A black and white portrait of Miroslav Vitouš, a prominent Czech jazz double bassist, is shown in a diagonal orientation. The portrait is partially obscured by a large, semi-transparent white 'X' shape that dominates the background. The background itself is a deep red color with a subtle grid pattern of thin white lines.

Miroslav Vitouš

Czech. music 2001

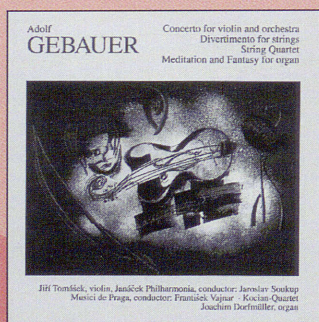
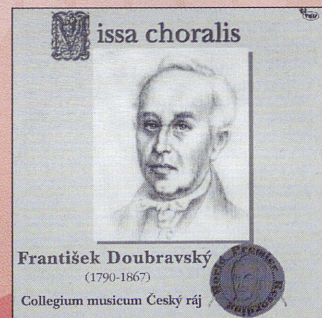
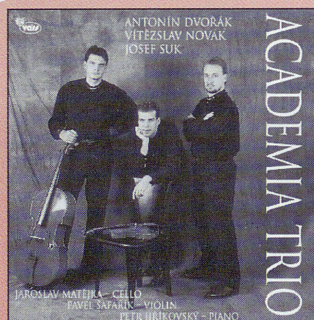
Hudbaby are coming

Josef Bohuslav Foerster Anniversary

Agon at Prague Spring 2001

3

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The Editor would like to request all our friends who reprint material contained in Czech music 2001 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.

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HUDBABY

are coming



IVO MEDEK

"Hudba" is Czech for "music", and "baby" is Czech for "crones". Put the words together and you could get something like, "the Musicrones"! They're not a new band in our rock heaven (although most of them are conservatory graduates and with their musical skills they would have little trouble creating one), and they're not "music babes" of the pop scene (although they're young enough for that too). They're an association of young women composers of serious music, graduates and students of the Janáček Academy in Brno. The group was founded by Kateřina Růžičková and Barbara Škrlová in 1997 and now also includes Lenka Foltýnová, Marcela Vocílková-Trtková, Kateřina Strážnická and Markéta Dvořáková.

Why Hudbaby?

K. Růžičková (K. R.): Our group came into existence completely spontaneously. One of the experiences behind the idea was a piece of homework I had to do on the subject of the Organisation and Structure of the Music Business. I had to think up a project that I would want to offer as a music manager. I abandoned the study of this particular subject, but the idea of creating Musicrones immediately appealed to Bára Škrlová and then to all the other women students we approached at the Janáček Academy. After the lean years there had been a striking increase in the number of women composers at JAMU, and so now there were enough for a group.

After several unsuccessful and complicated attempts, we managed to win the enthusiasm and support of Arskonzert, which included our first and so far our last concert in the Exposition of New Music 1998.

In translation the charm of the wordplay in your name is rather lost, although "baby" has an accidental resonance with "baby" in English, and in German you could try "hudebn". Do you have an official translation?

K. R.: We don't have a translation, although we could try and think of one. The truth is that the name immediately enchanted our Internet manager Karla Hartl, a Czech living in Toronto. She has created web pages for us and takes care of publicity, and she's already had results. Music institutions in the USA, Italy, Holland, and Luxemburg have contacted us. Even without a translation.

Why is it a women only organisation? Do you have something against men? Do you plan to stay a "mono-sexual" organisation on principle?

K. R.: As I just said, the idea of forming a group was linked to the growing number of women composers at JAMU. I think these kinds of ideas for groups are a natural part of student life - two years before another group called Bezmocná hrstka [Helpless Handful] was formed with the same sort of enthusiasm (Marcela Trtková and I are members of that group too). But there had never been a group made up just of women composers here. We've got nothing against men in general, but if we accepted

them in the group, it would lose its originality and character as a "first". Also I doubt if a male composer would want to be a "musicrone".

Do you feel discriminated against or at some some kind of disadvantage as women, in comparison to male composers?

K. R.: I haven't yet encountered any open attacks or ridicule, but the truth is that strange looks and incredulous sneers aren't exactly unknown. But this isn't just a problem for women composers. It's a problem in any other field or situation when someone comes up with something new and unusual. Suspicion and incredulity is part of the process, and any "pioneer" has to expect it.

Today is not an easy time for anyone, male or female, to devote themselves to composing serious music. There's no money in it, and most people aren't interested in it. Women composers are probably taken less seriously, but of course they can also be a bit of an attraction. They are not expected to be breadwinners for their families, and so they can more easily waste time composing pieces that won't be commercial. On the negative side again, of course, one has to add that concert organisers and recording companies tend to prefer the "security" of composers in the traditional mould.

What is the aim of the association? Do you have a registered legal status or are you just a private group?

K. R.: We are not going to arrange to register as a civic association just for one concert. If our activities expand and multiply in the future, however, there will be some point in considering it. A good many associations start with a grand gesture and after a couple of years you never hear anything of them again. We don't want to be in that category, and we shall let things evolve naturally. Recently several Czech and foreign performers and ensembles have approached us with commissions for new pieces (Duo Goelan, Trio Variabilis, the Raduga Ensemble), and so time will tell how it will all develop.

Is your association open to any woman applicant, or do you have some criteria of selection?

We've not organised any entrance procedures. We know each other from the school, and we know each other's compositions from concerts. We certainly don't want to close the door to any would-be new members, since we've never made any collective promise to devote our lives to composing. At the moment we're about the right size. Recently we acquired a new member in the form of Markéta Dvořáková (a student at JAMU, inevitably).

In recent years women's movements in music composition have been very active.

Do you have any links to European or world organisations?

K. R.: We're only now beginning to make contacts, and as I've said, Karla Hartl has been helping us a great deal with Internet publicity, and this has attracted interest from all kinds of organisations with an interest in music by women composers. There's been interest from radio stations in the USA and the Netherlands, for example, and from the Amsterdam women's orchestra the Raduga Ensemble and finally the Cidfemmes festival in Luxembourg.

Do you have joint or similar aesthetic ideals, approaches to composition or stylistic directions, or are you more a group of composers with very different individual orientations?

K. R.: What we have in common is chiefly the name and, so far, the enthusiasm of youth (all the members were born 1971-1979). Otherwise we're very much individuals, and our styles tend to be very different. Marcela, for example, is very involved with Moravian folklore; she plays the dulcimer and arranges folk music. In my view Bára inclines towards the spiritual and sacred dimension of music. Lenka most likes composing vocal pieces and is interested in the traditional music of other cultures. We each do what we want and we enjoy it.

Is there something specific about the female view of composition that makes it different from the male perspective?

K. R.: I've no idea. I've no way of comparing the two experiences.

L. Foltýnová.: It's hard to say. Just as there is a physiological difference between a man and a woman, so there may exist some difference between male and female music, but personally I think it's absurd to distinguish between them. Women didn't write and didn't paint in past centuries because they were not allowed to. On the other hand to shout - look how men have oppressed us and our talents - is also pointless. I don't care in the least whether this or that was written or dreamed up by a woman or a man. The important thing is what it communicates, what it is really about. Too much of an emphasis on "masculinity" or "femininity" strikes me as suggesting a loss of faith in oneself. If a piece is written honestly, sincerely and truthfully, then it's irrelevant whether it was written by a man or woman. The absolute value of a work of art bears no relation to male and female categories.

M. Dvořáková.: If your question can be answered at all on a global level, then I could say that it seems to me that the female approach to creation is more intuitive and spontaneous than the male approach. This probably relates to male and female

mentality in general. Men like everything to be fully thought out and planned in advance, while women don't keep a distance from their experiences and enjoy just being carried away by a situation.

Do you have some models among woman composers on the international level?

L. Foltýnová: I immensely admire the work of Sofia Gubajdulina and Galina Ustvolska - both of them by coincidence Russian composers, which confirms my "Eastern" orientation. I had the honour to meet Sofia Gubajdulina personally at the composers' courses in Český Krumlov, where both as a person and as a composer she completely "won me over".

I encountered the work of Galina Ustvolska at one of the Exposition of New Music concerts and her music so enchanted me that I decided - absolutely off my own bat - to go to Russia and trace her footsteps. Currently I'm just finishing my doctoral studies at the Philosophical Faculty of Masaryk University in Brno on the theme of Galina Ustvolska. So at the moment I'm not capable of talking about anything else. Why do these two composers so fascinate me? However much their music differs stylistically, it has one thing in common. Absolute truthfulness and great spiritual depth. Each uses different musical techniques to accomplish this, but after listening to their compositions I'm always in a trance. Unwillingness to compromise, sincerity, inner power and the courage to stand firm on one's ideas, artistic humility - it's in this that I find a model.

M. Dvořáková: I like the music of Sofia Gubajdulina, and at a concert by the pianist Patricia Goodson recently I was very taken by a composition by the American composer Vanesa Lann. And I could definitely think of others...

You're at the beginning of your careers.

How do you rate the prospects of contemporary music in the commercial world of today?

