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**Iva Bittová**

**Prague Modern & Pascal Gallois**

**Interwar Music and Sport**

**Wenzel Tomaschek**



# THE YEAR OF JANÁČEK

The year 2018 marks the 90th anniversary of the death of Leoš Janáček.

In honour of the composer, Vltava radio will exclusively broadcast all his nine operas this year – tune in Operní večer starting at 8 p.m. on the third Saturday of every month.

## FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

#nailemandjailem

DESTINY #headedtothebalcony

JENŮFA #jenufaishiding

KATYA KABANOVÁ #cankatacomeplay

THE MAKROPULOS AFFAIR #howoldareyaemilia

#letstravellovebug THE EXCURSIONS OF  
MR. BROUCEK

THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN #missmewiththatharas

## DEAR READERS,

at least in terms of scale, the current issue is dominated by two texts that turn their attention to the past. The first is Miloš Zapletal's essay on sporting topics in music, with a particular focus on the interwar avant-garde. The crux of the article, of course, lies in the exploration of Czech music, but an extensive introduction provides a convenient summary of these tendencies within a global musical context. The second article is Tom Moore's translation of a period source relating to composer Wenzel Tomaschek. In the last issue of CMQ, we wrote about Moore's English translation of the biography of this 19th century musician, recently published by Pendragon Press. We now continue with this Tomaschek pendant, available in English for the first time. Given that the aim of the editorial is not to recount the issue's contents, I will restrain myself to a mention of our interview with Iva Bittová. It was made on the occasion of her concert in Prague this April, but given the international presence this significant exponent of Czech music has, I would not be surprised if a concert of hers was being planned wherever you might be reading our spring issue.

Petr Bakla

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cover: Iva Bittová (photo: Karel Šuster)

# IVA BITTOVÁ ON KURTÁG AND THE SOUNDS OF THE HUDSON VALLEY

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On most occasions, Iva Bittová is categorised as 'alternative'. This follows from the character of her solo work, and also from her development as a musician: a violinist and singer with experiences in the Brno theatre Husa na provázku, she contributed to the Brno-centred alternative rock scene. Her albums with Dunaj or drummer Pavel Fajt combine song structures with improvisation and a search for unusual sounds. In her solo work, Bittová created a unique style, in which the violin and the voice seem to become one, with transformed echoes of folk music.

But Bittová does not leave other styles unexplored. Her forays into jazz involve the Norwegian-Czech ensemble NoCZ, her sister Ida Kellarová, George Mraz, Emil Viklický and Laco Tropp, or musicians from the New York jazz scene like Hamid Drake. Another dimension of Bittová's work is less visible, but it give its listeners a considerably greater surprise. In these cases, Bittová at least partially surrenders the position of the author and becomes a performer, interpreting pre-composed music. Her first effort, in 1997, was a recording of Béla Bartók's *44 Duos for Two Violins* with Dorothea Kellarová, then came *Classics*, an album featuring pieces by Leoš Janáček and the composer father-and-son duo, Miloš Štědroň and Miloš Orsoň Štědroň, among others. During the last decade, we have had many further opportunities to hear Iva Bittová as a performer of art music written in the second half of the 20th century. On several occasions, she enraptured audiences with Russian postmodernist composer Alfred Schnittke's Faustian cantata *Seid nüchtern und wachet...*, originally composed for Russian pop star Alla Pugacheva. This February, she sung Luciano Berio's *Folk Songs* cycle, accompanied by the Brno Philharmonic. A number of Czech, Moravian and Slovak composers have written vocal parts for Bittová, including Peter Graham, Vladimír Godár and Pavel Fischer.

Bittová also periodically turns her attention to historical music. In 2004, she sung Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and her present repertoire includes pieces by composers of the 17th and 18th centuries whom she encountered during her studies in musicology. She occasionally performs with lutenist Jan Čížmář with a programme combining, among others, Baroque and contemporary music, Iva Bittová's compositions, or John Lennon songs.

Iva Bittová's next significant foray into the performance of 20th century music will be introduced to Prague audiences on the 24th of April, when she will perform – together



with Czech violinist Hana Kotková, now based in Lugano – within the chamber concert series of the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK. The programme will consist of a single work: *Kafka-Fragmente* by György Kurtág (\*1926). These forty settings of diary fragments, letters and short stories by Franz Kafka were written between 1985 and 1987, and it is the composer's longest vocal work – Kurtág is famous for his use of very short forms. His music, however, is also very carefully composed, and it demands great discipline from its performers. At certain points, it also alludes to Hungarian, Roma and Jewish folk music.



**What was the motivation for you to learn the *Kafka Fragments*?**

After me and Dorothea Keller – with whom we recorded the Bartók *44 Duos for Two Violins* – stopped playing together, I got an invitation from a festival in Sydney. They were interested in this same programme, so I was looking for a violinist. I remembered a very dear friend, virtuoso Hana Kotková. We knew each other as children, we both grew up in Opava and our parents were very close friends. Hana agreed, and we enjoyed working on the Bartók so much we decided to learn the Kurtág. I'd had the score at home for years, thinking its time might come.

**What aspect of the piece proved most difficult?**

The blend of the voice and the violin is crucial: we have to sound like one. Then it's important to create a musical arch for the entire work, as well as to master the German and work out a differentiation for the colour and expression of each individual fragment.

**The *Kafka Fragments* form a song cycle, but some sections give the impression of being short dramatic scenes, which some performers take as an invitation for staging. Which of these poles do you feel closer to?**

It all has to be balanced. I try to balance voice technique and expression. The same is true of my pieces – expression is just as important, it's not just about reading notes and technique.

**Some passages in the violin part sound quite like Iva Bittová. Can you imagine playing it too?**

I chose a few fragments I wanted to learn on the violin. It's a challenge and a difficult task to play the violin part and sing at the same time, especially in German. It's a very fortifying exercise, one that definitely advances my interpretation.

**Will you be performing these fragments at your concert with Hana Kotková, or at your own concerts?**

For the moment, my solo interpretations of the fragments are for my own study purposes, but I plan to include them in my solo concert repertoire over time. Some time ago, I adapted Mozart's aria *Ah fuggi* in a similar way, as well as Henry Purcell's *Dido's Lament* and other pieces.

**It seems like in recent years, you have performed the music of other composers more and more regularly. It started years ago with the Bártók violin duos, Mozart, Janáček, Štědroň, later Alfred Schnittke, Vladimír Godár, Peter Graham, now Luciano Berio and György Kurtág. Do your choices of composers have a common denominator?**

The composers seem to come to me, and it's an excellent way to educate and improve myself. Learning Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, for example, which I performed in 2016 at the Kutná Hora Festival, gave me a lot of new knowledge about interpretation, especially as it's also theatrical. So the expression of each piece is considerably different – it has its own story, like with Luciano Berio.

**When you perform other people's music, do you feel that part of this experience permeates into your own work, or are these two areas separate?**

Everything combines beautifully. These experiences are very important, they support me in my work with the voice, in my expression, and also as a composer.

**Do you plan to perform more 20th century works?**

I'm now working on Heinz Karl Gruber's *Frankenstein!!* (1978), setting children's nursery rhymes collected by Viennese poet Hans Carl Artmann.

**A few years ago, you decided to study musicology, writing your bachelor's thesis on an edition of the Italian composer Baldassare Galuppi. What were the reasons behind these decisions?**

During this long creative journey, this search for myself, I gradually became more and more interested in everything about music and music theory. After

years of practising the violin, my path opened up to Baroque music, and finally to musicology. These days, I have students around the world, to whom I devote some of my free time, so I'm also interested in methodology and aesthetics. I really gain a lot over the five years spent at the musicology department, and now I can continue on my own when I rehearse pieces by other composers, and go deeper in my research. In my master's thesis, I worked on the critical edition of Luca Antonio Predieri's *Missa in C*, and I hope we will be able to present this performance in concert soon.

**You mentioned your students. What do you teach - violin, voice, improvisation? In which direction do you try to guide your students?**

Students usually come to me with a request and a curiosity about strengthening their interpretive capacities - not just in voice; some are interested in my specialisation in connecting the violin and the voice. I try to help them find their own expression and support their courage to try other paths than those offered by classical tuition in the art schools. This is connected to a certain freedom of expression and a courage that we look for during the lessons. Improvisation, of course, is an indelible part of my work with the students.

**On your websites and in other interviews, you mention that you get inspiration from nature, particularly where you live, in the Hudson Valley. Could you characterise the musical world there? Is there a typical or favoured sound?**

I listen to the rustle of the leaves and the voices of the wind. I am surrounded by forest. Birds nest around the house, and there are also deer, coyotes, foxes, bears and wolves living nearby. Stars fall from the evening sky, the trees are generally very old. Occasionally, one of them falls... All these sounds are inspiring.

**In 2005, you made an album in collaboration with the composer-performer collective Bang on a Can: *Elida*.**

I wrote a few pieces at their request, then we rehearsed together in New York and went into the studio to record. Then there were several tours in both Europe and the US. Ten years later, we made a trio CD with Evan Ziporyn from Bang on a Can, guitarist Gyan Riley (*son of composer Terry Riley - editor's note*) - we were called Eviyan. We all have our names on those pieces, but they were made gradually - we all brought some motifs and then rehearsed, worked out more sketches, and finally we made individual compositions.

**In 2004, you made *The Party*, a CD in collaboration with DJ Javas, which put your voice together with electronic sounds and rhythms. Susumu Yokota put your voice in a similar context. What is your position on combining the voice with electronics? Is it something you would like to return to?**

I'm definitely interested, but time is keeping me back. I will certainly return to the world of electronics on occasion, deepening my knowledge in this area bit by bit.



Iva Bittová was born in Bruntál in 1958. She studied at the Brno Conservatory, and during her studies, she began performing at the now-legendary progressive theatre Husa na provázku. She made her name as an actress with the musical *Balada pro banditu* (*Ballad for a Bandit*, 1978) and several films. Concurrently, she then began performing solo and with other musicians. In the 80s and 90s, she published several albums of original music: *Svatba* (*Wedding*, 1987), *Bittová & Fajt* (1987), *Dunaj a Iva Bittová* (1989), *Iva Bittová* (1991), *Ne, nehledej* (*No, Do Not Look*, 1994), *Kolednice* (*Carol Singer*, 1995), *Pustit musíš* (*Must Let Go*, 1995), *Divná slečinka* (*Weird Missy*, 1996), *Bílé inferno* (*White Inferno*, 1997). Her albums have also been published by world-renowned labels like Nonesuch and ECM. For a time, she lived in Lelekovice, a village near near Brno, where she also led a choir, *Lelky*. She currently lives in the Hudson Valley area in the United States.

# PRAGUE MODERN AND PASCAL GALLOIS RECORDING FOR STRADIVARIUS

Prague Modern is an ensemble that combines expert performance with a passion for contemporary works. In its ten years of activity, it has worked up to a level that invites comparison with any other ensemble. In the Czech context, Prague Modern is exceptional in that it regularly records for the Italian Stradivarius label. This is the home label of conductor and bassoonist Pascal Gallois, for which he records his solo albums, and to which he also brought Prague Modern.

**Pascal Gallois** and **Prague Modern** first met back when the ensemble was still part of the **PKF - Prague Philharmonia** orchestra. **Michel Swierczewski**, who was principal conductor with the PKF from 2009 to 2011, was a key figure in creating these conditions. PKF - Prague Philharmonia was founded by **Jiří Bělohlávek**, later the principal conductor with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Czech Philharmonic, and the orchestra was established within the confines of his conservative and classically oriented musical thinking. Swierczewski introduced a focus on music of the 20th and 21st centuries. “The Beauty of Today”, one of the Philharmonia subscription series, is dedicated to contemporary music, and it was within this cycle that Prague Modern was established. It was also where the ensemble first worked with Gallois.

At the time of its establishment, the dramaturgy of the “Beauty of Today” series was directed by violinist and artistic director of Prague Modern,



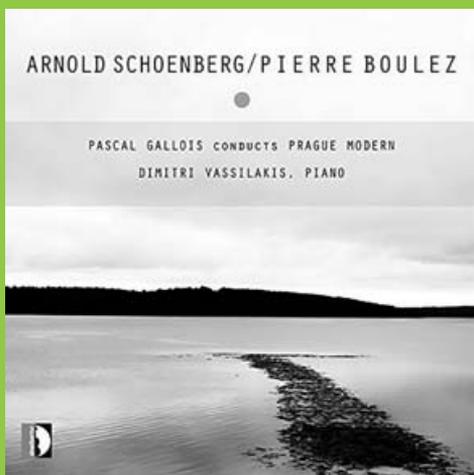


**David Danel.** “The impulse to invite Pascal Gallois came from bassoonist Tomáš Františ, who wanted to organise a masterclass for his bassoon class at the Prague Conservatory,” recalls Danel. “We wanted to make use of his visit and also alleviate the organisational and financial burden on the conservatory. So we came up with some ideas for concerts at which Gallois could perform, which we then succeeded in putting on.” Gallois also performed as a soloist in one of the concerts, performing *Sequenza XII*, one of a series of virtuosic solo pieces for various instruments, which its composer **Luciano Berio** dedicated to him. Another concert included chamber

pieces selected by Gallois, and performed by him together with musicians from both Prague Modern and the PKF – Prague Philharmonia.

Gallois was enthusiastic about the musicians, praising their flexibility and openness, and later contacted David Danel with a proposition for a recording. He had encountered the music of composer **Dai Fujikura** (\*1977) and was so taken by the material that he decided to make a profile CD.

The first collaboration between Pascal Gallois and Prague Modern was published by **Stradivarius** in 2013. It includes five pieces by Fujikura written



between 2007 and 2011. Gallois leads Prague Modern in the role of conductor, performing the final piece, *Calling*, on solo bassoon. In the same year it was published, the album received the Coup de cœu prize, awarded by the Académie Charles-Cros. Prague Modern thus found itself in the company of the Arditti Quartet, Klangforum Wien and other important ensembles.

Not only does Gallois initiate the projects he does with Prague Modern. He also oversees them organisationally, financially and dramaturgically. “Pascal considers all the effort he contributes to our collaboration as an investment into what he considers important,” says David Danel, adding: “We don’t really tell him how he should approach the dramaturgy, but in the future, we would like to feature pieces by contemporary Czech composers on our recordings.”

This has sometimes been the case in concert situations. In 2015, they performed **Miroslav Srnka’s** *Les adieux* in a live Radio France broadcast, while at the 2016 edition of the Contempuls festival in Prague, they premiered *Nostalgia II* by **Jiří Kadeřábek**.

Prague Modern and Pascal Gallois have made three recordings to date. Dai Fujikura, featured composer for the first of these, also made his way onto the second CD, made in 2016. This included his *Concerto for Bassoon*, on which Gallois was joined by the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and conductor Tatsuya Shimono.

Prague Modern recorded the first two pieces on the album: *Taléa* by **Gérard Grisey** (1946–1998) and *Requies* by **Luciano Berio** (1925–2003).

The latest collaboration, from 2017, featured two icons of 20th century music: **Arnold Schoenberg** and **Pierre Boulez**. The soloist is pianist **Dimitri Vassilakis**. This is the first album made by Prague Modern and Gallois which does not include the music of any living composers. There is still a characteristic affinity between the featured composers, however, as well as a connection between the composers and performers. Vassilakis has performed the opening piece, *Dérive 1*, under the direction of Boulez himself, among others. Gallois worked with Boulez for a number of years as a member of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and he has a direct and powerful experience of the composer’s music and his interpretive style. The presence of personal ties between the featured composers and performers is typical for the dramaturgy of Gallois’ recordings.

This is also true in the case of a recording currently in the works, which will present virtually unperformed pieces by **Fabien Lévy**. These include *Risâla ft-l-hob wa fl’lm al-handasa* (*A Small Treatise on Love and Geometry*) from 2003 and *Querwüchsig* from 2007. The other composer on this disc will be Lévy’s teacher **Gérard Grisey** with *Vortex Temporum*, written between 1994 and 1996. This programme was performed in February 2018 by Prague Modern under the baton of Pascal Gallois. The concert took place at Atrium Žižkov in Prague during the CD launch of their previous album, *Arnold Schoenberg/Pierre Boulez*, only a few days before they went into the studio.

# THE YEAR OF LEOŠ JANÁČEK

## A GRAND OPERATIC CYCLE BROADCAST

### BY CZECH RADIO VLTAVA



*Years ending with an 8 have a magical aura in the Czech Republic. 1918 saw the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia, while 1938 was the year in which crucial steps were taken towards its dissolution in the form of the Munich Agreement. Forty years of communist dictatorship began in 1948, while in 1968, the country was occupied by the armies of the Warsaw Pact. Among these crucial moments in history, 1928 is often forgotten – the year of Leoš Janáček’s death. Janáček is currently without a doubt the most successful operatic composer in the history of Czech music, and one of the most distinctive composers in the history of western music.*

For this reason, 2018 became **The Year of Leoš Janáček** – at least for **Czech Radio Vltava**. In 2018, it will broadcast all nine of Janáček’s operas, including the virtually unperformed *Šárka* and *Počátek románu* (*The Beginning of a Romance*), with which Janáček’s work for the theatre began. Czech Radio’s online broadcasts are not territorially limited, so the operas can be listened to anywhere in the world, every third Saturday of the month at 8pm CET on the Czech Radio website (<http://prehravac.rozhlas.cz/vltava>).

