



**18**  
**4**

**Irena Troupová**

**MusicOlomouc 2018**

**Vít Zouhar**

**The Plasy Symposia**

© Pavel Hejný



Jan Fišer — concert master



Lada Ševčíková — violin



Mikuláš Koska — horn



Hana Kubisová — violin



Oto Reiprich — flute



Theodor Brcko — violoncello



Veronika Panochová — violin



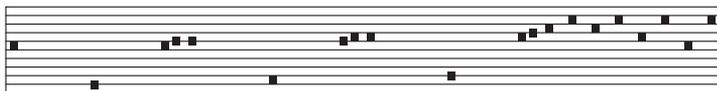
Jan Souček — oboe



Adéla Triebeneklová — horn

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## Dear readers,

in cultural terms, the autumn is in fact the season of harvest, as attested to by the texts we bring you on only two of the countless cultural events taking place in the Czech Republic this autumn. As Jan Borek writes – it is the season of new music lovers.

In addition to these very current events (the MusicOlomouc festival and the symposium in Plasy), we also focus on longer term developments – in the case of Plasy, these takes the form on Miloš Vojtěchovský's reflections of the wild symposia of the 1990s. In interviews with vocalist Irena Troupová and composer Vít Zouhar, we try to apprehend careers that are as varied as they are full. We are also happy to bring you another CD, which contains works of Zouhar's spanning the previous thirty years. And finally, Matěj Kratochvíl surveys the work of American group Dálava, who are continuously reinventing the tradition of Moravian folk songs in a contemporary jazz setting.

We wish you as many deep experiences with Czech music as possible, both this year and next, and a peaceful holiday season.

*Ian Mikyska*

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cover: "Kirchertrumpet", Plasy Symposium installation  
 (photo by Agosto Foundation Archive)



PHOTO: MARTIN FROUZ

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# IRENA TROUPOVÁ

## *and her musical curiosity*

.....

*At first, soprano Irena Troupová gives off the impression of a somewhat more fragile figure from a Gustav Klimt painting. Her musical soul is also reminiscent of these artworks: varied, full of character and an inner radiance. But while the painter was indelibly linked to Vienna, Irena Troupová's career has so far outlined the trajectory České Budějovice-Prague-Berlin-Prague, incorporating a huge number of impulses in almost all directions, complemented by a clearly conceived reflective approach. Hence her concerts are often full of listening discoveries and new challenges. Simply put, her stable audience knows that they'll never be bored.*

.....

*Looking at your career so far, I see a clear predominance of early music in its beginnings, while now, music of the 20th and 21st centuries makes up the majority of your repertoire. Czech critics recently called this a fairly unusual phenomenon. Do you agree?*

I suppose I do. My encounter with early music determined my trajectory for many years and it was difficult to extricate myself from that. That is why I was excited about every change, like when I was approached by pianist Tomáš Spurný, who works intensively on 19th-century German-speaking composers in the Czech lands (Joseph Maria Wolfram or Václav Jindřich Veit, for instance) with a plan for performing their music. This was already during my stay in Berlin, where I spent fifteen years. During this time, I had the opportunity to perform several interesting 20th century pieces, but ultimately, it was very few.

When I returned to Prague, by a happy coincidence, I had the chance to record Bohuslav Martinů's opera *Le jour de bonté* and perform a beautiful arrangement

of Mahler's early songs for soprano and wind ensemble at the Rudolfinum. I thus entered Czech musical life in a manner entirely untypical of me. And – again by coincidence – I was introduced to the composer Marek Kopelent at a concert with harpsichordist Monika Knoblochová, who soon after that needed to find someone at short notice to perform one of his pieces, and he chose me. Since that time, I have had a pleasantly varied concert life: both chamber and operatic Baroque music, Classical-era songs accompanied by the fortepiano, more traditional 20th century music (songs with piano or orchestral accompaniment), and truly contemporary music.

*It sounds like you'd long desired a greater range of repertoire, but you had to wait for it.*

Already in České Budějovice, I discovered early music thanks to the leading musicologist Martin Horyna, who filled me with enthusiasm for renaissance polyphony. Then Pavel Klikar – one of the first Czech proponents of historically informed performance – heard me sing, and one thing led to another. Pavel had an immense knack for connecting people: shortly after I was turned away from studying musicology in Prague for political reasons, I received a position at the Music Department of the National Library, quickly found accommodation, became a member of his ensemble Musica Antiqua Praha, and he also recommended a music teacher, Mrs Terezie Blumová.

*The second time around, you passed the examination to study musicology. Did the examiners simply forgive you your negative political profile?*

I think that to my good fortune, someone else was sitting on the panel. I guess the evaluation was also different thanks to the people from the library, who stood behind me. I even remembered the author of a Soviet piece and the beginning of the text, so I passed the entrance examination.

*What was it that made you so politically unacceptable in the eyes of the regime?*

My mother was formerly a teacher of religion, and my father a former member of the PTP, i.e. the Technical Auxiliary Battalions (Pomocné technické prapory), where so-called politically unreliable persons were sent for re-education in the mines or on construction sites.

*Was your interest in styles older than the Baroque awakened at Prague's musicology department?*

I certainly had an interest: there were many interesting scores in the musicology department's library and I wanted to study as much as possible, as well as to become acquainted with the music on a practical level. As far as modern music was concerned, I mostly imagined music like that composed by Petr Eben. I also met composer Svatopluk Havelka, but when he began writing something for me, I left for Berlin. I had a lot of work there, mostly concerning early music. I was also allowed to travel to the Schola Cantorum in Basel. Moreover, Germany had a very ingrained system of stylistic pigeon-holing, so nobody thought of offering me – firmly entrenched in the early music category – any other projects. Something would come through occasionally, but not as much as I would have liked.

*You really became involved with contemporary music after returning to Bohemia. What do you most enjoy about it?*

I can't say. I'm simply attracted and allured – my curiosity is piqued.



***How do you select pieces? Do you have any criteria?***

To tell you the truth, if I refuse something, it's usually for time management reasons, because at this point, I'm interested in every contemporary composition and I'm curious about everything that turns up. I take it as a challenge. Sometimes I also turn something down because of range. I remember, for example, meeting Arvo Pärt in Berlin several times. He wanted me to sing in his piece, but it was almost entirely in a low register, and it couldn't be transposed because of the violin parts, which were mostly played open strings. I think it was *Es sang vor langen Jahren*.

***At the beginning is your curiosity, but how can you be sure if a contemporary piece is worth it?***

Only when I study it in detail and really learn the piece. Otherwise I have no chance of knowing what it really holds inside; whether it is good or not.

***Did it ever happen that you were disappointed in the end?***

Of course. Sometimes, it can be summed up as "unnecessarily difficult", i.e. too much effort for minimal effect. Other times, the performer is somewhat unsure about the piece, but the audience is ecstatic. After all, there are many factors at work in a live performance.

***This is why I ask, because as soon as you are to interpret a new work, you have to believe in it. Otherwise, its strength is considerably reduced.***

That's absolutely true. But I always say it's up to me to discover and understand the meaning of every given work – that's my job.

*In the chamber concert repertoire, your most regular recent collaborator is Jan Dušek, who seems to be an ideal musical partner for you. How did you meet?*

We met when a singing substitute was being sought for his piece *Chalomot jehudi'im*. Someone recommended me, Jan like my recordings very much, so we rehearsed the piece with the Berg Orchestra. During consultations on the modern Hebrew text, when it was necessary that I try out the pronunciation while singing, he sat down at the piano. After a while I said: "Well then, our musical understanding is ideal!" Then we collaborated on a project that featured pieces by composers spurned by the Nazis, which was initiated by a German agency. We started rehearsing and it was obvious that that wasn't the end of it. We have been performing for over six years now.

*Together, you were the first to record the complete songs of Czech-Austrian composer Viktor Ullmann, whose Jewish origin led to his deportation to Terezín (Theresienstadt) and later to Auschwitz, where he was murdered in a gas chamber. How did you come across this composer?*

Already during my musicology studies in Prague, I came across an extensive collection of scores by the Terezín composers, i.e. those deported to the Terezín ghetto, and I always planned to prepare them for performance. But I didn't do it before leaving to Berlin, and there was no time to do it there. When I returned to Prague, I said to myself that I really had to look at the music. I took out Ullmann and read through it. I was utterly immersed in the music. It was an incredible discovery for me.

*Why?*

It's hard to explain. I won't give you a deep analytical explanation, but I'll tell you it's wonderfully colourful music with strong emotions. Some people think that seeing as the composer was in Terezín, his music will be pure depression, and they're then surprised at how varied and diverse the music is – not everything was written in Terezín, many pieces were composed much earlier.

*If we look into the fates of the composers that were deported to concentration camps, from where they often did not return, these narratives are so strong it is often neither easy nor pleasant to go through them. How is it for you?*

As for Viktor Ullmann, he himself suffered from depression, which he also passed on to his children – for him, it was not simply the psychological strain of being persecuted by fascism. In his case, however, I rather had images on my mind from the First World War, in which he took part voluntarily. These are reflected in his songs on Chinese poetry, for example, and that's truly depressing. In his Yiddish songs from Terezín, you can feel he is trying to come to terms with his Jewish roots, and there – I'll admit it – it really got me down.

*At the 2018 Prague Spring, you and Jan Dušek introduced listeners to another Terezín composer, Hans Winterberg, whose name is completely unknown to most.*

I came across him in the academic literature. Through my own intensive research, I found Peter Kreitmeir, a direct descendant of this composer. I got in touch with him through social networks. Peter was very obliging and allowed us to rehearse his grandfather's songs. He even came to our concert in Prague. When I went through the entire story, I was deeply struck by it.

*If I am not mistaken, Winterberger's compositions were stored in an archive in Germany, bound by a contract to remain off-limits to the public until 2031?*

Yes, that is the case. Peter Kreitmeir managed to have this contract annulled in 2015. Since then, Winterberg's oeuvre has been open to exploration.

*Could you say a little about the work of this newly discovered composer?*

Hans Winterberg was born in Prague to a Jewish family whose relationship to Czech and German identity was very ambivalent – sometimes they wrote his name as Hans, sometimes as Hanuš. He passed through the standard Czech-German education system, but he grew up without a closer relationship to the Jewish community. He studied music with Alois Hába.

He married Prague German pianist Maria Maschat, and if it weren't for the rise of Hitler, they would have had a normal married life. They faced huge pressures to divorce, which they resisted almost until the end of the war. They were only divorced at the end of 1944, most probably following a mutual agreement. Winterberg was then deported to Terezín, which he survived.

After returning to Prague, they weren't sure if he was a German or a Jew: his ex-wife, a German, was expelled. He wanted to search out not just her, but also his scores, so he requested a passport in order to travel to Germany. I think it's quite strange that he wanted to go there so soon after the war and everything that had happened. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that he wasn't treated very well here. He left and reunited with his wife. They lived together for some time, but the relationship no longer worked. He was then married another three times, and he adopted a son from the last marriage. This partnership was dominated by a terrible fear of anyone discovering he was a Jew.

Winterberg's compositions finally made it to the Sudeten-German Archive in Regensburg, and there could be no mention of him being a Jewish composer. Then a direct grandson, Mr Kreitmer, appeared and took over this heritage. The Nazis' influence on future generations is attested to by the fact that Mr Kreitmeier only learned about his musical relative about six years ago. For me, this is a truly incredible story.

*And it would certainly make a good film. I'd like to ask you a little about your singing technique. Your voice remains fresh, light, it sounds very natural, yet retaining a specific colouration. How do you take care of it?*

I keep attending supervisions – that is immensely important for me. Sometimes one despairs, of course, sometimes more rest is needed, as well as a reassessment, but it is good to always have an external “ear” available, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also vocal technique. A singer needs someone to point out that something is not right with the voice; that something is going on. There can be as much expression as technique allows, expression can sometimes greatly support technique, but they need to be balanced. Sometimes, it might happen that a singer allows emotion to overcome them; they can be moved by the piece at the expense of quality. That does happen sometimes, but an internal red flag should go up immediately: take a step back.

*Are you capable of this also because of Terezie Blumová's special technique, which you experienced at the beginnings of your career?*

First of all, I am grateful to Terezie Blumová for helping me accept my vocal identity. As a child, I had quite a deep voice, and for a long time, it was not clear that after

mutation – which was more distinct than it usually is in girls – I moved to a soprano range: the lows remained, but there was no longer any colour. I kept my voice low even though I was in fact no longer satisfied with it. Mrs Blumová connected all my registers, discovered new regions in my voice, and thus pushed me in the right direction. It took quite a long time, but it worked.

I'd compare her method to physiotherapeutic procedures, more specifically the so-called Vojta's Method, where certain points are held on the body, which is then moved into positions that are unpleasant, and so one must produce a certain counter-pressure. This activates certain regions in the body which it would otherwise be impossible to activate. The connection is not only in the muscles – it is also neurological, and Mrs. Blumová did something similar: during her teaching, she would hold certain points on the neck in order to activate the breath, the inhalation, and so on in a particular way. If the teacher has excellent control of this method and the student understands it, fantastic results can be achieved. If it is not done quite right, in the worst case, it can harm you, transmit bad habits, or teach you nothing. But I suppose this is the case with every method.