L. Foltýnová: Given that thanks to my current job I'm unwillingly supporting commercialism, I'm not sure I have the right to answer that question. What is called "serious" art, whether in literature, the fine arts or music has always had no more than a small percentage of supporters in the past, and today. It's easier to buy a ready-made meal and put in the microwave than to spend half a day preparing food that will take an hour to eat. And it's the same with art. Why go to the cinema or a concert when you have a perfect Hi-Fi system at home and a recording by a world-famous conductor? But this attitude means the loss of humanity, contact with others, that indescribable atmosphere between the artist and the listener, that sense of shared experience and shared

being...I hope that people will start to miss it when they become disillusioned with the continuous series of technical miracles that bring them closer together technically, but in human terms increase the distance between them. I think the percentage of enthusiasts seeking new roads forward in art is always the same, and I don't nurse any illusions that art can change the world. Its task is to reflect on the world, using the means provided by art, and to enrich it with elements that are not present in normal life, and are missing. And so in the battle against commercialisation I'll fight for art and specifically for contemporary music to my last drop of blood.

M. Dvořáková: You can't expect contemporary music to be able to compete with commercial music. After all, it makes certain demands not only on performers but also on listeners. On the other hand it probably won't disappear from the face of the earth even in the future. That would be quite a pity. I think it will continue to be sustained by its circle of enthusiasts and sympathisers, and I believe that there will always be a few lunatics around who will think it worthwhile to be involved in new music.

What interests you in music and outside music?

K. Růžičková: I'm interested in everything, and that means music too.

L. Foltýnová: In music what interests me, or rather fascinates me, is the way it can never be fully gaped. It's everywhere around me, not only in actual music played on the radio or at a concert, but in the sounds that surround me, and in the silence.

What is music? I can give you neat definitions in terms of physiology, acoustics, or through the notes of a written score, but what about the element that I can't explain? For example, what does the genius of Bach's work consist of? For me music is something like faith. It's a gift I have to open myself up to, and accept with gratitude and humility.

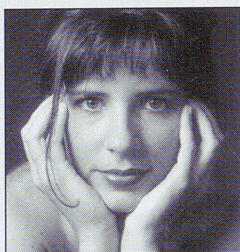
Outside music I'm interested in travelling. I've often wondered which I would choose if I had to make the choice. Every year I can't wait for the summer. Basically I travel independently, without travel agencies, and to southern or eastern or best of all oriental countries. Travelling allows me to get to know other peoples and their traditions and customs; it's personal contact with new people. Often I get into various adventures and I always find them a great source of energy and new experience. Travel gives me freedom.

M. Dvořáková: Almost everything - from lace making to tennis. In music what interests is mainly how to create it in a way that makes it worth it (and meaningful).

GALLERY OF MUSICRONES

Kateřina Ruřičková

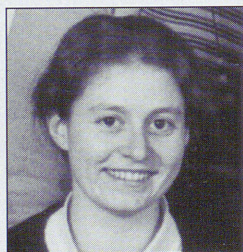
is a graduate of Masaryk University Brno in musicology and of the Janáček Academy in composition. She has composed a range of chamber, orchestral and electro-acoustic pieces. She has won a series of awards, including several first prizes in the Generace competition and a prize in the Musica Nova



electronic music competition. She has taken part in a number of important international festivals, such as the Exposition of New Music, Synthese in Bourges, the Janáček May in Ostrava and the FORFEST in Kroměříž. Currently she is employed in the music department of Czech Television in Brno.

Barbara Škrlová

graduated in competition from the Janáček Academy last year. She is in the non-traditional profession of music therapist. She is the author of a series of chamber compositions and has also won various prizes in competitions. She has taken part in master courses in Reinchen in Austria and her pieces have been played at the Exposition of New Music and the Janáček May Festival. She sees music as a world of colour in which every note and harmony has its own particular colour.



Lenka Foltýnová

studied theatre and music at Masaryk University and composition at JAMU.

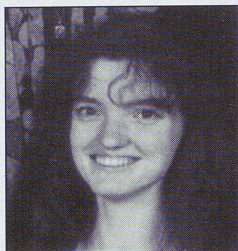


Since 1997 she has been studying for a doctorate in musicology at Masaryk University. She has taken composition courses in Český Krumlov

(Gubajdulina, Kopelent, Bosseur, de Pablo). She writes stage music in addition to her independent pieces.

Marcela Vocílková-Trtková

graduated in composition at JAMU in 1998. Her compositions are influenced by folklore and she herself is an excellent player on the dulcimer. She lives in an isolated spot "at the end of the world" near the frontier with Slovakia. When not on maternity leave, she also teaches piano and improvisation. Of her compositions, the *Conflicts for Large Orchestra*, her graduation piece for JAMU, has attracted particular attention.



Kateřina Strážnická

is in her fourth year of composition studies at JAMU and teaches at a public school of arts. She has been specialising in chamber music, but is now composing her first orchestral work. She gives precedence to tradition over experiment. Her work has also been performed for an international audience - at the Exposition of New Music in Brno.



Markéta Dvořáková

is the youngest member of Hudbaby. After graduating in composition at the Janáček Academy in Ostrava she is now studying in her 3rd year at JAMU: Despite her youth she has already won several awards and has even managed to "squeeze in" the writing of the first "Giraffe Opera" on a story by J. Prévert. In May she is going to Graz in Austria as a "composer in residence". She has taken part in international courses in Trstěnice (Steinauer, Nebesnyi), Krumlov (Balakauskas, Globokar, Kopelent) and has presented her work at festivals in the Czech Republic and abroad.

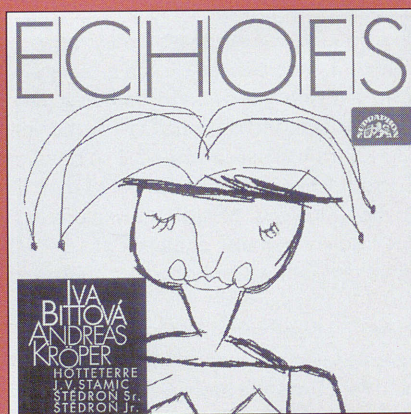


THE IVA BITTOVÁ LABEL

WANDA DOBROVSKÁ

The Iva Bittová "label" is one that offers listeners almost 100 percent certainty that the music concerned will be neither boring, nor infuriating nor tiresome, and will be fresh, original and probably in some way earthy. The new album *Echoes*, for which Iva Bittová joined forces with the composers Miloš Štědroň father and son and the flautist Andreas Kröper is no exception. Bittová's links with the other musicians are multiple:

a) through theatre - Miloš Štědroň senior is a leading light in the famous Brno Theatre „Na Provázku“ [“On a String”], where Bittová also worked in her time. It is not just a matter of the



artists knowing each other, but of the specific artistic language that the Theatre on a String has developed, enabling theatre to be music and music to be theatre. How is it done? If I could tell from listening to the recording, there would be something wrong somewhere. Listening to the album allows one only to find and feel it - most of all in the sixteen-part "suite" *Vanitas*, which is a joint composition by the two Štědroňs. The individual parts are brief (sometimes only twenty seconds long) musical aphorisms using texts in languages including Latin and Czech, proverbs, but also simply "headings" (*Arnica montana*). The two Štědroňs and Bittová have discovered a brilliant "serious musical" technique of projecting music idea "clips"; the tiny movements are polished with the pedantry of the creators of video ads, where every second counts and there is no need to work on the broader scale necessary for a larger structure. The suite does have a certain structure, however, with correspondences between different individual parts (the first with the fifteenth, the tenth with the

On the Wave of Dan Bárta

A NEW DOUBLE ALBUM FROM THE ROBERT BALZAR TRIO

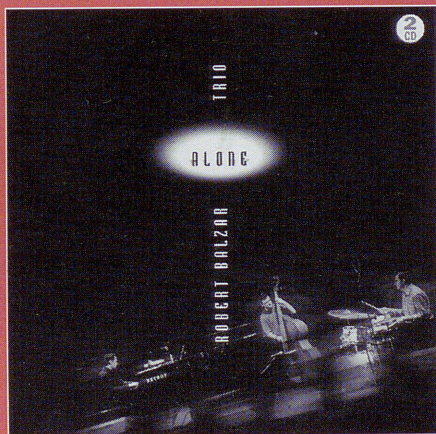
JAROSLAV PAŠMIK

thirteenth). Bittová performs with a five-member instrumental ensemble, but the singer nevertheless has the largest space – her vocal creations have something in common with the art of Meredith Monk, recently presented in the Archa Theatre in Prague.

b) early music – Andreas Kröper was brought to this country by a wave of enthusiasm for historically authentic performance, and he has already done a great deal for the Czech music scene in this field. He has contributed to the new album, which developed out of his improvisation work with Iva Bittová, with the elaboration of one piece by Jacques Hotteterre (*Ecos*), his own composition (*Iva for Flute*), and his creative participation in other works by the Štědroňš (*passacaglia* by one and *Requiem* by the other) and Bittová (*Winds for voice and flute*). From the practice and spirit of earlier music, Kröper brings to the *Echoes* project a mode of improvisation as a constant of musicality, as the sign of a music which actually exists only when it is played, and for which its sounding present is always more important than any kind of fixation (not excluding the digital!).

c) archetype – in the recording, and so robbed of three dimensionality and the visual aspect, Bittová manages more than once to expose the very foundation of living humanity and womanhood, using only the medium of sound, and sometimes so "authentically" that you almost want to escape, except that there is nowhere to go. So that the "consumer" of the recording should be left in no doubt, Bittová presents this aspect of her role right from the start in the introductory *Ecos 1* and then takes it much further from time to time in the later pieces. One might say that all the contributors to *Echoes* are continuing along their individual paths in the album, but that *Echoes* itself is no mere continuation. Thanks to the creative potential of the guest artists, its persuasive overall conception and courageous production, it is one of the few Czech CD projects that have a real chance of resonating right across the spectrum of the music public.