**Czech Radio Vltava** is the Czech Republic’s counterpart to the BBC’s Radio 3 or Österreich 1, with a focus on cultural journalism, classical music, opera and literary broadcasts. It follows, then, that Janáček is “composer of the year” on Czech Radio Vltava. The 90th anniversary of his death is a welcome occasion to work through Janáček’s operatic oeuvre thoroughly and systematically. It is surprising, one might add, that this does not happen with more regularity. This strange fact, however, is also typical of the remarkable story of Janáček’s life and work.

Perhaps no composer waited for success as long as Janáček, perhaps no one was as lonely in his endeavours. Indeed, the first of the two volumes of British musicologist **John Tyrrell's** giant biography *Janáček: Years of a Life* (2006, 2007, Faber & Faber) is subtitled *The Lonely Blackbird*. Janáček sticks out amongst the giants of operatic composers as an individual of piercing honesty which sees right into one's heart – just like Laca into Jenůfa's in Janáček's most popular opera.

Composing *Jenůfa* caused Janáček great anguish, but it was also his first major success. It is an excellent case study on which to demonstrate what seem to be all the crucial conditions which brought this teacher's son from northern Moravia – via great suffering in life and art – to the Vienna Court Opera and the New York Metropolitan Opera. Janáček spent a long six years composing *Jenůfa*. His duties as a pedagogue and conductor did not allow him to apply himself fully to his work on the opera, and he had to steal time away for composing. The death of Janáček's daughter Olga gave the finished opera a tragic commentary in 1903 – *Jenůfa* is dedicated to her memory.

A fruitless attempt at having the work performed at Prague's National Theatre followed its completion in 1902. The world premiere finally took place in 1904 in Brno. Its success, however, was only of a regional nature, and could not in any way make up for the marred Prague performance. A revised version was staged in Brno in 1908. Only six years later was the Director of the Opera at Prague's National Theatre, **Karel Kovařovic**, finally convinced to put the opera on. Before he did, however, he made a number of changes to the score.

The Prague production enthralled **Max Brod**, who helped *Jenůfa* on its journey out into the world – partly through his influence as a journalist, partly by translating the libretto into German. It was thanks to his efforts that the opera could be staged in the Vienna Court Opera in 1918. **Maria Jeritzka**, an excellent soprano and then the star of the operatic world, was also a great asset for the premiere. Originally called Marie Jedličková, this Brno native was also the first Jenůfa on the Metropolitan Opera stage in 1924. But it was the Vienna production which marked the beginning of Janáček's worldwide fame, for which he had to wait until the age of sixty four. He had only ten years of life left, but during this time, he would compose all of his major operas. Beginning with *The Excursions of Mr Brouček* and *Káta Kabanová* through *The Cunning Little Vixen* and

*The Makropulos Affair* to the fantastic operatic epitaph, *From the House of the Dead*.

But *Jenůfa* was the first work which written in a personal and entirely original dramatic style. And it is remarkable to see how general opinion developed over time.

Leading Czech conductor and Janáček expert **Jaroslav Vogel** (1894–1970) had no doubts that it was Janáček's best work. In his biography of the composer, published in 1963 by the Czechoslovak State Musical Press, he compares *Jenůfa* to Smetana's *Bartered Bride* and even calls Janáček “Smetana in a minor key”. **John Tyrrell**, on the other hand, calls it a breakthrough. During his work on *Jenůfa*, Janáček gradually liberated himself from the operatic conventions of the time in order to purify his own style of musical theatre, for which there are practically no direct models, analogies, or descendants.

*Jenůfa* was the first Czech opera, and one of the first operas in any language, to be written on a prose libretto. Janáček used **Gabriela Preissová's** drama, set in a Moravian village, whose text he cut and edited himself. There is a remarkable breaking point between the first and second act of the opera. In the first act, Janáček works with prose, but still dividing it formally into a nearly regular verse structure. Only in the second act does he seem to rid himself completely of a desire to bring regularity into the libretto, and lets the text flow freely. Speech melodies – Janáček's typical musical motifs, heard in and derived from human speech in everyday contexts – are used as a source of musical expression independent of regular metre or lines. Janáček turns away from romantic operatic style and towards dramatic truth. And he travelled this road further than all the *verismo* composers put together.

Janáček was a contemporary of the crucial *verismo* composers, and the operas that struck him deeply include mostly *verismo* works. He devoted a lengthy critique to a Brnoese production of **Pietro Mascagni's** *Cavalleria rusticana*. Set in a Sicilian village, this tragedy left slight imprints on the Moravian *Jenůfa*. Another crucial work for Janáček was *Madama Butterfly* by **Giacomo Puccini**, whose sadness and sense of tragedy suffuses *Káta Kabanová*. Perhaps Janáček's most beloved work was *Louise*, a *verismo* opera by French composer **Gustave Charpentier**. Janáček spoke and wrote of it often, right up to the end of his life.

Though Tyrrell claims that *Cavalleria rusticana* brought Janáček the idea of composing *Jenůfa*, and despite the fact that the composer saw in *Madama Butterfly*

a connection between *Káta Kabanová* and his beloved, **Kamila Stösslová**, we cannot speak of straightforward models. These sources appear in Janáček's work more as distant analogies, not direct references or connections. There is no comparable composer among Janáček's Czech contemporaries Vítězslav Novák, Otakar Ostrčil, or Josef Bohuslav Foerster. Janáček considered **Antonín Dvořák** his great teacher, as well as a close friend, but Dvořák's influence is nowhere to be found in *Jenůfa*, let alone the later works.

Listeners will be able to hear this for themselves in the cycle of Janáček operas prepared for Czech Radio Vltava by the author of this text. In addition to all of Janáček's operas, the cycle will also include works by his contemporaries both in the Czech lands and abroad, helping create a context for and contrast to Janáček's operas. The first criteria when choosing recordings was their referential quality, and an effort to provide an overview of performance practice from the second half of the 20th century until the present.

Each of these operatic evenings will be preceded by **Reflexe: Opera!** at 7pm, focused on Janáček's work, as well as his performers, editors and experts today. In the January edition, composer **Ondřej Kyas** spoke about *Šárka*. He is preparing an instrumentation of the original version for the Janáček Brno Festival. In February, we welcomed **Tyrrell**, perhaps the greatest authority on Janáček's life and work. The authors of the Janáček Reflexe are **Boris Klepal** and **Simona Kostrhunová**.

The series was inaugurated by *Jenůfa* in January of 2018, representing a turning point in both Janáček's work and his life. John Tyrrell is also the co-author of an edition titled *The Brno Version of 1908*, on which he collaborated with conductor **Charles Mackerras**, using comparisons of various historical sources. Together, they cleansed Janáček's score of later incisions and changes. Mackerras then recorded the work for **Decca** with the **Vienna Philharmonic** and soloists **Elisabeth Söderström**, **Wieslav Ochman**, **Eva Randová** and **Peter Dvorský**. This was the first in a series of five Janáček operas Mackerras recorded for Decca, thereby definitively securing Janáček's place among the top operatic composers in the world. In relation to Janáček's life, it is a significant observation that no Czech label ever made a similar decision.

In addition to this sizeable collection, Mackerras also recorded Janáček's *Šárka*. Janáček put his first opera

aside in 1887 after a conflict with renowned poet and author of the libretto, **Julius Zeyer**, who refused to give his consent for the use of his text. Janáček only asked for permission once he had finished the vocal score of the opera. He only received approval from Zeyer's heirs after the poet's death, and *Šárka* was premiered in Brno in 1924. This reworked version was recorded by Mackerras in 2001 for **Supraphon** with the **Czech Philharmonic** and soloists **Ěva Urbanová**, **Peter Straka**, **Jaroslav Březina**, and **Ivan Kusnjer**. Czech Radio Vltava broadcast it in February, accompanied by *Zvíkovský rarášek* (*The Zvíkov Imp*), a one-act opera by **Vítězslav Novák**. This juxtaposition brought together two of Antonín Dvořák's students - the devoted Janáček and the always rebellious Novák.

**Antonín Dvořák** himself will make an appearance as part of the Janáček series, in an operatic evening on the 17th of March. His opera, *The Jacobin*, is among his most popular with Czech theatres, right after *Rusalka*. *The Jacobin* was composed between 1887 and 1888, around the same time Janáček was composing *Šárka*. After all, Zeyer first offered the libretto to Dvořák, who ultimately chose not to set it, though he did pass a favourable judgement on Janáček's setting (which was no help with Zeyer, as mentioned above). *The Jacobin* is the work of a composer whom Janáček considered his great master and friend. When listening to *The Jacobin*, it is almost humorous to consider how little the two composers have in common in their top works. The recording of the opera is from 1964, with singers **Richard Novák**, **Milada Šubrtová**, **Karel Berman** and others, with **Jan Hus Tichý** conducting.

On the evening of the 21st of April, we will return to Janáček and his opera *Fate*. It was finished in 1904, at the time of *Jenůfa*'s premiere, but the composer abandoned the Moravian village and turned to the small town spa. Janáček struggled in vain to get *Fate* performed, but it was only premiered in 1934, after his death. In this bizarre tale of the composer Živný, who leaves the finale of his opera in God's hands, a crucial role is played by the death of his lover and the madness of her mother. **Richard Strauss**'s one-act *Feuersnot* will accompany Janáček's opera. The recording of *Fate* was made in 1976 with conductor **František Jílek**, for many years the director of the Janáček Opera in Brno. The soloists include **Vilém Přibyl**, **Marie Steincrová**, **Anna Barová** and others.

May's opera night will commemorate not only Leoš Janáček, but also the excellent conductor **Jaroslav**

**Krombholz**, who was born in January a hundred years ago. Krombholz was among the most significant Czech opera conductors, and *Káta Kabanová* from 1960 is among his most celebrated recordings, which will be broadcast on the 19th of May, with soloists including **Drahomíra Tikalová**, **Ludmila Komancová** and **Beno Blachut**. This recording features the Prague National Theatre and Jaroslav Krombholz in top form.

The evening of the 16th of June will belong to Giacomo Puccini and his *Madama Butterfly*, which Janáček called the saddest opera in the world. The tragic story also left its mark on Janáček's *Káta Kabanová*. The recording of Puccini's opera, made in 1966, is conducted by **Erich Leinsdorf**, with **Anna Moffo** singing the title role.

The next Janáček opera will be *The Beginning of a Romance* on June 21st. Like *Jenůfa*, it was composed on a text by **Gabriela Preissová**, but Janáček had the text edited into a standard verse libretto. This amusing idyll set in the countryside was successfully premiered in Brno in 1894. The premiere of *Jenůfa* is ten years away, but the greater difference is in the transformation of Janáček's compositional and dramatic thought. *The Beginning of a Romance* will be featured in a recording conducted by **František Jílek** and sung by the ensemble of the Brno opera in 1978. The second half of the evening will feature **Pietro Mascagni's** *Cavalleria rusticana*.

**Tomáš Hanus** and his recording of *The Makropulos Affair* from 2009 will represent the youngest generation of stellar Czech conductors. Hanus is currently director at Welsh National Opera and regularly works with the Bayerische Staatsoper, where he conducted a production of *The Makropulos Affair* in 2014. This was the first production based on the new critical edition of the score published by Bärenreiter, on which Hanus collaborated with **Jonáš Hájek** and **Annette Thein**. *The Makropulos Affair* is a tragicomedy about an elixir of life and the unbearable nature of eternal life. The recording features the ensemble of the National Theatre in Prague, with **Gun-Brit Barkmin** singing the role of Emilia Marty.

**Gustave Charpentier's** opera *Louise* will be on the airwaves on September 15th. The recording of Janáček's most beloved opera was conducted by **Georges Prêtre** in 1976, with **Ileana Cotrubas** and **Plácido Domingo** singing the main parts.

October will see the celebrations of a hundred years of an independent Czechoslovakia, which will certainly include Smetana's *Libuše* – more a grand

musical tableaux of Czech mythology than an opera. On the 20th of October, this noble pathos will be counterbalanced by *The Excursions of Mr Brouček*, Janáček's merciless study in the soul of a Czech bourgeois. His dream takes him to the moon and then to Prague at the time of the 15th century Hussite wars, where he shows himself to be a spineless coward. The recording was made in 1962 by conductor **Václav Neumann** with the ensemble of the National Theatre in Prague, with singers including **Karel Berman**, **Ivo Žídek**, **Helena Tattermuschová** and others.

On November 17th, we will hear *The Cunning Little Vixen* – a jolly piece with a sad ending, as Janáček described the opera in a letter to Kamila Stösslová. The writer Milan Kundera called *The Little Vixen* a “harrowing idyll”, Jaroslav Vogel spoke of a “Czech *Midsummer Night's Dream*”. A fantastical story populated by both humans and animals ends in the death of the protagonist, with the eternal cycle of life in nature triumphing above her. The recording of *The Cunning Little Vixen* was made by the ensemble of the National Theatre in Prague and conductor **Bohumil Gregor** in 1970, with **Helena Tattermuschová**, **Zdeněk Kroupa**, **Eva Zikmundová** and others.

“God's spark in every being.” Janáček wrote these words in the margins of the score to his last opera, *From the House of the Dead*. This collective work, set in a Siberian prison, has no protagonist or overarching story. Individuals gradually step out of the seemingly monolithic mass, with their particular stories, personal tragedies and suffering in an unusually poignant, even harrowing form. The dramaturgy in one of the most remarkable operas in the history of the genre is more cinematic than theatrical, as director **David Pountney** remarked to John Tyrrell. We will return to Tyrrell and his collaboration with Charles Mackerras on the 5-opera cycle on Decca on the 15th of December. Mackerras's recording of *From the House of the Dead* is from 1980, featuring the **Vienna Philharmonic** and **Antonín Švorc**, **Dalibor Jedlička**, **Jaroslava Janská** and others.

# Playful but Animalistically Serious: Czech Interwar Music and Sport



A short but significant series of compositions inspired by sport in Czech music of the twenties and thirties was a musical and general cultural phenomenon reflecting the time of its creation. As late as the First World War, it was generally the case that “where [...] art approaches, sport flees”, as novelist Karel Matěj Čapek-Chod wrote. But between the wars, it was just the opposite: the high arts – music included – rushed to meet sport halfway.

## Music Relating to Sport in European and American Music before 1945

Reflections of sport were fairly regular in western art from ancient Greece until the present. But deeper reflections of sport in modern art – and newly also in music – only began appearing in the second half of the 19th century. It hardly seems accidental that this is also a period in which sport enters the life of western society at greater depth, both quantitatively and qualitatively. If we leave aside Metastasio’s popular 18th century libretto *L’Olimpide*, which takes the Olympic Games as its subject, and Matthias von Holst’s composition *Village Rondo*, written in 1812, the title page of which features a cricket player, we must consider the first European art music to take sport as its subject to be Rossini’s charming song cycle *La regata veneziana*, written in the 1830s. Some ten years later, in 1842, Swedish composer Franz Berwald composed his symphonic poem *Wettlauf* (*Running Race*). These were rare examples at the time.

The situation only changed at the end of the 19th century, when the number of pieces of art music taking sport as its subject increased dramatically. In Czech music, this is also true, but with a 20-year delay: the inspiration for the symphonic poem *V Tatrách* (*In the Tatra Mountains*), relating to composer Vítězslav Novák’s passion for mountaineering, cannot be included within the topic at hand, as here alpinism, like in Strauss’s *Alpine Symphony*, is still conceived in the sense of the romantic “wandern”, not in the spirit of modern sport.

To begin with, let us review the most important European sport pieces from 1900 to 1914 (a more detailed stylistic and historical interpretation is outside the scope of this article, so I will only mention that in many respects, these compositions prefigure the poetics of sporting pieces written after the First World War).



PHOTO: WWW.RAEDERSCHIEDT.COM

Anton Räderscheidt: *Die Tennisspielerin*. Oil on canvas, 1926.

First, we must mention American maverick Charles Ives and his orchestral study *Baseball Take-Off*, written in 1909, which also exists in a piano version. Baseball was not the only sport which sparked Ives' interest: in 1911, he composed an orchestral piece with the off-hand title of *The Yale-Princeton Football Game*. Both these pieces were only first performed long after their completion, and they had no influence on European music between the wars. Two of the most significant cases of sport pieces before WWI came from France. In 1912, Claude Debussy composed *Le Jeux*, a "dance poem" for Dhiaghilev's Ballets Russes. This was his last orchestral piece. The premiere took place a year later, but the reception of the work was almost entirely eclipsed by the furore surrounding Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. *Le Jeux* represents a tennis match, employing the "impressionist" idiom and an unusually high number of contrapuntal moments.

