



Pavel Zemek

An Interview

COMPOSER

Czech Music 2000:

1

65081
čtrnáct
+ 200 na desku

Pavel Zemek (real name Pavel Novák, b. 1957), studied composition under Miloš Ištvan, and later continued his education on a scholarship in London (1992-1993, under G. Benjamin) and in Paris (1997-98 under G. Grisey). He regards his three daughters, Magdalena (1988), Verunka (1991) and Miriamka (1997), as his most successful creations.

To what extent were you influenced by your studies at the Janáček Academy in Brno in the late Eighties with Professor Ištvan, known for his montage method, and in what ways did your approach to composition change at that period?

A teacher always influences his pupil, even if the pupil ultimately takes a different path. Prof. Ištvan was uncompromising; he taught us to accept his own techniques. In the first years I enjoyed it, but then I tried to strike out in my own way. Ištvan understood my position, even if sometimes the sparks used to fly. Whatever disagreements we had in the school, we used to sort out in the Bzenecká (editor's note: the Bzenecká wine restaurant near Janáček Academy of Music - JAMU). Looking back, I realise that he led me to an understanding and awareness of

my own self based on the knowledge I had absorbed from him. And that's a good thing. For a few years after I left school I was interested in the boundary between the overall design and the evolutionary development of connected details; diatonics strongly predominated. I also several times experimented with using Beethoven's discoveries relating to the movement and its development (Finale op. 109), which from a certain angle I still enjoy doing today. The period after I finished my studies was one in which I gradually shifted my focus from technique to conception. Now I'm trying to achieve an ever more consistent evolution, since highly articulated forms strike me as comparatively traditional. I am interested in unison conceptions applied throughout a piece (all the instruments in unison with an octave break), and I am more interested in time - the use of classical rhythmical structures (especially 2:1), metric-rhythmical bridges (based on two full periods and one or more shortened or lengthened periods between them) and a clearer unity of form from this point of view. I am trying to develop a more precise idea of the possible

affinity between the metric-rhythmic course of a form and the time flowing around us. I have lost faith in seriality, modality and even in a tonal centre and I enjoy the free movement of tonal space according to its own acoustic orientation in consonances and dissonances. The coming period will probably see a re-evaluation of these relationships. But Ištvan's influence has not vanished. In my last quartet (4th String Quartet, "Unison"), this is present in the two-movement A-A reprise form, and in the divided piano quartet there are ritornelles.

In contrast to your music of the eighties, in recent years your work has shown a marked tendency towards the spiritual. What is behind the change?

My first experiments in this directions were in the late eighties (*Stabat Mater* for solo harp, *Zahrada lásky* [The Garden of Love] on texts from St. Paul and three others). A serious illness in 1989 and a long convalescence meant that I stepped off the usual roundabout and began to see myself with more detachment. I realised, for example, that I would not be here for ever and that I had been interested in a lot of inessentials. Such changes are probably more usual in older people, but they can do you a great deal of good even in your thirties.

The end of censorship at the same time helped as well.

C. G. Jung says that after forty, a person ought to make a fundamental decision - to throw himself into the world or to go into the desert. So another change is probably waiting for me. The time is ripe for it.

Does spiritual music have some specific character? After all it is easy to point out that all music is in fact a spiritual matter. With you, to what extent is it a matter of interplay with the liturgy?

The word "spiritual" in the musical sphere seems to be rather vague, especially as it has been used recently. Also, the spiritual is something that is, not something we do. I am more inclined to see a clear line between liturgical music and "the rest". In relation to the liturgy, music has precise boundaries in form and content. Ingmar Bergman put it exactly when he observed



◀ From Pavel Zemek's *Hommage à Lord Jesus*

| In This Issue: | Page |
|---------------------------|------|
| New Music Marathon '99 | 3 |
| Events 2000 | 6-7 |
| Bohuslav Martinů Festival | 10 |

that the greatest power of music is in its relationship to religious ceremony. I explain it in terms of the way liturgical music becomes part of a higher unity (order), and that itself prevents the kind of exhibitionism by composer and performer that mashes and dilutes it, and also means that it is bound to a certain content that illuminates it. I see current liturgical music as an attempt to develop the medieval type of form which is based on the chorale or chant. This provides a model of the structure, or the whole range of pitch, the metro-rhythm and the colour. From the modern point of view this involves the use of early forms of contrast, the reduction of the dynamics in the formal progress of the music, and above all a necessary purification of the word and its meaning (as against its fragmentation, parallel overlapping and so forth). It also means a rejection of the vocal virtuosity of *Ars antiqua* and *Ars nova* including all the other techniques that foreshadowed the musical form of the modern age and its concept of contrast, such as successive and concurrent contrast in time, the later (renaissance) complication of form and so forth. It is only now - after forty - that I am trying to master the smaller cycle. I'm at the halfway mark and would rather like to go back and start again in a different way. I really don't want to hear the *Songs for Easter Saturday* that I wrote 8 years ago, and especially not as part of the Easter ceremonies.

Recently you won the L. Janáček Prize for a work much longer than is usual in contemporary music. What led you to compose such a long work, and is there any hope of hearing it performed in its entirety in contemporary conditions?

I had been wanting to embark on the *Passion* for some time before, but it was only the pause after 1989 that I mentioned that allowed me to make a start in peace

and quiet. I chose the text from St. John and I was writing it for 7 years. I wanted to master a score that was large in terms of parts and length (90 mins.), and which would, for example, exceed the dimensions of a later romantic symphony but would be different in content. I couldn't actually imagine its performance in full, and the performance of a 25-minute selection brought me invaluable experience - I worked for almost a whole summer on the revision of the first four parts.

A full performance? I don't think that I could organise it by myself. Some institution or festival would have to sponsor it. I would like to set all four *Passion* texts to music. Now I want to embark on the *St. Mark Passion* and I would like to do it in a completely different way.

You are on the staff of the Brno conservatory, where you teach composition as a major subject. What do you actually try to teach your students in composition?

They say a teacher doesn't have to say too much, and that it's enough if his students watch him. And they are wonderful watchers. (In fact they often see us better than we see ourselves). These days, it probably isn't even possible to have a universal method. In that sense we are at a disadvantage compared to instrumentalists. Prof. Peter Sculthorpe from Sydney takes the view that "the composition teacher has primarily to be a friend to his student, and then all the rest follows."

Composition cannot be taught, but it may be possible to help a younger friend in his own development. From the technical point of view I try to guide them towards sufficient mastery of the movement of form, and harmony of time and structure. It may sound rather affected, but I can't put it any better. They have all the other things - tone relations, rhythm, imagination in use of colour - somewhere inside themselves

and it needs years and years of patient work. Even a well-intentioned teacher can actually deform these capacities for ever by an ill-judged intervention. With this principle in mind I also try to guide them towards their own concept of form and their own content. A good start at school is more or less an automatic requirement, but life demands completely different things and these, ultimately, are decisive. I would be glad if the students maintained a certain distance from the time in which they live. This means that they acquire the freedom necessary if they are to have a better perception of themselves and the world around them. It is the path of Nežval and the path of Reynek.

How do you see the future of contemporary classical music and its creators, here and in the outside world?

Our great antagonist is the desire for recognition, power, money, and our own impatience. It is the same today and tomorrow, here and abroad. It is just that the forms of this pressure keep changing. We succumb and increase our own troubles. Prof. Išvan once told me that he thought our generation could be the last to write, and only after another two centuries would people start to think of how to continue. Let us trust this won't happen. Perhaps there will always be those who will stand up, carry the tradition on and maybe even help each other more if there are even fewer of them. There are major talents in the generation twenty years younger.

I came across a book of Schubert's last letters. In the very last, addressed to his father, Schubert writes that "everyone of us is entrusted with a certain task", and asks "But who, who will confirm for us that we have fulfilled our task well?" The uncertainty as to whether development will continue today (and with us) will always be there.

/Interview by Ivo Medek/

Premières for Young Composers

EVENT

As is already traditional, the energetic Q Association has devoted one of the most recent concerts in its rich and varied season to young composers at the very start of their career. This year the young composers were from the Department of Composition and Conducting at the Janáček Academy of Arts in Brno.

The very first composition on the programme - *Nezelený muž* [The Ungreen Man] for male voice and piano by Markéta Dvořáková - brought very interesting, ingenious music with a keen sense of humour that found an excellent basis in the text by Hans Arp. This excellent impression was enhanced by the standard of performance by Mark Olbrzymek and the composer herself.