In the autumn of last year the Czech singer Dan Bárta recorded the album *Illustratosphere*. It was an ambitious project, with the members of his accompanying group representing the top Czech jazzmen of the young generation, including double bassist Robert Balzar, pianist Stanislav Mácha and drummer Jiří Slavíček. Here I shall mainly be talking about their subsequent project. It's a double album entitled the Robert Balzar Trio "Alone", and was released by the Cube & Metier company in December 2000. It isn't hard to guess why this album came out. It would seem a fair bet that the wave of interest in the last Bárta album, which was excellent, could lift up a CD by most of his backing group as well. Time will tell if this marketing ploy is effective.



Musically, the album is a case of standard standards (such as *Someday My Prince*, and *There is No Greater Love*) together with pieces by Balzar that are mostly in a similar spirit. The inspiration of the big trios of jazz past and present is audible, and especially the formations of such legendary pianists as Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans or, today, Keith Jarrett and Brad Mehldau. Mácha knows exactly how to "switch" between the styles of the first three mentioned. Slavíček, for his part, has been absorbing the essence of drums from American Jack DeJohnnet, for many years a player with Jarrett. The only problem is with the classification of Balzar. It can't be said that he switches on styles or resembles anyone. Maybe he only resembles Balzar.

Certain inspirations from serious music cannot be overlooked. The theme of Balzar's title track "Alone" is Chopinesque. The piece ends with a short Bachian tailpiece. It is more to Mácha, however, that we have to attribute this kind of interpretation. Balzar plays the theme of the ballad *My One and Only Love* on the strings (the first part even as a solo), which gives a slight impression of practice for entrance exams to the Academy of Performing Arts. Mácha co-repeats in exemplary fashion and Slavíček doesn't interfere too much. When Balzar adds a quote from a Bach cello suite in the final cadence, his entrance exam is already successfully behind him. After this exhibition comes the last piece, in which we find ourselves in rather different stylistic territory. This is Balzar's *Christiania*, which takes the rhythm of a cheerful march in modern New Orleans, of course with some stylisation. Mácha here plays on a Fender Rhodes piano. If it wasn't for the long double bass solo, the piece would give the impression of a kind of "bonus" for the listener for getting all the way to the end of the album.

In contrast to the difficult music of the Dan Bárta CD, the pieces on this album must have been a kind of relaxation and light relief for the Balzar Trio. It's a little as if the double album caught one evening in a jazz club. It is rather peculiar, in fact, that a project by a popular singer should actually be more difficult, unorthodox and open than a jazz CD. Times are certainly changing.

The Bárta CD has been nicely characterised by one of the visitors to the albumcity.com Internet store, who wrote, "This very untraditional, in the Czech Republic unheard-of concept of music speaks to me as nothing has done for a long time...and what's more it has slightly dadaist and onomatopoeic texts. A completely brilliant musical achievement. Will it fall? I don't think so."

If the Balzar album had been on offer, then one of the visitors might have written something like this:

A quite traditional concept of jazz. Not common in the Czech Republic, of course, for its quality especially in the mastery of instruments and mainstream musical idiom. Will it fall? Probably not for dedicated supporters of the jazz mainstream.

ROBERT BALZAR TRIO



„We are guided by love and love is all...“

JOSEF BOHUSLAV FOERSTER

(30th December 1859 - 29th May 1951)

VLASTA REITTEREROVÁ

The life of Josef Bohuslav Foerster forms a kind of coping stone between two centuries. Czech music-lovers greatly admired his work in the first half of the 20th century, but in the second half they systematically consigned it to oblivion. The sad fate of Foerster's music was summed up three years ago in a study for *Hudební věda* [Musical Science] written by Vladimír Karbusický (*Hudební věda* 1998, no. 1) under the suggestive title *What we Owe Josef Bohuslav Foerster*. The process of forgetting started while Foerster was still alive. In 1945 he was honoured by nomination as a National Artist, but after 1948, under the vigilant gaze of the cultural legislators of socialist realism, Foerster's artistic and human principles were regarded as socially harmful. While a large collection of essays was published for his 90th birthday, its contents were very limited by ideological considerations. In the following years the work of this Christian composer with mystical leanings was carefully avoided for so long that it actually ceased to exist. Musically, Foerster grew up with the legacy of the Czech national revival, matured in the period of the enchantment

of art nouveau, experienced the disaster that afflicted or destroyed so many people a generation younger than himself, shared the enthusiasm for the building of a new Czechoslovak state, for which he immediately began to work, and lived to see the tragedy of the young republic. At the beginning he had not been supposed to become the continuer of the family musical tradition. His father Josef Förster senior was a professor at the Prague Organ School, but he was originally destined for an engineering career. Continual encounters with music, however, decided otherwise. His talents were many-sided: he was a musician, draughtsmen and man of letters. His

[*Heart*], and the source of inspiration for his songs and piano cycles. He had fallen in love with the theatre in his childhood, when he used to watch the bustle on the building site of the National Theatre, "although we were just children and couldn't understand the importance of the deed." The genuine piety he experienced at his grandparents and his later study of the ideas of Thomas a Kempis, his childish pride in his uncle Antonín who worked in



From the performance of *Blood* [The Fool] at the Pilsen Opera in 2001



memoirs, studies and sketches are today an important source for understanding and resurrecting his own thought and the thought of his time. Honour for women occupied an important place in his thought. He saw them as beings who were "higher, sacred, worthy of respect and love", whose lot was "love, unremitting service, sacrifice, and unending suffering." Such ideas were the basis for the characters of the heroines of his operas: *Debora*, *Jessika*, *Eva* [Eve], and also *Barbora* and blind *Jana* in "*Blood*" [The Fool], *Alba* in "*Nepřemožení*" [Invincibilities] and *Klára* in "*Srdce*"

Ljubljana in Slovenia and was the author of the first opera on a Slovenian text, *Gorenski slavčok*, his first encounters with the works of Victor Hugo, Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare and Božena Němcová, the nature, from which he derived pleasure, the people he admired - Smetana, Dvořák - all of this formed his youth. Foerster's memoirs speak of Czech artists, and the beginning of Czech music publishers and music journalism, in which he himself shared as a contributor to *Světotozor* and *Dalibor* magazines and a correspondent for *Národní listy* [The National Periodical] Foerster dedicated his first piano trio to Edvard Grieg, for whose music he felt an affinity (Grieg returned the sentiment). He admired Camille Saint-Saëns, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Debussy and Wagner. A visit to Vienna for the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Viennese Philharmonic including the orchestra's performance of Beethoven's *Ninth* with Hans Richter was also among the formative events in the life of the young musician. His marriage to the soprano Berta Lautererová marked a new phase in his



life. In 1892 the Prague National Theatre (opera) company made a famous appearance at the International Music and Theatre Exhibition in Vienna. Smetana's *Bartered Bride* carried off the prize and, for the company, the triumph opened the way to the German stage and to other successes as well, since there were plenty of theatre agents on the look-out in Vienna at the time. Berta Foersterová-Lautererová sang Xenia in Dvořák's opera *Dimitrij* in Vienna, and was then invited in the name of Cosima Wagner to audition at Bayreuth, where she was given the role of Elsa in *Lohengrin*. The engagement in Hamburg that followed was probably less the result of a yearning for foreign successes than of a (far from isolated) error of judgment by the National Theatre in Prague. Berta Foersterová-Lautererová had worked for the company on a six-year contract, which was not renewed. She therefore accepted the offer from Hamburg and Foerster went with her. In Hamburg he taught music and wrote for the press, but above all became friends with Gustav Mahler. Mahler premiered Foerster's *3rd Symphony* in Hamburg and Berta Foersterová followed Mahler to the Viennese Court Opera, where she remained a member of the company up to 1913 when she retired from singing. When the Czechoslovak Republic was declared (in 1918, ed. note), Foerster gave up his position at the New Conservatory in Vienna and returned home to Bohemia after twenty-five years

abroad. In 1922 he published his memoirs of Mahler in the *Prager Presse* under the title *Gustav Mahler in Hamburg*. In the interwar period he became a much respected authority, the president of the 4th section of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and a teacher at Prague Conservatory and the university. The worlds of Mahler and Foerster are in many respects similar enough to raise the question of when there will be a rebirth of interest in Foerster to follow the renaissance of the works of Mahler. Foerster's work also has much in common with that of another recently rediscovered composer, Alexander Zemlinsky; the links between Zemlinsky's *Lyrical Symphony* and Foerster's *Love-Songs* on texts by Rabindranath Tagore have been explored by Jarmila Gabrielová (*Hudební věda [Music Science]* 1997, No. 3). In all his works the initial impulse and the final certainty is love. The words "We are guided by love and love is all" end his opera *Bloud [The Fool]* based on a Tolstoy story), a mystical work which perhaps represented Foerster's most serious "sin" in the eyes of the cultural commissars after the Second World War. Three years ago, in the study already mentioned, Vladimír Karbusický raised a number of questions that remain unanswered (as partial payment of the debt we should mention two other publications by Karbusický that also relate to Foerster - *Mahler in Hamburg*, 1996 and *Besuch bei Cosima*, 1997). The fact that this year is the 50th

anniversary of Foerster's death has been almost completely ignored. On Foerster's sixtieth birthday in 1919 a Foerster Society was founded that still exists today, but its chances of promoting Foerster's work in today's commercialised world are minimal. There will be Saturday late afternoon concerts in the Foerster Hall at the rectory of the Church of St Vojtěch, a concert for Foerster's jubilee in the same hall on the 26th of May Foerster's *Stabat Mater* in the Church of St. Vojtěch at Easter, and a concert on children's choirs at the same venue on the 10th of May. Foerster's cycle *Čisté jitro [Pure Morning]* was performed with great success in an orchestral cycle held by the Czech Philharmonic in 2000, singer Zdena Kloubová recorded the cycles *Erotikon* and *Milostné písně [Love-Songs]* op. 96 (Supraphon 1998), and Josef Suk and Josef Hála contributed a complete recording of Foerster's works for violin and piano (Supraphon 1999). On the other hand, there is no interest in other Foerster songs for piano although they have long been in rehearsal, *Eva* is the only one of his operas to be available on CD, and his operas are never performed on stage. Not in vain, alas, did Foerster choose the following quotation from Anatole France as a motto in his literary *Poutník [Pilgrim]* (Prague 1942): "For of all the illusions that can be born in a sick brain, fame is truly the most ridiculous and deplorable" Of course, in reality, fame is not the issue.

