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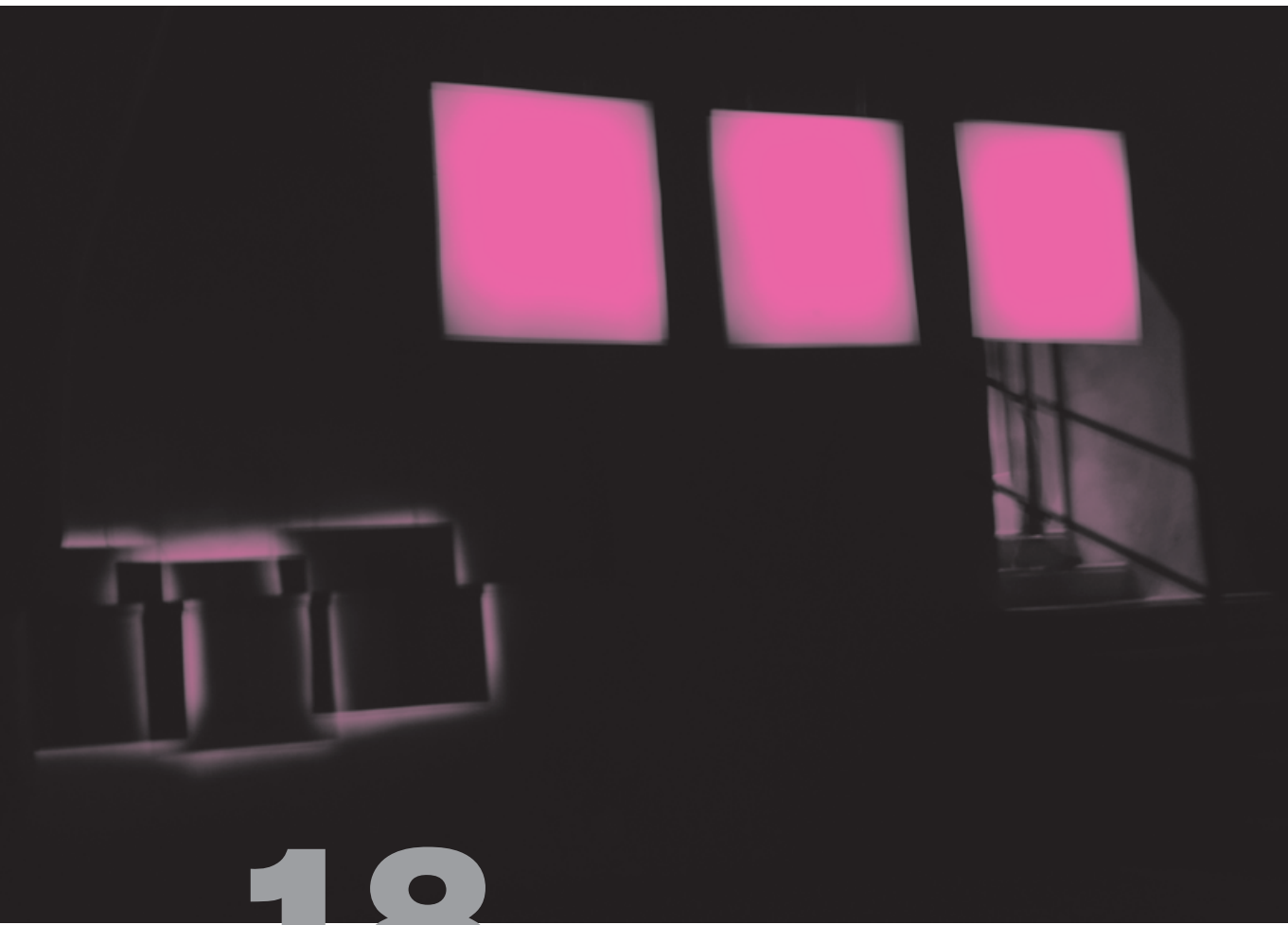

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Vítězslav Mikeš

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Jan Bedřich Kittl

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and Biju Abraham of Cosmos Travel (Dallas)

DEAR READERS,

In this issue, we celebrate the contemporary achievements of musicologist Vítězslav Mikeš, who received a state honour for his promotion of Lithuanian music, and explore the activities of IGLOO at the Vysočina Regional Gallery in Jihlava, which has now presented ten exhibitions in the only sound-focused gallery space in the Czech Republic. We return to previous centuries in Vlasta Reitererová's reflection on the musical context of 1968, the year of the Soviet occupation, and in a period biography of composer Johann Friedrich Kittl, translated into English for the first time by Tom Moore. All in all, this is another issue packed with a startling variety of Czech music. It is also my honour for the first time to greet you from these pages as deputy editor-in-chief.

May I wish you an inspirational musical autumn.
Ian Mikyska

CONTENTS:

CONTEXTS APPEAR GRADUALLY
VÍTĚZSLAV MIKEŠ ON CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
AND CZECH-LITHUANIAN RELATIONSHIPS
by Matěj Kratochvíl
_ page 2

"MAY PEACE REMAIN WITH THIS LAND…"
HOW CZECH MUSIC REACTED TO THE EVENTS OF 1968
by Vlasta Reittererová
_ page 8

A TALE OF MUSIC FESTIVALS, MONEY, AND REDEMPTION
AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS SOVÍK
by Vilém Spilka
_ page 14

VÍTĚZSLAVA KAPRÁLOVÁ : TALES OF A SMALL FLUTE
by Lukáš M. Vytlačil
_ page 18

SOUND IN THE GALLERY
NOTES ON THE IGLOO SOUND GALLERY IN JIHLAVA
by Lenka Dolanová
_ page 19

CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY
EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE SUMMER OF 2018
by Barbora Vacková
_ page 24

JOHANN FRIEDRICH KITTL: THE EARLIEST BIOGRAPHY
by Tom Moore
_ page 26

REVIEWS
_ page 37

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cover: A view of the IGLOO 3 installation – Tabula Rasa
by Ladislav and Adam Železný (photo by Pavel Petrov)

by Matěj Kratochvíl

CONTEXTS APPEAR GRADUALLY
VÍTĚZSLAV MIKEŠ ON CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND CZECH-LITHUANIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Musicologists are not your typical candidates for presidential honours. This July, however, one Czech musicologist received such a recognition from Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė. The musicologist was Vítězslav Mikeš, and the Cross of the Knights of the Order for Merits to Lithuania was to mark his long-term work in championing Lithuanian music in the Czech Republic. This, however, is only one part of his activities. In recent years, he has mostly been active in "invisible" but essential positions as a musical dramaturg, first at the Music Forum Hradec Králové festival, then at the Exposition of New Music festival in Brno, and since 2012 at the Brno Philharmonic and at the Moravian Autumn festival in the same city. During his tenure in Brno, we have begun to see brave but thought-out combinations of 20th century music and brand new works with Classical and Romantic repertoire. He also supplements the dominance of western music with pieces by so-called post-Soviet composers, but also music from Asia, for example. Additionally, he also writes about music (e.g. for this publication or HIS Voice) and prepares broadcasts for Czech Radio Vltava. He is among those helping music on its way from the artists to the listeners, remaining more or less hidden himself. In this interview, then, we will at least partially disrupt this inconspicuousness.

What was the path that led you to discover Lithuanian music?

At the beginning was a hitch-hiking journey to a country I knew practically nothing about, but which charmed me immediately. I will sketch the next stops only in bullet points: amazement with Lithuania – its landscapes, culture, history, language, people… – and a difficult to describe feeling of a second home (professor Giedrė Lukšaitė Mrázková, a Lithuanian harpsichordist and organist living in Prague later remarked that I must have been a Lithuanian in a previous life); getting to know the artistic and musical works of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, on whose piano music I later wrote my master's thesis; studies of Lithuanian at Charles' University in Prague, with the possibility to go for two- or three-month stays in Vilnius every year; gradually becoming acquainted with contemporary music, in which I was substantially aided by Daiva Parulskienė and Linas Paulauskis from the Lithuanian Music Information Centre (Linas is still at said institution today and continues to be of help in getting material – I would like to

thank him for that!); popularising Lithuanian music through articles and radio broadcasts… The culmination was totally falling for the music and personality of Bronius Kutavičius, on whose settings of the poet Sigitas Geda I wrote my doctoral dissertation. And gradually, opportunities began appearing to present Lithuanian music live in the Czech Republic.

What is the situation of contemporary art music in Lithuania today and the relationship of the state with this field? Can we find inspiration in the Baltics as to how we approach more marginal areas of culture?

Contemporary music certainly has a more significant position than in the Czech Republic. It has great support in the continually developed tradition of Gaida, a large festival which has taken place every year since 1991. Many Lithuanian premieres were presented there (including orchestral ones), as well as commissions by Lithuanian – and recently also international – composers. For contemporary electronic and electroacoustic music, the Jauna Muzika festival is an important platform. The truth is that in recent years, Lithuania has also seen a diversification of forces – smaller festivals are established, with lesser or greater uncertainty as to their long-term functioning. But the large events are certainly not languishing. The Lithuanian Music Information Centre plays an important part, publishing sheet music, CDs (profile albums, selections of the most interesting pieces in Lithuanian music in a given period, etc.), running an information-packed website, developing various projects aiming to publicise Lithuanian music at home and especially abroad, and so on and so on. They have six employees there – just compare that to our own Czech Music Information Centre.
The general support of contemporary works – not only in Lithuania but also in the other Baltic republics – might very well arise out of the absence of internationally renowned classical composers. We have Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček, Suk, Martinů, and that is in fact quite enough for repertoire. They do not have such composers in the Baltics, which is why they invest their efforts in promoting contemporary composers. Another area we shouldn't fail to mention is the strong field of choir singing – even amateur choirs in Lithuania are of a high standard, and they often perform contemporary music written for them by renowned composers. And ultimately, the distinctive folklore is also a moving force and contemporary music still draws rich inspiration from it, displaying a capability to use its potential even in the most avant-garde of contexts.

Which Lithuanian composers or musicians would you recommend to someone looking to educate themselves on the local music?

It would be typical for me say something like "that's a difficult question" and then continue with a random listing of many names and pieces. But you won't catch me out. Without hesitation, I'll say that I consider the oratorio *The Last Pagan Rites* by Bronius Kutavičius the key work of Lithuanian music. When I first came across this oratorio on CD and in a graphic score, I could not get away from it. What a simple work. But how thoroughly planned out, strong, and impressive! I dreamt of a performance in the Czech Republic, but for whatever reason, given the recording and the composer's instructions, I was under the impression that the work was practically impossible to realise live. However, Linas Paulauskis recommended I contact the Aidija choir and its choirmaster Romualdas Gražinis,

who came to the Music Forum Hradec Králové festival in 2012 and presented *The Last Pagan Rites* in collaboration with the local Jitro children's choir, as well as two other oratoria by Kutavičius. I realised that all you need for a performance is a choirmaster with a flawless knowledge of the score who is capable of creating a choreography for the movement of the choirs in the space. In 2017, the oratorio was produced again, this time at the Moravian Autumn in Brno, where Aidija once again collaborated with a local children's choir (Kantiléna). The reaction of the audience was the same in both performances – a long silence after the choirs left the church and the final organ choral had subsided, and then interminable and rapturous applause. It was also an intense experience for both the Czech children's choirs. In fact, I don't understand why Aidija does not make this into their flagship export project.

But lest I stay with a single piece… All of Kutavičius' oeuvre merits much attention. And if I were to approach the matter vaguely chronologically, I would recommend Čiurlionis' piano compositions, the works of the first two Lithuanian avant-gardists Vytautas Bacevičius (brother of Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz) and Jeronimas Kačinskas (a student of Alois Hába at the Prague Conservatory and a pioneer of microtonal music in Lithuania). The music of Julius Juzeliūnas is also wonderful, of Kutavičius' contemporaries we might mention Osvaldas Balakauskas and Feliksas Bajoras, from the younger generations, I'd like to name Onutė Narbutaitė, Šarūnas Nakas, Rytis Mažulis, Antanas Jasenka, Arturas Bumšteinas. There is much originality in the work of Justė Janulytė, Egidija Medekšaitė, Žibuoklė Martinaitytė, and the list goes on. Incidentally, the concentration of female composers is undoubtedly noteworthy – all the composers I mentioned also managed to secure a place on the international scene.

Receiving the Cross of the Knights of the Order for Merits to Lithuania from president Dalia Grybauskaitė

What is the current state of the musical relationships between the Czech Republic and Lithuania, as well as the other Baltic countries?

These relationships have gradually developed over the last two centuries and were certainly notable, although they seem to have made more of a mark with the Lithuanians – incidentally, Rūta Prusevičienė has thoroughly mapped Czech-Lithuanian musical relationships in her diploma thesis. She is now the director of the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society. There are few in the Czech Republic who know that in the 19th century, major contributions to Lithuanian musical life were made by two Czech musicians and pedagogues, Rudolf Liehmann (the son of Dvořák's teacher Antonín Liehmann) in Rokiškis and Josef Mašek in Rietavas (there is a legend in Lithuania that it was Mašek who first recognised Čiurlionis' talent. In our own country, though, knowledge about Lithuanian and Baltic music has improved considerably in recent decades, given by the rising international reputation of several composers. Composers like Arvo Pärt, Erkki-Sven Tüür, Pēteris Vasks, or Bronius Kutavičius have appeared repeatedly on our stages, and that's only the tip of the iceberg. Often times, these are crucial events – we could mention the performance of Šarūnas Nakas experimental work *Ziqquratu II* in the 1990s at the Marathon of New Music; of Kutavičius' pieces other than *The Last Pagan Rites*, we have heard his score to Dreyer's film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (thanks to the Berg Orchestra), or his symphony *Epitaphium temporum pereunti*, performed two years ago at the Prague Spring by the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra. Erkki-Sven Tüür was the resident composer for the Moravian Autumn festival in 2015 (which also presented Justė Janulytė's evening-length project *Sandglasses*), and the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava selected Pēteris Vasks as its resident composer in 2016/2017. Not to mention the frequency of performances of Arvo Pärt. And I'm sure I've missed out a number of important performances anyway…

As a journalist and dramaturg, you explore the music of various regions of the ex-USSR. Is there something that connects these countries musically? Is there anything like a "post-Soviet music"?

As a journalist, I really am drawn to the east. As a dramaturg, I aim for territorial balance and I hope that's the external appearance as well. As far as "post-Soviet music" is concerned: I once used this term, but these days I try to avoid it. Earlier, I concentrated mostly on the compositional generation that came into its prime in the 1960s, and it seemed to me that composers like Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, Arvo Pärt, Bronius Kutavičius, Pēteris Vasks, Giya Kancheli, Valentin Silvestrov, Tigran Mansurian, and others, i.e. the most significant figures of this generation in their respective countries – and of course authors of entirely different compositional styles – were connected by something. Even despite the cultural variety of their countries, which were all part of the Soviet Union. We might mention their enthusiasm for western modernism, seen early on in their careers as a protest against socialist realist aesthetics. Or, on the contrary, their later departure from a complicated musical language in favour of simplification and spirituality, which could again be construed as a protest against the atheisation of Soviet society, as well as an attempt to dive deeper into their spiritual heritage; the spirituality of the nation in question. This generation, then, already managed to extricate itself from the Soviet contexts, not to mention their successors. That is why

I consider the term "post-Soviet music" more than problematic, not to mention that it will always have negative connotations for the countries themselves. Let us speak today of Lithuanian music, Estonian, Latvian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Russian…

Over the last few years, which you have spent as the dramaturg of the Brno Philharmonic, you have mixed classical repertoire with more contemporary works and brand new pieces. Do you have a key which you use when searching for current but also audience-friendly repertoire?