The second sport piece written near the end of the *belle époque*, and generally a work of remarkable importance, is *Sports et Divertissements*, an album by Erik Satie written in 1914. It is comprised of twenty short piano pieces and humorous texts, accompanied by illustrations drawn by Paris-based illustrator Charles Martin. This original piano cycle created a new form, full of French elegance, light irony and blatant anti-romantic feeling. It connected music, language and the visual arts, with a rich connection to Parisian popular culture. Both Parisian works, Debussy's *Jeux* and Satie's *Sports et Divertissements*, could have had an influence on Czech interwar music. Of course, this is particularly true of those Czech composers who studied in Paris, or who were in contact with the French scene.

After the First World War, western music saw an abundance of sport-related pieces, which lasted all the way to WWII. The aim of the brief summary which follows will be to suggest – only suggest – that the wave of Czech sport music was not created in a vacuum. I will focus particularly on the question of genre.

One fact that strikes one immediately is the number of works dealing with sport in the form of ballet. I will leave unanswered the question of the extent to which this was conditioned by ballet itself, in its physical virtuosity, getting closer and closer to sport from the mid-19th century onwards.

We see sport ballets appearing in European music beginning with *Sports of England*, created in 1887 by choreographer Katti Lanner, which takes typically English sports, such as cricket, yachting, football, polo, hunting, rowing and box, as its main theme. After the success of this work, Victorian Britain saw more ballets portraying current social and technological phenomena. Sport was of chief importance in ballets such as *Up the River* (Henley's Royal Regatta), *Sita* (aviation), and *Sporting Times* (a sport daily newsroom). Constant Lambert, a student of Ralph Vaughan Williams, composed his boxing ballet *Prize Fight* in 1924. The flood of boxing pieces which followed the end of WWI, and which we will review on the following pages, can be linked to the ring's rise in popularity during the 1920s.

Sport ballets were also being composed on the other side of the channel. Looking for forebears, we might mention Luigi Manzotti's popular ballet on music by Romuald Marenco, *Sport*, premiered at La Scala in 1897, which included various sports such as running, rowing, mountaineering and ice skating.

But let us focus on the 1920s. Alexander Nikolayevitch Tcherepnin, associated with Bohuslav Martinů and the École de Paris, wrote his *Three Pieces for Chamber Orchestra* in 1922, one of which is titled "Pour un entrainement de boxe". This movement exists in various

authorised versions, and also as a one act ballet.

In that same year, before his better known symphonic movement *Rugby*, Arthur Honegger composed *Skating Rink*, a ballet on a libretto by avant-garde poet Ricciotto Canudo, which reflected a pastime then popular in Paris: roller skating.

Another member of the group of composers known as Les Six, Darius Milhaud, wrote a "dance operetta" on a text by Jean Cocteau. It was composed in 1924 for Dhiagilev's Ballets Russes, and coincided with the Paris Olympic Games. This ballet, influenced by the music hall, includes fanciful representations of tennis and golf as components of a modern middle-class holiday on the French Riviera. We might also mention that one of the main characters in Milhaud's earlier ballet, *Ox on the Roof* (1920), a canonic work of the French avant-garde, was none other than a Boxer.

Dhiagilev's ensemble had no shortage of ballets about sport. They also commissioned Prokofiev's civilist-constructivist ballet *Le pas d'acier* (*The Steel Step*, 1926), which celebrated great success in Paris. In this vision, sport is construed as part of the new, industrialised world then being born in the Soviet Union. As a side note, we should note that critics in St Petersburg described Prokofiev's first piano concerto, written in 1910, as a piece of a sporting nature, and that Prokofiev was generally close to mechanistic representations of sport and other quotidian situations in his toccata-like compositions. *The Golden Age* (1929), a propagandistic ballet by Dmitri Shostakovich, has a similar rhythmic drive to *The Steel Step*, but with more elements taken from dance-music.

*The Footballer*, choreographed by Igor Moiseyev to music by Victor Oransky in 1930 as their first original work for the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, was another propagandistic ballet on "current" topics, written in the time of Stalin. And in that same year, the Bolshoi saw another football ballet, its title also translated into English as *The Footballer* – a class satire by Nikolay Kurdyumov.

But let us return to France. In 1932, Debussy's *Petite suite* for orchestra was used for a ballet titled *Jeux d'enfants* (*Children's Games*) by Léonide Massine, which featured many sporting moments. Another ballet by Massine, *The Beach* (1933) – this time with jazz-influenced music by Jean Françaix, a Paris-based composer close to Les Six – works with sport as a component of healthy free-time activities. Satie's circus-themed *Parade* (1917) is also partially a sporting ballet, its final act bearing the title of "Acrobates". And with a little exaggeration, we might even include Stravinsky's *Jeu de cartes* (*Card Game*, 1937). A genre of sport music on which Czech composers had a particular influence is orchestral music. The European

avant-garde of the 1920s tended towards approaching new topics with new genres. For sport, the ideal genre seems to have been the symphonic movement. Whether we are discussing composers in Paris – Honegger’s *Rugby* (1928), Martinů’s *Half-Time* and *La Baggare*, or Filip Lazár’s symphonic miniature *Le Ring* (1928, premiered 1930) – or works by Czech composers, such as Pavel Bořkovec’s *Start* (1929) or F. M. Hradil’s *Football-Match* (1922), all these works are single symphonic movements. Another symphonic movement of Honegger’s, *Pacific 231* (1923), is particularly important in the context of sport pieces. While it does not represent sport, it presents in compressed form a great amount of compositional material and stylistic idioms typical of later sport pieces. As concerns interwar orchestral music, we should also not fail to mention Ottorino Respighi’s cycle of programme music, *Roman Festivals* (1928), which uses sound painting to narrate gladiator matches in the Circus Maximus: though still stylistically entrenched in late romanticism and impressionism, its rhythmic and sonic brutality brings it closer to the avant-garde sport pieces of the time.

Another plentiful genre is the collection of shorter piano pieces, often instructional. The most famous of these is Béla Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos* (1926–1939), which includes a piece titled “Ringen” (“Wrestling”). Then there are Kabalevsky’s collections for children, *From the Life of a Pioneer* (1931), which contains the tiny piece “Sporting Game”, and *30 Pieces for Children* (1938), which includes “Ball Game”. Britten’s juvenilia *Holiday Diary* (1934) contains a captivating movement titled “Sailing”. And finally, in Kurt Hessenberg’s *Seven Small Piano Pieces* (1936), we find a miniature called “Turnstunde” (“Gym Class”).

A unique case in chamber music is another piece by Alexander Tcherepnin, the masterfully crafted *Sonatine sportive* from 1939 for piano and alto saxophone, which also exists in versions for other solo instruments. Also extraordinary are the approaches to the theme of sport in musical theatre. In this respect, musical activity in the British Isles is highly specific. Even before the First World War, Ralph Vaughan Williams began composing the national ballad opera *Hugh the Drover* (1914, premiered 1924), which takes place during a boxing match. Interwar Britain saw the creation of operas like Albert Coates’s *Pickwick* (1936), which includes a “cricket fugue”, and two operettas written by Alan Herbert: *Tantivy Towers* (1931), with music by Thomas Dunhill, and *Derby Day* (1932), with music by Alfred Reynolds. Both are based on typically British

sports: football in the case of the former, horse racing in the latter. There is also a bit of cricket in Noel Gaye’s *Wild Oates* (1938). British operetta and musical theatre between 1890 and 1939 often turned to the races: we should mention *Newmarket* (1896) by J. M. Capel and John Crook, *The Gentleman Jockey* (1907) by George Ess, and three musicals, very popular in their day, with music by Billy Mayerl: *Sporting Love* (1932), *Twenty-to-One* (1935) and *Over She Goes* (1936). We might also add that in *Victory Over the Sun* (1913), an opera with music by Mikhail Matyushin that served as the Russian futurist “manifesto”, characters include Sportsmen and a Pilot, and one of the characters demonstrates a “football manoeuvre”.

Moving on to song, but staying on the British Isles for now: *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), Alfred Housman’s sentimental pastoral book of poems, became a sensation in England shortly after its publication. The number of settings of individual poems corresponds to this popularity. Sport plays an important role in some of them. “Is My Team Ploughing?”, a nostalgic ballad, involves the motif of a countryside football match. It was set to music by George Butterworth in *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad* (1911) and Ivor Gurney as a stand-alone song. Another one of Housman’s nostalgic poems, “Twice a Week the Winter Thorough”, takes football and cricket as its main subjects. As in the previous poems, they are used as symbols of lost youth, or life itself: playing cricket is ultimately the only thing that will reliably bring one joy in this tearful valley... John Ireland set “Goal and Wicket” and included it in his song cycle *The Land of Lost Content* (1921), while Ralph Vaughan Williams eliminated all references to football in his setting, part of *On Wenlock Edge*, a song cycle written in 1909. As a side note, we might add that Vaughan Williams also composed a “hymnic melody” in 1931 called *Marathon*. The British obsession with cricket also made its way into many other songs, such as *Willow the King* and *The Cricketers of Hambledon* by Peter Warlock, or *Cricket* by Alfred Scott-Gatty. Horse racing infiltrated British song as early as the mid-1800s (*Camptown Races* by Stephen Foster from 1850 or George Ridley’s *Blaydon Races* from 1862).

Like British music, music from the Scandinavian peninsula also retained a certain exclusivity and particular character in relation to events on the continent. The oeuvre of Finnish maverick Jean Sibelius’ includes two remarkable sport-themed pieces. In 1899, he composed a song with piano accompaniment, *Bollspelet vid Trianon* (*Tennis Match*

in *Trianon*), a setting of the Swedish romantic poet Gustaf Fröding. In 1925, he composed a short melodram, *Et ensamt skidspår* (*The Lonely Ski Trail*), which used skiing – a sport which is as natural an activity as walking in the north – as a metaphor for the miserable, lonely journey of life. Another northern modernist, Danish composer Carl Nielsen, composed a cantata in 1930 to celebrate the opening of a new swimming pool. In further considerations of sport in art music, we cannot ignore the development of the subject in popular music and the functional (often commercial) cooperation of sport and music in general. Modern sport and popular or functional music stood side by side in the 19th century, both yielding from the start to the process of commodification and mass popularity so well known to us: first sport helps sell music, then it's the other way around, often the relationship is reciprocal (for a recent example, we might cite Shakira's *Waka Waka*, the title song of the Football World Cup in 2010). In the 1860s, Josef Strauss composed several witty polkas referring to sports that were becoming popular in Vienna at the time: *Sport-Polka*, *Vélocipède* and *Eislauf* (*Ice Skating*). By the 1880s, waltzes, polkas, quadrilles as well as more stylised approaches to the dance genre with sport-related themes were spreading across all of Europe, with examples including G. W. Allen's *Lawn-Tennis Quadrille* (1881), *La valse des patineurs* (1882) by Émile Waldteufel or John C. Wild's *Tennis Polka* (1887).

### Sport Pieces in Czech Interwar Music

The interwar period saw a marked increase in pieces of music dealing with sport in Czech music of both 'serious' and popular varieties. The main reason for this seems to have been the fact that sport only really became a truly mass phenomenon in the Czech lands in the 1920s. Sport was being democratised, becoming part of the new lifestyle.

Another crucial factor is the influence from the Czech avant-garde, particularly poetism,<sup>1</sup> the official culture of the first republic, which was connected to the Sokol movement, and in no small part also the international influences mentioned above, particularly the Russian and French musical avant-garde. Certainly the most important moment for the development of representations of sport in interwar avant-garde music was the emancipation of brutal rhythms and a mechanistic musicality in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913), which, according to Adorno, allowed for "the production of an illusion of bodily movement".

Composers' personal interest in sport need not be the essence and origin of sport pieces in Czech interwar music. Rather, it can be found in the absurd situation that was the epidemic dissemination of sport – or rather sportiveness – in the interwar mentality. This situation was best expressed by Karel Čapek in a number of situations depicted in his novel *War with the Newts* (1935):

"And do you read the paper often?"  
 "Yes, sir. Every day, sir."  
 "And what is it that interests you the most?"  
 "The court cases, football, horse races –"  
 "Have you ever seen a football match?"  
 "No, sir."  
 "Or a horse?"  
 "I haven't, sir."  
 "So why do you read it?"  
 "Because it's in the paper, sir."

It is apparent that just like sport, "machinisation" and "motorisation" had a crucial influence on the fashion and lifestyle of the Czechoslovak first republic, they had a similar influence on the arts, including music.

A key character in this trend was Bohuslav Martinů. Perhaps no other composer let sport enthral him to the same extent. The libretto to Martinů's early ballet *Who is the Most Powerful in the World?* (1922) contained an introduction written by poet Vítězslav Nezval, which has the character of an avant-garde manifesto. It reads: "We will study the possibilities of the new ballet in the streets, in the circuses and dance halls, wherever movement is naturally exposed. We will search for its immediate manifestations in football and boxing matches." We also find sport in Martinů's ballet *Check to the King* (1930, premiered 1980). Regular pulsation is present in both pieces, in the latter, there are also contrapuntal webs serving to represent check, just like in Debussy's *Le Jeu*, which serve to represent a flying tennis ball.

*Half-Time*, Martinů's symphonic movement from 1924, appears to be the first orchestral piece based only on sport still known today. Opinion on what *Half-Time* represents diverged even at the time of the premiere: the period listener wasn't sure whether this was a programme work or a symbolic expression of "abstract" human endeavour. The connection of sport and jazz, or rather the discovery of their "common denominator" in a musical representation of sport, was much appreciated by E. F. Burian, composer, theatre

1) Poetism was an avant-garde poetry movement in 1920s Czechoslovakia, led by poets Vítězslav Nezval and Jaroslav Seifert and theorist Karel Teige. It emphasised the everyday, optimism, a denial of the hierarchies of low and high art, an effort to bring a poetic view of the world into everyday life. Poetism was important throughout the 1920s, but by the mid-30s, it had been replaced by surrealism as the crucial avant-garde movement in Czechoslovakia.

director and important theoretician of the musical avant-garde, who wrote of *Half-Time*: “Though this orchestral fountain seems far removed from modern dance (the composer was inspired by half-time in a football match) it is in essence a jazz piece.”

Another area – which Martinů also left his mark on – is that of pieces reflecting aviation. The first years of an independent Czechoslovakia, after WWI, was a time of an enormous growth in aviation, accompanied by the excitement this new phenomenon of civilisation aroused. The conceptualisation of aviation as a new heroism and the final step of the emancipation of mankind is to be found everywhere in both popular and official culture. Two examples: According to the popular encyclopaedia of 1930, *Kniha knih (The Book of Books)*, “illuminated by the golden aureole of a setting sun, an aeroplane, having triumphed over the Ocean and all its dangers – is this not the apotheosis of aviation, brave and spectacularly infused by a sporting spirit?” And in an official publication by the ministry of public health and physical education, published in 1931: “Working in aviation means working for the tomorrow of all humanity, for its brotherhood, peace, for its new and godlier [sic!] nature.”

Probably the most famous aviation-themed piece is Bohuslav Martinů’s *La Bagarre*, written in 1926 and later dedicated to the great sporting achievement that was the first crossing of the Atlantic without a layover, realised by Charles Lindbergh in 1925. In comparison to *Half-Time*, there is a semantic transformation here from sport as a primarily competitive activity to sport as a grand collective effort in which the individual disappears for the benefit of the whole.

The same ocean crossing led Bertold Brecht to write the celebratory lehrstück<sup>2</sup> *Lindberghflug* (1928), to which Paul Hindemith and Kurt Weill wrote the music. Another work of Bohuslav Martinů’s on aviatic themes is *The Amazing Flight*, a “mechanical ballet” with futuristic tendencies written in 1927, but only premiered in 1980. Martinů called *The Amazing Flight* an expression of a new, unsentimental, somehow everyday heroism, entirely in the spirit of the period as outlined above. The piece, instigated by an aviation disaster, uses ample means of musical representation (incessant regular pulsation, syncopation and polyrhythms) to suggest an outline and atmosphere of the dramatic situation, the movement of the propeller and the working of the motor. The staging concept for one of Martinů’s boldest works consisted in doing away with live actors and replacing them with moving set pieces, light design, photographs, and titles in the style of a silent film. Martinů’s

fascination with aviation is also clear in his later pieces and projects, the short allegro con brio with the planned title of *Decollage* (“the departure of an aeroplane from the airport”) and the orchestral scherzo *Thunderbolt P-47* (1945).