Miroslav Vitouš

AND HIS CASTLE EXPERIMENT

JAROSLAV PAŠMIK

Miroslav Vitouš (born 1947) is unquestionably one of the most respected jazz double bassists in the world. He made his name as a founder member of the group Weather Report, as player with Chick Corea and as the author of a whole series of independent projects including the CD Atmos (ECM 1993), which he recorded in a duo with Jan Garbarek. This recording was followed by more than seven years of silence from Vitouš as creative musician. He returned to the concert podium on the 10th of April 2001, presenting several of his current compositions for mixed choir, symphonic sounds (played on a sampler) and jazz trio in the Spanish Hall of Prague Castle. Playing in the jazz trio with Vitouš was the American Vinny Calaiuta on percussion and Aidyn Esen, originally from Turkey, on the piano. We used the occasion of the concert to ask Miroslav Vitouš a few questions. Most of the interview took place in the Hotel Intercontinental the day before the concert, but we asked the last three questions just after the concert ended.

Why did you include arrangements of several works by Antonín Dvořák in your programme?

As a Czech, I represent the whole life of Czech music. Dvořák's music - the music of one of the greatest of our national composers - has always been a great source of inspiration to me. That's why we shall be playing something from Dvořák at the coming concert. In my own work I try to draw on Dvořák.

In your own compositions jazz and classical music interpenetrate. What is your view of the future of this kind of fusion?

Jazz and classical music are practically condemned to join forces. In both genres improvisation will be important, and the education system in music will naturally have to change. Musicians from both camps will have to learn much more from each others. There is going to be a fusion of the jazz and the classical musician. There is simply going to be huge change. I don't think there's any other way. Or at least, this will probably be the main road. In my view development is moving in that direction. I also think my own work is a kind of first step on this road.

But surely it's already happened, I mean in what was known as the "third stream" in the mid-Fifties?

I can't see what I do as following up on something. I simply compose. I would say that I follow myself up. It's my own growth. Of course, the main thing is to listen to the music itself. It's not just a combination of a symphonic orchestra and a jazz trio, as it used to be in the past. My music isn't "cut and pasted" from bits of jazz and the classics. It forms a higher unity. It's like a new-born baby. It's new in every respect. Perhaps it's the "fourth stream".

Nevertheless you've still called one piece a "suite". That's quite an old form...

Yes, you're taking about the medley of three American standards, *Stormy Weather*, *Willow Weep for Me* and *Mood Indigo*. This isn't the new music I was talking about. It's simply a choir arrangement of old standards that struck me as having a certain mood in common.

Do you have any mainstream standards in your repertoire?

The only standard we'll be playing at the concert is *Autumn Leaves*, but of course in a special arrangement which is very avant-garde in relation to the piece itself. I chose this combination of a well-known standard and an unconventional arrangement completely deliberately, to show how beautifully the two go together.

You're the author of internationally acclaimed libraries of orchestral sounds. Personally you recommend that people use these sounds in conjunction with a GigaSampler. Why do you call the GigaSampler the best sampler in the world?

Today we're already talking in terms of the GigaStudio. This is the one sampler that plays straight from the hard disk, and doesn't need any other internal memory. Internal memory is usually a very limiting factor, since if the internal memory is only 128 MB, you can only use one solo instrument, strings and percussion at any one time. This new sampler isn't limited in the same way. For example, you can load a "musical instrument" with a capacity of 1.5 GB. This is a major advance in quality and also in convenience for composers, who can now have a complete



symphony orchestra at their disposal 24 hours a day. GigaStudio also makes it possible to record more instruments in real time, and that means you save a great deal of time. And the price of this software, which operates on a PC, is very favourable compared to other more limited samplers.

On the other hand you need to have your sound libraries to go with it, and those don't come cheap.

No, you don't need to. Naturally for the classical composer today this is probably one of the best things around.

What was the story behind sound libraries project?

It all started as a response to my own personal practical needs. I wrote a concerto for double bass and orchestra that we played in Germany and Italy. We had maybe three days for rehearsals and the result wasn't good. The musicians couldn't learn it properly, although it was quite easy. They played out-of-tune, ruined the rhythm, and in Italy we even got lost, I mean they got lost in the Fourth Movement. I was looking down from the left, and I saw my colleague in front of me down there going grey. He went grey in three seconds. Then he yelled, "Bar 64" and maybe three musicians came in and the rest luckily found their places. Classical musicians are simply unaccustomed to playing anything but the standard repertoire. And what's more they don't know how to improvise.

When I got home I listened to recordings of this concerto and recordings from the sampler. Back then it was some kind of Korg and everything sounded "à la Mickey Mouse". I discovered that we had sensational technology, but no sounds. For a while I waited for someone to put some sounds on

the market, but nothing appeared, and I was still waiting for a chance to have the best studio and sounds at home. For example, what if you get some commission and you don't bring it off? Then you'll never get another. Usually you only get such commissions once, and if you're not up to expectations, then no one will ever pay you. This wasn't just my problem, but faces plenty of composers. Anyway, finally I paid the Czech Philharmonic to do the sounds for me. It was difficult work and took many years. We started at the beginning of the last decade and completed the project at the very end of the decade.

Doesn't it threaten the existence of symphony orchestras when now you can get them for yourself in nice "canned" form?

I thought very hard about this question, but in the end it turned out to be unfounded? Musicians continue to have plenty of work, and of course one thing has changed for the better. Composers now have proper sounds at their fingertips. Of course, there are limitations to the system since the sounds are fixed and prepared in advance, but if composers know how to work with them well, they can achieve fantastic results.



It was this kind of fixed limited character that Keith Jarrett criticised in your sounds, wasn't it?

Yes. As I've said it's not perfect. It depends how it's used. I think it's very good for young composers. For me personally it's priceless.

What do you think of the Napster system for sending music on the Internet?

I think that mankind isn't yet mature enough for the technology that we now have at our disposal. It's a dangerous problem. There's no established order on the Internet, and pretty well no way of protecting copyright. I make my living from music. If people steal my music through the Internet, I won't have anything to eat. Society today works on market relations and so far no one has thought up anything better. We all know how communism ended. We would all like a society without money, but no one knows how to reach it.

Let's go back to the trio that you've brought here. Could you imagine other players in place of your fellow-musicians in the trio?

Perhaps on drums, but absolutely not on piano. Aidyn Esen has a style that suits me very well. He's not just a pianist, but also a classical composer, and this is reflected in his musical ideas during improvisations and his approach to the composed parts of my music. I have known him from the conservatory in New England, where I was director of the jazz section and he came to study. As far as playing my own compositions is concerned I couldn't imagine a better interpreter in his place. For this project I actually wasn't sure whether to bring just the choir or the trio as well. In the end I decided to bring the trio as well.

What do you expect from the Prague concert?

The concert has been conceived for a much wider audience than just the jazz public. It actually includes very few jazz elements and those have been used just to show that the combination is possible. I'm sincerely curious how this public will receive my music, because it's something completely new.

Tell us something about your time as director of the jazz department at the New England Conservatory. How did the system there differ from the system at the famous Berklee School of Music?

I forgot the details a long time ago. The basic difference was probably in the quality of the teaching and the personal approach of the teachers. There were no limiting rules about teaching. The musician - personality - taught a student any way he or she liked. That was probably the basis of my system.

Your last solo disc is *Atmos*, recorded in 1992 in a duo with Jan Garbarek. Why was it followed by such a long interval?

I was coping with some personal problems, and for seven years I was working on the sound libraries project.

Do you have a family?

I'm divorced and I have a son, who's now 33. He is still trying to find himself...



What do you say to the new American jazzmen like Greg Osby or Uri Caine, for example?

I live in the Caribbean Islands outside the USA, and I don't know these people at all. Most recently I heard something about a neo-bop style. Sometimes I have periods when I

do nothing but listen to music for two weeks on end. CD after CD. But then I don't listen to anything for as much as four years. We have only so much brain capacity and when you stuff it with the work of other people, there's no room left for your own things. You can't take things in and put things out at the same time. But it's an individual matter.

Do you regard yourself as a Czech and a European? Do you think that something like European jazz really exists?

No, nothing like that exists. Europeans have simply been adding something to American jazz.

What's your view of Wynton Marsalis?

I like the way he plays. Of course I was surprised to hear him say that he has to have at least a three-day interval between jazz and classical concerts, in order to "change gear". I don't have that kind of experience at all.

Perhaps it's connected with trumpet technique, don't you think? Mouthpieces and so forth.