### *Do you teach this method yourself?*

I wouldn't dare – I realised I did not quite get into its depth and foundations. Moreover, it isn't quite pleasant for me to touch someone while they sing, and I know this is also true of many students. There are a number of singing methods which involve the teacher touching the student's diaphragm, but it's not for everyone. In Berlin, I took classes with singer Maria Corelli. Nothing of the sort took place there, the teaching was classical, Italian, but Mrs Blumová's method helped me in situations that brought me to my wit's end. Much later, I met Mrs Pavla Zumrová here in the Czech Republic, who teaches following this method, continues developing it, and can also explain it. Thanks to her, I filled in a lot of gaps in my knowledge. So if someone comes to me and wants to follow this method, I'll do it, but I don't offer it to all my students automatically. I still feel a certain humbleness in the face of it.

### *I think that in your case, this won't be quite a cliché question: What are you planning for the future?*

I'm looking forward to new pieces which are being written right now – I can say no more, because they are in their early stages. And of course I'm also excited about the early music concerts, particularly the summer operas in the Baroque theatre in Český Krumlov, and then interwar-themed recitals, concerts with the Brno Contemporary Orchestra at home and abroad – it's so much beautiful music!

*Soprano Irena Troupová first gained notoriety in the field of historically informed performance of early music. Beginning in the 1990s, when she lived in Berlin, she has performed on stages around Europe, collaborating with Thomas Hengelbrock, Howard Arman, Joshua Rifkin, the Orpheon ensemble, and in the Czech Republic with Jaroslav Tůma, Barbara Maria Willi, Petra Matějová, Monika Knoblochová, and groups such as Ensemble Tourbillon, Musica Florea, and others. She gradually expanded her musical range to include romantic and, especially, contemporary works (both song and opera). Vocal works by 19th-century German composers of the Czech lands and interwar composers have a special place in her repertoire. She has performed with the Czech Philharmonic and other Czech orchestras, as well as several ensembles for contemporary music (Berg Orchestra, Prague Modern, Konvergence, Brno Contemporary Orchestra) and composers including Marek Kopelent, Jiří Teml, and Jiří Kadeřábek. She participated in the internationally renowned recording of Bohuslav Martinů's opera *Le jour de bonté* for the Arco Diva label, where she also published the complete songs of Viktor Ullmann (*Schwer ist's, das Schöne zu lassen*). Last year, she recorded a newly discovered song by W. A. Mozart for Czech Radio. In addition to her concert and stage career, she also teaches at JAMU in Brno and at international courses.*

# REPLANTING FOLK TRADITIONS

Lovers and experts in the field of folk music are constantly debating what is, in fact, authentic, what transformations and updates are acceptable, and which should be banished from the lands of good taste. Disregarding these debates, musicians from electronic producers through singer-songwriters to metal bands take on folk material. But one of the most exciting examples of how traditional material can be taken to new worlds came from the New World.

## Julia Ulehla, Vladimír Úlehla, and Dálava

“We have recently read that folk song has everywhere died out in its homes, that there are no more witnesses to its life and performance, and thus – predict these voices – no one can tell anyone else how to perform these songs. It is, apparently, the good right of every artificial singer of today to sing folk songs in his own way, especially, they say, since they are noted down in the songbooks, so any musically educated person can easily sing them!” (p. 11)

“In place of violins and clarinets, the farmer’s windows would all the more often elude the sounds of the accordion, which soldiers brought back from military service as a gift bought with their saved-up pay. Its nasty tonics and dominants combined with the thicker sounds of the brass band in their struggle against the old tonalities and strange harmonisations of the singers, thus robbing the cooking of the plums, harvests, and weddings of their most precious decoration. Instead of the old *Danaj* songs, we could more often hear from the taverns the singing of some suburban trash, and *Schlagers* took a confident seat at the Sunday music-making table.” (p. 176)

“The singers from Myjava also sometimes showed their faces in Strážnice, and once again, not quite in favour of local truthfulness. It seems to me that that was the origin of a certain gipsy note in the playing of the circle band, which was foreign to the singers of Strážnice. It also differentiated those of Strážnice from those of Velice, who, after all, did display a bit of this gipsyness in their last ensemble with Jožka Cigán. Perhaps it was also thanks to the fact that the Strážnice singers performed, at least then, without the cimbalom – whose flowing arpeggiated chords



*Vladimír Úlehla with Slávek Volavý's band*

contributed to the gipsy character of the Myjava singers in no small part – that the Strážnice locals managed to guard their music. Never did diminished chords appear in their harmony, so typical of gipsy playing, old tonalities were not erased to the advantage of major and minor, as the gypsies so like doing...” (p. 184)

### **Gentle and Raw**

A scepticism towards the development of folk culture is an unmissable undertone in *Živá píseň (Living Song)*, a book by Vladimír Úlehla (1888–1947), biologist, ecologist, philosopher, but also ethnographer, folk song collector, and co-founder of the folk festival in Strážnice. The hefty tome (only published after its author's death, in 1949), which is the source of the quotes above, is a thorough excursion into the life of folk songs in the South Moravian region of Slovácko (also known as Moravian Slovakia) – not only into its musical structure, but also into its interconnectedness with other aspects of local life.

In this respect, Úlehla took an approach similar to that of contemporary ethnomusicology – not only studying isolated melodies and rhythms, but also considering the situations in which these were performed, the communication between musicians and their audience, and the entire network in which music is entangled. Acting under the influence of his exact scientific experience with nature, he applied an ecological approach to music. In the book, however, he also admits to romantic feelings for a past he saw disappearing. He judged the present time which substituted it as unvaried, unified, cut off from the local spirit, and mechanical, just like the “nasty tonics and dominants” of the accordion.

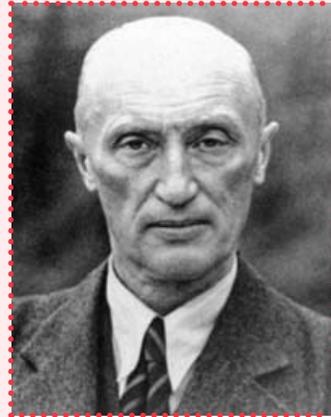
Vladimír Úlehla's great-granddaughter, Julia Ulehla, was born in the United States, and brings together experiences from classical singing, experimental theatre, and ethnomusicology studies. In her youth, her musical tastes were formed by bands such as Led Zeppelin, Jane's Addiction, and Fugazi, but also by singers like Billie Holiday or Etta James.

Through these global influences, she arrived back at her Slovácko heritage, following up on her great-grandfather's oeuvre. Together with her husband, the American guitarist of Armenian descent Aram Bajakian, and several other cross-genre musicians, she started the group Dálava, which focuses on adaptations of Moravian folk songs. In 2014, they published their first, eponymous album. Melodies chosen from *Living Song* are accompanied by electric guitar, acoustic bass (occasionally replaced by the North African bass lute guimbri), and two violins. Moravian melodies are supported by the violins' harmonic drones, often complemented by guitar played with an e-bow (electromagnetic bow).

The lyricism, however, meets rawness. *A ty moja nejmilejší* (*And You My Dearest*) is transformed into a wooden blues, the waltz rhythms of *Hory hučá* (*The Mountains Rumble*) are periodically assaulted by an apocalyptically distorted and feedback-full guitar - as if the Moravian singers had arrived at a jam session with their friends from the New York hardcore scene. Julia Ulehla's voice passes smoothly from fragility to monumentally vaulted dynamic arcs, occasionally getting to us through distorting effects. Even with a relatively limited sonic palette, this disc demonstrates the various lights in which Moravian folk song can be positioned.

Dálava's second album, *The Book of Transfigurations*, was released in April 2017, and shows the approach of the central creative duo with slightly greater diversity. The recording opens with an archive recording of Julia's grandfather Jiří Ulehla, accompanied on cimbalom by Antoš Frolka (the eldest son of the famous Moravian painter of the same name). After the first verse, the cimbalom is replaced by a distorted guitar, later joined by a drum kit and a screeching violoncello.

The lifelong credo of the musicians featured here is openness - this is true both of the personnel on Dálava's first record, made when they were based in New York, and the Vancouver-based musicians that play on *The Book of Transfigurations*: drummer Dylan van der Schyff, cellist Peggy Lee, and keyboard player Tyson Naylor. This North American openness, which has its foundation in the multicultural downtown scene, where jazz and rock, improvisation and composition, technique and grittiness all mix freely.



Vladimír Ulehla

On the second piece on the album, *Dyby ňa moja maměnka stara* (*If Only My Old Mother*), the soft chords of the electric organ are coloured in by restless rustles and noises; *Dyž sem já šel přes hory* (*When I Went Over the Mountains*) kicks off with the ruthless pulse of over-driven drums and the similarly coloured voice of the singer.

### Similar Valleys

*Folk song spread out between ambient jazz and noise rock* could well be an apt description of Vladimír Ulehla's nightmares. In truth, we can understand both albums by Dálava as a very successful homage to his ideas. If we were to stick to Ulehla's favourite ecological similes, let us imagine folk song as a flower which is only found in a specific valley. If we plant it in a field, it will die (or mutate into another species, like what happened - and continues to happen - to folk song in its arranged scenic form, as performed from after the Second World War to this day by many folk music and dance ensembles).

But if we find a valley with similar conditions, the plant might even grow on another continent. What Vladimír Ulehla valued most about the old Slovácko singers was their ability to fluently react to one another, not fall into schematicism ("the usual major and minor"), and understand the logic of the melodies. And we find these same qualities in Dálava, only expressed through different means. When the song *Před našim je zahrádečka* (*There's a Little Garden in Front of Ours*) is accompanied by a guitar riff



PHOTO: EMMA JOELLE FARHAD GHADERI (2x)

in 7/8 metre, it sounds entirely natural, though no one probably knew this rhythm in early 20th-century Strážnice.

Compared with other translations of folk songs to the languages of pop, jazz, or rock which have surfaced in previous decades, this is truly an understanding of the spirit of the music. This vague term conceals the discovery of a balance between regularity and irregularity in musical structure, between order and improvisatory unpredictability – principles shared by the singers of Hornácko (the northern part of Slovácko) and the musicians of Dálava. The only song that puts one in mind of the somewhat exhausting category of the “big beat folk song” as practised in the Czech Republic is *Vyletěla holubička* (*A Little Dove Flew Out*), whose long build-up is, however, quite palatable within the framework of the entire album.

In several interviews, Julia Ulehla expressed her respect for the material she works with, as well as for how the local audience will accept her conception. Of course, there is a circle of so-called folklore fascists, whom it is in principle impossible to please, and who take from *Living Song* mostly a distaste for anything new. As for the conception

of song as a living organism, Dálava is an excellent follower of Vladimír Úlehla’s ideas. Recent Dálava concerts in the Czech Republic are proof of the local audience’s capacity to accept a less conformist approach to folk song. Several also saw Dálava joined by local musicians, such as Petr Mička’s Hornácká cimbálová muzika, one of the leading cimbalom ensembles in the country.

*“I hear how the young boys walking through the village in the evening to visit their girlfriends are more often singing the pop songs of the Prague periphery than the old local songs. I see how the string ensemble is being overcome by brass bands, and with it comes a weak concoction of jazz; how the local dress that once equalised societal differences and elevated rich and poor into spiritual nobility is disappearing into factory suits and hats. In a time-lapse film I can see right in front of my eyes the richness of folk culture melting into the greyness of civilisation. Our contribution to the world’s share of creative individuality recedes into uniform colourlessness.”*

On the other hand, in the same text, Úlehla reminds us of the famous American composer Henry Cowell’s visits to Moravia in 1926 and 1929 and his enthusiasm for the music which he heard, accompanied by Úlehla, in Velké nad Veličkou. Úlehla probably met Cowell in 1925, when he travelled to California and Arizona, and was presumably responsible for organising his concert in Brno on the 9th of April 1926. It was the trips to see and hear folk musicians that doubtless made more of an impression on the American maverick than performing for the intellectuals of Prague and Brno. With a hindsight of seventy years after the publication of Úlehla’s *Living Song*, we can say that other musicians were as excited as Cowell by Moravian folk song – musicians who can understand the gentle nuances of its structure, and thus balance out the danger of the dissolution and greyness of cultural diversity.

# MusicOlomouc 2018

## *An In-Depth Audit of Contemporary Chamber Music*



*Olomouc, a city of a hundred thousand, lies at the very heart of Moravia and is also the cultural centre of the region. One of the many events taking place in this historical – and, most importantly, student – town is the international festival of contemporary music MusicOlomouc, which since 2009 has presented Czech and international premieres of new compositions as well as time-proven works of the musical avant-garde from the mid-20th century onwards, performed by leading Czech and international artists and ensembles.*

The festival is held every autumn, co-organised by the musicology faculty at the Palacký University, which also lends out the concert spaces. The spectacularly decorated Corpus Christi Chapel in the PU Art Centre or the modern roofed atrium adjacent to it – those are some of the traditional homes of new music in Olomouc.

The tenth edition of MusicOlomouc presented a survey of contemporary music in seven concerts that included six world premieres. This year's edition took place between the 9th and 23rd of October 2018 and featured chamber ensembles (one quartet, four trios, one soloist, one chamber orchestra) and traditional instrumentations – only two concerts made use of electronic components and projections.

The audience thus had the opportunity to compare the levels and possibilities of coordination in smaller instrumental combinations. The programme included pieces written between 1957 and 2018, but the vast majority was composed during the course of the last five years.

The opening concert presented **Ensemble Mondrian**, a Swiss piano quartet who visited Olomouc after a two-year break. **Michael Jarrell's** piano trio *Lied ohne Worte* and **Carlo Ciceri's** *Criteria Insoerge* were built mostly on the tension of three interlocking lines with somewhat choked instrumental

timbres. **Dieter Ammann's** *Après le silence* was the definite highlight of the programme, as well as a massive portion of music – a twenty-minute collection of an almost incredible number of musical ideas for piano trio. Fragments of rhythms, motives, and processes are presented one after another, usually in only a few seconds. Ammann, however, refuses to backtrack, instead adding further and further sections, both static and rhythmically and dynamically heightened. The composer himself describes this intentionally concentrated creative method as constant movement, the absence of a definitive state, unending gushing, birth, flow, change.

