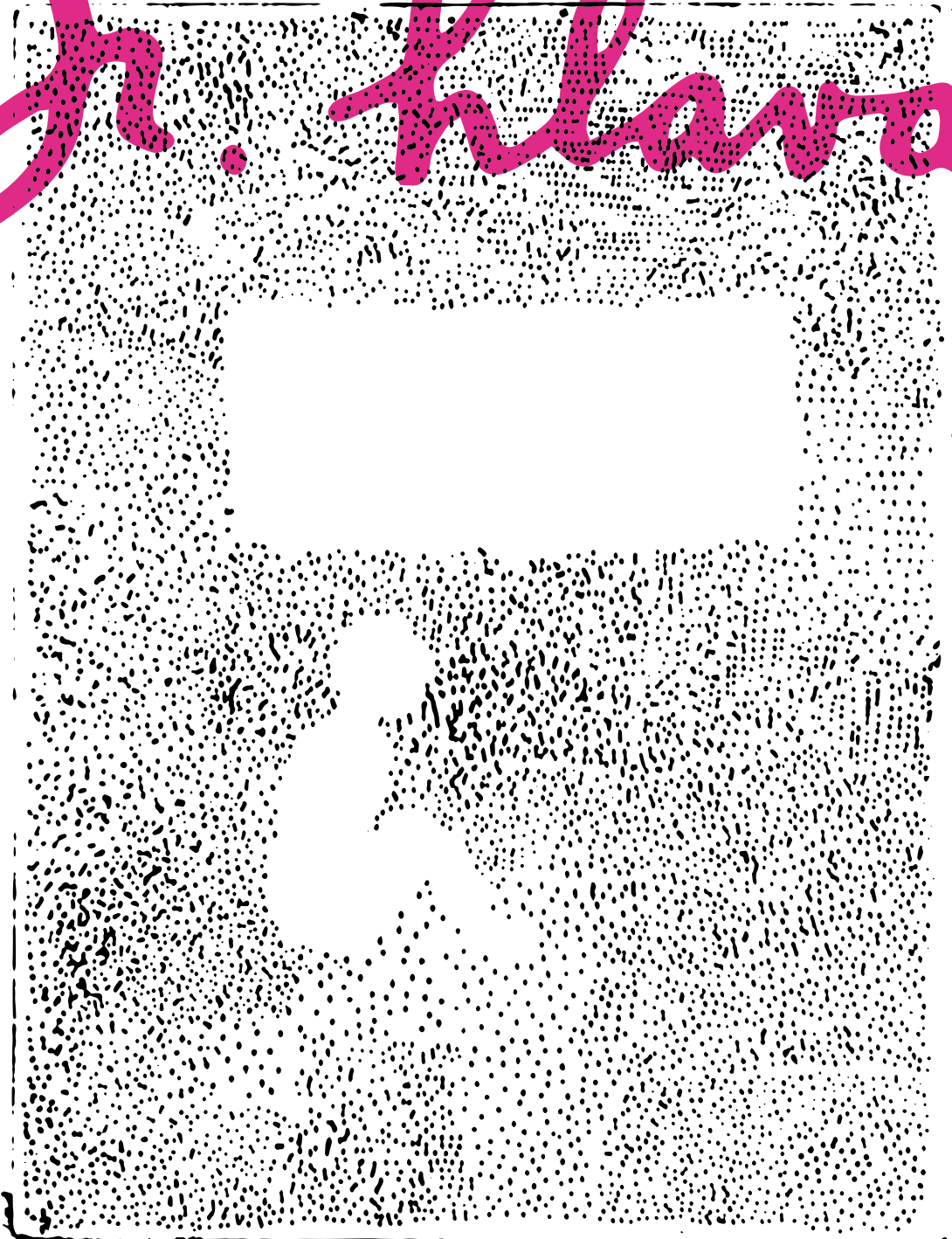




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Miloš Štědroň
Ostrava Days 2021
Karel Reiner
Jiří Třanovský

