH MUSIC QUARTERLY.

The Czech music programme around the world has been mainly occupied by Leoš Janáček's permanently staged operas and Dvořák's *Rusalka*, while more extraordinary was the staging of Viktor Ullmann's opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* at the Tiroler Landestheater in Innsbruck. The opera productions also included two world premieres. The first one, of **Jan Klusák's** *Philoctetes*, conducted by **Marko Ivanović** and directed by **Jiří Nekvasil**, took place in May at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava. Though working with the contemporary musical idiom, in terms of dramaturgy Klusák turns to the genre's very beginnings in the late 16th century in Florence, with the subject from Ancient Greek mythology clearly referring to them. He identifies with Philoctetes as a metaphor of an artist endowed with a supernatural gift (Heracles's bow), but unacceptable to society (owing to the stench of a festering wound). The other world premiere was **Jiří Najvar's** operatic debut *Zhasnutí* (Blackout). It is a student work, yet the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno finally invited the composition department to participate in the opera productions at its Divadlo na Orli theatre, and ceased to present merely older, tried-and-tested pieces. Noteworthy too is the first staging of **Josef Mysliveček's** *Armida* in Portugal.

Worthy of mention among the concert premieres is above all the performance given by the **Berg Orchestra** titled *Disgraphic Scores*, featuring six compositions, all of them written to commission directly for the evening at the Trade Fair Palace in Prague, by **Peter Machajdík**, **Lucie Vítková**, **František Chaloupka**, **Jiří Lukeš**, **Jakub Rataj** and **Slavomír Hořinka**, respectively. The (dis)graphic scores were co-performed by the dance company **Hudebně-taneční sdružení pro Evropu**. Moreover,

three **Miroslav Srnka** works were given world premieres: *Origami* at the Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik, and *move 01* and *move 02* for large orchestra within the musica viva festival in Munich. **Martin Smolka**'s seven-part piece for three choruses *Sacred Vessel* had its world premiere in Stuttgart. The Easter Festival of Sacred Music in Brno hosted the first performance of the *Saint John Passion* by **Jan Hanuš**.

Martin Smolka: LiPoLied. March 15, 2015, Liedfestival 2015, Stuttgart, Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka.** Premiere: March 15, further performances: March 17, 19, 27, 31, April 10, 12, 18, 26, May 3, 15, 20, 2015. Pforzheim, Stadttheater. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa.** March 20, 2015, St. Petersburg, Mariinsky Theatre. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa.** Premiere: March 22, reruns: March 28, April 6, 11, 18, May 3, 8, 17, June 23 and July 4, 2015. Aachen, Theater Aachen. **Jiří Najvar: Zhasnutí.** Premiere: March 21, 2015, further performances: March 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 2015. Brno, Divadlo na Orlí. **Leoš Janáček: The Cunning Little Vixen.** Premiere: March 28, reruns: March 29, April 1, 3, 4, 5, 2015. Athens, Greek National Opera, Olympia Theatre, conductor: Jaroslav Kyzlink. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa.** Premiere: March 27, reruns: March 29, April 5, 11, 17, 2015. Gera, Grosses Haus. **Viktor Ullmann: Der Kaiser von Atlantis.** Premiere: March 28, reruns: April 8, 17, May 2, 21, 22, 2015. Innsbruck, Tiroler Landestheater.

Jan Hanuš: Saint John Passion. April 2, 2015, Brno, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Easter Festival of Sacred Music, world premiere. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka.** Premiere: April 3, reruns: April 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 23, 26, 2015. Paris, Opéra Bastille. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa.** Premiere: April 7, reruns: April 9, 11, 2015. Glasgow, Theatre Royal, co-produced with the Den Jyske Opera. Festival performances: April 16 and April 18, 2015, Festival Theatre, Edinburgh. **Martin Smolka: Hats in the Sky.** April 9, 2015, 69. Frühjahrstagung des INMM – Institut für Neue Musik und Musikerziehung Darmstadt. **Berg Orchestra: Disgraphic Scores.** Music-Dance Society for Europe. April 7, 2015, Prague, Trade Fair Palace. Peter Machajdík: Imanentné čiary v tmavomodrej (The Immanent Lines in Blue Deep), Lucie Vítková: Fanfára č. 1 (Fanfare No. 1), František Chaloupka: Vrh kostek nikdy nezruší náhodu (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance), Jiří Lukeš: Threads, Jakub Rataj: Reactions II I, reconnection, Slavomír Hořinka: Aevum. SMS to W.A.M. **Martin Smolka: Bashō.** April 15, 2015, Basel,



Viktor Ullmann: *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, Tiroler Landestheater Innsbruck (Manuel Wiencke)



Miroslav Srnka rehearsing, musica viva festival, Munich

Gare du Nord. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka.** Adaptation with additional music by Alexandra Holtsch and additional text by Tim Staffell. Premiere: April 6, reruns: April 17, 22, 23, 25, 2015. Ludwigsburg, Forum am Schlosspark. **Ondřej Adámek: Sinuous Voices.** April 18, 2015, Zagreb, Youth Theatre, Muzički Biennale Zagreb. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa.** April 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 2015. Bologna, Teatro Comunale. **Hans Krása: Brundibár.** April 16, 2015, Boise, Opera Idaho, The Egyptian Theatre. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa.** April 18, 21, 23, 26, 2015. Budapest, Hungarian State Opera. **MusicOlomouc.** April 20 – 29, 2015, Art Centre of Palacký University, Olomouc. World premieres of compositions by Michal Nejtek, Peter Graham and Pavel Zlámal. **Ondřej Adámek: Profile Concert.** April 23, 2015.



