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Pavel Šnajdr

The Jistebnice Hymn Book

Adrián Demoč

Gideon Klein

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DEAR READERS,

I greet you now at the beginning of a period which will likely be transformative for many areas of our live. Of course, most of the endeavours discussed in this issue reflect musical life “pre-COVID-19” and many of the plans in question (like the performances in Prague which conductor Pavel Šnajdr mentions in our interview with him) have already been or will likely be cancelled. Perhaps we can find some inspiration in the words of composer Adrián Demoč, whose music ceased receiving performances for some time after he relocated to Spain: he kept writing music in order to continue discovering something in it for himself. Perhaps it is now time we all tried.

I hope you are able to use this time for some reflection and quiet listening at home. Hopefully this issue of Czech Music Quarterly will prove inspirational in this respect, whether you wish to turn to history (through Dita Hradecká’s article on a long-awaited modern edition of the Jistebnice Hymn Book), to history brought to life (in David Fligg’s article on a festival celebrating the work of Gideon Klein), or to the music of the feature (in a summary of and interview about the Musica Nova electronic music composition).

Wishing you many enriching solitary musical experiences,

Ian Mikyska, Deputy Editor-in-chief

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Czech Music Quarterly is issued by the Czech Music Information Centre with support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the Czech Music Fund.

Editors: Petr Bakla, Ian Mikyska
Producer: Monika Havlová
Translation: Ian Mikyska
Graphic design: Dita Jiříčková
DTP: HD EDIT. Print: Nová tiskárna Pelhřimov



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
CZECH REPUBLIC



ISSN 1211-0264 (Print), ISSN 1804-0586 (Online)
MK ČR E 7099

Price and subscription (shipping included):
Czech Republic: one issue CZK 80
subscription (4 issues) CZK 320
Europe: one issue € 10, subscription (4 issues) € 40
Overseas countries: one issue \$ 12.50, subscription (4 issues) \$ 50, or respective equivalents.
Electronic subscription: \$ 18 (see www.czechmusicquarterly.com)

cover: Gideon Klein with string quartet, 1941
(Karel Fröhlich, Lonja Weinbaum, Heini Taussig, and Freddy Mark)

PAVEL ŠNAJDR: AS PERFORMERS, WE ARE RATHER LIKE MESSENGERS OR COURIERS

Beginning in 2011, the Czech contemporary music scene has been enriched by the presence of the Brno Contemporary Orchestra, which has applied itself to a systematic mapping of the composed music of today – and a little older too: the BCO's broad dramaturgy also includes classics of the 20th century such as Arnold Schönberg and Edgar Varèse. The orchestra also commissions new pieces.

Their concert series are defined by a highly considered dramaturgy which includes links to extra-musical elements and a thoughtful selection of concert locations. One of last year's concerts, for instance, took place in the Brno crematorium, a First-Republic building designed by the architect Arnošt Wiesner.

The name of Pavel Šnajdr is inseparably linked to the Brno Contemporary Orchestra, and it is with him that the BCO will perform at the Prague Spring on the 20th of May, presenting the music of Olga Neuwirth, Pascal Dusapin, Erki-Sven Tüür, and Jan Ryant Dřízal. On the 17th of March, Pavel Šnajdr will conduct a concert of the PKF – Prague Philharmonia as part of its Beauty of Today cycle, featuring the works of Agata Zubel, Miroslav Tóth, and Balázs Horváth.

In addition to conducting, you also studied composition, and some of your compositions also received public performances. Now, you are mostly active as a conductor. What brought you to this decision?

Right after graduating from JAMU (the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno), I was hired by the opera in Plzeň, which at the time was led by



PHOTO: MAREK OLBRYNIEK

the composer and conductor Petr Kofroň. I had the good fortune to be immediately involved in the creation of a new repertoire and I was part of practically all the new productions, so there wasn't much time left over. It was a new experience for me and one which I enjoyed immensely.

It's also true that by the end of my studies, I began feeling that I should find my own path as a composer and that I wasn't really succeeding – everything that “fell out of me” had already been done and it seemed useless to me to flood the world with further musical “waste”.

For some time afterwards, I still attempted to make my own music, but I ended up scrapping it all – it seemed insufficiently original, communicative, and valuable. However, it's also true that over time, I perused a number of scores that made me think that in *this* competition, my scrapped attempts would, in fact, have stood up to the test. Everything needs training and as soon as you fall off the wagon, it's hard to get back on. I have no regrets so far, though.

Does your experience as a composer influence your work as a conductor?

I think it does. I always try to imagine what the author intended when they wrote something down the way they did. I try to imagine myself in their position, I try to discover how the work is constructed, and I don't just mean the form, but also the language – discovering the pitch system, the approach to proportion, the instrumentation, and so on. In short, to look “into the composer's kitchen”, “under the pot-lid”.

This brings variable results, of course – you can't actually look inside someone's mind, and my task is not to present a musicological analysis of the work, but rather to interpret it, i.e. to mediate *its* “mission” to the listeners. And let me emphasise – its mission, not some subjective feeling of what I think this mission should be. That's a huge interpretive error. We shouldn't smuggle our own “creative” attempts into the interpretation – I believe our primary objective is to try and be as objective as possible in serving to transmit the author's information towards the audience. As performers, we are rather like messengers or couriers.

The BCO's repertoire presents a broad spectrum of approaches in terms of both compositional technique and aesthetic positions. The music of Kaija Saariaho, Mauricio Kagel, or Steve Reich demands completely different approaches from its performers – and therefore conductors too. When you are starting a new work, how difficult is it to clarify what it is that you, as the courier, should focus on?

You've really hit the nail on the head. This is a question I ask myself more and more often. And more and more often, I don't know whether I've answered it correctly. With composers like Steve Reich, a kind of interpretive mode or tradition exists, confirmed by the author's presence at a number of performances. But there are many other composers whose paths the performer has to walk alone. And it is here where I often search for something to hold onto. I rely on my “compositional intuition”; on analysis. It's often a true puzzle, like a secret code. And sometimes I find the key in a moment of enlightenment – I slap my hand on my forehead and say “...right, of course, how could I have missed that.”

At that point, you know you are on the right path – everything begins falling into place. And sometimes, it happens that I'm not really that sure, so I try a few different perspectives. Sometimes it is a feeling, a premonition, which leads the way – and this is where the dangerous “creative temptation” comes into play. But really, I realise now that this is one of the reasons that makes this work so enjoyable for us.

If I didn't miss anything while checking the archives, you are the only one to conduct the BCO. Is the relationship between the musicians and their conductor so strong that the orchestra couldn't work with anyone else?

Your interpretation is highly suggestive, but unfortunately, the truth is much more down to earth. Of course, myself and dramaturg Viktor Pantůček plan out the programmes in so much detail that I don't feel like giving any of it away, but I also realised – and I have for some time – that it would be more than healthy to let

my musician colleagues have a different experience with a different conductor. This could bring a new energy, a new approach – in short: change. However, the reality is that guest artists cost a lot more money than we have available, and what's more, there aren't many opportunities for conductors in our little country – no one is going to give you an opportunity. You have to go make one for yourself.

On the other hand, you also conduct other ensembles, such as the PKF – Prague Philharmonia. To what extent do you have to apply a different approach compared to your “home ensemble”?

It's true that with the BCO, we've gotten used to each other, and this can have both positive and negative effects. Generally, however, I'm always a little nervous about trying something new. Not because of myself – quite the contrary, I am always trying to cultivate my response to nerves – but because of the players. And I don't mean something new as in a new piece. It's more about an approach to rehearsing. Musicians, you see, are quite a conservative group – and I don't mean this negatively in the least; thanks to this, they can operate with a high degree of professionalism. But sometimes, it's hard to convince them to see things from a different angle, to try and realise the extent of certain elements...

You mentioned the upcoming PKF concert. The programme includes Agata Zubel, whose piece is full of quarter-tones. The composer defines these very clearly – they are not some random harmonic colour, but a systematic, rational, modally-serial approach. It will be necessary to try and tune the quarter-tones as precisely as possible, and also to find our way around the chordal structure in order to be able to communicate it. With this piece, it's necessary that every player understands the structure, otherwise I think it's impossible to give a responsible rendering of the piece. But given our collaborations over the last couple of years, I don't think this will be a problem with PKF.

How stable is the musicians' line up at the Brno Contemporary Orchestra?

This is a question I've been trying to answer since we first started. I resolved to try and create as stable an ensemble as possible. Of course, it happens that someone leaves and someone else joins us. I don't force anyone to do anything. Since the beginning, the way we've approached HR has been “Let's play together and see who likes it”. I didn't kick anyone out, nor did I hinder anyone from leaving. “Firm hand” techniques certainly bring results, but I believe everyone works better when they want to than when they have to. So over time, we arrived at a more-or-less stable line-up, which of course varies enterprise to enterprise (I don't like the word “project”). The repertoire we perform sometimes demands unusual instrumental combinations and extensions, so we take on other players as needed. But here too, we try and approach those who are willing to play this music and who have worked with us before.

At the beginning of the millennium, you were a member of the Ars Incognita ensemble and the composer's collective Bezmocná hrstka (Powerless Handful; a play on words

relating to the group of 19th-century Russian composers known as the Mighty Handful or The Five). Do you think the situation of contemporary music has changed considerably?

I don't know. Sometimes I feel like so much has changed, but perhaps this is more to do with my own view of the world changing. On the one hand, I feel like we have an incredible quantity of possibilities, but on the other hand – and perhaps as a defence against getting lost – we become more and more closed off. And I'd say the position of contemporary music, which harbours the ambition to be taken seriously and perceived authentically (on the part of composers and performers as well as the audience) is similar to any other art with the same ambition. Unfortunately, I feel like the taste of the population is undergoing a rapid decline, which, of course, impacts the position of art which has serious intentions and doesn't simply seek to work as entertainment, instead offering impulses of a more profound nature. But I also think the possibilities I mentioned have led to a situation in which the contemporary culture on offer is relatively broad – certainly richer and more diverse than it was at the beginning of the millennium.

BCO commissions pieces by contemporary Czech composers. How difficult is it to arrange a commission like that? And to what extent do composers have to restrict themselves in terms of duration or instrumentation?

Allow me a minor correction: we don't exclusively commission Czech composers. As I said above, I don't like forcing people into something. So in this respect, "our" composers have excellent conditions. We usually give them a theme, an idea, a dramaturgical direction, an outline of the instrumentation, and an outline of the duration. This has never posed a problem.

Another issue is that given the funding system (and thank God we have it!), we are not able to commission pieces more than a year or a year and a half in advance, which is woefully little. The commissioning fee is another issue. So far, we've been lucky to work with generous composers, but I am always embarrassed when I have to offer a fee which just beyond our borders wouldn't even be enough to pay a copyist. When you think about how much time the composer has to spend poring over the score, and when you consider that this should be their principal source of income, then we can discuss the adequate sums, which correspond to at least an average income of, say, six months of expert full-time work. The fees we can offer, however, are only a fraction of this.

Do you search for new names among the younger generations?

That's not how we think. Of course, we work with people close to our own generation, but we have no problem reaching for anyone who fits our dramaturgical intentions. We even played pieces which are now absolutely part of the classical canon (such as Arnold Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony*) – and even absolute classics, like Beethoven's Fifth, which we coupled with fresh new pieces.

The production of contemporary classical music seems to be under constant pressure to present new premieres, so pieces rarely get a repeat performance, in stark contrast to the "old" classical music, which is repeated too much. Do you sometimes bring pieces back from the repertory, perhaps in new dramaturgical contexts?



That is the great difficulty of our endeavour. Yes, we always expend an enormous amount of work and energy on a single performance. If someone approaches us for a guest performance, we always try to make use of pieces we have already performed – and it's not because we want to make our lives easier. Quite the opposite: with repeat performances, we find new layers and new meanings, which I think benefits the entire production. But even in our subscribers' concerts, we go back to older pieces here and there, because – as you've mentioned – when the piece is suddenly placed within a new dramaturgical context, it can come off completely changed. And perhaps some of the listeners will remember they've heard it already and this will also provide a new experience.

The concerts in your current season often link music to other elements – architecture, circus, theatre. Will next year's season be just as extra-musical?

It's not just about this season. I am very lucky to count among my collaborators the Brno-based musicologist Viktor Pantůček, who acts as dramaturg for the BCO and who has a considerable scope of interest. He brings in everything we play and places it into such fascinating contexts and connections that this sequence creates a larger logical composition. And all this often happens in conjunction with other art forms, including architecture, literature, dance, or circus.

I remember one exceptional concert at Káznice (*The Prison; a former prison in Brno's Cejl district – editor's note*), where we performed mostly pieces by Fausto Romitelli alternating with poems by Jan Zahradníček from his collection *Dům strach* (*House of Fear – a collection written in a 1950s Communist prison while Zahradníček was jailed for his Catholic beliefs; it was only published in exile in 1981 – editor's note*). This was a “killer” combination, particularly when you imagine the prison chapel, devastated by the Communists, where Zahradníček himself spent some time as a prisoner – he refers to specific elements of this location in some of his texts.

Whenever we bring more art forms together, it is always a completely equal connection – every element can exist independently and has its own absolute communicative value. So it is not about the individual components mutually supporting each other, but rather about a composition of new meanings and contexts somewhere inside, in the soul of each “perceiver”, not in a pompous manner but rather privately, intimately. So yes, these attempts at extra-musical connections are a permanent fixture and we will continue implementing this dramaturgical position in the upcoming season.

