czech music quarterly

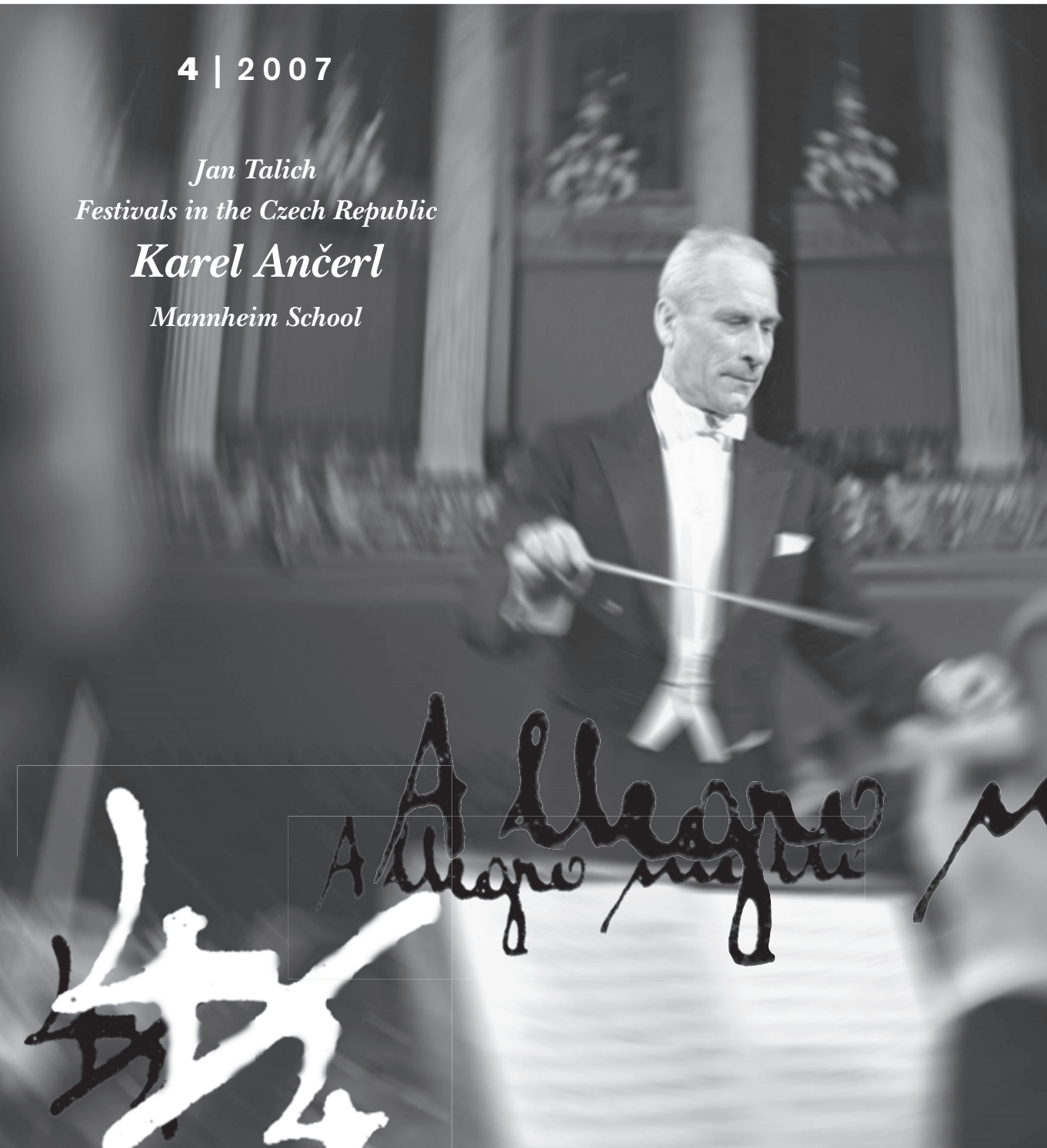
4 | 2007

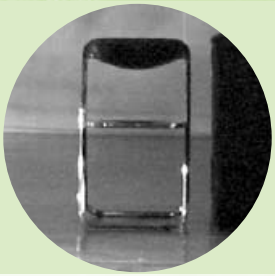
Jan Talich

Festivals in the Czech Republic

Karel Ančerl

Mannheim School

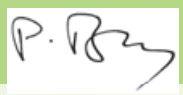




Dear Readers,

with this last issue for 2007, Czech Music Quarterly crowns its first year of existence in a new format and with a new graphic design. We think the magazine's new look has been a success and we hope we are not alone in thinking so. In any case we welcome any feedback from readers. And of course not only on matters of design but on the content too – your comments, suggestions and criticisms are very important for us.
I would like to draw your attention to the fact that for several months now full-text back numbers of all out issues from 2004 to 2006 have been accessible on our web pages, www.czech-music.net, and other issues will be added progressively (always a year after original publication). Please note that as far as older numbers are concerned, we shall always be happy to send you a copy of any article that interests you on request (you will find a list of contents of individual back numbers on our web archive). Our prime concern is that anyone anywhere who wants information about Czech music should have no difficulty getting it. Please don't hesitate to contact us.
With the next issue we shall once again be providing a CD, this time offering recordings of music by composers who came on the scene in the 1960s. As with the last CD, all the pieces (with one exception) have never previously been recorded.

Wishing you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year



CONTENTS

Czech music information centre

Czech Music Information Centre
Besední 3, 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Rebublic
fax: +420 257 317 424, phone: +420 257 312 422
e-mail: info@czech-music.net; www.czech-music.net

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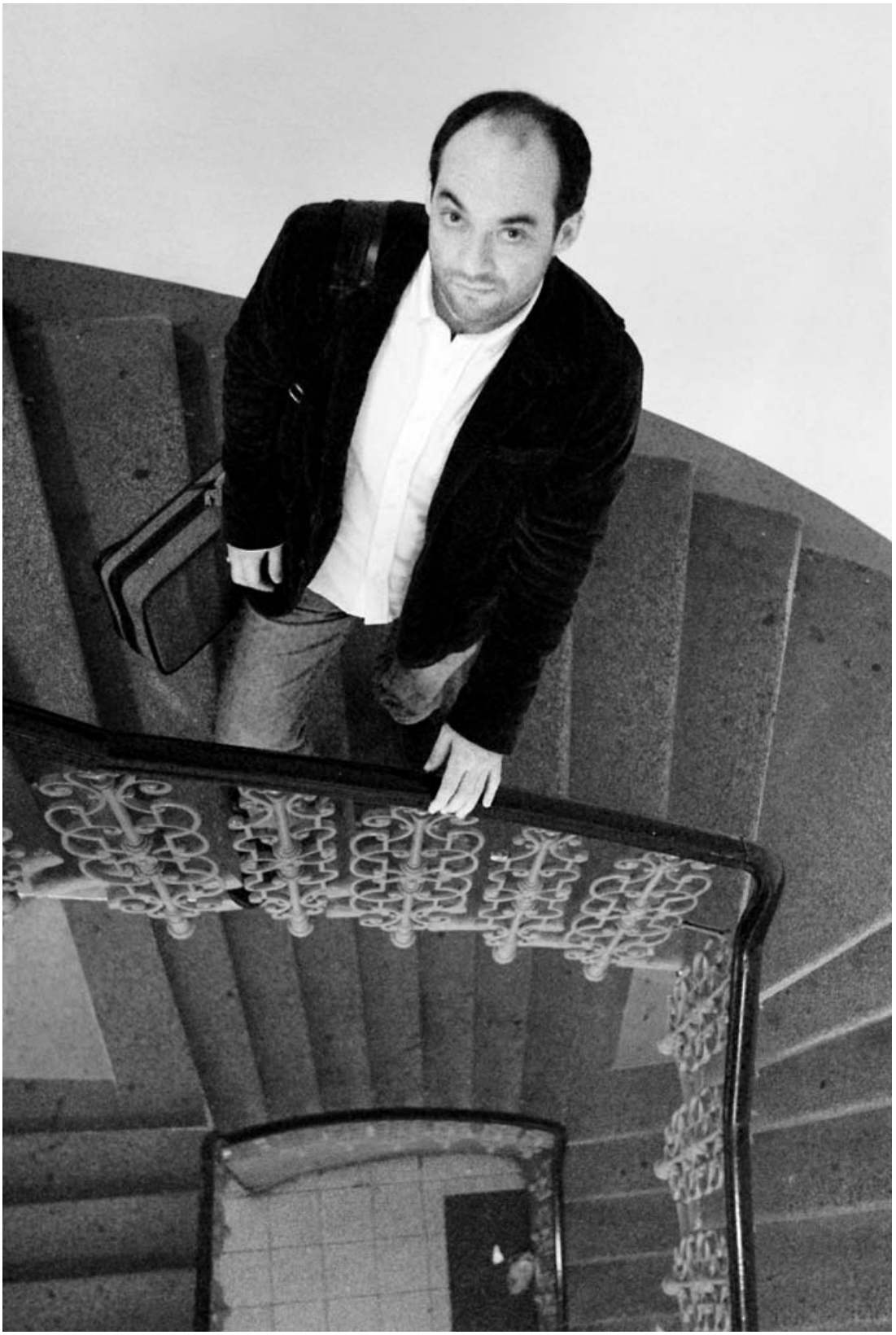


PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER (3x)

by Dita Kopáčová-Hradecká

JAN TALICH: I DON'T FEEL ANY COMPULSION TO TAKE STOCK

Every meeting with the violinist Jan Talich brings romantic ideals about the music profession firmly back to earth. This experienced musician knows what it means to lead an orchestra and a quartet, to make solo performances and to teach and raise funds – all in conditions that hardly make things easy for professional musicians. But as he himself says, you mustn't let it all get on top of you. The leader of the Talich Quartet and conductor of the Talich Chamber Orchestra inherited strong musical genes, but his character constantly compels him to expand his horizons.

You are the bearer of a famous name, since it's well known that your father the musician Jan Talich was the nephew of the conductor Václav Talich. What are your roots on your mother's side?

My mother is a violinist, who had me very young – while she was still at the conservatory. She would go to classes with Nora Grumlíková and leave the porter, Mr. Houdek, to mind the pram – and that same Mr. Houdek was still there fifteen years later when I attended the conservatory. My paternal grandmother started me off on the violin; she was an excellent violinist. She came from Pilsen and married Grandfather Talich, the conductor's brother. She also played solo, and taught after moving to Prague. When she died my mother took over teaching me the violin – my father was always away.

Did you ever have the urge to defy the "family inheritance" and do something quite different with your life?

Certainly. I wasn't a child who would have wanted to practice on his own initiative. Today I no longer remember why, but I wanted to devote myself to mathemat-

ics, I enjoyed it. But the moment I entered the conservatory, where these subjects weren't taught, it went right out of my head. The whole time I wanted to study philosophy or aesthetics – I felt that my education was deficient in that respect. And in my view it's not a good thing that the conservatory is so one-sided. Compare it with Moscow where the graduates are versatile; every instrumentalist has to know how to play the piano well, and the violinists are capable of accompanying each other. Today when I conduct I regret not being able to play the score on piano. And let's not even mention the sciences.

But do students have time for all this if they are meant to be excellent performers?
I think there's time. I don't actually believe the children are overloaded. I'll say something rather cruel: there are masses of musicians and many of them are very bad. In my view the standard hasn't been rising. This is to do with the quality of the teachers and so on. If the number of students was reduced to just the most talented, and attention could really be paid to them, if they didn't admit children just because there are quotas for numbers… It's a vicious circle. When you think how many graduates are produced – where will they find work?

That also depends on their being efficient agencies.
Only in this country there are no agencies mediating contacts with the outside world.

So you yourself would not entrust your children to the Czech music education system?
I would try to send them abroad as early as possible. There it's normal to have a series of different teachers, and to get experience from several people. It doesn't work like that here and there is no will to change the situation. I experienced it in America and it was a complete shock. Shmuel Ashkenasi had been a fellow-student of Perlmann, Zuckermann, and suddenly I saw what could be achieved on the violin. He told me to go and talk to this or that colleague who would advise me. Then I went to London to Yfrah Neaman, and that was a completely different school again. His method was brilliant; he taught me to go into technical problems in depth and also into the depths of music-making.

You were lucky, since you are of a generation that was generally unable to travel round the world freely…
I was lucky. A sponsor from Switzerland paid for my studies in America. That was in 1989, but before the revolution. I remember how we watched the television in Boston, following what was happening in Prague. My mother called me to say, "Havel is president!" I regret not having been there and experiencing that atmosphere, but there's nothing to be done about it. Back then I had been thinking of staying in America, but in the end I didn't have to make the decision.

After your stay in America you went to England. How did you make ends meet there?
In various ways. We used to play at weddings and funerals, and afterwards they would let us into the kitchen to eat… Just like musicians three hundred years ago…

You are a founder of the Czech-French Academy in Telč. What do you yourself get out of it in terms of impulses?
It's interesting to follow the French wind school; God knows why but they have a beautiful soft, dynamically more malleable tone. The French students who are

studying with me have the world of the music business open to them, and for them the path is easier. They are more adaptable and used to travelling. In this country the prospects for making a living are not rosy, we are a small country and pay is low in orchestras and teaching. But young musicians are now growing up here who are aware of the fact and not so spoilt. Coping with an American tour of the type we have just made is physically demanding, as well.

Is America a frequent destination for the quartet?

We go there every season, and this year we went twice. This time I was with the quartet in the USA just for 14 days. We started in the East and ended in San Francisco, as usual. The older I get the tougher it is for me – it's partly the jet lag, since it takes me a few days to recover from it. I prefer playing in Europe. But I don't have a chance to stay here for long. In January we shall be going to Korea.

What is the quartet public like in the USA?

I don't know the public for the other genres. It differs from place to place and depending on how well established a particular concert series is. Concerts are in big halls: for example in Salt Lake City they have two superb halls, and the smaller chamber hall is for 800 people. The reactions of the public depend on the programme as well.

Do they still mainly want you to play the Dvořák Americcan Quartet?

Not as much as before, but it's true that they don't want contemporary composers. That doesn't bother me much personally, because I'm not such a specialist in con-

temporary music. We play Shostakovich, and Martinů, but don't usually go much further. Just now we have presented a quartet by Jiří Gemrot, but it isn't any sort of radically experimental thing, really. We did a Lutoslawsky quartet on request, but couldn't get to like it. I think the public were rather shocked by it. In the second half we played Bartók, and it now seemed like Beethoven to them…

The quartet's second home is France, where you perform and record. You have an extensive discography behind you including works by Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Haydn and Janáček as well as other Czech composers. How far have you got with the planned Schubert complete set?

We keep intending to do it but probably we shall just do one record of the two big quartets and perhaps the quintet. Instead we are embarking on early Haydn and Mozart, which we have all always had a taste for. We have persuaded the recording company even though there are plenty such recordings. I'm no longer so keen on pioneering recordings of composers like Stamic, Kalivoda… It isn't such a wonderful music.

After a long tour you probably feel a need to take a break from each other…

We always feel that way and it's always worst in the middle of a tour. Now we shall have time for a break, and I shall be studying scores and conducting. But as soon as we get back from Korea we shall be flying to Estonia the same day. That's exceptional, however. I try to plan schedules in a way that allows us to "live" as well.

You have just turned forty and people no longer write about you as a "young musician". Is this a chance for you to take stock and reflect on your career so far?

It was fine being a "young promising musician", since that's not such an obligation. I found thirty a much tougher experience, and felt I was already old, but now I don't feel any compulsion to take stock, partly because I have a lot of work. And I've been losing hair for some years now… I'm glad that the work is there and looks as though it will keep coming in the future, that the quartet works almost without me having to make a lot of effort and that the orchestra is stabilising. Recently I've been thinking that I would like to do more solo work. Not to start a full-scale solo career, but I would enjoy solo play from time to time.

How did you come to take up a conductor's baton?

It was more from necessity than anything else, when the orchestra was rehearsing major pieces and there was no money for a conductor. And then I also discovered that I couldn't cope with playing in the orchestra, solo and chamber concerts all together. So in the orchestra I gave someone else the position of concert master. Conducting is my hobby, and I'm trying to get to work with other orchestras as well. But I wouldn't compare myself with professional conductors: my way of working is very detailed, which is what I enjoy and the orchestra appreciates it. I go to my conductor friends for advice.

The Talich Chamber Orchestra is fifteen years old. Over the period it's work has been consistent in standard, but has this been reflecting in funding and the confidence of sponsors?

One can't speak of stability at all, but that we are far from being the only orchestra with that problem. There would have to be a radical change in the policy of the state

towards culture or in the tax conditions for sponsors, and social pressure to make the sponsoring of cultural activities an integral part of the cultural milieu. This is what happens in America and in Western Europe, where culture is also generously subsidised by the state. In France for example it makes an enormous difference: the musicians have a sense of stability, there is plenty of good music there everywhere, people go to concerts and are educated to listen to difficult modern music.
In this country you cannot rely on the grant policy. There are no grants from the ministry for an orchestra of our size and so we are dependent on private sources.

What is the concept behind the orchestra's programme this season?

There were two lines there: I wanted to do a cross-section of the work of one composer from quartet to larger orchestra of Mozartian type. My second aim was to present ensembles whose members – except for the Pražák Quartet – had all gone through the orchestra, and so remind audiences of its history.

Will here be more Talichs continuing in the family tradition?

We shall have to wait and see. I certainly won't be pressuring my children into music. Both my sons play. The elder probably doesn't have the temperament for it, while the younger one wants to play and isn't shy about it. But I would have to see that he was truly very gifted and had other necessary qualities: above all cast-iron nerves. The demands on top musicians are immense, both physically and psychologically; they are under pressure from agents, conductors and recording companies.