I don't know. In any case it surprised me. I reconsidered my own approach to the issue.



Do you have any experience of working with a choir?

No. This is my first experience.

The sound in the Spanish Hall was very unbalanced. The sampler didn't sound natural.

I'm told that the sound was best on the balcony. Of course, you would have had to have been swallows for everyone to have squeezed in there. As far as the sound quality of the sampler is concerned, the fact that it didn't sound as well as it should was the fault of bad apparatus. It should have been Hi-Fi apparatus, and then the symphonic samples would have sounded right.

Don't you feel that this combination of choir and jazz trio with pre-recorded samples is a kind of combination of the living and the dead?

No, I don't feel that at all. I think that there can be correspondence and harmony.

THE BRNO

MULTIMEDIA



SCENE

("Poslech habrovského lesa") and involved the use of acoustic instruments which were placed at a distance from each other and so emphasised the natural sounds of the forest rather than producing an independent effect. The project "Habrůvka Noises" ("Habrovské šumy") inverted the approach, bringing the recorded and studio-modified sounds of ordinary village life to the closed space of the Glass Meadow theatre. Plachý created another two open-air projects - "Dusk in the Quarry" ("Stmívání v lomu") and "Over-Field Mass" ("Přespolní mše"), both in 1997. In "Dusk" the performers and public were located in the closed space of an old quarry under the surface of the ground. All the events were closely bound up with the space - sounds, readings of texts by J. Daněk and the visual side by Dalibor Chatrný. The same authorial team of Plachý, Daněk and Rozbořil also organised the largest-scale performance of the "Over-Field Mass" involving the participation of the local agricultural co-operative, manufacturers of domestic tractors, a children's choir, the local Sokol sports organisation, and members of the Brno military ensemble. The event took place in the fields not far from Habrůvka. J. Daněk described it in the magazine "Ticho" ("Quiet") (another facet of the activities of the Glass Meadow circle) in the following terms: "Anyone who finds himself in the ritual space and makes noises, musical or non-musical, natural or artificial, becomes a participant. All noises and silence are part of the author's design." The ritual space for the mass consisted of three concentric belts. In the middle was the staff belt, the central ritual sector, where all the main actors stayed (the authors, the percussionist D. Šubík and the conductor Řihák). Part of the central section was a market stall with objects of symbolic meaning that were not in fact for sale. In the middle concentric belt (the belt of the active performers), members of the military band, farmers on mini-tractors, the children's choir (intonation links) and teachers circulated. The task of the wind players was to conquer the distant spaces with the loud sound of bugles. The farmers on the mini-tractors represented the connection between the useful and the non-utilitarian aspect. The engines of their vehicles roared according to the scores. Each one of the children sang a single note, indicated on their chest and back by a conspicuous letter. The teachers checked the pitch of the tone with tuning fork and helped the children group form pairs, trios and larger groups of chords on the command of the conductor. When the conductor, composer or teachers gave the order, the individual notes (children) or chords were distributed to the more distant musicians. The third belt was defined visually by the outline of the horizon and acoustically as the boundary of audibility of the engines and brass. The complete openness of the project

Nineties

IVO MEDEK

As the Eighties ended so too did the activities of the Art Inkognito ensemble. The performers dispersed into orchestras both Czech, and thanks to the opening of the frontiers, abroad. Nevertheless, the life of multimedia composition continued to be closely linked with the group. People who had been at the birth of Art Inkognito (Zdeněk Plachý and Ivo Medek) continued to devise and work on multimedia projects, even if under a different hat. New and familiar faces appeared. Among the old but new let us mention Dan Dlouhý, now however by no means "just" an outstanding percussion player but increasingly in the role of composer, or Petr Váša, who moved over from rock musician to the peculiar vocation of "physical poet", who in solo performances combines acting, music and poetry. There was Tomáš Ruller, who together with a group of loyal supporters managed the truly heroic feat of founding a Faculty of Fine Art (FAVU) including an important multimedia atelier at the Technical University in Brno. There was systematic activity from the Theatre on a String (Divadlo na Provázku) and Mara, the JAMU theatre studio, and the "Brno creative team" in the form of Alois Piňos, Miloš Štědroň and Ivo Medek returned to the stage.

Another major impulse for the activation of experimental work came with the founding of Glass Meadow (Skleněná louka), a stage founded at the instigation of Vladimír Morávek, the Veleks, J. A. Piťínský, Zdeněk Plachý and others. Over the seven years of

its existence it provided a platform for dozens of artists, above all from the fields of music and poetry, and it gave a great deal of space precisely to creators of multi- and mixmedia events. Among them we should at least mention some figures of truly international significance - Ben Patterson, one of the leaders of the Fluxus movement, the American composer Phil Niblock and his distinctive combination of music and film, and Paul Panhoyen presenting his musical motion magic with very long resonating strings. Among Czech artists a whole "circle of Glass Meadow artists" emerged who in various combinations realised a series of projects, most of them multimedia in character. This circle included the poet and conceptual artist Marian Palla, Jiří Valoch working especially in the field of visual poetry and conceptual art, the artists Jan Šteklík, Josef Daněk, Václav Stratil, Boleslav Rozbořil and the musician David Šubík. The Cologne musician Hans Koch, the composer Ivo Medek and others took part in some of the projects organised under the Glass Meadow umbrella. There was also close collaboration with Slovak performers, of whom we should at least mention Peter Kalamus, Milan Adamčíak or Michal Murín, as well as Jiří Surůvka from Ostrava. The projects conceived by Z. Plachý, which he calls "poetic situations" always have a close connection with the environment in which they are developed and presented. Sometimes they are more like happenings, and sometimes they are more akin to kinetic environment or landart. The first of these projects took place in 1994 in a forest not far from the village of Habrůvka. It was entitled "Listening to the Habrůvka Forest"

meant that even animals could take an active part in the collective ceremony. Directly following on from these projects Plachý created his new project "Hard Times without Time" ("Těžké doby bez tactu"). This was one of his "mystifications", and once again involved his tried and tested team of colleagues (Daněk, Šubík, the Brno military band and others). It became the basis for a television film, which in its turn led to further projects directed by Plachý directly for television ("Artists for NATO" ("Umělci pro NATO"), "Parnassus under Guard" ("Sřezžený Parnas") and others).

Another important event organised by the circle of Glass Meadow authors was an evening-length project consisting of three separate acts in 1999. In its most frequently presented form it consisted of "Laundry" ("Prádelna") by M. Palla, J. Steklík and the German artists A. Heini and musician H. Koch. This show oscillated on the boundary between pure happening and kinetic environment. In the foyer members of the public would arrive to musical accompaniment and a small item of clothing would be taken from them. These items

modified (while still playing) by two performers (D. Šubík and the author) dressed in "period" coats, gloves and glasses, who used various devices such as sandpaper or sets of small electric model-kit instruments.

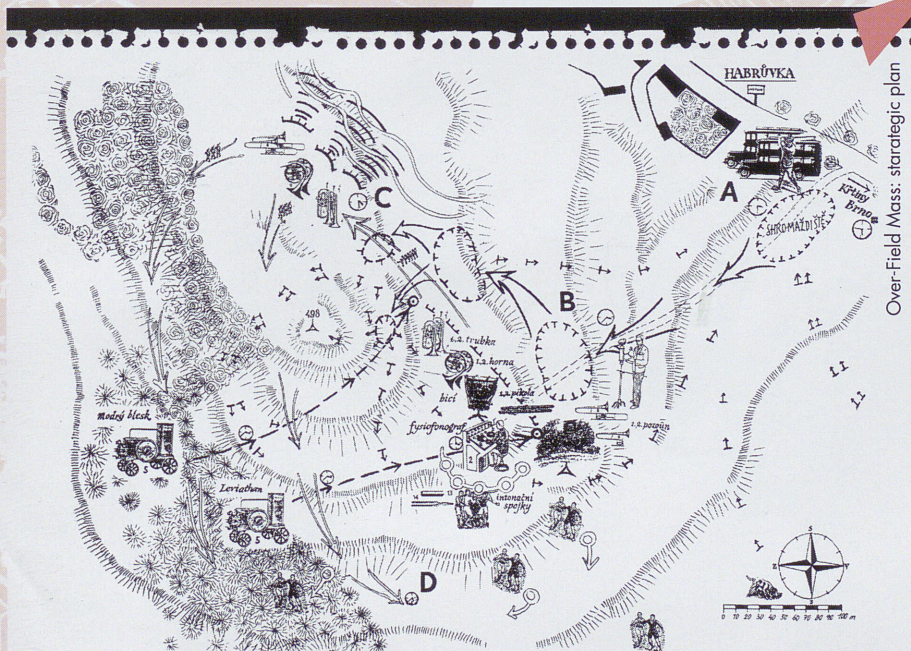
The programme was presented in this form as part of a festival of alternative art at the Roxy, and also on major experimental stages in Germany, for example Alte Feuerwache in Cologne, the Cube club in Münster and in Dortmund.