In his piece for piano quartet with scordatura (alternate tunings of the string instruments), **Thomas Wally** used a compositional method of similar freedom. Sometimes similarly exalted, but noticeably less contrasting and full of content, ... *jusqu'à l'aurore...*: *Caprice (IV) bleu* was out-shadowed by Ammann's work. The use of a metal mute on **Ivana Pristašová's** violin was very effective, achieving an unusually thin and metallic sound. **Martin Jaggi** and the exhibition of instrumental technique in his *KÔRD 1* for solo viola (performed by **Petra Ackermann**) brought a welcome change from chamber playing.

Thanks to their excellent teamwork, we can only judge the performers of Ensemble Mondrian as a whole, not as individuals. In this concert too, they gave a remarkable performance which included a wide inventory of extended instrumental techniques, which included the fragile percussive sound of the partially prepared piano or so-called string piano, i.e. **Tamriko Kordzaii** plucking the strings directly. They proved their instrumental control most clearly when balancing on the very edges of the instrument sounding. Rather than harmony of any kind, it was pure sonic qualities at work.

The second half of the opening evening belonged to the **Isang Yun Trio**. The programme of this trio of leading Czech instrumentalists was framed by two pieces written by the Korean composer whose name the ensemble bears. In the opening couple of *OstWest Miniaturen I* and *II*, the coincidental planes of the "eastern" oboe (**Vilém Veverka**) and the "western" cello part (**Petr Nouzovský**) contributed to an effect of time freezing. The closing *Espace II*, then, relied on the other basic category at work in Isang Yun's oeuvre – musical *space*.

The oldest piece of the evening was **Witold Szalonek's** sonoric *Proporzioni 2* (1967–1970). Its importance within the festival has to do with the time of its composition. This performance reminded us that



Aleksander Wnuk

the traditional set of "avant-garde" techniques, which includes playing the harp with the tuning peg, applying masking tape to its strings, or sudden contrasting entries headed by the omnipresent pizzicato, has, over the course of fifty years, travelled a trajectory from innovation through mannerism to cliché. Let us find consolation in the fact that the remaining pieces in both concerts overwhelmingly managed just fine without them.

The first world premiere of this year's festival was *Forgetting Ravel* by **Ian Mikyska**, which explicitly turns towards the musical past. The aim of this musico-psychological experiment was for the listener to forget the music of Maurice Ravel in the course of a gradual decay of organised music, or rather, to stop hearing Ravel in the repeating quotations from his *Piano Trio* and *Sonata for Violin and Cello*, instead experiencing pure, direct sound. **Ondřej Štochl's** *Šerosvit* was based on the character of the painting technique known as *chiaroscuro*, and so he stayed on the very line between both principles – light and shadow, the revelation of meaning and mystery.

Oboist Vilém Veverka stood out with his distinctive playing with precise and fluid control of a strong tone, while harpist **Kateřina Englichová** displayed the expressive range of her instrument with a quiet certainty – including those few unusual techniques.

## Solo For Drum And...

The only solo programme of the festival was that of **Aleksander Wnuk**, a young Polish percussionist whose highly performative concert on the 14th of October brought to life the Na cucky Theatre in Olomouc. Sometimes humorous, at other times lightly provocative, he performed this thought-through program with almost unbelievable coordination, precision, and concentration – memorising and adequately executing the complex rhythmic-melodic passages demanded no less.

**Piotr Peszat's** *Jenny's Soul. Or Dirk's?* – with its risqué background – opened a series of pieces integrating many extra-musical possibilities including live projections, acting, and a number of props. **Pierluigi Billone's** meditative *Mani. Gonsha* made use of two Tibetan singing bowls, while the central piece of the programme, the world premiere *I'm at ocean level moisture with these hacks*, had not only metal springs stretched out over the edge of a drum, hairbrushes, and an electric cappuccino frother, but also composer **Cory Bracken's** speciality – several small vibrators wildly leaping around the frame of the drum, sounding the entire body of the instrument, amplified to the very border of noise. The last three pieces made do without electronics:

**François Sarhan's** rhythmic movement etude *Homework*,

the more traditional *Solo for Percussion* by **Michel van der Aa**, and an incredible feat in the demanding acting piece *Graffiti* by **Georges Aperghis**, in which the already difficult part played on a number of percussion instruments is complicated by a fast German text.

## Three Trios

**Trio Helix**, comprised of **Tereza Horáková** (violin), **Ondřej Štochl** (viola), and **Lucie Tóth** (piano) gave the world premiere of **Marek Kopelent's** *Music from Silence for Violin, Viola, and Piano* on the 16th of October. I'd describe the piece as a "scenic ambience" of an abandoned industrial space, built more on sonic planes and lines than singing melodies graspable in the traditional sense. In contrast, **George Crumb's** music took on a historic function: his *Four Nocturnes (Night Music II)* for violin and prepared piano from 1964 brought that "new" sound of night music, as it was later made famous by Salvatore Sciarrino. **Pavel Zemek Novák's** *Touches of Mercy* (2017), then, was a safe bet, with its effective build-up of layers leading to an exceptionally insistent culmination of the dynamic and musical content.

A selection of Štochl's *Microludes for Violin and Piano* was certainly beneficial in clarifying his compositional principles and reducing his musical language to its very essence and was particularly striking in the complete artistic understanding between the composer and violinist Tereza Horáková, but I am uncertain if these embryonic compositions are suitable for concert performance. **Albert Breier's** delicate *Trio* with its long-breathed and almost Pärt-like fragile string lines was a pleasantly calming end to the programme. Sunday 21st of October belonged to the local ensemble **Lichtzwang**. The leading figure of the group and piano avant-garde specialist **Marek Kepřt** played solo – among others – the oldest piece of the festival: *Etude sur le carré magique sonore* by **Ivan Wyschnegradsky** from 1957. In the first half of the programme, he also displayed remarkable lightness in the charming and short *Esercizio* by **Salvatore Sciarrino** and **Gérard Pesson's** fragmented *No-ŷa-Li*. **Jiří Fajkus** performed **Adrián Demoč's** early solo cello piece, *Katharsis*. The audience then had the opportunity to compare the development of this Slovak composer's creative methods over the course of fifteen years, when the two musicians mentioned above were joined by trumpet player **Jan Příbil** for the world premiere of Demoč's newest piece, *A Luca Marenzio*. The expressive melodicism of the cello was here replaced by an emphasis on the timbral component of a static succession of fragile chords in very low dynamics.





The gradual widening of the intervals in a long series of harmonies brought a hypnotic timeless effect.

Dream spaces evoking the first rays of the rising sun were also present in the evening's second premiere – Marek Kepřt's piece, bearing a typically poetic (and, as usual, untranslatable) title: *jitřnoSmíšky...klamoMžítky...bzvůk!* It was an unmistakably "Kepřtian" fragile musical space, with its careful cello glissandi, trumpet air tones, and a crystalline piano foundation, which gave the piece its sonic and structural framework. The second half of the evening was taken up by a recomposition of **Morton Feldman's** *Palais de Mari*, written and performed by Marek Kepřt. The resulting piece of about half an hour, *palais de mari 2 (palais under snow)*, filled the dimmed Corpus Christi Chapel with the two composers' equal dialogue, in which both voices got to speak with surprising consonance – Feldman's lines in Kepřt's sonic space.

On the 22nd of October, **Trio Catch** (**Bogłárka Pecze** on clarinet, **Eva Boesch** on cello, and **Sun-Young Nam** on piano) presented the highest level of virtuosity and interplay. They opened with a showcase of their skill, *Catch Sonata*, written for them by Gérard Pesson. Slight nuances of tone in short rhythmic models, layering of timbre in a carefully controlled dynamic, and an absolutely precise, unified rendition. The almost-solo violoncello, occasionally accompanied by the piano, was also brilliant in **Miroslav Srnka's** demanding (but clear) *Simple Space*. Korean composer **Heera Kim's** *PAR V* brought a remarkable sonic effect: carefully constructed – and excellently performed –, the piece explores almost philosophically the idea of some universal pre-instrument from which all individual instruments only descended later. The non-traditional sounding of the bodies of the instruments, without a single "musical" tone being heard, truly evoked some primordial sonic quality which precedes any instrument we might know. This piece managed to

present music which stands apart from what we understand as the melodic or rhythmic approaches.

The two final pieces were then more of a return to the established methods of contemporary composition: in the programme note to *As if*, **Johannes Boris Borowski** tries to alert his audience to (and probably justify his existence in relation to) the "possibilities of the system". But this music, of a standard contemporary form, did not radically overstep its own – considerably chaotic – system. **Georges Aperghis'** hectic, monumental, and, most of all, forceful *Trio* is almost a dictionary definition of "exalted". Nine images overflowing with drama were in sharp contrast to the light and humorous *Graffiti's* discussed above, performed a few days earlier by Aleksander Wnuk. Catch Trio then dealt with the notorious problem of encores with grace in the form of **Franco Donatoni's** thirty-second canapé, *Ella*.

#### **Very Good Exercise to End On**

The closing concert, on the 23rd of October, which featured the **BERG**



**Orchestra** and its conductor **Peter Vrábek**, was also billed as a ceremonial concert on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic.

The programme, composed of four pieces by contemporary Czech composers, was opened by a short melodrama by **Petr Wajsar**, *8 Movements for a Fan*, written for seven musicians and recitation and inspired by a collection of poems in French by Paul Claudel, reminiscent of Japanese haiku. The result was a gently knit continuous stream with fine dynamic and atmospheric differences between the individual components, and moments of tone painting including a remarkably effective imitation of a flute played on violin. Actor **Petr Kubes** recited Claudel's poems – which were also beamed onto the atrium walls – in French. Though he does not possess a command of his language (as he himself admits), he nevertheless managed the pitfalls of French pronunciation satisfactorily.

This February, **Matouš Hejl's** *Kaleidoscope* was awarded a new prize for contemporary music, Trochu nižší C4 (A Somewhat Lower C4). In this new, reworked version of his graduation piece, which originally followed the structure of Ray Bradbury's eponymous short story, the musical material is now newly recomposed and decomposed (as in a real kaleidoscope) to its individual components: tone, harmonic space, sound. **František Chaloupka**, whose music is performed regularly in Olomouc, did not premiere a new work this time, instead presenting an older piece: *Mašín Gum – Seven Rituals for purging the Czech Lands from the Spirit of Communism*, which presents in seven movements-rituals the infamous story of the Mašín brothers, who killed several people while attempting to escape Czechoslovakia in 1953. Chaloupka's characteristic musical language reveals itself immediately in the expressive entries of the strings and their compressed melodies. The dynamic peaks and awkward rhythmic transformations are difficult to perform together, and



are particularly testing for the two violins. The inclusion of a large number of woodwinds and a careful accent on their timbres is also a stable fixture with this ensemble. Despite the difficult conditions in rehearsing this seven-part piece, the BERG Orchestra performed it with the appropriate panache.

The evening was closed off by **Tomáš Reindl** and his stage melodrama, *Joga*. Petr Kubes took on the role of the Guru – i.e. the narrator – originally written for opera singer Soňa Červená, who premiered the piece last September. This homage to yoga begins with an exposition of correct breathing, body posture, and the beneficial health effects of practising, all this on a very “relaxing” musical background. The scenic component was realised by six women on yoga mats, who demonstrated the basic yogic positions of the *Surya Namaskār*, also known as the Sun Salutation. In addition to the orchestra, we also heard the traditional Indian tabla, a sampled tanpura, overtone singing, beatboxing, and more live electronics including a recording of a text by photographer František Drtíkol – all this in the hands of the composer. Well aware of his difficult task, i.e. standing in for Soňa Červená, Petr Kubes gave a felt, pathos-free performance – even in the most intense passage, which poses an almost humorous contrast with the foundation of yoga as a non-violent teaching: when the Guru barks out his commands as if he were in the army, while the music passes from fragment to fragment and the yogis barely have time to assume the positions demanded of them.

This anniversary edition of MusicOlomouc once again offered a diverse display of contemporary music in many forms, performed by excellent and carefully selected soloists and ensembles. After the seven substantial concerts, one might be tempted to quote – with a certain degree of hyperbole – the words of František Drtíkol, which were heard in a historical recording at the closing concert: “Very good exercise, I am dead.” Until next year at least.

## ***Vít Zouhar Again and Again, Pattern After Pattern***

***As a complement to the last Czech Music Quarterly of 2018, we present a CD of music by Czech composer, performer, pedagogue, and academic Vít Zouhar, one of the most often performed contemporary composers in the country. On the following pages, you can read a conversation with the composer, in which we discuss his childhood in a musical family, intersections between teaching, analysis, and composition, and the various ways of listening he is interested in.***

### **Beginnings**

Your father was Zdeněk Zouhar, composer, musicologist, Czechoslovak Radio editor, and close friend of Bohuslav Martinů, who played a considerable part in the recognition of the composer's work in our country. What was your father's influence on your musical development?

With hindsight, I realise that the influence of both my parents – my mother, Věra Zouharová, was a pianist and a teacher at the Brno conservatory – had three phases. The first was seemingly accidental. As a little boy, I attended concerts with them, plays at the theatre, I was at my father's premieres, recordings, discussions, lectures, and I listened to many conversations – which I didn't understand at all, of course. But it was a natural part of my childhood, something I was surrounded by, and something – as I thought back then – all of my contemporaries had in their lives too. I did not meet it halfway, nor did I strive for it in any way, but I also did not protest against it. And it formed me without my even realising it.

