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— **Jiří Nekvasil**

Pavel Haas

Performing the Jewish Archive

National  Theatre

opera

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AT THE NATIONAL
THEATRE

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**DIE KLUGE/
/DER MOND**

CONDUCTOR: ZBYNĚK MÜLLER
STAGE DIRECTOR: JIŘÍ NEKVASIL
PREMIERES: 20. & 21. 10. 2016

Dear readers,

The covermount CD for the new issue of CMQ isn't this time from the Composer Portraits series but takes the form of selected recordings from Prague's Contempuls contemporary music festival. If you will allow me to strike a somewhat more personal tone than usual, I would like to share my joy at the fact that the international music fest, which eight years ago Miroslav Pudlák, the former director of the Czech Music Information Centre, and I founded, will be on again this year. Last year, owing to economic problems, the event did not take place, yet now (with a new programmer in my place) it seems to be at full throttle. And even though the CD features music by just a single Czech composer, I consider it an excellent showcase for the Czech music scene as such. Because it is precisely new works and the integration within the international context that - in my opinion - is the major factor that determines a given country's cultural level. As a matter of fact, the CD thus somehow counterbalances the textual content of the current issue, which, purely coincidentally, rather appears to turn to the past, with the notable exception of the interview with the director Jiří Nekvasil, a Czech opera legend, who, after all, has confirmed my thesis by his words and, in particular, work.

Wishing you a beautiful autumn

Petr Bakla

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cover: Bohuslav Martinů's *Three Wishes*
 at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava (photo by Martin Popelář)



PHOTO: TAMARA ČERNÁ – SOFIG

OPERA CANNOT FURTHER EVOLVE WITHOUT NEW WORKS

Jiří Nekvasil, the enfant terrible of Czech opera, is obsessed with staging new works, be it at small theatres or the mammoth institutions in Prague or Ostrava. He has directed dozens of opera productions, and even co-wrote the libretto to the acclaimed show-trial opera *Tomorrow There Will Be...*, composed by Aleš Březina for the renowned singer Soňa Červená to motifs from the life of the Czech politician Milada Horáková, who was executed by the Communists. Nekvasil is a relentless exponent of opera as contemporary music theatre.

Throughout your professional career you have worked both as a stage director and as a manager. What it is like to head a multi-company theatre?

You have to constantly think, seek meaningful ideas and, above all, breathe life into them. This encompasses devising artistic programmes, as well as improving the conditions for creative work and exploring the ways of raising sufficient finance. In my current managerial post, it involves conceptual work pertaining to further building up and consolidating the position of the Moravian-Silesian National Theatre as a major Czech cultural institution (the biggest in Ostrava and the Moravian-Silesian Region as a whole), a high-quality large respected four-company undertaking enjoying the audience's attention, and also a contemporary cultural centre in the wider sense of the word, with a good background and media image. I am convinced that this is the best way of trying to persuade the decision-makers that the money laid out on the theatre's operation is a good investment that amply pays off, giving in turn a positive image of Ostrava within the nationwide context. That which in my answer may have come across as generalities has specifically reflected in our everyday activities. You can check it out by looking at our theatre's website.

And what is it like to be an opera director?

I am doing all right at the present time. Owing to my, first and foremost, holding the post of manager, as a stage director I can continually work on “my” theatre, whose face and working conditions I am creating and, I believe, keep improving. I can devote to works that interest me (particularly 20th-century music and Czech opera), to that which I deem beneficial for the theatre itself too. Occasionally, I can also accept invitations to work on other stages. I don’t need to do everything I am offered (like a freelancer) so as to earn my living. Even though working concurrently as a manager and stage director can sometimes be quite challenging, it actually suits me very well indeed.

Over the long term, the opera company of the Moravian-Silesian National Theatre has maintained a prominent position in the Czech Republic, thanks to its imaginative programme-making and presenting high-quality productions. How have you attained it?

By means of a single-minded preparation of the programme, perceived within a longer time frame and a wider context. By approaching the programme as an artefact. And equally important is the selection of a good music director – the chief conductor and the head of the opera company –, one possessing a zest and concern for the long-term objectives, systematically cultivating, developing and increasing the company’s artistic level, choosing a good production team, being able to cast – in the given conditions – the best possible soloists, as well as to engage the best conductors available. A person also giving thought to maintaining continuous collaboration with artists and affording opportunities to the soloists and the opera company as a whole to continue growing. I think that in this respect we have succeeded in making the right choice with Robert Jindra, as well as, since the 2015/16 season, with Jakub Klecker too. And it goes without saying that of vital significance as well is the selection of the staging team, people possessing a dramatic imagination and sense for music, who aim to make a production that will, while respecting it, read the work through contemporary eyes. I do my very best to make all this come true as a stage director. Moreover, there is the intensive building up of the company’s public image, which involves additional communication with the audience: introductory meetings prior to the performances, discussions, educational programmes for the young, publishing of librettos and their translations in the programmes, seeking and developing other forms of promotion and communication.

By Czech standards, the Ostrava opera company can boast of having superlative soloists. How have you succeeded in retaining them?

Primarily by means of, I would say, assigning them with interesting artistic tasks and affording them intriguing opportunities, by first-rate colleagues – conductors, stage directors, the other soloists cast –, and the overall professional and human background, from the production team, through the rehearsal coaches, to the dressers and wig-makers, as well as a clean working environment – which is not a matter of course everywhere! And by providing a good, friendly, creative and professional atmosphere. The present Czech operatic landscape is actually a single opera company – there are not as many good soloists (male singers in particular) as are needed for the 10 opera companies in the Czech Republic, and, what is more, many of them often perform as guests at several theatres, not overly eager to accept permanent engagements. Naturally, this is also connected with finance. One of the main tasks of the music director is to keep seeking new singers, even

very young ones, duly affording them appropriate opportunities, both in the Czech Republic and abroad, and to continue expanding the circle. This is no easy task, owing in part to the economic limitations. Amid the current situation, you simply cannot maintain top-notch soloists, even when they are engaged at your company. In addition to the work they do for their theatre, you must allow them to perform elsewhere – not only for artistic but also financial reasons. Of course, it is good when a first-rate soloist agrees to a permanent engagement in Ostrava, choosing to make the city his/her home, as has been the case of Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová, Martin Gurbal and Luciano Mastro.

Throughout your professional career, you have been “obsessed” with contemporary opera, which, however, in most cases is faced with a lack of interest on the part of theatres, artists and audiences alike. Why do you think it is so?

As a genre, opera cannot further evolve without new works. It is necessary to keep exploring and seeking ways to develop this synthetic music genre, even by means of trial and error. New operas are definitely part and parcel of the operatic world! Up until the beginning of the 19th century, theatres mainly presented new operas –



Morenike Fadayomi as Katya in Janáček's Katya Kabanova

the audiences simply demanded them. Upon the accession of Romanticism, the 19th century did re-embrace works of the past, yet, at least till the end of World War I, new operas were still eagerly awaited. Only in the following period, later in the 20th century, did the audiences start giving increasing preference to the successful, time-honoured pieces, turning their attention from new operas. Nevertheless, the past three decades, at least from my viewpoint, have been promising. New works have been written, opening up new compositional paths and providing new performance possibilities, pertaining to the musical and dramatic aspects of the productions. Concurrently, of great significance is the line pursuing the re-discovery of forgotten or half-forgotten operas dating from recent and earlier times. Besides focusing on brand-new works, it is also vital to pay attention to the scarcely staged pieces by the towering 20th-century figures, as well as the today classics of new music, such as Xenakis, Ligeti, Sciarrino, Cage - the composers whose works we have been performing at the biannual NODO (New Opera Days Ostrava) festival.

At the beginning of your career, your Opera Furore, an “opera that does not hinder”, used to cause quite a stir. How do you now, in retrospect, assess this time, when, during the socialist era, you and the set designer Daniel Dvořák established the experimental company?

I see it as a wild, free creative time, wholly accordant with our youth and its healthy impudence, ambition, energy, conviction of the viability of opera and modern music theatre. And the feeling of the immense need to create new music theatre without boundaries and, sometimes, beyond boundaries. Moreover, in that way we opposed the ingrained approach on the part of Czech opera companies, which (unlike drama companies) simply refused to hire young creators and afford them scope for staging productions. And it was also an opposition, in the form of a radical, and somewhat brassy, creative gesture, against the then still existing, albeit moribund, totalitarian regime, against the falsity of the official “truths”. First and foremost, Opera Furore represented for us a huge laboratory in which we could try out things that would not have been tolerated elsewhere, present plenty of material, ideas and techniques, gauge their strength, their worth and their bearing capacity. It was a great school, both creative and managerial, as we did everything on our own - we single-handedly made the first productions, built them, attended to them; we illegally mounted posters, we devised marketing strategies on the hoof. During the pre-Revolution period, we were actually “opera dissidents” of a kind. The company served as a springboard for our further journey, and - I would venture, somewhat immodestly, to say - the further direction of Czech opera as such. It was the beginning of the so necessary “breath of fresh air”, which went beyond the official bricks-and-mortar opera theatre structure. In effect, it was the first opera project outside the official theatre network.

Then, beyond the established network of bricks-and-mortar theatres, you and Dvořák formed Opera Mozart. How did it come to pass?

In the spring of 1990, following an audition, we were assigned with the management of the then Chamber Opera Prague, supported by the Ministry of Culture as one of the companies within the Czech Art Studio. The Chamber Opera Prague had been instituted by a political resolution in 1985, yet for five years it did not come up with anything worthwhile, with its performances, on the outskirts of Prague, arousing no interest on the part of the audience. After the 1989 Revolution, it staggered on, staging virtually nothing, yet its employees continued to be paid, while pursuing other jobs. Immediately after being selected, we received a clear brief from the Ministry of Culture: either you do something essential about

it forthwith and resuscitate the Chamber Opera Prague, or the company will be abolished without compensation and off you go.

What did you do?

We dissolved the existing company and plunged into building up a new one for the new programme of Opera Mozart. We were inspired by the forthcoming Mozart Year of 1991, perceived as a global cultural anniversary. The inactivity in Prague, a city with which, after Vienna and Salzburg, Mozart's life was linked the most, was startling - on the part of large institutions, which possessed not insignificant public finances, and thus were logically obliged to address the anniversary, with the Ministry of Culture being no exception.

What did your concept rest in?

With regard to our possibilities, the limited budget in particular, we opted for founding in Prague a small-scale company, kindred to the theatres at aristocrats' manors which from the Baroque era until the early 19th century served as significant platforms for operas and their performance throughout Europe. Besides the cash the opera-loving gentry had available, the small stages and orchestra pits at many chateaux required arrangements of individual works, which also depended on the staff and space limitations. Operas were adapted dramaturgically (even taking the form of all kinds of pastiches) and instrumentally, tailored to the particular theatre. Our programme was inspired by this authentic interpretation of Mozart's operas in chamber premises, with all the attendant limitations, with our aim being to afford space to the contemporary dramatic form, free techniques and practices. And also to the young generation of singers.

How did you implement this concept?

On 1 November 1990, the concert hall adjusted to a small theatre for approximately 120 spectators at the Smetana Museum in the centre of Prague hosted the first Opera Mozart performance, titled *The Best of Mozart*. We had thought up a new dramatic form, made up of staged opera clips, and invited to work with us intriguing young artists, who had previously not worked in opera - Petr Lébl, Šimon Caban, Nina Vangeli and Daniel Wiesner. And because following the collapse of the Communist regime Prague was attracting high numbers of visitors, thanks in part to the first wave of tourists our production enjoyed great interest, especially among young people. During the course of the first season, our company created another two productions, which, along with *The Best of Mozart*, would become the axis of our repertoire: a chamber, "new Prague version" of *Le nozze di Figaro*, titled *Figaro? Figaro!*, and the "opera cabaret" *Play Magic Flute*, inspired by *Die Zauberflöte* and starring the actor Vladimír Marek. All three productions were given over 200 performances. Owing to the demand, we could perform almost every day, which in turn was a great school for the young singers, many of whom would go on to become distinguished opera artists.

It could not have gained success on its own...

Besides the artistic work itself, we had to create a marketing strategy, a model operation, as everything was new, there was no precedent for it in our country. We learned while everything was up and running. In addition, abounding in ambition, in 1992 we suggested staging Mozart operas at the Estates Theatre in Prague in the summer. It was an almost entirely private project, the first of its kind in Czechoslovakia, and it had to pay back. What is more, we were not willing



Morenike Fadayomi as Renta in The Fiery Angel

to compromise any of our artistic notions. Well, it turned out well, and in the 1990s the summer shows were a fully-fledged part of the Prague opera scene. Between 1992 and 1998, we managed to stage a whole Mozart cycle, including *Die Zauberflöte*, *Così fan tutte*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. Yet then, in 1994, came the “denationalisation” of the Chamber Opera Prague, which de facto meant its liquidation. Another chamber-like series of opera clips, *The Best of Mozart II*, was produced, yet it was not possible to renew the regular operation without subsidies (however paltry they had been previously). Regrettably, ever since the end of the company the Czech Republic has lacked a project of the type that would serve to afford space to young creators and performers.

Subsequently, as the artistic director of the State Opera Prague and, later, the National Theatre Opera, you came up with the Pounding on the Iron Curtain concept. What were its results?

When, in 1998, Daniel Dvořák and I became managers of the State Opera Prague (SOP), he the general director, I the artistic director, we were speculating as to how, in addition to the performances taking place on the large stage (on which we, logically, primarily focused), we could provide scope to an operatic experiment, new creations that would assume the form of a sort of off-SOP programme, a workshop requiring little finance and not markedly disturbing the operation on the large stage. We also wanted the programme to be spatially linked with the SOP building itself. Daniel Dvořák ultimately formulated the idea that the space in front of the iron curtain could be made use of for one-off shows of new works at the time when the theatre was not performing repertoire productions. He suggested that new pieces, or fragments of them, be presented within a limited performance space (on the covered orchestra pit in front of the dropped iron curtain). We set conditions, the main one being that it must concern a world premiere, either of an entire work or its part. The creative team were provided with the technology and the theatre’s movable property, a fixed fee and, when possible, the opportunity to use the rehearsal rooms. They were given a day at the theatre premises for the preparation of the production. After we had moved to the National Theatre, we duly transferred the project to the Estates Theatre. I think that it represented an intriguing, occasionally provocative even, platform for composers and

theatre-makers alike. It was an open workshop, a free space, directly confronting the audience with new pieces at a large theatre.

In tandem with Petr Kotík, in 2012 you established one of the most compelling opera projects of late to take place beyond Prague – the New Opera Days Ostrava (NODO) festival.

The idea of NODO crossed my mind following my intense experience at the Ostrava Days 2011 festival. It was clear that it was the right space, there were the right people, energy and resonance among the audience. Ostrava provided a splendid performance and audience platform, and the theatre was able to offer a professional background. In September 2011, Petr Kotík, his team and I came to an agreement, devised a concept, and June 2012 saw the first edition of the biannual NODO festival. Since the very beginning, we have put on the programme works by prominent contemporary music composers, Czech and world premieres of new pieces, including those commissioned by the festival itself.

I have been truly impressed by the enthusiasm with which the NODO visitors have responded to new operas, some of which are very “wild” indeed. Why do you think is it so?

The NODO visitors have also been visitors to the Ostrava Days, and those from Ostrava have also attended the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre opera performances, primarily of the productions of 20th-century works. The NODO audiences are fabulous; they know what they are about to go and hear, they are open, perceptive, eager for new stimuli and new experiences. Both the Ostrava Days and the NODO audiences are an integral part of the festivals.

You and the composer Aleš Březina wrote together the libretto for the show-trial opera Tomorrow There Will Be... , which you also directed. Since its premiere in 2007, it has been a resounding success, garnering a number of accolades. What routes has contemporary opera wended?

Many routes indeed, and many more are yet to be discovered. The libretto is, in my opinion, crucial in contemporary opera – to say clearly why the text is sung, why it serves as the basis for a new music theatre piece and what new quality it brings forth. When it comes to recent contemporary Czech operas, I definitely value the most Martin Smolka and Jaroslav Dušek's *Nagano*. And I think that Aleš Březina and I did a good job in the case *Tomorrow There Will Be...*

Today, opera productions are often staged by directors who can't read music. Do you consider the director's ability to read the score or piano reduction to be important?

Yes, I do, actually. But it would seem that it is not absolutely inevitable. The score cues and tells many a thing – particularly the dynamics, tempo and agogics markings. And it is useful to know and be able to find in the notation what point is being played at a given moment and to let know where precisely the rehearsal will commence or where to return, where there will be a change of scene, a change of lighting. For me, it is part of my job and professional knowledge.

Opera productions have often been undertaken by drama directors. You are the opposite case. How do you apprehend the difference between directing operas and plays?

You have far more free rein in treating the texts of plays – you can delete, rewrite, reshuffle the scenes. But when it comes to operas, you must adhere to the form, that is, unless you are creating a pastiche or a deconstruction, as we once did at

Opera Furore. You are staging both the libretto and its performance by means of music. Another difference is that in opera the text is first interpreted by the composer's setting, which also determines the rhythm of the scene, the dramatic situation. The director stages the opera's inner rhythm. In drama productions, you can play a scene for five minutes or half an hour. In opera, a scene always lasts the same time, yet there are productions in which it seems long and static, while in others it can be lively, charged and dynamic.