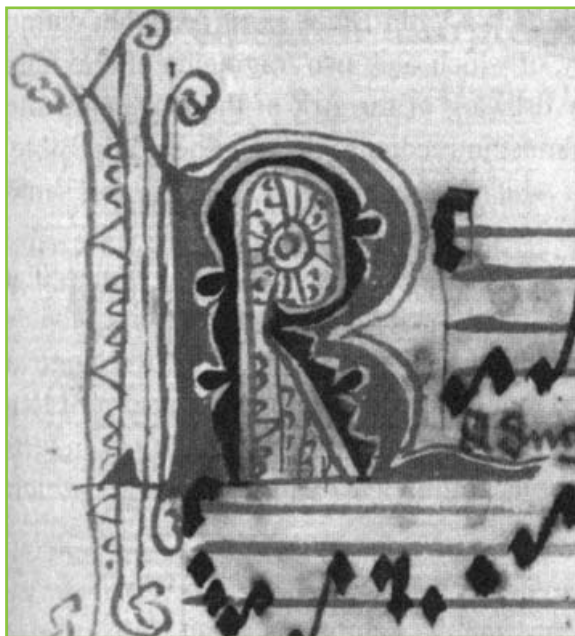
At the Prague Spring Festival, you will present a programme of pieces by Olga Neuwirth, Pascal Dusapin, Erki-Sven Tüür and Jan Ryant Držal. Can a link be found between these pieces?

I hope that it follows from what I've said already that it is not our aim to find little links, crutches, or semantic shortcuts. These are all pieces created independently of each other. The composers belong to different generations. We're happy we managed to agree on what I consider an interesting and representative programme within which we can introduce our dear collaborator and guest, Milan Pala, whom I would not hesitate to call a phenomenal violinist, even though not many people know him yet. He will perform Pascal Dusapin's *Quad* – he met the composer personally several times, so I am sure it will be an exceptional experience.

Pavel Šnajdr studied composition and conducting at JAMU under Alois Piňos and Emil Skoták. As a member of the *Bezmocná hrstka* (Powerless Handful) composer's collective, he succeeded in the Generace composer's competition on two occasions. He premiered over forty new pieces with the Brno-based *Ars Incognita* ensemble. He has collaborated with a number of Czech symphony orchestras and theatres, including the philharmonics in Brno, Hradec Králové, and Teplice, as well as the PKF – Prague Philharmonia, the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra (SOČR), the National Theatre and State Opera in Prague, the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň, or the Moravian Theatre in Olomouc. He was a conductor at the National Theatre in Brno between 2004 and 2007 and has recently returned there as a conductor at the Janáček Opera.

The Jistebnice Hymn Book: A Book With A Mysterious Story

A critical edition of the second part of the most important Czech relic of the late Middle Ages is currently in print. Now, thanks to transcriptions into modern notation, anyone can sing the songs of the hymnal, which includes the “greatest Hussite hits” – and in English translation too. We had to wait fifteen years since the publication of part one, but this second volume is a good opportunity to assess what we know about this valuable resource.



The discovery of the hymn book in 1872 is shrouded in mystery. The book was found in the rectory of the church in Jistebnice, South Bohemia, by a student of the gymnasium in Tábor, Leopold Katz. Searching for material on the history of the city of Jistebnice, he first discovered some old documents and a Latin Gradual (*a medieval book collecting all the musical items of the mass – editor's note*), which he donated to the library of the Tábor gymnasium.

A year later, he made an even more important discovery, but the two accounts he later gives of this finding differ considerably from one another. In the words of the main editor of this modern edition, musicologist Hana Vlhová Wörner: “His first version claimed he found it tossed away in a corner. He later claimed the book, encased in a wooden folder, was hidden in the secret drawer of a wardrobe.

Each of these situations presents a different context: if the volume were simply discarded, it would mean no one had taken any notice of it. And if it was hidden in a drawer, then someone devoted a lot of care to it, perhaps for several generations. This has the undertones of a conspiracy. In any case, the traces of the use of this hymn book dry out around the year 1500. What happened between 1500 and 1872 is a mystery.”

Several of the people Katz informed about his discovery recognised it as a remarkable manuscript. This discovery piqued the interest of nationalist historian František Palacký, who acquired it for the National Museum, an institution established in 1818. This is where the precious relic is still kept to this day, though it is now inside an air-conditioned box. A common mortal cannot be allowed to leaf through it – it is written on paper, which is much less durable than parchment. However, the Jistebnice Hymn Book is available to both researchers and the public in its online form.

The circumstances of its discovery remind us of another event – the “discovery” of the Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora in the first decades of the 19th century, documents which purported to be Slav epics written in Old Czech. These were soon shown to be fakes (final confirmation is usually dated to 1886 and a series of articles in the *Athenaeum* magazine, run by the future first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk).

Even so, linguist Petr Nejedlý claims there were no doubts as to the authenticity of the hymn book. “There was no reason for serious uncertainty. A number of relics of the Czech Middle Ages were found in a similar manner. Unlike the Manuscripts, the Jistebnice Hymn Book does not contain any suspicious elements. I cannot imagine why someone would falsify a book and date it with the year 1420, when even back then, much older manuscripts had already been discovered.”

A World-Class Rarity

“The Jistebnice Hymn Book is what we call a *codex mixtus*,” explains philosopher and musicologist Jan Frej, who is part of the hymnal’s editorial team. “It contains both musical and verbal sources, liturgical texts, and a collection of sixty ecclesiastical songs in Czech.” It is this last element, says Frej, which makes this manuscript so unique: “It is the oldest and most extensive collection of songs in a national language from anywhere in the world. We only see these kinds of collection decades later in other parts of the world.”

It is dated to the period of the Hussite wars and it was almost certainly written in Prague, probably in the vicinity of the Emmaus Monastery. The scribes were educated people, which

means they were either from the university or the monastery. The manuscript does not survive in its entirety – a part is missing at the beginning and the end – but it is still extensive, clocking in at over six hundred pages. It contains songs from the breviary, a collection of prayers, texts for the preacher to read... It seems unfinished – there are empty pages towards the end, which were used as a writing surface until the beginning of the 16th century.

The liturgical songs, which are the subject of this new critical edition, are carefully arranged. Jan Frej explains: the volume opens with settings of the essential texts of Christian ethics and theology: the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments. These are followed by songs about Communion under both kinds and verses written as a direct reaction to events taking place at the time. The manuscript contains a number of older songs, written in the 14th century. “It is interesting that these remained in the repertoire for longer than the then-new ones,” says Hana Vlhová Wörner.

War – Yes, But a Spiritual War

When we say “Hussite song”, many people think of striking military songs. “There are a few of these combative songs, but within the medieval context, you have to understand struggle as *spiritual* struggle,” notes Petr Nejedlý. “Most of the songs are prayers, thanks, laudations... songs which are meant to strengthen one’s faith. And the musical character corresponds to these aims. There are few two-part songs – most are monophonic,” says Jan Frej of the character of the music. “In a sense, all the melodies are of high aesthetic quality, even the simplest ditties are wonderfully arched melodies. We cannot forget these are liturgical songs which were to be easy enough for the common man to sing along to. But even here, we find complex rhythmic patterns.”

An interesting case is the song *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* (*Ye Who Are Warriors of God*), an iconic Hussite hymn, one of the most famous songs in Czech history, and perhaps the most oft-cited melody in Czech music beginning with modernity – among the many examples is Bedřich Smetana’s *My Country*. “The song survived in the general unconscious, but it remains unclear whether and how it was sung. In the Jistebnice Hymn

Book version, every verse has two parts, the first of which is highly rhythmically complex. Even a trained singer will struggle with sight-reading. The second part is rhythmically simple, but still relatively intricate melodically,” continues Frej. “There is a theory that the first part was sung by a smaller group of trained singers and the second by everyone.” *Ye Who Are Warriors of God* found its way into other hymn books and is quoted in 19th-century pieces written before the discovery of the manuscript – always in its simplified form.

“It would be good if we could change the ideological view the public currently has of the hymn book,” says Petr Nejedlý. “This isn’t so much the fault of Zdeněk Nejedlý (*musicologist, critic and politician, the first minister of education and culture after the Communist take-over, responsible for much of the repressive cultural policies of the 1950s – editor’s note*), but rather his poorly educated henchmen. The hymn book isn’t some collection of revolutionary songs of the medieval anti-feudally-minded working man. It is a compilation of spiritual songs in which people expressed and thus strengthened their faith, a faith that was the subject of heated debate in the Czech lands at the time.”

Publication Attempts

However careful the four or five central scribes were when writing the manuscript in the 1420s – and it seems like they were in a considerable hurry – it is still difficult for a layman to make out the words and the music. However, we now have at our disposal a critical edition of the first two volumes of the Hymn Book, which is over six hundred pages long. The complete edition will have four volumes, with the first two (the Gradual and the Hymn Book; already in print) covering about a hundred pages: the remaining two books will be the Antiphonary/Breviary and a fourth volume of supplements and appendices.

“The idea of preparing a modern edition of the hymn book is very old – I remember that in the 1980s, when I was studying musicology, publishing it was considered a duty toward the state,” says Hana Vlhová Wörner of her first encounters with this source. “I helped transcribe texts from a stack of glossy photographs. At the time, Jaroslav Kolár transcribed and revised the entire hymn book. Unfortunately, he did not live to see it published. There were also plans for an edition in the 1990s; several seminar



The presbytery in Jištebnice around 1920

and diploma essays were written with this aim in mind.”

František Mužík had plans to publish the Jistebnice Hymn Book in the 1960s. Before him, it was František Helfert in the 1940s; one of the establishing figures of Czech musicology. Unfortunately, Helfert’s death following imprisonment in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) internment camp cut his plans short, and we are left only with the transcriptions he made in prison.

From the inception of this project, it was clear that it presents an undertaking which calls for an interdisciplinary approach. The key parts are played by musicology, linguistics, history, and



theology. The reason this new edition took so long were the deaths of Jaroslav Kolár, Jaromír Černý, and Anežka Vidmanová. “You cannot simply replace an expert of that calibre. This work demands a high degree of specialisation and immense experience. We were very lucky to acquire Petr Nejedlý and Jan Frej,” says musicologist Hana Wörner Vlhová.

Both editors, who also penned the introductory studies, remember the highly intensive work with pleasure. “What was very beautiful was that when writing the studies and preparing the volume, we were constantly enriching each other. We each

signed our own work, but everyone provided some input – a wonderful collaboration,” summarises Petr Nejedlý.

Translator Gerry Turner also put in heroic work – the language often contains neologisms. “The richness of linguistic means forms a chapter unto itself. It is the result of creativity, of a search for a precise and fresh expression,” clarifies Nejedlý.

A Mountain of Work Up Ahead

On the occasion of the ceremonial presentation of the critical edition, its main editor Wörner Vlhová recapitulated the progress of the work.

“We considered the publication of the first volume in 2005 a great success, and when we finally presented it fifteen years ago, I made a euphoric promise that we would publish the other volumes soon. The promise, however, was made in my absence, as I wrote it with my mind on the Czech lands but with my body in California, where I was staying with my family at the time. A short while after that, I got a visit from the other general editor of the project, David Holton, who brought along a dark green folder containing the materials which would become the foundation of the new publication.

It was also then that we decided to publish the songs along with their English translations – we didn’t know what a demanding task we had taken upon our shoulders and that this decision would delay publication by several years.

And so we opened this folder again and again in hotel lobbies in Georgia or San Francisco, while in Prague, a demanding and intensive collaboration between Jaroslav Kolár and the principal translator into English, Gerry Turner, had already begun. It was in these distant lands that I received the sad news of Jaromír Černý’s death in 2012 (he was working on transcriptions of the polyphonic songs in the manuscript), and Jaroslav Kolár’s passing only a year later. These events would usually mark the end of a project. And yet, me and David chose to persevere with this marathon of preparations. The plan was to enter the final stretch after my return to the Czech Republic in 2017, thankfully joined by the Czech studies expert Petr Nejedlý. Due to serious health problems, David Holton also had to sit out



the final phase of the preparations, which in the end stretched out to two years.

We managed to get there in the end. In addition to support from the Ministry of Culture, we were also supported by the EXPRO project, which focuses on research on the music and musical culture of the 15th century. I consider it a great constellation of the stars that we could work with Petr Nejedlý and Jan Frej. The idea that all that needed to be done at the end was to put the transcriptions of texts and melodies together – like closing a zipper – is rather simplified. In reality,



with every song, we searched for the most likely combinations of the imprecise musical notation and the inconsistently recorded sonic form of Old Czech.

Our proofreading process included two sing-throughs of the entire hymn book. We met in library cafés, in the seminar room of the Institute of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University (where we were allowed to sing), and finally in the attractive attic spaces of the Jan Patočka Archive in Husova Street. And for whatever we did not manage to resolve in person, we had the nine hundred emails we exchanged over the last few months (I didn't even try to count the text messages).

The only photograph from our meetings was taken in the Jan Patočka Archive: it captures three colleagues deep in discussion over some last detail or other. The image radiates a calm but intense atmosphere. Unlike other similar situations, this was not about asserting some personal opinion, but about searching for the best possible result. For me, the photograph serves as a reminder that the work we describe as “academic” isn't only measured by results but also by the path that leads us to them.