Jan Klusák: Philoctetes, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, Ostrava

PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ

Donaueschingen, Donauhallen. **Ondřej Adámek: Kameny for 6 (Stones for 6)**. April 25, 2015. Witten, Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik. **Miroslav Srnka: Origami**. April 25, 2015. Witten, Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik, world premiere. **Ondřej Adámek: Endless Steps**. April 25, 2015. Friedrichshafen, Bodensee-Festival, Graf-Zeppelin-Haus.

Miroslav Srnka: move 01, move 02. May 8, 2015, Munich, Herkulessaal, world premiere. **Martin Smolka: Hymne für ein nicht existierendes Land**. May 9, 2015, Cologne, Acht Brücken, Funkhaus Wallrafplatz. **Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka**. May 8, 11, 14, 16, 18, 2015. Santiago, Teatro Municipal. **Martin Smolka: Lamento metodico, Music for Retuned Instruments, Haiku, Agnus Dei**. May 13, 2015, Stuttgart, Stadtkirche Bad Cannstatt, Musik am 13. **Jan Klusák: Philoctetes**. May 14, 16, 21, 2015. Ostrava, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, Antonín Dvořák Theatre. **Josef Mysliveček: Armida**. Premiere: May 22, rerun: May 23, 2015. Lisbon, Centro Cultural de Belém. **Ondřej Adámek: Ča tourne ça bloque**. May 23, 2015, Ljubljana, Klub CD. **Leoš Janáček: The Diary of the One Who Disappeared**. Premiere: May 30, 2015, reruns: June 4, 6, 10, 13, 16, 2015. Cologne, Kolumba. **Ondřej Adámek: Karakuri – Poupée mécanique**. May 30, 2015, Rolf-Liebermann-Studio des NDR, Hamburg.

Martin Smolka: Sacred Vessel. June 4, 2015, 35. Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag, Stuttgart, world premiere.

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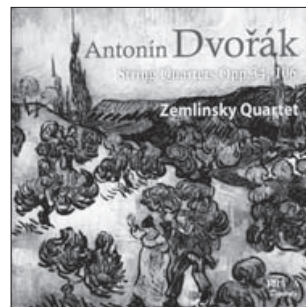
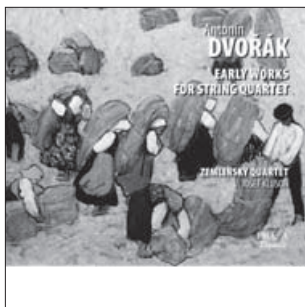
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TRACKLIST

1. **Slávo Krekovič:** Kurzwellen mit Fragezeichen
2. **Andreas Hagelüken:** Kühlschrank
3. **Jakub Rataj:** Mezi řečí
4. **Pavel Novotný:** Proměření





Zemlinsky Quartet

Antonín Dvořák: The Complete String Quartets

František Souček and Petr Strížek (violin), Petr Holman (viola), Vladimír Fortin (cello)

Early Works for String Quartet (String Quartets Nos. 1–7, Two Waltzes, Op. 54, B 105, String Quintet in A minor, Op. 1, B. 7, Quartet Movement in A minor, B 40a, & F major, B 120).

TT: 268:20. 4 CDs Praga Digitals PRD 350 028.

String Quartets No. 9 in D minor, Op. 34, B 75, & No. 13 in G major, Op. 106, B 192.

TT: 70:08. 1 SACD. Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 250 292.

String Quartets No. 12 in F major, Op. 96, B 179, & No. 14 in A flat major, Op. 105, B 193, & Terzetto in C major, Op. 74, B 148.

TT: 75:41. 1 SACD. Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 250 300.

String Quartets No. 8 in E major, Op. 80, B 57, & Miniatures, Op. 75a, B 149, & Cypresses, B 152.

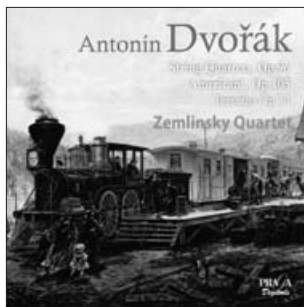
TT: 75:08. 1 SACD. Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 250 303.

String Quartets No. 10 in E flat major, Op. 51, B 92, & No. 11 in C major, Op. 61, B 121.

TT: 72:31. 1 SACD. Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 250 305.