Another "second-year", Edgar Mojdl, introduced himself at the concert with two pieces. Of the two solo works (guitar and claves), performed by the author himself, the piece with the rather mysterious name *NZT for solo claves* was very much the most impressive. The author had clearly devoted great thought to the acoustic possibilities

of this very simple instrument and it is no accident that the piece won an honourable mention in the composers' competition at the Trstěnice International Courses 1999. The piece *Vyzvánění* [Pealing] by Ondřej Šárek was also a study in acoustic possibilities. Like Mojdl, Šárek has set himself a difficult task - to create a composition for a single percussion instrument, in his case the tubular bells.

Jiří Raclavský presented his piece *In Honour of I. Xenakis* for piano, performed by S. Bánovec, and another fourth-year student Jan Srb rounded off the concert with his dynamic *Movement for Trumpet and Percussion* played by M. Brůček (trumpet) and P. Hladík and R. Králíček (percussion).

The concert confirmed the exploratory spirit of the young composers. At such events they have the opportunity to hear their own compositions, which is extremely important for their future development.

/Ivo Medek/

Marathon from Azerbaijan to the British Isles

FESTIVALS

The New Music Marathon is probably the only Prague festival of contemporary music that has succeeded in attracting a broad spectrum of the public. There are several reasons why. One is the fact that this festival takes place in the Archa Theatre, which is well-known for its strong focus on non-mainstream projects and has managed to create a stable following of people who often attend performances just to see what is going on at the theatre. Above all, however, the festival owes its success to its artistic policy of seeking to present the widest possible range of currents of contemporary "classical" music in which the definition "classical" is stretched to its limits, since they are often currents at the very edge of the category or at the crossing point with other musical genres. In other words, the festival has built a reputation as a showcase of "alternative" contemporary classical music, and this attracts followers of other alternative musical genres such as alternative rock (an advertising spot on Radio 1 is a help here), and also, for example, part of the American community in Prague and plenty of intellectuals orientated to the arts who regard it as little short of a duty to keep up with the "alternative" scene. The atmosphere of the festival is also unlike the usual atmosphere of other contemporary classical music concerts. The foyer of the Archa and its unbelievably cheap bar provide visitors with a place to go if they want to give one of the hourly blocs of music a miss or to leave the auditorium during a set that fails to appeal to them; in the bar they can digest the musical experiences they have liked better, and the local culinary specialities. This creates the overall impression of relaxed promenading without interrupting the concentrated listening experience in the auditorium.

The first evening of this year's Marathon was devoted to the music of the Azerbaijani composers Elmir Mirzoyev and Faradj Karayev. This represented the "most traditional" definition of contemporary music in the festival framework, although it also evidently partly belonged under the "ethno" rubric on the festival poster. This is because the Azerbaijani composers not only use the techniques of new music (at the Saturday workshop Faradj Karayev described his technique as freely dodecaphonic) but also the technique of the traditional middle eastern "mugam" form. In this way, as the composers say themselves, they are trying to unite the music of East and West. The evening was valuable primarily because it allowed us to hear music from an area that is geographically and culturally relatively distant, which the listener in our region almost never has a chance to encounter. It is also true, however, that for the same reasons it was very difficult for our untrained ears to fully understand and judge the music, and the length of some of the pieces proved a particular stumbling block for the Central European.

The second evening, which actually started in the afternoon and lasted past midnight - i.e. a Marathon in the true sense of the word - presented four composers in five hour-long monothematic blocks. The "big star" at the festival this year was British composer and double bassist Gavin Bryars. With his ensemble, sometimes expanded to include local musicians, Bryars played his melodious music, based on the ambient and the minimal, to a highly appreciative audience. The rock fans among the public were particularly pleased by the Lithuanian experimentalist Šarūnas Nakas, who presented his more than hour-long piece *Ziqurattu II*, in which electronically generated sound is the core and a major role is given to percussion instruments. The Czech scene was represented this year by Miroslav Pudlák with his Mondschein Ensemble, which performed some of his older and well-tryed pieces such as *Letím (I shall fly)* and also one première in the form of the essentially minimalist piece *Astarot*. For me the high point of the festival was the bloc from the Agon Orchestra devoted to the noted German composer Heiner Goebbels. *La Jalousie (Jealousy)*, structured around the reading of a French poem, linked natural sounds from a tape to the sound of the orchestra in a very meaningful way (which unfortunately cannot be said of all electro-acoustic compositions). It was followed by *Samplersuite*, which deployed various generated and natural sounds on the base provided by individual highly ingenious movements of a "suite", drawing on many different genres. In the final hours deep into the night, the Titanic went down again with skilful assistance from the Bryars Ensemble (G. Bryars: *The Sinking of the Titanic*)

One novelty at this year's Marathon was the Saturday Workshop. The composers E. Mirzoyev, F. Karayev, M. Pudlák and Š. Nakas all took part, and Heiner Goebbels was represented by a video of his project *Black and White*. It was attended by Prague students, several music journalists and also students from some schools with a musical focus outside Prague, and the arched space of the Archa Theatre Studio was packed to its limits.

/Tereza Havelková/

Two Moravian Festivals of New Music

Two festivals - the Brno Meeting of European Music + and the Ostrava The Musical Present overlapped not only in their dates, but partly in the nature of their programmes. They thus gave audiences in both towns a chance to get to know new compositions by leading Czech, and in the case of the Brno festival, also leading foreign composers. Over more than ten concerts, dozens of works were presented by Czech performers, and especially by musicians who already have long experience of work with contemporary music (Ars Incognita, DAMA DAMA, the Mondschein Ensemble, Resonance, Petr Matuszek and others). Nor was there any lack of young performers, especially from the Ostrava Conservatory which clearly devotes a great deal of attention to contemporary music in the teaching process. This was fully reflected in the concert by students of composition, who included both current students at the conservatory (Dyrrová, Šimůnek, Müllnerová, Hüla), and its graduates now studying at the Janáček Academy in Brno (Dvořáková, Figar) and Academy of Arts in Prague (Gavlasová, Pavelková), and also in evidence in a repeat performance of the opera *Věc Cage (The Cage Affair)* by the Brno composers' team (Medek, Piňos, Štědroň), given by students from the ranks of both schools. Both events were reviews - offering the chance of comparison - of all the generations of living composers, from the oldest (such as Báčhorek, Parsch, Piňos, Pokorný, Faltus), to those in early mid-career such as Pudlák, Košut, Medek, Bartoň, Zemek), and from those in late mid-career (Grossmann, Schiffauer, Štědroň and others) to the young generation (apart from those mentioned above, they included the Bezmocná hrstka [Helpless Handful] group who appeared in Brno in a special concert of their own). The Meeting of European Music Festival also - in line with the goals expressed in its title - offered an opportunity for further comparison by presenting music from England (thanks to the Mondschein Ensemble), and Slovakia. If to these two festivals we add two further important events that followed in Prague in December - the Three-Day + and the Marathon, it is clear that thanks to the activities of several associations, mainly of composers (Atelier 90, The Club for New Music, Camerata, the Q Association), the end of the year was literally loaded with contemporary music.

/im/

Three-Day Plus '99 A Wasted Opportunity for Taking Stock?

FESTIVAL

The four-day festival of contemporary music known as the *Three-Day*, organised by the Atelier 90 association in collaboration with its partner society Camerata Brno took place in its tradition autumn slot (30th November - 3rd December) in the halls of the Liechtenstein Palace. The tenth anniversary of the "Velvet Revolution" might even here have stimulated an attempt to take stock of achievements and failures on the road opened up by November 89 - except that the *Three-Day* as such was not celebrating a jubilee, and so the anniversary of 89 seemed scarcely to have affected the design of the programme for what is its 7th year. Perhaps the opening event of the festival - a discussion on the theme of "Communist Totalitarianism and Musical Composition" - might have been related to the fall of communism, but only if it had worked out better. In fact only a few of the pieces

performed metaphorically recalled this historical event as part of their conceptual world. The most important of these was clearly *Stella matutina* for chamber orchestra by A. Piňos, the concluding work of the festival and undoubtedly one of its musical high points. Much this year went wrong for the organisers for well-known technical reasons as well. In the end the *Three-Day* consisted in five concerts offering a standard march past of new work (mostly premières) from composers who are for much the greater part orientated to non-traditional and non-conformist styles of expression, and who move within this broad definition in more or less striking ways. They naturally include composers with a fully individualised, distinctive voice, whose creative thought reigns with the same sovereign ease in works as differently conceived as Piňos's *Saxophone Quartet - Thanks for Every Day*, and his *Stella matutina* mentioned above. I would see M. Pudlák's song cycle *Simple-Hearted Graveyard Songs* as a certain "opus extra". It is a composition with clear features of late romantic style, for which the composer found a corresponding inspiration at the particular time and used with delightful individuality - and perhaps with symbolic meaning for the end of the millennium. Composers whose authorial signature is easily identified by the experienced listener thanks to the tried and tested personal constants and codes of communication in their music, this year too included L. Matoušek, (*Proměny ticha* [*Metamorphoses of Silence*] for string quartet), I. Loudová (*Ztracený Orfeus* [*Lost Orpheus*] for percussion solo), M. Slavický