You have created about 130, mainly music, programmes for television. These include documentaries dedicated to accomplished artists, recordings of opera performances, as well as original TV productions. What are television's current possibilities to mediate opera?

As a medium, television in general has ample possibilities. Yet Czech TV, as a public medium, has virtually no yen for systematically devoting to opera and art music. Especially when compared to the 1990s, when I was frequently working for television on music programmes of a variety of formats and, thanks to the then free production system and the fabulously enlightened producer Radim Smetana, I was given the opportunity to create a number of programmes (documentaries, films about music and opera, chamber concerts), many of which have recently been screened in revivals.

In my opinion, there are two ways of presenting opera on TV. The first is to broadcast recordings of opera performances, whose major aim it is to present the production as faithfully as possible, including for the future. The second, which I personally deem more promising, is original film or TV treatments of short or medium-length operas, both existing and new works. Something along the lines of my TV adaptations of Josef Berg's operas (*The Return of Ulysses, European Tourism*) or film adaptations of Bohuslav Martinů's stage works (*The Amazing Flight, Tears of the Knife, The Voice of the Forest*). That is where, in my opinion, leads the path for an original visual-musical form, which can provide something in addition to theatre.

What is your opinion of the current trend of live opera transmissions in cinemas?

I welcome it as another way of bringing opera to a wider audience. Yet we should bear in mind that the sound during the transmission is being enhanced by truly excellent engineers. You can never hear the voices of the singers, not even the very best ones, as intensively at a theatre – I myself have seen a few performances at the MET. I must say that the great interest in the opera transmissions, in Prague in particular, somewhat fascinates me, as I wouldn't have expected it.

Which phases of your career do you value the most? And are there any you would like to forget or would have done differently?

Each and every one of the phases of my professional life has been important, even though not everything has always gone smoothly and without difficulties, and there have been plenty of obstacles and attacks from without too. Yet one does make mistakes, and life and working experience are there for you to learn lessons and gain inspiration. That which sometimes at first glance has appeared to be an emergency solution, has proved to have been the right step. At the moment, my current working situation, possibilities and space are the reason for my "equanimity". I reached fifty years of age during my third season in the post of general director of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre. Notwithstanding the many initial problems and, many a time, great efforts, we have accomplished a lot of meaningful work and gained results, in opera and beyond. Over a relatively short period of time, the theatre has made considerable progress, and we can expect further

development, which is a source for a certain, well-founded joy, but also an ongoing sense of responsibility. And – with reference to my personal half-century anniversary – I made my first production of a beloved piece, Janáček's *Katya Kabanova*, with a splendid cast and wonderfully explored and conducted by Robert Jindra. I would even venture to say that we have succeeded in creating a highly forcible and singular performance, one commensurate with the relatively intimate space of the Antonín Dvořák Theatre. We have three successful editions of the biannual NODO festival under our belt, along with acclaimed productions of a series of international 20th-century operatic hits (*Cardillac*, *The Rake's Progress* and *The Fiery Angel*), and the cycle of Donizetti's Tudor operas: *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Roberto Devereux*. So I do have the feeling that I am in the right place at the right time, with the right people. I hope that I will keep feeling this way for as long as possible, and that many a meaningful thing will be accomplished and I will keep moving forward.

While still studying opera direction and dramaturgy at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, in 1988, Jiří Nekvasil (b. 1962) and the set designer Daniel Dvořák founded the experimental Opera Furore studio, bearing the secondary title An Opera That Does Not Hinder. The tandem did not slacken up their ravings against the traditional opera practice when, two years later, they were named heads of the Chamber Opera Prague, which they transformed into Opera Mozart. Nekvasil continued to apply an unconventional approach to opera as artistic director of two bricks-and-mortar stages – the State Opera Prague (from 1998) and the National Theatre Opera (from 2006). Since 2010, he has held the post of general director of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava. To date, he has staged approximately one hundred opera and drama productions in the Czech Republic and abroad. He has also worked for television, mainly creating music documentaries and adaptations of operas.

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A FESTIVAL OF REDISCOVERED CZECH JEWISH MUSIC

September will see the launch the *'Out of the Shadows' (Ze stínu)* festival taking place in Prague, Pilsen and Terezín from 18 to 25 of the month. It will be a platform for rediscovered Czech Jewish music and theatre once thought forever lost as a result of the Nazi occupation. David Fligg explains what has been discovered, and how his own research is reflected in the festival.

I am currently investigating and writing a critical biography about the life and music of **Gideon Klein** (1919-1945), the prodigiously talented composer and pianist interned in Terezín (Theresienstadt), and later murdered in an Auschwitz sub-camp. In fact, this is how he is now largely remembered: one of a number of Czech Jewish musicians who were murdered during the Holocaust. Along with **Viktor Ullmann**, **Pavel Haas**, **Hans Krása**, and many others, the Holocaust stunted the development the post-Janáček Czech school of composition, its full potential never realised.

But of course, imprisonment was just one short, and often final, period to these composers' lives. Prior to the war, they enjoyed national, and in some cases international, careers and reputations. With Klein, my research has uncovered an astonishing story of how this young musician was at the heart of cultural life in Prague immediately before and during the early years of the war. 'Ze stínu' will be helping to bring this story to life, as well as giving voice to those who the Nazis tried to silence.

The festival is part of an ambitious international research project, **'Performing the Jewish Archive' (PtJA)**. Generously supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK, and based at the School of Music, University of Leeds, the project is motivated by a desire to recover and engage anew with music and theatre once thought to have disappeared. The Czech festival is the third of a series which aims to do just that. The opening festival took place in May, in Madison (Wisconsin, USA), and the series will end next year in South Africa, via the UK and Australia. There are



Gideon Klein at the piano, 1940



Lisa and Gideon

a number of international partners, plus Czech ones, including Prague's Jewish Museum and Terezín Memorial. Each festival relies on local performers and organisations. 'Ze stínu' is especially delighted to have a valued partnership with the violinist **David Danel**, who is Director of the Czech Music Information Centre, Director of both the Prague Modern Ensemble and Fama Quartet, and who has been key in sourcing local musicians. Also collaborating is the young Prague-based composer **Daniel Chudovský**, who has been commissioned to compose a new work for an invitation-only concert at the Maisel Synagogue.

The festival's opening concert on Sunday 18 September at the Jerusalem Synagogue demonstrates how long-forgotten Czech Jewish music is being reanimated. The UK-based **Clothworkers Consort of Leeds** will perform recently discovered music from Prague's synagogues that was lost during the Holocaust. The concert opens with **Táňa Fischerová** and **Daniel Dobiáš** bringing to life poems written by the children held at Terezín, in new arrangements by Dobiáš.

"Prague's synagogues had a rich tradition of music-making in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a tradition that was almost destroyed in the Second World War along with much of the city's Jewish community", PtJA's Principal Investigator, **Dr. Stephen Muir**, explains. "The archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, the Jewish Community of Prague, and other important organisations preserve large collections of music manuscripts and historic printed editions, mostly

forgotten and unperformed until recently. We are bringing just a small fraction of that music back to public attention, much of it for the first time since the war."

The music of **Zikmund Schul** (1916–1944), whose music will be showcased in a lunchtime concert at the Musical Conservatory of Pilsen on 19 September, is another example of how the Holocaust caused a rupture in the development and distribution of repertoire written by Jewish composers. Though German-born, Schul moved to Prague when he was a teenager, and his is an interesting story of how he married the music of the Czech avant-garde with traditional Jewish influences. Based at the Sydney Conservatorium, **Dr. Joseph Toltz**, one of the PtJA's Co-Investigators, is exploring a wealth of music by Schul. "Soon after arriving in Prague, he met two significant influences in his life: the microtonal composer **Alois Hába** (whose classes he attended) and **Dr. Salomon Lieben**, a prominent member of an old Orthodox Jewish family from Prague," Toltz explains. "Hába encouraged the young composer to study microtonal aspects of Jewish chant, while Lieben introduced Schul to carefully preserved material from his family's private shtibl (prayer room)." Schul died from tuberculosis in Terezín in 1944, his composer-colleague Viktor Ullmann, in a eulogy, writing that, "Schul was more than a hope. He had, in spite of his youth, a surprising maturity of musical conception." Also in Pilsen on 19 September, a refurbished apartment, designed by celebrated architect Adolf



Gideon Klein's Trio (original manuscript)

Loos, will be the venue for an evening of cabaret music from the Terezín Ghetto. Though the Nazis forced Jewish musicians out of public life, the homes of Jews soon became clandestine venues for high-calibre music-making and even theatre. A concert of Jewish cabaret in the beautifully appointed and spacious Loos apartment, commissioned by a Jewish family, Vilem and Gertuda Kraus, offers a glimpse into what these so-called house concerts might have been like.

And so to my own research on Gideon Klein, which has taken me on something of an odyssey. Discovering and evaluating archival material about him and his family has, in some ways, confirmed to me just how fragile our lives and environments can be. For Czech Jews, the period between the two world wars was a golden age. Of course there were pockets, and even acts, of antisemitism, yet the community faced no impediments, and had the same opportunities as the rest of the population. When all of that suddenly ended in March 1939 with the German occupation, Klein's life was turned upside down, and apart from his sister Lisa, herself a distinguished musician, the Kleins were annihilated.

It is well documented that Gideon Klein was at the heart of Terezín's cultural activities, and he was active there as a composer, pianist and educator. His accomplishments in the ghetto are well documented. Less researched have been his musical activities in Prague, and my dramatisation, '**Gideon Klein: Portrait of a Composer**', to be performed at the **Prague Conservatory**, where Klein was once a student, on 20 September, largely focuses on these Prague years.

Parts of the script, translated by **Hana Trojanová**, have been compiled from personal interviews I undertook with people who remember him. Some of the source material is from personal testimony in private ownership which has been given to me, but which is not yet in the public domain. Other sources are from archival collections, mainly in Prague, and other literature. A handful of actors, directed by **Kateřina Iváková**, take the parts of Gideon, his sister Lisa, friends and acquaintances. Musicians perform his *String Trio* and *Duo for Violin and Cello*, as well as the music of composers who influenced him, including **Janáček**, **Hindemith** and **Mozart**.

Whilst Klein's *Duo*, and the *Trio* in particular, will be familiar to some, two of Klein's works which I have prepared for performance will be receiving a Czech premiere and a world premiere. A short *Movement for Harp*, composed when the composer was 15, and which received its world premiere in the UK in June, will be performed in the lunchtime concert in Pilsen. On the same programme is the world premiere of the melodrama *Topol* (The Poplar), composed in 1938. The anonymous words, possibly by the composer, are accompanied by a darkly-intense accompaniment. On the manuscript, Klein wrote, "Those were lovely times", recalling better days, and perhaps underlining the current political situation, the final summer of freedom before the German occupation.

By bringing once-forgotten works that Gideon Klein composed in the city he loved to the 'Ze stínu' festival, we re-position him

from being a victim of Nazism, to his rightful place of being acknowledged as one of the great Czech musicians of the last century.

Further details of the festival: www.zestinu.cz;
 details about the Performing the Jewish Archive project: <http://ptja.leeds.ac.uk>.



David Fligg

UK-based musicologist Dr. David Fligg is Project Consultant for Performing the Jewish Archive (School of Music, University of Leeds). He is also a Tutor in Academic Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music (Manchester) where he runs an undergraduate elective 'Music under the Third Reich', and is Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Arts and Media, University of Chester.



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LICHTZWANG

Pondělí 3 / 10 / 2016 — 19.00
 Umělecké centrum UP,
 Kaple Božího Těla
 program: Takemitsu,
 Vičar **premiéra**, Murail, Tanaka,
 Keprt **premiéra**

LEISE DRÖHNUNG

Pondělí 3 / 10 / 2016 — 21.30
 Umělecké centrum UP,
 Divadlo K3
 program: Pattar, Vítková **premiéra**
 Oehring, Sanchez-Verdu, Maierhof,
 Szmytka

ENSEMBLE LUX

Úterý 4 / 10 / 2016 — 19.00
 Umělecké centrum UP,
 Kaple Božího Těla
 program: Haas, Neuwirth,
 Štochl **premiéra**, Stankowski,
 Resch, Wally

KONVERGENCE

Středa 5 / 10 / 2016 — 19.00
 Umělecké centrum UP,
 Kaple Božího Těla a Atrium
 program: Murail, Pálka,
 Plachká **premiéra**, Sciarrino,
 Štochl, Ullmann

KÜHNŮV SMÍŠENÝ SBOR

Neděle 9 / 10 / 2016 — 19.00
 Reduta, MFO
 program: Vičar, Nystedt,
 Ryant Džizal, Janson,
 Orson Štědroň, Lukáš

DUNAMI ENSEMBLE

Pondělí 10 / 10 / 2016 — 22.00
 Umělecké centrum UP, Atrium
 program: Chaloupka **premiéra**

MONDRIAN

Úterý 11 / 10 / 2016 — 19.00
 Umělecké centrum UP,
 Kaple Božího Těla
 program: Ammann, Zimmerlin,
 Keprt **premiéra**, Müller-Siemens

QUASARS ENSEMBLE

Středa 12 / 10 / 2016 — 19.00
 Umělecké centrum UP, Atrium
 program: Kmiťová, Bachratá,
 Buffa, Hosokawa

ONDŘEJ ŠTOCHL (ČR)

THOMAS WALLY (Rakousko)

FRANTIŠEK CHALOUPKA (ČR)

IVAN BUFFA (Slovensko)



PAVEL HAAS: Janáček's most gifted pupil?

An exhibition in Brno, opened on 18 November 2014 and marking the 70th anniversary of the death of the Czech composer Pavel Haas, bore the secondary title *The most talented disciple of Janáček*.¹ This idea is not new; hence, it is befitting first to elucidate the tradition to which it refers.

Haas's personal and professional life was almost exclusively connected with Brno. The city that, after Prague, was supposed to become the second major music centre of Bohemia and Moravia, evolved, similarly to the capital, on the basis of the two-nationality division. This state of affairs was not surprising, however. We can deem it to be a reflection of one of the characteristics of the national situation in the Austrian monarchy in the last third of the 19th century, which also encompassed emphasis on the political and cultural role played by language and art. In numerous permutations, this situation would last until 1945. While Brno-based German composers, who identified themselves with the broader German and Austrian context, drew upon traditionalist techniques, a distinct line of modern Czech music formed. One of its early protagonists was Pavel Křížkovský (1820–1885), who was linked up to by Leoš Janáček (1854–1928). After 1918, the music culture was markedly influenced by Janáček and his pupils.

For a long time, Janáček himself was the key musical figure in Brno and Moravia. The inception of the so-called Moravian compositional school was related to his teaching at the Organ School in Brno² and, later on, to his giving master classes at the Prague Conservatory (which had an agency in Brno). In 1919, Janáček initiated the establishment of a state-funded conservatory in Brno. From among Janáček's students too

1) The exhibition was created by Ondřej Pivoda.

2) The Organ School was set up through the Association for the Cultivation of Church Music in Moravia, which accrued from Janáček's initiative in 1881. Tuition at the Organ School started a year later, in 1882.

was a grouping that in 1922 founded the Club of Moravian Composers, whose active members included Pavel Haas himself. From 1923, together with the Czech Society for Contemporary Music and the German Literary Artistic Society, the Club of Moravian Composers constituted the Czechoslovak section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM).³ Janáček's pupils were assigned the difficult task of cultivating the tradition of Moravian music, linking up to the singular idiom of their teacher and concurrently seeking their own, authentic creative poetics. For the majority of them, the task proved to be unfeasible. Nonetheless, the ways of their facing up to Janáček's model now give us a valuable testimony. Some of them embraced other compositional patterns or left for Prague, so as to hone their skills in Vítězslav Novák's composition class, whereas others began devoting more to teaching, performing and organisational work than to composing. There is no need to write apologies honouring Janáček, just as we should not condemn Janáček's students for their failing to follow entirely in their teacher's footsteps. Despite having plenty of objections, despite striving to differentiate themselves from their teacher, many of them, either wittingly or inadvertently, did emulate the poetics peculiar to Janáček.

Understanding Haas: Helfert and Peduzzi

Pavel Haas was one such composer. References to his having been influenced by Janáček, his teacher, can be found in both the period reviews and the specialist musicology literature. Local

3) The Club of Moravian Composers was part of the ISCM until 1933. Duplicate national sections also operated in Spain (Madrid and Catalonia) and Sweden (Stockholm and southern Sweden, i.e. the historical province of Schonen, which only in the early 17th century broke away from Denmark and was annexed to Sweden).



