

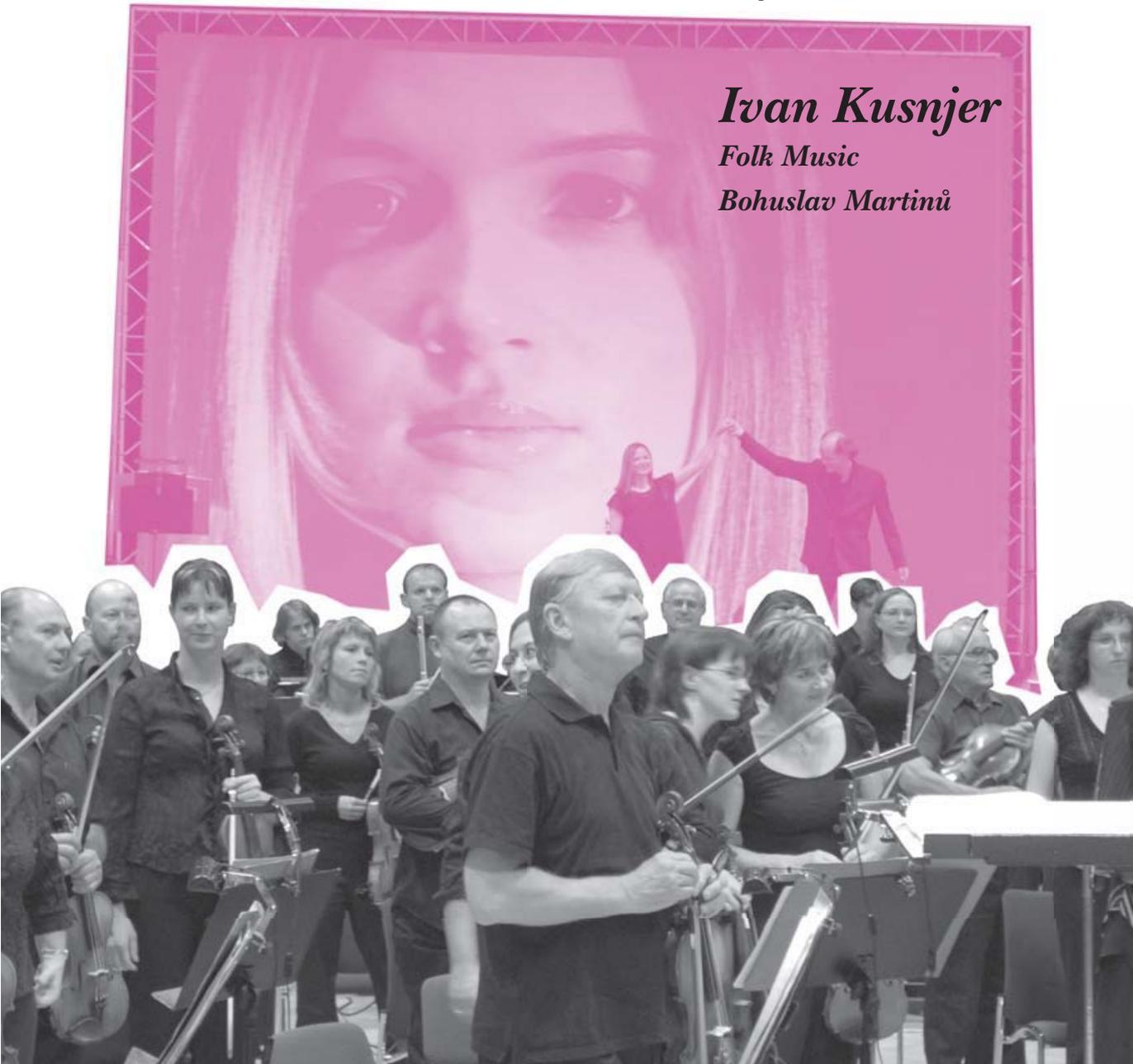
czech music *quarterly*

3 | 2007

Ivan Kusnjer

Folk Music

Bohuslav Martinů







Dear readers,

This issue of *Czech Music Quarterly* slightly deviates from the norm. As you have probably noticed, in recent years we have been quite strict about maintaining the profile of CMQ as a magazine concerned with classical music (please note that I don't put quotation marks round the expression). This is not because we look down on other sorts of music. We simply believe that despite its rather all-embracing title, it makes better sense for our magazine to keep its sights on classical music because this is in line with its own traditions and the mission of the Czech Music Information Centre which publishes CMQ. What makes this issue different? The thematic section is devoted to folklore. I will spare you contrived connections like "folk music is important for classical music, because the romantic composers found inspiration in it". Yes, folk music is of course an inseparable element of the roots of the musical culture of every country (and ultimately this is one reason we pay attention to folk music), but the real position of folk music today and its future are matters that are often far from clear and certain. Since – what today, in 2007, actually is the authentic folk music of people who live a predominantly urban life (the majority of the European population), in the middle of all these technologies? One of the answers is that for a significant part of the 20th century it was jazz. And guitarist David Dorůžka is a phenomenon so impossible to overlook that we have given into temptation and in the section where we regularly bring portraits of young hopes of Czech music you will find an interview with this outstanding jazzman.

Have a good time

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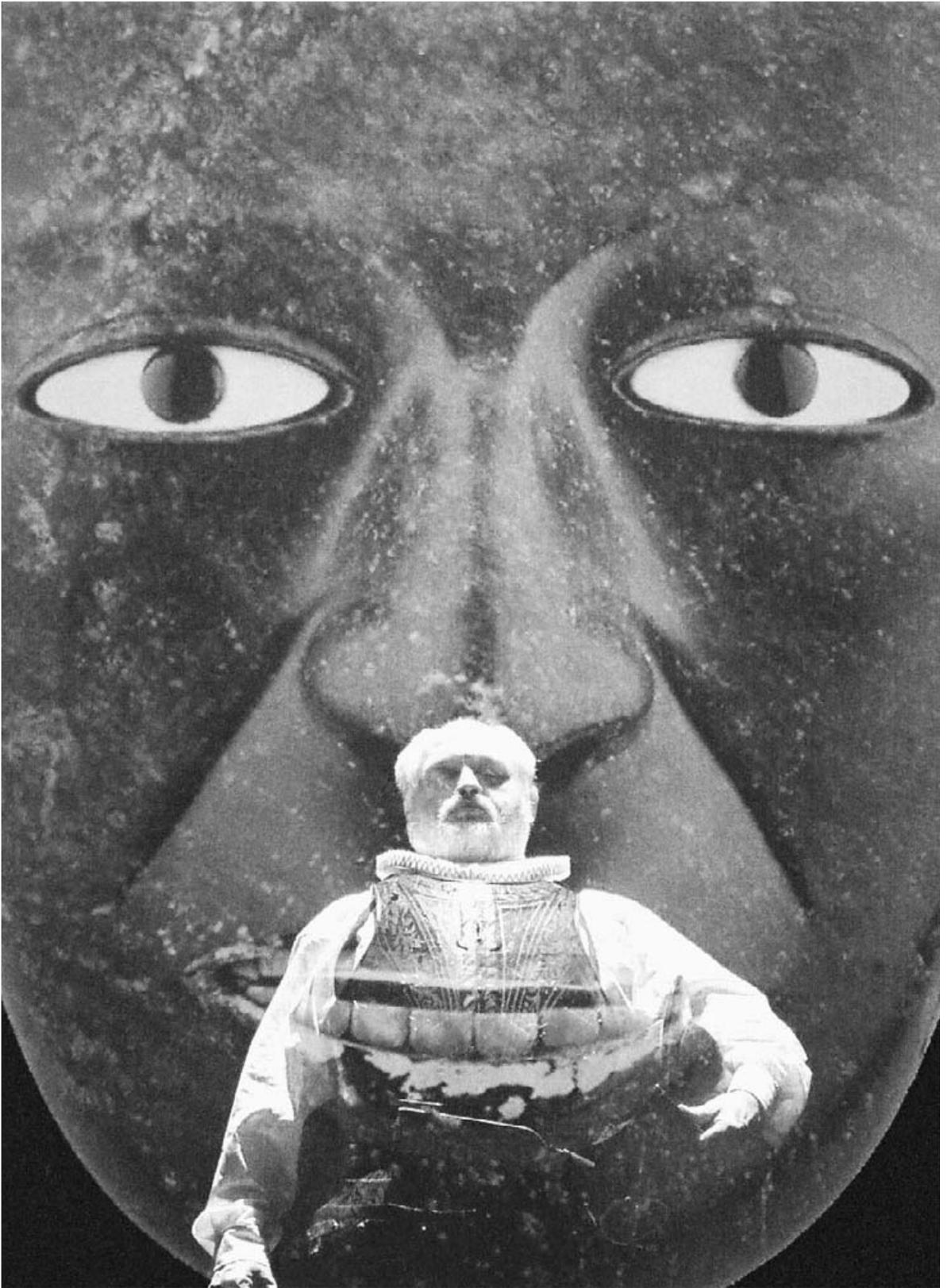


PHOTO: FRANTISEK ORTMANN

IT'S NOT AGE THAT HAS TURNED MY HAIR GREY, BUT LIFE...

THE BARITONE IVAN KUSNJR LOOKS BACK
AT A QUARTER CENTURY IN THE NATIONAL THEATRE,
IN OPERA AND IN PRIVATE LIFE.



You have been with the National Theatre Opera since 1982. A quarter century of your relationship with the NT invites a little retrospective “stock-taking”. What changes and perhaps even crises have there been in your “marriage” with the NT? After all, in a real marriage you would be celebrating your silver anniversary now, quite an achievement in the age of divorce. What keeps you faithful?

I've gone a little grey overall all those years. It isn't the result of living with the National Theatre, but just life itself. Several times now young people have offered to give up their seats for me on the tram, and I tell them, “It's not age that's turned me grey, it's life.”

Going right back to the start, the nicest period for any artist who steps on the stage of the National Theatre is the beginning, because the NT is the arch that spans the whole of Czech theatrical culture. That is my feeling about it. You always remember the director who engaged you; in my case it was Zdeněk Košler. Since those days the approach to work has changed a great deal. As directors come and go, your view of the opera house changes. Previously every production was worked out to the last detail, but today that's rather rare. Several times we haven't got together in ensemble rehearsal for a production of Marriage of Figaro, say, for a whole year, for

example, and we've met up for the first time on stage. This isn't a good thing for a company supposed to be a guarantee of the highest quality. But I've never had any real urge to chicken out and leave the NT. Once, when Košler was still there, I had an offer from Hamburg – and I thought about it very seriously. I stayed on after making an agreement that Košler would let me go anywhere anytime I didn't have a part in a premiere coming up soon. And that's how things have generally worked since then.

You started your career at the NT under the old regime. Can you say what the differences were at the NT opera in the era of “building socialism” and if so, how in your experience it has changed since 1989? And how the changes after 1989 have impacted on the everyday and long-term work of the NT opera?

Back then the big problems were mainly about trips abroad. All kinds of official papers were needed, approval from Pragoconcert [state-driven monopoly artistic agency], the Ministry of Culture, the opera directors and heads. Today everything's a matter of simple negotiation – I make an agreement, I take leave, that's it and off I go. There are no delays. But even under the communists the NT was the roof of theatre culture in the Czech Lands, in every respect. Places were found for various ex-mistresses there and the party management had to be the most reliable kind, but the theatre remained at a very good professional level. Recruitment of talents / non-talents to the NT wasn't such a hasty matter either. Everyone had to do the rounds of the companies outside Prague and anyone who stuck it out had a chance of getting into the NT. I met many musicians who didn't have what it took. And when they discovered that, they always spat on the NT one way or another. But in every case I could sense their longing to get into the NT. It's the same today, even though today it's incomparably easier to up sticks, sling your knapsack on your shoulders and go abroad. If you don't like it here you can go somewhere else, try your luck and maybe come back as a famous singer. Why not? Let everyone have a go.

Did you in any way feel the restrictions, political pressures, and weight of censorship that suffocated freedom of expression especially in the period of normalisation? Or did the special position of the NT mean that it was spared the interference of a regime that otherwise tried to control everything, and especially the field of culture?

I had problems at the very beginning with taking up my study place at La Scala in Milan, for example, but they were partly just the result of envy, because I had won the study place immediately after joining the NT – I was 30. It took a year and a half to get through all the difficulties and red tape, and I had an incredible series of problems with accommodation and expenses. On the other hand, my experience back then was very good for me, because it means I have a much better sense of how to get things done today. Back then I sometimes banged my head against a brick wall, and I don't do that so much today, even though I still sometimes go crazy when someone pushes a lot of nonsense at me. Of course, subconsciously my generation drags that era behind it like a ball and chain. It's only the next generation that will maybe be able to move on somewhere. I wasn't a member of the Communist Party, but surprisingly they didn't make much attempt to force me into anything. Perhaps it was because I was saucy. If I knew I could do it in the end, I made a beeline for what I wanted. And I went all the way up to those various ministers of culture, in person, and sat down and said, “I'm not budging until you give me some time.” In my way I argued with them, if politely. I remember when I first went into



PHOTO: FRANTIŠEK ORTMANN

O. Romanko and I. Kusnjer as Amonasro in Aida. National Theatre 2005

the Ministry of Culture. There were four pen-pushers sitting behind the table and it was an unbelievably uphill struggle getting to see at least the head of the relevant department. I had no help from the party or the government or any other organisation. After every trip out I had to submit a “report”. I wrote, “I was there, I saw”, possibly “I conquered”. I wasn’t forced to do anything else.

You went to the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) in Prague straight from a mechanical engineering secondary school. What are your memories of your first encounter with opera, and what decided you to abandon a career in engineering? Tell us about your experience of AMU, too – mainly in comparison with actual practice in opera. How did your school prepare you for work in the theatre? You have also studied in Italy; can you compare the two experiences?

For me singing has always been in a way a matter of satisfying my ego. I still prefer to sing than to go and see an opera. Even though I actually go to the opera often; I’m interested in how the young singers are developing, and what is happening in the opera world at home and abroad. What always captivated me about singing was someone could fill space just using his own organ – I mean his vocal chords. And I was lucky in my professor Teodor Šrubař, who gave me the maximum attention – we were singing every day from Monday to Friday. I won a place at AMU as an exceptional talent and had to do what were known as “bridging” exams, maybe 19 exams in the first year. I had a hard time finding a common language with some teachers, and I was even thrown out a few times. Here I must mention Dr. Karel Risinger, who told me, “Boy, you haven’t a clue. Come and I’ll give you private lessons.”

And I had three-hour sessions with him twice a week and learned the basics of form, counterpoint and other theoretical disciplines, I'm very grateful to him for the fact that I managed to get through the school. In the end I graduated with a "red diploma" (the highest class of degree). I was the thorough, pedantic type, because I told myself that if I was going to do something at all, I would do it properly. But that's beside the point – there were plenty of other people who graduated with a red diploma but I'm the only one of that generation still singing. AMU gave me a very theoretical education – which has an important place in a singer's training. In Italy things were completely different. There studies were based mainly on the singing element and if a baritone doesn't have a high a they can't be bothered with him. Whereas here we are still accepting people whose vocal potential is still only hypothetical.

For singers just starting out your experiences could be like gold, and not just for them. Today you actually teach at AMU yourself and have private pupils. How can singing talent be identified and what are the key factors for developing it?

You can recognise singing talent when someone sings just one aria; he doesn't have to sing for half an hour. You can tell if the voice sounds unaffected, well guided. There are two types, the ones who have had had some training and the "blank slates". It's hard to estimate precise potential. I had a tenor as a pupil, and he was suitable for second tenor. He was keen to study, but all the time I told him: You're not a first tenor but you could be a second, and the opera needs those as well. If you set your sights on that and go that way, it will mean not just artistic satisfaction for you, but also maybe a livelihood. He listened and it worked out for him. School shouldn't be primarily about encouraging egoism – "I'm brilliant", "I'm perfect". It should bring students up to recognise and accept what their true capacities are. This is a branch of music, where talent doesn't develop from the age of five as with instrumentalists (I'm writing a doctorate on the theme), and the problem is elsewhere. A singer has to mature – and that's also all about what's in your mind. You can get a fantastic talent but if he only has putty for a brain it's hard to make anything of him. On the road to singing the student has to discover things for himself, but you have to guide him. And you have to make comparisons. I'm not the kind of teacher who wants everything right this minute, but at the same time I won't give it a whole year, for example. You mustn't be allowed to sing with faults. You have to get rid of the faults as fast as possible and move forward.

You make a lot of appearances abroad and so you have a basis for comparison. How do our home opera companies and their productions emerge from the comparison? What are the biggest differences – in the quality of preparation, the standard of the singers, the staging and direction?

There are differences in every respect, but mainly financial. Here we could all shout that we don't have much but I think it's not like that, because what I have is quite enough for me. I could have two times as much, but that's not the point of my life. Every year the NT costs me thousands of crowns, because it prevents me from going somewhere as a guest performer. You have to sacrifice something for the theatre; it's not just something that provides you with a livelihood. Some musicians have a tendency to sing as little as possible in the theatre and do spin-off projects. Even if you raise their pay, those sorts of people will always want to make more on the side. We're all completely different people and have different approaches to the matter. Organisationally there are three kinds of opera in the world: stagione, semi-stagione



PHOTO: HANA SIMEJKALOVA

I. Kusnjer and L. Vele in Smetana's The Kiss. National Theatre 2007

and repertory opera. Repertory opera, which is the predominant form here, is the hardest. For singers the best is the stagione system, but it's boring in its way. It's all laid out and automatic... The difference is in the system of work. In stagione opera you rehearse for a month, then have the performances and then just pack your bags and go to another stagione and learn something else. The rehearsal phases are doubled up or tripled up, something we are getting into in repertory opera as well today. My toughest experience of the system was at the La Monnaie Opera under Gérard Mortier, when he was still the director there. He engaged me, and it was actually my take-off in Europe. We rehearsed there from ten to one, then from three to five and from seven to ten. I went home completely worn out and numb to everything else; it was like shifts in a factory. But everything is a question of the behaviour, culture, and traditions in a particular country. To have a discussion on the system of how opera houses function you need to invite chiefs, repertory directors, conductors, directors, members of the audience and critics.

You also often sing at the State Opera, the other opera house in Prague. Recently, the Minister of Culture has announced that the ministry is considering bringing the State Opera under the National Theatre or merging the two, and apparently an expert committee has already been set up to make recommendations to the minister on the future of the State Opera. Clearly the ministry is looking for ways of cost cutting and believes this would be a way of economising. We have also heard the view that having two opera stages is too much for Prague and the Prague City Council reportedly doesn't want to take over the "metropolitan opera" and fund it. What are your experiences with the State Opera and what would you recommend to the minister's expert committee?

I feel a little schizophrenic about this affair. When the National Theatre and the then Smetana Theatre (now State Opera Prague) were united, it was a well-oiled

system and it worked – one boss, one administration, one transport system... Then it was torn apart, and the best artists went to the NT while the rest stayed at the SOP. My experience with the SOP is very good, even though I'm not singing there at the moment. I think a solution could be found both for the NT and the SOP that wouldn't involve anyone "stealing the other's cabbages". As for the expert committee is concerned, these days there are expert committees by the dozen for everything. The expert committee will think something up but in a month things will still be different, because there will be a change of minister. Ministers of culture come and go here very fast, and the people around them too. One minister thinks something up, the next turns it into a project, a third comes and says it was a stupid idea and a fourth consigns it to oblivion because he has absolutely no understanding of it. Ministers dream something up and the artists are left clutching at their heads. And remember we're Czechs, everyone clinging to their posts and trying to hang on at any price. I've seen a lot of life and know what people are capable of, even at the price of their own dignity. If someone wants to put a proper policy together, first of all they have to get a pen and pencil (and one independent accountant) and calculate how it could be done and whether it would really produce savings. I think there are good grounds for the existence of both operas.

Which roles do you think best suited to your type of baritone and way of singing? You usually say yourself that you are more of a lyrical baritone.