And we still have the green folder containing transcriptions of further songs from the Jistebnice Hymn Book. The project isn't finished just yet – we still have another three volumes in front of us, including the three-book Antiphonary. And we also need to find a way to continue funding our work...”

MUSICA NOVA 2019

The 28th edition of the international sonic art competition Musica Nova 2019, which traditionally takes place in Prague, involved the participation of seventy-one composers from twenty-three countries. There were two categories: studio work and live electronics.

The winner of the former was Alex Buck (*1980), a native of Brazil currently residing in the United States, with his ecologically motivated *Screaming Trees*. Honorary mentions were awarded to the Canadian Gilles Gobeil (*1954) and his piece, written to commemorate the anniversary of Debussy's *Dans l'air du soir*, and British composer Louise Rossiter (*1986), whose composition was inspired by Fritz Kahn's *Neurons* (Kahn was a German physician who wrote popular science books and pioneered the field of the infographic). The rest of the finalists included well-known composers João Pedro Oliveira from Portugal and Adam Stanović from the United Kingdom.

In the live electronics categories, João Pedro Oliveira (*1959) took first place with his *Dark Energy* for cello and electronics. Honorary mentions went to British composer John Young (*1962) for his piece *Spirit*, scored for instrumental ensemble and electronics, and Julian Maple de Oliveira (*1993) from Brasil with his *Sextet "Dos Beija-flores"*. In the traditional Czech component, the first place in the studio category was occupied by Petra Šuško (*1976) and her composition inspired by Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, whereas the live electronics section was topped by Tomáš Reindl (*1971) and his *Frozen Tabla* for tabla and electronics. Tomáš Pernický also made it to the final round.

Since 2014, Musica Nova has also been accompanied by a project aimed at the youngest generations (aged nine to twenty): České ucho (Czech Ear; see CMQ 2016/2). This year's edition included eleven composers. The first place in the under-14 category was occupied by nine-year-old Denis Zeman and his *Obr a mnně (The Giant and the Tiny Tot)*, second place went to twelve-year-old Svata Timoščuk and his miniature *Film Hero*. In the 14–20 category, the winner was seventeen-year-old Tomáš Metlička with *Portal to Another Dimension*. Further prizes were awarded to sixteen-year-old Jakub Burian (Mayton) and eight-year-old Marek Suchan.

The laureate concert for both competitions was held on the 10th of December 2019 at the Inspirace Theatre, attached to the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (HAMU). The reprise took

place at the Edinburgh College of Arts on the 20th of February 2020. This reprise, which was accompanied by the presentation of the winning pieces of the Prix Russolo, also included a debate on the perspective of the field and format. Representing the Czech contingent were Tomáš Reindl (one of the laureates) and Lenka Dohnalová (competition manager and jury member). The Musica Nova pieces can be streamed at the following link: musicanova.seah.cz/cds/MusicaNova2019/index.htm Likewise, the Czech Ear pieces can be streamed here: musicanova.seah.cz/cds/MusicaNova2019/ceske_ucho.htm

Below are a few questions competition manager and jury member Lenka Dohnalová asked Juraj Ďuriš (this year's President of the Jury) and the winners of the Czech round, Petra Šuško and Tomáš Reindl.

Where do you see the potential of electro-acoustic (sound) work? Or is it already past its prime, as some have suggested?

Juraj Ďuriš: Contemporary sound technologies offer infinite possibilities for the transformation of sound.

This aids us in creating any sonic architecture we want for the sonic objects which form the basic elements of the work. Historically, electro-acoustic music has its roots in the academic tradition – this was mostly down to the prohibitive pricing of the equipment, as well as its scarcity. The students and practitioners are generally graduates of musical fields, and this is where the problem arises – the problem of an enclosed, highly specialised community. Lecturers often teach composition without the necessary courage to open new paths. They create only a few “compositional” patterns with which we then describe this genre. Even the term “electro-acoustic music” merits a reevaluation. We encounter music which gradually defines itself and diversifies. We search for new contexts to this art form, which gradually increases in impact; we open new spaces for research and teaching in terms of the expressive potential of new sonic technologies.

Petra Šuško: I don't think electro-acoustic music as such is past its prime – quite the opposite: I expect interest in this field to increase. Not as an individual category but rather in connection with other interactive elements (particularly the visual). I also see further potential in relation to spatialisation and virtual reality.



Petra Šuško

Tomáš Reindl

Tomáš Reindl: I think it's contemporary music *par excellence*. It reflects the current possibilities of the technology available to us, including the creation of sonic structures on the borders of acoustic and electronic sound. I like it when this border is blurred – I must admit I'm interested in work on the edges of classical and club music, so really, it is genre-defined borders that I consider "past their prime".

How do you use these means – and why?

JD: New digital technologies allow us easy access to memories – we can bring them up quickly for processing and transformation. Digital technologies are a good servant but a terrible master. This is why I like to return to "old sounds" – but process them with the aid of these technologies.

PŠ: I mostly record my own sounds (this is also the most enjoyable method). I often work intuitively. I try out individual possibilities for processes and effects on the basis of a specific mental image, and I continue until I am satisfied. I think a clear idea of the sonic space is important. It helps us avoid getting carried away by the sound itself and becoming a servant to the continually improving functions of the editing programme.

TR: Personally, I was gripped by the possibilities of this music during my time studying composition at HAMU, and I was only taken in gradually. I came from the position of a multi-instrumentalist who makes use of his voice, looping it and processing it live. I have gradually improved this system, moving towards greater creativity. I am drawn to sound design. And I am most fascinated by the possibility of transforming the sounds of various traditional instruments and shifting them to new fields.

What kind of work; what composers are an inspiration to you? Is there someone whose work you enjoy even though you work differently?

JD: I don't have a model – I enjoy any good music. Two components dominate my conception of composing: space and narrative.

PŠ: I'm very interested in live electronics and the possibilities for interaction with musicians. Even though I'd say I'm quite competent technically, I'd like to have the opportunity in the future to work with an audio designer who can realise my ideas technically.

TR: Among my favourites are the Mexican artist Murcof or Alexander Tremblay from Canada. And always Björk. In our lands, I admire Stanislav Abrahám's excellent soundscapes or Ondřej Anděra's Neurobeat project. I was very taken by Alex Buck's *Screaming Trees*, winner of Musica Nova 2019.

What are the conditions for this type of music in the Czech Republic?

JD: It's a minority genre. It's necessary to educate the public. It's great that we have a new stage available – the internet. It will be decisive for us.

PŠ: I think it's getting better. Michal Rataj is doing excellent work – he built up a fantastic electro-acoustic music department at HAMU. The Berg Orchestra is also excellent. Electro-acoustic work is supported by Czech Radio through their Radiocustica project (see CMQ 2019/1). A unique part is played by the Musica Nova international competition, within which Czech composers can compare their works internationally and access better promotion and dissemination. We are missing halls with multi-channel sound propagation capabilities. I think that new technologies in multi-channel sound, in relation to other artistic components – visual or choreographic – can provide one path. People enjoy strong experiences.

TR: Michal Rataj and Ladislav Železný have provided an excellent platform for the creation of new pieces of electro-acoustic music through their Radiocustica programme. It's also excellent that a separate electronic music department was established at HAMU a few years ago. Last year, I was very excited by the Lunchmeat Festival, which is aimed at the confluence of artificial and club-based electronic music, and where I also first heard Murcof, whom I mentioned above. I was also taken with the Prague Synth Library project, which brings the means of electronic music closer to the "common mortals".

ADRIÁN DEMOČ

“I WRITE MUSIC
BECAUSE I ENJOY DISCOVERING IT
FOR MYSELF AGAIN AND AGAIN”



Composer Adrián Demoč is a subtle force on the field of experimental composed music in Central Europe. This native of Slovakia studied at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno, first with František Emmert and later with Martin Smolka. During his time in Brno, he travelled to Romania and Lithuania as an exchange student, and he has now settled in a small town in Spain. In the Czech Republic, we have heard his music principally at the Ostrava Days festival, which he visited several times as a resident, but also at the MusicOlomouc festival (which commissioned his piece *A Luca Marenzio*) and as part of the Czech Philharmonic's composition competition. *A Luca Marenzio* is also one of the pieces featured on his profile album *Žiadba*, published at the end of 2019 by the Yorkshire-based label Another Timbre. Given the distance between us, it was only over e-mail that we sat down to discuss composing, inspiration, and emotion.

Did you grow up in a musical family?

My parents weren't that musical, but they tried to make sure all three of their children received an elementary musical education. We had a piano at home; my sister was quite a good pianist.

When did you develop a greater interest in music? And what music was it?

My interest in music began early on. I attended piano lessons from a tender age, but my real “musical life” took place at home thanks to my older brother, who was a great fan of metal. I absorbed his enthusiasm. I remember posting lists of our cassettes and CDs;

travelling to buy records. In elementary school, I often bothered our English teacher, trying to get her to help me translate the letters I was writing to my favourite bands (most of them were in Norway). I remember our attempts to create our own black metal band – imitating our models, I tried to write the texts in such a way that they would evoke the “Slavic spirit”. I therefore began listening to Slovak folk music with new ears. And all the while, my sister was practicing the piano at home. In addition to metal and recordings by fujara players (*the fujara is a traditional Slovak overblown flute traditionally played by shepherds – editor's note*), the playlist at home included Debussy, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, and at night, jazz on the second channel of Slovak television.

Was the choice of studying at JAMU in Brno an obvious one? Or were you hesitant? Have you ever doubted this choice (or the decision to become a composer)?

I got to Brno by accident. My girlfriend at the time had an uncle there and we saw the entrance exams as an opportunity to go on an adventure. My original intention was to study in Banská Bystrica, a city near my home town in Slovakia. But when I got a letter stating I had been accepted, I was uncertain. I didn't really want to leave the land of my childhood, but I ended up choosing Brno for "cultural reasons" and I harbour no regrets. I hold in high regard the friendships I made there, both with teachers and students.

I don't spend much time thinking about a composer's career and hardships - these terms are too abstract for me. After all, I've never been a freelance composer who lives from commissions or scholarships.

I have, on occasion, doubted "my path", particularly when I moved to Spain, where I had no musical or artistic connections. At the time, I often thought of moving to a larger cultural centre. Performances of my music virtually ceased for a few years, and yet I continued writing it. This experience was definitely crucial for me. I write music because I enjoy discovering it for myself again and again. I don't spend much time on some general doubts. It's more about compositional doubts.

For several years now, your music has been growing quieter and calmer. Did quietude lead you to quiet music or the other way round?

It's hard to say. Even as a student, I felt the need to concentrate my writing - both in terms of the resultant sound (calmer, quieter, less tense), but also in terms of composition (greater focus on detail and an overall clarity of form).

Perhaps in recent years, I have gotten a little closer to the desired concentration and patience. However, I also search for the necessary immersion and patience in compositions whose resultant sound is considerably more aggressive, like in *Struny: steny, zhluky, sny* (*Strings: Walls, Clusters, Dreams*) for string orchestra (2018). However, it's true that quiet music prevails. And with it, perhaps, an internal silencing.



PHOTO: FERNANDO GIMENO, JULIÁN VEVERICA (opposite)

However, I have no clue where my next steps will lead me.

I'm interested to know what your compositional practice is like. How long do you spend on pre-compositional planning? Do you write at the piano? Go on walks? Sit in silence? What does immersion in the material mean to you?

It depends - sometimes I write quickly, other times it's a slow and laborious process. However, in recent years, I've relaxed a little in general. I write my pieces using a kind of "diary method" - I put things down on paper, play them back, fill in, erase.

Luca Francesconi divides composers into two main types based on their working method: “sculptors” chisel away at the stone (they remove material from a pre-prepared block), while “painters” begin by considering the empty canvas which they fill in and edit. If I were to put myself in one of these groups, I’d say I’ve been more of a painter in recent years.

Pre-compositional planning is so linked with composing itself that I am incapable of telling them apart. Rather, I can recognise the moment when I move from sketches to clean copy. And the immersion I mentioned happens when you are so in sync with the music you are working on, so tuned in that you really feel where and what you need to remove, shorten, add, change, and so on. You are in harmony with it. But of course, this is highly subjective. I usually write at an instrument. Playing the music back on a piano helps me get into the music; to inscribe it in my body in a more physical way than simply through abstract mental playback. I have to imagine the deviations from standard, equal-tempered tuning, though I sometimes play them on guitar or fujara.

More than pre-compositional planning, I remember certain breakthrough moments in the process of writing. When writing *Neha* (*Tenderness*, 2019), for instance, the key moment included removing entire passages because I felt the piece was “asking for” something else. *Strings: Walls, Clusters, Dreams* was originally quiet music, but I felt the piece needed a strong contrast. So the situation was exactly the opposite as in *Tenderness*. Decisions like these can sometimes be painful.

Last year, you participated in the Czech Philharmonic’s composition competition with Tenderness – you made it to the final round along with Jana Vřořová and Matouš Hejl. We can probably agree that quiet music has a certain “performance practice”; a certain sensitivity, delicacy, a feeling for silence and stillness. How was your collaboration with the Czech Philharmonic and how happy are you with their interpretation?