I don't have a single key – that would soon lead to cliches. Behind every programme is a lengthy thought process involving the links between the pieces. I certainly try to avoid the "sandwich method", which I think does contemporary music more harm than good – the listeners are given a "taste" of contemporary music in the form of a ten-minute piece, and then they "get what they want".
It is my firm belief that intelligent combinations and apparent or hidden connections can help listeners with challenging programmes. Place the following next to one another: Tchaikovsky's *Symphony Pathétique* and Alfred Schnittke's cantata *Seid nüchtern und wachet*. Or Sofia Gubaidulina's flute concerto *The Deceitful Face of Hope and of Despair* and Mahler's *Song of the Earth*. Or *The Map*, Tan Dun's cello concerto, and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The connections appear, even if the works are a hundred years apart and have an entirely different musical language and context. I look at music without dividing it into classical and contemporary. I do not scorn popular classical works because it is not their fault that the music industry made them into what they are. Even these works, in a novel combination, i.e. a new context, sound different, new, alive. This approach then creates a certain balance which I am after when putting a programme together. I don't think it's something unusual – internationally, it's standard procedure. Only perhaps in our somewhat rigid musical waters is this still considered dramaturgical progress…

What influence will the Brno Philharmonic's new chief conductor have on the dramaturgy?

The influence is crucial, which is logical and appropriate. For me, it is essential that Dennis Russell Davies and I are on the same page. He, of course, has his own vision of what he'd like to perform, but he is open to discussion, doesn't mind taking advice, and is open to new impulses. Thanks to his natural authority and enormous experience, the more courageous components of the dramaturgy are easier to communicate not only to the audience, but also to the orchestra. I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with someone of his stature, and I feel blessed that he considers me an equal partner when preparing the Brno Philharmonic's seasons.

Vítězslav Mikeš *studied musicology at the Palacký University in Olomouc and Lithuanian at Charles University in Prague. He was a production manager with the Berg Orchestra and the Hradec Králové Philharmonic and dramaturg at the Music Forum Hradec Králové and Exposition of New Music festivals. Since 2012, he has been the dramaturg of the Brno Philharmonic. As a journalist, he works with institutions such as HIS Voice, Czech Music Quarterly, Harmonie, or Czech Radio.*

by Vlasta Reittererová

"May peace remain with this land, / may anger, envy, spite, fear, and strife, / let the pass, let them finally pass. / Now that the lost governance of your affairs / will be returned to you, / people, returned to you..." This song by Jindřich Brabec with lyrics by Petr Rada became one of the symbols of 1968, and it engendered a similar intensity twenty years later, in 1989. Lyricist Petr Rada used a quote from *The Last Will and Testament of the Dying Mother* The Unity of Brethren (1650) by the humanist scholar John Amos Comenius: "I too believe, God, that after the gails of anger are over, the governance of your affairs will be returned to you once again, oh Czech people" – the words which Tomáš G. Masaryk chose in 1918 to inaugurate his speech as the first president of the Czechoslovak Republic.

"May Peace Remain With This Land..." HOW CZECH MUSIC

Prague, August 1968

The song, titled *Modlitba pro Martu* (*A Prayer for Marta*), was originally written for a television series with a screenplay by Jaroslav Dietl, *Píseň pro Rudolfa III.* (*A Song for Rudolf III*). The screenplay was not political; Rudolf III was an ordinary butcher who had a somewhat goofy daughter with an imagination so rich it allowed her to transfer herself and her family to various periods of history. The principal aim of the series was to use the loosely assembled episodes to get the popular singers of the day on screen with their newest hits. The first original Czech cinematic musical, *Starci na chmelu* (*Green Gold* or *The Hop Pickers*) was four years old; there was a boom in small theatre with mixed original variety programmes of which music was an indelible component, and their popularity met a talented generation of writers and performers.

Dietl's nine-episode *Song for Rudolf III* was neither filmed nor screened in its entirety; in the spring

Marta Kubišová

REACTED TO THE EVENTS OF 1968

of 1969, renewed censorship struck and the last episode did not air. The song which Marta Kubišová recorded for this series in the August days of 1968, however, became almost an anthem – at the time, it was sung together with the real anthem, František Škroup's *Kde domov můj* (*Where My Home Is*). For Marta Kubišová, it was a fateful song. To dispose of her, the so-called "normalisation" regime in the 1970s construed accusations on the basis of which she could not perform for the next twenty years. She only sang *A Prayer for Marta* in public after the 17th of November 1989 – and she also did so this year on the 21st of August, during a gathering on Wenceslas Square on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the occupation by the troops of the Warsaw Pact.

The Students Rise Up

Nothing happens without cause and in isolation. The 1968 student protests in France, Germany, Rome, Copenhagen, Tokyo, the US, the provocations of the young actionists at the universities in Vienna, and the student protests in Czechoslovakia all happened for different reasons, and yet they were connected. The generation born after World War II was significantly politicised. Popular music stepped out of the category of commerce and began protesting and encouraging. A number of songs were written which disguised their open disagreement with a regime that spied and persecuted every manifestation of free thought, others contained allegories, or people simply interpreted them allegorically. In the domain of Czech pop, we might mention *Píseň o mé zemi* (*A Song About My Country*) by Pavel Žák and Karel Černoch, which won first prize at the Bratislavská lyra (Bratislava Lyre) competition in 1969, new meanings were given to songs such as Bohuslav Ondráček's *Requiem* with lyrics by Jan Schneider from 1967 in Eva Pilarová's rendition, *Le joueur de pipeau* from Hugues Aufray's repertoire, rendered in Czech as *Krysař* (*The Pied Piper*) by Ivo Fišer and sung by Waldemar Matuška, another song by Jindřich Brabec and Petr Rada, *Přejdi Jordán* (*Cross the Jordan*), which suggested people "Go and do not wait / until you fall cruelly for the tyrant, / go, and when you want, / ask, / for whom this bell tolls…", and Karel Kryl's rousing songs *Bratříčku, zavírej vrátka* (*Little Brother, Close the Gate*) or *Morituri te salutant*. These were the songs of a youth who did not want to be tied up, and so they rebelled.

Patience was running out in general, the discrepancy between news of economic prosperity and an acute insufficiency of everyday items, between the optimism of the official slogans and daily reality was too great. The prelude to the "Prague

Karel Kryl

Spring" – a term for a reformist movement within the Communist Party which strove for democratisation and an establishment of "socialism with a human face" – was the 4th Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers in June 1967. The congress saw open calls for the removal of censorship and freedom of speech. In October, Prague hosted the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) festival, the first time this event was held in Prague. *Hudební rozhledy* (*Musical Horizons*), a music magazine, wrote that this was the "first time the event takes place in the country of the national section of a socialist state", but the festival did not have an open political subtext, and the representation of composers and performers from seventeen states from Brazil to Japan signified an extraordinary occasion. Czechoslovakia left the ISCM in the early 1950s, returning in 1957, and by hosting the festival, it seemed once again to subscribe to the original idea of the society: to support contemporary works regardless of political and other barriers. Contemporary Czech operas were presented at the National Theatre as part of the accompanying programme: Otmar Mácha's (1922–2006) *Jezero Ukereve* (*Lake Ukereve*), Jarmil Burghauser's (1921–1997) anti-opera *Most* (*Bridge*), and two fairy tales by Jiří Pauer (1919–2007), already a little old by then: Červená Karkulka (*Little Red Riding Hood*) and Žvanivý *slimejš* (*The Blabbing Slug*). The special programme of the Czechoslovak section within the main festival programme featured seven pieces by local composers: Miloslav Ištvan, Roman Berger, Jan Kapr, the world premiere of the *16th String Quartet* (in fifth-tones) by the "senior" of the entire festival, 75-year-old Alois Hába, and orchestral pieces that stood up more than well in the international competition: Svatopluk Havelka's *Pěna* (*Foam*) after Hans Magnus Enzensberger's poem *Schaum*, *Patnáct listů podle Dürerovy Apokalypsy* (*Fifteen Pages After Dürer's Apocalypse*) by Luboš Fišer, and *Eufemias mysterion* by Miloslav Kabeláč. It is telling that in the 1970s, the composers in question were generally labelled as politically suspect.

That autumn in 1967 saw student protests in Prague in response to electricity cuts in the dormitories. This was the spark, the beginning of the unrest that spread through society and finally led to the resignation of Antonín Novotný as general secretary of the Communist Party, followed in March 1968 by his resignation as president of the republic. The tension grew, and in atmospheres like this one,

the writer's pen becomes a weapon. Ludvík Vaculík wrote *Dva tisíce slov* (*Two Thousand Words*), published in *Literární listy* (*The Literary Papers*) on the 27th of June 1968. With its efforts for a "socialism with a human face", the "Prague Spring" had the somewhat quixotic outlook of tilting at windmills, but it could have done much good, were it not for the fact that – among other things and as had happened several times before – the naturally beautiful geographical location of our country were not so politically disadvantageous. Since 1948, Europe had been divided by the "Iron Curtain", and Czechoslovakia's western border was to remain impenetrable.

During the night of the 21st of August 1968, Czechoslovakia was invaded by five allied countries, the armies of the Warsaw Pact states. It was not only the Czechoslovak citizens who were surprised but also some citizens of those states, now placed in the position of enemies apologising for the actions of their governments. Like the astrophysicist Dieter B. Herrmann, a lifelong friend of composer Hanns Eisler, through whom he met Alois Hába. Eisler died in 1962, but the East German physicist and the Czech composer kept in touch. Dieter B. Herrmann sent word to Czechoslovakia: "You know that the people of our state wish only the best for the new path on which the Communist Party of your country has so boldly set out. Know that we were not asked what means should be used to stifle the 'counter-revolution'."

And What About Music?

The protest statement published a day after the occupation in a special edition of the *Literární listy* weekly was a joint proclamation of five artist unions (the union of writers, journalists, theatre workers, film and television artists, and architects). The Union of Czechoslovak Composers published its own proclamation on the 30th of August, calling for a "normalisation of public and political life", the "undisturbed work of public and political bodies", and the "departure of the foreign armies" – the latter, however, only took place twenty years later. Later on, the word "normalisation" – in conflict with its original meaning – became a cover for the reintroduction of political censorship, the persecution of artists other than those sanctioned by the authorities, and other phenomena generally considered to be outside the scope of normality.

One of the first to react to the August events with a new composition was the Brno-based composer

Alois Hába: Suite for Bass Clarinet and Piano (2nd movement)

Alois Piňos (1925–2008) with his cycle *Přísloví* (*Proverbs*) for solo baritone. It was certainly no coincidence that he chose proverbs that could clearly be interpreted in light of current events: "It is not yet the end of days", "Your deeds come back to haunt you", "No trees grow to heaven". Luboš Fišer's (1935–1999) *Requiem* became another piece of the year. It was written as the last part of a triptych (*Fifteen Pages After Dürer's Apocalypse*, *Caprichos*), but the premiere of the *Requiem* on the 19th of November 1968, performed by the FOK Symphony Orchestra conducted by Václav Smetáček with soloists Helena Tattermuschová and Karel Berman, seemed to acquire symbolic value, just like the premiere of Fišer's piece *Žádost o popravu* (*A Request for Execution*) on March 4th 1970.

In its September 1968, *Hudební rozhledy*, the official magazine of the Union of Composers, stated that "at the time of writing, the subscriber cycles of the Prague concert halls are still undergoing changes demanded by the change of circumstance created by the entry

Luboš Fišer

Alios Piňos

of the armies of the five Warsaw Pact states. The changes will be directed towards an unambiguous expression of unity among the traditions of our national art and the history and feeling of all our people". It also disclosed that the Supraphon company was preparing recordings of composers and performers who had long lived outside the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic – Karel Boleslav Jirák and Karel Husa – and was also negotiating taking over the licence for Rafael Kubelík recordings from Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft.

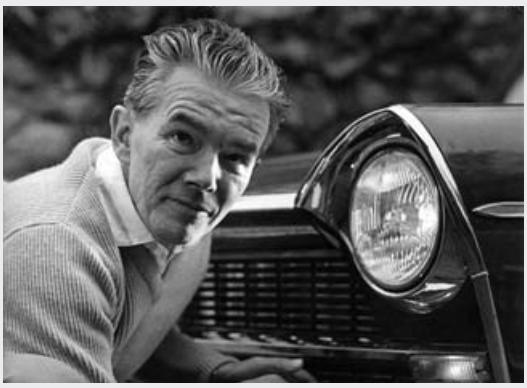
Little of these plans came to fruition, and very late at that. All those named above left the country after the Communist putsch in 1948. Karel Boleslav Jirák (1891–1972) was active in Chicago, and he was only allowed to return to his homeland after many years of waiting and bureaucratic delays, at the end of the year 1968. Composer and conductor Karel Husa (1921–2016) also worked in the United States. He reacted to the events of August 1968 with *Hudba pro Prahu 1968* (*Music for Prague 1968*). It was originally written for wind band, commissioned by the Ithaca College Concert Band. This version was first performed on January 31st 1969 in Washington. Exactly a year later, the composer conducted the premiere of the orchestral version with the Munich Philharmonic. He used a quotation from the Hussite song *Kdož jsú boží bojovníci* (*Ye Who Are Warriors of God*) – it had become a comprehensible symbol since Bedřich Smetana used it in his cycle *Má vlast* (*My Country*). The Czech premiere of Karel Husa's *Music for Prague 1968*, however, could only take place on the 13th of February 1990 in Prague's Smetana Hall – conducted by the author. Rafael Kubelík (1914–1996) only returned to the Czech Republic in 1990 in order to conduct the opening concert of the Prague Spring festival: *Má vlast*.

Petr Eben's (1929–2007) response to the events of 1968/69 took the form of a symphonic movement for three trumpets and orchestra, *Vox clamantis*. He said the following about the work: "The piece was born of a time in which our nation vainly called for help in the desert of its solitude. In each of us there is a voice calling for truth, an unrest calling for certainty in life, and throughout our entire lives, we follow this goal. But when we go far enough, we discover that the Faustian question cannot be answered completely, that searching is the permanent fate of man." The premiere took place on the 13th of January 1970, with Dean Dixon conducting the FOK Symphony Orchestra.

Certain allegories remained purely personal – so, for example, we know only from Alois Hába's testimony that he inscribed the words "Go home, Soviets" in a motive in the second movement of his *Suite for Bass Clarinet and Piano* written for the Due Boemi ensemble – this slogan was painted onto many walls in 1968, and was expressed in slightly different words in Jaromír Vomáčka's song *Dobře míněná rada* (*A Well-Intended Piece of Advice*).

Musica viva Pragensis, an ensemble dedicated to new music, could still take part in the Donaueschingen Musiktage festival in October 1968, performing the compositions of Ladislav Kupkovič, Vladimír Šrámek, Zbyněk Vostřák, Rudolf Komorous, and Marek Kopelent, a generation of composers who in the second half of the 1950s had begun catching up with what had been going on to the west of Czechoslovakia. But meanwhile, the screws tightened. Ladislav Kupkovič and Rudolf Komorous left Czechoslovakia, as did the conductors Karel Ančerl, Zdeněk Mácal, Jiří Stárek, and Martin Turnovský, jazz clarinettist and

Karel Husa



Jan Novák

conductor Karel Krautgartner, singer-songwriter Karel Kryl. Writers, musicians, artists, singers, and actors were all leaving.