An illustrative example: In 1975, I attended the premiere of my dad's radio opera, *The Metamorphosis (Proměna)*. I was nine years old and more interested in model cars than dad's modules and modes, or ancient myths. This is why I long thought that all I had left of this opera were a few motifs. Only when I returned to *The Metamorphosis* last year, when I was writing a book about my father, did I realise the many commonalities with my first opera, *Coronide*. Entirely unconscious. Beginning with



And the third phase was the one we most enjoyed: the collegial phase. My parents attended my premieres; my father would give me his advice and recommendations, and at the beginning, I thought I was writing in an entirely different manner, and therefore knew it all better. Later, of course, I discovered that a combination of affect, spontaneity, and an emphasis on experience connect us much more than I'd thought, and, of course, he was right about many things. This combination is what I inherited from my father.

**It is an emphasis on spontaneity and experience – also in connection with the affect of Baroque musical rhetoric and gestures – that is characteristic of your compositional work. These elements are often frowned upon in new music circles. Do you feel that a foundation in your father's work was essential in this respect? Or meeting with artists “outside the discipline”, such as Tomáš Hanzlík, co-author of your operas? How do you feel in the context of new music?**

the ancient subject matter, the ground plan of the numbered scenes, the total running time, all the way to the rhetorical gestures, which in my dad's case took the form of characteristic modes, while with me it was paraphrases of Baroque gestures. The works diverge in their musical means, and yet their starting points are similar. If it weren't for these subconscious childhood experiences, we can presume my *Coronide* would be very different.

The second phase of my parental influences was initiated by another piece: dad's *Variations on a Theme by Bohuslav Martinů*. In 1979, it captured my imagination so much that I attempted to write it again myself. This was followed by five years in which I strove to compose, and my father would correct, suggest, demand – these were my first studies in composition.



*Vít with his father Zdeněk Zouhar*

The importance of experience and spontaneity in my music is undoubtedly connected to my parents. After all, my father's variations on a theme by Martínů, which had such a formative influence on me, are a concentrate of these elements – despite the strict modular principles that form them. But consciously, this emphasis on experience goes back to the second half of the 1980s for me. That was when I began working on stimulating (musical) energy, which I consider crucial to this day. When it's missing, I can't respond to your questions, let alone slow down before a sharp right or a crossing full of pedestrians. My experiments at the time led to the realisation that repeated musical gestures (not the mere citation of historical materials) can work in a similar way to an induction coil. And I also realised that the succession of these loops, their layering and overlapping, is perceived narratively. As if *in spite* of the loops. And this creates further greater loops, which induce more energy. The result of these experiments was *Brána slunce (The Gate of the Sun)* for percussion and orchestra (1989), and also a text, *Dynamic Stasis and Static Dynamics*. *The Gate of the Sun* was also the beginning of my long-lasting collaboration with Dan Dlouhý and his Central European Percussion Ensemble, DAMA DAMA.



They played the piece very well, with several orchestras, published it on several CDs, it was even featured in a film, *Amerika*, and it became part of their repertoire. In the '90s, I wrote a few more pieces for Dan Dlouhý and his ensemble, with the focus still on the energising experience. *Dunes* (1995) for two marimbas is one of them. Other pieces of the '90s were also directed towards the stimulation of energy, such as *Six Pianos* (1992), *It Does However Seem Each Time* (1992), *Like Water Is* (1992) or *Close Encounters of the Wild at Heart* (1993), *Wide Crossing* (1994), etc. And it was *Close Encounters of the Wild at Heart* that became my private programme for connecting the disconnected. I verified how stimulating a combination of minimalist and Baroque gestures could be. And I also realised that musical gestures arising from Baroque and Classical signs could be another tool for communicating with the listener. At that time, I started speaking of musical handrails one can hold on to. Around the beginning of the 1990s, I also began discovering historically informed performance. I was fascinated by the emphasis on sound, which I already knew from contemporary music, and I was also mesmerised by musical rhetoric, affect theory, and an experience directed toward musical energy.



"Opening of *Alfréd Radok's Wells*", with incidental music by *Vít Zouřil*

In 1993, Tomáš Hanzlík began studying with me. He established what is known today as Ensemble Damian while still a student. They gave historically informed performances of Baroque music, but they also played Tomáš's music, which had many sources of inspiration. Around 1997, he asked me to set the Baroque libretto to the opera *Coronide*, for which the music was lost. I spent a long time preparing the new libretto, and finally, I wrote a cantata for Ensemble Damian in the meantime: *Kyvadlo* (*Pendulum*, 1998), magnifying the Baroque and minimalist gestures in order to strengthen the energetic effect. This was followed in the year 2000 by *Coronide* for the Baroko festival. It became a very popular component of Ensemble Damian's repertoire, with over one hundred performances. And people began writing about energising Baroque minimalism. Which continues to spread energy. Tomáš and I began running a joint composition workshop, to which we occasionally still return. And as for the derision. American music theorist Leonard B. Meyer published a book in 1967: *Music, the Arts, and Ideas. Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture*. There, he reminds us that colleagues from the other side of the world are often closer to us in their aesthetics

than those in the office next door. This is just as true today as it was fifty years ago. It is equally true that not everyone can like what we do. *Buon gusto* has many shapes, and the dominant aesthetic models have long been invalid. It is therefore unnecessary to squander one's derision. I myself have certain polarised fans, who prefer only a selected part of my compositions, while others prefer another type. Musical post-minimalism is often perceived as a pop-culture phenomenon. There are certain links with the ancient dispute between *stile antico e moderno*. But sometimes it seems that the impassioned participants do not even notice that the front lines change over time. That *moderno* gradually becomes *antico*. It will come as no surprise if I say that Baroque minimalism is not eclectic recycling, but that it has brought new knowledge relating to repetitive structures and their perception. Furthermore, its experiential nature speaks to new listeners who used to think that contemporary music is a purely expert and elitist affair, impossible for an uneducated layman to understand. So let us be sparing with derision and foster positive energy. And my position in new music? I feel better with musical post-postmodernism. Because *neue Musik war schon einmal*.



*Noci Dnem*

## Studies in Brno

### When and with whom did you study at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts (JAMU)?

I graduated from JAMU three times in total. It was always composition, but each time with a different teacher and at a different level of study. It began with Miloslav Ištvan in 1984–1989. This was a hugely formative period. Then followed a time of collegial post-gradual study with professor Alois Piňos from 1990 to 1993. And finally, similarly collegiate doctoral studies with professor Leoš Faltus, 1996–2001.

### What was the atmosphere in Brno at the time; the opportunities?

In the second half of the '80s, it seemed to us in Brno that as students of composition, we could do anything. We were not bound by tradition or period ideology. We might only have had restricted access to the new impulses of contemporary music, but we found our way to all the key developments in Europe and the US. We felt that Brno was where you could study composition most freely in Czechoslovakia.

Occasionally, though, we would run into the absurdity of the times. Like when Pavel Zemek Novák and I had to change the names of our new pieces – his was called *Hay Wagon (Vůz sena)* and mine *Two Metres for Percussion*. The rector explained to us that these titles were unacceptable, as they brought up inappropriate

associations: in Pavel's case, a poor harvest, and in mine, the amount of beer consumed! Neither of us had any idea what comrade rector was talking about at the time. But at the composition department, the atmosphere was amazingly stimulating. Miloslav Ištvan, Alois Piňos, František Emmert, my dad, and a number of others introduced us to their own aesthetics. I'd compare it to a workshop in which we were all interested in what everyone was doing – and, most importantly, why. The pedagogues inspired us; they shared news with us. We'd lend each other scores and recordings if we got our hands on something, whether it was Philip Glass and Laurie Anderson or Arvo Pärt and Witold Lutosławski. Despite the minimal opportunities for travel, we were surprisingly well informed. And most importantly, Miloslav Ištvan was a remarkable teacher. He did not try to create his own compositional clones but instead attempted to develop and support what was individual in each of us.

### One kind of activity popular in Brno – team composition – has almost no parallel anywhere in the world. Were you at all influenced by this approach?

Not when I was studying. At the time, I couldn't imagine that I should or could share my compositions. Only later did I understand that team composition was not merely about sharing, but much more about new impulses which a "solo" composer will never know. Only after I tried it myself with my composer friends – Tomáš Hanzlík, Ivo Medek, and Sára Medková – did I discover that this kind

of shared composing can be very enriching. It doesn't matter if you're each working with the other's material or if you're just sharing ideas, or if you're putting parts together and discussing the dramaturgy of the whole. This distance from one's own work which sharing gives you is irreplaceable. And stepping out of your composer's solitude is very beneficial and useful for other team projects, and not only compositional ones.

**What's the state of team composition in Brno (and... the Czech Republic) today? Can we expect further developments in this genre?**

It builds on the successes of the renewed Brno-based composition team Alois Piňos – Miloš Štědroň – Ivo Medek, who in the '90s – among other things – created two operas, *Věc Cage, aneb Anály avantgardy dokořán* (*The Cage Affair or Annals of the Avant-Garde*) and *Anály předchůdců avantgardy aneb Setkání slovanských velikánů* (*Annals of the Precursors of the Avant-Garde or The Meeting of The Slav Giants*).

In recent years, Ivo Medek has initiated several other teams creating new operas and other multimedia and chamber

pieces. He presented the operas *MrTVÁ?* (2004) and *Alice in Bed* (2014), composed with Markéta Dvořáková, and now he's preparing another opera with Ivo Medek and Sára Medková, *MeToy*. Ivo and Sára also wrote the chamber piece *Inside*, and in a team with Jan Kavan and Lukáš Medek, we made *Tastes* (2016). That was a continuation of previous multimedia team works *Vinegar Syndrome* (2014) and *Soundscapes* (2008). I believe an increasing interest in various kinds of sharing will soon be accompanied by this kind of composing. This is why I'm assuming shared composition can quickly become an important phenomenon. The three operas we wrote with Tomáš Hanzlík are further proof that it works: *Torso* (2003), *La Dafne* (2011), and most recently *L'Arianna* (2018), which are all still being performed.

**Composer... and Academic?**

**You have taught at the Palacký University in Olomouc since 1992. How do you manage to bring together your pedagogical and creative work? And what are the specifics of doing so at a music pedagogy department as opposed to a composition department?**



I try to connect them as much as possible. After all, if it wasn't for my experiences in *Different Hearing*, I would not have created the series of music-visual performative games, *zaHRAada*, *LIBOsad*, *PLANina*, and *NAD HLA VOU*, which we have been performing with Gábina Coufalová, Mirek Synek and Tomáš Hruža since 2014, gradually inviting other colleagues to join us. This year, we invited vocalists from the OLIO choir to join us for EUOJAE. Nor would we have the tradition of the opening of spring in the Japanese garden in Long Beach, California with my GArdenME/zaHRAada, performed there every year by Martin Herman and his CSULB Laptop Ensemble. Nor would the *Different Hearing* Laptop Ensemble have formed. And the other way round: I show my international students what they can achieve using very simple technical means – alone, with their colleagues, or with children. I will give at least one example of the differences and specifics: for many years, I have taught analysis at the Department of Music Education. So I know that students of music education need something a little different than students of composition. On the other hand, however, I'm convinced that the difference should rest only in the selection of pieces and the width of analytic range. The goals, however, should be the same: to bring them closer to the composer's intention – why, how, and in what context he composed the piece.

I am convinced that a music teacher needs to know this just as much as a composer does. Thanks to that, they can create or choose appropriate motivational exercises for pupils who are to get to know an existing piece through composition. And a composer, on the other hand, needs to speak about his composition even more than in the past, explain it, and be able to ask motivational questions. Thanks to these, analysis can become – even to the uninitiated – an adventure with a detective-story plot.

**Why do you think the composer today has to do more explaining? Is it simply down to the fact that we live in times of greater stylistic plurality, and so we need to know many ways to approach a composition? Or is it also because contemporary music is competing with a vast amount of other "products" in the realm of art and entertainment? And how do you feel as a composer in this day and age?**

I underwent a development from detailed explanations to very simple messages. And I now prefer the latter. I am convinced that a piece which has the ambition of communicating with the listener contains layers that do not need further elaboration. Hidden meanings or encrypted processes can be rewarding for those who meet them halfway. But they should not be a condition nor a mandate to enter upon compositional territory. They are not what the listener should know before first hearing,

playing, or even reading through the piece. Alban Berg reminded us of this almost a hundred years ago, and I think it's still the case.

These elements aren't necessary to better "understand" the piece. The reasons why we clarify everything so much seem to have to do with our lack of comprehensible codes and attributes that would be universally valid. The tribal diversity is so broad that even what was universally known a few decades ago has to be explained today. And so we continue to give up on a holistic approach; more and more fascinated by detail. And so we explain, because we presume that it is expected of us to explain, because, after all, it cannot be understood without our explanation. Until we get into a loop of explaining. I do it myself sometimes when I'm lecturing about my own music. But I try to remain a minimalist.

### **Different Hearing**

**In 2001, you co-founded *Different Hearing*, a musical pedagogy programme in which you try to introduce (experimental?) music to children as something universally accessible, rather than belonging to distant elites. How does the programme operate? And does it work?**

It does, and very well: the original goal of *Different Hearing* was to offer children an experience in creating music. Almost twenty years ago, I thought it was a shame that in art, children could draw, model, create art objects, while in music they could only interpret existing pieces. At the time, composing and the creation of sonic objects was unavailable to children in this country. So I decided we'd do something about it. And that's how *Different Hearing* was born.

