



17

**Adam Viktora**

**Miloslav Kabeláč – Symphonist**

**Želiv Monastery Catalogue**

**Řehoř Pešín**

# CONCERT WITH A PREMIERE



Orchestral  
series



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**Sunday, 16 April 2017, 7.30 pm**

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## Dear readers,

over the years I have had the pleasure to serve as editor-in-chief of this magazine. I have drawn attention in the editorials to various materials and sections, highlighted articles especially worth reading. I have never previously referred to our reviews. The reviews section, which has been part of our magazine for many years, has been prepared in collaboration with *Harmonie*, a journal that possesses an established network of contributors, who closely observe the music market and keep the readers posted on the albums that have been recently released. CMQ selects from among the reviews published in *Harmonie* texts that pertain to Czech music (music written by Czech composers and/or performed by Czech musicians), as well as to the titles we deem to be good – not because we would like to give a rosy picture of the world, but simply because our magazine's mission is to afford scope to that which deserves the attention of the surrounding world. And since we are on the subject of the reviews section, I would like to accentuate yet another first – for the first time ever, I feel obliged to mention something that you will not find in the magazine: the present issue does not contain a review of a recording featuring the Slavonic Dances, made by Jiří Bělohlávek with the Czech Philharmonic. The reason is simple – we just didn't have the space. So the result is that this time all the reviews relate to CDs containing music by contemporary composers. I am glad about it. The Slavonic Dances are lovely indeed (unless, that is, they are on the programme of every other concert or so...), but they are not going to run away. Next time, then.

*Wishing you a nice spring*  
Petr Bakla

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# ADAM VIKTORA

## “I DON’T SERVE UP WELL-KNOWN PIECES”

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Adam Viktora keeps coming up with surprises. Even though he and his Ensemble Inégal mainly focus on historically informed performance of early music, paying particular attention to the Czech Baroque composer Jan Dismas Zelenka, he also embraces contemporary creation. He plays the organ, conducts, organises international conferences and other projects, and he is an amateur archaeologist to boot.

*When did the organist Adam Viktora begin dreaming of having his own ensemble, one mainly devoting to the music of Jan Dismas Zelenka?*

Before I began dreaming of forming my own ensemble, I actually had one. Everything went quite prosaically. Since I was 14 years of age, I had always had the opportunity to head several choirs, with whom I pursued that which I found alluring and of significance, and I wanted to continue to follow that path. During a performance of Rossini’s *La petite messe solennelle* in 2000, I met the soprano Gabriela Eibenová, who would become my wife. She and I started immediately to plan our future projects, and soon founded together Ensemble Inégal. At the time, though, we had no inkling that we would above all concentrate on Jan Dismas Zelenka’s music.

*Was it you or Gabriela who came up with the ensemble’s name?*

It was Gabriela’s idea. “Inégal”, meaning “unequal”, “uneven”, indicates that our ensemble does not perform the music of just one or two stylistic epochs and points to the fact that we appear in all kinds of vocal-instrumental formations, ranging from three to 60 musicians. At the very beginning, we knew that we wouldn’t only be playing early music, and the term “inégal”, taken over from the French Baroque terminology, aimed to endow our ensemble with invention and a non-conformist approach to seeking values in interpretation and repertoire alike.



PHOTO: VOUTĚCH VLK

*You have mentioned your experience as a chorus master. Before we begin talking in more detail about Želenka, could you tell me why you got to conducting so early?*

I was simply thrown in at the deep end. At the age of 16, I enrolled at the Plzeň Conservatory and I used to go to rehearse at a Protestant church. And it's amazing, incredibly well-educated, priest persuaded me that I would be able to lead its choir, even though I didn't know how to do so. So I learned in the process. Later on in Plzeň, I became chorus master of the cathedral choir, as well as of the well-known amateur Czech Song, an ensemble made up of about 40 members, possessing quite a long tradition – the distinguished Czech composer Zdeněk Lukáš was named its first chorus master in 1954.

*What did you gain from this experience?*

An awful lot indeed. I came to know different milieus and all types of people, I passed through very large repertoire, ranging from the Hussite chorale, Baroque music, through Franz Schubert, Leoš Janáček, Benjamin Britten, to the ingenious arrangements of folk songs by Zdeněk Lukáš and Jaroslav Krček. All that was totally new for me at the time, since it was basically up to me alone to cope with, without possessing any experience, without having any ballast of performance tradition. Perhaps owing to this very experience I don't tend to serve up well-known pieces.



*The first work Ensemble Inégal recorded was Antonín Dvořák's Mass in D major, Op. 86, "Lužany". Your subsequent albums are primarily dominated by early music. Why did you start off with Dvořák, and his Lužany Mass in particular?*

For me, Dvořák's *Mass in D major* was almost initiatory; I have a very personal relationship to it. Its attribute, "Lužany" is of immense significance, as Dvořák composed it for the consecration of a new chapel at the Lužany chateau, nearby Plzeň, that is, for a specific place, for a group of Plzeň singers and for the specific small organ, which is still there today. The composer confirmed it in a letter to the chateau's owner, Josef Hlávka, in which he wrote that he had created a bespoke work for that particular space. While still a student, I was afforded the opportunity to give concerts at the Lužany chapel, playing the local organ, and when I was 18, I performed the said Mass by Dvořák with the Plzeň Cathedral choir. I was simply enchanted by the Lužany genius loci. The manor chapel has the dimensions of a large sitting room, with no more than 14 singers fitting into its loft, and the chambers in the chateau are still furnished in the manner they were at the time when Antonín Dvořák used to be a guest there. Spending a night at such a place is an unforgettable experience. That is why my student conception was entirely affected by my being familiar with the Lužany background, as well as a fair degree of an "authentically" romantic imagination. The Mass is intimate sacred music, and that is what I aimed to present to the listener.

Yet I first listened to a previous recording – I was overwhelmed by the monumental sound, an impassioned concept with an operatic touch. And I was appalled. That was my first encounter with the interpretational tradition that came into being at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, a tradition within which every single bar revealed that the performers had never visited Lužany, had no idea of the size of the ensemble that can fit into the chapel, had no inkling of the space's acoustics, nor the properties of Dvořák's organ – by and large, they had no idea whatsoever what it is about. With both horror and enthusiasm, I then started to ascertain that a similar fate had afflicted virtually all the music I came across. Therefore, I returned to Dvořák's Mass and recorded it with Ensemble Inégal directly at the Lužany chapel.

*Two years ago, you performed the "Lužany" mass again, at the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum in Prague, as you had come across a version that was considered to be lost. What version is it, and how many versions are there?*

There are several historical versions. The first, dating from 1887, just with the organ, was only published in 1963; in the second, the organ is replaced with the harmonium, cello and double-bass. When it comes to the final, orchestral version, from 1892, Dvořák only wrote it because no publisher was willing to issue the work in the instrumentation with the organ. Yet there is also a version for the organ, cellos and double-basses, which Dvořák himself deemed the best. A few years ago, the renowned researcher David Beveridge discovered in the archive of the London-based Novello & Company publisher Dvořák's manuscript of this version of the work, and since he was familiar with the recording we had made in Lužany, he turned to me and afforded me the opportunity to acquaint myself with Dvořák's original parts for the cello and double-bass. These parts do not just duplicate the organ part – now and then, they divert from it, duly creating an



astonishing colour in the composition. Although a detail, it is an essential one. So we got to perform this version in Prague in modern-time premiere.

*Four years after the Dvořák album, your third CD featured the world premiere recording of the Czech Baroque composer Jan Dismas Zelenka's oratorio Il serpente di bronzo. Since then, you have gone on to make world-premiere recordings of another eight Zelenka works, organise three editions of the Zelenka Festival in Prague and two international conferences dedicated to the composer. Your website bears the heading: "Discover Zelenka with Ensemble Inégal". Well, why Zelenka in particular?*

The answer is simple. I regard Jan Dismas Zelenka as the very finest Baroque composer, representing a totally original value, a value incomparable with anything and anyone. That is how I perceive him, and that's why I pay so much attention to him. His idiom is the closest to me, his energy raises me from the chair, the profundity of his ideas uplifts my spirit, and his compositional mastery completely floors me. And there are also emotions, yet they are difficult to talk about.

*Do you rate Zelenka's music even above that of Johann Sebastian Bach?*

Not at all. It's not that I consider Bach to be a worse and Zelenka a better composer. Bach truly fascinates me, yet I have to admit that whenever given the choice, I opt for Zelenka. By the way, Bach himself esteemed Zelenka as one of the best composers he had encountered, and Zelenka's pupil Johann Gottlob Harrer succeeded Bach at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig.

*What, in your opinion, is it that makes Zelenka's music so engrossing and appealing?*

For sophisticated listeners, Zelenka's music is a revelation, since they can detect in it novel and unknown dimensions of Baroque music. Those being somewhat familiar with Baroque music and venturing to compare are enchanted by Zelenka's singularity, extraordinary invention, as well as his breathtaking compositional mastery. As regards those seeking spiritual profundity in sacred music, they can certainly find it in Zelenka's works. And, finally, those who have just started to listen to classical and Baroque music will, similarly to all the other above-mentioned types of listeners, be spellbound by the immense current of feelings and emotions spurting from Zelenka's music.

*Do you recall when you first came across Zelenka's music?*

It was back during my studies at the conservatory, but I did not know at the time that it was Zelenka. The majority of Czech organists sooner or later have to tackle the *Fugue in A minor* by Jan Zach, a Czech composer of the first half of the 18th century, a piece I consider one of the most beautiful Baroque works of Czech provenience. Only a few years later did I learn that Zach had actually borrowed the impressive original fugue theme and the infinite chromatic labyrinth from the Kyrie of Zelenka's *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*.

*Besides your Czech Baroque Music - Discoveries and Surprises cycle, you have founded the Zelenka Festival Prague-Dresden and initiated the respective musicology conference. What is the overarching vision?*

Have you heard the opinion that there is "too much Zelenka" in the Czech Republic? I would like to know whether anyone in Germany has ever said that there is "too much Bach" there. Yes, we are talking about two totally incomparable aspects of Central European culture. Yet not only insofar as Zelenka is not the Czech Bach, as he has of late, rather inaptly, been labelled – just as Bach is not the German Zelenka – the respective extent to which their music is known starkly differs. According to our own research, the overwhelming majority of the Czech population have not the slightest inkling as to who Jan Dismas Zelenka was and what his music is like. In respect to the fact that just a few Zelenka concerts are held annually in the Czech Republic, as against the hundreds of performances of Bach's music in Germany, with the colossal difference also being evident when the populations of the two countries are compared, the knowledge of Zelenka's oeuvre is patchy among connoisseurs too. The framework tuition programmes for Czech primary schools do not include a list of recommended composers, of which every person of even a modicum of education should be aware, while none of the recommended indexed materials within the Methodological Portal pertaining to these programmes contain Zelenka's name. By comparison, Bedřich Smetana, for instance, is mentioned there seven times, Antonín Dvořák occurs five times, and both Bach and Handel three times. With respect to the fact that today Zelenka's music is being performed more frequently abroad than in his native country, that the documentation mapping his work and the majority of music editions have also been issued abroad and that all the theoretical knowledge serving as the basis for us, the performers, has solely arrived from abroad, as things stand now, I deem the assumption that there is "too much Zelenka" an outright infamy.



Since I feel greatly bound to Zelenka's legacy, as well as grateful for the pleasure his music brings to me, I have founded an international Zelenka musicology conference. It has become a new platform for making public the results of the research carried out by the contemporary Zelenka experts. At the same time, the conference is aimed to provide an impulse for and kick-start the still paltry Zelenka research in the Czech Republic. The epochal outputs from the first edition are freely available online on the Clavibus Unitis website and have gone on to serve as the basis for a new article on Zelenka and his work in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

The patron of the two projects is the Australian musicologist Janice B. Stockigt, the author of the monograph *Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745), A Bohemian Musician at the Court of Dresden*, and a leading figure in the current Zelenka research worldwide. A curious aspect of the whole matter is that owing to her former oboe teacher, a Czech émigré, who brought along Zelenka's trio sonatas to Australia and won Stockigt over to Zelenka, her workplace, Melbourne University, has turned into a hatchery of Zelenka scholars.

*You have mentioned the nonsense handed down in the literature. Admittedly, the details of Zelenka's life and work seem to be foggy; for instance, it has often been stated that following his studies at the Jesuit College at the Klementinum in Prague he left under mysterious circumstances to join the Dresden court orchestra, and that the second half of his life was replete with disappointments.*

On the Czech Wikipedia page, we can read about mysterious factors connected with Zelenka's departure to Dresden, his unfortunate fate, great disillusionment and career failure. There are other myths too – relating to his being a lone wolf, living in isolation, allegedly being homosexual and having committed a crime, of which he is said to have repented all his life. Yet Zelenka's work reflects his character in a completely different light. All those who perform Zelenka's music perceive an eccentric composer bursting with self-confidence, crafty inventiveness, profound spiritual cognizance, unceasing pleasure, as well as a sense of humour. For years now, foreign musicologists have submitted new knowledge, which has served to categorically debunk the aforementioned ideas, and presented instead Zelenka as a successful musician, one who was respected and acknowledged by his contemporary colleagues, including Bach and Telemann, as well as a central figure of the musical life at the Dresden royal court. At the time, Dresden was Europe's paramount centre of music and the dream destination of the best musicians of the first half of the 18th century.