A Living Torch

"We are deeply shaken by the tragic events of the last few days. The death of Jan Palach has put a terrible mirror of responsibility up in front of all of society, of the entire world. How is it possible that we have come this far – a free-thinking person; no fanatic, is today burning himself alive in order to secure for himself and his fellow citizens elementary human rights? Us of older generations, wherever we live, we cannot rid ourselves today of a feeling of responsibility for a world we created and which the young of the world inherit from us. Just as we don't agree with the resolution of political conflicts through wars and murder, we protest against a young person being driven into such an extreme situation that he must resolve the conflict of his conscience and the world by sacrificing his life."

This was the opening paragraph of the Proclamation of the Central Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak Composers, published on the 23rd of January 1969, four days after the death of Jan Palach, who committed suicide by self-immolation in order to rouse up a nation falling prey to apathy. The final paragraph of the proclamation emphasised that "one can only live freely in a free state", and despite the shock presented by the death of a twenty-year-old boy and the preceding events, it expressed its belief in "socialism with a human face", to whose vision some still clung.

Palach's death also had its musical responses. Jan Novák (1921–1984) composed a cantata on his own Latin text as a reminder of the tragic act, *Ignis pro Ioanne Palach* (*A Flame for Jan Palach*), which was premiered on the 15th of April 1969 in Prague. The composer thus bid farewell to his motherland – he no longer wanted to live in a dictatorship. He died in Neu Ulm, Germany in 1984, and his remains returned home in 2011. Evžen Zámečník's (1939–2018) *Elegie per Jan Palach* also bears the name of the tragic victim. The piece is written for violin and string orchestra or violin and piano. The vocal triptych *Poselství* (*Legacy*) by Jan Hanuš (1915–2004) was another reaction, scored for baritone solo, mixed choir, and two pianos, setting verses from Scripture and by poet Kamil Bednář. The middle movement is called *Hořící keř* (*Burning Bush*), which was also the title given by director Agnieszka Holland to her 2013 film dedicated to Palach's memory and the events of those years. Jan Hanuš's composition was premiered on January 26th 1970 by the Choir of Czechoslovak Radio with choirmaster Milan Malý. The soloist was Václav Zítek. The composer had to leave his position as editor-in-chief of the Panton publishing house immediately after the performance. The Union of Czechoslovak Composers was abolished in May 1970. Two years later, on the 19th of December 1972, the establishing congress of the "normalised" Union of Czechoslovak Composers and Concert Artists took place. In the following years, much care was lavished on no pieces being performed around the anniversaries of the August occupation and Jan Palach's death which could bring up "inappropriate associations".

by Vilém Spilka

A Tale of Music Festivals, Money, and Redemption

An interview with Thomas Sovík

In November and December 2018 the University of North Texas, in cooperation with the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts and Palacký University Olomouc, will host its 3rd International Festival of Czech Music. How is it that this institution became the centre for Czech music in the United States when, at the beginning, its architect was nearly fired from his faculty appointment for suggesting such a cooperation with Czech schools of music? Vilém Spilka, head of Jazz Studies at the Janáček Academy of Music & Performing Arts, Brno, interviews professor Thomas Sovík.
Thomas, before we speak about the festival, perhaps it could be interesting for our readers to know something about the resistance put up by your university against working with Czech institutions.

In 1990, after I completed my dissertation on the musical treatises of Jan Blahoslav (1558) and Jan Josquin (1561), I came to Brno to speak at a musicological conference at the Janáček Academy. I was quite the innocent assistant professor at the time, and it seemed to me perfectly logical to visit the rector's office and suggest that there might be some benefit in discussing an exchange of students between JAMU and UNT. Unfortunately, the bureaucrats at my own university were quite upset when they heard about it. I received a letter of reprimand in my permanent file for taking such an initiative, because I had no authority to even suggest such a cooperation without their approval.

And yet you continued?

At first the situation became even more perilous. The following year, I returned to Brno with a small group of students to offer some performances. Also in the group was the Dean of Music at the time, who accompanied us to investigate this embarrassing situation. He didn't like it at all; in fact, his report to the university president made it clear that any type formal engagement with Brno, which he perceived to be a small and unimportant "village", would have no benefit whatsoever for our institution.

And…?

But I simply ignored the bureaucrats. That's the easiest way to explain it. I suppose I can say that I've earned my reputation for being a pain in the ass of the university. All the time I was taking groups

of music students to Brno and Olomouc for performances, flying "under the radar" of the bureaucrats. And I survived for twenty eight more years to become not only the senior faculty member in musicology and music theory but also the Director of Central European Studies & Exchanges.

What was the reason for the initial resistance to establishing connections with the Czech Republic? Was it because Czechs were so unknown to your university?

Not even university bureaucrats were unaware of the number of Czechs in Texas.
The Czech language is the third most-spoken language in the State of Texas. We have more than 140 SPJST lodges (Slovanská podporující jednota statu Texas – Slav Support Group of Texas) in addition to the organisations of the KJT (Katolická jednota texaská – Texan Catholic Unity) and KJZT [Česko-římská katolická podporující jednota žen texaských – Czech-Roman Catholic Support Unity of Texan Women), and we have fourteen chapters of a Czech Historical Society. There is a Czech Heritage Museum in Temple, another one in Fayetteville, a Czech Cultural Center in Houston, and a Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center in LaGrange.
We have two newspapers published entirely in Czech, *Našinec* (weekly) and *Hospodář* (monthly). Two other newspapers, *Věstník* and the *Brethren Journal*, are a mixture of Czech and English, and a peer-reviewed academic journal, *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, based at Texas A&M University, is published under the auspices of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts & Sciences.

So how did this situation progress from a prohibited activity to your university now being the centre of Czech music in the US?

As it happens, it was a miracle. We have a great many Czech organisations in Texas, but we say

PHOTO: MICHAEL CLEMENTS

New staging of Coronide by Vít Zouhar

"three Czechs, four committees, five arguments." Each group is largely independent of one another except for a state-wide organisation called the Czech Educational Foundation of Texas, which is dedicated to preserving Czech culture.
CEFT was looking for a new project, something beyond supporting Czech-language instruction. They had been watching, silently I suppose, while the crazy Czech-American professor was building so many relationships in the Czech Republic. And when the organization decided to move on to its next project, it called the university to offer an initial $600,000 to support studies in Czech music at our university.

You received $600,000 to support Czech music without even asking for it?

Unbelievable, isn't it? Musicians usually have to resort to begging. And since that time, our endowment has grown to over two million dollars, and there is the possibility that CEFT will help us build the endowment to ten million.

And the university's response?

Once the university bureaucrats caught the scent of money, the crazy professor who had been making these visits to Brno and Olomouc and so many other places was no longer the lunatic. And, most important of all, we have a new Dean of Music, Prof. John Richmond, who is a fantastic colleague and a great supporter of Czech music.

Could you give us some specific examples of what you've been doing since you were first contacted by the Czech Foundation?

Between the time of my reprimand and this visit to Brno in September 2018 – during which our opera singers will receive language coaching at the Janáček Academy to perform *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), I've led 36 student visits to the Czech Republic and we've had multiple student exchanges with the Janáček Academy.

Our short-term visitors from the Czech Republic have included composers Jindřich Feld, Ivo Medek, and Arnošt Parsch, and flautist Arnošt Bourek. In 2006 we hosted a residency of the Wallinger Quartet, followed by the Petr Mička cimbalom orchestra and then, the following year, Radoslav Kvapil came over as our resident artist. In 2010 we produced Smetana's opera *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) – in Czech – with performances both

on campus as well as across the state of Texas. In 2012, 2013, and 2017 we sponsored Texas-wide tours of the Czech *dechovka* (wind band) Stříbrňanka, with the Škampa Quartet coming somewhere in the middle. I suppose I've lost track.

And the international festivals?

In 2013 we produced a two-continent music festival dedicated to Leoš Janáček, which included a production of *Zápisník zmizelého* (*The Diary of One Who Disappeared*); two years later we produced a similar festival with the *Česká mše vánoční* (*Czech Christmas Mass*) as our keynote work. In both instances, we followed the on-campus festival with performances in nine cities. Our third festival will be to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia.

Can you say who will be invited from the Czech Republic to participate in this year's festival?

In addition to performances by our own university soloists and our UNT Baroque Orchestra & Collegium Singers, we know that Sára Medková will perform the Dvořák *Piano Concerto*, on the second night we will produce the comic-love opera *Coronide* by Vít Zouhar; there will be a multimedia performance by Ivo Medek, Sára Medková, and Vít Zouhar which somehow involves frying an egg (!), and the keynote work of the festival will be our production of Janáček's *Bystrouška* that will include small children from the Dallas Czech School, who will be on stage as little foxes.
Our keynote speakers will be Prof. Jaroslav Miller, Rector of Palacký University (the significance of 1918) and Fr. Jaroslav Křivánek, Pastor of the Hussite Church in Olomouc (the history of the Czech Hussite Church).
And then, on the one day following the on-campus part of the festival and the beginning of our performance tour of *Bystrouška* to multiple cities, Fr. Křivánek and his wife Jitka will lead a sing-along of Czech Christmas carols in the Czech Catholic Church in Praha, Texas.
It will certainly be a busy but interesting time!

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by Lukáš M. Vytlačil

Tales of a Small Flute
The Remarkable Smallness of Vítězslava Kaprálová

Vítězslava Kaprálová: *Povídky malé flétny* (Tales of a Small Flute). Editor Věroslav Němec, Amos Editio, Prague 2014.

Despite the shortness of her life, composer and conductor Vítězslava Kaprálová's (1915–1940) name is written firmly among the notable figures of our interwar music. Thanks to a collaboration between The Kapralova Society – a Canadian music company – and Amos Editio publishers, the work of this remarkable composer is gradually becoming available in critical editions. Up to this point it has mostly been the song works, which are an essential component of Kaprálová's oeuvre, and works for piano. One of the interesting titles to receive little of the attention it deserves is Povídky malé flétny (Tales of a Small Flute) for soprano recorder or concert flute and piano, which represents the very first printed edition of this work. It takes the form of two miniatures that seem to exceed the context of the composer's oeuvre. The piece was most probably composed in Paris in 1940 and is dedicated to Jiří Mucha, whom the composer married on the 23rd of April of the same year. Mucha, son of famous painter Alfons Mucha, was a writer, but also an amateur recorder player – the instrument at the time having made its return to the musical world and finding enthusiastic admirers.

Kaprálová originally intended these Tales as a three-movement cycle, but she only finished two parts. Short programmatic texts have survived for each movement. The first said: "Spring was and wasn't. For real spring, it smelt too much of sadness, but somewhere inside the chestnut, something stirred nonetheless." The second movement: "One day (…?) looked as if nothing had happened and the chestnuts had opened entirely." And for the third part, which was never composed, the following text lay waiting: "And a nymph named Love descended from the blossom into the warm night, turning a nice lad into a prince." The first movement, which carries along in a free tempo with much melodic character, uses the range of the recorder extensively, from D_5 to C_7. From this, we can judge that at a time when the recorder was a fairly new instrument in the instrumentarium of the 20th century and composers did not yet have much experience with it, Kaprálová approached this part more as if it were a concert flute part. This would also agree with the unusual demarcation of the instrumental part as "Quasi flauto".

The piano writing is rich, betraying the fact that in this case, the author was moving on well-known territory. For the flute part in the second movement, the composer made do with a much narrower range from E_5 to E_6 (with a trill up to $F\#_6$). Unfortunately, we do not know what caused this imbalance, but it is possible that the first piece was too difficult for Jiří Mucha, so Kaprálová lost her enthusiasm for finishing the cycle, wrote a much easier second movement and did not even begin working on a third. Even so, the Tales are a set of unique and interpretively peculiar miniatures, representing probably the oldest work by a Czech composer in the 20th century to employ a recorder. We find two pieces featuring the instrument in the works of Bohuslav Martinů, but these were both created more than ten years later.[1]

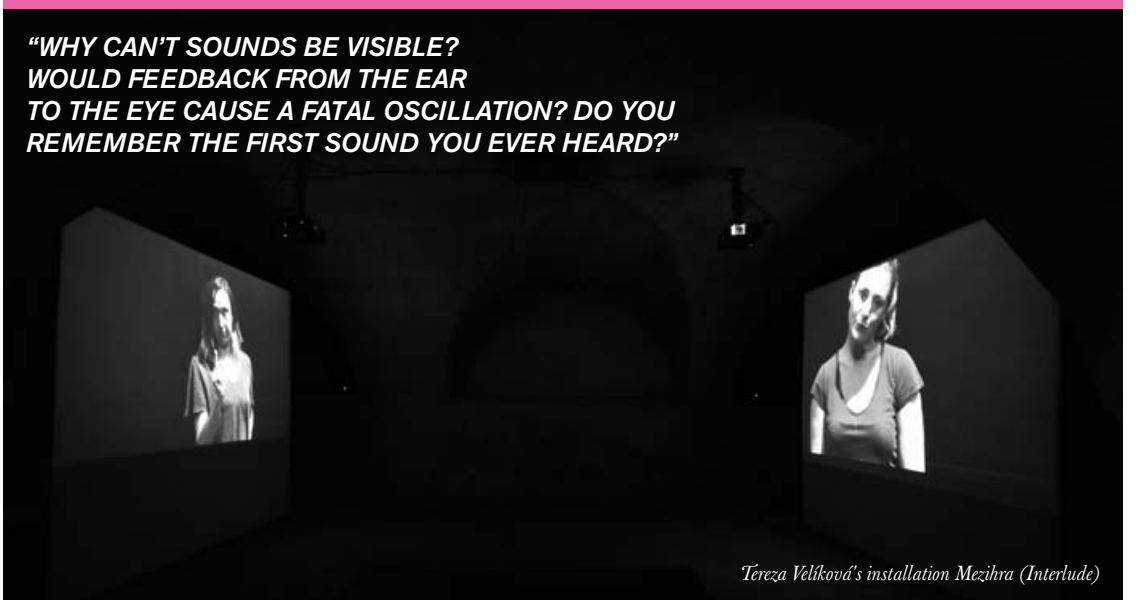
The slim edition consists of only a few leaves, the score itself fits on a mere two pages, and the one-page flute part is inserted into the whole. The music is edited with great thoroughness and the notography is very clear. The introductory text, which details the history of the Tales, was written by Karla Hartl and Věroslav Němec and is presented here in both Czech and English. The same is true of the Editor's Notes, which divulge in detail the state of Kaprálová's autograph, which is the only source for this work. The notes also explain all the editorial corrections. Vítězslava Kaprálová's Tales of a Small Flute are a worthy recommendation for researchers interested in Czech interwar composers, music teachers, and flautists, particularly recorder players.

1) The first piece by Bohuslav Martinů was his nonet Stowe Pastorals for five recorders, clarinet, two violins, and violoncello (1951), followed by the Divertimento for two recorders (1957). The same period (1955) also saw the composition of Benjamin Britten's Alpine Suite for a trio of recorders.

by Lenka Dolanová

SOUND IN THE GALLERY
NOTES ON THE IGLOO SOUND GALLERY IN JIHLAVA

"WHY CAN'T SOUNDS BE VISIBLE? WOULD FEEDBACK FROM THE EAR TO THE EYE CAUSE A FATAL OSCILLATION? DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST SOUND YOU EVER HEARD?"