I am satisfied with their interpretation. They gave a good performance despite the fact that they lack this practice. However, this practice is gained through experience, and now they’ve had their first. This music demands maximal concentration even though the score makes it look like there’s “nothing there” (which, in itself, is an uncommon situation for classical performers).

Overall, they were professional at the concert. The conductor didn’t have much faith in the piece – he probably didn’t know what he should chisel, perfect, and extend. He didn’t spend much time on it in rehearsals, but the concert went a lot better than I thought it would during rehearsals. It’s excellent and admirable that the Czech Philharmonic put this initiative together, taking a crucial step into the future. I hope similar projects will take off in Slovakia too.

How is the life of a two-metre Slovak composer in a small Spanish city?

It’s good. I am kept busy by everyday obligations (family, work, composing). I’m happy.

Do you not miss being in touch with a living cultural centre (if that’s how you saw Brno)?

I missed live contact with a musical and cultural centre at the beginning, after we moved here, when I began living a completely different life: family life. However, I was always a bit of a rover – I often escaped from Brno, either on exchange trips or to go home to Slovakia. I didn’t create roots strong enough in Brno that they would force me to stay there for good. However, I’m still regularly in touch with some friends and former teachers. These connections remain very important to me. Thanks to the internet, I am also in touch with artists from other cities and countries, so I can’t complain about insufficient impulses or communication.

Last year, the Yorkshire-based label Another Tímber, which focuses on quiet contemporary music, put out your profile album, Žiadba. Were some of these pieces written specifically for the album?

Only a new version of the title-track, *Žiadba*, for standard violin. Originally, the piece is scored for the “milanolo”, a five-string instrument built for Milan Pala, a long-standing collaborator of mine.

And the other pieces?

The other pieces were commissions. As it happens, they were all premiered in the Czech Republic: *Kvarteto* and *Septett* (or rather the latter’s arrangement for standard instruments) in Ostrava, *Modré kvety* (*Blue Flowers*) at Forfest, *A Luca Marenzio* in Olomouc. Only *Žiadba* (in the original *milanolo* version) was premiered at the music biennial in Zagreb, Croatia. The original version of the *Septett* received its first performance in Germany.

How was working with Apartment House and their director, Anton Lukoszevieve? I assume this combination was concocted by Simon Reynell, director of Another Timbre?

Yes, their participation in the making of this CD is Simon's work – a few years ago, he made an agreement with the ensemble, settling on a long-term partnership. Apartment House is currently the resident ensemble at the label. Even before we shook hands on the album, however, Apartment House performed *Modré kvety* at a concert in London. So in my case, it was a pleasant coincidence – Anton Lukoszevieve already knew about my music and was interested in performing it.

Our time with the ensemble was fast and intense. Three pieces were recorded in a single day. Mira Benjamin recorded *Žiadba* for violin in my absence. With Simon Reynell, our collaboration was intense but much longer. We spent several months fine-tuning sonic details on the recording, discussing the order of the pieces, and so on.

If you'll allow me a critical remark, it seems that Apartment House in general sometimes let the tuning go a little bit, which is clearly audible on your album. In Kwarteto I, for instance, the passage from 3:50 to 4:05 is quite out of tune – I'm assuming these aren't microtones?

For most of its duration, the first part of *Kwarteto* is a strict canon at the unison, with the individual parts' entries being delayed by a sixteenth note. The instruments play arpeggios across very wide intervals. This part is already complex for the clarinet, and much more so for the cello. Although I ask the musicians for as much precision in tuning as possible (this part of *Kwarteto* is the only portion of the album not to use microtones explicitly), I also count on a certain out-of-tune quality which covers the purity of the melodic line with a cloth of a very particular colour. Technically, I support this by alternating the entries of more easy-to-tune instruments with those more sensitive to tuning deviations (piano first, violin second, clarinet third, cello last).

The piece has been performed by four ensembles so far. The Plural Ensemble from Madrid even took it on a small tour of Spain. The cellists' reaction has always been the same: rage and curses at first, but then, they take it as a challenge. Apartment House is planning to perform this piece again in London in April. I'm curious to hear what they'll do.

I am very happy with Anton's interpretation. The ensemble recorded the other chamber pieces (the second part of *Kwarteto*, *Modré kvety*, and *A Luca Marenzio*) with precision and without hesitation. It was clear that they understood the music and that they have the performance practice we were talking about under their belt. This is in no small measure down to Anton, whose tuning (and sound) in these more static sections is excellent.

A Luca Marenzio is a piece which naturally connects a logical compositional element with an emotional charge. Do you think about materials in these terms? Or do you not think about materials at all?

Can you not think about materials? Yes, of course, I also consider how the music sounds; what it radiates. This might sound exaggerated, but I try to invest myself into every sound as fully as possible. I can lead the music that is created in a particular direction, but I also try to respect it rather than struggling with it on the basis of some plans prepared in advance. I try not to let my "composition" (plans, ideas, resolutions) triumph over that which I think the music "asks for".

And your general approach to composing? What inspires you? Do you imagine the music in your head or do you start from a conceptual foundation?

I think each of my pieces has a certain amount of conceptual background. But I can only really get the piece moving once I have found the adequate sonic material; when the result satisfies me musically. Sometimes, though, it's the opposite – I have a few musical ideas that I can only get moving when I start getting a clearer idea of what should happen to them conceptually.

It is somewhere around here that inspiration is born, but I think I have nothing new or surprising to say on this topic. I'd just be repeating Stravinsky and others. But what I need in order to work is peace and an unchecked daily schedule. Especially after starting a piece or when I get "composer's block", I need to run off and be alone for a few days.

Do you miss playing live, improvising?

At the moment, not really. I still play for myself – when I sit down to compose or when I'm tired, occasionally as a bit of sonic therapy. However, I need more and more quiet – I've got more than enough sound around me.



Music Behind an Expanding Wall
(page 22 from the manuscript score)

How has your relationship with the emotional dimension of music changed? When you were younger, you liked black metal, Slovak folklore, and jazz – wild, unchained music. Later, you were given an LP by your art teacher at school, thanks to which you discovered the emotional charge contained in the music of Stravinsky, Lutosławski, and Górecki. Later still, Feldman and Pärt showed you the possibilities of a more peaceful mode of expression. What are your preferences now?

I try and stay informed on what's going on in "new music". And there is so much music I love – the list would be too long. It's been a long time since I experienced the positive shock of discovery – the last piece to really grip me was Cassandra Miller's *Duet for Cello and Orchestra*. I was also very glad to hear about the release of music by Zygmunt Krauze and Tomasz Sikorski on Bôlt Records. I often return to these recordings. I sometimes listen to Bach (performed by Glenn Gould and Milan Paľa) or Haydn (Glenn Gould).

I am also a big fan of returning to one's favourite composers. I recently spent a few months listening to the oeuvre of György Ligeti. Or Stravinsky's *Petrushka* – that's holiday music for me. I regularly listen to music of the *ars subtilior* tradition performed by the ensembles Ferrara and Mala Punica. Recently, I've been listening with open ears to Japanese traditional music (koto), whose balanced and unexaggerated emotion has a strong effect on me.

Probably the last important composer I discovered was Jürg Frey. I only came to know his music a few years ago and it was a very strong impression. Not only due to its beauty, but also given its poetics, which are closely related to what I'd been aiming for in some of my pieces. So it was also an encouraging discovery – that I'm not walking this path alone, so to speak.

There is a striking similarity between your music and Jürg Frey's compositions, particularly on this newest album. Have you met? And do you feel some relation to the entire Wandelweiser composers' collective of which Frey is a member?

I think I can agree we have a similar aesthetic. But you yourself know older pieces of mine, like *Ozvena* (*Echo*, 2008), which I wrote years before I'd even heard of Frey. Even back then, I was working with simple, slow moving, bare triads. I had to return to these through an extended "cluster period".

As for Frey, I am most impressed by his pieces from the turn of the millennium – the second string quartet, for instance. Fascinating music – something like a composition for ghosts. Some fifteen years ago, I tried to write a similar piece for clarinets. I wanted to compose a chorale played on "tuned breath/noise", but it didn't work as I had imagined it would at all and I withdrew the piece after the first rehearsal. When I heard Frey's piece, I couldn't help but shake my head: he managed to whisper, to breathe this beauty out of string instruments – a genius idea!

We haven't met personally, though we communicate over e-mail and send each other pieces. I am also in touch with Antoine Beuger, co-founder of the Wandelweiser collective. However, I do not feel a particular connection to the entire group. I have a critical view of a lot of the production. In my opinion, some of the concepts or pieces seem a little unfinished, or they rely too much on the interpretive tradition we discussed earlier. The music of some

composers – like Manfred Werder and Mark Harnesson – is work I prefer reading (as poetry or as impulses to think and to listen to the world around oneself) over playing from recordings. But of course, this is the case with every aesthetic movement. That said, I observe the activities of Wandelweiser members much more closely than those of “Neue Musik” publishing houses.

Before we finish, I'd like to talk a little bit about poetry, which I know you read avidly. What does poetry bring to your life? And what does poetry in music mean to you?

Poetry brings many things: sometimes it is the pleasure of language, at other times of “method”, composition, arrangement, sometimes even things like the “tempo” which the poetry suggests – for instance, reading the excellent verse of Ján Ondruš, I often have a difficult-to-describe feeling of falling. I enjoy reading, but I can't say whether this has any impact on my music. I've tried several times (always unsuccessfully) to set words to music. And poetry in music? It's hard to verbalise.

Poetry doesn't just have to be an evocation of the divine Parnassus. I enjoy the “poetry” of Alvin Lucier or Peter Ablinger (though his “poetics” are quite distant from my own). I feel that these are joyous meetings of the scientific and the poetic – their concepts, often based on acoustic phenomena, encountered an idea which is poetry in and of itself. But I dare not try to encapsulate all this in a few sentences. I find the work of Paweł Szymański highly poetic musically, though I'm sure to some, his music will seem more like an evocation of the visual world of M. C. Escher.

I also find myself thinking of Martin Smolka. Incidentally, while I was still studying with František Emmert, Martin gave me several clearly defined tasks of a rather technical nature, but he also appended a condition: not to “avoid poetry”. I think he meant the same thing: a technical idea and solution needs the poetic spark; elegance. Just like chess or science. By the way – I didn't complete the tasks.

Prague
Philharmonic
Choir

Friday 29. May 2020, 7.30 pm
Church of St Simon and St Jude, Prague

Final Choral Concert
of the Season 2019/2020



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Kateřina Englichová | Harp
Jiří Brückler | Bass
Lenka Navrátilová | Piano
Daniela Valtová Kosinová | Organ
Zemlinsky Quartet
Violoncello Trio

Prague Philharmonic Choir
Lukáš Vasilek | Conductor

IVAN BOŽIČEVIĆ
Spring Passes
LUKÁŠ SOMMER
Alchemist (world premiere)
ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
From the Bouquet of Slovanic Folk songs
BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ
The Opening of the Wells



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EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

DURING THE WINTER OF 2019/20

After a busy autumn, winter in the Czech Republic usually means a minor drop in concert activity. There is no festival in December, all the concert halls are filled with Jan Jakub Ryba's *Czech Christmas Mass*, Baroque music, and carols, and even after Christmas, musical life only gathers momentum hesitantly and slowly. And yet, a number of concerts took place presenting new chamber (e.g. Vojtěch Dlask, Slavomír Hořinka, František Chaloupka, and Pavel Trojan) and orchestral works (Sylvie Bodorová, Tomáš Ille, Jaroslav Krček, Jan Kučera, Ian Mikyska, and others). It is also worth mentioning two new stage works by Czech composers. Marko Ivanović's *Monument*, premiered at the Janáček Theatre in Brno, approaches the same subject matter as Jiří Kadeřábek's *Žádný člověk* (No Man) from three years ago: the fate of the sculptor Otakar Švec, who in the 1950s was forced to create the enormous memorial to Joseph Stalin on Letná Hill. Lukáš Sommer's chamber *Hra o malinu* (*A Game of Raspberry*), which takes as its subject the commercialisation of culture, was most captivating in its format: the performance took place in a closed bookshop and the audience looked in from outside with headphones on.

Even before the deadline of this issue, a number of concerts were cancelled following regulations effected by the Czech government with the aim of protecting its citizens against coronavirus. Cultural life is currently in a state of total paralysis: the entire country is quarantined and citizens are urged to stay at home with the exception of work or acquiring the most essential goods. It is hard to estimate how long this state will last, when life will go back to normal, and when it will be possible once again to attend a concert or theatre performance. Before then, I hope you can all take joy in listening to music at home or in watching the various online streams which many institutions and ensembles have begun offering in relation to the current crisis.

4 December 2019, Jan Neruda Grammar School, Prague. Music for Sirens... micro-concerts with the emergency siren test. ***Staircase and Brass* (world premiere)**. Concept / music: Matouš Hejl. Štěpán Janoušek – trombone, Jiří Genrt – tube.

5 December 2019, Congress Centre, Zlín. **Jan Kučera: *On the Multiplicity of Inhabited Worlds* (world premiere)**. Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Tomáš Brauner.

8 December 2019, Suk Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. 3rd Advent Concert of the Czech Philharmonic. **Tomáš Ille: *Christmas Eve – a Christmas divertimento for string quartet* (world premiere)**. Chamber Ensemble Variation Prague.