(*Vzývání IV* [*Invocation IV*] for violin, clarinet and piano), V. Matoušek (*Incantatus* for at least three musical instruments), A. Parsch (*Bílí ptáci* [*White Birds*] for chamber ensemble), J. Rybář (*Three Toccatas* for piano - a piece that particularly highlighted the mastery with which the composer combines traditional and non-traditional elements of instrumental stylisation) and P. Pokorný, whose *Znamení noci, netopýří a mlha* [*Portents of Night, Bats and Mist*] for baritone and chamber ensemble, suffered from a slight retardation of expression in the second part, probably because the whole was drawn out at too great length. M. Haase certainly pleased others besides myself with his very successful composition *Ormai* for percussion and electronic instruments. Among the younger authors, R. Z. Novák impressed me with his *Obejmi lehce, čistě, vroucně, nekonečně* [*Embrace lightly, purely, warmly, unendingly*] for chamber ensemble, in which his earlier more rambling musical idiom had been disciplined and focused with remarkable success. The festival also presented more mediocre pieces, some of which were rather unsuccessful for one reason or another.

One characteristic feature of the *Three-Day* is the already traditional afternoon programme of student compositions. The students set it up entirely by themselves, it seems, and this is an appealing and desirable state of affairs. On the other hand, as someone getting on for old age, I can be excused for occasionally obstinacy about some principles, for example in insisting that it is not only for the author to decide whether a piece is really finished or not. That apart, this year's cannonade of student music was a kind of mini-review of the further results of the development of seven young composers whose artistic growth is still (at least formally) under the wing of a training institution and a personal teacher. In most cases, their progress towards technical sureness of touch and conceptual audacity was very clear. O. Štochl's *Troufalost* [*Presumption*] for voice and chamber ensemble was particularly eloquent testimony to both qualities. I also enjoyed O. Adámek's excellent performance of his own composition *Strom a zvíře* [*Tree and Animal*] for percussion instruments, and the contribution from M. Nejštek, whose witty *Music for 18 Strings* caused a certain stir in the hall among certain students who were trying to count them all up (the composer must certainly have been pleased at the story). M. Ivanovič's *Toccatà for Two Pianos* also came across relatively well, and the youngest of all the composers represented, R. Pallas, gave



▲ Petr Pokorný, Miloš Haase, Ivana Loudová, Marek Kopelent and Michal Macourek (from left to right)

convincing and appealing testimony of his talent in the form of his small *Fantasy for Piano*.

But now I am forced to raise my chalky and didactic old finger once again. This student artillery was logistically supported from the rear by a kind of warped ideological campaign in the form of authorial commentaries, and even in the music itself there were here and there disturbing symptoms of something that these commentaries expressed more openly, and that frightens me. It is as if the young composers have sometimes felt helpless and bewildered by the limitless material in front of them and the limitless possibilities of treating that material with a meaningful purpose that would lead to a result of the same quality. This feeling of helplessness has then been masked by a sarcastic and self-ironising pose or by astral nebula of mystery, but either way, what both express is a negative attitude to practically everything. Sometimes one even gets the impression of a certain disgust with music itself (or, for God's sake, even with life! - to judge by M. Trnka's *Selbsmord (Suicide)* for piano, which was so long that it almost became a work of naturalism). As a historian I know that almost every young generation of the past has wrestled with similar problems.

Or is the situation from the point of view of the young generation really so universally and fatally unsatisfactory that today it even embraces terror of creative freedom, a value apparently quite useless? In this too I sense the hidden perspective of "ten years after", the comparison of the achievements and the wasted opportunities from the angle of the youngest generation. Although hidden (and probably even undesired), it is still worth pondering. On every possible horizon, wherever anybody looks, the absurd grimaces guilefully in every kind of disguise.

Perhaps it is important every so often to take stock, summarise, and confront, and not only because of the symbolic end of the millennium. When after a concert one of the audience, who has come voluntarily and with sincere interest, told me that over the last 30-35 years this musical style has changed very little and referred to the performance of Kopelent's *Hudba pro pět [Music for Five]* of 1964 (the piece was included in the programme as a replacement for a planned première - and in the circumstances we can only be grateful!), I couldn't agree, but I was somehow lost for telling arguments. Something is wrong. Perhaps the degree of knowledge in the audience? Certainly!

Perhaps even the degree of knowledge in certain composers? Here the word "possibly" must be a warning. I have already argued for greater openness in such festivals towards history and towards the world. This year a moment of this kind came practically only with the recital by T. Ondrůšek (and, in equal isolation, with works by E. Cartman and M. Stern) - and this of course had been included at the last minute as a replacement programme, and however artistically valuable could hardly of itself fulfil the function of creating thought-provoking comparisons. Broader elements of comparison and confrontation should be integrated into such events and also, of course, adjusted to the character of the new work presented, where by contrast an element of the arbitrary is inevitable. The valuable "educational" activities of the Agon ensemble have so far successfully avoided any cross-over in timing or venue with the Three-Day, and so what is to be done? Pudlák's song cycle, perhaps thanklessly, indicates another means of historical and cultural confrontation. Maybe next time, on the 10th anniversary of the founding of Atelier 90? Or in three years, on the 10th anniversary of the Three-Day? Or maybe not until...

/Jaromír Havlík/

Musica Nova '99 COMPETITION

On the 19th to the 21st of November, the jury of the international correspondence competition in electro-acoustic music, Musica Nova, met in Prague.

The competition was founded in 1969, but for political reasons it lapsed in the seventies, and was revived in 1992 by the newly founded Society for Electro-Acoustic Music.

The competition is for work in the field known as "electro-acoustic art music", i.e. it excludes pop music and multimedia compositions both for reasons of quantity and stylistic definition. It has two separate categories: a) music for tape, and b) music envisaging performance by live instrument and also tape (for the purposes of the competition, of course, one such performance is recorded). In the course of the nineties the competition has acquired major prestige and attracts entries from important composers all over the world.

This year a total of 69 composers from 22 countries participated.

It therefore provides a very representative picture of the various directions in style in electro-acoustic music today, its current "state-of-the-art" technical basis, and the increasing capacity of composers to use this technical potential in a creative way.

The first place in the category of compositions for tape was awarded, as in the year before, to **Francis Dhomont**, a French Canadian living in Montreal, for his piece *Les moirures du temps [Reflections of Time]*. Second place went to the American **James Dashow** for his piece *...At other times and distances*, and the Israeli composer **Amnon Wolman** won an honourable mention for his composition *Slow down*.

In the category for instrument and tape the first prize went to the German composer **Reiner Buck** for his piece *Flautando*, with **Fabio Gorodski** from Brazil in second place with his composition *Ficciones [Fictions]* for tape and violin, and the French composer **Cyril**

Kestellikian gaining an honourable mention for his piece *Connivence [Connivance]*. **Annamaria Federico** from Italy won the special prize for women composers with her composition for tape, *Tempi Persi [Lost Times]*, and the award for Czech composers went to **Michal Košut** for his piece for tape, *Concertino for shakuhachi*.

In terms of overall range of styles, certain lines were clearly perceptible. The French tradition of acousmatic music was represented in the competition by the work of Francis Dhomont, and also, for example Gilles Gobeile (Canada), Patricia Martinez (Argentina) and Gustav Mendy (Argentina). The abstract gestalist line deriving from German tradition was evident in the work of J. Dashow from Stanford University, while a new and increasingly strong direction over recent years has been towards ecologically motivated or justified music, which is often linked to simplicity of aesthetic form and respect for the psychology of perception. Here of course we find various levels of intuitive insight and today a whole range of theoretical and experimental backgrounds in university research centres (often among Canadians, Japanese and Britons). In the competition this line was represented, for example, by John Drever and Sugure Goto.

Aesthetic postmodernism, most strikingly represented in the composition by Michael Edwards' composition *Thick*, is evidently on the wane.

The prizes were ceremonially announced on the 10th of December 1999. Today this important competition is financially supported by the Czech Music Fund and the OSA Foundation.