Experimental music offered tools and possibilities, projects like *Klangnetze* and *Response* offered methodical models. But for us, the most important thing was – and remains – the mediation of the experience of the creative musical process, not advertising contemporary music in schools. This is why we have spent years convincing ourselves – through the *Different Hearing* programme – how creative children can be when you create an appropriate space for this creativity.

**What phase is the project in now? Who are the prominent figures?**

For over a year now, my colleagues Gabriela Coufalová, Gabriela Všeticková, and Jaromír Synek have led weekly courses for elementary school teachers from around Moravia and Eastern Bohemia. Teachers can thus become acquainted with the *Different Hearing* methodology and use it in their teaching. And not just music teachers. We

also receive applications from physics or maths teachers, as they are discovering how to use the Different Hearing methodology to develop creativity or build simple musical instruments for project teaching.

In order to be as effective as possible and so that the Different Hearing methodology can have as broad an impact as possible, our focus in recent years has been on teachers who offer the creative principles and musical games to children as part of their teaching. Our courses for the Czech Philharmonic have a similar focus – teachers can take part and bring their classes along. Most of our work directly with children happens as part of the yearly Workshop for the Youngest Composers.

### Listening, Listening, and Listening

In another interview, you mentioned that you “made these very simple observations” – what it does to me. I had material, I had tonal centres, various things – and I tried it out. It wasn’t magic mushrooms or anything like that, it was tones, sounds, patterns, and it was very interesting.” What are the various ways in which you listen? To your materials during composition (do you record extracts, or create them digitally?), in everyday life (the sounds of nature, the city?), or when listening to music (at concerts, from recordings)?

Depends on my disposition and the specific aim – sometimes it’s concentrated, analytic, other times more associative. I prefer what seems to be silence, a careful selection, and I’m also joyous about unexpected surprises. When I compose or analyse, I focus on detail, as well as the proportions of the whole. I also enjoy collecting, most often just for my own memory. Unexpected sounds – sounds that surprise me. Preparing new pieces is what allows me a more directed selection. Thanks to pieces like *Wide Crossing*, *Mente*, *zaHRAda*, and many others, I have hours of fantastic natural sounds, industrial surprises, and also a collection of Aeolian instruments.

What’s interesting is that both our children (7 and 11 years old) often alert me to fantastic sounds, without me having to indoctrinate them in any way. The last one was when seven-year-old Vojta discovered the charm of the hundred-metre string on which a kite was flying above his head.

One of my strongest recent experiences had to do with the realisation that the brain is capable of completing sonic perceptions in a similar way to visual ones. If we are looking at a house through a gate, for example, the brain is capable of filtering out the gate, allowing us to see the house quite clearly. We were testing the set-up of the magnetic resonance at Brno’s CEITEC for our research with neurologist Petr Hlušík, and I was surprised by how well the brain can filter out the noisy

cadence of the magnetic resonance machinery. Just like the fence. Despite the high intensity of the MR, I could analytically listen to music in my headphones or recognise quiet natural sounds without a problem. And when I compose instrumental or vocal music, I sketch at the piano or at electronic instruments. I record and listen as soon as I have a pattern to start with, I test them on myself, how they behave in me and towards me. Again and again, pattern after pattern, until the piece is finished and I can let it go. The space in which the pieces are played is also more and more important to me. I attempt a kind of unity of space and sound, composition, an ideal resonance. This is why I have returned several times with new projects to the Atrium of the Arts Centre of UP in Olomouc and the Congress Hall of the Kroměříž château.

Your pieces often operate on the uncertain ground between affect, experience, emotion, and that “adventure with a detective plot”. Do you think this detective work also happens in listening, or is it doomed to exist only in classrooms with a score? Is there something like “thinking through listening”? It seems to me that – particularly with minimalist compositions, such as *It Does However Seem Each Time* or *Dunes II* on the attached disc – we sometimes achieve this through repetition and slow development. How would you like our readers to listen to your music?

I wish they would listen with an open mind, which might take them somewhere entirely different from what I had expected. In a programme note for *Gate of the Sun*, I once wrote that the piece created a space for the listener’s associations. And that’s still true of my music: I create a space for the listener. An energy gained from this space.

I put various layers, processes, meanings in the work, I use various means, but the way in which the listeners move between them, how and whether they uncover them, or whether they need them, is left entirely up to the listener. They can think through listening, not only in classrooms. But I do not try to convince them or lead them. There is no single way to listen to my pieces. There are many. And many others are created, just like the psychoacoustic phenomena that accompany them. And I’m very excited when listeners want to share their experiences. I wish they can find another source of energy in them, even after many years. Like I do.

# CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

## EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

### IN THE AUTUMN OF 2018

Autumn is traditionally the season of contemporary music lovers in the Czech Republic. New pieces were premiered at many festivals including MusicOlomouc and Opera Schrattenbach in Olomouc, Exposition of New Music and Meetings of New Music in Brno, and Contempuls and Archaion Kallos in Prague. Further projects were motivated by celebrations of the hundredth anniversary of the foundation Czechoslovakia in 1918. In addition to Michal Nejtěk's song cycle at the ceremonial concert of the Orchestra of the National Theatre or Lukáš Sommer's opera *Časoplet* on themes from Czech history, much attention was attracted by the Brno Contemporary Orchestra's concert at the beginning of November. The movements of Bedřich Smetana's *Má vlast* were presented in six new arrangements by six different composers, who thus had an opportunity to express in music what this Czech national opus magnum means to them in the 21st century. Internationally, the most notable success was probably the world premiere of Miroslav Srnka's *Overheating* by the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Susanna Mälkki. The chamber opera *Schreibt Bald!* was performed at the festival in Essen, composed by Ondřej Adámek based on letters which his relatives sent from concentration camps. As for the opera classics of the 20th century, let us mention at least the premiere of *Jenůfa* at the Greek National Opera – the first performance of this work in the history of Greece.

27 September, Suk Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. The Czech Philharmonic Low Brass Ensemble: Concert homage to Prof. M. Hejda. **Ivan Zelenka: *Trombon je snadný, když se to umí* (The Trombone Is Easy When You Know How To Go About It, world premiere)**. Robert Kozánek, Lukáš Mořka – trombone.

1 October, St Salvator church, Prague. Seventh Day. **Marek Kepř: *šálnivá beztíž slechoPýře* (world premiere)**. BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

3 October, Baroque Refectory of the Dominican Convent of St Giles., Prague. **The Presence of the Past. New pieces by young composers inspired by early music.** A shared project by the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, and HERA Sound Memories; The Musical Past in Late-Medieval and Early-Modern Europe. **Bruno Cunha: *Amour and sieben capeças*, Jan Dobiáš: *Thunder – Perfect Mind*, Kateřina Horká: *Immundus valeat mundus*, Patrik Koko: *.o salutaris Hostia...*, Roman Zabelov: *Chorale* (world premieres)**. Irena Troupová – soprano, Daniela Čermáková – alto, Roman Zabelov – accordion, FAMA Quartet.

6 October, Atrium Žižkov, Prague. 3 premieres for Solaris 3. **František Chaloupka: *Piano Trio*, Jakub Rataj: *ES.23* (world premieres), Lukáš Sommer: *Xcape* (premiere of a new version)**. Solaris 3.

9 October, Atrium, Palacký University Arts Centre, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Ian Mikyska: *Forgetting Ravel*** (world premiere). Isang Yun Trio.

9 October, De Nationale Opera, Amsterdam, Netherlands. **Leoš Janáček: *Jenůfa* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Katie Mitchell, music director: Tomáš Netopil. Following performances: 11, 14, 17, 20, 22 and 25 Oct 2018.

SEPTEMBER



PHOTO: V. DVORÁK

13 October, Besední dům, Brno. Exposition of New Music. **Ivo Medek: *Shades of Silence* (world premiere).** Plural Ensemble, conductor: Fabián Panisello.

13 October, Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Prague. Archaion Kallos. **Jan Dušek: *Four Salomon's Songs II. III. Around, Around, Shulamite!* (world premiere).** Bohemiachor, choirmaster: Kryštof Spirit.

14 October, Greek National Opera, Athens. **Leoš Janáček: *Jenůfa* (Greek premiere).** Directed by: Nicola Raab, music director: Lukas Karytinios. Following performances: 19, 21, 24 and 27 Oct, 2 Nov 2018.

14 October, Staatstheater Augsburg, martini-Park, Augsburg, Germany. **Bedřich Smetana: *Dalibor*.** Directed by: Roland Schwab, music director: Domonkos Héja. Following performances: 21 and 23 Oct, 1 and 18 Nov, 16 and 29 Dec 2018, 5 Jan and 15 Feb 2019.

16 October, Corpus Christi Chapel, Palacký University Arts Centre, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Marek Kopelent: *The Music of Silence for violin, viola and piano* (world premiere).** Trio Helix.

18 October, Gallery, Academy of the Performing Arts, Prague. Archaion Kallos. **Jakub Rataj: *sound interventions* (world premiere).** Jakub Rataj – electronics.

21 October, Corpus Christi Chapel, Palacký University Arts Centre, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc.

**Marek Kepř: *jitřnoSmišky...klamoMžitky...bzuňk!* (world premiere).** LICHTZWANG.

28 October, Philharmonie Essen. Essen, Germany. NOWI-Festival. **Ondřej Adámek: *Schreibt bald! Performance piece for 21 voices, amplified objects and video projection on texts from Adámek family's letters from Theresienstadt and Birkenau 1943–1945* (world premiere).** Directed by: Eric Oberdorff, music director: Ondřej Adámek. ChorWerk Ruhr.

1 November, Chamber Music Hall, Faculty of Music, Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts, Brno. Meetings of New Music Plus. **Miroslav Pudlák: *Intuitiva III*, Kamil Doležal: *44*, Jan Ryant Dřízal: *Lone objects* (world premieres).** Monika Knoblochová – harpsichord, MoEns, conductor: Miroslav Pudlák.

4 November, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany. Klangwerkstatt Festival. **Ian Mikyska: *Ordered (or Acoustic Noise Rituals)* – world premiere.** Suono Mobile.

4 November, Atrium, Palacký University Arts Centre, Olomouc. Opera Schratzenbach. **Vít Zouhar: *OVER ONE'S HEAD. Music & visual game for four players* (world premiere).** Gabriela Coufalová, Jaromír Synek, Vít Zouhar (interactive music, laptop performance), Tomáš Hruza (interactive video, laptop performance).

5 November, DOX – Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague. OLD/NEW. **Jiří Lukeš: *Different Spaces* (world premiere).** BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

5 November, Convent of Merciful Brothers, Brno. **Bedřich Smetana's *My Country* arranged by contemporary composers.** *Hrad (Vyšehrad)*: Petr Kofroň, *Vltava. Aqua Mater (The Moldau)*: Marek Piaček, Šárka: Miloš Štědroň, *A Shorter Letter to Bedřich Smetana (From Bohemia's Woods and Fields)*: Pavel Zemek-Novák, *Lost in Tábor (Tábor)*: Miroslav Tóth, *Blaník*: Daniel Forró. Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.

PER-NOVEMBER



Šimon Voseček and Yarn/Wire

8 November, Zlín Congress Centre, Zlín. **Leoš Janáček: Fate, orchestral suite (arranged by Tomáš Ille) – world premiere.** Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.

13 November, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, California. European Avantgarde.

**Miroslav Srnka: Overheating (world premiere).** Los Angeles Philharmonic, conductor: Susanna Mälkki.

13 November, Jatká 78, Prague. Celebration concert for the 100th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic, part II. **Michal Nejtěk: Die Schattenjahre, Three Parallel Songs for soprano and orchestra (world premiere).** Marta Reichelová – soprano, National Theatre Orchestra, conductor: Ondřej Olos.

14 November, Corpus Christi Chapel, Palacký University Arts Centre, Olomouc. Opera Schratzenbach 2018. **Marek Kepřt: Když váškobdění vychmyřuje svět 3 (premiere of a new version for French horn, violin and piano).** Potestatem trio.

14 and 15 November, Prague Crossroads, Prague. Opera Studio Prague. **Lukáš Sommer: Mudeltime. Opera comics from the nation's history (world premiere).** Directed by: Vojtěch Svoboda, music director: Sébastien Bagnoud. Cast: Tereza Hořejšová, Anita Jirovská, Pavla Mlčáková, Lucie Prokopová, Eliška Sedláčková (singing), Jonatán Vnouček, Šimon Pliska (pantomime).

15 November, Punctum, Prague. STIMUL festival, Sanatorium Dźwięku. Stimul Nights: Polish Musical Avant-garde of the 20th Century. **Petr Vrba: Psychedelic Reisebüro 1.0 (for Jano Doe) – world premiere.** Petr Vrba – trumpet, electronics.

18 November, DOX – Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague. Contempuls Night.

**Miroslav Srnka: Triggering (world premiere).** Mahan Esfahani – harpsichord.

18 November, DOX – Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague. Contempuls Night.

**Šimon Voseček: Fists (world premiere).** Yarn/Wire.

19 November, Studio 1, Czech Radio, Prague. Live Stream on Czech Radio Vltava. **Juraj Filas: La buona morte (world premiere).** Olga Jelínková – soprano, Jiří Houdek – trumpet, Robert Heger – flute, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Jiří Rožeň.

22 November, Atrium Žižkov, Prague. **Michal Rataj: Piano sonata – almost quiet, Slavomír Hořinka: Trust in Heart (world premieres).** Magdaléna Bajuszová – piano.