Ji. hlava



**25TH JI.HLAVA INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL
26. ——— 31. DOCTOBER 2021**

DEAR READERS,

We greet you after the end of a lively and eventful musical summer. The full programmes at several festivals – most notably the Ostrava Days festival, a comprehensive review of which you will find inside the magazine – almost made us forget about the lurking danger of another period of restrictive measures on culture and life generally. As everyone gears up for a no-less packed autumn (with the slogan of “getting it all in before they close us up again”), we invite you to read Michael Beckerman’s reflection of the history of infectious diseases projected directly onto the music of the great Czech composers. Turning further back to the past, we find Matěj Kratochvíl’s interview with organiser Pavel Straka about bringing the less explored areas of the music of Jewish composer Karel Reiner back to life, and further back still, Adriana Grešová-Sekelská’s exposé on Jiří Třanovský, a scholar who is positioned directly on the edge separating Renaissance and Baroque thinking. The history of music is also a prime interest of scholar and composer Miloš Štědroň, whose profile CD is attached to this copy of Czech Music Quarterly, accompanied by a profile interview by Barbora Šteflová. Not only is this CD – an overview of a strikingly varied compositional career – worth listening to in itself, but it might also lead you to explore much other music: the Third Stream big band jazz of Gustav Brom, the madrigals of Monteverdi, or Leoš Janáček (circling back to Beckerman’s interpretation of Jenůfa through infection).

Wishing you a musical autumn,
Ian Mikyska



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I Enjoy Making Banality Ironic

AN INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER MILOŠ ŠTĚDRŮ

MILOŠ ŠTĚDRŮ (*1942) IS AN IMPORTANT FIGURE ON THE CULTURAL SCENE OF BRNO AND, BY EXTENSION, THE CZECH REPUBLIC. HE IS A LECTURER AT BRNO'S MASARYK UNIVERSITY, A MUSICOLOGIST, COMPOSER, AND MUSIC EDITOR. THOUGH HE HAS WRITTEN OVER FOUR HUNDRED PIECES OF CLASSICAL MUSIC, HE IS ALSO HIGHLY SOUGHT-AFTER AS A COMPOSER OF INCIDENTAL AND MUSICAL THEATRE WORKS AND HAS HAD AN EXTENSIVE CAREER AS AN EDITOR OF THE WORKS OF LEOŠ JANÁČEK.

The number of fields you work in is extensive. What is your role as a professional composer?

“Composer” as a profession? I’d be wary of that. It’s something that exists but also doesn’t. We fight for it practically every day. I “admire” those who can subscribe to it openly: “I am a composer”, “writer”, etc. It’s something I can think about myself, but it’s also possible that it hasn’t been true for a long time. But what is truth? How did Pontius Pilate put it? And he knew what he was talking about, because there are plenty of those truths to go around...

Attached to the September edition of this magazine is your profile CD. What pieces did you select and what do they mean to you?

My selection mostly consists of younger pieces, with perhaps three older relics - *Panychida Pasternakovi* (*Memorial Ceremony to Pasternak*), *Jazz Ma fin*, and *Trium vocum*. The *Memorial Ceremony to Pasternak* is musique concrète - highly atypical of my general oeuvre. I worked in an electronic studio for years. I wanted to recall