Yes, I would like to sing as lyrically as I can. Although my friends tell me that one day I have to grow old. Dramaticism doesn't do much for the voice. Carlos, Rigoletto – all the Verdi roles are the closest to my heart. Of course, it's Smetana in the Czech repertoire. Tausendmark is the hardest role of all. Czech has a very specific character when you sing it; it's much harder to sing in Czech than in Italian. Even though I'm Czech, Italian is closer to me when I'm singing. What I'm saying isn't barbarism, it's the way I feel it. Tausendmark's opening section is a grave for baritones. You wait in the portal for twenty minutes and then you have twenty minutes singing in a high register. On the other hand Vok is perfect for singing, because it has a cantabile line. The aria is hard, but sings itself beautifully, it has a smoothness. Then Kalina – that's a part more baritones can sing because the aria has no cantilena; it's choppy in fast tempo. Making the transition from the lyrical to the dramatic is fine, but it's hard to make it back to the lyrical from the dramatic because the voice has been over-burdened. I wanted to try Scarpio, but when the production of Tosca ends here, I won't sing the part again. Ever. It's a waste for people to play themselves out like that. I sang the part in Salzburg and the critics there commented that I was a pleasant baritone – a jolly chap from next door. The conventional Italian view of Scarpio is that he has to be a real villain, roaring and raging after Tosca, but I think that his wickedness actually comes out better when the part is sung by a smooth baritone. Macbeth is set in a different way; the part is very singable.

You are also well-known for the fact that you don't mind accepting roles in new, "untested" operas that are trying in some way to take up or develop contemporary opera. Are the composers succeeding? Have you sung in (or seen) a contemporary opera that worked, not just in terms of music, but in libretto and stage concept? Has any contemporary opera appealed to you in a way comparable to "classical" opera?

At the beginning I avoided that sort of role, I thought – and I still think – that a young singer at the beginning of his career should mature by devoting himself

to things that are melodious, that he finds understandable in terms of drama and voice. But today I very much enjoy taking on these contemporary tasks because I think everything keeps on evolving. And there is a need to provide space for these new developments. Once there was an attempt to stage Jan Bedřich Kittl's opera *Bianka and Giuseppe* here, and listening to it you realised that while there are a few beautiful passages in it, the opera as a whole had nothing to say; there is too much imitation in it. And it's the same with modern opera. How can you judge whether it is good or bad and what you mean by good? You can't put on eight new pieces in a season, but why not do one real museum piece opera, three classical productions and then one or two modern operas, to see the direction in which things are moving and whether it gets a response? What's more, directors can dream up anything they like with a modern opera.

Which of your roles up to now would you consider the most difficult and why? And is there one that you particularly like?

I love Rigoletto, Carlos and in its way Macbeth. The hardest of all was Krapp. It's maths. I have to praise the conductor Jakub Hruša [see CM 2/06], who despite being so young at the time was very well informed and well prepared. I can't help remembering the *Songs for the Mad King*, which I did with the conductor Přemysl Charvát. I liked him very much in the context of this kind of material; he had a certain nonchalance when a note got lost here and there. He adjusted fantastically to the singer. At that time I initially thought I would do it myself, direct it myself, prepare it and then have a 100% share in it with Charvát. But then I thought about it, realised that after all my view is an internal view, and I need someone to correct it from outside. From the inside your sense of how it looks and what effect it has is different. You think something up because you are that kind of actor. You're satisfied with it but the man on the outside says it's boring and means nothing. I invited the choreographer Pavel Šmok to help and I must say it worked perfectly – he just guided me, but never pressurised me. This is ideal with many of those one-man operas. In a normal opera with 30 people there has to be some kind of order. Šmok would say, "I don't like that, find some other space there, remember that". In time it grew on me. Originally we had planned on 6 – 8 performances, but in the end there were 30. And all of them full. I tremendously enjoy doing these things. Here I feel like someone who gives something to the work. Of course when you do Verdi it's interesting as well, but you have to respect the sea of circumstances around it. Here you respect the composer, the conductor and the director but it's all up to you. I'm looking forward to Falstaff – and that is one of the reasons why I have stayed at the NT – I can choose. Today I'm in a situation where they are staging Falstaff because of me, which is fantastic. When I say "I'd like to sing that", they try to oblige me.

You are an experienced singer with an international reputation. Do you still ever feel stage fright?

I do. When I go abroad and read the cvs of some of my fellow performers, then I sometimes get an attack of nerves. But then you find out that the brilliance is more evident on paper than in practice. But the management makes a song and dance about it getting people to believe how wonderful it is. It's not brilliant, they're lying to the public. It's a cash cow, a way of making money out of these names, because today what's sacred is business. Sometimes when I sing alongside these kinds of "star", my throat starts to seize up. That's where the stress is.



I. Kusnjer as Hemán Cortés in L. Ferrero's Montezuma (La conquista) with R. Fišarová (above) and L. Kalendovský (opposite). National Theatre 2005

Tell us something about your private life. Have you managed to achieve that silver wedding anniversary at home as well? How is it possible to keep up a marriage or family life when you are so fully engaged in an operatic career? And has there been any space left for other areas of life, for interests and projects apart from opera?

In a way opera is the despot in the family. I have a huge study, which is a terrible mess but I know where everything is. I have two daughters, 26 and 22 years old, and today they say I could have devoted more time to them. I'm lucky in having a wife who comes from the theatre, a ballerina. She knows what theatre involves, what it takes out of you and what it gives you. When she was doing *Swan Lake*, she would lie down and I would launder nappies. When she came back in the evening her toes would be bleeding from the dancing. She is a great help to me in everything. I know how to switch off but the work does keep going round and round in my head. Repertory opera is tough from that point of view. In 10 to 14 days you have to sing everything possible from Smetana to Verdi to Bizet; you have 14 days to learn new things. When I tell my wife that now I need peace and quiet, then I get it, and I learn parts. And often when I'm already in a bad mood, my wife will tell me to go and study for a moment. I study best in our country cottage, where the telephone doesn't ring and I don't have to dash around anywhere. I have a daily amount of studying that I just have to do. I still love singing, I still enjoy it and in a way it's like a drug for me – I smoke a joint of music, of singing. It still gives me huge pleasure



searching for the nuances. And with pupils as well. What's wonderful about the search is that it never ends until that wooden sleeping bag.

And what about hobbies?

I like cooking sometimes, which is probably clear from the way I look... Angling isn't as important now as it used to be. I go to Litomyšl to a famous trout stream. I'm more the fly fishing type, since I don't have the patience to sit and wait until a carp bites.

How do you managed to keep in the good physical condition that has often been such an advantage on stage, vocally and psychologically?

To be truthful, I don't do much sport. Every time I start doing sport, I injure myself in some way. In the vacations I do a lot of sleeping, go mushroom-picking and study. This year I was swimming a great deal, but I don't gain weight or lose weight. I swam so much I caught cold, then I was walking with a stick. I don't let trivia get me down – if I want to get angry, I buy a newspaper in the morning, and I'm angry immediately. I try to have a clear head. I read a lot, but I have several books half read – I can't get through one book at a time. In the vacations I study but I don't sing. I get five weeks holiday and I try to make sure that I take 99% of it. In the season I have so much that when I open the calendar I start sweating – I need to take a rest from it.

You have done dozens of opera productions with all sorts of different directors and conductors. What is your experience?

Some are despotic, others liberal. Some let me say what I think about it, and what I would like. Some desperately insist on their own idea. Zdeněk Košler was like that; he had his own idea and that was the way it had to be. I have met conductors with quite major international names who have a very well worked out and fine interpretation, but their hands aren't entirely ideal. Sometimes you flounder for a while before you catch that first beat, before you learn to recognise it. There are conductors whose technique is to place you so that you hear even a famous thing in a different way. There are directors who insist you take an exact eight steps, and the kind who say, "By the time you finish that you have to be over there." Naturally I work better with the second kind. Working with David Pountney on the *Devil's Wall* was excellent, and earlier I did the Forester in *Cunning Little Vixen* with him at La Fenice. He doesn't push me into anything. I had a great deal of freedom working on that production. When he found out I was Czech he assumed I knew an awful lot about Janáček. He gave me free rein. When I did *Fate* with Bob Wilson, it bothered me slightly that his assistants pushed us around on the stage. It's a kind of impersonal approach. But I came up with one gag for him that he liked and I was allowed to do it.

You have founded the Fatum foundation fund. Can you tell us something about this rather different "role" of yours?

A former fellow-student from the Academy, an NT viola player, died tragically. He left three small children behind, and his wife was a healthcare worker. They were in such dire straits that I decided to establish a fund to help the families of professional musicians who fall sick or die tragically in mid-career, especially to take care of their children up to the age of 26. We're not at all a rich fund, we have no real estate. I just do it with my wife entirely for free, and so the only problems we always have are just with bureaucrats. But another thing we do is provide a certain degree of financial help when people are seriously ill and can't play. They don't have a right to all the state sickness benefits because they work on contract, not as full-scale employees. I want to get as many musicians as possible involved, but it's going very slowly. The centre is mainly in the NT; I've negotiated with the Czech Philharmonic, since they have something similar, I've negotiated also in Brno, in České Budějovice, in Hradec Králové – it's a long-haul project. Every year we allocate around 60–80 thousand crowns.

What goals do you still want to achieve in opera and private life?

What is the goal in private life? It means being content, happy. In the work area, I wouldn't say I had goals exactly. When the revolution of 1989 came, I had an offer from an agency suggesting I leave my engagement at the NT and saying they would look after me. But the revolution came when I was thirty-eight and it would have meant leaving something where I was established, where I had my own prospects and possibilities and my own space. So when I refused it wasn't just a matter of caution and anxiety about setting off somewhere where I would de facto be a *gastarbeiter* (why not, if they looked after me?) but because I had no ties of either love or marriage with that agency, and it was all purely professional. You never know what can change with that kind of set-up. I would have no freedom at all. Here I have a permanent engagement but I'm essentially free. There I would earn more, and maybe be better off, but what does "better off" really mean? We have enough

money for food, the girls have completed their studies, my mother is well, my wife is fine. You can only do so much. And when I do what I do – I enormous enjoy it – I don't feel the need to tussle and shout or squeeze through keyholes to “get on”. I usually hold strongly to my opinions, although of course some things are still changing and developing in me. Abroad you have to keep your mouth shut and keep in step, pack your bags and go. You have to simper on all sides – and I don't much like doing that.

Now, at the end of our interview, looking back over your career, what else would you like to mention?

Répétiteurs are very important for an opera singer and I have been able to work with the outstanding Drahomíra Ricová, Jaromír Šalamoun and Jiří Pokorný. At the beginning of my opera career I had the good luck to have Jiří Pinkas as conductor. He asked me what I wanted to sing, and I wanted Rigoletto, the Flying Dutchman, and Macbeth. And he answered, “You're getting the Baron in *La Traviata*, the Indian in *The Bartered Bride* and the Mason in *The Secret*.” And that was good.

Ivan Kujšner (*10th November 1951, Rokycany)

With his lyrical and superbly melodious baritone and great range, Kujšner has been a dominating presence among Czech singers for many years now.

He studied opera singing at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts and did a course at the La Scala in Milan. In 1982, after periods with companies in Ostrava and Brno, he became a soloist of the Prague National Theatre opera company.

*Kujšner's interpretative range is enormous. He is not only a unique interpreter of classical and contemporary opera, in which he has sung more than forty roles, but a highly rated and sought-after concert singer (dozens of cantatas, song cycles and recordings). Roles in operas by Czech composers are central to his repertoire, from Smetana (*Tausendmark in the Brandenburger in Bohemia*, *Vok Vítkovic in The Devil's Wall*, *King Vladislav in Dalibor*, *Tomeš in The Kiss* or *Krušina in The Bartered Bride*), and Dvořák (especially *Bohuš in The Jacobin*), to Janáček (*The Forester in The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Stárek in Jenůfa* etc.) and Martinů. In world opera his roles have been principally in Verdi (*Rigoletto*, *Posa in Don Carlos*, *Macbeth*, *Luna in Trovatore*, *Don Carlos di Vargas in The Force of Destiny* or *Germont in La Traviata* and so on), but also *Count Almaviva in The Marriage of Figaro* or *Tonio in Pagliacci*. He has also made a name as a distinguished interpreter of Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Dvořák's *Biblical Songs*. He masters roles in modern operatic and vocal music work with sovereign ease and a taste for experiment (*Davies's Eight Songs for a Mad King*, *Eben's Jeremiah* or most recently *Mihalic's Last Tape* based on the Beckett text, and works by *Krása* and *Zemlinsky*).*

Ivan Kujšner often performs as a guest singer on stages and podiums in Europe, America and Japan, including the prestigious La Scala in Milan, La Fenice in Venice, the Opéra Comique and Châtelet in Paris, the Vienna State Opera, Unter den Linden in Berlin, the Royal Albert Hall in London, opera houses in Madrid, Lisbon and Brussels, the Carnegie Hall in New York or operas in Hongkong and Tokyo.

At home Ivan Kujšner has been honoured for his vocal and dramatic brilliance by three awards of the national Thalia Prize. He has won many awards at international singing competitions and has also received the Gustav Mahler European Prize.

FOLK MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE IN BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA

Central European folk culture in all its diversity is a product of a thousand years of history, above all the co-existence and mutual influence of Slavic and Germanic peoples, with important Jewish and Romany contributions. The character of the specific folk culture of the territory that is today the Czech Republic has been moulded by geographical position, natural conditions, political history and of course contact and interaction with wider cultural milieux, making it a vivid mosaic of distinctive ethnographic regions.

In the field of folk music, there is a particularly pronounced cultural dividing line between the Bohemian regions (including part of Western Moravia) and the east of our territory, including most of the Moravian ethnographic regions. Up to roughly the 16th century no such division is held to have existed, but subsequently, as the two areas took different directions in social and economic development, there occurred a stylistic differentiation in folk music and a stabilisation of two basic contrasting types: the Bohemian type known as „instrumental“ and the type represented by the repertoire of Eastern Moravia and sometimes known as „vocal“.

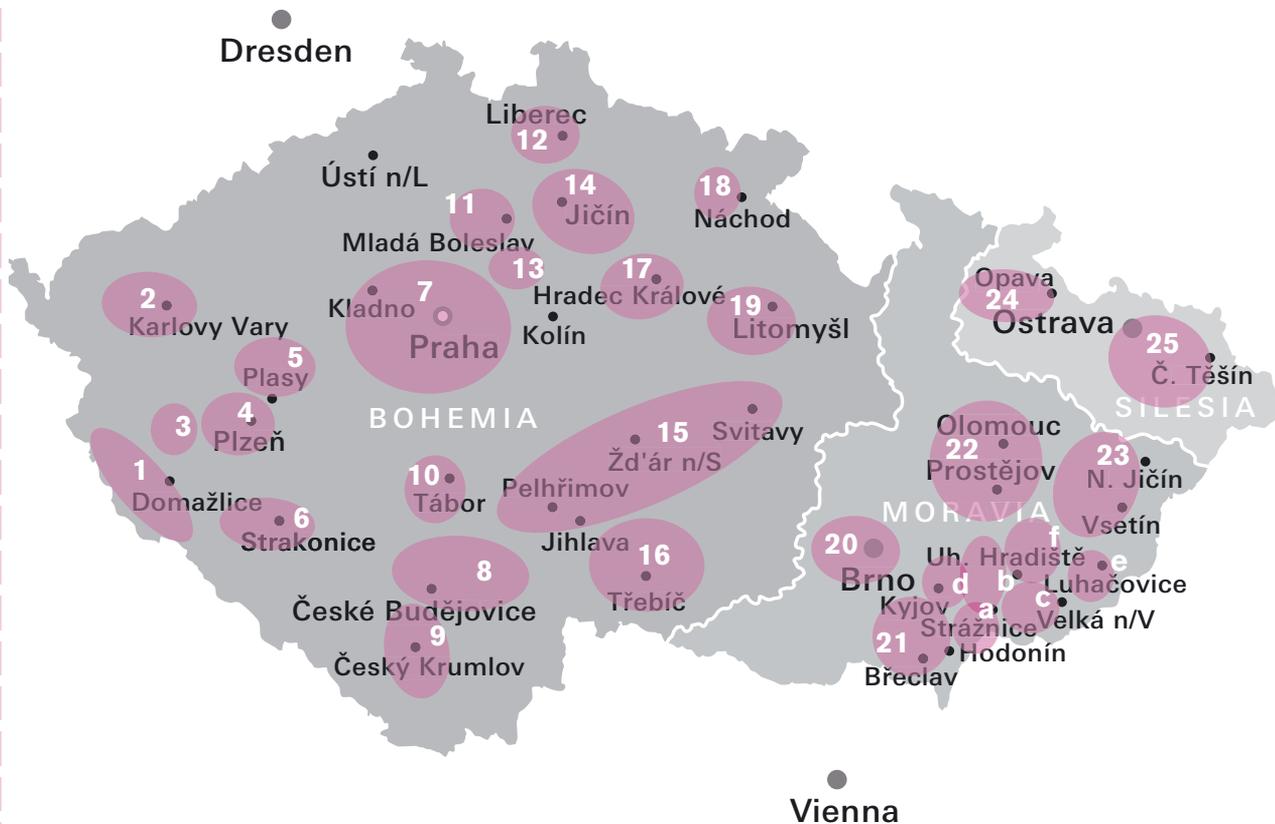
The Character of Bohemian and Moravian Songs

The character of the folk songs of Bohemia as preserved for us in collections of songs and dance made

from the early 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, is directly conditioned by a well-developed tradition of instrumental music and dance that imprinted its rhythm on the song melodies. The regions where music has been most intensely cultivated, and the best mapped in ethnographic work, are in South-west Bohemia – the Chodsko, Plzeň and Šumava regions, in which an archaic repertoire survived for a long time, as well as the accompanying music known as *malá selská muzika* („small country music band“, consisted of bagpipe, violin and clarinet). Some note records and sound recordings from the Chodsko region or South Bohemian Blata district reveal a peculiar bagpipe „polyphonic“ style of folk song accompaniment. Meanwhile, Central and North-eastern Bohemia in particular stand out for their advanced classicist instrumental and dance music tradition.

Bohemian folklore studies in the older Romantic tradition used to look primarily for Slav parallels, but in fact Czech folk music has tended to be more closely related to Western styles and developments. Major keys and instrumental character with a clear structure that tends to symmetry predominate in Bohemian folk song. One specifically Bohemian feature, itself proof of the advanced musical sensibility of Bohemian folk musicians and dancers, is the existence not only of songs in duple and triple meter, but also of melodies with alternating time signatures that accompany the dances known as *mateník*. Its very close relationship with Baroque, Rococo and Classicist music gave Bohemian folk song greater formal refinement and a richly contrasting range of memorable melodies.

The folksong melodies of Western Moravia correspond to the



Ethnographic regions of the Czech Republic

source: <http://lidovepisne.wz.cz>

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 - Chodsko | 12 - Podještědí | 21a - Podluží |
| 02 - Karlovarsko | 13 - Polabí | 21b - Dolňácko |
| 03 - Střibsko | 14 - Podkrkonoší | 21c - Hornácko |
| 04 - Plzeňsko | 15 - Horácko | 21d - Kyjovsko |
| 05 - Plassko | 16 - Podhorácko | 21e - Luhačovské Zálesí |
| 06 - Prácheňsko | 17 - Hradecko | 21f - Moravské Kopianice |
| 07 - Střední Čechy | 18 - Náchodsko | 22 - Haná |
| 08 - Blata | 19 - Litomyšlsko | 23 - Valaško |
| 09 - Doudlebsko | 20 - Brněnsko | 24 - Slezsko |
| 10 - Kozácko | 21 - Slovácko | 25 - Lašsko |
| 11 - Boleslavsko | | |

Bohemian instrumental type, but the traditions in the East Moravian areas are already different, exhibiting more of a connection with the Slovak, Polish and Hungarian regions and the supra-ethnic Carpathian culture. Regional differences within East Moravia are also more marked than in the Bohemian case, for example between the more austere songs from the Lach and Wallachian regions, the fiery and emotionally explosive songs from Slovácko, or the easy-going, symmetrical melodies of songs

from the Haná, which have affinities with the Bohemian type.

