czech music *quarterly*

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Slavomír Hořínka

Vážný zájem

Daniel Skála

Ji.hlava Internatio Document Film Festiv

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DEAR READERS,

The summer edition is, once again, a composer edition. The attached CD, presenting the music of Slavomír Hořínka, is another addition to our series of Composer Portraits, and if all goes according to plan, there will be one further addition before the end of the year. Daniel Skála, whom we introduce to you with an interview, is also an excellent cimbalom player. The interview delves into his musical world, but also the challenging path he had to take on the way to accomplishing his artistic dreams. Also worth mentioning is a short article on a home-concert project which has experienced a very successful start. It might not be a totally relevant concert invitation for those of you reading Czech Music Quarterly outside the Czech Republic, but it is a remarkable – and perhaps inspiring – report on a novel cultural phenomenon.

Wishing you an inspiring and musical summer,
Petr Bakla

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by Iva Oplištilová

EXTRACTING SOUND FROM SILENCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER SLAVOMÍR HOŘÍNKA

You can hear his music performed by the Czech Philharmonic in Prague's Rudolfinum, but also in the church in Ludgeřovice near Ostrava in the far east of the Czech Republic, where the Prague Philharmonic Children's Choir will sing his psalm settings. He spends most of the year teaching young composers at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, but he also spent several weeks lecturing in Jerusalem whilst also leading workshops in refugee camps. He is among the favourite composers of the progressive contemporary music ensemble, Berg Orchestra, but he also collaborates with early music ensembles such as Capella Mariana or the Tiburtina Ensemble. As part of a university grant, he is participating in a research project exploring sound in space, but he also finds time to lead composition workshops for children. Welcome to the exceptionally multi-faceted world of composer Slavomír Hořínka, whose music you will find on the CD attached to this edition of our magazine.

I know you as someone very open to everything new, so I was struck by a statement I found in some older interviews – ten years ago, you spoke of the edge of bearable music. Is your position different now?

Well, I certainly wouldn't say that today. What might have changed is that all the more, I see music as something omnipresent. As if the entire universe were one infinite composition and I – or someone else, though I can't speak for others – simply listen to it differently. This position is liberating for me – to a certain extent.

Liberating how? You mean you're not responsible for what you write?

No, I am responsible for the perspective I bring. But everything is possible. I just need to look at it with my own ears. I started working with things that weren't


PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER

quite *mine*, but they were very important for me. First came Gregorian chant, because it was a huge experience for me to sing it. And through that, I began thinking about its potential.

Is chant tied to liturgy for you, or is it simply musical material?

I definitely wouldn't have gotten to it if there weren't a connection to liturgy. And of course, all manner of things are sung and played during liturgy. But chant was something that struck me; touched me somehow

And how do you work with it? Do you simply quote it?

It varies. You can just take it – you know I've done it on a number of occasions, it's not something I'd consider wrong, but it's also probably not what I most enjoy about this kind of work. I enjoy finding an experience, something that impresses you; enthrals you, and then you search for something describable that could draw you to it. And then you can reflect these describable things – consciously or unconsciously – in your own composing.

Do you expect the audience to realise you've used Gregorian chant, and do you therefore count on the associations this will bring?

Not necessarily. In principle, working with chant is the same thing for me as working with sound analysis or ethnic music. It's a source; something I relate to. And the chain of decisions which accompanies the creative process is sometimes very long – at the end might lie something which seems to have no relation to the beginning at all. But it gives me a certain security, a pillar – that I am internally relating everything to something else. It's not necessary that the source is detectable in my music. When I was writing for children's choir with the motivation of bringing Gregorian chant closer to the practice of children's choirs, I used both Latin texts and complete chant melodies which I placed in new contexts. I find it very exciting when I start hearing chant melodies or chant intonations in something that has nothing to do with chant – something that might be sonically much more complex. I simply find it entertaining. In *A Pocket Guide to Bird Flight*, for instance, all the chant melodies are derived from a recording of the flight of a hummingbird.

You are often spoken of as a composer of spiritual music. How do you feel about this label?

Well, first, we have to say what spiritual music is. I don't label music spiritual or secular. It's up to me whether I consider something music or not, and if it does something to me, touches me, transforms me, then I consider it spiritual. Of course, we can talk about liturgical music as a category that has its own requirements; rules; determinations, but I'd say that's something else. Sometimes I do that too, but it's like writing incidental music. You consciously insert yourself into a particular context which has a specific use. If you want to do it, that's absolutely fine. But music as such – all real music – has to be called spiritual, or it is not the music at all.

To what extent do you take into account the fact that you are writing a piece that will be performed somewhere and someone will listen to it?

I write music because I want to learn. I learn about the world, I think about something that is important to me at that point. For me, it's easiest to do this through creation. And of course I invite others to participate in it afterwards, but I'd say this isn't the primary motivation. On the other hand, I think it would be dishonest to say I'm not glad when someone listens to a piece of mine and likes it, or when they hear in it something I did not even think you could hear, because music is purely abstract and yet it strikes us in the most intimate ways. So when this happens, it's kind of like a vitamin injection. Lately, I've been thinking a lot more about the space a piece will be played in, and I often consider a specific place an active participant in the performance. For me, the most significant feature of spiritual music is that it can shift our perception in a number of directions.

But any good music does that – it doesn't have to be called spiritual at all.

Precisely! That's why when a piece strikes me, when I like something about it, I try to notice how I perceive it. It's the same with the moments in which I have a spatial listening experience that enraptures me. That's what inspires me, what

brings me joy. When I feel like I've uncovered some mechanism, I want to try it myself. Simply repeating it, however, would not be enough. To make a study of this kind would be nice, and when I'm writing a piece, I'll often do that, but simple replication is not enough for me. In *Trust in Heart*, for instance, I start off from my own experience of a transformation in my perception of a complex sound of bells, but the piece uncovers the mechanism as if in reverse. I, in time and in a particular space, began perceiving sound differently. The performer of my piece begins to experience and measure time differently once he begins timing sections following his own breath.

You often use non-European instruments. These might be tied to other religions, or used in particular roles, but the Latin titles of your pieces suggest a connection to Christianity. Do you not feel a contradiction?

But this has been essential to Christianity from its inception; to adopt and transform elements that were pagan in their original context, or which come from other religions! All of St Paul's theology is essentially pagan discourse transferred into a Christian context. So I'm really not bothered. Of course, I think about it; it's not that I don't care, but it certainly doesn't seem like an obstacle.

What I'm getting at is that when I hear a particular instrumental colour, certain shapes and movements also come to mind. If these are ethnic instruments, I also imagine the people playing them in their environment, which can be quite distracting if I don't understand the connection with other extraneous elements. Are you simply after the colour?

I'm definitely also interested in the sounds' original contexts. It's not that I use these colours in an arbitrary way – I define myself in relation to these questions. But let me give you an example. I have a work in progress now; I call it the Jerusalem project. I made recordings in several churches in Jerusalem over Easter. The concept is that whatever passes through the church walls and sounds within the church's acoustics is sacred sound. I don't want to categorically claim anything, it's more of a personal motivation – I want to find out what this will lead to. In my acousmatic piece, *Prayer Inside*, there is a section in which a Romanesque church in the Old City of Jerusalem resonates with the evening prayer of all the Muslims living in its vicinity. This prayer is extracted from a nearly inaudible recording, creating a beautiful harmony. For me, this is a Christian sacred sound – all the Muslims in the area praying. This is my idea of Christianity's potential and capacity to remould and transform.

What brought you to this concept?

This idea has had quite a long incubation period. I wrote two pieces specifically for the Church of St Salvator by Charles' Bridge. The first, *Magnificat*, included a relatively complex choreography for the movement of the performers, and while I was writing the piece, I'd go there to think it through. I walked through the musicians' paths, imagined the music, and tried to imagine how it would sound down there, but also up here; how the ensemble would coordinate. At the very beginning, I needed to find out if the players would have time to move. But the more time I spent there, the more I realised that the church is located in an incredibly busy place.

Trams, cars, tourists…
All of that. It's only when you sit down there to be in "silence" for an hour that you start listening to what's around you. And I realised that the entire surrounding world would necessarily enter into my piece and that there was no point in trying to make it disappear. And if you take part in liturgy at a church like that, are these sounds distractions, or are they part of the liturgy? Ultimately, I opted for the latter option. And a year later, I was in Jerusalem for some lectures and workshops, and when I entered various churches – for mass, or simply to sit and listen – I realised how similar it was to St Salvator. The very first idea was to record the sound in these churches at night during Easter, and then materialise it somehow – through instrumental stylisation – in St Salvator in Prague.

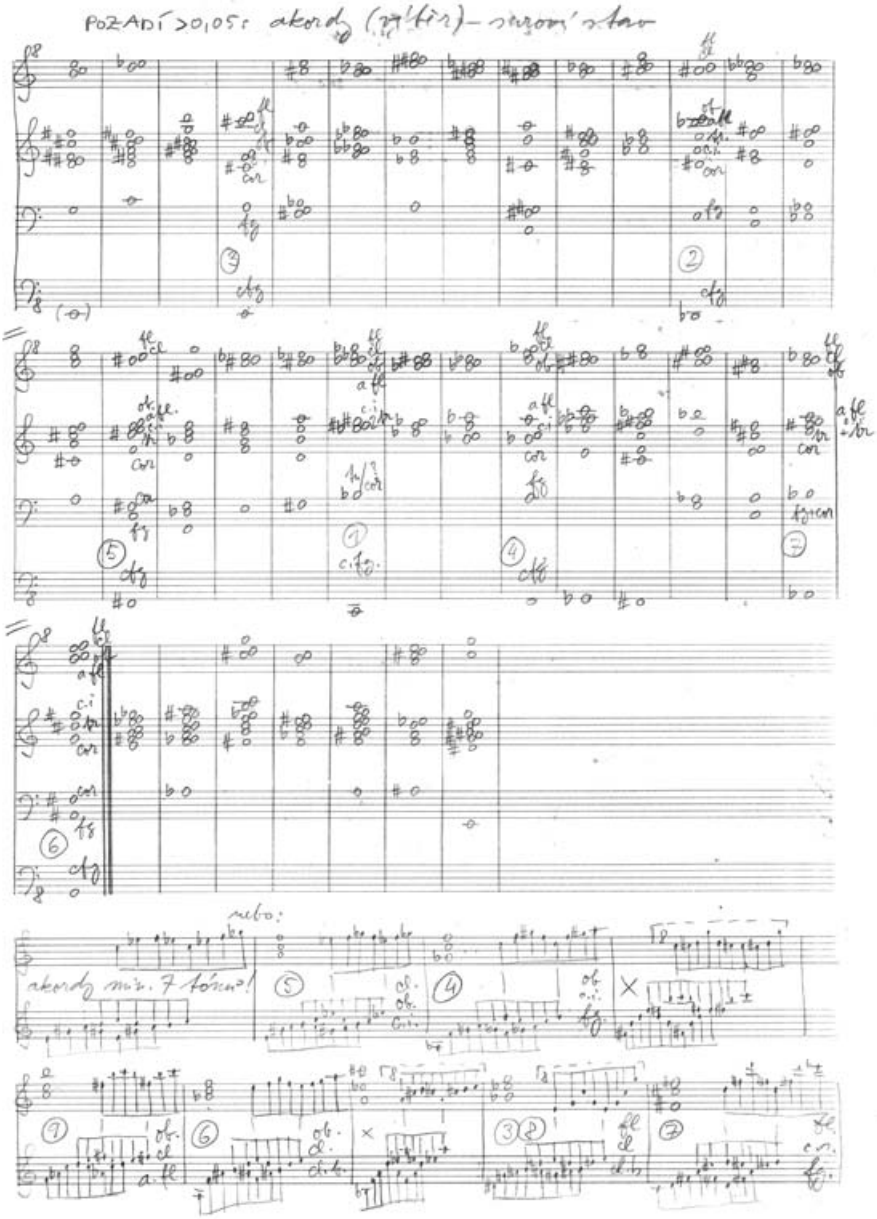
To relocate the sound?
Yes. But not so that the listener finds themselves transported to Jerusalem for a certain time. Again, there are several filters through which the original material passes, and the result is something that sounds different at first listening – but I know that it is integrally related to the beginning. I see a parallel to the mystery of the Eucharist. You're in a specific church at a specific time, but you're also in Jerusalem in the year 33.

If we take the other perspective: you try to understand perception – so to what extent are you willing to manipulate the listener?
Well, almost everyone does that, don't they?

Not everyone admits it. And they really don't like hearing it.
That's one of the things I consider when I write. Oftentimes, my aim will be to achieve a particular moment, and this moment is preceded by a strategy which I choose to achieve this moment. We're not in the field of like–dislike, but in wanting to achieve a particular effect. But on the other hand, when I work with students, I often emphasise – and they're always surprised – that it's good when a piece contains something of which the outcome is unknown.

A few moments ago, you admitted to very internal, emotional motivations, and yet you work very rationally, or if not rationally, at least consciously – and you even observe yourself doing it.
But these are communicating vessels! I feel that in certain respects, I work very intuitively, but in order to achieve what I want to achieve, it's necessary that I also think through larger units. And when I need to create strategies for longer time scales – in order to attain certain effects – I simply cannot avoid planning. And what's more, I enjoy it. It's not some necessity, something you can't do without – like I said, I think the two are connected.

Are you influenced by the fact that you teach? You have to put things into words, you go through your students' pieces with them…
I wouldn't say so. Sometimes people ask you – especially non-experts – about inspiration. And you don't know what to say. But what these questions helped me realise was that pieces generally occur to me as a whole. That I don't develop some detail – rather, I have a feeling about a whole and then I look for ways to express it, to phase it out in time.



A sketch of "A Pocket Guide to Bird Flight"

I sense two significant modes in your work: on the one hand courage, joy, and on the other calm, reconciliation. Are these opposing poles?

I haven't thought in terms of these categories. Rather – both in music and in life – I tend to connect things. It's not about categories like traditional, new, innovative, or stereotypical, but if I do think of (what a nasty term) theoretical concepts in music, I often think of music of all kinds, without focusing on a stylistic period or cultural environment. I don't listen to music to relax, for example – I prefer silence or going to the forest alone, but actively, I listen quite a lot.