When it comes to new recordings of 19th- and 20th-century Czech classical music made during the Year of Czech Music 2014, the greatest attention on the part of the media was paid to the new complete set of Dvořák's symphonies, recorded with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek (Decca 2012–2014; see CMQ 2,3/2014). This attention was so concentrated that it put into the shade the (let us hope, to be finished) project of Dvořák's symphonies with the same orchestra and its former music director Zdeněk Mácal (Octavia Records) and other interesting accomplishments, with the most intriguing among them being the very first recording of Dvořák's debut opera *Alfred* (Arco Diva 2015, see CMQ 3/2014). The general press and, regrettably, the specialist media, paid little attention to the finalisation of a project comparable with the mentioned new complete recording carried out by the Czech Philharmonic under Jiří Bělohlávek, a release on a foreign label, with complicated distribution on the Czech market and, what is more, much more demanding for the performers and listeners alike. The project in question is the complete recording of the 14 Dvořák String Quartets dating from between 1862 and 1895, supplemented with a few chamber pieces for strings, undertaken by Messrs František Souček and Petr Strížek (violins), Petr Holman (viola) and Vladimír Fortin (cello), the members of the **Zemlinsky Quartet**. Performed on concert stages with varying frequency has been the approximately second half of Dvořák's quartet works, starting with the *String Quartet in E major*, Op. 80 (27), B. 57 (1876/1888). Thus all the more significant for the listeners and fans of Dvořák's chamber music were the complete recordings of his quartets, which in the final third of the 20th century followed similar projects presenting the complete recordings of his symphonic works. The very first complete recording of Dvořák's string quartets, made by the Prague String Quartet (Břetislav Novotný, Karel Příbyl, Lubomír Malý, Jan Šírc) between 1973 and 1977 at the studio at the National House in Žižkov,

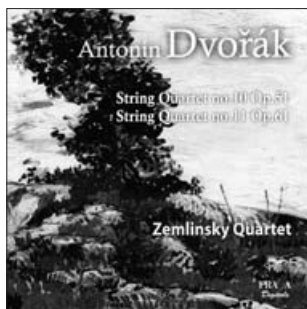
Prague, was highly acclaimed by the critics, who branded it the best comprehensive set of the commercially recorded quartet oeuvre of a single composer. This oldest recording of Dvořák's string quartets has ever since been available to listeners, as it is still on the market on a Deutsche Grammophon re-release (429 193-2, 463 165-2). In addition to its indisputable artistic value, this Dvořák compendium possesses the great forte of the works being rendered by the Prague String Quartet in their original versions, without taking into consideration the reductions and retouches, as presented in the critical edition of Dvořák's quartet pieces. Accordingly, if the listeners want to hear Dvořák's early quartets in their true, non-revised form, they have no choice but to reach for this set of recordings. The chronologically second complete set, recorded, originally for Germany's Bayer Classics, by the Stamitz Quartet between 1989 and 1993, was most recently re-released by Brilliant Classics (92396). Some of its main characteristics are slower tempos and looser handling of Dvořák's music material, including repeated sections. The third complete recording of Dvořák's quartet works was made by the Panocha Quartet (1983–1985, 1992–1999), who dedicated the major part of their career to this artistically highly refined project. Their decades-long labour paid off, as a number of the recordings contained in this sonically and rhythmically balanced set rank among the most intriguing accounts of Dvořák's chamber works. Especially as regards the early pieces, the Panocha Quartet afforded them faster tempos and not overly furrowed agogics, thus arousing doubts as to the viability of extensive and structurally experimental compositions, which Dvořák himself rather doomed to oblivion. The complete Dvořák set embarked upon by the (New) Vlach Quartet Prague for Naxos between 1995 and 1999 only lacks the early *Quartets Nos. 2 and 4*. The album has yet to be completed owing to the personnel changes in the ensemble, and we can only hope that it will soon be rounded off, as it is desirable not only due to the wide distribution avail-



ability of the recordings but also the definite qualities of some of the deliveries. Besides the, for the time being, most recent album of the complete Dvořák string quartets recorded by the Zemlinsky Quartet (yet another one made by a Czech ensemble for a foreign label), 2010 saw the launch of a project of complete Dvořák quartet works, of which *Quartets Nos. 4, 9, 10, 12–14* have so far been recorded by Germany's Vogler Quartet (Tim Vogler, Frank Reinecke, Stefan Fehlandt, Stephan Forck). It comes as no surprise that this set too is being produced by a German label, CPO, but, for the first time by a foreign ensemble from the Czech perspective. Germany, it would seem, is the promised land for Dvořák's quartet music. Back in 2003, the Zemlinsky Quartet – at the time under the provocative moniker Penguin Quartet – recorded the most frequently performed of Dvořák's string quartets, that in F major, Op. 96, B. 178 (Bohemia Musica). Yet the ensemble had to wait for their great Dvořák opportunity until 2006, when in November and December they made a four-part studio album featuring Dvořák's early *String Quartets Nos. 1–7* and smaller pieces (*Two Waltzes*, the *Quartet Movement in A minor*), including the *String Quintet in A minor*, Op. 1, B. 7, in which they were joined by the violist of the Pražák Quartet, Josef Klusoň. The Zemlinsky Quartet did not approach the quartet works from the studio recording purist perspective, but as they decided to return them to concert stages (during the Year of Czech Music 2014, their repertoire encompassed the complete Dvořák quartet oeuvre), they recorded the early quartets in shortened form, as instructed by the composer himself or the publishers of the Dvořák critical edition. Dvořák's spacious, occasionally youthfully chatty, compositions gave way to the young artist's emotionally charged, often dramatically and tempo contrastive chamber statements. The first piece, *String Quartet No. 1*, is performed by the Zemlinsky Quartet as a vigorous work, with the brisk first and final movements and the tense slow movement.