Jan Talich (*1967)

studied at the Prague Conservatory and then at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in the class of Václav Snítil. While still a student he organised his own recitals and played with orchestras throughout the republic. He obtained a scholarship for further studies first in the USA with Shmuel Ashkenasi and then at the Guildhall School of Music in London with Yfrah Neaman. In 1989 he won first prize in the Václav Huml International Violin Competition in Zagreb. As a soloist Jan Talich has appeared with orchestras throughout Europe (Paris, Birmingham, London, Brussels) and in the USA. His discography includes a number of CDs of concertos by Czech and world composers. Jan Talich plays on a violin made by A. Stradivarius in 1729. He regularly teaches on courses both at home and abroad – in Telč, Dijon, Angers, Prades and at the Conservatoire Supérieur in Paris. In recent years he has been devoting ever more time to conducting.
In 1992 he founded the Talich Chamber Orchestra, of which he is music director and conductor. It has recorded numerous CDs under his direction.
Jan Talich was also a founder member of the Kubelík Trio, with which he appeared all over Europe and recorded the piano trios of Dvořák, Smetana, Suk and Novák. In 1997 he left the trio to become first violinist of the Talich Quartet, which is among the leading international ensembles of this kind. He has appeared with the quartet in many concert halls throughout the world (for example the Carnegie Hall, Signore Hall, Beethovenhaus, Hercules Sal, Chatelet, Theatre de Champs-Elysées, Gaveau), reaping marvellous reviews. The Talich Quartet regularly tours Japan, America, Mexico or South Korea. Many of its recordings have won awards from the magazines Gramophone, Strad and Diapasson.

by Mojmír Sobotka

FESTIVALS OF CLASSICAL MUSIC IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Currently as many as two hundred festivals of classical music take place in the Czech Republic every year, thirty-six in Prague alone. Our brief chronological overview can only hint at all the outstanding music that you can encounter in the Czech Lands throughout the year, and not only in Prague and other big towns. Even smaller but architecturally notable places such as Litomyšl, Kroměříž, Český Krumlov and many others have a rich musical tradition that is gradually being revived in local festivals. The following selection is offered as an inspiration for visitors to the Czech Republic.

2nd – 6th March 2008, Brno

The Exposition of New Music (www.enh.cz)

Focused on contemporary music, the Exposition is part of the International Brno Music Festival (see below). The aim of the Exposition of New Music is to give audiences an opportunity to get to know current ideas and trends in contemporary music at home and abroad, and to provide musical experiences that visitors rarely have the chance to encounter in normal concert life elsewhere. The festival is always conceived in terms of a particular theme, and the titles of the different years in themselves convey the difference between the music presented and normal production (1994: *New Pulsation,* 1996: *Against the Current,* 2005: *Pleasure of Different hearing,* 2007: *So what…? A Non-academic approach*), and an unusual focus in terms of content (1995: *Teatromusica,* 1998: *Unexpected Meetings,* 2002: *Roots in Rock,* 2003: *Echoes of Nature*). The programmes are built on the participation of top international musicians and ensembles. The Exposition of New Music aspires to be a kind of counterweight to commercialised culture and the museum-like concept of conventional concert life. It puts the emphasis on original creativity and seeks to reveal the links between contemporary currents of thought. This year's 21st festival, entitled *Between Pop and Non-Pop,* is designed to show that contemporary techniques of composition and the new technical equipment are erasing the hitherto apparently impermeable borders between genres.

PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER

Exposition of New Music

29th March – 6th April 2008, Prague

Prague Premieres (www.praguepremieres.eu)

As early as the 1950s festivals were founded in Prague, Brno, Ostrava, and Pilsen to showcase new pieces by domestic authors. Their main problem was the absence of the chance to compare these with foreign work, and to add to their difficulties, from 1990 orchestral premieres were ruled out for financial reasons. The Czech Philharmonic has tried to rectify the situation since 2004 by organising the spring festival known as Prague Premieres. The first two years of the festival were devoted to a cross-section of Czech, above all orchestral music from the past decade. Since its third year the festival has always presented several dozen compositions by Czech and foreign composers in all age groups and with different stylistic and intellectual orientations written in the last five years and not yet performed in Prague. In 2006 the programme included work by Czech, German, Austrian, Belgian, Luxembourgeois and Dutch composers, while the 2007 festival was focussed on the Northern Lands, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and this year we shall have a chance to compare domestic music with new pieces by Belgian, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Swiss composers.

12th May – 4th June 2008, Prague

The Prague Spring (www.festival.cz)

PHOTO: IVAN MALÝ (2x)

The oldest, biggest and best attended of Czech festivals, the Prague Spring has become a national institution just like the Prague National Theatre and the Czech Philharmonic, which organised the festival's first year to mark the 50th anniversary of its own founding and with the National Theatre's opera has continued to be one of its main pillars. It starts every year on the day of the death of Bedřich Smetana, the 12th of May, with a performance of My Country and ends in the first days of June. Over the last sixty years its concerts have offered all the best of Czech music and also the most important works of world musical repertoire interpreted by outstanding Czech and foreign musicians. From the innumerable stars we mention at least the following names: Sviatoslav Richter, Lorin Maazel, Herbert von

Karajan, Mstislav Rostropovich, Boris Pergamenshchikov, Lucie Popp, Kim Borg, Sir Colin Davis, Maurice André, Dmitri Sitkovetsky, Leonid Kogan, Paul Klecki, Gustav Leonhardt, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alfred Brendel, Heinrich Schiff, Leopold Stokowski, Arthur Honegger, and Arthur Rubinstein. This year, apart from the domestic stars performers will include Garrick Ohlson, Edita Gruberova, Nigel Kennedy, Alfred Brendel, Julia Fischer…
Many works have been premiered here, some of them specially commissioned by the festival. The festival itself is preceded by an international performers' competition, and its finale and concert of laureates are part of the festival programme. This year we shall be hearing the flower of young oboists and clarinettists. The history of the Prague Spring is presented in detail on its Internet page and in a lengthy publication marking the sixtieth anniversary of its birth.

19th May – 9th June 2008, Ostrava

Janáček's May (www.janackuvmaj.cz)

North Moravia's showcase festival with a musicological conference and associated Generation competition for young artists (now only composers), was founded in 1972. At the turn of the 20th/21st century it acquired a better base with the improvement in the standard of the local Janáček Conservatory and the opening of a new Ostrava University with a department of music. The music of Czech and foreign classics and above all Leoš Janáček forms the core of the festival programmes, but tried and tested pieces by contemporary composers are also played and one concert is always devoted to the winning works in the national composing competition Generation. Jazz and other musical genres are also on the menu.

PHOTO: LUBOŠ VELECKÝ

31st May – 29th June 2008, South Moravian towns

Concentus Moraviae (www.concentus-moraviae.cz)

This festival has been held since 1996, usually in June, in almost 20 South Moravian towns (with the exception of Brno) and sometimes across the border of neighbouring Austria. Every year it has a special theme. This year the programme is focussing on the musical life in the Visegrad region (i.e. the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, which have signed an agreement on cultural co-operation), from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the 19th century. The theme, "Old Music of Visegrad", will be developed at several different levels. Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Polish composers will be presented, the musical life in the historic capitals – Prague, Bratislava, Budapest and Cracow (later Warsaw) – will be mapped, and attention will also be devoted to music centres outside the capitals, including monasteries. The newly formed Visegrad Baroque Orchestra will be playing an important role here.

21st – 26th June 2008, Kroměříž

Forfest (www.forfest.cz)

The collapse of the communist government meant that from 1990 festivals of sacred music began to appear. One of the first was the Kroměříž Forfest in June, striving to put spiritual content back into contemporary music and fine arts. As expressed in the words of a leader member of the festival's organising committee the violinist, composer and teacher at the Church Conservatory in Kroměříž – Zdena Vaculovičová: *"The policy of the festival is to highlight the trends in Czech and world art that embody elements of a new spiritual charge and have the power to reintegrate the shattered image of the post-modern era at a high level. Today there is a lot of talk of a kind of transitional period in art, a lack of clarity, a deliberate obscurity. The history of art teaches us that it has often been precisely at such times that works are created which turn out to be basic and fundamental."* It is a festival that involves a high proportion of young musicians, and many premieres in all kinds of genres including the experimental, The appeal of the festival is enhanced by the beauty of the venues: the Arbishop's Chateau, the Chateau Gardens and the churches of Kroměříž. This year's 30 festival concerts will be held in 10 different settings.

PHOTO: FORFEST

4th – 8th June 2008, Olomouc

Olomouc Song Festival (www.festamusicale.cz)

The large number of excellent children's choirs in the Czech Lands led to the establishment of many children's choir festivals, most of them competitive. In 1972 what is now the best known was founded – the Olomouc Song Festival which from 1990 was gradually transformed into an international competition festival involving all kinds of choir. Children's, boys, youth and adult choirs appear here every year. More than 150 choirs with many thousands of singers regularly participate. This year the obligatory pieces are works by Gesualdo, Verdi, Bruckner and Petr Eben. There will be a series of concerts for the public and appearances by choirs at Sunday services in the Cathedral of St. Maurice, but competition performances are also open to all.

18th June – 5th July 2008, Litomyšl

The Smetana's Litomyšl International Opera Festival (www.smetanovalitomysl.cz)

Originally founded in 1949, this is one of the oldest of Czech festivals, but in its first three decades it was held at irregular intervals and its importance declined. From the 1990s, however, it has been held annually and has become ever more extensive and diverse. The main setting for festival events is the superb Renaissance chateau in which Bedřich Smetana was born the son of a maltster at the chateau brewery. Opera productions and major concerts are presented in the 2nd Chateau Courtyard, which is equipped with a sliding roof in case of rain. Most of the events today are concert productions of various genres, including new world concert premieres. The festival this year is the 50th since its founding. The programme will feature Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* and *Libuše* presented by the Prague National Theatre, Verdi's *Nabucco*, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet,* Smetana's *My Country* performed by the Czech Philharmonic and conducted by Libor Pešek, two concerts of chamber works by Smetana, Antonín Dvořák's *Requiem*, a joint concert of the choirs Schola Gregoriana Pragensis and the Japanese Buddhist monks Gyosan-ryú Tendai shomyó and much else.

PHOTO: FRANTIŠEK RENZA

27th – 29th June 2008, Jihlava and other places in the vicinity

Festival of Choral Music (www.fsujihlava.com)

In the history of modern choral singing in the Czech Lands, starting in the 1860s, we will find many events of festival type. The oldest that still in existence is Smetana's Jabkenice, founded in 1924. The Jihlava Festival of Vocal Art, a centralised national event from 1958, was later renamed more accurately The Festival of Choral Music. At first it was a non-competitive showcase of the best amateur Czechoslovak choirs of all types, which then gradually changed into an international festival

with occasional appearances by professional ensembles as well. The nature of the festival programmes, which open with a concert in the Jihlava Cathedral of St. Ignatius, has also changed. At last year's 50th festival the Vox iuvenalis Brno choir performed Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum*. This year's festival will continue in the now traditional format including an international composers' competition. The winning pieces in its 9th year, called "Jihlava 2008", will be played at the 51st Festival of Choral Music.

28th June – 7th July 2008, Český Krumlov

The Český Krumlov Festival of Chamber Music (www.ckrumlov.cz/fekohu)

The South Bohemian town of Český Krumlov, which is listed as a UNESCO monument, boasts one of the largest and most beautiful Czech chateaux with a famous round tower. Under the tower, in historic interiors such as the 17th-century Baroque theatre or the Masquing Hall decorated with scenes of entertainment in centuries past, a festival that animates these rooms with the music of bygone ages and sometimes with contemporary music has now been taking place in the early summer for 22 years. The musical direction and personal participation of the grand old man of Czech violin virtuosity, Josef Suk, in itself suggests the high standard of the festival (his joint concert of works by Antonín Dvořák and Josef Suk with four other top musicians from last year's Český Krumlov Festival will be reprised this year on the 29th of May at the Prague Spring.) In line with established tradition this year's festival will again be including a "Baroque Night", in which for a short while the centuries will be rolled back and the old life will return to the former residence of the powerful Rožmberk dynasty. During the four-hour programme visitors will see and hear musicians and singers in Medieval dress, and will be served with Medieval delicacies, and they are encouraged to come in historical costume themselves.

PHOTO: CKFCM

2nd – 7th July 2008, Pardubice

IFAS International Festival of University Choirs (www.ifas.cz)

Pardubice became a centre of the choral movement thanks to the activities of the choirmaster Vlastislav Novák, who founded a number of Pardubice choirs and choral festivals. The oldest and most famous is the IFAS Festival of University Choirs. Its first year was 1968, when the temporary relaxation of communist totalitarian control meant that several West European choirs could take part as well. It was a great success, but after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia it was forbidden in the following year and in 1970 had to be held under the title *Festival of University Choirs with the obligatory participation of a choir from the Soviet Union*. Subsequently it proved possible to organise it every two years (even years) with the original name. Currently it is an important international platform for university choirs, many of them outstanding including the Pardubice University Arts Ensemble, which was the first organiser of the IFAS Festival.

17th July – 19th August 2008, Prague

PHOTO: COLLEGIUM MARIANUM

The Summer Festival of Early Music

(www.collegiummarianum.cz)

Founded in 2000, this international music festival seeks to enrich the cultural life of our time with the music of centuries long past. It has been initiating a search for pieces that have hitherto been outside our angle of vision or have not been given the attention they deserve. The festival presents music by little-known Baroque French, Italian and Spanish composers, as well as the better-known such as Samuel Capricornus, Johann Jacob Froberger, Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, Jan Křtitel Krumpholz, Jan Ladislav Dusík and great names like Jean Philippe Rameau, Francois Couperin, Christoph Wilibald Gluck, Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Sebastian Bach, Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Apart from the foreign guest ensembles and soloists, the festival has a "core" group in the form of the instrumental, vocal and dance ensemble Collegium Marianum, whose artistic director, the flautist Jana Semerádová, also manages the entire festival and heads the Prague Týn Higher Vocational School, lectures at the Academy of Early Music at the Masaryk University in Brno and pursues her own research work. Concerts and productions presented in the picturesque historical settings of the Břevnov Monastery, for example, the Troja Chateau, the interiors of lesser known Prague churches and the superb exteriors of the Ledeburk or Vrtbov Gardens, all regularly meet with a very warm response. This year's festival will include a music-theatre project based on Molière's comedy, *Le Medecin malgré lui* produced by the French theatre company La Fabrique à thêatre. The renowned counter-tenor Philippe Jaroussky will also be appearing, and a concert of Spanish Baroque and Renaissance music performed by the Spanish ensemble Armoniosi Concerti is another treat to look forward to. **Baroque Early Evenings**, a series of concerts of early music in the historical setting of the fomer Servite monastery in Melantrich St. in Prague, is associated with the festival.

PHOTO: AUVIEX

18th July – 23rd August 2008, Český Krumlov

International Music Festival Český Krumlov

(www.festivalkrumlov.cz, ww.auviex.cz)

The festival is in some ways a free continuation of the Krumlov Chamber Music Festival that precedes it. Music of the Baroque and Classicist eras forms the core of its programme. In the coming, 17th festival season it will be offering music from the Gothic to the present in twenty-eight programmes in twelve venues in and around Český Krumlov. In the first six days of the festival the South Bohemian and some outstanding soloists from abroad will be presenting Verdi's opera *The Force of Destiny* in an outdoor theatre with revolving auditorium, in the Masquing Hall the Prague ensemble Ensemble Inégal will be performing Baroque music and there will be recitals by the pianists Géza Anda and Martin Kasík, the Škampa Quartet and others, the phenomenal Israeli clarinettist Sharon Khan will be playing with the Moravian Philharmonic in the Riding School, and the Brewery Garden will be the venue for both the very popular Irish Night and this year a Greek Night, both with a chance to savour national gastronomic specialities. The programme in the Baroque Theatre has yet to be confirmed.

21st – 24th August 2008, Kuks

Theatrum Kuks **(www.theatrum.zde.cz)**

An annual festival of Baroque theatre, opera and music that has been taking place since 2002, always at the end of September, in the whole chateau complex of Count Sporck in the East Bohemian village of Kuks between Dvůr Králové and Jaroměř. The programme is unusually broad and diverse. Last year for example it hosted Comoedien-Haus with a production of the *Opera about a Chimney* attributed to Karel Loos, Georg Philipp Teleman's opera *Pimpinone* was staged in statuary exhibition and František Xaver Brixi's humorous *Erat unum cantor bonus* in the refectory. The Church of the Holy Trinity was the venue for a recital of songs from the Božan's famous hymnbook *The Nightingale of Para-*

dise, a concert of organ music and a concert by the folk group the Michal Hromek Consort. Flute concertos were played in the Baroque pharmacy and on the cascade staircase, and Baroque guitar in the Gallery of Wines. Since the deadline for applications from ensembles who wish to participate in the festival is the 15th of February, the precise programme will only be drawn up after that date. We already know that during the festival the facade of the today no longer existing Sporck chateau building itself (finally demolished in 1901) will be conjured up by virtual representation, and that water music will be played on the River Labe, which flows through the extensive chateau grounds.

End of August – beginning of September 2009, Ostrava

Ostrava Days (www.ocnmh.cz)

Currently this is the biggest and most important festival of contemporary music, orientated to progressive European and American avant-garde movements (see CMQ 2,3/07). The Ostrava Days take place as biennale in odd years and are already an internationally acclaimed platform of contemporary musical life for both composers and performers. The week-long festival follows and is integrated with a three-week course for composers focused on work with an orchestra. In addition to its "resident" orchestra, the Janáček Philharmonic, the festival hosts a range of often outstanding, mainly foreign soloists and groups. The festival's own Ostrava Band, an international ensemble originally planned purely for festival purposes, has already been successfully developing its activities outside the festival, for example in foreign tours. On the 23rd of May 2008 it will be appearing at a Prague Spring concert.

12th September – 1st October 2008, Prague

The Prague Autumn (www.pragueautumn.cz)

PHOTO: PRAŽSKÝ PODZIM

This festival may be regarded as the very popular but more modest counterpart of the Prague Spring. Each year it offers more than twenty orchestral concerts in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, with programmes that include the most important piano, violin and cello concertos. It collaborates closely with Czech Radio in three main areas: the regular participation of the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, radio broadcasts of the festival concerts and also appearances by two radio orchestras from other European countries each year. The most frequent guests are the BBC Radio Symphony Orchestra and German orchestras. The festival always concludes with a performance of Dvořák's Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B minor.

2nd half of September 2008, Prague

The St. Wenceslas Festival (http://svs.sdh.cz)

Since 1993 the Sacred Music Society has been organising the St. Wenceslas Festival, which culminates on the anniversary of the murder of the Czech Prince Wenceslas on the 28th of September. In addition to oratorios by the Baroque masters the festival concerts include new pieces by contemporary composers. Reverence for St. Wenceslas, one of the most famous figures in Czech history, has led to the holding of St. Wenceslas festivals in other places as well. Outstanding among them is the **St. Wenceslas Music Festival** (www.shf.cz), held since 2004 in September and October in 24 places in the Moravian Silesian region.

