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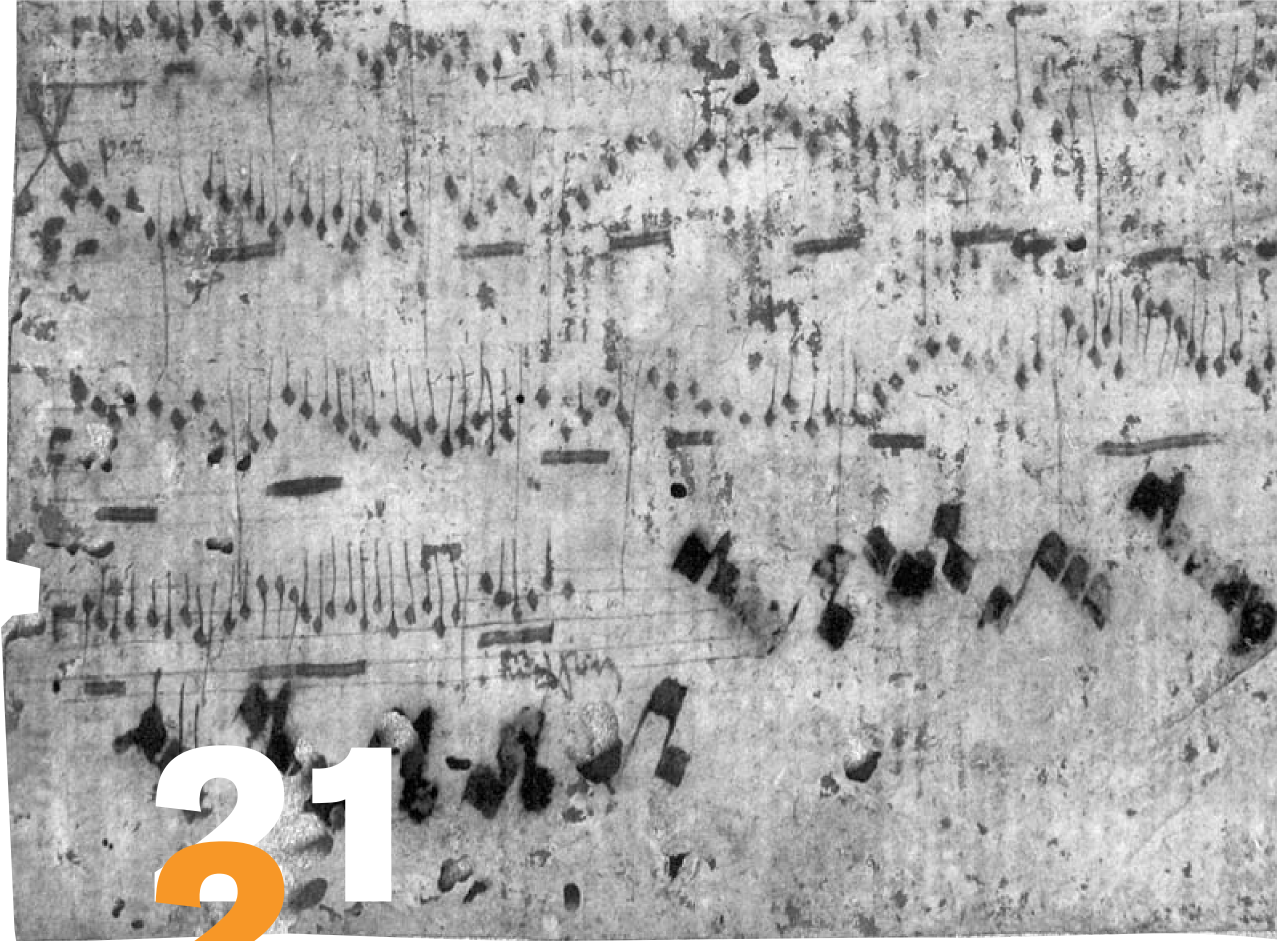

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DEAR READERS,

we greet you from these pages as all of Czech culture goes from zero to a hundred in under ten seconds following a seven-month pandemic hiatus. This unprecedented situation and its influence on our perception of time was, inevitably, one of the topics of our interview with composer and performer Lucie Vítková, but the other articles in this issue also serve to provide new connections between the past and the present: Andrew Baker and Martin Horyna discuss newly discovered paintings and notation fragments, respectively, relating to music of the Enlightenment and the Middle Ages (respectively), while Michael Beckerman muses on the historical power of a photograph taken in the early 20th century and Dina Šnejdarová presents a comprehensive look at the fascinating life and career of the Czech-Lithuanian harpsichordist Giedré Lukšaité-Mrázková. There is hopefully much to look forward to in our concert halls and theatres over the coming months.

Wishing you a musical summer,
Ian Mikyska
deputy editor-in-chief

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Cover: Detail of a manuscript reproduced on p. 29

by Ian Mikyska

No Surface, Only Content: An Interview with Composer Lucie Vítková

Lucie Vítková is one of the most distinctive voices among young Czech composers. A native of Blansko, an industrial city near Brno, they studied at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) with exchanges in the Hague, Berlin, California, and New York, where they worked with George Lewis on their doctoral dissertation (at JAMU) on the social and political dimensions of the music of Christian Wolff.

As well as composing – often using text and graphic scores in addition to standard notation – Lucie is also active as an improviser, performer, and dancer, in recent years adding the Japanese hichiriki and electronics to their main instruments, the accordion and voice. Their work has also never been confined to sound and concert halls, instead exploring various collaborations with artists and photographers, as well as Lucie's own interest in Morse code and its sonic legacy.

We caught up with Lucie over video call – although they were stuck in Europe for a considerable portion of the pandemic (six months in Brussels followed by four months in Czechia), they have now rented an apartment in Brooklyn that will serve as their base between travels to Czechia, Slovakia, Germany, and Japan in the coming months. Our conversation started with general catch-up small-talk from two friends who only see each other once or twice a year. Inevitably, the conversation turned to the pandemic.

I really stopped enjoying composing during the pandemic. It all seemed very bureaucratic; devoid of people. I felt more like an office worker, constantly writing something up and sending it along. I finish a piece and I don't hear it played, so I don't really know what I'm doing; I don't know what the music does to people. It's only now that we'll actually be rehearsing my new piece *Room* with Ensemble Spectrum from Slovakia.

PHOTO: DANIEL WOLF

Here in Brooklyn, I am in the full speed again, after the US opened its venues in April. I began playing with people almost every day. I work on my new orchestral piece, *Environment*, in the morning and meet with people to play in the afternoon. Just yesterday, we met up with cornet player and composer Graham Haynes, I'm also playing with clarinettist Madison Greenstone, with singers and composers Amirtha Kidambi and Leo Chang. With another friend, Teerapat Parnmongkol, we just started a new band called Seminar Shadow. With Teodora Stepančić and her series Piano+, we rehearsed for a concert that featured a new piece of mine, *Extended Parts*, and I also collaborated with Petr Kotík here in New York. I also spent a month with my OPERA Ensemble at the Watermill Center Residency on Long Island and there is more coming in the next few months. It is a pretty broad range of activities.

Nevertheless, you took part in some of the social distancing online artistic activities.

That's right, I tried all these avenues, and I published an album as well, but I felt really out of place being just another link on the internet. It seems absurd to force people to spend one more hour sitting in front of their computers. That's not why I make music at all. It seemed demotivating. Nevertheless, I'm really happy with the album – it's called *Aging*, it includes seven pieces for double bass and electronics, and lots of people worked on it.

I make music because I think it can take people out of the house and bring them together, though I also understood that the point now is to keep each other safe. I was also stressed out by the technical instability of online performances or by the lack of feedback from people: you sit in your room, then you turn off the stream and you're alone. You have no idea if someone saw it or how they responded.

The fact we have been separated from audiences is bigger than we think. Their feedback and capacity have a huge impact on the music. On the other hand, maybe it is a good break to have where the musicians have to be alone with their music and figure it out for themselves, without the public. It seems unnatural because we have been living in symbiosis with the audience and now we have to manage by ourselves. That might be an important one year period.

I was generally unsure of what to do with music – whether there was any point in making it. But now there's hope; we're starting to play concerts again. I perform in a duo with my friend Teerapat – one could call it free improvisation, but it no longer really sounds like that. The music we play sounds like something new to me, playing together after such a long time spent in isolation. I feel like "working with the imagination of a place" would be a better description. Like you are in a physical place and situation, but with the music, you are transported to a space of interaction which visualises as another place in your head. It is another concrete room which doesn't have much to do with the physical space you are in but with the combination of two people who meet inside sound and relate to each other. We recorded our jam session and listened back to it and we felt very good about it – "this is great, we have to publish this, everyone has to hear this!". It was great to feel that motivation.

During this pandemic, I've realised the extent to which the music world makes us fulfil certain structures. The music isn't really about them. All this bureaucracy around the music, programme notes, CVs, video invitations, promotion, being seen, sending links, pictures, emails – why are we making the music? Sometimes it feels that our music is confined to the practical things, though I want to believe that music has different functions and could have transformative powers. Of course I sometimes meet people whose perspective is closer to mine and that's highly motivating – people for whom music forms part of a ritual, of a gathering, and so on.

As I said before, my music sounds pretty different after the pandemic and I actually like that a lot. I also came out with my non-binary identity during those months, so there are lots of changes in my life and it was good to have the OPERA people around, especially during our one month residency, where we lived and made music and art together every day.

You started the OPERA Ensemble following a commission from Roulette in New York.

Yes, we performed for the first time together in my piece *OPERA* in 2017 and have continued since then. After our latest residency at the Watermill Center, we were discussing what to do next – we could easily put out three records, as we've collected over fifty gigabytes of material to date. We agreed to meet up once a month, with each meeting organised by a different member of the group. We all feel it's important to keep the work up and not let the energy dissipate after the residency, but the absolutely best thing would be to rent a van and do a tour of the USA, camping in between fixtures.

The community aspect is an important part of the OPERA Ensemble. Is this a response to the standard conditions of labour in contemporary music? People taking music as their "day job"?

You know, I don't really get that feeling. I recently performed a piece at a Ukrainian Contemporary Music Festival in New York and it was all very human and friendly. Maybe it's to do with being in New York as well, but generally, I mostly encounter people who want to enjoy it all and who have a lot of enthusiasm.

But of course, it's different with OPERA. It's all about *who's* in the ensemble, what we need to do, and what each of us needs to do. I put it all together, but when we're at the residency and someone has an idea, we go for it – we don't think about whether it's adequate in relation to the main project. If someone has an idea, we go and do it. We started making wooden combs and then playing them, for instance. With Sophie Leetmaa, we set up a wood workshop, bought tools, and started woodworking for a week to see what it would bring. We also organized a Comb Cult Gala with Sydney Viles, where we played the combs for seventy minutes. In the following weeks of the residency, we spent some time dancing, moving and playing with Muyassar Kurdi, playing graphic scores of magnolia leaves with Aine Eva Nakamura, or in my project, for which we sung into vases and noted their resonant frequencies. Then we stuck these pitches onto a keyboard with tape and created a piece out of this drone. We have made an Instagram Reels video as another form through which to work with the vases, one connected with pop culture. We have also played the drawings on ancient bowls in a piece by Vered Engelhard, *Monkeys in the Edge of the World*. We played with lots of people on the site, such as the poet Candace Hill, we gave a workshop for kids and visited the Shinnecock Reservation where we played with the musician and activist Shane Weeks and artist Jeremy Dennis.

I am interested in the multiplicity of the ensemble, which has its foundation in each of the members. Everyone is doing loads of different things and has a variety of skill. They're not just professionals at one thing – they practice on multiple levels and in multiple disciplines.

How did the idea come about?

I got the commission from Roulette Intermedium, an experimental music venue in New York, and I wanted to make an opera. I also thought it would be great to have a single group of people doing both the singing and the playing, so I set out to find instrumentalists who would be open to singing. There's a great range of both trained and untrained voices in our ensemble that people use in various genres and

contexts. I liked the versatility of having a small choir, a small ensemble, or a mix of the two. I called the piece *OPERA* and wrote it using graphic, text, and classical notation. Some members don't read classical notation, however, so I "translated" the entire standard notation into an audio score for them so they could learn it by ear. That way, I could understand the accessibility of different kind of notations and really learn to be flexible.

In *OPERA*, there is no story in the usual sense. The text is composed of excerpts from *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, a book by the Italian philosopher and feminist thinker Adriana Cavarero. So it's a piece about the voice itself. The story was that we live through the piece on the stage, while doing whatever was necessary to play it. All the texts were translated into Morse code, which is another layer of this piece, in which I explored the musical potential of this sonic language. I paid a lot of attention to staging, so that each movement would have its own place. I used my experience with dance choreography for that aspect of the piece, even though there was no dancing except for the scene where the movement was determined by an electronic feedback loop. After the premiere, there was a review in the San Francisco Classical Voice by Lucy Caplan. I really liked when she mentioned that the piece had no surface.

> ***"Vítková's sound-world might be described as music turned inside out. Through sounds both strange and unremarkable, she puts the seams of music-making on full display. You hear the stuff in the nooks and crannies rather than the glossy facade."***
> **Lucy Caplan in a review of OPERA for the San Francisco Classical Voice.**

There was no theatre in *OPERA* – it was all an authentic reflection of what we needed to do to perform the piece. It was important to clearly state that we are on the stage. In concerts, you focus more on the music over the presence of the performers, while in *OPERA*, you focus on the characters it portrays. And each person was very important in the piece. Despite the fact that there was no overarching story, each of the performers had their own story to tell while playing all these parts and changing clothes for their "aria". We started in casual dress and ended up dressed in a more extravagant/"aria" style. That transformation was important – the idea was to show yourself through fashion. *OPERA* is conceived as a spiral, in the next performance of it, we would start in the more extravagant "aria" attire and would end up in something even more "aria". All this is *OPERA* for me: to operate in space; to transform. What interests me about the word "opera" is not only its origin, in the sense of an extended dramatic composition, but also the meaning of the word as "work" or an "effort" in general. You can see both of these elements in *OPERA*.

It felt so good to surround myself with like-minded people, so I decided to continue and founded the OPERA Ensemble. I feel that we're more like a pack of wolves than an ensemble. There's quite a punk approach – someone might disappear for two years and we hear nothing about them, and then I get a phone call from South Korea and we can celebrate their return. Or, during the residency, one member didn't come at all, well, that doesn't mean that they weren't there with us! We had

them on our minds and worked with that presence. It was a composer, Elizabeth Adams, who could not join us because she could not access the residency with her child due to residency regulations.

I am really learning about how to lead, and also noticing how the mainstream structures and notions of leadership are not broad enough. It pushes me into a non-conformist world – most of the members, including me, are outcasts, to an extent, living more or less outside of the system. Sometimes it feels like anything can happen. This really stretches the range of how we can be together.

It does seem like a difficult situation in which to plan concerts.

Sure. It does a great job at disrupting all my organisational habits and stereotypes. Should I start to get upset about this? Should I reject someone and say they're no longer a member of the group? I don't think so. It really stretches the boundaries and often shows me new ways of being creative. If one person drops out, the pieces are flexible enough that we can always find a solution. And this also informs how we write. We can respond quickly and dynamically when something changes, which also teaches us to process our emotions. It should not be such a problem: if someone needs to do something, they should do it, and if someone needs to disappear, that's how it is and I respect that.

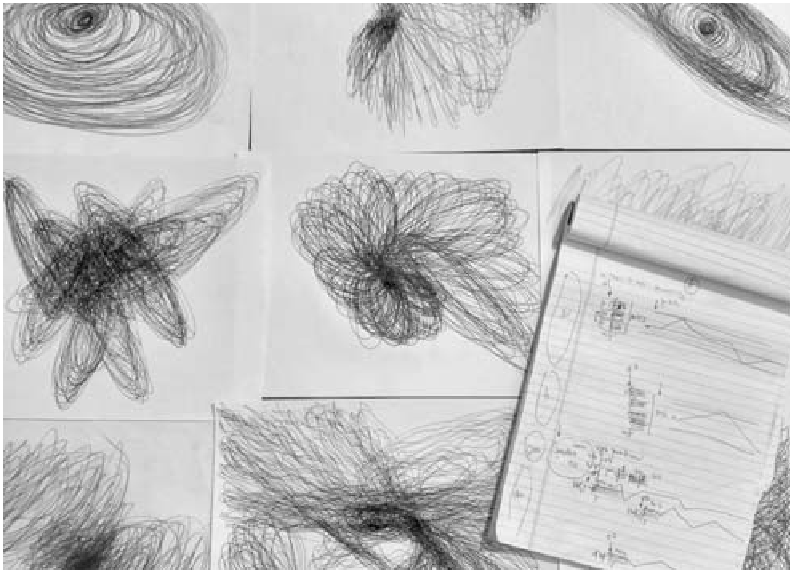
Just from this discussion, it seems like there is a distinct similarity with anarchist thought. Is the political made explicit in the ensemble?