*Why, in your opinion, did Zelenka adopt the name Dismas, that is, the name of the thief who hanged on the cross to the right of Jesus?*

Before his death on the cross, Jesus promised the criminal: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) Dismas was thus the one and only human in history to have been told by God that he would be entering the Divine Kingdom. It is said that Zelenka chose the name Dismas to show his repentance because he had committed a heinous crime. I myself hold the view that it was not a manifestation of self-flagellation but, contrariwise, a certain degree of self-confidence, which the composer, I think, certainly did not lack.

*The Ensemble Inégal repertoire not only features Zelenka, it has expanded into all directions. Which of your non-Zelenka projects would you like to highlight?*

When it comes to our recent projects, I would above all like to mention Alfred Schnittke's *Requiem* and the modern-time premiere of Adam Michna's *The Czech Lute*, the very first Czech song cycle. Furthermore, we have explored the music by Samuel Capricornus, a virtually unknown Czech Baroque genius, given a theatre performance with puppets and Baroque music for children, and the Czech premiere of Philip Glass's *Symphony No. 3*.

*It almost beggars belief that in addition to leading Ensemble Inégal you have also been performing as a solo organist, teaching the organ at the Plzeň Conservatory, managing an organ festival. Is it at all possible to pursue all these activities concurrently and still be able to co-ordinate them with your family life?*

I hate it when I read in interviews that artists claim how difficult it is to co-ordinate all their pursuits, yet they somehow manage to pull off the balancing act, and that is why they are so good and admirable. I don't think it is possible to harmonise it all together, or I myself am not able to do so. I either devote to the organ and Zelenka, or my family, or archaeology. Sometimes I have the feeling that I'm going to lose my mind, yet, fortunately, I am not on my own. I share work and family joys with my wife. We have three children, and when today I went ice-skating with our son, Zelenka, the accounting of seven grants, as well as this interview, just had to wait their turn.

*What have you and Ensemble Inégal in store?*

We will soon be presenting in world premiere and recording a CD of Zelenka's *Psalmi vespertini III*, performing his oratorio *Gesù al Calvario* at the Prague Spring festival. There are also the preparations for the fourth edition of the Zelenka Festival Prague – Dresden and the Zelenka conference. We will be performing at festivals in the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Austria and Spain. Dozens of organ concerts are scheduled to be given within the Czech Organ Festival and other events.

*The organist, conductor and harmonium player Adam Viktora appears at music festivals throughout Europe, and lectures and performs at international organ conferences. He also works as an adviser to expert committees for the restoration of precious historical organs and makes recordings for European radio and television channels. He is highly dedicated to historical organs and to efforts towards their conservation and promotion. He is the founder and artistic director of the Czech Organ Festival and teaches organ playing at the Plzeň Conservatory. He is artistic director of Ensemble Inégal and Prague Baroque Soloists, with both of which he has given numerous present-day premiere concerts and made records of the European Baroque repertoire. As such and with these two ensembles, Adam Viktora has become in recent years the most outspoken representative within the currently ongoing process of rediscovering the oeuvre of Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745), a Czech Baroque musical genius.*

# MILOSLAV KABELÁČ

## SYMPHONIST

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On the occasion of last year's publication of the complete set of Miloslav Kabeláč eight symphonies on CD, recorded for Supraphon by conductor Marko Ivanović and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, we present a study of this crucial chapter in the history of 20th century Czech music.



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### PART 1

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Miloslav Kabeláč (born 1st of August 1908, died 17th of September 1979) counts among the great Czech symphonists. In this area, his import is entirely comparable to that of Dvořák or Martinů. In the context of Czech symphonic music of the 20th century, Kabeláč's oeuvre has a crucial and, in its way, exceptional place, which has so far not been adequately appraised and made generally known. The creative development of Kabeláč as a symphonist was already positively influenced by the composer's personality and dispositions: he was a deeply and universally educated person, in whom intellectual activity and a wide range of knowledge coincided most beneficially with spontaneous creativity and musical imagination. All of these elements together directed his creative process in a very distinctive manner. Kabeláč was not only perfectly and widely trained as a composer, pianist and conductor, he also had a deep musicological, ethnological, historical and philosophical education, as well as being an able mathematician and technician. Thanks to this ample erudition, he later (in the 1960s) found

it easier to successfully enter into the compositional problems of electro-acoustic music.

Kabeláč was also endowed with further qualities that are valuable, or rather indispensable, for the path of the symphonist. His poetics – and this holds for Kabeláč's entire output – includes an ever present tendency for gravity of content, for monumental or monumentalising constructive and conceptual proportions. On the other hand, his compositional method shows a working out in detail of the construction of each work, maximal economy in working with expressive musical means, an incessant search for new compositional methods both in the form of creative experiment, and – perhaps even more strikingly – by actualising those musical elements and compositional techniques which were long overlooked by European music (metro-rhythmical aspects, the use of percussion instruments, sound colours), or else long abandoned or practically forgotten (elements and procedures of old, pre-Baroque European music), or as yet only negligibly (and often inadequately) used (elements of non-European musical cultures).

His graduation piece, *Sinfonietta* (1931) and the eight symphonies which followed it form a monumental pillar at the centre of Kabeláč's oeuvre, astonishing in their homogeneity, developmental logic and solidity of form, as well as in their individuality and convincing expression. Without a doubt, it is the symphonies that hold the key to understanding Kabeláč's creative type, his original poetics, and his lifelong human and artistic development. Kabeláč's symphonies can also represent certain important trends in the development of Czech music in the times of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–45), but especially in the post-war period. There is also no doubt that at least some of them would have considerable import in the development of European music after the war. I have been able to uncover many remarkable links by comparative studies of the work of Kabeláč and of the leading figures of Polish post-war music, particularly Witold Lutosławski. Alas, Kabeláč has not yet been incorporated into this context to the appropriate extent. Czech musicology is yet to step up to this challenge.

Kabeláč's symphonies represent, on the one hand, a series of entirely autonomous and fully individualised works of art. On the other, they form an entity of a higher order, interconnected through their inner order with distinct marks of a systematic and consistently fulfilled process of development and innovation. If the generally recognised ideal of a true work of art is reaching a productive proportion between fulfilling and concurrently surpassing the present conditions, norms and rules of artistic

production, resulting in new artistic value, then Kabeláč's symphonies, individual and as a whole, are one of the telling proofs of the fulfilment of this ideal. At the time Kabeláč was embarking on his career as a composer (1931), the symphony represented a genre within Western music with a relatively stabilised profile, at least in its basic constructive parameters (monumentality) and meaning (gravity, universality of utterance), with a relatively finalised development, during which the symphony had arrived at a manifold differentiation in shape, sound, and, understandably, style, in the sense of the Adlerian *Personenstil* and *Zeitstil*. All this generally served to discourage young composers from approaching the symphony.

Not so for Kabeláč, for whom the symphony remained a creative challenge with plenty of space for various innovations. His process of innovation within the limits of the symphony gradually enters the higher levels of the work, in terms of material, form and content. In the domain of pitch material, it is his distinctively structured artificial modalities, whose inner laws Kabeláč exploits for the melodic, harmonic, but also the rhythmical, even the constructive layers of the work or its individual movements. Furthermore, there is historical material from older historical periods, particularly those that were – until his time – practically untouched by neoclassicism and other approaches: Gregorian chant, medieval non-liturgical spiritual music and secular music, Hussite chorales and so on. There is also material from non-European cultures – here, Kabeláč's importance, particularly in the context of Czech music, is outright foundational.

Kabeláč's unusual interest in percussion and its greater use for modern musical expression also falls into this area. This tendency will later lead to a complete emancipation of percussion instruments in his work. In terms of compositional techniques, we see an actualisation of the old techniques of early polyphony (organum, heterophony, early polyphony) as well as refined, finely nuanced techniques of developed renaissance polyphony. As concerns texts, we mostly encounter Biblical sources (I should remark here that all of these were composed under the totalitarian regime!) in unconventional adaptations, as is particularly striking in the 7th and 8th symphonies. The architecture is characterised by an exposition of cyclical form, while the sonic texture and instrumental colours are marked by a number of striking deviations from the traditional orchestration of a symphonic score. On the level of content and meaning, certain ancient (and also once primary) functions of music enter the process

of artistic expression: the magical, ritualistic function, in which Kabeláč re-revealed their immediate communicative power as a vessel for a modern and pressing conveyance of ideas.

Kabeláč always respected the basic parameters of the symphony genre as petrified by tradition: primarily, that it is an instrumental form conceived of in ensembles, then its cyclical form, gravity and high universality of content including a fundamental inclination to a dramatic treatment of the subject, and finally, monumental ambitions of all the crucial parameters: form, sound distribution in space, expression and content.

The aforementioned graduation piece, *Sinfonietta* (1931) has an atypical three movement structure

of Fugue – Variation – Finale. In its approximately 18 minutes of duration, it represents the type of a “small symphony”, whose monumental tendencies are guaranteed in part by the large orchestra and in part by the strictly concentrated evolutionary form of the individual movements (particularly the extensive fugue of the first movement) and the concentrated final gradation in the concluding movement. However, a further ten years were needed for the first numbered item in Kabeláč’s symphonic output.

*Symphony no. 1 “in D” op. 11* (1941–42) deviates from the standard form of a symphony mostly in the constitution of the orchestra: it is written

**1. SINFONIA in Re**  
per orchestra ad archi e strumenti a percussione

**I.** MILOSLAV KABELÁČ, op. 44.

Lento grave (♩ = 34)

Symphony no. 1 “in D” op. 11



only for strings and a large group of percussion instruments. The role of percussion is certainly not just rhythmic or dynamic in the traditional sense. Rather, percussion is an equal partner to the string group and in this way participates significantly in the thematic development of the work. It is worth noting that another work for a similarly “reduced” instrumentation – Arthur Honegger’s 2nd symphony, generally much better known – was written at approximately the same time, though both these works are entirely independent. In Kabeláč’s 1st symphony, it is the number and variety of the percussion instruments in contrast to the sonically quite homogeneous string orchestra that is most striking: Kabeláč writes for two timpani, snare drum, tambourin provençale, bass drum, two tambourines, cymbals, triangle and tam-tam, whilst also specifying a large range of mallets. The character of the musical material shows clear marks of rational deliberation in all three movements. The 1st movement (Lento grave. Allegro, in sonata form) is based on two themes: the main theme is structured so as to alternate steps of a second and large interval leaps (sixths, sevenths). In the rhythmic plane, the principle of augmentation and diminution is used as an analogue to the procedure in the pitch domain, both successively and simultaneously. The second theme is relatively expansive and internally segmented; its outer extremes are inversions of each other. It is also built on alternating small steps and leaps. The principles of augmentation, diminution and inversion are therefore key in the construction of the entire first movement. Not only frequency and clarity, but also the multi-layered nature of their appearance is doubtless a mark of rational design in the construction of this movement. The 2nd movement (Largo) is based on an artificial seven-tone mode, 1-2-1-3-1-3-1<sup>1</sup>. In contrast to the expansive and dynamic character of the 1st movement (large interval steps), the idiom of the 2nd movement is rather contracted, engrossed into itself, which is given already by the predominance of seconds melodically, and further supported timbrally (the dark timbres of low violas with celli and double basses prevail). The mode has twelve transpositions, which Kabeláč makes adequate use of, including augmentation and diminution, where the augmentation and diminution also concerns the proportions of the intervals, following certain algorithms. At the same time, the resultant

effect of augmentation – intervallic expansion – is a very effective means of gradation. The intervals in the series are gradually stretched into the form 2-3-2-4-2-4 and 3-4-3-5-3-5. A detailed analysis reveals a number of other compositional operations in which Kabeláč goes as far as connecting the constructive principles used in the 1st movement with the principle of the artificial mode in the 2nd movement.

The 3rd movement (Allegro) is a typically energetic symphonic finale, in which the greatest prominence is given to percussion. The driving basic metre, 3/8, is incessantly enlivened by metrical deviations, irregular accentuation and an artful development of melodic lines above this basic metric pulse: the melodic and rhythmic phrases oppose the fundamental quasi-mechanical nature of the music through a differing metrical foundation, which seems to surpass the limits of the basic metric figures, and bridges the sharply defined accents of the mechanical foundation. In essence, this freely rhythmically arranged polyphony, as if without bar lines, is dominated by something like a *talea* – a model and basic organising principle, in the boundaries of which all the layers of the texture, despite their variability, will always coincide. The logical synthesis of all the constitutive layers gives the impression of an iron will and consistency, and an enormous concentration of energy. This, of course, has important semantic ramifications (let us remind ourselves that this work was composed during the Nazi occupation).

*Symphony no. 2 “in C” op. 15* (1942–44, orchestration finished 1946) for large orchestra is a munificently laid out work of about 45 minutes in duration and a sweeping pathos-laden gesture of Romantic temperament, which was necessitated by the unsettled times in which it was written. In its sonic disposition, formal layout and compositional style, the 2nd symphony belongs among Kabeláč’s more traditional. Innovative elements are less striking and focus more on details of structure, musical material or instrumentation: the use of a solo saxophone in the 2nd movement, once again, the important role of a highly emancipated percussion section – particularly in the rhythmic counterpoint in the opening fugue of the 3rd movement – and work with artificial modalities. The symphony consists of four movements, wherein the 3rd and 4th are intricately connected into

1) We give the modes according to the number of chromatic steps, ascending. The mode in question, starting from C, for example, is therefore C-C#-D#-E-G-G#-B-(C).