19th September – 4th October 2008, Brno

The Moravian Autumn (www.mhf-brno.cz)

From 1995 an annual festival was held in Brno under the title Brno Musical May. This festival resembled the Prague Spring in title, dates and content. In 1966, during the brief period of relaxation of the centralised totalitarian control of culture, a radical change was made – the festival was moved to the end of September and beginning of October and was renamed the International Brno Music Festival, with the programme conceived in a newly thematic way and a musicological colloquium being added. The first year was devoted to Bohuslav Martinů, as was the festival in 1990. Leoš Janáček, who lived and worked in Brno, receives the greatest attention, and the Brno festivals in major anniversary years of his death (1928) have been devoted to him. He will also be the focus of the coming festival, called Music of Passion and Resistance. Since 1996 the festival has been known as the Moravian Autumn and become part of the newly conceived Brno International Music Festival, which also includes the Easter Festival of Sacred Music and the Exposition of New Music.

PHOTO: PETR FRANČAN (2x)

September – Novemebr 2008, Prague

The International Festival of Concert Melodrama (www.concert-melodrama.com)

The launch of the festival in 2000 was connected with the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the birth and commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the death of Zdeněk Fibich, the pioneer of the modern Czech concert melodrama and author of the only trilogy of stage melodramas in world musical repertoire, *Hipodamie*. Many new compositions are presented at the festival each year, and it is combined with a competition in the performance of melodrama and creative workshops for performers.

End of September – mid-November 2008, Prague

Strings of Autumn (www.strunypodzimu.cz)

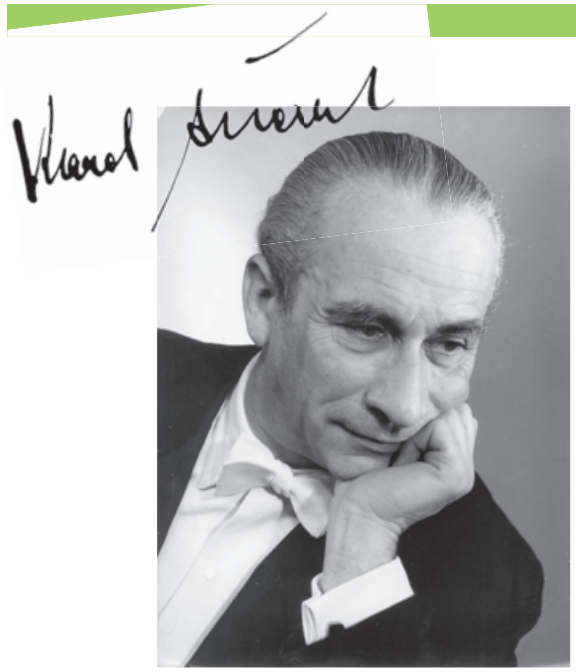
A festival orientated to jazz and classical, tradition and experiment. The nine festival concerts are usually scheduled at weekly intervals from the end of September until mid-November. The festival organisers promise to publicise the programme for this year in May. In general framework it will be similar to last year's, which for example included a concert of Händel areias, Old Russian liturgical chant, an Arab-Andalusian Nouba feast, jazz music, a conceptual project on the boundaries of drama, dance and music using new technical means, duets for violin and cello by Maurice Ravel, Zoltán Kodály and Bohuslav Martinů, traditional Portuegese *fado* and a multi-genre concert by the Bester Quartet. The last two concerts were held in a new concert venue known as the Prague Crossroads and created by reconstruction of St. Anne's Church in the historic centre of Prague.

PHOTO: PETRA HAJSKÁ (2x)

In conclusion I should like to add that you can find a more comprehensive view of Czech festivals at the Czech musical listings service Muzikontakt, which provides constantly updated information on its Internet page at www.muzikus.cz/muzikontakt.

You will also find brief information about some of the festival settings mentioned above, which are often very attractive and of great historical interest, in the article The Music-Loving Tourist's Guide to the Czech Republic in the 2/07 issue of this magazine.

by Jindřich Bálek



It is entirely right that Karel Ančerl should today be regarded as one of the greatest of Czech conductors and that his era in the role of head of the Czech Philharmonic should sometimes be characterised as a "golden age". The Supraphon extensive "Gold Edition" of all his important recordings as conductor has undoubtedly contributed to this reputation. It is nonetheless salutary to remember in this context that his path to general acclaim was far from direct, and that not even in the period when he headed the Czech Philharmonic (1950 – 1968) did he enjoy anything like the general respect that he deserved. Many people at the time said that he was cold, that he did not have the right feeling for the Czech tradition of performance, that he was over obsessed with detail, and a range of other comments of a distinctly hostile kind.

KAREL ANČERL
THE LEGENDARY CONDUCTOR

Even with hindsight we can say that Karel Ančerl never quite fitted the usual image of the Czech musician who retains his spontaneous musicality and whose heart leads him to soft warmth and melodiousness. In this respect Ančerl is definitely alien in his uncompromising emphasis on rhythmic precision, a sense of structure and the rational understanding of the score – and these are only his most striking features. As an authoritative chief he was not always popular and his interpretations were criticised for a lack of originality. It was as if his great successes during tours with the Czech Philharmonic and as guest conductor with world-famous orchestras were not a clinching argument. Today these doubts are a thing of the past, although in a way history is repeating itself slightly, since the charges that were levelled at Ančerl are today often thrown at the currently most acclaimed Czech conductor, Jiří Bělohlávek. We might indeed find even more parallels between the careers and musical profiles of the two conductors. Karel Ančerl was only to enjoy full recognition in retrospect and we may perhaps hope that Bělohlávek, working in a culturally and politically more favourable time, will gain general recognition in his homeland with less delay.

If we look at the beginnings of Karel Ančerl's career (he was born almost exactly a century ago on the 11th of April 1908), two things emerge as crucial: the radio and contemporary music, often both together. He was born in Tučapy near Soběslav, and only came to Prague as a high-school student, shortly afterwards transferring to the conservatory, where he graduated in 1930 with a concert at which he conducted his own *Symfonietta*. His next important step

was rehearsal for the premiere of Hába's quartertone opera "Mother" in Munich (see also CM 3/05). It was directed by Hermann Scherchen and the young Ančerl proved his worth as a brilliant assistant. His subsequent step up the ladder was surprisingly enough jazz, since the composer Jaroslav Ježek (see CM 1/07) gave a helping hand to the young conductor and engaged him at his home venue, the Liberated Theatre. Under Ančerl's leadership the small jazz band for which Ježek composed his still famous songs on lyrics by Voskovec and Werich performed very well. He won even more of a name as a conductor at the festivals of the ISCM in Amsterdam and Vienna. Only later was he engaged at the radio, where he initially just worked as a stand-in, and he only got his first invitation to work with the Czech Philharmonic after he had successfully stood in for the planned conductor at a performance of Sergei Prokofiev's difficult *Third Symphony*.

His promising career was interrupted by the German occupation. As a Jew Ančerl immediately lost his post and in 1942 he was transported to Terezín, where he became deeply involved in the musical life of the ghetto. Unfortunately not even the post-war era in Czechoslovakia was to be favourable to the performance of the music of the "Terezín composers", which Ančerl personally presented. In 1944 he lost his whole family in Auschwitz. He returned from the concentration camps not only with hardly imaginable psychological scars, but with long-term health problems that were to be responsible for his death when he was otherwise at the height of his powers.

The immediate post-war period is associated with the least-known chapter in Ančerl's career: his role as opera conductor. After the war the original New German Theatre in Prague was renamed the Opera of the 5th of May and as chief conductor Karel Ančerl presented a number of premieres here: Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*, Offenbach's *Hoffman Tales*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Puccini's *La Boheme,* Hába's *Mother* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. These productions were distinguished not only for the precision of the musical rendering, but for directorial conceptions audacious for their time – two important names, Alfréd Radok and Václav Kašlík had entered the field of opera direction.

In 1947 Ančerl became chief of the Czechoslovak Radio Orchestra, and had soon worked up a remarkably broad repertoire from which the operas, or rather their old radio recording, still attract great attention today. The recently reissued archival recordings of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, and Smetana's *The Bartered Bride, The Brandenburgere in Bohemia* and *The Two Widows* are still astounding for their dramatic power and modern approach. A lineup of singers of a kind that you would not find in Prague operas today also contributed to the lasting fame of the recordings – to stand for them all let us at least mention Beno Blachut, Václav Bednář and Marie Podvalová.

His appointment as conductor in chief of the Czech Philharmonic in 1950 came as rather a shock to both Ančerl and the orchestra. After the emigration of Rafael Kubelík in 1948 the Czech Philharmonic had been experiencing a time of great insecurity; the still too young Václav Neumann had tried to direct it for a short time, there was talk of Karel Šejn, but at first no one had thought of Ančerl. Many people associated him with an excessively narrow focus on modern music. It took some time for him to win the respect of players who identified with the entirely different approach of Talich and Kubelík.

If we look at the main pillars of Ančerl's repertoire and discography, the absence of works considered (and still considered) the core repertoire of the Czech Philharmonic become clear. With only a certain degree of simplification we can say that while Talich and Kubelík built on the melodic current and "natural" flow of the music, Ančerl placed much greater emphasis on rhythm and the thinking through of structure. This was precisely why he was not to many people's taste, but is also why from today's perspective we are compelled to admire precisely this aspect of his talent. As time went by he found supporters even among the leading orchestral players, some of whom figure in his recordings as soloists (Miroslav Štefek – french horn, Karel Bidlo – bassoon).

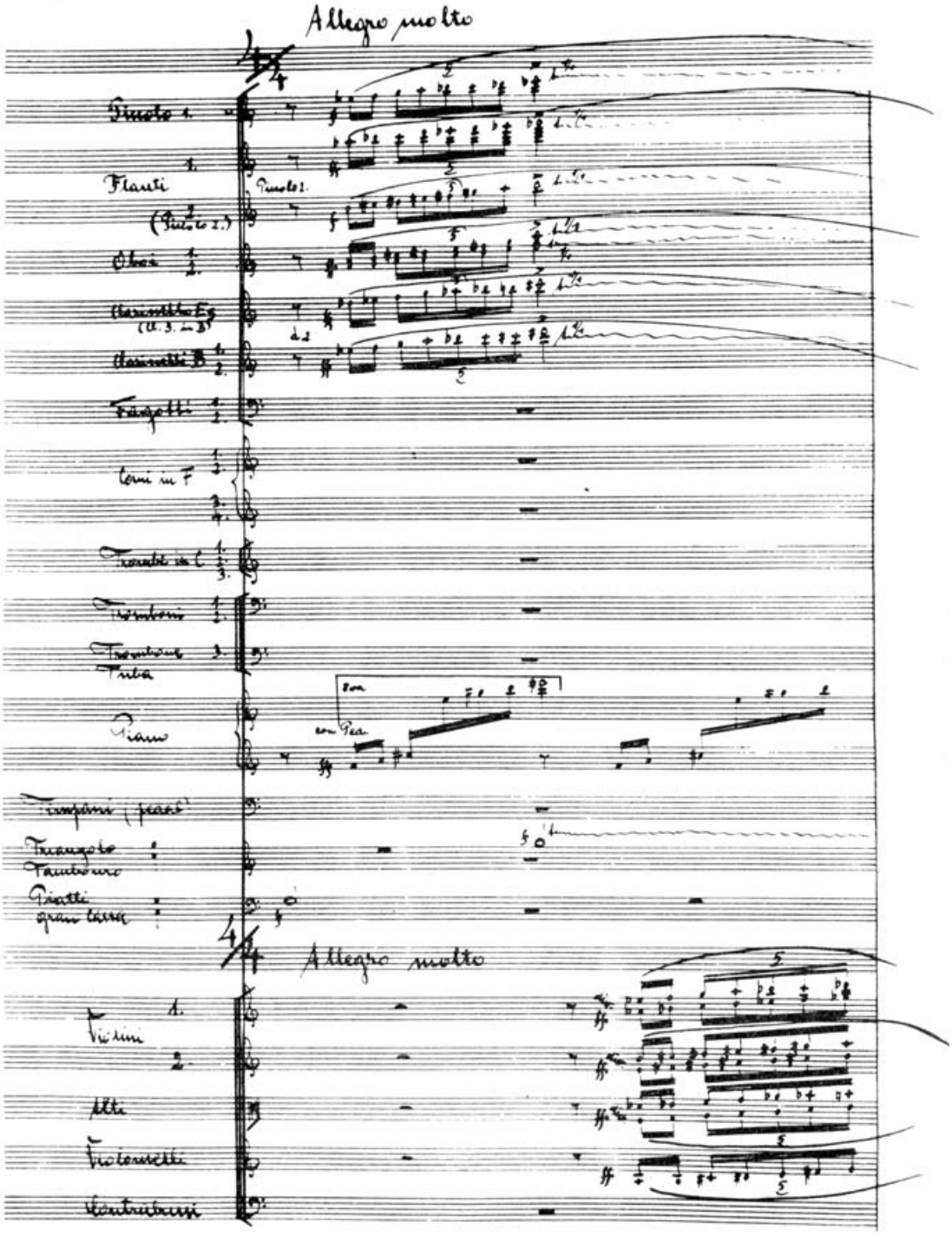
Returning to his repertoire and discography, however, what is striking is the major share of modern classics – i.e. Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Bartók. There are still many reasons to return to his recordings of the Rite of the Spring, Petrushka, suites from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* or the *Concerto for Orchestra*. These are enduring models.

The qualities of the new generation of orchestral players in Ančerl's era are demonstrated by Mussorgsky's *Pictures at the Exhibition* and a long series of brilliant preludes and symphonic poems, including Richard Strauss's *Till Eulensiegel's Merry Pranks* and the virtuoso conception of the overture to Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*.

Ančerl was denied the chance to work and record with many of the "western" world-famous soloists of his day. Fate partly made it up to him with the opportunity to produce several immortal creations with the pianist Sviatoslav Richter, the violinist David Oistrach and the today lesser known cellist André Navarra. He did not like soloists with virtuosic tendencies, demanding of them the same fidelity to the composer's written notes that he required of himself. It is a great pity that he only had time to record two Beethoven symphonies, the *First* and the *Fifth*. His departure abroad prevented him from recording Brahms' *Third* and *Fourth Symphony*, and we only have his recordings of the *First* and *Second* symphonies, and the *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello*. The recording of the complete Brahms symphonies with the Czech Philharmonic was a feat only to be accomplished by Jiří Bělohlávek at the end of the 1980s.

One special and relatively neglected chapter is that of Ančerl as conductor of sacred works. In his Prague subscription concerts we shall find more of these than might have been expected in a time of Stalinist repression. One of the true high points of his art as a conductor is preserved in his discography – his recording of Dvořák's *Requiem*. A foursome of foreign soloists contributes to its glory (it was both a Supraphon and Deutsche Grammophon production), but it is above all the conductor's conception that endows it with immortality. With his unerring sense of structure and deep understanding of the content and gravity of the work.

Karel Ančerl's achievements are perhaps even greater as regards the classics of 20th-century Czech music. While his less romantic and sober Dvořák always provoked controversy, his interpretation of Janáček arouses enthusiasm to this day. In the case of Bohuslav Martinů, he also showed a great deal of personal courage in throwing the whole weight of his personality behind a composer who had stayed abroad during the war and after the communist take-over in February 1948. He recorded what were then entirely new works by Bohuslav Martinů – the



Ančerl's Symfonietta (1930)

Fifth and *Sixth* symphonies, the *Frescos of Piero della Francesca, Parables, Bouquets, the Piano Concerto no. 3, The Memorial to Lidice* –, even though in the year that Ančerl was appointed to the head of the Czech Philharmonic Martinů was an almost prohibited composer. Also interesting and representative was the range of other 20th-century composers whose works he presented in model form: Miloslav Kabeláč, Klement Slavický, Jan Hanuš, Ladislav Vycpálek, Otmar Mácha, Pavel Bořkovec, Iša Krejčí. In this way he remained faithful to the composers of his generation, the "modernists".
He never ceased to be a convinced modernist in his own way, even though his horizons broadened to include the entire symphonic repertoire. This is most evident in his approach to Romanticism. Ančerl never wanted to be the soaring and uninhibited romantic – not even in scores that would have borne or even cried out for such a conception. Even with Wagner's overtures he remained resolute in his sobriety and took the same line when he recorded Mahler's *First* and *Ninth* symphonies. Not all the critics were convinced, but today his sincerity and purity of approach cannot but impress everybody, even setting aside the fact that the non-Romantic conception is once again an important feature of many famous interpretations, most notably those of Pierre Boulez.

The last chapter in the career of Karel Ančerl was for many years forgotten in his homeland. He emigrated after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet forces in Autumn 1968. His decision was influenced not only by deteriorating health, but above all by the analogy that he saw between the German and Soviet occupations. He was repeatedly assured that nothing would happen to him, but as someone who had been sent to a concentration camp two years after the fascist occupation took place he didn't believe the assurances. He was, however, able to say his farewell to the Czech Philharmonic with two commemorative concerts at the Prague Spring Festival of 1969.
He moved to Toronto, where he as it were started from scratch again with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and rapidly achieved results. It is an even more interesting aspect of the final stage of his career, however, that he received one invitation after another from internationally renowned orchestras. While still with the Czech Philharmonic he had received invitations to appear abroad, he had won the respect of Herbert von Karajan and conducted the Berlin Philharmonic more than

In Japan, 1959

once in the 1960s (even recording Shostakovich's Violin Concerto with them, with Wolfgang Schneiderhan as soloist), but it was not until after his departure for Canada that the real flood of invitations began. He conducted the Concertgebow Amsterdam, the Tonhalle Orchestre Zürich, the Cleveland Symphony Orechestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic and others. Death caught up with him on the 3rd of July 1973 when he was on the threshold of truly international fame and a first-rank international career. But of course he had already one world renown with his Czech Philharmonic and his Czech recordings are still particularly popular and beloved by audiences.
To end our account of this partly celebrated, partly still underestimated figure in Czech music history, we should remember his own words and a number of extracts from his unpublished letters. These were only recently entrusted to the Czech Philharmonic archives and were written from Canada to Ivan Medek, the Czech Philharmonic's concert agent in Ančerl's time (who was later to be a signatory of Charter 77 and in the 1980s a journalist for Voice of America in Vienna). Wisdom, a sense of humour, and penetrating insight were all the trademarks of Ančerl's verbal style.