More information about the competition is available at www.cibulka.cz/musnova/compet.htm

/Lenka Dohnalová/

Events 2000

a selection of musical events in the Czech Republic scheduled for 2000

CLASSICAL MUSIC FESTIVALS

MARCH

- March 28 - May 28 **Sedlčany** - 36th
Suk's Sedlčany
- March 31 - April 2 **Ústí nad Labem** - 7th
International Festival of Choral Singing
- March **Jilemnice** - *Winter Festival of Jeunesses Musicales*
- March **Prague** - *Festival of Youngest Pianists* (8th year)
- March - June **Prague** - *Festival of Czech Concert Art*

APRIL

- 14 - 16 **Prague** - *16th Bouquet of Flowers* (children choir festival)
- 14 - 16 **Prague** - *10th Easter Days of Chamber Music*
- April 17 - May 1 **Prague** - *8th Festival of Primary Schools of Art*
- April **Pardubice** - *22nd Pardubice Musical Spring*
- April - September **Prague** - *Mozart Open 2000* (10th year of the theatre festival)

MAY

- 1 - 29 **Ústí nad Labem** - *Music Spring in Ústí nad Labem*
- 3 - 31 **Prague** - *3rd Czech Chamber Music Festival*
- 9 - 28 **Nové Město nad Metují** - 17th
Smetana's Days
- May 10 - June 1 **Příbram** - *32nd Dvořák Festival*
- May 12 - June 3 **Prague** - *55th Prague Spring* (International Music Festival and Competition)
- May 13 - June 23 **Letohrad** - *International Music Festival Letohrad 2000* (11th year)
- 19 - 21 **Mariánské Lázně** - *5th Mozart Festival*
- 19 - 21 **Polička** - *Martinů Fest* (3rd year)
- May - September **Vizovice** - *Vizovice Cultural Summer of Alois Hába*
- May 24 - June 1 **Náchod** - *30th Camerata Nova 2000*
- May 26 - June 15 **Ostrava** - *Janáček's May in Ostrava*
- 28 **Křečovice u Sedlčan** - *Suk's Křečovice*
- May **Vamberk** - *8th Voříšek's Vamberk*

JUNE

- 2 - 4 **Liberec** - *10th Festival of Jeunesses Musicales*

- Jun 10 - Jul 3 **Hukvaldy** - *International Music Festival Janáček's Hukvaldy* (7th year)
- 15 - 26 **Litomyšl** - *42nd Smetana's Litomyšl International Opera Festival*
- Jun 15 - Jul 2 **Northern Bohemia, Saxonia** - 8th
Saxon-Czech Music Festival
- 21 - 26 **Kolín** - *10th Kubelík's Festival*
- Jun 23 - Jul 5 **Český Krumlov** - 14th Chamber
Music Festival in Český Krumlov
- Jun 28 - Jul 3 **Pardubice** - *16th International Festival of Academic Choirs IFAS 2000*
- Jun **Jindřichův Hradec** - *32nd South Bohemian Festival Concertino Praga*
- Jun - Jul **Prague** - *Europamusical (Pan-European Music Festival)*
- Jun - Jul **Southern Moravia** - *5th Cententus Moraviae* (International music festival in 13 towns)

JULY

- 1 - 23 **Southern Bohemia** - *25th South Bohemian Music Festival 2000* (In Memory of Czech Terezín Composers)
- 7 - 17 **Kaliště u Humpolce** - *Mahler 2000* (open air festival with master courses)
- 9 - 22 **Český Krumlov** - *Piano Festival in Český Krumlov 2000* (8th year)
- 16 - 21 **Bechyně** - *7th International Piano Festival*
- 22 - 29 **Southern Bohemia** - *Organum Hydraulicum 2000* (7th Organ Week on the Vltava River)
- 26 - 29 **Karlovy Vary** - *Mozart and Karlovy Vary* (10th year)
- July **Nelahozeves and Prague** - 7th
Dvořák's Music Summer
- July **Mikulov** - *14th International Guitar Festival 2000*
- July **Luhačovice** - *Janáček and Luhačovice 2000* (9th year)
- July - August **Karlovy Vary** - *Karlovy Vary Ancient Music International Festival*

AUGUST

- Aug 3 - Sep 21 **Prague** - *5th International Organ Festival*
- 4 - 6 **Karlovy Vary** - *9th Beethoven Days 2000*
- 4 - 26 **Český Krumlov** - *9th International Music Festival*
- 5 - 26 **Kladruby u Stříbra** - *23rd Kladruby Summer 2000*
- 13 - 19 **Brno** - *9th International Guitar Festival and Courses Brno 2000*
- 19 - 26 **Mariánské Lázně** - *41st Fryderyk Chopin Festival*
- Aug 24 - Sep 9 **České Budějovice** - *11th Emmy Destinn Music Festival*
- Aug 29 - Sep 4 **Prague** - *10th Young Prague International Festival*
- Aug 30 - Sep 8 **Praha, Nelahozeves** - *7th String Quartets International Festival* (in honour of Antonín Dvořák)
- Aug **Karlovy Vary** - *28th Young Platform 2000*

SEPTEMBER

- 3 **Nelahozeves** - *Dvořák's Nelahozeves*
- 6 - 30 **Prague** - *Mozartiana Iuventus* (2nd year)

- 7 - 21 **Olomouc** - *32nd International Organ Festival*
- 7 - 29 **Karlovy Vary** - *42nd Dvořák's Autumn In Karlovy Vary*
- Sep 13 - Nov 13 **Prague** - *Jiří Hošek Unconventional Autumn In Žižkov*
- 15 - 17 **Dolní Lukavice** - *8th Haydn Music Festival*
- Sep 15 - Oct 1 **Prague** - *Prague Autumn International Music Festival* (10th year)
- Sep 20 - Oct 7 **Brno** - *Brno International Music Festival - Moravian Autumn* (35th year)
- 22 - 24 **Litomyšl** - *27th Young Smetana's Litomyšl*
- 22 - 24 **Znojmo** - *8th Vítězslav Novák Days*
- Sep **various locations** - *'Pontes' International Music Festival* (4th year)
- Sep **Teplice** - *Ludwig van Beethoven Music Festival in Teplice* (36th year)
- Sep **Trutnov** - *20th Trutnov Autumn*
- Sep - Oct **Uničov** - *14th Uničov Musical Autumn*
- Sep - Dec **Prague** - *Strings of Autumn 2000*

OCTOBER

- 2 - 6 **Brno** - *Brno International Music Festival - Exposition of New Music* (13th year)
- 28 - 31 **Prague** - *14th Prague Days of Choral Singing*
- Oct 28 - Nov 17 **Prague** - *7th International Festival of Student Orchestras*
- Oct 29 - Dec 3 **Prague** - *2nd Festival of Concert Melodramma*
- Oct - Nov **Prague** - *Musica Iudaica* (9th year of the festival of Jewish music)

NOVEMBER

- 7 - 28 **Ostrava** - *Contemporary Music* (concert cycle of contemporary music by North Moravian composers)
- 17 - 19 **Prague** - *New Music Marathon*
- Nov **Pardubice** - *18th International Children Choirs Festival*
- Nov **Prague** - *Contemporary Music Days*

DECEMBER

- 13 - 20 **Prague** - *Bohuslav Martinů Festival 2000* (5th year)
- Dec **Prague** - *Three-Days Plus* (festival and workshops of contemporary music)
- Dec **Brno** - *Festival of Microintervallic Music* (3rd year)

SACRED MUSIC FESTIVALS

- Apr, Aug, Oct **Prague** - *Musica Sacra Praga* (7th year of the international festival of sacred music)
- Apr 14 - 24 **Prague** - *Musica Ecumenica 2000*
- Apr 16 - 30 **Brno** - *Brno International Music Festival - 9th Easter Festival of Sacred Music*
- May 14 **Prague** - *10th St. John's Festival*
- Sep 15 - 28 **Prague** - *St. Wenceslas' Festival 2000* (7th international festival of sacred music)

June 18 - 25 **Kroměříž** - 11th Forfest Kroměříž (international festival of contemporary spiritual art)

Sep 16 - Oct 7 **Olomouc** - Autumn Sacred Music Festival Olomouc 2000 (7th year)

JAZZ FESTIVALS

Jan - Dec **Prague** - AghaRTA Prague Jazz Festival

Apr 28 - 29 **Šumperk** - Jazz Pramet Šumperk

Apr 28 - 29 **Polička** - Polička Jazz

Apr **Prague** - D.D.Fest - 15th Prague Jazz Days

May **Karlovy Vary** - 17th International Jazz Festival Karlovy Vary 2000

Aug **Plzeň** - Jazz on the Street (7th year)