# III. SYMFONIE IN F I

MILOSLAV KABELÁČ, op. 33  
(\* 1908)

Andante patetico (♩ = 63-66)

I. II. Trombe C  
III. IV.  
I. II. Corai F  
III. IV.  
V. VI.  
I. II. Tromboni  
III. IV.  
Tuba  
Timpani  
Organ

Andante patetico (♩ = 63-66)

f marc.

a single whole. It is written for a large orchestra including 6 horns, 4 trumpets, alto saxophone, 2 harps, organ, and a large percussion section, among others. The romantic conception of the work also lies in self-citation of symbolic motifs and excerpts from Kabeláč's previous works. In short, and in the language of period journalism, it is a typical "symphony of war and peace".

**Symphony no. 3 "in F" op. 33** (1948-57) for brass (3 trumpets, 6 horns, 4 trombones, tuba), organ and timpani. The four-movement symphony represents a fairly radical innovation into the genre's traditional form already in its instrumentation. The work is written not for orchestra, but for solo organ and an ensemble of fourteen brass instruments with timpani. It is a peculiar form of a *concertante* symphony with a ceremonially exalted, pathos-laden expression. The four movement cyclical form is framed by two slow movements. Not even the order of tempi across the movements is typically symphonic.

## Symphony no. 3 "in F" op. 33

Similarly to the 2nd symphony, a fugue is used as the form for one of the movements (in both cases, it is the 3rd, scherzo movement).

The first movement, in sonata form with two themes, has a pathetic character with a grandiose energy. This resides particularly in the main theme, which is based on the considered alteration of small and large intervals (this theme is not based on an artificial modality). The secondary theme, on the other hand, develops in seconds, and its foundation is the nine-tone mode 1-1-2-1-1-2-1-3.

The short second movement has the character of an intermezzo, which, in contrast to the 1st movement, gives a more prominent role to the solo organ and timpani. In terms of expression, the entire 2nd movement gives the sense of a deep, resigned, generally sombre meditation with a slight gradation about halfway through, with a quieted, as if resigned conclusion.

The 3rd movement stands in for the symphonic scherzo with its fast, wild tempo with distinctive triplets. It's a virtuoso fugue for solo organ, which the brass enter only with curt interjections which strengthen its general dynamic pulse. The non-diatonic subject of the fugue contains 10 notes from the chromatic scale, and grows out of a concise head in the booming register of the C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>3</sub> octave. The dramatic tension is increased by a general pause, which divides the head from further expansive development of the subject. Its construction once again reveals the involvement of rational deliberations – there are clear inversional relations between the individual motives, there is augmentation and diminution of the shapes, including interval contraction and expansion. Kabeláč then develops these techniques in many ways in the following sections of the fugue. Despite the high density of the aggregates, which throw uncertainty on the tonality, the fugue remains

clearly tonally rooted, including the standard expressions of tonal centres.

The 4th movement is a dignified, affectedly flowing finale with a ceremonial feeling and a clear expression of the main tonality of the work bearing the title “in F”: here, F minor prevails, beginning and ending the movement. In its generally majestic, festive tone, the final movement approaches the character of the opening, which we can also interpret as a sign of the symphonic conception of the entire work. That is also confirmed by the summarising, recapitulating character of the movement’s thematic material, which contains reminiscences of the characteristic motives of the previous movements.

**Symphony no. 4 “in La - Camerata” op. 36** (1954–58) is written for chamber orchestra. In addition to the atypical tempo scheme of its movements (Grave-Scherzo-Lento-Allegro), there is a striking presence of elements of non-European musics (in both the melody and the harmony) as an effective expressive contrast to European idioms. This primarily concerns the 1st movement, which consists of only 100 measures and yet gives produces a monumental effect, on which all aspects of the musical language and architecture participate. The use of pedal points and heterophony is very characteristic for this movement. In general, its static nature implies a non-European religious ritual. The composer himself has said of the 4th symphony’s 1st movement: “*My interest is in folk traditions from around the world. The air of the first movement sets an atmosphere distant from our musical thought.*” The 1st movement, Grave, has the outline of a sonata form, set in a very slow tempo, and its general impression is considerably static. The first theme is essentially a series of 15 tones from the eight-tone artificial mode 1-2-1-1-3-2-1-1 with twelve transpositions, which does not contain the “dominant” – that is, the tone a perfect fifth away from the fundamental. This series of 15 tones is rhythmicised using a metric mode within a four-beat metre (i.e. it is in fact an application of the *talea* method to the melodic series – a species of *color*, a technique originating from isorhythmic motets in the ars nova period). The metric mode essentially permutes the progression 2-3-4, meaning the 2nd, 3rd and 4th beats of a four-beat metre (the 1st beat is consistently “unoccupied”). The rhythmicised perfect fourth pedal point in the bass has an important function in the exposition of this theme, adding to the general “oriental impression” of the section.

The second theme is comprised of two mutually freely invertible parts and grows out from a five-tone section of the mode of the first theme and gradually goes through all 12 notes from the chromatic scale. The remaining three movements have a more neoclassical character: unlike the first movement, they are convincingly “European”.

The 2nd movement is a classical symphonic scherzo (the basic 3/8 metre remains stable throughout) in a simple ABA form. A fanfare motif in the horns plays a crucial role, giving the movement the character of a “scherzo da caccia”. The regular metric pulse is made dynamic by irregular divisions of simultaneously occurring melodic phrases. The mutual complementarity of several layers is a natural driving force of the gradational pull of the A section. The middle of the B section brings a contrasting theme, again a very dynamic three note phrase, first stated in the timpani. The range of this theme is limited to an octave, variously filled in by third, fourth and fifth progressions (the range of both themes in the first movement was also confined to an octave). The reprise of the A section is practically an exact repetition.

The 3rd movement is also in a simple ABA form with an effective expression of the middle section. The themes are once again melodically economical, but they conceal enormous potential for gradation, which the composer gradually reveals and develops in three waves with sharp breaks at the peaks of the gradations: the third of them brings the movement to a quiet, somewhat resigned conclusion.

The 4th movement has the regular form of a traditional symphonic finale, particularly in its fast tempo and high energy. It unfolds in a rondo form with fanfare-like motives based on a regular metric pulse. The emphasised note – A above middle C – in the main theme confirms the validity of the main key of the work – Kabeláč has of course not abandoned tonality. Similarly to the final movements in the previous symphonies, Kabeláč recapitulates the key thematic material of the previous movements, so that he can add a new idea to it at the peak of the final gradation, one taken from his own composition for children’s choir, *Žaklínání* [Incantation] (no. 5 from the cycle *Přírodě* [To Nature] op. 35).

**Symphony no. 5 “in B - Drammatica” op. 41** (1959–60) is a very unusual *concertante* symphony: the *concertante* “instrument” is in fact the human voice – a textless dramatic soprano. This concep-



tion was motivated by considerations of content relating to expressing the conflicting relationship of an individual to an inconsistent world. In its pitch construction, this symphony is also based on the thorough exploitation of an artificial mode – the seven-tone, non-diatonic 1-2-3-1-1-3-1. Kabeláč's "Fifth" has a close relationship to his orchestral one-movement composition *The Mystery of Time* op. 31 (1953-57). In a certain sense, it is its counterpart: if *The Mystery of Time* was inspired in particular by the composer's ideas about the world around us, by eternal laws and the unity of the universe, then the 5th symphony takes its lead from the opposite pole: it focuses on the inner life of the individual. There, it is nature and its "static" eternal order, here, it is the torrid human soul with its contradictions, conflicts and transformations. The entirety of the work is again governed by a strict logical architectural order with a strong involvement of rational constructive operations. Moreover, it presents closer motivic connections between the musical material of its individual movements (anticipation of themes in preceding movements).

#### *Symphony no. 5 "in B - Drammatica" op. 41*

The 1st movement is in sonata form with an affected slow introduction. The first theme of the solo soprano is again based on an artificial mode, the aforementioned 1-2-3-1-1-3-1. The mode has a clear minor sound – the presence of the Phrygian minor second gives it an elegiac, spirited mood. Later, this initial mode is expanded by an eighth tone in the range of an octave, a minor seventh from the fundamental. The compositional operations used to develop melodic lines from this mode are typical of Kabeláč – there is an accentuation of the generally ascending line with an expansive "interval augmentation". The second theme is in the same mode as the first, and with its entry, there is a fluent and gradual increase in tempo.

The 2nd movement is a scherzo (Presto in a 2/4 metre) in a clearly articulated ternary form. The motivic material is based on the mode of the 1st movement with occasional modifications. Through partial "cut-outs" from the mode, Kabeláč also temporarily achieves other modal structures, for example both variants of the octatonic scale: 1-2-1-2... and 2-1-2-1...

The 3rd, slow movement of the cycle is in ternary form with an extended final section also develops from two themes, of which the first has the strenuous and gradual ascending melodic tendency so typical of Kabeláč, filled in with "creeping" seconds. The second theme, by contrast, uses mostly larger interval steps and leaps. There is no material derived from artificial modes in this movements. The 4th movement has a development analogous to the opening movement: it accelerates gently from the initial slow tempo to an Allegro. The thematic material again returns to the initial mode with its typical hiatuses. The second theme also has this modal structure, constructed as a contrasting addition to the first.

*To be continued in the next issue*



## THE VERSATILITY AND BEAUTY OF SOUND ART

### MUSICA NOVA 2016 INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Today, sound art is a stylistically diversified discipline that has brought into being new sonic worlds, provided unprecedented possibilities for both traditional, modified and brand-new instruments, advancements in spatial sound projection, as well as new formats and blending with other types of art (sound installations, audio-visual works).

The prize-winners of last year's MUSICA NOVA international competition too have presented all kinds of ways of using technology in sound art. Ireland's **James Surgenor**, who came first in the category of autonomous art electroacoustic music, is currently studying for a doctorate at Sheffield University. A composer, researcher and programmer, he focuses on the "shaping" of sound, its quality and intriguing spatial projection. His piece *Twist and Turn* is a brilliant result of merging rational algorithmic approach and sense of beauty, the natural sonic quality and the "twisting and turning" of sound in space in a continuum between noise and tonality. As Surgenor has himself written, a composer of this inclination considers competitions an important platform serving to get within the context and into contact with a network of similarly oriented creators. He works with information in a creative manner, he wants, and needs, to know what is going on in the domain and what is new in technology.

Of a totally different vein is the composer who received first prize in the category of music for acoustic instruments and electronic media. Japan's **Kotoka Suzuki** has a penchant for philosophy and poetry. She is known for employing a variety of formats in her works, including theatre, audio-vision and sound design. To put it in semiotic terms, she does not create her own "language", yet is interested in specific, unique "speeches". In linkage to the traditional Japanese dialectical aesthetics ("there is no light without shadow"), which permeates the entire style of life, there is no sound without silence: *"Silence can remind us to listen. Silence can also articulate presence and beauty within it... when there's silence, it can even enhance all the senses together."* Unlike Surgenor, Kotoka perceives technologies as solely serving a purpose. In her opinion, we are still somewhat *"obsessed with technologies"* (admittedly, this evidently applies to Japan to a far greater degree than to Europe), and hence, she has *"turned her back on all that, so as to work with something purer; for instance, paper; which is very simple and familiar, and can produce acoustic beauty."* In her composition *In Praise of Shadows*, inspired by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's 1933 essay, Kotoka also treats silence acoustically and visually. Three performers (the composition was premiered by the Arizona Contemporary Music Ensemble) play on various types of acoustically amplified paper instruments of various sizes, with white paper representing a *"pure form, accentuated by spot light in total darkness. Moreover, the acoustic and visual presentation is articulated by means of the performers' silent movement and their 'freezing' between the individual actions"*.





*Video still from Jiří Lukeš's **Elementhis-Metamorphosis***

Another type of creative approach is represented by the Czech composer **Eliška Cílková**, the winner of the competition's Czech round, who also received an honorary mention in the live electronics category. She studied composition, yet has over the long term had a passion for sound documentary. Possessing multiple talents (perhaps in part owing to her father, the renowned Czech geologist and philosopher Václav Cílek), she also has a degree in phytotechnology, and she is currently studying documentary at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. The intersection of her interests and background has probably given rise to her interest in acoustically documenting the Chernobyl region, the propensity for site-specific projects, and the conviction that authentic audio-recording of spontaneous moments may generate very complex information. In Eliška's own words: "*I am interested in transferring site sounds into music compositions*". Her concept, akin to sound ecology and radio art, entails natural coupling of real and stylised materials. However, Cílková's short piece for effected piano, titled *Vzývání* (Invocation), performed by Jana Černožouzová, was of a different, rather ritual, nature, a sort of sonic invocation of a pregnant

woman, which reflected the composer's personal experience.

The winner of the honorary mention in the Czech section, the accordionist and composer **Jiří Lukeš**, teaches at the Prague Conservatory. The concert marking the announcement of the competition's results featured his prize-winning piece *Elementhis - Metamorphosis*, accompanied by a video projection (choreography: Dana Pala, visual component: Michal Hór, dancers: Daša Horváthová and Dana Pala, cinematography: Tomáš Krejča, costumes: Nguyen Ha Thanh Špetlíková), as well as his performance of another award-winning work, *Doppelgänger*, for accordion and electronics, by the Netherlands's **Roderik de Man**. The two musicians share an interest in expanding the potentialities of instruments and their blending with electronics.