And do you have any favourite composers?
It really varies a lot. What I enjoy most is listening to new things. When I'm writing texts, for example, or something else I have to do and don't particularly enjoy, then I spend my breaks browsing SoundCloud, letting myself be led on by the automated chain. I might be taken by some author I've never heard of, I'll have a look at what he "liked", and I'll get to something I would never otherwise have found. Or we had this period with Hanuš Bartoň when we spent nights doing school paperwork. We'd send each other links to all sorts of stuff – Zelenka, Baroque and Renaissance music, whatever we found. Sometimes I discover that music which never appealed to me now does. I used to hate Smetana, for example, and now I like him.

Why is that?
I was always annoyed by these pieces because of the coating one encounters from first grade onwards. What's more, I went to a school with "extended musical education", so we really had mighty doses right from the start.

What coating?
People telling you how things should be – how you should listen to which piece, what it means – yuck!

Meaning that you can't like compulsory reading and recommended pieces?
Precisely. But now, discussing string quartets in instrumentation class with my students, I discovered that Smetana's 2nd string quartet is music that's incredibly mentally fresh; quite constructivist.

And do you think that if you didn't have experiences with such diverse music that you'd be capable of getting rid of the coating and hearing the old differently now?
Probably not.

You should say that to performers who are scared of contemporary music…
But I feel that the problem isn't really that classically trained musicians don't play contemporary music, but that they don't play much early music, particularly pre-Baroque. I'm missing a wider scope. It reminds me of a doctor who only operates on eyes. He is a fantastic expert in just that one thing.

Seeing how you combine things and that you want to create and communicate a deep experience, I'll ask: how are you with performers?
Really well.

Because you choose them yourself?
It's more that I'm lucky, I guess. To an extent, it's given by the fact that my peers – those who now play my pieces – are people with whom I studied or performed. For a long time, I was an active performer myself. I spent years playing violin in the Berg Orchestra and in other ensembles. At one point, I made extra money by helping out in Pardubice, Hradec Králové, the National Theatre, anywhere, so the musicians know me and they're willing to give my pieces time.

That means it's not quite luck – you have people around you who want to play your piece as best they can. And when someone you don't know plays them, are you usually happy with how they understand them?
Not always, of course. A few times I even cancelled a performance completely. I used to think I'd never do that.

What was the problem?
In my experience, if I work with performers systematically, or if I feel that there's a process, an effort, then I'm willing to be satisfied even with a less-than-ideal performance. In fact, I don't mind these shortcomings. But I feel much worse when something is done at the last moment, half the performers are absent at the dress rehearsal, or indeed the dress rehearsal is their first rehearsal. They might execute it well technically at the concert, but I get no joy from it. This perspective is much more important to me. It happened that a performer wrote to me – everything is great, fine, all good. And then a day before the concert, I discovered they barely knew half the piece. These are situations in which I am inclined to a certain severity, I'd say. In teaching, I see it the same way. When you see a student who puts a lot of effort into their work and the result is perhaps not that excellent, it's different from someone who puts in nothing, simply sends you the finished product, and isn't interested in working on it together. It's about understanding, about sharing.

Do you feel like you manage to put everything you need in the music?
I try to put as much in the music as possible. On the other hand, as a performer myself, I know that it's better *not* to write some things in; that it can be counterproductive. I suppose one's own player psychology plays a part.

You use a variety of colours – not only tones, but also noises, various kinds of sound. But for me, these aren't just sounds, they're also tactile and situational perceptions. What does colour mean to you?
In simplified terms, one could say colour is the carrier of some emotion.

You could also say it's a sound spectrum.
But that's in terms of physics!

Exactly, both are possible.
I think that once again, the two are connected. I want to achieve something, so I found out how it's done physically and I try to achieve a similar synthesis using different means. If you're referring to the pinecones in *Čtvrtek a Odpusť ti Pánbůh* (*Thursday and May the Lord Forgive You*), there I found it compositionally interesting to resynthesise the sound of fire. To resynthesise it through the use of objects that are connected to Christmas in my mind: pinecones, wrapping paper, hay, walnuts. I spent hours recording various fires and analysing them. It's similar to sitting at the piano and improvising – you have a sound and you just play around with it.

Why not use the recorded sound directly? Why do you transfer it to acoustic means which seem to come from a fairy-tale? For me at least, this brings a lot of added value.
In this piece specifically?

Yes, but I think you usually opt for live interpretation, don't you? When you start from a spectral analysis, do you simply stay with synthesis and create an electroacoustic track?
Not really. I work with soundscapes, and perhaps over time, I'll get to this. But it's not really a focus right now. There are sound recordings in *Songs of Immigrants*, but they function as aural documents. They're essentially unchanged, and all of the transformation of material takes place in the string quartet.

Is it important to you that the audience sees the musicians creating the individual sounds?
It's important to me to work with a live medium. So much so that it outweighs the negative aspects and imperfections that can be created. I'm really excited by setting a challenge, by overcoming something. Why should I play back the recorded sound of a fire – that's nowhere near as fun as reproducing it with pinecones and paper. It's another moulding, stylisation – whatever the filter is. Some things pass through me as a filter, or through something else, it can be the instrumentation or the walls of the church, and it is this moment of transformation that I find most interesting. Perhaps this is also because I still feel more like a student in electroacoustic music. Maybe it'll change over time.

Your pieces tend to remain at lower dynamic levels. You reduce the means at your disposal. But this music also has its pitfalls: it's sensitive to where it's played, and what the audience is like – whether they cough, disturb the performance…
That's certainly true. In Orthodox spirituality, there is a movement called hesychasm – the spirituality of silence. The way I think about this, it doesn't necessarily mean that everything has to be quiet. It's something that leads you towards silence. So even in my pieces, there are loud moments, but they usually lead to a quieting down.

For me as a listener, concert performances of such pieces are very demanding. If the music draws me in, these are usually beautiful experiences, but this might not happen because the music is too fragile and I'm nervous that something might destroy it.
I'm not so bothered by that. I have more of a problem with recordings. When a piece like that is recorded, it has such a huge dynamic range that the quiet things are completely inaudible. Such a recording has to be compressed, but you can't do it mechanically – mixing it is essentially compositional work. I stylise it so that it comes to my ears in a similar way to the live performance. So it's not a recording, it's a new artistic artefact.

So you don't like recording live performances?
No, that's not what I'm saying. I just realise that in performance, it's extremely crucial whether you see the source of a sound or not.

That's why I was asking about the player's movement. As soon as I see too objects coming closer to each other, I'm primed to hear something, and if I see the objects, I can calibrate myself to a particular kind of sound. And if I saw nothing, I might not even have noticed that there was a sound.
That's exactly how I feel about recordings – that something isn't there and you have to find it again. Like when you record silence in a church and then you have to extract what's inside it.

by Dita Hradecká

Vážný zájem

Music in Your Slippers

The phenomenon of house concerts – brought to the Czech Republic by cellist Tomáš Jamník – makes use of 21st century means to resuscitate salon culture in Czech homes. It's eminently common to use a phone app to order a pizza, take out a loan, or hire a handy man to fix your toilet. Now, you can use your phone to get a string quartet to your home, or to find out who near you is hosting musicians at their home. *Vážný zájem* – the name can be translated as Serious Interest (a play on the Czech term for art music; vážná hudba or serious music). Since its launch, the project has proved extremely popular – so much so that they do not hesitate to call it a movement.

PHOTO: MAREK VOLF

Tomáš Jamník

A Musician Who Just Can't Let It Be

Tomáš Jamník could simply be satisfied with his career as a cellist. He drew attention to himself when he won the Prague Spring competition and then put out his debut album. Top orchestras invite him to perform as a soloist and he also performs regularly with the Dvořák Trio, where he is joined by violinist Jan Fišer and pianist Ivo Kahánek. He lives with his family in Berlin, a city sworn to music where he was once a member of the Berlin Philharmonic's Academy and an assistant at the Universität der Künste.

But for Jamník, being a musician means more than playing an artful concert or making an excellent record. He feels a need to express his position on musical life, politics, society.

PHOTO: ANNIKA AHRENS

Belfiato Quintet

His many talents – in addition to the musical, also the organisational, creative, and technical – came into a perfect confluence in *Vážný zájem.*

This is not the first time that Jamník has attempted to improve the social climate or to intervene where he sees fit. He also established the Academy of Chamber Music, an institution with international outreach which awards stipends to young musicians. These allow them to study with top pedagogues, further their education, and acquire new contacts. Jamník makes no effort to conceal how much German musical life inspires him. The house concerts also have their model in Berlin. "In Germany, it's normal that when music students meet, within ten minutes, they're talking about house concerts," relates Jamník, adding that Berlin's music-loving senior citizens also welcome the initiative. "The support senior citizens give musicians is considerable. They often relive their own careers. This is one of the beautiful effects of these happenings," says the cellist.

How does it work? You register at *Vážný zájem* as either listener, host, or musician. If you want to host, it's best if you have a piano at home, but it's not a must. Then you simply choose from the offers you have for any given date and create an event to which you can invite your friends. "The host provides the space. The listeners bring some refreshments and a voluntary donation – this should be a bill, at least," says Jamník. So there's no reason to mope if you're not a rentier and you don't own an apartment where the salon is the size of a smaller gymnasium. The basis is good will and a few music-loving friends. "Each concert can be completely different," said Jamník in one interview. It depends on the place and the audience you get. "One time, I had sixty hipsters in a flat in Vinohrady in Prague, each of whom brought a hundred crown bill. On the opposite end of the spectrum was an event in Kutná Hora organised for doctors. The customer had the event catered and the welcome drink took place on an enormous terrace with a view of the Cathedral of St Barbara."

Why Does He Do It?

There are several reasons which led to the creation of *Vážný zájem.* The reason that is always included in the blurb is popularisation. The initiators explains: "If you ask someone who does not listen to classical music about classical music, they'll often say they don't understand it. This, however, is often simply because of the barriers classical music creates itself, and which drive listeners away from the concert hall. Classical music is easy to understand, it is a world full of stories and emotions which music allows us to experience together. We want to open this world to anyone who's interested!"

Home music, or, if you like, salon music, is nothing new in the history of performance. Chambers and salons always played an important role in music. Whether these were private music lovers like Gottfried

Roman Patočka

PHOTO: MAREK VOLF

Josef Špaček and Tomáš Jamník at the rooftop of the Lucerna Palace, Prague

von Swieten who patronised Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, or the salons of Romantic Paris, such as George Sand's, where poetry was read, music performed, and lofty conversation had. Both the First and Second Viennese schools owe a number of their premiers to private individuals who provided the space. *Vážný zájem* is merely continuing in this tradition using the means of the 21st century.

Community Supports Community

"In 2016, we had no idea how big the response would be," says Jamník. "It didn't stop at house concerts, we organised performances in hospitals, social facilities, cafés, gardens, parks, children's rooms, a literary festival, an art awards ceremony, a philosophers' salon, a shopping mall…"

At the beginning of the creation of this non-profit stood enthusiasm and many hours of unpaid work, but the project was set into motion by a crowd-funding campaign. It was successful to an unexpected degree, giving the team courage to getting the project all the way there and developing an application which makes organising concerts easy, intuitive, and quick – while also connecting you with similarly inclined people in your vicinity. It is a relief to discover that there is a concert happening on your street and the lady you meet in the park with her chihuahua is a former opera singer who is hosting it.

Over the past two years, the organisers have collected a number of stories and anecdotes. "There are often more tears at a house concert than at the Rudolfinum. It is because the music goes directly to the listener, who then has a greater chance of getting immersed in it. What's more, they often don't even have the chance to *avoid* getting immersed…" Tomáš Jamník is now officially considered an influencer – in 2017, he presented a talk on his popularisation skills at Prague's TEDx conference.

Multiple Effects

For the musicians themselves, house concerts are not that interesting financially, but rather in terms of getting in touch with interesting people with whom they can converse after the concert, mutually enriching each other. The opinions of informed laymen are often fresh, as well as very informative for someone whose profession will one day consist of engaging audiences. At a home concert, you can "play out" (try out) new repertoire for an exam, audition, or important concert.

And what do the concerts bring the hosts?

An unrepeatable experience, an immediate contact with music created here and now – chamber music can never resonate as well in large halls as it does in the small dimensions it was created for.

A feeling of intimacy, togetherness, continuity, and community. And also a welcome de-mythologisation of classical music, a loss of inhibitions, and a removal of the barriers between the "experts" and the "laymen".

The project has already had considerable social outreach. What started as a concert for a few slipper-clad friends around a canapé table has grown into a series of events for seniors or people with health problems. To a certain extent, Jamník is thinking about how to acquire more attendees at the "classical" concerts. "When you have fifty hipsters in front of you, you've got fifty potential fans, and not just on Facebook. You can take them to the concert hall with you. Incredible bonds are formed in every performance," he claims. After all, this was how he met the patron who bought him the rare violoncello he now performs on.

by Boris Klepal

Štěpán Filípek and Katelyn Bouska:
A Czech-American Bridge Over Chamber Music

Czech cellist Štěpán Filípek and American pianist Katelyn Bouska first met at a contemporary music festival four years ago. In their joint projects, however, they aim to paint in much broader strokes the deeper connections between Czech and American composers. Their first joint CD, published last year, included Leoš Janáček's *Pohádka* (*Fairy Tale*), Jeremy Gill's *Dos sonetos de amor*, and sonatas for cello and piano by Samuel Barber and Miloslav Ištvan.

Filípek and Bouska have performed over twenty recitals together, including a prestigious concert organised by the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington. They have performed at festivals including Encounters of New Music, Forfest, and American Spring. They work regularly with Czech Radio.

"I met Katelyn in 2015 at the Exposition of New Music festival in Brno," recalls Filípek. "Katelyn had been in the Czech Republic for some time, going to festivals and meeting people – she was interested in contemporary Czech music. We met after the festival, I showed her some scores by Miloslav Ištvan which she liked, and she based her PhD on them. Only after that did we agree to play together."