PHOTO: PAVEL ZATLOUKAL

the only piece of musique concrète I created myself – apart from this composition, we mostly worked in teams. The *Memorial Ceremony* was created in the Brno studio of electronic and concrete music between 1968 and 1969. This studio began operation thanks to the efforts of the conductor and radio director Jiří Hanousek. It produced and broadcast over two hundred works. I took part in these activities within the framework of the experimental music studio, which JAMU (the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts) ran in collaboration with the Czechoslovak Radio, with the only graduates being me, Rudolf Růžička – the doyen and most knowledgeable expert on Brno’s electronic music –, and Arnošt Parsch. The course was cancelled in 1971, I think. I spent more than a year working on this *Memorial Service* for my beloved writer Boris Leonidovich Pasternak in the studio. Then an informant’s letter arrived in Prague from an officer at the South Moravian Regional National Committee, claiming that it was an anti-Soviet and generally reactionary piece. The composer Ladislav Kubík, an important dignitary at the Czechoslovak Radio and the Czechoslovak Union of Composers (from which I, along with many others, had been expelled by that time), set a meeting with me when I came to Prague, showed me the letter, and destroyed it in front of me.

Jazz Ma fin is a piece from my youth, when I was a great admirer of the Gustav Brom Orchestra. It is based on Guillaume de Machaut's canon *Ma fin est mon commencement* – a brilliant bit of wordplay transferred into a musical structure. In 1967, as a youth of only twenty-five who had great admiration for Brom and his big band, I conceived the piece as Machaut's response to first hearing jazz: "The beginning of jazz is my end and the end of jazz is my beginning". I don't know whether bandleader Gustav Brom registered this and whether he knew who Machaut was, but he made a fantastic recording of the piece. Finally, *Trium vocum*, which is also from the late 1970s. It connects three phenomenal performers in a Third Stream approach: flautist Jiří Stivín, cellist Michaela Fukačová, and percussionist Alan Vitouš.

From the younger pieces, I selected *Čarování (Witchcraft)* for voice, flutes, and guitar, a piece that makes use of my decades of experience with the magical performer and composer Iva Bittová. I also selected the cantata *Lupi*, written for the Affetto vocal group. It makes use of a classification of wolves created by Milíč of Kroměříž, one of the forerunners of Jan Hus. I wrote *Affetti banalissimi* for the phenomenal Trio Aperto, and I used – as I have done many times in the past – my favourite method of confronting banal segments with a different background.

Austerlitz for four cellos was originally a piece for Jan Škrdlík and other cellos played back from magnetic tape, then I returned to the material in orchestral form, and this is the resultant reduction. *Villanelle per Willi* – throughout my life, I have written villanelles as a light form. This series was written for my friend, the excellent musician and currently dean of JAMU, Barbara Willi, who is leading this art university to achieve European standards. The *Madrigals and Villanells on Švejk* are a homage full of admiration for the genius of the writer Jaroslav Hašek, author of *The Good Soldier Švejk*, whom I have revered since I was a boy. I have returned to his texts many times, always with the knowledge that *Švejk*, this brilliant World War I novel that is in fact not humour but existentialist, cannot be set to music in full, only as a collage of the individual situations. The madrigal and villanelle seemed most fitting to the task at hand.

The disc concludes with *AD: Allegria e Nostalgia*. My tribute to Antonín Dvořák's genius. For twenty years, I have been working on Dvořák, trying to bridge the gap brought about in Czech scholarship by the hagiographical and somewhat stale activities of Otakar Šourek (obviously highly praiseworthy in their time), confronting them with the English, American, and German literature (Michael Beckerman, Klaus Döge, John Clapham), as well as new Czech studies (Veronika Vejvodová). I think I now understand Nejedlý¹ a little better – attack was aimed much more at the dilution of Dvořák by his students and epigones than at the essence of the work itself. For me, Dvořák remains the highest expression

1/ Zdeněk Nejedlý (1978–1962), an influential and controversial musicologist, historian, and journalist. After the communist putsch in 1948, he accepted the post of minister of culture in the Stalinist government and helped define the aesthetics of Socialist Realism in Czechoslovakia.

of Czech musicianship, described by the composer Karl Michael Komma as “Das böhmische Musikantentum”. The occasions are few and far between when someone has interpreted a solo piano part with as much perfection and invention as the pianist Dagmar Pančochová.