All the prize-winners were asked a question about the sense of competitions and the nature of education. They duly highlighted the importance of finding themselves among other creators and gaining experience with the diverse practice within their respective disciplines. And that is precisely what MUSICA NOVA strives to enhance.

**In 2016, Prague hosted the 25th edition  
of the MUSICA NOVA International Electroacoustic  
Music Competition**

Composers from 21 countries presented 70 works. Between 25 and 27 November 2016, the international jury sat at the Sound Studio of the Film Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. The concert of the laureates and winners of the Czech Ear competition for children and young non-professionals (see CMQ 2/2016) was held on 16 December 2016 at the Alfred ve dvůře theatre. Forty-four compositions were presented within the autonomous art electroacoustic music category, which was won by Ireland's James Surgenor with his piece *Twist and Turn*. Honorary mentions went to the 90-year-old French composer Francis Dhomont and his *Phoenix XXI*, and to Italy's Antonio Scarcia with *Harvest Fields*. The other finalists were Canada's Giles Gobeil, Argentina's Mario Mary and the UK's Adam Stanovič.

Twenty-six, mainly young, composers competed in the acoustic instruments/voice/ensemble & electroacoustic media category. First prize went to Japan's Kotoka Suzuki and her piece *In Praise of Shadows*, while the honorary mentions were awarded to the Netherlands's Roderik de Man for his *Doppelgänger* and the Czech composer Eliška Cílková for her *Vzývání* (Invocation), who also won the Czech round. The other finalists were the UK's Monty Adkins and Paulina Sundin, Chile's Remmy Canedo, Italy's Giulio Colangelo and Portugal's Joao Pedro Oliveira. Another honorary mention in the Czech round went to Jiří Lukeš and his piece *Elementhis-Metamorphosis*.

In the CZECH EAR competition, which has been associated to MUSICA NOVA since 2014, the winner in the under-14 category was the 13-year-old Jakub Burian, second prize was awarded to the 10-year-old David Princ. The 18-year-old Dan Smejkal clearly won the category of 15 and over.

The competition is held by the Society for Electroacoustic Music of the Czech Republic under the auspices of the Czech Music Council, in collaboration with the Academy of Performing Arts and the Arts Institute, the Theatre Institute and the Institute for Modern Music, with support from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the Municipality of Prague. The compositions have been sent to the European Broadcasting Union.

Streaming audio of the prize-winning works:  
[musicanova.seah.cz/cds/MusicaNova2016/index.htm](http://musicanova.seah.cz/cds/MusicaNova2016/index.htm)  
[musicanova.seah.cz/cds/MusicaNova2016/ceske\\_ucho](http://musicanova.seah.cz/cds/MusicaNova2016/ceske_ucho)

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*Ornithophona cyphonica*  
(Zpěvohlasná rozjetá)

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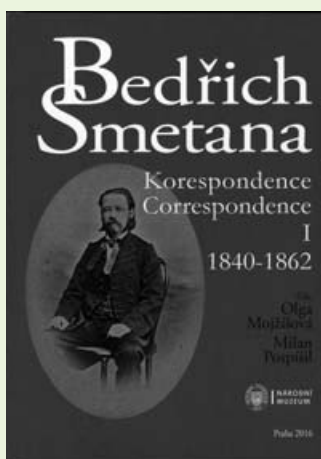
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## “I would like to write two letters every day”

### The first complete Bedřich Smetana correspondence edition



**Bedřich Smetana.**  
**Korespondence / Correspondence I**  
**(1840–1862), edited by Olga Mojžišová**  
**and Milan Pospíšil,**

with the co-operation of Jiří K. Kroupa, KLP & National  
Museum, Prague 2016, \*326 + 522 pp. + 32 pages  
of illustrations

That is why they strove to present a “faithful picture of the maestro’s personality and artistry” (Hostinský, 1885). And they duly plunged into gathering the relevant materials with the aim to put together an extensive biography. Besides focusing on Smetana’s music itself, they also paid attention to his correspondence, collecting and continuously publishing his letters, first in magazines and soon in books too. The published correspondence was subsequently made use of by authors of Smetana studies and monographs, including those writing in German: at the turn

During his lifetime, Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) did not gain the same degree of international renown as did his younger contemporary Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904). In the 1870s, however, he became the main representative of Czech national music, and later on he would enjoy general acclaim in his home country. When Smetana died, in 1884, his champions were well aware that his oeuvre, as well as the major circumstances pertaining to his life, was not sufficiently known.

of the 19th and 20th centuries, for instance, the qualities of Smetana’s music were the subject of studies by the Vienna-based musicologist and critic Max Graf. And the author of the first Smetana monograph in German, Bronislav Wellek, furnished his 1895 book with a supplement containing Smetana’s letters to Franz Liszt. By and large, further research would simply not prove to be possible without detailed knowledge of the composer’s correspondence.

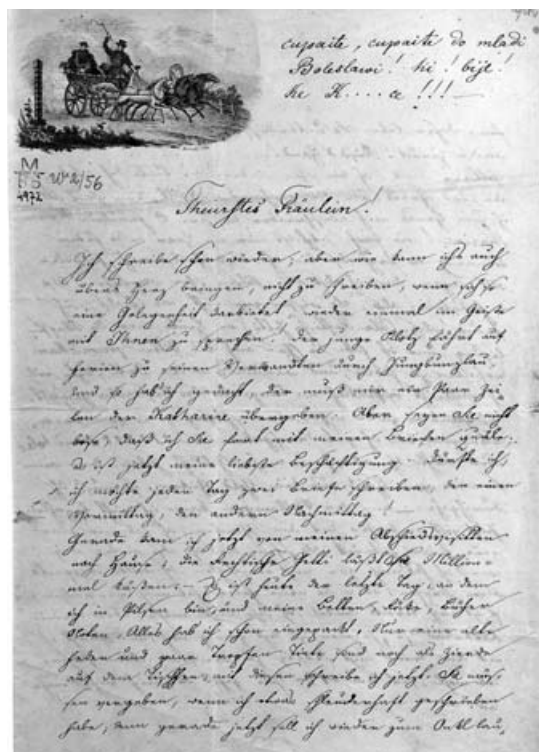
Hence, it comes as no surprise that the first deliberations about publishing the complete Smetana correspondence occurred way back in 1919. A number of scholars, museum employees, collectors and Smetana admirers have made several attempts at making the idea come to fruition, yet none of them was able to accomplish this challenging and complex task. One of the reasons for this failure at the time must have been the fact that publishers had to take into consideration several questions which are not so essential in the 21st century: How to do it while at the same time not besmirching

the idealised image of the national giant? How to deal with the correspondence written in German? How to cope with Smetana's incorrect Czech spelling? How to negotiate the intimate content of some of the letters and diaries? And what to do with the incomprehensible entries the composer wrote towards the end of his life? Over the past few years, two musicologists from the Bedřich Smetana Museum – Olga Mojžíšová and Milan Pospíšil – have linked up to the work carried out by their predecessors. In an extensive introductory study, they have summed up all the current knowledge pertaining to the history of collection and publication of the composer's correspondence. From the very beginning, they have approached their project bearing in mind the aim to ensure that the complete edition entirely comes up to the standards of the current international requirements placed on critical editions of musicians' correspondence. The transcription principles in particular have been significantly modified as against the older, far freer practice, in the direction of the diplomatically authentic transcription of the original texts. Furthermore, new sources have been discovered and acquired. Part of the Smetana correspondence has not previously been published at all, and a large amount of the letters until recently merely available in copies or known from flawed editions have only been procured for the collections of the Bedřich Smetana Museum over the past few years.

„... seyen Sie nicht böse, daß ich Sie fort mit meinen Briefen quäle; es ist jetzt meine liebste Beschäftigung. Dürfte ich, ich möchte jeden Tag zwei Briefe schreiben, den einen Vormittag, den andern Nachmittag!“

[“... I am sorry for having kept bombarding you with my letters; it is now my favourite activity. If I could, I would like to write two letters every day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon!”]

Thus wrote the 19-year-old Smetana on 6 August 1843 to his beloved Kateřina Kolářová, his future wife. In the letter, he described how he was just taking leave of Plzeň and the local grammar school. On that very day, he left for Prague, where he would finish the letter the next day and send it to Kateřina in Mladá Boleslav. As it concerns the composer's earliest correspondence preserved, no wonder that the letter has been published on a number of occasions. Now, however, it has for the first time been included in a scholarly edition that differs from the previous ones in a host of parameters. Above all, the letter is published in the original language, German, while the words Smetana deliberately wrote in Czech have been left in Czech. The letter is thoroughly commented on in the editors' notes (in Czech and English) and placed within the appropriate context. Similarly to all the other letters, it is also furnished with brief abstracts



BEDŘICH SMETANA MUSEUM IN PRAGUE

First page of Bedřich Smetana's letter to Kateřina Kolářová, 1843

in Czech and English. In the chronologically sequenced edition, the letter does not occupy the first position. It is preceded by 22 items of correspondence, which have not been preserved yet their former existence is documented in other sources, including the composer's diaries. The presented first volume ushers in the entire edition. Over more than 300 pages, the reader is familiarised with the overall subject matter of Smetana's correspondence. All the introductory studies and editing principles are in Czech, English and German. They are followed by the correspondence itself, in the original languages, and the necessary indices in conclusion. The complete edition is conceived as bilateral, hence, all the sent and received correspondence forms a single, chronologically ordered whole. The edition will encompass five volumes, with the sixth to contain the cumulative indices, providing brief characterisations of the respective persons, institutions, places, etc. Although Smetana was not a diligent letter-writer, the first volume alone amounts to almost 1,000 pages! It encompasses the period from 1840 to 1862, during which the composer travelled widely, staying in many places in the Czech lands, as well as abroad, mainly in Sweden. Smetana was open to foreign languages. We know that he took English lessons, he practised his French, and while in Gothenburg, he wrote to his parents that he had to study Swedish. Two languages – Czech



and German – were of vital importance for Smetana. He grew up with Czech and primarily used it in spoken communication, whereas German was the language in which he was educated at school – therefore, he almost exclusively used German in writing. His approach to Czech fundamentally changed following his return home from Sweden. At the time, Smetana realised that it was crucial for him to improve both his spoken and written Czech. Hence, from the middle of 1862, the majority of his correspondence was in Czech, and he even started to write his diary solely in Czech. The first volume also contains an exhaustive linguistic study, in which its authors, Marek Nekula and Lucie Rychnovská, analyse the language of Smetana's letters within the contemporary context, thoroughly treating not only his parallel use of Czech and German, but also assessing the level which the composer attained in both languages.

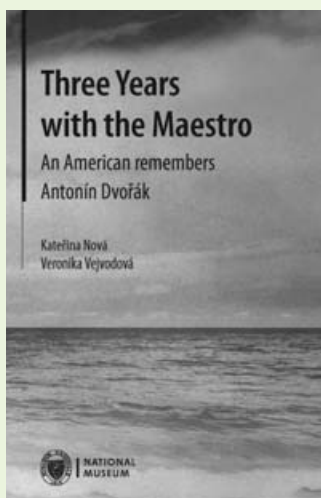
For a hundred years, several generations of researchers have tried to accomplish one of the tasks essential for Czech musicology and music culture as a whole – a task very prestigious and extremely challenging alike. The history of these endeavours does not only comprise failures. Many preparatory works, partial editions, and other achievements, have served as the foundation on which it has now been possible to build. And the two editors have succeeded in linking up to this basis in the best possible manner, with respect to the efforts of their predecessors and by concurrently pursuing their own research. And the result of their work can now serve as the basis for other scholars interested in the history of 19th-century music in the Czech and pan-European space. We believe that the splendid first volume will soon be ensued by the next volumes.

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czech music | review  
by Markéta Kratochvílová

## Three Years with the Maestro

### An American Remembers Antonín Dvořák



Kateřina Nová and Veronika Vejvodová (eds.).  
English translation by Adam Prentis. Prague: National  
Museum, 2016, ISBN 978-80-7036-499-4

It may seem that Antonín Dvořák's life had been thoroughly mapped. Yet the new Czech-English publication contains materials that provide a highly singular view of the celebrated composer. It concerns edited correspondence between Josef Kovařík, who kept Dvořák company during his time in America, and Otakar Šourek, the first Dvořák biographer.

Josef Jan Kovařík (1870–1951) accompanied Antonín Dvořák in the USA, during the time when he served as the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City, from 1892 to 1895. He was a faithful guide, assistant and friend, he invited the composer to spend the summer holidays in Spillville, Iowa, and he observed the maestro's writing music, including the New World Symphony, whose first copy he made. Kovařík virtually became a member of the Dvořák family. He formulated his reminiscences of Dvořák



in letters to Otakar Šourek (1883–1956), a Dvořák biographer, who addressed Kovařík when he was working on the third volume of his monograph on the composer.

The new publication is dominated by a series of letters Kovařík wrote and sent from America to Šourek, primarily those dating from 1927 and 1929–30, yet the book encompasses the entire correspondence between the two men available, that is, a set of almost 60 letters written between 1927 and 1950, which are part of Otakar Šourek's personal effects, now maintained at the National Museum – Antonín Dvořák Museum in Prague.