One of the most significant illustrations of quotidian tendencies in Czech interwar music is *Aeroplane* for male choir, composed by Boleslav Vomáčka in 1926, setting a poem by Miloš Jirko, a member of the Brno Literary Group, which celebrates the aeroplane as a method of overcoming humanity. Alas, the piece was not published and is now considered lost. The motif of the aeroplane was also favoured in the popular music of the time, as attested by *Oh aero-aero-aeroplane*, a foxtrot by popular Prague songwriter and cabaret performer Rudolf “Rudy” Jurista from 1927.

In addition to the pieces by Bohuslav Martinů mentioned above, Pavel Bořkovec made two essential contributions to the genre of sport music, both from 1929: the relatively well known symphonic allegro *Start*, and a virtually unknown song cycle, *Stadion (Stadium)*. Both works were radically avant-garde for their time: aseptimental, atonal and constructivist. *Stadion*, a song cycle for middle voice, wind instruments and piano, is comprised of three settings of poems by Kazimierz Wierzyński translated by Jaroslav Fiala: “100 m”, “2nd Breath” and “Start of the Women’s Race”.

The poems come from a collection titled *Laur olimpijski (Olympic Laurel)*, published in 1927, for which Wierzyński was awarded the gold medal in the artists’ competition held as part of the Summer Olympic Games in 1928. Czech-Polish relations at the time were strained to say the least, and it was not common for a Czech composer to set Polish poetry – Bořkovec seems to have been reacting to Wierzyński’s extraordinary success, as this was the first work of poetry to have been awarded the highest prize in the Olympic art competition. This chamber piece, whose difficulty calls for a conductor, was first performed by the Society for Modern Music in Prague in 1930, with Karel Ančerl conducting and *soubrette* Nelly Gaierová singing, and then again in Prague a year later, this time in Radiojournal, conducted by Otakar Jeremiáš and sung by Czech contemporary music expert Máša Fleisherová. That same year also saw a performance in Brno by the Moravian Composers’ Club (Vilém Petrželka, Fleischerová). František Bartoš wrote a review of *Stadion* directly after the premiere. In his view, *Stadion* was only a “vocal pendant” to *Start*, “with which it has ties both in terms of content and musical material”. Bořkovec, he claims, is aiming at “capturing

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2) The lehrstück (learning piece or learning play) was a form of educational experimental theatre developed by Bertold Brecht during the 1920s and 30s. It takes as its core principle the possibility of learning through acting and pretending and breaks the divide between actors and audiences.

an atmosphere filled with sporting vigour [...]. Curtness and terseness are [...] the prime characteristics of Bořkovec's music, full of pulsing power and elementarity. [...] The polyphonic nature of the work leads to the voice often being treated instrumentally.” The first performance of *Start*, Bořkovec's second sport piece, was given in Prague on the 26th of March 1930 (H. W. Steinberg conducting the Czech Philharmonic), with further performances that year at the Lutych international festival (Karel B. Jiráček), and again abroad in Warsaw in 1936. In 1931, the piece was awarded the prize of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Jaroslav Tomášek's critique offers an interesting point of view, very much indicative of its time. In 1936, he wrote that *Start* “is today a well-known piece”, a “predominantly rhythmic” composition “in a fast tempo”, influenced by Stravinsky and Hindemith, its title “pointing towards the composer's lively relationship to contemporary life and its typical manifestations and pastimes, among which sport occupies an important position”. Tomášek concluded his review by stating that “the relationships between sport and contemporary art are not only negative, as they are generally thought of. Bořkovec's piece proves that sport and physical culture can positively inspire musicians of the most serious and progressive tendencies.”

Both of Bořkovec's pieces include a high concentration of properties typical of other musical representations of sport from the same period: a physiological pulsation of the musical material founded on rhythmic-melodic ostinato models or pulsations, and in no small measure also an excited tempo which corresponds to the accelerated heart beat and breath rate, further strengthened by a linearity of musical structure, and finally, a new and characteristic sportive pathos.

Other crucial works by Bořkovec from the same period – *The Piano Concerto no. 1* from 1931 or the *Suite for Piano* from 1930 – also have a mechanistic character and tend towards the aesthetics of the New Objectivity. We are only missing an adequate name, programme or receptive context to be able to include them in our list of sport pieces.

We encounter a short but striking sportive moment in Bořkovec's song “The Mad Altar Boy” from *7 Songs on Words by Vítězslav Nezval* (1934). The surprising invasion of a boxing match into the mystical atmosphere of a church service is matched by three measures of sharply syncopated swing on the following text: “Tis not enough for the others and so they started a boxing match”. Sport and jazz enter here as two inseparable

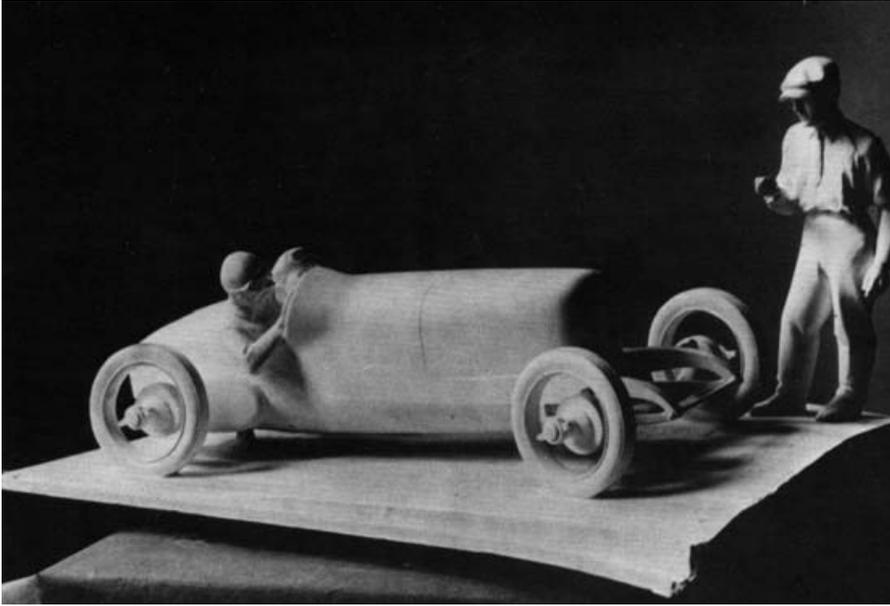
indexes of modernity, tearing up the idyll of the old world.

So much for Bořkovec. Composer Jan Evangelista Zelinka (1893–1969), practically forgotten today, who composed a considerable amount of music for workers' olympiads, wrote a ballet pantomime in 1928, *Skleněná panna* (*The Glass Virgin*), markedly influenced by poetism, with words by Karel Schulz. Sport, specifically “ball games”, meets other quotidian moments in the third act (the atmosphere of a fancy bar, the glow of neon, alcohols come to life, car horns and a seductive tango dancer), set among them entirely in the spirit of forced poetistic playfulness. This “mix”, popular at the time, seems to have missed the mark on this occasion: after the premiere in Prague's National Theatre on the 2nd of July 1928, *The Glass Virgin* got only one repeat performance, after which it was removed from the repertoire. It has not been performed since.

The 1920s saw the mass spread of alpine skiing in Czechoslovakia, a modern phenomenon which the music of the time did not fail to reflect. As early as 1918, Jaroslav Křička composed a piece for male choir, *Lyžaři* (*The Skiers*). It was published as part of a song cycle, *Vzhůru srdce* (*Onwards, Heart*), a work typical of the agitated atmosphere that followed Czechoslovak independence, infused with the ideology of masculine nationalism. *The Skiers*, as the final piece in the cycle, steps back from the nationalist position, concentrating on celebrating the healthy manliness of the sportsmen: “They are good skis we have, hoyahay, / courage, zest. / Your boys will not be scared / of wind or frost. / And what is a steep hill / for a certain skier? / Every problem into joy / we will turn with true soul.”

Křička continued in this vein with his *Horácko Suite* from 1935. While it was primarily intended as a tribute to Horácko, the composer's birth region, the sporting character was supplied by the last movement, “Skiing Finale”, which has its foundation in *The Skiers*. This seems to have been the reason why the *Horácko Suite* received a prize in the artist's section of the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936. In relation to skiing, we should also mention a curiosity from the realm of period folklorism: *Lyžaři na Javorině* (*Skiers on Javorina*), a radio play written by Vladimír Ůlehla and Jaroš Hudeček. Another important sporting piece of the period is Jaroslav Ježek's famous *Bugatti-Step* for piano (1930), which also exists in a version for piano and orchestra. The piece is best known today as a virtuoso piano piece, but it originally served as an overture to the Liberated Theatre's revue *Don Juan & Comp.* (1931). In 1930, however, it was also recorded onto vinyl as an individual piece,

3) The Liberated Theatre (Osvobozené divadlo), also known as the Prague Free Theatre, was a left-wing avant-garde theatre active in Prague between 1926 and 1948, at first growing from the context of poetism and Devětsil, a left-wing arts movement led by theorist Karel Teige. Later, its name became tied to actors Jan Werich and Jiří Voskovec and composer Jaroslav Ježek.



Bedřich Stefan:  
Proposal for a Sporting Prize.  
Coloured plaster, 1923.

and a year later it was used in *Pudr a benzin (Make-up and Petrol, 1931)*, a play and film starring Voskovec and Werich.

Searching after the inspiration of *Bugatti-Step*, we are led to the Bugatti touring car, in which Louis Chiron won on the Brno Masaryk Track, and Czech female racer Eliška Junková in the famous Targa Florio race. The piece uses an elementary off-beat accent model typical of boogie-woogie which, combined with the opening mechanistic figure and a dizzying tempo, represents a ride in or the operation of the motor of a racing car. We also find sporting moments, mostly with the character of parodic reactions to experiences of period modernity, in the rest of Ježek's music for the Liberated Theatre: *Robin Hood (1932)* is introduced by "Biguine Hydroplane", and the finale of *Osel a stín (The Donkey and the Shadow, 1933)* includes a "Rhythmic-Gymnastic Dance".

As early as 1922 – that is, before *Half-Time* and *Rugby* – another symphonic sport piece was composed in Czechoslovakia: *Football-Match*, a symphonic image for large orchestra by Janáček student František Míťa Hradil (1898–1980). The work was originally conceived as accompaniment for a dance performance of the Brno-based dancer and patron of the arts Zdenka Podhajská (and, it seems, her ensemble La Pantomime

Futuriste), to be performed around Europe's concert halls. The piece was first performed by the Wiener Tonkünstler-Orchester on the 23rd of August 1923.

It was then played in the most luxurious spa centres on the French Riviera, followed by Paris on the 19th of February 1927 and Turin on June 12th 1928.

*Football-Match* was never performed in Czechoslovakia, and today, we regrettably consider it lost. It is not without interest that Hradil composed *Football-Match* at the end of his first year studying with Janáček, and supposedly on an impulse from his teacher. Furthermore, Janáček (according to Hradil's testimony) supposedly helped arrange performances abroad. Emil Hlobil's *Weekend (1933, premiered 1936)* is a quotidian orchestral suite which approaches sport as a compulsory component of free-time activities. Let us conclude this section of the study with *Štafeta (Relay Race)*, a song cycle reflecting relay racing – an integral part of first republic culture – for voice and string quartet. Setting poetry by Jiří Wolker and Jules Romains, it was composed by another Janáček pupil, Vilém Petrželka, in 1927.

In our consideration of all kinds of relationships between music and sport in the First Czechoslovak Republic, we cannot leave out film music – that is, music to accompany silent films. Much of it, in fact, was sport

music, underscoring sporting moments and expressing emotions connected with sport. We can also assume the influence of this music on the avant-garde, which, as we know, was enthusiastic about foreign films. Given the mass dissemination of music to accompany silent films, and after 1929 also synchronous film music, we can consider this a separate layer of sport music. It is no accident that in the 1920s, E. F. Burian wrote of “sport music” in connection with music for silent films.

### Czech Interwar Music, Physical Education and the Sokol Movement<sup>4</sup>

As suggested above, a large and specific group is formed by works relating to the Sokol movement and other forms of organised physical education. Large amount of functional music was created for the Sokol movement and other physical education organisations: music for exercising, marching, music for the rally<sup>5</sup> and others. Almost from the outset of Sokol physical education, music was connected with exercise and other collective and mass activities. Its ideological and practical founder, aesthetician Miroslav Tyrš, wrote in 1873: “Our exercise of the body is, in its culmination, truly art as well.” Between 1870 and 1885, Karel Šebor – then an important Czech composer – composed dance pieces, marches and hybrids for *šibřinky*, the Sokol masked balls. For the second Sokol Rally, Šebor also composed an anthem on a text by poet Josef Václav Sládek, *Kupředu, kupředu, zpátky ni krok* (*Forward, Forward, Not One Step Backwards*, 1891). And the young Antonín Dvořák seems to have made sketches for *Sokolský pochod* (*Sokol March*) in the early 1860s, though the authorship of this piece is disputed.

Exercise accompanied by music was introduced at the Second Rally, in 1891. Probably the most important ensemble to accompany Sokol exercises was František Kmoch’s wind band from Kolín (a small town about 50 kilometres east of Prague). Kmoch composed a number of Sokol marches before his death in 1912, the best known of which are *Vzletem sokolím* (*With a Falcon’s Flight*) and an arrangement of *Lví silou* (*With the Strength of a Lion*), a Sokol anthem. Janáček wrote his *Hudba ke kroužení kužely* (*Music for Club Swinging*) for piano in 1893. The Moravian Sokol members at the Rally in 1893 exercised to a wind band version of *Music for Club Swinging* orchestrated by František Kmoch.

The First Republic (1918–1938) saw further development of the Sokol movement, but also of other forms

of organised physical education. Musicians František Janský, František Suchánek and Jan Urban collaborated with the workers’ physical education movement, while Josef Kříčka, Jan Evangelista Zelinka and Prokop Oberthor, among others, composed music for socially-democratic workers’ olympiads. The varied work of Brno-based composer František Josef Papš stood somewhat above party lines. He composed for both the Sokol movement and the Federation of Workers’ Physical Education Association (a left-wing organisation active in Czechoslovakia from 1921 to 1938), but also for Orel, the second largest sports organisation in the First Czechoslovak Republic. Musical production linked to the Turnverein – the German gymnast’s association – represents a virtually unexplored issue regarding German culture in the Czech lands.

This situation also saw more in-depth considerations of the characteristics of an ideal music for exercise and relationships between music and physical education more generally. We must certainly mention “Eurythmics”, also known as “Eurythmic gymnastics”, a sport/dance method developed by Swiss composer Émile Jacques-Dalcroze, which gained considerable influence in the beginning of the 20th century.

Jacques-Dalcroze was essentially trying to revive Greek “orchestrics”, based on the bodily fusion of word, music and movement. “Eurythmics” soon made its way into Czechoslovakia in both theory and practice, mostly thanks to the efforts of Eliška Bláhová and the Jacques-Dalcroze Society. Eurythmics became a typical phenomenon of middle-class first republic culture, and an indispensable part of the life style of young girls and women in the city. As a period women’s magazine puts it, “sport strengthens the body and solidifies the muscles”, and Eurythmics, on top of that, “provides grace, a certainty of movement, walking, natural and effortless poise”.

Crucial figures for a discussion of Sokol musical works are Karel Pospíšil and Jan Seehák. Pospíšil composed a number of pieces for exercise and most of the pieces for the 5th–8th All-Sokol Rallies (1907, 1912, 1920, 1926). He also wrote accompaniments for the mass scenes at the rallies: *Marathon* (1912), *Budování sochy svobody* (*Building the Statue of Liberty*, 1920), *Kde domov můj?* (*Where is My Home?*, 1926) and *Pád tyrana* (*The Fall of the Tyrant*, 1913), as well as a number of podium compositions, Sokol songs, marches and male choirs (*October 28th*, *Náš cíl – Our Goal*). Jan Seehák also wrote a number of exercise pieces, as well as Sokol songs and marches. The identifying

4) The Sokol Movement (sokol is Czech for falcon) is a gymnastics organisation for all ages, founded in Prague in 1862 by Miroslav Tyrš and Jindřich Fügner, based on the principle of “a strong mind in a sound body”. The movement eventually spread into all corners of Austria-Hungary, but despite its non-political foundations, it was crucial for the development of Czech nationalism.