9 December 2019, Church of St Lawrence, Prague. **Pavel Trojan: *Calligraphy for harp and piano, Sonata for oboe and piano* (world premieres)**. Vanda Šabaková – harp, Jana Brožková – oboe, Luděk Šabaka, Daniel Wiesner – piano.

10 December 2019, Convent of St. Agnes, Prague. **Ian Mikyska: *Motionless* (Malá Strana Silences) – world premiere**. Orchestr BERG, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

DECEMBER-MARCH



Marko Ivanović: *Monument*

11 December 2019, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. **Miroslav Srnka: *move 01; move 03***

(Czech premieres). Czech Philharmonic, conductor: Peter Eötvös.

12 December 2019, Měšťanská beseda, Pilsen. **Tomáš Ille: *Pilsen, Capriccio*** (world premiere).

Pilsen Philharmonic, conductor: Ronald Zollman.

22 December 2019, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. **Jaroslav Krček: *Little Suite for Flute, Oboe, French Horn, Harp, and String Orchestra*** (world premiere). Andrea Rysová – flute, Jana Brožková

– oboe, Hana Sapáková – French horn, Jana Boušková – harp, Chamber Orchestra of the Czech

Philharmonic, conductor: Jaroslav Krček.

14 January 2020, NoD, Prague. The Beauty of Today. **Mirvis: *Štítník, Dobšíná and Brdárka***. A sound portrait of three evangetic churches from the Gemer area of Slovakia accompanied by a video **(world premiere)**. Ladislav Mirvis Mirvald and Band.

26 January 2020, Concert Hall of the Slovak Philharmonic, Bratislava, Slovakia. Hommage à Bohdan Warchal. **Sylvie Bodorová: *Bruromano, double concerto for guitar, double bass and orchestra***

(world premiere). Miriam Rodríguez Brülllová – guitar, Roman Patkoló – double bass, Slovak

Chamber Orchestra, conductor: Ewald Danel.

5 February 2020, Centre for Architecture and Metropolitan Planning (CAMP), Prague. Music for Sirens... micro-concerts with the emergency siren test. **Good Luck** (world premiere). Concept / music: František Chaloupka. Kateřina Lískovcová – viola, Helena Velická and Helena Matyášová – cello.

7 February 2020, Janáček Theatre, Brno. **Marko Ivanović: *Monument*** (world premiere). Directed

by: David Radok, music director: Marko Ivanović, libretto: David Radok. Cast: Svatopluk Sem, Markéta Cukrová, Roman Hoza, Ondřej Koplík, David Nykl, Martina Mádlová, and others. Following performances: 28 and 29 Feb 2020.

16 February 2020, Řehoř Samsa Café, Bookstore, and Art Gallery, Prague. Festival of music theatre OPERA 2020. HAUSOPERA. **Lukáš Sommer: *Hra o malinu*** (world premiere). Directed by:

Jiří Nekvasil, libretto: Josef Škarka. Cast: Andrea Šíroková (Wife), Josef Škarka (Husband), Marek Olbrzymek (Dealer), Žaneta Vítová (accordion).

18 February 2020, Church of St Simon and St Jude, Prague. **Lukáš Sommer: *The Master and Margarita*** (world premiere). Pavel Šporcl – violin, Petr Jiříkovský – piano.

4 March 2020, Convent of St Agnes Convent, Prague. Music for Sirens... micro-concerts with the emergency siren test. **Rejoice!** (world premiere). Concept / music: Slavomír Hořinka. Barbora Kabátková – soprano, Daniela Čermáková – alto, Tomáš Lajtkep – tenor, Štěpán Janoušek – trombone.

4 March 2020, Reduta, Brno. **Vojtěch Dlask: *Querell Songs for oboe and strings*** (2020) – world premiere. Vilém Veverka – oboe, Ensemble Opera Diversa, conductor: Robert Kružík.



Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis by Jan Dismas Zelenka and the Legacy of Wolfgang Horn

Jan Dismas Zelenka: *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*.
Ed. Thomas Kohlhase and Wolfgang Horn, Breitkopf & Härtel,
Wiesbaden 2018, 316 pages, ISMN 979-0-004-21399-5

Day. Unlike some previous mass cycles, the composer opted here for a more chamber-sized instrumentation without brass instruments – the work is scored for four soloists, a four-part choir, two flutes and two oboes, a solo chalumeaux, strings, and basso continuo. The vocal and instrumental parts are conceived virtuosically, which is after all a typical feature of works written in Dresden at this time. It is not without interest that the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* has been recorded twice in the Czech Republic. In the 1990s, it was recorded by Musica Florea with Marek Štrunc, and in 2012, Adam Viktora and Ensemble Inégál presented their own take on this music.

The life of **Jan Dismas Zelenka** is still a strong catalyst for interest in this important Baroque composer both at home and abroad. While in terms of live performance and recordings, Czech early music ensembles are not only active, but also highly valued on the international stage, editorial and research activities are mostly developed abroad, particularly in Germany. After all, Saxony was Zelenka's second homeland – he spent a considerable part of his life before his death in 1745 in the services of the Dresden Prince-Elector and Royal court. Thanks to the attention of certain publishing houses, more and more of Zelenka's pieces are available in high-quality editions. Breitkopf & Härtel occupies a special position in this regard, as it publishes not only new editions, but also newly revised versions of older pieces published as part of the *Erbe Deutscher Musik* edition. The volume under review, a mass cycle written for Trinity Sunday, is among these revised editions.

The *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* in a minor, ZWV 17, was written in 1736, and – together with the *Missa votiva* – provides a link to the unfinished cycle of the last six masses; the *missae ultimae*. Zelenka wrote it in a few autumnal weeks and the first performance took place in the Dresden court chapel on All Souls'

The work is now also available through a new edition put out by Breitkopf & Härtel (PB 5589), whose source was an autograph kept in the Sächsischen Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek in Dresden under catalogue number Mus. 2358-D-31, also available in digital form on the library's internet portal. This was the manuscript used for the 103rd volume in the series *Erbe Deutscher Musik*, "Abteilung Motette und Messe, Band 16", where it was edited by the German musicologist Thomas Kohlhase. The task of revising Kohlhase's original 1987 version was taken up by another German musicologist and editor, Wolfgang Horn. In addition to changes in the score itself, he also edited the prefaced commentaries on the work and its performance practice and the concluding critical report. As for the score itself, the original notation was more or less adhered to, meaning the staff is a little bigger than editions prepared today. This has no essential influence on legibility – in regards to practical music-making, Breitkopf's scores are always excellently prepared, and so the only way we can notice this is an older edition is through a few symbols that are different to modern digital typesetting and the greater number of pages. The publisher also offers performance parts with a piano extract, making the work available to a broad spectrum of interested parties among ensembles and musicians.

Wolfgang Horn's edition is also one of his last finished works – he died unexpectedly on the 7th of May 2019 in Regensburg, where he was head of the musicology department at the university. We lost not only an excellent musicologist and highly experienced editor, but also an exceptionally friendly and open person and colleague. His conference papers were always a concert of deep professionalism and exacting preparations. However, he also embodied an exceptionally human approach – his genuine respect for students or younger colleagues made him everyone's friend. Czech music has also lost a faithful supporter with a lively interest. And it is in Czech music that the exceptional legacy of his life's work lives on. The *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* is one of the many editions which were published under the editorial care of Wolfgang Horn.

GIDEON KLEIN AT 100

A FESTIVAL AND A NEW BIOGRAPHY

David Fligg, a lecturer at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, was co-curator for last year's Gideon Klein centenary festival, which took part in a number of Czech cities with a link to Klein's life. In this article, Fligg reflects on some of the events which took place under the festival's auspices, interweaving among them extracts from his book, *Letter from Gideon*, which was published in Czech by P3K press last year – the English version will be published this year by Toccata Press

2019 afforded the opportunity to reassess the talent of Gideon Klein in his centenary year. A quick Google search still identifies him as the musician who animated musical life in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) ghetto, later murdered in an Auschwitz sub-camp at the age of 25. The link between Klein and the cataclysm of the Holocaust is inevitable, and it is only right that the elements of reflection and memorialisation should never be extinguished when we remember him and similar others. As the Holocaust journeys from living memory into history, there is an emergent and timely re-focusing as Klein's music becomes recognised as part of mainstream European modernism in general, the Czech tradition in particular, and middle-European inter-war Jewish culture. This article will investigate the focus of the Klein centenary events within the *Gido's Coming Home!* (*Gido se vrací domů!*) centenary festival in the Czech Republic alongside, and by way of context, four appropriate extracts from my monograph on Klein, *Letter from Gideon* (*Dopis od Gideona*), the English version of which will be published in the UK later this year.

Gido's Coming Home! was the ideal vehicle for a repositioning of Klein. Along with my colleagues Dr. Lisa Peschel (University of York, UK), Zdenka Kachlová (Festival Manager),

and with an accompanying pedagogical project, *Gido's Voices*, led by Dr. Teryl Dobbs (University of Wisconsin, Madison), we partnered with Czech organisations and individuals to explore Klein's music and musicianship, his Moravian Jewish roots, and his musical and cultural environment. Klein's birthday fell on 6 December, and the previous evening marked the launch of the Czech version of *Letter from Gideon*¹, the title referring to the letter which Klein, remarkably, smuggled out of the Fürstengrube labour camp. Generous funding from the UK-based Arts and Humanities Research Council and others enabled us to consolidate the Czech partnerships already established during the 2016 festival *Ze stínu* (*Out of the Shadows: Rediscovering Jewish Music and Theatre*)². Through the festival's enigmatic appellation, we wanted to provoke some questions: Who is Gido? Why is he coming home? Where has he been? We used a diminutive of his name, often used by family and close friends (and also occasionally on contemporary concert programmes) to denote a certain familiarity with Klein.

1) P3K Publishing, Prague, 2019

2) <https://jewishmusicandtheatre.org/events>



Gideon Klein in 1940

We followed this through so that, where possible, concerts were in more intimate, even domestic, venues, rather than large concert halls. The sense of “the place”, *ha'makom* in Hebrew, reinforced this perception of coming home, of Gido and his music emerging from the ghetto, and back to his cultural and geographic roots.

Significantly, the festival's opening event was in Klein's native Moravia at the *Ha'Makom Festival of Jewish Culture* in Holešov in July, where our Artists in Residence, the Fama Q String Quartet, performed his music – plus music by young contemporary composers – in the sixteenth-century Šach Synagogue. The same musicians, along with soprano Irena Troupová, led the birthday tribute itself in December, where the *ha'makom* was the historic Maisel Synagogue in the heart of Prague's Jewish Quarter.

This notion of connecting Klein to his environment remained throughout *Gido's Coming Home!* The opening concert of the Prague iteration of the festival in December was at Klein's alma mater, the Prague Conservatory. The German occupation had been in place only three months when he graduated from the Conservatory in an adulatory performance of Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto* in June 1939. Our opening concert featured the same concerto, this time with another Conservatory student, 20-year-old Anna Gaálová.

Letter from Gideon

The spectacular neo-Renaissance Žofín Palace, on Žofín Island, was the venue for Gideon's graduation concert on the evening of 22 June 1939. He was billed as Professor Vilém Kurz's student, and performed Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto in G major* with the Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Pavel Dědeček, under whose baton he had performed the Janáček *Concertino* earlier in the year. Of all the works that he had so far performed in public, the Beethoven, this supreme member of the piano repertoire, would be Gideon's biggest challenge, but an appropriate one for someone on the edge of a promising career. The press reviews³ in the days following the concert heaped characteristic praise on Gideon's performance, Národní politika recognising Gideon's exceptional talent:

The mature understanding of the musical content of the work, astonishing for so young a pianist, has raised his rendering of Beethoven's *Concerto in G major* to standards well beyond that of a simple graduation performance.

České slovo described the performance as “an exceptional experience”, that he “fascinated and captivated” listeners, and that there was a “unique outburst of enthusiasm” afterwards from the audience. An “inspirational interpretation” was the opinion of the critic Jan Flajšhans in Venkov.

Press reviews are one thing, but quite clearly the eminent professors at the Conservatory were in no doubt as to the exceptional performance of the Beethoven. Dated 24 June, the diploma assessment feedback says: “Despite his young age, Mr. Gideon Klein is a mature artist and his flawless performances bear the seal of his own individuality, high intelligence and temperamental musicality.”⁴ But the most poignant account of the graduation performance comes from Gideon's friend, Hana Žantovská⁵, whose recollection reminds us that, with

3) All reviews in: Jewish Museum Prague [JMP]/GK [the estate of Gideon Klein] II/26; translation in: Slavický 1995, 91–92

4) JMP/GK II/23

5) *Letter from Gideon* quotes extensively from Hana Žantovská, either from her 1946 letter of reminiscences to Božena Wirthová (JMP/GK III/34), or the non-inventoried collection of personal reminiscences, *Setkání (Encounters)* circulated privately in 1998/99, and given to the present writer by Klein's childhood friend George Horner

Prague now under German occupation, Gideon's concert was the prelude to dark times, rather than the overture to something wonderful:

An unforgettable evening for me: Gideon's graduation concert at the Žofín Island in June 1939. He completed his studies with Professor Kurz, it was three months after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, and he played Beethoven's *Piano Concerto in G major*. Never since have I heard it played from the depths of the artist's heart, without superficial mannerisms. The Grünfeld sisters, Helena and Erna, were seated behind me, and I could hear their exchange of whispered ecstatic comments. We were at the crossroads of traditions and hopes, all of them in mortal danger. Perhaps this was the reason why we absorbed the music with such intensity.