Katelyn Bouska first came to the Czech Republic in 2006 for a short study visit, and then once again during her studies in Vienna. The music of Leoš Janáček led her to an interest in the works of Czech composers of the 1950s and '60s – there wasn't much information to be found about them in the US. She had been interested in Czech music for a long time, and wanted to devote her dissertation at Temple University in Philadelphia to these forgotten composers.

"I grew up in a family of Czech heritage, so I was accustomed to listening and playing works by Dvořák, Smetana, and, of course, Janáček," explains Bouska, "but my particular interest didn't begin until 2012 when I began my doctoral studies. I wanted to focus on something that was both interesting and relevant to me, as well as representing an area of scholarship that was lacking in American musicology."

Filípek's knowledge of American music at the time also didn't go beyond a few of the most popular composers. He knew part of the New York avant-garde scene and the minimalists. But he also had an inkling that American music is a much more diverse world,

one in which every university generates a somewhat different style.
"After discussions with Katelyn, I was taken by the scene in Philadelphia, which doesn't work with hard experiments," notes Filípek. "It is stimulating and extremely well-crafted music, which first and foremost attempts to get the musical information to the listener in the conservative sense, while at once speaking in a contemporary language."

The duo's musical interests thus found a natural continuation in sharing knowledge on Czech and American musical culture. That was also manifested on their first album.

Barber – Janáček – Gill – Ištvan. Works for Cello and Piano
Štěpán Filípek – violoncello, Katelyn Bouska – piano
1 CD. TT 50:09. Published by Radioservis in 2018. CR0962-2

"We aimed for a selection of Czech and American 20th-century composers who would correspond in time frame and style," says Filípek of the disc's dramaturgy. "For me, Barber is strongly connected to Janáček, even though he is much younger. Of course, Barber uses the compositional techniques of his time, but even with these, he achieves essentially romantic results."

American composer Jeremy Gill is the only living composer on the record. "Part of my main interest as a performing artist is to collaborate as much as possible with living composers," says Katelyn Bouska of her selection. "I feel this collaboration instills a sense of authenticity on my part during the preparation of the materials. Furthermore, the possibility of real-time feedback from the author himself during the preparation can provide an inspiration that can only be imagined when working with materials from an already-deceased composer. I considered several works by composer-colleagues and Jeremy's seemed best-suited for the composers already selected for the project."

"Jeremy Gill's *Dos sonetos de amor* occupy only a bit of space and follow perfectly the form of Pablo Neruda's sonnets which inspired them," adds Filípek. "It is compact music whose message is very convincing to me."

But both Bouska and Filípek feel the strongest mutual connection to Miloslav Ištvan, whose *Sonata for cello and piano* from 1970 closes the album.

"Miloslav Ištvan is a question of fate I chose myself. It began with my composition studies with his son, Radomír Ištvan. I got to know Ištvan's oeuvre while studying at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, and his *Sonata for cello and piano* was one of the first pieces I played there. I told my piano colleague at the time that it would definitely be this music that would make us famous; that we'd take around the world. Today, we play the sonata with Katelyn, but we *do* take it around the world."

"One of the things that drew me so quickly to Ištvan's work is that it sounded so distinctive to me despite the clear influences of Janáček and Bartók," Bouska explains her admiration for Ištvan's music. She recently recorded Ištvan's complete works for piano for Czech Radio. For her, his music cannot be compared to that of any other composer.

"Since his piano compositions begin with his early composing days, they have clarified to me his experimentation, his search for musical forms, and the creation of his own compositional language," adds Bouska. "I think it is apparent in his works for piano or for small chamber ensemble – one hears in each a new approach to structural and textural details and the use of the instrument. He finds a way to enter new sound worlds in every composition. This, to me, is one facet of his musical creativity and why I continually find him so intriguing as a composer."

Filípek and Bouska are currently extending their repertoire and turning towards older music. They recently recorded for the radio **Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek's** (1791–1825) *Variations for violoncello and piano, op. 9,* and Philadelphia-based composer **David Carpenter** wrote them a piece called *Romance*.

"We'd like to include **Vítězslava Kaprálová** in our repertoire, as well **Antonín Dvořák** – audiences often ask for his music, and what's more, it's very beautiful," notes Filípek. "Me and Katelyn both feel that we shouldn't lose the capacity of interpreting music of all periods. I myself most value musicians who can present Franz Schubert just as well as George Crumb," he concludes.

by Ian Mikyska

At the Moment I'm Probably at the Happiest Phase of My Life

An interview with cimbalom player and composer Daniel Skála

The cimbalom is a percussive string instrument found chiefly in Central Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Greece. Few exponents are as passionate in its propagation and able to encompass such a wide range of music including early, contemporary, folk, and improvisation. We met with composer and cimbalom player Daniel Skála at his room at the Ostrava Conservatory to discuss playing, composing, teaching, and improvising.

Let's start traditionally, at the beginning: are you from a musical family?

Not at all. Neither of my parents had a deeper relationship with music. I was instinctively drawn to music, and when I was little, I started playing guitar. I couldn't press down the strings because of an injury to my finger, so I looked for an alternative instrument where this wouldn't be a problem. Of course, there aren't many of those. Following a series of coincidences, we arrived at the cimbalom, which wasn't an option many music schools in Ostrava offered back then – only a single school in Poruba, where I travelled across the city three times a week.

Of course, it has to do with the fact that my parents were folklore fans. I was born in Ostrava, where my mother's side of the family is from. My father came to Ostrava from Vyškov to work as a mine paramedic. They met in a folklore ensemble – they danced together and sparks flew.

With the cimbalom, though, it was quite an obvious affair – as they say, the instrument chooses you. When you have this good fortune and you listen to its voice, all is as it should be. If my brother hadn't cut the tip of my finger off, I'd be a guitarist today.

So you started playing cimbalom when you were seven. I assume you also played in a folk ensemble?

We had a cimbalom band *(a traditional Moravian folk music ensemble usually consisting of cimbalom, two violins, viola, double bass, and clarinet – translator's note)*, but at the beginning, I didn't really get it. I only started playing in a real cimbalom band when I was about fifteen. Then I held on to folklore for quite some time, but it was always the second, third, or fourth thing… From the beginning, it was a natural part of the cimbalom – its background, its hinterland – and I learned a lot there, but it was never the main affair.

What was? Classical music?

Yes. Starting at music school, I'd perform, I'd attend competitions. And then at the conservatory, it became very much obvious. I went there back when you went to high school straight from eighth grade, so when I was fourteen, I went to study cimbalom at the conservatory in Kroměříž

PHOTO: ANEŽKA HRUŠKOVÁ

(conservatories in Central Eastern Europe are in fact institutions of secondary, rather than tertiary, education – translator's note).

What was it about the classical tradition that drew you in more than folklore?

I don't know if "more" is the right word. At one point, I was playing in three cimbalom bands at once – that was a period when I enjoyed socialising… But I also enjoyed working hard on improving, discovering new things – that'll be it. Cimbalom bands are a much more social affair, and also much more intuitive. I didn't realise it at the time – you know how it is, when you're eighteen, you do it because of drinking, girls, and so on. You don't need to practice five, six, or seven hours a day to play in a cimbalom band.

And you liked practicing.

Always. I had a dropout just before I started at the conservatory: that was probably the only period in my life when I spent six months without practicing. But after that, it clicked and everything was clear. Unshakeable. I realised – and I still remind myself today – that unlike my peers, my choice was always clear. High school, university, further universities… I never doubted what it is that I should search for. Rather, I tried to find *how* I could do it. At a certain point in your development with the cimbalom, you find yourself in a situation where whichever way you go, you find yourself in a field no one had ever visited before.

This pioneering nature is one of the most important things that keeps me at the cimbalom. It also has to do with composing, which, after all, is by its very essence about discovering new things. Pioneers are very close to me. It used to be connected to a particular form of elitism. I went through a number of phases – at one point, I was very taken by the fact that I was doing something no one else had done before. This was great food for my ego. Today my approach is different – contrary, in some respects.

Can you elaborate?

It probably has to do with the fact that I noticed and continue realising fully what a small wheel I am in an enormous vehicle. And that helps lower the desire

to be “important”, “unique”, and “indispensable”. I appreciate more consciously what there is and how it is, what the people around me can do, and I can rejoice in it.

Ferenz Liszt Academy, Budapest

Where did this unshakeable path lead next? Straight to the Liszt Academy in Budapest?

Exactly. That was around the year 2000 and there was not yet any teaching in English at Liszt. I had to learn Hungarian and pay my fees – at the time, it was around eight and a half thousand Euros per year. Half of my tuition was paid by George Soros’ Open Society Fund – I feel like crying when I see what’s happening in Hungary today.

I paid the fees until my second year there. Then I conceded that it was impossible – we’d used up our family savings and the situation was becoming unbearable. So I intermitted my studies. But a year earlier, I had began studying choral conducting at Ostrava University. I thought I could get back to Budapest through the Erasmus scheme, only to later find out that you couldn’t do an exchange inter-departmentally, but only within the same department.

So I studied both schools at once, but when I intermitted in Budapest, I also took on composition studies at the Janáček Conservatory in Ostrava. Compared to Liszt, though, both were a walk in the park. Thanks to the education provided by the Kodály method, Hungarians are musically much further advanced than any other nation, particularly concerning ear training, intonation, and tonal sensibility. At the ear training test at the conservatory entrance exam, they play you eight bars of a three-voice Bach chorale, give you the first note – and you fill in the rest. For the Academy, it’s four-voice chorales. And the kids do it like it’s nothing! When I applied, I couldn’t hear anything – deaf as bamboo.

You learned the Kodály system from the beginning?

Yes, I had private tutoring. During those two years, I really worked hard on myself. Only there did I realise that I had known nothing and heard nothing before. Our education system is so one-sided – the intervallic method on its own achieves nothing. Kodály’s tonal method, which stands on listening and singing, on a profound understanding of musicality, is a much deeper and more universal preparation that all Hungarian musicians receive, from classical, jazz, and pop to improvised music.

Did you manage to catch up?

I definitely wasn’t at the level of the best students, but I think I got quite close to absolute pitch. One fascinating thing is that hearing has to be practiced every day, otherwise it has a tendency to grow lazy.

How do you use the Kodály method today?

It comes through a lot in my teaching, and especially in my hearing. It’s integrated and I don’t realise exactly how I hear what I hear – it’s just inside me.

How did things develop in Budapest?

It had already been three years since my intermission and I had given up hope of going back to school. I prolonged my intermission for the third time, so that was my last chance, and then we joined the EU. I remember that I was pushing a shopping trolley along. I got a call from a lady working in admissions – I think her name was Takás.

I ran to the toilet to find a bit of silence, and there I heard Hungarian for the first time in over two years. She’d noticed that I was still hanging on in the system after our ingress into the European Union, and that I could finish my studies as part of an exchange programme.

At the time, I had just arranged the establishment of a cimbalom course at the conservatory – everything was going in a different direction. My professor from Kroměříž, Růžena Děcká, took over for that first year at the Janáček Conservatory so that the new course could survive. I confirmed with Mrs Takás, who sent me all the paperwork filled in – all I had to do was sign it and send it back.

Two months after I started, she went on maternity leave and I never saw her again. A wonderful coincidence. I got a further two years to finish my studies, and that was a great gift.

So you had a little more time on your hands?

Exactly, even though I was still studying the other two schools. I then finished three schools at once, which meant five graduation concerts, three theses, and other entertainment of that nature. Later, I also did a doctorate at Ostrava University.

I'll Write a Piece for Anyone Who Deserves One

Did you start composing while at the conservatory in Kroměříž or later?

I didn't really compose much at the conservatory – I was more into exploring the sheet music; discovering how the music functions. I only started writing while studying at Liszt: at first I thought I might write an etude here and there, but it developed very quickly.

Did you mostly keep your head down and study while in Budapest, or did you also play concerts?

One came with the other. When I intermitted my cimbalom studies, I felt like I had to find something else to whip me into shape, so I kept arranging concerts and building up a repertoire. That stayed with me. And when I started composing, I presented my own pieces.

So at first you mostly performed your own music for solo cimbalom?

Yes, or I wrote for the cimbalom students at the Janáček Conservatory. I always said I'd write a piece for everyone who deserves it.

That hasn't been true for a long time – today, you write pieces for various ensembles, musical theatre, choirs, and other contexts. When did that change?

Not that long ago. You know yourself how crucial the Ostrava Days festival can be *(a biennial festival of new and experimental music with a concurrent institute for composers from around the world – translator's note)* – thanks to the repeated shocks I experienced there, I had to find myself again each time. It took me a long time to rid myself of everything acquired and learned. I went through a lot of schooling, which I am grateful for – I could compare a great deal of approaches and knowledge. But I devoted a lot of my energy to being the best performer I could be. And then there was this other leg which had to be filled in from the start. It was a long struggle inside me: who am I really and how can I use this. I felt very strongly that being purely a performer, being a little monkey who gets the sheet music and turns it into sound is not enough for me (of course, I say this without wanting to denigrate many fantastic performers whose artistic qualities are undoubtable). At the top level, performance demands hours every day. But the demands of composition are the same.

And furthermore, I'm a born *cantor* – a teacher. I love the work. I started full time at the conservatory, later switching to two-thirds, but even that is so much – it's a full-time job in its essence. Two or three lessons in a day tire you out.

And if you spend four hours composing and five practicing, you're at the end of the day and you haven't made any money yet.

Exactly. For a long time, I was dependent on income from teaching. But then something changed – this was about five years ago. Students started opting for other conservatories. My explanation is that they felt that I was overcome by teaching. Then it started balancing out and at the moment, I'm probably at the happiest phase of my life. I no longer worry about whether I'm going to compose or play – I just do it. I react to the situation such as it is.

That's also true of repertoire: I decided that I want to apply myself primarily to contemporary music, but that doesn't mean I'm not going to play Janáček. My aim is to introduce the cimbalom as a concert instrument, and if I were only to play contemporary music, I'd get into a minute and closed circle. I don't see a contradiction in this combination – quite the opposite, I'm happy when various styles complement each other. That is also why I attended the early music courses in Valtice and elsewhere, even though it was not my main interest.