Pavel Haas in 1940

writers mentioned Haas's name in connection with Janáček's compositional school back in the 1920s. When, somewhat later, Vladimír Helfert, in his study *Czech Modern Music* (1936), alluded to Haas's orientation towards Stravinsky and Honegger, he also stressed the fact that, in conjunction with Janáček's impact, the composer's creative poetics had been notably enriched with elements of constructivism and novel sonic expression. According to Helfert, such a synthesis, however, occasionally led to "empty experimenting", with cases in point being Haas's *Fata Morgana* (1923), *String Quartet No. 2*, Op. 7, and *Psalm XXIX*. Comparing Janáček and Haas also served as a good parallel for Lubomír Peduzzi, Haas's pupil and the author of the monograph *Pavel Haas: Life and Work of a Composer* (1993). He praised Haas as an exceptional musical figure who, although not ranking among the best-known



Haas at the piano, early 1920s

In Janáček's class

Who, then, was this most gifted of Janáček's pupils? Pavel Haas was born on 12 June 1899 in Brno, into a Jewish family. His father, Zikmund Lipmann Haas (1871-1944), a businessman, and his mother Olga, née Epstein (1874-1933), a daughter of a Russian official of a steam-boat company in Odessa, married at the Brno synagogue on 27 March 1898. Zikmund Haas was initially employed at the local branch of the Taussik & Sohn textile company, yet in 1907 he opened his own shoe shop, to which he gave the proud title "U Zajíce, Czech Industry Footwear". Although Brno had long been a city with a German-majority population, upon the industrial boom it experienced in the late 19th century it began to be transformed by workers of Czech origin, who arrived in great numbers from the Moravian and Bohemian countryside. The Brno businessmen promptly adapted to the change. Thus it comes as no surprise that the Haas family predominantly communicated in Czech. On the other hand, the shop's operation also required that they speak excellent German, hence the parents decided to enrol their sons, Pavel and the two-year younger Hugo (born on 19 February 1901, died on 1 December 1968), in a German elementary school, after completing which the boys continued to study at the 1st Czech Technical Secondary School (Pavel joined the first class in 1910). Evidently at his father's discretion, Pavel started to take piano lessons from Anna Holubová (1883-1972). His inclination and talent clearly indicated that music would be his future profession. Music was the only thing he was really concerned about, with his zeal overshadowing the failure in other subjects. Pavel Haas's first preserved piece, *Konzerstück No. 1*, for piano, is dated 7 August 1912. In the 1913/14 school year, he interrupted his studies at the 1st Czech Technical Secondary School, and the following year he left for good. He joined the Music School of the Beseda brněnská (The Brno Beseda Philharmonic Society), where he studied harmony, subsequently counterpoint and other theoretical disciplines, taught by Jan Kunc (1883-1976), a pupil and close associate

and most popular, was nevertheless a composer who in a singular way adopted Janáček's style. In Peduzzi's opinion, Haas was not a Janáček epigone, he was his successor.

Similar conclusions were reflected in other of Peduzzi's studies, as well as, later on, in articles by other writers, identifying Haas as the one and only of Janáček's pupils to have comprehended his teacher's style. Such views, however, may give rise to the spontaneous question of to what extent they project the personal ambitions of those who voice them. In this respect, it should be pointed out that Peduzzi's relationship to Haas was highly personal and that his interpretation was guided by the endeavour to elevate him as a momentous positive quantity among the prominent composers of inter-war music in Czechoslovakia. Having an awareness of these motivations is important, yet they should not be condemned. Such a phenomenon could be perceived as a testimony about the time, a righting of old wrongs. Champions of "forgotten composers" seek to attain for their works to be understood, and are willing to engage in polemics on their behalf.

left to right: Zikmund, Hugo and Pavel Haas, 1930s

of Janáček, who would later on be appointed the first director of the Brno Conservatory. Bearing witness to Haas's diligence and determination is the 1915/16 curriculum of his, on whose second page he wrote the motto "Will! Strength! Character!!!!!"

The first preserved autograph scores of Haas's hail from this period of time. The juvenile pieces also include chamber songs to lyrics by German authors. Surprising too are the two unfinished orchestral scores set to Old Testament themes, *Jonáš* (Jonah, 1914) and *Odchod Izraele z Egypta* (The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, 1915), for which he was inspired during the Haas family's summer visits to Pavel's uncle Richard Reichner, cantor of the Jewish community in the town of Kolín nad Labem, where he acquainted himself with synagogue music.

Even though none of these early pieces have proved to be of enduring value, Pavel's music written in this period, the selection of the subjects and the manner of treatment do suggest his musical ambitions and literary education. To what degree all this would be transformed into a genuine interest in music was to be revealed in the next phase of his life.

Following its opening, in September 1919, the Haas brothers were among those who enrolled at the State Conservatory in Brno. Hugo began studying voice, yet soon changed to drama, ultimately becoming a renowned actor and director. Pavel started to study composition with Jan Kunc, and, owing to his skills, directly advanced to the third grade of the four-year course. Under Kunc's guidance, he completed his first opus-numbered pieces: *Small Prelude* for piano, Op. 1; *Songs to J. S. Machar's Poetry*, Op. 2; and *String Quartet No. 1* in C# minor, Op. 3. The latter work's artistic merit is still acknowledged nowadays; although marred by a juvenile gaucheness, it reveals the talent of a promising composer. The pen scrapes in the autograph document that the quartet attained its final form after it had been revised under Janáček's supervision.

Pavel Haas joined Leoš Janáček's class in September 1920, at the beginning of the fourth



grade. Janáček acquainted his students with his own working methods, the specific poetics of folk music, as well as with the current compositional techniques and theory. In addition to individual composition classes, Haas and his classmates also attended Janáček's lectures on phonetics and applied musical forms. In the second year, Janáček focused on analysing Dvořák, Smetana and Debussy works, and gave lectures on the folk song. According to Pavel Haas's testimony, Janáček was extremely vivacious, and he often applied unconventional approaches and had original ideas. At the end of the winter semester, for instance, he tasked his students with composing an opera scene to the text of the Russian playwright Viktor Krylov's comedy *The Third* (*The Wild Girl*). Edified by Janáček in phonetics, particularly the melodic cadence of questions, they were asked to focus on short sections and attempt to render the nature of the dramatic text. Under the tutelage of an accomplished composer and seasoned teacher, Haas gained the dexterity necessary for technical mastering of music material, a prowess that was entirely in accordance with the contemporary music development. He took over

from Janáček stratification of the rhythmic structures and the principle of instrumental figuration, which not only forms the character of the melodic treatment but also impacts on the macrostructure, connecting passages with different tempos into a continuous flow. Although at the time Janáček pursued his own distinct style, he allowed Haas to fully evolve a singular creative potential.

Supervised by Janáček, Haas wrote the cycle *Chinese Songs* for middle voice and piano, Op. 4 (set to lyrics by Kao Shi, Tsui Hao and Thu Fu, 1921), and the symphonic poem *Scherzo triste* for orchestra, Op. 5 (originally titled *May Festival*, 1921). In the former, he brought to bear his experience with piano stylisations of Moravian folk songs, attempting an impressionistically colourful representation of old Chinese poetry. Notwithstanding the evident spontaneity, by means of which Haas strove to overcome a number of technical insufficiencies in his compositional work, the cycle's artistic value should not be overestimated. The latter piece bears distinctive biographical features. Haas's draft of the content of the *May Festival*, written in the sketch, refers to the painful experience of his first love. The piece's significance exceeds the framework of a mere student work. Haas completed his music studies with a graduation concert, at which he played his *String Quartet No. 1* in C# minor, Op. 3. He received the diploma from his teacher Leoš Janáček on 28 June 1922.

Pursuing his own path

The first responses to Haas's *String Quartet No. 1* were positive. Although the critics viewed it as a student work, they universally emphasised the composer's evident creative potential. As in the case of other students of Janáček's of the same age (Břetislav Bakala, Osvald Chlubna), they acknowledged Haas's invention and craftsmanship, yet took issue with his compositional derivativeness, "hackneyed polyphony", which deprived the piece of freshness and airiness. When confronted with similarly formulated assessments, the question arises of when a composer can be relieved of the suspicion of having imitated someone else's creative methods or standardised model. If we are to identify in Haas's biography the qualitative transformation of the acquired compositional routines into a poetics of his own, we must define the point at which this input began to be cultivated and developed. Paradoxically, it happened

at the moment when his possibilities of continuous work were limited as a result of a major change in his living conditions, which occurred immediately after he had completed the master school. Although Haas tried to assert himself as an occasional music performer, composer and teacher, he failed to gain recognition in all three respects.

The endeavour to pursue a career as a musician led Haas to Saarbrücken, where he served as a rehearsal accompanist at the local theatre. A few months later, he left his job for financial reasons and returned to Brno, where, for over a decade, he would work in his father's shoemaking business. During this period, however, he never ceased to compose.

Probably owing to his brother Hugo's contacts, Pavel Haas was commissioned to write incidental music for several plays. In 1921, under a pseudonym, he created the music for a new Brno adaptation of Karel Čapek's drama *R.U.R.*, and two years later for a production of Quido Maria Vyskočil's *The End of the Petrouskys*. In 1923, he composed the music for a production of Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* at the Revolutionary Stage of the actor and director Emil Artur Longen. Later on, Haas wrote the music for the plays *A Merry Death* (Nikolai Nikolayevich Evreinov), *Pulcinello's Victory* (Blahoslav Zavadil), *The Black Troubadour* (based on Samson Raphaelson's short story *The Day of Atonement*) and *Primus tropicus* (Zdeněk Němeček), the latter for the Vinohrady Theatre in Prague.

The sporadic commissions he received from theatres diverted the promising composer from more ambitious creative intentions. Yet Haas's works dating from the second half of the 1920s did not come into being quickly and easily. The autographs that have been preserved do bear witness to plenty of creative plans, but the orchestral scores and operatic drafts remained mere fragments. From 1923 to 1930, Haas only completed four chamber pieces and a single male chorus. Some of the qualities of his style, later on highlighted as quintessentially Haas, actually have their roots in this period. Noteworthy too is the fact that since that time Haas had often composed with regard to the specific performance possibilities. What is more, he connected his works with selected musicians and ensembles (the newly formed Moravian Wind Quintet, alongside the Moravian Quartet and the Moravian Teachers' Choral Society). The first piece Haas independently completed following his studies was *Fata Morgana*, for tenor,

string quartet and piano, Op. 6, set to Czech translations of Rabindranath Tagore's poems (1923). In the introductory motto in the autograph, the composer referred to a "symbolic farewell to everything that was and never will come back". This profoundly personal statement anticipated his future creative transformation. *Fata Morgana* was followed by *String Quartet No. 2, "From the Monkey Mountains"*, Op. 7, which was premiered on 16 March 1926 by the Moravian Quartet and whose novel techniques gave rise to a diversity of opinion. Haas had garnered the inspiration for writing the work during his summer stay in the Czech-Moravian Highlands, nicknamed the "Monkey Mountains" by those living in nearby Brno. He gave special titles to each of the four movements (*I. Landscape, II. Coach, Coachman and Horse, III. The Moon and I, IV. Wild Night*), which should be understood as expressing characteristic atmospheric scenes. The piece reflected in Haas's music a new, modern direction, which at the time had been ushered in by the French composers associated in Les Six, Igor Stravinsky and other contemporary music creators. The sonic illustration in the second movement of a horse-drawn carriage travelling on a bumpy road brings to mind Arthur Honegger's *Pacific* 231. Audible too is a jazz inspiration, particularly in the final movement, in which Haas employed a percussion set, which, besides onomatopoeia and excessive holding on to the subject, was castigated by the period critics, who deemed it to be an insensitive erosion of the desired stylistic purity of chamber music. Perhaps with regard to the criticism, or for performance reasons, Haas removed the percussion in the wake of the premiere, given by the Moravian Quartet on 16 March 1926, whose audience did not appreciate this experiment. (The ensemble went on to perform only the work's quartet version.) Two years later, in 1927, Haas composed the song cycle *The Chosen One*, for tenor, flute, horn, violin and piano, Op. 8, to poems by the Czech author Jiří Wolker. It was followed by the male chorus *Carnival*, Op. 9, to lyrics by the Brno-based poet Dalibor Chalupa (1928/1929). At the same time, in 1929, Haas completed the *Wind Quintet*, for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon, Op. 10, whose first movement contains melodic phrases referring to synagogue songs, motifs that, especially at the end of the 1930s, would appear in Haas's works ever more boldly.

Music for film and radio

The precipitous expansion of mass media, radio and sound film in particular, influenced the work of composers not only in the major cultural centres, but also in places that were rather peripheral in this respect. Haas and a number of his peers too were impacted by this development. In an interview for the paper *Moravské noviny*, published on 23 October 1933, Haas formulated his view of contemporary art evolving within the context of technical progress as follows:

"Genuine art never ceases to be related to life. It is an idealised picture of life. It seeks stimuli and inspirations in contemporary life. That is why genuine music of the age of the aircraft, the submarine and the radio cannot be identical with the music of the time of the stage coach and the sailboat. If one is a child of his time in terms of his opinions, his behaviour and his way of life, his opinions of art must not remain one hundred years behind. [...] If we love the telephone, wireless telegraphy, radio, sound film... we must be open to modern art."

The Brno Radio studio, founded in 1924, started to broadcast music programmes the next March, with Jan Janota (1874–1957), the Kapellmeister of the National Theatre in Brno, being appointed as the head of the department. On 1 October 1926, it engaged the conductor Břetislav Bakala (1897–1958), Pavel Haas's colleague from the Club of Moravian Composers, who first worked there as an accompanist, chamber player and solo pianist before, in 1930, assuming the post of the chief conductor of its orchestra. The Brno Radio Journal broadcast popular, as well as older and contemporary, primarily Moravian, music, affording particular scope to the works of Janáček. During the first few decades, it mainly transmitted live productions performed by the radio ensemble, which between 1926 and 1930 expanded from the original chamber formation into a small, 26-member orchestra.

In 1930, Břetislav Bakala asked former schoolmates and colleagues of his to write a composition for the Brno Radio orchestra, which would also befit the technical capacities of the radio broadcast. His intention was in line with other similar projects elsewhere in the world, with music for radio being perceived as an independent artistic discipline, possessing peculiar aesthetic qualities. At the end of the 1920s, the new radio music style won over a host of fans, yet there was also a growing number of adversaries.



Pavel Haas with his wife Soňa and the daughter Olga

For this occasion, Haas wrote the *Overture for Radio*, Op. 11 (1930/31), to verse penned by his brother Hugo, a short piece akin to a cantata, intended for a small orchestra and a male vocal quartet, who were also assigned the role of narrators. The work is a celebration of radio and its pioneer, Guglielmo Marconi.

The Haas brothers continued to work together in the years to come. Hugo, at the time an actor at the National Theatre in Prague, also began appearing in films. In 1925, he performed in several silent movies, yet he would only fully bring to bear his dramatic talent after 1930, upon the global triumph of the talkies. His brother's rising star in cinema made it possible for Pavel to compose music for the features *Life Is a Dog* (1933), *The Little Pet* (1934) and *Mother-Hen* (1937).

In his film scores, Pavel Haas mainly capitalised on his experience with jazz and sense of witty situational characteristics. (When it comes to jazz, the use of the term within the context of Czech inter-war music had its limitations, as authentic jazz was not performed in Prague or Brno at the time. Commonly referred to as "jazz" was contemporary dance and pop music, influenced by American jazz, accompanying the shimmy, one and two-step, Boston, fox trot, blues, and other fashionable dances at bars and music halls.)

According to the memoirs of the prominent Czech actress Adina Mandlová, however, Haas's compositions did not overly appeal to film producers and those persons whose funding was crucial for the Czech cinema industry. When working on the score for the film *The Little Pet*, for instance, Pavel Haas was at loggerheads with the Moldavia-Film production company. Following

the screening in Germany of the German version of the comedy *Life Is a Dog*, using his music, yet under the name of another composer, Haas brought legal action, yet the parties ultimately settled the dispute amicably. And as regards the next film, *Mother-Hen*, Haas, for unknown reasons, signed his score with the pseudonym Ivan Pavlas.

Immediately after the premiere of the *Overture for Radio* in the summer of 1931, Haas made a trip to Germany, during which he outlined an organ concerto. The piece is referred to in one of the preserved sketches, which, after the fashion of Janáček, contains the peal of the bells of Cologne Cathedral. Later on, Haas changed his initial plan and completed the work under the title *Psalm XXIX*, Op. 12 (1931/32), in whose second section he set to music the text of Psalm 29 in the Bible of Kralice (the first complete translation from the original languages into Czech), for baritone, female chorus and chamber orchestra with organ.

The Charlatan

In the 1930s, Pavel Haas experienced several major changes in his personal life. Towards the end of 1931, his mother, Olga Haasová, came down with a serious illness, which ended with her death on 25 December 1933. Overwhelmed with grief, he decided to write the cantata *Commemoration* in her memory, to a text provided by František Kožík (1909–1997). Yet the piece, to which Haas would return on several occasions during the 1930s, remained unfinished.