During the time of your studies at JAMU in Brno, the school witnessed copious experiments with New Music. Many Brnoese composers created their own compositional systems. Unique “team compositions” were created. What are your reminiscences of this period?

I was truly absorbed in New Music. In fact, I never passed through the traditional, conservatory training in composition, which was then considered – the clue is in the name – highly conservative. Miloslav Ištvan, Josef Berg, and Alois Piňos became my gurus and I followed all their activities. I never missed a single concert by the Musica nova ensemble (Josef Horák – bass clarinet, Oldřiška Vaňharová – flute, Branko Čuberka – piano, and Jan Novák – percussion, plus a number of guests). For only a short time, I succumbed to dodecaphonic mysticism and believed that serialism would save us. Then I understood that it is – as always – the refuge of eclectics who rely on salvation through rows as something self-saving. Thankfully, my teachers at JAMU did not fall prey to this kind of thinking. Alois Piňos was an original thinker and his monograph *Tónové skupiny* (Tone Groups), if it had been published at the time in German, French, and English, would be at the level of some grand book on dodecaphony. Unfortunately, this did not come to pass. As a composer, he enthralled me more and more, from *Karikatury* (Caricatures), *Zkratky* (Shortcuts), and *Konflikty* (Conflicts) all the way to great works like *Dvojkonzert* (Double Concerto), *Trojkoncert* (Triple Concerto), the *Ars amatoria* cantata and other pieces. Ištvan enraptured me with his cantatas *Já, Jákob* (I, Jacob) and *Hard Blues* and many other pieces. In 1980, we worked together on completing the evening-length version of *Johanes doktor Faust*, an opera by Josef Berg. We met daily all summer and worked on the score. The teaching methods of both these composers were fascinating. These were not the prescribed two hours of composition theory, but entire afternoons and evenings. No imposition or lecturing – merely the opportunity of observing how they do it. Dress rehearsals, work on the score, consultations with conductors, etc. And the sneers of the orchestra, which was, at the time, convinced that in aleatoric music, everyone can play what they like, so what we mostly heard was the old musician’s adage of C D E C D E... When Piňos’s *Concerto for Orchestra and Magnetic Tape* was to be recorded, we heard dozens of these remarks. František Jílek, the conductor on that recording, suddenly cut the hubbub short and said: “So far, I’ve heard a lot of remarks, but I haven’t heard what is written down in the score. Now play it as it stands in the music and then you can criticise.” So they did – and there was silence. Piňos’s music was thrilling... The years passed, I was formed anew by the theatre, but every once in a while, I return to this “modernism” and call it my “seconda prattica”, following Monteverdi’s famous modernist phase.

What was the creative process like with the team compositions?

That was a joint idea of ours, to make team compositions. I have no idea how it came about, it might have been totally random, but it was probably due to

the fact that we wanted to be together. Alois Piňos was the leader, followed by Arnošt Parsch, then me and Rudolf Růžička. We began writing by inventing a methodology – different for every piece. The first evening-length team pieces were *Peripetie* (*Peripeteias*), *Divertissement*, and *Ecce homo* (which will be performed soon by the Brno Contemporary Orchestra). In *Peripetie*, we first used the method of composing in layers. That is the first, immediate idea that comes into one’s mind, and the critics understood it too – when the premiere took place in Germany, a critic for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung wrote: “Team aus Brno – mache du Geige, ich mache Bläser” – you do the violins, I’ll do the winds. We made many of these team pieces. It would be worth making a summary.

You are a renowned expert on Leoš Janáček, as well as a connoisseur of the oeuvre of Claude Monteverdi. How did it happen that these two diverse worlds find a connection within you?