### **I was born in Spillville**

Kovařík's letters serve as a source for research into Antonín Dvořák's life and his work, concurrently providing information about their writer himself – bearing witness to the life of a person born in the USA, yet one boldly perceiving his Czech identity.

Kovařík starts his memoirs with the words “I was born in Spillville, Iowa, where the maestro spent the holidays in 1893... He was born in the USA to Czech émigrés. His father had left Bohemia for America in 1868, settled in the village of Spillville and became a major figure in the local musical scene. He taught his son how to play the violin and the cello. “In 1888 my father decided to send me to the Prague Conservatory, and I had no choice but to obey him”. “As a boy, I had read of the wonderful successes of maestro Dvořák in England, and it was thus no surprise that my greatest desire upon arriving in Prague was to see the great and famous man.”

Kovařík recalled how he first met Dvořák, at the turn of 1888 and 1889, at František Urbánek's bookshop in Prague, where he went to read American newspapers. They talked together and soon became friends.

Kovařík accompanied Dvořák, spoke English with him (“the maestro spoke very good English”). Once it had become certain that the composer would go and work in New York City, he visited the Dvořák family at home, so as to also converse with Mrs. Dvořák and their daughter, Otilie. “Back then, I never suspected that I would see the maestro in America, much less that I would live with him.”

After completing his studies at the Prague Conservatory, Kovařík intended to spend the summer at home in Spillville, yet Dvořák thwarted his plans, suggesting: “Wait here until September, and we will then set off nicely together. You're on holiday now, so you'll come join us in Vysoká.” A similar situation occurred after they had arrived in the US and Kovařík wanted to see his parents, whom he had not seen for four years; Dvořák prevented him from doing so by announcing that he had arranged for him a teaching post at the conservatory, which he had to assume immediately.

And when Kovařík wanted to travel home at least for Christmas, Dvořák responded: “But please, my little Indian, surely you wouldn't be so cruel as to leave us just now! What a sad Christmas we would have!”

And so the devoted Kovařík virtually stayed by his maestro's side all the time; he even lived with his family. Every day, he observed Dvořák working, composing; he spent all his leisure time with him or with his whole family. In his letters to Šourek, Kovařík depicted the details of Dvořák's everyday life. “The maestro's life in New York was a very peaceful one, I would say more peaceful than in Prague. His second year in America, when he had his whole family around him, I think and firmly believe, was the happiest year in his life.”

The two friends went together to watch pigeons, steamboats and trains – “... and when the train zoomed past, the maestro would remark: Darn, he's whizzing along!” In the summer of 1893, Kovařík took Dvořák and his family to Spillville and en route showed them the natural beauties of America. When they stopped by Niagara Falls, after a few minutes of silence the composer said: “Darn, that'll be a symphony in B minor!” Dvořák taught his younger friend how to play the “darda” card game. Whereas as a teacher he was very patient, during a game he would lose his temper. “The problem was that the maestro played calmly while he was winning, but as soon as he lost twice in a row – there was trouble! And so soon enough not an evening would go by that the maestro would not break into a fury during “darda”, knocking the cards all over the room and gracing me with all sorts of titles. His favourite title for me was ‘Indian’.”

### **Might you remember?**

Moreover, the correspondence provides an insight into the work of the Dvořák biographer, showing which aspects he was most interested in, what information he required from Kovařík and how he assessed the information. For Šourek, Kovařík was, naturally, a highly significant source, as he himself confirmed: “If all of Dvořák's contemporaries could recount such interesting things with such accuracy, what a biography I could write!” The information about Dvořák's time in the USA duly became for Šourek the basis for the third volume of his monograph Antonín Dvořák: His Life and Works (Prague, 1922–1933). Šourek initiated his correspondence with Kovařík pertaining to the latter's reminiscences of Dvořák, in 1927, decades after Kovařík had spent years with the composer. In all likelihood, the biographer was aware that his source's memory may have been somewhat patchy. Accordingly, he critically examined and systematically verified the information in Kovařík's letters, and whenever he struck upon a discrepancy or error, he corrected it and added the right information in pencil, as the publisher's note reads.

In 1929, Šourek wrote to Kovařík:

“Dear Professor,

The third part of my ‘Dvořák’ is still not finished, although I am fully dedicated to its completion. I am ‘stuck’ the most on America, and I realise how difficult a task lies ahead of me and how hopeless the situation would be if I could not avail myself of your invaluable contributions. I am constantly coming up with questions, several of which I dare to ask you today with the plea that you might find some free time to kindly answer them and that you be not angry with me for troubling you so. I will go straight to the point: Might you remember for what reason you visited the Dvořáks almost daily during the last year of your stay in Prague, and what did you do during those visits? Is it true that the Dvořáks furnished their American flat in New York with their own furniture, and what sort of furniture was it? Might you remember whether the maestro spoke of his knowledge of Negro and Indian folk songs, or from what source he discovered their peculiarities?” Kovařík’s reminiscences have served as a source for reconstruction of Dvořák’s time in America, yet also shed light on the Czech reality at the time. Kovařík is presented not just as an obedient assistant to his maestro, the correspondence also reveals his own family life, career as a musician, and also indicates his exerting influence on Dvořák. The reader also learns a lot about the music education and culture in America at the end of the 19th century.

Josef Kovařík was an outstanding violinist, a member of the New York Philharmonic for more than 40 years and a conservatory professor, yet he acquired “immortality” owing to his having been a friend of Dvořák’s. He would attend to Dvořák’s legacy until the very end of his days. A major figure in Antonín Dvořák’s biography, he would also become a literary character, appearing in Josef Škvorecký’s novel *Dvořák in Love. A Light-Hearted Dream*, published in Toronto 1984, as J. J. (“It’s me, Kovařík,” said J.J.), in which he courts Dvořák’s daughter Otilie (it would seem that this was pure invention on the part of the writer, as Kovařík makes no mention of it anywhere).

### Everything faultlessly spelled

The publication takes the form of a critical edition of the correspondence, furnished with ample footnotes. While the factual notes identifying the mentioned persons, places and works are marked in the index with Arabic numerals, Šourek’s critical work with the data contained in Kovařík’s letters can be observed in the footnotes denominated with Roman numerals – these footnotes refer to or comment on Šourek’s insertions and other inscriptions in the letters’ texts. There are two editorial treatments of the text – separately for the Czech and English versions.

The English translation, carried out by Adam Prentis, retains the maximum of the characteristic traits of Kovařík’s writing style.

In addition to the letters themselves, the publication contains several related studies by the editors. The first of them sums up the issue of recollections of Antonín Dvořák by his contemporaries. The others give an account of the history of the Kovařík family, their settling in America, their musical activities in Spillville, the life of Josef Jan Kovařík, and his care of Antonín Dvořák’s legacy.

The set of the correspondence between Kovařík and Šourek has its own history, which is described in detail in a separate chapter. It reveals that Otakar Šourek himself intended to publish the whole correspondence, and he had some of the letters printed during the first years of his contact with Kovařík. A number of researchers worked with Kovařík’s reminiscences, among them, Jarmil Burghauser, Šourek’s son-in-law. Yet the letters have now been published in their entirety for the very first time, including sources and the necessary commentaries.

The reader will undoubtedly appreciate the profiles of the famous and less famous figures mentioned in Kovařík’s letters, the publisher’s report, the indices, the coloured pictorial supplement, and the list of sources and literature.

The reminiscences in the form of correspondence are a seminal historical source of information, yet they are also intriguing and written in a light manner. As the letters disclose, Kovařík was able to view his role as the celebrated maestro’s guide with a certain ironical distance. He also reflected upon Šourek’s work, specifically by praising the third volume of the Dvořák monograph: “I found no mistakes or errors at my first reading, and even all the names of people and places in America are rendered flawlessly and not, as is the habit, that such words tend to be misspelled and often completely garbled.”

As the editors of the reminiscences, Kateřina Nová and Veronika Vejvodová, curators at the Antonín Dvořák Museum, did an enormous amount of work when verifying and footnoting the correspondence. The book’s linguistic editor was Jiří Pešička, the translation was made, as mentioned above, by Adam Prentis, while its conception and specialist standard was secured, besides the editors, by the scientific editor Jan Kachlík.

Owing to the sterling efforts of the named specialists, we have been afforded the opportunity to admire Kovařík’s narrative style, Šourek’s historical method and, last but not least, savour the aura of the one whom it all concerned: Antonín Dvořák.

## THE ŽELIV MONASTERY MUSIC COLLECTION

Thematic music catalogues serve as a useful aid and source of information for researchers, writers, as well as performers, who can select and compile from them their concert repertoires. The tradition of drawing up lists of pieces of music dates back to the 10th century (tonaries with incipits of melodies), while in approximately the middle of the 19th century catalogues started to be made up with the aim to answer specific historical, analytical and musico-sociological questions. Besides covering the creations of world-renowned composers, researchers have also focused on catalogues of works that pertain to a certain region, institution, publisher or musical form.

One such accomplishment is the *Thematic Catalogue of the Music Collection of the Premonstratensian Monastery in Želiv* (Catalogus Collectionis Operum Artis Musicae De Monasterii Siloensis), published last year by the National Library of the Czech Republic within the *Catalogus artis musicae in Bohemia et Moraviae cultae* edition. The catalogue has been drawn up by **Pavla Semerádová** and **Eliška Šedivá**.

The Želiv Monastery was founded in 1143 in the Vysočina region, on the borderline between Bohemia and Moravia, under the Biblical name Siloe. (The Premonstratensian Order launched its operation in the Czech lands in 1143 in Strahov, Prague.) With regard to the Premonstratensians' practice, the Želiv Monastery occupants have always placed emphasis on the solemn pursuance of the religious worship, with music having always been an integral part of the liturgy. Owing in part to this rule, the Premonstratensian monasteries in the Czech lands, including the one in Želiv, were major cultural and spiritual centres, possessing extensive libraries, which also encompassed ample music material.

The thematic catalogue of the Želiv collection comprises a list of compositions dating from between 1707 and 1858, with the prevailing part of it being constituted by church music (over 600 pieces). It also features approximately 20 secular works. As a result of the collaboration with the non-profit organisation Répertoire International des Sources Musicales (RISM), the catalogue content is freely available in its database, which currently includes more than a million entries. Each of these versions has its own fortes: online searching allows for combinations across the individual collections, while the printed form – in addition to a list of works by composers in alphabetical order – provides further valuable sources of information, such as the expanded introductory study, several types of indices (nominal, of texts, names, places of issue and publishers), lists of copiers, and tables. Of extraordinary benefit is a voluminous supplement with a watermark catalogue, which can serve as a vital aid in the identification of undated or not precisely localised sheet music. All the accompanying texts are in both Czech and English. For the sake

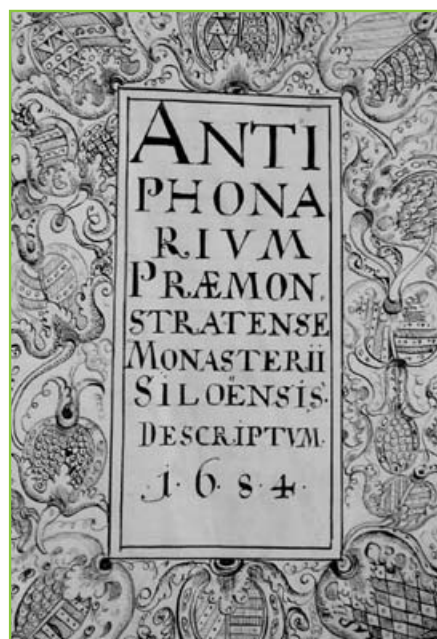


*Želiv Monastery, oil on canvas, 1695*

of easier orientation and lucidity, the catalogue is divided into three sections: the catalogue of composers (in alphabetical order), the catalogue of anonymous pieces, and, finally, the “Collections” (a list of shelf-marks, containing more than one composition, with references to the two previous catalogues), liturgical books and fragments. The readers can thus familiarise themselves with the music that was performed at one of the vital cultural centres, discover composers that have long been forgotten and perhaps even strike upon new connections.

The research in the Želiv archive, carried out over the long term by **Pavla Semerádová**, the author of the comprehensive study in the printed catalogue, has shed light on what type of music was performed in the monastery, as well as the fate of its thematic collection. The Želiv Monastery thrived until the 15th century, when its operation was suspended owing to the Hussite wars. The monastery’s property was transferred into private ownership, subsequently under the Premonstratensian administration at the Strahov Monastery in Prague, and only in 1662 did it regain independence. As the religious activities resumed, so did music performances, an essential part of which was plainchant and, approximately from the middle of the 17th century on, also masses with figural music and instrumental accompaniment. The performances were entrusted to musically skilled members of the order who – with the exception of the organists – had to be ordained priests. The monastery choir was thus headed by the choir master, while the director of the figural choir, the cantor and succentor (the cantor’s deputy) attended to the singing of the Liturgy of the Hours (*Officium Divinum*). The Želiv Monastery library maintains manuscripts and prints of liturgical books with choral notation.