The Cimbalom As You've Never Heard It Before

So what are your concert programmes like?

One of them I call "The Cimbalom as You've Never Heard it Before". When an institution like the Tišnov Cultural Centre invites me to play, I can't expect an audience with an in-depth knowledge of contemporary music – or, God forbid, the cimbalom. So I play a cross-section; I show the audience that you can play early music on the cimbalom at a very high level. I'll play some Janáček or Debussy – both are very colourful composers whose work suits the instrument very well. And towards the end, I get to contemporary music or my own works. I sometimes also insert short improvised interludes. I see this as a didactic path for an audience who has had no encounters with the cimbalom or more demanding music.

And these concerts usually take place in smaller regional towns and cities?

Precisely. The second type of programme contains mostly contemporary music. When you get invited to play at a contemporary music festival, they invite

PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ

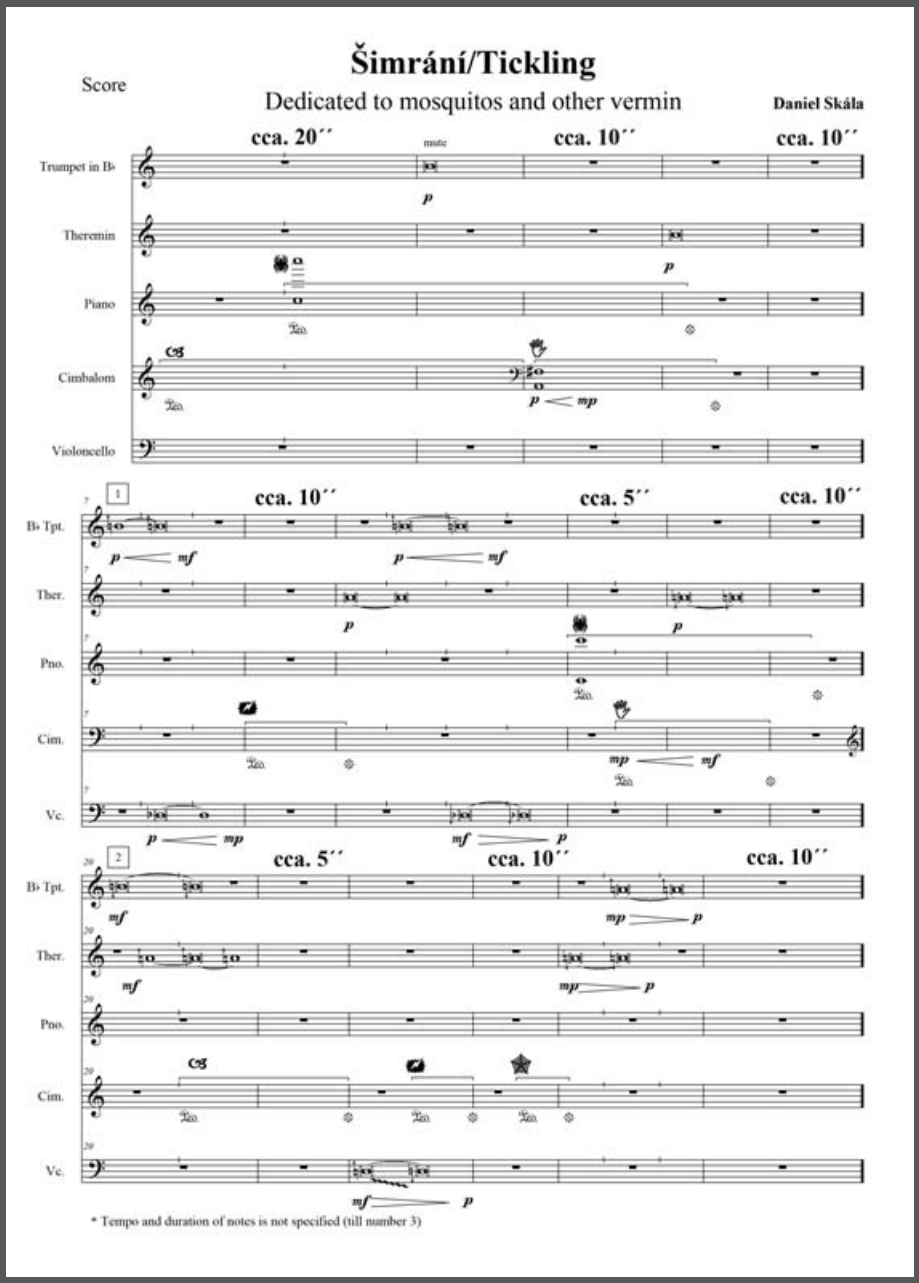
PHOTO: ANEŽKA HRUŠKOVÁ

you to play contemporary music. I'd like to do more of this – I often find something in contemporary music that I haven't come across in thirty years of playing the instrument. This is also why I like to collaborate with the people who write for me, but I try to be more selective – it takes up a lot of energy. I realise all the more now my responsibility for how a new piece will (or won't) work. I want to understand it in depth, and that takes a long time.

And the third path consists of projects connected to free improvisation. Especially in recent years, I have come to consider improvisation a universal cure – in teaching too. It's a brilliant diagnostic method. A six-year-old child comes into their lesson and you can see something's wrong – pressure at school, arguing parents, her friend told her she has fat legs, whatever – and all you need to do is sit her down at the instrument and start playing. Allow her to be free. Give her a narrative or a few notes she can use, anything, and after a few minutes, you know what's up.

I teach a course now at Ostrava University called Creative Improvisation. The students are singers and instrumentalists. They're over twenty years old and they've never encountered improvisation. The system is so blind, so one-sided – they practice playing from sheet music, but when I tell them to play any tone, anything they want, they're capable of sitting still for five minutes and playing nothing. That's how blocked they are.

I've worked out in quite a bit of detail a method aiming to use improvisation as a tool of liberating ourselves from what the system forces us into. It works on six-year-old children, on students at



conservatories and universities. At the conservatory, I try not to be a cimbalom teacher, but a music teacher, and improvisation is at the centre of this. Just yesterday, I had a student here. Life has not been easy on her at all. She was wiped out, and she asked for it herself: instead of playing Bach or some other compulsory works, let's improvise. We spent over half an hour improvising, she relaxed, freed herself, and then we could go on.

When you play in concerts – I usually play from memory – you spend an hour and a quarter playing, and I'd say up to eighty percent of your attention is taken up by memory, just so you can play what's in the music. And with improvisation, there's this wonderful possibility of freedom, which is what people often can't deal with: they have an incomparably greater

amount of energy to deal with what is happening right now. The aim of improvisation is completely different to composed music: to experience freedom and to define one's limits here and now.

Let's talk about the cimbalom department at the Janáček Conservatory in Ostrava, which you helped establish.

There was a department here until the late '60s, when it was closed down. I then reopened it in 2006. I led the effort, but of course a number of people helped me.

You mentioned your cimbalom teacher who took over when you went to Hungary.

Yes, Růžena Děcká – she had taught me at the conservatory in Kroměříž. After two years, I came back and I've been teaching here ever since. It's not quite a department – I'm part of the strings, guitar, and cimbalom department, and officially, I fall under the guitarists. But it's great – I have quite a lot of freedom and I can do things my way. As long as you follow some basic rules, it's alright.

Are there any other cimbalom teachers here?

No, just me.

Where can you study cimbalom at a conservatory in the Czech Republic?

Here, Kroměříž, and Brno. There are around ten conservatories in Slovakia where you can study the instrument, but they are almost exclusively focused on folklore. And at university level it's only Budapest and Bánská Bystrica.

Ostrava, the Steel-Hearted City

How do you see Ostrava, the city where you grew up, where you live, teach, and perform?

A lot of people think being in Ostrava is a disadvantage. I think if you like living in Prague, you live in Prague. If you like living in Brno, you live in Brno. I like living in Ostrava, so I live here. Of course, from a Prague-centric point of view, it's relatively out of the way and it seems like nothing happens here. On the other hand, the tracks are not as deep here as elsewhere – there's a lot of space to do things your way.

Is that positive or negative?

Well, Prague and Brno might offer more possibilities, of course, but there are certain expectations determined by tradition. You just don't have that here. It's much, much freer. This is one of the reasons why I think I feel so good here.

Furthermore, the air here – in addition to dust and pollution – was always full of a hard-working spirit. Miners came here to work hard – we can barely imagine how hard their work was. Of course, they then went to the pub and got terribly drunk. The alcohol is the flip side of all this. But this industriousness, this hard-working spirit, it's really in the air here. People *like* working hard. They don't mind. There is less money here – the money stops either in Prague or in Brno, occasionally getting all the way to Ostrava. But everything feels fresh.

And what about the Ostrava Days festival?

I think the first time I performed at the festival was in 2005. We played Louis Andriessen – I got a good whiff of contemporary music. Then I was away, focusing on other things, and it got back to me around 2009: the first time I was a resident composer at the companion institute which the festival organises.

Of course, Petr Kotík *(founder and artistic director of the festival – translator's note)* is so exceptional that a lot of people talk ill of him. By his nature, he doesn't care one bit. He's a bulldozer. Totally uncompromising. He brought his aesthetic here, his own idea of professional contemporary art, and turned this city inside out – it definitely changed my life.

So you were a performer first, but almost a decade later, you came to the festival as a resident composer and your works were performed.

As a resident, you always have one piece performed. The first time was, of course, demanding. Once you're already somewhat established in one field, it's tough to start anew in another. I mean, you played that first piece of mine, so you know what it was like! *(laughter)* That's not to say that I'm ashamed of it, not at all – that's where I was back then. And of course, fate had its own plans – the guitar amplifier dropped out, as I'm sure you remember, the piece failed in other respects, and most importantly, there was a Ligeti piece right before or after it. And two years later, it happened again. Hearing your own piece immediately compared with something as fantastic as Ligeti's music, you have this very straightforward realisation – this just won't do.

It took me many years to find a basic self-confidence in composing – it has only really happened in the last year or two: I really feel like I'm doing something one particular way because that's how I *want* to do it. It's also about being informed, about knowing that other people do it differently – and why. And it's on this deep knowledge that you start finding your own means and methods.

My life has recently changed considerably thanks to regular meditation. It led me to a realisation: ninety-five percent of what we do is sub- or unconscious. The other five is consciousness. And we try to resolve everything through these five percent. The compositional process – like everything else in life – is a process of creative decision-making. Just like when I walk down the street barefoot and I have to decide where I place my feet. And if I do it consciously – not intellectually, not rationally, but *consciously* – it is I who has power over the thoughts, and not the other way around.

It's tragic when we rationally close our creative paths. This is what schools should teach you. My thirteen-year-old student was telling me about the dozens of Latin names for the components of a tree trunk she has to learn for a test. But who teaches us to deal with anger? How to work with subjectivity?

I think that as a society, we greatly overvalue authorship. When someone creates something and insists on their signature, on their version of the truth, it is fatal for the author themselves. Learning to send things on is how everything starts coming back to you: instead of stopping the process at your own part of it, you let it go on, transform, and come back.

I'd like to go back to your third degree, the one we've talked about the least: choirmaster.

Choral conducting, or, by extension, conducting in general, is absolutely crucial to composers. You can't compose without knowing how to conduct. As a cimbalom player, my hands are destined to be good for conducting. And leading choirs, I learned that I have a gift for working with people, with groups – that I don't have to learn how to do it, but I can easily lead them by just using my two upper limbs.

At the moment, I'm not active in this field at all. I can't imagine leading a choir of my own. Ninety percent of being a choirmaster consists of sending text messages to singers asking whether they're free. I just don't have the time for that. But choirs were a huge influence on me. That's also how I met Jurij Galatenko – the leader of the Canticum Ostrava choir – who does most of my works now. And writing for choirs is my favourite thing in the world – I mean, to be honest, so many things are my favourite thing in the world, but I feel an immense closeness to this discipline. It is a paramount spiritual experience, the human voice – and not only that, more human voices together...

What are three pieces that were important for you as a performer and as a composer?

As a performer, I'd start with Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor (BWV 903)*. This was the first large piece I really had to struggle with. Then Dadák's *Cimbalom Sonata;* a twelve-minute solo sonata, one of the truly excellent pieces of the repertoire. These were both important pieces for me at the conservatory. And third... probably some pieces by Kurtág. I was very influenced by him at the time (throughout the conservatory and the Liszt Academy).

As for my own pieces, I'd definitely mention a cantata I wrote, *Všechen ten čas (All That Time)*, an evening-length piece I wrote a short while after my father passed away. So though I realise I was still stuck in loops and traditional methods, it was big task for me, one that opened a number of paths.

Then a series of compulsory pieces I wrote for a cimbalom competition; I call them *Neopaganiniani*. They're about playing with form when focusing on a particular playing technique. I like discovering new techniques and I plan to write many more of these. I enjoy that these are performed by a number of students at conservatory level and higher, so I get a lot of excellent feedback.

And perhaps I should have started with this one, because it's an early piece, *Manon*. Essentially an amateur dance workshop for which I wrote the music; about twenty-five minutes of it. But it was the first time I experienced writing music for someone else, for someone who then takes the music further. That was also a really important experience.

CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE SPRING OF 2019

This spring, it was the Prague Spring festival that provided the broadest selection of pieces by Czech composers, its tendency to enrich the festival programme with contemporary music growing more apparent ever year. In 2019, audiences had the opportunity to hear premieres of works by Šimon Voseček, Ondřej Kukal, Jakub Rataj, and Jana Vöröšová, while the famous Ensemble Intercontemporain performed the European premiere of Miroslav Srnka's *Overheating*. Like every year, there were also commissions for new pieces performed in the second round of the instrumental competition (this year in the flute and oboe categories).