Not really – everyone's politics are different and I don't really want to put a label on the whole thing. Even the fact that I am the notional leader of the group teaches me a lot. For instance, I realised there was a tacit expectation of peaceableness – we all want to be together, we always try to meet each other half way. However, this would exclude people of a more conflict-based nature. The make-up of the ensemble changes all the time – people come and go, some return, some don't, though there's a stable core that includes me and a few other people.

Personally, I'm definitely very influenced by democracy. I like when everyone has the same amount of space and can express their individuality in the collective. This also relates to Christian Wolff and his conception of music. I wanted it to be like that because I felt there wasn't enough of this approach in society, and it worked for years, but now I also want to be able to accommodate conflict, in part because conflict can have the effect of renewal, so we won't get stuck in a groove.

That's a frequent critique of Wolff's music – that it's too utopian and doesn't give any tenure to conflict, struggle, and the like. I remember George Lewis once saying: "If you want to make a change, you've got to make some noise!"

Studying Wolff's music was very important to me, but I feel like I'm in a post-Wolff stage – I have to develop his ideas further. In response to the quote by George, I remember that whenever I wanted to change things in an improvised context, I would start playing extremely quietly and paying enormous attention to it. It doesn't just have to be volume – it can also be about gesture and concentration. Though, I get what George meant and now I also make loud noises – ever since I started playing the hichiriki, which is a very powerful instrument.



Sketches for the orchestral piece "Environment"

As for Wolff, what I was most attracted by was the interplay between the individual and the whole: we're all part of the whole, but we're all equal parts and there is space for each of us to express ourselves individually – even if it's through his material, we still get to decide how we use it. The conclusion I arrived at in my dissertation was that his approach operates on an abstract sphere: Wolff isn't interested in who plays his music. It's nice that he teaches us to behave towards each other in these ways (which might well be highly beneficial), but he applies this to people who are not representative of all of society. The techniques are therefore only applied to a particular group of people – to his friends or to a contemporary music community that isn't diverse enough to test the model in depth.

So far, I know that music is made by people, it doesn't fly in the air by itself. Somebody has to move to make it happen and the *who* is an important context of music which has been overlooked for a long time.

So what do you mean when you say you're "post-Wolff"?

Well, I finished the dissertation – it's going to be published as well – and now I'm moving on. I'm saying "Okay, Christian, I respect the way you're doing it and I take it on, but now I'm moving in my own circles and I have to think about what this all meant." So I approach it critically, but I'm definitely not saying Wolff wasn't an influence on me. And not just with the OPERA Ensemble, with other ensembles too – I was starting the NYC Constellation Ensemble while I was reading a lot of Wolff, so it was also based on equality and individuality in the collective.

When we met in Brussels a few years ago, we were both excited by Jane Bennett's ideas of an expanded ecology of things as set out in her now-classic book* Vibrant Matter. *How have these ideas developed in your work in recent years?

Jane Bennett is always with us, particularly when we're working with the OPERA Ensemble or in my solo work. What I was most captivated by was her question

Comb making during the Watermill Center Residency 2021, Long Island NY

whether we can see things from a non-human perspective. This is crucial for me. We use things, look at them, constantly interpret them – how they relate to each other, how they work. In a sense, they are an embodiment of how we relate to the world. But how do things relate to themselves? This is a perspective I am very interested in.

Bennett talks about people who struggle with hoarding *(an inability to throw away things that would generally be considered trash – editor's note)*. There might be something about being close to the objects in a way you start to perceive them as a part of your body. In this perspective, it is unclear where the human ends and where the objects begin.

As a musician, I consider myself a cyborg. I think about my instruments as parts of my body. This includes things like my portable speaker, which I've had for years. Whenever someone touches it, I become jittery – it's very close to me. People around me know this and the members of the OPERA Ensemble, for instance, are very careful with my things.

This is so crucial for my work as a performer – the relationship between me and my objects is the principal subject of my performances. I often use portable feedback, where I have a little microphone on my hand and an active speaker on my leg. This way, every move I make is reflected in the sound and when I hear it, it leads me to another movement or to play my instrument, creating the whole.

The aim is to give space to the objects, to my body, and to the relationship between them. Jane Bennett really just needed to say "non-human perspective" and that opened the floodgates for me to develop my practice in all these various directions. I like that she doesn't provide concrete answers. Instead, she circles around various questions, perspectives, and issues that create new locations for thinking.

My next question was going to be about the role of sound and listening in your approach to "vibrant matter", but actually, what you just said makes it pretty clear that your approach is not in the abstract or acousmatic listening tradition, but closer to Cage's idea of a musical

OPERA Ensemble during the Watermill Center Residency 2021
Left to right: Lucie Vítková, Vered Engelhard, Sophie Leetmaa

performance as total theatre involving all the senses and components of the situation.

Right, though I would like to distant myself from Cage at this point – he was an influence on me in my early years but not recently. As I perceive it, his music has become defined and established and is losing its flexibility for me. Jaroslav Šťastný *(composer Peter Graham, Lucie's teacher at JAMU – editor's note)* used to say that experimental musicians do music that they feel is necessary. When I perform, it basically just *happens*. I barely do anything – I simply exist in that situation. To be on the stage is an extreme situation that influences what I do – for instance, when I'm on an elevated stage, I pretend I am not elevated. I try to demolish the stage and make it clear that anyone can do what I am doing. If people see it and say: "Well, I could do that too," then that's great! I hope people do start doing what they need to do and what is necessary for them. I don't need people to look up to me – sure, I want them to respect my work, but I also want them to search within themselves and maybe find something *they* need to say. That's why I find working with non-musicians so inspiring: I think everyone can do something; everyone can take part.

What's the relationship between virtuosity – the amount of time you had to spend with your instruments so that they could become part of your body – and the idea that what you arrive at is something anyone can do?

That's a good question. I find virtuosity is still part of my practice, only on a different level. Usually, my pieces have virtuosic coordination which underlays the resultant sound, which may well be considerably simpler. These co-ordinations are where I direct my education, dance practice, and composition practice. It is something which is not obvious at first sight, but sometimes, you look into my scores and they seem really complicated on the level of co-ordinating the movement to produce the sound, and I also write pieces in which you have to focus on multiple things at the same time. In my compositions, the players usually have an audio score in headphones and they have to listen to their co-players as well as reading multiple scores in front of them. From this overwhelming situation, I want to distract the players to stop performing and only be in the space making sound. I've called some of my later pieces multiplicity exercises, where you can try to train your brain to be able to do many things at the same time. I think this is a good contradiction to the specialisation and professionalism that is dominating our scene.

On the other side, I am also aware how virtuosity might cut off access for people to make music and where virtuosity dictates the binary of good and bad, which is not useful for music or art. People can often be cut off, divided from music – they don't give themselves a chance, or else they're told they're not suitable for music. I like

the opinion that they are suitable, so through my solo performances, I want to bring them in, offer the possibility of doing something themselves; the idea that it might be beneficial for their lives.

While you were at Columbia University, you began performing with the gagaku ensemble there (gagaku is a traditional Japanese form of imperial court music – editor's note). This led to you taking up the hichiriki (a double-reed Japanese instrument) and you've kept up this practice. What is it that interests you about folk and traditional music?

Well, I have always been interested in all kinds of music – at Columbia University, I was also involved in a North Indian ensemble, CU Raaga, and during my time at CalArts, I tried out Javanese dancing with gamelan accompaniment and African dances with a live band, played by the students. Somehow, I stayed with gagaku the longest – we perform twice a year, and the second concert is always at the Miller Theatre with Masters from Japan. I also went to Japan for a six-weeks residency, I bought a hichiriki there and started taking it seriously; as one of my main instruments.

When I went to Japan for the second time, next to the traditional gagaku concert at the Yomiuri Otemachi Hall in Tokyo, I played a concert with two noise musicians, Toshimaru Nakamura and Tetuzi Akiyama – we formed a trio of no-input mixer, electric guitar, and hichiriki. I love the fact that the hichiriki has such a powerful tone that even in a noise setting, it doesn't need amplification. I also performed some concerts in a duo with my colleague Haruhiko Okabe, who has a background in traditional Japanese music as well as free jazz.

The approach of my teacher, Hitomi Nakamura, is a huge inspiration to me. Whenever I hear her play, I feel great depth in what she does, combining a devotion to traditional music with a curiosity for contemporary music. She also came to my Appolo bar noise concert, so I really admire her capacity to be able to perceive the potential of the instrument on a broad scale.

I have a keen interest in what it means to play the hichiriki in various contexts. How we approach these blends is a challenge. What I've figured out so far is that it is good to be aware of one's own position in this context and be transparent about your relationship to what you do. I'm actively thinking about this – what does it mean when I play the hichiriki in a free improvisation context, who I play with… The conclusion I've arrived at is that it's good not to walk away from it even if one has doubts. To keep trying to connect, bring different environments together, keep asking and keep playing.

There seems to be a considerable difference between the training system of Japanese traditional music, with its high degree of rigour and specialisation, and the approach you described in your solo performances – that "anyone can do this".

But I think everyone can play gagaku, in the sense that anyone is invited to play. That's how I felt at the Columbia University Gagaku Ensemble, where I met some composers and musicians as well as engineers and people from various non-music oriented disciplines playing this music. The same in the temple in Tokyo: I had the impression that lots of the members in the ensemble were so-called non-musicians and had a broad spectrum of occupations.

PHOTO: MUYASSAR KURDI

OPERA Ensemble performing OPERA
Left to right: Lucie Vítková, Sky Macklay, (Sophie Leetmaa – legs), Sydney Viles, Carolyn Hietter and Martha Cargo

The training in gagaku is different from the experience I had at a conservatory when learning a solo instrument. In gagaku, you first need to sing "shoga", which means that you internalise the melody you are going to play through your voice. There is a modern book of scores written in katakana to practice gagaku, though in some lessons we would still do it through traditional oral learning, where my teacher, Hitomi Nakamura, would sing the melody first and I would repeat it. Through learning to sing the song first, I would acquire a basic knowledge of it. After that we would learn to play it. The combination of singing and playing is very important; you only know the song well if you know "shoga" well. I think even the masters would tell you that there is still more work to do on their sound and more to learn. It seems that in gagaku, you are never finished with being a master or such, you simply continue to play your whole life. Each player also has their own distinctive sound, the reed is very sensitive to changes in temperature or embouchure, and there are more ways to play the songs according to the masters and their lineage.

In a gagaku lesson, I realised that we never practice the song as single sections or focus on the most difficult places separately. Also, nobody will give you any tips, tricks, and shortcuts to learn it faster. You play the song over and over, alone, with your teacher or in the ensemble, until it becomes clear to you. Daily practice is important to strengthen your breath and embouchure muscles, especially with the hichiriki, since it is hard to produce a sound on it. These are some of my experiences of gagaku acquired over the last four years.

The last topic I'd like to discuss is your collaboration with the musician David Rothenberg, whose life project is exploring musical interactions with animals.

That was an important experience. With David, we made an album with a nightingale in Berlin and another with hundreds of thousands

of seventeen-year-old cicadas in Ohio. I'm always aware of the environment around me and being able to practice and perform with him for three years, whilst also meeting scientists who study animal behaviour and calls, had a considerable influence on me. I learned a lot from David, who also wrote several books on the music of birds, whales, and insects.

Some moments were very strong, particularly with the nightingale in Berlin – we spent forty-five minutes playing with the bird, in the park at midnight. I was only singing, while David performed on clarinet and electronics. There is something about a realisation of contact with the nightingale. I was trying out things I often do in music: it would start a note, then I'd join it, it would stop, and what I'm interested in is whether it'll then respond and realise that we are singing together. There were two amazing moments when the nightingale came back to the tone I was singing. I don't know whether I imagined this or not, but the moment of connection was very strong. Though one has to realise that one can't beat the nightingale – it'll go on singing through the night, hours and hours, even losing a portion of its body weight during the process.

What you are talking about is your direct interaction on site. What is the shift that takes place when someone listens to a recording of this performance?

Being there is one experience, and we do live concerts of these interactions too, but once you put it on a CD, it enters the musical sphere and what's interesting is listening to the sonic interactions to see what new music is created. Though I'm still not sure if what we're doing there is really music. We can call everything music so just people pay attention to it, but maybe there is meaning in sonic interaction other than music-related meaning. I think that's one possible critique of Cage – he wanted us to pay attention to everything as music, which seems like a good thing at first, but on the other hand, we may begin to forget what the sounds were in the first place and that they deserve attention even without being called "music".

To return to the first part of your answer: I think it's crucial that I'm listening to the interaction between a human being and another agent with a non-human perspective. I don't think it's as simple as "abstraction has now taken place; this is now music" – the deepening of our relationship with the environment and the animal kingdom can still take place.

I agree. It's unlikely that someone would spend forty-five minutes just listening to the nightingale. The framework of the concert or CD gives you an opportunity to focus in – a musical excuse.

Right, like the paradox of field recording – for many people who enjoy field recording, particularly on an amateur level, recording is actually just an excuse to stand here and listen for ten minutes, listen to anything, because it turns out that listening to anything for ten minutes is interesting.

Exactly. What you create for yourself is an environment for concentration, a motivation, and meaning. It's interesting that we have to use such means to break through the everyday structures we live in to arrive at activities that were once, perhaps, perfectly natural. Well, I don't know if it was ever natural to listen to birds for an hour… perhaps in a different way.

by Dina Šnejdarová

The Energy Passes Through Me When I Play
HARPSICHORDIST GIEDRÉ LUKŠAITÉ-MRÁZKOVÁ

She was born at the end of World War II in what is now Lithuania and was then part of the Soviet Union. Growing up in the Baltics, she encountered deportations, fear, and bullying. Despite this, she never lost her optimism and hope for the future. Giedré Lukšaité-Mrázková has lived in Prague since 1976 and has been a professor of harpsichord at the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) in Prague for over forty years, where she has taught a number of successful performers who have gone on to distinguished careers. She is an avid champion of Czech music and has recorded, among others, the works of Leopold Koželuch, Josef Antonín Štěpán (Joseph Anton Steffan), and Jan Ladislav Dussek, as well as presenting world premieres of works by Jiří Gemrot or Petr Eben. She is also a recipient of the Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas.

In 2019, Mrázková celebrated her 75th birthday by putting out an album (on the Czech label Arta) featuring her life's work, the second volume of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The disc presents her own original interpretation: a combination of the preludes and fugues with Protestant chorales.

This central artistic endeavour began in Lithuania, when, as an eleven-year-old girl, she played Bach's preludes from an edition by the Italian pianist, composer, and teacher Bruno Mugellini (1871–1912). It was miles away from what we now understand by the terms "critical edition" and "Urtext" – in accordance with Romantic tradition, the editor added dynamics, tempo markings, and articulations, considerably distorting the essence of the Baroque-period music.

She then studied piano and organ at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, followed by further organ studies at the Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. Incidentally, she was inspired to study the organ after a concert by the notable Czech organist, composer, teacher, and organ builder Jiří Reinberger (1914–1977), with whom she later studied in Prague. She did not perform on organs in churches, only in concert halls, and she knew only little of the religious motifs contained in Bach's music, as these were taboo topics in socialist society.

At age twenty-five, she won the third prize in the Čiurlionis International Organ Competition. That was the breaking point. One of the judges, an Estonian Evangelical organist, told her that Bach's

PHOTO: VOJTĚCH HAVLÍK

music is constructed in a different manner than she was performing it. “I was teaching at a university, working on my doctorate, I was a laureate at a competition, and suddenly – someone said *this* to me. It was such a shock that I didn’t touch the organ for six months,” the artist recalls. She finally decided to start with Bach again, from zero, and follow only her own intuition. “Over time, I understood that at the root of it all is Bach’s faith, which grows out of the Protestant chorale. And that this faith is exceptional. It’s the purest possible relationship – love for God. It’s impossible for a composer to think utterly differently at the organ, the piano, and the harpsichord. He’s still just one person!”

With her excellent knowledge of German, she began avidly studying Protestant chorales. Important sources included the Gesangbuch (a Protestant song book), containing about five hundred chorales, the German Bible, and Albert Schweitzer’s famous book on Bach, after which she discovered Schweitzer’s contemporary Boleslav Leopoldovič Javorský (1877–1942), who sent a student of his a letter from the front in 1916 including an exegesis of biblical motifs in Bach’s work. “Through consideration, research, and comparison, I finally arrived at the conclusion that in both volumes of the *Well-Tempered Clavier,* we can hear quotations and hints of chorale melodies and chorale thinking. I don’t hear the chorales so strongly in Bach’s dances – I always focused more on the preludes and fugues,” says Mrázková.