In terms of both text and music, the Moravian folk song generally exhibits a greater lyricism and a sharper alternation of exuberant emotion and melancholy that is enhanced by a colourful palette of modes. Apart from major and minor keys we often find Mixolydian and Lydian modes, and on rare occasions “gypsy scales” with two one-and-a-half-tone (augmented second) steps or odd tone rows derived from the possibilities of some

folk instruments. Especially in the South Moravian areas, modulations to more distant keys are typical. In Moravia the rhythm, melodies and the structure of songs are more often based on the text than on instrumental music patterns. The characteristic slow song, which changes tempo and employs numerous fermata, tends to be hard to squeeze into regular bars when written down.

Andante con moto

Te - če vo - da te - če od po - to - ka k ř e - ce.
 Na - mlu - vil si mla - dej hu - lán mo - dro - o - ké děv - če.



K. J. Erben

Example of Bohemian song: the dance *Sousedská*
 (Erben collection)

Vejr, vejr, vejr, vejr se - dá v le - se,
 dá - vá po - zor, kdo co ne - se.
 Šla tam sel - ka za sed - lá - kem, nes - la mu tam ko - lác s má - kem.
 Vej, vejr, vejr, vejr se - dá v le - se,
 dá - vá po - zor, kdo co ne - se.

Bohemian dance *Mateník* – note the typical changing metre
 (Holas collection)



Fr. Sušil

“Small country band” in Chodsko region



Folk Music of the German Speaking Inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia

Given the long coexistence of ethnic Germans and Czechs in Central Europe we should not forget the folk music of the German speaking population of Bohemia and Moravia. This folk music was not a homogeneous phenomenon; from the time when the Germans originally came to the territories in the Middle Ages, the different regions of German settlement retained their own repertoires but gradually reworked them under the influence of neighbouring Czech areas. The Germans of the Šumava, the Cheb area, North-east Bohemia, the Jihlava area, the South Moravian borderlands, or North Moravia and Silesia thus all had their own particular music, and their repertoires of folk song and dance were only to converge and become more standardised after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary. Typical forms of German dance music recorded in the collections include a range of *ländler* and *steyrisches*, love songs with a *jodler* attached, and comic and sacred songs. A sword dance was associated with the Shrovetide house-to-house procession. In general the separation of dance from song can be observed earlier in the case of the German population of the Bohemian Lands than in the case of the ethnic Czechs.

The oldest combination of musical instruments, and one still used at the beginning of the 20th century especially in the Cheb region and on the Bohemian-Moravian borders, was the short necked fiddle and bagpipes, sometimes augmented with *hackbrett* and clarinet. In the Šumava, Cheb, Krušné Mountains and Sudeten regions, the hook harp was also used in folk music. Probably the most widespread plucked string instrument on the whole territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was the *zither*, used to accompany song, as a solo instrument and in small bands with a *salon* repertoire. Other documented instrument combinations include string bands, and in the second half of the 19th century there was a vogue for the combination of accordion, *zither*, guitar and later brass instruments as well.

The development of German music in the Bohemian Lands ended with the mass expulsion of the ethnic Germans after the Second World War.

The History of the Collection and Study of Bohemian and Moravian Folksongs

The beginnings of ethnographic research in the Bohemian Lands were connected with the first phase of the movement for national Czech emancipation from the end of the 18th century and first half the 19th century. The first generation of what came to be known as the National Revival was inspired by the work of the Slavist scholar and historian Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829), and it was philological and literary historical scholarship that provided the impulse for the first, purely textual, recording of folk songs. The first collections of song texts were made in this period by the philologist and poet Václav Hanka, the Moravian national revivalist Josef Heřman Gallaš and above all the popular figure in Prague salon society, the Knight Jan Jeník of Bratřice (1756–1845). The earliest known records of the melodies of folk songs and dances were made at the same time, primarily as practical aids for rural cantors and their ensembles (Ondřej Hůlka from Zlatá Koruna, Jiří B. Hartl from Stará Paka).

The greater part of the rich heritage of the folk song and dance repertoire has been preserved thanks to large-scale collecting campaigns that took place in several waves over roughly a hundred years beginning in the 1820s, but the personal contribution of leading composers and later academics was also fundamental.

The first campaign to collect folksongs was launched on the initiative of the Vienna Society of the Friends of Music (Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde) by order of the Austrian Interior Ministry in 1819. It was supposed to produce proofs of the folk creativity and solidarity of the peoples of the monarchy and

*Example of slow Moravian song
(Bartoš collection)*



“Cymbalom music” of Jozka Kubík from Hrubá Vrbka

was organised through the governors of all the Austrian Lands. This is why it later came to be known as the “gubernatorial collection”. The records were made by rural teachers, priests and junior civil servants. Although the campaign was a purely bureaucratic exercise it yielded as many as 3,500 records of texts including melodies from the whole monarchy. It was using this

abundant material that in 1825 the director of the Prague Conservatoire Friedrich Dionys Weber (1766–1842) together with Jan the Knight of Rittersberk (1780–1841) published the first collection of Bohemian folksongs with melodies, entitled *České národní písně / Böhmisches Volkslieder (Bohemian Folksongs)*. The folksongs of Moravia and Silesia, which were gath-



“The ride of kings” in Vlčnov, 1985

ered together in Brno, were not published at this period.

The next generation of Czech patriots was already influenced by Herderian romanticism. Their interest in the countryside was based on idealised notions of the noble simplicity of the people and the exceptional moral and artistic values of the folk song culture. The most important work of this period was *Slovanské národní písně* (*Slavonic Folk Songs*) by František Ladislav Čelakovský (1799–1852), published in 1822–1827. It contains texts of songs from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, and also translations of songs from Russia, Serbia, Lusatia and elsewhere.

Two fundamental collections of folksongs form a permanent and living part of the national culture. Their authors were, respectively, the Prague archivist and poet Karel Jaromír Erben (1811–1870) and the Brno professor of theology František Sušil (1804–1868). The definitive edition of Sušil’s *Moravské národní písně s nápěvy do textu vřaděnými* (*Moravian Folksongs*

with Melodies Interpolated in the Text) came out in the years 1853–1860 and contains more than two thousand texts with melodies from all the Moravian regions. In final form the Erben’s collection, published in the years 1862–1864, brought together two and a half thousand texts and eight hundred melodies from Bohemia, under the title *Prostonárodní České písně a Říkadla* (*Bohemian Folksongs and Rhymes*). Thanks to the collecting and editing work of Sušil and Erben we therefore have a virtually complete picture of folksong of the Bohemian and Moravian countryside in the first half of the 19th century. As in the case of Čelakovský, however, they were unable to resist making alterations to the texts for aesthetic effect.

A new impulse for the collection of folk songs in Bohemia and Moravia came in the 1890s with the rush of activity around two Prague exhibitions, the *General Land Exhibition* in 1891 and above all the *Czechoslavonic Ethnographic Exhibition* in 1895. The latter was preced-

ed by an organised collection and series of „krajinské“ exhibitions (a period Czech term – essentially these were regional exhibitions, from which the best presentations were chosen for the Czechoslavonic Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague). Apart from saving other examples of the material and spiritual life of the nation, the project produced a manuscript collection of more than two thousand songs from all the Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian regions.

A collection campaign entitled *Folksong in Austria* (*Das Volkslied in Österreich*), originally intended once again to gather together folksongs and music of the peoples of the Austrian monarchy, bore even greater fruit in the form of more than sixteen thousand documents of folk music, song and dance. The working committee was headed by the art historian and aesthetician Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910), while the Moravian-Silesian committee was directed by the composer Leoš Janáček. There were also German committees for Bohemia

and Moravia with Silesia under the chairmanship of Adolf Haufen and Josef Zak. The principles of collection were very modern for the period and not limited only to traditional folk song. The collectors were also interested in folk dances, and very thorough collection information was required (name of collector and performer, date of record, data on the locality, the area in which a song was diffused and explanatory notes on dialect). *The Folksong in Austria* collection was also important in laying the foundation of modern institutional musical ethnographical research in the Czech Lands. Among the publications directly connected with this collection project we should mention *Moravské písně milostné (Moravian Love Songs)* (1930–1937), compiled and edited by Leoš Janáček with Pavel Váša, and the collection of German songs *Volkslieder aus dem Böhmerwalde* (1930) edited by Gustav Jungbauer (1886–1942).

Other important contributions include the extensive collections *České národní písně a tance (Bohemian Folk Songs and Dances)* produced by Čeněk Holas (1855–1939), *Český jih a Šumava v písni (The Bohemian South and Šumava in Song)* by Karel Weis (1862–1944) and the *Chodský zpěvník (Chodsko Songbook)* by Jindřich Jindřich (1876–1967). In Moravia František Bartoš (1837–1906), in particular, carried on from Sušil's work with his collection *Národní písně moravské v nově nasbírané (Moravian Folksongs Newly Collected)*. The painter and folklore specialist Ludvík Kuba (1863–1956) had a collector's interest in the musical culture of all the Slav peoples. The first two volumes of his series *Slovanstvo ve svých zpěvech (Slav peoples in their Songs)*, published in the years 1884–1888, were devoted to Bohemian and Moravian songs, and Kuba also recorded the music of a bagpipes band in the Chodsko region in unique scores in the 1890s.

Technological advances at the beginning of the 20th century pro-

vided new possibilities for documenting and studying folk culture. Especially valuable for folk music studies were the first sound recordings made on an Edison phonograph: 1908–1909 in Moravia (the ethnographer František Pospíšil and circle of co-workers of Leoš Janáček) and in 1909 in South and West Bohemia (the musicologist and composer Otakar Zich). From 1929 documentation of folk music continued on gramophone records, and later on tape recordings and other modern sound media (for more detail see the article by Matěj Kratochvíl).

After the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 and especially after the Second World War, academic research in the field of folk music studies and ethnomusicology could develop to the full. The founding work of Otakar Hostinský, Otakar Zich and Leoš Janáček in this field was followed up by generations of scholars, particularly Karel Dvořák, Jiří Horák, Karel Plicka and Bedřich Václavěk, and later Bohuslav Beneš, Oldřich Sirovátka, Robert Smetana, Jaroslav Markl, Dušan Holý, Jaromír Gelnar, Vladimír Gregor or Lubomír Tyllner.

Roma Folk Music in Bohemia and Moravia

The traditional song and instrumental folk music of the Gypsies – Romanies, has a common foundation but has always been influenced by the culture of the majority ethnic groups on the different territories where the Roma minorities live. This traditional Roma music is associated with dance and differs fundamentally from the music produced by Roma bands for a non-Roma public. These bands have, however, had an absolutely fundamental impact on the development of the traditional music of some Slovak and Moravian region, because it was they that in the 19th century were primarily responsible for spreading what is known as Neo-Hungarian song, sometimes mistakenly believed to be genuine gypsy music. In Bohemia and Moravia we can distinguish two basic types of Roma musical culture: the music of the once itinerant Olach Romanies (Vlachika Roma) and the music of the settled original Slovak and Hungarian Roma (Servika and Ungarika Roma). The two types exhibit certain common features despite distinct differences. The traditional songs are either slow, or dance songs (especially the csardas). The slow song melodies progress in a free rhythm with a latent pulsation, and can be in both major and minor keys. Only among the Vlachika Roma do we find melodies based on modality, or old church modes, most frequently Mixolydian. The dance songs are in even times, with the rhythmic structure sometimes breached by the addition or subtraction of one beat. Among the Slovak Roma dotted rhythms and syncopation appear more frequently. The key is minor or major, sometimes mixolydian or aeolian mode with harmonic alterations is used, and very occasionally we encounter pentatonics as well. In traditional form the slow songs of the Vlachika Roma were performed solo a capella. The originally Slovak Roma settled in the Bohemian Lands base instrumental accompaniment (in various combinations) on the contrast between the main melodic instrument (most often the violin) and the rhythmic-harmonic instruments (dulcimer, accordion, guitar). Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the small bands of the Bohemian and Moravian Roma do not have their own special folk music but mostly take over and play the songs of the Slovak Roma.



The legendary Kondrády's piper band from Domažlice, 2003



Folklore celebrations in Dýššina in Plzeňsko region, 2006



Chodsko folklore celebrations in Domažlice, 2005

This overview is too brief to allow us to list the hundreds of other collections of folk songs made at different periods. Over almost two centuries as many as thirty thousand melodies of folksongs from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia have been published, and a further more than one hundred thousand manuscript records from various periods are kept in the archives of the Ethnological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the depositaries of regional libraries and museums. This vast and unique resource provides a valuable picture of the folksong of the people in the poetry, spiritual wealth and multiplicity of its everyday life.

The Developmental Types, Genres and Functions of Folk Song

The main basis of the rich repertoire of Bohemian and Moravian folksong remains songs created in the 18th and first half of the 19th century, but the published and archival funds occasionally include older songs (more often lyrics rather than melodies) that originated in the 16th century or even sometimes as far back as the 14th century (some archaic ballads).

In a repertoire of this breadth one can find songs of different provenance (pure folk song, composed songs that have become „folk“ songs, workers' songs, street-

seller songs, music-hall songs), songs of both secular and religious type, and songs for different age groups (children's songs, songs for the young, for adults).

The oldest functions of traditional music are connected with ritual, work and of course entertainment. It played a unique and essential role at weddings, funerals, itinerant fairs, annual folk festivities involving house-to-house carolling and other customs, village fairs and dance entertainment.

The songs are thematically linked with occupations (crafts and trades, agricultural work), social issues, nature, conscription and war, love, marital and community life, illness, old age and death. Lyrical and lyrical-epic songs with motifs of young love, unrequited love or military service predominate. The epic appears in the form of ballads and legends. In the 19th and especially the 20th century the rapid social change has meant the disappearance of many forms of folksong, but many of their features and functions have survived to this day.

Groups of Instruments in Traditional Music in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia

According to available literary and iconographic sources, in the 16th and 17th centuries the main and often the only rural folk musician in the Czech Lands was the

bagpipe player. Only later did the bagpiper start to play in an ensemble, above all with players on wind instruments (pipes, oboes) and drummers. The advent of the fiddle, dated in Czech rural music-making to the mid-17th century, meant a fundamental change. From the end of the 18th century an instrumental combination of bagpipe, violin and clarinet, known as the *malá selská muzika* – *small country music band* became an established form. In South Bohemia towards the end of the 19th century waldhorns (French horns) and trumpets were added to the pipes, and in the foothills of the Bohemian-Moravian Uplands or in Wallachia, a small dulcimer was added and soon a basset horn as well.

The *gajdošská muzika* (bagpipes sometimes accompanied by a fiddle) was also common in North East and East Moravia. Only in the mid-19th century there was a transition here to the purely string band known as *hudecká muzika* (string band consisting of one or two fiddles, viola, double bass and sometimes a clarinet). At the end of the 19th century the *hudecká muzika* consisted of principal voice (“prim”), second voice (“third”), fiddle and viola “contras” (harmonic accompaniment), double-bass, and sometimes basset horn or clarinet as well, and later brass instruments were added as well. In Wallachia, Slovácko, the Haná and the Bohemian-Moravian Uplands,

bands consisting of one or two fiddles, a double-bass and a small dulcimer were popular from the beginning of the 19th century. It was not until the 1920s that the big Hungarian Schund dulcimer appeared, which meant a change of keys, the departure of the brass instruments and the basis of the new sound known as *cimbálová muzika* [*cymbalom music*].

The German *skřípkařská muzika* (“fiddle music”) in the Jihlava region under the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands used an absolutely unique instrumental combination, involving from three to eight home-made fiddles with two or three strings, and one fiddle bass (Ploschperment). The first mention of their existence dates from 1804 and they died out during the 2nd World War. This “fiddle music” was characterised by a mainly linear treatment of the parts, rhythmically similar.

In the period from the 1860s to the 1890s what was known as the *štrajch* spread in Czech villages and small towns. This was a variable combination of fiddles, violas, clarinets, flutes, trumpets, bugles, a double-bass and a drum: usually a band had eight to ten members. Gradually, however, these groups gave way to the increasing popularity of the originally military *brass bands*. Today folklore bands and historical music ensembles offer reconstructions of the play of most of the historical traditional music instrument combinations in the Czech Lands.

Folk Dance

Sources are lacking for the study of the oldest forms of folk dance, but remnants of archaic round dances have come down to us, inter alia, as part of folk rituals. In the Bohemian Lands the period of greatest flowering of folk dance culture was in the 17th and 18th century, when many kinds of couple dances were created in tandem with the rapid



Shrovetide sword dance in Strání in Uherský Brod region

development of Baroque instrumental music. The anonymous collections of practical dance music from aristocratic households are important sources for folk dance culture, since under the titles *valachica*, *kozák*, *villana hanatica* and so on, compositions containing stylised folk dances are concealed in lute or keyboard tabulature. One rare catalogue of 23 folk dances survives from the Litomyšl Estate; it was drawn up as part of the preparations for a procession to mark the coronation of Ferdinand V in Prague in 1836. The dance repertoire of the Bohemian Lands in the 17th-18th century is well documented in the gubernatorial collection of 1819, but for the most part these records give only the name of the dance with the accompanying vocal or instrumental melody.

A new interest in folk dance as symbol of distinctive Czech identity was born as part of the Czech National Revival movement that gathered way during the 1830s. The cultural revivalist trends culminated in the 1890s in the period of preparations for the Czechoslavon-

ic Ethnographic Exhibition, when material was gathered that became the basis for compilation of the main collections of folk songs and dances. It was a time when what were known as „national social dances“, represented in Bohemia since the mid 1830s particularly by the *Polka* and from 1862 the *Česká beseda* dance suite, were very popular in Czech bourgeois circles. Even in the country these pushed out the older forms of folk dance. Apart from the national social dances, Czech society of the 19th century took up folk dances from other countries: *ländler*, *deutsch*, *mazurka*, *waltz* and *cracoviënne* (krakováček). The decline of the *hudecká muzika* and bagpipe bands and the growing popularity of brass music was another factor in changing the dance repertoire, however, traditional forms of folk dance hung on even after the 1st World War, especially in Moravia. Indeed, in Moravia not only couple dances but the tradition of male dances has been documented and carried on: one such dance, the dance of army conscripts known



Municipal brass band in Vysoké nad Jizerou, 1903

as the *slovácký verbuňk* from South Moravia, was placed the UNESCO List in 2005 as a „masterpiece of the oral and non-material heritage of humankind“.

The Forms of Folklorism

For centuries the inhabitants of both the country and the towns were bearers of the traditional culture, and artificial music and folk music were deeply influenced by each other. Particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries, village teachers and musicians took part in the advanced music culture of the chateaux, and conversely brought the influences of the elite music and dance repertoire of the time to village entertainment. This was a period in which – thanks to the links between the local, regional and international created by generations of Bohemian and Moravian musicians in what is known as the European musical emigration – an essentially unified style crystallised in the elite and folk music of pre-classicism and classicism. The work of W.A.Mozart (1756–1791), especially, whose models and contempo-

rary sources of inspiration included many leading figures in Czech music, met with an unusually warm reception in all ranks of society.

It was only in the 19th century that artificial music developed in the direction of more complex melodic-harmonic thinking, but even for the founding generation of the Romantics, Czech folk inspiration was still fundamental, as was the exceptional musicality of the whole society. From the start both the composers themselves and the public considered echoes of folk music to be integral to the programme of the rebirth of the Czech nation. Folk songs and dances in various degrees of stylisation, including direct citation, are employed deliberately in the chamber and orchestral works of Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) and Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904). Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) exploited his deep knowledge of Moravian folk songs in his work in a completely original way. New ways of using folklore inspiration can be found in the music of Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949), Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959), and in con-

temporary Czech music, especially that of Zdeněk Lukáš (1928–2007), Jaroslav Krček (*1939) and Petr Eben (*1929).