Oct 18 - 21 **Hradec Králové** - Jazz Goes to Town (6th year of the International jazz festival)

Nov 1 - 3 **Prague** - 3rd Swing Festival

CLASSICAL MUSIC PERFORMERS' COMPETITIONS

(International competitions with entry deadlines after February 25, 2000)

Apr 22 - 25 **České Budějovice** - 6th Ema Destinn International Singing Competition age limit up to 35, deadline for entries March 31, 2000

May 26 - 28 **Brno** - Leoš Janáček Competition 2000 (7th year) categories: violin and piano duos, cello and piano duos age limit: 27, repert.: Janáček, Martinů, contemporary music, deadline: Feb 28

Jul 2 - 7 **Kutná Hora** - 10th International Guitarists' Competition Biennal Kutná Hora 2000 categ: 1st up to 15, 2nd up to 19, 3rd up to 28, deadline for entries: Feb 28

Sep 18 - 23 **Brno** - 5th International Performing Competition part of the Moravian Autumn International Festival category: tuba, age limit: 30, deadline for entr.: Apr 30

Oct 23 - 25 **Prague** - 1st International Melodrama Performance Competition age limit: 16-35 years, deadline for entries: May 31

Nov 9 - 11 **Karlovy Vary** - 35th Antonín Dvořák International Singing Competition categories: 1st women up to 23, men up to 24, 2nd women up to 30, men up to 32, deadline for entries: June 30

Nov 9 - 11 **Ústí nad Labem** - Virtuosi per musica di pianoforte 33rd year of the international competition, age limit 16, deadline for entries: June 20

Nov 13 - 18 **Hradec Králové** - 24th International Smetana Piano Competition

Nov **Prague** - Concertino Praga (35th year) International radio competition for young musicians

categ.: piano, violin, cello, age limit 16 years, deadline for entr. Apr 30

2001

Apr 25 - 28, 2001 **Jeseník** - 12th International Schubert Piano Duos Competition - Jeseník [biennial] categories: 1st up to 21, 2nd age total up to 70

May 2001 **Brno** - Leoš Janáček Competition 2001 (8th year) category: piano, age limit: 27, repert.: Janáček, Martinů, contemporary music, deadline: Feb 28, 2001

Jun - Jul 2001 **Mariánské Lázně** - 4th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition categ.: 1st up to 18, 2nd up to 28, deadline for entr.: Mar 31, 2001

Oct 2001 **Prague** - 3rd International Carl Czerny Piano Competition 2001 categories: 1st up to 13, 2nd up to 16; deadline for entries: May 31, 2001

COMPOSERS' COMPETITIONS

May **Prague** - Symphony of the Third Millennium international composers' competition for a symphonic or vocal-symphonic work (small orchestra) duration up to 25 min, entry fee 50 EUR, deadline for entries May 31

Oct **Prague** - Musica Nova 2000 international electroacoustic music composers' competition; deadline for entries: Oct 1

2001

Apr 2001 **Brno** - Trstěnice Composition Award (4th year) categ.: percussion, age limit: 25, deadline Jan 30, 2001

PERFORMANCE COURSES

Jun 3 - 24 **Jaroměřice nad Rokytou** - Performance Courses of the P. Dvorský Festival (2nd year) category: singing

Jul 1 - 9 **Valtice** - 15th International Summer School of Early Music (for amateurs and children, categories: plain chant, solo and ensemble singing, historical instruments solo and in ensembles, dance)

Jul 1 - 15 **Brandýs nad Labem** - Ameropa 2000 (6th year of international music courses - violin, cello, piano - and music festival)

Jul 2 - 16 **Český Krumlov** - 10th International Piano Master Courses Český Krumlov

Jul 2 - 23 **Litomyšl** - 5th International Violin Courses Litomyšl 2000 deadline for entries: Apr 30

Jul 11 - 25 **Brno** - 33rd International Masterclasses at the Janáček Academy 2000

categories: pf, vn, vlc, fl, keyboard, string quartet, singing, deadline for entries: May 31

Jul **České Budějovice** - 11th International Piano Masterclasses

Jul **Nové Strašecí** - 9th International Horn Courses deadline for entries May 15, 2000

Jul **Hradec Králové, Praha** - 3rd Performance Course of the Central European Piano Music

Aug **České Budějovice** - 11th Ema Destinn International Singing Masterclasses deadline for entries: Mar 31

Aug **Hradec Králové** - 10th International Violin Course artistic manager prof. Jan Tomeš, deadline for entr. June 15, 1999

COMPOSERS' COURSES

Jun 27 - Jul 2 **Trstěnice** - 4th International Percussionists' and Composers' Courses Trstěnice (deadline for entries: May 31)

Jul - Aug **Prague** - International Summer Program in Composition two terms: July, August, no age limit

Aug 19 - 26 **Český Krumlov** - International Courses for Composition Students in Český Krumlov (deadline for entries: June 10)

To obtain the complete information on musical events in the Czech Republic in 2000 you can order our publication for 9 USD. Payments are accepted by cheques payable to the Czech Music Information Centre.



**HUDEBNÍ UDÁLOSTI
V ČESKÉ REPUBLICE**

2000

**MUSICAL EVENTS
IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

Czech Opera on the Edge of the Millennium

The Opera '99 festival, this year thematically focused on Czech opera, ended with a conference in the Kolowrat Theatre on the 11th of December. The festival took place in October and November, involved all ten Czech professional opera companies and included studio performances by three music schools. The original plan was still more ambitious, but financial and operational problems prevented the participation of the prospective Slovak guests and the České Budějovice Conservatory, and administrative slip-ups meant that the Orfeo opera ensemble from

L. Janáček's "From the House of the Dead" - Brno National Theatre performance



Brno was also absent from the final programme. As is traditional, the festival juries presented the stylised "Libuška" figurine to winning productions and soloists. This year the lay jury awarded their prize to Hurník's new *Oldřich and Boženka* (The Silesian Theatre in Opava), and the emeritus singers awarded the prize for performance in a leading role to Magda Máilková (The Moravian Theatre in Olomouc), for the role of Anežka in Smetana's *The Two Widows*, and the prize for performance in a supporting role to Monika Cahová (The F. X. Šalda Theatre in Liberec) for the role of Agafje in Martinů's *The Marriage*. The Musical Drama Association prize went to the production of Martinů's *The Marriage* (Liberec) and the prize for the best production was carried off by the Brno National Theatre for Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*.

Although Jiří Nekvasil made some positive comments, a pessimistic and even sceptical mood predominated in the formal contributions to the conference (from Věra Drápelová - presented by Helena Havlíková, Jiří Nekvasil and Radmila Hrdinová). Those attending heard that performances generally suffered from failures in teamwork, Czech vocal art was in crisis, young singers were put off by their teachers before they had even begun, choice of repertoire was timid, tradition was a weak excuse for shapelessness, and there was a general impotence in stage design and direction...and these were only a few of the complaints.

I shall try to formulate my impressions of the festival and stir up a little controversy. First, the thematic focus on Czech opera proved its worth, since judgement of a repertoire of works that are comparable in origin and context is much more objective than judgement of works as stylistically varied as those presented in earlier years of the festival when the theme was conceived more freely. This year's festival included the basic "foursome" of 19th- and 20th-century Czech opera in the form of works by Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček and

Martinů, and also new, recently premièred works (I. Hurník, Z. Lukáš) The only deviation from the thoroughly Czech repertoire was the Brno JAMU Chamber Opera's production of Florian Leopold Gassmann's *Critical Night*. Gassmann was a native of Most but he probably could not speak Czech and his opera has an Italian libretto, although this was translated into Czech several years ago by Jan Panenka for its new première in České Budějovice. The tolerance expressed in the inclusion of Gassmann might, in fact, become a stimulus for a historically justified expansion of the notion of "Czech opera" to embrace "opera in the Czech Lands". Then some companies might, for example, have the courage to present Škroup's operas on German libretti, or some of the works of the German-speaking authors in the Czech Lands. I believe we should resist the idea that it is the duty of Czech opera to take care of Czech work in the narrow sense. Duty, after all, is something to be enforced and controlled, and by putting the accent on duty we burden ourselves with the old Czech "national revivalist" syndrome which has by no means had uniformly positive effects on our culture. The choice of Czech repertoire ought not to be regarded as a national service, but as something natural that requires no special stimulus.