The account of *Quartet No. 2* manifests the forethought choice of reductions, highlighting Dvořák's ability to intrigue by both melancholic moods and dance motion. The most strikingly shortened are *Quartets Nos. 3 and 4*, coming across as formally compendious, yet at the expense of forfeiting the Schubertian dimensions, hence also the potential of letting the compositions flow widely and alternate in moods. *Quartet No. 5* is already interpreted by the Zemlinsky Quartet as a piece intended for the concert stage, contrastive in mood, with the winsome tune of the second movement and a delicate dance nature. A resignation to principally faster tempos, which should serve to disguise the allegedly compositional obscurantism of the early quartets, as well as a sense for Dvořák's melancholic seriousness and chamber intimacy, is splendidly demonstrated in the account of *Quartet No. 7* (only performed more slowly by the Vlach Quartet), but also in the recording of such a miniature as the *Quartet Movement in A minor*, B. 40a. Whereas decades ago the Prague Quartet in their purist recordings of the early quartets staked on their anonymity, or the fact that they were only known by a limited number of researchers, the Panocha Quartet in turn gave preference to an objectivising aloofness of lively tempos and the Stamitz Quartet to a natural flow of the music material, the Zemlinsky Quartet's interference with the repeated sections resulted in the creation of a concentrated space, which proved to be good for alternating moods and agogic details. Six years down the road, the Zemlinsky Quartet plunged into the second part of Dvořák's quartet works (the *Cypresses*, *String Quartets Nos. 8–14*) and between 2012 and 2014 made recordings that linked up to the older set of early string quartets, which was originally meant to round off their Dvořák project with Praga Digitals. Fortunately, the label recognised the ensemble's artistic potential and duly afforded them the opportunity to record Dvořák's mature quartet pieces, thus creating a self-confident counterpart to the older

sets. This time, the Zemlinsky Quartet combined rhythmic pregnancy (the scherzo of *Quartet No. 9*) and bold emotionality of the first and slow movements (the dreamy nocturne-like third movement of *Quartet No. 9*, the second and third movements of *Quartet No. 10*). A prime example of the ensemble's remarkable approach is the liberal tempo delivery of the first movement of *Quartet No. 10*, with whose repetitions the musicians really fondled, perhaps bearing in mind that it was the last recording within the set. The *Two Waltzes*, Op. 54, B. 105, and the *Quartet Movement in F major*, B. 120, bear witness to the Zemlinsky Quartet's increasing agogic loosening over time in their Dvořák creations, a case in point being their performance of *Quartet No. 11*, a work of major significance within the set and the Dvořák project in general, in which they succeeded in attaining a perfect symbiosis of the Brahmsian structure with Dvořák idioms, rhythms and affinity to the middle parts, which were paid great attention to especially in the swiftly conceived *Cypresses*, including with regard to the clearly led vocal line. The final three Dvořák quartets are ushered in by the *Terzetto in C major*, Op. 74, B. 148, recorded in 2013. The Zemlinsky Quartet endowed the piece with the gravity of grand works, virtuosic ferocity transcending the limits of an occasional composition (the third movement), as well as variation invention. The final variations of the *Terzetto in C major* alone make the Zemlinsky Quartet's Dvořák set worthy of attentive listening. As for the *American Quartet*, the ensemble opted for wait-and-see tactics: their account deviates from the sonically Slavonic melodic, focusing instead on the composition's rhythmic and structural aspect. Whereas older recordings made by the Smetana Quartet plumped for engrossing sound, and while the most recent recording by the Pavel Haas Quartet sparkles with ferocious energy, the Zemlinsky Quartet's objectivising take on the piece provides an analytical insight into the notorious score. The complete album of Dvořák quar-



tets maintains many of its fortes until the very end. The last Quartet, *No. 14*, too is characterised by variable tempos, revealing in the fast passages the ensemble's virtuoso qualities, the tension resulting from the variability of the moods of the slow movement and a perfect tempo-rhythmic structure of the finale, in whose case many other ensembles failed to retain the thrill. Vivid agogics are also a salient feature of the recording of *Quartet No. 13*, a chamber symphony for four parts, whose opening bars are boldly divided by rests. Almost sounding rhetorically is the agogically furrowed introduction of the first movement which, in combination with the old-worldly rubatos, transforms the entire first and second movements into a narrative arch in audio magnificence. Pregnant rhythmisations, sensitive ornamentation (the glissando of the first violin in the third movement) and monumental sound make one forget about the more vibrant first violin and more ecstatic finale, as performed by the Panocha Quartet. None the less, the first violin, alongside the viola, of the Zemlinsky Quartet is the sonic buttress of the whole Dvořák set, with the second violin stepping out of its shadow more audibly than the sometimes overly soft voice of the cello. The recording of the *Cypresses* in particular presents the first violin and the viola as the most self-confident members of the Zemlinsky Quartet, whose current qualities and artistic cogency, as shown in the complete recording of Antonín Dvořák's quartet works, are admirable indeed. Hats off!