Apart from the classical music tradition, the Czech Lands have a very long tradition of clubs and ensembles devoted to folk music. Hundreds of folk bands and dance troupes form a permanent part of the cultural life of the individual regions. The beginnings of the deliberate, conscious cultivation and stage performance of folk song and dance can be traced right back to what were known as the cassations, nocturnes or divertissements of the 18th century, when on special occasions the lords of the chateaux would invite village musicians, singers and dancers to perform for them. Similar productions were part of the Prague coronation festivities, for example at the coronation of Ferdinand V in 1836.

In the last years of the 19th century, particularly in the context of preparations for the Czechoslovakian Ethnographic Exhibition, the first groups in the Czech Lands striving to preserve tradi-



*The verbušik dance, Kostice na Podluží, 1947 (left)
Slávek Volavý, famous violinist from Strážnice, with singer Jan Míša (right)*

tional songs and dances, costumes, customs and so forth were formed. Later similar ensembles operated as part of other cultural and sports organisations. There was an unusual wave of interest in folk music after the 2nd World War. Dozens of town ensembles and village groups were formed. This modern folk movement presented itself through competitions and festivals. The communist totalitarian regime in power from 1948 to 1989 often exploited some aspects of folk music and dance culture for its own propaganda ends. The motifs of optimism, verve, patriotism and attitude to work were abused at numerous festivals and political occasions. This to some extent brought folk music activities into disrepute and in the 1990s complicated the further development of folklore research and performance in the Czech Lands.

Especially in Moravia and more rarely in the Bohemian regions, ensembles since the mid-20th century have carried the torch for the declining forms of authentic folklore, and subsequently they have exploited newly published records and classic collections of folk songs and dances. In the second half of the century, there has been a perceptible improvement in the stand-

ards of folk musicians. In addition to the spread of cymbalom and hudecká muzika groups in Moravia and in Silesia, there was a renaissance of bagpipe playing in South-west Bohemia and the stylistic development of musical and choreographic arrangements took place. The popular brass band music has had a major effect on the sound ideal of accompaniment and performance of folk songs and dances. Especially in recent years we have seen a new boom in children's folk music at schools and in leisure activities, exploiting folk music and dance culture for artistic and pedagogic purposes. The combination of the traditional cultivation of domestic folklore with other musical genres, usually based on a highly individual authorial concept, has given rise to various theatrical and musical projects of the kind that have come to be termed „world music“ in recent years.

The Czech Republic currently boasts dozens of folklore events and festivals. The country's oldest and biggest international festival of traditional music has been taking place since 1946 in Strážnice, while other important festival in Moravia and Silesia are organised annually in Brno, in Velká nad Veličkou, Kyjov, Liptál, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm



„Small country band“ from Strakonice

and Dolní Lomná. In this context a special status attaches to the unbroken tradition of major folk ceremonies such as the „Ride of Kings“ in Vlčnov (a set of Whitsun customs in South-East Moravia with a spectacular „royal“ procession) or Shrovetide „sword“ carolling in Strání. In Bohemia the oldest festivals include the International Bagpipes Festival in Strakonice, and festivals in Domažlice, Mělník, Pardubice, Lázně Bělohrad and Červený Kostelec

This „second life“ of folk music and dance, together with the informed cultivation and presentation of other elements of traditional culture plays an important role in the Czech Republic in forming a sense of local, regional and national identity. Sharing the rich heritage of folk songs and dances is something that contributes to healthy patriotism and at the same time to a sense of belonging to the broader European cultural tradition.

SAVED FROM THE TEETH OF TIME

FOLK MUSIC ON HISTORICAL SOUND RECORDINGS

One important characteristic of the music we call folk music is its tight link to its extra-musical context. Folk song had its specific place in life, and was sung in particular places on particular occasions. If it is taken out of this context – for example in the case of a sound recording – part of the information about it is lost. On the other hand, it is precisely thanks to recording that folk music can leave its “milieu” and reach listeners who would never otherwise hear it. In addition, the recording enables us to hear how the music sounded in an earlier era. The oldest sound recordings of the folk music of Bohemia and Moravia were made almost a hundred years ago. What has been preserved for us from that time?

History in Wax

In 1888 Thomas Edison put his phonograph on the American market and at the same time the Columbia company started to manufacture a device exploiting the patent of Alexander Graham Bell. Sound recording became an international vogue and did not pass unnoticed in Central Europe. Indeed, as early as 1892 Leoš Janáček, the composer and collector of folk music, reportedly thought about using the technical novelties on his folksong-gathering expeditions. He actually got round to it a few years later as chairman of the Working Committee for Czech Folksong in Moravia and Silesia. This institution was supposed to co-ordinate the collection of folk songs as part of the project Folksong in Austria, and in

its minutes of the 8th of October 1909 we find the purchase of a phonograph noted. Although Janáček had made great efforts to bring in a phonograph, he made only a few recordings on it himself and most of the recordings were made by his colleagues, especially Františka Kyselková and Hynek Bím. While most of the recordings were made in Moravia, a large proportion of the recorded songs actually came from Slovakia; the female singers are often Slovak seasonal labourers working in Moravia. One of the collecting expeditions headed for the Strážnice area in Slovácko (on the Moravian-Slovakian border), where most of the songs recorded were folk sacred songs. When the Working Committee was dissolved in 1919 the wax cylinders bearing the recordings were passed on

from one institution to another and some were destroyed in the process. In the fifties copies of the recordings were made on gramophone foil and later on audiotape. In 1998 these recordings came out on CD together with extensive documentation thanks to the GNOSIS company.

In Bohemia the oldest preserved sound recordings were also made as part of the Folksong in Austria collection campaign. Direction of the Bohemian Committee was entrusted to the musicologist and professor of aesthetics Otakar Zich. Equipped with an Edison phonograph he travelled to the Blata area in South Bohemia in 1909. There he made a series of recordings of songs performed by the bagpipe player František Kopšík. The second series of Zich's recordings

came from the Chodsko area of West Bohemia and the players were an anonymous trio of bagpipes, fiddle and clarinet – what was known as the “small country band”, earlier the usual musical accompaniment for dances in the region. In 2002 the Ethnological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences published these recordings on CD with technical assistance from the Vienna Phonogrammarchiv.

The phonographic recordings were originally made primarily as an aid for the collectors who could then check the correctness of the transcription of the melody. Wax cylinders with music were already commercial articles at the time, but folk music did not appear on the music market at the beginning of the 20th century. The recordings therefore remained in the archives and the sound media were often destroyed. In later years the collector Kyselková wanted to play the recordings that she had made in co-operation with Janáček at a lecture “...I requested a loan of the phonograph and cylinder. I found that neither the one nor the other was usable. The tooth of time had gnawed at them until they were gnawed away”. Today with digitalisation we have the opportunity to get at least a partial sense of the way folk music sounded a century ago. The virtuosity of the bagpiper Kopšík or the voice of Eva Gabelová, a singer who made a great impression on Leoše Janáček, is audible even despite the crackling in the old wax grooves.

The Nation on Records

In the first decade of the 20th century wax cylinders were already starting to be replaced by gramophone records made of various materials, offering higher quality of recorded sound. It was with this new medium that a great enterprise was conceived: the documentation of the “sound identity” of the new republic. Paradoxically, the impulse for

“Folk Music from the Archives of the Ethnological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences” (CD cover)



the project did not come from music scholars, but from linguists who wanted to record vanishing dialects. In the autumn of 1928 a Phonographic Commission was set up at the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts and entrusted with the task of making recordings. Professor Josef Chlumský was elected to chair it. Although the original idea came from the philologists, it was decided that absolutely all sound expressions should be recorded, i.e. folk and classical music, dialects, and the voices of actors, poets and important figures in public life. Folk music turned out to play a significant part in the result.

The folk music of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was assigned to the care of Professor Josef Horák, Slovakia to Dobroslav Orel and Karel Plicka, and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to Dr. Ivan Pankevič. In the search for performers in the regions the commission worked with a number of other individuals and institutions, in the Chodsko area with Jindřich Jindřich, for example, and in Moravia with the Brno Institute for Folksong.

The first phase took place from the 19th of September 1928 to the 1st of November 1919. The performers chosen in the different regions were brought to Prague and the recording was made at the National House in Vinohrady. The technical side was handled by em-

ployees of the Pathé firm under the direction of Prof. Pernot. Otakar Zich, Karel Plicka, Josef Hutter and the French musicologist Barraud were also present.

The recording was made on wax discs, from which a metal matrix for the production of gramophone records was produced later in Paris.

In the first phase a great quantity of material was recorded primarily from Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia. Further recordings took place in 1933 and 1934, but on a smaller scale. The co-operation with Pathé ended for financial reasons and the Academy looked for a cheaper firm. In 1935 an agreement was signed with the Czech firm Esta, which in 1934 made several recordings principally of Moravian folk music directed by Professor Hutter.

When recordings were not underway, the commission devoted itself to the pressing and cataloguing of discs and to hunting for funds. These were raised partly from the state and partly from private donors including for example banks, but there was ever less money available. During the Second World War the commission was chaired by Prof. Smetánka, but did almost nothing and was dissolved after the war.

The fruit of the labours of the Phonographic Commission con-



“Bagpipes and the Piper Music” (CD cover)

“The Oldest Recordings of Moravian and Slovak Folk Singing” (CD cover)

sists of a total of 304 discs, 204 of which contain recordings of folk dialects and songs. Of these 89 are Slovak, 24 from Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, 26 Bohemian, 50 Moravian, 17 Silesian and 13 Lusatian Sorb. Singing and the spoken word often alternate on individual discs. One point of interest is the participation of the composer Miloslav Kabeláč (then a student at the conservatory), performing as a pianist on a recording of Lusatian Sorb melodies.

The recordings were made in a period when one can still speak of a traditionally functioning folk culture based on the passing down of repertoire from generation to generation and not influenced by the media. (While the radio already existed at this time it was not yet so widespread as to be able to influence the formation of repertoire, for example). The value of the re-

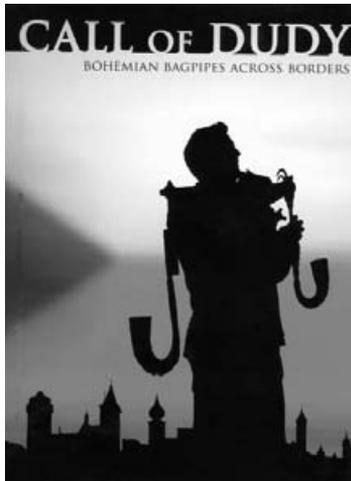
cordings is also increased by the good choice of performers. These are not trained singers, but for example farmers, village teachers, ordinary older people with good memories and repertoire. The guidelines for the choice of material to record were very general and in practise, it was up to each member of the commission to decide whom to invite to record and from where. Often the deciding factor was just the momentary availability of the performers and funds for their journey to Prague (in one of the minutes from a commission meeting we can read a sigh about the fact that while waiting for funds two excellent singers who were to have been recorded had died in Moravia).

Although the Phonographic Commission’s project had been intended to record the sound expressions of the culture of the young state as completely as possible, it never managed to reach a number of areas. In some cases this was because of the expense, but we can only speculate on the reasons for some omissions. We might detect possible political reasons for the focus on purely Slav areas; the Germans living in the Czech Lands were left out, for example, while the Lusatian Sorbs living in Germany were included. The search for folk music was confined to the countryside and so expressions of urban folklore were outside the picture. All this we can put down to the effort, maybe only subconscious, to create a certain picture of the culture of the Czechoslovakia of the time as a homogeneous whole. In the minutes of the commission, however, there is no trace of any discussion of these questions. Despite all these limitations the collection of the Phonographic Commission represents an extraordinary document of the form of folk music culture and contains some particularly interesting elements: polyphonic male singing

from Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, dulcimer music from Myjava or the Chodsko musicians (perhaps the direct heirs of those whom Otakar Zich recorded in 1909). The disks are also exceptional in their sound quality; the gramophone records of the time were already capable of recording a wide sound spectrum and unlike the cylinders the recording is stable. Although the commission tried hard to publicise the results of its works and offered selected recordings for sale, e.g. to schools, interest was negligible. Today all the recordings are kept at the Academy of Sciences and are being converted into digital form at the Ethnological Institute which is also preparing them for publication. Selected samples have been included in the compilation *Folk Music in the Collections of the Ethnographic Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences* (2005).

After the Second World War recording equipment became a normal part of the resources of institutions concerned with folk music and many hours of recordings today lie in archives in various places. The compilation just mentioned contains samples of recordings made by the Prague and Brno ethnographic teams in various localities in the republic, and recording folk music in the field continues.

From the fifties, folk music came to be publicly presented above all through various different organised professional and amateur ensembles that have also made their own recordings. Currently too there are a great many groups releasing recordings that offer an updated view of the folk music of different regions of Bohemia and Moravia in arrangements that are attractive to listeners. In comparison, the historic recordings from the beginning of the 20th century sound rough and raw, but they offer an encounter with a form of folk music that today we can no longer hear.



**Call of Dudy:
Bohemian Bagpipes Across
Borders**
Directed by: Radim Špaček

Peligroso Productions
(www.callofdudy.net)
Language versions: Czech, English,
German

The division of the Czech Republic in terms of folk music, or more specifically folk instruments, is often schematised in a very simple way, i.e. in Moravia they play the dulcimer, and in Bohemia the bagpipes. Regardless of the fact that in Moravia the bagpipes (which Moravians

call *gajdy*) are still played to this day in many places, and conversely people play the dulcimer in Bohemia, bagpipes are almost always involved whenever people claim to be offering a representative sample of Czech folk music. Western and Southern Bohemian towns like Strakonice, Domažlice or Cheb, are the principal places where the tradition of bagpipes is still kept up. In these areas Czech culture used to encounter German culture, in which we also find bagpipes.

It was to these areas that Radim Špaček headed with producer Jeff Brown and stage designer Keith Jones (both Americans who have lived in the Czech Republic for many years), to produce a report on the current state of bagpipe music.

The axis of the documentary is the International Bagpipes Festival in Strakonice, which has been held regularly since 1967, and which has grown from a get-together of local bands to an international review of bagpipes from all over the world. The founder of the festival, folk music collector and musician Josef Režný, is the main protagonist and at the same time the most important narrator in the film. Michael Cwach, an American with Czech roots who in his search for other Czech immigrants in the USA decided to learn the bagpipes and sing Czech songs, can be considered his cinematographic opposite number.

The documentary is built up as a mosaic from the testimony of musicians (foreign bagpipers are represented as well), concerts from festivals and

a quantity of archive materials – not just historical recordings of performances but excerpts from feature films that show how bagpipes have been presented in Bohemia and the symbolic aura they have come to possess. Appearing at the Strakonice Festival we see on the one hand “guardians of tradition”, ensembles reconstructing the probable original form of folk music, but also musicians who take something from the tradition and mix it with other elements, for example the group Chodská vlna (Chodsko Wave) which includes the Chodsko bagpipes in the instrumental set of a rock band. Apart from accounts of the history of the festival and all kinds of anecdotes associated with it (for example how a certain bagpiper from England was afraid of crossing the frontier into socialist Czechoslovakia), a great deal of time is devoted to the history of the instrument, the technique of play and tuning, and the instrumental sets in which the bagpipes have appeared. Through the musician and researcher Tomáš Spurný we also touch on the relationship between Czechs and Germans and its reflection in music. For anyone interested in Czech culture (not just the bagpipes aspect), this film offers plenty of food for thought and in a filmic form that is stylish and effective. After several days at a bagpipes festival the sound of the instrument may drive some people mad, but the fifty minutes of this documentary can only awaken interest in this distinctive instrument.

Matěj Kratochvíl

KEJDAS, SKŘIPKAS, FANFRNOCHS

WHAT PEOPLE USED TO PLAY ON IN BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA

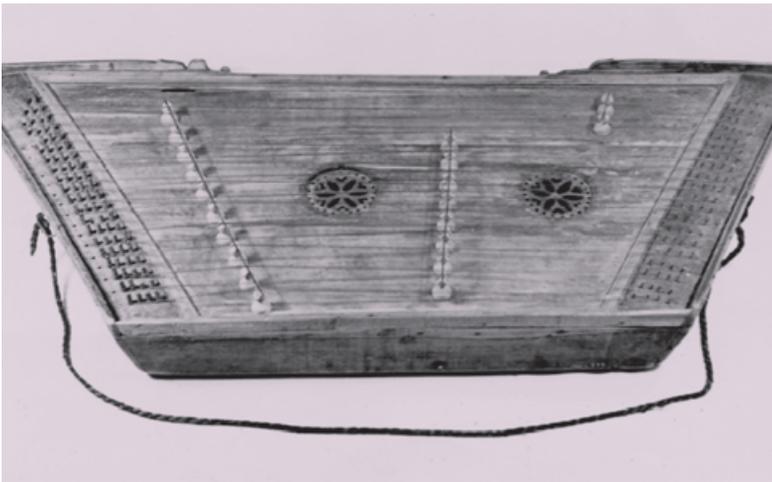
It is basically impossible to define what is a folk music instrument and what is not, because folk music and art music are spheres that have always interacted. The bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy or dulcimer have at several periods won the favour of composers of classical music and then moved back into the folk sphere. People used to make some instruments for themselves at home, for example *skřipky*

(fiddles), but in many other cases folk musicians used professionally produced instruments. This short article offers information on at least a few of the instruments that have played or still play a major role in folk music on the territory of the Czech Republic.

The Dulcimer

The dulcimer is often thought of as the typical folk music instrument of Eastern Europe, but its present form is a relatively modern product. Its forerunners – all kinds of instruments trapezoid in form with a variable number of strings played with the fingers or sticks – could be found in many places in Europe as early as the Middle Ages, when some were known as psalteries. The first pictorial representation of such an instrument in Bohemia comes from the year 1320. The construction of the psaltery was perfected in the 17th and 18th centuries and its range was enlarged. The word *cimbál* (dulcimer) was already being used in the Bohemian Lands around 1680. At the same time the instrument was growing in popularity in both folk and art music. While today it is associated primarily with the folk music of Moravia, up to the 1850s

the dulcimer was played in South Bohemia and the Labe basin as well, but it was still an instrument with a relatively small range, which was played hung round the neck or placed on the table. The large concert dulcimer standing on its own legs originated in Hungary, but in fact its design was Czech. It was built in 1866 by Josef V. Schunda, a native of Říčany near Prague who had settled in Budapest. He enlarged the range and dynamic possibilities of the instrument and added a damper pedal for the strings. It was in this form that the dulcimer was adopted into the instrumental sets of Gipsy bands in the Budapest cafes, and with them it went out to conquer many lands. In the 1930s several richer Moravian ensembles acquired such dulcimers and the new form replaced the small portable dulcimer, which is only rarely used today.



Small portable dulcimer from Valašsko region

The Bagpipes

It is only slight exaggeration to say that if anything unites Europe, it is the bagpipes. By the 12th century at the latest the instrument was known in some form or other to all European peoples (and also in North Africa, for example) and in some periods the bagpipes were the most important instrument of musical entertainment – one bagpiper could accompany a whole village dance on his own. The importance of the bagpipes in folk culture is reflected in the immense range of names that they were given. Many names, such as *kozel* or *kozlík* derive from the word for goat (*koza*), since the bag was made from goatskin and the instrument often decorated by a stylised goat head. Others probably derive from the oriental names for bagpipes (in Bohemia *kejdy* and in Moravia *gajdy* – from the Turkish *gaita*).

What are known as the Czech bagpipes consist of a melodic pipe with seven holes, a bordun (drone) pipe and two bags, one serving as air reservoir and the other being pumped. The drone pipe usually plays the note E flat, but in some areas it is tuned higher.