In 1932, he met in Brno the Russian doctor Sonya Jakobson (née Feldman, 1899–1982), the wife

Haas's autoportrait in a letter to his friend,
the conductor Břetislav Bakala, 1925



of the linguist Roman Jakobson (1896–1982), who at the time was teaching at the Masaryk University. The couple had arrived in Czechoslovakia in 1920, as members of the Soviet diplomatic mission. They initially settled in Prague, where Sonya worked at several hospitals. Following their relocation to Brno, she opened her own surgery, with one of her first patients being Haas's seriously ill mother. Over the course of time, Pavel and Sonya fell in love, and she divorced Roman Jakobson. In 1935, they married, and two years later had a daughter, Olga. Soon after the wedding, Sonya assumed a significant part of the material responsibilities for the family, thus allowing Pavel to fully devote to music, composing and teaching theory (as documented, his pupils included Karel Horký, Richard Kozderka and Lubomír Peduzzi). The happiness Haas found in his personal life was duly reflected in his music. In 1935, he wrote for the Brno-based pianist Bernard Kaff the five-movement *Suite*, Op. 13, which, owing to its brilliant and sonically impressive stylisation, met with positive responses right at its premiere, within a concert given by the Club of Moravian Composers in Vienna on 10 February 1936. The piece has ever since remained one of Haas's best-known and most frequently performed works.

At the time when his love for Sonya was at its peak, Pavel plunged into writing his first, and only one, opera. Musical drama had attracted him in the past too, as documented by a preserved fragment of a sketch of the opera *Der Harfner* (1914). Haas gained further experience with the genre in Janáček's composition class. Although the aforementioned task to compose

a scene from the comedy *The Third (The Wild Girl)* can certainly not be deemed a real artistic accomplishment, it may indeed have made an impact on his future orientation in this domain, just as the premieres of Janáček's operas at the Provincial Theatre in Brno in the 1920s may have had. At the time, Haas was intrigued by a few dramatic subjects, yet the intention to set them to music came to naught owing to the aborted negotiations with the respective authors. Several sketches of Haas's have been preserved, including for Stanislav Lom's play *The Penitent Venus* and Karel Čapek's *The Outlaw*. Evidently hailing from the beginning of the 1930s is his draft libretto for the opera *The Dybbuk*, based on the eponymous play by the Jewish Russian writer Salomon Anski, yet in this case too Haas failed to see through his intention.

In 1934, Haas set down to composing the tragicomic opera in three Acts (seven scenes) *The Charlatan*, Op. 14 (completed in 1936). He penned his own libretto after the novel *Doctor Eisenbart* by Josef Winckler (1881–1966), based on the life of the travelling surgeon Johann Andreas Eisenbarth. The selection of the story of a quack was in line with a subject that had proved to be popular among the Czech avant-garde artists back in the 1920s (also treated by Emil František Burian, in the opera *The Quacksalver*). What is more, in some respects, it reflected Haas's personal life. One of the first versions of the libretto, accompanied by numerous notes, features the belle Amaranta (Sonya Jakobson), the wife of the university professor Nitpicker (Roman Jakobson).

In the case of this opera, Haas again had bad luck when negotiating with the author of the novel. In all

likelihood, he and Winckler entered discussions after September 1935, when the infamous Nuremberg Race Laws came into force. In consequence, Winckler, whose wife was Jewish, withdrew completely from the official cultural scene and, amidst the fraught situation, would have found it risky to establish co-operation with a Czechoslovak composer of Jewish origin. Pavel Haas, however, was not to be deterred. Following years of seeking, he was not willing to forego the longed-for subject of a libretto and thus opted for a not overly honourable solution: to conceal Winckler's name. He transposed the story into a different milieu and Czechicised the names of the characters (including that of the lead personage, "Eisenbart", to whom he ultimately assigned the name "Pustrpalk"). As regards the music, Haas was evidently inspired by Janáček, while also striving for a mixture of styles. Yet unlike Janáček, who chose subjects and stories imbued with ebullience and raging passion, which he set in a realistic manner, Haas approached opera as a stage genre that served to foreground the performance and whose stylisation

was rather kindred to Igor Stravinsky's. While working on the opera, he created the six-movement orchestral *Suite*, Op. 14, whose aim it was to draw attention to the opera under preparation. *The Charlatan* received its premiere on 2 April 1938 at the National Theatre in Brno. The opera was a resounding success, as confirmed by numerous period reviews. In the same year, in quick succession, Haas composed *String Quartet No. 3*, Op. 15 (1938), and the cycle of Slovak-Moravian songs *From Evening till Morning*, Op. 16 (1938).

With the Star of David

Prior to and after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Hitler's army on 15 March 1939, the situation of the Haas family members dramatically altered. In February 1939, Hugo was sacked by the National Theatre in Prague, at the time when his wife, the actress Marie Bibikoff, was recovering from a complicated labour. Fortunately, both of them were granted French visas and soon, on 1 April 1939, fled to France, from where they managed to



Haas's *The Charlatan* at the National Theatre in Brno, 1938 (stage design by František Muzika)



Haas at the premiere of his Study for string orchestra in Terezín, with the conductor Karel Ančerl (still from a movie Terezín, 1944)

travel to the USA. Hugo and Marie left behind in Czechoslovakia their two-month-old son Ivan, whom they entrusted to their relatives in Brno. Pavel Haas and his family too attempted to flee abroad, yet his applications for Soviet, British and US visas were all rejected. On the top of everything, they had to take care of little Ivan, who was officially registered as their own child. Nevertheless, they did have some luck amidst the difficult situation. The race laws implemented in the occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia stipulated the obligation for the local people to document their “pure race” origin. Before the Soviet Union was attacked by the Nazi forces, all the papers pertaining to Sonya’s descent were destroyed in a fire, hence it was not possible to prove her Jewish ancestry and, consequently, the Haas couple were affirmed as racially mixed. Yet the Nazi authorities also prosecuted the non-Jewish members of mixed families, with the consequence being a rising number of separations. Pavel and Sonya got divorced, following which she was allowed to reassume her medical career and thus, at least to a certain extent, sustain her family. Their divorce was an entirely formal act and the couple continued to live together, up until the spring of 1941, when Pavel was forced to move out and find another dwelling.

World War II put an end to Haas’s life and work, as he did not escape the tragic collective fate of the Jews. Under the arduous conditions, music offered him a gateway into another, more joyous

universe. The first piece Haas wrote in this period sprang from his need to face up to the occupation and his own unfortunate lot. Within a short time, he composed the three-movement *Suite for Oboe and Piano*, Op. 17 (1939), in which he quoted tunes from the Saint Wenceslas and Hussite Chorales, indicating the piece’s ideational intent. In the phase of putting the finishing touches to it, however, Haas abandoned the work, without giving it an opus number, which was only added after his death, and with regard to the chronology of his oeuvre. Many a time, researchers have voiced the assumption that it may have been a sketch of a more extensive piece, for tenor and piano, or, possibly, orchestra, whose text was hidden or destroyed by the composer. This hypothesis, backed up by Haas’s undocumented statement, is also supported by the vocal nature of the melodic structure, as well as the manner in which the solo part is written. In the following work, *7 Songs in Folk Style*, Op. 18 (1940), for high voice and piano, Haas combined, with his inherent levity, simple folk tunes with a rhythmically and harmonically refined instrumental accompaniment. The unfinished *Symphony* for large orchestra has remained a mere torso. The stylised Jewish Psalm chants in the second movement give way to a march, employing drums and piccolos, and quoting the Nazi anthem *Die Fahne hoch* (*The Horst Wessel Song*), blended in the conclusion with the motif of the third movement of Frédéric Chopin’s *Piano Sonata No. 2* in B♭ minor, Op. 35 (*Marche funèbre*), in a way clearly emphasising that it concerns a parody. In the third

movement, which has only been preserved as a bare outline, Haas intended to quote the Hussite war song *Ye Who Are Warriors of God*. The work on the symphony, however, was interrupted by outer tragic circumstances.

On 2 December 1941, Pavel Haas was summoned by the Nazi authorities and transported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto (Terezín), where Jews and some political prisoners from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and, later on, from other occupied countries and Germany itself, were concentrated. A number of outstanding musicians found themselves together in the camp, among them, the violinists Egon Ledeċ and Karel Fröhlich, the pianists Bernard Kaff, Gideon Klein and Alice Herz-Sommer, the singers Walter Windholz and Karel Berman, the conductors Karel Ančerl, Rafael Schächter and Franz Eugen Klein, and the composers Viktor Ullmann, Gideon Klein, Karel Reiner, Hans Krása and Zikmund Schul. After overcoming the initial depression-triggered passivity and rejection, Pavel Haas engaged in the ghetto's cultural life, composing pieces for the confined musicians and ensembles. According to the contemporary witnesses, he fervently produced one work after another. Apart from the pieces that have been lost or remained mere fragments, those preserved include *Al S'fod (Do Not Lament, 1942)*, a male chorus to David Shimoni's text, dated November 1942. Upon Karel Ančerl's suggestion, in the second half of 1943 Haas created the *Study* for string orchestra (1943), for the newly formed ghetto ensemble, who unofficially performed it on 1 September 1944, within the shooting of the propagandist picture *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet), directed by Kurt Geron. The last preserved Haas piece is *4 Songs on Chinese Poetry*, for bass (or baritone) and piano (1944), written upon the request for the singer Karel Berman.

The most noteworthy of his works that have not been preserved include the *Fantasy to a Jewish Melody*, *Partita in Olden Style* and *Variations for Piano and Orchestra*, composed for the pianist Bernard Kaff. The unfinished *Requiem* for solo voices, chorus and orchestra was intended to be a mass for the Theresienstadt Ghetto victims. Haas was most likely prompted to write the piece in reaction to the death of his 73-year-old father in May 1944. Soon after the *Terezín* film had been made, mass transports of the ghetto prisoners to the Auschwitz

extermination camp commenced. Between 28 September and 28 October 1944, a total of 11 trains with 18,400 people were dispatched from Terezín. Only 1,574 survived. Pavel Haas was not among them. After arriving in Auschwitz, on 17 October 1944, he was declared unable to work and, together with Bernard Kaff, sent forthwith to a gas chamber.

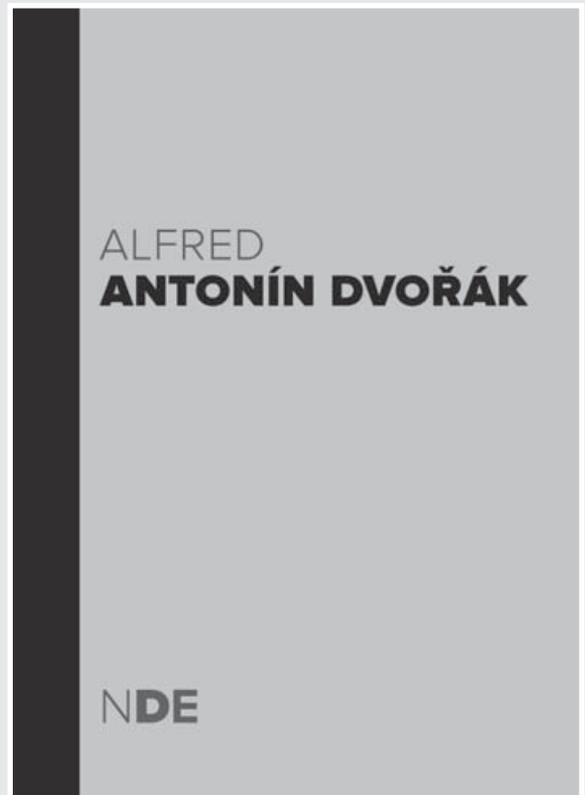
In conclusion

Having reached the end of Haas's life story, we can now raise the question of the position he occupied within the context of Czech music. He was not a successful composer, if we are to gauge success in terms of the direct interest on the part of audiences. Although immediately after being completed his works were performed at concerts held by the Club of Moravian Composers, in the post-war era they were not in general demand. The interest in Haas's legacy only occurred later, particularly in relation to the reception of Janáček's music, accompanied as it was by the endeavours to map the maestro's direct influence and to define his organisational and educational significance. Haas's example in particular can serve for the formulation of the answer to the question of how Janáček impacted his pupils. Already during his lifetime, Haas was considered one of the most intriguing, and most faithful, students of Janáček's. Yet Janáček's influence would only fully manifest itself at the moment when, striving to find his own creative methods, he distanced himself from his teacher. Haas was a composer who to an extent greater than that of Janáček's other pupils responded to the stimuli arriving in Czech music from outside, primarily those of the French modernists. By his embracing the tendencies that would in the future affect the development of modern music, he resembles a few other Czech composers of note (Martinů, for instance). Yet these partial syntheses notwithstanding, Haas did not craft a truly singular style of his own. Another essential trait of Haas is that he made only a rather marginal contribution to the future evolution of Czech music. This may have been down to several reasons, some of them being purely practical. Haas did not compose continuously, and his educational activities were not ample. After World War II, the awareness of Haas's music was for a long time limited to a select few, mostly chamber, works.

THE FIRST EDITION OF ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK'S FORGOTTEN OPERA

Antonín Dvořák: *Alfred*.
Czech Radio and the Institute of Ethnology
of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v.v.i.,
Prague, 2014, 368 pp.

An opera that has been plagued by bad luck. That, in a nutshell, is how we could characterise the fate of **Antonín Dvořák's** first operatic work, the heroic opera in three Acts **Alfred**, B 16, to a German text by the dramatist Karl Theodor Körner (1791–1813), in all likelihood composed in 1870. The piece, however, was not performed, and there are no mentions available indicating that Dvořák actually aspired for its being staged – the very opposite seems to be the case, as he did not even include the opera in the lists of his compositions. To all appearances, Dvořák returned to *Alfred* just once, in 1881, when he revised the opera's overture and gave it the title *Tragic Overture*. Yet this orchestral piece was not performed during the composer's lifetime either, with its premiere only taking place on 4 January 1905. The opera itself would fall into oblivion for a long time to come, until it was finally staged, with the libretto translated into Czech, in 1938, at the Czech Theatre in Olomouc. More than seven decades would then elapse before *Alfred* was performed again in its entirety, and with its original German libretto, as a concert version on 17 September 2014, within the Dvořák Prague festival (see also CMQ 2014/3). For that occasion, Czech Radio provided new performance materials, which were produced with the participation of the members of the “Dvořák team” at the Department of Music History of the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. In terms of performance and edition practice, the case of *Alfred*, a stage work by one of the major composers of the 19th and 20th centuries being overlooked for such a long time, is truly extraordinary.



One of the outcomes of the aforementioned team's efforts is the publication of the piano reduction of *Alfred*, which has made the hitherto virtually unattainable music available to musicians and the general public alike. It concerns the first printed volume of the *New Dvořák Edition (NDE)*. In this connection, the question may arise of its not being a critical edition, as the professionals would expect, yet its indisputable benefit rests in the fact that it is the very first edition of this extensive Dvořák work and that the *NDE* has thus set out on the path whereby the outputs of the vast

edition project are utilisable not only at the level of musicology but also in practical performance terms, which has not been commonplace in the case of complete editions in general. The piano reduction was created in 2012 by the composer Otomar Kvěch, yet its final form was the result of revisions which, in accordance with the prepared score with critical comments, were carried out by Markéta Kratochvílová. The German libretto was thoroughly edited by Jarmila Gabrielová, who also refined its translation, as well as stage directions. The edition of *Alfred* is made up of introductory commentaries in Czech, English and German; the piano reduction itself, which forms the bulk of the publication; and the German libretto, together with a Czech translation, at the end of the volume. Jarmila Gabrielová refers to the English version of the text in the booklet to the CD capturing the opera's concert performance at the Dvořák Prague festival. The piano reduction is elaborated in truly dexterous and lucid terms. Moreover, Kvěch has maintained in the score notes pertaining to the orchestra instrumentation, which provide valuable and vital information for the performing singers. The notation itself is very well arranged and legible, with the one and only difficulty being the choice of a larger format of noteheads against the staff, thus resulting in their not being totally clear in places of a thicker typeface on ledger lines, since they rather blend with them upon a cursory glance. The collaboration between Czech Radio and the Department of Music History of the Institute of Ethnology has also positively manifested itself in the overall quality of the editing work. Whereas the sheet music published by Czech Radio often suffers from backlogs and errors, the edition of *Alfred* is an exemplary, attentively made publication. Coming across as rather mysterious is the missing imprint though. Now we can only hope that the piano reduction will be followed by a publication of the critical score of Dvořák's *Alfred*, which is of great significance for the performers (it would be fully sufficient to have the actual parts available for rental). Yet the edition alone is a momentous achievement, one that some 110 years after Dvořák's death has served to fill in the blank space in the operatic oeuvre of the globally most frequently performed Czech composer, thus erasing part of our debt towards his legacy. The rigorous execution of the edition indicates that we have good reason indeed to believe that the next volumes of the *NDE* will be approached in a similarly meticulous way.