It seems that while the financial and administrative resources of our companies are very varied, the general level of performance is comparable in terms of quality. Of course, in some productions all the elements are well up to standard, while in others some elements limp behind the others. On the other hand, the same criteria could be applied to all the productions, and there was no need to wrinkle one's nose or excuse anyone on the grounds of the financial difficulties of local companies. A telling example (and one mentioned at the final conference) is that of the traditionally excellent productions of the Opava company, which has been fighting for survival from season to season. Of course, the argument can be reversed: Is the Ostrava company so good simply because it cannot afford to allow itself any sloppiness?

Participants in the discussion generally agreed that what our companies most signally lack (apart from sufficient funding, as was ritually pointed out), is creative courage particularly at the level of choice of repertoire and directing, and readiness to look for new works, including older but neglected operas. Yet what exactly does such courage mean? Courage in directing does not have to be an attempt to update or find unconventional approaches at any price, but could also be simple humility in the face of the authorial form of the work to be staged. This is an approach already familiar today in the performance of baroque and classical works. There are works that are timeless and their universality means that they can be transformed into almost any mode, but there are also works that resist such treatment. After all, even romantic opera belongs to history and should be staged in an authentic way as far as the laws of its structure, vocal interpretation and general musical interpretation are concerned, with appropriate visual and kinetic elements.

Much of the discussion at the conference was taken up with lamentations over the state of Czech teaching for singers and the young generation of singers in general. The situation in opera training is considered to be one of chronic debility, and the reasons for this sickness to have become "taboo" subjects. All the indications are that the main problem is the lack of connection between schooling and live opera practice. Teachers perpetuate student illusions that the path to fame will be easy, while conductors and directors demand fully-fledged artists and do not want to shoulder the burden of nursing singing talent. Unfortunately, no school produces finished professionals in any field, and this is even more true of a theatrical profession that depends utterly on the teamwork of the whole collective. It is not a coincidence that the overall best production at the festival was from Brno and the best group of young voices was that of the JAMU Chamber opera in Gassmann's opera.

The essential point is that choice of repertoire is one of the decisive factors for the success of student productions. Here the producers face a double task: to find an opera in which young singers can shine, and to find an opera in which they can learn something. In this context it must be admitted that the choice of Gassmann's *Critical Night* was bound to turn out better than, for example, the choice of Luboš Fišer's *Lancelot*, presented by the AMU (Academy of Music) Opera Studio from Prague. Gassmann's classically pure music is highly "singable", and the opera is not difficult from the point of view of either singing or acting while at the same time Panenka's witty translation enhances effective moments and the overall impression. The AMU students performing the Fišer opera were in a comparatively thankless position (quite apart from the fact that this graduation composition is not among Fišer's best). And the Ostrava Conservatory with its jokey piece on the life of Janáček, *Věc Cage [The Cage Affair]* (by Miloš Štědroň, Alois Piňos and Ivo Medek), had a wholly exceptional advantage with which the second production from JAMU in Brno, Kaňák's *Agadir*, could not compete. Several stimulating suggestions were made at the conference. One was to vary the thematic focus on Czech opera with a free repertoire

but try to concentrate on opera of the 20th century (for example by adding a prize for a production of new or neglected operas to the existing range of awards). Another was to try to solve the problems of Czech opera and operatic schooling by applying experience from abroad. Examples mentioned include the work of the Curtis Institute in the USA and the central state management in Finland, but while these are seductive they are not viable in the Czech Republic. Let us try to take a sober view. Financial problems, however painful (including the dreadful prices demanded by publishers for scores), are not such as to provide an excuse for opera companies or let them off the hook. We have always nursed ambitions to succeed culturally in any kind of competition, and since this desire has been gratifyingly fulfilled in the past in the field of opera, it is natural and praiseworthy that we should aspire to be even better and even more perfect. On the other hand, we should not allow this aspiration to become a source of self-flagellation. After all, to have ten professional, high-quality companies with their own opera theatres on these few thousand square kilometres is something unparalleled in any neighbouring state.

/Vlasta Reittererová/

CD REVIEW

DAMA DAMA: <http://www.damadama8.cz>

Dan Dlouhý, Vít Zouhar, Daniel Forró, Ivo Medek,
 Ctibor Bártek, Adam Kubíček
 World Records 1999, WORE 990014-2



● This new CD, the eighth from the percussion group DAMA DAMA, has been given the significant title, "http://www.damadama8.cz". According to DAMA DAMA's leader, Dan Dlouhý, it differs from all its predecessors by its "leanings toward the most contemporary technological methods in the field of electronic sound production and recording, and its theme (beyond the purely musical) is fear of the over-technologised society that is represented by this world of electronic music. Nonetheless, this is an album from a percussion ensemble - some of the pieces were electronically modified after recording on normal percussion instruments, and others were recorded directly on electronic instruments familiar and less familiar." (CMB 2/99). The album is framed by three of Dlouhý's own

compositions, the first track, *Convergence*, the fifth track, *Fifth Element*, and the sixth and final *Sublimation*. All of these are electro-acoustic. *Convergence* and *Sublimation* form two parts of a trilogy with *Divergence*, but for reasons unknown to me the last piece is not on the CD (could it be that the composer wants to get listeners to buy another CD?). *Divergence* and *Sublimation* are both "completed" by just a single player, Dlouhý himself. They are both pieces mixed in a complex way, enriched with "live" electronics and intermixing of electronically perforated sounds from percussion instruments, but they are based on acoustic instruments and a human voice. Here, entirely in line with the composer's ideas, the field of art interpenetrates with the most advanced scientific research. In *The Fifth Element*, an amplified string quartet is used in addition to percussion and synthesizers. The opening *Convergence* is followed by *Dunes for Two Marimbas* from Vít Zouhar, composed in the "minimal music" style. The passage from the first to the second piece is in itself interesting and slightly raises the temperature. After the marimba duo comes Daniel Forró's *Concertino for Synthesizers and Percussion*. It is divided into monologues and dialogues for various percussion instruments and synthesizers (mainly monologues), and is a kind of discussion ending with consensus after about twelve minutes. It seems to me that producing music for TV, radio and various commercial events has left ineradicable traces on Mr. D.F., and they can be identified even in this piece, since I doubt that the "signature tunes" were used deliberately. This piece is followed by Ivo Medek's *Tamtamania* [Tomtomania], a very

remarkable composition - a kind of "tomtom obsession". It uses only one huge tomtom, whose sounds have been sampled and layered on top of each other without further modifications, and one more live track using various sticks and drumming techniques. For me this piece evoked the sounds of a storm, a gale, fireworks and roaring surf. The last piece not yet mentioned is the sixth on the album, *Blue Sky Research* by Ctibor Bártek and Adam Kubíček. It is the kind of piece that rock drummers might play to show off, or that could be featured at concerts promoting the products of percussion manufacturers, and involves the sort of improvisations used by many drummers to let off steam in their garages. The basic impression one gets from the CD splits into two levels. On the one hand there is the sense of the listener's inability to penetrate the mysteries of studio manipulation of sound and complex compositional techniques, and so a kind of frustration at being wafted into a "no man's land" where we shall never feel at home. On the other hand, there are the relaxing pieces by Vít Zouhar and the Bártek/Kubíček duo, where the listener feels firmer ground beneath his feet although perhaps at the price of a certain simplification. These mixed feelings essentially corresponds to the basic aims of DAMA DAMA, i.e. "to use musical means in sharpened form to show the polarity of the two eternally contending fundamental opposite poles of the life of modern man - an original naturalness, and the pressure of civilisation." (Booklet for the DAMA DAMA CD 3).

/Jaroslav Pašmík/

Bohuslav Martinů Festival 1999

In the nineties the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation founded a new tradition - an annual festival mainly devoted to the music of its patron. It is one of the many positive initiatives (including conferences, publications, information and documentary systems, organisation of premières, as well as scholarly and social gatherings) which the foundation has taken in order to raise the profile of this classic of 20th-century Czech music, and ensure that his works are better-known and more regularly performed. A less striking, but no less important aspect of its work has also been the co-financing of all kinds of different activities and projects relating to Martinů, including assistance to concert organisers by the loan of scores to which the rights are not held in the Czech Republic.