Pipes

We find a great range of shapes and sizes in folk music throughout the Czech Republic, but they were particularly important in regions where sheep herding was the main source of livelihood. This was primarily the case in the eastern part of Moravia – part of the “Carpathian arch” that connects Moravia with Slovakia, the Ukraine and Rumania. In these regions we find similar types of pipe and a related musical repertoire.



One peculiar type of pipe is what is known as a *koncovka* (literally “ender”) – a flute without holes, where the pitch is controlled just by varying the pressure with which it is blown and covering or opening the end of the instrument. In Wallachia these flutes were still being made in the 1950s.

Fiddle

While the classical violin in folk music was mainly used in Bohemia and Moravia, the area around Jihlava, inhabited mainly by Germans, was the home of *skřípky* – fiddles: home-made stringed instruments with short necks and a characteristic buzzing sound. Their existence is documented from the beginning of the 19th century, but as early as from 1813 their history was associated with the carpenter J. Bernesch who altered their design to obtain a stronger sound. His innovation meant that the whole family could join in making them and produce the instruments cheaply, and so the whole area was flooded with them. Among Jihlava burghers it became fashionable to have at least one such fiddle at home (ideally hanging on the parlour wall). Ensembles of fiddlers played in seventy German and five Czech villages in the Jihlava area. The instrument taking care of the bass line in these ensembles was quite unique in Europe, and known as the *Ploschperment*. Unlike the other stringed instruments the body of



String drum from South Bohemia

Fiddle from Jihlavsko region, around 1900

Nuptial merrymaking with a piper woodcut, around 1550

the Ploschperment was not glued together but sewn together with iron wire. After the Second World War and the expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia the tradition of *skřípky* bands ended and has only been artificially maintained by a few enthusiasts.

Noise-makers

In an entry of 1777, the Beroun Town Book records the rowdy behaviour of carollers who disturbed the peace close to the houses of burghers. It is in this context that we find the first mention in Bohemia of an instrument known as the *bukač*, *bukál*, *brumbál* or *fanfrnoch*, in fact a sort of string drum (lion’s roar): a vessel, usually a pot, with a membrane stretched across the neck; a bunch of horsehair was

stuck through the middle of the membrane, and the outside end of the horsehair was rubbed by hand. The resulting hooting sound was a bit like the cry of some strange being, which was probably why the instrument was used at various house-to-house carolling and begging ceremonies at Christmas and Easter. Although we have no precise evidence, it is possible that the fanfrnoch may also have been used for rhythmic accompaniment to songs.

Easter is particularly associated with the use of various other “noise-makers”. These include rattles (wooden springs sounded by a cogwheel) or “knocking boards” – little wooden plates with an attached hammer that hits the plates when the instrument is waved.



Robin Hayward

OSTRAVA DAYS 2007 – A BACKWARD LOOK

The last but not one Ostrava Days Institute and Festival of New Music took place in 2005 (it is a biennial event) and by all appearances meant a definite breakthrough. The Ostrava Days found (let's keep our fingers crossed!) long-term reliable sponsors, the formation of the Ostravska Banda ensemble meant a substantial expansion of the programme possibilities and an improvement in the level of performance, and the structure of the festival crystallised in the best form so far. The event started to acquire an international reputation. With this year's 4th Ostrava Days, it has now made the full transition from the category of projects about which we are never quite certain if the current year will not be their last, to a state in which we take its existence for granted and see it as a permanent and important part of the scene.

As has been indicated, Ostrava Days is not just a festival. The core of the whole event consists of three-week composition workshops known as the Ostrava Days Institute, where the permanent lecturers apart from the founder and musical director of OD composer and flautist Petra Kotík (see CM 2/07), are the American experimental composers Christian Wolf and Alvin Lucier. An important guest this year was the prominent composer Kaija Saariaho, for example, who represents the entirely different musical world of spectral music. The number of students-residents at the institute is limited to around thirty, with young composers attending mainly from the USA but also from many European countries and from much further afield. An important and very attractive part of the composing programme for young composers is the chance to present their own original compositions in the festival part of the Ostrava Days – both chamber pieces interpreted by top musicians and pieces for large orchestra. It is indeed in its focus on work with an orchestra that the OD Institute is relatively unique even in global terms.

Naturally of course, from the point of view of the general public it is the festival part that is the main attraction. Over the last week in August, when the OD Festival was held, around a hundred pieces were played, with two to three concerts every day. Thanks to its clear-cut conception focused on really good quality avant-garde music, the festival is now an established event on the all-European scene. The background of the director Petr Kotík is reflected in programming that shows a clear fondness for the American experimental scene (which is a strong element in the identity of OD), but a great deal of attention is also paid to European work. The festival covers practically the whole period from the Second World War to the present with occasional forays further into the past. One cannot therefore speak of contemporary music in the strict sense. Many of the regularly performed composers are already parts of the world history of music, such as L. Nono, G. Ligeti, J. Cage, I. Xenakis, M. Feldman, and K. Stockhausen.

In terms of performance the festival relies on collaboration with the Ostrava Janáček Philharmonic, its own ensemble Ostravska Banda and renowned foreign ensembles, soloists and conductors invited from abroad. This year the leading guests included the Flux String Quartet, the conductors Ronald Kluttig and Peter Rundel, the cellist Charles Curtis, the pianist Daan Vandewalle and the tuba player Robin Hayward. One very important success for OD is the very promising development of the work of the Ostravska Banda – an international chamber group of variable size, formed mainly of younger musicians involved in performance of contemporary music. The Ostravska Banda was founded at OD two years ago and the core of its activities is performance at the Ostrava Days. Nonetheless, in the intervening periods the Ostrava Centre for New Music has managed to organise several concerts for the ensemble in Europe and the USA. Given the huge amount of work on the



ensemble's shoulders in the course of the festival, the quality of performance is remarkable.

What were the highlights? In so brief an article I only have space to mention a fraction of all that deserves attention – it should be said that the quality of the festival concerts is very balanced and at least one exceptional piece could be found at practically every concert. The closing evening of the festival was, however, definitely a major event, with the hour-long “opera” (de facto a stage concerto for solo soprano and large orchestra) *Neither* by Morton Feldman on Beckett’s poem. The Janáček Philharmonic conducted by Peter Rundel earned itself an entirely justified final ovation. The soloist was the sovereign Martha Cluver. In the first half of the evening the Ostravska Banda excelled in G.Ligeti’s *Violin Concerto*, with Hana Kotková taking the solo part. The 1960s were a kind of theme at this year’s OD. In addition to generally noteworthy pieces of the period scattered through the overall programme (S. Wolpe, Ch. Wolf, K. Stockhausen and others), there was a praiseworthy attempt at mapping the situation in the sixties in Prague (the round table of composers-protagonists didn’t turn out particularly well, but the concert that followed on was interesting and enlightening – my favourite is P. Kotík’s piece *Spontano*, for example) as was the afternoon devoted to the Fluxus movement with the personal participation of its protagonists Ben Patterson and Milan Knížák (currently the director of the Czech National Gallery, incidentally).

*Residents of the Ostrava Days Institute performing
J. Lely’s Second Symphony*

*M. Cluver and P. Rundel with the Janáček Philharmonic,
bowing after Feldman’s Neither*

Milan Knížák

Petr Kotík in Yoko Ono’s happening



DAVID DORUŽKA: WITH MY OWN BAND I WANT TO PLAY MY OWN MUSIC

Despite his young age, guitarist and composer David Dorůžka is one of the leading musicians of the Czech jazz scene. In New York he recorded his first CD *Hidden Paths*, which was awarded the “Anděl” prize in the Czech Music Academy Awards as “CD of the year 2004” in the Jazz&Blues category. He mostly performs with his own trio and also plays in a quartet with singer Josefine Lindstrand from Sweden.

When you started playing guitar, did you know from the beginning that it was going to be jazz you wanted to do?

At first I wasn't very interested in jazz. I started listening to rock'n'roll bands – a lot of music from the 60s. My parents bought me a guitar and I started taking classical guitar lessons. And then two years later they bought me an electric guitar and I started playing rock and blues, and then jazz one or two years later. But at the same time I always heard jazz music at home from my grandfather who is a jazz critic and who used to be an amateur musician.

After graduation from high school in Prague, you went to Berklee College of Music in Boston. There you studied guitar and composition. It seems to be a crucial moment in your career. How important was it in fact?

Yes, it was very important. Education was one thing but equally important was the chance to be around a lot of musicians from very different backgrounds. Berklee is like a small musical world. 3500 students study music there and come from many different places and different continents and they study different things. The age and level is mixed but I met some really incredible players from all over the world and many inspiring people, and I made lot of friends. I got to play with many people from the US, from different European countries, from South America and from Japan. I also met some composers and I got to play with some of the teachers too. When I think back on it now, this was the most important thing. But the education was also important. I mostly studied composition. Even though I'm much more a player than a composer, I had the chance to

write for larger ensembles and to hear the music being played right away. That's an important experience definitely.

Which of those teachers were most important for you?

There was Joe Lovano, a very well-known saxophonist and composer. He started teaching there the last year that I was in school. He is really amazing. I was in his ensemble and he also gave some lectures that were open to everybody and he just played and talked about his experiences and that was great. And then there were several guitar teachers: Mick Goodrick, Jon Damian, Richie Hart and some other ones. There was Greg Hopkins who is a trumpet player, composer and arranger. He was great for writing. And there was trombonist Hal Crook and saxophonist Eddie Tomasi, and I had those two for improvisational subjects, that was really good. I also had some classical music analysis courses and that was very nice too.

And then you moved to New York.

In a way, the one year I spent in New York was definitely as important as the three years in Boston at Berklee, but maybe even much more important. It was the most natural step to finish Berklee and move to New York. Most jazz musicians who go to Berklee do it. I had many friends in NY who I had met in school before. I think studying at a school is a great thing but it's not like real life. Being in New York was a real-life experience. Having to make a living, doing everything seriously and making the decisions yourself and not because you're supposed to do it for school. In a way it was a much more im-

portant school than being in Boston before, even though at Berklee it was great and important for me, without question.

In New York I played with a lot of people I knew from Boston but I also met many New York jazz musicians who have been living there for some time.

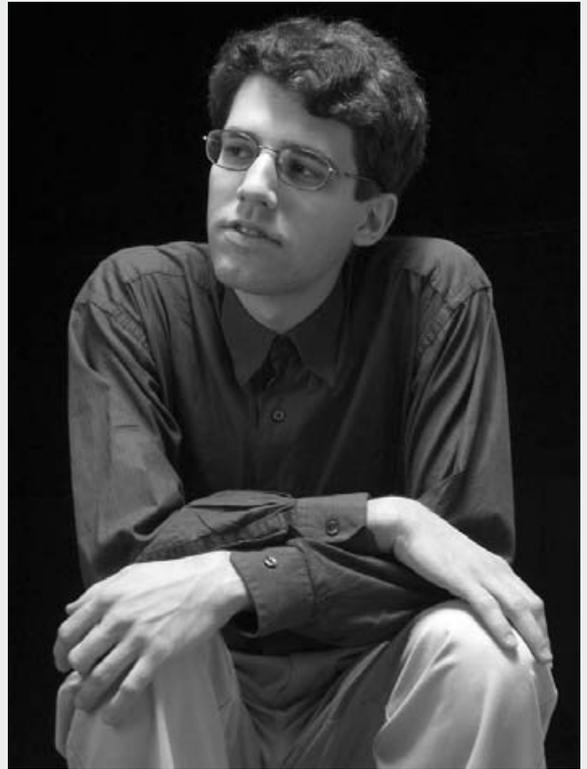
For jazz musicians, New York is a city like no other in the world. It's very hard to survive, it's incredibly competitive, there's so much energy in the air and in everybody's playing and the level of musicianship is very high. There's a kind of energy I haven't found anywhere else.

The time when I lived there was, I think, quite a difficult time for most people in New York. I moved there in September 2002, one year after September 11th 2001. The events of 2001 changed many things, I think. They really changed the thinking of people in New York. New York was really touched by this.

How was your return from such a big city to a much smaller place like Prague?

I have to say that after four years of living in the US, I wanted to go back to Europe. I grew up in Prague, I lived here the first 19 years of my life but I never tried to make a living here, I never had to before. The best and most important thing about moving back to Prague was that I started being much more active than before, even though I had performed a lot around Prague as a teenager. Now I started to lead my own band which I didn't really do much when I was in the US. I started touring a bit and I met a lot of people from other countries in Europe.

I started playing with some really good Polish musicians. Actually when I was still living in the States, in the summer of 2002 right before I moved to New York, I went on a European tour with a project called the European Jazz Youth Orchestra put together by Danish bass player Erik Moseholm. This was a large band of 19 musicians; there were people between the age of 20 and 30 from all over Europe. Each year a different composer/conductor is invited to lead the band, it's usually a well-known person. The year I was there, it was the British pianist and composer Django Bates. We played in Denmark, then went to Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain and Portugal. I met many people on this tour, some of them really good players. So when I moved back to Prague in the end of 2003, I started trying to make more connections in Europe.



Of course, I play a lot in jazz clubs in Prague, but in a country of the size of Czech Republic you have to try to go outside to make connections. The scene is still very closed, there is not enough connection with other countries.

You are very particular about the musicians you work with. How do you choose them?

With my own band I want to play my own music. My music, I think, is distinctive in comparison with music that other contemporary jazz musicians write. I think it's definitely not music you would call "mainstream" or "classic". It has a lot to do with the jazz tradition, but also there are things that jazz musicians are not used to doing that much. I think the music I write is not the easiest to play and so I choose people who can play that music well. Professionalism is one thing, meaning that you can play something well and do the things that the composer wants you to do. But the other thing is being able to feel intuitively, not just intellectually, what the music needs. In the end, this is what makes music good or not good, what separates music that's only professional from music that is really beautiful. The players I love to play with the most are those who feel my music intuitively without me having to explain what this is and what this is not. You give them the music and they play it immediately the way you hear it. And this is a magic thing.

I'm sure this can work in any music, not just jazz music. But in improvised music people have more room to use their own imagination so perhaps you can hear the difference more. This thing that I'm talking about is something that doesn't happen every day. In the last three years this has certainly become very important for me – I feel that I accomplish something if I can play my own music with people who feel that music in the same way I feel it. That's basically the criterion when I choose the musicians I play with.

When I look at the contemporary jazz scene, at a certain level it seems to be quite similar to the contemporary classical music scene. A lot of music hasn't really moved away from tradition and sounds more or less the same as music of the past. In addition, there is a great wellspring of materials, which both jazz musicians and contemporary classical composers use, reshape, and re-work, such as folk music, electronic media, and all other sorts of music. Could you comment on this and how do you regard your position in this context?

If you look at all music as a whole, there is an infinite number of traditions and styles that come from different places and evolve in different ways but at the same time I think that musical categories are empty words in a way. You can set some criteria to decide whether something is still jazz - "jazz up to here" and "this is no longer jazz", and "this is classical or concert music" and "this isn't any longer". But that's meaningless to me and I don't care about that. I'm not interested in whether something is jazz or classical or pop. In our world today we have the media technically at a much more advanced level than ever before, with CDs and internet and all that, so you can listen to or read almost anything you want, which was never the case before. A hundred years ago it would have been much more difficult for example to listen to music from Africa without having to go to Africa. We are all confronted with much more influences than people were before. Nowadays we hear much more varied music every day. We can listen to it but it's also put in front of us even if we don't want to listen to it and we cannot just close ourselves and ignore it. In a way, the genres and styles and categories are losing their meaning, I think. I consider myself a jazz musician because I play mostly improvised music, but right now I want to explore many things that don't have much to do with the American influence. Improvisation is not something you only find in jazz. In the end I don't pay so much attention to whether I'm a jazz musician or not. I prefer to speak clearly about what music I feel close to or what I'm interested in.

So what is it?

From the moment when I started being serious about music, maybe at the age of 13, until when I was 17 or 18, all I really cared about was jazz, especially the jazz tradition of the 40s, 50s, and 60s in the US. I wanted to learn how to play this music and to be strong at it and then when I was maybe 18, I slowly started being more and more interested in classical music. First it started because I was listening to musicians like Brad Mehldau and others, who had a strong classical influence in their music. And then I went to the US and for the first time I got to play with the American musicians and I saw the American jazz tradition first hand. I became better at playing this music but somehow I didn't feel complete and I wanted to discover who I was because I felt like I was playing with all these great American musicians but that wasn't all I was personally about. I also knew I could never play as great as the Americans, do naturally what they do, because I can learn this intellectually but it never goes beyond the intellectual. I started listening more and more to European music, at first a lot of contemporary classical music from Eastern Europe – Arvo Pärt, Giya Kancheli and Alfred Schnittke, and then I started discovering many new things that I never paid attention to, especially many great contemporary jazz musicians from Europe. And I'm still discovering all these things.

This autumn, you are planning to record a new CD. Can you say something about it?

Mostly it's going to be my new music that I've been writing in the past year. It will be a quartet with an international line-up. It's going to feature Swedish singer Josefine Lindstrand, who I've played a lot with before. We met on tour with the European Jazz Youth Orchestra in 2002. Then she came over twice to teach at the Prague summer jazz workshop and we also did a two-week tour together in spring of 2005. I really love working with her; she's an amazing singer. She also writes her own music and lyrics too. In general, I really like working with singers and I've wanted to record with her for a long time.

There's going to be a Polish rhythm section: Michal Baranski on bass and Lukasz Zyta on drums, great players, one of the best rhythm sections on the Polish scene. And also two people I really feel close to both personally and musically. I think we share some musical values that make the music work.



David Dorůžka, guitar

Born in 1980 in Prague, he took up the guitar at the age of ten and from the age of fourteen started performing with leading musicians on the Czech jazz scene. In 1995 he received the "Talent of the Year" award from the Czech Jazz Society. He played on award-winning recordings by Karel Růžička Jr. (*You Know What I Mean*, 1997) and Jaromír Honzák (*Earth Life*, featuring Jorge Rossy, 1998). From 1999 until 2002 Dorůžka lived in Boston in the USA and studied composition and improvisation at Berklee College of Music. Among his teachers were Joe Lovano, Mick Goodrick and George Garzone. Dorůžka was chosen by Pat Metheny to participate as the only guitarist in the Aspen Snowmass Jazz Colony in Colorado in the summer of 2000, where he studied with Christian McBride, Joshua Redman, Brian Blade and Herbie Hancock among others. In the summer of 2002 Dorůžka took part in a tour with the "Swinging Europe" project led by British pianist and composer Django Bates. After graduating from Berklee, Dorůžka lived in New York City from 2002 to 2003. In New York he recorded his first CD, *Hidden Paths*, which was awarded the Anděl prize in the Czech music academy awards as CD of the year 2004 in the Jazz&Blues category. Since moving back to Europe at the end of 2003, Dorůžka has been performing mostly with his

own trio and also working in a quartet with singer Josefine Lindstrand from Sweden. He also worked as an accompanying musician with Divadlo Vizita, a Prague-based free-improvisation theatre. In addition to performing and composing, Dorůžka devotes his time to teaching activities. In past years he has taught at the Department of Higher Education at the Conservatory of Jaroslav Ježek in Prague and since 2003 he has been a teacher at the annual Prague Jazz Summer Workshop. He has also given master classes and clinics in Czech Republic and abroad.

Dorůžka has appeared at important festivals in the US (Monterey, Cleveland and others), Canada (Montreal), and in many European countries (festivals in Vienne, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Athens and others). Countries where he has performed also include Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Greece, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The list of musicians with whom he has worked includes such names as Jorge Rossy, Django Bates, Tiger Okoshi, Perico Sambeat, Albert Sanz, Rodney Green, Orrin Evans, Kenwood Dennard, Phil Wilson, Greg Hopkins, Don Grusin and many others.



Paris, 1938

“Music for me is the idea of light”

A view of the life and music of Bohuslav Martinů

Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) is one of the truly world famous “four” among Czech composers, together with Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček. He is also considered one of the most important composers of the 20th century. Over his lifetime Martinů wrote more than four hundred compositions of every type and genre: symphonies, operas, cantatas, oratorio, ballets, chamber works, film and stage music. He is the author of sixteen operas, fifteen ballets, around thirty concertante works, and almost a hundred chamber works all the way from duets to nonets. He composed a hundred and sixteen vocal-instrumental works, including three melodramas and one oratorio. Among his orchestral works let us mention his six symphonies and another near fifty compositions for large and chamber orchestra.