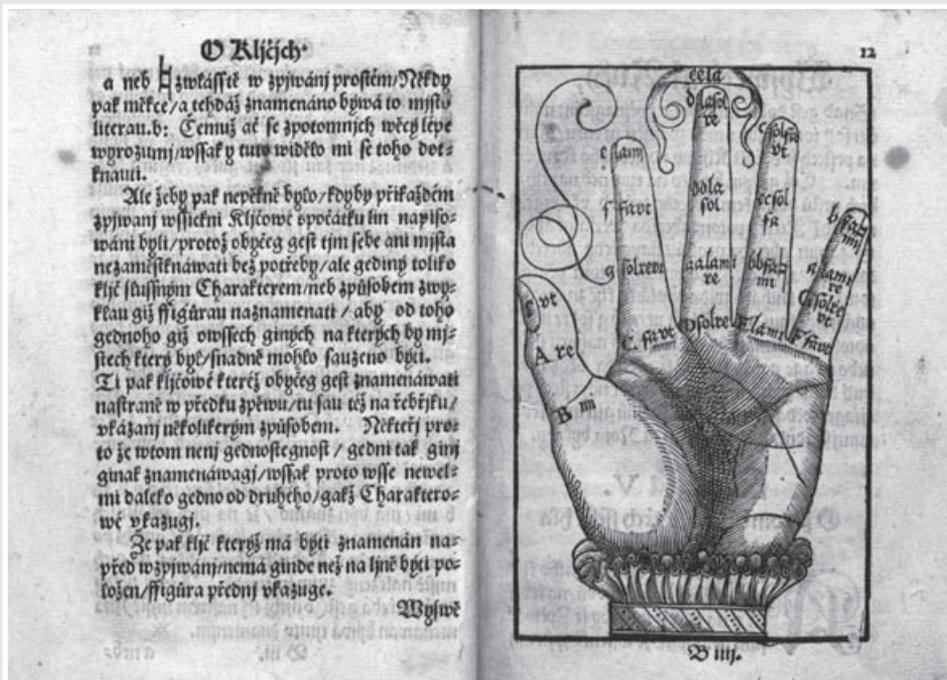
FACSIMILE EDITION OF THE FIRST CZECH THEORETICAL TREATISE ON MUSIC

Jan Blahoslav: *Musica*.

A Facsimile of the 1569 Edition (Ivančice: Jednota bratrská / Unity of the Brethren), according to a copy maintained at the library of the National Museum in Prague (mark 27 F 23). Prepared for publishing by Petr Daněk and Jiří K. Kroupa, KLP – Koniasch Latin Press, 2016, 99 folios + 56 pp, ISBN 978-80-87773-37-6

The 70th anniversary of the Prague Spring international music festival was commemorated by its organisers in the best possible way – in collaboration with the Association for Central European Cultural Studies and the National Museum in Prague, they embraced the initiative suggested by the distinguished Czech musicologist Petr Daněk and supported the facsimile edition of the first Czech compendium on the theory of music. The Prague Spring thus endorsed the deep roots of musical culture and made accessible a work that is yet to be afforded the position in musicology and general history of culture it so richly deserves.

Jan Blahoslav (1523–1571) was one of the major figures of 16th-century Czech culture. His life was connected with the Unity of the Brethren, a Bohemian religious denomination who linked up to the teachings of the Christian reformist Jan Hus. After completing his studies at the brotherhood's schools in Moravia, Jan Blahoslav went abroad so as further his education in Goldberg, Wittenberg and Basel, where he became acquainted with the ideas of humanism and the Reformation movement. A man of letters and a scholar, throughout his life he wrote texts in Czech with the aim to extend the knowledge of the Unity of the Brethren members. His legacy ranges from brief essays, discourses, religiously



of the seven free arts. Daněk relates Blahoslav's active interest in music to his participation in the preparation of the Šamotulsky Hymn-Book (Songs in Praise of God, 1561), referring to the first edition of *Musica* (Olomouc, 1558) as being the earliest attempt at describing the contemporary system of musicology in Czech. Similar was the case of Blahoslav's *Gramatika česká* (Czech Grammar), which he put together when working on the Czech translation of the New Testament. Daněk brands *Musica* as a predecessor to a major hymn-book, intended for practical needs. Although admitting that Blahoslav drew upon the Latin treatises written by the leading scholars of the time, Daněk points out that the work is truly exceptional on a European scale, as it was published in a minor language, not in Latin or German, the latter of which had asserted itself. In effect, Blahoslav inspired another author, concealed under the cryptonym Jan Josquin, to write a similar work (1561), to which he himself soon responded by embarking on the second edition of his *Musica* (Ivančice, 1569), an extended and improved publication, making use of and generalising the experience from the preparation of the Ivančice Hymn-Book (Sacred Evangelistic Songs, 1564).

Petr Daněk has appositely analysed and assessed the oldest music-theory textbook in Czech preserved in its entirety. He gives a detailed formal description of the two editions and, based on adroit juxtaposition of their contents, compares their thematic and linguistic levels. He evaluates Blahoslav's entire hymnological and hymnographic work, and, referring to the research carried out by the musicologist Otakar Hostinský, highlights the fact that Blahoslav was "most likely the first in history to have used the notation to record the intonation, the pronunciation of human speech". Furthermore, he focuses on the sources of Blahoslav's inspiration and his relationship to the Latin terminology of the time. Daněk also specifies the social outreach of Blahoslav's music, which amid the denominationally divided society, was primarily intended for the members of the Unity of the Brethren itself.

The Blahoslav text appears only in Czech, yet the accompanying study has been translated into English, owing to which his writings have now become available to foreign historians and musicologists too. The elegant book, whose design is reminiscent of the 16th-century original, may thus play a relevant role in incorporating the overlooked aspects of Czech humanism into the wider European cultural tradition.

CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

FROM JUNE TO AUGUST 2016

This June, contemporary music fans had several opportunities to listen to new works by distinguished Czech composers. As expected, the greatest attention was paid to the biannual NODO – New Opera Days Ostrava. In addition to works by György Ligeti, Iannis Xenakis and others, the programme of the festival's third edition included two world premieres of contemporary Czech operas: Petr Kotík's *William William*, and Petr Cigler's *Protracted Sinuous Movement of a Longitudinal Object*.

Those who did not make the journey to Ostrava could enjoy in Prague the premiere of a new version of Martin Smolka's opera *The Lists of Infinity*, which was staged and given three performances at the Alfred ve Dvoře theatre (the first version was commissioned by and presented at the previous edition of NODO, in 2014). Other opportunities to listen to contemporary music were afforded by the 10th International Shakuhachi Festival Prague. The traditional Japanese bamboo flute played the main role in pieces by Vlastislav Matoušek, Tomáš Pálka and other composers. Another noteworthy summer event was the popular annual open-air concert given by the Czech Philharmonic, within which this year the orchestra also performed Petr Wajsar's *Four Angry Men and an Orchestra*, written for superlative Czech bassoonists.

Whereas the programmes of the majority of this year's July and August festivals rather adhered to the classical repertoire, contemporary Czech music was presented to great acclaim at events abroad, including the Festival de Música La Mancha in Spain and the Carinthischer Sommer and Bregenzer Festspiele in Austria. During the summer, some of the time-honoured Czech operas received new foreign productions too, with the most significant being of Viktor Ullmann's *The Emperor of Atlantis* at the Teatro Real in Madrid, Bohuslav Martinů's *Mirandolina* at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, and Leoš Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*, within the Savonlinna Opera Festival in Finland.

More information about the individual events can be found on the Czech Music Information Centre blog, which since the beginning of the year has also been available in English.

2 June, Convent of St. Agnes, Prague. Prague Spring International Music Festival. **Juraj Filas: *Confessions of a Poet* (world premiere)**. Baritone: Ivan Kusnjer, piano: David Wiesner.

5 June 2016, Theater Aachen, Aachen, Germany. **Bedřich Smetana: *The Bartered Bride* (new production)**. Directed by: Béatrice Lachaussée, music director: Justus Thorau. Further performances: June 10, 16, 18, 24, 26 and 30, July 3, 6 and 10.

5 June 2016, New Stage of the National Theatre, Prague. International Shakuhachi Festival Prague, Prague Spring International Music Festival. **Vlastislav Matoušek: *Canon for Orchestra and Three Shakuhachi Players* (world premiere)**. Shakuhachi: Kifu Mitsuhashi, Christopher Yohmei Blasdel and Jim Franklin, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Marko Ivanović.

6 June 2016, former cinema, 64 U Hradeb, Prague. International Shakuhachi Festival Prague. **Tomáš Pálka: *Landscapes: MountainsLakes* (world premiere)**. Shakuhachi: John Kaizan Neptun, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

JUNE-AUGUST



Miroslav Srnka: *Make No Noise* (Bregenzner Festspiele)

9 June, Municipal Museum, Bystřice nad Pernštejnem. Cententus Moraviae. **Slavomír Hořinka: *Words Without Thoughts* (world premiere)**. Miloslav Ištvan Quartett.

10 June, Teatro Real, Madrid, Spain. **Viktor Ullmann: *The Emperor of Atlantis* (new production)**. Directed by: Gustavo Tambascio, music director: Pedro Halffter. Further performances: June 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20.

11 June, Theater Mönchengladbach, Mönchengladbach, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *Katja Kabanowa* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Helen Malkowsky, music director: Mihkel Kütson. Further performances: June 17, 19 and 22, July 7 and 10 (Theater Mönchengladbach), October 15 and 23, November 13 and 18, December 20 and 28 (Theater Krefeld).

22 June, Hradčany Square, Prague. **Petr Wajsar: *Four Angry Men and an Orchestra* (world premiere)**. Bassoons: Ondřej Roskovec, Jaroslav Kubita, Tomáš Františ and Martin Petrák, Czech Philharmonic, conductor: Petr Altrichter.

27 June, Hlubina Coal Mine, Ostrava. NODO – New Opera Days Ostrava. **Petr Kotík: *William William* (world premiere)**. Choreography: Matilda Sakamoto, music director: Petr Kotík. String Noise violin duo.

27 June, Alfred ve Dvoře theatre, Prague. **Martin Smolka: *The Lists of Infinity* (premiere of a new version)**. Libretto and direction: Jiří Adámek. Further performances: June 28 and 29, November 6, 7 and 8. Piano: Jana Holmanová, Harp: Hedvika Mousa Bacha, Pavel Bořkovec Quartet.

29 June, Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Ostrava. NODO – New Opera Days Ostrava. **Petr Cigler: *Protracted Sinuous Movement of a Longitudinal Object* (world premiere)**. Libretto and direction: Petr Odo Macháček, conductor: Ondřej Vrabec. Orchestra: Ostravská banda.

1 July, Teatro La Fenice, Venice, Italy. **Bohuslav Martinů: *Mirandolina* (new production)**. Directed by: Gianmaria Aliverta, music director: John Axelrod. Further performances: July 3, 9, 12 and 14.

10 July, Quintanar de la Orden, Spain. Festival de Música La Mancha. **Petr Bakla: *String Quartet No. 2, Jakub Rataj: String Quartet* (world premieres)**. fama Q string quartet.

16 July, Longborough, UK. Longborough Festival Opera. **Leoš Janáček: *Jenůfa* (new production)**. Directed by Richard Stuter, music director: Jonathan Lyness. Further performances: July 19, 21 and 23.

23 July, Olavinlinna Castle, Savonlinna, Finland. Savonlinna Opera Festival. **Leoš Janáček: *From the House of the Dead* (new production)**. Directed by David Pountney, music director: Tomáš Hanus. Savonlinna Opera Festival Orchestra and Choir. Further performances: July 26, 28 and 30.

2 August, Domenig Steinhaus, Steindorf am Ossiacher See, Austria. Carinthischer Sommer. **Ondřej Adámek: *Conséquences particulièrement blanches ou noires for airmachine solo, Lo que no' contamo', Chamber Nôise, Rapid Eye Movements***. Quatuor TANA, double-bass: Yann Dobost, airmachine: Roméo Monteiro.

17 and 19 August, Werkstattbühne, Bregenz, Austria. Bregenzner Festspiele. **Miroslav Srnka: *Make No Noise* (new production)**. Directed by: Johannes Erath, music director: Dirk Kaften. Ensemble Modern.

21 August, Festspielhaus, Bregenz, Austria. Bregenzner Festspiele. **Miroslav Srnka: *Eighteen Agents* (Austrian premiere)**. Vorarlberg Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Gérard Korsten.

SOCIALIST REALISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

PART 2

The previous part of the study focused on the perception of socialist realism prior to the Communist take-over in 1948 and the subsequent period. It outlined the contemporary methodological views, particularly the totalitarian and modernist approaches. We arrived at the opinion that a certain compromise was in place, with the system being formed not only by means of directives from above, but also by the sedulity, either deliberate or unpremeditated, on the part of the individuals, whereby an essential role was played by the distribution and embracement of a specific language, “speaking Bolshevik”. Furthermore, we defined socialist realism as a strategy based on a consistently built and controlled organisational structure, with the Union of Czechoslovak Composers being its main buttress in the domain of music.

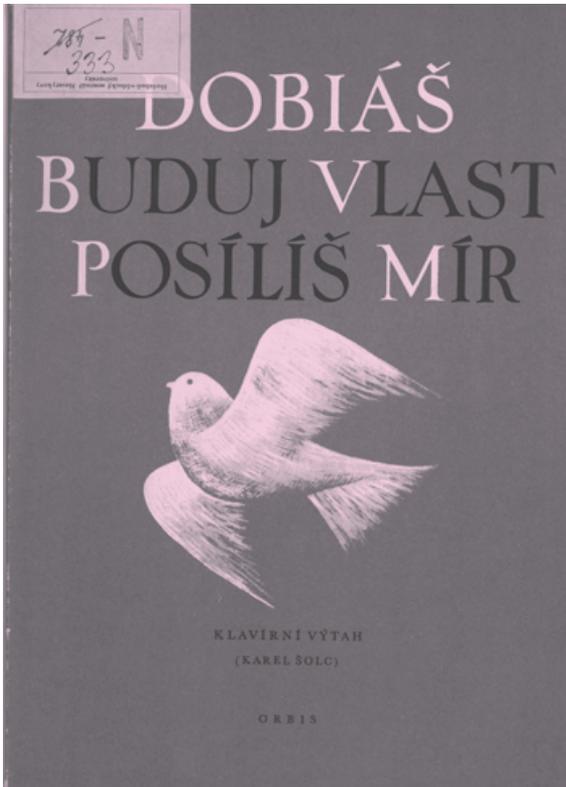
Socialist realism as an ideology

The collective debate was determined by deformed Marxism as the one and only possible path leading to socialism, to the ideal of a classless society, in the belief of the collective spirit of joint creation. Art, which within Marxism was considered to be part of the “economic superstructure”, was attached an extraordinary importance in promoting the idea of socialism. The strategy of those wielding the power was an unprecedented assertion of the ideology of socialist realism, applying the principle of “totalitarian marketing”, precluding even the slightest competition. The fundamental ideology was the Stalinist doctrine, formulated in the *Brief Course of History of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party*, which highlighted the journey from Marx through Lenin to Stalin as the sole legitimate advancement of Marxism. Socialist realism was duly proclaimed the one and only creative method and the single possible mode of committed art.

The official methodological guidelines for literature were presented by Ladislav Štoll at the plenary session of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers in January 1950. In his speech, Štoll clearly enunciated the historical structure of the engaged history, describing the progressive and the reactionary tendencies, and, giving examples of specific artists, showing relatively plainly how things should and should not be done. The figure of Ladislav Štoll can serve us as an instance of a representative of the so-called party intelligentsia. Although without any education of note (he had only completed a technical secondary school and attended a one-year training

course at the commercial academy), in 1946, Štoll was appointed a professor, and later on, named President of the University of Social and Political Sciences. In 1926, he had joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which in 1934 sent him to Moscow to work as an interpreter from German. During the Nazi occupation of the Czech lands, he ceased his public activities. After 1948, Štoll held numerous political functions, in which he always advocated the Stalinist conception of literature. Owing to his being closely associated with President Klement Gottwald, he survived the wave of political purges at the end of the 1950s. In 1952, he assumed the post of chairman of the government committee for the building of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, and subsequently even served as Minister of Education (1953–54), and Minister of Culture (1954–60). Most significantly, from 1946 Štoll was continuously a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and it was exclusively thanks to his being politically active that he became the main spokesperson of Czechoslovak literature. At the time, the installation of uneducated, yet sufficiently engaged figures to specialist posts was a common practice. It was, however, not only the result of implementing the dictatorship of the proletariat; another reason was the chronic absence of educated persons. (During the course of World War II, the state lost approximately 250,000 citizens, as well as two cultural communities – the Jewish and the German, with the latter perishing for good in the wake of its post-war eviction. Within two emigration waves, the first in 1939, the second in 1948, mostly of highly qualified people, as many as 150,000 went abroad. During the 1950s, about 250,000 were jailed, of whom at least 8,000 died in prison. Some 140 prominent figures were executed. And, for political reasons, young people were disallowed access to higher and specialist education.) The key role in the domain of music was played by the works of Antonín Sychra and Miroslav Barvík, mentioned in the previous part. Yet the situation was more complicated than in literature. During the lifetime of Generalissimo Stalin, a more specific form of that which socialist realism actually represented in music – at least within the demarcation of what was and what was not – failed to be, and evidently could not be, defined. The efforts to

characterise the music composed by applying the method of socialist realism did not concentrate on its immanent means, but dealt with the type of creative questions that should be raised. In line with the period interpretation of the Marxist reflection theory, art was a prominent tool in the re-education of people, served to expand their range of vision, and facilitated them in taking their bearings amidst intricate societal problems – and the only issue that could be rendered was the building of socialism and, ultimately, communism. The general belief was that a beautiful society must require a beautiful music. Which was a highly nebulous concept, even in the contemporary apprehension. On the one hand, the literature and visual-art works that came into being were undoubtedly novel, contemporary and characteristic for the time as regards their socialist content, form, language and technique, however primitive they might have been. Yet nothing new was actually created with regard to music. This was a consequence of the aforementioned circumstances, as well as the sheer servility of the young cadres, whose “radicalism” actually manifested itself more in music critique than their own work, against the government in which the post of Minister of Culture was held by the two generations older historian and musicologist Zdeněk Nejedlý, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a relentless promoter of Bedřich Smetana and castigator of Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček, or the leadership of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers, helmed too by figures who had joined the Communist Party back during the period of the inter-war republic. We should also bear in mind that the Czech musical culture (the creators and theorists alike) was burdened by a considerable conservatism, with original manifestations of the avant-garde being rather an exception proving the rule; hence, unlike the situation in the Soviet Union, it was not so clear as to what precisely artists should disclaim (the Soviet communist critics relatively often gave Alexander Mosolov’s composition *The Iron Foundry* as a deterrent example). Whereas in literature, the fine arts, architecture and film the ideology of socialist realism was cultivated in Czechoslovakia precisely and above all on the basis of rejecting the modernism of the pre-war culture, the music domain experienced



Václav Dobiáš: *Build Your Country, Strengthen Peace*

a continuous development of the inter-war traditionalism, primarily based upon Bedřich Smetana's legacy.