Martin Jemelka

Pavel Haas Quartet

Smetana

Pavel Haas Quartet: Veronika Jarůšková, Marek Zwiebel - violin, Pavel Nikl - viola, Peter Jarůšek - cello.

Text: English, German, French, Czech. Recorded: 2014/11+12, Studio Domovina, Prague. Released: 2015/4. TT: 47:47. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4172-2.

New Pavel Haas Quartet releases are closely observed events in the Czech and, perhaps even more so, Anglo-Saxon cultural worlds. The ensemble have garnered numerous accolades for their recordings, as was also the case of the two previous albums, featuring Antonín Dvořák's string quartets and Franz Schubert's *String Quartet in D minor "Death and the Maiden"* and the *String Quintet in C major*. With copious media support, great, and richly deserved, attention is currently being drawn to their most recent project, a CD with Bedřich Smetana's *String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2*. Even though the two pieces have long ceased to be the intellectual property of Czech quartet ensembles, they have to date mainly been coupled on albums of Czech provenience. The Pavel Haas Quartet indisputably possess enough courage, as well as self-confidence, not to loiter but plunge into the canonical works of Czech quartet music and present them to the listeners from the current interpretational perspective. Following two Janáček quartets and Dvořák's quartets in F major and G major, they have this time focused on Smetana's quartets, evidently the most set in stone when it comes to interpretation, as Dvořák's quartets have been performed globally since the very time of their coming into being and Janáček's quartets call for singular interpretation owing to their very essence. The Pavel Haas Quartet's new Smetana



album is far from being a conservative, gennetflectory project, with the very opposite being the case, even though I would not have minded a little greater adherence to the interpretative tradition. They play the quartets ferociously (beware of the first chord of Quartet No. 1!), with a sharp accentuation, emphatic rhythm, a sense for emancipation of the middle parts, bold dynamic differences, and vivid, though not exceedingly speedy, tempos (a number of ensembles, the Panocha Quartet in particular, play Quartet No. 1 markedly faster). The Pavel Haas Quartet have basically sacrificed the Slavonic melodies of Quartet No. 1 – and I must admit that I personally really miss it in the polka *Allegro moderato* – and, perhaps surprisingly, placed the emphasis on cantability. And there is no doubt they have done so wittingly, since the ensemble render Smetana's quartets neither as absolute chamber music, as defined by Eduard Hanslick, nor even programme chamber music, but rather instrumental music dramas. This conceptual approach, indicating an understanding of instrumental music in the sense of informed early music performance, is evident right in the first movement of Quartet No. 1, and then in its enthralling slow movement, as well as virtually throughout Quartet No. 2, which significantly benefits from the sonically transparent leading of the middle parts. That which I personally find lacking in the account of Quartet No. 1 the Pavel Haas Quartet fully provide in their take on Quartet No. 2, which profits immensely from their unrestrained playing, emotional contrasts, impressive lyricism and softened finales. Whereas in the case of Quartet No. 1 I am more satisfied with the older recordings made by the Smetana, Panocha and Alban Berg Quartets, as regards Quartet No. 2, the Pavel Haas Quartet simply have too many aces in their hands, with the most notable being their natural ability to keep the now and then dangerously kaleidoscopic work within the banks of the rapid performance current. On the other hand, all the ferocity, self-confident forcibility and engrossing narrativity notwithstanding, the en-



semble have somewhat shorn the Smetana pieces of the flashes of humaneness through which the music can caress and move the listener by the Czech melodic. Only time will tell whether this is attributable to the youthfulness of the Pavel Haas Quartet members or their objectivising approach to the score, albeit in an extremely subjective rendition. What is, however, certain is that the ensemble have created yet another remarkable recording which does not let one take a breath, let alone actually relax. This too is what chamber music should or could be like.

Martin Jemelka

Jitka Čechová

Bedřich Smetana: Piano Works VII

Jitka Čechová – piano.

Text: English, German, French, Czech.

Recorded: June, Sept. 2014, Studio
Martínek, Prague. Released: 2014.

TT: 2:24:07. DDD.