Another "seedbed" of multimedia projects derived from Art Incognito. The old group had provided the first platform of contemporary serious music for two musicians - percussionists - who from 1990 became the basis for the DAMA DAMA ensemble - Dan Dlouhý and Adam Kubiček. We have written generally on DAMA DAMA at the time of its tenth anniversary in the autumn of 2000, and so here we shall concentrate on its multimedia programmes. The first of these, "Wave Fronts" ("Vlnoplochy") from Dan Dlouhý took the form of a stage performance and was

DAMA DAMA, P. Váša, the Duo Konvergence, M. Štědroň and A. Piňos, children and Misha the Bear) put on in the Marta Studio and repeated at the FORFEST festival, the other projects have all been connected with another attractive venue - the great planetarium in the Brno observatory. In addition to its unusual spherical form, the planetarium has technical equipment that allows unusual projection, lighting and stage events. The first of Medek's programmes here was called "Worlds without Frontiers" ("Světy bez hranic") and in 1993 involved the participation of D. Dlouhý, Denisa Kapitančíková, Helena Jankovská and others. The next year it was followed by the performance "Adam and Eve". In this event pieces by Medek were performed together with music by D. Dlouhý, A. Piňos, Z. Matějů, J. Kollert and D. Forró. The performers included the Duo Konvergence, D. Dlouhý and B. Kapitančík, and texts by J. Valoch, K. Šiktanc and Z. Pelikánová were read while the huge head of the speaker was filmed through special optics and projected onto the cupola of the planetarium in the middle of the starry heavens. The most ambitious of Medek's programmes so far has been the "Crossings" ("Křižení"), which aimed to show the changes in a human symbol of faith during history and up to the present. Dramatic episodes alternated with normal and wide-angle projections and live music.

The composition was premiered at the international FORFEST festival in the rotunda of the Flower Garden in Kroměříž, where it was filmed for television, and it was repeated at the Meeting of European Music Festival 2000 in the planetarium. Here, given the reduced space, the musical elements were slightly modified with the Ars Incognito ensemble being replaced by percussion and the American singer Jacqueline Bobak.

Multimedia is one of the most dynamically developing fields of contemporary art. In view of the Brno traditions described above it would be a good thing if it could evolve further with more theoretical and teaching support. As far as theory is concerned the first swallow appeared in the form of the Musica Nova 2000 conference at the Janáček Academy. The conference was directly concerned with multimedia and brought together lecturers and performers (at associated concerts) from six European countries and the USA. In the teaching field, the most active institution has been FAVU, but this is naturally more focused on visual arts than on music. It is therefore high time that multimedia elements be included in the study plan of the JAMU music faculty. Given the ever-increasing popularity of the field, both applicants and schools would very much welcome such a move.



would be washed and hung in a way that created ever new artifacts. "Laundry" would be succeeded by Plachý's stage performance "Cogwheels" ("Ozubená kola") and Medek's stage happening "Checking the Roughness of the Surface" ("Kontrola drsnosti povrchu"). Both acts used visual elements of old educational films of the Fifties that had the same names. In "Cogwheels" an "Indian" group in ethnic costume then appeared and created the main part of the music supplementing the recorded and live electronic music. In Medek's act the film was "given a sound track" by using contact microphones to record from the surface of the old black discs that played the original recording. In the course of the piece the surface was

subtitled, "musical visual journeys though the micro-, macro- and megaworld and the human psyche". It had its premiere at the Exposition of New Music in 1995. The authors of the more collective "Valley of people" ("Údolí lidí") (script DAMA DAMA, music - D. Dlouhý, D. Forró, V. Zouhar, I. Medek, K. Šimandl) called it a "multimedia show" and in addition to live music it contained stage elements, dance and lighting effects including a laser and fireworks. It was first presented in the Brno Laser Show Hall in 1998 and was later repeated at the Prague Spring. Another group of multimedia stage performances date from 1993 and bear the authorial signature of Ivo Medek. With the exception of "Absurdaria" (performed by

STAGING OPERA TODAY

PETR KOFROŇ

Over the Nineties, Czech opera productions several times met with strong antagonism from both the public and the critics. It began with Opera Furore, continued with Bednárík at the National Theatre, actually caused the abandonment of Forman's planned Dalibor, and can be seen most strikingly with the Tosca at the National Theatre. The objections can be simplified and summarised as follows: The composer

The position sounds logical enough, even if we get the strange feeling that there's a fly in the ointment somewhere. The fly, it turns out, is the very nature of opera - its character as a synthetic genre combining abstract music and concrete text. Let us look at these elements separately. The history of the text in the 20th century is actually the history of the interpretation of the text. In spoken drama it is usual to cut, turn upside-down, rewrite and put in a new context, and not at all because the

perceived entirely as the art of "here and now" and production teams are in fact almost obliged to interpret the text in a way that will appear "up to date". Indeed, this is ultimately part of the intentions of the dramatic author, whose secret wish is that his text will "work" in some way even in the future. Shakespeare may have been a genius, but he had no way of knowing how the ideas and perceptions of mankind would change in the future. Rather provocatively we might claim that

"Shakespeare has no right to over-ride the contemporary director, because he knew nothing at all about the contemporary world". An opera libretto is the same kind of "ur-text" and - let's be honest - often these are dramatically fairly feeble texts. If these librettos had to be staged as spoken drama (as Pitřinský managed, quite exceptionally, to stage Janáček's Jenůfa libretto) they would in most cases be failures. Many librettos could not be staged at all as spoken drama,

From the performance of Puccini's Tosca at the National Theatre in Prague



knew best what he was writing and want he wanted, and so producers and directors have no right to over-ride the composer and change his intentions. "Puccini was a genius. He worked hard on his opera and some insignificant Morávek has no business reworking his opera!"

original text is bad, or has "mistakes" that are repaired by the changes. Even Shakespeare is reworked, and today no one is taken aback when instead of the classical English Hamlet he sees what are de facto Nekroshius's "variations" on Hamlet. This is because the theatre is

and others would have to be thoroughly rewritten and re-interpreted. The history of the music of the 20th century, however, moves in a contrary direction. It is not the history of interpretation, but more a march towards "authenticity". Isolated 20th-century experiments in "interpretation"

(e.g. Busoni with Bach) have found no successors, and we can see the movement for "authentic interpretation" creeping gradually from the Baroque to Classicism and up to 20th-century music itself (note the recent dispute over the "authentic interpretation" of Vostřák's word scores). Let us return to our comments on text, since in the 20th century attitudes to text have been the complete opposite to attitudes to music. In music we are not allowed to cut, turn around, rewrite, or place in a different context, because the original music was flawless. Music is the art of "here and then", and the whole team of performers (significantly decreasingly referred to as interpreters) is duty bound to interpret the music in a "historically" correct way, i.e. according to the intentions of those composer whose secret wish was allegedly that his music should always be played as he wrote it. These musicians were geniuses and had no interest at all in how musical perceptions would change in the future. This may seem to be an overstatement, but essentially it is the prevailing view.

Nor is there anything wrong with it. The problem is that two contradictory paradigms are meeting and clashing here: the first is the text paradigm of up-to-date interpretation, and the second is the music paradigm of historical authenticity.

Once again, neither one nor the other need be regarded as negative. The text is identified with the paradigm of general consciousness, which in the 20th century "changed with the times" or even "ran ahead of them" (see the "avantgarde"). While music kept to the paradigm of myth, i.e. it repeats things as they were in the beginning. The avantgarde is "effective" because it draws the world one towards future visions, and the mythic museum is "effective" because it connects the world to the unchanging "point zero of the beginning of the world". And who can judge which paradigm is still working well today? On the one hand we hear lamentations on the end of "modernism" and the "avantgarde", and the whole 20th century "of discoveries" and "drive towards the future" is viewed almost as a "mistake". On the other hand we hear lamentations on the diminished energy of traditional myths (such as Christianity, for example). Thus on the one hand within the former "avantgarde" we can observe not marches towards new discoveries but marches back to what were previously (even among "traditionalists") regarded as rubbish, foolishness, lack of invention, and on the other hand we witness "updating" tendencies in mythology (see for example the entire 2nd Vatican Council). And no one has a clue!

What about poor old opera in all this confusion?

Is opera supposed to unite these opposite poles when even the Pope can't manage it? Of course, opera cannot solve the question either. With a certain degree of simplification one can simply distinguish three possible approaches.

1. To accept the increasing distance between the world of text and the world of music, and to interpret the text while playing the music authentically. The final logical consequence of this approach would be to provide an entirely new text for the original music. As far as I know, nobody in this country has ever made such an attempt. It would require a poet-librettist and therefore the revival of a now almost extinct discipline.

2. To submit to the text paradigm, and so interpret the text and radically interpret the music as well. This approach has also rarely been tried here (in its time the Opera Mozart attempted something similar). This would mean team work by composer-librettist.

3. To submit to the music paradigm and play everything "as it stands in the score", including text and stage directions. Although this approach seems the nearest to public taste, however, there have not been a great many examples. It would mean, for example, that at the beginning of *Rusalka* there would have to be an "old willow bending towards a lake", and sitting on it the *Rusalka* herself. What then does the so-called "modern symbolic approach" to opera actually mean? Does it just mean that there is no lake on stage, but some sort of huge bakelite cake and the *Rusalka* doesn't sit on the willow, but sinks into the bakelite "bank" and makes ripples with her hands on its artificial material surface? Or does it perhaps only mean embarrassment and "conditional" staging, i.e. staging it "as if" there were a lake there (but for God's sake not a girls' boarding school as in Pountney's version!). It is having your cake and eating it. It means that you must stage the opera in such a way that the original intentions of the opera are not actualised, but are not ruled out either. This kind of production is regarded as "modern" and "pure" by our critics (see for example reactions to the *Othello* by the Liberec Opera). Here "symbolic approach" means that a sign or symbols means something, not that it can mean anything.