When asked for specifics, she suggests that the second volume of the WTC includes the chorales *Vater unser im Himmelreich* in the C minor fugue, *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir, Herr Gott* in the B flat minor prelude, or *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* in the F major fugue. Sometimes, she only perceives snippets or internal connections, such as the depiction of the Last Supper of the Lord in the F sharp minor prelude and fugue, the lashing of Jesus Christ in the G minor fugue, the crucifixion in the A minor fugue, and the song of the archangel Michael in the E major fugue.

It is Mrázková’s opinion that what results is a close relationship between language and music, which she considers crucial: “As soon as I have the German text of a Protestant chorale in front of me, I know exactly which word is important. I also know what is important musically in a fugue subject. Then, however, I consider the content related to the fugue. I consider Bach’s harmonic emphasis in this context and whether this will stand up to scrutiny in the entire fugue – and usually, it does. This, for me, is rhetoric. I don’t know if it’s correct – someone might say it’s all nonsense, but for me, this is how it is,” she adds.

The Lithuanian Journey

Forging a path to grasping Bach’s music was not the only challenge the artist faced. If she wanted to

work in the Soviet Union and continue performing, she always had to search for balance. She was a member of the Lithuanian intelligentsia, and that wasn't exactly a winning hand.

The Soviets occupied Lithuania a year before the outbreak of World War II. The beginning of the war saw the first wave of deportations, mostly targeting teachers and recent high school graduates who had voted against accepting the Soviets as liberators.

A considerable portion of the Lithuanian intelligentsia emigrated at the end of the war, mostly to America: "About half of my relatives left, as they knew very well that the deportations would continue after the war. I have to add that about a third of my relatives were deported and some never returned. My parents, both university lecturers, also considered leaving the country, but I was already on the way, so they decided to stay. The deportations really did continue after the war, essentially until Stalin's death in 1953. We lived in fear. We always had bags full of clothes and dried bread ready in case the Soviets came for us," she remembers.

This period also meant compulsory socialist indoctrination, and children from "undesirable" – i.e. intellectual – families had to learn fast what they could and could not say in public. Phone calls were out of the question because of wire taps, so people mostly visited each other: "My parents knew who to trust, and what's more, there were few of us – after the war, there were only about two and a half million Lithuanians left. Our home was frequented by composers, poets, novelists – some of them now the classics of Lithuanian culture. This created strong bonds that remain so today – me and some of my contemporaries are as close as if we were siblings. Our family also helped hide escapees from Siberia and people who had nowhere to go. One of our nannies, for instance, was a woman whose husband and two sons had been shot. All this aid was coordinated by my great aunt – she distributed people into families and arranged for new names and documents. We helped each other. And, miraculously, we survived it all."

Despite the difficult conditions (her mother lost her job due to political reasons), Mrázková managed to establish herself. She was the first in the Soviet Union to present a full, hour-long organ recital of music by the French composer Olivier Messiaen, which she later also recorded. To satisfy the regime, she "made up" for this performance with a concert featuring only Soviet composers held on the occasion of the Day of the Army. She was also allowed to perform in the countries of the Eastern Bloc: Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia.

The Charm of the Harpsichord

It didn't come at once, but gradually. From Prague. She first heard the harpsichord in Lithuania, at a concert given by the legendary Zuzana Růžičková (1927–2017). It was not love at first hearing – more curiosity. Mrázková was not satisfied by pianists' performances of Bach's music and desired to understand this literature through the means of the harpsichord. She suspected she might find answers here, but opportunities for playing the instrument did not exist in Lithuania.

Then, fate decided. In 1976, she moved to Prague for love, got married, and started from zero. During the period known as normalisation in Czechoslovakia, which began in August 1968 with the invasion of the armies of the Warsaw Pact, she could not find work in her field in Prague. Some didn't like the fact that she was a foreigner, others that she was from the Soviet Union, while some were simply jealous of her reputation and threatened by her competition.

At a time when the situation seemed desperate, Mrázková received help from the Academy professor mentioned above, Jiří Reinberger, who not only offered her organ lessons but also arranged for harpsichord tuition with Zuzana Růžičková (between 1981 and 1984), while the director of one of Prague's state music schools for children, Vladislav Dlask, employed her as a piano teacher. She had never taught small children before and struggled with the language, but she still remembers fondly the three years she spent at the school. She found lifelong friends and, in her own words, became more humble. Then came the opportunity to study at AMU and acquire another doctorate.

Ars Rediviva

When it became apparent that the Lithuanian artist would not do the regime's bidding, her concert life began encountering problems again, but once more, she was lucky: She was invited to collaborate with one of the first champions of historically informed performance in Czechoslovakia, the flautist and conductor Milan Munclinger (1923–1986).

He established the group Ars Rediviva with his wife Viktorie Švihlíková in 1951, i.e. at around the same time as Nikolaus Harnoncourt founded Concentus Musicus Wien. (The European ensembles La Petite Bande, Musia Antiqua Köln, Academy of Ancient Music, or Les Arts Florissants only began performing in the 1970s.)

In Czechoslovakia, his activity was like an apparition. Not only was he a brilliant concert dramaturg, expert, and enthusiast who could attract listeners

Members of the Ars Rediviva ensemble (left to right: Milan Munclinger, GLM, František Sláma)

Giving a recital in Nagoya, Japan

across generations to his concerts – he also translated important sources, worked as an editor, and co-founded the Czech Society for Early Music. At a time when the word "mass" could not be used on concert posters, discovering Baroque music became a great adventure. After Munclinger's death, Mrázková did not continue working with the ensemble, instead later forging close partnerships with violinist Gabriela Demeterová and viola da gamba player Petr Hejný, among others.

A New Beginning and a Love of Czech Music

Only after the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, the fall of the totalitarian regime, and the opening of the borders to Western Europe could musicians in Czechia delve deeper into historically informed interpretation. The curious pedagogue travelled to the Netherlands (Utrecht, The Hague, and Amsterdam), where she consulted with a number of keyboard instrument teachers during her exchange, including the famous Gustav Leonhardt, one of the leading figures in the modern-age early music movement. Additionally, she also learned to play the fortepiano.
She also began inviting specialists to Prague. Thanks to her efforts, the harpsichord virtuosos who visited the city include Jacques Ogg from the Netherlands, Johannes Sonnleitner from Zurich, Kenneth Gilbert from Paris, Françoise Lengellé from Lyon, and Gordon Murray from Vienna. She wanted the new harpsichord generation to have the best possible conditions in which to study, she wanted the school to acquire high-quality editions of harpsichord literature, and, last but not least, for it to allow its students to play on copies of Baroque instruments.
She was successful in her efforts, and today, the Academy in Prague has at its disposal three copies: of a French harpsichord by Pascal-Joseph Taskin from the 18th century by the builder Kennedy, a Flemish Ruckers harpsichord from the 17th century made by František Vyhnálek, and a German harpsichord by Michael Mietke from the end of the 17th century by the builder Martin Sassman. Another source of joy for Mrázková is that two of her former students are currently colleagues of hers at AMU.
In her choice of repertoire, Mrázková emphasises Czech composers. In this respect, she is also responsible for reviving interest in harpsichord pieces by two composers who lived in Vienna, Leopold Koželuch (1747–1818) and Josef Antonín Štěpán (1726–1797). With Koželuch, by whom she recorded thirty-seven fortepiano sonatas for Czech Radio, the relationship was one of immediate understanding: "It's true that he wrote for amateurs, so some of his pieces are rather stereotypical – that's why I didn't record them all. But when he cut himself off from this fact, he managed to achieve – particularly in the slow movements – a wonderful tenderness, beauty, and joy. That is why I am convinced his music should return to our concert halls."
Mrázková believes Antonín Štěpán is an even more interesting composer: "When I played his music in Japan, people would come see me after the concert and ask me for the sheet music. They were completely enraptured by him. For me, this composer was also a huge discovery. Given that he also wrote music for himself to perform, similarly to Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, he experimented; tried out unconventional approaches, which we hear in the form, harmony, and affects. I think that musically, he opened the door to Beethoven, and when we listen closely, we can even hear Schubert." Mrázková recorded six of Štěpán's sonatas for harpsichord and fortepiano for Czech Radio.

As for contemporary music, the harpsichordist performs many pieces by Lithuanian composers, but she also has a particular focus on the work of Czech composer Jiří Gemrot (born 1957): "He has a fantastic gift for creating form, writing in a modern style, and yet using an emotional energy that is balanced in the structure. I enjoy both performing and listening to his music. Everything is in accord and he also has marvellous feeling for the instrument. Furthermore, he is my favourite music director – I don't record with anyone else. I am glad that we made – in collaboration with other musicians – a recording of his harpsichord solo and chamber works, published online by Radioservis."

The Energy Around Us

Anyone who has met Giedré Lukšaité-Mrázková and heard her play must have noticed her inner freedom and concentration on the energy that arises out of the music: "Music is vibration and energy, and when it's well formed, it affects us. With some performers, rationality dominates, while with others, it's emotion, intuition. I enjoy analysing, but I can free myself from it. When I play, I get an energy that leads me. I know very well where the dissonance is, where the harmony changes, which notes are important, and so on, I respect the rules and the style, but when I play, in the present moment, there's something more. Sometimes it even happens that there is too much of this energy. I process this energy and pass it on, so it might even be too much for the listener. Once, when I was playing Bach's preludes and fugues at a concert, people left with headaches. I myself experienced something similar when I attended a concert by Sviatoslav Richter – not that I would dare compare myself to this artist. We left that concert almost in a trance, some of us with migraines..."

Her interpretive style manifests great freedom, which she considers one of the advantages of old age: "I was brought up in a model that postulated that I can play everything even better and that I always have reason to be dissatisfied with my performance. This excessively self-critical mind can really tie you up. You end up with an inferiority complex, from which I suffered for a long time. Now I am no longer bothered by what a music critic might say, or my students. I started playing music as it is, according to my own momentary internal state. I also have to make peace with the fact that I belong to a generation that is not particularly needed for concert life. I could perform, but I would really have to offer myself up and plead. So I work on myself instead. I clean my inner channels. And whether an offer connected to music comes or not – we'll see…"

by Boris Klepal

TEREZA HAVELKOVÁ
OPERA AS HYPERMEDIUM: *MEANING-MAKING, IMMEDIACY, AND THE POLITICS OF PERCEPTION*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2021
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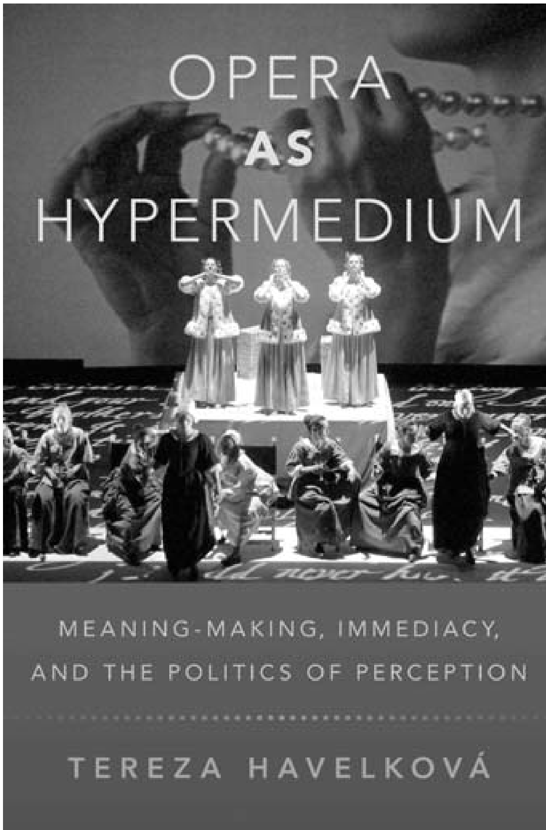
A new book by musicologist Tereza Havelková places opera in the context of contemporary media and the relationships of the world today. The genre, which she characterises as a hypermedium, is not defined as a separate area, but as one of several mutually influential structures.



Havelková makes her groundwork clear right at the start, and not only in theoretical terms (with reference to the book *Remediation: Understanding New Media*[1]) but also practically, using the well-known opening of the *Ring of the Nibelungs*, which includes an appearance by the three Rheinmaidens. The author presents two renditions of their entry in two striking productions from the last fifteen years. The first, directed by Robert Lepage, premiered in 2010 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the second was produced in Valencia in 2007 by the Fura dels Baus theatre group. Both productions are marked by an intense use of video, and are also generally well known thanks to widely available video recordings distributed online and on DVD. Already this layering or looping of the meaning of media suggests one of the themes Havelková addresses in the book. The core of her short comparison, however, rests primarily in a characterisation of the manner in which both productions approach the medium of video – either as an illustrative layer completing the environment, which is the case at the Met, or as an equal layer within the theatrical form, one that is necessary in order to create the resultant meaning of the production.

It is significant that Havelková uses the scene from Das Rheingold merely as an illustration of her aims. She is not confined to the standard repertoire of the 18th and 19th centuries and is not interested in the use of new media as tools to make the production more diverse or up-to-date. She also avoids becoming distracted by listing numerous productions that make use of hypermedia. At the centre of her interest are recent operatic productions with a strong relationship to our present and its possibilities, capably demonstrated on two well-chosen examples discussed in detail.

Opera can be viewed as a multimedia genre that was, over time, forced to find itself an appropriate space in a multimedia world. Havelková offers a much broader and more complex perception of the topic at hand, proposing opera not as multimedia but as a hypermedium. In her conception, opera is not a framework composed of its individual components unified under the banner of the "Gesamtkunstwerk". In reality, opera presents its audience with mutually interpenetrating layers, their parallel existence within the production, and the interlinking of its fragments through "hypersignificant"[2] references. It follows that this entails a blurring of the difference between a performance in the theatre and a video recording of this performance, so it comes as no surprise how often Havelková makes reference to film. She then applies the results of her theoretical research to an analysis of two operas by the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, co-authored – or, if you will, with a libretto by – the film-maker Peter Greenaway. If what we are discussing is a hypermedial interlinking of the components and

1) Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin. Remediation: Understanding New Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

2) The analogy of the hypertext imitates the manner in which Havelková substitutes "point of experience" for "point of view".

fragments of an operatic work, even commonly used terms such as "composer" and "librettist" lose much of their apparent unambiguousness.
The operas *Rosa, A Horse Drama* (also sometimes presented as *Rosa – The Death of a Composer*) and *Writing to Vermeer* by Andriessen and Greenaway are at the centre of Havelková's interest, but they also represent the climax of the gradual interpenetration of opera and other multimedia and hypermedia forms. The author mentions the opera *La Belle et la Bête*, for which Philip Glass strictly adhered to the eponymous film by Jean Cocteau, video operas by Steve Reich and Beryl Korot, the cinematic adaptation of *The Tales of Hoffmann* by Powell and Pressburger, and other works. On all these examples, she demonstrates how the individual media significantly influence each other within a single opera, how they create the resultant image and how this image must be read, how they address the physical aspect of the singers, and how they uncover or camouflage the gap between our perception of the voice and the body. All these works, however, are presented by the author as preliminaries to Andriessen and Greenaway.
It might almost seem blasphemous to separate into components a genre that the demands of the Gesamtkunstwerk led to a complex perception of all its parts – after all, many opera lovers still consider this principle the basis of opera. However, it has been decades since Bertold Brecht called for a division of all theatrical components, leading to a removal of their mutual intoxication. Hypermediality turns opera into a mobile matrix of fragments that mutually influence one another, shifting in meaning, and it is only from this interaction that the whole is created, with its form necessitating perception as part of precisely this plurality. A hypermedia opera does not direct its audience, instead providing it with the opportunity to "click through" the emotions and meanings of the work on offer, just like a website.
Part of the reason why Havelková selected operas by Andriessen and Greenaway to demonstrate her intentions was surely the fact that they are dear to her personally and that she could consult directly with Andriessen. These are extreme examples of operas that were marked by the hypermedia language of an exceptional film-maker right from the very start, with Greenaway also providing considerable input on the staging. And since we're talking about gentle shifts in meaning, it is hard, as we read, not to think of Greenaway's film The Draughtsman's Contract, in which the detective plot is generated and complicated by unexpected and inexplicable details found in a drawing at an aristocratic estate. Greenaway's 1982 film thus ceases being a complicated puzzle, acting instead as a subtle guide.
Opera as Hypermedium represents an attempt to provide a comprehensive answer to the question of how opera becomes embedded in today's world of networked relationships between small knots; how it reflects and co-creates this world. The text itself feels like an intellectual detective novel in which it is clear at the outset who the culprit is, but what is most interesting is the manner in which this was discovered, how and why the deed was done, and how many various meanings this method contains.
If hypermedia opera can be roughly characterised as a synthesis of the Gesamtkunstwerk as the thesis and Brechtian theatre as the antithesis, Havelková progresses in a similar manner not only on the complex level of the book but also in a number of fragments of ideas. The text of *Opera as Hypermedium* is built on extensively cited sources in whose contradictions the author searches for solutions and offers possibilities for reconciliation. She points out differences as well as points of contact, building out of them a more complex manner in which to create and perceive opera.
The book opens with the "Introduction: Theorizing Opera as Hypermedium", which is followed by four themed sections: "Allegory and Excess: Reading Hypermedial Opera", "Theatricality and Absorption: Listening for a Point of Experience", "Liveness and Mediatization: (De)constructing Dichotomies", and "Synaesthesia or Anaesthesia? Toward a Politics of Hypermedial Opera".
Havelková guides her reader through a dense foliage of text that includes not only opera, but just as seriously makes use of film, media theory, the sociology of music, and a number of other fields.
Havelková considers opera political, though mainly on a general level. It is affected by external events and it influences them in turn, not because of some absolute power or position, but simply because it is one of them. At the same time, it creates a micro-world within itself in which the relationships of the external world can be recognised, observed, and decoded.

by Michael Beckerman

A Visit to the Social Club with Stravinsky and Ježek

Some time ago I was asked to take part in a panel discussion with Richard Taruskin and Pieter van den Toorn at the Stravinsky conference and festival at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Sitting onstage between two such formidable Stravinskyians, and having carefully checked my own published writings for even a mention of the word "Stravinsky", I pursued a bit of public academic theater which I called *Mike's Little Book about Stravinsky*. Festooned with drawings made by the sons of a young colleague, and occasionally animated by the only slightly primitive use of Powerpoint software, I introduced a photograph of Stravinsky sitting with the Czech composer and jazzster, Jaroslav Ježek.