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## Plasy, Architecture, and Sound

*Sound exists in architecture and architecture exists in sound.*

*The process of their mutual influence can be observed  
throughout history.*

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**The international and interdisciplinary meeting of researchers in the humanities and natural sciences with sound and visual artists titled “Architecture and the Senses”, which was dedicated to questions of concepts and perception of space in the historical contexts of architecture, the arts, and landscape with a special focus on sound took place from the 12th to the 14th of October at the Centre for Building Heritage in Plasy (housed in what used to be the farming facilities of the monastery in Plasy). Some of the accompanying events took place in the Plasy Monastery, now a place of national cultural heritage administered by the National Heritage Institute. On the last day, participants travelled to the old Cistercian abbey in Mariánská Týnice, today the Muzeum and Gallery of the North Pilsen Region.**

Plasy was not a random choice. The symposium took place in relation to the publication of the online archive of two no-longer-extant projects, the *Hermit Foundation* and *The Centre for Metamedia Plasy* in the mediatheque of the Agosto Foundation. These projects initiated a series of international artistic symposia which took place from 1991 to the autumn of 1999 in the building which once housed a Cistercian monastery; particularly in the convent area. The author of this unique piece of architecture “on water” was the Baroque architect and builder Jan Blažej Santini-Aichel, who had the building erected on 5100 oak piles, which to this day fortify the swampy foundations. The wood is conserved by clean river water which Santini intentionally diverted into the substructure.

The multimedia archive of the Plasy symposia offers not only hundreds of photographs, texts, artists’ biographies, but also original videos and sound recordings. Collecting these was a certain form of media archaeology involving both analogue and digital media, as apart from the printed catalogues, which are found today mostly in private collections, almost nothing remained publicly available from an event that spread out over the course of ten years. Through sound recordings, the archive also serves as witness to something else: the remarkable sonic qualities of the Baroque convent and its two chapels. The Architecture and the Senses meeting picked up on the theme of last year’s *Soundworms Ecology*



PHOTO: MICHAL KINDERWAY AND AGOSTO FOUNDATION ARCHIVE

*Gathering* in Mariánské Radčice in northern Bohemia, in a landscape exploited by coal mining. This “worms seminar”, located on the intersection of aesthetics and acoustics, geometry and architecture, natural and human sciences, and art, focused mostly on acoustic ecology (which means a lot more than sound pollution). The ‘90s Plasy symposia and both the recent meetings have Miloš Vojtěchovský in common: art historian, curator, pedagogue, and artist, who – particularly in the last fifteen years – has worked predominantly not on visual art, but on sound art. If we consider the topics of acoustic ecology and the sonic qualities of sacred architecture, we get the thematic core which – both in the past and now – met the magnificent architecture of the Plasy monastery convent. In addition to a number of lectures, this year’s meeting in Plasy also included sound installations, performances, and workshops, which took place in the Centre for Building Heritage and its immediate surroundings, in the Plasy monastery, and in another Santini-Aichel building only a few kilometres away: the Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary of the Cistercian provostry in Mariánská Týnice.

### **Soundscapes and Acoustic Ecology**

*“Sound is a fundamental quality of nature, and as it can be drastically influenced by a number of human activities, it is truly surprising that sound has not become a more universal measure of the ecology of the landscape.”*

Jianguo Liu, 2017

Sounds are an eternal and dynamic quality of all landscapes. The sounds of animals, people, and non-biological sounds of flowing water and rustling wind all arise from natural landscapes. These are spatial and temporal patterns emerging from landscapes; they are signs of natural processes. To this date, however, there is no coherent theory relating to the ecological meaning of all sounds arising from the landscape – not even acoustic ecology.

Acoustic ecology brings together research into the technical, sociological, and aesthetic aspects of the acoustic environment, operating with the key term soundscape. This term is always used in the relation of an individual (or a certain community) and the environment. The sonic environment is described as a subjective perceptual experience, thus delimiting acoustic ecology from traditional scientific approaches, which are based on the positivist principle of objective knowledge.

Pauline Oliveros, an American composer and post-war electronic music pioneer, defined the soundscape as all the sound waves transmitted to our brain by the ear and its mechanisms. It is apparent that acoustic ecology, for the most part, accents human perception and attention, and not a wider approach to socially ecological systems.

Canadian composer and pedagogue Raymond Murray Schafer (born 1933), who is considered the founding father of acoustic ecology (Agosto Foundation is preparing a translation of a book on Schafer), says that the content of acoustic ecology is the study of the effects of the sonic environment on the physical reactions or behaviours of living organisms living in this environment.

### A Weekend in Plasy

The broadening of interest and thought to non-human beings was represented in Plasy by ornithologist and ecologist Vít Zavadil, who presented recordings made in the former military compounds of Ralsko and Vrchbělá, which proved – exempting irregular shooting practice – an excellent environment for recording avian voices. We might also mention Slovenian multimedia artist Saša



### Both Echo and Narcissus Sonic and musical activities at the Center for Metamedia Plasy and the Hermit Foundation, 1992–1999

*Miloš Vojtěchovský*

In a text written in 1992 to accompany the first documentary catalogue of the Hermit symposium in Plasy, I wrote that “the specific acoustic qualities of the Baroque monastery became a defining inspirational element. The sonic mirroring of the cloisters of the convent and the long reverberation time in the chapels of St Benedict and St Bernard, accompanied by the clock striking on the hour above the granary and the natural sounds of the environment, defines the somewhat dreamy atmosphere of the place. (...) We are dealing with links between space and sound, conversations between people and landscapes. Plasy witnessed encounters between visual and sound artists, dancers and musicians, especially those who find themselves on the edges of various disciplines. Those working on the synthetic genres of site specific installation, soundscape, or performance. Direct inspirations (for me) included the work of artists such as Terry Fox, Logos Duo, Hans van Koolwijk, Thierry de Cordier, Paul Panhuysen, the ideas



Spačal, who in her performance connected sounds made by crickets in glass jars with an electronic music performance.

The topic of architecture and acoustics was opened by religionist and historian of science Anna Kvíčalová, who mostly researches sound and hearing within “alternative” acoustics, searching for knowledge on the distribution of sound in space in fields such as religion, architecture, art, period sources on masses, preaching practice, and clerical buildings.

It is evident that architecture and sound were mutually influencing each other long before the establishment of exact scientific acoustics in the 20th century, inspired by musical

of John Cage, Thomas Merton, and others. Crucially, during the symposium, people spent shorter or longer periods living together directly in the former monastery, in a place relatively distant from the art world and its influences. Relatively undisturbed, they could go about their thoughts, projects, meeting and having long discussions.”

Terry Fox or Duo Logos never made it to Plassy, but Paul Panhuysen came the very first year, accompanied by Phill Niblock. They both returned semi-regularly.



forms, liturgical rules, cosmology, and the spatial dispositions of buildings. An example of the phenomenon in question is the development of religious singing influenced by the long reverberation time in sacred spaces. But as Kvíčalová herself concluded, it is honest to admit that despite all of its efforts, science does not yet have much to add to the history of acoustics.

All we can say as to the acoustic qualities of historical religious buildings is probably that architects and builders in the past probably did not know the principles and calculations of acoustics, but their constructions were erected in harmony with the times' acoustic needs or could be adapted in such a way.

The idea of a synthesising interdisciplinary concept of contemporary art was topical and carried some weight in 1990s Czech Republic because after the long abstinence of the normalisation period, people were curious, open, and generally unorthodox. In preparing the dramaturgy of the symposia, I returned to my interest in contemporary music and attempted to make use of the opportunity to be and work in a space as amazing as the Plasy monastery, cloisters, and chapels in the convent.

The director of the Museum of Mariánská Týnice, Irena Bukačová, added to the relationship between architecture and music the element of light. She spoke of the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, which was the foundation of analogies between music and architecture. Numerology was the source of the numeric ratios which also appeared in both architecture and music, as reflected by the popular phrase “architecture is frozen music”, often attributed to Goethe. According to Bukačová, Santini-Aichel’s buildings are marked not only by striking geometrical parameters but also by a highly effective use of natural light. Light also had a semantic function, highlighting what was most important in the church: the heavens.

Other contributions honed in on various types of hearing or listening which are not purely biological but also culturally or historically conditioned. The act of listening itself was designated as one of the elementary human perceptions. Acoustic ecology, however, distinguishes human perception of sound. Two positions can be adopted in relation to the term soundscape: 1. Specific acquaintance with the acoustic landscape around us through the form of a *sound walk*. 2. An analysis of the sound composition, focusing on traditional compositional approaches in sound compositions. The first case means the application of a radical demand for active hearing, a psychological type of hearing, which Schafer calls for when hearing our surroundings.

Deep listening – Pauline Oliveros’ term for active listening – was also a feature in the contribution of electronic music composer Yiorgis Sakellariou, whose interest lies in the sonic atmosphere of sacred architecture. He is also a proponent of acousmatic music, which demands a complete reduction of the visual or performative component. His concerts take place in darkness, which again refers to Pythagoras, who – in order not to disturb his students with impertinent gestures – established what he called an acousmatic situation: he would lecture behind a screen, leading his students to focus purely on the sonic address.

Composer Ian Mikyska prepared a nocturnal participative sound walk through the cloisters of the monastery, in which the audience – at once also the performers – followed a simple score. His lecture presented some of his recent work in the context of the “economy of attention”, i.e. attention as a limited and gradually more and more precious resource, which, if squandered, lowers our general capacity for concentration. He extended this to the possibilities for contemplative engagement with a given space or environment.

Though the series of lectures was certainly fascinating, given the time available, the golden rule “more is less” would certainly have applied – especially given the exceptional nature of the accompanying programme, which allowed the participants to perceive and verify the theoretical concepts presented with their own senses, all this in the historical environment of Santini’s

Every symposium between 1992 and 1999 concluded in an international festival, where the musical and sonic works were to complement the installations and performances which were created in the various nooks and crannies of the monastery complex. Thanks to a collaboration with the AVIK studio in Pilsen, most musical events were recorded. We published these recordings as a supplement to the print catalogues (on cassette in 1992, on CD for the following seven editions). Mostly, these recordings presented concerts at which the acoustic ambience and the magic of the moment played an important part, elsewhere, the recordings contained no noise and audience coughs (the recording of the Rova Saxophone Quartet, for instance). Three recordings were published from the initiative of and in collaboration with musicians who secured funds for the technical side and rental of the space (Hans van Koolwijk’s *Bambuso Sonoro*, *A Day in Benedict*, by Rajesh Mehta, Irena Havlová, and Vojtěch Havel, and Michael Delia’s *USUKU*). Recordings were mostly shared as part of the catalogue. Sometimes, we managed to make a larger print run, in which case the CDs were distributed to specialised stores in both the Czech Republic and abroad. The second disc, *Letokruhy* (Annual Rings, 1993) got a positive review in *The Wire* magazine. Unfortunately, most of the material not used for releases was deleted at AVIK studios for practical reasons. There are still some private archives in which certain recordings perhaps still await their discovery (and possibly publication). Many recordings are available in the online archive on the Agosto Foundation website, which has supported an archiving of the materials which have survived the decades which divide us from the end of the activities of the Center for Metamedia Plasy. The musical works created in Plasy during the ‘90s ran in parallel to related or allied initiatives such as the Transcommunication Festival in Slovakia, *Het Apollohuis* in Eindhoven, or *Experimental Intermedia* in New York.



architecture, which (particularly in the case of the convent) now falls under the strict protective regime of a natural cultural heritage building. In the evening hours, the convent resonated with the bubbling sound of the water flowing from a fountain in one of the water pools on the lowest floor, where the level of water flowing in the substructure of the convent can be controlled. The sonic range of the water was widened in a performance by three students, Tomáš Roček, Matěj Šenkyřík, and Zuzana Šklíbová, who poured it into the pool from a variety of glass containers. The chill, the damp, the smell of water, the faint lighting, and the monumental building of the convent with its echo – well, yes, one could listen to this for hours.

Sound was also the focus in both the convent chapels, famous for their long reverberation times. George Cremaschi played an improvisation between his double bass and the echo in the Chapel of St Benedict. The Chapel of St Bernard resonated with an electronic improvisation by students Martin Marek, Jan Kromholz, Iva Polanecká, Polina Khatsenka, and Matěj Šenkyřík, based on the ticking of the central clock tower. Adam Hejduk’s outdoor long-string installation in the old farmyard was open to anyone who wanted to try playing with their hand using a wet cloth.

The finale of the accompanying programme took place in Mariánská Týnice, on the premises of the former provostry with the pilgrim’s church

of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary – after the dark convent with its watery foundation, we arrived in a joyously light space with an equally compelling acoustic. A sound performance which featured young artists spinning small speakers tied to ropes above their heads was reminiscent of aboriginal rituals with the ancient musical instrument bullroarer (also known as rhombus or turndun), although the principle differs technologically (a smartphone connected to the speaker via Bluetooth was used here, befitting our technological age).

For the very end of the programme, Hana Sar Blochová, in her lecture, *The Music of the Spheres and the Sonic Geometry of Sacred Chants*, gave a practical demonstration of the strong and beautiful voice leading the dialogue between architecture and the sacred. This symposium also pointed to the problem of how we study the history of art. We do not think of a developing ritual which connects emotion and music, text and art. We study it as if we were deaf.

But what I consider essential is the context of the gathering. The current noise strain on the landscape affects us not only physiologically (hearing damage), but also influences our spiritual processes. The degree of this influence is not fully known, either. We think about a healthy environment as the quality of air, water, or soil. But similarly, we can also ask what acoustic environment allows living beings to flourish? Is there anything like a “natural” acoustic environment for life?