Abroad, Czech music was most notably represented at the German Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik festival. This year's edition saw several compositions by Martin Smolka and Ondřej Adámek, including new pieces – works for voices and percussion presented at the opening concert, Smolka's sixty-minute *Vor dem Gesetz* "for speaking musicians and secondary instruments" on texts by Franz Kafka and Albert Camus, or Adámek's *Man Time Stone Time* for four singers, objects, video, and chamber orchestra, once again reflecting the composer's interest in stones, already apparent from his a capella opera *Seven Stones.*

MARCH–JUNE

10 March 2019, Teatro Sá de Miranda, Viana do Castelo, Portugal. **Martina Vídenová: *Requiem à Floresta Portuguesa* for choir and orchestra (world premiere).** Members of Coro Casa da Música and Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música, conductor: David Wyn Lloyd.
10 March 2019, Oper Köln, Cologne, Germany. **Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Nadja Loschky, music director: Christoph Gedschold. Following performances: 13, 16, 22, 24, 28, and 30 Mar, 3, 5, and 7 Apr 2019.
11 March 2019, Archa Theatre, Prague. **Michal Nejtek: *Get Ready!* (world premiere)**. Tereza Marečková (speaker), BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.
12 March 2019, St Lawrence Church, Prague. 632nd Tuesday of Umělecká beseda. **Terezie Švarcová: *War das die Liebe?* for flute and soprano, Marta Jiráčková: *The Impossibility of Strawberries,* op. 69 (world premieres).** Morgenstern Ensemble.
12 March 2019, Scottish Opera, Theatre Royal, Glasgow, Scotland. **Leoš Janáček: *Katya Kabanova* (premiere of a new production in co-production with Theater Magdeburg).** Directed by: Stephen Lawless, music director: Stuart Stratford. Language: Czech. Following performances: 14 and 16 Mar (Theatre Royal, Glasgow), 21 and 23 Mar (Festival Theatre, Edinburgh).
18 March 2019, Suk Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. Hommage à Alfred Brendel. **Miroslav Srnka: *Future Family* (Czech premiere)**. Quatuor Diotima.
18 March 2019, Bloomsbury Theatre, London. **Bedřich Smetana: *Libuše* (British staged premiere).** Directed by: Cecilia Stinton, music director: Charles Peebles. Language: Czech. Following performances: 20, 22, and 23 Mar 2019.
22 March 2019, Carnegie Hall, New York. **Bohuslav Martinů: *Juliette (The Key to Dreams)* (American premiere, concert performance**). American Symphony Orchestra, Bard Festival Chorale. Directed by: James Bagwell, conductor: Leon Botstein.

PHOTO: PATRIK BORECKÝ

Petr Wajsar: Tramvestie (National Theatre, Prague)

MARCH–JU

23 March 2019, Staatstheater Darmstadt, Darmstadt, Germany. **Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Luise Kautz, music director: Daniel Cohen. Language: German. Following performances: 30 Mar, 4, 12, and 18 Apr, 10 and 26 May, 8 and 16 Jun 2019.
27 March 2019, Suk Hall, House of Music, Pardubice. **Jan Jirásek: *Song of David,* Jan Vičar: *Tempus Iuvenis* (world premieres).** Kristýna Kůstková, Veronika Kaiserová, Josef Kovačič – solos, Bonifantes Boys' Choir, Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, conductor: Jan Míšek.
2 April 2019, The Shoe Factory, Nicosia, Cyprus. **Lenka Nota: *Ptelea and the other Dryads* for bass clarinet and piano (world premiere)**. George Georgiou – bass clarinet, Gergana Georgieva – piano.
3 April 2019, New Town Hall, Prague & Lichtenstein palace, Prague & Upper Square, Olomouc. Music for Sirens... micro-concerts with emergency siren test. **Audiobridge from Prague to Olomouc and Back. Concept/music: Jan Trojan.** Yanina Alachnovič – flute, Štěpán Janoušek – trombone, Miro Tóth – tenor saxophone.
4 April 2019, St. Agnes Convent, Prague. **Martin Kumžák: *Saint Agnes* (world premiere)**. Michaela Šrůmová – soprano, Roman Janál – baritone, Capella da Camera Praga.
7 April 2019, Theater Bonn, Bonn, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *The Makropulos Affair* (premiere of a new production in co-production with the English National Opera).** Directed by: Christopher Alden, music director: Hermes Helfricht. Language: Czech. Following performances: 11 and 20 Apr, 4, 19, 26, and 31 May, 19 Jun 2019.
9 April 2019, Church of St Lawrence, Prague. Konvergence. **Marek Keprt: *Lehkosnovná zújmění když mízní* (world premiere).** Helix Trio.
10 April 2019, Municipal House, Prague. **Antonín Dvořák: *Rusalka Fantasy,* arr. Manfred Honeck/Tomáš Ille (Czech premiere).** Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.
13 April 2019, GöteborgsOperan, Göteborg, Sweden. **Bohuslav Martinů: *Three Fragments from Juliette* (staged premiere in collaboration with National Theatre Brno).** Directed by: David Radok, music director: Marko Ivanović. Language: French. Following performances: 18, 24, and 26 Apr, 10 and 12 May 2019.
15 and 17 April 2019, Suk Hall, The House of Music, Pardubice. **Jiří Pohnán: *A Moment with Astor Piazzolla for trumpet and orchestra* (world premiere).** Michal Chmelař – trumpet, The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, conductor: Stanislav Vavřínek.
16 April 2019, Reduta, Olomouc. **Marek Keprt: *v hlesoSnovná zMúznění se vJíni* (world premiere)**. Marek Keprt – piano.
17 April 2019, The New Stage, National Theatre, Prague. **Petr Wajsar: *Tramvestie* (world premiere).**

PHOTO: MAREK OLBRZYMEK

Bohuslav Martinů: Three Fragments from Juliette (National Theatre Brno)

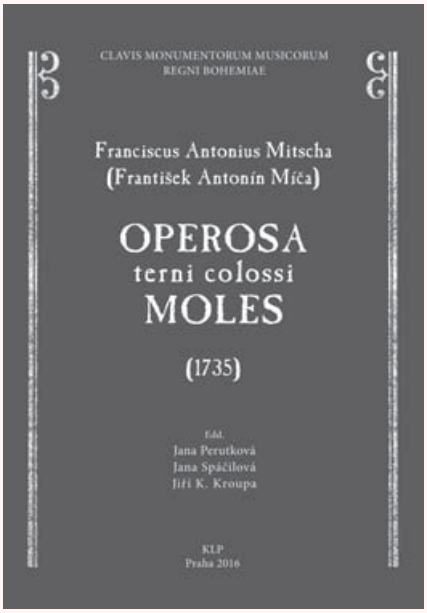
Libretto: Pavel Novotný. Directed by: Marek Bureš, music director: Richard Hein.
Following performances: 22 Apr, 7 and 20 May, 23 Jun 2019.
28 April 2019, Alfréd ve Dvoře Theatre, Prague. **Luboš Mrkvička: *Quartet for Flute, Clarinet, Violin and Cello,* Petr Hora: *No hay banda,* Jan Rösner*: String Trio* (world premieres).** Ensemble Terrible.
1 May 2019, 11:50, Bastion XXXI, Prague. Music for Sirens... micro-concerts with emergency siren test. **Jan Mikyska: *A Succession of several sounds and silences* (world premiere).** Tomáš Mika – electric guitar, Renata Raková, Anna Sysová – clarinet, Šimon Veselý – percussion.
1 May 2019, Paralelní Polis, Prague. **J-T Vesikkala Wittmacher: miniatures from Insulae, Soňa Vetchá: *Blue-green Colors of Light,* Barry Wan Yuk Bun: *The Misty Morning,* Bruno Cunha: *Seja marginal, seja herói for solo bass & electronics* (world premieres).** Ensemble Terrible.
4 May 2019, Bühne am Park, Bühnen der Stadt Gera, Gera, Germany. **Viktor Ullmann: *The Emperor of Atlantis* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Kai Anne Schuhmacher, music director: Takahiro Nagasaki.
Following performances: 11 and 30 May 2019, 8 Dec 2019 at Theaterzelt Altenburg.
10 May 2019, Saalbau, Witten, Germany. Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik. **Martin Smolka: *Stretto for six voices and four percussionists,* Ondřej Adámek: *Schlafen gut. Warm.*** *for six voices and four percussionists (world premieres).* n.e.s.e.v.e.n., Eklekto, conductor: Ondřej Adámek.
10 May 2019, Saalbau, Witten, Germany. Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik. **Martin Smolka: *Vor dem Gesetz* for speaking musicians with secondary instruments (world premiere).** Libretto: Jiří Adámek, Franz Kafka, directed by: Jiří Adámek. Ensemble Ascolta.
11 May 2019, Martinů Hall, Academy of Performing Arts, Prague. Prague Spring International Music Competition, oboe category, 2nd round. **Martin Hybler: *Sound-Telescope* (world premiere).** Performed by the twelve semi-finalists.
12 May 2019, National House of Vinohrady, Prague. Prague Spring International Music Competition, flute category, II. round. **Jaroslav Pelikán: *Introduzione e Tema con Variazioni* (world premiere)**. Performed by the twelve semi-finalists.
12 May 2019, Saalbau, Witten, Germany. Wittener Tage für Neue Kammermusik. **Ondřej Adámek: *Man Time Stone Time* for four vocalists, objects, video and chamber orchestra (world premiere).** n.e.s.e.v.e.n., WDR Sinfonieorchester, conductor: Michael Wendeberg.
15 May 2019, Chateau Březnice. Jakub Jan Ryba Festival. **Jaroslav Pelikán: *Trio for flute, viola and violoncello* (world premiere).** Eliška Hejhalová – flute, Martin Stupka – viola, Lukáš Polák – violoncello.

15 May 2019, City Theatre, Jablonec nad Nisou. **Lukáš Sommer: *Chicago Steps* (world premiere).** Prague Guitar Quartet.
19 May 2019, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. Prague Spring. **Šimon Voseček: *Hypnos* (world premiere).** PKF – Prague Philharmonia, conductor: Ben Glassberg.
20 May 2019, National Technical Museum, Prague. Prague Spring. **Ondřej Kukal: *Harfenianna. Concertino for Harp and Strings Op. 55* (world premiere).** Kateřina Englichová – harp, Ensemble 18+, Blanka Karnetová – artistic director.
20 May 2019, Dvorana Hall, Bratislava, Slovakia. AsynChrónie 2019 festival. **Petr Bakla: *My Way* (world premiere).** Ivan Šiller – piano.
21 May 2019, Dvorana Hall, Bratislava, Slovakia. AsynChrónie 2019 festival. **František Chaloupka: *Ke xylofonii obscénního nad vědomím v agónii.* I. Danse Macabre, II. Mephisto Waltz (world premiere).** Asynchrónie Ensemble.
23 May 2019, Grandhotel Ambassador Národní dům, Karlovy Vary. **Jan Kučera: *Concerto for piano and orchestra* (world premiere).** Jan Kučera – piano, Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Martin Lebel.
24 May 2019, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. Prague Spring. **Jakub Rataj: *æther* (world premiere)**. Carolina Eyck – theremin, Alžběta Jamborová – oboe, Karel Košárek – piano, Bennewitz Quartet.
24 May 2019, Marguerre-Saal, Theater Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *Katya Kabanova* (premiere).** Directed by: Andrea Schwalbach, music director: Elias Grandy/Dietger Holm. Language: Czech. Following performances: 26 and 31 May, 8, 13, 20, and 24 Jun 2019.
25 May 2019, Anhaltisches Theater Dessau, Dessau, Germany. **Antonín Dvořák: *The Devil and Kate* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Jakob Peters-Messer, music director: Elisa Gogou. Language: Czech. Following performances: 1 and 16 Jun 2019.
26 May 2019, Convent of St Agnes, Prague. Prague Spring. **Jana Vöröšová: *Cloud Atlas* (world premiere).** Bohemia Saxophone Quartet, Jana Bezpalcová – accordion.
27 May 2019, DOX+, Prague. Prague Spring. **Miroslav Srnka: *Overheating* (European premiere).** Ensemble Intercontemporain, conductor: Julien Leroy.
30 May 2019, Chateau Dobříš. Antonín Dvořák Music Festival. **Petr Koronthály: *Suite for string orchestra* (world premiere of the winning piece of the festival's 3rd composition competition).** Quattro Chamber Orchestra, conductor: Marek Štilec.
5 June 2019, 11:50 am, Johannes Kepler Grammar School, Prague. Music for Sirens... micro-concerts with emergency siren test. **Martin Klusák: *Mycelium* (world premiere).** Students of Johannes Kepler Grammar School – musical instruments, natural objects, improvised recitation.
5 June 2019, DOX+, Prague. **Petr Wajsar: *Algorhythm for trombone and small orchestra* (world premiere).** Štěpán Janoušek – trombone, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.
5 June 2019, The House of the Lords of Kunštát and Husa na provázku Theatre, Brno. **Ondřej Štochl: *Živý motýl* for soprano and chamber orchestra, Mario Buzzi: *Kryptadia aneb co se nevešlo do Bartoše* (world premieres).** Irena Troupová – soprano, Arnošt Goldflam, Mariana Chmelařová, Ivana Hloužková – recitation and singing, Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.
8 June 2019, Foyer of the Pasáž Theatre, Třebíč. Concentus Moraviae. **Lukáš Sommer: *Coffee with Ennio M.* (world premiere).** Karel Košárek – piano, Petr Valášek – bass clarinet, Oleg Sokolov – vibraphone, Epoque Quartet.
9 June 2019, St. Wenceslas Cathedral, Olomouc. Forfest Czech Republic. **Josef Adamík: *Sinfonietta* (world premiere).** Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.
13 June 2019, Church of St Lawrence, Prague. Konvergence. **Jiří Lukeš: *O spánku, Rem-Nrem* (world premiere).** Matěj Vlk – violin, Ondřej Štochl – viola, Sebastian Tóth – violoncello, Jiří Lukeš – accordion.
15 June 2019, Oper Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany. **Bedřich Smetana: *The Bartered Bride* (premiere).** Directed by: Christian von Götz, music director: Christoph Gedschold. Following performances: 23 and 30 Jun, 25 Aug, 1 and 28 Sep, 6 Oct, and 16 Nov 2019.

by Lukáš M. Vytlačil

Operosa terni colossi moles

A congratulatory serenata for the Count of Questenberg by the Jaroměřice capellmeister František Antonín Míča



The court of the art-loving Johann Adam Count of Questenberg (1678–1752) was important centre of late Baroque culture in Moravia. During a costly redevelopment of his country residence in Jaroměřice nad Rokytnou (upon Rokytná), led perhaps by the famous Viennese architect Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt (1668–1745), the extensive residence complex also came to include the newly built parish church of St Margaret, which also served as a castle chaple, garden theatre, or theatre hall. But Questenberg also lavished much attention on music. He was an active lute player and had a lively interest in musical events in Vienna, where he often stayed at the imperial court, and where he also had a palace available. At his own court, he established an ensemble of musically talented serfs, and beginning in 1722, the theatre at the palace hosted opera performances.