5) The spartakiads (or spartakiades) were originally international events held in the Soviet Union between the wars. The spartakiads in Czechoslovakia were of a more national character and were characterised by mass gymnastics displays for the public.

signs of this type of work are a strongly rhythmical nature and a nationalist character, represented by the use of folk music idioms. We should also mention Julius Kalaš as an author of music for Sokol exercises and the musical accompaniment to the documentary film made in 1939, *X. všesokolský slet (The 10th All-Sokol Rally)*. Functional sport pieces have an important place in the work of composer Jaroslav Křička (1882–1969). Occasional pieces for physical education shows predominate, written – with considerable political flexibility – for Sokol as well as for workers’ physical education societies or the YMCA. For the Sokol Rally in 1932, Křička composed *Prostná cvičení žáků (Floor Exercises for Students, 1931)* and *Nápodobivá cvičení nejmladšího žactva (Imitative Exercises for the Youngest Students, 1931)*. He also composed an exercise scene for children’s choir, *Roční doby (The Seasons, 1931)*, *Prostná cvičení mužů (Floor Exercises for Men, 1936)*, *Prostná cvičení žákyň (Floor Exercises for Female Students, 1937)*, *Národní tance (National Dances, 1938)* for exercises of teenage gymnasts and *Prostná cvičení dívek nižších tříd (Floor Exercises for Girls from the Lower Years, 1938)* for the high school games in Prague. Additionally, Křička also composed sport marches, march songs and other genres, predominantly functional. He also wrote the music for the ceremonial scenes at the Workers’ Olympiads in 1921 (*Na úsvitě nové doby – On the Dawn of a New Age* for wind orchestra) and 1927 (*Práci k svobodě – Through Work to Freedom* for large military orchestra) and the rally march *Věrná stráž (Loyal Guards, 1926)*. In 1936, Křička arranged Suk’s Sokol march *V nový život (Towards a New Life)* with lyrics added by his brother Petr Křička. We’ll find further sporting moments in Křička’s march song *Vám, letci, vám (To You, Pilots, to You, 1934)*, written for the Czechoslovak air force, or in his work for children: in the piano collection *Cirkus v pěti tónech (Five-Note Circus, 1934, no. 2 “On the Trapez”)*, in *Nové písně a pochody (New Songs and Marches, 1935)*, a song cycle which includes a short piece titled “Physical Education”, or in *Pochod mladých táborníků (The March of the Young Campers, 1934)* for voice and piano. Finally, let us mention that Křička’s comic opera *Bílý pán (Gentleman in White, 1930)* contains a striking table-tennis tournament scene (“Valse noble e ping pong”).

As for the music used by communist spartakiads<sup>6</sup> and social-democratic workers’ olympiads during the period of the First Republic, we shall mention only a few basic facts. The first spartakiad in Czechoslovakia took place in 1921. Josef Dobeš, then mostly known as a composer of music for silent films, composed a *Festival March (Slavnostní pochod)* for it. *Vítězství revoluce (The Victory*

*of the Revolution)*, the music for the final scene, which included dramatic and vocal elements, was composed by Bohumír Kudera, sung by the Dědrasbor and directed by avant-gardist Jindřich Honzl. A year later, in 1922, Brno hosted a municipal spartakiad. In addition to Dobeš, mentioned above, there was also music by František Janský, horn player with the Brno National Theatre and a professor at the Brno Conservatoire. Jan Urban wrote the revolutionary songs for the 1925 spartakiad in Ostrava.

In addition to the spartakiads (held in 1921, 1927, 1934), the First Republic also saw three workers’ olympiads organised by SDTJ (Federation of Workers’ Physical Education Units), for which – in addition to Křička’s pieces mentioned above – music was written by Václav Kálík, Prokop Oberthor, and Antonín Kučera.

Let us turn our focus to the festive scene of *Práci k svobodě (Through Work to Freedom)* from the second worker’s olympiad, held in 1927. This was a mass pantomime involving 2200 performers and accompanied by Křička’s music. Today, the scene’s musical dramaturgy seems bizarre to say the least. In the first part, writes Křička, “the rise of the old world is shown a variations on the Russian tsarist anthem (a sabbat is danced), the arrival of the commissioned officers to a rhythmisation of the same theme in the drums, the lazies and the hedonists as a ländler, and a cynical waltz”. In the second part, according to musicologist Vladimír Gregor, “the aim is to capture false freedom through a fox-trot persiflage of the Austrian anthem and the chaos of nations in the counterpoint of six anthems of nations recently at war”. The final part is based on the “Song of Work”<sup>7</sup> and the folk songs “Není muže nad kováře” (“There is No Man Like a Blacksmith”) and “Nemel, nemel” (“Stop Jabbering, Stop Jabbering”), which flow out into the final triumphant march.

On the fringes of European functional sport music, we might also mention Sergei Prokofiev’s *March for the Spartakiade (1935)*. In his youth, Prokofiev frequented a Sokol group and wrote a sport march which was published by the Sokol movement. The American musicologist Simon Morris recently discovered Prokofiev’s lost *Fizkulturnaya Muzyka (Phys-Culture Music)* from 1939, intended for a spartakiade. Morris also realised its world premiere.

*V nový život (Towards a New Life, 1919)*, Josef Suk’s famous Sokol march, infused with heroic pathos (which rose even further with the addition by Petr Křička’s lyrics) is practically functional music: it only differs from other Sokol or nationalist pieces such as František

6) The spartakiads (or spartakiades) were originally international events held in the Soviet Union between the wars. The spartakiads in Czechoslovakia were of a more national character and were characterised by mass gymnastics displays for the public.

7) The Song of Work (*Píseň práce*) was a revolutionary song with music by Josef Scheu and words by Josef Zepf, later very popular during the communist era (1948–1989).

Kmoch's march *Lví silou* (*With the Strength of a Lion*) in its superior composition. The piece, which is part of Suk's "republican triptych" (along with *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale "St Wenceslas"*, 1914, and *Legend of the Dead Victors*, 1920), was most probably composed as a reaction to a threat to the young state: the first sketches are from April 1919. Like in Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, the work is both introduced and concluded by fanfares, which thus form a relatively autonomous section. The piano four hands piece *Towards a New Life* succeeded in the Czechoslovak Sokol Community competition for a new festive march, in which it received the first prize. The premiere (in Oberthor's arrangement for wind band) took place on the 27th of July 1920, during the entrance of the men for the floor exercises at the 7th All-Sokol Rally. It then became an integral part of the men's entrance at all future rallies.

Janáček's *Sinfonietta* (1926) is an example of a work bound to the world of sport - more specifically the Sokol movement - by its title at the premiere ("Sletová Symfonieta" - "Rally Sinfonietta"), the circumstances of its first performance (the 8th All-Sokol Rally in 1926) and the critical texts about the piece (designated as inspired by the Sokol idea) and its author (Janáček as a Sokol sympathiser).

Another piece that can be considered to reflect the Sokol movement is Otakar Ostrčil's opera *Honzovo království* (*Honza's Kingdom*, 1934), which cites Sokol marches, as Brian Locke discovered. Boleslav Vomáčka dedicated his setting of Vítězslav Hálek's text *Vítězi!* (*To the Victor!*), part of the *Ž temna* (*From the Darkness*) cycle, composed at the end of WWI. It was published as a pamphlet in the revolutionary year of 1918. It is similar in character to Křička's cycle *Onwards, Heart*: there is a strong, exalted pathos regarding the nation and manliness, and Sokol is conceived as both its embodiment and symbol. By dedicating *To the Victor!* "to the Sokol movement", Sokol becomes an embodiment of combative Czech masculinity, with an emphasis on a militant anti-German position, rather than a focus on physical education. The character of the music is adapted accordingly - it is a lively march in B flat major with effective "echoes" in the chorus ("To arms, now!" - "To arms, now!") between the tenors and the basses.

Bohuslav Martinů also had important links to the Sokol movement. We should mention the *Festive Overture for the All-Sokol Rally of 1932*, with which Martinů won a world-wide composition competition, and - moving into the postwar years - also *Pozdrav sokolstvu a sletu* (*Greetings to Sokol and the Rally*) from 1948.

Among Martinů's occasional functional pieces, we find a humorous piano miniature titled *Vítězný pochod sportovního klubu R.U.R. v Poličce* (*Victory March of the R.U.R. Sports Club in Polička*,<sup>8</sup> 1948). As proof of similar tendencies in Slovak music of the 1920s, we can cite Eugen Suchoň's juvenilia, *Pochod pezinského športového klubu* (*March of the Pezinek Sports Club*, 1924) for two violins and cello, inspired by the composer's small-town environment and his participation in the local football club.

Two regional Moravian composers were also close to Sokol physical education: F. M. Hradil (mentioned above in connection to his symphonic image *Football-Match*) and Alois Ručka (1867-1940). Hradil was active in Ostrava from 1926 as choir director for the Sokol Singing Society, and he seems to have dedicated *Píseň vítězná* (*Victory Song*, 1924) for male choir to Sokol. Ručka composed the *Festive Chorus for the Sokol Anniversary* on text by Stanislav Cilijak, as well as the *Cantata for the Anniversary of the Dačice Sokol*. In connection with a general sporting theme, we should also mention Ručka's piece for children *Na hřišti* (*On the Playground*, 1929) for three violins and piano four hands.

Pavel Haas (1899-1944) was another composer inspired by the Sokol movement in the tense period before the Munich Agreement, specifically the All-Sokol Rally in 1938. Hearing the festive march on the radio, says biographer Lubomír Peduzzi, inspired Haas to write the third movement of his third string quartet. In its linearised shape, it is related to the avant-garde sport composition, its Sokol character strengthened by the march tempo and intonation.

This leads us to the conclusion. In 1938, philosopher and music theorist Theodor Adorno compared modern popular music (and mass 'serious' music too) to sport, considering both detrimental symptoms of a dehumanised modernity, marked by "a strict differentiation from games" and an "animalistic seriousness". This survey of a marginalised layer of Czech music can be concluded by stating that the interwar avant-garde, despite its clearly playful character, did not avoid this animalistic seriousness, nor did it avoid sport or jazz. Quite the opposite: it accepted them as important inspirations, or even allied cultural productions: new music, sport and jazz were the building blocks of the new culture.

8) R.U.R. refers to Rossum's Universal Robots, from Karel Čapek's theatre play of the same title. Polička is the town of Martinů's birth and childhood.

# CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

## EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

### IN THE WINTER OF 2017/18

Miroslav Srnka has once again made asserted his presence on the international field, this time as featured composer at the DIALOGUE 2017 festival for contemporary music in Salzburg. His music was the basis of the festival's dramaturgy, and for four days – in keeping with the festival's name – it was presented in dialogue with other music: contemporary, classical, electronic and cinematic. Of the pieces presented, let us mention at least the monodrama *My Life Without Me* sung by soprano Laura Aikin with the österreichisches ensemble für neue musik conducted by Johannes Kalitzke, the orchestral *Eighteen Agents* and *No Night No Land No Sky* (Münchener Kammerorchester, cond. Clemens Schuldt) or *Les Adieux* (Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, cond. Pablo Heras-Casado). Czech orchestras and ensembles then presented new works by composers Ondřej Štochl, Ian Mikyska, Petr Bakla, Luboš Mrkvička, Jiří Gemrot, Marko Ivanović, Daniel Skála and Pavel Zemek-Novák, among others.

As for contemporary opera, the boldest feat of this winter season was the world premiere of composer – and in this case also librettist – Miloš Orson Štědroň's (\*1973) second opera. *Don Hrabal*, which bears the subtitle of "Poetic images from the life of Bohumil Hrabal", uncovers the personality and stance of the famous Czech writer in nine scenes on the New Stage of the National Theatre, focusing on his relationships with women – his mother, his wife Pipsi, or his other loves, brought together in the character of the Muse. The story oscillates on the verges of the comic and the existential. Štědroň's music is stylistically eclectic, combining the language of contemporary music with rock and roll, pop and jazz. Leading Czech Baritone Roman Janál excelled in the title role of Hrabal. You can read more information about the individual events in both Czech and English on [blog.musica.cz](http://blog.musica.cz).

DECEMBER-MARCH

30 November – 3 December, Stiftung Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria. **DIALOGUE 2017.**

Miroslav Srnka as featured composer of the festival.

3 December, Oper Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany. **Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Michiel Dijkema, music director: Christoph Gedschold. Following performances: 9 and 14 December 2017, 4 March and 1 June 2018.

5 December 2017, St Salvator Church, Prague. "Circle". **Ondřej Štochl: *Shadows by Day, Light by Night* (world premiere).** Tereza Horáková – violin, Martin Opršál – vibraphone, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

12 December 2017, Church of St. Lawrence, Prague. **Ian Mikyska: *All Ending* (world premiere).** Konvergence ensemble.

14 December 2017, The New Stage, National Theatre, Prague. **Miloš Orson Štědroň: *Don Hrabal* (world premiere).** Directed by: Linda Kepřtová, music director: Jan Chalupecký. Following performances: 3 and 6 February 2018.



*Ondřej Štochl: Shadows by Day, Light by Night*  
*Tereza Horáková – violin, BERG Orchestra cond. by Peter Vrábek*

15 January 2018, Amphithéâtre – Cité de la musique, Philharmonie de Paris, Paris, France. Biennale de Quatuors à cordes. **Miroslav Srnka: Future Family (world premiere)**. Quatuor Diotima.

18 January 2018, Convent of St Agnes, Prague. **Petr Fiala: Introduction and Tango (world premiere)**. Petr Nouzovský – violoncello, Ladislav Horák – accordion.

28 January 2018, Opéra National de Lorraine, Nancy, France. **Leoš Janáček:**

**Katya Kabanova (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Philipp Himmelmann, music director: Mark Shanahan. Following performances: 30 January, 1, 4 and 6 February 2018.

31 January 2018, Besední dům, Brno. FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA. **Petr Bakla: Elsewhere, Luboš Mrkvička: For Large Ensemble – part C, Marián Lejava: Vertigo (world premieres)**. Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.

31 January and 1 February, Smetana Hall, Municipal House, Prague. **Jiří Gemrot: Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra (world premiere)**. Vilém Veverka – oboe, Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, conductor – Tomáš Netopil.

4 February 2018, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum. **Ondřej Štochl: Yin – Nostalgia and Hope (orchestral version world premiere)**. PKF – Prague Philharmonia, conductor: Ilyich Rivas.

10 February 2018, Staatstheater Kassel, Kassel, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: Jenůfa (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Markus Dietz, music director: Francesco Angelico. Following performances: 17, 23 and 28 February, 8, 10 and 18 March, 1, 8 and 24 April, 14 and 21 June 2018.

19 February 2018, Suk Hall, Dům hudby, Pardubice. **Marko Ivanović: Little Words (chamber version world premiere)**. Chaazi Levicek – mezzosoprano, Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, conductor: Marko Ivanović.

21 and 22 February 2018, Church of St Anne, České Budějovice. **Daniel Skála: Layering (world premiere)**. South Czech Philharmonic, conductor: Marek Prášil.

25 February 2018, Oper Köln, Köln, Germany. **Viktor Ullmann: The Emperor of Atlantis (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Eike Ecker, music director: Rainer Mühlbach. Following performances: 27 February, 2, 6 and 10 March 2018.



Baritone Roman Janáček in Miloš Orson Štědrňák's *Don Hrabal*  
National Theatre, Prague

DECEMBER - MARCH

28 February 2018, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theatre, Moscow.

**Leoš Janáček: *Jenůfa* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Alexander Titel, music director: Evgeny Brazhnik. Following performances: 1 and 2 March, 21 April 2018.

3 March 2018, Oper Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany. **Bohuslav Martinů: *Julietta* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Inga Levant, music director: Johannes Pell. Following performances: 11 and 23 March, 14 April and 17 June 2018.

3 March 2018, Theater Koblenz, Koblenz, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *The Cunning Little Vixen* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Alexander von Pfeil, music director: Enrico Delamboyé. Following performances: 11, 13, 22 and 23 March, 5, 18 and 28 April, 21 May 2018.

5 March 2018, Church of St Lawrence, Prague. "... impressions and touches in the soul...".

**Pavel Zemek-Novák: *The Touches of Mercy* (world premiere).** Trio Helix.

7 March 2018, Royal Opera House, London, UK. **Leoš Janáček: *From the House of the Dead* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Krzysztof Warlikowski, music director: Mark Wigglesworth. Following performances: 10, 14, 19, 22 and 24 March 2018.

9 March 2018, Morat-Institut, Freiburg, Germany. **Petr Bakla: *String trio no. 2* (world premiere).** ensemble recherche.

10 March 2018, Staatstheater Darmstadt, Darmstadt, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *The Makropulos Affair* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Eva-Maria Höckmayr, music director: Will Humburg. Following performances: 16, 22 and 29 March, 13 and 27 April, 10 May 2018.

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## A LITTLE-KNOWN CONTEMPORARY SOURCE FOR WENZEL TOMASCHEK

After preparing a translation of Wenzel Tomaschek's autobiography for publication (Pendragon, 2017; see also CMQ 2017/4), I was surprised to discover a contemporary source on the composer little-known to modern scholarship. This is the "Reminiscenzen an W. Tomaschek" by the poet Karl Victor Hansgirk (1823-1877), born in Pilsen, who studied with Tomaschek in Prague. The reminiscences had already been mentioned in the Czech article on Tomaschek published by Jaroslav Kamper in *Obzor literární a umělecký*, Volume 2 (May 1900, p. 98). More recently they were mentioned in the article published by Markéta Kabelková in *Hudební věda* (vol. 46, no. 4, 2009, p. 341-354). Neither article is included in the bibliography in the article on Tomaschek in *Grove* (published 2001).