I’ve grown out of Janáček. Since my childhood, I was in the claws of my uncle, the musicologist Bohumír Štědroň, who fed me Janáček since I was five years old. I saw *Jenůfa* for the first time when I was six, and then another thirty times. I saw everything. My uncle taught me about Janáček through everything he published. He taught me in a complex manner – he was a bachelor, and every day, he would rush into our apartment, eat dinner there, and teach me everything. I had to write reviews, study history, play the piano. Then he wanted me to begin playing the violin, so I did. At about age ten, I was ripe for a breakdown, so my mother had me study with her old teacher, Anna Holubová, who was a professor at Janáček’s organists’ school. I played Janáček with a running commentary by her. She would always say: “That Janáček, he’s a genius, but he always spoils everything and cuts it short. He just does it in 5/4 time.” And I would say: “But, professor, that’s exactly what’s so gorgeous about it.” At age twelve, I knew all of Janáček’s operas. In 1958, there was a festival in Brno that presented all of Janáček’s dramatic works. I was sixteen and I attended the world premiere of *Osud* (*Destiny*) with my uncle. And then came early music. That was around the years 1962 and 1963, when the conductor and dramaturge of the Brno opera, Václav Nosek, had a tendency towards balance, so the stable dramaturgy, which mostly consisted of Martinů, Prokofiev, and Janáček, came to include Händel, Lully, and Purcell.

How did Monteverdi enter the world of Janáček?

Before 1968 was the peak of New Music in my own composing practice – I did not believe in anything else. In 1967, I attended the international Darmstadt New Music courses, and that was a breaking point. There came a need to balance out New Music, and then came bass clarinetist Josef Horák, who kept asking me for arrangements: “Miloš, we can’t play Schönberg in Jánské lázně [a spa town in the Hradec Králové Region]. We need some early music!” So I began searching for tablatures and making arrangements of the Levoča tablature, Lublin, and others. And that gradually led me to a greater and greater interest in early music.

Around the year 1971, and totally by chance, I met the Prague Madrigalists (Pražští madrigalisté). Their artistic director, Miroslav Venhoda, had similar demands to Horák: “Write something for the Madrigalists that would bring modernism together

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The first system of musical notation for the organ. It consists of three staves: a treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (left and right bass clefs) below it. The piece is in 4/4 time. The treble staff contains a complex melodic line with many accidentals and ties. The grand staff provides harmonic support with chords and moving bass lines. There are some handwritten annotations above the treble staff, possibly indicating fingerings or articulation.

The second system of musical notation, consisting of three staves (treble and grand staff) that are currently blank, indicated by double diagonal lines across each staff.

The third system of musical notation, consisting of three staves (treble and grand staff) with musical notation. The treble staff continues the melodic line, and the grand staff continues the harmonic accompaniment.

The fourth system of musical notation, consisting of three staves (treble and grand staff) that are currently blank, indicated by double diagonal lines across each staff.

The fifth system of musical notation, consisting of three staves (treble and grand staff) with musical notation. This system features a prominent chordal texture in the treble staff, with some chords marked with a 'tr' (trill) or similar ornamentation. The grand staff continues with a steady bass line.

with the madrigal.” So I wrote a madrigal cantata on the tomb of Gesualdo and four other pieces for the Madrigalists. From 1975 to 1981, me and Arnošt Parsch began realising early operas. We did Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* for the chamber opera of Miloš Wasserbauer (formerly the JAMU Opera Studio, later an autonomous theatre), Caccini’s *Euridice*, and others. The university library had a complete edition of Monteverdi in about thirty volumes. I gradually went through all of this, marinating myself in Monteverdi for about four years. Miroslav Venhoda saw that I was deep in Monteverdi, and suddenly I get a phone call and he says: “I’ve arranged for you to write a small monograph on Monteverdi for Supraphon”. So I went even deeper and wrote one chapter after another.

In addition to producing old operas, you later also edited and prepared for publication the works of Leoš Janáček.