In the wake of the closing of the universities at the beginning of WWII, a multitude of students were forced to take up blue-collar jobs, and they selflessly helped to form the working-class movement, thus radicalising the formerly rather apathetic masses. And, following the end of the war, these people were much more capable of formulating their requirements. The vision of a socially just state and the longing for it, for a world order different from that which had caused the military conflict, as well as a great trust in the Soviet Union, the liberator, was shared by a large proportion of Czech society. After the end of the war and, in particular, the Communist coup in February 1948, the working class began boldly distancing itself from the "intelligentsia", resorting when doing so, among other things, to the Marxist conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Slogans like "Professors to mines!" were not uncommon. In the communist rhetoric, artists, scientists and persons working in non-manual jobs were not referred to as "the people", but

"the working intelligentsia". Their position was actually inferior in the societal hierarchy, as outlined in the following sentence: *"Only in the service of the people does the intelligentsia become part of the people. That is, not sharing knowledge in the name of progress, yet service in the name of re-education"*. Stalin himself termed artists "engineers of the human soul". Accordingly, the prime objective of musicologists and music writers was supposed to be setting the tasks and goals for the youngest generation of composers en route to socialist realism, criticism and self-criticism of the previous creative activities, and, first and foremost, seeking a theoretical framework for the moulding of socialist realism in music.

The years 1949 and 1950 in particular saw the seeking of the path to establishing the ideology of realism in music and the quest for the actual position of music, and musicology for that matter, in society. There is no doubt that society radicalised, yet the scale of notions of and approaches to the current reality and, especially, the future was quite variegated. The differences did not rest in the set objective – the attainment of socialist realism – the thorniest issues were the embracement of the cultural heritage, or rather, the relationship to it, primarily as regards inter-war music, alongside the apprehension of the socialist realism aesthetics, as well as the concept of the methods of asserting the cultural policy.

When it comes to the revolutionary phase of the Stalinist cultural policy (1948–1951), Czech historiography has frequently divided it into the so-called radical wing, associated with the activity of the party bodies, particularly the Culture and Propaganda Department, which was directly subordinate to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, headed by the agile politician Gustav Bareš; and the so-called moderate wing, which was represented by the state executive authorities, i.e. ministries, whose competencies also included culture (the Ministry of Information, dubbed the "Ministry of Truth", was helmed by the prominent party ideologue and Stalinist Václav Kopecký, the Ministry of Education and Edification, which in October 1948 was renamed the Ministry of Education, Sciences and Arts, was managed by Zdeněk Nejedlý; ministers were not directly dependent on the party leadership). The "radicals" mainly included members of the young, up-and-coming generation (the new cadres), who

had only joined the Communist Party after 1945. They deprecated any continuity with the pre-war culture (both artistic and political), they intended to build a brand-new world, root and branch, and they also fiercely denounced the artists who had publicly recanted their pre-war work, and demonstratively endorsed the building of socialism. They were tenacious propagators from the ranks of workers, farmers and people's creators. The "moderates", on the other hand, mainly hailed from among the artists and theoreticians who had become members of the Communist Party back prior to the outbreak of World War II. They had no tolerance whatsoever for modernism and the avant-garde, yet they gave preference to transformation and re-education. The "moderates" were of the opinion that if artists were to self-critically repudiate their pre-war output as wrong and go on to espouse socialist realism instead, they should be allowed to participate in the collective building of socialism and should be afforded the opportunity to pursue further artistic activities. They championed a conjuncture with the progressive (in the sense of the socialist idea)

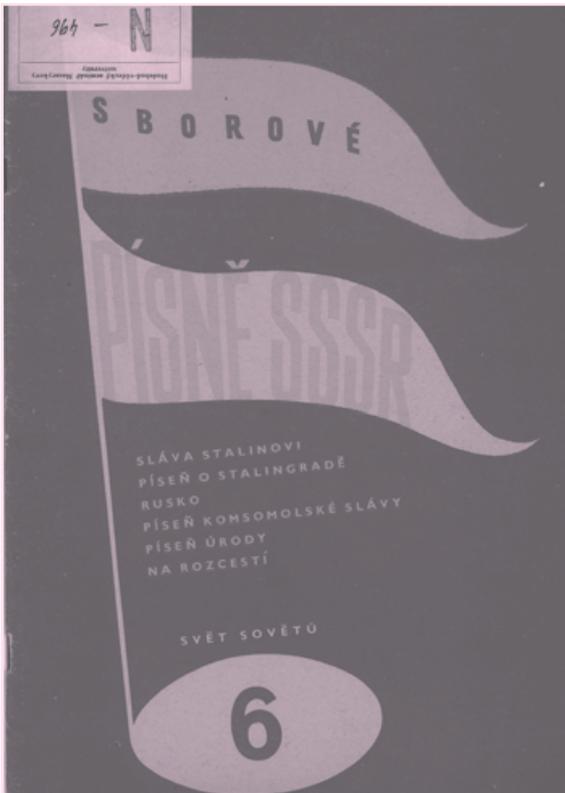
traditions of the past. Beyond the domain of cultural policy, plenty of examples have been mapped pertaining to the disputes between the "radicals", who abhorred any continuity, and the "moderates", in the fields of literature (the wrangles relating to František Halas, František Hrubín, Konstantin Biebl, Karel Teige and Vítězslav Nezval), the fine arts (the argument about Emil Fila) and film (the discord about Otakar Vávra's feature *Krakatit*, based on Karel Čapek's novel).

As regards music, however, the polarity of approaches was not so distinct, which was connected with the aforementioned servility on the part of the young generation of composers and the traditionalism of the pre-war musical culture, as well as the far more firmly rooted continuity between teachers and pupils. What is more, unlike in the case of the other arts, the number of new cadres among composers, performers and musicologists from working-class backgrounds was low. Major disagreements thus only emerged in the domain of vaudeville, commercial (pop) music, musicology and pedagogy, yet even there the more heated debates were more often than not motivated by the schism between the generations, geographic pertinence (the long-term rivalry between the regions - Brno, Ostrava - and the centre - Prague), or merely personal grudge.

As far as it was possible, the Stalinist cultural policy in Czechoslovakia strove to link up to the past, not to annul it, yet recast it to its own liking. The preservation of at least false conjuncture was a vital content of the propaganda, therefore, a new history was designed - of great significance was the promotion of parallels between the Hussite movement and Communism, for instance - and on that account, manifestations akin to socialist realism were also sought in history. (By the way, the very idea of socialist realism was only retrospectively attributed to the great Stalin, allegedly accruing from his conversations with Maxim Gorky.) Emphatic proclamations about the necessity to do away with everything that was old were to remain mere proclamations, as more radical tendencies got dangerously close to the Leninist idea of revolution, while not so much converging with the Stalinist conception.

Socialist realism as a method

A fundamental role in the formation of the Stalinist doctrine in post-February 1948 Czechoslovakia was played by the distribution, both controlled and spontaneous, of a singular parlance - "speaking Bolshevik" - terminologically and stylistically



The Soviet Union's Mass Songs

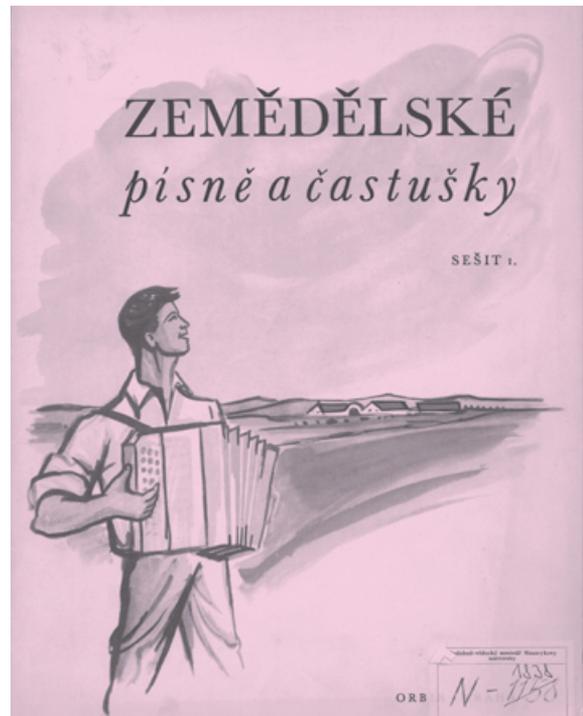
alike. New words, phrases, collocations and platitudes afforded scope for goal-directed interpretations, pseudo-objective criticism and advocacy of one's own doing. The so-called reflection of reality in music, with all the attendant written and merely thought (potential) attributes, became a mantra, a veritable magic formula for criticism, self-criticism, denouncement and defence of personal enunciations and collective utilitarianism. In 1951, V. V. Vanslov's book *Reflection of Reality in Music* was published in Slovak translation, evidently the very first text to have presented to the Czechoslovak readers an attempt to apply the Leninist-Stalinist "reflection theory" to music. Vanslov sought to prove that, by means of the set text and its immanent tools, music can reflect reality, "mainly expressing the inner world, depicting emotional states, unveiling human experiences". Yet his reasoning had nothing in common with H. H. Eggebrecht's theory of programme music (Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht: *Understanding Music: The Nature and Limits of Musical Cognition*), as it was based on the use of pseudo-mimesis. The main vehicles of representation specified by Vanslov included: intonation (when a composer uses in music a characteristic tune – a motif – of a peasant song, for instance, he/she will thus depict both the peasant and the conditions in which the peasant lives); onomatopoeia (should a composer reflect bad weather, he/she will imitate the sounds of thunder and the drumming of rain); genre (if a composer wants to imply a funeral, he/she will employ the motif, rhythmic-melodic model of a funeral march); musical quotations ("In this case, composers directly, or in a slightly modified form, quote someone else's or their own music, which is closely linked with a certain epoch and with a certain social milieu characteristic of it, thus concisely painting in the typical traits of this very epoch or milieu."); and stylisation ("Stylisation is understood as a deliberate creation of music in the spirit of someone else's style, with the aim to attain musical representation of the reality that has shaped this style."). All the mentioned formulae soon became part and parcel of the Czechoslovak socialist realism aesthetics, yet they most notably enriched the vocabulary used by music critics, who would amply bring them to bear in order to voice praise or condemnation. Simply as the situation might demand. Everyone could somehow sense what the dominant ideology deemed to be "wrong" (de facto, any modernist style), while that which was "right" could be formulated in line with the current need, given by personal preference, spite and belief, interpretations of the idea of social justice and

dissent between the generations. In Czechoslovakia, burdened as it was by an extreme servility towards the Soviet Union, and, whenever the need arose, redefining the sense of its existence, this intellectual game was embraced with pleasure. The leftist, social and even socialist orientation of post-war Europe was apparent and comprehensible, yet the mindless adoration of Stalin (the Soviet Union) and the virtually unchallenged acceptance of the directive programme – in this case, in culture and art – and the attendant phraseology introduced by the system represented by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, now gives rise to embarrassment, at the very least. The transformation of the country into a people's democratic republic had been essentially prepared prior to WWII, and it was finally nailed down by the actual removal of political opposition through the setting up of the National Front (a conglomerate of leftist parties with a single programme, one based on the elimination of the entire right). The process was then given a definite green light by the demonstrable victory of the Communists in the first post-war elections, in May 1946. The debate about the sense of contemporary music conducted in the Euro-American cultural space after 1945 was exploited in the given political situation in Czechoslovakia, as it was assumed by proponents of both sincere and manipulative strategies, constructed on the nebulous terms and phrases pertaining to the method of socialist realism. Such phrases as "the revelation of typical experiences", "specific expression of human emotions", as well as "collectivism", "folksiness" or "bringing up of the new human", could epitomise virtually anything. They entered the vocabulary used by the left front, the surrealists and the poetists, served as a platform for the Marxists, and became the doctrine of the radical Stalinists. If we still want to consider socialist realism as a method, or, more precisely, a compositional method, the characterisation of actual techniques appears to be markedly limited. The fundamental, and the sole, criterion was interest in melody, since "without melody there is no music". Words were supposed to sing, and music was expected to speak, which resulted in the composers being compulsorily inspired by folklore, their many a time vulgar extracting of the classics in the sense of fictitious reflection in programme music, an almost unconditional application of the classical forms, thematic and motivic work in the classical fashion and, most significantly, a declared subservience

of all musical means to melody itself. Everything had to be beautiful, optimistic and, in particular, “comprehensible”. Just as the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy smoothly resolved every historical-sociological problem, simple too was the formula for the present – “*should you perceive reality pessimistically – you will be occupied by the form, you will be a formalist*”. By and large, one had to conform to the Zhdanov aesthetics, end of story. The requirement for unity of the content and the form was also met by other than the immanent means of the respective art: understood as the “content of music” was the text set. This resulted in a clear gravitation towards giving preference to vocal and vocal/instrumental music, ranging from songs and song cycles, through mass songs and choral pieces, a great amount of cantatas, to operas. The sheer arbitrariness of interpretation thus offered up plenty of personal and “collective” projections, which, however, proceeded to the selfsame outcome. Paradoxically, many theses, founded on the most striking of clichés, are still today applied in film, as well as autonomous composition, and have been resorted to in the unceasing debate on the sense of contemporary music.

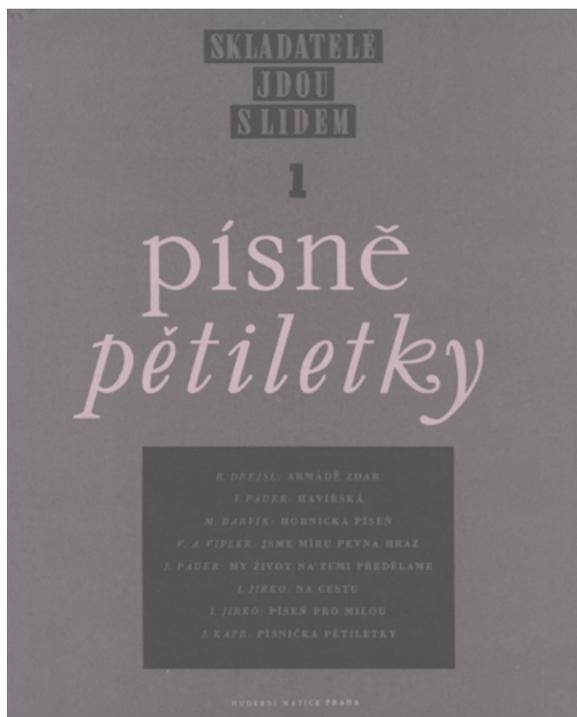
Socialist realism as a characteristic trait of the Stalinist era

The overly great scope for discussion and the growing influence of the self-styled cadres (many of them rank-and-file party members who, owing to their fervent engagement, ascended meteorically to the top echelons of the Communist bodies) began to seriously imperil and impair the bureaucratic system of the central cultural policy, based on the propagation of the only possible truth. Consequently, at the beginning of 1950, Czechoslovakia saw the start of a gradual reorganisation of the culture scene, with a number of “redundant” organisations being dissolved and the ill-considered recruitment of Communist Party and trade union members suspended. Screening of the existing members and candidates was launched, and newly specified requirements for the acceptance of new applicants were laid out. An era of disclosing the enemy within commenced. The most dreadful outcomes of these endeavours were judicial murders, following on from trumped-up charges, many of which were aimed against



Peasants' Songs and Chastushkas

the most orthodox and faithful protagonists and advocates of the Stalinist dictatorship. No one could be sure about anything, and being branded as a “formalist” or a “cosmopolitan” could lead to total elimination. The political show trials soon became part of the Stalinist phraseology, and such terms as “Slánskyism” (in a show trial, Rudolf Slánský, a Czechoslovak communist politician, a long-time member and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, was sentenced to death and subsequently, on 3 December 1952, executed) or “Šlingoism” (Otto Šling, a high-ranking functionary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Brno, and deputy of the Provisional and Constituent National Assembly, was executed in 1952) began to be used to designate virtually anything that, either objectively or subjectively, could be deemed as not aiming at socialism. Labelled as a manifestation of “Slánskyism” could be a bad mood, excessive engagement, counter-revolutionary or espionage activities, or common theft. The victors were neither the “moderates” nor the “radicals”, but the individuals who had managed to take their bearings in the situation and duly adapt themselves.