2 CDs Supraphon SU 3847-2.

In 2005, Jitka Čechová made her first disc within the recording of the complete Smetana piano works. And in 2014, the Year of Czech Music, she symbolically rounded off the grandiose project with the final, 2-CD album, whose launch took place, in the artist's presence, on 10 November at the Bedřich Smetana Museum in Prague. (Bearing witness to the Czech music-lovers' being well aware of this accomplishment's significance was that the hall was bursting at the seams.) Jitka Čechová devoted almost 10 years to recording Smetana's piano pieces and the fruits of her labours are splendid indeed, with the final two discs being no

exception. The album features Smetana's works dating from 1845 and 1846, the time of the composer's studies with Joseph Proksch. In terms of form and genre, it is an extremely varied selection, ranging as it does from miniatures in the song form, rondos, variations, sonata movements, fugues, marches and etudes to the extensive Sonata in G minor. For the most part, they are "school" exercises, whose quality, naturally, differs (up until he started taking lessons from Proksch, Smetana was virtually an autodidact). Yet the listener is simply taken aback by the young musician's invention, his imagination regarding the formal design of the compositional tasks, his harmonic audacity, as well as his masterfully built fugues. Jitka Čechová approaches these piano exercises with the utmost responsibility, performing them with admirable understanding, bravura and cultivation. Her magic fingers make each of the pieces live its own story, telling the listener about Smetana's seeking an authentic path, his creative triumphs, and his doubts. The majority of the works presented on the CDs were not intended by the composer for public performance and thus have not been a regular part of the concert repertoire. Smetana fans and discophiles alike will definitely appreciate the fact that nearly two-thirds of the 31 tracks are "premiere recordings", thus being afforded the unique opportunity to hear something truly extraordinary – and in an extraordinary rendition to boot.

Věroslav Němec

Karel Dohnal

Kubín, Francaix, Kabeláč

Karel Dohnal – clarinet, Moravian
Philharmonic Orchestra Olomouc,
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra,
Marko Ivanović, Ondřej Vrabec –
conductors.

Text: English, Czech. Recorded:

Reduta Studio of the Moravian
Philharmonic Orchestra Olomouc,
Sep. 2014 and Sep. 2011, studio of the
Czech National Symphony Orchestra,
Prague. Released: 2014. TT: 71:50.
DDD. 1 CD LH Promotion 2257.

A leading Czech clarinetist, Karel Dohnal needs no introduction to music fans in his native country. Nevertheless, I deem it worth mentioning a few basic facts. Dohnal is above all a vigorous soloist, who has gained his renown by activities connected with distinguished Czech and foreign ensembles, as well as owing to his successful performances of new or not overly frequently played pieces for clarinet. One of his most distinct solo accomplishments is the phenomenal rendition of Stockhausen's *Harlekin* (and its numerous performances on Czech and foreign stages), which has earned him high critical acclaim. At the present time, Dohnal regularly appears with the orchestra of the State Opera, the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, and is a member of the Philharmonia Octet and Amadeus Trio (the most noteworthy of his past experiences is his two-year tenure as first clarinet with the BBC Symphony Orchestra). All the works featured on the present CD were created around the middle of the 20th century, thus forming a logical, integrated programme entity. The first piece, Rudolf Kubín's three-movement *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*, is performed flawlessly by both the soloist and the orchestra, with a dynamically struc-



tured second movement that immediately draws the listener into the mysterious, here and there sinister even, atmosphere. When listening to the second track, Jean Françaix's four-movement *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*, two phenomena kept crossing my mind – playfulness and acrobatics. And my notion was presently provided with a specific platform. That which the attentive listener (and the poor interpreter) experiences is aptly characterised by the composer himself, as quoted in the booklet: *"This concerto is amusing to listen to, or at least I hope it is. But playing it is another matter. It is an aerobatics display for the fingers with looping the loop, steep turns and sudden dives to terrify the soloist, who must have nerves of steel and thousands of hours' flying time under his belt. There are no free rides in this concerto, not even in the slow movement, where enchantingly long passages have to be played in a terrifyingly long single breath. To pursue the aeronautical image further, it's a bit like the pilot turning the engines off and gliding till the plane is on the brink of plummeting down, then casually flicking the switches back on and swapping his pilot's helmet for a circus clown's rotating wig..."* Precious few musicians relish such a white-knuckle ride, yet there is no doubt that Dohnal can afford to take up such a challenge, and he duly acquits of it with ease and grace. And his performance deserves praise in many respects. In relation to the playfulness with which he delivers Françaix's concerto, I would like to point out that if it is assumed that we can only toy with something we have under absolute control, he holds sway over the clarinet part with admirable refinement and nobleness. Laudable too is the performance of the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra, under the precise baton of Ondřej Vrabec, who are a splendid, enviable partner to the soloist. The disc is rounded off by Miroslav Kabeláč's *Symphony No. 6, "Concertante", for clarinet and orchestra*, Op. 44, which, as in the case of the Kubín work, concerns the first studio recording. The soloist is ac-

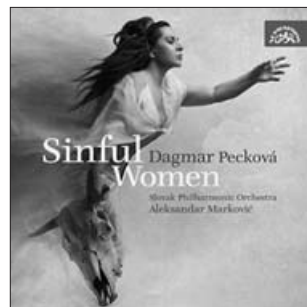
companied by the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, superbly conducted by Marko Ivanović. This album serves to prove Karel Dohnal's artistic mastery, supported by his technical brilliance, intonation purity, expressive forcibility, as well as the courage to immerse himself in some of the not overly explored waters of the clarinet repertoire. He has paid tribute not only to his instrument itself but also the three distinguished 20th-century composers, whose music warrants much more frequent performance. Moreover, I would like to praise the intimate, tender yet highly impressive profile photograph on the CD's sleeve, which, in my opinion, alongside the comprehensive comment on the featured pieces, detailed information on the soloist, conductors and orchestras, represents an ideal booklet for this type of recording.