Upon close inspection of the collection’s contents, it is evident that it was positively influenced by the abbots in the 18th century, who strove to attain a high-quality of the liturgy and did their utmost to build up the monastery library. The most noteworthy



*Antiphonarium Praemonstratense Monasterii Siloensis, 1684*





František Xaver Brixi: *Theatrum figuratum, Canto*, 1761



František Xaver Brixi: *Oratorio Theatrum figuratum quo Petrus lacrimans*, title page of the text book, 1771

of the composers who worked at the monastery was Josef Leopold Václav Dukát (1684–1717), who wrote there the church cantatas *Cithara nova* (Catalogue No. 110) in the then popular Neapolitan style. Furthermore, the Želiv collection contains copies of pieces of music, including of those by one of the major 18th-century Czech composers, František Xaver Brixi (1732–1771), copies of works by the Italians Antonio Sacchini and Niccolò Piccinni, as well as 19th-century copies of W. A. Mozart's compositions. As for the latter, the library contains a contrafact of an aria from the opera *La clemenza di Tito*, transformed into the offertory *Hic est filius meus* (Catalogue No. 268), as well as an aria from the opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, re-texted as *Coeli lux o decus mundi* (Catalogue No. 269). The catalogue also encompasses re-texted arias by Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785), Vincenzo Righini (1756–1812), Tomasso Traetta (1727–1779), Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848), Johann Adolf Hasse (1699–1783), Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787) and Josef Mysliveček (1737–1781), a Czech composer who lived and worked in Italy.

After 1950, when following the accession of the Stalinist regime the Želiv Monastery was turned into an internment camp for priests and friars, its entire music collection was transferred to the music department of the National Museum in Prague (today the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music), where it has been maintained ever since. In 1965, it was catalogued within the Union Music Catalogue of the National Library of the Czech Republic. The printing of the catalogue was preceded by an in-depth review of the whole collection, on which Eliška Šedivá, the librarian of the Music Department of the National Library, worked for approximately one and a half years. In 2014, the collection was placed in the RISM online database, and subsequently the printed catalogue was published. All the music material is only available in material form at the Museum's archive, from which those interested can ask for copies following prior agreement.

When asking what the music contained in the collection actually sounds like and where it can be listened to, the question is yet to be fully answered. At the present time, there is no recording available, while the one and only opportunity to actually hear the music is afforded by the Musica Figurata summer festival of sacred art, which is held directly at the Church of the Nativity of Our Lady in the Želiv Abbey. The visitors to the previous seven editions have got to hear several modern-time premieres of compositions contained in the Želiv collection. Now, owing to the printed thematic catalogue, the performers have been provided with a unique chance to give the music material a specific form and to record it on CD.



# CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

## EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

### IN THE WINTER OF 2016/17

During the winter, the Prague Radio Symphony was the large Czech orchestra that performed contemporary music the most frequently. At the end of 2016, it gave the Czech premiere of Miroslav Srnka's *Piano Concerto*, followed in February by the world premiere of Pavel Zemek Novák's *Symphony No. 6, "Praise Creation"*, and a crossover concert featuring world premieres of pieces by Jan Kučera and Ondřej Brousek. New works were also premiered by Prague Modern, the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra and the Brno-based Ensemble Opera Diversa. The most closely observed Czech opera event was the first night of a new production of Dvořák's *Rusalka* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, a direct broadcast of which was watched by Czech audiences in sold-out cinemas. The winter season was rounded off by three performances of Czech classical music at the prestigious Hong Kong Arts Festival, given by the National Theatre Brno.

6 December, St Lawrence Church, Prague. **Michal Rataj: *Running for Breath* (world premiere).** Piano: Eva Hutytová.

7 and 8 December, Congress Centre, Zlín. **David Rotter: *I, Job!* (world premiere).** Bolek Polívka, Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Vojtěch Spurný.

8 December, Ratusz Staromiejski, Gdańsk, Poland. Nowa Muzyka w Starym Ratuszu.

**Michal Rataj: *Winter Shadow, Writing Machine, Small Imprints.*** Michal Rataj, Dariusz Mazurowski, Andrzej Wojciechowski.

13 December, Saint Climent Church, Prague. Music in Contexts. **Jaroslav Rybář: *Solstice, Hanuš Bartoň: *Pastorale in F major*, Slavomír Hořinka: *Čtvrtek a Odpust' ti Pánbůh*, Jan Rybář: *Já jsem přišel k vám* (world premieres).*** Prague Modern, Bubureza female choir, Markéta Cukrová, conductor: Jan Rybář.

17 December, Theater Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany. **Bedřich Smetana: *The Bartered Bride* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by Markus Weckesser, music director: Zoi Tsokanou. Further performances: 8 and 28 January, 17 February.

19 December, Rudolfinum, Prague. **Miroslav Srnka: *Piano Concerto* (Czech premiere).** Nicolas Hodges, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Tomáš Netopil.

11 January, Theater an der Wien, Vienna, Austria. **Viktor Ullmann: *The Emperor of Atlantis or The Disobedience of Death* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by Rainer Vierlinger, music director: Julien Vanhoutte. Further performances: 15, 18, 24, 27 and 30 January, 2 February.

14 January, Saarländisches Staatstheater, Saarbrücken, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *Katja Kabanowa* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by Ben Baur, music director: Nicholas Milton.

Further performances: 20 January, 1, 11 and 19 February, 16 and 28 March, 8 April.

2 February, The Metropolitan Opera, New York, USA. **Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka* (premiere of a new**

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*Bedřich Smetana: The Bartered Bride. Theater Erfurt, Germany.*

**production**). Directed by Mary Zimmerman, music director: Mark Elder. Further performances: 6, 9, 13, 17, 21 and 25 February, 2 March.

4 February, Landestheater Coburg, Coburg, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *The Cunning Little Vixen* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by Alexandra Szemerédy and Magdolna Párditka, music director: Roland Kluttig. Further performances: 9, 16, 19, 21 and 24 February, 3, 8, 11 and 15 March, 29 April, 7 May.

4 February, Stadttheater Bremerhaven, Bremerhaven, Germany. **Šimon Voseček: *Biedermann and the Arsonists* (German premiere)**. Directed by: Christian von Götz, music director: Thomas Kalb. Further performances: 8 and 24 February, 5, 9 and 25 March.

6 February, Rudolfinum, Prague. **Pavel Zemek Novák: *Symphony No. 6, "Praise Creation"* (world premiere)**. Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Prague Philharmonic Choir, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.

6 February, Reduta, Brno. "New Music for Strings". **Radim Bednařík: *Fantasia for Strings*, Miloš Štědroň: *quattro omaggi claudiani for piano, violin and strings* (world premieres)**.

Milan Paľa, Alice Rajnohová, Ensemble Opera Diversa, conductor: Gabriela Tardonová.

8 February, NoD, Prague. The Beauty of Today. **Petr Kotík: *Etude 7* (world premiere)**.

Oboe: Vilém Veverka, flute: Petr Kotík.

13 February, Municipal House, Prague. "PRSO and Big Band – the Classic in the Hands of Jazzmen".

**Jan Kučera: *Travelling Blues*, Ondřej Brousek: *Golden Age Rhapsody* (world premieres)**.

Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Vladimír Válek & Czech Radio Big Band Gustáv Brom, conductor: Vlado Valovič.

23 and 25 Feb, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong. Hong Kong Arts Festival. **Leoš Janáček: *The Makropulos Case***. National Theatre Brno, director: Alfréd Radok, music director: Marko Ivanović.

25 February 2017, Seattle Opera, Seattle, Washington, USA. **Leoš Janáček: *Katya Kabanova* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by Patrick Nolan, music director: Oliver Dohnányi.

Further performances: 26 February, 1, 4, 8, 10 and 11 March.

26 February, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong. Hong Kong Arts Festival. **Antonín Dvořák: *Stabat Mater***. Orchestra of the National Theatre Brno, conductor: Jaroslav Kyzlink.

28 February, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong. Hong Kong Arts Festival. **Leoš Janáček: *Sinfonietta***, The Eternal Gospel, Glagolitic Mass. Orchestra of the National Theatre Brno, conductor: Jaroslav Kyzlink.

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## A CZECH COMPOSER WHO TRAVELLED THROUGHOUT EUROPE

**Řehoř Pešín / Gregorius Peschin**  
**Bohemus Organista**  
(b. cca 1500, Bohemia / d. after 1547,  
Heidelberg)

**Have you ever come across the name Řehoř Pešín? Or Gregor (sometimes Georg) Pečin, Pesch, Peschins, Peschin, Pesthin, Petschin, Pischin, Pitschner, Pitsch, Pitschin, Posthinus, Pöschin? Highly unlikely, as it is a name forgotten and not even mentioned in the current publications mapping the history of Czech music.**

Although Emilián Trola (1871–1949), a distinguished Czech musicologist, knew of him and wrote about him the following entry in the *Pazdírek Dictionary of Music*, prepared back in the 1930s:  
*Řehoř Pešín. An organist and church composer of Czech origin, based abroad, first half of the 16th century. He is referred to under the name Gregorius Peschin Boemus. A subject of Jan of Rožmberk, in 1526 he served as court organist in Salzburg. His masses, motets and other compositions have been preserved in Munich and Regensburg. The mass for three male voices was published by O. Kade in A. W. Ambros's Geschichte der Musik V (I, 1882, 247/80).*

The public could only read this short reference 30 years later, when Trola's text was included in the second volume of the *Czechoslovak Dictionary*

*of Musicians and Music Institutions*. For a long time, it was the one and only reference pertaining to the composer available in the Czech-language environment. Hence, it is not surprising that Řehoř Pešín has remained a figure virtually unknown in his native land. Yet it is also owing to the fact that he evidently spent his entire productive life beyond the Kingdom of Bohemia. The sources relating to Pešín are scarce, fragmentary and, above all, difficult to access, since all of them have been maintained beyond the Czech Republic. And if today's music historians and performers ever do pay any attention to him, they are mainly those in Germany, who understand him as part of their musical culture of the first half of the 16th century. Well, and little wonder on that account. What do the precious few literary sources out there actually say about Pešín's life? Most of them draw upon the entry in Volume 7 of the 1902 *Quellen-Lexikon* by Robert Eitner (1832–1905), which states that Pešín was most likely born in Prague circa 1500. He gained his musical training in the court orchestra of Louis (Ludwig) II Jagiellon (1506–1526), King of Bohemia and Hungary, probably in Budapest, where the monarch spent most of his short life. Pešín served at the royal court up until Louis's death at the Battle of Mohács, on 29 August 1526. Between 1527 and 1539, he was a member of the orchestra of Cardinal and Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Matthäus Lang von



Michael Wolgemuth and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff: Prague. Woodcut from the book *Liber chronicarum* by H. Schedel, Nuremberg, 1493

Wellenburg (1468–1540), in which he preceded the renowned organist Paul Hofhaimer (1459–1537). During his time in Salzburg, Pešin worked with the Kapellmeister Wilhelm Waldner (?) and the organist Nicolaus Lescallier (d. 1562, Prague). In 1539, he moved to Neuburg an der Donau, Bavaria, where he joined the court of Elector-Palatine Ottheinrich (Otto-Henry, 1502–1559). The local orchestra's Kapellmeister was Christoph Stockhamer (?), whose son Nicolaus went on to take lessons from Pešin. The arrival of Pešin in Neuburg might have related to the acquisition of a large new organ, which was built at the chateau by Hans Schachinger Sr. (1485–1558) from Munich. Following the Duchy of Pfalz-Neuburg's state bankruptcy in 1544, Pešin moved with the Elector-Palatine's court to exile in Heidelberg. The accounting records dating from 1546 mention Pešin along with the lutenist Sebastian Ochsenkun (1521–1574), for instance. The final available document pertaining to his life is the letter Pešin wrote in November 1547 to the composer and publisher, later on the secretary of Elector Ottheinrich, Hans Kilian (1515/16–1595), which has been preserved as an extra draft to the Heidelberg orchestra inventory.

## Bohemus?

The majority of the aforementioned information is based on dictionary entries and brief allusions in texts that deal with wider topics. The interpretation of Řehoř Pešin's life and work basically draws upon a few sources. Let us now focus on them in detail.

What is the correct form of his name and where has the allegation of his Czech descent come from? The name can be found in period music prints and manuscripts in numerous

variants, some of them rather curious and far-removed (Botsch, Bosch). In the preserved letter of his dated 18 November 1547 (Cod. Pal. 318, Heidelberg University Library), the composer's signature reads Gregor Peschin. The name gives rise to the impression that it could be of Slavonic or Czech origin. In the early Middle Ages, the name in this form in Bohemia indicated that its bearer (Pešín or Pešin) was the son of Pech, Péch (Pích), Pěš (Píš, Petr), and the like. The surname Pešin / Pešina is still found in Bohemia; today more than 170 persons bearing it are registered in the Czech Republic. Gregor Pešin's Czech background can be gathered from the following two references. The Prokesche Musiksammlung collection maintained at the Bishop Library in Regensburg contains manuscript B 211–215 of a motet without text, in which the author of the tenor part is stated as one Gregorius Pesthinus Bemus; in another manuscript, B 220–222, the composer of the piece *Beati omnes qui timent Dominum* reads as Gregorius Peschin Bemus. That indicates that he was most likely a native Czech.