Composers Go with the People - Five-Year-Plan Songs

That which took place in cultural policy almost immediately resonated in literature and film, somewhat later affected the fine arts, and, finally, with a fairly significant time lag, influenced the activities of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers and other music organisations. It is impossible to judge whether it was a wilful tactic or a result of inconsistency, yet the truth is that, owing in part to this vacillation, and if we disregard the sheer absurdity of the issue of socialist realism in music, the purges among the ranks of musicians were not as fearsome as those in the other artistic spheres, while the musical culture was rather reduced to a mediocre, all-embracing greyness, with nothing as gross being produced as in the domain of literature. After all, the majority of the outstanding socialist-realist compositions were represented by works that had been created at the time prior to the February 1948 coup (e.g. Miloslav Kabeláč's cantata *Do Not Retreat!* and Václav Dobiáš's *Czechoslovak Polka*) or were more often defined thematically, in the sense of the literary content (the title, the set text) than by their actual musical structure.

The major objective pursued in 1949 and 1950 was to involve as many composers as possible in the building

up of socialism, with the greatest attention being paid to vaudeville (popular) music, mass songs and cantatas. During the following two-year period, the emphasis was placed on quality rather than sheer quantity. In 1952, the members of the head office of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers and, later on, the participants in the sessions of the Brno branch's bodies, began castigating the "thematic theory". "... *We should bear in mind that the so-called political theme or political subject does not in itself make socialist realism, yet, contrariwise, may sorely discredit the very idea of socialist realism ... How to apprehend the fact that an apolitical theme can make socialist realism and vice versa? ... I think that we should come to understand that the most important thing is that the creative subject, the artist himself, is a convinced socialist.*" (A shorthand record from the session of the Central Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers in Prague in October 1952.) Once socialist-realist pieces had forfeited their theme, there was nothing left to make them socialist art. The term "socialist realism" thus turned into an empty platitude.

In conclusion, one would be tempted to say that socialist realism in music, either as a style or a method, has never existed. That it was instead a mere conglomerate of windy phrases, parasiting on the alluring vision of a classless society, just as it was a methodological-organisational strategy with the aim to achieve power, profiting from the Stalinist propaganda's populist marketing. Accordingly, from today's angle of vision, the term "socialist realism" can be rather comprehended as a bearer of connotations, which can be identified more in terms of geography and time with the space of the Soviet Union's influence during the period of the Stalin dictatorship than aesthetically or stylistically. Should we then attempt to characterise the music that was produced at the time without applying ideological platitudes, it appears to make more sense to work with the aesthetic categories of historicism, epigonism, watering down of the 19th-century artistic arsenal and the sociologising terms of pop or populist culture. Thus our next task will not be to strive to further describe socialist realism in terms of an ideological centre issuing guidelines pertaining to real application in practice, but to concentrate on the music as such. The article in the next issue of our magazine will therefore not deal with "socialist realism in Czechoslovakia", but with "musical culture in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1953".



Bohuslav Martinů

Complete Piano Concertos

Igor Ardašev, Ivo Kahánek, Martin Kasík, Karel Košárek, Václav Mácha, Miroslav Sekera, Adam Skoumal, Daniel Wiesner – piano.
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra.
Tomáš Brauner – conductor.

Text: English, Czech.

Recorded: Feb. 2015 – Jan. 2016,
Studio No. 1, Czech Radio, Prague.
Released: 2016. TT: 175:26. DDD.
3 CDs Radioservis CR0776-2.

This year saw the release of two intriguing complete Bohuslav Martinů albums.

Following the exquisite Supraphon set of his piano trios, performed by the Smetana Trio, Radioservis has released a recording featuring all five of his piano concertos, plus the *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* and the *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*. The solo parts were undertaken by eight Czech pianists of note – Igor Ardašev, Ivo Kahánek, Martin Kasík, Karel Košárek, Václav Mácha, Miroslav Sekera, Adam Skoumal and Daniel Wiesner – who were accompanied by the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tomáš Brauner.

The concertos for piano and orchestra constitute a remarkable component of Martinů's oeuvre, bearing witness to his musical development itself. The earliest of them, *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D major*, H. 149 (1925), is a purely Neo-Classical work, whose first and final movements are imbued with a playful Mozartean wit, while the slow middle movement also contains romanticising tones. Václav Mácha presents the concerto with brilliance, sparkling vivacity and perfectly consistent rhythm, which all become the piece very well indeed. *Piano Concerto No. 2*, H. 237 (1934), generally comes

across as more weighty than the first concerto, its orchestration is richer, with the lyrical passages being afforded a much greater scope. In his account, Karel Košárek showcases his outstanding technical skills, as well his unique sense for the melodic structure in the lyrical sections. The *Concertino*, H. 269 (1938), occupies a somewhat strange position in Martinů's work. The composer himself said that he did not like it and did not even care for its being performed. And no wonder, as the *Concertino* fails to match the standard of the other piano concertos. Yet, notwithstanding its being a "marginal" piece, to his credit, Adam Skoumal explored the solo part very meticulously and did his utmost to make it sound as good as possible. The *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*, H. 292 (1943), can be deemed the true antipode of the "repudiated" *Concertino*, affording the two pianists the opportunity to demonstrate their artistry in full lustre. And Daniel Wiesner and Miroslav Sekera made full use of this opportunity, playing the fast movements with a forcible, now and then jazz-like, finger-tapping, while in the slow movement they opened space to an almost programme interpretation. Many Martinů connoisseurs have branded *Piano Concerto No. 3*, H. 316 (1948), "traditional" and "tame". Well, when listening to the piece, it does indeed rather bring more to mind the masters of Romanticism than the trends of 20th-century music. On the other hand, it is a colourful and engrossing work. The solo part in the concerto on this recording was entrusted to Martin Kasík, one of the foremost Czech Romantic music performers, which proved to be a very good choice. Kasík executes the Martinů piece highly poetically, with great imagination and a soft "narrative" tone, giving the impression that he has discovered in it a concealed story, which he strives to convey to the listener. In contrast to Martinů's "tame" third concerto, *Piano Concerto No. 4*, "Incantation", H. 358

(1956), is the most compositionally venturesome of all his five piano concertos. The two-movement work, sounding just as enigmatic and magical as the title itself, may be deemed more a symphony with piano than a piano concerto. The score is extremely complex and refined, with the result being that the listener has the feeling of unceasing vibrant shimmer, discomposing and mysterious alike. A thoughtful pianist, Igor Ardašev has negotiated the score's numerous pitfalls with levity and an admirable cogency. *Piano Concerto No. 5 in B flat major*, "Fantasia concertante", H. 366 (1958), is the last of Martinů's pieces within the genre. A mature work, all its component are in equilibrium, containing both impressive virtuoso passages and wonderful lyrical areas. Ivo Kahánek performs the solo part with a fascinatingly light and airy technique, while playing the simple "song-like" melody in the second movement in an emotive and tender way, making it sound as though it is coming to us from another world. That I have yet to mention the orchestra and the conductor was for a single reason – I would have to repeat the very same with each of the compositions. The Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra did a great job, and Tomáš Brauner, its main guest conductor, showed himself in the best light. Should we add to the excellent recording the carefully laid out booklet and Alena Nievaldová's inspired graphic design, there is no doubt that the Martinů project is set to become one of the jewels in the crown of Radioservis's catalogue.

Věroslav Němec



Bohuslav Martinů

The Complete Piano Trios

Smetana Trio: Jitka Čechová - piano,
Jiří Vodička - violin,
Jan Páleníček - cello.

Text: English, German, French, Czech.
Recorded: May-Dec. 2015,
Studio Martínek, Prague.
Released: 2016. TT: 71:30. DDD.
1 CD, Supraphon SU 4197-2.

Bohuslav Martinů wrote 15 trios for various combinations of instruments, yet merely four of them for the "classical" configuration of piano, violin and cello. The first two piano trios date from the 1930s; both of them are made up of five movements and neither of them was referred to by the composer as a "piano trio". The earliest of them – today known as *Piano Trio No. 1 in C major* (H 193) – is titled *Cinq pièces brèves*, while the second trio (H 275) bears the name *Bergerettes*. The remaining two pieces, *Piano Trio No. 2 in D minor* (H 327) and *Piano Trio No. 3 in C major* (H 332), were written in the early 1950s. All the four works are characterised by Martinů's singular stylistic traits, with their most salient features being playfulness and poeticism. The **Smetana Trio** have opted to start their album with the extensive *Piano Trio No. 3* (sometimes referred to as the *Grand Trio*), the most mature and the most forcible of Martinů's piano trios. After listening to just the first few bars, one is totally captured by the frolicsome and poetic music, which the Smetana Trio imbue with a youthful briskness and lightness, radiating great optimism and joie de vivre. As performed by them, the fast movements (e.g. the second and fourth parts of the *Bergerettes*) are able to brighten up even the most cloudy of days. Another, no less engrossing, feature of the recording is the sheer variety of colour, with the sound timbres metamorphosing and blending in the most peculiar combinations – frequently, it is hard to believe that all this

could have been produced by a mere three instruments. All the Smetana Trio members are superlative soloists, whose brilliant technique is evident at numerous times on the recording, yet there is not the merest hint of any of them showboating. Their sense of chamber music is simply amazing, and their interplay truly fascinating. Music-lovers will certainly appreciate the cultivated accompanying text penned by Sandra Bergmannová, as well as the booklet's sophisticated and novel graphic design, evoking as it does the 1930s and 1940s, in line with which is the performers' photograph on the sleeve. This CD should definitely be included in the collection of all Martinů admirers, and I would also recommend it to those who are still seeking their way to his music.

Věroslav Němec

Josef Vlach

Czech Chamber Orchestra

**Czech Chamber Orchestra,
Prague Chamber Orchestra,
Josef Vlach - conductor,
artistic director, Karel Patras - harp,
Stanislav Duchoň - oboe.**

Text: English, German, French,
Czech. Recorded: 1965-1978. Released:
Supraphon compilation, 2016
(originally Panton, Supraphon).
TT: 5:00:33. AAD Stereo. 4 CDs
Supraphon SU 4203-2.

When I recall my childhood, Josef Suk's *Serenade in E flat major* used to be an essential part of Christmas Eve. Every year, I would listen with sheer amazement to the impeccably refined performance of the **Czech Chamber Orchestra** and gaze at **Josef Vlach**, an inconspicuous man, yet one radiating an incredible energy and natural leadership. At the time, it meant more than anything else to me. And joy, idyll and

lyricism are also captured in the work's 1961 recording, which has recently been released on CD for the very first time. Supraphon's tribute to the – nowadays somewhat undervalued – conductor and violinist Josef Vlach (1923–1988) deserves praise. The four-CD pack, from the accompanying notes, graphic designs and remastering, has been paid rigorous attention to. The first disc presents that which the Czech Chamber Orchestra under Vlach was best known for – the Czech music classics, represented by its performances of Suk's *Serenade in E flat major* and Antonín Dvořák's *Serenade in E major* and *Czech Suite in D major*. The second CD features European music: three W. A. Mozart and two P. I. Tchaikovsky pieces. The Czech Chamber Orchestra's accounts of the former's *Divertimento in D major* (K 136), *Adagio and Fugue in C minor* (K 546) and *Serenade No. 13 in G major*, "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" (K 525), may be compared to those of Karel Böhm, while eclipsing the, in my opinion, overestimated creations of Herbert von Karajan. As regards the Andante cantabile from Tchaikovsky's *Quartet No. 1 in D major*, Op. 11, and the *Serenade in C major*, they could be considered integral parts of the Czech Chamber Orchestra's identity. The third CD, comprising performances of 20th-century works, has actually introduced to me a new facet of the orchestra. Czech music is represented by Ilja Hurník's *Concerto for Oboe, Piano and String Orchestra* and Jiří Pauer's *Symphony for Strings*, with the former being one of the gems by the distinguished modern Czech composer and the latter a welcome reminder of an artist who suffered in the wake of the post-1989 political changes in Czechoslovakia. Western Europe is represented by Claude Debussy's *Two Dances for Harp and Strings*, and Benjamin Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, Op. 10, one of the album's apices, faultlessly and wittily delivered. (The recordings of the Hurník and Britten works have been released on CD for the very first time!)

The performances captured on the CD can serve as ample proof that Josef Vlach was indeed a sensitive and telepathically accurate accompanist, as he was referred to by his contemporaries. The harpist **Karel Patras** and the oboist **Stanislav Duchoň**, both also eminent members of the Czech Philharmonic, must have felt as though they were in seventh heaven. The fourth CD could be termed retrospective. When viewed through the current lens, staunch promoters of authentic performance may take exception to Vlach's interpretation of the suite from Henry Purcell's opera *King Arthur*, yet with respect to the fact that back at the time the recording was made (1978) the awareness of historically informed performance was only in its infancy, the conductor arrived at a notably clear opinion of English Baroque music and duly steered his orchestra into playing in a highly disciplined and melodious manner. Vlach's account of Ottorino Respighi's suite *Gli Uccelli*, inspired by the music of the old masters, can be branded as benchmark. He approached the piece, which has – undeservedly – been performed on Czech stages far less frequently than Respighi's *Antice danze et arie*, with his typical nobleness, and led the Czech Chamber Orchestra to play it with fine jest and hyperbole, all the while maintaining smart proportions. Yet the absolute climax of the album comes at the very end. I have probably heard Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Apollon musegète* on 50 or so occasions, some of its performances having been quite provocative, but Vlach's version harbours such delicate transfigurations and tonal culture that I was left speechless. The Czech Chamber Orchestra's performance is even better than that of the PKF – Prague Philharmonia in the 21st century...

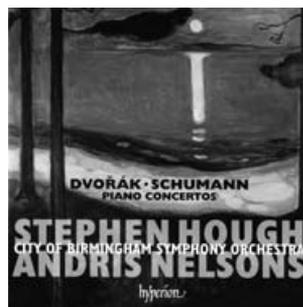
I am pleased to add that the input on this album of the **Prague Chamber Orchestra** – the recordings of Respighi's *Gli Uccelli* (1974) and Dvořák's *Czech Suite* (1976) – is outstanding too. The latter ranks among the best recordings of this orchestra, which efficiently strove to reach the excellence

of the Czech Chamber Orchestra, which was established and moulded by Václav Talich (1946–1948), and later on taken up by Josef Vlach (1957–1988). (Since 2002, the Czech Chamber Orchestra has been helmed by Jana Vlachová.)

When listening to the four CDs, one cannot but help questioning the technical quality of the recordings, which, notwithstanding their first-rate remastering, reveals the time of their making. Nonetheless, discophiles and those seeking authenticity, musical qualities and novelty (I myself being one of them), these minor deficiencies can be viewed as a pleasant positive. I even think that, in addition to the CD version, Supraphon should also have released them on LP, as this format has of late been experiencing a veritable revival worldwide. Every single one of the tracks within the project is imbued with Josef Vlach's notable musicality and intuition, his ability to inspire and lead. In his placing great requirements on the detail, interplay and intonation, he was similar to Jiří Bělohávek and Jakub Hruša when conducting the PKF – Prague Philharmonia. Some may consider it a manifestation of love for the bygone and nostalgia for the years of childhood (mentioned at the beginning), yet I do find that the Czech Chamber Orchestra in top form in the 1960s is the closest to my heart.

In conclusion, I would like to refer to the pianist Ivan Moravec's words, quoted in the booklet: "In everyday life, Vlach was a person absolutely ordinary, humble, yet rather absent-minded, whereas his imagination as regards music was so immense that I can hardly conceive of Talich's successor possessing a greater, ampler and more compelling vision. What do I miss the most? Vlach's overwhelming *espressivo*. He felt a melody in an immensely dynamic swing."

Luboš Stehlík



Antonín Dvořák
Piano Concerto in G minor

Robert Schumann
Piano Concerto in A minor

Stephen Hough, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Andrís Nelsons.
Text: English, French, German.
Recorded: Nov. 2014 (Schumann), Mar. 2015 (Dvořák), Symphony Hall Birmingham. Released: Mar. 2016.
TT: 73:12. 1 CD Hyperion CDA 68099.

Josef Suk
Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra in G minor

Antonín Dvořák
Violin Concerto in A minor, Romance for Violin and Orchestra in F minor

Christian Tetzlaff, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, John Storgårds.
Text: English, German, French
Recorded: Sep.–Oct./2015, Helsinki Music Centre. Released: Feb. 2016.
TT: 66:32. 1 SACD Ondine ODE 1279-5.

Antonín Dvořák
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B minor

Bohuslav Martinů
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra No. 1

Christian Poltéra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Thomas Dausgaard.
Text: English, German, French. Recorded: Mar. 2014, Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin. Released: Mar. 2016. TT: 63:18. 1 SACD BIS-SACD-2157.