Prior to our Prague Conservatory concert, we took Gido back to Hagibor, now a Jewish retirement home and social centre, but in Klein's day a youth and community centre where he undertook some teaching during the early period of the occupation. There, he also took part in some rehearsals for Hans Krása's opera *Brundibár*. Children from the Nature School (Přírodní škola), one of our festival partners, sang music by Klein and others, whilst one of the pupils read the chapter "Making music under occupation" from *Letter from Gideon*. Some of the elderly residents in the audience lived through that period, and using Klein's music as a bridge from the young children to the residents was especially moving.

Letter from Gideon

At first an orphanage for boys, in 1940 the Belgická Street orphanage and the girls' orphanage on Lublaňská Street merged. Under the directorship of the popular and enlightened Otto (Moritz) Freudenfeld, who himself came to Belgická as an orphan in 1897, the orphanage gave the children an excellent and well-rounded education. Freudenfeld was a fine synagogue cantor and a deeply knowledgeable musician. He encouraged music-making and cultural activities in the orphanage, maintained close ties with the Zionistically-oriented Hagibor sports and cultural club, which became a vital centre for educating the children, whilst at the same time giving the youngsters a meaningful Jewish education. Gideon's activities at the orphanage were as a teacher, though not exclusively centred on

music. It was, however, a musical project which has become the most well-known cultural event there, one which Gideon was closely involved with. This was the children's opera *Brundibár*, composed in 1938 by Hans Krása and his librettist Adolf Hoffmeister, but as yet unperformed. In July 1941, along with Krása, Rafi Schächter, Erik Saudek, the former National Theatre stage designer František Zelenka, and others, Gideon took part in a 50th birthday celebration for Otto Freudenfeld. Schächter announced that *Brundibár* had not yet been performed, and that it would be an ideal piece for the children to stage. Under Schächter's direction, and with Gideon as pianist, rehearsals began soon after, some at the orphanage itself, some at Hagibor.⁶ In the event, neither Gideon, Krása, nor Schächter were able to see the rehearsals through to the actual performance, as they were eventually transported to Terezín. But under the direction of Adolf Hoffmeister's son, Rudi, and despite the ongoing deportations of children, *Brundibár* was successfully premiered in the orphanage's dining room,⁷ with a follow-up performance at Hagibor. Eventually, the Germans closed down the orphanage, and deported the children to Terezín. There, they regrouped and, reunited with Gideon, performed the opera 55 times. Today, the building on Belgická Street is something of a jewel in Prague's Jewish community's crown, being the highly successful Lauder Jewish School.⁸

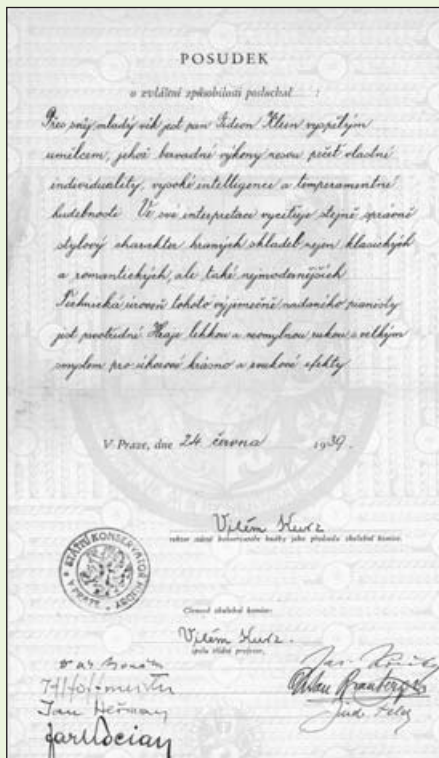
In September, as we stood on the brink of the Jewish New Year, we symbolically marked a new beginning by dedicating a plaque to Klein and his family in the Jewish cemetery of his birthplace, Přerov⁹. That evening, a capacity audience at the beautiful Chateau, now a museum, heard Klein's music performed live, as far as we know for the first time in countless years in the town. As a central theme of the festival has been to showcase young Czech talent, we commissioned a new work for this concert from Přerov-born composer Martin Konvička. His *Fünfundzwanzig* for piano and clarinet has a title which references not only the age at which Klein died, but also that Konvička himself has now exceeded that age

6) (Steinová 2012, 47)

7) There is some doubt with regard to specific dates of performances. Karas (p.80) suggests it was the winter of 1942/43; Steinová (p.49) proposes, by a process of elimination, that the premiere was between April and July 1943.

8) The Lauder Jewish School in Prague: <http://www.lauder.cz/en/>

9) https://prerovsky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/vratil-se-domu-v-prerove-odhalili-pametni-desku-slavneho-rodaka-gideona-kleina-20190912.html



Gideon Klein's conservatory diploma, 1939

Letter from Gideon

Eventually, Gideon realised that any type of public performance, either anonymously or under an alias, was risky at best, and impossible at worst. Necessity became a virtue, and there soon became established a remarkable and ambitious network of private musical and theatrical performances in the homes of Prague's Jews. Gideon became actively involved in both. These house-concerts were plentiful and ambitious, and the Klein home itself became something of a covert artistic centre between 1940 and 1941. Performances took place on late Saturday or Sunday afternoons, were free for anyone who wanted to attend, and the audience consisted of Jews and non-Jews alike. The larger homes could accommodate an audience of anything up to 80 people; specific Jewish venues, such as the orphanage on Belgická Street, up to 150.

Gideon began performing with, and acting as something of a coach for, a group of young, professional string players: violinist and violist Karel Fröhlich, violinists Lonja (Leopold) Weinbaum and Heini Taussig, violist Romuald Süssmann, and cellist Freddy Mark. Domestic though the concerts were, they were approached in an entirely professional way: full length concerts, often with an interval. As an example, one such concert¹⁰ consisted of repertoire close to Gideon's heart. He opened it with two Bach *Chorale Preludes*, followed by Beethoven's *Sonata in D minor, op. 21, No. 2*. After the interval, he is joined by Fröhlich, Weinbaum, and Mark in Mozart's *Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478*, after which he concludes the programme with Janáček's *Piano Sonata 1.X.1905*. The choice of Janáček's work was appropriate, with its two movements having the subtitles of "Foreboding" ("Předtucha"), and "Death" ("Smrt"), inspired by a people's uprising in Brno in 1905 which resulted in the death of a Moravian worker.

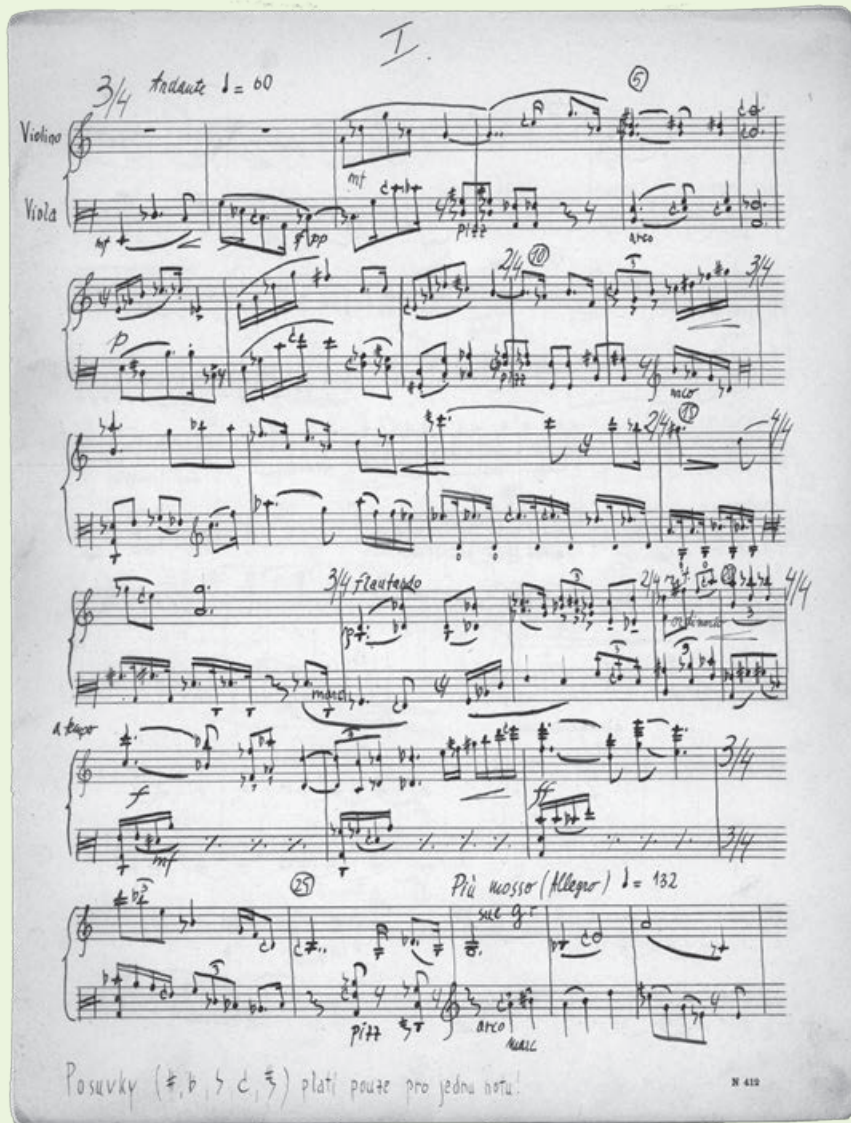
Gideon's choice of works for other concerts¹¹ was, typically, grounded in the core repertoire: Beethoven's demanding *Piano Sonata in A flat major, op. 110*, and the *Piano Trios*; the late piano works of Brahms; Schoenberg's *Three Piano Pieces, op. 11*; plus works by Chopin, Schumann, and Scarlatti. In terms of stamina, however, the Brahms *Second Piano Concerto* has to take centre stage, a work Gideon performed with an unnamed second pianist taking the orchestral role, and a solo part considered to be one of the most demanding in the regular repertoire. This

with the opportunities that were denied to Klein. This work explores how two young Přerov-born composers have reached across the generations towards one another.

Three villas once owned by Jewish families before, and in the early years of, World War Two, were used for concerts. As more restrictions were placed on how Jews could engage in musical activities and theatre, clandestine house concerts played an important part in music-making under occupation, and Klein took part in a number of these. For *Gido's Coming Home!*, in Brno we used the Villa Löw-Beer for a "Jazz for Gido" concert, whilst Villa Stiassni provided a second performance of Konvička's *Fünfundzwanzig*. In Prague, the Winternitz Villa, now reclaimed by family members of the original owners, was the backdrop for the festival's celebratory closing concert, where the audience was encouraged to dress in 1940s attire.

10) JMP/GK II/32. The flyer for this concert is not dated, though is catalogued with the date 1941.

11) There are no extant printed programmes for any other concerts, but Slavický (1995, 114) details them based on information given to him by Lisa Kleinová.



Manuscript of the Duo for Violin and Viola in the Quarter-tone Style, dedicated to Alois Hába

performance took place in the splendid villa of Karel and Miša Blass, which had two pianos. Because of the 8 pm curfew, guests stayed overnight for this event, and Gideon was received so enthusiastically that he performed the finale as an encore. Still not satiated, the audience demanded more, so he then played all the other movements in reverse order.¹² Hana Žantovská describes this performance as “the climax of the house concert era, an unforgettable evening”. One can only marvel at this challenging work being performed forwards and backwards in one evening.

Not all of Gideon’s music-making was what might be described as serious and weighty. On New Year’s Eve 1940, the Blass family were again the hosts, this time for a collectively-written opera, with tunes that Gideon and his friends had requisitioned from opera, popular songs of the day, and other works. For example, the opera’s opening was based on Suk’s incidental music to *Radúz and Mahulena*, though a play on words was exploited, as the heroine’s name, Hana Žantovská explains, rhymes in Czech with “smoke-filled room” (*zahulená*). Recalling that

12) (Karas 2008, 4)



Memorial plaque, Přerov Jewish Cemetery



they all wanted to have fun, “the circumstances notwithstanding”, she says: “The girls were in evening gowns, for one last time. We danced, and we all thought we had a fun night out. With a gloomy tinge, we realised later.” Like too many of the guests at the New Year’s Eve party, the opera did not survive. A similarly lost work is another collaboration between Gideon and his friends, a light-hearted operetta or musical called *Liebe ohne Lieber* (*Love without Love*). Gideon composed the music, his friends the lyrics, and the work was performed in the home of one of his friends, Lisa Roubíček.¹³

Of Klein’s experiences in Terezín, we know that, despite outward appearances of optimism and vitality, the place was slowly suffocating his spirit. In the essence of bringing Gido home, it would have seemed inappropriate, during a birthday festival, for events to take place in the former ghetto, and so we emphasised the pre-Terezín music more than the later works. Moreover, with Klein’s final composition, the *Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello*, now an established member of the chamber repertoire, it hardly needed any advocacy by the festival. It was performed only

within the context of my play *Gideon Klein: Portrait of a Composer*, staged by Švandovo divadlo during the birthday weekend. Relatively neglected works composed in Prague immediately prior to, or during, the occupation, were showcased, all receiving at least one performance. These included *Three Songs op. 1*, the *Second String Quartet*, the *Preludium for Solo Viola*, and the melodrama *Tópol* (*The Poplar*) for narrator and piano. Two incomplete works were also performed: the *Duo for Violin and Viola in the Quarter Tone Style*, and the *Duo for Violin and Cello*, the latter unfinished due to Klein’s deportation.