František Antonín Míča (1696–1744), one of the important figures of Baroque music in the Czech lands, was tasked with leading the ensemble. He had been employed by the count since age fifteen, in 1711, when he was listed in a register of servants at the Questenberg palace in Vienna mentioned above. He was in charge of musical productions and rehearsing new pieces, including the stage components of theatrical works, in which he also performed as a tenor. He also composed a number of compositions. Probably the most famous of these is the opera *L'origine di Jaromeritz in Moravia,* which was also the first opera to be presented in Czech translation: *O původu Jaroměřic na Moravě (On the Origin of Jaroměřice in Moravia)*. As for the richness of the local musical life, we need not look much further than the fact that between 1722 and 1752, the chateau in Jaroměřice nad Rokytnout saw more than 170 dramatic musical performances. In addition to operas and other pieces, there were also occasional works which celebrated significant events in the life of the aristocratic patron and his family.

Count Johann Adam of Questenberg, to whom Míča's congratulatory serenata was dedicated on his name-day

The congratulatory serenata *Operosa terni colossi moles (The Ingenious Construction of the Triple Colossus)* is precisely such a work. It was first performed on the 24th of December 1735, intended for the celebration of the name day of Count Johann Adam of Questenberg. The work opens with a three-part sinfonia, which is followed by nineteen vocal numbers (twelve solos, four duos, and three choruses) – quite the extensive composition. It is written for nine soloists and a choir and an instrumental ensemble of strings and basso continuo, occasionally joined

by the chalumeaux (no. 14: aria of the Third Siren *Decurrunt flumina cuncta in mare*) and two baroque trumpets with timpani (final chorus). Another curiosity is the use of solo cello in Policardo's tenor aria *In hoc charo nostro solo* (no. 8). The Latin libretto was written by Jakub Ignác Želivský, probably the chaplain of the church in Jaroměřice from 1734 to 1736. In her preface to the new edition[1] of that serenata, Jana Perutková claims that a clear inspiration was a similar libretto by Antonín Saletka from the Jesuit Order, from which Želivský took entire lines.[2] As one might expect from the period, the text is permeated by a number of symbolic meanings, the chief aim of which traditionally consisted in celebrating the nobleman. Another interesting note of Perutková's is that the text of the libretto could also be a response to Questenberg's currently somewhat unfavourable position at the Viennese court. The distance grew with his being named the generally unpopular and also financially demanding position of the chief commissioner in the upcoming Moravian provincial assembly. This is a further interpretation of the sadness which the sirens dispel in the serenata, as well as of the moment when "the clouds spread on the sea" (Preface, page IX).

The serenata *Operosa terni colossi moles* is now newly available in the form of a critical edition prepared by Jana Perutková (opening commentary), Jana Spáčilová (score editing and editorial note), and Jiří K. Kroupa (libretto editing and translation).[3] The main source was the autograph, stored in the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna under the signature III 27714. The edition is meticulously prepared and changes are generally clearly marked in the score and described in the editorial notes (e.g. the notation of a particular type of rhythmic figuration to which it would be useless to allude directly in the score). Compared to recent similar scores (published by Carus Verlag, Breitkopf & Härtel, Academus Edition, Ortus Musikverlag, and others), the size of staff and text are slightly smaller, with thinner lines in the staff. This is also true of ties and legati, which are sometimes difficult to discern, particularly when dotted lines are used (e.g. p. 28, measures 24–25; p. 29, measures 27–28; p. 69, measures 25–28; or p. 86, measure 1). This is the default setting in the Finale notation software – it is difficult to resolve, but not impossible.[4] I also think that the writing out of the parts which are led *colla parte* with another part in the autograph would be sufficiently explained in the editorial report, saving some characters in the somewhat cluttered score. In insufficient lighting – which we encounter more than occasionally in musical practice – the score might not be perfectly readable. The accompanying texts – in Czech and English – then provide not only information on the editorial revisions, but also detailed information on this work and the circumstances of its performance, a semantic analysis of the libretto and a description of its source. The editorial note is then followed by an edition of the Latin libretto and a translation into Czech. Despite my misgivings about the graphic form of the score, the scholarly import of this edition of the serenata is indubitable, and we can certainly consider the edition a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the musical culture of the Jaroměřice court of Count Questenberg, as well as the fascinating oeuvre of František Antonín Míča, which we are only still beginning to acquaint ourselves with.

1) Franciscus Antonius Mitscha: *Operosa terni colossi moles.* Eds. Jana Perutková, Jana Spáčilová, and Jiří K. Kroupa. KLP – Koniasch Latin Press, Praha 2016.
2) Jana Perutková has previously written about this serenata, for example, in her book *František Antonín Míča ve službách hraběte Questenberga a italská opera v Jaroměřicích.* [František Antonín Míča in the Service of Count Questenberg and Italian Opera in Jaroměřice]. KLP – Koniasch Latin Press, Prague 2011, pp. 198-203.
3) See footnote 1.
4) We had to deal with the same problem in a critical edition of Reichenauer's Oboe Concerto; Antonín Reichenauer: *Concerto in G per oboe, due violini, viola e basso.* Fontes Musicae Bohemiae 1. Togga, Prague 2016.

by Lukáš M. Vytlačil

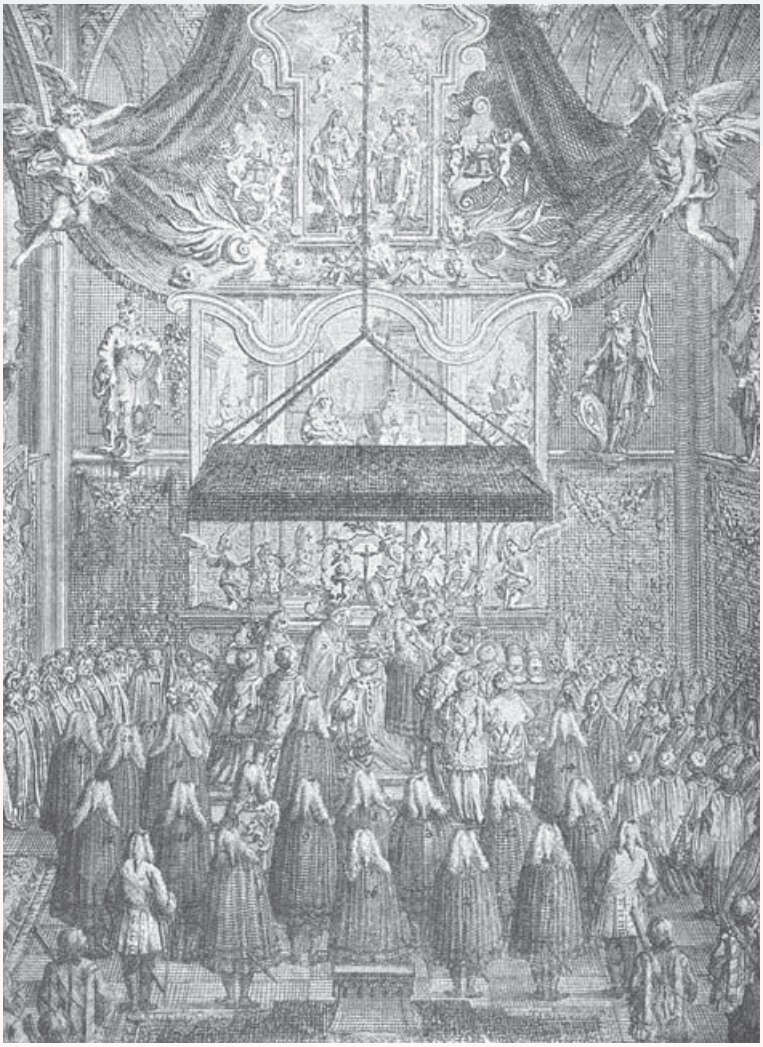
Christmas Music for Late Baroque Prague

The Latin pastorellas of Josef Antonín Sehling

Josef Antonín (or Joseph Anton) Sehling (1710–1756) is one of the many remarkable figures of Prague musical life around the middle of the 18th century whose life and work later fell into near-oblivion. The situation has changed slowly in the last few years, and so even Sehling's work has become the focus of certain musicians and musicologists. A very worthy contribution is the critical edition of four Latin pastorellas prepared by Milada Jonášová,[1] certainly one of the most significant figures in contemporary Czech musicology and also a respected scholar in international Mozartian research. Her edition of Sehling's pastorellas is certainly not her first work on this composer, as she has devoted several papers to him.

In her opening study, Jonášová expounds in detail Sehling's life. Born in a bourgeois family in Toužim (Theusing in German), he attended the local school, where – thanks to the patronage of the nobility – music got particular attention, allowing Sehling to receive his first musical education. Jonášová mentions that the most significant source of information on Sehling's youth is his own request for the position of Capellmeister at Prague's St Vitus Cathedral in 1737. In it, Sehling posits that he studied composition in Vienna and later settled in Prague, where he devoted himself to composition and performance, e.g. in the famous ensemble of Wenceslas Count of Morzin (1676–1737[2]). At the time, he also owned an extensive collection of sheet music which he used for his own use, and also as loans for various Prague Capellmeisters – he mentions, for exemple, the St Vitus Capellmeister Anton Görbig († 1737). At that time, Sehling was second violinist at St Vitus, and though he applied for the position after Görbig's death, he did not became the Capellmeister there. Nevertheless, it seems that due to the illness of the new Capellmeister Jan František Novák († 1771), Sehling was his long-term deputy. In addition to work in the cathedral, where he remained until his death, he was also successful elsewhere, serving as Capellmeister at the Church of St Benedict in Hradčany (1739) and also in the Maltesian church of the Virgin Mary under the Chain in Malá Strana (1740). Sehling's strong position in Prague musical life is well attested to by the fact that the Jesuits asked him to compose the music for their school play *Judith*, performed on the occasion of the coronation of Maria

1) Joseph Anton Sehling: *Latinské pastorely. Latin Pastorellas. Lateinische Pastorellen.* Ed. Milada Jonášová. Academus Edition 5. Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, v. v. i., Kabinet hudební historie, Praha 2017.
2) In the publication, Count Morzin's year of death is mistakenly listed as 1735, see ibidem, p. VIII.



The Prague coronoation of Maria Theresa on the 12th of May 1743 in St Vitus' Cathedral, where Sehling was active at the time. He also composed music for a Jesuit play that was performed at the coronation celebration.

Theresa. The collection of scores he gathered is today stored as part of the capitulary archive of St Vitus Cathedral in the Prague Castle Archive, counting over 591 items.
In the second part of her introductory study, Jonášová explores Sehling's compositional oeuvre, part of which was lost, the existence of the missing pieces today proved only by mentions in period sources. The composer's musical style is characterised here as significantly oriented to the milieu of composers in the Viennese, Venetian, and Neapolitan school. Sehling became acquainted with the modern repertoire of the Neapolitan circle not only through his studies, but also through his own performance practice, as in 1754, he took part – as a violinist – in performances by Giovanni Battista Locatelli's opera company in Prague Theatre *V Kotcích* (p. XI). We are also reminded of Sehling's presumed Italian connections, which also had to do with the numerous contrafacts, i.e. arrangements of Italian operatic arias with new sacred texts. Sehling made these arrangements for the need of the St Vitus music ensemble, but copies also spread elsewhere. More space is then dedicated to the pastorellas and the topic of repertoire intended for Christmas time more generally (p. XII–XIII). For this liturgical period, the composer's collection in the capitulary archive contains two pastoral masses, six Christmas motets, six Christmas offertorios, rorate, and four pastorellas.
The remaining paragraphs are dedicated to the latter, whose formal construction, instrumentation, and other remarkable aspects the editor expounds upon.

Special mention is certainly deserved by the image section. Before the usual facsimile samples from the autograph of the pastorellas, there is also a facsimile of Sehling's above-mentioned request for the position of Capellmeister at the metropolitan Cathedral of St Vitus with a parallel diplomatic transcription of the entire letter (pp. XXXI-XXXIV).

The critical edition itself follows. It includes four pastorellas on Latin texts: *Non sic cervus* for solo bass, *Eja surgite pastores* for soprano, *Eja laeti properemus* and *Dormi tenellule*, both for soprano and alto. The instrumental accompaniment of the solo voices is made up of two violins (in the second and third pastorella, these play in unison), viola (marked explicitly as *concertante* in the second and fourth

pastorella), and organ. G major predominates; only in *Eja laeti properemus* does Sehling write in F major. All the pastorellas are in one-movement *aria da capo* form. The pieces betray the hand of an experienced composer, one who is well aware of the technical capabilities of the instruments and the solo voices, and who has a great sense for dramaturgical and narrative development, which Sehling learnt through works for the stage. In notographic terms, the edition is very professionally prepared and extremely clear, including wholly legible text and basso continuo marks which make it perfectly useful for practical performance needs. The occasional small blemish is the collision of ties and legati with the staff (e.g. p. 15, mm. 92–94 in the soprano part; p. 19, m. 51 in the second violin part; p. 29, mm. 126–127 also in the second violin part). Unlike previous publications in the Academus edition, we find the editorial additions of legati and articulations explained only in the critical note, not marked directly in the score with square brackets.