The idea of the "little book" I borrowed, just a bit, from the notion of the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. Instead of bravery earning a medal, which is the way we might usually think of it, if we think of it at all, the lion is given a medal to make him brave. So, absent the stature to appear in such an authoritative role at such a momentous conference, I hoped that showing that I too had a book, albeit a tiny and virtual one at that, would puncture some of the reverent celebrations.

And I was further delighted that my old friend James Oestreich was reviewing the whole thing for *The New York Times*. We all know the old saw: if a tree falls in a forest and the *New York Times* doesn't report it, can we really say the tree has fallen? However, when I saw the review of the event written up, I found this sentence, "Michael Beckerman, the chairman of the musicology department at New York University, who loves to play the class clown, had the group in stitches with his little self-made e-book, 'Mike's Little Book About Stravinsky,' haplessly trying to tie the composer to Mr. Beckerman's specialty, Czech music."

Nothing is worse than trying to explain a joke or a bit of academic street theater after the fact, and I suppose one should be gratified to have one's colleagues "in stitches." However, there were at least two things I was trying to achieve through what the Czechs might call my "intervention."

The first is, indeed, a sense of clownishness, which might also be called anarchy, or even… perspective. The self-serious anointing of the Modernist Medal of Honor to Stravinsky and his *Rite*, the "Hall of Fame" atmosphere that merely ensures that the famous get more famous and everyone else gets forgotten – all this may be due for what local road racers call an oil and lube in the pit. The worship and exaggerated flogging of fame is not necessarily such a healthy thing for either the subjects of our research or practitioners of our own craft, nor does it in any way produce historically nuanced portraits.

My visual illustration of this was a photograph someone took in Prague of Stravinsky and Ježek at the Společenský Klub in 1930:

Nothing could illustrate the idea of "The Great Man Comes to the Provinces" better than this photo. Stravinsky seems so obviously to be the focus of the photographer (and himself) that the fact that poor Jaroslav Ježek has a lit ciggy up his schnozz is barely worth noticing. And this is in keeping with what we know of Stravinsky's visit to Prague, during which he was feted and honored, even though there was some requisite hissing when his *Capriccio* was performed by Václav Talich and the Czech Philharmonic on February 26th on the 80th birthday of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, with the composer at the piano.

As a matter of fact, one would consider titling the portrait of Stravinsky and Ježek – "Fame and Its Opposite" – were it not for the fact that at the time it was snapped, Ježek was arguably the most famous composer in Prague. He was a darling of the critics, the composer-in-residence at the Liberated Theater – the most popular cabaret in the city – and one of the few composers anywhere to have a double career as a leading figure in the separate worlds of popular and avant-garde music. Does knowing that change the way we view the photograph?

And there's another thing: Ježek's cross-eyed look might appear almost humorous, completely in line with his obliteration-by-cigarette. Yet the look we see here is more correctly understood as a "disability issue." Ježek was famously almost completely blind; his signature tune is a brilliant song called *Dark Blue World (Tmavomodrý svět)* because he could only see shadows. Thus, the cigarette is positioned in front of a blind man's eye. There's nothing funny about that.

And of course, that was and is my other goal: to suggest that the past never stands still, it is never what we think it was; the moment we settle upon it and marked it "paid," we have given up any chance of understanding it. Here's another image:

We see another part of the same photo, now with Alois Hába, the famed microtonal composer, who at this time was completing his opera, *Mother (Matka).* In this iteration, Stravinsky is even more centered, between, as it were, microtones and blue notes. Can we tell anything from this picture? Did Stravinsky know or take any pleasure from the fact that he was sitting with a man whose big band was one of the best in the world (Benny Goodman famously mistook it for Jimmy Lunceford's ensemble), or did Igor, like Balakirev before him, consider the "Little Slav Brothers" barely worthy of notice

as he basked in his own fame? He certainly did not think much of Hába's microtones, once stating that his importance, like Schoenberg's, was "evident but limited", and furthermore, that Hába's work sounded "like ordinary music just a little off. Es klingt falsch [it sounds wrong]. That's all. They try to write the music of the future, strange unheard of combinations, and all they succeed in writing is quarter-tone Brahms." Ouch!
Perhaps another photograph can shed light on the situation:

In this version of the image, taken from a book on Ježek, Hába has himself been turned into a kind of microtone and instead Ježek sits huddled next to Stravinsky, while another noted composer, Jaroslav Křička, looks away. Does it matter at all to our viewing if we add that the photograph was probably taken in late February, 1930? Or that Křička's *Comic Overture* from the opera *The Gentleman in White or It's Tough Scaring Ghosts Today (Bílý pán aneb Těžko se dnes duchům straší),* as well as his ballad, *Jenny the Thief (Zlodějka Jenny)* were also performed by Talich on that same program with Stravinsky's Capriccio? Does a summer photo look different than one in late winter or early spring? Several years later, Křička would win a bronze medal for music composition at the 1936 Olympics with his *Horácká suita,* finishing second to Werner Eck and the now forgotten Lino Liviabella. Alois Hába would live to the ripe old age of eighty as something of a forgotten man in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Ježek would flee the Nazis and end up poor, jobless, blind, and ill conducting a worker's choir in the Bronx, dying of kidney disease on New Year's Day of 1942 at the age of 36 after having been born on the same day as Shostakovich in 1906. Stravinsky, on the other hand, would simply get more and more famous. Do any of those bits of information change our gaze?
And what about Hába's disappearance? Do we know why the author of the book on Ježek, Vaclav Holzknecht, cut out half his face? Perhaps some score settling? Should we not endeavor to restore him to the Pantheon:

We have seen the other photograph and we know that Hába was there and belongs just where I have put him. He deserves to be there as much as the other three, but the difference in color and tone when I transpose it from the second image above makes it a challenge to believe he was really there, to actually see him there. Is there no solution? Can we possibly help Alois get back into the group where he can sit with that placid smile (and if I call it a smile does that make it one)? I attempted a reconstruction by compiling the photographs together. I worked hard to restore this "original" gathering by creating something that never existed except in this particular here and now, only to find that several versions of the complete photograph do, in fact, exist, making my attempts at collage irrelevant – or are they?

And what of their conversation, is that lost? Most of it is certainly, but a fifth party, not photographed, must have been there, and perhaps even took the photo. This was the composer, critic and translator Silvestr Hippmann (in 1951, the year I was born, he Czechified his name by dropping the double consonants in favor of single ones). We know Hipman was there because he reported on the event, first writing about Stravinsky's dandified clothing (silk tie, pink shirt, brown waistcoat) signifying his French – rather than Russian – demeanor; and then recording his discussion of harmony ("the first inversion [sextakord] has no more in common with a root position triad [kvintakord] than an ass does with an ox") and a rich array of other topics including instrumentation and text setting.
And yet, even as we gaze upon the four composers finally sitting together, hopefully enjoying their time both before and after the camera's interruption, the tableau offers us far less than we could imagine. For the instant after the picture was taken all these figures moved in different directions and in different ways that may have been revealing and are now gone, never to return. The past is almost like the future: anything could have happened! And seen from Křička's perch, there was never a cigarette in front of Ježek's face.

by Barbora Vacková

CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE SPRING OF 2021

Although throughout the spring of 2021, most musical events had to make do without live audiences, pandemic restrictions did at least allow for gatherings of larger groups of musicians. Listeners could thus enjoy premiere recordings not only of chamber pieces but also orchestral music – new compositions by Lukáš Sommer (Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra), Juraj Filas (Hradec Králové Philharmonic), Josef Klíč (Brno Contemporary Orchestra), Zdeněk Merta (Moravian Philharmonic Olomouc), or Martin Wiesner (Ensemble Opera Diversa). Towards the end of the spring season, musical fans were delighted to be able to attend their first concerts and performances in over half a year. We can only hope that the situation becomes stable soon, putting an end to the constant programming changes and cancellations – among the postponed concerts were two evenings (as well as workshops and other accompanying activities) by the renowned ensemble Klangforum Wien at the Prague Spring Festival, which was to present premieres of pieces by Martin Smolka, Jakub Rataj, Lucie Vítková, Adrián Demoč, and Ian Mikyska.
It was this same group that performed in the premiere of Miroslav Srnka's new opera at the Bavarian State Opera. After his success with *Make No Noise* (2011) and *South Pole* (2016), *Singularity* (2021) is Srnka's third opera premiered on this prestigious stage, and once again, the composer worked with the Australian playwright and librettist Tom Holloway. This "space opera for young voices" is a science fiction comedy exploring rapid technological development and its impact on interpersonal communication. Each character has a digital doppelgänger, they communicate through nano-chips, and artificial intelligence begins outperforming human intelligence… The performance can be seen on staatsoper.tv until the 9th of July.

MARCH-JUNE

12 March 2021, online from Congress Centre Zlín, Zlín. **Lukáš Sommer: *The Sphinx* (world premiere).** Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.
15 March 2021, Czech Television, stream from Hradec Králové. **Juraj Filas: *Záhoř's Bed.* Cantata for solos, choir and orchestra based on K. J. Erben (world premiere).** Michaela Štiková Gemrotová – soprano, Michal Lehotský, Daniel Matoušek – tenor, Filip Bandžak – baritone, Prague Philharmonic Choir (choirmaster Lukáš Vasilek), Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Leoš Svárovský.
20 March 2021, online from the Cosmopolitan Bobycentrum Hotel, Brno. Please, do not disturb (a 7-part miniseries of live concerts from Brno hotels). **Josef Klíč: *Plastic Meat* (world premiere)**. Director & libretto: Martin Svobodník. Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.
31 March 2021, Czech Radio Vltava. **Slavomír Hořínka: *Splinters Under the Skin* (Třísky pod kůží) – world premiere.** Barbora Kabátková – voice, Vojtěch Urban – violoncello, David Matásek – recitation, Slavomír Hořínka – violin, electronics.
13 April 2021, online from the Church of St Lawrence, Prague. 645. Tuesday of Umělecká beseda. **Miroslav Pudlák: *Passacaglia for Piano,* Hanuš Bartoň: *8 Etudes for Piano* (world premieres).** Hanuš Bartoň – piano.
29 April 2021, online from Reduta Olomouc. With Music Over Horizons. **Zdeněk Merta: *Over the Horizon, Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (world premiere).** Vilém Veverka – oboe, Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Jakub Klecker.
7 May 2021, live stream from the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House, Czech Radio Vltava. **Petr Wajsar: *Prague Metamorphoses* (world premiere).** Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.

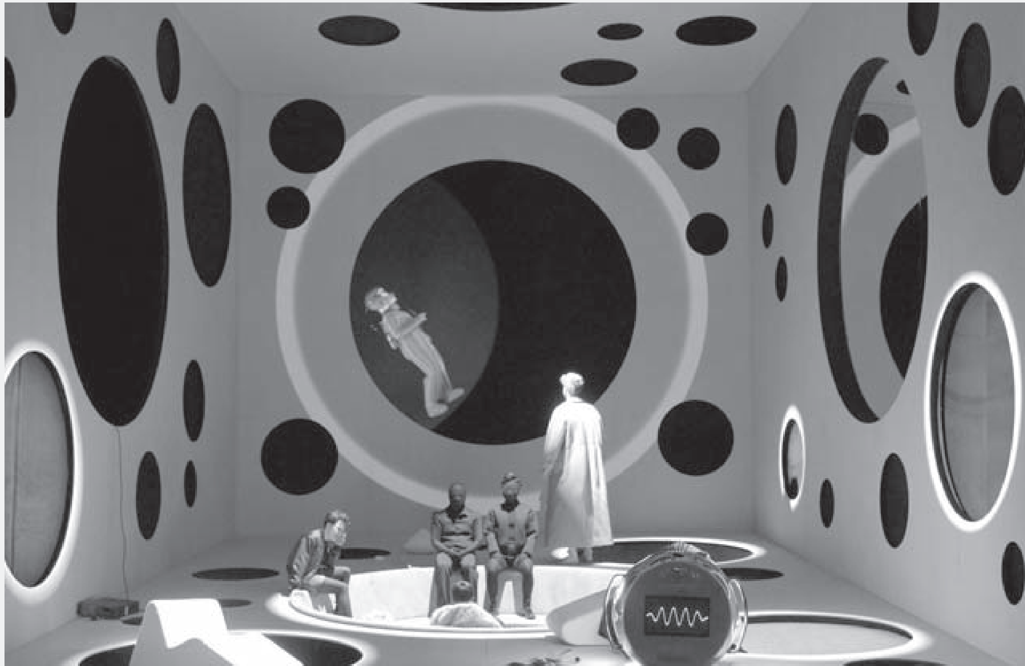


PHOTO: WILFRIED HÖSL

Miroslav Srnka: Singularity

MARCH–JUNE

9 May 2021, online from Stadttheater Aachen, Aachen, Germany. Acht Brücken. **Miroslav Srnka: *Jakub Flügelbunt… und Magdalena Rotenband oder: Wie tief ein Vogel singen kann.* Comics for three singers and ensemble (2011) – premiere of a new production.** Libretto: Miroslav Srnka on a motif by Maria Procházková. Director: Clara Hinterberger, music director: Christopher Ward. Lisa Ströckens – soprano, Fabio Lesuisse – baritone, Pawel Lawreszuk – bass, members of the Sinfonieorchester Aachen.
11 May 2021, online from Löw-Beer Villa, Brno. Movere. **Martin Wiesner: *Rays of Light* (world premiere).** Ensemble Opera Diversa, cond. Gabriela Tardonová.
11 May 2021, online from the church of Master Jan Hus, Česká Lípa. Lípa Musica International Music Festival. **Lukáš Sommer: *Sonatina in Re* (world premiere).** Pavel Steidl, Lukáš Sommer – guitars.
16 May 2021, the yard outside Willow Place Auditorium, Brooklyn, USA. **Petr Kotík: *The Lost Guitar* (world premiere).** Xander Naylor – guitar.
20 May 2021, Piazzetta of the Janáček Theatre, Brno. Theatre World Festival Brno. **František Chaloupka: *Noosphere.* Site-specific performance for two ice cream cars, dancers and a programmed fountain (world premiere).**
20 May 2021, Glyndebourne, UK. Glyndebourne Festival Opera. **Leoš Janáček: *Káťa Kabanová* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Damiano Michieletto, music director: Robin Ticciati. Cast: Kateřina Kněžíková, Katarina Dalayman, David Butt Philip, Nicky Spence, Alexander Vassiliev, Aigul Akhmetshina, London Philharmonic Orchestra, The Glyndebourne Chorus. Following performances: 22, 26, and 29 May, 3, 5, 8, 12, 17, and 19 June 2021.
2 June 2021, garden of the Löw-Beer Villa, Brno. “Landscape as Music”. **Miloš Štědroň: *Canti diversi insieme* for percussion (world premiere).** OK Percussion Duo.
3 June 2021, Church of St Wenceslas, Opava. Leoš Janáček International Music Festival. **Slavomír Hořínka: *A Pocket Guide to Bird Flight* (world premiere of a symphonic version)**. Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Ainārs Rubiķis.
5 June 2021, former synagogue, Kladno. Lieder Society. **Jan Dušek: Dozpěv (world premiere)**. Tamara Morozová – soprano, Monika Jägerová – alto.
5 June 2021, Cuvilliés-Theater, Munich, Germany. Bayerische Staatsoper. **Miroslav Srnka: *Singularity.* A Space Opera for Young Voices (world premiere).** Libretto: Tom Holloway. Director: Nicolas Brieger, music director: Patrick Hahn. Cast: Eliza Boom, Juliana Zara, Daria Proszek, Yajie Zhang, George Virban, Andres Agudelo, Andrew Hamilton, Theodore Platt & Klangforum Wien. Following performances: 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, and 18 June 2021.

by Martin Horyna

Newly Discovered Fragments of Medieval Music

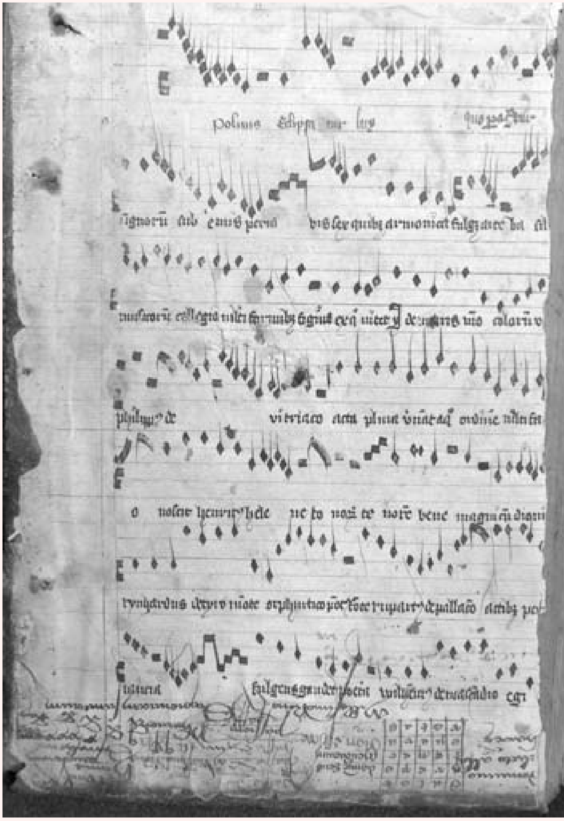
14th-century organ music, two-voice organa from 13th-century Notre-Dame, and a motet from the *ars nova* period. Music historian Martin Horyna introduces three important new discoveries regarding medieval music in the Czech lands.