Tereza Veliková's installation Mezihra (Interlude)

THESE WERE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS WHICH AMERICAN NEW MUSIC COMPOSER, ACCORDIONIST, AND MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST PAULINE OLIVEROS (1932–2016) POSED IN ONE OF HER ARTICLES. IN HER WRITINGS, SHE ALERTED US TO TO THE FACT THAT SONIC EXPERIENCES ARE AT THE BORDERS OF OUR CONSCIOUS INTEREST. HER LIFELONG FASCINATION WITH SOUNDS GAVE RISE TO THE CONCEPT OF DEEP LISTENING, MEANING A CAREFUL AND PROFOUND LISTENING, WHICH CONTINUES INSPIRING SOUND ARTISTS TO THIS DAY

Pauline Oliveros distinguished between two forms of listening: focused listening and overall, globally receptive listening. She claimed it was possible to "unfocus" our eyes and thus perceive all the sounds around us and inside us, the sounds of memory or imagination. She understood deep listening as a process involving the sounds of everyday life and nature, the sound of thought and the sound of music. She explained the difference between hearing and listening: "We cannot turn off our ears – ears are continually taking in sonic information – but we can turn off our listening. I feel that listening is the basis of creativity and culture. The way in which you listen is the way in which you develop culture, the way a community listens, that's how it creates its culture.

At the end of the 1980s, Oliveros created the Deep Listening Band (DLB), whose performances and recordings were often arranged in locations with a particular resonance or echo, such as cathedrals or cisterns. The acoustics of a giant cistern at the Fort Worden army base, with a very long reverberation of around forty-five seconds, was particularly important for the group. They made their first album there – the "deep" in "deep listening" was initially a pun to do with the location of the cistern – and for their 25th anniversary, they performed using a simulation of its acoustics using Cistern Simulation Technology, software developed by Jonas Braatsch.

The Jihlava House of Sound

The ideas of Pauline Oliveros were also inspiring when establishing the IGLOO sonic gallery, in which we tried to create the perfect conditions for careful listening to sound art. The gallery is part of the Regional Gallery of Vysočina in Jihlava, located in an arched cellar whose resonant acoustic determines, to a certain extent, the sound of all the sounds brought into it. One of the artists to have exhibited here, Slovak sound artist and field recordist Jonáš Gruska, called the IGLOO acoustics "cathedral-like". The shape of the space, after all, co-determined the name of the gallery – an igloo as the dome-shaped abode of the Inuits. However, it also relates to the original German name of the city (Iglau – Jihlava) and thereby to its invisible multi-lingual past. The regular programme at the IGLOO sound gallery was inaugurated in June 2016. Since we began, we have tried to understand sonic art as a hybrid and interdisciplinary art form. Installations made here also bring in – to a greater or lesser extent – the specific environment of the gallery. They are based on field recordings; they work with themes of emptiness, speech, and the impossibility of understanding; they include a meditative aspect. Some artists deal with the resonances by creating a space absolutely flooded with sounds despite the space, for others, it is an instigation to quiet down.

Field Recordings Clean and Unclean

The first exhibition, titled *Polish Soundscapes*, was prepared by curator Marcin Barski together with the team of the Soundscape institute in Krakow. It consisted of a selection of field recordings by Polish authors, and the conception of the exhibition included the gallery as a "pleasant, meditative, but also educational listening room". The recordings were played in the space from five simultaneous sources; they were triggered randomly, divided into sections (documentary, urban, natural, people, sound as a scientific research method). Their authors had diverse backgrounds as well as approaches to recording. Paweł Duczmal makes his recordings on train trips around Europe – including tiny local trains in Polish Kashubia and a village fair in Sułoszowa – on a small Sony tape recorder with an external microphone. Konrad Gęca recorded birds, cows, and bats in Vietnam and Thailand, while Marek Choloniewski introduced his composition

from a salt mine in Wieliczka accompanied by inaudible high frequencies. Ludomir Franczak played sounds recorded by microphones buried underground, Martyna Poznańska also contributed recordings… Working in this acoustically complex space with a number of diverse recordings wasn't easy: they were amplified by small speakers and were only audible if the listener came closer, otherwise they would merge into an indistinguishable blend of sound. This acoustically flooded situation called for an active listener, finding their own ways through the considerably knotty environment of the recordings.

Martin Janíček, who has a long-standing interest in exploring languages and methods of communication, also used field recordings in his installation *Řeč zvuku (Sound of Speech)*. He made them on his journey through Armenia, during which he studied how speech can change into a rhythmic and melodic musical structure when understanding is no longer central. "Speech turns from a means of understanding into a stream of sound in which meaning is created more intuitively. It can be seen as referring to an idea of some kind of mythical original speech." He describes how he recorded the sound of swallow's wings in a church, merging

PHOTO: PAVEL PETROV 3x

Peter Cusack, Martyna Poznańska: Would there be another forest?

with people talking outside, or visiting a writing monument where the guided tour took place in all manner of world languages at once.

There are also a number of field recordings at the current double exhibition, a collaboration between sound artists Peter Cusack and Martyna Poznańska, whose installation *Would there be another forest?* responded to current events in the Białowieża Forest, one of the most valuable European primaeval forests on the borders of Poland and Belarus. "There is an emphasis on intimate relationships with ecology, on the general atmosphere and the connection between people and forest." A key component is a sequence of recordings from the forest: birdsong, trees moving in the wind, rain falling on the trees, but also the sounds of bark beetles inside the tries recorded with contact microphones. These are complemented by drawings of bark beetle larvae creating lines on the surface of the wood, photographs and objects from the forest placed around the gallery space, and a two-channel video, *My Body Is the Forest, the Forest Is My Body,* in which Martyna Poznańska attempted to identify her own body and the forest – she recorded herself lying down and standing in the middle of the primaeval forest near to which she grew up. The audio and video were captured in the forest at a time when the Polish government had ordered massive logging operations, later stopped thanks to the intervention of the EU courts, which declared these illegal.

The Gallery as Instrument / The Resonance of the Space

Jonáš Gruska also works in field recordings, documenting the long-term acoustic transformation of the Czech and Slovak countryside. He also constructs listening devices and microphones. His exhibition, *Site Specific Resonances – Radiátory (Heaters)* introduced a radical reduction within which the gallery space itself became the instrument. Two cast-iron radiator heaters were temporarily transformed into amplifiers through which one could hear compositions which had their basis in the given space, specifically reacting to the resonance of the radiators. The frequencies which were the foundation for most these pieces were 232.1 Hz, 339.7 Hz, and 347 Hz, at which the radiators were most resonant: "Because these resonant frequencies are slightly different for the individual heaters, their simultaneous sounding in the spaces creates new frequencies in some of the pieces, which have to do with the acoustic addition and subtraction of the individual sounds. One can hear them only

IGLOO 4: Where silence begins. A video by Lauren Tortil.

in the form of sonic 'beating', which changes based on the listener's position in the space. For this reason, it is recommended to move about during listening and explore the individual positions."

"Listening is similar to a graphic record on an empty sheet of paper." That was the motto of *Tábula Rasa*, an exhibition by brothers Adam and Ladislav Železný, who also worked directly with the resonance of the space. They used three acoustic instruments – suspended ceramic panels – as natural resonators for a sound signal digitally generated and controlled by an Arduino processor. Every panel was a little different and had a different pitch. When the visitor touched the board, the frequency changed. The installation was still functional after one of the panels broke and instead of a square, we were left with a shape which one visitor likened to the silhouette of Fuji mountain hanging in the gallery. Here, porcelain represented emptiness, a space to "inscribe" sounds, and also a musical instrument.

Audibility and the (in)capability of understanding were the topics of *Není slyšet (Nothing to Hear)* by Brno-based group Skupina, who are brought together by their love of field recordings. They do not, however, have a purist conception of these, and often modify or process them further. In their work for IGLOO, they followed up on the crucial experimental recording made by Alvin Lucier in 1969, *I Am Sitting in a Room*, in which he captured his voice, piped into a room where it was recorded and then played back into the room, repeating this process thirty-two times until his voice completely dissipated into the resonance of the space. Skupina – their name simply means "group" – repeated this procedure, but leaving out the voice and recording repeatedly only the resonance of the empty and silent space, simply bringing the volume up a little each time. The recording was

made in an abandoned farm building in the Vysočina region and the resultant "multiplication of emptiness" was only softly modified given the acoustic specificities of the gallery. The broader topics – how the utterance of the individual is lost in space along with his history and memory – was supported by a simple projection consisting of quotations from *Živý bič (Live Whip)* by Milo Urban; the subtitles were the only lighting in the space.

Traces of Sound

In their installation *Where silence begins*, Hungarian curators Eszter Öze and Flóra Gadó explored various modes of communication in the works of two authors and one authorial duo. The common feature was an interest in sound as a trace or sign, "something which can be collected, organised, and then further distributed and developed". Péter Tornyai and Krisztián Kertész explored the legacy of Béla Bartók. The experimental audiovisual work by Ábris Gryllus dealt with the patterns and rhythms of human behaviour, and French artist Lauren Tortil based her video on the history of the parabolic antenna, used to capture the first transatlantic television signals at the beginning of the 1960s. A key object in the space was a counter with twenty small speakers, each playing a Hungarian folk song collected by Béla Bartók.

Ian Mikyska's installation *Paper and Time* invited the visitors into a more meditative domain, composed as it was of a series of interactive objects from tracing paper. This has been our most participative exhibition so far, pointing towards the connections between sound, writing, and one's own breath. One could write onto the individual objects with a pencil, lines on the paper were created in a rhythm of inhalations and exhalations, creating a sonic response. The room was full of paper objects of various levels of complexity, including how they were captured (using contact and condenser microphones), creating a coherent meditative space in which the visitors could place quite common sounds and movements (writing) into a rarefied, concentrated, and contemplative space.

In her works, Tereza Velíková explores the borders of understanding. For her installation *Mezihra (Interlude)*, consisting of two video projections with sound; an imaginary discussion between two middle-aged women, she used a collection of theatre scripts from shows featuring two well-known Czech actresses, Lenka Krobotová and Daniela Voráčková. She recorded these in a neutral environment. A tension was thus created between the original texts of the scripts and their position in the context of the timeless video projections, a kind of "dialogue of monologues", as the artist called them. In speech, she is most interested in elisions, mistakes, and slips of the tongue, i.e. speech dislocated from its intended meaning.

The tenth IGLOO exhibition will present Veronika Svobodová, who comes from the world of theatre and who wants to approach the space partly in a scenographic manner. After that, we are planning to change the concept and focus more on the situation of collective listening. Attempting to make listening (back into) a collective activity.

The Regional Gallery of Vysočina in Jihlava has its roots in the 19th century, and has been active in its current location since 1946. The IGLOO space is currently the only exhibition space in the Czech Republic with a primary focus on sound – the previous possessor of this title, Galerie Díra (The Hole Gallery) at the Školská 28 space in Prague, was simply a hole in the wall into which one could plug one's headphones. It closed in 2017. IGLOO's home is a cool subterranean space in the Gothic foundations of the medieval house in the historical centre of Jihlava (130 km from Prague and 90 km from Brno). Under Lenka Dolanová's curatorship, the gallery has presented a varied programme, introducing artists from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and the US. The backgrounds of these artists reflect the interdisciplinary nature of sound art, hailing as they do from disciplines as diverse as classical composition, visual arts (video, painting/drawing, object), electronic music, field recording, and theatre scenography.

Lenka Dolanová is a Czech curator, art theorist, and journalist. She studied art history at the Arts Faculty of Charles University in Prague, later completing a doctorate at the Film and TV School Of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU). Her publications include *Dialog s démony nástrojů: Steina a Woody Vasulkovi (Dialogue With the Demons of Instruments: Steina and Woody Vasulka,* NAMU and JSAF, 2011), *Seno, sláma, řeřicha (Hay, Straw, Watercress,* OGV 2015) and *X: Čestmír Kafka* (OGV 2016). She writes about the connections between new media, ecology, and agriculture, particularly in the countryside. She is a founding member of the KRA – Kravín Rural Arts association, which runs an artist residency centre in the Iron Mountains. She is also a co-initiator of RurArtMap, a map of activities in the arts in the countryside. She is a curator at the Regional Gallery of Vysočina in Jihlava.

CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE SUMMER OF 2018

JUNE-AUGUST

For new music lovers, the end of June was marked by the biennial NODO festival – New Opera Days Ostrava. Among other things, it presented an as yet unjustly overlooked sixth-tone opera by Alois Hába, *Thy Kingdom Come,* composed in 1937–1942 (see CMQ 2018/2), and *The Mute Canary*, a new chamber one-act opera by Rudolf Komorous, a Czech composer who has long resided in Canada. Another Czech operatic work was premiered abroad – Ondřej Adámek's *Seven Stones* at the prestigious Aix-en-Provence festival.
As for instrumental music, the most significant event was perhaps the inclusion of *Emojis, Likes and Ringtones* by Miroslav Srnka as the compulsory piece for the piano trio category in the semi-finals of the prestigious ARD competition in Munich. The piece was thus premiered six times in a single day by ensembles from around the world, including the victorious Aoi Trio from Japan. The 51st edition of the Festivale delle Nazioni in Italy was a grand celebration of Czech music in general, as it was entirely dedicated to the Czech Republic this year. There was one premiere among the pieces by famous composers of our past: Lukáš Sommer's saxophone quartet *Indiana.*

24 and 25 June 2018, Jiří Myron Theatre, Ostrava. NODO. **Alois Hába: *Thy Kingdom Come* (world premiere).** Directed by: Jiří Nekvasil, music director: Bruno Ferrandis. Cast: Michaela Šrůmová, Kamila Mazalová, Marek Olbrzymek, Juraj Nociár, Josef Moravec, Vojtěch Šembera, Josef Škarka, David Nykl. Canticum Ostrava (choirmaster Jurij Galatenko), Ostravská banda, ONO – Ostrava New Orchestra.
24 June 2018, Church of St Maurice, Kroměříž. Forfest. **Josef Adamík: *I Stop Somewhere Waiting for You* (world premiere)**. Vox Iuvenalis, choirmasters Markéta Ottová and Jan Ocetek.
28 June 2018, Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Ostrava. NODO. **Rudolf Komorous: *The Mute Canary* (world premiere)**. Directed by: Jan Horák & Michal Pěchouček, music director: Owen Underhill. Cast: Anne Grimm, Alexander Dobson, Daniel Cabena. Ostravská banda.
30 June 2018, Theater Aachen, Aachen, Germany. In collaboration with the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln. **Leoš Janáček: *The Cunning Little Vixen* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Tamara Heimbrock, music director: Raimund Laufen. Following performances: 6, 8 and 12 Jul 2018.
7 July 2018, Théâtre du Jeu de Paume, Aix-en-Provence, France. Festival international d'art lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence. **Ondřej Adámek: *Seven Stones* (world premiere)**. Libretto: Sjón, directed by: Éric Oberdorff, music direction: Ondřej Adámek, Léo Warynski. Cast: Anne-Emmanuelle Davy, Shigeko Hata, Nicolas Simeha, Landy Andriamboavonjy. accentus / axe 21. Following performances: 8, 10, 12, 15 and 17 Jul 2018.
22 July 2018, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and St. Wenceslas, Znojmo – Louka; church of James the Greater, Vratěnín; Abbey Church, Geras; Town Hall Church, Retz. "Tour de Organ", Music Festival Znojmo. **Miloš Štědroň: *Tanze di Anima et di Corpo* (world premiere)**. Organ: Martin Jakubíček/Martin Bernreuther/Ines Schüttengruber.
4 September 2018, ROXY, Prague. "Transformation". **Jakub Rataj: *Trans-polypnoe* (world premiere).** fama Q, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

PHOTO: FESTIVAL D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Ondřej Adámek: Seven Stones

30 August 2018, Castello Bufalini, San Giustino, Italy. Festival delle Nazioni: Omaggio alla Repubblica Ceca. **Lukáš Sommer: *Indiana* (world premiere)**. Italian Saxophone Quartet.
7 September 2018, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Nový Jičín. St. Wenceslas Music Festival. **Ivan Kurz: *How Many Angels Can Dance on the Head of a Pin* (world premiere)**. Kühn Children›s Choir, Kateřina Englichová – harp.
7 September 2018, Theater Bonn, Bonn. **Viktor Ullmann: *The Emperor of Atlantis* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Seollyeon Konwitschny, music directors: Hermes Helfricht, Stepha Zilias. Following performances: 16 and 22 Sep, 12 and 26 Oct 2018.
13 September 2018, Prinzregententheater, Munich. Internationaler Musikwettbewerb der ARD, Piano Trio category, semi-final. **Miroslav Srnka: *Emojis, Likes and Ringtones* – compulsory piece in world premiere**. Aoi Trio / Lux Trio / Trio Adorno / Trio Cascara / Trio Marvin / Trio Sōra.
13 September 2018, Stadttheater Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, Austria. **Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Eva-Maria Höckmayr, music director: Nicholas Carter. Following performances: 15, 18, 20, 22, 26 and 28 Sep, 5, 10, 13 and 20 Oct 2018.

PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ

Rudolf Komorous: The Mute Canary

JOHANN FRIEDRICH KITTL
THE EARLIEST BIOGRAPHY

The earliest biography of notable Czech composer is that published by W. Neumann (pseudonym for Arthur Friedrich Bussenius, d. 1858) in 1857, as Heft 114 in his large-scale series Die Componisten der neueren Zeit (Composers of the New Time). Amazingly, there is every indication that Bussenius wrote all of the dozens or hundreds of works under his name and pseudonym himself (an assertion made by a friend and contemporary, the German poet Hoffmann von Fallersleben). Surprisingly, this extensive biography seems to be almost absent from the bibliography on Jan Bedřich Kittl, a major composer, friend of Wagner, and director of the Prague Conservatory. It is mentioned and quoted in the 2016 survey of the German symphony by Christopher Fifield. However, it has not been republished in German or translated into English. My translation from the German into English follows. (Tom Moore)

Johann Friedrich Kittl was born on the 8th of May 1809 in Bohemia, at the Wörlitz Castle[1] of the Princes Schwarzenberg. His father, the chief administrator there, gave me a very careful upbringing. As a four-year-old boy, he could already read and write and had a very lively but extremely irritable temperament. Because he showed a particular inclination for music, the castle teacher provided him with keyboard instruction from an early age. But, when one day his worthy mentor rapped him on the fingers with a ruler because of an error, the boy could no longer be convinced to continue his lessons. He was entrusted to another teacher – namely the first clerk – who was undoubtedly strict but did not resort to violence, and to whom the boy could be very grateful. When he was not yet nine years old, he went to Prague in order to attend the Latin school. Before he left his birthplace, however, he gave a farewell concert – in the most harmless meaning of the word – at his parent's house. He played, in fact, some eclogues by Tomášek, and an easy trio by Hummel for piano, violin, and violoncello.

1) Now part of the town of Oranienbaum-Wörlitz, on the west bank of the Elbe

In Prague he lived with his grandmother and aunt throughout the six years he spent there. This environment had a deleterious effect on him inasmuch as his character became soft, undecided, even fearful, and he came to know things in the world according to the limited, feminine point of view, since he had little exposure to men, and devoted all his time to study, playing the piano, and reading. The latter held an ineffable appeal for him, and he was the most well-read boy in the entire school. The choice of his piano teacher was infelicitous here too: it was a dilettante – a jurist – who greatly neglected him, and often did not teach him for eight to fourteen days running. Kittl, however, continued to learn, unimpeded, and always surprised his dilatory teacher with new pieces that he had prepared on his own. At the age of thirteen, he received a skilled teacher, Sawora by name, who began to work on the forty-eight Cramer studies with him and introduced him to the Beethoven sonatas. Kittl made so much progress that within two years, he was able to play the E-flat major and C-sharp minor concertos of Ries, and the E major trio and B minor concerto of Hummel without mistakes. His piano studies were interrupted by illness, and they were not continued, since Kittl no longer needed a teacher.
In the fifth year of Latin school – that of "poetry" – he experienced an unstoppable urge to write verse. He devoured the Latin and German poets, reciting and writing poetry wherever he went. During the holidays he prowled around the woods for entire days, with pencil and letter-case in hand, continually simulating, reflecting, and combining. This went so far that he neglected music, and believed that he had to become a poet. But this stormy period did not last long, and his mind returned to music once more.

Only in his sixteenth year did he write his first song, or rather, someone else had to write it down for him since he was unable to set down his thoughts on paper. By his third song, he felt ashamed of his helplessness and undertook to write it all down himself. Without the least knowledge of composition, he composed more than forty songs and a one-act idyllic opera: *Daphnis' Grab,* with text by his schoolmate Heinrich Poeschl.

As a first-year student of law Kittl became Tomášek's student in harmony, studies he completed in six months. At the beginning, he was inconsolable about the many rules which he viewed as so many fetters on his spirit. But when his teacher asked him "whether any writer had ever complained about the rules of orthography", he was content, and – under his master's direction – became a strict purist. On holidays, he felt his spirit very much under attack, and in particular his awareness was in a sick state of agitation – as a jurist in the first hear he had taken the test in statistics and had had to

store so many figures in his head that it left him with an anxiety about whether he would notice this or that, and this anxiety extended itself to all the circumstances of daily life. Thus he, without wanting to, had to repeat to himself, each evening, everything that had taken place during the day, in the most minute details, which very much unsettled him.

In this over-excited nervous state, he met a young woman whose dark eyes bored deeply into his soul. The covenant was soon made, and an agreement was made that he would marry the maiden as soon he would ask for an apportionment. Kittl was not yet nineteen years old!

After a time, he had to learn that she – before he had met her – had been unworthy of him. For this reason, he fell into a deep depression which lasted an entire year, and as a result, he had to pay more attention to his studies. He spent the entire time in his parent's house and was incapable of looking after himself. The depression had such power over him that he twice wanted to put an end to his life. Since nothing helped, he was sent to Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně) in late summer to drink from the Kreuzbrunn (Křížový pramen). There, he saw a large, fat man on the promenade who slid along like a snail, wrung his hands at every step, and sighed and wept without ceasing. Upon inquiring, he learned that this unfortunate was a victim of the most profound melancholy, and had been declared incurable by the doctors. This sight worked like magic on Kittl. The man showed him his future as if in a mirror. From this moment on he pulled himself together in a wonderful way and was unrecognisable upon his return.

The widow of the field marshall Prince Schwarzenberg took him into her salon, and there he made the acquaintance of the entire Bohemian nobility, whom he entertained with his piano playing: the recognition that Kittl received once more aroused his amour-propre, and he travelled to Prague in order to continue the studies that he had broken off. But the sad experiences of the preceding year and the elaborate self-tortures that he prepared for himself had robbed his nerves forever of that elasticity which one needs in order to bear all the vicissitudes of luck and misfortune like a man.

In Prague, he lived in alternation with Müller, professor of aesthetics, and Lichtenfeld, professor of philosophy, and his contact with them was extremely instructive in many regards. He also often visited the house of the composer Tomášek, whose witty wife interested him very much. His visits were that much more frequent since his sister Marie lived there, and he passed many delightful hours in this circle and came into contact with all the foreign artists who visited Tomášek.

The following year, his mother moved to Prague to complete the education of her daughter. The entire family lived together for two years, with the exception of the father, who had to remain at his post. During this time, he got to know the daughter of a general, who had become aware of him through a spinning song, which pleased him to no end. Her voice and her soulful performance held such charm for him that between every visit, he would always compose a new song so he could hear her sing it. Most of the songs which were only published much later, and dedicated to other persons, were originally written for her.

When his mother, with her daughters, left Prague once again, it happened that he fell in love with a maiden whom we wanted to marry. He had already completed his juridical studies and was preparing for the judicial examinations since his father wanted him to become his successor.

Then his best childhood friend died suddenly from natural pustules. The doctor had made a false diagnosis, and, in order to prevent a suspected inflammation of the brain, had ordered ice-compresses, which Kittl spent the whole night placing on his friend, and thereby killed him, since the pustules infected the brain. His friend died in the most frightful delirium. This fatal result had such an effect on Kittl that during these days he became ten years older, and succumbed to a violent fever himself. During this attack of fever, he saw his friend coming to him at night, in his sleep. He shudders. – His friend speaks:
"Hans! Write a Requiem for my soul."
"Alois, my dear! I will never be able to accomplish that!"
"You will, and soon!" was the answer.

As soon as Kittle got out of bed, he went to the piano, and as he sang the words "Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine", the tears were streaming down his face. With great persistence and perseverance, he followed the commission that had come to him from the world of shadows and completed a vocal Requiem in less than six days.

Kittl's mother died the following year. The death of his friend had prepared his soul for this blow, and he bore it more calmly than one had generally feared due to his violent and excitable character. He had learned loss.
– In the house of his bride, he found consolation and sympathy.

The following two years were dedicated to the study of civil and criminal law and political science, and under these circumstances, Kittl passed the strict judicial examinations (the so-called appellatories) with notable success. During this time, he composed little: a few songs, three scherzi, and a sonata for piano four hands.

As the time drew near for him to go to Wörlitz as an official in the justiciary, he simply could not make the decision, because he could not bear to do without the spiritual pleasures that the city offered. Through many entreaties, he convinced his father to let him enter the civil service. Thus Kittl became an imperial concept-intern in the fiscal office. As such he studied simple and double counterpoint under Tomášek, and wrote, as a little study, an entire sonata in double counterpoint at the octave. Excited by Spohr's quintet and Onslow's septet, he composed a septet for piano, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn and contrabass. Because of the transition to the civil service, he was prevented from marrying as early as he had intended, and the engagement with his bride was thus dissolved through mutual consent from both parties. During this period he became acquainted with Richard Wagner, who was to become a close friend.

In the autumn of 1835, he wrote a nonet, several songs, and an ensemble piece for piano, four male voices, and four horns. Since nothing was taking place to make his compositions better-known, he decided to do so himself. For his birthday on May the 8th 1836, he organised, at his own expense, a grand concert to which he invited over 900 people. At this concert, his nonet, his septet, and the above-mentioned ensemble piece were performed, and the tenor, Breiting, at that time in full bloom, sang his song "…Wär ich ein Stern" from Jean Paul's "Flegeljahren" with such inwardness that it became a favourite song of the people of Prague and had to be published immediately. It was only at this time that Kittl was mentioned as a composer in the newspapers.

In autumn of the same year, he wrote his D minor symphony, and in spring of the following year his Jagdsinfonie. Both were performed under Weber's direction at the Conservatory Concerts to warm receptions. The old master Spohr, with whom Kittl had already become personally acquainted in Prague in 1833, performed his Jagdsinfonie in Cassel in 1839, and was so kind as to give the highest of recommendations for the composer to Mendelssohn, who at that time was at the zenith of his fame.

That year, Kittl was lucky enough to become acquainted with the musically-minded Countess S., who took a great interest in the aspirations of the artist, and paved the way for him to be a highly-placed personality; he later dedicated most of his works to her. He now applied himself with fiery zeal to playing the piano, and performed, in the salon of this lady, before the assembled nobility, the transcriptions of Schubert lieder by Liszt (very popular at the time) to great applause.

In the early days of January 1840, he received a friendly invitation from Mendelssohn to attend a performance of his Jagdsinfonie. He immediately travelled to Leipzig, and, on January 10th, when his work was performed to resounding success in the Gewandhaus concerts, celebrated the happiest day of his life. The symphony was dedicated to Mendelssohn; it was published by Breitkopf & Härtel, and was soon joined by other piano works and songs, some of which were also published by Hofmeister. The way was open, and Kittl's name was heard throughout Germany.

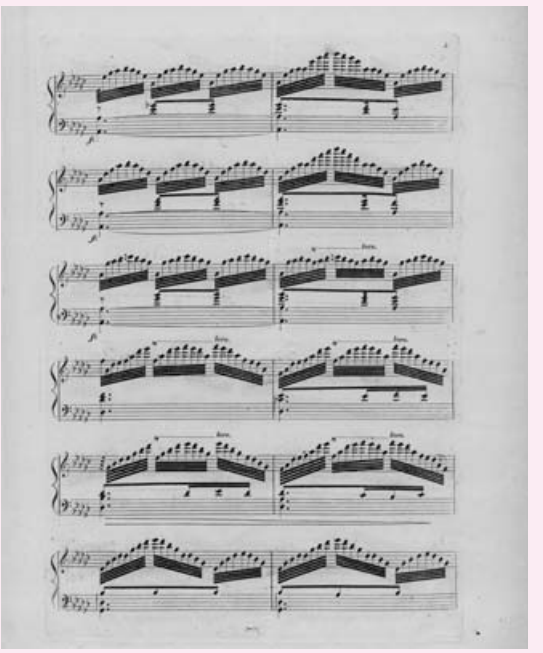
Herr Friedland, who was arriving from St. Petersburg during the performance of the symphony, and stood next to the composer, was so obliging as to invite him to arrange a performance in Paris, and it was in fact repeated there multiple times. The French papers at that the time called Kittl, prophetically, "directeur au conservatoire de Prague". This symphony was heard in almost all of Germany's cities and is one of the composer's most renowned works.

On September 24th 1840, Kittl drove to a manoeuvre. In a steep ravine, the carriage turned over and Kittl fell with the weight of his body on his left elbow, driving his upper arm out of its socket. This happened not far from the city near Villa Bertramka, which had become famous after Mozart wrote his Don Giovanni there. The philanthropic owners of the villa came to Kittl's aid and took him in. When the surgeon who had been called set his arm, quite an unusual event occurred – upon hearing the very audible pop of the bone snapping in, not Kittl, but the mistress of the house, listening in the adjacent room, fainted. Kittl spent the following days in mortal danger, the swelling increasing to the size of a child's head, and there was fear of gangrene, but this was happily averted through cold compresses that continued day and night. Only after eleven days could Kittl be brought back to the city. A long and painful convalescence awaited him here, and after three months he was finally returned to health.

When he felt that he was fully able to use his left hand, he composed a piano piece called *La Guérison,* in which he used difficult arpeggios in the left

SIX
IMPROMPTUS
pour le Pianoforte
1. La Gaieté.
2. Le Départ.
3. La Confiance.
4. L'Inquiétude.
5. La Conversation.
6. Le Zéphir.
composés
par
JEAN FRÉDÉRIC KITTL.
Oeuvre 18.
Leipzig, chez Frédéric Hofmeister.
Londres, chez Wessel et Co. Paris, chez S. Richault.