Toronto 7th October 1968

Dear Friends,
your kind letter arrived just at the right time, because I was already very nervous and impatient to convey my view to an orchestra that means so much for me, and I was finally thinking of writing to Pauer officially (*Jiří Pauer, composer and communist functionary, director of the Czech Philharmonic during 1958–1980*

– *editor's note)* . Basically I was still very undecided, because resolving on so fundamental a step is no light matter at my age, even though both in Europe and in America I have been experiencing the kind of reception that I would never have dreamed of. I don't like to write about this, because after all I have been reading here and hearing from the people who have left and are coming here in ever greater numbers, I have been gripped by a terrible pessimism as far as the future at home is concerned. This time I cannot make the same kind of basic mistake that I made in 1939 when I firmly believed that things would turn round again and I had to stay in order to help, when I assumed that I could help. I have learned my lesson and I am convinced that in this situation I would be unable to help anyone and that no sacrifice on my side would benefit anyone, but would even do even more harm. Another reason for my decision not to return is that I have heard how our leading politicians were "transported" to Moscow and how they were treated, and the comments made by Brezhnev about Kriegl are known to me *(František Kriegel, member of parliament and reform-orientated member of the Communist Party. In 1968 he was among the six leaders of the Czechoslovak government arrested and taken to Moscow and was the only one to refuse to sign the so-called Moscow Protokol, a capitulation to the occupation by the Soviet armies on the 21st of August 1968 – editor's note).* If these are the methods of "normalisation" of life in our country, I have a pretty vivid idea of what would be waiting for me (…) I regard my life as integrally bound up with the whole nation and especially the Philharmonic and if it is never given to me to stand in front of the Czech Philharmonic again, it will still and forever be the most beautiful memory of a happy period of my life. (…)

Lake Musoka 16th September 1969

Dear friends,

Just now I am spending my holiday on an island in a superb lake and taking advantage of the quiet to write a few letters. (…) The summer has been very busy. It started with the Clevelanders *(i.e. the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra – editor's note.)* and I managed to conjure up a beautiful performance of Janáček's Symfonietta. It was hard work, because Szell *(the conductor Georg Szell (1897–1970) – editor's note)* had added a lot of his own invention and as you know I give precedence to Janáček, and so for most of the rehearsal time I was getting rid of the alterations (…) Then I went off to Tanglewood and started to rehearse *My Country* with the Bostonians *(Boston Symphony Orchesta – editor's note).* Apart from Vlasta and Meadows (From Bohemias Woods and Meadows – editor's note) they didn't know anything and it involved me in a lot of work, but the Country appealed to them and they played it with real verve. The public's reaction was unusually tumultuous. I have never before had that kind of success doing the Country abroad. An audience of 8000 held up faithfully even though it was raining and not all of them could get under the roof of the auditorium. That's a good testimonial for Smetana. The orchestra and I understood each other excellently and they really tried to please. Then it was the turn of Philadelphia. This had piqued my curiosity the most because I had never before heard the orchestra (The Philadelphia Orchestra) except on records. They are outstanding, the strings in particular, and in my view unrivalled in America. In its warmth the exquisite sound of the strings strongly reminded me of the Czech Philharmonic. We have better wind, even though in this orchestra they are technically completely at the top.

But in sound they are harder than ours, but on the other hand play flawlessly. (…) In January and at the beginning of February I shall be in Vienna and in Amsterdam at the Concertgebow. (…)

Toronto 2nd April 1970

(…) in Europe I five times conducted Brahms (Haydn-Variations), Prokofiev's 2nd Piano Concerto with Cherkassky and Dvořák's (symphony) D-major. Then I went to the Concertgebow – an orchestra that has won my heart and we enjoy making music together. At the moment they are playing in wonderful form. With them I did a total of 8 concerts and two programmes – Haydn (the Oxford), Beethoven's Violin Concerto with their extraordinarily brilliant concert master Krebbers and then once again the Dvořák's D major and in the second programme Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, Rachmanonov's Variations on a Theme by Paganinini and Franck's Symphony. (…) After my return to Toronto I was supposed to record Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto with Michelangeli *(Arturo Benedetti-Michelangeli – editor's note)*, but this didn't happen because the previous day his piano in the television studio got cold and he just refused to play, and another lunatic Glenn Gould, a phenomenal Canadian pianist, who refuses to play in public, stood in for him. It was a big joke and I could write a novel about it. Sometime I hope I'll be able to tell you all about it. I also recorded for the radio and gave two public performances of Willan's Symphony, a sort of refined English piece with nothing to say, but the Canadians were jubilant and were writing and saying that they had never experienced such a performance here. So I don't know! *(Healey Willan (1880 – 1968), composer, organist and teacher, born in England, working in Canada from 1913- editor's note) (…)*

CONTEMPORARY CZECH MUSIC AT THE 50th WARSAW AUTUMN 2007

The end of September saw the 50th year of the Warsaw Autumn, one of the most prestigious festivals of contemporary music. Unfortunately, Czech music has been and still is very sporadically represented at the festival, and this has been especially true since the 1980s. If we take a look at the carefully kept list – presented in this year's programme – of all the composers whose music has been played at the festival, we discover the following facts. Since the founding of the festival in 1956, the programmes have included pieces by a total of twenty-eight Czech composers, counting Janáček, Martinů, Hába, Vítězslav Novák and Czechs permanently living abroad – Petr Kotík, Rudolf Komorous, and Jan Novák. Seventeen of these twenty-eight Czech composers were presented at the festival before 1980. In the next more than quarter of a century only fifteen Czech works by ten composers have been played, and in fact almost half of these were performed thanks to just two concerts by Czech musicians: the Agon ensemble in 1993 and the percussionist Tomáš Ondrůšek in 2002. As far as our better-known composers are concerned, a work by Marek Kopelent was last heard here in 1986, and by Jan Klusák in 1980, while the names of other composers, such as Miloslav Ištvan, Alois Piňos or Petr Eben do not appear at all. Nor is the situation any better with the younger generations: Lukáš Matoušek – last played at the festival in 1979, Ivana Loudová – 1988, Petr Kofroň and Peter Graham – 1993, and more recently Martin Marek – 2004, Michal Nejtek – 2001, 2002, Miloš Haase – 2002. Up to this year that was all. Composers like Miroslav Pudlák, Pavel Novák-Zemek and a whole series of others were entirely absent from the programmes. The only representative of Czech contemporary music to have been making quite regular appearances at the Warsaw Festival – this time for the fifth time since he first took part in ‚87 – is Martin Smolka. This year the festival had commissioned him to write a piece for solo harpsichord, to which he added some natural sounds from a "tape", calling the composition *Haiku*. It was performed on the 24th of September in the hall of the Warsaw Academy by the outstanding Polish harpsichordist, indeed already a harpsichord legend – Elzbieta Chojnacka, together with works by Ligeti, McLachlan and Risset. From the point of view of contemporary Czech music and in the context of the disappointingly short list of performed pieces described above, it is gratifying

that at this year's Warsaw Autumn Smolka's composition was not the only Czech representative. Two days before, the full-length opera *MrTvá?* by Markéta Dvořáková and Ivo Medek was presented at the festival. This was a work inspired by motifs of Arnošt Dvořák's story from the 1920s and premiered in the Prague Estates Theatre in 2005, with subsequent performances in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It was a product of the collaboration of a composing duo who have been engaging in team composition for some years and whose joint work (created in parallel to the purely individual music of the two authors) had already been presented at festivals and on concert podiums in Europe and the USA. The activities of both musicians in the Marijan Ensemble, a group founded in 1999 and devoted to presenting original work, improvised music and multimedia projects, has obviously been a stimulating influence on their joint works.

The Warsaw production of the opera *MrTvá?* took place in the very specific setting of the great Ochota sports hall, where the organisers built a stage, huge projection screen, light park and auditorium for more than three hundred viewers. The main roles were sung by Petr Matuszek, Markéta Dvořáková (no relation to the co-author of the opera) and Tomáš Krejčí. The extended Ensemble Marijan was joined by percussionist Dan Dlouhý and flautist Kristýna Vaculová. The production was directed (as always since the premiere) by Gabriela Tardonová, while Tomáš Hrůza made the video that replaces most of the stage design and is based on work with huge enlargements of details – mainly the faces – of the main protagonists in the opera. The roughly eighty-minute long work held the attention of a full hall despite running without intervals and in Czech (although the whole libretto was printed in Polish and English in the programme). The reactions of the large group of professionals pres ent, as well as the general public, were very positive, and it should be stressed that at the Warsaw festival the favour of the public is far from automatic; when it dislikes a piece, even works by celebrities, thumping and whistling are the order of the day. This year a piece *Kápote* by Giya Kancheli suffered the treatment, for example, and last year a piece by Penderecky himself. One reason for the success of *MrTvá?* was undoubtedly the fact that it was the only work among the hundreds presented at the festival that included a humorous level – a rather rare thing in contemporary music. The successful performance of Smolka's *Haiku* and the opera *MrTvá?* – both to packed halls and with positive responses – is a definite encouragement for contemporary Czech music and we can only hope that the good impression left by the Czech contribution to this year's festival will lead to more extensive representation of Czech music at the Warsaw Autumn Festival in future years.

PHOTO: ANNA SMOLKA (CITY), ZBYNĚK MADĚRYČ (5x)

High points of this year's Warsaw Autumn definitely included the performance of Lachenmann's *Schreiben*, pieces by Hayagriv Param Vir, the puppet opera *Zeugen* by Georges Aperghis and Beat Furrer's huge composition *FAMA-Szenen*.

In conclusion I would like to offer one comment on the public and the popularity of the festival. All the concerts were entirely full, with long queues for tickets not sold in advance at the box offices before the performances and many people failing to get in. And it was mainly young local people who filled the halls apart from large groups of foreign guests – critics, composers, musicologists, publishers and music-lovers from all over the world… We can only hope and dream that there will some day be the same interest in contemporary music in our country.

by Iva Opištilová

THE CLARINETTIST KAREL DOHNAL: THREE STRIKES AND OUT

How can a performer today influence not just the musical consciousness of society but the community of composers too? We talked about the problem with Karel Dohnal, a young Czech clarinettist who has made a major name at home and abroad for his interpretations particularly of modern music.

You have taken part in lots of competitions. Have they in any way changed your life, your career?
These sorts of international competition don't have the kind of importance for the clarinettist that they have for pianists or violinists or, say, singers, who when they win some big international competition get not just prize money but also management, which can even mean dozens of concerts. Of course, competitions do get me a reputation in the music world. Secondly I practise for them more intensively, longer, more deeply and much more precisely than for ordinary concerts, and thirdly I get a terrific overview of what's being played on the international scene. When you live in the enclosed environment of a school or a country you can sometimes feel you have achieved a certain level, but then you suddenly go into the big wide world and discover that they play differently there, for instance. Not all of it appeals to me but sometimes something does, and it's an inspiration for the future. And fourthly, of course, it's very pleasant to win some money that I can then spend on another competition, international master classes or for buying a new instrument or note material.

Could you give us a more specific idea of what you encountered when you first discovered that people outside played in a way that was different from here?
My first Prague Spring competition, which was in 1996, was a big impulse for me. I thought I played very well in the first round, without any faults of any kind, but I still didn't get through to the next round. Some members of the jury said it was a question of politics, but others were critical of me, mainly for problems with sound. I decided that maybe there was something in it, and since I wasn't going to be reassured by soothing noises about politics from jurors, I started to look hard at how I could improve my sound. The Prague Spring was in May, the semester ended in June and at the end of October I would be off on my scholarship at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. During the vacation I resolved not to play at all for a month and forget about embouchure completely, and then I started again entirely from scratch - from sustained notes, from practice deliberately focused on tone. After six months of intensive practice enhanced by studying in London where I got a slightly different idea of sound, I went to the competition in Belgrade, where all the jurors praised not only my play, musicality and technique but also beautiful sound. It was to do with ambition and actually the first thing that prompted me not to be satisfied with what I was learning at home.

Can you compare the sound ideal in this country with the ideal in the different schools where you have studied?
Since 1988, when I entered the conservatory, the sound ideal has changed a great deal even in the Czech school. In the major orchestras, the academies and the conservatories, the "old-school" teachers, known for broad sound and use of vibrato as part of

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the sound and not as a timbre addition, retired, and so there was a shift to a more level, concentrated and direct sound. What remained was a sort of silvering, a luminous quality of sound that has maybe remained as a distinctive Czech characteristic. But when I listen to a player today, it's already hard for me to tell if he or she is Czech or French, because the difference between schools isn't so great. In the Netherlands they play using the reform-Böhm system, and so the sound is much darker, concentrated and at the same time smaller, not as translucent as the French, for example. At one time my ideal was Michel Arrignon, for example, but then I gradually went off it, because I wasn't comfortable with the way that he created the sound. You may not be able to achieve a sound that you terribly like, because everyone has a different embouchure and breathes into the instrument in a different way.

And in Russia?

There the school wasn't at all focused on quality of the sound. It was probably the last thing discussed there. In Russia what was waiting for me was mainly tough drill on scales and technical mastery of the instrument. At the time maybe only 3 out of the 20 students had a good instrument. The others had old instruments put together from parts from different firms, and so it was hard to devote yourself to the sound. Even so, these days, when I was in Moscow and in Petersburg in the spring, I had the chance to hear the young generation of clarinettists and the play really fantastically; the sound isn't in the western style, but they play perfectly in the sense of mastering tone, and ability to change the colour in the same way that a singer works with his voice. Today even at the Geneva competition, which is one of the biggest, the 1st Prize wasn't awarded and the 3rd Prize went to a Russian.

You are well-known for your interest in modern techniques of play on the clarinet – you give courses and work with composers. What was behind your decision to take this particular path?

First I would like to put things in proportion by saying that I play all kinds of music. I don't think exclusive specialisation in contemporary music is ideal, because you need to play Mozart or Brahms from time to time to get back to the foundations:

perfect mastery of technique, intonation, precision. It's a kind of detoxification cure, because in contemporary music performers often don't pay so much attention to the note material or precision of play to the last detail, and so they start to forget honest craftsmanship. I don't want to say this happens to everyone, but a lot of people rely on the fact that a great deal can be covered up. My interest in contemporary music started way back when I was at the conservatory and is something I owe to my professor Petr Bohuš, who gave me Jiří Pauer's Monologues of the Everyday to play in my very first year. Up to then I had been playing Stamic or Koželuh, Tuček, and this meant being suddenly thrown into a completely different kind of music. I tremendously liked the fact that I could actually influence the face of the piece to some extent – that I could play it a little differently each time and this would even be appreciated so long as I kept to the notation. That was the very first impulse. Fellow students-composers noticed me at the time. The first to dedicate a piece to me was Petra Gavlasová – I was enthusiastic and it was a success, and they even recorded it for radio immediately. I was Václava Černohorská's court performer. On top of that, I started to study more and more modern pieces for competitions. I began to understand more about the performance of contemporary music and became the kind of musician that doesn't steer clear of parts just because at first sight they look unreadable and unplayable. I still collaborate with composers. In my view it's a phenomenon confirmed by history, when excellent performers of the day inspired composers. By the way, Ondřej Štochl is just now writing a concerto for me, and its premiere is planned for 30th of March with the Prague Chamber Orchestra at the Prague Premieres Festival.

How do you choose pieces for courses on performance of contemporary music?

On the basis of my experience – they need to be pieces that are not too hard and are also part of the basic repertoire of any clarinettist who wants to go a little further than Weber and Mozart. The courses I hold at Ostrava University are mainly focused on methods and practising modern techniques: slaptones, multiphonics, frullato, various glissandos and so on. They really are a lot of students at the courses – this year we had 39, more than half of them from abroad. A great many contemporary pieces get played there, by teachers and students.

How far are the students prepared for the courses by their schools in different countries? You have a basis for comparison, so how flexible are the Czech students compared to the students from abroad?

The situation is changing. I was one of the first to have a chance to go abroad, but at the time there were still people teaching in the schools who hadn't had that chance and weren't particularly interested in performance of contemporary music. Now, for example, students come to the courses and listen to someone playing Denisov, Stockhausen or Berio in a class and think: …well, if he's playing it and we play almost at the same level, then why shouldn't I be able to play it? And so the next year they will come with, say, the Berio themselves and suddenly discover that the worst part is getting over the first barrier, which consists of opening the part and taking fright, thinking "Crikey, I can't play that!". But as soon as the student has laboured up that first steep hill to the point where the horizon opens out, and hacked his way through the thicket of signs and notation, it is suddenly simple and interpretation just like any other. My feeling is that students are realising ever earlier that in fact it is not all that difficult. What is more, there is a new generation of teachers at the conservatories, and they know it already themselves, give the students these pieces to play and are able to advise them.

You are a Selmer performer. How did you get to be that and what does it mean for you?

I'm not only a Selmer company performer, but also a performer for the American company Rico which makes reeds. One advantage of competitions is that they attract head-hunters looking for people who might in some way be able to influence public opinion and the market in instruments and various instrument accessories. A Selmer manager approached me at the competition in Seville. My job is to create awareness of the firm. Someone who is a respected player and a well-known name internationally functions as a model. When a conservatory student wants to buy a new instrument, he hesitates, and begins to look around to see who plays what. My task is to play on a Selmer and publicise the fact in the programmes. When I started to do it, in the Czech Republic the ratio was about 5% Selmer to 95% Buffet Crampon. Today clarinettists at the Czech Philharmonic and the Prague Symphony Orchestra, and teachers at the Prague Academy, the Janáček Academy in Brno, and the conservatory have Selmers and the ratio is turning around. One advantage is that I get free instruments from the firm and it also sponsors my trips to various festivals, courses, my CD recordings and so on. On

this basis I have been to festivals in China, and in the USA, and as a Rico performer I have visited conservatories in St. Petersburg and Moscow for example.

You mention recordings. Who is doing the repertoire design for you, and with what priorities?