The history of music, such as we might understand it from various written accounts of greater or lesser expertise, rarely corresponds to the true state of things, particularly in regard to the history of music of distant epochs. The process is always one of reconstruction, and its resultant form is influenced by a great number of factors. The first is the number of randomly preserved sources and testimonies – going against the flow of time, this number decreases significantly. The second factor is the capacity of musicologists to understand the period testimonials and mediate them to others in a comprehensible form. The third factor is the historical awareness of the period; a compendium of notions about the past that music historians actively enter into, influencing it themselves in turn.

The result is a perspective, changing with time, of historical events and their interpretation in continually new contexts. This is why a history of music written today is different – or rather, *should* be different – to a history written a hundred years ago. Newly discovered sources appear, some of which may significantly correct historians' perspectives on historical events – of course, only when they are reliably interpreted and this interpretation "catches on". In the following texts, I will mention three such discoveries made recently.

The first concerns a sheet of paper with barely discernible notation from the fragment archive of the Library of the National Museum in Prague (shelfmark 1 D and 3/52). The sheet suffered a similar fate to a number of musical and literary materials in the past: When they ceased being used, and were not destroyed, they could be used as binding material for new books. In the case of this fragment, there is unfortunately no record of which codex it was taken from and when. It was clear from the beginning that the notation contained on it is very old and that it is probably organ music. The fragment's true age was only discovered when the inscription was deciphered through the use of an image taken under ultraviolet light, which uncovered a layer of ink brushed off the surface or else hidden under dirt and traces of glue.

The sheet had originally served to record the debts of an unknown "Mister Thomas" (*Dominus Thomas*) and one of the inscriptions included a year: 1356. Only after this – though not long after – did someone use the empty spaces on both sides of the sheet to record notation. Each of the sides of the sheet contains one organ arrangement of a liturgical plainchant. On the "front" side, among records of debt, it is the *Kyrie, magne Deus potencie*, on the "back", an *introitus* for the Marian votive masses *Salve, sancta Parens*. The age of the fragment is comparable to a source that has, until now, been considered the oldest existing notation of music for keyboard instruments. This is known as the Robertsbridge Codex and is kept at the British Museum in London. It is generally dated around the year 1360, but the contents are quite different from the Prague fragment: it contains keyboard arrangements of instrumental *estampies* (a 14th-century courtly dance) and contemporary vocal motets from the *ars nova* period. The Prague fragment, then, is proof of the replacement of plainchant singing with organ music, a process we know from transcriptions made in Central Europe and Italy a little later, as well as from a number of literary sources. Our fragment captures a transition between unwritten improvisation and the beginnings of true composing, as it corresponds to period instruction books for playing organ settings of plainchant melodies. Theory suggests that the plainchant melody is to be played in longer notes in the pedal, applying pre-determined melodic formulas in smaller values to the manual, their selection guided by



The highest voice of the motet "Apollinis eclipsatur-Zodiacum signis" on the fragment from the parish library of St James in Brno, around 1400.

the progression of the bottom voice. And it is this repertoire of formulas that the musical language of the fragment draws from.

Period textbooks describe these formulas using the term *tactus* (in Latin, touch; sense of touch, from the verb *tangere* – to touch), which contains three related concepts: melodic movement filling in a certain interval, time divided into a certain number of notes, and the movement of the fingers across the keys. The similarity to the modern measure or bar (*takt* in German and Czech) is evident: the metric values in the length of the pedal notes are separated by barlines, while for the top voice, played on the manual, it is determined in advance how many notes will be regularly divided across the time specified by a single note in the pedal – most often, four, though in our fragment, it is eight, each of which can be divided into halves, arriving at a total number of sixteen.

The second meaning has to do with fingerings. The limited number of formulas had a corresponding number of fingerings, but we do not know all of these. They probably looked a little like someone typing on a typewriter or computer keyboard who never learned to type with all ten fingers, and so they use only one or two fingers on each hand. Church organs at this time certainly had wider keys than is common today, and the stereotypical progressions of the formulas corresponded to a simple technique consisting of alternating movements of several fingers of both hands. The voice leading does not follow the rules of counterpoint – rather, it is reminiscent of the vocal music of the period, with a preference for fifths and octaves.

The notation suggests that what we are looking at is an organ tablature at the moment of its birth. The top voice is written in simplified mensural notation into a staff, the bottom voice, which needed no specification of rhythm, is written in three different ways – by notes in the same staff, letters referring to note names (a common element in later medieval organ tablatures), or simply as the syllables of the lyrics of the original plainchant melody, which served the organist as a mnemonic device to remind them of the melody.

The notation of the top voice even includes chromatic notes and written-out melodic decorations (appoggiaturas and mordents) that were later transformed into symbols that are not always easy to decipher.

The organ for which this music was intended probably corresponds to a description of an instrument written in 1361. This organ was located in Halberstadt Cathedral and was still around at the time of Michael Praetorius, i.e. at the beginning of the 17th century, who described it as a curiosity in the second volume of his *Syntagma musicum* (Wolfenbüttel 1619, pp. 98–101). The highest note of both these compositions, as well as the manual of this organ, is A4.

The second fragment was identified in early 2021. It consists of two parchment double sheets containing 13th-century repertoire of two-voice organa, bound in the first half of the 15th century into a manuscript now housed at the National Library in Prague (shelfmark V E 15). This codex was probably linked – from its creation – with the university and its library. This, of course, brings up tempting questions, but the age of the fragment and its relation to a musical culture that was probably no longer alive at the time of the establishment of the university in Prague (1348) are sure signs for us to be cautious – and what's more, we have no proof that the necessary conditions for the performance of 13th-century Notre-Dame repertoire existed in our lands during the period of its blossoming in France.

The fragment contains the torsos of seven pieces. The first double sheet includes three mass chants: the gradual *Gloriosus Deus*, *Alleluia. Veni electa* and the Marian *Alleluia. Post partum Virgo*. The second double sheet includes four chants of the canonical hours: the responsoria *Sint lumbi vestri*, *Regnum mundi*, and *Terribilis est locus iste*, and *Benedicamus Domino*, the final chant of the hours services. (In the Roman Rite, canonical hours (or offices) are the obligatory prayers of clergymen. In the Middle Ages, holiday hours – particularly Vespers, the evening prayer, and Matins, the night prayer – were celebrated with plainchant or polyphony.)

Prague, National Museum, manuscript fragment 1 D and 3/52 (after 1350), organ paraphrase of "Kyrie, magne Deus potencie", ultraviolet image. Perpendicular to the musical stave is the list of debts inscribed with the year 1356.

Kyrie, magne Deus

KNM 1 D a 3/52

Ky - ri - e, mag - ne De - us po - ten - cie, li - be - ra - tor ho - mi - nis, trans - gres - so - ris manda - ti, e -

vel sic

Transcription of the opening of the organ arrangement of "Kyrie, magne Deus potencie".

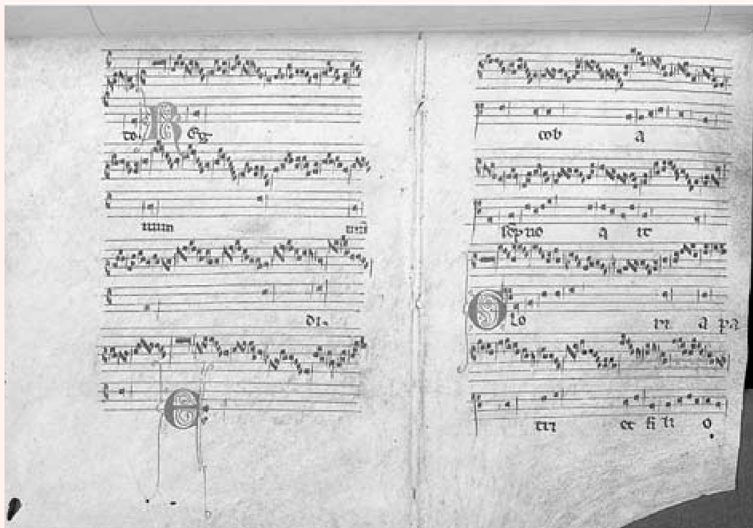
All of these chants can be found, in various forms, in the central sources for the repertoire of the Notre-Dame period, created around the middle of the 13th century, and are now housed at the Laurentian Medici Library (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana) in Florence and at the Duke August Library in Wolfenbüttel (Herzog August Bibliothek, in two manuscripts, one of Parisian origin, another from the abbey of St. Andrews in Scotland). At the end of the 12th century, the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Paris, then under construction, became the focal point of a remarkable musical culture, which – in only a few decades – culminated the transition from polyphonic improvisation to polyphonic composition.

In some music theory treatises from the 13th century, authorship of the earlier pieces of the Notre-Dame repertoire is attributed to a single figure known as Leoninus. This is probably a simplification, but Leoninus was a real historical figure – a singer (cantor) at the cathedral who died in 1201. His name is connected to an extensive repertoire (known as the *Magnus liber organi* – the great book of organa) of two-voice arrangements of the parts intended for soloists in selected plainchants for the important holidays. In the mass, this means the *graduale* and *alleluia* sections, in the hours services, it is what's known as the *responsoria prolixa*.

The two-voice arrangements, however, were also intended for soloists: while the singer of bottom voice sung sustained tones of the original melody in a manner of pedal notes, the singer taking the top voice had to be a singing virtuoso, improvising or using predetermined formulas to compose long and complex melismas in the top voice, rather than performing finished "compositions" written out in detail. Some principles in this music are remarkably reminiscent of the organ pieces from the fragment mentioned above, which are more than a hundred years younger.

While we do not know the true form of Leoninus' original "organum purum", it is certain that the notation of the time was not yet capable of describing rhythm. This music only survives in later transcriptions from the period around the mid-1200s, in a notation system that included rhythmic values. After 1210, what is known as modal notation developed, which was capable of expressing a few basic rhythmic "modes", such as the trochee (long – short), iamb (short – long), dactyl (long – two short), and other feet derived from the theory of syllable weight in Latin verse.

The younger layer, attributed to the composer Perotinus (who was probably active in the first third of the 13th century) could no longer make do without rhythmic notation – Perotinus wrote pieces for three or four voices, and they could not be coordinated without precisely inscribing the rhythm.



Prague, National Library, manuscript V E 15, back endpaper, fragment of two-voice organa from the Notre-Dame period (13th century), on the left of the open double sheet is the beginning of the responsorium "Regnum mundi", on the right is the "Terribilis est locus iste" section of the responsorium.

The fragment from the National Library in Prague includes two-voice pieces from the older layer of the Notre-Dame repertoire in a quality of execution and visual form identical to the central sources mentioned above. It is without a doubt that it does not come from the Czech lands. Smaller and greater differences in the notation of the individual chants will only now become the subject of research dedicated to the dissemination of this repertoire outside Paris and France. While it is certain that this dissemination took place, whether it reached the Czech lands at the time of the rule of the kings of the Přemyslid dynasty remains an open question.

The university in Prague was mentioned above, and it is certain that during the Middle Ages, music theory was taught here as one of the seven liberal arts. Its content was mostly speculative, using numeric ratios to explain tonal systems. However, there are also many texts that attest to the fact that practical theory was also cultivated here in connection to liturgical plainchant and the polyphony of the time. We must not forget that university students generally already had some practice as choirboys and would take part in the singing at the services held in the university chapel, along with their professors, and perhaps also in other churches in Prague. In any case, most of them were headed for career as priests, which at the time was unthinkable without a strong singing voice.

In relation to period polyphony, it is characteristic that in 1369, a treatise on French mensural notation was written for the students in Prague, which is also the oldest surviving text of its kind in Central Europe. If someone wanted to sing French music from the *ars nova* period, they had to master the theory of its relatively complex notation. The catalogues of the college libraries of the university in Prague attest to the fact that songbooks with music of French origin were available to the students.

Several other treatises point to specific pieces as examples of particular notational problems. One of them – a motet of French origin titled *Apollinis eclipsatur-Zodiacum signis* – partially survived in another fragment. The top voice of the composition is written on a sheet of paper that is glued on the inside cover of a manuscript in the parish library of St James Church in Brno, no. 94/106 (now the City of Brno Archive, part of the "St James Library" collection). The fragment attests to the piece settling into its new home – it is given in a simplified notation used for polyphonic music created around 1400 in the Czech lands. The piece is a celebration of the art of music and the text incorporates the names of twelve composers and music theorists popular at the time (e.g. the composers Guillaume de Machaut and Philippe de Vitry and the theorist Johannes de Muris, whose writing formed part of the curriculum of university studies), whose art literally shone like Apollo's light (i.e. the Sun) in the collegium of musicians. This fragment of a composition is precious proof of how French music could, through the intermediary of the university, become part of the intellectual merriment of the educated classes in the Czech lands at the turn of the 15th century.

Prepared in collaboration with the Musica Rudolphina research centre.

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by Andrew Baker

REDISCOVERING ANTONÍN KAMMELL

Antonín Kammell was a Bohemian composer and violinist active across Europe in the 18th century. Andrew Baker presents a comprehensive look at the composer's life, musical philosophy, and social milieu in light of a newly discovered portrait by the renowned British painter Thomas Gainsborough.

KAMMELL'S ENGLISH FRIENDS

The composer and violinist Antonín Kammell was baptised on April 21st 1730 at Běleč, a village some twenty-four miles east of Prague. His father was a forester on the estate of Count Vincent Ferrerus Waldstein, who was a keen musical enthusiast. The Count supported Kammell's education and musical career and was also the patron of the composer Josef Mysliveček (1737–1781), Kammell's more famous contemporary.

Kammell attended the school at Slaný, to the north-east of Běleč, which was run by the Order of Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools. This religious order specialised in teaching the children of poor families. Both Kammell and Mysliveček studied philosophy at Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague. They may have been contemporaries at the university, though Mysliveček was younger by seven years.

Count Waldstein sent Kammell to Padua to study with the great violinist and teacher Giuseppe Tartini (1692–1770). Very little is known about Kammell's early career. There are letters from him in Padua to Count Waldstein dated July 6th and 25th 1759, but these have not been translated into English.[1]

At the beginning of 1765, Kammell travelled to Germany. Two manuscripts of early symphonies, his earliest known works, survive in Czech archives. These, unusually, show direct links to the Rhineland. One of the symphonies, in D major (AK5/1/1), has a movement titled *Adagio representa Auerhann-Pfaltz*. The other, in G major (AK5/1/2), has a finale titled *Allegro representa Burkheim-Pfalz*. (The G Major also has a very haunting middle movement headed *Allegretto alla Francese*.)

It is not easy to identify these places. There is a place called Burkheim, near Freiburg, but that is not in the Rhineland area of Pfalz. Could the original have been Durkheim? Bad-Durkheim is in the Pfalz, close to Mannheim, a city with a famous musical tradition that would have attracted the composer.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the court orchestra at Mannheim was famous for its excellence and virtuosity, and the symphony developed

as a form to show off the orchestra and explore new dramatic effects. Kammell seems to have been imitating the style of the Mannheim composer Johann Stamitz in these early pieces.