Irena Černíčková

Dagmar Pecková Sinful Women

**Dagmar Pecková – mezzo-soprano,
Ivana Veberová – soprano,
Peter Mikuláš – bass, Slovak
Philharmonic Choir and Slovak
Philharmonic Orchestra,
Aleksandar Marković – conductor.**
Recorded: Sep. 2014, Slovak
Philharmonic Studio, Bratislava.
Released: 2015. TT 67:59. DDD.
1 CD Supraphon SU 4181-2.

After some time, **Dagmar Pecková** has come up with a new album. This fact alone is an event, especially given that the singer herself said that she passed through a period during which she needed counselling and technical assistance in connection with her changing voice. In the wake of settling abroad for good, the artist, previously at



the centre of Czech music-lovers' attention, has somewhat faded from the general consciousness. The present CD is thus a comeback big time and, what is more, a clearly profiled project – not an "opera recital", not a "best of" compilation, yet one bearing a singular idea, plainly summed up in the title: *Sinful Women*. The subject makes it possible to unify the recording under a single topic, a single approach, a single major feeling. The *Sinful Women* capture attention, but they also afford the singer the opportunity for inspiration and immersion. The choice of a slightly provocative and novel theme for returning to the Czech market was a good idea in both advertising and artistic terms. By the way, having an overarching theme and title for a CD has of late proved a masterstroke as regards the albums of, for instance, the bass-baritone Bryn Terfel (*Bad Boys*) or the bass René Pape (*God, Kings and Demons*). Just as in the case of the Czech mezzo-soprano, their discs prove that negative or controversial opera characters are more explicitly profiled and actually easier to portray than positive heroes and heroines. Attentive listening to Dagmar Pecková's new album reveals, or confirms, that her voice still possesses much of that which so delighted us on her recordings made in the 1990s and into the next decade – softness and darkness, colour, empathy, fervency and modulation. Seldom do we hear a note slightly sharper or more fricative than the very ideal, with only now and then her voice vibrating somewhat more than in the past, which is, understandably, most audible in the contrastive changes and the highest notes in the scene from Cherubini's opera *Médée*, the only work on the disc deviating from the style of mid- and late-Romanticism. In my opinion, Pecková's expression is in details perhaps a little bit exalted for the standards of the traditionalist Classicism of the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Extremely cogent is the atmosphere created by both the singer and the orchestra in the scene from Strauss's *Elektra*, whereby Pecková also employs the deepest regis-

ters at the lowest border of singing, most akin to declamation and speech. A few rejoinders are sung by the soprano Ivana Veberová. The expressive, pointed scene is gradated suggestively indeed, yet, similarly to the scene of Kundry from *Parsifal*, it ends too abruptly, inconclusively, actually just stopping. Yes, we know that in modern operas, which do not comprise self-contained musical numbers, it is rather difficult to execute extracts, but it might have been done somewhat more imaginatively. An interesting discovery featured on the CD (and a good full stop to round it off) is an aria from the generally little-known opera *Salomé* by Antoine Mariotte, dating from the time when Richard Strauss was creating his celebrated

eponymous work, with its musical style revealing a penchant for Art Nouveau colours, decadent piquancy and refinement, as well as veristic poignancy. Dagmar Pecková's extremely forcible performance is supported by a choir and briefly accompanied by the bass Peter Mikuláš.

The inclusion on the album of the *Bacchante* from Saint-Saëns's opera *Samson et Dalila* and the *Dance of the Seven Veils* from Strauss's *Salome* can be viewed from two angles: either as part of the comprehensive artistic conception of the chosen title or as mere filler. True, the soloist sings for about 50 minutes of the almost 70, and we would perhaps like to enjoy listening to her for longer. But it is also the case that

the album does not possess a uniform symphonic atmosphere and that it is not necessary to resist purely orchestral opera music. The Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra plays reasonably well, but their performance is not particularly attention-grabbing. Dagmar Pecková's performance comes across as humble and is sufficiently profound in expression. Her sinful women are complex beings, mirroring as they do self-reflection, sorrow and hope. The singer has come up with a good idea and she has succeeded in presenting the characters with mature empathy and proved to still be in good vocal form. What will be her next surprise? And when?