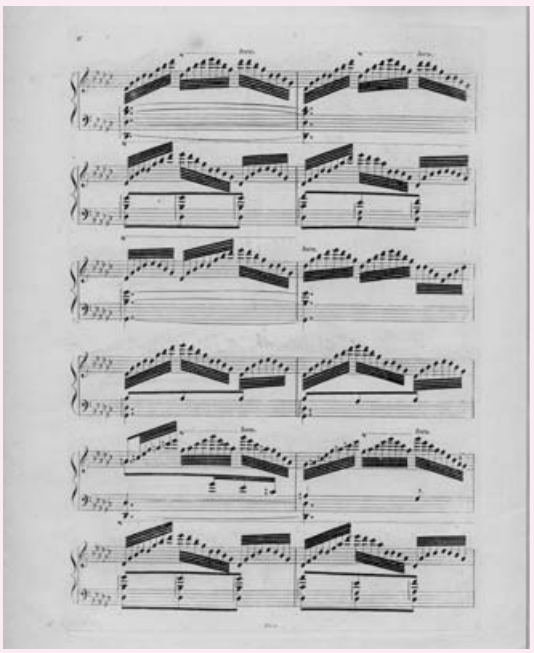
LE ZÉPHIR.

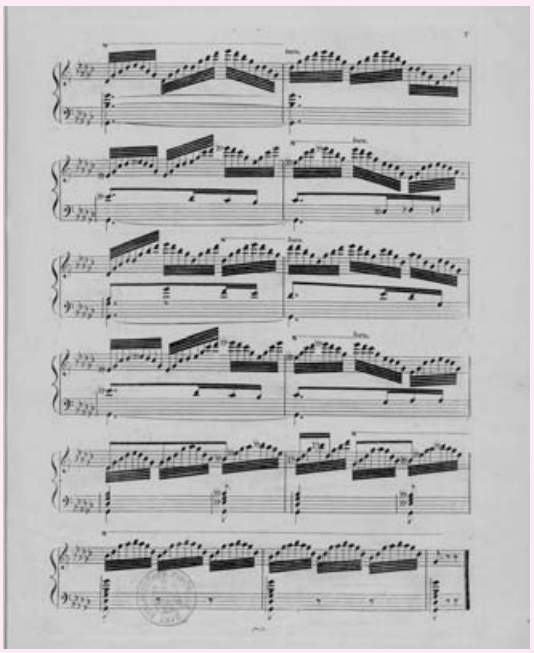


Le Zéphir from Six Impromptus pour le pianoforte, Op. 18.
Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr)

hand. Because of this accident, he was excused from going to the office and received permission to work at home. In early 1841, he composed a Concert Overture in D major, in the Larghetto of which there is a passage for four cellos; it was heard publicly for the first time on May 2nd in Prague, and later published by Kistner in Leipzig. It is dedicated to the Empress-Mother, Caroline Augusta. Subsequently, Kittl travelled to Vienna for six weeks to meet local notables and become acquainted with the musical scene there. He heard an Italian opera there for the first time, which was very well performed by Tadolini, Frezzolini, Moriani, Donzelli, and Badiali.

After his return, he composed a second Concert Overture, which had the unusual formal quality of having the Allegro divided into two halves, between which there is a long spun-out Andante, finely nuanced in its instrumentation. In the winter of 1842, he wrote his third symphony in D major, which was performed in April. He dedicated it to the Duke of Lucca, and





in return was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of St. Louis.

On May 5, Hamburg was, as we know, severely damaged by the great fire. Everyone was deeply affected by this calamity – everyone who could help did so, each in their own way. Kittl arranged a grand concert, for which the boxes were sold at high prices – some for 100 or even 200 florins. Encouraged by the motto: "Ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluntas" ("Though the power be lacking, the will is to be praised all the same"), he turned over the proceeds of the concert, 1600 B. M. [Marc Banco, local currency in Hamburg], to the relief effort as the first assistance from Austria.

When he drove through Leipzig, he sold some of his manuscripts, and since his travel money was thereby considerably increased, he travelled from Hamburg to London to see the famous city on the Thames. It made an overwhelming impression on him. His fellow countryman, Moscheles, who lived in London at the time, received him very amicably, and arranged entry for him to all the concerts. He was particularly interested in the Philharmonic, where he heard the D major symphony of Mozart and the Double Symphony by Spohr one evening. Molique, with whom he drove to the concert, only appeared on the list shortly before midnight. This evening had been very unpleasantly disturbed by the news that there had been an attempted attack on the Queen in Hyde Park. When, the following day at his morning concert, Thalberg had the happy and fitting inspiration to improvise on the song "God Save the Queen", people burst out in the sort of enthusiasm that only belongs to the South.

At the Italian Opera, where he heard Persiani-Tachinardi, Frezzolin-Poggi, Ronioni, and Lablache, he happened to meet Mendelssohn, who scheduled a rendez-vous with him for the following day chez Moscheles. Moscheles and his wife were so fond of Kittl that they entrusted their son Felix to him for the return journey. Looking after the boy, who was to visit his grandfather in Hamburg, was made very difficult by his extreme liveliness, not to mention the fact that Kittl had a very severe case of seasickness.

Kittl remained in Hamburg even longer and returned to Prague after an absence of nine weeks. This caused severe discontent with his superior in the civil service, and he was informed that he would have to be as regular in his hours of service as any other. This, however, was not possible for Kittl, and, without informing his father, who had been enjoying his retirement in Prague since November 1841, he submitted his resignation, and lived from art from then on. When, one day, his father read the news about his son's transition to art in a Leipzig newspaper, there was a very stormy meeting between father and son, because his father, understandably, had a harsh view of this apparently reckless and ill-considered step.

In December 1842, Dyonis Weber, the director of the Prague Conservatory of Music, died, and Kittle immediately applied for the vacant position. A competition for the position was set up, and even Spohr and Molique were among the applicants. Until the definitive decision was made, a provisional arrangement made the director of the organ school, Pietsch, responsible for theory, and the Kapellmeister for the theater, Skraup, leader of orchestral rehearsals, and these two shared responsibility for the duties of the Conservatory director.

In January 1843, Kittl received an invitation from Mendelssohn to conduct his D major symphony at the Gewandhaus. He declined, but was nevertheless present in Leipzig for the performance. The symphony was received with great applause (it was later published by Schott in Mainz), but a particularly successful performance took place some years later in Hannover, on which occasion Marschner wrote to the composer and assured him that he had been astonished at the reception, seeing as the Hannoveraner only liked symphonies by Beethoven.

On May 16, 1843, Kittl was definitively named director of the Conservatory, having been selected from among 13 candidates. Each one had to submit, in writing, his "views on old and new music, and how the two would be unified in a conservatory of music", and the especially felicitous solution of this problem must have had much to do with Kittl's selection. One cannot imagine a nicer name-day gift – Kittl's name day falls on May 16th.

However, great worries and troubles also began at this time. Kittl was standing on new ground and had to gather all his energies together in order to address his tasks. The first months were very exhausting, and Kittle lost heart several times. Richard Wagner, who was visiting him with his wife, found him in these circumstances of depression. Wagner, now the Saxon Court Kapellmeister, and the newly-minted director of the Prague Conservatory had not seen each other since the days when they were still carefree young people without names or reputations, and remembered the happy days of endless joking and laughing. The school examinations, successfully passed, and

the brilliantly successful concerts gave our artists their entire amour-propre, and from now on it was invulnerable against any attack that might be launched at it by envy and resentment.

When Kittl looked back over the previous three years, he came to a remarkable conclusion: breaking his arm had been the cause of his being named director. If he had not broken his arm, then he would not have been released from having to go to his office in the civil service, but would have peacefully continued to go to work as before, would not have received a reprimand, and consequently would not have submitted his resignation; if that had not happened, then, as a civil servant of the state, he would not have been allowed to apply for the position of director, and thus breaking his arm and the position of director were in a demonstrable causal nexus. The accident that had caused him so much pain was the seed from which, three years later, his greatest happiness would bloom. Because, for a musician, there can scarcely be a more beautiful, more influential and more honourable position than that of the director of the celebrated Prague Conservatory.

His relations with the excellent Countess S. continued to be sincere and friendly, and he did not regret having remained a bachelor.

Above all, Kittl, in his prestigious position, was anxious to eliminate the barrier against new music that had previously been in force, and, in addition to classical works, create an entry for good, new compositions. He was the first to present the works of Schumann, Gade, Ries, Berlioz, et al. to the public in concert.

For his first ecclesiastical function (the so-called Veni Sancte Spiritus of the students), he prepared in quite an unusual way. He looked upon this occasion as an offering of thanks to the Creator for the fortuitous resolution of the rift in his life, and for the stable position he had finally achieved. He composed a grand mass in E-major with three fugues which he completed in three months (May, June, and July 1844).

Following the composition of the mass, he joined poet Uffo Horn on a trip to northern Italy.
In Milan, he familiarised himself with the facilities of the Conservatory there and made comparisons. At La Scala he was present for the premiere of the opera Ernani, in which the public was supposed to object to a Carlo V; before then, he had no idea of the hissing, screaming, laughing, scorn, jeering, whistling, and singing along that accompanied each phrase of the unfortunate performer.

From Milan, he went over the Simplon pass to Switzerland and rode on a hinny to the Great St. Bernhard Hospice. It was September 7th, at 7:30 PM, when he, through the agility of his leader, escaped death. There is a steep slope immediately in front of the hospice. Kittl, who was tired from the long journey, was not well-seated, his eyes closed, half-asleep. All of a sudden, the saddle, on which the strap had come loose, suddenly slipped to the left side, and if Kittl had not luckily called out "Je tombe!", he would have fallen into the abyss abutting the eternal snow. The leader yanked him upwards but trembled so much that it took him a long time to recover, and the same was true for Kittl, who spent a night in the hospice in feverish dreams.

In Switzerland, he had only the pleasures of nature, and not of music. Only in Munich did he hear an excellent orchestra under Lachner's direction, and he would always remember the exemplary *crescendo* and *decrescendo* in the Andante of the overture to Fra Diavolo. Having arrived home, he immediately led the rehearsals for his grand mass, which was very successfully performed on October 30th 1844, despite the great difficulties that it presents.

During the holidays in 1845, he travelled throughout all of Germany, visited the Rhine, Belgium, and Holland, and everywhere became personally acquainted with musical notables. Thus, he came into direct contact with the bearers of the musical art, and was able, through recommendations, to be of good and thorough use to the pupils who had graduated, as can be seen through the many positions arranged by him for his students.

In December he was invited to conduct his D minor symphony at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig; however, he was unable to accept the invitation, since he did not want to be absent during the season of instruction. Thus, the composer had to make a sacrifice to the director. The D minor symphony was published by Breitkopf und Härtel and is dedicated to the King of Prussia, who sent the composer a gold medal through Alexander von Humboldt, with whom Kittl exchanged letters because of this circumstance. The symphony was also performed in Berlin under Taubert's direction, and Rellstab, in his review of the work, assigns the composer a high rank, particularly because of the Andante movement.

In January 1846, he lost his father, a noble old man of 71, who was accompanied to the grave by the undivided recognition and respect of all who knew him. Kittl, in his pain, found relief and distraction in his

interaction with Hector Berlioz, who came to Prague around this time, and had considerable conversation with him, since the students of the Conservatory, exceptionally, were allowed to participate in his concerts. In the fall, he wanted to travel to Petersburg with his youngest sister, Jenny, and have his D minor and D major symphonies performed there, seeing as the city already knew the Jagdsinfonie. Kapellmeister Kazinsky had already rented him an apartment – everything was prepared for his arrival. Then he became ill in Hamburg and had to remain there for three weeks. For this reason, there was an alteration in his travel plans; he now went to Copenhagen, where he was most amicably received by Saloman, Hartmann, and Olsen, and at his departure was even accompanied a mile out to sea. From Copenhagen he travelled to Gothenburg, and then by canal to Stockholm. Here he became acquainted with Lindblad, van Boom, Danström, Bonnier, and Hirsch, who, by their courteousness, made the already charming stay even more pleasant. He was chosen by acclamation to become a full member of the Stockholm Academy, and, after a sea voyage of three times 24 hours, returned to Hamburg. From there he went to Hannover, where he met Marschner, and to Berlin, where he met Meyerbeer, at whose mother's house he was invited to table, when she, after the first performance of Michael Beer's Struensee, at which Kittl was also present, gave a festive meal. In Dresden, he visited his old friend, Richard Wagner. When Wagner asked him how things were going, Kittl answered: "Not well! Many people suffer from a loss of appetite, others from sleeplessness – I suffer from a lack of an opera text." This statement was indeed founded on truth; Kittl had already been looking for an opera text for three years. These came to him from inside and outside Germany, but none met his requirements.

"I want to help you, dear Hans", answered Wagner. "I have a text for you." He immediately read a manuscript to him, which he had adapted from a novel by König, calling it *Die Hohe Braut*, and Kittl was wholly enchanted.

Kittl set to work with great enthusiasm and completed this four-act opera in eleven months, calling it *Bianca and Giuseppe* or *Die Franzosen vor Nizza*. Since he was overloaded with other affairs throughout the day, he would only use evenings and nights for composition work, and thus weakened his eyes so severely that after this time he could no longer read or write without spectacles.

He presented the completed opera to the management of the Estates Theatre, it was accepted, and the director, Hoffmann, had new scenery painted and new costumes made in order to present the work to the public with pride. Kittl led everything – from the first rehearsals at the piano to the actual performance, which took place on February 19th 1848 before a crowded full house. When Kittl appeared, he was welcomed by long applause. There is probably almost nothing more thrilling for the nerves of an artist than directing a work of one's own for several hours. The success of each number always left behind such an impression that the author had to gather all his strength in order not to let his mood affect his conducting, and to work calmly with a clear vision. When, in the first act, the second tenor had an alarming memory lapse, the conductor, as he later described, literally saw black before his eyes, and only when, after the first act, he was called twice for bows did his state of mind calm down once again.

In the second act, however, he experienced a triumph which stands almost unrivalled in the annals of Prague theatre. The scene takes place at the peak of a high mountain not far from Nice. The sun, shrouded in fog, which slowly and gradually clears, presages

a wonderful day; the conspirators kneel in silent prayer to gather strength for their deed. From the depths of the background, up from the valley, the martial music of the French is heard, to which the conspirators add their voices. And when the trio of the March begins, with which one of the conspirators, Giuseppe (Reichel, the first tenor), sings a thrilling melody, touching his highest note, thunderous applause was heard from the public, like a crashing avalanche, and lasted until the scene was repeated. This opera has been produced more than twenty times since then, but the effect of this scene continues, its power undiminished. The fate of the opera is thus sealed. Kittl was called twelve times for bows on the evening of the performance. With the subscriptions cancelled, the opera was given four times in a row, a success which no opera had enjoyed until then. Kittl, however, conducted four benefit performances. The director, Hoffmann, gave the composer a grand banquet, and handed him a very tasteful conducting baton, with a cordial speech.

Kittl was already negotiating with Leipzig to sell his opera when the days of March interrupted and with them all the unrest which devastatingly swept through the states of the German Confederation. Music lost all its meaning, and politics alone remained the single crucial and saving principle, and trampled, with its heavy, iron-shod foot, all the seeds and flowers of knowledge and art.