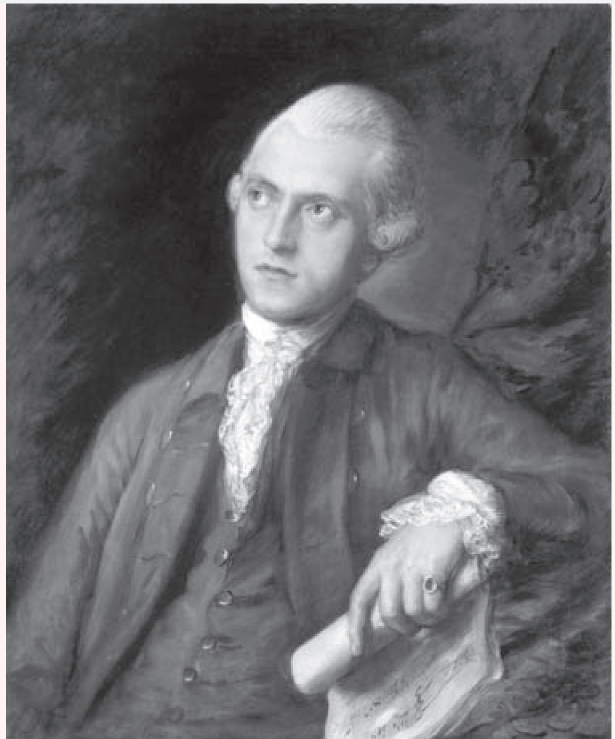
Another link with Mannheim, and with Johann Stamitz, is Kammell's set of string trios (AK3/10 in my catalogue) which were published in Paris as opus 6 (but which did not appear in England, where opus 6 was a quite different work). The title page states that these may be played by a full orchestra - "Li qualli si Potranno Esequire a piena Orchestra" ("which can be executed by a full orchestra"). This suggests a style different from that of his trios, which were written for intimate music making. The idea of writing music in just three parts - two violin parts and a bass line - intended for orchestral performance originated with Johann Stamitz, whose op. 1 was a set of orchestral trios. These trios may well have been written while Kammell was in Germany.

Kammell came to London as an agent of Count Waldstein, with a large cargo of timber which the Count was hoping to sell to the Royal Navy for use as ship masts. This cargo would be a burden and cause of anxiety to Kammell for several years as the timber did not meet the Royal Navy's standards. Kammell arrived in England in March 1765.

Clearly, the real purpose of his journey was to develop his career as a composer and violinist. The Count gave him letters of recommendation to several people in society.

Kammell very quickly became a member of the select circle of musicians around Johann Christian Bach. He had a successful career as a composer and violinist in London and also performed in other towns and cities, including Bath, Salisbury, Stamford, and Northampton. His published music is exclusively instrumental, including violin sonatas, duets, trios, quartets, symphonies, and concertos. His historic claim to fame is the fact that one of his string quartets was the first string quartet known to have been performed in public in London, on April 27th 1769.[2]

Kammell has been a neglected figure, partly because there was, until now, no known portrait of the composer. Many of his musical colleagues, such as Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), Carl Friedrich Abel (1723-1787), and Johann Christian



Portrait of a Musician, probably Antonín Kammel (1730-1784), ca. 1768. Oil on canvas, 76 x 64 cm. Private Collection, courtesy of Simon Gillespie Studio.

Fischer (ca. 1733-1800) are remembered thanks to portraits by Thomas Gainsborough, who was a keen musician and close friend of both Abel and Bach.

In 2020, I was asked to provide evidence to support the identification of a newly discovered Gainsborough portrait of an unknown musician. Finally, nearly 250 years after his death, we have an image of Antonín Kammell. Seeing the composer's face, we can now ask: What kind of person was he? What kind of composer? And, of course, the portrait will hopefully inspire us to perform more of his music in the future.

I came across Kammell when I was researching Thomas Anson (1695-1773), the elder brother of George, Lord Anson, who is famous for circumnavigating the world and for his significant influence on the development of the Royal Navy. Thomas is a more elusive character. There are very few records of his private life, but he has emerged from the shadows as a fascinating and

influential figure. In his earlier days, he had been an adventurous traveller, visiting the ancient cities of Palmyra and Baalbek and the site of Troy. He was a patron of the arts, particularly of the architect James Stuart, the leading artist of the Greek Revival (Stuart was known as 'Athenian Stuart' because of his enthusiasm for ancient Greece). Stuart built a series of buildings based on Greek originals at Thomas Anson's Staffordshire estate, Shugborough. He also built Thomas's new London house at 15 St James's Square, which was a showcase for the new Greek Revival style – and for music.

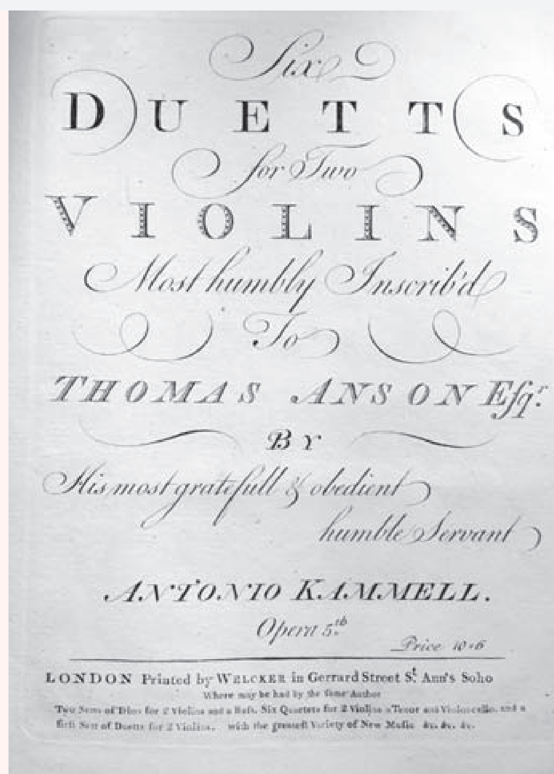
Thomas Anson died in 1773. In his will he left annuities (annual payments) to four close friends – the architect Stuart, the botanist and musician Benjamin Stillingfleet, the agriculturalist Nathaniel Kent, and "Mr Kammell". When I first read the will I did not know who Mr Kammell was, but the name also appeared in the list of friends who received a mourning ring in memory of Anson.

As a composer myself, I was excited to discover that Mr Kammell, too, was a composer. As soon as I had identified him, I contacted Michaela Freemanová (*a leading Czech musicologist, 1946–2017 – editor's note*) who had published the only two articles on Kammell in English.[3] From Michaela I learned that Thomas Anson had been one of Kammell's most important patrons.

Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill's *Music and Theatre in Handel's World* was published in 2002. The fascinating book is a collection of extracts from the family archives of James Harris, a Member of Parliament, musician, and philosopher.[4] The archives include interesting glimpses of Kammell's career in England.

The letters of the Harris family reveal that Thomas Anson regularly held concerts at his new London house where, as Mrs Harris wrote: "the best hands in town" could be heard performing. It is probable that Kammell led the music at Thomas Anson's London house between 1769 and 1773. These concerts took place in the London season, between Christmas and Easter. After Easter, musicians with wealthy patrons would travel with them to the country.

Kammell was well known at Anson's country estate, Shugborough, in Staffordshire. Sir William Bagot, of neighbouring Blithfield Hall, sent Thomas



Anson, who was at his London house, a poem dated April 25th 1772, looking forward to his return to the country at the end of the London season. Bagot exhorts Anson to bring his closest friends with him when he returns to his country estate:

> Bring Attic Stuart, Indian Orme,
> Kammell unruffled by a storm
> Shall tune his softest strain (…)[5]

("Attic Stuart" was the architect James Stuart, who was often at Shugborough. Bagot probably called him "Attic" simply because it fitted the metre of the poem better than "Athenian". "Indian Orme" was Robert Orme, historian of the East India Company.)

There was certainly music at Shugborough as well as in London. Irish MP Sir John Parnell, visiting Shugborough in May 1769, wrote the following in his journal:

> There has been this day, Thursday, a most agreeable meeting of the neighbouring gentry, Snead [Sneyd, of Bishton Hall] Clifford [of Tixall Hall], Piggot [possibly Bagot of Blithfield Hall] etc. who all play or sing and dance together here afterwards and have music again on the evening. (...)[6]

Kammell's violin duets op. 5, which he dedicated to Thomas Anson, must have been composed at about this time, perhaps written and played at Shugborough that summer.

On June 3rd 1773, Kammell wrote in English to his Bohemian patron Count Vincent Ferrerus Waldstein:

> My dear old good friend Mr. Anson the brother of the Admiral Anson, who defeated so much the Spaniards, died two months ago. I do not like to loose good friends, his death contributed a lot towards my illness, in his testament he left me 50 gineas yearly for the time of my life, my friend George Pitt, when he saw me so distressed after Anson's death, he also gave me by the law 50 gineas yearly, now I have 100 gineas yearly which I can spend as I wish. (...)[7]

George Pitt (1721–1803), from 1776 Baron Rivers of Stratfield Saye in Hampshire, was a diplomat and Member of Parliament in the constituency of Dorset. He was Kammell's other significant patron in this period of his life, though patron is a misleading word. Anson and Pitt were not simply financial supporters of the composer. Anson was a "dear old good friend". In 1769, Kammell was living in George Pitt's London house on Half Moon Street, Piccadilly. From 1770 onwards, this became Kammell's own house. His first daughter was born at Pitt's country house, Stratfield Saye, that Christmas. Kammell dedicated his first set of string quartets, op. 4, to George Pitt. George Pitt is Kammell's strongest link to Thomas Gainsborough, who called Pitt a "staunch friend".

KAMMELL'S PORTRAIT BY GAINSBOROUGH

Hugh Belsey, a significant authority on Gainsborough, has dated the portrait[8] to late 1768, when Kammell was performing in Bath, Gainsborough's home at the time. It is probable that the composer had travelled to Bath with George Pitt from Pitt's country house. A striking aspect of the portrait is that no instrument is shown. The subject holds a roll of music manuscript paper. This is Kammell the composer rather than Kammell the violinist.

The concerts Kammell gave in Bath in 1768 and 1769 presented him as the composer of a variety of works, rather than as a violin virtuoso. The concert advertised in the Bath Journal on October 31st 1768 included two overtures (symphonies), a quintetto, which would have featured all the solo instrumentalists, and a solo by Kammell.

The portrait shows Kammell looking upwards in a philosophical, almost Romantic pose. It raises the question: How did composers of this era see themselves? Were they craftsmen, or inspired artists? What was the business of composing about? What was the nature of music? This was something that occupied the mind of Kammell's teacher, Giuseppe Tartini, and there are good reasons to suppose that Tartini's ideas would have been discussed amongst Kammell's circle of friends in England.

Another of Tartini's students, Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen[9] (1745–1818), appears to have stayed with Kammell in Half Moon Street during her time in England between 1771 and 1772. She had begun her studies with Tartini while a student at the orphanage of San Lazzaro dei Mendicanti in Venice, being granted special permission by the orphanage to travel to Padua in the 1760s. Sirmen has a special place amongst Tartini's students. In 1762, he wrote her a letter of advice on violin playing which was later published, with an English translation by Charles Burney, in 1779.

In March 1772, Sirmen performed with Kammell at one of Thomas Anson's concerts. A letter from Elizabeth Harris to her son from March 17th 1772 mentions the performers:

> Yesterday morning we were all at that most elegant house of Mr Anson's to a breakfast and concert after, ever thing suited the elegance of the house. When breakfast was ended the rooms were open for people to walk about and admire – after that the concert, for which he had collected the best hands in town – Madame

Thomas Anson's London House, 15 St James's Square.

> Sirman, Grasi, Fischer, Crosdale, Ponto, Kamell etc. Got home in time enough to snap a short dinner before the opera.[10]

("Grasi" was Cecilia Grassi (ca. 1740–1791), later the wife of J. C. Bach. "Crosdale" was the cellist John Crosdill (1751–1825). "Ponto" was the Bohemian horn player Jan Václav Stich (1746-1803), known as Giovanni Punto, a translation of his name into Italian which he adopted after escaping to Italy from the service of Count Joseph Johann von Thun, to whom his father was a serf.)
Tartini was born in Istria, which is now in Slovenia but was then part of the Republic of Venice. He was taught in Assisi by the Bohemian composer Bohuslav Matěj Černohorský (1684–1742), who was the organist at the Basilica of St Francis. Tartini settled in Padua and continued his connection with the Franciscans, performing violin concertos at the Basilica of St Anthony in celebrations honouring the saint's miraculous preaching. Instrumental music could, like St Anthony's words, convey meaning to people, whatever their mother tongue might be.[11]

Tartini writes that a composer should compose "musica secondo natura"; according to nature.[12]
The key to Tartini's ideas is the belief that nature has laws within it that guide the formation of things, and that the composer or artist should be attuned to nature's laws, working in harmony with nature, rather than trying to imitate the works of nature. This view of music was inspired by Tartini's neo-Platonic philosophy. Tartini's belief that to truly follow nature music should be simple was in turn inspired by his Franciscan background.
An English translation of Tartini's *Trattato di musica* (1754) accompanied by a commentary was published in 1771 as *The Principles and Power of Harmony*. It was published anonymously, but its author was Benjamin Stillingfleet, a botanist, cellist, and author of libretti for oratorios and for an opera by Handel's amanuensis John Christopher Smith the younger. Stillingfleet was also, with Kammell, one of the four close friends of Thomas Anson who had received annuities in his will.
Stillingfleet wrote, translating Tartini:

> Every nation (…) has its popular songs, many of which are of antient tradition, many newly composed, and adopted by common consent. In general, they are extremely simple; nay, the most simple are generally the greatest favourites. (…) Nature has more power than Art. (…)[13]

Through this simplicity, Tartini hoped to rediscover the power of ancient Greek music and drama. Tartini's most personal music, which most closely follows this philosophy, was his collection of *sonate piccole* – sonatas for unaccompanied violin. Some of these sonatas have poetic inscriptions, sometimes in code, as if the instrumental music could convey the meaning of the words. These sonatas were not published in Tartini's lifetime.
Kammell mentions in a letter on October 20th 1766 that he had written:

> 52 solos for the violin, which, to tell the truth, are very beautiful, and 6 for the Viola da Gamba, which start in a very decorative way.[14]

Kammell only published two sets of six violin sonatas with continuo. These fifty-two solos were

more likely to have been unaccompanied pieces imitating his teacher's private music. These works are lost, as are the solos for viola da gamba. Unaccompanied music for viola da gamba had been a private form of music since the 16th century. In 18th-century England, the instrument was still popular for private, intimate music making. The English viola da gamba player Sam Stadlen has shown that some of Kammell's trios are designed to be played by violin, viola da gamba, and piano, and were probably played in this way by Kammell, Abel, and J. C. Bach.

Thomas Gainsborough, one of the leading painters of 18th-century England, was a very enthusiastic musician, and a good player of the viola da gamba, the instrument of his close friend Carl Friedrich Abel. In 1773, he wrote:

> (I wish) very much to take my viola-da-gamba and make off to some sweet village, where I can paint landskips and enjoy the fag-end of life in quietness and ease.[15]

There are close connections between music and ideas of nature and landscape in this period – attitudes that we might associate with the Romantic period, which is generally thought to have begun forty years later but had its roots much earlier. Landscape painting was Gainsborough's passion, though he made his living by painting portraits – and even his portraits often show their subjects in landscape settings. Gainsborough was interested in the forms of nature rather than literal representation. Gainsborough was an artist "secondo natura".

Gainsborough developed his theories of landscape while staying with the Price family at the romantically wooded estate of Foxley in Herefordshire. His friend Robert Price (who died in 1761) was a composer and he, his father, and his son, Uvedale Price, developed new, Romantic ideas of landscape gardening following nature. It is curious, and significant, that Benjamin Stillingfleet, with Kammell a close friend of Thomas Anson, had a cottage on the Foxley estate. Stillingfleet had been Robert Price's tutor and made a Grand Tour of Italy with him, ending with a long stay in Switzerland. Stillingfleet shared the family's interest in music and nature.

Stillingfleet was certainly in Bath at the time of Kammell's concerts in 1768, when Gainsborough probably painted Kammell's portrait. It seems very likely that Thomas Anson and Uvedale Price were there too.