When I and my friend and manager Lukáš Herink from LH Promotion were thinking about the repertoire of my first CD, I wanted every piece to be brilliant in itself. I wanted to be able to present myself as an all-round clarinettist with a repertoire that was original and very interesting. So I came up with the idea of East European music. Lukáš was delighted and promised that he could find the funding for it. Today there is huge interest in the CD in the world clarinet community, and lots of people have written asking me to send it to them. These are pieces that have been recorded rarely or not at all. I am planning another CD, but I would prefer not to reveal any details.

What does chamber music mean for you?

It is an integral part of my diary as a performer. I played for many years with the Prague Clarinet Quartet, and I'm now missing it a little, since two of the members are abroad long-term. Then we have the Amadeus Trio, which is more a light music ensemble, but we hugely enjoy playing in it. And now I've become a member of a new ensemble called the PhilHarmonia Octet. I've always had a yen for this ensemble combination, because wind harmonias had a wonderful repertoire in history. An octet has one disadvantage – being so large it is too expensive for organisers, but when you offer it somewhere that usually has large orchestras, they complain that it isn't an orchestra. Organising rehearsals is difficult too. Despite all this, we got together six months ago and everything worked out: four rehearsals, the concert, excellent. We played the Mozart *Serenade*, Kramář's *Partita*, Beethoven's *Octet* and Šesták's *Octet*. We enjoyed ourselves. It is just the type of chamber music that gives you a kick in the pants and then you get immense pleasure from being able to do it. And that is one reason why I say that I don't specialise only in contemporary music, because then I might miss out on that Serenade, for example.

Do you enjoy playing contemporary pieces in the same way?

Of course. Lots of people say, "What on earth are you playing that for? Do you actually like it?" While composers on the other hand are always asking what I think of their piece, and sometimes it is very hard to answer. There are many pieces that you practice, you give them absolutely everything but you find that they are not the real thing. In Mozart's time there were a great many composers and a great many pieces were written, but only 1 in 20 or 1 in 50 has survived to this day. These pieces were filtered through a net. Some have been unjustly forgotten, but others were just played once. I personally use the rule "three strikes and out". When I am given a piece or choose it for myself, I rehearse it, and usually I try to give contemporary music even more than classical, because contemporary needs to be done

really more than perfectly. When it comes to performance I try to imprint some form, some soul in the piece. The first performance may not be completely ideal – not that I don't play everything technically right, but maybe I haven't yet found all the connections or nuances. Then there is the second time, and the third time. If even the third time I don't have the feeling that the music has filled me up, that the piece has filled up the hall, the audience, then I put it to one side and don't include it in repertoire again unless someone directly asks for it. The first time I may not enjoy a piece so much. But by the time I play it a third time, I already have my freedom in a piece: I know where to wait, where to prolong the note, how to interpret it. This means a piece may really acquire a form and I become terribly fond of it. But from my point of view not all pieces deserve to be played. Maybe some would be better with another performer. But I only give brilliant pieces at concerts. I don't mind performing Stockhausen or Berio's *Sequenza* in some small place the other end of nowhere; I explain it to them, tell them what they should notice, what special techniques are used – and my experience is that even a public absolutely unused to contemporary music and in mild shock about what's going to happen actually responds very positively. What I do mind and won't do is play a piece that I don't have properly mastered and tested by the "three times and out" rule. Of course, if I'm asked to play at a festival, I am prepared to rehearse a piece with pleasure and give it absolutely everything, but if it doesn't prove its worth to me, then there's nothing to be done about it. That is how I choose my repertoire and the pieces that then remain.

How far do you manage to combine all these activities and your personal life?

I have a little girl, aged three and a half. I try to limit activities and mere "bread-and-butter deals" that bring me nothing but income. I think it's very important to make time not only for the family, but also for relaxation, because if you don't it shows up in the playing too in some way and one day your body just hands in its notice. It's important to be choosy and do things properly and very well. Building up a name and a standard is something that takes a terribly long time, but you can lose it very quickly. I know that if I don't make time for practice I can somehow or other get through the concert, but it's not a question of playing somehow or other; it's a question of playing as well as possible. That's how you maintain your standard and the prospects of getting more offers, more concerts.

There's the question of money, but also career – are you aiming for the very top internationally?

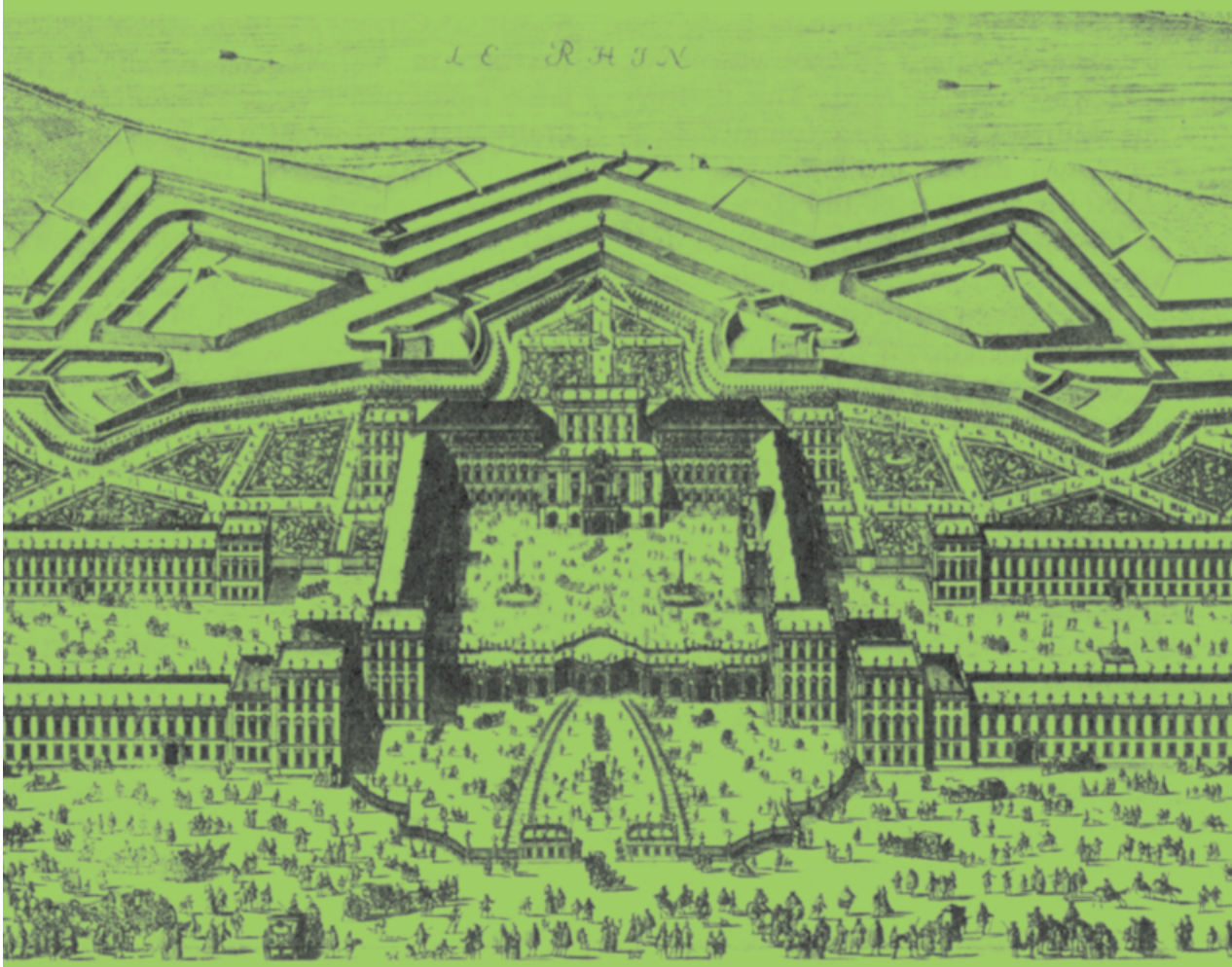
The clarinet has one big disadvantage, which is that in the eyes of organisers it isn't really a solo instruments as far as playing with orchestras or recitals are concerned. If you look at the Czech Philharmonic, then if there's one concert with solo clarinet in a season, then that's already a lot. And everywhere else- in London, in Paris. I think that if I play about 6 times with an orchestra in one season then that's fantastic. As far as getting a name in the world is concerned, I have the advantage of having made masses of contacts when I was going to competitions, and now I'm reaping the benefits in the sense of being invited to various festivals or as a guest teacher on courses – for example now I'm going to be touring the United States, where I shall be teaching at three universities and at the same time giving recitals in the same places and a master class on modern techniques. So in a way I am building up a reputation in the world. But I don't have any illusions about being able to make a career just as a solo clarinettist. I have recitals all over the world, but at the same time I have to work here, and play at the State Opera on a full-time contract. I have to fit it all in together.

Karel Dohnal (born 1973)

Graduate of the Ostrava Conservatory in the class of Petr Bohuš and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague with Vlastimil Mareš, studies at academies/universities in London, Berlin, St. Petersburg and Hilversum, PhD at Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.
Laureate of many important international competitions ("Premio Valentino Bucchi" in Rome 2005, Prague Spring 2002, Bayreuth 2001, Ostende 1999, Seville 1997, London 1997). He regularly appears with Czech and foreign orchestras and chamber ensembles and is member of the Prague Clarinet Quartet, the Amadeus Trio and the PhilHarmonia Octet. Dohnal teaches on regular basis at courses in the CR and abroad, since 2002 official player of the French clarinet manufacturers Selmer and the American reed-makers Rico. His discography includes a solo CD (East-European Music for Clarinet) as well as several chamber music CDs.
http://dohnal.czechian.net

by Jaromír Havlík

THE MANNHEIM SCHOOL
PHENOMENON AND MYTH



Jan Václav Stamic

This year's double Jan Václav Stamic anniversary (his dates are 19th June 1717 – 30th March 1757) is a good reason for a brief, overall consideration of the phenomenon, known as the Mannheim School, with which Stamic is so inseparably linked. The Mannheim School as a "technical term" appeared in music history at the beginning of the 20th century and went on to become the focus of lively discussions and polemics that occupied music historians most intensely roughly up to the seventies, when the various different opinions and conflicts settled into a kind of compromise position. Since then there has been relative harmony in views and now, thirty years on, it seems to be the right moment to try and give an overview of the whole period of debate and dispute but also of productive scholarship in this field, and to recall the key phases of the development of controversy and the important results that were gradually achieved. In resolving the "Mannheim problem" a major share was eventually taken by Czech musicology. Indeed, it was through involvement in discussion about the Mannheim School that Czech musicology actually made its first more prominent appearance on the international musicological scene, and even today it cannot boast very many conspicuous forays of this type beyond the borders of its domestic territory.

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The Mannheim School as Historical Fact

The Mannheim School in the sense of the phenomenon that is our subject here was formed in the environment of the Elector Palatine's Orchestra in Mannheim in the course of the 1740s.

The original Mannheim kappella had been established earlier, at the turn of the 17th/18th century in the reign of the duke Carl Philipp, Carl Theodore's predecessor. Carl Philipp had his residence in Silesia and it was here that that core of the kapella was formed, later moving a number of times with the ducal court: in 1707 it moved to Innsbruck from where it then followed the Elector Johann Wilhelm to Düsseldorf. When Johann Wilhelm died (1716) his younger brother Carl Philipp became elector, moving first to Heidelberg with part of his former Silesian kapella and finally to Mannheim in 1720. Here the kapella was reconstructed partly from members of the former Silesian and "Innsbruck" kapella, and partly from new members.

In the reign of the Elector Palatine Carl Theodore (1742–1799) the orchestra experienced a great flowering both in style of performance and in terms of the music written by its members and associates. In Mannheim the orchestra perfected a style of interpretation celebrated and acknowledged throughout Europe, while the music produced by composers in the orchestra's circle displayed a series of new elements of material and technique that were later to be seen as crucially important for the development of the style of Classicist instrumental music. A whole range of allegedly distinctive innovations were to be attributed to the Mannheim School – in melodics (the so-called Mannheim manners: the "Mannheim sigh", the "rocket", the "Mannheim roller"), in structure (a higher developmental stage of the so-called sonata form, the introduction of the minuet into the symphony as a 4th movement), and orchestration (the emancipation of the wind instruments, the introduction of the clarinets into the orchestra). Music historians found the Mannheim composers to have written in a style not based on the figured bass foundation as heretofore. The dominant element in their work was instead the emancipated melody, divided into two-, four-, eight-bar units symmetrical and periodic in arrangement, and this was considered a fundamental influence on the new musical structuring.

The older, founding generation of the Mannheim School, represented by Jan Václav Stamic, Franz Xaver Richter, Anton Fils, Ignaz Holzbauer and a few others was particularly important in this regard. Stamic and Richter came from the Bohemian Lands, which meant that the "Czech Question" was a major issue in discussion of the Mannheim School from the very beginning. As research continued it was established that the Mannheim musicians had had contacts with the music-loving Austrian Count Jan Adam of Questenberg (Questenberk, 1678–1752), who had his own residential kapella in Jaroměřice nad Rokytnou in South Moravia – a kapella that experienced a great flowering especially when headed by the kapellmeister František Václav Míča (1694–1744). Questenberg's demonstrable contacts with the Mannheim kapella were to play a considerable role in later discussions around the phenomenon of the Mannheim School, specifically in arguments for a strong musical connection between Mannheim and the Bohemian Lands.

In 1778 the Mannheim court moved to Munich with its the famous orchestra. Only a smaller orchestra with kapellmeister Ignaz Holzbauer was left in Mannheim.

The "Mannheim School" was a phenomenon noticed by contemporaries[1)] of course, but first and foremost in the sense of the elector's celebrated court orchestra, which astonished by its brilliance in performance. Only much later did assessments and commentaries shift in focus from the musical art of the kapella (which attracted attention in sources specifically from

František Xaver Richter

the time when it was headed by Jan Václav Stamic) to the work of the composers concentrated around the orchestra. The comments of contemporaries were not surprisingly related to the immediate events and concert practice of the day. Naturally while the orchestra was active and the Mannheim composers were presenting their pieces certain characteristic compositional techniques (especially melodic styles) were already noted, but without these being made the starting point for any general authoritative conclusions. The music of Classicism had been building up a relatively universal style of expression in which the characteristic elements of the Mannheim composers were not perceived as strikingly different from the overall stylistic paradigm. In any case, in the next generation of Mannheim composers, represented on the one hand by the two sons of J.V.Stamic and for example by Cannabich, Fränzl, Danzi and others, the style of the "founders" grew barren, and having meanwhile spread throughout Europe tended to be considered more as unproductive mannerism. Throughout the 19th century the phenomenon of the Mannheim School was only mentioned in outlines of musical history as primarily a matter of the performance style of "Stamic's" Mannheim orchestra. This approach is well illustrated by the words of the earliest serious Czech work on the history of music, penned by Karel Stecker (1903): he mentions the Mannheim orchestra and Stamic only in a section devoted to violin virtuosity of the period: *"…Altogether, the attempt to place dizzying technique in the foreground is the mark of all contemporary violin virtuosity in the German Lands, and its ever greater precedence is regrettably in inverse proportion to the internal value of the production itself. In this respect a turn for the better is already evident in the case of the Berlin virtuoso Fr. Benda mentioned above, but above all in the second half of the 18th century with the performances of the famous Mannheim court orchestra, where German instrumental music already vies with its Italian counterpart. Apart from the first kapellmeister already mentioned, the Czech Jan Václav Antonín Stamitz …author of numerous chamber pieces and his pupil Christian Cannabich… contributed to its fame."*

The Mannheim School Becomes a Subject of Academic Debate

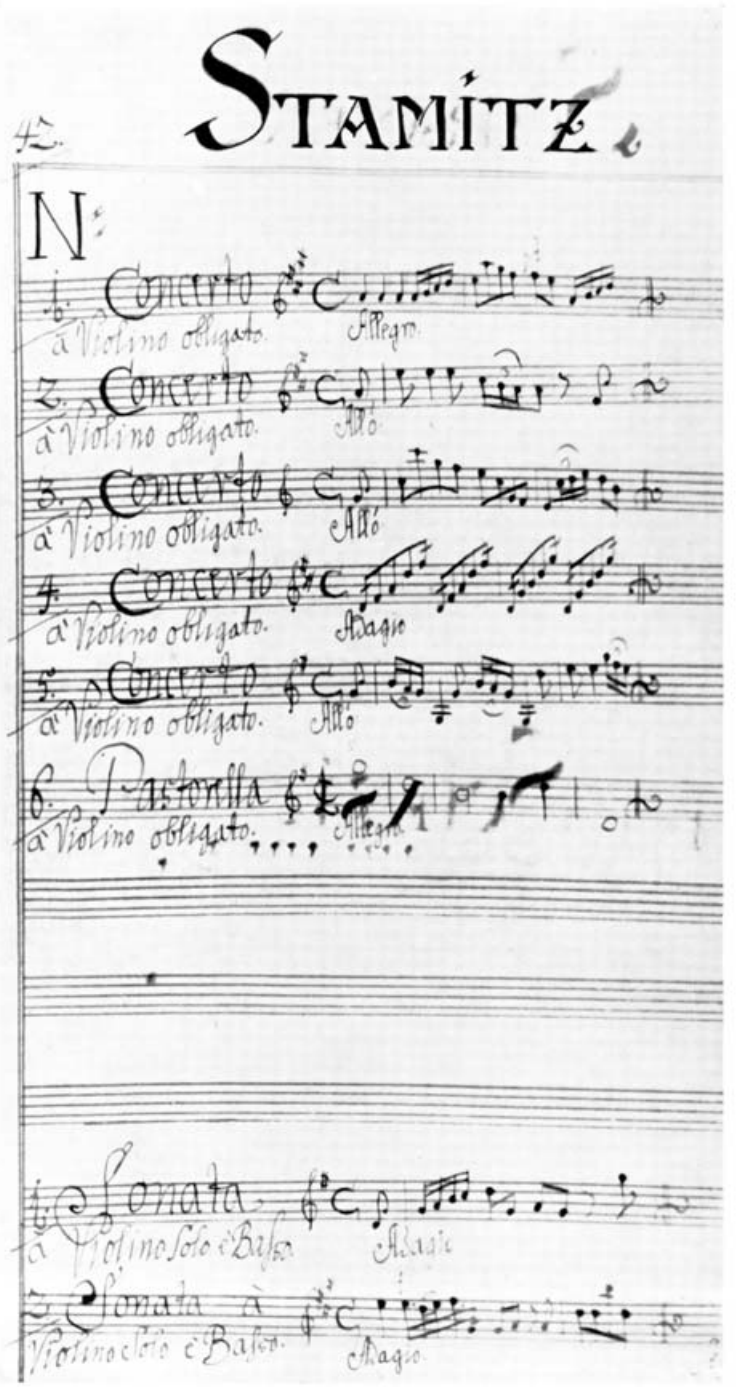
At the turn of the 19th/20th century, music history had developed to the stage at which it sought to identify the dynamics of the historical development of music, and in the field of the development of instrumental music it was searching for a major connecting link between the Late Baroque and High, so-called Viennese Classicism. It was in this context that the phenomenon of the Mannheim School once again came to the fore, this time primarily as a school of composition. The rediscovery of the Mannheim School was initiated by Hugo Riemann: while working on the major edition *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern* (DTB) he discovered important markers of that missing link in the instrumental work of the Mannheim composers (specifically the first generation represented above all by the threesome Jan Václav Stamic, Franz Xaver Richter and Anton Fils). The markers in question were the following five:

1) A new way of formulating the melodic idea and developing the musical structure that is not derived from the progression of the bass (the old figured bass practice) but directly from the character of

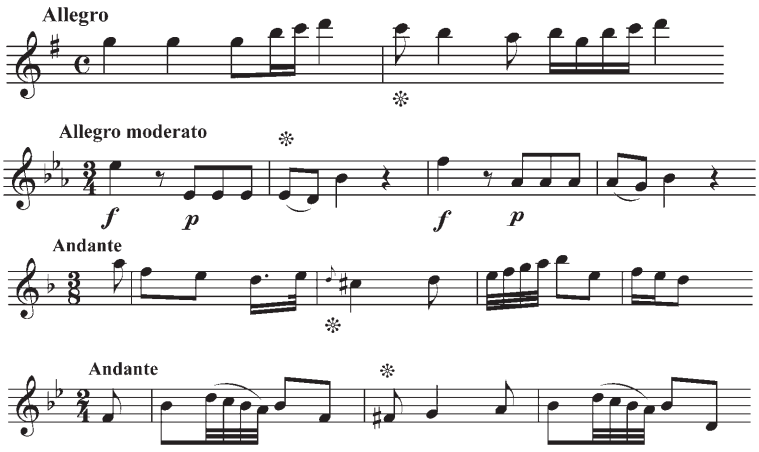
the melody – theme. Corresponding to this is the clear, periodic division of the phrase in 2, 4, 8 bars, and the slowing down of the movement of the bass and thus of the changes in harmony. Dynamic, sound, and ultimately thematic contrasts are organically linked with this development.
2) A more advanced evolutionary phase of the crucial form of the instrumental music of Classicism, i.e. the sonata form, in which instead of the previous tonal contrast a thematic contrast appears with the introduction of a secondary theme. Concurrently the importance of the development section increases.
3) The introduction of the minuet as the fourth (usually in order the third) movement of the sonata cycle (initially in the symphony).
4) More advanced work with the orchestra, especially the strengthening of the role of the wind group (and specifically the introduction of clarinets into the orchestra).
5) Standardised techniques for the creation of melodies – the so-called melodic manners (or with reference to the supposed originality of the Mannheim School in this respect the "Mannheim manners").

The First Phase of Discussion on the Mannheim School

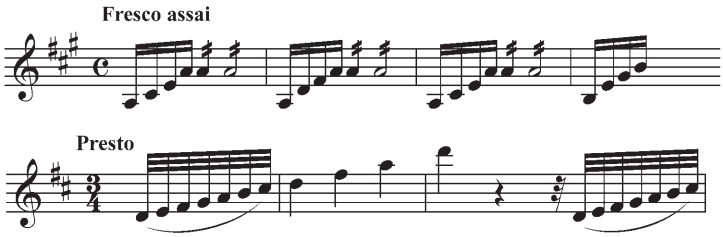
The first volume of the DTB containing the symphonies of the Mannheim composers came out in Leipzig in 1902 with a lengthy preface by Riemann and provoked what were to be long years of debate and polemic on the phenomenon. At the start those who joined the debate were mainly German and Austrian musicologists.[2)] Austrian musicologists from the



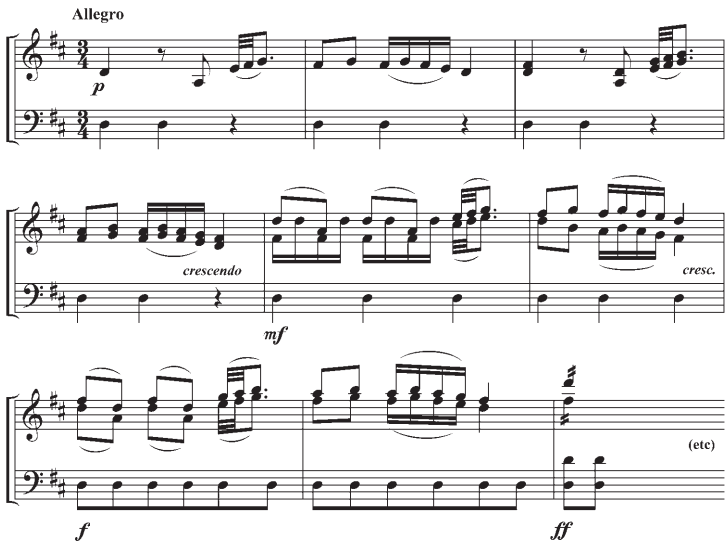
Symphonies by J.V.Stamic in the list of musical scores of the orchestra of Count Collalto in Brtnice in Moravia (around 1752)



Examples of "Mannheim sigh" (J.V.Stamic)



Examples of "Mannheim rocket" (J.V.Stamic)



Example of "Mannheim roller" (A.Laube)

circle of Guido Adler, who were publishing an Austrian DTÖ edition in parallel with the DTB, objected first of all to the alleged priority of the Mannheim School in the introduction of the minuet into the sonata (symphonic) cycle. They claimed that the minuet had already been introduced by the Viennese pre-Classical School (specifically Wagenseil) around the year 1745.

Since important "Bohemical aspects" were at stake, it was not long before Czech musicology joined the fray, especially thanks to Vladimír Helfert, who in his book *The Music of the Baroque in the Bohemian Land*s of 1916 offered the first general assessment of the controversy on the Mannheim-Vienna axis. He wrote, *"Historians are not looking at this problem in a historically unprejudiced way, but are constantly looking at the subject with a premature eye to the classical symphony of Haydn and Mozart. Those publishing are placing the main stress on the extent to which the roots of the classic symphony can be identified in this pre-Classical symphony, but the approach causes a double error that stands in the way of further scholarship: the pursuit of a Vienna-Mannheim polemic takes precedence. Riemann, who has published the symphonies of the Mannheim composers (…) without yet being familiar with the Viennese pre-Classical symphonies, declares the Mannheim symphony to be the direct predecessor of the classical symphony. The Vienna school grouped around the DTÖ, however, wants to save this honour for the so-called Vienna pre-Classical symphony. On this basis a controversy has developed that is not conducive to a calm, unprejudiced resolution on either side. Looking for the connection between the pre-Classical symphony and the Classical cannot be*

the first problem addressed in relation to the fact [of the Mannheim School]. *First it is necessary to get to know the fact itself from all sides, and only then can the rest of the issues be tackled. And it is this knowledge of the fact that the Vienna School is not yet seeking to acquire. To put it concretely, it is first necessary to answer the question of how the so-called pre-Classical symphony relates to period and preceding music. This question is one that the Vienna School has so far left aside side apart from small and more or less chance mentions. But this is why the school looks at the so-called pre-Classical symphony as something individual, autochthonous. Thus Adler sums up his judgement*: 'anything extraordinary moulded in the Vienna Classical School came into existence on domestic soil' (preface to the edition of the Viennese Pre-Classical Symphony, DTÖ XV, 2, 1908). *But all these are historical errors…"*

Helfert was partly seeking to go beyond the rivalry between Riemann and the Viennese musicologists by pointing out the broader historical contexts of the problem, but he was also trying to emphasise the strong share of the "Czech element" in the Mannheim phenomenon, and in this way he was de facto entering the ongoing polemic game as a third player.

As far as the accent on the broader historical contexts is concerned, Helfert's position at the time is in some respects justified but in others rather wide of the mark: *"It is necessary to take as premise the fact that the concert sinfonia is not an autochthonous form but is based on and grows directly out of the opera sinfona… The Italian and Italianate (Viennese) opera sinfornia was the direct predecessor of the pre-Classical opera sinfonia… The search for the roots of the pre-Classical sinfonia leads directly to the Italian music which at the period of the shaping of this sinfonia determined Viennese music in sovereign degree (Caldar and his entourage)…"*

This is an undoubtedly correct view, but somewhat beside the point. The polemic was over something other than the Italian opera sinfonia of the Late Baroque (the historical position of which was certainly not challenged by either Riemann or Adler and his cohorts). On the other hand Helfert's view still has its value, because at least in this aspect it rises above the particular "mythology of first discoveries" that bedevilled the debates for rather long years. The same is true of Helfert's attitude on the question of the precedence of Stamic or Wagenseil in the introduction of the minuet as a fourth movement in the symphony. Helfert's arguments against both the sides defending their claim to precedence once again seem rather wide of the mark. He objects that at this time (and even earlier) the minuet was common in the sinfonia and so in this respect the pre-Classical symphony develops from the Italian sinfonia and "Italianate" sinfonia in Vienna. What he has in mind, however, are the final movements of the three-movement sinfonias "in tempo di Minuetto", often in 3/8 time and in the common two-part form with repetitions, while the subject of dispute was actually the minuet as the fourth, dance movement in three-part "da capo" form included in the symphony usually in the third place in the cycle.

What were known as the "Mannheim manners" were probably the weakest and most easily challenged Riemann's arguments for the importance of the Mannheim School in composition. Plenty of examples of melodic techniques of this type could be found in the work of other composers who had demonstrably not been in any contact with the Mannheim School at the time in question. Another subject of heated discussion was the advanced level of the sonata form in the first movements of symphonies, particularly from the point of view of the progressive creation of a secondary theme, and with it the evolution in thematic treatment and the expansion of the section of development. Here many participants in the discussion made persevering efforts to produce evidence of ever earlier symphonies showing characteristics similar to those of the supposedly "innovative" symphonies of Stamic. Helfert joined this discussion both in the book already mentioned and in subsequent works of 1924 and 1925.[3)] Naturally, he too found similar characteristics (or at least hints) of more advanced sonata form for example in the work of the Jaroměřice master, František Václav Míča, whom he presented to the world as a new musical discovery. At this point a further area of polemic opened up, i.e. the role of the "Czech element" in this whole very important music historical affair.

After the first phase (roughly the first twenty years) of controversy, the state of opinion on the Mannheim School was roughly as generally aptly described in the brief Pazdírek's educational musical encyclopaedia: *"The Mannheim School was a movement in orchestral instrumental music that developed from the mid-18th century in Mannheim in the Elector's court kapella. Its importance lies partly in orchestral play that*

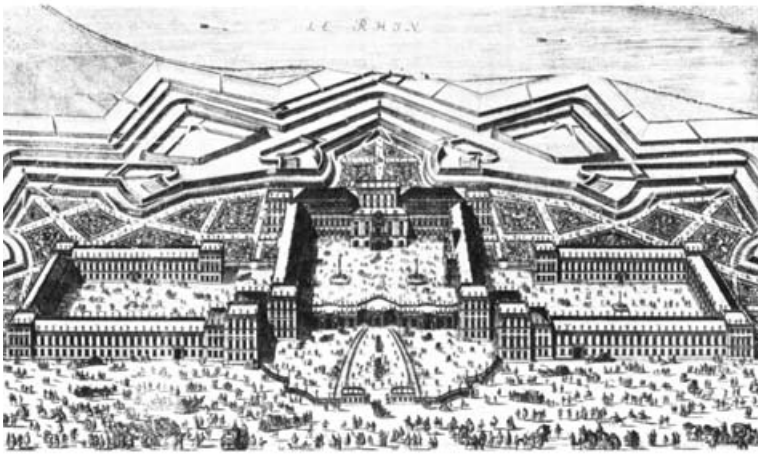
brought a hitherto unusual richness of dynamic shading and expressive pregnancy, but its significance for composition was far greater. In the M.S. the symphony evolved towards its typical form, and so Viennese Classicism, especially Haydn and Mozart, may have developed out of the Mannheimian symphony." Let us take note: the performance style of the Mannheim orchestra is again stressed in first place, with the advance in composing identified in a general way in the field of the symphony without further specification: there is no mention of melodic styles, the minuet, clarinets, or even "Czech contributions". This is worth some brief reflection.

From some time in the mid-1920s the discussion on the Mannheim school divided into essentially two streams, the theoretical and, let us say, the nationalistic.

The Mythologisation of the Phenomenon, Nationalist Elements

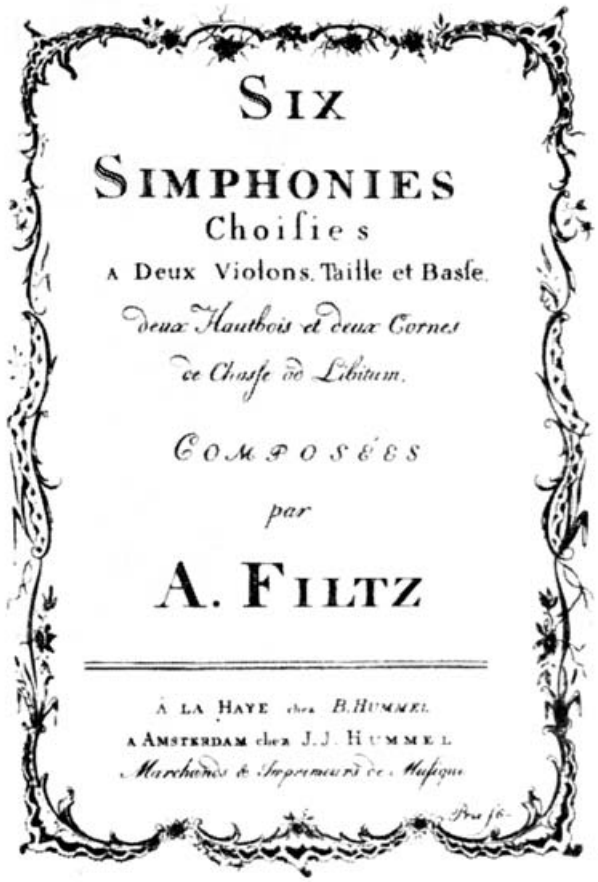
While the theoretical current of discussion was concerned with further study of different elements in Riemann's definition of the distinctive features of the Mannheim composers, and developed an ever broader international base, the "nationalist current" concerned itself just with the Czech-German line and was primarily interested in establishing or contesting the Czech share in the phenomenon of the Mannheim School. Let us start with this second current of discussion, which is today generally considered a dead letter, but in the twenties and thirties was a sensitive issue especially for Czech musicology. The question of the Czech element had been triggered off by Reimann's positive claims about it – i.e. in the work of the founding generation of Mannheim composers Riemann claimed to see "Czech elements" which he read directly off the pieces themselves. In what did they consist? Well, naturally, in good-humoured melodic simplicity, the symmetry of themes and some kind of vague and undefined "folkishness" (Volkstümlichkeit). All this Riemann thought he found in Stamic, Richter – and even Fils, whose music even seemed to him the most "Czech". This was a lure that Czech musicology (then only just emerging) could not resist since it was a matter of prestige. It also had a stimulating effect on music history research since it led to a search for "Czech-Mannheim musical contacts" further back in history (naturally innumerable examples were discovered) and to attempts to establish the nationality (ethnicity) of composers in Stamic's circle. There was never any doubt that Václav Stamic had become the leading figure in the 1st generation of the Mannheim School from around the year 1740 (and the key stylistic features of Mannheim compositional output were evident in his work from op.1[4]), and he demonstrably came from the Bohemian Lands. German musicology interpreted the case as one of the expression of German creativity in the Bohemian Lands and often came to tendentious nationalist conclusions including the German spelling of the name Johann *(Wenzel) Stamitz* with the national specification of "deutsch-böhmisch", which was generally understood to mean not mixed "German-Czech" but "German from the Bohemian Lands". Czech musicologists started to write the name with Czech orthography on principle, i.e. Jan Václav Stamic, and produced various pieces of evidence for his Czech ethnicity. In the process, arguments of rather uneven calibre were deployed. It was pointed out, for example, that Stamic was a Czech with Slovene ancestors who had come to Bohemia from Maribor (i.e. this showed he was at the least Slav, not German). The main pioneer on the Czech side was Helfert, who in the interests of science and the "national cause" undertook wide-ranging research with a number of remarkable results. He was interested not only in direct proof of Stamic's Czech identity, but in showing the many-sided cultural and specifically musical contacts between Mannheim and the Bohemian Lands. He managed, for example, to demonstrate the contacts between Count Questenberg and the Mannheim kapella as far back as 1738, and found connections between Jaroměřice and Německý Brod (Stamic's birthplace). At the same time he investigated the development of instrumental music especially with an eye to sonata form on Bohemian territory in the "pre-Mannheim" period (great hopes were awakened by the discovery of the well-known *Sinfonie in Re*, which Helfert attributed to František Václav Míča; later research, however, overturned this attribution).