After the bloody week of Pentecost in Prague, when all the schools and institutes were demolished, and everything threatened to fall apart, a nameless melancholy took over Kittl's soul. There was also talk of the Conservatory closing, and Kittl took this so hard that he fell into an insomnia which lasted for several weeks and disturbed his nerves so much that he was unable to work in the accustomed manner. His idée fixe was that he would have nothing to eat. This obsession had put down such deep roots that it would not yield when, after a year, circumstances were friendlier, and order returned. But little by little these dark shadows departed from his life, and the sun shone amicably once again. In the meantime, the March from his opera had travelled across Europe at an incredible speed. Most of the cities of Italy and Hungary were stormed to its rhythms, it went to Belgium, France, England, and Russia, as confirmed by witnesses, and even made its way into the alpine cottages of Styria.

In February 1852, his three-act opera *Waldblume*, with a libretto by Hikel, was performed. The subject – idyllic/romantic – was less appealing; the music offered several favourite numbers, especially a duet, which, in the soulful performance of Eugenie Fischer (later Nimbs) created such enthusiasm that it always had to be encored. Since the opera had been rehearsed shortly before the change in direction, it could not be performed more than six times, and since the *prima donna* and the baritone had left, it was not produced again.

In July of the same year, Kittl received a text from Leipzig from Julius Eduard Hartmann: Die Bilderftürmer, which he found so appealing that he sketched out this four-act opera between August 5th and September 23rd, and did the instrumentation between September 23rd 1852 and March 20th 1853. For this he had established a basic rule: "Nulla dies sine linea" – whatever happened, Kittl worked on his piece each day, and only in this way was it possible to complete it in such a short time.

Immediately after his last concert, which fell on Palm Sunday, March 21, Kittl travelled to Frankfurt am Main following an invitation from the orchestra personnel there, in order to direct his Jagdsinfonie at the grand Good Friday Concert, and also to take over the conducting of his opera, *Die Franzosen vor Nizza,* which was being rehearsed there. The Jagdfinfonie was so pleasing that the members of the orchestra applauded during the rehearsal – a very unusual occurrence! – and Kittl was called for a bow after the performance. In the art and manner of his conducting, many found a resemblance to that of Kapellmeister Guhr. The opera was conducted by Kapellmeister Schmidt because Kittl was afraid that he himself would become too agitated. The March was received just as stormily as it had been in Prague, an encore was demanded, and Kittl was very enthusiastically called for a bow after the second act.

On the return journey, Kittl met with Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, who published the complete piano reduction with lyrics. Much earlier, when Kittl received the libretto from Wagner, the latter had stipulated that he should not be named publicly as the author. This was the case for all the Prague performances – all the posters simply said: "after a novel by König". But this was an open secret that everyone knew about. When, in 1849, Wagner fled to Switzerland, and later published a volume "Three opera texts, with a message to my friends", where he literally says, in speaking about this libretto, "this is the same text which Kittl, director of the Prague Conservatory later brought to performance with the title *Die Franzosen vor Nizza*" – Kittl naturally believed that he had been released from his commitment, immediately named him publicly

in Frankfurt as author of the libretto, and wanted to indicate him as such on the title page of the piano reduction as well. Then Kittl received a message from Breitkopf & Härtel claiming that Wagner by no means wished to be named as librettist, whereupon Kittl immediately desisted from his intention. An unpleasant tension arose between the two old friends as a result of this contretemps. But when Tannhäuser was supposed to be performed in Prague, and this project could not be carried out without the assistance of the Conservatory, Kittl, in the interest of this work, waived the application of the statutes which prohibited any collaboration with other institutions and permitted the participation of 49 students. This course of action was reciprocated amicably by Wagner, and through a cordial letter, which Wagner wrote to Kittl, the two friends were reconciled.

The first performance of the *Bilderftürmer* took place in April 1854. The poet came to Leipzig to attend the first performances. The theatre director, Steger, had had new decorations and new costumes prepared for the opera. Kittl did not conduct, and that was precisely why he was called for even more bows than was customary. The third act was the most popular – the chorus and a duet had to be repeated at all performances. The poet had promised the composer a new libretto, but scarcely had he arrived in Leipzig before he succumbed to a nervous fever, and died a few days later, in the prime of his life. Kittl received this news, without the least preparation, through the newspapers.

When, in May of the same year, the Austrian Emperor came to Prague shortly after his marriage to Empress Elisabeth, where he was received with endless festivities, Kittl conducted, at a solemn torch-parade, in the presence of their Majesties and of thousands of people who filled the castle square, a cantata he had composed for the occasion, which was published by Hoffmann immediately thereafter. In March 1855, Kittl, in recognition of his services for the Conservatory, received from His Majesty the grand gold medal for art and science.

In December of the same year, the musical world of Prague suffered a harsh blow in the death of Count S. Kittl composed a male quartet for this sad occasion, for which Meissner wrote the text. It was sung at the public blessing of the corpse. Presently Kittl is not working on any larger works, but is writing duets for soprano and alto, lieder, and characteristic piano pieces.

His works that have appeared until now are the following:

Op. 1. Six Idylles, Haslinger.
Op. 2. Sechs Idyllen, Marco Berra
Op. 3. Wilde Rofen, sechs Lieder, Haslinger.
Op. 4. Sechs Lieder, Diabelli.
Op. 5. Sechs Lieder, Breitkopf und Härtel.
Op. 6. Drei Scherzi, ditto
Op. 7. Klage nicht! (Lied), Hoffmann.
Op. 8. Romanze für das Pianoforte (Mozart-Album).
Op. 9. Jagd-Sinfonie (Auflegftimme und vierhändiger Klavier-Auszug).
Op. 10. Romanze für das Pianoforte, Breitkopf und Härtel.
Op. 11. Drei Gefänge, ditto.
Op. 12. Der Vogelsteller- für Mezzo-Sopran, Hofmeifter.
Op. 13. Drei Lieder, ditto.
Op. 14. Prager wilde Rofe, ditto.
Op. 15. Die Abfahrt des Korfaren, für Sopran und Tenor, ditto.
Op. 16. Drei Gefänge, Schlesinger.
Op. 17. Drei Impromptus fiir das Pianoforte, ditto.
Op. 18. Six Impromptus für das Pianoforte, Hofmeifier.
Op. 19. Sinfonie (D-moll), published parts, Breitkopf und Härtel
Op. 20. Der böfe Genosse (für eine Baritonitimme), Hofmeifter.
Op. 21. Sechs Lieder, Hoffmann.
Op. 22. Konzert-Ouvertüre (D dur), Kiftner.
Op. 23. Sechs Gefänge, ditto.
Op. 24. Sinfonie (D dur), Schott.
Op. 25. Grand Septuor, Kiftner.
Op. 26. Trois Impromptus, Peters.
Op. 27. Grande Sonate à 4 mains, Schuberth.
Op. 28. Trio für Klavier, Violine und Cello, ditto.
Op. 29. Trois Impromtus, Hofmeifter.
Op. 30. Bianca und Giufeppe, oder die Franzofen vor Nizza, complete piano reduction with text, Breitkohf und Härtel.
Op. 31. Zwei Defilirmärsche, Spina.
Op. 32. Zwei Defilirmäsfche, Hoffmann.
Op. 33. Jubel-Kantate, ditto.
Op. 34. Sechs zweiftimmige Gefänge für Sopran und Alt, Chriftoph und Kuhe

Through Opus 44 the manuscripts have already been sold, and will soon appear with various publishers.

Ivan Ilić
Reicha Rediscovered, Vol. 1

Ivan Ilić - piano.
Text: EN, DE, FR.
Recorded: Mar. 2017, Le Studio Ansermet, Geneva. Released: 2017.
TT: 66:47. DDD. 1 CD Chandos CHAN 10950

Antonín Rejcha (known as Antoine Reicha in France) was among the most remarkable musicians of his time. Today, he is considered one of the most interesting figures in European music. He was born in Prague, but he left the city as a boy, working in a number of prominent European cities. He knew Beethoven and Haydn very well. He settled in Paris in 1808, where he received many significant honours for his musical abilities. His Parisian pupils included Berlioz, Gounod, Liszt, and Franck. Rejcha's compositions and theoretical works still fascinate us today with their quality and originality. In his brave, even revolutionary opinions and musical experiments, Rejcha often reminds one of the efforts of "avant garde" composers that came many decades after him. Interest in Rejcha's oeuvre has been on the rise in the last few years, as attested to by this CD of his piano works, symbolically titled *Reicha Rediscovered*. The attractiveness of this recording is certainly aided by the fact that all of the pieces are marked as "premiere recordings". We are presented with three parts of the original theoretical-practical work *Practische Beispiele (no. 4 Fantaisie sur un seul accord, no. 7 Capriccio, no. 20 Harmonie),* then the *Grande Sonata in C major*, the *Sonata in F major "Variations on a Theme by Mozart"* (with the loosely appended separate *Rondo*, which here replaces the lost final movement of the sonata), and the *Introduction to the Etude no. 1 in E minor* from the *Études dans le genre fugué,* op. 97. Without exception, the compositions are uncommonly inventive (the four-minute *Fantaisie sur un seul accord*, for example, is constructed exclusively from the notes of a single major chord), they often have interesting forms (frequently a fantasia or improvisation), and they are all marked by an effective and colourful harmonic development. Everything in these pieces that deserves attention (and there is quite a lot) is expounded upon in detail by the extensive booklet text, whose author is the important Rejcha expert Louise Bernard de Raymond. I admit that at first listening, I was not particularly excited by Serbian-American pianist **Ivan Ilić** – his playing seemed too stiff and lacking in fantasy. Over time, however, I developed a taste for Ilić. His pianism might be aristocratically reserved, but it is also very virtuous in its craft and immensely cultivated sonically. Moreover, Ilić has at his disposal an instrument with an exceptionally beautiful and inspiring tone. He performs all the pieces on this album from a new Rejcha piano edition published in France by Symétrie. Chandos (who in their advertising materials refer to Rejcha as a *Czech* composer) have planned their Rejcha project for five albums. If this introductory one is anything to go by, we have much to look forward to.

Věroslav Němec

Škampa Quartet
Antonín Dvořák: American String Quartet & Quintet opp. 96–97

Škampa Quartet (Helena Jiříkovská, Adéla Štajnochrová - violins, Radim Sedmidubský - viola, Lukáš Polák - violoncello), Krzysztof Chorzelski - viola.
Text: EN, DE, FR. Recorded: Mar. and June 2015 Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK. Released: 2017. TT: 61.19. 1 CD Champs Hill Records CHRCD110.

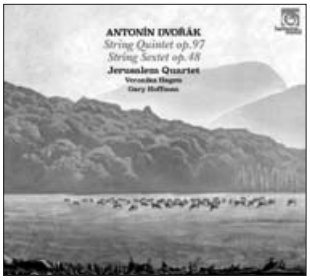
Takács Quartet
Antonín Dvořák: String Quartet op. 105 & String Quintet op. 97

Takács Quartet (Edward Dusinberre, Károly Schranz - violins, Geraldine Walter - viola, András Fejér - violoncello) & Lawrence Power - viola.
Text: EN, DE, FR. Recorded: May 2016 Concert Hall, Wyastone Estate, Monmouth, UK. Released: 2017. TT: 64.59. 1 CD Hyperion CDA68142.

Jerusalem Quartet
Antonín Dvořák: String Quintet op. 97 & String Sextet op. 48

Jerusalem Quartet (Alexander Pavlovsky, Sergei Bresler – violins, Ori Kam – viola, Kyril Zlotnikov – violoncello) & Veronika Hagen – viola, Gary Hoffman – violoncello.
Text: EN, DE, FR. Recorded: Jan. 2017 Teldex Studio Berlin, BRD. Released: 2018. TT: 66.57. 1 CD Harmonia Mundi HMM 902 320.

In the short space of a few months (between June 2017 and January 2018), international publishers Champs Hill Records, Hyperion, and Harmonia Mundi published three studio recordings of Dvořák chamber pieces for string instruments, always involving a combination of the *String Quintet no. 3* op. 97, for two violins and violas with cello, B 180 (1893). The recordings were made by established quartets with ample experience of Dvořák's chamber work, including recordings. Chronologically, the first album was brought out by British label Champs Hill Records, featuring the **Škampa Quartet** in an ideal combination with the "American" *String Quartet no. 12 in F major* op. 96, B 179, which was composed a little earlier



than the quintet. There is much that suggests that middle-generation Czech quartets, including the Haas and Zemlinsky Quartets, for example, have abandoned the older Czech interpretive tradition of the *American Quartet*, which consists of a kind of Haydn-Janáček shorthand and interpretive directness, skipping the repeat in the opening movement. The Škampa Quartet recording is thoughtful, amorous in details, comfortably loose in the wide-breathed tempi and predominantly lyrical in expression. The recording lacks the straight-forward rhythm of older Czech versions (e.g. the Panoch Quartet) and wagers on the strong lyrical drive of the opening movements. The **Takács Quartet,** which has to its name a number of successful Dvořák recordings, including an older recording (Decca 430 077-2, 1989) of the *String Quartet no. 14 in A flat major* op. 105, B 193 (1896), decided to focus on detail and accentuate the neurotic passages of the composer's last quartet, again presented in an ideal combination with the quintet. While the composition of the *American Quartet* preceded the quintet, it was the 14th quartet that followed. After repeated listening, however, I cannot help but feel that with the Hungarian-British unit, the quartet recording is much more convincing than the quintet, for whom they invited violist **Lawrence Power** following their successful Brahms quintet recordings. The last to enter the notional competition for laurels for the most convincing interpretation of Dvořák's E flat quintet was the **Jerusalem Quartet** with their recording of the quintet and the *String Sextet in A major* op. 48, B 80 (1878), for which they invited Canadian cellist **Gary Hoffman** and violist of the Hagen sibling-quartet, **Veronika Hagen.** Thanks in part to their contributions, the result is a sonically rich, rhythmically and dynamically hyper-contrasted recording of this beautiful sextet, ideally balanced in tempo and without a trace of the central-European sonic Melos and vibrating ham-ups, spiced up with gentle glissandi, breathing on the neck of the referential recording of the Smetana Quartet with Chuchro and Suk (Supraphon 11 1469-2131, 1988). The latest recording of the sextet, whose "divine" origin was undisputed even by Václav Talich himself, does not hide the virtuosic ambitions of the ensemble, who play the outer movements with vigor usually reserved for the Mendelssohn *Octet*. This review, however, is primarily concerned with comparing recordings of Dvořák's *American Quartet*, to which we could also add the recent production by the Haas Quartet for Supraphon. Of the recordings of Dvořák's youngest string quartet under review, I prefer those by the Škampa and Jerusalem Quartets. From among those three, but also among the other forty six commercial recordings made between 1937 and 2017, the Jerusalem Quartet's production will captivate with its rich sound, the contrasting tempi and dynamics, pointed agogics, and the almost soloistic first viola part in the scherzo trio. The Jerusalem Quartet has an inclination towards the smallest of dynamics, especially in the third variation movement, whose dark corners the players explore fearlessly. The Škampa Quartet is right on the Jerusalem's heels, presenting the strong and impossible-to-miss character of **Radim Sedmidubský**, whose viola dominates the entire CD, including the *American Quartet*. The pairing with the F major quartet adds attraction, and that's not to mention the duo of violists Sedmidubský – **Chorzelski** (Belcea Quartet), whose rendition of the scherzo in the E flat major quintet is breathtaking (said without a shred of uncritical nationalism). In the introduction of the scherzo, the viola does not sound like a native drum: it becomes one. And the viola solo in the trio has the emotion of Moravian folklore, so you will immediately recall the Škampa's Janáček album with Iva Bittová (Supraphon). The acute accents sharpen the recording and logically segment it at once. An added bonus are the gently restrained folkloric reminiscences. The Škampa Quartet's recording was rightly chosen as The Times Record of the Year 2017. If you want to rediscover Dvořák's American quintet sonically and formally, I recommend the Jerusalem Quartet recording, if only for the contrasts in mood in the variation movement. If you want to enjoy the quintet like a hedonist, you must opt for the Škampa Quartet disc, if only because it contains their third *American Quartet* recording (1991, 1998, 2015). The collection of a Dvořák discophile will however never be complete without the wonderful recordings of Dvořák's quartets no. 14 (Takács Quartet) and the spectacular string sextet (Jerusalem Quartet).