Bearing these philosophical interests in nature and music in mind, it is worth looking again at the newly discovered portrait of Kammell. It might be fanciful, but I see this as the portrait of a philosophical composer, painted by an artist who had a serious interest in nature and music. It is easy to imagine that these ideas, of the meaning and nature of music, and the music of nature, which Gainsborough had explored at Foxley, were discussed by Kammell and his friends who had escaped the heat of London for the woods and landscaped gardens of Shugborough.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In 2006, when I began my research into Kammell, the only substantial articles in English were by Michaela Freemanová, one of them in collaboration with Eva Mikanová. The articles are based on Kammell's letters to his Bohemian patron Count Waldstein. They are full of fascinating details of the composer's life in England: his delight at making the ladies fall in love with him as he played his adagios, the expense of buying the elaborate clothes a virtuoso needed to make a good impression, his travels to Edinburgh in the guise of "Signor Carmellino". More recently, my research has been supported very generously by Sylva Šimsová, whose *Traces in the Sand: The Story of Anthony Kammel in 18th Century Britain* was published by the Dvořák Society in 2014.

My study of Kammell, which contains a great deal of material that had not previously been published, including the story of his family in England, can be downloaded from my website, together with my thematic catalogue of his works.[16]

Kammell published a series of works in England. Some of these were also published in Europe, often with entirely different opus numbers.

Other music was published in Europe but never appeared in England – most importantly, several violin concertos, only one of which seems to have survived.

There are many missing works. Where are the fifty-two violin solos and the six solos for viola

St Mary's Church, Norton, Kent.

da gamba? Where are the "new overtures" he performed after the publication of his op. 10 set? Where are the missing violin concertos? Where is his violin?

Kammell died on October 5th 1784 at Norton Court, Kent. He was buried at St Mary's Church, Norton, on October 8th 1784.

Norton Court was the home of John Cockin Sole, whom Kammell had met soon after coming to England. When Sole died in 1790, The Times advertised the sale of the contents of the library at Norton Court, including:

> (…) a capital violin which formerly belonged to the celebrated Kammel. Manuscript music never published (…)[17]

This manuscript music is very likely to have included works by Kammell that he had with him when he died.

All the quotations from Kammell's letters which I have used are from Michaela Freemanová's articles. According to her 2003 article in Early Music, the letters are in the Central State Archive, Prague (RAV – Doksy deposit, shelfmark VI-4/3). The collection must contain information that would cast light on Kammell's career before he travelled to England. Very little is known about his early life. There are the letters from Padua in 1759, the two early manuscript symphonies have titles that show that he spent time in the Rhineland. Sometimes the smallest passing remark or mention of a name can lead to interesting discoveries about his friends and acquaintances.

I hope that this portrait will encourage researchers in the Czech Republic to study Kammell's letters, discover more about his personality, and search for more music from his early years. Most importantly, however, I hope that now Kammell's image has reappeared, more musicians will be inspired to perform his music.

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1) Michaela Freemanová and Eva Mikanová, *'"My honourable lord and father": 18th-century English musical life through Bohemian eyes',* in *Early Music* vol. 31 issue (May 2003), and Michaela Freemanová, *'"A certain M. Nouelle…":* A Rutland association for the musician Anton Kammel', Rutland Record 21, *Journal of the Rutland Local History & Record Society* (2003).
2) Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (eds.), *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain,* Ashgate, 2004.
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15) https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/thomas-gainsborough-199, accessed 9 June 2021.
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17) The Times 22 June 1790 and 25 June 1790.

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Text: CZ, EN. Published: 2020.
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The tenor Karel Burian is a singer surrounded by many legends that are still maintained and disseminated by a small circle of those who remember him. Last year, this contemporary of Ema Destinnová and a colleague of hers at both the National Theatre in Prague and the Metropolitan Opera in New York[1] finally received the honour of having a complete set of his recordings published – almost a century after his death and three decades after Destinnová received the same honour. Much important work on the project was done by its editor, Jan Králík, adding an important new fixture to Supraphon's catalogue.

"As a singer, I leave nothing behind" – these poetic words were chosen by Karel Burian (born January 12 1870, died September 25 1924) for his last will and testament. He wasn't just referring to the ephemeral nature of the performing arts – he also attested to his capacity for occasionally ruthless self-reflection. In the later verses of the poem quoted above, he speaks derisively of the possibilities of gramophone recordings at the time, which can "hardly hold the soul". Burian's scepticism is still valid today, even in this period of fantastic recording possibilities and given the acoustic parameters of today's studios and halls. Burian was a singer who evidently needed an audience – a born stage performer, despite his small stature and, in his glory years, considerable excess weight. After all, even the critics of the time would occasionally point out these handicaps.
He hated advertising and from what we know of his life, it is clear that he wasn't a particularly capable businessman: he refused to adequately appraise his talent and popularity. Even so, Burian made decent money and showed more shrewdness than Ema Destinnová: instead of an over-sized château, he bought a simple farm in Senomaty, a village about seventy kilometres west of Prague. His son worked on the farm, so the singer could spend his final years there – years during which he was burnt out and ignored. Thanks to Burian, the name of this small village near the city of Rakovník even made it to the New York Times, which reported on the tenor's demise.

Perhaps the influence of his simple countryside roots were manifested in Burian's character and behaviour, adding to his talent, education, and intellectual tendencies a considerable portion of earthiness, often unpleasant directness, and bragging. A weak nervous disposition easily influenced by alcohol provoked his impulsive behaviour, which brought him much strife and made him many enemies.

There are still many unclear passages in Burian's life and career. We know little of his activities in Estonia, the site of his first engagement abroad after his Brno debut. Often repeated is Burian's own account of the disgraceful end of his time in Leipzig, where the intendant sacked him after a single performance of *Cavalleria rusticana.* So far, however, no one has adapted or at least collected the sources relating to his time in the city theatres in Aachen and Cologne, nor in the royal opera houses of Hanover and Hamburg.

All this preceded Burian's return to Prague and the signing of a contract with the National Theatre, which took place shortly before the arrival of Karel Kovařovic as director. Burian became a devoted supporter of Kovařovic, even during the period of the orchestral strike. This alliance, however, did not last long: Burian escaped – not terminated – his engagement at the National Theatre and the two artists would later be sworn enemies in the "Battle for Dvořák", during which they were evidently also settling personal scores. In the meantime, Burian sung in Budapest, Dresden (where he performed the role of Herodias in the world premiere of Richard Strauss's *Salome*), the Viennese Court Opera, Covent Garden in London, and also the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He was accused of kidnapping and adultery and had to leave Germany to avoid prison. Even the Met voided his contracted after this scandal – and all this before World War I. It is a mystery that as rich a life story as this one has not yet found a biographer to apply themselves to it in earnest, bringing this interest to fruition in a published biography, one that would include many details and cite many sources. Not to let more tabloid-style stories out into the world, but to create a unified image of a character that had few equals in the history of Czech opera.

This complete edition of Burian's gramophone recordings made between 1906 and 1913 is valuable already for its booklet, which provides a respectable and, conditions allowing, diligent biography written by Jan Králík. Králík leaves out unverifiable colourful anecdotes, avoids quoting jokes from Burian's rhymed letters, and keeps to the facts as far as possible. What might in other contexts seem dry is a welcome approach here – in Burian's case, it is still

1) Burian and Destinnová were both members of the opera company of the National Theatre, but they never performed together on its stage. They did, however, perform together before then at the Royal Opera in Berlin and later in a Parisian production of Salome conducted by Richard Strauss. They only met on the stage of the Met once, in Tannhäuser, with Destinnová substituting another singer in the part of Venus.

necessary to repeat basic information and explain to listeners who he is. The booklet also includes a short – and sad – history of Burian's legacy on record and a chronological list of the surviving recordings.

Seventy-two of these were collected in total, which is little in comparison to some of Burian's famous contemporaries. The Czech tenor didn't exactly rush into recording, and perhaps he misjudged the business potential of the rapidly developing recording industry – unlike his contemporary and Metropolitan Opera colleague Enrico Caruso. The Italian tenor was, after all, one of the few singers for whom Burian had an honest and publicly confessed admiration, though he also made fun of his shrewdness in advertising and self-promotion.

Whatever the reasons behind Burian's less-than-intense recording career, today, all we feel today is regret. This is only compounded by the delay with which this complete set finally reached the public: Supraphon was preparing an edition of the then-unknown recordings as early as 1991, but the tapes in question were lost (as stated by Králík in his accompanying text). The recordings on three CDs are arranged thematically. The first two discs are devoted to opera, with Richard Wagner being the first composer – Burian was most famous as a performer of heroic Wagnerian roles and was in competition with several German colleagues for the unofficial title of best Tannhäuser, Tristan, and Siegfried of his time. The collection could hardly have started with a different selection than Tannhäuser's *Dir töne Lob*. The second part of the first CD features the music of Bedřich Smetana, whose Dalibor was also one of Burian's most important roles. This aria is followed by Kozina's aria from Karel Kovařovic's *Psohlavci (The Dogheads)* and the disc concludes with *Zaluskal si prstem (He Snapped His Fingers)* by Václav Juda Novotný – the only song Burian ever recorded with orchestral accompaniment.

The second CD turns to other operatic composers, and, with the exception of Dvořák's Dimitrij, these are all non-Czech composers. The result is essentially a concise cross-section of the repertoire of operatic theatres at the time: given Burian's stylistic inclinations, we won't be surprised to hear several extracts from Weber's *Der Freischütz,* less expected is the duo from Verdi's *La forza del destino* or the aria from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin.* The disc also includes Daniel Auber's Fra Diavolo – though it stands somewhat outside of Burian's Wagnerian focus, the singer favoured the role greatly. The same is true of the title role in Jules Massenet's opera *Werther*. In addition to the now neglected Dimitrij by Dvořák, another opera not to stand the test of time is Wilhelm Kienzel's *Der Evangelimann*, which was a very popular title in the early 20th century. The second disc concludes with several arias from Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohéme* and Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci.*

Both the operatic CDs clearly show that singers engaged in theatres at the time were less specialised – simply put, they were members of a company and sung everything that was needed. However, this was not the case at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where Burian sung German roles exclusively. A testament to the flexibility of the operatic world is to be found in the fact that most of the operas featured on the Burian complete set are amongst the common repertoire of today – and we would do well to remember that at the time of recording, Puccini, Massenet, and Leoncavallo were all living composers.

The last of the three discs is dedicated to song repertoire, mostly by Czech composers. After six Bohemian and Moravian folk songs come works by Oskar Nedbal, Alois Ladislav Vymětal, František Picka, Václav Juda Novotný, Jan Malát, Eduard Tregler, Jindřich Jindřich, Zdeněk Fibich, and František Neumann. Burian's song repertoire – in contrast to the operatic component – gradually disappeared from performance practice. One of the exceptions is Richard Strauss's *Zueignung*, which is present in two recordings – and it is not the only item to appear in several versions. In the songs with piano accompaniment, it is even more remarkable than in the operatic takes how Burian had the capacity to build his heroic performances on an intimate depth that can still charm listeners today.

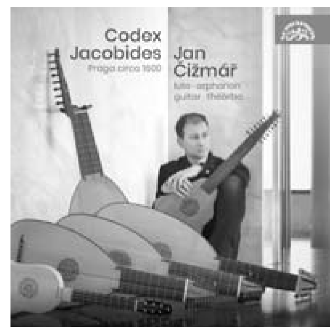
The recordings are rounded out by a couplet titled *Ten můj koleg' Caruso (My Colleague'Caruso)* – a cabaret-style jest whose value lies in the sovereignty with which Burian parodies Caruso's vocal style on a contrafact of the melody *Ridi, pagliaccio, sul tuo amore infranto.* In Burian's interpretation of this passage from Leoncavallo's opera, the phrasing is markedly different from Caruso's, as listeners can find out for themselves on the Supraphon set.

Burian evidently possessed excellent style (taken in the context of the times, of course). This was grand operatic singing that balked at no measure of pathos. Even the old recordings show how beautiful Burian's voice was and how complex his renditions seem today, despite the historical patina. He furnished his Wagnerian roles with much more songfulness and lyricism than was common at the time – in this respect, he was ahead of his time. Perhaps that is why the critics were reticent in their reviews of his first performances at the Met – they praised Burian's performance but judged his voice to be not among the best. These objections gradually disappeared and the reviews turned to unbounded praise. Even the recordings show, however, that Burian was not a "tenor of high Cs". The upper register was not one of his strong points, and he particularly struggled with quieter dynamics in the extreme of the range.

He shared with Caruso a beautiful middle register with a notable baritone colour – Burian himself compared Caruso's middle register to the cello playing of Pablo Casals. Burian lacked Caruso's long breath, but he phrased perfectly and with respect for the text being sung. He cared about what he was singing, he loved Wagner and Smetana and had only scorn for Verdi and fans of verismo – in his judgements, he was passionately unjust and subjective to the extreme. In his eulogy for Gustav Mahler, whom he knew personally from the Metropolitan Opera, he described the composer as the greatest composer of his time, compared to whom "ten Rosenkavaliers" were nothing. Few people were of this opinion in 1911, and Burian's aesthetic judgements (and not only in this case) were remarkably similar to those of Zdeněk Nejedlý, a theorist who became responsible for the development of socialist realist aesthetics in 1950s Communist Czechoslovakia.

The tenor made use of his literary talents not only in magazine articles and poems, but also as the author of Czech libretti to Salome and Tristan and Isolde. This complete edition of Karel Burian's recordings provides a focused look at a short period during which the singer was at the absolute peak of his career. He sang in top-class theatres, lived with relative ease, and was successful with both audiences and critics. Burian's recordings were published following a careful selection of available sources and a remarkably well executed digitalisation process undertaken by Miloš Guth and Czech Radio sound archivist Miroslav Turek. With their publication of this Burian complete set, Supraphon has filled an enormous gap that had long troubled fans of Czech opera.

reviews



Bohemian Tales (České příběhy)

Antonín Dvořák: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in A minor op. 53, Romantic Pieces for violin and piano op. 75, no. 4, Songs My Mother Taught Me op. 55, no. 4 (A. Hadelich), Humoresques op. 101, no. 7 (Fritz Kreisler); Leoš Janáček: Sonata for violin and piano; Josef Suk: Four Pieces for violin and piano op. 17,

Augustin Hadelich (violin), Charles Owen (piano), Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Jakub Hrůša (conductor).
Recorded: Oct. 2018, Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, and Nov.–Dec. 2019, Fraser Performance Studio, WGBH, Boston. Published: 2020. Text: EN, GE. TT: 81:29. CD Warner Classics 0190295274764

The thirty-seven-year-old German violinist with Italian roots and an American address **Augustin Hadelich** boasts a remarkable discography and several Grammy and Gramophone award nominations. He has under his belt recordings of violin concerti by Haydn, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Sibelius, as well as Bartók, Ligeti, and Adès. Hadlich's latest album so far is, as the title *Bohemian Tales* suggests, dedicated to Czech repertoire. Hadelich's partner in Dvořák's violin concerto in A minor op. 53, B. 108 is the **Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Jakub Hrůša**. For the conductor, this is another addition to a Dvořák concertante discography that already includes the cello concerto (Pentatone, Johannes Moser, 2015) and an acclaimed recording of the piano concerto (Supraphon, Ivo Kahánek, 2017). The recording was made at the same concert series in Munich in the autumn of 2018 that already gave rise to Hrůša's recording of Josef Suk's *Asrael Symphony* (BR Klassik). Suk's music is also featured on Hadelich's album, with the increasingly popular *Four Pieces* for violin and piano op. 17. The album is rounded out by Janáček's violin sonatas and several Dvořák miniatures, either in versions by the composer, or in (unauthorised) adaptations (by Hadelich and Fritz Kreisler). Dvořák's concerto (most recently recorded by J. Fischer, C. Tetzlaff, L. Batiashvili, I. Gringolts, and others), Suk's violin pieces (S. Jaffé, L. Matějáková, J. Pike, etc.), and Janáček's sonata (L. Matějáková, J. Pike) have appeared with increasing frequency in international recording catalogues in recent years. Hadelich thus enters a competitive field replete with both his peers and experienced violinists a generation older than him. Long gone are my fears that Dvořák's concerto isn't "in fashion". For this last decade, the opposite is true. Most of the album is devoted to Dvořák's oeuvre, either with orchestral or piano accompaniment (the latter supplied by **Charles Owen**). There is no use in discussing the qualities of the Munich orchestra. Through a generation of diligence and continual care by the deceased Mariss Jansons, it established itself as one of the best orchestras in the world. We can be glad that Jakub Hrůša is invited to conduct them with greater and greater frequency. The spark certainly jumped between the orchestra, conductor, and soloist in the Dvořák concerto, which is audible, at the very least, in the warm sound of the woodwinds and the relished and playful syncopations of the sprightly finale. Hrůša took great care – particularly in the first and last movements – that the orchestra avoid dynamically upstaging the soloist, whose greatest virtue is a (Central) European warm tone in the middle register. Hadelich's strengths are a balanced combination of pathos and melos, a balance we seldom hear in these recent recordings, which either go in the direction of emphasising the virtuosity of Dvořák's concerto (Tetzlaff), or else become fully immersed in his Slavonic, warm world of sound (Batiashvili). Hadelich, however, manoeuvres brilliantly through Dvořák's ambiguous sonic world and masterfully measures out exhibitionism with intimacy, with highly synergetic support from the orchestra. The album's name, *Bohemian Tales*, is well chosen – Hadelich is a talented storyteller, particularly when supported by an ensemble at the level of the Bavarian radio symphonists. He is also a tireless narrator, which the listener will appreciate particularly in the last measures of the finale, where many a violinist has run out of steam in the past. The chamber section of Hadelich's album is dominated by Janáček's violin sonata and Suk's four pieces. For these, Hadelich used a different instrument than for Dvořák's piano concerto, giving the chamber half of the album a more intimate timbre. Suk's compositional language and sonic world from a period of transition between musical eras is a little closer to Hadelich's temperament than Janáček's intonational expressionism, which, in Hadelich's interpretation, is considerably more amiable than it is usual performed by the Czech interpretive tradition. A strong element in Hadelich's recordings are the lyrical and virtuoso passages, which sound particularly clear in Suk's four pieces. It therefore comes as no surprise that this album won a nomination for the 2020 Grammy Awards.