That came with my position at the university. When I started at the faculty, they immediately made me the secretary for the complete critical edition of Janáček. This was terrible work. I was constantly arguing with Supraphon. Me and Leoš Faltus would visit Jarmil Burghauser, who had written – along with Milan Šolc – the editorial principles for publishing Janáček and acted as something like a general guarantor all for Janáček editions. Burghauser was a true expert – he was excellently skilled in reading Janáček’s manuscript scores. Me and Faltus gradually acquired the same skill, so he trusted us. He stood behind us when we discovered Janáček’s violin concerto.

We were preparing the *Danube Symphony* for publication when I got a call from Svatava Přibáňová, whom I had worked with for nine years, and she said: “Miloš, what about a violin concerto? We found the score – it had been laying around at Bakala’s for twenty years.” When Janáček died, the conductor Břetislav Bakala received all the materials pertaining to the opera *From the House of the Dead*, which also included this concerto. He understood this did not belong to the opera, so he simply put it aside and it stayed with him. After four days of working on the concerto, we understood that the sixty-page score had had about fourteen pages ripped out. What to do? And I had an idea: let’s look at the *House of the Dead*. And there it was. Janáček, in a frenzy, used the pages he needed – he didn’t even cross out the page numbers. We put it together – it was logical, tie to tie, so it fit. That was a fantastic feeling. The concerto was then premiered by Jan Stanovský, after which it was performed excellently by Josef Suk and a number of other fantastic violinists.

You have written for many top-class performers. The most extensive list belongs to Due Boemi di Praga (Josef Horák – bass clarinet, Emma Kovárnová – piano). Was your encounter with bass clarinetist Josef Horák – and, by extension, Due Boemi di Praga – crucial for your composing career?

Certainly. In the 1960s, I was enraptured with the Musica nova ensemble, as I already mentioned – I attended all of their concerts. I was introduced to Josef by the ensemble’s pianist Branko Čuberka. I wrote Josef a *Meditation for Bass Clarinet*, and three months later, he wrote me a letter: “I performed your *Meditation* at the festival in Warsaw, take a look what the press wrote about you”. And some

reviewer had written: “the Czech Varèse”. At the time, I had no idea who Varèse was. That was how I began composing for Sonatori di Praga and, later, for Due Boemi di Praga. Josef Horák and Emma Kovárnová – my lifelong duo. I have written almost a hundred pieces for them as a duo and as soloists. For the rest of my life, I will never forget my friend, the Paganini of the bass clarinet, and his partner...

What other collaborations do you remember fondly?

As far as ensembles go, I remember with gratitude BAS – the Brno Academic Choir with choirmasters Lubomír Mátl and Petr Altrichter, the Brno Madrigalists with Josef Pančík, the Prague Madrigalists with my great supporter Miroslav Venhoda, the Moravian Quartet, the DAMA DAMA percussion ensemble, the Gustav Brom Big Band, for whom I wrote over a dozen Third Stream compositions, BROLN – the Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments, for whom me and Arnošt Parsch wrote almost twenty pieces (both as a team and individually). I also cannot forget Jiří Stivín, the Graff Quartet, harpsichordist Barbara Willi, guitarist Vladislav Bláha, percussionists Martin Opršál and Martin Kleibl, harpsichordist, organist, and conductor Robert Hugo, though there were many others too...

For most of your professional life, you have been active both in the academic world and the world of theatre. Are these two different worlds, with one allowing you respite from the other, or do they mingle and complement each other?

I always and proudly subscribe to the operetta *Mam'zelle Nitouche*. I am Célestin and Floridor – the boring, theoretical Célestin, who resides in the convent, is replaced by his alter ego, the perennially joyous Floridor. That is my discipline! In the 1970s, I was at this horrific faculty, with a meeting every two days where they would tell us how awful it all was and how they'd throw us all out as soon as quality political cadres were available... Those were the times. There was nothing of the sort when I worked at Husa na provázku (Goose on a String Theatre). That was a commune – a world unto itself, closed from morning to night. We were always rehearsing. And I came to this commune – they took me as a sparring partner. I was writing for people who couldn't read music, they would step on the sheet music, but when I brought them pieces, they sung them with gusto, they performed my productions, and I was happy. I never heard annoyed comments from musicians about what they have to play. I realised that if I had written an opera for the state theatre – and I probably could have gotten it performed after 1980, with an enormous amount of effort – it would leave scores of people angry and annoyed.