“For the rest, I believe greatness consists in how naturally we express our idea.”

(B. Martinů, USA, Ridgefield, 1944)

Composing was the focus of Bohuslav Martinů's life and apart from a few years when he worked as a teacher of composition, it was his only source of livelihood. This is one reason why he was so unusually prolific as a composer. His extraordinary energy is attested by the vast number of surviving letters from his correspondence with important conductors and musicians, representatives of publishing houses, friends and of course with his family in Polička and friends in the then Czechoslovakia.

A brief biography of the composer could serve as the subject for a screenplay. Martinů's birthplace was Polička, a small town in the

hilly countryside of the Vysočina (Uplands) on the border between Bohemia and Moravia. He was born here on the 8th of December 1890. At the time his family was living in a humble one-room dwelling in the tower of St. James's Church, where the whole family had moved when Bohuslav's father became a tower watchman, who watch for fires in the area and rang the bells as well as carrying on his original trade as a cobbler. The Martinůs moved out of the tower in 1902, when Bohuslav was twelve. In 1906 he entered the violin class at the Prague Conservatory as a promising young talent but after four years he was expelled for indolence. He stayed in Prague and became a member of the Czech Philharmonic as one of the second violins under the direction of the outstanding conductor Václav Talich. In 1923 he went to Paris, where he studied

composition with Albert Roussel, whose symphonic pieces had entirely captivated him when he encountered them in Czech Philharmonic's repertoire. He lived in Paris from 1923 to 1940, when he and his wife Charlotte were forced to flee from the Nazis to Portugal and then overseas. In the years 1941–1953 he lived in the USA, where apart from composing he taught composition at various music academies, universities and master classes. In the USA he won an enormous reputation as one of the most important composers of his time. After the Second World War he began to take trips back to Europe and from 1953 to his death in 1959 he divided his life between France, Italy and Switzerland. The last twenty years of his life he therefore spent abroad; in 1952 he became an American citizen and subsequently never returned to his homeland even for a visit.



“New and great horizons have opened up for me here”

(Paris, 1924)

What made Martinů move to Paris and stay there for the next seventeen years? One decisive moment was his visit to Paris on a concert tour with the orchestra of the National Theatre in 1919. For the young musician, Paris was a synonym for creative freedom, liberation from the humble conditions of his birthplace and from the traditionalist environment of Prague, dominated on the one hand by the German Neo-Romanticism and on the other by Czech National Revivalism. After half a year in Paris he wrote: *“New and great horizons have opened up for me here, I don’t seem to be the same as I was just six months ago.”* Martinů found himself in the company of the most important artists of the day: Igor Stravinsky, the members of Les Six, the conductor Sergei Koussevitzky, the organiser and choreographer Sergei Diaghilev with his celebrated Russian Ballet, and painters Pablo Picasso, Josef Šíma and Jan Zrzavý. Still, after 1930 he was starting to consider a return home. An opportunity arose in 1935, when Martinů nursed hopes of the position opened by the death of Josef Suk at the master department of the Prague Conservatory. Since he only made the



The church tower in Polička where Martinů was Born

Interior of the tower

trip back to Prague in the vacations or for premieres of his work, however, and as he himself wrote had “had done nothing to prepare the ground in high places”, he failed to get the post. *“Who knows if it isn’t better for me to be able to stay here, when after all it is a completely different milieu and it is more important for me to stay here. Nobody ever knows the good that may come out of something...”* This was how he reacted to his failure in Prague in a letter home. Apart from the desire to console his nearest and dearest, the letter shows a resignation to fate and a trace of distrust for the Czech musical world, where for some of his contemporaries he was merely a “French” composer, an imitator of Debussy and Stravinsky.

“I know our tower is asking what has become of me”

(New York, 1950)

After 1936 Martinů’s letters show an ever more intense desire to go home, but the growing threat of Nazism changed the situation entirely: *“... I would already like to go back and work at home, but now of course everything has become much more difficult”*. His closest friends, the Sachers and Miloš Šafránek, ensured that the composer escaped the Nazis and reached the safety of the USA. With the end of the war there were

once again genuine prospects for his return to Czechoslovakia, but after his failed pre-war attempt to get an appointment post as a professor, Martinů had developed a rooted distrust for the Czech music scene and was convinced he was neither welcome nor expected back at home: *“After all, it’s now almost a year since the liberation and so far no-one in official circles has even asked about me. Naturally I’m not going to go running after them.”* (From a letter to his family in Polička, March 1946). At this point accident intervened – Martinů suffered a serious head injury during a summer composing school in Great Barrington (Massachusetts) in 1946. Treatment was long, and while he was convalescing the political conditions in Czechoslovakia were moving in a direction inimical to artistic freedom. Martinů began to fear the reaction his return to Czechoslovakia might provoke and to wonder whether, once back there, he might lose the right to get out again and travel freely: *“Whatever happens I have to be able to get back to the USA, because that is essential if I am not to lose what I have managed to achieve over here, and over here the pace of life is fast and people easily forget.”* The communist coup in 1948 naturally made Martinů was even more sceptical, and he decided that it was more meaningful and safer to compose outside his homeland.

Left to right the scientist Antonín Svoboda,
Bohuslav Martinů,
the pianist Rudolf Firkušný
and Charlotte Martinů.
New York, 1943?



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“My work is still Czech and connected with my homeland”

(New York, 1951)

The music of Bohuslav Martinů has many faces. In the course of his career it underwent many several transformations of style. Martinů was very sensitive to external musical impulses and always managed to incorporate them into his own work and exploit them in an admirable way. Over the years Martinů cultivated a great feeling for the specific features and potential of every instrument. He forged his own distinctive musical idiom and his music is recognisable after no more than a few bars. His is a musical language derived from the simplicity and melodiousness of Moravian and Bohemian folksong, the inventiveness with sound of Impressionism, the polyphony of English madrigal, the formal discipline of the Italian musical Baroque and the rhythmic, motoric influences of jazz. Many of his pieces are dedicated to friends among the important musicians of the day, and some of his work were written as commissions.

Harry Halbreich, author of the catalogue of the composer's works, divides Martinů's creative career into four stylistic periods, which also relate to the different places where he lived: the early period in Prague and Polička before his departure for Paris,

the Paris period (1923–1940), the years spent in America (1941–1953) and the last creative phase associated with his years back in Europe (1953–1959).

When Martinů was studying at the Prague Conservatory and later as a member of the Czech Philharmonic, the contemporary composer whose music most captivated him was Claude Debussy. He was fascinated by Debussy's harmonic freedom, the breadth of colour of his harmonies, his new concept of instrumentation and permissiveness of form. At the same time Martinů remained under the influence of the domestic classics Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák and even at this early stage his music manifested his fondness for Czech and Moravian folkore. In this period Martinů produced a great many songs and small piano pieces, of which the most successful was the three-part cycle *Marionettes* (Loutky, 1912, final part completed in 1923), and broke with his enchantment with impressionism in the ballet *Istar* based on an Ancient Babylonian saga.

As a second violinist in the Czech Philharmonic Martinů got to know the music of Albert Roussel, specifically the symphony *Le Poème de la Forêt* and the ballet *Le Festin de l'Araignée*. When Martinů arrived in

Paris he immediately tracked down the composer and for a period became his pupil. In Roussel he found proportionality of musical expression, equilibrium of form, taste and order – in short, the virtues of French music that he had always admired. For Martinů, the second most important person that he encountered in Paris was Igor Stravinsky. His favourite works by Stravinsky were *The Soldier's Tale* (*Histoire du soldat*), *Petrushka* and *The Wedding* (*Les Noces*): “He stands in sharp opposition to Romanticism and subjectivism. He is positive and immediate.” wrote Martinů in an article for the Czech press in 1924. Martinů's symphonic piece *Half-Time* (1924) is considered a turning point in his creative development. Written nine months into his stay in Paris it shows no trace of dreamy impressionism; instead, energy of rhythm, vivaciousness and audacious harmonic and instrumental techniques are to the fore. In terms of sound, the winds predominate, together with the piano part that now seems closer to percussion in style. Dissonant harmonies and pronounced rhythm reveal the influence of Stravinsky. *Half-Time* was inspired by the atmosphere of half-time at a football match, and the following masterpiece of the Paris period, *La Bagarre* (1926) is dedicated in theme to Charles Lindberg's successful flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

Handwritten musical score for the first system, featuring vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The vocal lines are for **Manolios?** and **Want me to tell him anything?**. The piano part includes dynamic markings like *p* and *mf*, and performance instructions such as *(imitate)* and *(begin to sing)*.

Scene 5. Priest **Grigoris**, **Archem** (Behind the Stage a kindly & naive people talking) and **Ladas**. (*Yannakis is hiding behind a rock.*)

Allegro

Grigoris: What is he talking about?
Archem: About Christ.
Grigoris: Christ? But that is my business!
 He knows nothing about!
Archem: Oh, let him speak.
Grigoris: He upsets order, he dirty prophet! He
 pass himself as a saint, make the folks
 believe him!

Handwritten musical score for the second system, featuring a full orchestral arrangement. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (B.), Horns (Horns), Trumpets (Tpt.), Trombones (Tbn.), and Timpani (Timp.). The piano part is marked **Allegro** with a tempo of *♩ = 120 (♩♩)*. The score includes dynamic markings like *mf* and *f*, and performance instructions such as *(Enter Manolios and the villagers of Lycavrisia. Manolios is speaking to them)* and *(Manolios)*. The score concludes with a **f** dynamic marking.

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New York City

Page from the manuscript score of the Greek Passion (1st version, 1954-1956, 3rd act)

Martinů was open to the many stimuli that Paris offered. At the time this meant the avant-garde art movements of Dadaism and Surrealism, with whose leaders Martinů collaborated on the libretti of his operas: with the Dadaist playwright Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes on the operas *Tears of the Knife / Larmes de couteau* (1928) and the “film” opera *Three Wishes / Les trois souhaits* (1929) and later with the Surrealist playwright Georges Neveux on the opera *Juliette* (1937), which became Martinů’s most famous operatic work. Nor did Jazz, very popular at the time, escape Martinů’s attention. Martinů’s intoxication with jazz lasted almost five years, starting in 1926, when he employs various degrees of stylisation of the foxtrot, black bottom, charleston and blues, in piano compositions, orchestral works (*Jazz Suite* for small orchestra, *Le Jazz* for large orchestra and vocal trio – both 1928) and very obviously in his operas (the *Tears of the Knife* and *Three Wishes* already mentioned) and the ballets (*The Kitchen Revue/La revue de cuisine* – 1927, *Check to the King/Échec au roi* – 1930).

Starting from 1930 a strong response to Czech folklore and also adoption of the Baroque concerto grosso as a formal model can be traced in Martinů’s output. He sometimes used fragments of real folksongs in his compositions, but usually created his own motifs derived from the spirit of folk music. In this phase he wrote the remarkable musical dramatic work – the ballet with dance *The Chap-Book* (Špalíček, 1931–1932), the opera cycle of four miracle plays *The Plays of Mary (Hry o Marii, 1933–1934)* and the radio opera *The Voice of the Forest (Hlas lesa, 1935)*. The core works of his “folklore” period also include the cantata *Garland (Kytice, 1935)*.

Baroque concerto grosso is the influence least often mentioned in relation to Martinů, but in fact it had a fundamental effect on his work and represents one of its most remarkable and frequent hallmarks. Martinů was entranced by the music



Berkshire, USA, 1942

of Corelli and Bach’s Brandenburg concertos; he found in concerto grosso the embodiment of his ideal of form and sound. The “trilogy” of orchestral pieces for chamber orchestra – *Concerto Grosso* (1937), *Tre Ricercari* (1938) and *Double Concerto* (1938) are among his most important works from this period.

In the USA Martinů was inspired to write five symphonies (1942–1946). The sixth and last symphony differs from the others (even in its very name *Fantaisies Symphoniques*) and was finished seven years later (1951–1953). In Martinů’s output considered as a whole the symphonies represent a self-contained series of masterpieces and occupy a unique, and it might be said a dominating position.

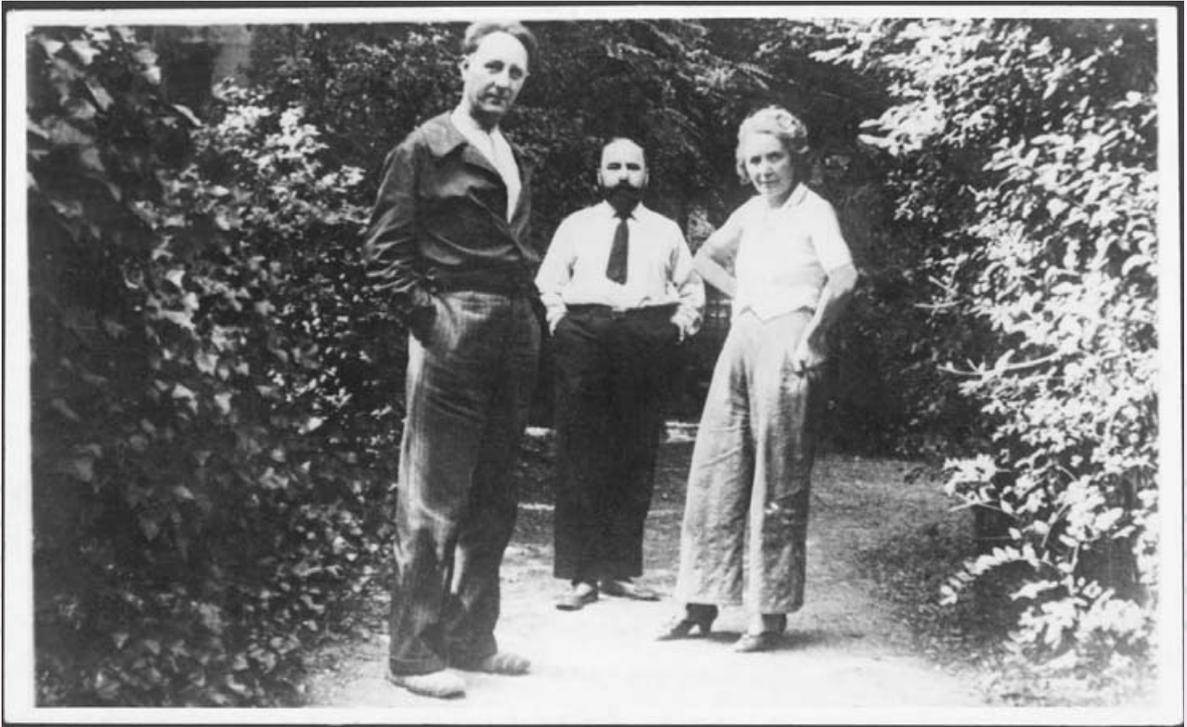
Martinů’s late period is dominated by three works: the opera *The Greek Passion*, the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 5* and the symphonic *The Parables*. He found the subject for his last opera, *The Greek Passion*, in Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis’s novel *Christ Recrucified*. He worked on it for almost three years and it can be considered his “swan song”. The titles of the different movements of the symphonic piece for large orchestra *The Parables* are inspired by the literary works of An-

toine de Saint-Exupéry and Georges Neveux (*Parable of the Statue, The Garden, The Boat*), but this is not so much programmatic music as free fantasy, a kind of neo-impressionism deriving once again from the music of Debussy.

Despite all the shifts of style, we can consistently identify Martinů’s music on the basis of a number of fundamental features. These are rhythmic pregnancy and melodic based on domestic folklore, syncopation, and lucidity and balance of proportion in musical form. Over the years Martinů cultivated a great sensitivity to the specific features of each instrument, and so it is hard to imagine his music played by instruments different from those for which he wrote a particular part. Another distinctive characteristic is the frequent use of piano; we find it in a near majority of Martinů’s compositions.

“Not everyone will understand me immediately”
(Paris, 1931)

What was Martinů really like as a man? How did those around him see him and how did he see himself? As he himself mentions when recalling Polička, his early childhood in the tower in Polička (1890–1902)



Bohuslav and Charlotte Martinů with the painter Jan Zrzavy in the Rue de Vanves garden, Paris 1934 (above)

Bohuslav and Charlotte Martinů, Ridgefield, USA, 1944

Bohuslav and Charlotte Martinů, during Christmas in 1942, New York

*Bohuslav Martinů with the piano duo
Janine Reding – Henri Piette,
and the conductor Rafael Kubelík
(1955, Besançon, France)*



© PAVANĀK BOHUSLAVA MARTINŮ (63)

*Bohuslav Martinů with Germaine Leroux
and Leon Barzin (1942, New York)*



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had a huge effect on his perception of the world. Here he created his own childish world, which always remained present in him at some deep level. “*Entirely isolated from the outside world as if in some lighthouse, I had nothing else to do for work or for entertainment than to record in memory various pictures that could be seen from the tower (...) – everything in miniature, with small houses and little people, and above them a vast and boundless space. I think this space is one of my biggest impressions from childhood (...) Not the small interests of the people, the cares, pains or even the joys I saw from a great distance, or to put it better from a great height. It is that space that is always before my eyes, and it seems to me that it is the space I am always searching for in my works. Back then people had no special distinctive appearance of their own, but just seemed to be part of the picture of nature like trees, paths, birds. All these were events that cannot be forgotten.*” Martinů considered his unusual childhood in the tower one of the most important impulses behind his work: it was in this period that “*the longing to get that space into my composition, and then the longing to express and depict form*” took root in him. Martinů was rather shy and timid by nature. He did not enjoy staying for long in the bustle of society, and liked to escape from big cities. Visits to the countryside and mountains were his frequent refuge. He had a great sense of humour, as is attested by his sketchbooks of small drawings and cartoons and the memories of his friends.

Everyone who met him was astounded by his extraordinary erudition, intellect and sense of humour. His knowledge of literature and art was remarkable. Ever since his Prague years he had filled his free moments with reading, or going to the theatre and exhibitions. In Paris and in America he became a regular film goer and admirer of cinema. He was also interested in philosophy and natural science. Martinů was active as a writer as well as a musician. In his first Paris years he sent pieces

on Parisian musical life to Czech magazines, and during his time in America he wrote three diaries with philosophical-aesthetic reflections on composition, the role of the composer, and listeners. He produced programme commentaries for twenty of his works. He wrote the libretti to his own last five operas on the basis of literary sources (*What Men Live By* – 1952, *The Marriage* – 1952, *Mirandolina* – 1954, *Ariane* – 1958, *The Greek Passion* – 1959). Martinů spoke French and during his stay in the USA considered it essential to master English as well. As he himself wrote, “*English is very hard, but I will manage it. We communicate in French a lot and there are plenty of Czechs here as well.*” He also had the basics of German but used this language the least as is evident for example from his surviving correspondence.

The serious head injury that he suffered while staying in the small town of Great Barrington (Massachusetts) in the USA in 1946, where he was teaching composition on a summer school, had permanent physical and psychological effects. One July evening he fell more than two metres from a poorly protected balcony. The results of the accident were to last for practically the whole remainder of his life. He complained of pain in the head, buzzing in the right ear, loss of balance and exhaustion. There was also a perceptible change in his behaviour: he was far more sensitive, reacted more slowly in conversation, and sometimes seemed not to be entirely aware of what was going on around him.