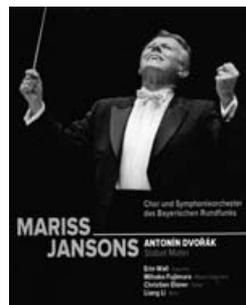
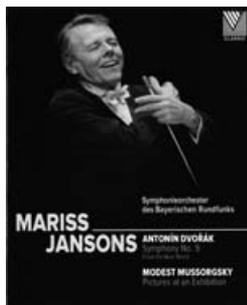
Of late, Antonín Dvořák's concertos have been increasingly sought after by musicians and record companies alike. It would seem that what we have been witnessing is a true revival of interest, as a new recording of his superb cello and other concertos has appeared on the market virtually every year. In addition to the performances of young artists, a number of recently produced albums have featured recordings made by older generations of musicians. The releases of Dvořák's cello concerto (Bailly, Brunello, Isserlis, Klinger, Moser, Müller-Schott, Weilerstein) have thus been newly joined by a recording made by **Christian Poltéra** with the **Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin**, conducted by **Thomas Dausgaard**, who also has to his account a very intriguing album featuring Dvořák's Symphonies Nos. 6 and 9, recorded with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra (BIS-SACD-1566). Recent live and studio recordings of Dvořák's violin concerto (Fischer, Irnberger, Mráček, Mutter, Špaček, Zimmermann) have been extended with the studio recording made by **Christian Tetzlaff** and the **Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **John Storgårds**. And the recent recordings of Dvořák's piano concerto (Helmchen, Primakov, Piemontesi, Ohlsson) have been added to by the creation of **Stephen Hough**, accompanied by the **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra**, led by **Andris Nelsons**. While Poltéra (1998, Stadtorchester Winterthur, conductor: Heinrich Schiff) and Tetzlaff (Virgin Classics, 1992, Czech Philharmonic, Libor Pešek) have previously recorded Dvořák's concertos, Hough's was his first album featuring the increasingly valued piece (the booklet notes were written by Steven Isserlis, Hough's permanent artistic partner). Justus Frantz was the only one who, in his 1975 recording (Columbia/Sony, Leonard Bernstein), has opted for a slower tempo (41:20) than Hough (40:49), who returned to Dvořák's original, essentially chamber, version of the solo piano part, in which, accompanied by a dynamically disciplined orchestra, he rather highlights the piece's lyrical, pensive facet (the second movement), as well as the somewhat

obstinate aspect (the first movement), which in the opening section brings to mind the finales of Dvořák's Symphonies No. 4 and 5. Refraining from virtuosity and exhibitionism, Hough consistently exposes the chamber qualities of the first movement and, by means of precise articulation, he makes of the second movement an engrossing romantic nocturne, in the spirit of the lyricism of the Moravian Duets. Although the orchestra has available great dynamic possibilities, under Nelsons's baton it does not play agogically limberly and not really flexibly in terms of rhythm, which has a negative impact on the first movement and, in particular, the metrically variable finale, which would have benefited from a faster tempo (11.47). The musicians adhere more to the chosen conception than the score itself, and its performance potentialities. In my opinion, there are more interesting recordings (Richter, Schiff, Aimard), revealing the affect of the first and final movements of Dvořák's piano concerto, yet I still consider Hough's project much better than the most recent recordings made by Ohlsson (2012) and Piemontesi (2013). The absence of elasticity in the rhythm and agogic ease is even more palpable in the account of Robert Schumann's piano concerto, which does contain prepossessing lyrical standstills and dialogues with the woodwinds, yet fails to present the Schumannesque imagination and airy motion. That which is lacking in Hough and Nelsons's creation – free agogics, sharper accentuation and rhythmic pulsation – is there in spades in Christian Tetzlaff and John Storgårds's account of Suk's Fantasy, and Dvořák's Violin Concerto and Romance. Under the keen strokes of brass chords, Suk's Fantasy all of a sudden becomes a peer to Stravinsky's early pieces. The lyrical passages, free of the Czech melos, sound dynamically delicate, without the soloist and orchestra giving up on precise articulation and phrasing in favour of the late-Romantic sonic mist. Similarly to Mutter (2013) or Zimmermann (2013), Tetzlaff wanders through the emotional land-

scape of Dvořák's concerto with considerably loose agogics, which so irritates some of the Czech critics. Tetzlaff differentiates between melodic recurrences, inventively toying with the phrasing, against the dynamically structured orchestral accompaniment, which the listener appreciates even more in the agogically vigorous, restless even, Romance. As performed by Tetzlaff, the Romance comes across as a short, sonically transparent, novel, featuring exemplary entries of cautiously vibrating woodwinds (excellent clarinets). The SACD format makes Tetzlaff's recording a true pleasure for the listener.

While Tetzlaff's album features two major concertante compositions for violin and orchestra of the Czech (late-) Romantic repertoire, Poltéra's SACD contains the two best-known cello concertos of Czech provenience: the world-famous one by Dvořák and Martinů's increasingly sought after first. Five years ago, Poltéra recorded for Sweden's BIS a high-quality album of Dvořák's cello works and adaptations with piano (2011, BIS-SACD-1947), which has now been joined by a project presenting his account of the cello concerto, which can be deemed the climax of his Dvořák discography. Poltéra has thus become one of the few cellists who (with the exception of the early concerto in A major) can pride themselves on having recorded almost all the composer's works for cello, among them Heinrich Schiff, with whom he made the debut recording of the concerto in B minor (1998). At first listen, and to my great joy, it would seem that Poltéra is evidently more keen on the tradition formed by Feuermann, Casals, Fournier and Starker than the Eastern European performance style, as represented by Rostropovich and Piatigorsky, which duly manifests itself in the brisker tempos of the first two movements, in the almost Strauss-like heroic nature of the first movement, the modest objectivity of the slow movement (credible with regard to the artist's age) and the virtuoso draught of the finale. And Poltéra's account of Martinů's concerto is one of the best I have ever heard, with the alternating moods and latent balancing on the border between symphonic ballad and instrumental bravado. The Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin is convincing both when performing Dvořák and Martinů, with whose 1930s lyricism and tricky syncopated rhythm it copes without any trouble whatsoever. The SACD format serves to further underline the forcibility of Poltéra's creation, which has taken up the gauntlet thrown down by his contemporaries Hornung, Moser, Müller-Schott and Klinger. There is no danger that the album will disappear without trace – the performance of Martinů's piece is enchanting, that of Dvořák's certainly intriguing.

Martin Jemelka



**Antonín Dvořák
Symphony No. 8, Carnival**

**Josef Suk
String Serenade in E flat major**

Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Mariss Jansons.

Text: German, English. Recorded: Jan. 2016, live (Dvořák), studio (Suk), Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich. Released: Mar. 2016. TT: 73:14. 1 CD BR Klassik / BR Media 900145.

**Antonín Dvořák
Symphony No. 9**

**Modest Mussorgsky / Maurice Ravel
Pictures at an Exhibition**

Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Mariss Jansons.

Text: English, French, German. Recorded: Nov. 2014, live, Herkulesaal der Münchner Residenz, Munich. TT: 83:00. 1 Blu-ray Concorde Home Entertainment / Clasart Classic, Blu-ray 43002 BD 25. Sound formats: DTS-HD Master Audio 5.0, LPCM Stereo. Picture format: 1080p High Definition 16:9.

**Antonín Dvořák
Stabat Mater**

Erin Wall, Mihoko Fujimura, Christian Elsner, Liang Li, Chor und Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Mariss Jansons. Text: German, English. Recorded: 24–26 Mar. 2015, live, Herkulesaal der Münchner Residenz, Munich. Released: Jan. 2016. TT: 77:55. 1 CD BR Klassik / BR Media 900142.

**Antonín Dvořák:
Stabat Mater**

Erin Wall, Mihoko Fujimura, Christian Elsner, Liang Li, Chor und Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Mariss Jansons.

Text: English, French, German. Recorded: Mar. 2015, KKL Concert Hall, Lucerne. Released: Jan. 2016. TT: 83:00. 1 Blu-ray Concorde Home Entertainment / Clasart Classic, Blu-ray 43001 BD 25. Sound formats: DTS-HD Master Audio 5.0, LPCM Stereo. Picture format: 1080p High Definition 16:9.

I cannot shake off the impression that, unlike others of his generation, **Mariss Jansons** (b. 1943) is yet to be fully appreciated in the Czech Republic. His conducting skills have been underestimated, even though for a number of years he concurrently headed two orchestras that are ranked among the world's top ten, that is, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam (2004–2015), and the **Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks** in Munich (2003–2021). As regards the Czech reception of Jansons's artistry, I assume that we can surely blame the marketing (upon the expiration of his year-long exclusive contract with EMI, he established collaboration with the RCO Live and BR Klassik labels, whose releases are only available for Czech listeners through online shops). Yet those who have not let themselves be discouraged by the deficiencies of the latest classical music albums' distribution in the Czech Republic will never cease to marvel at Jansons's mastery. This year, Jansons and the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks have come up with true treats for Dvořák fans: within the short interval of a few weeks, they saw the releases of their recordings of *Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9*, the concert overture *Carnival* and the oratorio *Stabat Mater*, supplemented

with Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition* in Ravel's orchestration, and Suk's *Serenade in E flat major*, Op. 6.

Following the recordings made in Oslo (1992), Tokyo (DVD 2000, Berliner Philharmoniker) and Amsterdam (2007/2008), the new album is Jansons's fourth disc featuring Dvořák's Eighth. When listening to them, we realise how conceptually mature a conductor Jansons already was during his tenure at the helm of the Oslo Philharmonic. In this respect, I do not only refer to the gracious, old-worldly rubato in the string figures in the second movement, but also his delicate handling of the waltz scherzo, the dynamic contrasts in the first and final movements, and the falling into silence in the second variation section of the fourth movement. If I had to name the most forcible of Jansons's recordings of *Symphony No. 8*, I would point at the live one from Amsterdam, which I mainly find attractive owing to the dark sound of the orchestra and its enormous rhythmic flexibility (RCO, Live 10001). On the other hand, the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks possess the utmost culture of impeccable intonation, fascinating dynamic possibilities, and its members include top-notch German instrumentalists, at least in the wind section. There are another two aces up the sleeve in Jansons's Munich CD containing Dvořák's *Symphony No. 8* – the sonically transparent, delicately balanced *Carnival*, devoid of the merest trace of orchestral bombast, and Suk's *Serenade in E flat major*, whose performance favourably presents the current dispositions of the orchestra's string section. One simply cannot get enough of the account of Suk's piece, so balanced is it in terms of dynamics, agogics and tempo (Jansons's ability to opt for the most natural paces is truly admirable), perhaps also because it was recorded in a studio, not live, as is the case of Dvořák's Eighth and *Carnival*. Recorded live too was the *New World Symphony* – last year at the Herkulesaal in Munich. Following Oslo (1988) and Amsterdam (2003), it is Jansons's third



live recording of the piece. In comparison with the two older accounts, this time the conductor bet on imbuing the finale with an immense emotionality, which can perhaps only compete with that captured on the Stokowski albums. Whereas the first movement, without repetition, and the Scherzo do not background the structural aspects of the composition, the Largo and the finale possess an emotional charge fully equal to that of Mahler's slow movements and Tchaikovsky's symphonic endings. The summarising traits of the finale, quoting the motivic material of the previous movements, may be somewhat drowned in the emotional current, yet, in the wake of numerous dispassionate recordings made by his peers, Jansons engrosses the listener with a deluge of affection in a first-class sonic packing. Initially, I was not overly excited about the producers' decision to put the *New World Symphony* and the *Pictures at an Exhibition* next to one another (instead of Mussorgsky's work, I would have preferred the *Classical Symphony* and one of Haydn's final symphonies), yet if their intention was indeed to couple within a single DVD the most popular, in the best sense the word, music there is, then the result can be deemed very good. If Jansons acts like a surgeon at rehearsals, when it comes to the *Pictures*, he has turned into a seasoned pharmacist, weighing out the performance on the scales grain by grain. The *New World Symphony* comes across as a compelling alternative, while his account of the *Pictures at an Exhibition* can serve as a model of unrivalled work with the orchestra, evidently being the fruit of communication (it is simply impossible not to notice on the audio-visual recording the glances continuously exchanged between the players). Jansons's album with Dvořák's oratorio *Stabat Mater*, linking up to the Amsterdam recording of the same composer's *Requiem*, cannot be considered anything other than admirable (2009, RCO Live). The commercial catalogues of the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks contain four audio recordings of *Stabat Mater*, two of them made with Rafael Kubelík (1964, Living Stage; 1976, Deutsche Grammophon), one with Nikolaus

Harnoncourt (2007, Sony Classical), and the most recent with Mariss Jansons. All of them are praiseworthy – Kubelík's chamber creations, Harnoncourt's rhetorical version, as well as Jansons's accomplishment, presenting as it does a precise orchestra, a superlative choir (now performing in its 70th season) and an immaculate vocal quartet, including a metalically objectivising soprano, a smooth non-vibrato-laden mezzo-soprano, a tenor bringing to bear the German declamation tradition coupled with a Slavonic timbre, and a profound bass. When listening to the recording, one cannot help but marvel at the fine dynamics, the delicate agogics, the balanced tempos, the rhythmic pulsation of the vast sections, the faculty of emphasising interesting details in the middle voices. The funeral march of the trumpets in the second part can move the listener to tears, while subsequent relief is brought by the rocking barcarole of the waltzy fifth section. The visual recording is unobtrusive, the audio quality is very high, which has been enhanced by the choir's attenuation by its sitting members and the changing of the arrangement of the soloists in the eighth part. Jansons's recording of *Stabat Mater* simply overshadows a good many of the previous projects. And the Munich audience was clearly of the same opinion, bearing witness to which was its enthusiastic response to the performance, captured on both the CD and the Blu-ray disc.

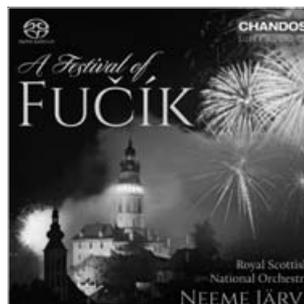
Martin Jemelka

Neeme Järvi A Festival of Fučík

Royal Scottish National Orchestra,
Neeme Järvi – conductor.

Recorded: Feb. 2015, Royal Concert
Hall, Glasgow. Released: 2015.
TT: 78:00. 1 SACD CHSA 5158.

In January 2016, a full century had passed since the death of the Prague-born composer Julius Fučík (1872–1916), whose work and musical spirit were closely linked with the conducting of military pieces. The British label Chandos entrusted the renowned Estonian conductor Neeme Järvi (b. 1937) to pay tribute to the artist, who is at rest at a cemetery in his native city of Prague. The project features recordings of pieces which are and will be extremely popular on a global scale. The album was made in February 2015 in Glasgow, with Järvi conducting the excellent Royal Scottish National Orchestra. In his account, he opted for darker accentuations, which was by no means detrimental to the sound, with the main forte being the interplay and balance between the groups of instruments. Even though the brass could have been brighter and



the percussion seems to have been overly drowned in distance and could have been more to the point, the sound as a whole is captured very well indeed. Hearing the brisk performance of such fabulous pieces as the marches Uncle Teddy and Die lustige Dorfschmiede, the *Miramare Overture*, and the waltz *Winterstürme* is a great pleasure indeed. In 1983, some Fučík compositions were recorded for Orfeo at the Rudolfinum by Václav Neumann. The number of tracks is lower, yet the album contains three pieces that were not recorded by Järvi: the Hungarian triumphant march *Attila*, the Spanish march *Triglav*, and the magnificent waltz *Ideals of Dreams*. Neumann's recording is there for whoever may desire to hear the Czech Philharmonic's refined sound. Fučík's music was also recorded by the celebrated Herbert von Karajan, conducting the Berliner Philharmoniker's wind section, in 1966 at the Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin, for Deutsche Grammophon. He chose to include Fučík's *Die Regimentskinder* and the *Florentiner Marsch* in the album titled "Austrian and Prussian Marches", featuring music by various composers, among them the famous *Königgrätzer Marsch* by Johann Gottfried Piefke (1817–1884), which was probably sketched directly during the Battle of Königgratz (Hradec Králové, Bohemia) and whose trio contains the theme of the even more famous *Hohenfriedberger Marsch*. This popular short piece is one of the world's most frequently performed military marches (and also one of Adolf Hitler's reported favourites). In connection with the *Königgrätzer Marsch*, I would like to point out that this year, on 3 July, 150 years had passed since the Battle of Königgratz, which provides us with the opportunity to commemorate the massacre that ended with the death of tens of thousands of Prussian and German soldiers. By listening to Julius Fučík's music, we can recall the events that had a devastating impact on Bohemia as part of the defeated Austrian Empire. This "gift" given to the Czech lands by Emperor Franz Josef I, who played an infamous role in the European history of the 19th, as well as the 20th, century, should never be forgotten.

Miloš Bittner

11th November 2016
PKF – Prague Philharmonia (CZ)
Marián Lejava, conductor
Jan Bartoš, piano

15th November 2016
Ian Pace (UK)
ensemble recherche (D)

21st November 2016
Ensemble Terrible (CZ)
Marek Šedivý, conductor
Pascal Gallois, bassoon
Pascal Gallois (F)
Andersen – Haltli – Snekkestad (DK/N)

25th November 2016
Jonny Axelsson – Kevin Volans (S/IRL)
Prague Modern (CZ)
Pascal Gallois, conductor

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