What are you working on now? And when can we look forward to hearing it?

I finished a chamber opera, *Magnum mysteriu* – the great mystery of the title is the story of Gregor Mendel and the half-hour chamber opera is intended for the Mendel bicentenary (2022). I also recently finished another chamber opera, *Delirium*. It describes the journey of army chaplain Otto Katz back home in a delirium, with the assistance of Švejk and other characters. But looking forward to a performance? I'd prefer not to. The opera houses I have approached so far are making excuses. I take this naturally, with humility. This is the Weltlauf – the running of the world – and thank God for the fact that it is so...

Ostrava Days 2021

A festival twenty years young

Over the past two years, I've often found myself asking questions about what musical life will look, feel, and sound like once the global pandemic recedes into the background. What music will people programme? Who will play it? What have composers been crafting in isolation? Are performers ready to dive right back into playing? Have they maintained practice regimens? Have composers returned to performing, playing, or practicing? How will that change their work? On the flip side, have some performers jumped into the foray to become composers? In short, how has everyone been spending their time?



Well, the successful presentation of Ostrava Days 2021, due to the resilience of the Ostrava New Music Center led by artistic director and composer, performer, and conductor Petr Kotik and executive director Renáta Spisarová along with their determined staff and close partnership with the City of Ostrava, provided some answers to some of those questions. After watching many hours of live performances, I can say that musicians are carrying on as best they can and live concert music looks much the same as it did before the pandemic began.

In terms of sheer size, the festival was comparable to years past. Ostrava Days 2021 featured at least two hundred musicians, ten ensembles, and seven conductors who rehearsed, prepared, and performed works by at least fifty composers representing ten countries. If this wasn't enough, thirty-six works were world premiere performances. This colossal amount of music was presented in over eighteen concerts clocking in at more than seventy hours of music (by my count) spanning ten days taking place at eleven different venues.

Before the festival begins, there is an institute for composers, performers, and occasionally musical thinkers. I attended Ostrava Days 2021 as a participant in this institute, which I have done three times before, in 2015, 2017, and 2019.

It Only Takes a Spark...

You may think that I mean spark of inspiration. But I mean a literal spark. Ostrava Days 2021 opened with Robert Watts' *Trace for Orchestra*, performed by musicians from Ostravská Banda, the Ostrava New Orchestra (both "home" ensembles created by the festival), and others including Kotik himself and soloist Hana Kotková. The piece is simple; the musicians are instructed to light their sheet music on fire, which they did – and I need to say "Thank You Ostrava Days!" for ensuring that the first live performance I attended in nearly two years literally set music ablaze.

The concert continued inside with Roland Dahinden's patient exploration of memory, *Theatre of the Mind*, for bass clarinet and electronics, intensely performed by Gareth Davis. Its five loop-based movements were often brought to a close with physical gestures like the breaking of wooden sticks and the scratching and rubbing of a bass drum head by the bass clarinetist, with the overall form of the piece moving from a whisper to a roar.

Alvin Curran's plaintive yet engaging *Why is this night different from all other nights* followed, demonstrating how rich music can be created out of simple parameters. Curran improvised an obligato part on an acoustic piano and sampling keyboard over long, slow ensemble chords of varying length followed by silence. He seemed to generate his performance from simple rules that produced a rich result: each hand could do one of three things: play the piano, play the electronic keyboard, or nothing.

To conclude the set, the chaotic exuberance of Fredric Rzewski (visited the festival on numerous occasions on the past and sadly passed away in June of this year) was on display with a short yet boisterous performance of *Les Moutons de Panurge* accompanied by the audience banging on chairs, clapping, and generally making an organised rhythmic ruckus as instructed by the score.