Karl Victor Hansgirk, like many cultural figures of his place and time, studied law, and became a civil servant. At the same time he maintained an active creative life, publishing both novels and volumes of poetry. He spent his entire life in Bohemia, writing in German, and was ennobled (becoming von Hansgirk) upon the death of his uncle, the poet K. E. Abert. His work appears in almost every issue of the annual *Libussa*, published by Paul Aloys Klar, the same periodical in which Tomaschek's autobiography was serialized. His poem "An mein Vaterland" was set to music for a male chorus by Tomaschek, appearing in *Libussa* in 1850. We know from a report in *Bohemia* (vol. 23, March 3, 1850) that this work was performed at a benefit academy held at the Sophieninsel in Prague on March 1.

My translation into English from the original German follows. The article appeared in the 1855 issue of *Libussa*, pages 204-220.

### The Reminiscences of Wenzel Tomaschek

By Karl Victor Hansgirk

Wenzel Tomaschek was born on April 17, 1774 and died on April 13, 1850. Within this three-quarters of a century lies the development and continuation of a rich artistic life, which will provide later centuries with a worthy view of our fatherland. Just as the cradle and the grave of this artist were so widely separated in time, likewise the matter of his life was equally richly woven into the history of music.

My reminiscences of him seek neither to be an apotheosis of his musical personality, nor a criticism of his achievements. Neither should their lack of an indication of his musical

directions be taken as a reproach. I leave the labor of a musical appraisal and a critical and historical judgment of Tomaschek to skilled writers who may be permitted to utter weighty words in the highest courts of the musical world. They will have to historically and critically evaluate a composer of sacred masses, Goethe lieder and old-Bohemian folk tunes as well as the creator of a traditional harmonic method shared with many students, a system of counterpoint. To sum up they will have to evaluate an old master of an entire school from which composers such as Kittl and virtuosos such as Dreyschock, and Schulhof came from.

My reminiscences do not deal with the field of music but will simply cast light on the life of the immortal, and open the circle of his opinions to the reader, to show how his artistic creativity arose from the background of his life. For those who were near to him and personally acquainted admirers, these lines should be an hour of lively conversation with the departed. To the spiritual friend, who is less acquainted with his personality, this characteristic may even be more welcome than a biography overloaded with facts, in the midst of which, sometimes, the view of the psyche and individuality of the one being described is suppressed<sup>1</sup>.

If we view Tomaschek from the most arbitrary manner with respect to knowledge and life, then we will become aware of the fundamental basis of his artistic attitude and way of feeling. For him music was an undivided colorless beam of light coming from heaven, split only according to the various views of life. Tomaschek viewed the construction of his harmonic theory, which in the final analysis was built upon abstract numerical relations, to be synonymous with the system of created nature in general. Tomaschek was steeped with this autodidactic philosophical thought; his belief in the infallibility of his tonal relationships increased to the point of being a creed, and was taken from his thinking that his musical law was identical with the original law of the world of created nature. He was convinced that astronomy and physics in the broadest sense

rested on no other basis than on his highest musical principles. For this reason, he also viewed the technical mechanisms of his music with a sort of reverence and devotion, and revealed, in the manner of a higher religion the oracles and mysteries of his wonder-world to his students, listening with eager expressions on their faces. His religious feeling, however, did not suffer because of this special cultus. On the contrary, we must assume that Tomaschek's renowned masses, which moved both German cathedrals and hearts, were not expressions simply of passing moods, but that they had their origins in a deep understanding of Christian-Catholic teachings.

The master found the central point of his philosophical thought and religious world of sensations in the nodal point of his musical system, and he often enjoyed going as far as paradox in the parallels, above all deriving other expressions of life from his art. However, he also stood, on the other hand, on too high of a vantage point not to recognize the intrinsic value and same aesthetic heights and moral values of other artistic activities. He was guided by the view that poetry works not only in the great creation of the world and in all forms of life, but in all forms of art as well, and he therefore imposed on every artist the categorical imperative to be a poet. Therefore, the art of poetry filled him with holy awe from its tragic and heroic side, and with childlike joy and delicate melancholy from its lyrical side. In particular, he was attracted by the genuinely lyrical Goethe, appropriate for song to the greatest degree, whose freshness, health, and immediacy of feeling he was so well able to appreciate that Goethe himself placed an uncommonly high value on the compositions of his songs. In addition, this writer's versatility and objectivity in form simply amazed our old master. Above all, he overflowed with praise for Iphigenia, Tasso, and Faust. His enthusiasm for Goethe, however, was not to the disadvantage of the latter of the two Dioscuri, by whom I mean Friedrich von Schiller. He sought to reproduce the pathos of his glowing and grand

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1) I hope that it will be possible in these pages to include rich reminiscences of Tomaschek, featuring characteristic traits of his individuality, something that all his numerous admirers and friends have asked for. (The Editor)



*Wenzel Johann Tomášek*

feelings in some song compositions, as well as in the arrangement of the *Bride of Messina*. However, in the setting of many of Schiller's poems, he seems to have been guided less by his own intuition than the urge to experiment and see whether it was possible for the antithesis between Schiller and Goethe's lyric poetry to provide a musical parallel. He also strived to see whether one could overcome the difficulties faced by the composer, partly in the abstract and philosophical spirit, partly in the rich and splendid ostentation of language, and partly, finally, in the wide and difficult verse construction of Schiller's poetry. Another nourishing source of creative power from literature was found by the composer in the text of the Old Bohemian folk-song. Although credit is due to others for having rescued the songs of the so-called *Königinhofer* manuscript from dirt and mildew, and thus having snatched them from the obliterating hand of time, Tomášek has been endowed with fame for having given many

of these songs back to the people through a folk-style composition, and to have translated them from the manuscript into the family circle, where they might have been sung centuries before among other melodies from our forefathers. We find an entirely naïve nature displayed in these musical creations, going from the most unrestricted rudeness to the most mournful and tender moods. When he sang these songs himself, which happened often, even in his old age with a trembling voice, the friend of the nation flashed forth in his expressions, his eyes, and his gestures. At the same time his tongue was excellently able to give the texts the requisite linguistic softness, and thus to demonstrate how very fitting for singing the Czech language is. For history, and especially for the history of his fatherland, our master possessed a great fondness; he read it often, and knew it thoroughly. He loved to swoop with an adventurous mind back into the domains of legend, and made humorous observations about the old heathen myths.

He spared neither effort nor time in observing historical monuments or places of legend. Although, or rather because, Tomaschek was a true friend of his nation, he did not find the recognition which he was due from the side of the so-called national party. He was filled with patriotism and sympathy in his heart and mind for his fellow countrymen, for his language, and for the historical recollections of his land. In this respect he did not, however, build a Chinese wall around these thoughts and feelings, and did not pronounce anathema which lay outside these domestic boundaries. Here it was once more music which, without damage to the excellent direction of his genuinely national creations, showed him a cosmopolitan standpoint. He showed himself, with the same enthusiasm, to be amicably inclined to the gradual development of a national effort, as he was an archenemy of a Czechomania which would overwhelm its own goal. Was it for this reason then, that his beautiful settings of Old Bohemian texts, for example, individual songs from the *Königinhofer* manuscript, were so soon forgotten? In addition, there was probably another circumstance that contributed to alienating him more and more from the national party in later times, the political movement that went hand in hand with nationalism. Before the Revolution of 1848 broke out, rocking the old masters, he had been incorporated into the spiritual community of the so-called "Old Liberals". The experiences of that year and its destructive tendencies however soon made him into a decided friend of the party of the government, and created in him an aversion and disgust for the revolutionary demonic machinery, for anarchic processes, for the manifold fermentation to which the law of his harmonic method and his sense for harmony found little relevance. In his early years, that is, in the formative years of his youth, Tomaschek engaged in scholarly studies of the most heterogeneous kinds, mathematics, linguistics, and law, with talent and a rigor. To these studies he brought memory, acumen, and a talent for reflection, unusual talents for musical intellects – along with this he had the rare advantage of iron perseverance. His talent in drawing was not slight, which gladly expressed itself in caricatures, in which regard he had an excellent ability to take suggestions

from his surroundings. The master also possessed a cultivated sense for sculpture, and assigned in opera a greater significance to the plastic moment we are accustomed to seeing among musicians of the older school.

One of the nine muses was almost scorned by Tomaschek; he may not have recognized her as such, and feuded with her. Had she fought back against him with the swing of a *Cerrito* or an *Elssler* – then he would have doused this fluttering footwork with the liquor of his satire. This orphaned muse was, indeed, *Terpsichore*, he denied her divine origins, and wanted to hear in art of no other feat than that of versification, and of no other rhythm than that of music. Choreography he haughtily assigned to the lower spheres of gymnastics, and he looked at dance music with colossal disdain. The cult of fashion associated with her may have contributed to his sense of injury. During his legal studies, Tomaschek's spirit led him to the out of the ordinary and criminal histories, which he looked at with a psychological eye, and discussed, just like the trials for heresy and tortures from the Middle Ages, from all possible sides. Public judgments would certainly have had the greatest interest for the survivors. Tomaschek had outspoken sympathies and antipathies for certain men of action, and of music. The reader may simply content himself with the former in passing here. Thus, he was a warm admirer of Emperor Joseph of Austria, a fanatic for the greatness of Napoleon, and an admirer of Franklin. He was highly enthusiastic about the genius of Michelangelo, full of design, and permeating all strata of art; he took great pleasure in Hogarth, the depicter of morals. Gluck and Mozart were for him the pillars that bore up the temple of music. Shortly before his death I spoke to him about a successful performance of Mozart's *Titus*. The old man, and at any rate already wracked by illness, was so moved simply by the reproductions in conversation of this, as he called it, colossal opera, and especially by reminiscences of the parts of *Sixtus*, that soon words to express his amazement failed him, and finally he began to weep bitterly. After he had regained his composure, he expressed his pain that this opera did not exert on other minds the same sublime effect as it did on his own.

"To My Dear Homeland" for male choir by Wenzel Tomaschek on text by Karl Victor Hansgirk

His observation of beloved nature was one of the master's purest sources of pleasure. In this regard, nature's mysterious and grand workings into infinity, her planetary activity, the image of the starry heavens, the gigantic world of the Alps, and the powerful sea aroused transcendent amazement and wonder in him, just as the sweetness of the views of charming landscapes and the delicacy of their details gave him pleasure. And in the same way nature won him over with her baroque moods. Cliffs with fabulous forms and shapes, and their bizarre appearance attracted him with heightened sensations. A friend of traveling, he would miss no wonder of nature, and likewise no historical recollection and no interesting personality, and became familiar with each of these objects as much as possible.

In society our master was cheerful and courteous; one could even count on him for gallantry and hospitality, and on something rare among great musicians, to present performances of their own music. He knew how to spice up a cozy meal with guests with pithy jokes.

To give an example relating to myself: one day he sent me an invitation to a banquet in which he told me very succinctly that he would be happy to have me at table in the company of one of the famed sisters of the Roman capitol. He instructed the deliverer of the note to offer

the invitation to me verbally as well. The latter directed his embassy to me most solemnly, for he mentioned, in fact, that Tomaschek had invited a distinguished Roman woman to table as well, while he only wanted to play on the historical service of the fat house bird that would be presented to us for lunch.

The fuel for the highest potencies of his soul, however, was only given in society by conversation regarding music. In alternation, he, next to the finest expressions of enchantment and melancholy, let fly the flares and rockets of satire, or prepared his humor to mercilessly attack the foe with howitzers. Mind, wit, and sentiment became all at once quick to raise an ideal, or to obliterate antipathies. Unfortunately, his weakness was that he, in critical polemics against personalities, attacked the standpoint of his opponents from both objective and personal sides, which mainly contributed to many untrue judgments being made about him by contemporaries.

In the manner of his sociable tone and in his domestic furnishings there was something of the pride of self-acquired dignity and comfort. His external appearance in its grand outlines was imposing, and made him into a well-known figure in the city, counting among one of the stereotypes of Prague. One was really won over when he was at the piano. Then his features reflected

his genuine Czech upbringing. His lively eyes then sprayed forth artistic fire, and reached heights of exaltation when he was improvising. His eloquent mouth gained a smile of ecstasy, with a very individual charming pleasantness, while his high and free brow revealed traits of the thinker and poet.

If one thinks of such a significant head on an immense, well-proportioned body, built as if for eternity, then the imposing nature of the impression he left is explained. As with the head, so the body as well was only at its most graceful when Tomaschek had just sat down at the piano. Life, depth, power of feeling and a charming naturalness was then sprinkled over his entire appearance. The motion of the playing hand was always undulating and calm, and had nothing affected about it. His clothing corresponded with his appearance. He would always wear a jacket of dark cloth, with very nice linens. He was as averse to a tailcoat as he was to dancing. His head was shaded by a broad-brimmed artists' hat, almost calculated for the dimensions of other creatures than men. Along with many steel engravings, which presented the appearance of this man to the public, we can recollect the one by A. Payne after Thadäo Meyer's painting in the 1845 number of this annual. We also cannot avoid mentioning Ernst Popp's little bust in gypsum. It is a very well-done bust of this Bohemian musical hero, which was created through the encouragement of Mr. Paul Aloys, tirelessly active for our music and science, for which music-loving posterity will certain pay him the warmest thanks. Moreover it is worthy of recognition with what devotion Mr. Paul Aloys Klar continues to maintain a decades-long close relationship between himself and Tomaschek through lively acts of piety, even over his grave, missing no opportunity to cause the name of the deceased musician to resound in the hearts of posterity. Likewise, Tomaschek was attached to him and his family with unusual affection - he showed his worthy mother in her final years the most tender consideration, and sought to cheer her with all sorts of surprises.

His attachment to his landlords (Tomaschek resided, videlicet, at the handsome, beautiful rooms of the second floor in Klar's house, N.C. 15 3 in the Thomasgasse, Kleinseite) were also

extended by the old master to the house itself; for he lived there for 28 years, and expressed, when he came into possession of this house in 1832, the lively wish to live in this residence forevermore, and to be able to die there, which indeed came to pass.

The comfortable domestic establishment that could be seen in Tomaschek's residence made a very happy impression, because to these impressions was joined the thought that productive and instructive music, exceptionally, had found golden soil here. Our master had, however, only earned everything through music. This well-to-do household, not showy, but rather the expression of prosperous sufficiency, was the product of years of artistic activity. In particular, the source of gold from piano instruction raised him from circumstances of great penury to a rich and respectable man who revealed himself in the furnishing of his apartments.

In the middle of his grand salon his beautiful piano stood like an altar. From this central point all life spread outwards into the sprawling rooms - music, society, conversation. All instruction, even that in which the teacher could momentarily dispense with the piano was delivered from here. Here he taught his important singers, male and female - Groff and Ullram, his spouse Wilhelmine and his sister-in-law, and the likewise excellent singer Juliane Ebert, Mariée Glaser, also known to the public as poetess. Here, in earlier years, when the twilight hour approached, one heard him indulge in his glowing fantasies. Here he performed his songs and choruses before Prague's most select music audience in house concerts, and here one heard the later most-epoch-making piano virtuosos appear for the first time, before they began their musical tours in the wider world. Here, finally, one heard them when they came home crowned with fame from Paris, London, Madrid, Moscow, and the cities of Germany, before the same small, select audience, filled with thanks for the old master, showing off their brilliance. One can easily imagine the most touching scenes of noble gratitude on the part of the students, and of devoted acknowledgement by the teacher. Tomaschek's final years were certainly less rich in moments of musical life. Increasing pain from gout had afflicted the immense structure

of the otherwise healthy body, and the spares of several years had lost their previously beneficial influence and were no longer able to lastingly drive away the toughened substance of the disease. His joy in composition was spoiled by physical pains, and his piano-playing was affected, since the gout influenced the flexibility of his fingers. The old and sick man soon began to lose his will to live. But companionship always remained a consolation to him, even in the most preoccupying moments of his illness, and when he was among people he armed himself once more with his old humor, which even made his illness the target of his sarcastic remarks.