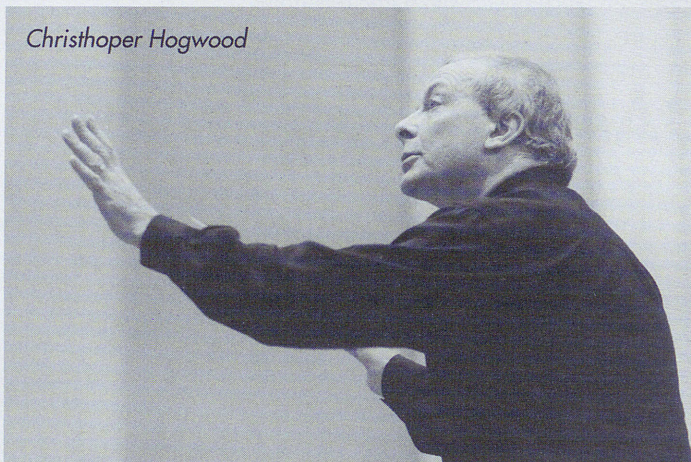
The festivals have not been large, but they have been concentrated. This year's festival consisted in five programmes, including performances by the Prague Chamber Philharmonic conducted by Christopher Hogwood, and at the end the Czech Philharmonic with Charles Mackerras in an evening entirely devoted to Martinů's music. Two of the events honoured the memory of great performers - Bohuslav Martinů's friend and supporter, the patron and conductor Paul Sacher (1906-1999) and the conductor Georg Szell (1897-1970), one presenting the winner of a competition for pianists held by the Foundation, and the other providing an opportunity for students of the Sándor Végh Academy to perform in a programme that juxtaposed Martinů and French music.

The Orchestra of the Prague State Orchestra commemorated Szell by performing in the place where he himself had actually worked before his emigration to the USA - the former New German Theatre, presenting Szell's own work but above all works by Martinů that Szell had later conducted with the Cleveland Orchestra. It was Szell who commissioned Martinů to write a piece entitled *Skála* [Rock], and who conducted the world première of the *Viola Concerto* in the fifties. At the festival concert the *Sinfonietta La Jolla* was also played. To have two outstanding guest conductors with Czech orchestras was in itself stimulating for the music of Bohuslav Martinů. Of course, neither of them are

novices in the field. While the British conductor Christopher Hogwood is best known as an interpreter of early music and the founder of "The Academy of Ancient Music", who even studied at one time in Prague under Zuzana Růžičková, he has performed Martinů and other modern, usually neo-classically orientated music relatively often. Mackerras is a well-known friend to Czech music.

What did the two performances have in common? The musical energy of leaders who enjoy respect and are capable of convincing musicians of the validity of their ideas.

Under Hogwood's baton, the Prague Chamber Orchestra (in a concert on the 10th of December) showed an admirable capacity to discipline their vibrato when



Christopher Hogwood

they played Haydn's *Concertante Symphony in B Major* with solo violin, violoncello, oboe and bassoon, and, at least as far as the technical limits permitted, managed to come surprisingly close to historically authentic performance. The only aspect that was not perfectly judged was the dynamic level; the Martinů Hall in the Liechtenstein Palace is rather small even for a chamber philharmonic, but at this concert there was unfortunately little economy with sound. The podium had a tendency to rumble, and Hogwood, perhaps carried away by the musical immediacy of Bělohlávek's young ensemble, allowed it to get away with a symphonic sound too loud and robust for the hall, especially in the pieces by Martinů. In the *Serenade for Chamber Orchestra* and even in the *Symphony Concertante* for the same combination of instruments employed in the Haydn, there could perhaps have been more lightness of touch. Instead, a kind of massive joyousness predominated. The encore was particularly interesting, since it was the first public performance of an eight-minute piece for trumpet and piano entitled *Vložka* [Insert], recently found in manuscript in the Martinů estate. It appears to be part of some stage music, but as yet its precise date and context has not

been identified. Stylistically, however, it belongs to the neo-classical period that the concert programme as a whole fully reflected.

Mackerras and the Czech Philharmonic (21st of December) presented the suite from the ballet *Špalíček* together with the *First Violin Concerto* performed by Josef Suk, and then *The Fifth Symphony*. Mackerras is now so much "at home" with the Czech repertoire that he has no need to be cautious, and understands the terrain. In his conception of the music, which has always been characterised by its energy and sense of the dramatic, there has also recently been signs of an ever increasing tendency to higher dynamics, and joyful extremes, right across the board. In "Špalíček" especially, this approach is frequently appropriate, but

both the other pieces in the programme can offer - and in fact generally have offered - more scope for shading and nuance. Suk's performance - in 1990 the violinist celebrated his 70th birthday - was admirable: balanced, secure. Martinů actually dedicated *The Fifth Symphony* to the Czech Philharmonic from America in

1946, but it is less performed than his *Sixth Symphony*, which is a pity. As this rendering confirmed, it is a superb score - weighty, and demanding in conception. Mackerras drew out its more tragic tone, very marked at least in comparison with the optimism of *The Fourth Symphony*, to the point of monumentality.

/Petr Veber/

Karel Mlejnek died on the 5th of December in Prague, just under a year before he would have celebrated his seventieth birthday. After graduating from Charles University he became an editor on a music desk, and remained faithful to the profession all his life. He also wrote widely as a music critic in the daily and specialist press. His major works include *O valčíku a jeho tvůrcích* [The Waltz and its Creators] (1960), and *Smetanovci, Janáčkovci a Vlachovci* [Smetana, Janáček, and Vlach Quartets] (1962). His texts, written in a language that lay music-lovers too could understand, are always highly informative, factually reliable and readable

Three Jazz CDs from Jan Knop alias Naj Ponk

ballads blues and more
najponk trio



Najponk Robert Balzar Martin Sulc

Jan Knop, better known as Naj Ponk, is one of the most important representatives of the young generation of Czech jazzmen. Last year this jazz pianist brought out three profile CDs, and in my view this provides a good opportunity and a good basis for an attempt to sketch his profile.

Although all three CDs were released in 1999, the first of them, the trio "Birds in Black" (published by Gallup Music), on which Naj Ponk (b. 1971) is joined by Robert Balzar (b. 1962) on the double bass and Martin Sulc (b. 1961) on percussion, uses recordings from 1994 and 1997. The second CD, "Ballads Blues and More" (published by Cube/Metier), with the same trio, was recorded on the 22nd of September 1999. The third CD, a solo disc called "Going it alone" (also Cube/Metier), was recorded on the 23rd of September 1999.

These recordings are mainly a reflection of the work of the trio and Naj Ponk solo in Prague jazz clubs in the nineties. If you have ever visited one of the jazz clubs where he and his trio were playing in recent years, you have actually heard these studio CDs live. In terms of style they are mainly in the jazz "mainstream", which means a mixture of jazz styles from the forties to the sixties, and mainly bebop and hardbop. The repertoire is principally based on old standards (evergreens) by composers of music to the Hollywood films of the day (Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Jimmy van Heusen and others), which the jazzmen arranged for themselves in all kinds of different ways.

Another important element in the repertoire is blues. It is here that Naj Ponk is most active in "manufacturing themes". I hesitate to use the word "composer", because this term seems rather an exaggeration for any creator of a twelve-bar theme on a

previously given harmonic structure. In the CD "Going it Alone", however, there are also two non-blues compositions by Naj Ponk (*Anna* and *To My Mom with Love*). He himself has said that it was the young American jazz pianist Brad Mehldau, who most inspired Naj Ponk, who was responsible for his decision to experiment and really compose something (until recently he regarded the composition of his own pieces as a pointless contribution of twigs to the mainstream forest). Now we reach the important problem of his particular sources of inspiration. For the Naj Ponk Trio, the most typical sources are the trios of the fifties, like the Wynton Kelly Trio, or the Bobby Timmons or Oscar Peterson Trio. Since the fifties, however, the jazz trio as such has experienced a very sharp development. The Bill Evans Trio in the sixties and seventies, the Chick Corea Trio and the Keith Jarrett Trio in the eighties, and finally the Brad Mehldau Trio in the nineties, form the main pillars of the evolution of this musical grouping, and in my view it is an evolution that the Naj Ponk Trio has yet to reflect. Why? The answer is to be found, of course, in the evolution of Naj Ponk himself. Jan Knop alias Naj Ponk was born in the Ukraine. His mother is Ukrainian and his father Czech. His parents decided to live in Roztoky by Prague, the home of his father's family. Jan's father made his living as a musician in a circus band and brought a rich haul back from his foreign tours, especially in the form of jazz records and books on jazz. In fact, Knop senior became a passionate collector of jazz "relics", and so from his earliest childhood Jan could absorb jazz. He succumbed to it fully consciously when he was around ten years old. First he tried to play the guitar and



imitate blues singers, then he experimented with his father's tenor sax, and finally he settled on the piano, apparently because it was comfortable to play. Even at basic school he had shown his special "archival" capacities during lessons by writing out long lists of jazz saxophonists, trumpeters,

pianists, drummers, bassists and so on. Thanks to this, he rapidly acquired an almost encyclopaedic knowledge and clear idea of how "real jazz" should sound. He made the jazz tradition his own. He could recognise swing and knew the beat of a jazz rhythm. In his twenties he was already able to play jazz with more assurance than many forty-year-olds in the Czechoslovakia of the time. Of course, he didn't acquire his piano skills at any school. Apart from a couple of years in a "People's Art School" and the Jaroslav Ježek Conservatory, which fortunately left no traces on him, Jan essentially taught himself. He did not have the luck of his contemporary Stanislav Mácha, who found an enlightened teacher, but I think his character simply resisted any kind of school system. At the time his credo was "only jazz". Here, of course, this limited him as a pianist and prevented him from fully mastering the instrument, and today what holds him back is precisely technique and harmonic ideas. This brings us back to the question of sources of inspiration. While the jazz pianists of the fifties had still not mastered classical piano technique, from the emergence of Bill Evans in the sixties the situation changed. Bill Evans, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett and Brad Mehldau are classically trained pianists.