At this point we hit yet another contradiction in opera. While there is no limit to the meanings that can be assigned to the music without changing it, and while the stage design and costume elements – if the opera is not transferred to some utterly different setting – can follow either the composer's original ideas or something else (depending on the fantasy of the

audience), the text does not allow multiple approaches in the same way. "Now I shall stab you with a sword", is simply "Now I shall stab you with a sword". The result is a mass of productions that are carried away by the idea of "approximation" even in the text. While the text insists that the king mounts a horse and rides away on it, nobody actually produces a horse. On the other hand, in order that he shouldn't actually leave on a motorcycle, they stage it so that he "departs on foot". This is what might be called probabilistic staging, or "most probabilistic". It is additionally supported by the view (of the creators themselves) that productions should use the most universal signs leaving members of the audience to imagine whatever they like according to their own tastes. Some experts would even be happiest to leave the whole business of interpretation to the audience. "Play it approximately as it stands, and if someone finds it funny let him laugh, and if someone takes it seriously, let him savour it."

The movement of the singers on stage therefore sticks to the way in which most of us most probably move, i.e. using our legs. More sensitive directors regard this as a problem that goes to the heart of staging in general (see Marthaler's "basic dilemma" – "how to get people on stage and off stage.")

Taken to its limits, this "imaginary" approach would lead to productions on an empty stage with the direction confined to "human relations".

But: as a pure bon mot it will be said that theatre is not "probable," but "truthful".

But Pope, think hard!

I therefore offer two honest solutions:

1. Let "museum-piece" productions of opera exist. They will be extremely expensive, of course, with all those lakes, camels and elephants...
2. Let "interpretative" productions of opera exist. This will, however, ultimately lead to the creation of new operas on the libretti and musical themes of the original operas. Although it sounds almost heretical, in fact this happened in European Baroque and Classical music; it didn't upset anyone then and shouldn't now).

In the end even the Pope lost control and apart from the Latin rite we now have Gnostics, "Messengers of the Heart of Jesus".

Why was this text written? Theatre should be considered with humour, but taken fully seriously. And the problem of opera is an artificial problem, and it must be solved in an artificial world in which you don't know what is reality and what is fiction.

And the Pope can dance during the mass.

Czech Melodrama in Czech Music

VĚRA ŠUSTÍKOVÁ

Melodrama as a separate musical-dramatic form was first brought to public attention by **Jean Jacques Rousseau** with his stage work *Pygmalion* (1770), but he is regarded more as the father of the idea than as a genuine creator in the genre. The new concept was most successfully realised by **Jiří Antonín Benda**, a composer of Czech origin working in Germany. Indeed, Benda's very first melodrama *Ariadne on Naxos* (1774) and



the immediately following *Medea* (1775) were so successful that they became a fashionable craze and travelling theatre companies took them to other cities of Central Europe. They arrived in Bohemia in productions by Karl Wahr's company probably at the end of the 1770s. In 1786 *Medea* was even translated into Czech by the poet Karel Thám. Benda's melodramas were still known and sometimes produced on the Bohemian stage as late as the beginning of the 19th century. The most interesting response to the phenomenon in Czech production was the melodrama

Circe by **Václav Praupner**. The piece is 15 years younger than Benda's melodramas but displays the same characteristic elements as in Benda. Some decades later another work was written that shows strong traces of Benda's influence. This is **František Škroup's** melodrama *Bratovrah [The Fratricide]* (1831). Despite its general popularity from the beginning the form of Benda's melodrama provoked aesthetic objections to the disturbing effect of the frequent switching from words to music. Clumsy arrangements and copies of the works that were widespread in Europe at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century also led to condemnation of the form, and many composers began to avoid the genre. For several decades it stagnated.

The emergence of Romanticism in the earlier 19th century, however, made possible a new approach to the relationship between words and music, and with it a resurrection of melodrama. The first to try it were evidently the German Romantics: C. M. Weber, Felix Mendelssohn, Hector Berlioz, Franz Liszt and above all Robert Schumann, who developed a chamber form of melodrama with piano (*Haideknabe*, *Schön Hedwig*, *Flüchtlinge*). This simplified, pure concert form allowed him to concentrate on the main problem - that of the organic linkage between words and music.

In Bohemia, meanwhile, the national revival movement was gathering way. It was distinguished by efforts to put together various styles, trends and currents that elsewhere had developed in chronological succession, and to emphasise the Czech language as the key expression of nationality, and therefore to cultivate it in each artistic discipline. In music this placed choral and opera work in the forefront. The Czech music community got to know the new Romantic trends primarily thanks to the activities of the leading figures in Czech music, such as Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák, and Zdeněk Fibich. It was above all the works of these classics that had the founding influence on the individual types and genres of Czech national music.



Zdeněk Fibich

PART ONE

melodrama Czech Cultural



Karel Kovařovic

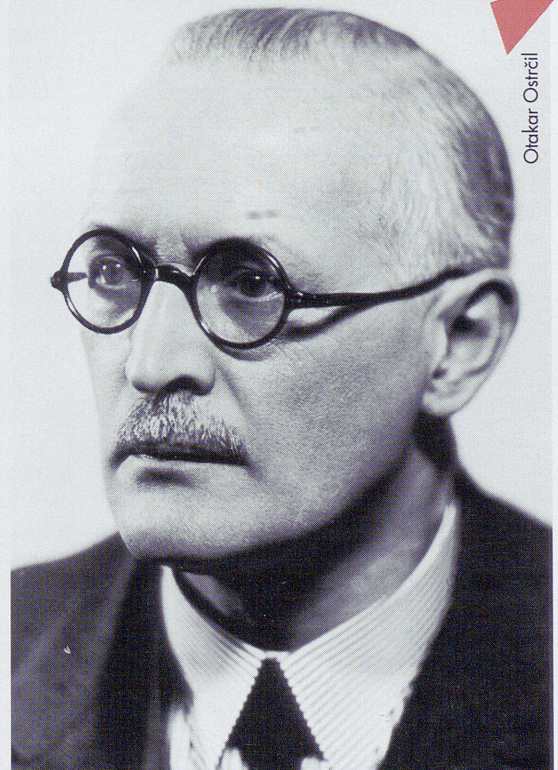
showed that the two elements could run in uninterrupted parallel without obscuring each other, but on the contrary complementing and enhancing each other. By deriving small musical motifs from the rhythm and intonation of the poetic speech he ensured that certain key words should fall in exactly the right places. Fibich's instrumentation of both his orchestral melodramas, *Vodník* [*The Water Goblin*], *Hakon* and the second version of *Štědrý den*, is also masterly. Over six concert melodramas, of which each represents a further developmental step in the genre, Fibich finally came to the creation of his crowning work - the trilogy of full-length stage melodramas on a classical theme, *Hippodamia*, which is unique in world repertoire. (The

It was **Zdeněk Fibich**, of course, who took up the efforts of Robert Schumann and the German Romantics to rehabilitate the musical-literary form of melodrama, and whose first concert melodrama *Štědrý den* [*Christmas Day*] (1875) was a successful experiment in producing a fully conceived and composed form. He went beyond his predecessors in managing to solve the architectonic problem of melodrama. By using leitmotifs and developing them he avoided a fragmented mosaic technique of description and created an independent musical current, almost a symphonic poem. He thus met the aesthetic demand for the complete equality and relative independence of the two elements of melodrama - poetry and music. He

author of the text, Jaroslav Vrchlický made a major contribution to the works, as did the theoretician Otakar Hostinský, author of the first theoretical treatment of melodrama which was published in 1885 in Lumír magazine. Hostinský's piece "On melodrama" also defined the main principles for the possible production of melodrama). It is from the work of Zdeněk Fibich that we can derive the developmental line of Czech melodrama in its modern form, which has managed to adapt to new styles and movements, especially impressionism,

expressionism and neoclassicism, as has the form in other countries with a stronger tradition of melodrama, such as Germany, France, Russia and Spain.

In the first phase of development Czech melodrama is represented by Fibich's pupils and his contemporaries, most of whom drew directly on Fibich's legacy. Choice of poetic texts was often from the work of the most popular Czech poets: Karel Jaromír Erben, Josef Václav Sládek, Jaroslav Vrchlický and Jan Neruda. Musically, the inspirations were still romantic, but new possibilities were already being explored. Fibich's best pupil **Otakar Ostrčil** wrote six concert melodramas, of which *Balada o mrtvém ševci a mladé tanečnici* [*The Ballad of the Dead Cobbler and the Young Dancer*] (1904) *Balada česká* [*Czech Ballad*] (1905) and the last, *Skřivan* [*The Lark*] (1934), are not to be overlooked. As a typically orchestral composer, Ostrčil wrote all three of his melodramas for orchestra. In *Balada česká* the symphonic flow even takes the dominant role. Another pupil of Fibich, **Karel Kovařovic**, wrote four chamber melodramas, of which one, *Princezna Lyoleja* [*The Princess Lyoleja*] to the symbolist verses of Antonín Sova, is of lasting importance. The work reflects the position of its author as the first Czech conductor of Impressionist music, and represents Czech musical impressionism. A remarkable quantity of melodramas were also produced by less well-known composers such as **Ludvík Vítězslav Čelanský** (7), **Karel Moor** (11) and **Miloš Čeleta** (4).