By this route Czech music historians eventually arrived at the view that the Czech musicians in Mannheim had been the mediators between the Italian-Viennese music of the Late Baroque and Viennese Classicism. A number of Helfert's successors invested considerable energy in polemic with German interpretations of the phenomenon, particularly as regards the ethnic identification of leading figures of the stature of J. V. Stamic, F. X. Richter and A. Fils. These efforts were carried over even into the post-war era, as is clear for example from the entry under "Stamic" in the *Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of People and Institutions (CMDPI)*, and most strikingly in what was for a long time the definitive comprehensive work on the history of *Czech music – Czech Music. From the earliest times to the beginning of the 19th century* by Helfert's pupil, Jan Racek. The latter devoted a great deal less time than his teacher to close study of historical sources, and was all the



more adept a master of fabulation for that. Racek's view is still highly prejudiced by nationalism.
For Racek, Stamic and Richter are *"prominent composers of Czech origin (…) In this way the western Slav musical element* (underlined by present author) *came to the forefront of world musical life (…) The Mannheim School (…) became the bearer of Czech musicality abroad (…)The Czech founders of the Mannheim School not only musically monumentalised Czech folk elements in the international musical environment, but at the same time rendered them accessible to the broad public of European peoples (…) German musicology led by Hugo Riemann denied the Slav and Czech character of the Mannheim School and explained Viennese Classicism, especially the work of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, in terms of purely Germanic roots (…) Today it is already clear that Viennese Classicism would have been inconceivable without the fertilising contribution of Czech musical emigrants, especially the members of the Mannheim School (…) We must not forget that the founders of the Mannheim School were Czechs (…) Stamic spent his youth in Czech conditions. His native tongue was Czech."* (p.156).
While these are claims that may flatter the Czech reader, they are not demonstrable in any conclusive way. Elsewhere, however, Racek adopts one important theory of his teacher's, writing (on p. 151), *"But also from the point of view of form (the emergence of the sonata form), the Mannheimians were undoubtedly carrying on from the many years of preceding development that had taken place in European music as early as the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century. If we are aware of this fact, then Mannheim will not seem to us as revolutionary and pioneering as it still seemed to Riemann, for example."*
In the case of Franz X. Richter it is certain that he came from Bohemia, but not that he was a Czech. "Patriotically orientated" Czech musicologists nonetheless obstinately refer to him as *František X. Richter* (as did the CMDPI and of course Racek, although at least it is not claimed that his mother tongue was Czech). Richter's ethnicity created less of a problem than the ethnicity of Stamic. It was rather different in the case of another member of the founding group of the Mannheim School – the composer with the surname Fils (Filsl, Filts, Filtz, etc.), in whose music Riemann had claimed to detect Czech elements even though very little was known of his origin and ethnicity. From the beginning the evidence for Fils's "location in the Bohemian Lands" was indirect, including the strikingly plentiful examples of church music preserved under this name on Czech territory.
Failure to identify Fils's actual birthplace for many years coupled with the strong conviction on the part of Czech musicologists that Fils was Czech (a theory for which there were some supporting arguments even on the German side – e.g. in 1932 Robert Sondheimer published one Fils' symphony, A-major, under the title *Böhmische Sinfonie*) even led to the inclusion of the composer in the Musica antiqua bohemica edition. For Racek Fils is *"…the last Czech member of the Mannheim School (…) but so far we know very little about his life. Fils was probably born in Bohemia. His birthplace has not yet been identified (…) many Bohemianism, and even furiant dance variations appear in his work…"* Racek wrote much the same in the entry on "Antonín Fils" in the CMDPI.
The mystery of Fils's origins was finally solved in 1966 by the German musicologist Walter Lebermann, who ascertained the precise date and place of Fils's birth, i.e. 22nd of September 1733 in Eichstätt in Bavaria.[5] Since then there has been only one correct version of the written name of this Mannheim cellist and composer (Stamic's pupil), who died at the very young age of only 27 in Mannheim in 1760 – Anton Filtz.

With Filtz established as German, Petr Vít in his degree dissertation of 1970 theorised the existence of a "Prague Fils" (the author of the liturgical pieces mentioned above) about whom no details are known and who is perhaps the same man as the composer Filsl in Dlabač's lexicon (B. Dlabač: Allgemeines historisches Künstler-Lexikon für Böhmen und zum Theil auch für Mähren und Schlesien, 1815). It is possible that the information in Dlabač's lexicon may have inspired Riemann to his theories of the "Bohemianisms" in the work of the Mannheim composers, especially Fils – Filtz, in the first place. Even in German academic literature, specialists kept on writing about the "Bohemianisms" in the work of the Mannheim Filtz for some time after Lebermann's discovery of the composer's Bavarian origins.
The fourth of the Mannheim musicians of the key period was definitely Czech. This was the violinist and composer Jiří Čart (Czard, Szarth, Zarth etc., born 1708, died after 1778), who appeared in Mannheim at the end of the 1750s (after Stamic's death) and who was not a first-rate figure as composer, quite apart from the fact that he did not write symphonies, the crucial genre in the Mannheim School debate. Even so, it is generally evident that from the very beginning the so-called "Czech group" of Mannheim composers was at the stage in question among the most important and most productive of the whole circle.


SIX
SIMPHONIES
Choisies
A Deux Violons, Taille et Basse,
deux Hautbois et deux Cornes
de Chasse ad Libitum.
COMPOSÉES
par
A. FILTZ
A LA HAYE chez B. HUMMEL
A AMSTERDAM chez J. J. HUMMEL
Marchands & Imprimeurs de Musique

The Second Phase of Discussion, New Views and Intellectual Convergence

Long-term and increasingly international research efforts gradually led to more objective and sober views. The earlier sharply national positions (mainly Czech and German) were abandoned and nationally unprejudiced specialists from other countries entered the debate. We should mention at least one of the most important, the Danish scholar Jens Peter Larsen (1902–1988). Historical scholarship reached the conclusion (and agreement on the international level) that in the 18th century purely national differentiation did not have the importance that it developed in the subsequent era with the formation of so-called national schools. It was generally agreed that the mechanical identification of local and personal connections (Stamic and Čart on the basis of the proximity of their places of birth, Richter with Holzbauer through Holešov and the local kapella of Count Rottal, Jaroměřice and Mannheim through Count Questenberg, etc.) is not always an argument in itself and can be misleading. Above all, the development of the stylistic orientations of different composers in the period concerned cannot be reduced to a matter of their early environments. Czechs and the other members of the Mannheim group came to Mannheim by various different routes, at different ages and with different experiences behind them – and all of this was then confronted and combined with the specific Mannheim environment. Anywhere that a qualitatively new repertoire developed in the conditions of the court ensembles of the time (which were then actually "creative centres"), it was virtually inevitable that new and distinctive kinds of instrumental music would

emerge. Musicians from the Bohemian Lands were strongly represented in these ensembles (Mannheim was not exceptional in this respect) and various different influences and impulses brought by these musicians from their previous places of work must unquestionably have contributed to the formation of the new repertoire. As an ensemble exceptional for its time (in quality and in size) the Mannheim kapella naturally encouraged the concentration and synthesis of these innovative elements.

Another consensus achieved after long discussions is that the feedback effect of the Mannheim influences in the Bohemian Lands or Vienna is by no means as demonstrable as was originally supposed. Modern musicology has finally started to ask the question of the real character and contribution of musical life in Mannheim. It is ever more evident that in the case of J.V. Stamic and his circle we are not talking of a group of composers with the standard characteristics of a school of composition. Pedagogic influence between members of the group (for example Stamic on his sons or on Cannabich) cannot be ruled out, but the common features of the output of the Mannheim group were determined primarily by the responses of the composers to the natural repertoire needs of the orchestra as an ensemble of a new type working in new conditions (public concerts and their orchestras). Mannheimian influences are manifest in the music of other composers who were demonstrable never in direct contact with the Mannheim School (Johann Schobert, Francois Joseph Gossec and others). In the next generation of Mannheim composers represented mainly by Stamic's two sons, Cannabich, Danzi, and Fränzl, the development of the Mannheim style very obviously stagnated… Period testimony (Schubart 1775, Leopold Mozart 1777) agrees that the Mannheimian style is burdened by mannerisms and that the Mannheim School is primarily distinctive for the superb performance of the orchestra. The view that the Mannheim School brought important innovation above all in orchestral performance style then predominated throughout the 19th century.

The particular features of the Mannheim style, clarinets in the orchestra and the minuet as a 4th movement in the symphony have also turned out to be problematic as arguments for the phenomenon of a Mannheim School. This is both because these features have been found elsewhere and because of advance in the understanding of the mechanisms of musical life and operation at the time. Discussion of the Mannheim school has also led to the greater definition and academic refinement of views on what is known as "sonata form". Above all the basic premises of the arguments have changed: sonata form is one of the petrified basic concepts of music history

and theory but despite, or perhaps because of this, the meaning of the term has become ever more unclear. Or, to put it another way: the more entirely clear and universally valid the term sonata form appeared, the more in the light of historical evidence it turned out not quite to correspond to the real historically developed musical form. Music historians have reacted to the problem by seeking to produce a less schematic picture of the sonata form – one that covers the great quantity of types that existed in history. An analogy is the fugue, for if the "ideal – textbook fugue" is abstracted from the crowning fugues of Bach, the ideal "textbook" sonata form was abstracted in the second half of the 19th century from the crowning works of Beehoven. The problem is that Beethoven fundamentally changed the sonata form, and so theoretical interpretations of older music of the "pre-Beethoven" era have often created more problems than they solved by working backwards from Beethoven. This is most obvious in relation to the "thematic dualism" abstracted from Beethoven. How much effort has been expended in the past on the search for a secondary theme in older (pre-Beethoven) sonata forms just to meet the principle of thematic dualism!

The term sonata form first appeared in the work of Adolf Bernhard Marx (1795–1866). Marx already noted the double meaning of the term: on the one hand it was applied to the multi-movement "sonata cycle", and on the other for the form of the individual (most often first) movement in the cycle. He himself gave precedence to the second. With the great diffusion of Marx's textbook the term "sonata form" took universal root in musical terminology, but up to the 1860s other expressions were also employed in this context, such as "die erste Form", "die Form des ersten Allegro", "Form der Evolution" or "Form der freien musikalischen Gedankenentwicklung", "die Hauptform". In the 1920s and 1930s new approaches to the issue were tried: in the spirit of phenomenological theory (Kurth and Mersmann) the term "form" (die Form) was reserved for something already finished, fixed in its principal formal parameters, while the contrasting term "die Formung" (forming) was introduced for the particular process of creating a certain form with the awareness of a number of given defining general criteria but with the concurrent possibility of quite considerable variation in the details. In the 1920s the form of the symphonic movement, which had hitherto been treated purely from the point of view of a static "sonata form", was the subject of wide-reaching historical research and its roots were already sought in the forms of the High Baroque, and especially Baroque sonatas and the instrumental concerto. Attention was directed to very specific aspects (e.g. the relationship between the theme and its free evolution (already cited by Blume: Fortspinnung und Entwicklung)). The foundation of the structure is motif-theme and the symmetrical phrase, and these are the moving forces of the symphonic movement. The essence of the "evolutionary forms" (including the sonata form) does not consist in "juxtaposition" (Riemann's conception), but in the "inner musical force of the material", as Mersmann argued.

In 1924 Helfert *(in his Music at the Jaroměřice Chateau)* was undoubtedly under the influence of the phenomenological method, which exposed the fact that previous analyses of pre-classical sinfonias had focused only on form as a static form instead of trying as far as possible to explore the process of formation. His is a still not fully appreciated insight, offered by a Czech musicologist offered in the context of discussion of the phenomenon of the Mannheim school at a time of increasing mythologisation of the issue. In a nutshell, it all means that the historical development of the sonata form is not so one-dimensional as it has seemed. In the 1960s musicologists returned to the question of sonata form in the Mannheim School at a more advanced level of information and interpretation. With contributions from top musicologists (Larsen, Eggebrecht, Fukač, etc.), the theme of the basic developmental problems of the music of Classicism was explored in a number of papers at an important musicological colloquium in Brno in 1970. Under the title *Musica bohemica et europaea* it provided one important recapitulation of the long years of discussion of the phenomenon of the Mannheim School.

1) For example, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart: "Mannheim – eine herrliche Schule in der Ausführung, aber nicht in der Erfindung. Monotonie herrscht hier im Geschmack.", Deutsche Chronik 1775, p. 591.

2) Of the first contributions we should list at least the following: Alfred Heuss: Zum Thema "Mannheimer Vorhalt", ZIMG 9, 1907/08; the same author: Über die Dynamik der Mannheimer Schule, in: Festschrift H. Riemann, 1909, continuation in ZfMw 2, 1919/20; L.Kamieński: Mannheim und Italien, SIMG 10, 1908/09; W. Fischer: Zur Entwickulngsgeschichte des Wiener klassischen Stils, StMw 3, 1915; R. Sondheimer: Die formale Entwicklung der vorklassischen Sinfonie, AfMw IV, 1922.

3) Vl. Helfert: Hudba na jaroměřickém zámku [Music at the Jaroměřice Chateau]. František Míča 1696 – 1745, Praha 1924; Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Sonatenform, AfMw 7, 1925, no. 1, pp.117-146.

4) Six sonates à trois parties concertantes dui sont faites pour exécuter ou à trois ou avec toutes l´orchestre (Paris cca 1755)

5) Lebermann, W.: Biographische Notizen über Johann Anton Fils, Johann Anton Stamitz, Carl Joseph und Johnn Baptist Toeschi, Musikforschung 19, 1966, no. 1, pp. 40-41.

Antonín Dvořák
Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B minor, op. 104, The Quiet of the Forest, op. 68 no. 5, Rondo in G minor op. 94
Josef Suk
Elegy for Violin, Cello and Orchestra op. 23
Peter Bruns – cello, Staatskapelle Dresden, Michael Helmrath.
Production: not stated. Text: Eng., Ger., recorded: 2004, St. Luke's Cathedral, Dresden. Released: 2004. TT: 58:16. DDD. 1 CD Hänssler Classic CD 98.478 (distribution Rosa).

Dvořák's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B minor* is a very familiar work. There are dozens of recordings and the competition is strong. The two other minor pieces *The Quiet of the Forest* and *Rondo* are less well known, while Suk's Elegy in the form in which it appears on this CD is a complete rarity! Having been disappointed by a number of recordings of Czech music made abroad (in recent years for example the *Stabat mater* produced by Deutsche Grammophon and also from Dresden), I have to admit that I was initially sceptical, but I was soon pleasantly surprised! From the very first bars it is a delightful, modest, lyrical Dvořák that addresses us! Although in the concerto the strings are not as warm and dynamically melodious as we might want, they are refined and pleasant. The wind, however, is excellent (the French horns in the 1st movement, the ravishing pianissimos of the trombones in the 2nd movement!). The development section in the first movement is on the sober side and lacks the romantic depths of the Talich version, but this is the case with many famous later recordings. We are somehow automatically forced to judge a new recording of a well-known piece against the milestone recordings of the past. Bruns' conception engages us not by attempts at modernity (often striving for anti-Romanticism at any price) but by an approach from rather the same angle as former legends (Casals, Rostropovich). This is a less romantic conception, or to put it better an interpretation rid of elements of sentiment, but does not mean we are deprived of the profound emotional testimony that this score of genius offers. The Slavic expansiveness is very effective, but the soloist never goes over the top and emphasises the lyrical nuances more with dynamics than agogics. The orchestral element is outstanding. The **Staatskapelle Dresden** once again demonstrates the mastery that ranks it among the world's best symphony orchestras. It is a pleasure to hear a performance that is not encumbered with domestic tradition, and respects and with complete seriousness exploits the score to produce a musical picture cleansed of convention, expressing its emotional content with complete immediacy and openness.
We can say much the same about the two minor Dvořák cello pieces. *The Quiet of the Forest* glows with refined lyricism and a strictly chamber style. The *Rondo* is also presented without large sound, but with the picturesque exquisite tone of the soloist. The recording of Suk's *Elegy* is a true original, since it had never been performed or recorded before – the piece is known only in the version for piano trio. Instead of the piano we hear a string ensemble enriched with the delightful chords of the harmonium and harp. In this version it is a characteristic piece that must certainly have appealed in domestic or salon music-making, but evidently we shall continue to prefer the well-known version for piano trio. The booklet cover is too doleful and has little relationship with the music, but the text inside is better than average!

Bohuslav Vítek

George Frideric Händel
Arias
(Alcina, Hercules, Agrippina, Giulio Cesare in Egitto, Joshua, Ariodante, Theodora, Amadigi di Gaula, Orlando, Rinaldo)
Magdalena Kožená – mezzo soprano, Venice Baroque Orchestra, artistic director Andrea Marcon.
Production: Marita Prohmann. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr. Recorded: March 2006, Kulturzentrum Grand Hotel, Gustav Mahler Saal, Toblach. Released: 2007. TT: 76:30. DDD. 1 CD Deutsche Grammophon 477 6547 (Universal Music).

Magdalena Kožená's first album of opera arias has come out precisely seven years after the release of her album of Händel's Italian cantatas. In the cantatas, Marc Minkowski, conducting his orchestra Les Musiciens du Louvre, was the prime mover, but now the producer has brought Kožená together with the Venice Baroque Orchestra, and one must add that the decision was a happy one. Judging by the result, the collaboration between the international singing star and the famous orchestra known mainly for its admirable Vivaldi recordings is amazingly successful. This is an incredibly suggestive album. Just as in all their previous projects, the choice and order of the pieces is worthy of note. Kožená has chosen what are generally little-known arias, and so the celebrated aria by Almirena, *Lascia ch'io pianga mia cruda sorte* from *Rinaldo* feels rather like a bonus. Comparing this with her previous Händel CD, Kožená seems to have developed her capacity to express the content of texts that are often a long way from „Shakespeare". Each aria is a world in itself. The introductory plaintive part of the Alcina's aria *Ah! mio cor! Schernito sei!* from the opera of the same name is already freezingly effective. Kožená is sincerely indifferent to any expectation that she should always sing bel canto. To express the emotionality of the text she is quite ready to „mutilate" her voice sometimes to the point of Baroque grimace, and achieves a result of a kind I have never yet encountered in so wide a palette of colours on a CD. And here I am even including Cecilia Bartoli, whom I previously considered peerless. (I am thinking of the interpretation of the music in all its aspects, not of course the instrumental technique of the allegro parts, in which the Italian is incomparable). The one singer whose approach to Händel is as evocative is Anne Sofie von Otter, whose approach is different, but with a similarly suggestive result. Magdalena Kožená has said several times in this country that her feeling is that her voice is going to expand mainly in the higher, soprano register. This is true in a way, but here I was more enchanted by her exquisitely rounded depths, colourful to the point of erotic, of a kind I had not heard her produce before. I don't know if it is the effect of motherhood but it is definitely extending her range and is a promising omen for her planned role of Carmen. Suggestive characterisation of an opera role and its combination with expressive vocal technique is typical for Magdalena Kožená. Her Händel album offers arias from 10 works of musical drama. Each is a jewel, but if the cutting and polish of the most ravishing jewel can always be a subject of debate among jewellers, the same is true on this CD. The Almirena aria from *Rinaldo* is like the other numbers original in expression,

reviews

even though it works within the boundaries set by the general contemporary view on Baroque music. For me, however, it was a little too expressive and perhaps less might have meant more. On the other hand, one should not be a nit-picker and one of those people who have lost the chance to pursue an active musical career and so turned to criticising – as the star of this album once described Czech music critics in a television documentary some years ago – and there is no reason not to let go and be carried along in the Händelian flow created by the brilliant combination of Magda Kožená and the terrific musicians from Venice (the strings are especially spellbinding). I only hope that this title will not be the last collaboration between the singer and the orchestra.