**Bohuslav Martinů**

**What Men Live By,  
Symphony No. 1**

**Czech Philharmonic, Martinů Voices, Ivan Kusnjer - baritone, Josef Špaček - violin, Jiří Bělohlávek - conductor.**  
Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded: 2014 (What Men Live By), 2016 (Symphony No. 1). Published: 2018. TT: 75:57. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4233-2.

Entirely by coincidence, two important recordings made by **Jiří Bělohlávek** in the final years of his life have appeared almost simultaneously. The Decca company continues introducing selected titles of Czech national music. Now, they present a double album featuring the essential works of Leoš Janáček – the *Glagolian Mass*, *Taras Bulba*, *Sinfonietta*, and *The Fiddler's Child*. Another new release, this time from Supraphon, features the same orchestra and collaborating artists. It contains works by Bohuslav Martinů, namely *What Men Live By* and the *Symphony No. 1*. In numbers, Bělohlávek's Martinů discography is undoubtedly the greatest. The conductor recorded Martinů's works from the very beginnings of his artistic career – with the FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra, with the Czech Philharmonic, and with the Prague Chamber Philharmonic. Amongst recordings of orchestral pieces and concerts, we also find complete operas, including *The Voice of the Forest (Hlas lesa)*, *The Miracles of Mary (Hry o Marii)*, or *Les Larmes des Couteaux (Slzy nože; Tears of the Knife)*, with further unpublished live opera recordings waiting in the radio archives. The **Czech Philharmonic** performed the opera *What Men Live By* at three advent subscriber concerts in 2014. These concerts were put on with the aim of releasing the recordings, so the opera was performed at the Rudolfinum in its English language version and the three parallel performances were all used in order to achieve a perfect

edit. Jiří Bělohlávek was a great champion – even during his time at the BBC – of concert performances of operas, which allow for what is impossible in theatrical productions: flawless presentation of the music. *What Men Live By* is proof of that – the character of the opera predestines it for this purpose. In essence, it is a pastoral miracle story of a similar kind to what we encounter in the 3rd scene of Martinů's much older opera, *The Miracles of Mary*. There are narrators, the vocal entries are rather static and do not demand great dramatic action. From the very beginnings, we admire the simple musical register. Among the kaleidoscope of motifs, there is even one reminiscent of Jan Jakub Ryba's Christmas Mass, making us wonder whether it is intentional or accidental. The instrumental interludes are magical, like the one from the 3rd scene, which depicts a clear sunny morning. Martinů created this work in the final creative period of his life. In the same year (1952), he composed an opera after Gogol, *The Marriage (Ženitba)*. *What Men Live By* is also an adaptation of a Russian text (a short story by Lev Tolstoy, *Where Love Is, God Is*). In its almost mystical balance, this forty-minute one-acter gives off the impression of a pure human testimony braided by an unassuming belief in God and love of one's fellow humans. It is incomprehensible to this reviewer why it remains neglected among the rest of the composer's oeuvre. Its melodic, transparent, and communicative nature has the potential to capture an ordinary, even an inexperienced listener, though it often raises the critical public to reproach Martinů for resigning on modern musical developments and turning back to the classical simplicity of his distant predecessors. The performance is top class, and it seems that thanks to the recording (musical director **Jiří Gemrot**, sound engineer **Václav Roubal**) and additional edits, even better than at the concert. The recording contains certain elements that characterise the conductor's well-known personality – an entirely consistent artistic responsibility, a lyrical, warming, and

sweet mode of speech in place of a lavish sound-world, seriousness, and respect for the work in question. The orchestra's broad sonic range is balanced among all the instrumental sections. In addition to the musical performance, we must also mention the perfect rendition of the linguistic original. The English parts are faultlessly interpreted both by **Ivan Kusnjer**, who sings Martin Avdeitch, the protagonist, and his colleagues. Concertmaster **Josef Špaček** deserves a special mention, as he also took on the spoken role of the narrator. The child part (**Lukáš Mareček**) is sweet and natural. It was a fortunate idea to engage **Lukáš Vasilek's Martinů Voices**. Listening to their parts – perfectly tuned and balanced among the voices – is truly an experience. After their recent recording of Martinů madrigals, they once again confirmed their world-class parameters. In short: a top-class recording and also an extraordinary dramaturgical project by Supraphon. One of Jiří Bělohlávek's unfinished projects was a complete edition of Bohuslav Martinů's symphonies, with which the conductor – who had previously recorded these with the BBC Symphony Orchestra – wanted to create competition with a series featuring the Czech Philharmonic. To the existing recordings of symphonies 3 through 5, Supraphon thus appends the first symphony. Once again, this is a recording of a Czech Philharmonic concert, this time from 2016. Here, the leading Czech orchestra presents itself as an ensemble with a universal world-class sound. Perhaps that is why it seems a little colder than under the long bygone baton of Václav Neumann, but on the other hand, it is imposing in its exemplary sonic balance and the resultant sonic image. Unlike other recordings, the dominant sound is rather homogeneous, encompassing the entire orchestra, without inventively highlighted details. The piano plays an important role from the beginning of the piece, with connections and syncopations typical of this composer predominating. The second movement emphasises a pulse, while its middle part was painted with a charming contrast by



Jiří Bělohlávek. The slow third movement is enrapturing – a broadly conceived memorial to the wife of commissioner, Serge Koussevitzky. Jiří Bělohlávek loved this work very much. Many still remember a number of his performances, the earliest ones hailing from his time at the head of the Prague Symphony Orchestra (e.g. at the Prague Spring in 1980, or on the Panton recording released a year prior to that). Unfortunately, this is Bělohlávek’s final Martinů recording, and the second symphony is missing from a complete set with the Czech Philharmonic. We might also mention the commendable booklet, which includes the Czech-English libretto of the opera and a first-rate text by Aleš Březina containing information about both pieces, their creation, and further fates.

Bohuslav Vitek

## Johann Sebastian Bach Oboe Concerto & Cantatas

Xenia Löffler – oboe,  
Anna Prohaska – soprano,  
Collegium 1704,  
Collegium Vocale 1704, Václav Luks.  
Text: EN, FR, GE, CZ. Recorded:  
July, Nov. 2017, Church of St Anne,  
Studio Domovina (BWV 1061), Prague.  
Published: 2018. TT: 67:37.  
1 CD Accent ACC 24347.

**F**rom my perspective, the protagonist of this new **Collegium 1704** is certainly oboist **Xenia Löffler**, long-standing member of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin. In collaboration with **Václav Luks**, she prepared three concerti by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) in new versions: *Concerto in F minor BWV 1056*, *Concerto for Harpsichord in A major BWV 1055*, *Concerto for Two Harpsichords and Strings in C major BWV 1061*. Löffler’s starting point became the A major concerto, which she reconstructed for the – perhaps original – oboe instrumentation. To this, she

appended a new version of the F minor concerto, which was probably intended for a melodic instrument, and in collaboration with violinist and violist Tim Willis, she changed the instrumentation of the double harpsichord concerto to a cast of four *concertante* instruments and a string *ripieno*. The result is three fascinating views of Bach’s music with no faults to be found. But it is not merely a well performed score which characterises this album, it is, primarily, its sound. Xenia Löffler is almost supernaturally perfect, and if it were possible, I would award her all manner of music prizes for her performance here. Her playing is entirely natural, light, fresh as a morning wind, sparkling and sparking, but also entirely logical and precise. It is remarkable how many dynamic shadings Löffler can conjure up from one tone, how capably she differentiates sharper tones from soft ones, how she “speaks” through her instrument, and how well she knows when to make a pause, a full stop, a question or exclamation mark, when to smile and when to cry. This is such a textbook example of performing a solo part I would recommend it – not only – to all woodwind players (on modern instruments too) as study material. All this takes place not only in total harmony with the author, but also with the other players, who lead with the soloist a real, fully concentrated and unflinching dialogue. Violinist and concertmaster **Helena Zemanová** excels in the A major concerto, bassoonist **Györgyi Farkás** is also excellent, as is Václav Luks at the harpsichord. The group of soloists is also enriched by **Vittorio Ghielmi**’s viola da gamba, **Michal Dušek**’s viola, and **Libor Mašek**’s excellent (as always) cello. Václav Luks added two Bach cantatas to the three instrumental concerti, for which the musicians are joined by soprano **Anna Prohaska**. If we look towards the position of Luks as a conductor, harpsichordist, and researcher in relation to the interpretation of vocal works, this choice will come as no surprise. Anna Prohaska is an artist who is capable of feeling her way into a text and is

unafraid to live through it. The cantatas *Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Blücke BWV 84* (*I am Satisfied With My Fortune*) and *Falsche Welt, dir trau ich nicht! BWV 52* (*False World, I Do Not Believe You!*) need precisely this approach. Not even for a moment can the listener “switch off” and let themselves be carried away by the music, because the singer is constantly accosting their hearing with emotional words about the joy, hope, and fidelity which God provides. Prohaska has at her disposal a healthy, clear voice and technique, which allow her to achieve much with very little. Her decorations are brilliant, her lows resounding, only her high register is a little narrow, and in certain fast passages, we sometimes hear an unattractive, to me almost unpleasant tone, which the soprano then balances out with warm and smooth lows. Even so, though the singer has improved tremendously since her first published recording, her voice has matured, and she is today a convincing performer of Vivaldi, Händel, or Mozart. I dare say that with Bach, there is still some way to go. For his **Collegium Vocale 1704**, Luks selects interesting and at once connective voices. They sound so good thanks to performers such as **Ivana Brouková**, **Marta Fadljevičová** or **Daniela Čermáková**. As we have become accustomed to with Václav Luks, his interpretive conception is emotionally heightened, effective, and therefore thrilling. Although Bach music does not perhaps need it so much, Luks gives it enormous spontaneity, energy, almost animality, and he is completely convincing in his opinion. What is admirable is the extent to which these emotions are transmitted through the musical recording, and how all the musicians bring them to the fore without allowing themselves to be overcome by them. This too, is a mark of quality. It would be a mistake to forget recording engineers **Jiří Gemrot** and **Aleš Dvořák**, thanks to whom the orchestra’s playing is heard up to its slightest nuances, from tremulous pianissimos which many might envy, to full fortes.

Dina Šnejdarová



## André Navarra Prague Recordings

**André Navarra - violoncello,  
Josef Suk - violin, Alfred Holeček,  
František Maxián - piano,  
Czech Philharmonic, Chamber  
Philharmonic, Karel Ančerl,  
Constantin Silvestri, Martin  
Turnovský - conductors.**  
Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded:  
1953-1966, Rudolfinum, Studio  
Domovina. Published: 2018.  
5 CD Supraphon 4229.

The Supraphon project *André Navarra Prague Recordings* is important and very successful. Just like another homage to another great André, Hungarian violinist André Gertler, which Supraphon put out in 2007. On that set, Gertler puts forward the summation of his Bartók on four CDs. Here, we are introduced to the phenomenal **André Navarra** (1911-1988) - one of the three great post-war apparitions of French cello playing, next to Pierre Fournier (1906-1986) and Paul Tortelier (1916-1990) - on five CDs and in the entire breadth of his repertoire. The dramaturgy of the set is symmetrical: the first half, up to the middle of the third CD, is devoted to concertos, while the latter part belongs to chamber music. Supraphon has material to choose from - its Navarra archive is one of the richest and can withstand comparison with those of French labels Dante or Calliope. After his Prague Spring debut in 1951, André Navarra visited Prague regularly. Between 1953 and 1966, he made fourteen recordings for Supraphon, which are now being introduced to the musical public as a complete set for the first time. I returned to these recordings repeatedly, living with them for an entire month. As a whole, this collection and its manifold qualities deserve our utmost attention. Not only the sound quality, which improved dramatically from

the 1950s onwards. In this respect, the fifth disc is the worst off, containing mono recordings of Prokofiev and Beethoven chamber music with **Alfred Holeček** (made in 1958) and **František Maxián** (1953). These recordings were made in the Domovina studio in Jungmannova street, and even in the context of the era and its possibilities, they are of relatively low quality, with a considerably "blurred" piano sound. Nevertheless, today they serve as an interesting sonic document of the past, including the Romantic pedalling of Alfred Holeček in the Baroque piano parts. This, however, brings my partial criticism to an end, because all the other recordings in this set are of high or top quality, always captivating us with something despite some small reservations - certainly a valuable addition to any archive. Perhaps the creators should not have been satisfied with mere remastering (the closer details of which remain a mystery to me, as only this term is given in the booklet), instead attempting to further improve the CD standard, whether we call this Bit Image Processing, 96 kHz/24 bit Image, or anything else. This sonic softening - a 21st-century amenity - is certainly audible, though only on equipment of higher quality. What do we highlight, then? The concert recordings from the blessed years 1963-1966 with the **Czech Philharmonic** and **Karel Ančerl**, particularly the legendary recording of Brahms' *Double Concerto in A minor* with **Josef Suk**, which I would rank among the top recordings of this work. And there's no shortage of those! There are other gems too: Prokofiev's *Symphony-Concerto* op. 125, sonically the best recording in the set, Ernst Bloch's *Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody*, but also works of more chamber dimensions: Martinů's *Concertino for cello, winds, percussion, and piano*, H 143, and Ibert's *Concerto for cello and winds*, performed with **Martin Turnovský** and the **Chamber Philharmonic**, a unique wind ensemble founded by Libor Pešek in 1958. Doubtless also Édouard Lalo's *Concert for cello and orchestra D minor* with the Czech Philharmonic with Romanian

conductor **Constantin Silvestri** - although the value of this wonderful recording is once again compromised by the poor sound quality (here, I suspect the tape suffered more than necessary during its decades of storage). But the recording is saved by André Navarra's performance, who - perhaps due to the Biarritz native's Pyrenean blood - is among the most skilled performers of this invention-rich work, one of the best in Lalo's oeuvre. The chamber disc with Josef Suk is a pleasant surprise - Suk was a frequent companion of Navarra's at his performances in Prague -, dedicated to the works of Kodály, Honegger, and Martinů: a remarkably spontaneous session by two wonderfully in-tune instrumentalists. And finally, another gem: Brahms cello sonatas opp. 38 and 99, where - particularly the first - introduces André Navarra in top form as one of the greatest masters of the instrument not only in France, but around the world.