Otakar Ostrčil

Agon at Prague Spring 2001

TEREZA HAVELKOVÁ

Czech ensembles consider it a prestigious matter to perform at the Prague Spring Festival. When ensembles don't have the opportunity to appear regularly at the festival and are not performing as part of some broader overall project or specific thematic programme, they usually choose the cross-section approach and try to present the best of their repertoire at the broadest possible range. As far as contemporary music is concerned, another favourite principle sometimes also applied to concert-planning is what might be the "sandwich" principle, i.e. offering audiences the reward of a little of the classics of 20th-century music as a way of getting them to "put up with" a contemporary piece. This is in fact an out-of-date principle, and a look at the public today shows how wide of the mark it is. People who attend concerts that despite every effort still have the "contemporary" label, represent a public that knows exactly what it is about, goes to concerts precisely to hear contemporary music, and can do without the bait of "classics". The others will in any case be put off a concert by the mere presence of a few known or unknown "contemporary" names.

This year two leading contemporary music ensembles from the Czech Republic had the opportunity to appear at the Prague Spring. One is from Bohemia – the Prague-based Agon ensemble, and one from Moravia – the Brno Ars Incognita, and the concerts of both groups were burdened by the concert-planning principles I have mentioned. Ars Incognita, whose concert will be reviewed in the next issue of Czech Music, took the "sandwich" approach and included the "Moravian classics", L. Janáček and B. Martinů in their programme at the request of the festival planners.

Agon took the "cross-section" approach. On the one hand they chose representative international pieces from their repertoire – "For Your Eyes Only" by John Zorn, "La jalousie" by Heiner Goebbels and "Are You Experienced?" by David Lang, and on the other works by Czech composers from their circle "Tři kusy pro orchestr" ["Three Pieces for Orchestra"] by Petr Kofroň and

"Děšť, nějaké okno, střechy, komíny, holubi a tak... a taky železniční mosty" ["Rain, some window, roofs, chimneys, pigeons and so on.... and also iron bridges"] by Martin Smolka, to which they added "Tajemství růže" ["The Mystery of the Rose"] by the classic of Czech New Music Zbyněk Vostřák. It was precisely this juxtaposition of international and home production that proved to be the biggest pitfall of the concert, which took place on the 22nd of May in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum. The world and domestic scenes appeared here as two very different worlds, each working in a different context, and unfortunately their juxtaposition in no way flattered the Czech production. All three "international" pieces mentioned are based on the post-modernist situation, in which there is no sharp boundary between the genres of contemporary music and the composer can make what is essentially a free choice of musical idioms, from classical music to jazz and rock. This means that forms emerge that give a musical, fresh, and lively impression of openness to the audience, and even if the personal styles of the composers naturally differ, humour and a broad overview are common to all. In his piece John Zorn uses the method of collage; he creates the work from very short extracts of pop music melodies, arranged pell-mell and without apparent coherence, and this allows its emergence as typical cliché, taken over from both "serious" and "popular" music. Heiner Goebbels takes the text of a novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet and creates "sounds from the novel" *La jalousie*, producing a kind of sound equivalent of the story and with the help of a tape evoking its general setting and situation (the section based on the sound of the clatter of soles is particularly effective) "Are You Experienced?" David Lang asks in his amusing trifle about a blow to the listener's head, in which a reciter draws the public into the musical events.

In comparison to these, all three Czech pieces performed belong exclusively to the world of serious music and are strongly concentrated on the technical aspect of composition within that world. In the case of Vostřák the music is the expression of a spiritual idea which is transformed into

musical structure (three movements express the successive transformation of the form, colour and scent of a rose as the symbol of Rosicrucian mystery – translated into musical terms this becomes a matter of three constant themes always created by three intervals which are mutually combined, with the melodic principle predominating in the first movement, the harmonic principle in the second movement, and the rhythmic principle in the third). In his "Three Pieces for Orchestra" Kofroň conducts a dialogue with his fellow composers and their principles of composition (in the first movement "with Messiaen's harmony of slow organ pieces", in the second "with Reich's principle of the rapidly repeating chord", and in the third with Erik Satie). Martin Smolka stands between the "programme" and the "technical" approach; he orders fragments that recall in sound the title of the piece ("Rain, some window, roofs, chimneys, pigeons and so on.... and also iron bridges") using a key that he has borrowed from Italo Calvino's book *The Invisible City*. This principle is not however audible in the piece which is striking primarily for the onomatopoeic character of the individual fragments and therefore has a "programmatic" quality that makes Smolka, among the three Czechs mentioned, conceptually the closest to his foreign colleagues.

For the reasons outlined, the pieces by Vostřák, Kofroň and Smolka were more introverted than the compositions by Zorn, Goebbels and Lang and therefore less open and accessible to the audience. Nor did the alternation of Czech and international pieces at the concert help to create links between the two worlds. The length of the concert, which including the interval lasted almost three hours, was another burden for the audience. The ensemble under the baton of Petr Kofroň turned in its usual excellent standard of performance, although in the premiere of the Kofroň piece there was a sense that the musicians had not quite settled into the music. One particularly happy stroke, in my view, was the choice of the cult actor Jaroslav Dušek as the reciter in Lang's "Are You Experienced?", thanks to which the piece took on truly theatrical dimensions.

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Mladé pódium 2001

Karlovy Vary, August 17-24 2001

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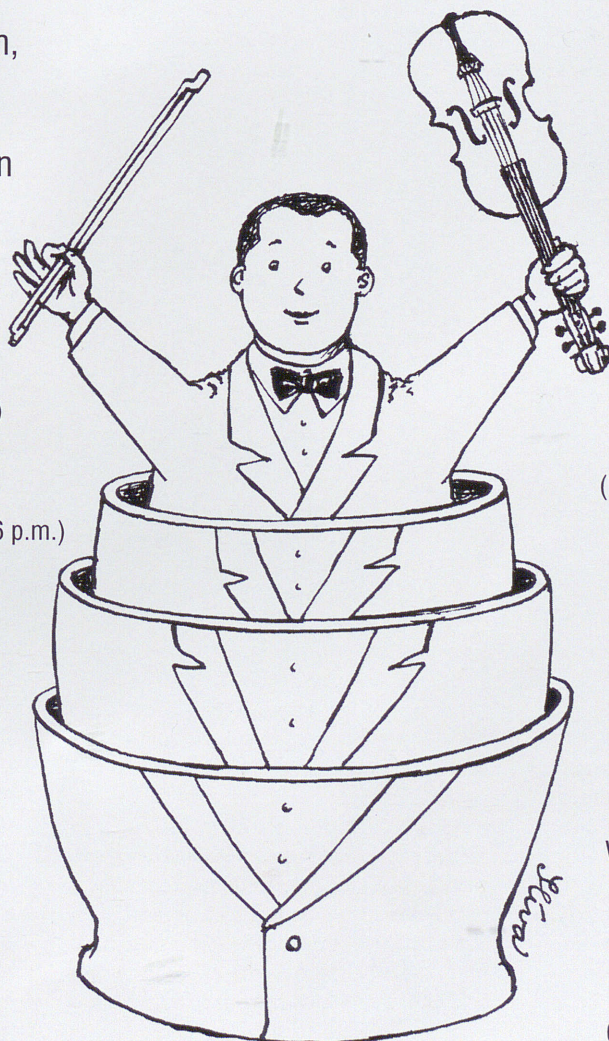
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Sat-Sun 10 a.m.-4 p.m.)
CITY-INFO, tř. T.G. Masaryka (9 a.m.-6 p.m.)
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Festival Secretariate

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FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

17. 8. 2001 Friday

Grandhotel Pupp, 19.30

OPENING ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

P. M. Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition
S. Prokofiev: Peter and the Wolf (theater performance)
Symphony Orchestra of Karlovy Vary
Conductor: Jakub Hrůša

18. 8. 2001 Saturday

Art Gallery, 19.30

PIANO RECITAL OF ROMAN FRIČ

(P. I. Tchaikovsky, V. Kalabis, B. Martinů,
W. A. Mozart, S. Rachmaninoff)

19. 8. 2001 Sunday

St. Mary Magdalene's Church, 20.00

CHAMBER CONCERT

Mgr. Martin Jakubíček - organ
Zbyněk Bílek - trumpet
(J. A. Benda, M. Dohnal, B. Martinů,
G. P. Telemann, J. P. Vejvanovský)

20. 8. 2001 Monday

Art Gallery, 19.30

SINGERS' RECITAL

Irena Houkalová - soprano
Pavol Bršlík - tenor
Jaroslav Šaroun - piano
(P. I. Tchaikovsky, A. Dvořák, V. Kaprálová,
B. Martinů, S. Rachmaninoff)

21. 8. 2001 Tuesday

Art Gallery, 19.30

BASSOON QUARTET

Fagoti Brunenses
(P. I. Tchaikovsky, S. Prokofiev,
N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov,
B. Řehoř, V. Zouhar)

22. 8. 2001 Wednesday

St. Mary Magdalene's Church, 19.30

CHOIR CONCERT

Foerster's Chamber Singers' Group
Conductor: Lukáš Vasilek
Lenka Mikulová - organ
(P. G. Tchesnokov, P. Eben, P. Hindemith,
Z. Kodály, F. Poulenc)

23. 8. 2001 Thursday

Art Gallery, 19.30

STRING QUARTET PENGUIN QUARTET

(A. Dvořák, L. Janáček, B. Martinů,
S. Prokofiev, D. Shostakovich)

24. 8. 2001 Friday

Grandhotel Pupp, 19.30

FINAL ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

W. A. Mozart: Concerto D major for Violin
and Orchestra K 218
Jana Nováková - violin
D. Shostakovich: Symphony No. 14
Pavína Senič - soprano
Ivo Hrachovec - bass
Chamber Orchestra of Prague Symfonists
Conductor: Mario Košík



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