One of the most moving moments in Tomaschek's final years took place at the celebration of the centennial of Goethe's birth, held in 1849 at the German casino in Prague. On the evening before this birthday fest all the artistic notables and friends of Goethe's muse assembled in the rooms of the German Casino for a supper at which, after a presentation by the actor Mr. Grauert of a prologue which I had written, a wealth of exceptional song compositions (all lieder to texts by Goethe) were performed. It was natural that this attracted Tomaschek, who had the closest connection of artistic intercourse with Goethe, to this fest. Since the Goethe celebration had to be kept firmly in view, Tomaschek's compositions of Goethe lieder had to be put on the program, which indeed mainly happened. The arrangers thought to make a simply formal invitation to the composer, since one was aware of the considerations that he had to make because of his illness, and which meant that he seldom left the front door of his house. The high regard in which he held the poet overcame, however, all the difficulties on this occasion; he made a quick decision and was driven to the fest, to the great surprise of all the friends of Goethe, and just think! – the fest became, without exaggeration, not only a Goethe celebration, but a Tomaschek celebration as well. As soon as he arrived the warmest sympathies for him were expressed, and he was greeted as a comrade equal in birth to the poet. His compositions, excellently sung by the singers Versing and Knopp, enraptured the listeners and brought unusually enthusiastic applause and in this high tide of general approbation feelings of pettiness

were completely submerged. The toasts offered with truly sincere devotion, his happy musical interpreters (along with Goethe) and the subjects of praise made no eye among the assembly, and, least of all, the eye of the musician praised, remain undewed with the pearls of the heart. Tomaschek, overcome, extended his hand to the musical colleagues present, and shook their hands with an expression which vividly testified to the feelings which powerfully filled him from within. Immediately after this evening the old master still had the great pleasure of hearing the brilliant opera singer Frau Auguste Knopp Fehring perform the most beautiful of his lieder with, as he said himself with amazement, unsurpassed mastery.

The urge to self-expression naturally weakened in the final living hours of the master as the degree of the discomfort of his bodily situation increased. His final composition of lieder is published in the 1849 volume of *Libussa* with text and music. It is a quartet for male voices, the text of which (An Mein Vaterland) is composed by the author of these lines. The tireless teacher did not cease to give instruction to his students during the most painful hours of his illness until the point at which he was bedridden. I cannot avoid being deeply moved when I think back to one of his last hours of teaching.

O tireless teacher! – you were just then in the state in which one could see that the enigmatic process of the separation of soul would soon take place. Your eyes were dull, glassy, broken; your otherwise solid form was shivering and contracted; your breath was uneven and difficult, and over the cheeks of your ruined countenance flitted those worrisome roses which precede those of the tombstone. You, however, held the notebook in your trembling hand, and had, as in your happiest hours, a circle of your students gathered around you. There were tormenting pauses in your exhaustion, and then it became secretly quiet in the room, while from the adjoining chamber the weeping of your friends, difficult to hold back, penetrated. During this scene, I approached you with a feigned expression; you laboriously stood up, pointed to the notebook, and said, with visible emotion: “I must, however, still tirelessly share what I know with my students; for I will not be here much longer.”

I pretended as if I had not understood this hint of his imminent death, and let his inclination to teach continue on. The old man died calmly and tranquilly, although not without pain at separating from the life for which his active participation and living sense of music did not leave until the last hour. He was only too aware of his increasing weakness before his death, and bitterly lamented the gradually rising decrepitude of his immense body. It is a strange and ironic twist of fate that the master, for whom the recognition of his efforts by worthy parties did so much good, was unable to have the pleasure of seeing the certificate of honor sent to him by the Berlin Academy for Arts and Sciences. When the certificate arrived in Prague, its recipient was no longer among the living, and the eye, which would have viewed this document through tears of joy, was broken; it only served to be laid upon the coffin of the departed.

What Tomaschek left behind, along with his living monuments, the already published compositions and his already renowned students, is a musical nachlass of volumes of unknown works, the redaction and edition of which was placed under the aegis of a man whose sense for music and scholarship and whose close relation to the author lets one hope that these works will not be lost to the world<sup>2</sup>. This is the departed's dear nephew, Dr. Eduard Tomaschek, former professor of the K.K. Theresianum, and of the University of Vienna, now the K.K. Ministerialrat in the Ministry of Education.

We now close these words of remembrance with the vivid wish that they may not be the last to be spoken over the grave of this significant artist.

2) Tomaschek's "Harmonielehre" can be described as the highpoint and landmark of his life's efforts and striving; it is as witty as it is original, and has filled everyone who has received only some knowledge in this area with deep reverence. This work, which Tomaschek always looked upon with pride, he completed, and it requires very little for it to be published in a printed edition, which would be the most marvelous and grand monument for posterity, and which each friend of art, music and the fatherland has been looking forward to for years with longing and the most excited anticipation! May the present owner of this rare musical treasure soon contribute this to the common inheritance of humanity – a request, which is pressingly made to him in the name of Czech music. (The Editor)

## reviews

### Ensemble Berlin-Prag

Jan Dismas Zelenka  
Trio Sonatas

Ensemble Berlin-Prag  
(Dominik Wollenweber, Vilém Veverka -  
oboe, Jakub Černohorský - violin,  
Mor Biron - bassoon, Barbara Maria  
Willi - harpsichord,  
Ulrich Wolff - double bass, violon).

Text EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded: July 2017  
at Teldex Studios, Berlin. Published:

Jan. 2018. TT: 47:10, 47:33.  
2 CD Supraphon 4239-2.

Zelenka's cycle of *Six Trio Sonatas for Two Oboes (Violins), Bassoon and Basso Continuo*, written around 1721–1722 is remarkable in many ways. It was not written as a commission, and so the composer could really let his creativity and invention run free. As for musical form, these are *sonati di chiesa* (church sonatas), but Zelenka goes to the very edge of the form in his expert use of counterpoint and inventive melodic writing. He creates music that is emotionally very distinct and has a capacity to draw the listener in in a very direct fashion, but which is also extraordinarily demanding for the performers – the 1st and 2nd oboe parts are virtuosic, including large leaps and extremes of the range. The composer included a note in the bassoon part, stating that he considers it a *concertante* part, and he also often notates it separately. Due to these difficulties, there are not many complete recordings of the sonatas. Of these, the most often mentioned are those made on modern instruments by Swiss oboist and composer Heinz Holliger in the 1970s and 1990s. The newest recording on period instruments were made last year by Collegium 1704. **Ensemble Berlin-Prag** was formed in 2011 as an ensemble featuring the best German and Czech performers, with the intention of performing – and later recording – Zelenka's trio sonatas. Three of its members are also members of the Berlin Philharmonic. In their interpretation and their use of modern instruments, the ensemble takes their cue from Heinz Holliger's work. In their attempt to take interpretations of this extraordinary chamber work forward, they



set themselves an ambitious task: record the cycle in a manner that would mean it would not have to be recorded again. Or at least that's how their efforts were summarised by conductor, violinist and historically informed performance expert **Reinhard Goebel**, whom the ensemble invited to work on the recording with them. Their approach to Zelenka's music, then, is absolute. From a lengthy period of preparation and concerts, through the choice of studio (Berlin's Teldex) to an intense immersion in the musical manuscript. So what does Zelenka's music sound like in Ensemble Berlin-Prag's interpretation? The *Sonata no. 1 in F major* opens the cycle. The ensemble chooses a tempo that is considerably faster than what is commonly adopted, which suits the music very well. The same is true of the second movement – a fresh entrée to the cycle par excellence! Oboists **Dominik Wollenweber** and **Vilém Veverka** excel in their pleasantly cultured tone, enlightened rhetoric, refined articulation, phrasing and ornamentation. They imprint the slow movements with delicacy and charm. In the faster passages, when the composer makes use of imitation (among other techniques), the oboists are at the limits of what is possible without losing expression and certainty. Bassoonist **Mor Biron** excels in a similar manner, particularly in the *Sonata no. 3 B flat major* or the *Sonata no. 5 in F major*, where his part is of a more *concertante* nature. The basso continuo part is played by harpsichordist **Barbara Maria Willi** and **Ulrich Wolf**, who alternates double bass and violin. Their playing does not lack facility, letting the polyphonic construction show with precision, and exquisitely framing the wind parts. *Sonata no. 3* also features **Jakub Černohorský** on violin, concert master of the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava. His interpretation too is stylistically pure, transparent – it sounds light and joyful, especially in the fast movements. His work with dynamics is highly balanced. The coordination of all the players is therefore synergic, and it presents Zelenka's compositional mastery and intellectual depth

in its full complexity. Reinhard Goebel wrote some emotionally tuned words for the booklet of this compact 2-CD set. He focuses in detail on the historical context, listing Zelenka as one of the five best composers at the beginning of the 18th century, next to Bach, Leclair, Händel and Loccatelli. Ensemble Berlin-Prag mediates the world of Zelenka's trio sonatas in an entirely unique way. Time will show whether their ambitious goal has been fulfilled, but we can already say that this is a recording of extraordinary artistic quality, which is also true of their concert performances.

Lucie Hradilová

### Bohuslav Martinů The Epic of Gilgamesh

**Lucy Crowe** – soprano,  
**Andrew Staples** – tenor,  
**Derek Welton** – baritone,  
**Jan Martiník** – bass, **Simon Callow**  
– narrator, **Prague Philharmonic  
Choir, Czech Philharmonic,  
Lukáš Vasilek** – choirmaster,  
**Manfred Honeck** – conductor.

Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded:  
Jan. 2017, Rudolfinum Dvořák Hall,  
Prague (live). Published: Oct. 2017.  
TT: 51.08. 1 CD Supraphon  
SU 4225-2.

**W**ithin Martinů performance practice, the discovery of (half)forgotten works and their renewed premieres are no rarity, even in an era when we have recordings of his complete piano music (Giorgio Koukl, Naxos) and songs (Jana Hrochová, Naxos). Martinů's polystylism and large chronological expanse predestine his work in this manner. Even today, then, there might appear a situation in which sixty years after the composer's death, one of his important – or dare I say even *most* important – works is produced in what is a de facto

premiere. This is also the case of the disk in question, Martinů's *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was recorded in January 2017 in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, at a **Czech Philharmonic** subscription concert. The intention to prepare *Gilgamesh* using the new critical edition of the Bohuslav Martinů Complete Edition (Editio Bärenreiter, Aleš Březina) was born in the team of Jiří Bělohávek, who was to conduct the work. For health reasons, however, **Manfred Honeck** took over at the last minute, accepting Bělohávek's choices for the solo voices and the narrator's part. In a remarkably short time, he found a way to the work and built a relationship with it. His interpretation is impressive for its urgent contrasts in dynamics and his capacity to ply the three-part form of the score into monolithic musical blocks. Supraphon made an excellent dramaturgical decision in placing this composition on a single disc, without the addition of any other pieces, and accompanied by tasteful graphic design. Martinů's *Gilgamesh*, which took the author fourteen years to complete, is doubtless a crucial work, both in style and content. It was finally committed to paper between 1954 and 1955. The importance of this recording is only emphasised by the use of the new critical edition, but it lies chiefly in the fact that it is the first full commercial recording in the original language, i.e. archaic English. It seems almost incredible that the three extant commercial recordings (made in 1976, 1989, and 1996) were sung in Czech, which made the piece unattractive to foreign listeners, even though it was performed by such prominent conductors as Zdeněk Košler (Naxos 8.555138) and Jiří Bělohávek – twice (Supraphon SU 3918-2, BBC Music Magazine BBC MM47) –, who was unfortunately not granted the time to finish his third rendition. He is, however, still responsible for the success this disc is destined to have, thanks to his initiating the recording and choosing the singing parts, led by **Lucy Crowe**. With all due respect to Marcela Machotková, Eva Děpoltová or Eva Urbanová, neither of them reached up to the spontaneous



quality of Lucy Crowe's performance, who continues in her acclimatisation to the Czech terrain after Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* (Opus Arte 2013). The only Czech soloist is **Jan Martiník**, whose voice always adds an almost existential urgency to the music. On this occasion, it is complemented by the paramount fullness of his mature and sacral-sounding voice. If you still have in your mind's ear the charming voice of narrator Otakar Brousek from Bělohlávek's first recording (1976), you will be surprised, but ultimately captivated by stage actor **Simon Callow's** rendition. An excellent choice. I would also choose the voice of **Andrew Staples** over those of Jiří Zahradníček or Ludovít Ludha on the older recordings. Staples is one of the many excellent British tenors performing today. Nor does **Derek Welton's** voice get lost in the quartet: juicy, masculine and self-confident. The **Prague Philharmonic Choir** led by **Lukáš Vasilek** acted as a collective support for the recording. With all due respect to their high artistic standard, they gave an extraordinary performance on this occasion, currently without competition. And we must also resort to superlatives when discussing the **Czech Philharmonic**: it spent years soaking up Martinů's music under Bělohlávek's direction, and on this hour-long disc, they present it with a technical and idiomatically confident self-evidence, which Manfred Honeck was then able to lean on. You must hear this recording before it starts winning Supraphon prize after prize.

Martin Jemelka

**Bedřich Smetana  
My Country**

**Czech Philharmonic,  
Jiří Bělohlávek - conductor.**

Text: EN, FR, GE.

Recorded: May 2014, Smetana Hall,  
Prague. Published: 2018.

TT: 76:52. 1 CD

Decca 00289 483 3187.

**W**hen Jiří Bělohlávek died, on the 31st of May of last year, the public expressed great sadness at his passing, but also posed many questions as to the continuation of the remarkable but unfinished work he left for not only the **Czech Philharmonic**, but also musical life in general. Of course, one of those questions asked after the next recording to form part of a large project focusing on Czech music for the Decca label, on which the management of the philharmonic had previously agreed with the world-renowned brand. A few of these discs have already appeared on the shelves, mostly presenting the music of Antonín Dvořák – the complete symphonies and concerts, *Stabat Mater* and the *Slavonic Dances*. Smetana's *Má vlast* (*My Country*) was also expected, of course, having only recently become popular on the world's stages in its entirety, and not only for the notorious *Vltava*. Czech orchestras and conductors also deserve part of the credit, but increasingly, this popularity is the work of artists abroad. Decca readily reached for an edited recording of the opening concert of the 2014 Prague Spring festival, added the appropriate components and then published it in the same edition as the previous Dvořák pieces. There is more news to calm fears about the fate of this series: the label has also taken on a recording of Dvořák's *Requiem* which was intended to continue the series, even though it will now be Jakub Hrůša conducting and not Bělohlávek. We can only hope, then, that Decca will gradually release the other planned philharmonic titles – whether this means publishing Bělohlávek's remaining recordings, or collaborating with other conductors. In relation to the newly published recording of *Má vlast*, some media have erroneously claimed that the 2014 Prague Spring opening concert was Bělohlávek's first performance with the philharmonic after the conductors return. The first meeting, in fact, took place a year before then, at the opening concert of the Smetana's Litomyšl festival. So how does Bělohlávek's new *Má vlast* fare?

The word *next* is intended to engender respect for the fact that Jiří Bělohlávek already has one philharmonic recording of *Má vlast*. It was made in the Vladislav Hall of the Prague Castle, it is excellent and we should not forget about it. At the time, it was overshadowed by the legendary live recording made by Rafael Kubelík at the 1990 Prague Spring, only a few weeks later. The new compact disc provides an interesting opportunity for comparison with the Czech Philharmonic's older recordings – including live albums, this includes Talich 4x, Šejna, Ančerl 2x, Neumann 2x, Smetáček, Matačić, Košler, Pešek, Mackerras, Kobayashi and Bělohlávek's older recording, mentioned above. In any case, this is a classical approach, not dissimilar from the earlier recordings or the philharmonic concerts. The lengthy performance tradition of the piece plays an important part here, as it is consistently and – especially among the listeners – sometimes anxiously guarded. We will find the differences, then, in small nuances, in the pinpointing of certain details. Older generations became accustomed to Václav Talich's conception, advanced for many years by Czech Radio in the form of his last recording (1954). In his rendition, the individual symphonic poems are beautiful classical scenes with unambiguous interpretations, about which there are no doubts, which we feel are a pre-given, unquestionable reality. Karel Ančerl surprised the public with his more modern, somewhat pragmatic conception in the 1960s, in which he dialled down the Romantic emotional exaltation and successfully and convincingly attempted a perfect, masculine discourse lacking grand emotion. Neumann's recording, referential for the coming decades, was welcomed as a certain return to the Talichian position, which after all had never completely disappeared, remaining latently in the philharmonic awareness. This lengthy Czech tradition of Smetana interpretation was confirmed by Václav Smetáček's 1980 recording; for the first time in digital. None of the number of ensuing recordings introduced a radically new take on *Má vlast*. We might consider Jiří Bělohlávek's new recording, then, as a kind of philharmonic synthesis of the dozens of preceding interpretations as we can survey them not only thanks to earlier recordings, but also in regards to the opening concerts of the Prague Spring (though we can find more contrasting elements there). Even so, we cannot miss certain moments on this recording that make it particularly interesting. Above all, Jiří Bělohlávek strove for a noble sound for the large symphonic ensemble. We notice that already with the opening harp cadenza (both recordings feature six harps in place of the original two) and in the dense symphonic sound image of the expanded orchestra (eight horns, eight double basses



and so on). Václav Talich, in fact, also considered these expansions. What is somewhat subdued here is rhythmic vigour and more noticeable changes of tempo and agogic accents. There are more *legato* sections, the unusually full sound often culminates in thrilling gradations (the best are in *Šárka* and the finale of *Blaník*). Thanks to the sonic plasticity, we can hear the harps perfectly in the climactic instance of the main motif in the finale of *Vyšehrad*, or the strings as answers to the brass at the climax of *Blaník*. The emphasis on a few small details of expression is also interesting and pleasant: though Smetana wrote them in, conductors often overlook them, for example the internal *crescendi* in the final theme of *Vyšehrad*, or the counter-voices in the trio of the polka in *Z českých luhů a hájů*. In any case, Jiří Bělohlávek's new interpretation is of the same style we have come to expect from him in relation to other pieces – it displays utter respect for the notated music, worked out to the last detail, and lacking any arbitrary elements. His *Má vlast* shines with solemnity, which is preferred to excessive pathos and formality. The above-mentioned excessive weight of the sound can be a question of the sound engineering, to an extent, but these aspects were already apparent in the Smetana Hall during the concert. The individual instrumental groups are captured perfectly, almost never dominating. We have grown accustomed to that with Decca, albeit with a Czech "crew". But thanks to the torrent of sound, some anticipated passages are suddenly drowned out. The triplets in *Blaník*, for example, lose their renowned brilliance and with it the clarity we have become used to. Many elements are lost too in the middle part (the development) of *Tábor*. The percussion section also paid the price; very effectively used by Smetana (the barely audible triangle that runs through the entire piece, the absence of the cymbals on the 4th beat during Ctirad's ride). The older recordings cannot compete with the perfectly captured sound, nor with the current form of the Czech Philharmonic, but they still occasionally seem more

colourful. These apparent blemishes, which I have sometimes noted on other new Decca recordings (in the case of the *Slavonic Dances*, for example), might disappear when listening on state-of-the-art equipment, but we cannot expect that with a majority of listeners. In any case, this is a very beautiful *Má vlast* – stylistically the best in many years, it might not surpass the extant philharmonic recordings in many areas, but it does fare better in every respect than all the recordings made by the best orchestras and conductors abroad.