His relationship to religion and the church remains uncertain. Martinů never wrote a Latin mass nor a musical arrangement of any of the Latin liturgical texts (*The Field Mass* from 1939 is based on texts by the writer Jiří Mucha and Czech prayers). On the other hand religious motifs appear in his operas (*The Plays of Mary* and the *Greek Passion*), and in his

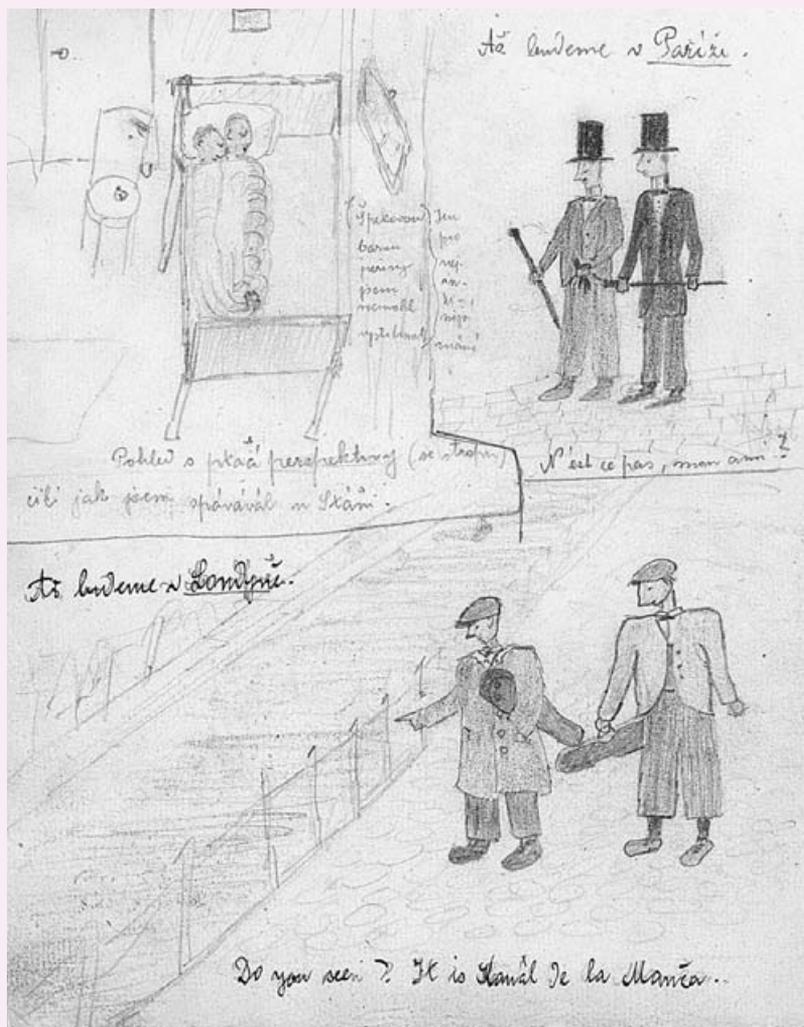
letters he writes in times of trouble of faith in God’s plan and the meaningfulness of the events around him. He felt himself to be an observer of life and in his later years accepted changes and reverses in his own life with humility and resignation: “*Do as we will, what has to happen will happen, (...) and perhaps the Lord God will not abandon us and we shall meet again earlier than we think.*” (From a letter home to Polička, March 1939).

“*I doubt I shall ever see the money*”

(New York, 1950)

In monographs on Martinů we often find it claimed that Martinů had difficulty making ends meet right up to the end of the Second World War. Certainly he struggled financially in his first years in Paris, when he lived on no more than a scholarship from the Ministry of Education and the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts, and a small irregular contribution from the community and mayoral office in Polička. Subsequently over his lifetime Martinů won several awards carrying financial rewards: a Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts Prize, first prize from the Coolidge Foundation, and twice a grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

In addition to composing, from the forties Martinů occasionally taught students at music school. He taught at the Berkshire Music Centre in 1942 and in 1946, then at the Mannes School of Music in New York (1947–1948, again in 1955), in 1948–1951 at Princeton University in the State of New Jersey, in 1955–56 at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and finally in 1956–57 at the American Academy in Rome as “composer in residence”, which involved less the direct obligation to teach than the role of encouraging and supporting students in their studies and providing artistic guidance.



From Martinů's notebook (1918-1924):
 "When we are in Paris"/"When we are in London"

His main source of income was therefore royalties from performances of his work and a share in the profits from sales of his scores and recordings of his music. Martinů was a member of the authorial copyright protection organisation based in Prague known as the OSA; membership meant that the organisation collected payment for the performance of his work at home and abroad and passed it on to the composer. The whole situation became difficult after the Second World War, when the National Bank in Czechoslovakia

refused to pay Martinů his royalties in either dollars or French francs. Martinů's main source of income was therefore cut off. In the end the royalties were at least paid out to the composer's siblings in crowns. The fees from the publication of his scores were tied up in Czechoslovakia in the same way. Martinů therefore left the OSA, in 1952 became a member of the American copyright protection association ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) and started to publish his music with foreign publishing houses (Boosey&Hawkes, Universal Edition, Bärenreiter-Verlag).

When considering the composer's material situation we should not forget the substantial help he received from friends and patrons. He was able to ride out the toughest situations in his life thanks to Maja and Paul Sacher – his Swiss patrons. Maja Sacher was the heiress of the Roche pharmaceutical concern and Paul Sacher was a conductor, who founded the Basle Chamber Orchestra. The Sachers funded Martinů's journey to the USA and in his last years made it possible for him to devote himself to composing at their country estate in Schönenberg by Basle.

Martinů Yesterday and Today

Martinů made a huge name for himself in the USA in the forties and fifties. His compositions were premiered by the leading American orchestras: The Boston Symphony Orchestra (*Symphonies nos. 1, 3 and 6, Concerto for Violin no. 2*), The Cleveland Orchestra (*Symphony no. 2*), The Philadelphia



Orchestra (*Symphony no. 4, Concerto for Two Pianos*). In the USA Martinů was hailed as the “Dvořák” of the twentieth century. Numerous performances of his works followed in Europe, above all thanks to close co-operation between orchestras and soloists (Kammerorchester Basel, Wiener Philharmoniker, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande). Martinů also found promoters among the most important conductors of his day – Sergei Koussevitzky, Charles Munch, Ernest Ansermet, Paul Sacher, Eugene Ormandy, George Szell, Walter Straram, Rafael Kubelík, Václav Talich and Karel Ančerl. In

Nice, 1959

the fifties Martinů’s choral works and cantatas were frequently performed in Czechoslovakia. Since the seventies Martinů has acquired a permanent place in the repertoire of many domestic ensembles, his works have been republished and he has become one of the most frequently performed of domestic composers. Leading soloists have included his concertos in their repertoires: the pianists Germaine Leroux and Rudolf Firkušný, the cellist Alexander Vechtomov or the violinists Samuel Dushkin and Mischa Elman.

Performance of the music of Bohuslav Martinů abroad has ebbed and flowed more than once over the last two decades. After a great upsurge in performance of his works in his jubilee year 1990 (which was most intense in Czechoslovakia), there was a certain decline, but then 1998/1999 proved to be a breakthrough in certain respects. First there was a week-long festival in London organised by BBC Radio, the Barbican Centre concert hall and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Since then the number of performances of Martinů’s operas on world opera stages has been rising, for example in London (*The Greek Passion* 1999 and 2004), Bregenz (*Juliette* 2002), Paris (*Juliette* 2002), Bremen (2003), Thessaloniki (*Greek Passion* 2005) and elsewhere. Since 1995 a Bohuslav Martinů Festival has taken place regularly in Prague, with appearances by the violinists Josef Suk and Bohuslav Matoušek, for example, the soprano Magdalena Kožená, and conductors Jiří Bělohlávek and Christopher Hogwood.

An international peak is expected with the approaching 50th anniversary of Martinů’s death, which will be marked by concert organisers and opera houses in dozens of places in Europe and overseas.

The Bohuslav Martinů Foundation, set up in 1975, takes care of the composer’s musical legacy. This insti-

tution supports the performance of Martinů's works, contributes financially to the running of the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička and helps to fund the Bohuslav Martinů Institute, which it has founded.

The Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague serves as a research and information centre for everyone interested in the music of Bohuslav Martinů and, more widely, the music of the 20th century. The institute gathers and centralises printed Bohuslav Martinů music materials, and also CD recordings and old archival sound recordings, originals or copies of manuscripts not only from public institutions, but also autograph sources from private owners. Thanks

to the ongoing project of digitalisation some of the sources are also accessible in electronic versions. The institute is striving to acquire other source materials such as concert and opera programmes and to assemble the composer's extensive correspondence with important figures.

One of the most important institute projects is the Bohuslav Martinů Complete Edition – i.e. publication of all the compositions of Martinů in the form of note material produced on the basis of study and comparison of all accessible sources. Given Martinů's extraordinarily prolific output, this is a long-term project and will take several decades. The BM Institute also operates web pages

www.martinu.cz and publishes a Bohuslav Martinů Newsletter – which comes out 3 times yearly in English. It contributes to the publication of musical materials and production of publications about Martinů (most recently the catalogue of works by Harry Halbreich: Bohuslav Martinů. Werkverzeichnis und Biografie, Schott, Mainz 2007). Last but not least the institute organises an annual festival, Bohuslav Martinů Days.

*"It's suffocating me,
I shall explode!
That's the way music
should affect its listeners."*

*Arthur Honegger after the premiere
of Martinů's Double Concerto in Basel*

martinů revisited 2009

50th anniversary of the composer's death

SELECTED FESTIVALS, ORCHESTRAS & EVENTS DEDICATED TO THIS ANNIVERSARY

status: July 2007

Prague Spring Festival 2009

Budapest Spring Festival 2009

International Musikfesttage Bohuslav Martinů 2009, Basel

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra,
Brno Philharmonic Orchestra, Prague Philharmonia
– the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 seasons

National Theatre Prague, State Opera Prague, National Theatre Brno

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, New York

Cité de la musique, Paris

Orchestre de Paris

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, London

In 2009 we will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the composer's death. Many organisers are preparing for this year large- or small-scale events at which works by Bohuslav Martinů will be performed.



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Under the aegis of Karel Schwarzenberg,
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Václav Talich Special Edition 14 (Händel, J. S. Bach)

František Hanták – oboe, Sviatoslav Richter – piano, the Czech Philharmonic, the Slovak Philharmonic, Václav Talich.

Production: Supraphon Music a.s.

Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr.

Recorded: 29. - 31. 3. 1953, Studio Domovina Praha, 8. 6. 1954, Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum in Prague, 19. 6. 1950, Great hall of the government building in Bratislava. Released: 2007. TT: 56:04. ADD, digitally remastered. 1 CD Supraphon Music SU 3834-2.

The Czech Supraphon company's Talich project, launched in 2005, continues this year with its 14th disc, which offers us a true rarity: pieces by the German Baroque masters Georg Friedrich Händel and Johann Sebastian Bach. Conducted by Talich, whose domain was above all 19th-century music, the combination is definitely unexpected and all the more appealing for being so. Another attraction is the pair of soloists: the leading Czech oboist František Hanták and the legendary Ukrainian pianist Sviatoslav Richter. The pieces on the CD were all recorded in the years 1950–55 and consist of four pieces: Händel's *Oboe Concerto*, Bach's *Oboe Concerto in G minor*, and Bach's *Concerto for Harpsichord (piano) in D minor* (accompanied by the Czech Philharmonic) and *Orchestral Suite no. 3 in D minor* (Slovak Philharmonic). Listening to them one has to remember that the recordings were made in the nineteen-fifties, when there was relatively little experience with playing Baroque music in this country and the ideal was based on the great romanticising sound of the strings. Nevertheless, the spontaneous musicality and virtuosity of the two soloists and Talich's precise interpretation remain captivating and transcends the pitfalls such as the already noted excessively dense sound of the strings and the absence of harpsichord continuo. Personally I was most enchanted by Hanták's rendition of the Händel Concerto, his soft tone, very plastic and spell-binding in the 3rd

movement (Sarabande). Technically the reconstructed recordings with the Czech Philharmonic emerge best, while the recording of the Bach Orchestral Suites with the Czech Philharmonic is the least satisfactory. Probably this is because of damage to the original matrices, but even here one has to admire what the new digital technology can restore and make available to listeners. The accompanying commentary in the booklet, written by the editor of the project Petr Kadlec, is concise and readable (and there are profiles of the soloists and composers), and focused on the co-operation between Talich and Richter that resulted in the studio recording of the Bach concerto. I can't help a certain disappointment at the lack of proper information about the recording of the Bach Suite with the Slovak Philharmonic, since this is a unique recording above all from the documentary point of view. It is certainly interesting that retouches were carried out in the difficult parts of the high Baroque trumpets and that timpani and harpsichord continuo were left out. Nonetheless, I think that these recordings have an unquestionably fruitful place in the Talich series, for they are above all unique documents of primarily historical value.

Libor Dřevíkovský

Bedřich Smetana The Two Widows

Maria Tauberová – soprano, Drahomíra Tikalová – soprano, Ivo Židek – tenor, Eduard Haken – bass, Miloslava Fidlerová – soprano, Antonín Zlesák – tenor, National Theatre Choir in Prague, Milan Malý – choir conductor, Orchestra of the National Theatre in Prague, Jaroslav Krombholc. Production: not stated. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: 28. 11. - 13. 12. 1956. Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 56:08, 68:37. ADD. 2 CD Supraphon SU 3926-2.

It is very creditable that Supraphon is gradually opening up its old opera archives, but in this case the little word "old" is completely out of place. While the recording

was indeed made half a century ago, in musical terms it remains actual, contemporary, because there have been no later recordings of Czech operas that have surpassed it. Previously what is known as the classic Czech repertoire was cultivated to a much greater extent than it is today. Anyone who wants to find out more about the so-called Czech opera school from a performance point of view, i.e. the style developed over many decades by conductors like Ostrčil, Talich, Chalabala, Krombholc, and later Košler as well as many singing teachers, must necessarily go back to the nineteen-fifties, and at the latest the nineteen-seventies. Subsequently we tried with uneven success to catch up with the world in mainstream international repertoire, i.e. with opera in Romance languages and German, and rather shunted our own school into a sideline. In saying this I do not mean to imply that for example later recordings of *The Two Widows* are substantially worse or even bad (specifically these are the more recent Krombholc radio recording of 1975 and Jílek's recording with Supraphon a year later). Still, if we compare these with the recording under review here we must admit that they do not come up to the same standard either in terms of ravishing musical commitment, or immediacy of expression, in which the vocal aspect corresponds perfectly with the emotional relationship to the particular character concerned. There is also a difference in the quality of the orchestral play. From the first strike of the timpani at the start of the overture we are literally hurled by the orchestra into the effervescent current of typically Smetanian passages distinctive not just for their charge of energy but above all for the masterly fully worked out score in which it is hard to find a single weak spot. Compared to later periods, fifty years ago the National Theatre had the edge in possessing an ensemble of soloists who considered the interpretation of Smetana and other Czech operas as its priority and developed this interpretation very systematically. Every character is a highly distinctive individual type! Vocally equally brilliant, the singers in the title roles, Maria Tauberová and Drahomíra Tikalová are opposite poles – beautiful women with all the distinctive, charming nuances in their opinions and actions. After



the young Beno Blachut (in the radio recording of 1948) it is hard to imagine a more lyrical and yet manly and masterly Ladislav than the young **Ivo Židek**. While for **Eduard Haken**, Mumlal was the same kind of challenge as Kecal in *The Bartered Bride*. Indeed, this unforgettable soloist very tellingly managed to distinguish the two comic levels in the part – the artful village matchmaker and the respectful rather dim grumbler in the service of the two ladies. Nor can we overlook the moving pair of younger lovers as interpreted by **Miloslava Fidlerová** and **Antonín Zlesák**. In the past the opera itself provoked many debates, and doubts as well as praise. More than once there were attempts to “clean up” the story for salon tastes by removing the choir and folk elements. The recording offers an unambiguous insight in this context as well, i.e. that although Smetana didn't have much luck with librettists, he thought out the dramatic side of his operas with such care that any major alterations only degrade these refined and wise works, which are still relevant in terms of musical wealth and stories, and do them violence by forcing them into worlds that are completely different and alien to them. The contents of the text by Zbyněk Brabec in the booklet, with small accounts of the protagonists, are valuable. The design of the cover is perhaps debatable. I have nothing against artistic freedom but in terms of style this example is rather remote from Smetana's music.

Bohuslav Vitek

Václav Dvořák
Dvořák: Romantic Pieces op. 75,
Sonatina op. 100.

Smetana: Z domoviny
(From the Homeland).

Ernst: Nocturno op. 8/1, Bolero op. 16

Václav Dvořák – violin, Michal Rezek – piano.

Production: Václav Dvořák. Text: Cz., Eng.,
Recorded: 2007. Released: 2007.

TT: 59:24. DDD. 1 CD Jan Nykrýn ny 24 6003-
2 (www.nykryn.com).

The famous violin magazine *The Strad* has declared that **Václav Dvořák** has a big, attractive tone. After hearing his new project I have to agree with them. It is not a tone as individual as that of Mutter, Vengerov, Kremer or Repin, but it offers a quality that cannot be overlooked. He gives an honest rendering of the obligatory Czech repertoire, without self-serving surprises in tempos, phrasing and dynamics. What is more he has great respect for the author's precise instructions, which is by no means something that can be taken for granted. The Romantic Pieces are truly intimate, tranquil and sensitive to the charm of the instrument. If there were no pleasant spark in them one might write that they were “staid”. They will please as examples of the expected tradition of the Czech mode of interpretation. In this context the more “full-throated” rendition of the *Sonatina* is more interesting, but the high point of the disk is Smetana. Listening to *Z domoviny* I had the feeling that it is this music for which V. Dvořák feels most affinity. The pointing up of a number of details was a surprise for me.

If you do not want to play the music of Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst in the melancholy salon style into which it easily slides, then you have to think very carefully about tempos, the level of vibrato, glissandos, and tempos. Dvořák has hit the bulls-eye. While his technique is not as brilliant as for example that of Heifetz, Menuhin and others, that is not the first consideration anyway. As the Czech premiere of *Nocturno*, and the world premiere of *Bolero* the main question is expression and this is persuasive. If I had to compare Václav Dvořák to anyone in terms of type, it would be Václav Snítíl.

Coda: The publisher has been so thorough that he gives data of a kind I have never met before on any Czech disk: the violin and its maker (Zdeněk Frol in Hradec Králové, 2000, “Luigi”), the strings used (Larsen “Tzigane”), the maker of the bow (Rudolf Neudörffer) and the piano (Steinway, concert model D; **Michal Rezek** is its inspiring partner). The cover is simple, non-commercial, which in a time when almost anything goes in the field of design is not necessarily just an advantage.

Luboš Stehlík

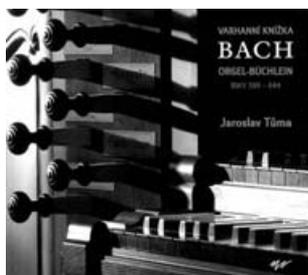
Bedřich Smetana
Czech Dances I, II,
Bettina's Polka (2nd Version),
Venkovanka [A Countrywoman],
Andante in F minor, Romance in G
minor

Jitka Čechová – piano.

Production: Petr Vít. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr.
Recorded: 1, 2/2007, Rudolfinum Prague.
Released: 2007. TT: 65:33. DDD. 1 CD
Supraphon SU 3843-2.

Few pianists are as perfectly fitted for the interpretation of Smetana's *Czech Dances* as **Jitka Čechová**. She has outstanding technique, an unusually colourful touch, a great gift for creative fantasy and an extraordinary sense for structure. In this recording she uses all these advantages brilliantly and just as on the preceding two CDs confirms that she is one of our most remarkable interpreters of Smetana. In her excellent accompanying text, Olga Mojžišová points out that in his *Czech Dances* Smetana created not just unique piano stylisations of folk dances, but also “piano dance poems”. Jitka Čechová's performance shows there can be not the slightest doubt of this dimension of the *Czech Dances*, especially the second series. As she plays them, every dance has its own unique mood, and in most of them we can trace a hidden extra-musical programme that often has a hint of a genre picture or even a poetic story. Each dance brings new colours, new moods, new “pictures” and “stories” and they are all so appealing that at the end we want to play the whole album again. The dances distinctive for a certain “boyish” wildness or tenacity (*Furiant, The Bear, The Stamping Dance and The Astride Dance*) are especially ravishing. They literally seethe with energy, and all the more so since the lyrical “feminine” element within them is brought out by Jitka Čechová with a charm that is completely irresistible (there can really be no doubt at all about the programmatic subtext in this music). Czech dances were Smetana's last major piano work. On this CD they are accompanied by four minor pieces of Smetana's last phase, that were written soon after: the second version of Bettina's Polka (1883), the piano arrangement of the orchestral polka *Venkovanka* (1879) and two short occasional pieces commissioned by the Arts Society (Umělecká beseda) – *Andante in F minor* (1880) and *Romance in G minor* (1881).