Martin Jemelka

Přemysl Vojta, Tobias Koch Metamorphosis

Přemysl Vojta – horn,
Tobias Koch – piano.
Text: EN, DE. Recorded: 2015 at the WDR studios in Cologne. Released: 2018. TT: 66:04. 1CD CAvi-Music Records. AVI 8553383.

On *Metamorphosis*, we hear the natural horn, the romantic horn, and the modern horn. Through significant compositions by Beethoven, Schumann, and Klebe, this remarkable album maps three development stages of an instrument that was at first a symbol of nature and the hunt. Concurrently, this CD takes the form of a guide through two centuries during which the development of musical language saw profound changes linked to instruments and their development. These were perfected in order to allow composers to write music rich not only in melody fbut also in emotion and tone-painting. This metamorphosis also corresponds to the choice of a second, more-than-accompanying instrument, which also went through a significant transformation – the piano. At the instruments are Czech horn player **Přemysl Vojta** and German pianist **Tobias Koch.** Vojta is among our most respected horn players. In 2010, he

celebrated a triumph at the ARD competition in Munich, where he not only won 1st prize, but also the audience award and two special prizes from the expert jury. A year later, he succeeded at the Beethovenfest in Bonn. Since 2015, he has been solo horn with the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Cologne. Fifty-year-old Tobias Koch is an experienced pianist valued primarily as an interpreter of Schumann and romantic music more generally. The journey begins in 1800, when Ludwig van Beethoven wrote his *Sonata für pianoforte und horn F dur*, op.17. The composer was 30 years old at the time and known only in Vienna. The piece betrays a strong Mozart influence, so there are unusually light transitions between dancing gaiety, lightness and humour, and German severity. Vojta plays a natural horn, i.e. an instrument without valves and with a simpler bore. And he plays with admirable certainty – certainly not the result of gruelling studio work, as the entire album took only three days to record in the radio studios of the WDR. The sound is full-blooded, fresh, dynamic, and expressively demarcated. Clear passages swiftly alternate with echoes of hunt fanfares, military marches, or the whirl of a dance. The typical period Viennese piano at times reminds one of a harpsichord or spinet, and further lightens the sonata. Robert Schumann referred to the horn as the soul of the orchestra. The romantic instrument had valves – two at first, then three from 1830 onwards – and a typical, spiralling bore shape. The composer put the extended possibilities of the improved horn to good use, particularly in his chamber music. The album includes three pieces from 1849, i.e. Schumann's most productive year, in which the composer felt healthy (i.e. the anxiety and neurasthenia relented). In this case, however, the dramaturgy is truly risky and inspired. Only one is a work originally written for horn; the others are transcriptions. Excellent ones. The *Adagio und Allegro für pianoforte und horn* op. 70 presents the horn primarily as the carrier of a wide range of emotions and sonic colours. Vojta is steadfast even at the top of his range. He can bend or break the notes in accordance with the emotional drive of the music and without being distracting or impulsive. In the case of the *Fantasiestücke für pianoforte und klarinette*, the composer allows for the clarinet part to be played by violists or cellists. Vojta had no qualms about using a horn, proving the incredible flexibility of this seemingly robust instrument. Together with the pianist, they managed to sonify a range of moods in sudden, unexpected changes – melancholy, optimism, explosions of emotion, luscious melody, passion, even madness, but also a sense of triumph. Typically romantic imbalance. The horn in particular often spits out extremely charged, almost hysterical tones, strong even in the highest register. The *Drei Romanzen für pianoforte und oboe* op. 94 is constructed from distinctive and truly exciting melodic and emotive contrasts. It is Schumann's only piece for oboe, dedicated to his wife Clara in thanks for being with him through good and bad. The first movement is played with true emotional urgency, the second with a celebratory and energetic melodicism. The final movement then enhances these positions with faster cuts and moments of sudden silencing.

The modern horn acquired a fourth valve and an extension of its bore. The performer can thus perform even the most difficult and chromatically extensive pieces. German composer Giselher Klebe (1926–2009) is certainly not a full-blooded avant-gardist: he is the author of 140 traditionally constructed pieces, including 14 operas, 8 symphonies, 15 concertos and so on. The protagonists of this CD opted for a piece that brings them back to Beethoven. Not only did they thus close that line of development, but they also pointed towards the roots of European music of the 20th century. *Veränderung der Sonate für klavier, op. 27/2 von Ludwig van Beethoven in Sonate für horn und klavier, op. 95*, written in 1986, takes a thoroughly contemporary approach to the classical style, i.e. dispensing with unnecessary curls and flourishes. The central melody is taken from the famous *Moonlight Sonata*. The piano is more present in the first movement, with the horn only timbrally outlining the motif, which it later develops with an immensely sensitive, gentle, inward-looking and exquisitely silver manner. The second part, in contrast, is playfully clear, with dynamically varied, inventively layered and transformative variations of the motif. The ending returns to the opening, to Beethovenian moonlight lyricism, but this gradually swells up, finally exploding in a gripping conclusion. I'll admit that the six minutes of the *Allegro agitato* brought me out of my chair – the last time I had that happen with the horn was with Ligeti.

Jan Hocek

Antonín Dvořák
Moravské dvojzpěvy
(Moravian Duets)

Simona Šaturová – soprano,
Markéta Cukrová – mezzosoprano,
Petr Nekoranec – tenor,
Vojtěch Spurný – piano.
Text: EN, DE, FR.
Recorded: July 2017 Antonín Dvořák Museum in Prague.
Released: 2018. TT: 52.20.
1 CD Supraphon SU 4238-2.

Dvořák's *Moravian Duets*. Who doesn't know them, by ear, from the composer's artistic biography, or even from our own interpretations? They invite us to sing them – less often, surprisingly, to make complete recordings. That is why the album in question, recorded by Supraphon in July 2017, deserves recognition from the very start: it is – curiously – only the third complete recording of all twenty-three *Moravian Duets* composed between 1876 and 1881 in the original two-voice version (before, it was only Zikmundová, Soukupová, Žídek, Holeček, Supraphon 1972; Hajóssyová, Beňačková, Kundlák, Lapšanský, Opus 1991). There are more recordings of the individual cycles of *Moravian Duets*, both in Czech (Procházková, Sýkorová; Trio Ridente; Kühmeier, Fink, and others) and German (Schwarzkopf, Seefried; Banse, Fassbaender; Bonney, Kirchschlager, and others), especially those which make use of the female and mixed choir (Bouches-du-Rhône, Český pěvecký sbor, Kühn's Mixed Choir, Pěvecké sdružení pražských učitelek, Pražští pěvci). The album under review has a further added value, which is the presence of Dvořák's Bösendorfer piano (Vienna, 1879) in the recording studio. The "studio" in this case was Dvořák's villa "Amerika" in Prague's New Town district. Discophiles will recognise Dvořák's keyboard from older recordings by Radoslav Kvapil (Alto 1998) and the unique studio recordings of Dvořák's one-voice song works undertaken by Jitka Soběhartová with R. Kvapil (Assai 1998) and Alexandra Berti with **Vojtěch Spurný** (self-produced 2003). Spurný, then, sat down at Dvořák's home instrument for the second time, armed with an intimate knowledge of both its strengths (clear harmonics, a lighter attack, and softer pedalling) and its limits (a hammer-heavy tone with a longer resonance). Most of the attention, however, will deservedly follow vocalists **Simona Šaturová, Markéta Cukrová,** and the young tenor **Petr Nekoranec,** for whom this CD is a debut. The *Moravian Duets*, which set Moravian folk poetry, are among

the simplest and most accessible works Dvořák committed to paper. And that is where the interpretive difficulty lies. How to adequately approach their textual and compositional simplicity? How to tame – in dynamic and expression – the trained voice to a simplicity of expression? How, in the company of two singing voices, to allow through the sophisticated piano accompaniment, which is certainly much more than mere harmonic support for the vocal part? We could find many more problems and questions, particularly as the composer did not intend the duets as a song cycle, but rather a song collection, a bouquet of beautiful flowers, meadow greenery from the fields of Sušil's collection of Moravian folk poetry. The first requirement for a convincing interpretation of Dvořák's songs is faultless declamation, with which representatives of the youngest generation of Czech singers often struggle (see, for example, Adam Plachetka's Dvořák song double album published by Radioservis). Unfortunately, this is also partly the case with the performers in question, particularly Šaturová, whose soft Slovak accent does not always aid the declamation. Though the voices of Simona Šaturová and Markéta Cukrová are an adequate sonic blend, the surprise of the record is the engagement of the young tenor Petr Nekoranec, who interprets the duets with a youthful and spontaneous air, lightly brushing away the older recordings by Jozef Kundlák and Ivo Žídek. For that matter, the oldest – recently digitised – collected recording on Supraphon sounds intolerably aesthetically antiquated in comparison with the new recording (VT 0420-2). The current title, then, should rather be compared with other contemporary creations abroad, including those in German. For me, two recordings remain at the top – the German recording by Juliane Banse and Brigitte Fassbaender (B 60 & 62, Koch Schwann 1993) and the charming Czech recording by Edita Gruberová and Vesselina Kasarova (B 60 & 62, Nightingale Classics 1995). The first duo managed to make the duos into comical situations, spreading smiles in an illusion of a city salon entertainment. The second charms one with the beauty of their voices and the simplicity of their expression. The new recording by Šaturová and Cukrová has certainly come close to the interpretive qualities of Banse-Fassbaender and Gruberová-Kasarova, especially as Supraphon packaged the recording in appealing graphics and invested in a captivating introductory text by Jan Kachlík, an expert among experts. In this project, Šaturová and Cukrová's experience with early music brought fruit in the ascetically disciplined vocal performance and the unmissable respect for Dvořák's notation, rather than in the form of an exceptional listening experience. The recording arises out of the Czech tradition of the last few decades, bringing Dvořák's duets closer to our idea of folk music than the artificial songs of the urban salon. Whoever listens to recordings by Banse-Fassbaender or Gruberová-Kasarova will be surprised how funny, spirited, even playful the interpretations of these young vocal gems can be. That was not the path taken by the protagonists of this new complete recording. It is less of a problem than the running time – less than an hour –, which could have been supplemented by Dvořák's piano miniatures, often composed in chronological proximity to the *Moravian Duets*. Even so, the performers and the publisher deserve an honest word of thanks for this new recording.

Martin Jemelka

Rudolf Firkušný
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Piano Concertos no. 15 in B flat major and no. 18 in B flat major

Rudolf Firkušný – piano, WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne, Zdeněk Mácal, George Szell – conductors.
Text: EN, DE, JP.
Recorded: Jan. 1973 (K.450), June 1966 (K.456), Funkhaus, Klaus-von-Bismarck-Saal, Köln.
Released: 2017. TT: 53:23. ADD.
1 CD Weitblick SSS0209-2.

Reading the booklet of this CD is guaranteed to bring every discophile's pulse up in no time. He will learn that the Firkušný recordings in question only recently surfaced in the WDR SO archive and have never been published before. The recording of the *Piano Concerto no. 18 in B flat major* K. 456 with **George Szell** was made in 1966, i.e. more than half a century ago, while the *Piano Concerto no. 15 in B flat major* K. 450 with **Zdeněk Mácal** conducting is seven years younger. We might like to know why both recordings were in the WDR SO archive for such a long time and under what circumstances they were "discovered", but unfortunately, the booklet remains utterly silent on this topic. It does, however, contain a very interesting text by Veronique and Igor Firkušný, which tells us – among other things – that their father had a deep relationship with both conductors – not only professional but personal too. Apparently, he had so much respect for Szell that in the library next to his piano, he had exhibited in a place of pride the conductor's photograph and his glasses. And over time, Firkušný's relationship with Zdeněk Mácal grew into a friendship between their families. Countless admiring words have been written about the art of **Rudolf Firkušný**, and of these recordings too, we can say nothing else than that they are excellent. Firkušný delivers Mozart lightly, playfully, song-fully, with logical and naturally breathed rubatos (the charming minor episode in the 1st movement of the 15th concerto). His fingers can both sparkle (the ornamentation at the beginning of the cadence in the 1st movement of the 15th concerto) and caress (the graceful second subject in the 1st movement of the 15th concerto, the gently nuanced melancholy 2nd movement of the 18th concerto). His rhythm – here and there spiced with a sharp accent – is marvellous and his self-confidence thrilling (the youthfully rowdy return of the subject in the 3rd movement of the 15th concerto). Above all of this, the listener feels the enormous, almost infectious joy of playing (the shiny cadence in the 1st movement of the 18th concerto). The **WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne** also gives a fine performance. The orchestral component of both recordings is pleasantly lightened and playful, and it is clear that both Szell and Mácal had a good rapport with the soloist. Special notice goes to the exceptionally cultivated and colourful winds, with which both the conductors work masterfully. This CD will undoubtedly bring joy to admirers of the art of Rudolf Firkušný.

Věroslav Němec

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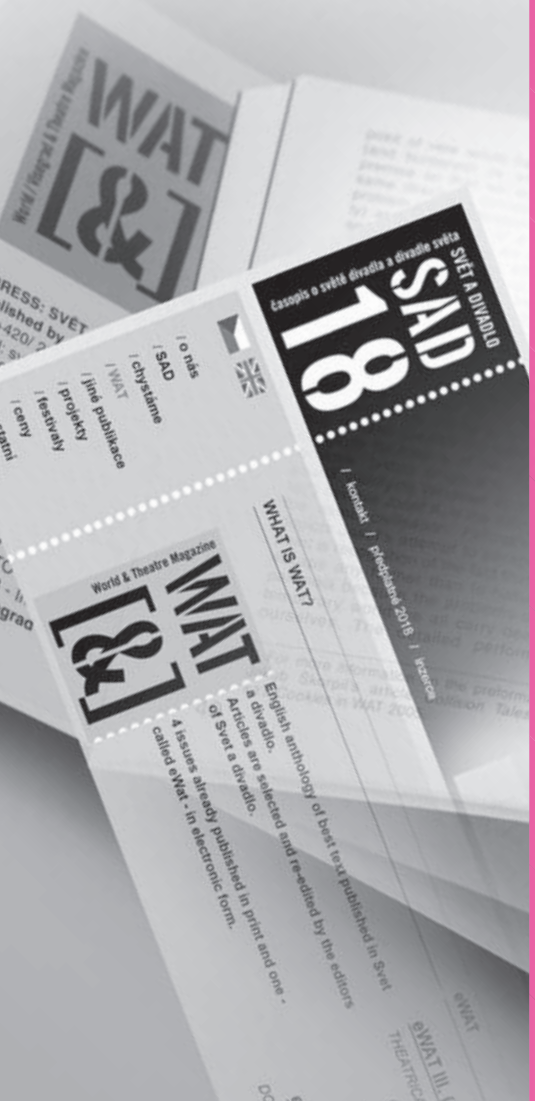

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