Letter from Gideon

Gideon was summoned to be deported to Terezín. Soon after, he met his friend, Hana Žantovská. She recalls the final goodbye to her special friend:

I met Gideon on a corner in the old Jewish quarter, the site rich with history and fateful events. It was at the end of November. Gideon told me, in passing, that he had received his summons for the so-called *Aufbaukommando* in Terezín. We said good-bye, keeping the old “formal” tone: “Don’t do anything silly, and take good care of yourself,” he said, and I babbled something about the invincible power of hope, and that we shall see each other soon again. But it was our last encounter, and I think that he knew.

13) This is mentioned in a letter from Susan Cernyak-Spatz to musicologist David Bloch, dated 28 December 1988, and archived in the Professor David Bloch Collection at the United States Holocaust Memorial Music (<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn557826>). Cernyak-Spatz was at the house-concert in question.



Stolpersteine in memory of Gideon Klein and his mother outside their apartment building at Rašínovo Nábřeží 66, Prague

The *Aufbaukommando* consisted of young men chosen by the Germans from a labour index,¹⁴ though some men volunteered in the belief that their families would soon be able to join them. The first *Aufbaukommando*, AK-1, as it was known, consisted of 340 Czech Jewish males who arrived in the town on 24 November. On Monday the first of December, having been selected for the second *Aufbaukommando*, AK-2, Gideon left his apartment at Rašínovo nábřeží 66 for the last time. Along with his fellow-travellers, he then went to the Radiomark assembly point at Prague's Trade Fair Palace in the suburb of Holešovice where, in cramped, unhygienic conditions, with little food, surrounded by barbed wire, he languished for three days.¹⁵ He was subjected to form-filling, the confiscation of forbidden personal belongings such as ration cards, pens, watches, and keys, and his luggage was inspected for prohibited items. From there he went to the nearby Bubny Station¹⁶ with his maximum allocation of 50 kg of luggage.¹⁷

He never saw Prague again, and this is why it was time to bring Gido home. Our festival achieved a number of objectives. It placed Klein's music within the wider environment of twentieth-century music, and the repertoire which informed him as a composer and pianist. So whilst his music was performed alongside that of his Terezín colleagues Viktor Ullmann and Hans Krása, it also appeared along works from

the Czech school. Suk and Janáček, and other composers such as Mozart and Beethoven, whose repertoire Klein performed, and the European modernism of Berg and Hindemith, contextualised Klein and his world.

The festival's impact is most keenly demonstrated in its engagement with the musicians we worked with, most of whom took part in a number of concerts. Mainly young performers and composers, often approaching the work of Gideon Klein for the first time, they humorously referred to themselves as Team Gido. This youthful cohort is now integrating the music into their own repertoire, whilst composers such as Martin Konvička and Daniel Chudovský have added new Klein-inspired works to the contemporary canon. Of special significance were the activities which included students from the Nature School, youngsters participating in Klein's music and its accompanying narratives. To this, we can add the pedagogical events for teachers, led by Teryl Dobbs, which focused on the instructional aspects of Klein's music and experiences.

Klein's Jewishness had been largely neglected up until now, except within the context of the Holocaust, and *Gido's Coming Home!* allowed an exploration of this. The *Ha'Makom* Festival in Holešov afforded an ideal opportunity. As a result, the Mikulov Jewish Culture Festival will be hosting a *Gido's Coming Home!* event, with Team Gido musicians, in September 2020; perhaps it should now have a modified title of *Gido Came Home!* Of the other neglected area of Klein's life, his Prague activities play a central part in the *GidoTour* which is being developed as a self-guided walk by the Prague Jewish Museum for 2021.

It is clear that the Klein centenary events created a wonderful sense of momentum for performances of his works, enabling musicians and audiences to relate to a small, yet intriguing, repertoire, supported by a refreshed appraisal of his life supported by the Czech version of *Letter from Gideon* (*Dopis od Gideona*). The English edition, to be published by the UK publisher Toccata Press, will be released towards the end of 2020.

Dr. David Fligg lectures at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, UK. He is also a Visiting Professor at the University of Chester. *Letter from Gideon* (*Dopis od Gideona*) is published by P3K Publishing, Prague. His chapter "(Re) Visiting the (Jewish) Archive of Gideon Klein – Terezín, 1941–1944" appears in the *Routledge Handbook to Music under German Occupation*.

14) (Bondy 1989, 243)

15) The site is now occupied by the Mama Shelter Hotel (ex-Parkhotel), which has a memorial to Prague's deported Jews on the outside wall facing the road towards Bubny railway station.

16) *Aufbaukommando* 1 (AK-1) went from their homes to Hybernská Station, today Masaryk Station.

17) Bubny station is still there, but no longer used by the railway. It houses the Bubny Memorial of Silence, which hosts educational and cultural events, and Aleš Veselý's *The Gate of Infinity* memorial monument: <http://www.bubny.org/en/memorial-of-silence/the-sculpture-the-gate-of-infinity>



Prague Spring Festival

Gold Edition Vol. 1

Annie Fischer / piano,
Josef Suk / violin,
Czech Philharmonic, André
Cluytens, Erich Kleiber, Charles
Munch, Antonio Pedrotti, Wolfgang
Sawallisch / conductors.

Recorded: live, Prague Spring 1946,
1955, 1956, 1958. Text: CZ, EN.
Published: 2019. TT: 139:44.
2 CD Radioservis CR1042-2.

At the close of 2019, Czech Radio and its Radioservis label published the first in a new editorial series titled *Prague Spring – Gold Edition*. “Finally!” one feels like exclaiming, because audiophiles have been expecting some of these recordings for years (if not decades!). So far, archival Prague Spring recordings were published on labels including Panton, Praga Digitals, Radioservis, Supraphon, and exceptionally also under globally distributed labels (EMI Classics). These titles, however, had either already been published on numerous occasions, or else they were of problematic technical standards. I therefore looked upon this new joint project by Czech Radio and Radioservis with a reserved curiosity. However, this curiosity was transformed to enthusiasm upon my first listening of the five live recordings made at the festival between 1946 and 1958, published on a double CD with a simple graphic design and an eminently readable text by Bohuslav Vítěk. The two CDs present recordings audiophiles knew about, but which were unavailable for a long time (Martinů, Novák, Ravel), or about whose existence they probably had no idea (Bartók, Dvořák). For me, the surprise of the album are the recordings of the Bartók and Dvořák concerti. Bartók’s highly accessible

Piano Concerto no. 3 (1945) is presented by the excellent **Annie Fischer** (1914–1995) and conductor **Antonio Pedrotti** (1901–1975). The recording captures one’s attention even when placed in the vicinity of the contemporary works written in the decade after this last work of Bartók’s was completed. Bartók dedicated the concerto to his second wife and Annie Fischer’s interpretation sounds all the more authentic given that it is performed by a leading representative of the Hungarian piano school. The recording will stand up even in competition with more pianistic studio work by Ferenc Fricsay, Igor Markevitch, or Georg Solti. An even greater surprise is a recording of Dvořák’s *Violin Concerto in A minor, op. 53, B 108* performed by **Josef Suk** (1929–2011) and **Wolfgang Sawallisch** (1923–2013). The recordings of Suk performing this concerto we have available at the moment were all made between 1961 and ’63 (Ančerl), 1964 (Sargent), 1970 (Gielen), and 1978 (Neumann). This 1958 recording is the artist’s first take on this essential work of the Czech violin literature, and an ideal companion piece to older Dvořák recordings for Supraphon made between 1956 and 1958 (SU 4075-2). The lively tempi to which Suk would never return (the running time is a mere 29:55) and the orchestra’s spontaneous playing under the baton of the debutante Sawallisch make this recording a listening experience rather than an archival sonic document of the chronologically oldest of Suk’s recording of this primary Czech violin concerto. The double CD is a sonic monument not only to Suk, the Prague Spring festival, and the technical standards of the Czechoslovak Radio, but also to the **Czech Philharmonic**, which excels on live recordings. Ravel’s *Spanish Rhapsody*, conducted by **André Cluytens** (1905–1967) from 1955 is an ideal entryway into the forgotten musical world of the first decade of the Prague Spring festival, and a convincing calling card of the interpretive qualities of the leading Czech orchestra during Karel Ančerl’s

tenure (1950–1968) in the French repertoire. Definitely the best recordings on the album are two pieces which lovers of post-war recordings and aficionados of the Prague Spring and the Czech Philharmonic had so far only encountered in written references. Firstly, it is one of the few recordings of Vítězslav Novák’s *Jihočeská suita op. 64 (The South-Bohemian Suite)* conducted by **Erich Kleiber** (1890–1956), made in 1955. The piece was dedicated to Kleiber, who premiered it in Prague in 1937. Listeners can finally hear the broad tempi and expressive intensity which inscribed itself into the post-war history of music. However, towering over all these recordings – all excellently handled technically and interpretively – is Bohuslav Martinů’s *Symphony no. 1* conducted by **Charles Munch** (1891–1968). It was only later that Kubelík recorded his rendition of the composer’s fourth symphony (1948) and Karel Šejna his take on the third symphony (1956). With all due respect to Rafael Kubelík, I always found his recording of the 4th imperfect, especially when compared to Šejna’s studio recording of the 3rd. However, Munch’s version trumps both with an excellent combination of musicianly spontaneity and a precise approach to the composer’s notation, even though it the oldest of all these re-issued recordings, hailing from the very first edition of the Prague Spring festival: 1946. In his introductory text, Bohuslav Vítěk apologises for the technical quality of the recordings, but the publishers worked hard on the remaster and despite their age, the recordings speak to us as sovereign musical documents from a time when the Czech Philharmonic was on its way to the climactic years of the Ančerl era, and when guest performances on the Prague Spring stages by Cluytens, Kleiber, or Munch bore more attraction and symbolic power than we can even imagine today, thirty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Martin Jemelka



Petr Nekoranec

French Arias

Petr Nekoranec – tenor,
Czech Philharmonic,
Christopher Franklin – conductor.

Text: EN, GE, FR. Recorded:
Aug. 2019, Prague – Rudolfinum.
Published: 2019. TT: 57:00. 1 CD
Supraphon SU 4260-2.

Tenor **Petr Nekoranec** is rightly being noticed among listeners of opera and song both at home and around the world. This recording, published towards the end of 2019 by Supraphon, is to form a contribution to the advancement of his career. As I – unlike art management agencies and art peddlers – am completely indifferent to any awards or competitions (and I detest having to write this in polite terms), I am able to make my own choice as to whether the young singer will win me over with his voice – or not. Both are true in this case. Me and Petr have one passion in common: the aria of Nadir from Georges Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles*. The countless recordings of *Je crois entendre encore* made by many celebrated singers meant there wasn't much chance of me discovering something exceptional. However, the opposite is true, and I am immeasurably glad that the effect this young Czech tenor – together with the **Czech Philharmonic** and conductor **Christopher Franklin** – had on my soul and body is among the most intensive I've ever heard and experienced. This Czech vocalist has redrawn the map of performances – beginning with the winter of 2019, there is no more successful interpretation of this French hit. Opera fans around the world will be forced to reassess their preferential tables – and no one expects this to be the result of an attack from Nové dvory u Polné. This fact

alone should be enough of a reason to buy this album, which is titled *French Arias* – but it is not the only reason. In addition to the sound of the Czech Philharmonic, excellently captured in the Rudolfinum, the very sensitive dynamics and tempi chosen by the conductor, it is predominantly the selection of the other tracks on the album. Pâris from Offenbach's *La belle Hélène* is fantastic and Nekoranec was certainly impressive as Tonio from Donizetti's *La fille du régiment*. Compared to the other gorgeous performances (Gounod's Romeo in a duet with the beautiful voice of soprano **Zuzana Marková** or Iopas from Hector Berlioz's *Les Troyens*), however, I was utterly unimpressed by Nekoranec's rendition of arias by Massenet. I must say the same of the famous piece from Gounod's *Faust*, *Salut! Demeure chaste et pure*, which seems to be void of life, tension, and excitement, taking its place among the commonplace music I have no need to hear again. It would be dishonest for me to claim that Petr Nekoranec is the kind of singer whose interpretive style fits me without any qualms. In the context of other Czech tenors, I do not consider him the most interesting simply given the material given unto him by nature. We have the excellent Ladislav Elgr and the even more attractive voice of Pavel Černoš; I could also reach for a Richard Samek CD. Of course, they often perform different repertoire and Petr Nekoranec is certainly irreplaceable, but this is not enough for boundless excitement. The cards are dealt in advance, but you need to play them well and not dream of the impossible. Nekoranec doesn't have a voice that would attract new audiences to our theatres and concert halls – I see him more as an artistically polished personality who will always be the target of aficionados who know what they want to hear. And it is for this group of listeners that his profile album should be mandatory.