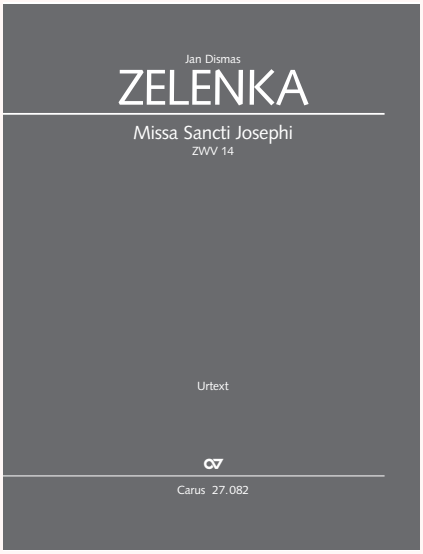
The publication is concluded by a critical report which presents information about the individual sources from the Cathedral archives, as well as the collections of the Strahov Premonstrates Monastery[3], and finally, the editorial note. Just like the opening study, this text is printed in three language mutations: Czech, English, and German. After another section of images which uses photographs to present the watermarks of the types of papers used, follow the English editorial notes and the libretti of the pastorellas. These are unfortunately presented only in the original Latin – semantic translations would surely have been a welcome tool for many performers and scholars alike.

This critical edition of Josef Antonín Sehling's collection of Latin pastorellas is a successful work in all respects, making available the quality fruits of Czech musicology to a wide circle of users from the academic community to practical musicians. Let us hope that this contribution will help resuscitate more interest in Sehling's work and will also be an opportunity to present the importance and import of academic research to the wider musical public.

3) These are copies of the pastorellas *Non sic cervus and Dormi tenellule* from 1823, which were originally in the collection of the Royal Premonstratensian Canonry in Strahov and now are deposited in the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music in Prague.

A Solemn Mass for the Feast of the Patron of the Royal House by Jan Dismas Zelenka

On the new critical edition of the Missa Sancti Josephi



The last few years have seemed to foreshadow this year's small anniversary of composer Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745), born 340 years ago. A number of new recordings of his works have been published (and are yet to be published), but more crucially, a number of new editions of sheet music have made a progressively wider portion of Zelenka's oeuvre available to performers and scholars alike. One of the latest enrichments is the urtext edition of a smaller cycle: *Missa Sancti Josephi*, ZWV 14.[1] For the Czech musical public, this is not an unknown work, as a recording was made several years ago by the Baroque orchestra Ensemble Inégal under the direction of Adam Viktora. Last year, the album received the prestigious French Diapason découverte award.

1) Jan Dismas Zelenka: *Missa Sancti Josephi,* ZWV 14. Ed. Wolfgang Horn. Carus Verlag, Stuttgart 2018.

Dresden in a period rendering. In the forefront, we see the court church, where Zelenka's Missa Sancti Josephi was first performed.

The German musicologist Wolfgang Horn introduces the creation of the work. To anyone who keeps up with Zelenka scholarship, Horn's name will be eminently familiar from a number of other editions, papers, and conferences (he is an annual guest at the Zelenka Conference Prague). The *Missa Sancti Josephi* is intended for this liturgical feast. It has no Credo and consists of a Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. After all, a catalogue label from the 18th century designated it as *Messa senza Credo*. The piece was composed in the first half of the 1730s, as attested to by the rich and monumental instrumentation, typical for this period of Zelenka's work. In addition to four soloists and a mixed choir, the orchestra is composed of two transverse flutes, an oboe, horns, trumpets, and timpani, as well as a string section and basso continuo. Based on analyses of period sources, Horn concludes that the mass was probably premiered in Dresden on the 19th of March 1732, the day of St Joseph. He also observes that Joseph was the baptismal patron saint of Joseph I, Holy Roman Emperor, the father of Archduchess Maria Josepha of Austria, the wife of the son of the Saxon Elector and Polish King Augustus the Strong. This important holy day for the ruling family demanded – in the period language of Baroque symbols – a celebration in the form of Zelenka's monumental mass.

The source for this critical edition (publisher's catalogue number Carus 27.082) was the only one surviving source – Zelenka's autograph. Today, it forms part of the famous *Schranck III* (a collection of sacred music from the court Catholic church in Dresden), preserved in the archive of the Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden under catalogue number *Mus. 2358-D-43*. With regard to minor damage to certain pages, Wolfgang Horn reconstructed the notation very sensitively. All editorial interventions are commented upon in the standard manner in the critical note, or are made visible directly in the score (e.g. through the use of cursive for supplementary text, or dotted ties and legati). As for the engraving, every performer will certainly appreciate an excellently chosen proportion between the size of the printed page and the size of the staff, which is wonderfully uncluttered. Taking into account the considerable changes in the number of staff lines (up to seventeen), I would also welcome designations of instruments through abbreviations on every page. The score itself is complemented by a preface and notes on performance practice in German and English, seven facsimile appendices, and a critical note in German.

The quality of this edition puts Jan Dismas Zelenka's *Missa Sancti Josephi* among the top scores on offer from this composer – a position well deserved both by this extraordinary work and by the musical oeuvre of this leading composer of the late Baroque.

reviews

George Frideric Handel Messiah

Giulia Semenzato – soprano, Benno Schachtner – countertenor, Krystian Adam – tenor, Krešimir Stražanac – bass, Collegium Vocale 1704, Collegium 1704, Václav Luks – conductor.
Text: EN, FR, GE, CZ. Recorded: live, Mar. 2018, Rudolfinum, Prague. Published: 2019. TT: 48:43, 50:36, 31:19. 2 CD Accent ACC 24354.

Václav Luks is a maximalist. He puts together grandiose projects, constantly broadening and deepening his erudition, manifesting as an enthusiast and visionary in musical interpretation. He is not afraid of aiming high – after all, he's got an excellent ensemble and choir at his disposal. He has introduced pieces into the Czech environment which are firmer parts of the German or English musical tradition, and thanks to this, we consider them a matter of course. His **Collegium 1704** might not be the only Czech ensemble whose concert season copies the liturgical year, but what makes it exceptional is that it also records these famous Baroque works. Most recently, they have completed the first complete Czech recording of Händel's oratorio *Messiah*, made during their fourth concert performance of the piece in Prague's Rudolfinum in the 2017/2018 season. I will say outright – and gladly – that I believe this album to be some of the best recorded work by Collegium 1704 thus far, perhaps even becoming its own personal Mount Everest – and not only because this is a live recording. The more I listened to the *Messiah,* a feeling grew inside me – that Václav Luks has enriched historically informed performance (which since the pioneering times of Christopher Hogwood has become a firm part of musical life) with something extraordinarily original. If we look back in time, Nikolaus Harnoncourt's *Messiah* is aristocratically noble like a walk through the Schönbrunn gardens with the Viennese melange and top shelf Sachertorte (DHM, live 2004), John Eliot Gardiner offers the precision and perfection of Earl Grey tea infused precisely to the second (Decca 1992), the newer French-British recording by Emmanuelle Haïm is a rich table of an inexhaustible number of tastes, scents, and colours (Erato 2014). Collegium 1704's *Messiah*, in contrast, is simple like an oak tree decorated with fresh spring flowers. The tones of Händel's music flow to us in one of their most crystalline and brilliant forms. There are no weak points, no decline in tension, no absence of feeling or expression – one can take delight in every second and experience the entire oratorio in its very essence. Listeners can let themselves be charmed by the pleasant voice colour of tenorist **Krystian Adam,** among whose best contributions is the arioso *Behold, and See if There Be Any Sorrow* or the aria *But Thou Didst Not Leave His Soul in Hell*, or the pure tone of countertenor **Benno Schachtner**, who excels in the almost ten-minute aria *He Was Despised and Rejected of Men***.** Bass **Krešimir Stražanac** had to manage the "Luksian" killer tempi (the aria *Why Do the Nations So Furiously Rage Together* is an enthralling *furioso*), and his rendition of *The People That Walked in Darkness* is rapturous and deeply felt. The only dame among the soloists is the soprano **Giulia Semenzato.** Her healthy voice with a soft yet full colour and pleasant vibrato lights up every section into which she enters, adding a womanly tenderness. Thanks to this, the alto and soprano duo *He Shall Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd* truly sounds *suave,* the aria I *Know That My Redeemer* has a certain nightingale-like lightness. The choral sections, performed by **Collegium Vocale 1704,** are perfection itself: perfect period pronunciation (and this is also true of the soloists), naturalness, sonic balance, fullness, passion, but also delicacy and feeling. A great addition to this is the excellent work of the orchestra led by concertmistress **Helena Zemanová.** They manage extreme tempo changes without blinking, articulate with precision, react sensitively to dialogues in the singing, and complement in colour the fulness of the basses and the lustre of the sopranos. This is material with which Václav Luks can do whatever he pleases, and which reacts promptly and precisely to his mouldings.

Dina Šnejdarová

Bohuslav Martinů Symphonies

Symfonie no. 1 H. 289 (1942), no. 2 H. 295 (1943), no. 3 H. 299 (1944), no. 4 H. 305 (1945), no. 5 H. 310 (1946), no. 6 H. 343 Fantaisies symphoniques (1954)

ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Cornelius Meister.
Text: GE, EN. Recorded: live 2011–2017 Konzerthaus Wien. Released: 2017. TT: 57:26 + 64:43 + 58:56. 3 CD Capriccio C5320

Stepping outside genre conventions, let me begin on a personal note.
In the advent of 2001, I stood wistfully in front of the overflowing shop window of a record shop in Heidelberg, Germany. The amount of CDs and LPs took my breath away, as did their prices, far outweighing the possibilities of my student budget at the time. A small consolation for my last saved-up marks was a visit to a philharmonic concert by the theatre orchestra of the Heidelberg opera. Dvořák's sixth symphony was on the programme, conducted by a young man with slightly protruding ears and prickly hair named **Cornelius Meister**. He conducted it with such

zeal and absorption that I resolved to continue following Meister's career. A few years later, he became the principal conductor of the **ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra** (2010–2017), and today, he leads the largest German musical operation – the opera house and symphony orchestra in Stuttgart. Meister will be forty next year and already has a remarkable career behind him, marked by interesting recordings with the publishers CPO (Bartók, Zemlinsky, Weinberger's *Valdštejn*!), Orfeo d'Or (von Einem), and Capriccio (Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, Strauss, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Weinberg, and others). It was the Austrian publishers Capriccio who produced Meister's excellent recording of Dvořák's cantata *Svatební košile* (*The Wedding Shirts*), and who also published Meister's largest recording project to date – a collective recording of all six symphonies by Bohuslav Martinů, as he rehearsed and recorded them live with the ORF orchestra between 2011 and 2017. Meister's liking for Czech music consistently reminded the Viennese and the listeners of ORF of the qualities of Dvořák's symphonic poems or *Biblical Songs*. Revolutionary for the Viennese context, however, was his taking up the Martinů symphonies under review. He has not been given any attention in our lands, not even on the airwaves of the allied Czech Radio, and so I happily apply myself to the obligation of reminding Czech discophiles of the qualities and virtues of Meister's Viennese cycle, published in 2017. It would be unfair to compare it to the Czech complete editions by Neumann, Válek, and Bělohlávek's unfinished set, as the Czech Philharmonic and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra both have a considerably longer and more intensive interpretive tradition of Martinů's oeuvre than Austrian orchestras, including the three main Viennese orchestras. The assets of Meister's set, however, become immediately apparent if we compare it to recordings by Bryden Thomson (Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Chandos) Neeme Järvi (Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, BIS), Arthur Fagen (National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Naxos), and even with the much celebrated set recorded by Jiří Bělohlávek with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Onyx). I'd place the sound of the Viennese radio symphony closer to their colleagues in London than the German radio orchestras in Munich, Hamburg, or Stuttgart. First and foremost, we have to value Meister's exact approach to the scores and his will to compel the orchestra to understand the specific idioms of Martinů's peak symphonic works, including their complex rhythmical component. Meister's tempi are thought through, his obsession with the composer's orchestral colours relentless. A Czech listener might miss the warm melos of Martinů's strings, but Meister rewards him with a transparent sound and shaded dynamics. He also resists the temptations of neo-impressionist mist in the *Fantaisies symphoniques*, single-mindedly uncovering their solid modernist structure. A great advantage of this project is the recording quality, characterised as it is by a crystalline sound and dynamic balance between the instrumental groups. Personally, the largest surprise of the recording is how soon Cornelius Meister matured into an excellent conductor, and particularly into an interpreter of such specific and somewhat undervalued work as those of Martinů's symphonic oeuvre. Honestly, I regret having missed most of the live performances in Vienna, as I now have to do make do "only" with listening to these remarkable recordings.

Martin Jemelka

Petr Eben
Labyrinth

Martinů Quartet (Lubomír Havlák, Libor Kaňka – violins, Zbyněk Paďourek – viola, Jitka Vlašánková – cello), Karel Košárek – piano.
Text: CZ, EN, GE, FR. Recorded: Oct. 2016 Studio Domovina, Prague (String Quartet), Mar.–Apr. 2017, Martinů Hall, Prague (Piano Quintet, Piano Trio). Published: 2018.
TT: 68:32. DDD.
1 CD Supraphon SU 4232-2.

The Piano Trio, String Quartet, and Piano Quintet are some of the gravest chamber works in Petr Eben's compositional legacy. The oldest of these is the four-movement String Quartet. It was written in 1981 and bears the subtitle *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart,* referring to the famous alegorico-philosophical work by J. A. Komenský (Comenius). The excited and dramatic opening and closing movements of the String Quartet are images of the "labyrinth of the world", while with the meditative middle movements, the composer invites the listener to the "paradise of the heart". Eben greatly admired Komenský, considering him "an example for the position of each of us to this world". In 2003, he published – also under the title *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* – an evening-length organ cycle which includes recitation from selected passages of Komenský's book. The Piano Trio was composed in 1986, five years later. Surprisingly, he does not attempt a sonic connection between all three instruments, instead placing the piano in contradiction to the strings. He said of the work: "It's not so much a trio; rather, a cycle for two string instruments and piano." In terms of both sound and content, the most colourful piece on this record is the piano quintet, written in 1991 and '92. The basic three-movement

structure (fast – slow – fast) is enriched here by two intermezzi, wherein the first is built on string pizzicati, the second – working with the same theme – on staccato chords in the piano. All three works on this disc are fascinating in their rich creative imagination and inventive instrumentation. The **Martinů Quartet** and pianist **Karel Košárek** play Eben's works with fantastic understanding and empathy, absolute technical mastery, and coordination of the excellence we hear only with the best musicians. The magical world of Eben's music opens up before us in all its unique beauty, urgency, and impressiveness. Add to that Kateřina Vondrovicová's enlightened introductory text and a seemly layout, and what results is a project Supraphon can rightly be proud of.