Luboš Stehlík

Johannes Brahms
Cello Sonatas no. 1 in E minor op. 38, no. 2 in F major op. 99

Jan Páleníček – cello, Jitka Čechová – piano.
Production: Pavel Vlček. Text: Cz., Eng. Recorded: 12/2006, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 53:36. DDD. 1 CD Cube Bohemia CBCD 2735.

To record the Brahms cello sonatas shows a certain amount of courage and self-confidence. **Jan Páleníček** has entered the ring when there are already more than 25 complete sets competing for the listener's attention and the list of performers is breathtaking. Fortunately he has not been intimidated and has pursued his own conception with sympathetic stubbornness. If we had to characterise this conception in brief, it is a mix of temperament, strong emotional surges that are a pleasant surprise particularly in the fast movements, „Czech" expansiveness of phrasing and intellectual grasp of the whole. These are not the kind of waves of emotion that overwhelm the listener away with their spell, as with Jacqueline du Pré or Mischa Maisky. It is more a matter of the „controlled Romanticism" associated with Rostropovich or Steven Isserlise. The marked urgency of expression is certainly enhanced by the brilliant performance of the pianist, the cellist's partner in life **Jitka Čechová,** whose equal contribution deserves high praise. In the lyrical passages I could imagine more lightness and conjuring with colour. Nonetheless, in the Czech context I find Páleníček appealing not just for his qualities as a player (and manager) but also for the stability of his standard. This is not something so common in the Czech Republic. I do not know what instruments were used, but both with the cello and the piano I have heard better quality and even higher recording quality on competing CDs, although this does not change my conviction that the project fully deserves to be recommended. The international dimension of the label Cube (Bohemia) should guarantee that this CD reaches the demanding markets of Great Britain and the USA and will be proof of the very high standard of Czech musicians.

Luboš Stehlík

Frederic Chopin
Sonata in G minor for Piano and Cello op. 65; Introduction and Polonaise Brillante in C major for Cello and Piano op. 3; Grand duo concertante E major on a theme from Meyerbeer's opera Robert le Diable for cello and piano; Trio in G minor for piano, violin and cello op. 8

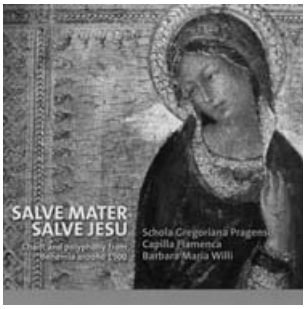
Jiří Bárta – cello, Martin Kasík – piano, Jan Talich jr. – violin.
Production: Petr Vít. Text: Eng., Ger., Fr., Cz. Recorded: 2007, Martinů Hall at the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 77:45. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon Music SU 3881-2.

Supraphon is looking for ways of surprising listeners and getting away from recording just the same circle of pieces by our national foursome Smetana – Dvořák – Janáček – Martinů. This Chopin album is another good idea from the Czech recording company. It is actually a complete set of Chopin pieces in which the cello takes the main role, although in fact this may be a slight exaggeration given the role of the piano. Chopin's decision to write the solo parts of his „non-piano" work for the cello was in my view based on the sound of the instrument and also on his later contact with the celebrated virtuoso August Franchomm, who seems to have been a major influence on him. There is even serious speculation that Franchomme himself may have been the author of the cello part particularly of the *Grand duo concertante.* Given the paucity of existing recordings, the inclusion of this spectacular work and also the Introduction and *Polonaise Brillante op. 3* is a definite repertoire plus on the CD. Both compositions undoubtedly reflect the fondness of the age for virtuoso pieces, but even so this music does not deserve the dismissive judgement in the sleeve note (Vít Roubíček) for it is substantially better than the average of its time. Fortunately **Jiří Bárta** and **Martin Kasík** took a different view, and play this music with great enthusiasm and of course brilliance. The most serious work on the CD is the Cello *Sonata op. 65,* which should perhaps have been called a sonata for *piano and cello.* The piano part is unbelievably difficult while the cello part for all its melodiousness seems to be the complete opposite. Jiří Bárta has therefore had to carefully „decipher" the musical structure to become an equal partner with Martin Kasík. The interpretation of the *Piano Trio, op. 8* is as successful as the approach to the sonata. Once again the piano is dominant and the violin-cello pair has to „make up for" the deficit. The players elegantly manage to smooth out the natural acoustic conflict between the hammer instrument and strings and create a homogenous, delightfully integrated whole. Their conception of the piece is chaste in terms of expression, avoiding the grandiosity of some foreign recordings. My view that **Jan Talich jr.** is a secret violin treasure in the Czech Republic has been confirmed once again.

Luboš Stehlík

Bedřich Smetana
The Two Widows

Marie Podvalová – soprano, Marie Tauberová – soprano, Beno Blachut – tenor, Eduard Haken – bass, Oldřich Kovář – tenor, Miloslava Fidlerová – soprano, Czechoslovak Radio Choir, Jiří Pinkas – choirmaster, Czechoslovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Karel Ančerl.
Production: Beno Blachut Company. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger. Recorded: 1948, Czechoslovak Radio Studio, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 53:37, 68:54. AAD. 2 CD Beno Blachut Company 003-07-02.



The final form of Smetana's comic opera *The Two Widows*, as in the case of *The Bartered Bride*, was not the direct result of the composer's critical perspective on his own word, but his reaction to responses from the musical public. Both operas originally had spoken dialogue, in both the folk element was later strengthened (in the Bartered Bride with dance, and in the Two Widows with the added characters of Toník and Lidka and similar changes), and both formed an important intermediate step towards *The Kiss*, the first full-length Czech fully musically composed comic opera (the first Czech opera without spoken dialogue was Blodek's one-acter *In the Well*). While the Czech public took *The Bartered Bride*, but also *The Kiss* and finally even *The Secret* to its heart, Smetana's fourth comic opera *The Two Widows* remained a kind of poor relation, and with a certain amount of justification. The linking up of the original musical numbers by musical setting of the recitative failed to iron out the seams in the musical flow, and the recitatives often remained more or less mechanical. The addition of rustic characters increased rather than diminished the contradiction between the salon milieu and village (folk) surroundings. It is in fact this contradiction that presents the biggest problems for directors, i.e. the difficulty of putting together the chamber, intimate relationship between the three characters of „higher social class" (Anežka, Karolína and Ladislava) and the mediating and at the same time disturbing comic element (Mumlal) on the one hand, and the decorative role of the choir and non-organic Toník and Lidka episode on the other hand. The strain led to a series of later alterations but these only crippled the work. The original version was therefore purer in style, but today it would probably meet the same fate as singspiel, opéra comique and other forms of historic music theatre involving the spoken word, i. e probably nothing would remain in the work but abridged, clumsy and stiffly performed dialogues. Yet *The Two Widows* is full of charming, inspired music, which overcomes all the shortcomings, and if repertory directors are now mean when it comes to staging the opera, here we have a chance to stage it for ourselves in our imaginations as we listen. The recording was made in the Czechoslovak Radio studio in 1948 with the **Radio Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Karel Ančerl** and the radio choir conducted by **Jiří Pinkas**, and with a unique constellation of National Theatre top soloists who became legends. I had the good fortune actually to see the main protagonists in these roles and I can confirm that the child's first impressions are truly long-lasting and perhaps even determine a lifetime's direction and taste, even though back then I had no inkling of the reasons why I like their style and expression today. I savour the music on the Supraphon recording of 1975 (also a studio recording) with Naďa Šormová, Marcela Machotková, Jiří Zahradníček and Jaroslav Horáček in the leading roles (Orchestra and choir of he National Theatre, conductor František Jílek, SU 112122-2 612), but I really most enjoy hearing **Marie Tauberová, Marie Podvalová, Beno Blachut** and **Eduard Haken** on this recording from the Beno Blachut Company. This is because the foursome manage to meet what is perhaps the hardest challenge presented by *The Two Widows*: it is a comic opera, but it is not a farce, its story is cheerful, poetic, mildly ironic, and the salon lightness of touch must not be lost, but it is also a „democratic" work (after all, Karolina proclaims her attitude to life in the very first aria), and while Mumlal's ideas are clumsy, he is not simple-minded and if he often provides the occasion for smiles in the course of the plot, he does not deserve ridicule. While Ladislav is head over heels in love and plays with the romantic attributes of the spurned lover, he is neither Werther nor a sentimental day dreamer nor a fop; on the contrary, his „attack" on Anežka's citadel is very intelligent and purposive (Ladislav Podhájský was Beno Blachut's first role in his professional engagement in Olomouc). Smetana's types are living people, not cardboard cut-outs, and the music makes this clear. Karel Ančerl and the radio orchestra likewise fully capture the opera's humour. The recording sound quality is also admirable (Radek Roubal); although it is an AAD version it sounds cleaner to me than the other recording mentioned above, which is thirty years younger. Furthermore, this contributes to another aspect that should not be neglected – the clear comprehensibility of the text. This finds its limits in the choral passages, but otherwise even in the ensembles (even in something sung at a very jaunty pace like *„Malá ty šelmičko" / „You little beast of prey")* every word is distinct. The school of singing of the time was generally distinguished for its model culture of diction, but of course the artificial reverb is a factor in more recent recordings. At first sight (but not sound) I was a little taken aback by the black-and-white design of the booklet's title page (Ludmila Rybková), for the opera is scarcely a black-and-white story (on stage we were used to seeing Anežka's mourning garb in a pastel surround), but in the end I had to admit that this corresponds entirely to what I have said above. For all its cheerful humorous character *The Two Widows* is a work of wisdom – the white / black or light / dark polarity is retained inside the booklet as well and on both CDs; it is like the projection of an old black-and-white film, giving a far more poetic impression that the sharp Kodak colours of today. The recording comes with information-packed well-written texts by Zbyněk Brabec and Beno Blachut jr. The Beno Blachut Company has managed to honour not only the art of its „patron" but also one of the jewels of Czech opera and an unforgettable generation of the National Theatre.

Vlasta Reittererová

Salve Mater, salve Jesu. Chant and polyphony from Bohemia around 1500
(Anonymus, Ghiselin-Verbonet, Obrecht, Brumel, Josquin)

Schola Gregoriana Pragensis, Capilla Flamenca, Barbara Maria Willi – organ. Production: Shulamith Brouwer. Text: Cz., Eng., Ger., Fr., N. Recorded: December 2006, March 2007, Parkabdij, Heverlee (Belgium). Released: 2007. TT: 58:20. DDD. 1 CD EtCetera KTC 1346 (distribution Euromusica).

Although the text of Gregorian chant is spiritually tremendously important, recordings of the genre tend in most cases to be used as background for all kinds of grand occasions and scenes – few people follow and understand the text as they listen and so a whole diverse sophisticated choral world is experienced simply in terms of the distinctive features of una voce vocal and free rhythmic simplicity. There is nothing to be done about it – if a CD sounds the same at the beginning, middle and end, it will hardly attract greater attention and repeat listening.
Most leading choirs do not reflect on this problem and keep on publishing Gregorian chant in the same wrappings, like shoes – all the boxes look the same on the outside, and it

is as if what is inside is invisible. The **Schola Gregoriana Pragensis** is a shining exception, and that is why it is rightly considered an absolutely top-ranking ensemble in world performance. Its close link with traditional Prague musicological scholarship on the sources also makes its albums valuable as academic as well as musical events. The choirs frequent transitions into polyphonic areas outside the chant actually highlight the nature of the chant with attractive colours and to a great extent solves the problem that chants as parts of a functioning liturgical system can sound unnatural if torn out of context, lined up and sung in concert, and that CD recordings can exacerbate this effect. Following a joint album with Buddhist choral music the schola has now made this one CD with the Flemish vocal quartet **Capilla Flamenca.** The collaboration between the two ensembles started thanks to the Concentus Moraviae Festival and its programme director **Barbara Willi,** who provides period organ transcriptions for the album. The most remarkable element of these is the actual sound of the small, evidently authentic organ instrument (the whole CD programme could be heard live – and seen – at last year's Concentus Moraviae); its archaic tuning is something that the ear has to get used to, but it facilitates the path to the „objective" tuning of the vocal music. Unfortunately the otherwise brilliantly presented booklet and CD cover offers no information about the origin of the instrument. The programme is meant to be one of the possible pictures of the musical culture of the Czech Utraquists around the year 1500, who had abundant contacts with the polyphony of the Low Countries – from this repertoire the Capilla Flamenca (by itself) performs only two pieces, but these are very long and difficult. The Prague schola presents choral pieces, representatives of primitive forms of polyphony, other polyphonic pieces of Bohemian provenience and, of course, songs performed with the Flemish quartet, above all the final ravishing combination of several chants. The standard of performance on the album borders on perfection, but of course it is also interesting to compare the two ensembles. The Capilla Flamenca places an almost despotic stress on perfect sound, intonation and unity, and the result is a truly heavenly purity. It uses dynamics very sparingly, striving for the least possible difference in timbre between the limits of loudness and softness. By contrast the Prague schola has a full-blooded vocal style, and in places geographical proximity to the Old Slavonic Orthodox vocal tradition is evident (although there is no direct influence). What is important for the schola is riveting rhythm, even in the non-mensural chant pieces. The two ensembles are then significantly contrasting: the impressive purity of the Flemings as against the expressive natural style of the Praguers. That too is an element that makes the album special. Thanks to its musical, textual, conceptual and also even its visual appeal this carefully thought out album also has educational value – the CD can be very warmly recommended particularly to people who enjoys contemporary or popular music but would like to try listening to some of the earliest vocal music.

Jan Špaček

Leoš Janáček
On an Overgrown Path,
1st and 2nd Series
Gideon Klein
Sonata for Piano

Ivo Kahánek – piano.
Production: Pavel Vlček. Text: Cz., Eng.
Recorded: February 2007, Studio Martínek, Prague. Released: 2007. TT: 56:33. DDD.
1 CD Cube Cz CBCD 2737.

I come from there, said **Ivo Kahánek** when asked why he had chosen the music of Janáček for his first CD recording. The album (in which the EuroArt Agency was also involved) – contains Gideon Klein's *Sonata as well,* which unlike the oft-recorded „Path" is virtually unknown. Familiarity with the landscape from which the Lachian master drew his inspiration is an undoubted plus, but actually the recording by Kahánek's rather older colleague, Jan Jiraský who comes from Vysoké Mýto, sounds just as „authentic". Indeed in some aspects of tempo, rhythm and dynamics it is even more sharply contoured and gives a weightier, more fateful impression... But these are differences to be put down to differences of temperament. What is gripping about Kahánek's performance is the unbroken drive and tension, which rather than consisting in a single moment, heads towards its goal and gives the listener the sense of the whole – both in the micro- and the macrostructure. The booklet does not mention the piano on which the studio recording was made (musical direction by Milan Slavický, sound and mastering by Jan Lžičař) but passages that are ravishing in colour suggest that the pianist must have got on very well with the instrument and perhaps even been inspired by it.
The CD includes the continuation to the series *On an Overgrown Path*, including what are know as the *Paralipomenas* – pieces that Janáček did not publish or present in public during his lifetime. Here we even have Vivo in a longer and shorter version. Janáček's music was one of the sources of inspiration behind the brilliant three-movement sonata written by the twenty-three year-old Gideon Klein in the Terezín Ghetto during the war. The other inspirations according to Milan Slavický, an expert on Klein's work, were Berg's op. 1 (specifically in the interval „stretch" of the theme of the first movement), Schönberg and Suk. Although freely atonal, Klein's music has great immediate emotional power – all the more so when we think of the conditions under which it was written. Gideon Klein, one of the greatest talents of the inter-war generation, perished in circumstances that are still obscure shortly before the liberation of the extermination camp of Auschwitz. His music shows no indulgence in sentimentality, is refreshing in its energy and is exceptionally mature and original.
Ivo Kahánek shows ravishing technical virtuosity in the fast first and third movements, but the intervening Adagio is no less impressive.

Dita Kopáčová-Hradecká

The Faculty of Music of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno in partnership with Leoš Janáček Foundation

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02. The competition consists of three rounds.
03. The competition repertoire:

Round I:

a) **Two concert etudes of virtuoso character, at least one of them must be from Chopin's Op. 10 or Op. 25 (except Op. 10 No. 3 and No. 6, Op. 25 No. 7)**
b) **One fast movement from a sonata by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Dusík or Schubert**
c) **L. Janáček: two parts from the cycle "On an Overgrown Path"** (based on own choice)

Max. length of performance is 30 minutes. Playing by heart is required. The order of compositions depends on each competitor.

Round II:

Recital – program must include one composition from the following selection:

L. Janáček: **"Sonata 1. X. 1905"**
"In the Mists"
"On an Overgrown Path"
(at least 5 random parts based on the candidate's choice)

and compositions from at least two other style periods.

The selection must not include the composition interpreted in the 1st round. Total length of the recital is 40 – 50 minutes. Playing by heart is required. The order of compositions depens on each competitor.

Round III:

One of L. Janáček's compositions for piano and instrumental ensemble;
selection of: **Concertino**
Capriccio for piano (left hand)

or one of the following piano concertos:

W. A. Mozart: **Concerto in D minor, KV 466**
Concerto in C major, KV 467
Concerto in A major, KV 488
L. van Beethoven: **Concerto No. 1 in C major, Op. 15**
Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 19
Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37
Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58
Concerto No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 73
F. Chopin: **Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11**
Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21
R. Schumann: **Concerto in A minor**

Playing by heart required.

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1st prize	CZK 100,000
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R. Schumann, David Philips Hefti – světová premiéra, F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

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A. Schnittke, F. Chopin, R. Schumann

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

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