They have all mastered the basic classical repertoire and with it classical piano technique. They are then able to use this skill in playing jazz. A top jazz trio today simply cannot manage without this capacity in its "prime mover", the pianist. Here Jan Knop has some way to go, and he is undoubtedly well aware of his limitations himself. Why then can we still call Naj Ponk one of the most distinguished and most influential of the young generation of jazzmen in the Czech republic? It is because it was and is principally Naj Ponk who has drawn, and still draws, the attention of young players to the knowledge of the jazz tradition, without which jazz is melting into the boundless stylistic plurality of the end of the twentieth century and ceasing to be jazz.

/Jaroslav Pašmík/

Contents CZECH MUSIC '99

VARIOUS ARTICLES, LISTINGS

The Classic '98 Awards - results II/7

Courses for Horn Players in Nové Strašecí - review by *Petar Zapletal* V/5

The Czech Experimental Scene in Vienna - event review VI/5

Events '99 - a list of musical events in the Czech Republic scheduled for 1999 I/6-7

Jindřich Feld - new CD recordings from foreign companies V/5

Prague Spring 1999, 51st International Music Competition - Results III/3

The Stowe Pastorals - history of one of Bohuslav Martinů's compositions - by *Gregory Terian* IV/9

Trstěnice 1999, composition and percussion courses review by *Ivo Medek* V/4

Viktor Kalabis and Zuzana Růžičková in the USA - interview by *Aleš Březina* VI/4-5

Works by Czech Composers premiered in 1999 - list of compositions III/5-7

OPERA

Première after Sixty Years - E. F. Burian's *Bubu* of Montparnasse opera review by *Petar Zapletal* III/4

A Welsh *Jenůfa* - opera review by *Graham Melville-Mason* III/8

FESTIVALS

Apocalypse Now, 12th Exhibition of New Music in Brno - review by *Ivo Medek* VI/3

Bohuslav Martinů at the Europalia Czech Republic Festival (Brussels, December 1998) - festival review by *Aleš Březina* I/11

The 4th Bohuslav Martinů Festival - review by *Petr Veber* I/9

Brno - City of New Music - by *Jaroslav Šťastný* II/4-5

Forfest Kroměříž 1999, contemporary music festival review by *Jan Vrkoč* IV/4-5

The Greek Passion in a previously unknown version at the Bregenzer Festspiele - review by *Petr Veber* V/11

New Music Marathon '98 - festival review by *Antonín Matzner* I/5

Three-Day Plus - contemporary music festival review by *Petr Pokorný* I/10

Young... to Old - Young Platform Festival review by *Luboš Stehlík* V/8-9

PORTRAITS, ANNIVERSARIES, INTERVIEWS

Ars Incognita in Conversation - ensemble portrait by *Vít Zouhar* VI/1-2

A Breath of Wind portrait of the Afflatus Quintet by *Wanda Dobrovská* I/1-3

Composer *Luboš Fišer*: An Obituary by *Karel Mlejnek* V/6

Conversation with *Evžen Zámečník* - interview by *Ivo Medek* VI/10

Interview with *Neeme Järvi* by *Aleš Březina* II/6-7

Klement Slavický - an obituary by *Petar Zapletal* V/9

Marek Štryncl and *Musica Florea* by *Wanda Dobrovská* II/1-3

Miloš Štědroň on *Janáček*, *Monteverdi*, *Stage Music* and *Stoicism* - interview with the composer by *Ivo Medek* IV/6-7

Music is about Feelings - Interview with *Jitka Vlašánková* and *Lubomír Havlák* - a *Martinů* Quartet portrait by *Wanda Dobrovská* V/1-3

Oh Sleep, Send Me a Dream of Returning Home... - On the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of *Pavel Haas* - by *Vlasta Reittererová* III/9

On the 80th Birthday of *Štěpán Lucký* by *Petar Zapletal* II/9

Resonance Ensemble - Interview with *Monika Knoblochová* and *Michal Macourek* - an ensemble portrait by *Tereza Havelková* IV/1-3

A Ruined Life - The Composer *Hans Krása* - (On the 100th anniversary of his birth) by *Blanka Červinková* V/7

Secular Monks - An Interview with *David Eben*, Artistic Director of the *Schola Gregoriana Pragensis* choir portrait by *Wanda Dobrovská* III/1-3

Twelve-Tone Redemption - Interview with the composer *Milan Slavický* by *Miroslav Srnka* VI/6-8

Vlastislav Matoušek at 50 - composer's portrait by *Jaromír Havlík* I/8

35 Years Ago *Jan Rychlík* Left Us - composer's anniversary portrait by *Petar Zapletal* IV/8

CD REVIEWS

Agon Orchestra: *The Red and Black* - CD review by *Wanda Dobrovská* IV/5

Czech Contemporary Music - *Atelier I.* - CD review by *Wanda Dobrovská* V/10-11

Czech Contemporary Music - *Atelier II.* - CD review by *Michal Rataj* V/12

Czech Contemporary Music - *Concertante compositions* - CD review by *Jaromír Havlík* II/11

Czech Contemporary Music - *String Quartets I.* - CD review by *Petar Zapletal* V/10

Der Erste - *Peter Graham's Second Profile* CD - review by *Petr Pokorný* III/11

Fusion Music - *Lukáš Hurník* - CD review by *Petar Zapletal* VI/8

Jiří Těm - CD Review by *Jaromír Havlík* I/4

Kaleidoscope of Contemporary Works of Czech Chamber Music - CD review by *Petar Zapletal* VI/12

Martin Smolka - An Authorial CD - review *Wanda Dobrovská* III/12

Milan Slavický - Chamber Music - CD review by *Michal Rataj* VI/11

"A Montage of Chord Stuffing" by *Miloš Bok* - CD review by *Petar Zapletal* IV/11

New CD Recordings of Czech Contemporary Music III/10

The Oldest Sound Recordings of Moravian and Slovak Folksong - CD review by *Petar Zapletal* IV/12

Original Music from the Younger generation of Czech Jazzmen CD review by *Jaroslav Pašmík* VI/9

Vlastislav Matoušek - *Kaligrafie* - CD review by *Lenka Dohnalová* IV/10

Corrections

● The **Bohuslav Martinů Foundation** has not been renamed, as was erroneously reported in the last number. The change related only to one of its sections, The Bohuslav Martinů Study Centre, which has now become the **Bohuslav Martinů Institute**. We apologise for the error.

● The visit of *Z. Růžičková* and *V. Kalabis* to the U.S.A. reviewed in the last issue, took place in 1999, and not in 1997 as misprinted.

The Editor would like to request all our friends who reprint material contained in Czech music 2000 kindly to send him either the respective copy of their publication or otherwise to inform him about the reprinting of our texts, and thanks them in advance for their courtesy in this matter.



Czech Music 2000 is issued bimonthly with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, Bohuslav Martinů Foundation, Leoš Janáček Foundation and the Czech Music Fund by the Czech Music Information Centre, Besední 3, 118 00 PRAHA 1, CZECH REPUBLIC. Fax: ++420 2 539720, Phone: ++420 2 57312422 E-mail: his@mbox.vol.cz http://www.musica.cz The subscription fee is \$ 20 for Europe, \$ 25 for overseas countries, or respective equivalents. If you want to be put on our mailing list please write to the Editor. The Editor: Adam Klemens Translation: Anna Bryson Front page graphic design: Milan Pašek Photos: Zdeněk Chrapek (p. 4, 10) and Archives Print: Tobola ISSN 1211-0264