Věroslav Němec

Bohuslav Martinů Songs

Martina Janková – soprano, Tomáš Král – baritone, Ivo Kahánek – piano.
Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded: Martinů Hall, 2017. Published: 2019. TT: 82:34. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4235-2.

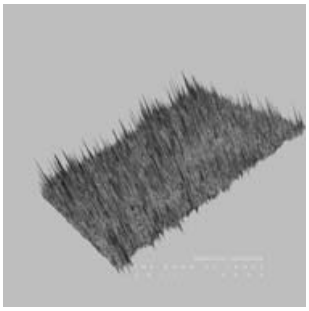
More than anything, the album is beautiful – this is what's going through my mind after repeated listenings of this new recording of Martinů songs. After her Janáček album (SU 2015), Martina Janková, along with **Tomáš Král** and **Ivo Kahánek,** recorded all three key song cycles written by Martinů in the 1940s – *Nový Špalíček (New Miniatures), Písničky na jednu stránku (Songs on One Page),* and *Písničky na dvě stránky (Songs on Two Pages)* – plus the *Nové slovenské písně (New Slovak Songs),* a thirty-piece cycle of Slovak folk melodies which Martinů collected in Slovakia during the summer of 1920, later adding piano accompaniments. These two song-worlds are thus two decades apart, during which time Martinů went through his stylistic transformation in France, leading to a very different compositional approach. Martina Janková sings the songs in her sparkling, delicate manner, with an infectuous joy and a clear aesthetic ideal of beauty, which is a path that shines in the lyrical songs; in the gentle girls' poetry. It is because of the *New Slovak Songs* that I will gladly put the album on in a few years, and not simply because there is no satisfactory recording of the complete cycle (in 2016, Naxos published a CD by Jana Hrochová to which I will certainly not return). These simple, uncomplicated melodies with a rich Romantic piano accompaniment are decorated by both singers with loose phrasing and a beautiful tone – in most cases, this provides for excellent listening experiences, but it also occasionally brings up questions. Like when *Ej, hora, hora (Hey, Mountain, Mountain)* – which is based on a traditional *halekačka* (a wordless folk call not unlike yodelling found in Moravia and Slovakia) – sounds like a Romantic duet, and instead of the calls, we hear a strait-laced *messa di voce.* Or when *Hore Váhom (Up the Váh River),* performed by Král and Kahánek, comes out not so much as a hot-blooded threat ("Whomever does not love the Slovaks will be killed by lightning"), but rather a friendly dance. The little gems with which you cannot resist a blissful smile and a feeling of frisson are the bittersweet *Ještě jednu sestru mám (I Have One More Sister)* and *Hanulienka, Hanulienka,* the flashy *Sedmdesiat sukien mala (She Got Seventy Skirts),* or the reproachful *Hore Hronom (Up the Hron River),* particularly in Janková's part. In Martinů's more famous miniatures from the 1940s, both vocalists opt for slower tempi in which a beautiful tone is more pleasantly developed, but the songs' characteristic rhythmic structures and irregular metres are thus somewhat diluted. Martina Janková works flexibly with time, giving every phrase a new energy – but this also transforms the nuances of every word. She often changes the space, colour, and character of her voice, and though listening to every note, there is no doubt she sings it with great care, if the listener desires a little more simple singing after all, they can do nothing but wait for another recording, or return to the Magdalena Kožená's 2000 recording for Deutsche Grammophon, unsurpassed in my opinion. I was not elated at the inclusion of Tomáš Král, who was not able to put aside his somewhat one-sided, noble vocal register: elegant, smooth, but after a longer listen, rather empty. Even so, this is certainly a disc that no Martinůphile (among whose ranks I happily count myself) should miss.

Michaela Vostřelová

Antonín Rejcha Musique de chambre

Soloists of the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth: Quatuor Girard (Hugues Girard, Agathe Girard – violins, Odon Girard – viola, Lucie Girard – cello); Trio Medici (Vera Lopatina – violin, Adrien Bellom – cello, Olga Kirpicheva – piano); Tanguy Parisot – viola; Josquin Otal, Victoria Vassilenko, Đorđe Radevski – piano; Han Bin Yoon, Kacper Novak, Justin Metral – violoncello.
Text: EN, GE, FR. Recorded: Feb., Apr. 2017, Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth, Waterloo. Published: 2017. TT: 63:51, 54:38, 58:08. DDD. 3 CD Alpha Classics/Outhere Music 369.

In his time, the Prague native and naturalised Parisian Antonín Rejcha/Antoine Reicha (1770–1836) was among the most celebrated of European composers. Despite Rejcha's unmistakeable importance, however, his compositional oeuvre was not given the attention it surely deserves



until recently. In the last few years, interest in his work has been rising significantly, as attested to by a generous Rejcha piano edition by the French publisher Symétrie or a recording of Rejcha's complete piano music on the Chandos label. One of the freshest testimonies to this renewed interest is a three-disc set with Rejcha's chamber music, published in September 2017 by the Parisian Alpha Classics label. Within this rich and varied selection, we can acquaint ourselves both with Rejcha's pieces for traditional instrumental ensembles (piano trio; string quartet) and with compositions for fairly unusual combinations (a string quintet with two violas; a cello trio). A separate disc is devoted to Rejcha's piano works. The selection of performers is surprising, and from a listener's perspective, very likeable: the recording features young musicians studying at the Belgian music academy, Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth. In the *String Quartet in E major, op. 95/1* and the *Quintet with two violas in F major, op. 92/1,* we hear the French **string quartet of siblings Hugues, Agathe, Odon, and Lucie Girard** (the F major quintet sees them joined by violist **Tanguy Parisot**). Both works – just like all of Rejcha's works selected for this project, for that matter – are immensely inventive and worked out compositionally down to the last detail. We can appreciate the premonitions of Romanticism in the first movement of the E major quartet, and the sweet rustic moments in the third movement. The F major quintet catches our attention with its nearly symphonic instrumental setting and dramatic passages we might expect from a Romantic programme work. The performers play both works excellently, with great understanding, perfect technique, plastically profiled dynamics and wonderful interplay. The gorgeously singing sound of the first violin deserves special attention. It is with the same acknowledgement that we speak of the **Trio Medici's** performance of the *Piano Trio in D minor, op. 101/2*. This work of Beethovenian conception might have a minor key in its title, but passages in major clearly predominate. In the final movement, the composer surprises the listener with an "experimentally constructed" principal theme. Three cellists came together the *Trio in E flat major for three cellos:* **Han Bin Yoon** from South Korea, **Kacper Novak** from Poland, and **Justin Metral** from France. They perform this virtuosic and demanding piece with fantastic flair, exciting not only in the fast outer movements, but also in the unexpectedly brilliant parts of the slow movement. The humorous minuet also goes by at a fast tempo, its main theme, switching between duple and triple metre, referring to the Czech folk dance known as "furiant". The piano CD offers five works performed by three pianists. In the opening three-movement *Sonata in E major*, we can clearly hear the influence of the masters of sonata form from Haydn through Clementi and Mozart to Beethoven. The following *Etude no. 29* from Rejcha's remarkable collection, *Études dans le genre fugué,* is in fact made up of two sections. First, we hear the prelude, whose arpeggiated chords waving above a calm bassline flow through harmonies so interesting and courageous it's hard to believe it was composed as early as 1815. And the distinctive fugue which follows this prelude only confirms that Rejcha was truly a master of the form. Both these pieces are performed here by **Josquin Otal.** His excellent technique is admirable, but in expression, Otal is relatively impersonal. I found **Victoria Vasilenko,** who performers the third piece on the disc, the *Sonata in F major,* far more captivating. She performs the first variation movement (on a theme from Mozart's *Magic Flute*) with unusual colouring; the trio from the minuet second movement also sounds charming. The final movement seems to breathe with peace and a good disposition. Of the three pianists on the disc, however, I was finally most impressed by **Đorđe Radevski**, who performs the last two pieces. This selection of eight of Rejcha's fourteen *Variations on a Theme* by Gluck, which are in themselves more of a salon piece, are performed irresistibly by Radevski, and the closing *Fugue. no. 8 "Cercle harmonique"* from the *Twelve Fugues for Piano* (later included in the famous collection of *36 Fugues for Piano*) is performed with such lightness and transparency that listening, it would occur to no one what a sophisticated and harmonically complex composition this is (the theme of the fugue passes through all twelve keys within the piece!). It is worth mentioning the image on the CD cover, called *Open Doors*. It is the work of Danish artist **Vilhelm Hammershöi** (1864–1916), whose paintings often refer to Vermeer, but are also very close to Jakub Schikaneder's nostalgic interiors. The motif of the open door, leading to new and unknown spaces, is clearly symbolic in the case of Rejcha.

Věroslav Němec

František Chaloupka
The Book of Sands

Dunami Ensemble, VENI Academy Ensemble, Kytarový Institut Guitar Ensemble, Glyptos, Amadrums, ensemble of the Duchcov Flute Courses students.
Recorded: 2011–2017. Published: 2019.
TT: 105:43. DDD, digital download.
K.I. Records, www.kytarovyinstitut.cz.

On his new digital album, composer František Chaloupka presents the interpretive possibilities of his piece *The Book of Sands* through a collection of diverse renditions by five different ensembles. "There was a small illustration, like the kind used in dictionaries – an anchor drawn with pen and ink, as if by a schoolboy's clumsy hand. It was at this point that the stranger said, 'Look at the illustration closely. You'll never see it again.'" It is this quote from Jorge Luis Borges' short story *The Book of Sands* that

opens František Chaloupka's extensive description of his eponymous composition. This is a considerably open work, which can give rise to something different with each performance, something we'll never hear in quite the same form again. The notation combines traditional means with graphic forms and verbal instructions, it can be performed by any group of instruments, and although it assumes the presence of a conductor, their function as a coordinator and navigator can be taken over by one of the performers. Aleatoricity, i.e. the indeterminacy of music, is present in several layers, and if you like, you can read the composer's extensive explanation on his website. *The Book of Sands* was written in 2011 and one version is included on František Chaloupka's 2-CD profile, published in 2016. Now, in digital form, he is putting out ten performances ranging from 2011 to 2017, thanks to which we can assess what remains in the work despite its openness and what the limits of variability are. Of these ten versions, four are performed by the Slovak **VENI Academy** in various instrumental combinations. Two versions are by Chaloupka's **Dunami Ensemble**, for which the piece was originally composed, and another two by **the guitar ensemble of the Guitar Institute**, a musical education institution which the composer established and directs in Brno. The collection is completed by the Polish ensembles **Glyptos** and **Amadrums**, and in addition to the guitar ensemble, another "monochrome" recording by **students at the Duchcov flute courses** led by **Lenka Kozderková**. All the recordings are connected by an atmosphere of calm and a certain meditativeness. The use of ostinati on a single tone contributes to this: one instrument or group forms the core, with the others breaking away to a lesser or greater extent. Feelings of chaos and unpredictability for which aleatoric compositional techniques were traditionally used are absent here. Rather, there is a feeling that even though the lines diverge in various directions, they always melt back into each other. We can find differences in how the ensembles work with shadings of tones and dynamics. In this respect, the most interesting versions are those of Glyptos and Amadrums Ensemble, whose five-minute interpretation is the wildest and most dissonant, and VENI Academy in their studio version, where they take the opposite approach, working very subtly and deliberately with soft shadings and silence. The guitar versions are pleasant in their sonic homogeneity, though one would probably have been enough. The final flute rendition is closest to Brian Eno-style ambient, aided by the presence of incidental noises, including phone signal interference. The remaining versions are not markedly different from one another. For performers, *The Book of Sands* presents a pleasant combination of interpretive freedom and fairly straightforward and catchy pre-composed material. The ten versions gathered here show that a greater variability in approach helps make this work more attractive to listeners. If the work has the good fortune to find performers further from home, this crossroads might lead to further surprising and original paths.

Matěj Kratochvíl

Viktor Kalabis
Sonatas for cello, clarinet, violin, and piano

Tomáš Jamník – cello, Anna Paulová – clarinet, Jan Fišer – violin, Ivo Kahánek – piano.
Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded: 2016, 2017, Martinů Hall, Prague.
Published: 2018. TT: 65:51.
1 CD Supraphon SU 4210-2.

This trio of sonatas by Viktor Kalabis might provide a model for discussions as to whether absolute music has any "content" and can speak through more than its tone structure. The music of all three pieces is defiant, sometimes coarse, there are conflicts, the two instruments struggle. All three sonatas are rather compositions for piano and melodic instrument – the piano (at least in these interpretations and particularly in the *Sonata for cello*) has a strong sonic prevalence. A common feature of the three pieces is their Classical three-movement structure with a slow middle movement. They also correspond in the dimensions of the individual movements within the overall structure, always with an emphasis on the final, longest movement. The third movement of the cello sonata could even function as a separate composition – not only for its length, but also given its formal and stylistic variety, its richness in rhythm and contrast. These are not works to listen to at a pleasant get-together: this nervous music teases, provokes, sometimes irritates. The explanation is simple. The cello sonata was written in 1968, the clarinet sonata a year later. And not even 1982, the year the violin sonata was composed, was marked by the fulfilment of the promised beautiful tomorrows – quite the opposite. Compared to the others, this latest piece is more concentrated. The composer provides the solo instrument with more opportunities to sing, the piece contains fewer stark contrasts than the preceding sonatas, there is a balance, perhaps even some resignation. It is a work of equilibrium and maturity. All three pieces provide a difficult task for the performers, one they took on in full measure of their talents and with humility towards the composer.

Vlasta Reittererová

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