Even more interesting is the reference in a letter written in 1528 by Matthäus Lang to Jan of Rožmberk (1484–1532), in which the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg asked the ruler of the Rosenberg House whether Řehoř Pešin could inherit his father's property. The requirement bears witness to Řehoř Pešin's hailing from South Bohemia. On the other hand, the ever-repeated presumption that Pešin was born circa 1500 in Prague should be deemed merely hypothetical, as it has not been confirmed in any currently known sources. With regard to Pešin's life, it is however possible that he was born some time in the early 16th century.



## Prague - Buda - Salzburg - Weingarten / Biberach - Neuburg - Heidelberg

Prague as Pešin's native city has thus to be considered a hypothesis. Disputable too is the assumption that he worked or was musically trained in Buda (it has even been speculated that he studied under the guidance of Adrian Willaert!) at the orchestra of Louis II Jagiellon. On the other hand, Pešin's tenure in Salzburg in the services of Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg Matthäus Lang has been confirmed by a number of sources. Evidently, he worked there from 1527 to 1539 as the cathedral (or city) organist. His other employments, in Weingarten in Württemberg and in the nearby Biberach an der Riß, at the end of the 1530s and the beginning of the 1540s, also mentioned in the music encyclopaedias, have not been clearly proved. What is certain is that no later than in 1543/44 Pešin worked for Elector-Palatine Ottheinrich in Neuburg and enjoyed a good income as an organist. The Count was a patron of the arts, he was fond of alchemy, books, architecture and fine food, and, under the influence of the theologian Andreas Osiander (1498–1552), he embraced the Protestant Reformation. In the wake of the Neuburg court's bankruptcy, caused by a huge burden of debts, Ottheinrich was forced to move to Heidelberg to his uncle Friedrich II (Frederick), Elector-Palatine of the Rhine (1482–1556). Pešin moved with his master to Heidelberg, where he probably died.

### Missa super Dominicale minus

Yet Pešin was not only a splendid organist, he was also an accomplished composer. Regrettably, the majority of his pieces have not been preserved, as revealed when consulting the contents of the Heidelberg inventory of Ottheinrich's orchestra, which has been mentioned above. In all likelihood, part of the inventory was drawn up by Pešin in his own hand. The compositions listed under his name include five masses, 30 motets, four epitaphs on the members of the ruling family and more than 50 songs, which we do not know today. Which of his pieces have been preserved?

When it comes to sacred music, a manuscript of the *Missa super Dominicale minus* (Missa dominicalis) for four voices has been maintained in its entirety, and is today deposited at the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Mus. Ms. 69). The source hails from the second

quarter of the 16th century. Together with the mass, whose composer is referred to as *Grego. Peschin*, the manuscript also contains the *Missa Carolus Imperator Romanorum* for five voices, written by Johannes Lupus (circa 1506–1539), a piece that has frequently been cited as an example of a setting of a mass, in whose cantus firmus the *sogetto cavatto* is used in the form of sol-fa. Pešin's mass features two different Agnus Dei sections: the first for four and the second for six voices. Both of the masses are supplemented by the anonymous motet *Saulus autem adhuc* for five voices. There is no other Pešin mass known. Troid's allegation that his mass for three male voices was published in Volume 5 of the *Geschichte der Musik* penned by August Wilhelm Ambros (1816–1876) is merely an error taken over from Hermann Spies's 1917 study on the musical culture in Salzburg. No such mass of Pešin's has been preserved.



Caspar Bohemus, the bass part of the polyphonic song *Artlich und schön*, Nuremberg, 1552

Řehoř Pešin, the bass part of the polyphonic song *Frau ich bin euch von herzen hold*, Nuremberg, 1552



The other Pešin works that have been preserved include the motet *Vocem iocunditatis / Ecce ducem nostrum* for eight voices (in fragments of a manuscript), dedicated to Francesco II Sforza (1495–1535), Duke of Milan; four complete motets for six voices (*Beati omnes, Praeceptum novum de vobis, Cum ascendisset aurora, Deus qui sedes super thronum*) and two entire motets for four voices (*Si bona suscepimus* and *Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum*).

## Ich hab ein Hertz, glaub mir. Quinque vocum

The number of Pešin's secular pieces that have been preserved is higher. They primarily include polyphonic, largely strophic songs to German texts, which were published in various anthologies of this at the time popular genre, and arranged for the lute. Pešin's works can be found, for instance, in the collection *Harmoniae poeticae* by Paul Hofhaimer (1459–1537), issued in Nuremberg in 1539; in all the three volumes of the widely distributed collection *Ein Außbund schöner Teutscher Liedlein* by Georg Forster (1514–1568), published in Nuremberg in 1539 and 1556 (*Frau ich bin euch*). Thirteen Pešin songs are mentioned by Caspar Glanner (1515–1581) in his anthology *Liber musicalis*, published in 1560, of which, however, mere fragments have been preserved. Twelve of his songs, eight of them sacred (*Invocabat autem Samson*), were transcribed for the lute and issued in 1558 by Sebastian Ochsenkun (1521–1574) within his collection *Tabulaturbuch auf der Lautten*. In addition to another six German secular songs (*Ich hab ein Hertz, Ein Stund vermag*, etc.), preserved in manuscript has been the song/ode for three voices to Latin lyrics *Dulces exuviae* and the ode for four voices *Collis o heliconi*, set to a text by the Latin Roman poet Catullus.

## Ein Außbund schöner Teutscher Liedlein

Řehoř Pešin was one of the group of the composers and musicians of Czech origin who for the most part of their lives worked beyond their native land. They adapted to and established themselves in a different milieu, travelled widely and changed their places of work, and the Czech music historiographers have not tented to perceive them as part of our culture. A certain role in the assessment of their lives and careers has also been played by the fact that their works have been preserved in a number of different sources, that

their authorship cannot be clearly confirmed and many of their pieces have been saved incomplete, often with missing vocal parts. German music historiographers acknowledge Pešin as a highly skilled composer of the *Gesellschaftslieder*, secular social entertainment polyphonic songs, whose cantus firmus often contained in the tenor a popular folk tune (*Tenorlied*). Accordingly, he is ranked among the respected and much-favoured generation of German composers of the first half of the 16th century, whose main representatives were Paul Hofhaimer, Stephanus Mahu, Heinrich Finck, Thomas Stölzer, Sixt Dietrich, Georg Forster, Erasmus Lapidida and Arnold von Bruck. This list could be extended with a composer whose name was Caspar Bohemus, or also Kašpar Zeiss, who is referred to in the music literature mentioned above. But that would be another story to tell, albeit one in many respects similar to that of Pešin's.

## Recommended literature and editions

Hermann Spies: *Aus der musikalischen Vergangenheit Slazburgs bis 1634*, Musica Divina, 1914, pp. 314–345.  
Leopold Nowak: *Das deutsche Gesellschaftslied in Österreich von 1480 bis 1550*, SfMw, xvii, 1930, pp. 21–52.

Hermann Spies: *Beiträge zur Musikgeschichte Salzburgs im Spätmittelalter und zu Anfang der Renaissancezeit*, Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde, lxxxi, 1941, pp. 80–84, 89–91.  
Siegfried Hermelink: *Ein Musikalienverzeichnis der Heidelberger Hofkapelle aus dem Jahre 1544*, Ottheinrich: Gedenkschrift zur 400jährigen Wiederkehr seiner Kurfürstenzeit in der Pfalz, G. Poesgen (ed.), Heidelberg 1956, pp. 247–60.

Adolf Layer: *Pfalzgraf Ottheinrich und die Musik*, AfMw, xv, 1958, pp. 258–275.

Gerhard Pietzsch: *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Musik am kurpfälzischen Hof zu Heidelberg bis 1622*, Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse der Mainzer Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, vi, Wiesbaden 1963.

Jutta Lambrecht: *Das 'Heidelberger Kapellinventar' von 1544 (Codex Pal.Germ.318)*: Edition und Kommentar, Heidelberg 1987.

Editions of compositions:

Nine secular songs in: *Das Deutsche Gesellschaftslied in Österreich von 1480–1550*, L. Nowak (ed.), DTÖ 72, 1930.

Three secular songs in: EDM 20, 1942.

One song in: EDM 62, 1987.



## Ondřej Adámek

### Körper und Seele

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Polish Radio Choir, conductor: Alexander Liebreich; Ensemble intercontemporain, conductor: Marco Angiuscn; Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, conductor: Manuel Nawri; Orchester der Lucerne Festival Academy, conductor: Pierre Boulez; Ensemble Modern, conductor: Ondřej Adámek; SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg, SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart, conductor: George Benjamin; Christoph Grund, Ondřej Adámek – airmachine, Shigeko Hata – voice.

1CD+1DVD. Text: German, English, French. Recorded: 2008–2013. Released: 2016. TT 78:29 (CD), 115:63 (DVD). DDD. 1CD Wergo WER 64192

Can something like a personal style be found in contemporary music? Should we seek in the case of composers involved in global music the connecting links with the place of their origin, mother tongue, native music? Does anyone actually still have the slightest interest in such aspects? These questions somewhat intruded upon me when I was listening to Ondřej Adámek's profile album. For a number of years, Adámek has been living in France, and his compositions have been performed by ensembles all over the world. The reviewed CD/DVD was released last year by Wergo, one of the world's most established labels focused on contemporary music. At the same time, however, Adámek's creations have steadily kept featuring elements "from somewhere", which are nowise concealed. His embracement of a variety of influences dates back to his 1998 CD *Polychorolum*, which employed an

arsenal of ethnic instruments. When it comes to the album *Körper und Seele*, two pieces are explicitly stimulated by Japanese music and culture, while two point to the Czech heritage. The opening piece, *Polednice* (The Midday Witch), for chorus and orchestra, is based on a poem whose first lines are perhaps known to everyone in our country and which has inspired other works of art, from Antonín Dvořák's symphonic poems to last year's eponymous horror film. Adámek deconstructs Karel Jaromír Erben's text to fragments, which he then reshuffles, remixes and reassembles into a mosaic in which Czech-speaking listeners can recognise the original poem, while others can concentrate on the sonic quality of the syllables. Connecting it with orchestral colours, whose range is often more noise than tonal, gives rise to a formation that cogently renders the atmosphere of the literary model, without one having to read it in advance. The piece *Körper und Seele* (Body and Soul), after which the album has been titled, also for chorus and instruments, refers to the "controversy between the body and soul", a subject that has been present in Czech literature since the Middle Ages, reflected in folk songs, and perhaps most famously set by the singer-songwriter Jaroslav Hutka. In tandem with the Icelandic writer, poet and lyricist Sjón, Adámek again takes the text apart, thus suppressing its actual content, and merges it with other elements, including a recitation of a Hindu mantra. Just as the text spans specific lingual and historical roots, so does the music range between the universal contemporary phraseology and references to local essences. The latter take the form of a caricatured brass band march or folk dance stylisation, coming across like Leoš Janáček cranked up on speed. In the "Indian" part, the ensemble imitates a ritual blare, bringing to mind Tibetan Buddhism. This amalgam is joined by yet another element, the airmachine, a device Adámek, assisted by other designers, built at the time when he was working on the composition. An assemblage of trumpets, in which two vacuum cleaners, one sucking air

in, the other sucking air out, leads into a set of rubber gloves and squeaky toys. The system can function independently as a sound installation, yet it may also be operated through a MIDI keyboard, as is the case here. Like the previous piece, *Karakuri – Poupée mécanique* is on DVD, which makes it possible for us to observe the role that is played in it by the visual component of performance. Whereas in *Körper und Seele* the surprising element was the airmachine, here it is represented by the soloist. Besides delivering a text made up of Czech, French and Japanese words, she also plays a *karakuri*, a traditional Japanese mechanised puppet. In the 19th century, such automata were created by the Japanese inventor Hisashige Tanaka, to whom Adámek directly refers. Performing puppet movements, the vocalist recites a current of Czech diminutives: *osička, páseček, panáček, kolečko...* Subsequently, her machine-like expression gives way to more expressive exclamations, while the instrumental accompaniment is like an elaborate mechanism – well-tuned and interlocked, albeit rather non-committal. Sjón is also the author of the text for the next work, one employing a motion action (though less conspicuous) – the cantata *Kameny* (Stones). This time, the chorus members move around, after they have drawn pairs of pebbles from the bag held by the conductor. They ceremonially raise their arms, drum, throw plastic trumpets on to the ground. The text builds a disconcerting parallel between skimming stones across a water surface and the stoning of a girl in the name of religion. Listening to the music on this 2-CD pack is akin to strolling through a delicatessen. At any given moment, your attention is assaulted by unusual, excitable incitements. Your ears are overwhelmed by the concentrated sonic effects and the extraordinary techniques, combined in a refined way. On the other hand, however, the acoustic opulence somewhat diminishes the unique character of the individual works. Consequently, the three solely orchestral pieces, *Nôise, Dusty Rusty Hush* and *Endless Steps*,



may fuse into a single, almost one-hour-long area replete with glissandos, almost industrially sounding rhythms and colours, indicating that Adámek has picked many a thing from the spectral music in France. The first of the three pieces in particular seems to be consisting of moments that can be savoured separately, without undue regard to the overall structure. The most conspicuous of them is the *Dusty Rusty Hush*, whose compact and boldly rhythmicised masses of sound come across as reminiscent of Arthur Honegger's famed *Pacific 231*. The very opposite pole, that is, concentration on simple sounds, is produced by the two videos, showing the mentioned airmachine in a solo action. At one time, the composer is present as an operator replacing the sources of sound in air conduits, the next the machine appears on its own. Such dehumanisation and the seeming primitiveness of the generated sounds are quite refreshing within the collection. As regards the question raised at the beginning of this review, it is not easy to formulate a clear answer. Yet the skill with which Ondřej Adámek masters all the contemporary compositional sleights of hand may result in his being confused with other, similarly dexterous composers. His music is perhaps the most singular at the moment when he couples modern idiom with seemingly anachronistic elements, such as Czech poetry dating from the middle of the 19th century, or when he employs in the music the mechanical, somewhat amusing sounds of party blowers driven by a vacuum cleaner.