Miloš Bittner

Opera Trio

Emmert / Dlsk / Nota /

Demoč: Works for Oboe Trio

Barbora Šteflová – oboe,
Štěpán Filípek – violoncello,
Ondřej Olos – piano.

Recorded: 2019. Published: 2020.
TT: 51:23. 1 CD Radioservis CR1048-2

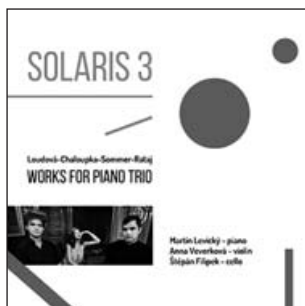
Solaris 3

Loudová / Chaloupka / Sommer / Rataj: Works for Piano Trio

Martin Levický – piano,
Anna Veverková – violin,
Štěpán Filípek – violoncello.

Recorded: 2019. Published: 2020.
TT: 51:10. 1 CD Radioservis CR1034-2.

There might still be a lot of 2020 left, but lovers of contemporary chamber music already have two reasons to rejoice: Radioservis, the publisher affiliated with Czech Radio, opened the year with two CDs of music by contemporary composers. Although both discs are connected through cellist **Štěpán Filípek**, these are in fact recordings by two different ensembles. While *Emmert / Dlsk / Nota / Demoč: Works for Oboe Trio* is a disc by the **Opera Trio**, *Loudová / Chaloupka / Sommer / Rataj: Works for Piano Trio* was recorded by the musicians of the **Solaris 3** ensemble. In addition to a focus on contemporary music, these recordings are also linked by another factor: they both pay tribute to recently deceased figures of the Czech composing world – Ivana Loudová and František Gregor Emmert –, placing their works in the context of music



by their students and contemporaries. The piano trio album begins with Ivana Loudová's *Piano Trio in B*, offering from the very beginning an immense richness of expression and mood – from the darkly brooding cello, through a wildly struggling knot of three instruments, all the way to the conciliatory and calm-infused catharsis. The musicians captured this broad yet natural internal development, full of subtle nuances and sudden excitations and explosions, with a vigorous, yet unexaggerated and purely musical expressivity. The musicians took almost pedantic care that their interpretation serve the piece itself, and this attention to detail is most apparent in their work with phrasing and dynamics. This meticulous care is also devoted to the other pieces on the disc. For that matter, the order chosen has its own internal rhythm – the conciliatory *Trio in B* is followed by František Chaloupka's *Piano Trio no. 1 "Solaris"*, captivating in its colours and tempi. The piano's calls seem to answer the cathartic ending of the previous piece, but in terms of timbral work, Chaloupka's work goes a lot further. At some moments, it even seems like the sounds proffered by the trio simply cannot be produced by acoustic instruments – sustained tones stretching out from infinity to infinity create a unique tension which is just as eternal and peaceful as it is chilling and unsettling. Even though in comparison to Chaloupka's *Solaris*, Lukáš Sommer's *Xscape* uses a more traditional musical language, this is no soothing transition. Given its more transparent rhythmical divisions, the work is an excellent contrast to the previous two pieces, and some of it – say, parts of the *Frottola* – is carefree, playful, and frolicsome. The closing piece, Jakub Rataj's *ES.23*, is a clash, synthesis, and symbiosis of extremes. It contrasts sharp, piercing, eccentric, static, and

sometimes even comical moments. The Opera Trio recording is comparable in interpretive and production quality to the one discussed above. Generally speaking, however, it offers access to a more pleasant, less expressive part of these works could be described as "tame", what is foregrounded here are the more subtle and lyrical forms of contemporary classical music, without giving up on variety. "Guilty-pleasure humour" even made it onto the disk in Vojtěch Dlak's *Querelle Trio*. Lenka Notá's *Agnus dei*, on the other hand, resonates excellently with Emmert's *Oboe Trio*, which opens the disc. The recording closes with the ethereal and meditative *Modré květy (Blue Flowers)* by Adrián Demoč, inspired by the eponymous novel by Raymond Queneau. These two new recordings produced by Czech Radio offer an interesting dramaturgy and successful performances. If you are a fan of contemporary chamber works, these are definitely albums worth your time and attention.

Martin Jemelka

Capella Mariana

Praga Rosa Bohemiae

Cappella Mariana (Hana Blažíková, Barbora Kabátková, Daniela Čermáková, Vojtěch Semerád, Tomáš Lajtkep, Ondřej Holub, Tore Denys, Martin Schicketanz, Jaromír Nosek), Vojtěch Semerád - artistic director.

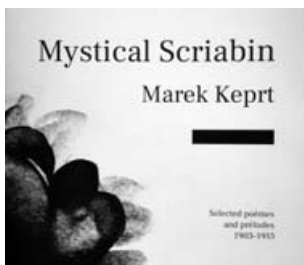
Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded: July 2018, Osek monastery. Published: 2019.

TT: 62:56. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4273-2

Praga Rosa Bohemiae is the newest work of the Capella Mariana ensemble under the direction of Vojtěch Semerád, whose projected aim is to provide revealing presentations of Czech musical culture in the 15th and 16th centuries. As the title suggests, the unified dramaturgy of the album should focus on Prague, the rose of Bohemia. The graphic design of the work rests on a minimalist-monochrome light ochre photograph of the vaulted arches in Slavonice, a small town in the south of Moravia – any relation to Prague is tenuous and unclear. Perhaps this wouldn't be worth mentioning, except the same can be said of the selection of repertoire. The recording opens with



the *Presulem ephebeatum*, a St. Martin's rotulum (canon) which is famous for its Latin text, which is phonetically identical with the German exclamations "Raw goose!", "Roast goose!", "One goose for you!", "Take your goose and eat!", and so on. This piece, which transports us to the world of late medieval student humour, has already been recorded several times. The ethereally restrained 1995 version by the Hilliard Ensemble (*Codex Specidlnik*) was complemented ten years later by the Schola Gregoriana Pragensis (*Maestas Dei*) with a more considered and earthly rendition. The Capella Marian presents a successful synthesis of both approaches: the "geese" are not lost in the cultivated discourse. *Presulem ephebeatum* was an inspiration to Heinrich Isaac, who used its melody as the *tenore* voice for his setting of part of the Mass ordinary. This is one of the few precious encounters of 15th-century polyphonic culture with a local, still mediocrally ordered tradition. The premiere recording of Isaac's *Missa Presulem ephebeatum* is the backbone of this recording, but it's not an unproblematic backbone. The piece is known from a single entry in the manuscript designated as 59 R 5117, probably of Austrian origin, which the National Library in Prague only acquired in 1994. The link between this manuscript and the city of Prague was never proven, a fact glossed over by the text which accompanies this recording. Framing this source as representative of Renaissance Prague is, let's say, a courageous step. The Collegium Marianum's interpretation of Isaac's mass follows Martin Horyna's edition. This means that we can occasionally find a missing flat (*Sanctus*, 2:17). The booklet is unnecessarily short. The listener has no way of finding out who edited the remaining pieces, such as the convincing Tourout, and no clue as to where to look to verify some



Marek Keprt

Mystical Scriabin

Marek Keprt - piano. Recorded: Divadlo na Orlí Studios, Brno, 2016. Text: EN. Published: 2019. TT: 53:15. 1 CD KI Records.

Pianist, composer, and pedagogue **Marek Keprt** is an expert on both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the Russian musical avant-garde at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, which was led by Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915). Scriabin, a leading exponent of Russian symbolism, underwent unprecedented stylistic development during his lifetime, from late-Romantic tendencies towards a unique musical language which significantly influenced the music of the 20th century. To arrive at this language, he drew on philosophy, theosophy, or synaesthesia. This is demanding music to perform, and it is more difficult still to understand the mystical foundations of the work, which Keprt attempts to capture from his triple position of performer, composer, and musicologist. This recording is a selection of mostly shorter pieces for solo piano which fall into the late and crowning phase of Scriabin's work between the op. 32 (1903) and op. 74 (1915). The weight of the album is contained in three collections of *Poèmes* and *Préludes*. These are complemented by other pieces including the dreamy *Morceaux*, *Rêverie*, or the more extensive *Poème-nocturne*. The programme, whose duration approaches an hour, flows along in a generally contemplative spirit, with a darkened atmosphere and restrained dynamics. The intense moments – for instance in the *Enigme* or *Poème* op. 71 no. 1 – draw their power not from rage, but from a solid understanding of the material

and absolute control of the situation. The aforementioned intensity thus always radiates through Keprt with paramount calm and deliberation, made possible by a precise mastering of Scriabin's musical language. Among other things, Keprt is known for his unorthodox approach to the interpretation of the established piano literature, including Frédéric Chopin or Franz Liszt. Even though in these and other cases, he applies a highly personal approach to virtually canonical works, he never succumbs to the typical mannerisms of the performer's oversized ego which puts itself above the art itself – quite the opposite: he allows himself to be fused with the musical gesture itself. He displays an extraordinary feeling for the shading and detail of each tone, for the unusual colours of Scriabin's harmonies, and the mutual interplay of the individual layers of the musical stream. The brevity of the pieces selected (around two minutes) and the formal arches realised on these minute durations help him avoid diluting this detail-oriented concentration. It is on this micro-level that Keprt allows the fragile, ephemeral messages of the mystical Scriabin to materialise. Similarly to the collection of songs by František Chaloupka, *Iszek Baraque* – their first release – this second production by KI Records also uses a non-standard and minimalist (or rather: ascetic in terms of material) approach to the cover. However, in this case, the all-too-flimsy paper cover draws looks of unwanted attention, needlessly degrading its remarkable contents to the level of promotional material. This potentially corrigible factor, however, should not shroud the import of the album as an important contribution to the anthology of Czech recordings of early 20th-century piano literature.

Jan Ciglbauer

Jan Borek



Vilém Přibyl Zápisník zmizelého

(The Diary of One Who Disappeared)

Vilém Přibyl - tenor, Libuše Márová - mezzo-soprano, members of the Kühn Mixed Choir, Pavel Kühn - choirmaster, Milan Máša and Josef Páleníček - piano.

Text: EN, CZ. Recorded: 1971 at the studios of the Czechoslovak Radio, Brno, 1972 and 1977 at Studio Domovina, Prague. Published: 2019. TT: 69:43. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4269-2

This archival recording of the excellent tenor **Vilém Přibyl** featuring the gems of Czech song was put out by Supraphon in a remastered version as a memorial to the art of this singer, who is still considered part of the so-called Golden Generation of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Despite numerous and significant successes at home and abroad, Přibyl remained faithful to the Janáček Opera in Brno, where he portrayed many parts of the Czech operatic repertoire in works by Smetana, Dvořák, Martinů, and contemporary composers, in addition to numerous roles in operas by Wagner or Verdi. Přibyl made us of the wide expressive range of his wonderfully light and supple tenor not only on the operatic stage, but also on concert stages, performing cantatas and songs, among the most unforgettable of which is Janáček's *Diary of One Who Disappeared*. This album is devoted to the essential song cycles of Czech music - in addition to Janáček, it includes Smetana's *Evening Songs* and Dvořák's *Biblical Songs*. The oldest pieces, Bedřich Smetana's 1879 *Evening Songs*, open with the lines *He who knows how to play the golden strings (Kdo v zlaté struny zahrát zna)* in an inward and

emotional rendition by Vilém Přibyl. In these pieces by the ageing and deaf composer, who selected from Vítězslav Hálek's eponymous collections those lines which spoke of his own life, the tenor reflects Smetana's deep submersion into the inner feelings of the author with all his successes and defeats. The singer's certainty, warmth, and cultivation - along with his outstanding diction - allowed Vilém Přibyl to transmit Smetana's songs with an unambiguous understanding of Hálek's words. Dvořák's *Biblical Songs*, also written at the cusp of their composer's powers - in 1894 - were also performed by Přibyl with all the seriousness and nobility biblical texts deserve. As a man of deep faith, Dvořák selected David's psalms from the Old Testament as thanks for the gift of composing and being able to devote his entire life to music. These emotions are perhaps most clearly expressed in *Hospodin jest můj pastýř (The Lord is My Shepherd)*, delivered by Vilém Přibyl with exceptional understanding and devotion and without unnecessary pathos. The piano accompaniment, provided by **Milan Máša**, is just as unobtrusive but also securely and meticulously emoted. Leoš Janáček and *The Diary of One Who Disappeared* - another challenge for Vilém Přibyl to present a completely different kind of discourse. This collection, setting poetry by an unknown youth, evoked in Janáček a desire to confess his late love with a passionate and chilling expressivity; with a wild - though loving - heart. The vocal part follows the composer's line of musical and rational reasoning with absolute sovereignty, observing the heart of a young man who is desperate and in love, unable to defend himself against fate. Vilém Přibyl's performance bears no comparison. His Janáček is still among the model interpretations and this recording, featuring the beautifully virtuosic pianism of **Josef Páleníček**, is a true gem - everything remains fully in motion up to the last note.

The mezzo-soprano part of the gipsy Zefka was performed by **Libuše Márová** with a darkly coloured voice one cannot help but succumb to, the pitch-perfect female choir accompanies the young lovers' dialogue with their gentle explanatory and narrative interventions. The desperate and victorious ending is presented by Přibyl and Páleníček with impressive devotion. Not only is Vilém Přibyl's vocal career worthy of much more appreciation - we should also show our appreciation to the publisher for this excellent re-edition.

Marta Tužilová

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