Martin Jemelka

Jan Čižmář

Codex Jacobides

Jan Čižmář – lute, orpharion, guitar, theorbo.

Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. Recorded: Nov. 2019 Domovina Studio, Prague. Published: 2020. TT: 60:31. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4278-2

reviews

Lutenist **Jan Čižmář** is known by everyone in Czechia who wants to know anything about the lute. I met him personally a few years ago when I needed to rent a lute for a musical project. At the time, Jan told me he was working on a new album including a rare fragment of lute tablature kept at the Czech Museum of Music in Prague. It is known as the *Codex Jacobides* and is among the most significant relics of instrumental lute music of the early 17th century, i.e. during the rule of the Emperor Rudolf II and his successors. Čižmář's album includes not only instrumental compositions for lute, but also period dances and intabulations of songs and vocal homophonic compositions from various countries. The manuscript's breadth and artistic quality proves that Rudolfinian Prague was a cultural crossroads of Europe. Some melodies of the *Codex Jacobides* acquired almost folk status in Czechoslovakia thanks to the cinematic musical *Noc na Karlštejně* (*A Night at Karlstein*) and the popular folk band Spirituál Kvintet, which included them in their repertoire. The recording presents about half of all the surviving compositions, and its dramaturgy is conceived with a clear focus on variability and variety. In addition to various types of lutes, guitars, theorbos, and an orpharion, all of which Čižmář plays with interpretive gentility and a cultivated sonic elegance, the album also features the **Consort of Renaissance Transverse Flutes** and the **Czech Lute Orchestra**. One of the Renaissance songs includes the voice of **Eliška Tesařová** and we also hear a viola da gamba, played by **Magda Uhlířová**. Most of the pieces clock in at under two minutes, which explains why the disc has forty-four tracks in total. The resultant listening experience, however, is neither fragmented nor fidgety. The recording is arranged like a mosaic, in a way that allows one to examine the individual nuances and focus on various details in the sound, character, melodic decorations, and other finesses. I appreciate the remarkable personal input of Jan Čižmář, who used eight master-made lute-type instruments for the recording. He is truly a master of his instruments. In his rendition, it is never about the mere evocation of an idea of how the historical music might have sounded. At every moment, one can hear his personally motivated playing, which is marked by considerate phrasing, well-chosen expression, and sophisticated articulation. Jan Čižmář's album *Codex Jacobides* will surely take its place among the most significant contemporary productions in the field of early music. The erudite foreword, as well as the humble tribute to Jiří Tichota, whose research contributions Čižmář did not fail to mention, are two further pleasant attributes that complete the integral profile of this excellent lutenist.

Milan Bátor

Leoš Janáček
Osud (Destiny)

Martin Šrejma, Veronika Rovná Holbová, Petra Alvarez Šimková, Tomáš Kořínek, Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová, and others, Jana Hájková – piano, Orchestraa of the Opera of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, Jakub Klecker – conductor. Director: Jiří Nekvasil.
Recorded: Nov. 2018, Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Ostrava. Published: 2020. Text: CZ, EN. TT: 76:43. 1 CD National Moravian-Silesian Theatre and Czech Radio.

Leoš Janáček's opera *Osud (Destiny)* is among those that spent a long time fighting their way to the stage – all the more interesting is the live performance at Ostrava's Antonín Dvořák Theatre presented on this CD. In *Osud*, subtitled *A Spa Romance on the Life of a Composer*, setting a libretto by Fedora Bartošová and finished in 1907, Janáček reflects autobiographical elements with fantasies and visions in a highly personal musical setting, begun in 1904 with *Její pastorkyňa (Jenůfa)*. Unlike *Jenůfa*, with its raw, realist narrative, however, *Osud* portrays a reality connected with inner life and the atmosphere of the story. In a shorthand but emotionally very intense expression with contrasts and twists of both dynamics and expression, the composition was so unusual at the beginning of the 20th century that it remained misunderstood for years. In the booklet, director **Jiří Nekvasil** describes his relationship with Janáček's *Osud,* which had to wait for a premiere of the original score until 1978 in České Budějovice (where it was directed by Nekvasil's father), as the world premiere in Brno in 1958 was unfortunately marked by significant changes to the score that failed to respect the work in its full form. The opera foreshadowed the development of opera for years to come and it had to be produced with great humility and empathy. The team in Ostrava, led by stage director Nekvasil, conductor **Jakub Klecker**, set designer **Daniel Dvořák**, costume designer **Simona Rybáková**, and further creative and technical collaborators, managed to create a remarkable production that provided ample space for the excellent soloists, the well-composed choir, and the fantastic Orchestra of the Opera of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, providing this demanding work with authenticity and a homogeneous shape. Of the soloists, we must not fail to mention **Martin Šrejm**a in the leading part of the Composer Živný and **Veronika Rovná Holbová**, whose performance as **Míla Válková** is just as captivating as we might expect from this leading singer of Janáček roles. Both singers excel in their charged, difficult parts overflowing with emotion, diligently marking the sudden changes of feeling of their characters. Also excellent were the other soloists: **Tomáš Kořínek** as Dr. Suda, **Jakub Kettner** as the Painter Lhotský, or **Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová as Miss Stuhlá, who captured Janáček's na**rrative and musical language perfectly. **Ondřej Mager** handled his short but crucial entry as Doubek expertly, and the same can be said of **Filip Kasztura** appearance as Doubek in his childhood days. The choir, composed of soloists playing other characters, has a refined, cultivated discourse with balanced colours. We should mention, at the very least, **Rudolf Medňanský** in the roles of the Poet and Student and **Karolína Cingrošová Žmolíková,** with her clear soprano, as the First Lady or Kosinská. The choir of students in the third act is youthful and doubting, only calming down during the reconciliation. The poignant concluding confession of the composer

Živný is a deep study into the aroused male soul, introducing Martin Šrejma, with his excellent performance, in all the registers of his richly colourful, inwardly directed voice. In this interpretation from Ostrava, Janáček's highly specific opera was given a remarkably suggestive form.

Marta Tužilová

Josef Mysliveček
Oboe Quintets / String Quartets

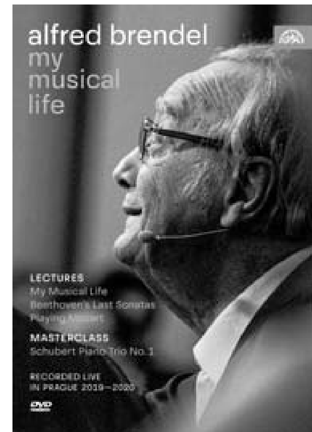
The Doležal Quartet (Václav Dvořák, Jan Zrostlík, Martin Adamovič, Vojtěch Urban), Michaela Hrabánková - oboe. Recorded: Jul. 2020, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. Published: 2020. Produced by: Matouš Vlčinský. Text: EN, GE, FR, CZ. TT: 64:34. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4289-2.

Prague native Josef Mysliveček (1737–1781) was renowned for his gorgeous Baroque Italian operas, mostly written for the city of Naples, which secured his reputation as "Il divino Boemo" (the Divine Bohemian). However, in addition to these major works, he also left behind a considerable chamber music legacy in which his great talents were applied just as well as in the dazzling operas. Václav Dvořák, first violinist of the **Doležal Quartet,** along with oboe player **Michaela Hrabánková,** now living in Paris, completed their work of several years: trawling through archives and completing the oboe quintets featured on this album, dated around the year 1777 based on surviving correspondence with Leopold Mozart. The selected quartets op. 3 were published in Paris, probably in 1768, and the final quartet cycle was only published in Amsterdam after the composer's death, in 1781. The research and meticulous preparations have certainly left their mark on this world premiere recording of three oboe quintets and three string quartets by Josef Mysliveček, which the Doležal Quartet and Hrabánková performed truly excellently. Their masterful playing, full of attention to detail, presents Mysliveček's effective and compositionally rich pieces with professionalism and a wonderful personal input. The high Baroque and Rococo gracefulness breathe in the crystal clear melodies of the oboe parts with lightness and devotion. Their performance is technically perfect, but this perfection serves to strengthen the experience of every nuance. The balanced and diverse dynamics add lightness and charm to the soaring melodies. These pieces are not only proof that Mysliveček influenced the young Mozart but also that he was rightly among the admired composers of his time in the broader European context. **Daniel E. Freeman's** enlightening and detailed booklet text includes details from Mysliveček's life, his relationship with Mozart, and a musicological exegesis of the individual pieces, presenting a marvellous bonus to this excellent recording, which, incidentally, was made in top-class audio quality and is also available in Hi-Res Audio format.

Marta Tužilová

Alfred Brendel
Můj hudební život (My Musical Life)

Alfred Brendel - lectures and masterclasses, Jan Bartoš - piano, Trio Incendio: Karolína Františová - piano, Filip Zaykov - violin, Vilém Petras - cello. Text: CZ, EN, GE. Recorded: Mar. 2019, Feb. 2020, Suk Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague. Published: 2020. TT: 4:13:45. 1 DVD 7141-9.



The Austrian pianist, writer, and poet **Alfred Brendel** has enjoyed the status of a living legend in the musical world for years. In January of this year, he celebrated his ninetieth birthday in excellent physical and mental condition. He concluded his concert career over twelve years ago, but he has not relented in the least in his other artistic activities, which include extensive lecturing. Thanks to the personal contacts of pianist **Jan Bartoš,** who was a student of Brendel's for several years, Prague recently had the unique opportunity to experience several lectures by Brendel. The last four, which the legendary pianist presented at the Suk Hall of the Rudolfinum in 2019 and 2020, were filmed, this footage later published by Supraphon on DVD. This DVD went on the market in December 2020, shortly before Brendel's ninetieth birthday. The most attractive (and extensive) is a lecture Brendel calls *My Musical Life.* The lecture can be seen as a small autobiography: we learn about the pianist's childhood, parents, students, concert tours… Brendel has a wonderful sense of humour that helps him even when communicating the most serious of topics. And what's more, his humour has one excellent property - it is kind and never lapses into irony or sarcasm. "I am still able to laugh," says Brendel in the conclusion of this talk. "Perhaps not as much as I used to, but it's enough for one to survive. If things seem funny to you, all is not lost." The lecture includes a number of musical examples, with the last of these being particularly touching: Schubert's translucent *Impromptu* in G flat major op. 90/3. The DVD then continues with three lectures (or rather two lectures and a masterclass) dedicated to Brendel's favourite composers: Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert. In the lecture titled *Beethoven's Last Sonatas*, pianist Jan Bartoš provided the musical examples at the piano. Brendel presents a number of interesting observations about Beethoven's music, reaching the finale of Beethoven's last piano sonata, which he claims "opens a space in which all music ceases to exist". The third lecture on the DVD bears the title *How to Play Mozart,* again featuring Bartoš as an "assistant". And here too, as in the case of Beethoven, we hear many of Brendel's remarkable opinions on Mozart's music, richly documented with quotations by leading figures in the field. Brendel pays particular attention to Mozart's pieces in minor keys. The pianist complemented his lecture with two of his own Mozartian recordings: the deeply felt minor *Andantino* from the ninth piano concerto, which he performed with the **Vienna Philharmonic** conducted by **Sir Charles Mackerras** in December 2008 in Vienna at his "goodbye concert", while at the end of the lecture, we hear

an unbelievably light and brisk final movement from the piano concerto no. 19, recorded by Brendel with **Neville Marriner** and the **Academy of St Martin in Fields** orchestra. The last track on Brendel's DVD captures a masterclass by Brendel in which the artist coaches the young **Trio Incendio** in Schubert's first piano trio op. 99, D 898. The listener has two unique opportunities here: not only is the Trio Incendio a truly excellent ensemble, but the level of detail at which Brendel is able to analyse Schubert's score and what he is able to find in his inspired reading of the notation is astounding. All four of Brendel's lectures captured on this DVD are in English, but Czech – and English and German – subtitles are also available (and excellently synchronised, too). The booklet contains – in addition to a short introduction by Brendel and an even shorter epilogue by Jan Bartoš – an extensive and elegantly stylised text by the important German musicologist and conductor **Peter Gülke**, a contemporary of Brendel. This DVD affords us the opportunity to spend over four hours in the company of a remarkably charismatic artist. It is not only fans of Brendel, but lovers of music in general that should make sure not to miss this opportunity.

Věroslav Němec

Ivan Ilić
Reicha Rediscovered, Vol. 3

Ivan Ilić – piano.
Text: EN, GE, FR. Recorded: 2020, Potton Hall, Dunwich, Suffolk. Published: 2021. TT: 86:50. 1 CD Chandos CHAN 20194.

On the third disc of his Rejcha project, **Ivan Ilić** offers his listener a true delicacy: *Rejcha's variation cycle L'Art de varier ou 57 variations pour le piano, op. 57* (The Art of Variation, or, 57 Variations for Piano), which the composer wrote between 1803 and 1804. In its quality, originality, and scope, this work is comparable with the most famous variation cycles, such as Bach's *Goldberg Variations* or Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*. Rejcha's originality is already present in the songful twelve-bar theme: the first four bars flow by in a simple homophony, the following four are in two voices, and only in the last four bars is the right hand joined by the bass line in the left hand. In the variations that follow, the listener can only marvel at Rejcha's creativity. The entire piece is an immensely diverse kaleidoscope that includes both simple and complex variations, easy and virtuosic ones (several measures are, in fact, completely unplayable), polyphonic and homophonic, major and minor, the theme sometimes remaining utterly clear (in several variations, it is only the harmonisation that changes) and at other times craftily concealed. Several variations take the form of dances: variation no. 40 Menuet (with a devilish trill finale), var. 46 Siciliana (which includes five tempo changes), var. 52 Gavotta. In addition to these, we also hear a Marche funèbre (var. 31). Several of the variations have the character of etudes, whilst others are reminiscent of fantasia. We also get ample opportunity to appreciate the composer's sense of humour (10, 22, 28, 32, 41, 44, 46, 49, and others). Utterly fascinating are Rejcha's "views into the future": the harmonies and piano stylisations often remind us of Schumann (e.g. vars. 27, 38, 42, and 48) and – less often – Chopin (vars. 22 and 57). With his originality, enormous technical demands, and striving to go beyond the limits of conventions, Rejcha is reminiscent of Liszt and, particularly, Alkan. In the fifth variation, the metre changes in every measure (2/4, 3/4, 4/4) and the harmonic break at the end of var. 22 sends shivers down one's spine. Ivan Ilić plays *L'Art de varier* with audible captivation, humour, and delight, coping brilliantly with the work's extensive technical demands. Particularly likeable is how much inventiveness and joy in variation is present in Ilić's approach to the notation, which we appreciate most strongly in the repeats. A few examples, at least: in the fourth variation, the pianist changes the agogics, in the eighth, the dynamics, in the forty-third, he plays the arpeggios first with pedal, then (courageously) without pedal, and in the fifty-third, he plays the chords tenuto first and then arpeggiated. Listening to this CD offers many uncommon experiences, and I must admit it has been a long time since I had as much fun as I did listening to Ilić and Rejcha's *L'Art de varier.*

Věroslav Němec

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7 JULY, / J. K. TYL THEATRE
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Lukáš Klánský – piano
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8 JULY / LESSER COURTYARD, CASTLE TŘEBOŇ
Kalabis Quintet
Zuzana Bandúrová – flute
Dana Wichterlová, j. h. – oboe
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Denisa Beňovská – bassoon
Adéla Psohlavcová – French horn

9 JULY / COURTYARD OF THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY, TŘEBOŇ
A Balad for a Bandit
Soloists – Eva Vrbková, Igor Orozovič, Dalibor Buš, Gabriela Vermelho
South Czech Philharmonic
Vojtěch Spurný – conductor

10 JULY / COURTYARD OF THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY, TŘEBOŇ
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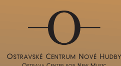

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