Ivan Žáček

## Franz Schubert Winterreise

**Jan Martiník - bass,  
David Mareček - piano.**  
Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded:  
March 2017. Published: Sep. 2018.  
TT: 71:27. DDD.  
1 CD Supraphon SU 4243-2.

I recently interviewed **Jan Martiník** and **David Mareček** about their recording of Schubert's *Winterreise*. I intentionally took a few weeks break from the *Winter's Journey* before first listening to the recording. The ear sometimes hears what the brain suggests, and particularly after an interview which was pleasant on a human level and enriching on the information and opinion levels, it is a good idea to create a bit of distance. But after several listens, I kept thinking of Martiník's "We're missing how much we've sped up time".



It is work with time that deserves special attention when listening to one of the many recordings of Schubert's most famous song cycle from previous years. Few works offer so much space for recording comparison as *Winterreise*, and that is not to speak of the untouchable Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the incomparably original and enthralling Brigitte Fassbaender, or the great song interpreters of previous decades such as Thomas Quasthoff or Ian Bostridge. All we need to do is look back to 2014 and we are flooded by dozens of recordings (underline Jonas Kaufmann - SONY, 2014, and Matthias Goerne - Harmonia Mundi, 2014). And if we draw the line at the beginning of 2017 in order to compare truly contemporary renditions, the most interesting names are Mark Padmore, David Greco, and Bo Skovhus. Unfortunately, Mark Padmore did not repeat his feat from nine years ago, when he recorded *Winterreise* with Paul Lewis with such sonic fragility and lyricism it earned him a Grammy. For his second *Winterreise* (Harmonia Mundi, 2018), he searches for a period rendition accompanied by Kristian Bezuidenhout on the fortepiano, but the result is a straight, subtle, almost bland stream of music. Unfortunately, the time difference and Padmore's age are also audible. Australian baritone and early music expert David Greco (ABC Music, 2018) is also clearly searching for authenticity (accompanied by Erin Helyard, once again on a period instrument), but on the other hand occasionally treats rhythm and note length with much deliberation, uses faulty melodic decoration, and generally does what he can to make you focus on a number of superficial details and not the real content. Danish baritone Bo Skovhus (Capriccio, 2017) went in the opposite direction and recorded a very lively, earthy, and informal conception of the cycle (accompanied by a modern piano by Stefan Vladar) - a sharply pointed version for the times we live in. And where does Jan Martinik stand in this little private

ranking of mine, sensitively accompanied by David Mareček? After several dozen listening hours, I can say with a clear conscience that it is high above the trio of recent recordings discussed above. The intoxicating nature of Martinik's technically perfect voice and breath has no competition. It gives off the impression of an infinitely expanding force of nature - in terms of range, dynamics, and volume. Furthermore, he does not feel the need to find new perspectives on *Winterreise* like his colleagues discussed above; define himself against his predecessors; be different. He takes his time with most of the songs, with an inner patience and a belief in the weight of the word, he lays himself, full-blooded and sometimes old-worldly, into the vocals, diligently modelling every word (*Mein Herz, in diesem Bache erkennst du nun dein Bild?* - in the final stanza of *Auf dem Flusse*, you will hear one of the most intoxicating *ch* in the history of song literature, I promise). On the other hand, he can also sharpen the tempo and expression, but never at the expense of his cultivated tone. Moreover, he has a natural talent for storytelling, thanks to which he sounds contemporary despite everything else I have written, so I would not think of comparing his performance to the old masters of classical song (but rather to the charisma of Charles Aznavour or Leonard Cohen). Listen and judge for yourselves.

Michaela Vostřelová

## Miroslav Sekera

### Janáček, Mozart, Chopin

#### Miroslav Sekera - piano.

Text: CZ, EN. Recorded: live, Jan. 2016, Rudolfinum Dvořák Hall, Prague. Published: 2018. TT: 67:37-DDD. 1 CD Radioservis CR0980-2.



I have known **Miroslav Sekera** since his childhood when he was a pupil of the legendary piano teacher Zdena Janžurová at the no-less legendary music school in Voršilská street. His unusual talent and his capabilities at the piano were already impossible to miss. Over time, Sekera has become a remarkably versatile pianist who has achieved many competition successes, performed on prestigious concert stages, and collaborated as a chamber player with many leading performers. A great artistic triumph for Sekera was his recital at the Rudolfinum Dvořák Hall on the 16th of January 2016 as part of the FOK cycle of piano recitals. The hall was completely sold out, and the pianist received not only two standing ovations but also extremely enthusiastic reviews. Radioservis now presents a CD with a selection from the live recording of this recital of Sekera's. Sekera narrates the opening *Sonata r. X. 1905*, composed by Leoš Janáček, in a very introverted and soft manner, in a quiet dynamic, without exaggerated emotions, deep in his own self. His conception is highly sensitive but also thought out in surprising detail. The artist is clearly aware of every note and the complicated structure of Janáček's *Sonata* is thus unexpectedly clear and transparent. Sekera's rubatos are also worth mentioning - often highly unorthodox, yet completely convincing. After the Janáček, Sekera performed Mozart's *Nine Variations on a Minuet by Jean-Pierre Duport K.573*. This was an excellent dramaturgical decision - after the dark and depressing Janáček, the theme of Mozart's variations lit up like a sun from the very first notes. Sekera's Mozart is songful and carefree, with subtle pedal work. The individual variations sparkle brilliantly under his fingers, unwinding one after another like a row of glittering and elaborately chiselled ornaments. Two-thirds of Sekera's CD are taken up by a complete rendition of Chopin's twenty-four *Preludes op. 28*,



which the artist offered his audience in the second part of his recital. He conceived these as a series of minute poetic stories and images. He performs them with colour, cultivation, inspiration, with beautiful romantic rubatos, applying a number of novel ideas. He does not exaggerate the tempi in the fast numbers – he clearly does not prefer empty virtuosity over clarity. By his nature, Sekera is first and foremost lyrical, and so the preludes which most stand out in his performance are those in which he can apply his poetic sensibility, his feeling for cantilena, but also his admirably light finger dynamic – e.g. nos. 3, 10, 11, 13, 17, 19, 21, or 23. Among the assets of this disc, we could also list the well-recorded piano, the knowledgeable and stylistically lively booklet text by Vít Roubíček, and the likeably unobtrusive layout.

Věroslav Němec

## Jean-Pierre Rampal in Prague

### The Complete Supraphon Recordings

Jean-Pierre Rampal - flute,  
Alfréd Holeček - piano,  
Viktorie Švihlíková - harpsichord,  
Czech Philharmonic,  
Prague Chamber Orchestra,  
Milan Munclinger,  
Martin Turnovský, Václav Neumann,  
Václav Jiráček - conductors.

Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ.  
Recorded: 1955-1958, Studio  
Domovina, Prague. Published: 2017.

TT: 2:42:23.

2 CD Supraphon Archiv SU 4217-2.

**T**he phenomenal French flautist **Jean-Pierre Rampal** made his mark on musical culture not only as a crucial pioneer of solo flute interpretation, but also as a re-discoverer of Baroque flute

literature, and finally also as an artist who inspired composers of his time to write solo or concert pieces. Rampal's first concert in Prague in 1955 and his close collaboration with the excellent flautist, composer, and conductor **Milan Munclinger** was a turning point not only for the further development of Baroque interpretation in our lands, it was also a milestone for Jean-Pierre Rampal, as mentioned in biographies of the artist. Recordings following on from his collaboration with Munclinger and other Czech musicians are presented on a two-disc set by Supraphon as part of their Archive edition. These are truly unique recordings both artistically and technically – legendary sound engineer František Burda makes an appearance too. Immediately after his first Prague Spring concert in 1955, Rampal recorded Prokofiev's *Sonata in D major* with pianist **Alfréd Holeček**. Then came František Benda's *Sonata in F major* with **Viktorie Švihlíková** on harpsichord. Franz Xaver Richter's *Sonata da camera no. 3 in A major* with the same accompanist is the earliest recording in the set, made in May 1955. Both these Baroque pieces were recorded for the first time, as were other works recorded soon after, in the autumn of 1955, with the **Prague Chamber Orchestra** conducted by Milan Munclinger and **Václav Neumann**. As with other pieces, Jean-Pierre Rampal searched for Richter's *Concerto in D major* and Carl Stamitz's *Concerto in G major* in archives abroad. These pieces later became benchmarks of his repertoire. It is interesting to observe how Munclinger led an orchestra of contemporary instruments to achieve a truly authentic Baroque interpretation, thus laying the grounds for early music not only for musicians but also for listeners. Václav Neumann's gracefulness gives Stamitz's concerto an almost symphonic feeling, typical for his later work with the Czech Philharmonic. A year later, further discoveries by Rampal were added to the list: Franz Benda's gorgeous

*Concerto in E minor*, again performed by Milan Munclinger and the PCO, which is the peak of the set. Deservedly, the Richter and Benda concerti assured Supraphon the prestigious Grand Prix du Disque de l'Académie Charles Cros in 1961. 1955 also saw the recording of František Antonín Rössler-Rosetti fresh and rhythmically rich *Concerto in D major*. Finally, in 1958, came Jindřich Feld's *Concerto for flute, symphony orchestra, piano, harp, and percussion*, composed in 1954, which sees Rampal joined by the **Czech Philharmonic** conducted by **Václav Jiráček**, and harpsichordist Viktorie Švihlíková. The friendship that was born during Rampal's first visit to Prague inspired Feld to compose other solo pieces for flute. But most of all, the composer was taken by meeting a charismatic, friendly, and open person overflowing with musical excitement and generosity. Viktorie Švihlíková said that "meeting Rampal turned the lives of several young Czech musicians upside down. Rampal's exceptional interpretive art with its wonderfully broad expressive range and refined technique continues to stun and charm us today.

Marta Tužilová

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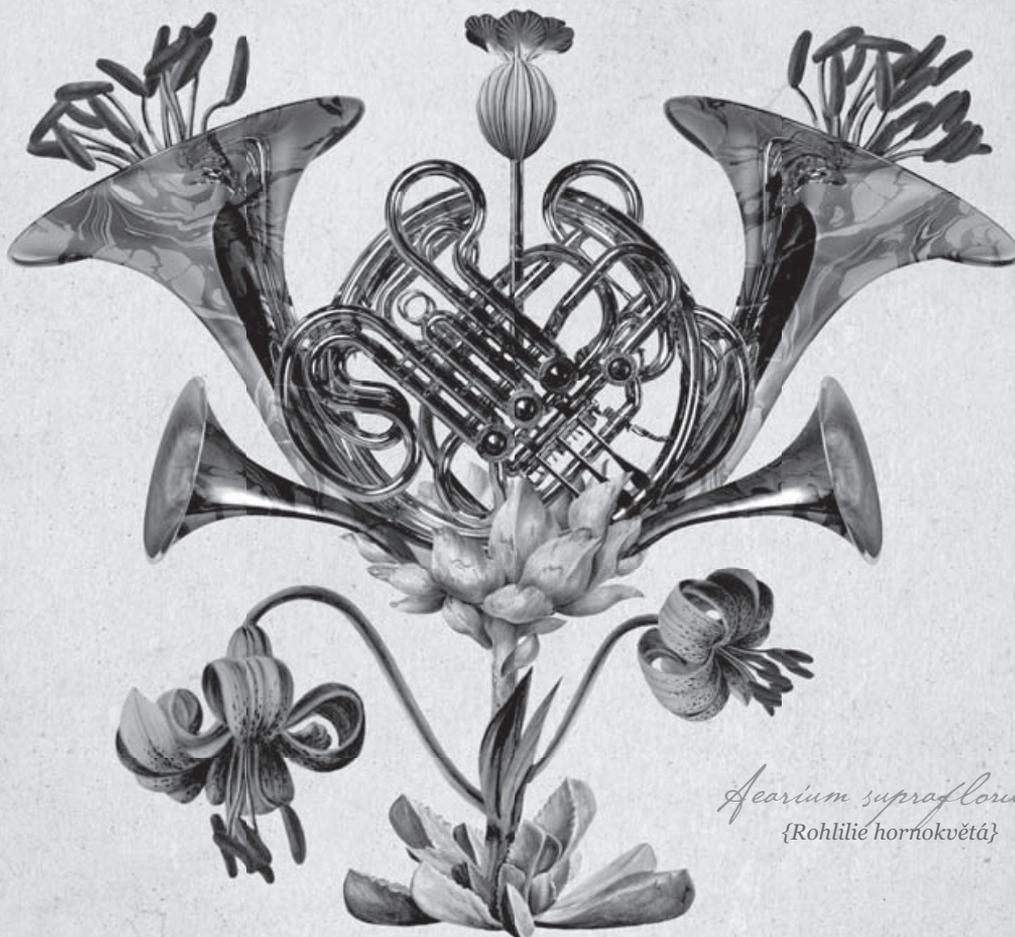
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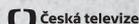
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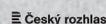
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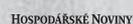
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