Matěj Kratochvíl

## Martin Smolka

### Poema de balcones

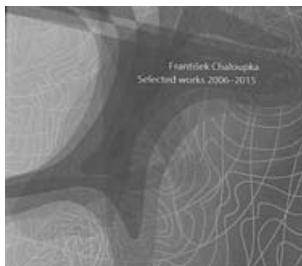
SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart,  
Martin Homann – percussion,  
Marcus Creed – conductor.

Text: German, English. Recorded:  
2008/2009. Released: 2016. TT: 54:01.  
1 CD Wergo WER 7332 2

**M**artin Smolka's compositional style is quite well discernible within the contemporary music scene. Since the 1990s, he has pursued and evolved his variant of (new) simplicity, the type of music that blends such traditional elements as tonal harmony, melody and regular rhythms with microtonal detuning and unusual timbres. His music can even be provocatively pleasant, yet he has never ceased to seek new paths – even though the composer himself has disavowed the quest for novelty. Smolka has long enjoyed recognition abroad, whereas he has been less heard of in the Czech Republic. It is not surprising, then, that his second CD, following the 1998 album *Euphorium*, has been released by Germany's Wergo label. As performed by the SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart, conducted by Marcus Creed, it contains three choral pieces, each of which shows a somewhat different facet of music, which is not afraid of being simple. *Poema de balcones* (2008) for two mixed choirs was inspired by Federico García Lorca's poetry collection *Romancero gitano*, of which, however, the composer has used a mere three lines: "the sea slowly dances across the beach / a poem about balconies / water thunders". The text has become a material dissolved into the choral voices, blurred like water paints, shaped into waves. Although the aim is not to make the text comprehensible, the music seems to illustrate it almost literally, forming waves, repeating the motion up and down, while pure harmonies pour over into thick clusters. Whistling in a high register joins in like froth on the crests of waves, initially being reminiscent of an electronically generated sound. Should we stick to comparing the music to painting, with the *Poema de balcones* sounding like impressionistically fuzzy areas, the ensuing *Walden, the Distiller of Celestial Dews* (2000) comes across as a series of calligraphic inscriptions. The piece is based on Henry David Thoreau's book *Walden*, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings and freeing oneself

of the deposits of modern civilisation. Fragments from Thoreau's text are divided into five parts, guiding the listener from the Pleiades in the star-spangled sky, through lakes, Native Americans, brambles and cypresses. The parts differ musically, yet in all of them the text is clearly declaimed, in places monophonically, sometimes the melodic line defocuses like when a calligrapher presses on the brush, at others the harmony unfurls to the full. Sometimes a phrase becomes cyclical for a while, yet never so much as to make the repetition conspicuous. Rather unobtrusively, in a few passages the choir is tinged by percussion instruments – a gentle friction of metal surfaces. The third piece on the disc is *Stone i smutne* (Salt and Sad, 2006), based on a text by the Polish poet Tadeusz Różewicz. Blurred areas and a rigorously etched in declamation give way to harmony and the choral sound in the more traditional sense. The poem is not set in its original form, it is stripped down into phrases and words, with the voices sliding from conventional harmonies into spots with thicker texture, and passages testing the very limits of audibility are followed by vehement surges. Now and then, the composer has concentrated on a group of consonants, creating from it an almost jazzily swinging percussive phrase, followed by long areas of vowels. Seeking extraordinary beauty in simplicity does have its pitfalls, though, with some of Smolka's previous works giving the impression of wandering on a path too well trodden. Yet the three pieces on the CD do not come across as fruits of routine, owing in part to the great contrast between them. The ambient surfaces of Lorca's sea poetry, Thoreau's sermonic declamation and the drama of the Polish text reveal that it is indeed still possible to seek and find untried combinations in the intersection of pleasant and unusual musical experiences.

Matěj Kratochvíl



## František Chaloupka

### Selected Works 2006-2015

Ivana Jenešová – oboe, Dan Hucek – bassoon, František Lukáš, František Chaloupka – electric guitar, Pavel Zlámal – clarinet, Radim Hanousek – soprano saxophone; Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Prague Modern, VENI Academy, Ensemble Modern, BERG Orchestra, International Ensemble Modern Academy; Ondřej Olšs, Petr Kotík, Marián Lejava, Peter Eötvös, Lucas Vis, Aleš Kománek – conductors.

Text: English, Czech. Recorded: 2006–2015. Released: 2016. TT: 155:40. 2 CDs, K.I. Records.

The 2-CD album, released last year, is a compilation mapping a decade in the development of František Chaloupka's music. Or, more precisely, the development of a part of his oeuvre, as it does not encompass the songs of his that blend folk and rock elements. So, what does the album tell us about Chaloupka as a composer? The 12 tracks, lasting a total of two and a half hours, are sequenced chronologically, thus aptly documenting the artist's path to a singular mode of musical expression. A few of the older pieces reveal Chaloupka's having been influenced by his teacher Martin Smolka (as well as, for instance, Louis Andriessen, from whom he also took lessons) – a tinge of minimalism, tonal chords microtonally detuned so as not to sound overly sweet, repetition of melodic motifs, albeit never quite regularly. The first five works – *Orestes* by Euripides, *An Ancient Calligraphy*, *Nevýslovně mnoho* (Unspeakably much), *Smooth the Heavens*, *Mount (Never) Rests* – are quite stylistically akin to one another, despite their having been written for different configurations, such as the symphony orchestra, the wind quintet

and other chamber ensembles. The music is somewhat nostalgic, reasonably variable, and flamboyant. Repeated listening discloses gradual changes, above all, the diminishing smoothness in favour of wilder sounds. Such boisterous traits are afforded a greater scope on the second disc, particularly in the 2012 piece *Mašín Gun*, bearing the secondary title *Sedm rituálů k očistě českých zemí od ducha komunismu* (Seven Rituals for Purging the Czech Lands of the Spirit of Communism). It opens with an apocalyptic industrial pounding, which evokes a sort of brutal rite. In the seven short movements, the noise alternates with more delicate passages, which, however, are by no means soothing, as is the case of the older compositions, yet rather disconcerting, replete with glissandos and rapid tremolos. A variety of combinations and blending of the two bearings serve to build a symmetrical form.

František Chaloupka's music often seems to unfurl in waves. The majority of his pieces (the older and the newer alike) harbour a tension between the passages in which a lot is happening and the places in which the action is reduced. It may take the form of alternating between boldly rhythmicised chords and sustained notes, loud spots and soft areas, sound and silence. Changing the ratios and lengths of these waves gives rise to tension, as we anticipate that a modification will occur yet do not know whether it will be sooner or later. Perhaps it was not that which the composer had aimed at, yet it is my personal impression from listening to the album, and I consider this alternating tension, every time attained by different means, one of the most interesting facets of Chaloupka's music. There are exceptions, though. One of them is the piece *Stockhausen on Sirius* (2015), made up of a succession of episodes, which appear to represent the phases of a space flight (an association, which naturally comes to mind owing to the work's title) and which feature constant gradation instead of an undulating variation. The result is somewhat reminiscent of the psychedelic journey through space in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space*

*Odyssey* and is, in my opinion, along with *Mašín Gun*, the best item in the collection. A slightly different group of works is the renderings of graphic and open scores. The piece *Barevná hudba* (Coloured Music), based on Miroslav Ponc's work, has been recorded by two electric guitars, whose tone has been transformed by means of effects into gliding curves. The electric guitar also plays a significant role in the performance of the open score *Dunami*, in which, in combination with the clarinet and saxophone, it paints an ambient, lullaby atmosphere. *Vrh kostek nikdy nezruší náhodu* (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance) and the *Book of Sand* entrust the finalisation of the fragments to the conductors, yet it is difficult to hear how they differ from traditionally through-composed pieces. It rather concerns a testing of transformations in the relation between the performers and the creator. The presented decade is rounded off by *Zatímco krajina se chvěla v mokré kápi* (While the Landscape Trembled in a Wet Cape), in which the composer plays an amplified piano and recites. Perhaps not entirely uninteresting, the track is, however, strangely protracted, and had it not been included in the album, it would be clearer that over the past 10 years František Chaloupka has attained a very compelling style, one also directly forcible owing to its sound and well-considered structure. Chaloupka's music is delivered by Czech and foreign performers – the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Prague Modern, the Berg Orchestra, Slovakia's VENI Ensemble, and the composer's own Dunami Ensemble. The most stellar among them is Ensemble Modern, conducted by Peter Eötvös. All the pieces are performed respectably, yet the standards of the recordings vary, as all of them have been made at concerts. That in itself does not constitute a vital problem, with the exception of the third movement of *Smooth the Heavens*, in which an intensively coughing listener is a somewhat disturbing element.

Matěj Kratochvíl





## Martin Marek

### Loudium

Ensemble Mondschein,  
Ensemble Konvergence, Kamil  
Doležal - clarinet,  
David Danel - violin,  
Edita Adlerová - voice.

TT 51:47. 1 CD Rosa Music RD2471

The composer Martin Marek died in 2014 after having lain in a coma in hospital for a long time, preceded by his having lived homeless on the very margins of society. Born in 1956, he was initially a cellist; only later on did he begin composing and taking lessons from Marek Kopelent. His music draws upon post-war European modernism, with all its attendant complexity of structure, unusual sounds and high requirements placed on the performers. The Marek CD, *Loudium*, was recently released by the Rosa label, whose catalogue contains Christian music of a variety of genres, as well as five recordings featuring works by contemporary Czech composers. The collection of chamber pieces provides plenty of food for thought as to what extent the composer's state of mind can be read from the music, as to whether the music can be construed as being witty and ironic. Serving as the best example in this respect is the first track on the album, *Cosciette di roncole alla Luigi Galvani*, completed in 1999, and performed by the Ensemble Mondschein, which also plays the majority of the featured pieces. Marek wrote of it: "Today, we can only speculate as to the reasons that led Luigi Galvani, a reputable surgeon and gynaecologist, a professor at the university in Bologna, to carry out grandiose experiments with dissections from (still living) frogs, which would certainly not earn him praise from animal rights protectors. The convulsions of frog legs laid on metal plates, explained to have been caused by

the omnipresence of the 'animal electricity', working in every human body, the contrast between tension and relaxation, something intimate between physics, chemistry, biochemistry and the psyche, was the main source of inspiration for my septet. And then the vast quantity of frog parts and the hungry researchers..." Acoustic instruments dramatically twining in irregular rhythms are accompanied by frog squawking, the sound of frying legs and other rustles, joined at the end by the inorganic, almost psychedelic solo of the synthesiser. The contrasts, occasionally stark, yet more often gentle, represent a vital structural element in Marek's music. Delicate sounds and tender melodic lines are built next to roughly grating areas. That is the case of the *Roses impénétrables* (2000), a piece inspired by texts of the Belgian poet Charles van Lerberghe, sung by Edita Adlerová. In the four songs, Marek translates the universe of 19th-century symbolist poetry into a mosaic resembling a collage of historical recordings on scratchy discs. Another salient trait of Martin Marek's musical style is working with instruments' timbres. It is evident in the pieces for solo clarinet (*Loudium*, 2004) and violin (*Salvaggio di due S.*, 2004), as well as in the compositions for a larger configuration. The 2000 work *Schlussgesang*, written for clarinet, viola and cello, is dedicated to the memory of the German composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann, whose name is encoded in the music as a cryptogram. The clarinet, playing multiphonics, veils the entire piece in a strange haze. Martin Marek was a composer-intellectual, who attached the utmost importance to the well-considered structure of his compositions. At the same time, however, many passages harbour a spontaneous energy, which seems to somewhat take us back against the flow of time. In some places, we feel as though we have arrived in the 1920s, when respectable European composers would fall for the magic of modern dances. Even though Marek did not integrate

pop culture elements into this works, attentive listening reveals that he did not deem music to be just an intellectual performance, but also a sensual experience. Some passages, for instance, in the 2004 piece *Mistnost č. 29* (Room No. 29), sound a little bit like Igor Stravinsky's music, as though dating from the said energy-charged bygone era. Yet the optimistic and sweet passages are surrounded by dissonances, which appear to serve to ironically point out that beauty cannot have it so easy. The compilation *Loudium* is the work of those who knew the composer in person and sensed that his music should be, at least posthumously, presented to a general audience. This accomplished album duly arouses the listener's interest in finding out what else Martin Marek – who continued to write music in the final years of his life – has bequeathed to us.

Matěj Kratochvíl



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Michal Nežtek

# Rules for Good Manners in the Modern World

Conductor: Pavel Šnajdr  
Stage Director: Jiří Adámek

Premiere: September 15, 2017  
at Reduta Theatre

Based on a play  
by Jean-Luc Lagarce