Petr Veber

Czech Music Quarterly

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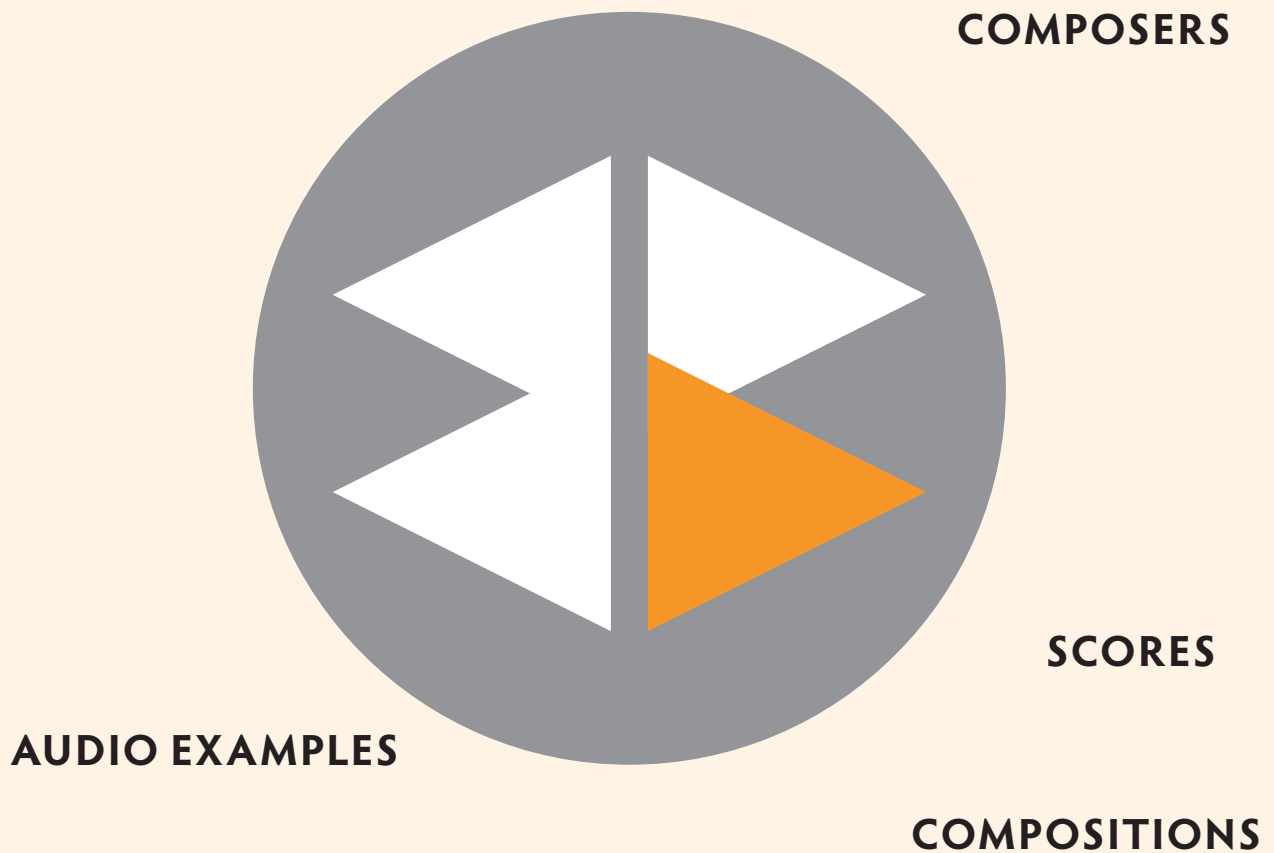
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A database of compositions and composers of contemporary classical music from the Czech lands, ranging from the mid-20th century till recent times

Czech Music Information Centre

PRAGUE OPERA SEASON 2015–16

Director of Opera: Silvia Hroncová

Artistic director of Opera: Petr Kofroň

Bellini

NORMA

Enrico Dovico | Tomo Sugao

Premiere: 2. & 4. October 2015

Stravinsky / Tchaikovsky

THE NIGHTINGALE / IOLANTA

Jan Latham-Koenig | Dominik Beneš

Premiere: 22. & 23. October 2015

Gordon, Lang, Wolfe

LOST OBJECTS

Petr Kofroň | Michael Bielicky

Premiere: 17. December 2015

Rossini

LA CENERENTOLA

Jan Kučera | Enikő Eszenyi

Premiere: 21. & 22. January 2016

Puccini

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

Martin Leginus | Jiří Heřman

Premiere: 4. & 9. February 2016

Martinů

JULIETTE (THE KEY TO DREAMS)

Jaroslav Kyzlink | Zuzana Gilhuus

Premiere: 24. & 25. March 2016

Gounod

ROMÉO ET JULIETTE

Marco Guidarini | Sláva Daubnerová

Premiere: 21. & 23. April 2016

Giordano

ANDREA CHÉNIER

Petr Kofroň | Michal Dočekal

Premiere: 5. & 6. May 2016

Strauss

ELEKTRA

Roland Böer | Keith Warner

Premiere: 10. & 14. June 2016