Věroslav Němec



**Johann Sebastian Bach
Orgel-Büchlein BWV 599-644**

Jaroslav Tůma - organ.

Production: Vítězslav Janda, Jaroslav Tůma.
Text: Cz., Eng., Ger.

Recorded: 4/2004, Church of St. Peter, Bruchsal. Released: 2007. TT: 84:08. AAD.
1 CD ARTA F10156 (distribution 2HP Production).

Jaroslav Tůma [see CM 1/07] is tireless in his production of all kinds of recordings. This new recording is part of his series of Bach titles – the last was a double version of the *Goldberg Variations* played on both harpsichord and clavichord. Tůma performed the complete Bach works for organ in the years 1990–93, and part of this project has been recorded and released by Suraphon. His new move to Arta is evident just in the external design of the disc, which is clean and modern but also dignified. The album, consisting of Bach's *Orgel-Büchlein* or little organ book, seems to me to be conceived as a "story" on several different levels. The biblical narrative, starting with Advent and ending with Whitsun, with stops at Christmas, the New Year, Epiphany and Easter, interacts with the purely musical techniques of contrast, colour, dynamics and gradation. All the way through, however, thought is given to the text of the different chorales. Maybe this was not the intention, but Tůma's project can be read in this way too. And the fact that the performer has succeeded, and that the whole thing holds together, is remarkable given that it consists of scarcely two-minute "crumbs" – a whole forty-five fitted into the album. With any organist the first consideration is the instrument itself. The thirty registers of the organ built by Vladimír Šlajch (2004) in Bruchsal in Germany, offers enough combinations to be just sufficient in registration. The registers combine perfectly and at the same time the individual parts can be clearly distinguished. Which is essential in Bach's sophisticated polyphony, for example in *Hilf Gott, daß mir's gelinge*. And so we do not miss the charming figuration of the chorale *Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich*, or the "descent and entrance of the angel" vividly depicted

in music by scales in *Vom Himmel kam der Engel Schar*. The acoustics of the classicist church are crystal clear even with a long echo. The recording (sound masters Aleš Dvořák, Tomáš Zikmund) produces the illusion that we are standing in the place where all the sounds meet and merge. We should add that the disposition of the organ and registration used are noted in the booklet.

The first group of chorales draws us into an atmosphere of dream, the suppressed expectation of advent. The tones of the soft registers float somewhere above by the vault. The Easter mystery (*Christ lag in Todesbanden*) is also evoked very effectively. Through the organist the instrument practically speaks, summoning up entirely concrete feelings in the listener: there is triumph here, contrition, innocence, humility, plea, quiet joy, exultant joy. It is obvious that Tůma has become perfectly at one with Šlajch's organ – and with Bach's "Little Book".

Dita Kopáčová Hradecká

Antonín Dvořák

**Symphony No. 5 in F major op. 76
and No. 6 in D major op. 60, Scherzo
capriccioso op. 66, Warrior's Song
op. 111**

BBC Symphony Orchestra, Jiří Bělohlávek.

Production: John West, Ann McKay.
Text: Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: live, 5/1999
(op. 60), Royal Festival Hall, 3/2006,
Maida Vale Studio 1, London. Released: 2006.
TT: 78:02, 42:27. DDD. 2 CD Warner Classics
2564 63235-2 (Warner Music).

For the first time we have the chance to hear the first major edition of Jiří Bělohlávek's recordings with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, with which Bělohravek has been working as guest conductor since 1995 and which since July this year he has headed as principal conductor. Although he made the recordings on this double album while still just a guest conductor, the timing of their release on an important world label is well "timed" given his subsequent elevation and naturally we receive them with keen interest. Jiří Bělohlávek has been performing Dvořák with the BBC Symphony since the



beginning, but also Martinů, for example, and these recordings cannot even be regarded as complete premieres on commercial media. *The Symphonic Variations*, for instance, recorded at a concert in 2000, can already be found on the CD BBC Proms. Dvořák is very often recorded all over the world and with the most famous pieces their treatment by top world orchestras and conductors differs little from that of Czech interpreters. Nonetheless differences of nuance are always apparent. We might recall the earlier Decca project with the London Symphony Orchestra and the conductor István Kertész. It is worthy of respect, but still in the case of the better known symphonies we can tell with relative ease that it is not the work of a Czech conductor. Even if we concede the right to different interpretations, in searching for the ideal we still inevitably give priority to our domestic tradition. Bělohlávek's London recordings are proof of the striking power of a conductor to impose a stylistic sensibility on an orchestra. Hearing even the very first bars of any of the four pieces on the CD (*Symphony No. 5, Scherzo capriccioso* and *A Warrior's Song* were recorded in the studio, *Symphony No. 6* at a concert), we are made aware of the conductor's effort to ensure a cantabile quality, the emphasis on melodiousness that is particularly rich in Dvořák. It is of course convincing only when it is presented completely naturally, without the tendency to self-conscious exaggeration that in some recordings leads to ostentation. The most individually distinctive attribute of Bělohlávek's conception is lyricism – in the sound as a whole, even in the more sprightly movements. The conductor is economical with big sound, and this means that the culminating passages work better and more naturally. Perhaps some people will feel the absence of a greater and more striking commitment or more dynamic culmination of some passages, but a complete view on the structuring of the pieces as wholes necessarily leads one to consider relatively sober approach to be the right one. Jiří Bělohlávek has an excellent basis in the orchestra. Apart from its typically English, entirely homogenous sound (fantastic brass, and other sections!), the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which is used to coping with a wider range of repertoire than other London orchestras, is very flexible, and so its Dvořák is truly authentic. As far as a future complete edition of the symphonies is



concerned – and this is much to be welcomed – this is a very tactical and well thought out beginning! Although attractive, however, the reproduction of a rustic design on the booklet (Jan Brueghel) is more debatable. It has nothing in common with Dvořák's music! The text by the great expert on Czech music Patrick Lambert is as erudite as usual.

Bohuslav Vítěk

Milan Slavický

Porta coeli. A Symphonic Vision for Large Orchestra (1991), Two Chapters from the Apocalypse for Large Orchestra (1995), Requiem per soli (mezzosoprano e baritono), coro ed orchestra (2000-01)

Jana Štefáčeková – mezzo soprano, Ivan Kusnjer – baritone, Prague Philharmonic Choir, Jaroslav Brych - choirmaster, Czech Philharmonic, Jiří Bělohlávek and Serge Baudo. Production: not stated. Text: Cz., Eng. Recorded: live, 6. 9. 1992, Philharmonie Berlin, 2. 11. 1995, Rudolfinum, Prague, 27. 1. 2005, Rudolfinum, Prague. Released: 2006. TT: 61:05. ADD, DDD. 1 CD Studio Matouš MK0056.

Three orchestral pieces, three spiritual themes, three premieres. It cannot be said that Slavický's musical language is innovative or advances musical development in any striking way, but if there is something to be conveyed, then the means are not the main thing. Listening to the CD you tend to forget about any modern "isms", because the music draws you into its depth and doesn't lose its hold even after you have switched off the player. *Porta coeli* is a twenty-minute arch moving through dramatically tense moments to a final redemption. Slavický constantly thickens and intensifies the "triological" cadence between the strings, woodwind and brass accompanied by kettle drum, until at the end it is the simple, sustained tone of the violin that comes to the fore. The piece was written for the Berliner Festwochen and the recording was made at the premiere. Jiří Bělohlávek conducts the **Czech Philharmonic** with understanding for the composer and sovereign knowledge of the orchestra. The *Fiery Lake* of *Two Chapters from*

the Apocalypse shows that even after the gigantic fortissimos of Mahler and the frenzied fortissimos of Shostakovich, something new and just as effective can be conceived. Dramatic development using low string registers is in places reminiscent of Honegger's symphonies but culminates in completely simple strokes of the kettledrums accompanied by trombones and trumpets. A very effective vision of the monstrous end of all that is evil. The continuation in the movement *New Jerusalem* is a contrast, both in terms of thought and music. This tranquil movement proceeds from low to higher registers and is ever more consonant. The premiere of this piece is conducted by **Serge Baudo**, and his is the most balanced sound on the whole CD. The thirty-minute *Requiem* is an excellent sacred composition with excellent soloists, choir and orchestra. Unfortunately the dynamics of the recording are unbalanced. The quiet sections (*Requiem aeternam, Quid sum miser*) are insufficiently audible and in the fortissimos you have to jump up and turn down the volume. As in the *Fiery Lake*, Slavický has created a terrifying *Dies irae*, made more powerful by a choral element. The **Prague Philharmonic Choir** also distinguishes itself with the sureness of its glissandos in the *Confutatis maledictis*. The concluding *Lacrimosa* restores everything to eternal peace. The Czech Philharmonic is our top orchestra and with conductors like Jiří Bělohlávek (*Porta coeli* and *Requiem*) and Serge Baudo, the music of Czech composers can only benefit and go from strength to strength. The Matouš Studio (www.matous.cz) has been making sure progress down this road for quite some time, as we can see on this recording or on the recently released profile CD of the Konvergence association of young composers.

Tomáš Kučera

Clara Nováková
20th-Century Music for Flute
(Martinů, Kabeláč, Grossmann, Mácha, Havelka, Novák)

Clara Nováková – flute,
Jean-Bernard Marie – piano
(in Martinů, Grossmann, Mácha, Novák).
Production: Lukáš Herink. Text: Č, A.

Recorded: 24. - 27. 10. 2005, Studio 1, Czech Radio, Prague. Released: 2006. TT: 77:59. DDD. 1 CD LH Promotion 7 1771 009-06.

The children of great composers often follow in their footsteps and become performers of their music. Examples are ready to hand – Maxim Shostakovich, Marcus Stockhausen and, in this case, **Clara Nováková**. Clara Nováková is one of the two daughters of the composer Jan Novák (1921-1984), born in Nová Ríše. He is a composer whose works are rarely performed today. Although he was the pupil of Pavel Bořkovec, Aaron Copland and Bohuslav Martinů, he never achieved anything like the recognition in public consciousness attained by his older classmate Vítězslava Kaprálová. The reason lies in the official cultural policy of the 1950s and 1960s, which Novák unwaveringly opposed, and which ultimately forced him to leave Czechoslovakia in 1968. His intelligence, education, razor-sharp irony and very precise vision of the work made him an inconvenient individual who mocked every dogmatism and collectivising trend of his day. Twenty years of forced silence did nothing for his work and today he is almost unknown in this country. Nonetheless, he wrote music of exceptional quality which needs to be accorded the recognition it deserves. His daughter flautist Clara Nováková is playing an important part in the process. Coupled with her gifts, her outstanding education (Musikhochschule Stuttgart and Conservatoire National Supérieur in Paris) has made her one of the most sought-after interpreters of the music of the 20th century, including that of her father. This CD entitled "20th Century Czech Music for Flute" contains pieces by Miloš Kabeláč, Otmar Mácha and Svatopluk Havelka framed by the compositions of Jan Novák and his teacher, "padre" Bohuslav Martinů. The CD has many appealing features. First of all it is rare for a CD booklet to be written by the performer herself, and in this case clearly for the best of reasons – Clara Nováková makes no pretence to affected encyclopaedic knowledge and talks about the pieces from her own standpoint. Second, the CD offers relatively unknown but still engaging compositions for flute solo or with piano accompaniment. The arrangement of the CD is like a mirror. The centre of the symmetrical programme design is the expressive *Natalis Solis Invicti* (1977) by J. Grossman for flute and piano. Arranged around



it are the solo pieces, *Improvisation op. 29* by Kabeláč and *Disegno* by S. Havelka, both rather meditative in character, and also the mobile *Variations on His Own Theme* by O. Mácha. The circle is closed by the pieces at each end: B. Martinů's *Sonata for Flute* and J. Novák's *Choreae Vernales* (*Spring dances*, 1977) are both pieces written in exile. Perhaps this is why they possess the greatest emotional charge, pure joy and grief. Their authenticity is the mirror of the purity and conscientiousness of the performance offered by Clara Nováková and **Jean-Bernard Marie**, who both set the seal on the excellent choice of music with the excellence of their interpretation.

Martin Flašar

Jan Pěruška
The Praise of Viola
(Slavický, Lukáš, Hanuš, Eben, Kalabis)

Jan Pěruška – viola, Aleš Bárta – organ, members of the Czech Philharmonic, Jan Kučera.

Production: ArteSmon. Text: Cz., Eng. Recorded: 2001-2006, Czech Radio R1 and the church in Kralická Street, Prague. Released: 2006. TT: 51:32. DDD. 1 CD ArteSmon AS 720-2.

There are a lot of jokes about viola players. These are apparently based on the mistaken idea that the technical properties of the instrument are connected in some mysterious fashion to the limits of the performers as interpreters. If this myth had even a bit of truth in it, then **Jan Pěruška** (a teacher at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, a member of the Stamic Quartet and soloist) would certainly not have selected for his new album pieces by contemporary composers that require not just well-thought out and well worked through interpretation, but above all first class technical abilities. Not to mention the fact that there exist no previous recordings that could serve as a model or that finally the choice of pieces doesn't have anything even remotely in common with the ordinary repertory pieces that can always be "dusted off" and served up to the public. Admittedly, *The Praise of Viola* (*Chvála violy*) is not the most ingenious title, but on the other hand

what do the composers Slavický, Lukáš, Hanuš, Eben, and Kalabis actually have in common? Perhaps only the expansion of the traditional neo-classical style and a creative centre of gravity in the second half of the 20th century. *Rhapsodie per Viola Solo* by Klement Slavický, *Sonata per Viola Solo Op. 243* by Zdeněk Lukáš and *Diptych per Viola Solo Op. 115/II* by Jan Hanuš together form a relatively consistent triad of compositions in similar style. Here we shall not expect or find any great swings away from rhapsodic subjective expression – for which the viola seems so ideal. It is more interesting to compare how the different composers approach work with the solo part. K. Slavický makes good use of fast movement in the lower registers played sul ponticello, while Z. Lukáš by contrast opts for chord passages, the "dialogue" between registers and so on. Petr Eben's *Rorate Coeli* (with organ accompaniment from **Aleš Bárta**) and Viktor Kalabis's *Tristium Op. 56* (for viola and strings, here accompanied by members of the Czech Philharmonic) give the album diversity. Both these pieces are very dark, gloomy and thanks to their timbres superbly expressive. Kalabis's composition is about the battle between man and death, to which he ultimately succumbs, while Eben's is about waiting for the arrival (advent) of new life, bring hope, liberation and catharsis at the musical level. Our praise is therefore due not just to the velvety voice of the viola, but also to Jan Pěruška for the selection and interpretation of the fascinating pieces presented on the disk.

Martin Flašar

Tomáš Jamník, Ivo Kahánek
Martinů: Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 2 H 286, Variations on a Theme by Rossini for Cello and Piano H 290. Janáček: Fairytale for Cello and Piano. Kabeláč: Sonata for Cello and Piano op. 9

Tomáš Jamník – cello, Ivo Kahánek – piano. Production: Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz.. Recorded: 3, 4/2007, Studio Bohemia Music, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 66:36. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3928-2.

When I attended the concert of the winners of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation competition in 2003, I was bowled over by the performance of **Tomáš Jamník** [see CM 1/07]. Apart from

the Bennewitz Quartet, I heard nothing so mature and promising at the competition. I had the same feeling I had experienced in the mid-1990s when I first heard Magdalena Kožená sing at the international Mozart Academy in Dobříš. (I would wish him the same dazzling career, but unfortunately that doesn't depend only on qualities of play). Tomáš Jamník's debut CD has come off grandly. First of all I must draw attention to the choice and order of pieces, which is logical and coherent and uncommercial, in other words like a fairytale from another world in these days of emphasis on numbers of sales, profitability graphs for every CD and marketing priorities. The pillars are two massive sonatas – Martinů's 2nd and Kabeláč's Op. 9. Between them come lyrical virtuoso Janáčekian-Martinůesque vibrations. The inclusion of two works by Martinů may have been just the fruitful outcome of the past of both players, but I see it more as the tribute of two young men to a composer of genius and a public declaration of their priorities. The choice of Janáček was a logical one in relation to Martinů and the Kabeláč, another jewel of the disk, just extends the dramaturgical axis deep into the 20th century. The choice of repertoire is thus the first pleasant surprise. The second is the cellist's actual performance. Jamník has been maturing incredibly fast and today it is already evident that he is successfully discovering his own style of interpretation. First of all he humbly puts the composer first, rather than using the music to show off his certainly extraordinary tone quality and reliable technique. His playing seems at first unobtrusive, but after a few minutes you discover to your surprise that he has won you over, and listen in wonder. In my view Jamník's excellent musicianship has found an ideal response in **Ivo Kahánek**. I didn't have the feeling that his instrument was perfect, but nonetheless under his sensitive hands it sings, storms and quietly grumbles. He has raised the instrument to a level that it otherwise would not have. Supraphon have succeeded in launching a remarkable title on the world, which if it is well marketed, could draw the world's attention to two very promising Czech musicians. The graphically tasteful booklet with unconventional typography should help.

Luboš Stehlík

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16. 10. 2007 Praha - „MLADÍ JAPONŠTÍ VÍTĚZOVÉ“

Bennewitzovo kvarteto; Vilém Veverka, hoboj

J. S. Bach / W. A. Mozart, A. Webern, J. Haydn, Y. Yun – česká premiéra, R. Schumann

13. 11. 2007 Praha; 14. 11. 2007 Trutnov

Merel Quartet (Švýcarsko); Stamicovo kvarteto

R. Schumann, David Philips Hefti – světová premiéra, F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

11. 12. 2007 Praha; 12. 12. 2007 Liberec

Modern String Quartet (Německo)

FEVER – 10 jazzových variací na téma Beethovenova opusu 7 Mich brennt ein heisses Fieber a jiné melodie – česká premiéra

15. 1. 2008 Praha; 17. 1. 2008 Brno; 18. 1. 2008 Brno

Ben Kim, klavír (USA) – cena pro vítěze soutěže ARD Mnichov 2006; Stamicovo kvarteto

A. Schnittke, F. Chopin, R. Schumann

19. 2. 2008 Praha; 20. 2. 2008 Děčín

Royal String Quartet (Polsko); Vladimír Leixner, violoncello

A. Webern, K. Szymanowski, F. Schubert

18. 3. 2008 Praha; 19. 3. 2008 Jičín

Pavel Steidl, kytara; Stamicovo kvarteto

J. K. Mertz, N. Paganini, N. Coste, M. Giuliani

22. 4. 2008 Praha; 21. 4. 2008 Nelahozeves, 23. 4. 2008 Chrudim

Miró Quartet (USA); Irvin Venyš, klarinet

Ch. Ives, J. Zorn, J. Brahms

20. 5. 2008 Praha; 21. 5. 2008 Ostrava, Janáčkův máj

Leipziger Streichquartett (Německo)

**L. van Beethoven, J. Widmann – česká premiéra,
F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy**

17. 6. 2008 Praha; 16. 6. 2008 Havlíčkův Brod

**Aquilon Wind Quintet (Francie) – cena pro vítěze soutěže ARD Mnichov 2006;
Stamicovo kvarteto, Petr Ries, kontrabas**

J. Francaix, J. B. Foerster, H. Tomasi, B. Martinů

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