Bohuslav Vitek

## Bohuslav Martinů

### Complete Works for Cello and Orchestra

Petr Nouzovský – violoncello,  
Prague Philharmonic,  
Tomáš Brauner – conductor.

Text: CZ, EN. Recorded: May–Sep. 2014. Published: Nov. 2017.  
TT: 60.54, 53.30. 2 CD  
Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm MDG 601 2041-2.

**B**ull's eye. How else might one describe cellist Petr Nouzovský's (\*1982) new double CD, which features four compositions by Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959) for cello and orchestra. There is not an abundance of recordings of the Martinů cello concerti, but they certainly exist – in recent times, for instance, in the interpretation of Swiss cellist Christian Poltéra for the Swedish label BIS, accompanied by the concerti of Dvořák and Shostakovich. Some of the recordings are complemented by the experimental, one-movement *Concertino for violoncello, wind instruments and percussion with piano* H 143 (e.g. Raphael Wallfisch on a Chandos disc from 1991). Those recordings aspiring

to completion in the field of Martinů's work for cello and orchestra, however, were heretofore short of the *Sonata da camera for cello and small orchestra* H 283 (which was recorded by Angelika May with both the concerti on a Supraphon LP from 1984, and by Martin Rummel with the *Concertino* on a Musicaphon CD from 2010), which, in comparison with both the concerti and the *Concertino* (Alexander Večtomov, André Navarra, Torleif Thedéen, Martin Rummel), is a rather overshadowed work. The Pilsen Philharmonic Orchestra – yes, a smaller regional orchestra, not one of Prague's symphonic ensembles – under the baton of principal conductor Tomáš Brauner managed a grand feat, deciding to realise (2014) and publish (2017) the recording in question with German label Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm (MDG). The Czech items in MDG's music catalogue would merit a separate review – after all, this is the only company of the market that can boast a complete recording of Foerster's symphonies with the Osnabrück Symphony, not to mention a number of successful recordings of Dvořák's chamber music and a recent disc of the *Slavonic dances op. 46* and the *New World Symphony* in a version for piano four hands (the female piano duo Trenkner & Speidel also recorded a four hands version of Smetana's *My Country*). This album belongs to Petr Nouzovský, who thus considerably extended his Martinů discography (*Duo no. 1 for violin and cello* H 157, ArcoDiva) and brought to the market the most representative of his albums so far. Nouzovský is a star not only formally, as a soloist, but also in terms of interpretation. His performance, which has a considerable lyrical component, drives the entire recording, whose strong points are certainly the slower movements of Martinů's pieces, written at very different periods of the author's life and work (1924–1955). The provocative *Concertino* with its jazz rhythms and Stravinsky inspirations is chronologically succeeded by the confident Cello Concerto no. 1, in the first of three versions from 1955. The *Sonata da Camera*, specific in many respects, composed in the troubled first weeks of WWII, is followed by the Cello Concerto no. 2, which aspires to equal Dvořák's *Concerto in B minor*, the Christmas-cantorum lyricism of the slow movement rising to the level of poignancy of Czech pastorals. Even though there are not many recordings of the Martinů cello concerti, the bar was set very high in the recording studios (Večtomov, May), including the choice of accompanying orchestra. The Pilsen Philharmonic does fall behind somewhat, especially when compared with the Czech Philharmonic led by Václav Neumann (May) and Jiří Bělohlávek (Wallfisch), and it does



## Antonín Dvořák Piano Quartets

**London Bridge Trio (Daniel Tong - piano, Kate Gould - cello, Tamsin Waley-Cohen - violin), Gary Pomeroy - viola. Text: EN. Recorded: Oct. 2014 Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK. Published: 2015. TT: 67.20. 1 CD Champs Hill Records CHRCD107.**

not have the particular rhythmic elasticity and syncopated flexibility of the leading Czech orchestra. But as soon as we get to Martinů's expressive strings, the Pilsen players shine at their best. The smaller orchestra is more of a virtue than a deficiency, except for the second concerto. Even with one's best sympathies in mind, the orchestra's performance cannot compare with the masterful rendition by the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (BIS) which accompanied Christian Poltéra (1977) in the studio for his recent recordings, whether conducted by Thomas Dausgaard (no. 1) or Gilbert Varga (no. 2). Poltéra is of the same generation as Nouzovský, and at the time of the recording's completion also a natural competitor, especially since the recordings were made at almost the same time, in 2014 and 2015. If I had to choose, I would prefer Poltéra's impressive, virtuosic, and brilliant interpretation of the first concerto (25:23), with its heightened contrasts and expert handling of the balance between the Moravian lyricism of the second movement and the outer movements, full of French esprit, over Nouzovský's attempt (30:41). In the second concerto, given the existential urgency of the slow movement in a very low dynamic and the omnipresent lyricism, I would take Nouzovský's version over Poltéra's, which is often unnecessarily rushed, coming in at almost nine minutes shorter than the Czech cellist's (30:41). The second concerto also lets the orchestra shine, just like the excellent performance of the *Concertino* and perhaps the best performance on the album, the *Sonata da Camera*. Nouzovský manages to guide the listener through the piece from its anxious opening bars to the careless allegro of the finale. Simply put, Petr Nouzovský has become the true heir of Saša Večtomov, whose takes on the *Concertino* and the second concerto have rightfully become canonical. He premiered both pieces (in 1949 and 1964), and they have now become convincing and attractive components of Nouzovský's repertoire.

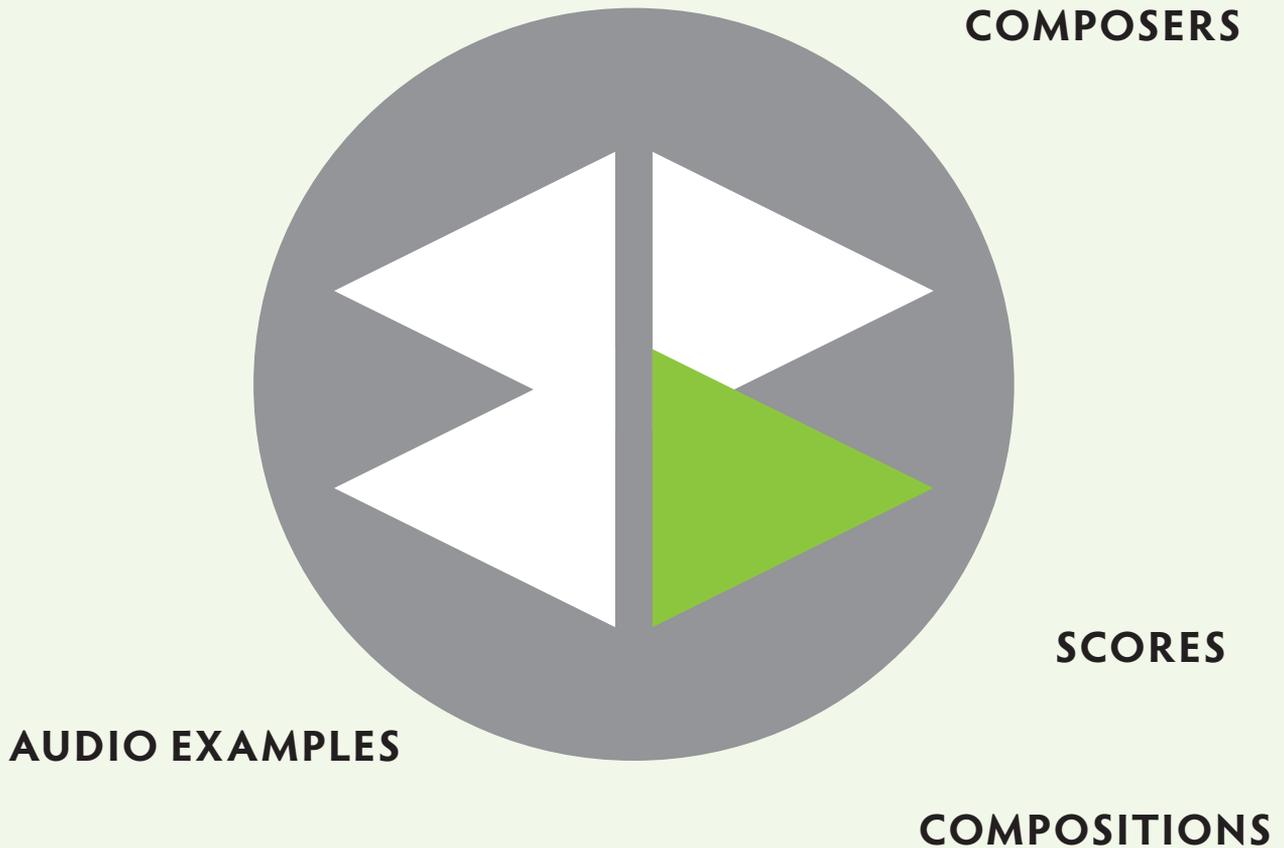
Martin Jemelka

**D**ramatists, performers and listeners often come to confront a similar question: where do we place the boundaries of Antonín Dvořák's oeuvre? When do we stop considering a piece an early curiosity worthy of occasional resuscitation, but instead take it for a full-blown work that belongs in the world's concert halls and recording studios? Even though I won't hear a bad word spoken about Dvořák's earlier *Piano Quintet op. 5* (1871), and I recently heard a Viennese performance of the *Seventh String Quartet in A minor op. 76* (1874), 150 years of Dvořák performance practice have determined that the breaking point will be 1875. In the first half of that year, Dvořák wrote the *Piano trio in B flat major op. 21*, the *Serenade for Strings in E major op. 22*, the *Piano Quartet in D major op. 23* and the *Symphony in F major op. 24* (76). 1875 was one of those feverish periods in Dvořák's work, during which he also wrote the *Piano Quartet no. 1 in D major op. 23, B 53*, whose latest studio recording by the **London Bridge Trio** and violist **Gary Pomeroy** was published by the smaller British label Champs Hill Records. They systematically and regularly publish Dvořák's chamber music: after the complete piano trios, they also put out both the older quartet and the later *Piano Quartet no. 2 in E flat major op. 87* (1887). While this review was being written, the label presented a new recording of the Škampa Quartet playing Dvořák's quartet and quintet op. 96 and 97 (CHRCD 110). Dvořák's piano quartets, composed twelve years apart, are different enough that including them on one digital disc achieves an adequate contrast for

the listener. The three-movement D major quartet has a wide-breathed first movement reminiscent of Schubert, a beautiful variation movement, and a finale which combines a scherzo with a rondo-sonata form finale. The four-movement quartet in E flat major, including a second variation movement in two parts, is a chamber counterpart to the composer's *Symphony no. 8 in G major op. 88*. Unless I am mistaken, there are eighteen commercial recordings of the D major quartet, usually in combination with the E flat major quartet, whose forty one recordings bear witness to the continual interest this gem of Dvořák's chamber music can attest to. It is certainly not true that the older quartet is only recorded by Czech ensembles – quite the opposite. Most of the recordings of the older of the two quartets were made beyond our borders, which is also true in the case of the CD in question. Much of what was written of the London Bridge Trio's complete recording of Dvořák's trios applies here. In terms of tempo and timbre, these are certainly more objective renditions than those made in central Europe, led by the legendary Supraphon recordings which featured Suk, Kodoušek, Chuchro and Hála (1982). The high-period E flat quartet is certainly none the worse for the subtle and objective approach which the British artists opt for. In the last two movements, it is even fitting, as it allows their rendition to stand its ground next to the sonically rarefied creation by the Panocha Quartet and Andrés Schiff (Warner Classics, 1997), as well as the spectacular and sonically opulent live recording by Faust, Poppen, Tetzlaff and Vogt (EMI Classics, 2000). Dvořák's extroverted 1887 quartet can do with a bit of interpretive distance, given the way it overflows with emotion and extravagant invention. The older D major quintet, however, lacks the delicacy of sound and Czech judiciousness of Suk's Supraphon recording or the Martinů Piano Quartet recordings (Panton, 1994), especially in the first and last movements. This does not mean that the London Bridge Trio's album is not worth our attention – quite the opposite. They have a deep faith and devotion to Dvořák's chamber work (they did not even think of leaving out the repetition in the 1st movement of the op. 23 quartet), they approach it with respect and graciousness (see, for example, the barcarolle finale of op. 23) which surpasses many older recordings. We might point out the exemplary string unisons in the first movement of the E flat major quartet, and the quartet's delicacy shines brilliantly in both the variation movements. If we add to the artistic qualities of the playing the pleasant graphic design, the accompanying text by pianist **Daniel Tong**, and the highly personal declarations of love for Dvořák and his piano quartets written by the members of the London Bridge Trio which open the booklet, we must concede that this is a very successful Dvořák CD, one that should attract the attention of discophiles with a Dvořákian bent and all lovers of Romantic chamber music.

Martin Jemelka

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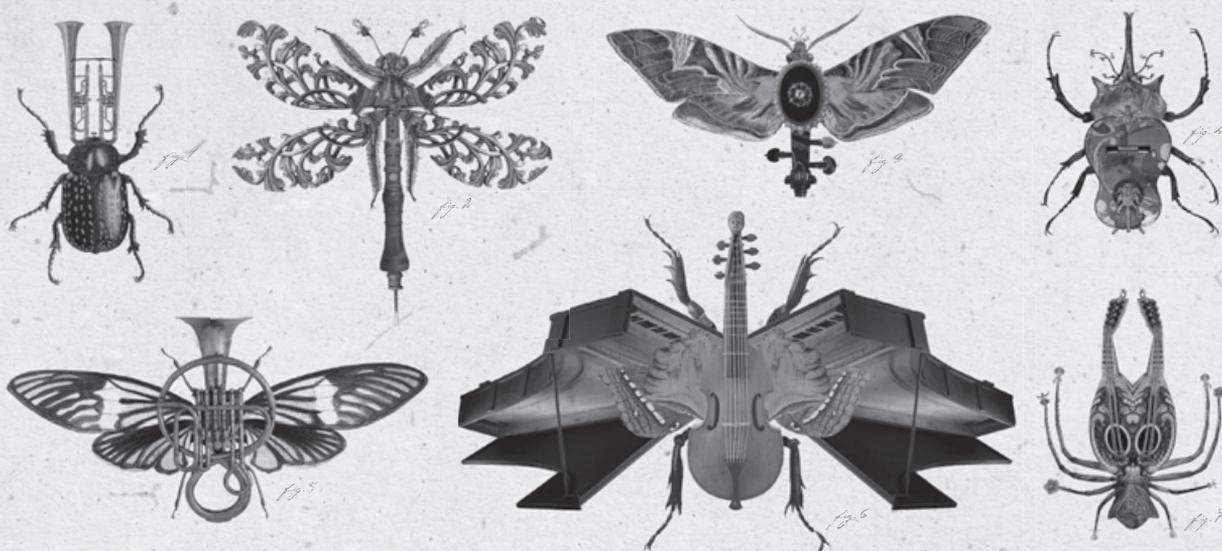
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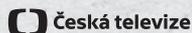
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