A long personal work by Maria De Grandy Ruzafa, *Introspective State # 5* opened **The Coming** and established her musical proficiency in four areas: composition, violin, guitar, electronics. The seriousness of this work was balanced out by Mac Waters' humorous and animated trio *Justin Bieber – Baby (remix)*. Waters' fun mangling of a Justin Beiber song could have been simply a novelty, but the way he reflected the form of the song in the form of the piece, especially how he treated Ushers' entrance, ensured that it meant much more. There were also five distinct, well performed solo works composed by resident composers of the Ostrava Days Institute: Gareth Davis performed Christian Ferliano's *[Locked] Down in the Basement*, a balanced solo that moved smoothly from lyrical lines to wild virtuosic runs, clarinetist Lukáš Daňhel circular breathed his way through Aures Moussong's *Middle Eastern Flashes*, while bassist James Ilgenfritz's left and right hand played independent parts on Gergely Zoltán Szabó *Mattheus 6:3* and Maria De Grandy Ruzafa played Forest Eimold's quietly and blatantly disruptive solo for violin and electronics *Paraclete*. Finally, trombonist Jen Baker jogged (literally jogged) herself to exhaustion to create involuntary microvariation in the musical material of Federico Pozzer's *Four Sections*.

Two themes connected all these works: flexibility and big ideas. Musical flexibility is not new, but it's an important point. For instance, Maria De Grandy Ruzafa was initially a performer in the Ostrava New Orchestra, formed for Ostrava Days 2017. At this concert, she presented a work of her own and only moments later performed Forrest Eimold's piece. Later in the week, she performed other composers' work in the large ensembles. I also have to note here that Petr Kotik leads by example here, as he conducts and performs while also having his work performed (and organising the festival).

Regarding big ideas, young composers are sometimes tasked with being productive troublemakers, which they did very well at this concert. All of these works stoked the fire in some way, with Pozzer's being the most direct. Overall, this concert displayed an amazing energy that bursted with wild and innovative ideas from young composers working in broad strokes.

The final concert of the evening was a performance of selections from Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Aus den sieben Tagen*. Residents of the institute performed alongside Dahinden and Davis in a reverent realisation of this work. Even though this concert was called **The Past**, at this point in Stockhausen's career, improvisation was also a wild



idea – according to the programme notes – as he was moving towards a more imaginative or spiritual approach to composition. It's always fun to remember that something we now consider **The Past** was at one time **The Coming**.

This year, instead of ending outdoors, **The Long Night** began outdoors at Masaryk Square with a reworking of Alvin Curran's *Era Ora (On Wheels)*. This piece required large forces: Curran himself and Daan Vandewalle on spinning pianos, the Coal Mine Band Stonava directed by Jaroslav Šindel, and percussionists from BUMBUMBAND directed by Kuba Kupčík. These musicians were governed again by simple rules: the pianists can play together or with the wind band, and the wind band can play as individuals, as a group, or as a larger ensemble with the pianos. The samba percussionists seemed to bring a third agitating layer to the composition that worked on its own logic, a separate layer sometimes interacting with the group and sometimes carrying on autonomously.

The next performance, a powerfully reserved rendition of James Tenney's *Having Never Written a Note for Percussion* took place outside the Cathedral of the Divine Saviour. Chris Nappi's soft, slowly growing tam-tam roll began a dialogue with the city when church bells rang soon after he started. As the pitches of the bells clashed with the tam-tam overtones, a fellow composer commented to me that this ever-loudening roll could be seen as a metaphor for the relationship of the festival to the city. Like Ostrava Days, things start soft, then overtake the city, then quell back down. After quite some time, the roll disintegrated into silence, preparing our ears to enjoy an excellent performance inside the church of Wolfgang Rihm's fragmented text setting of *Et Lux* by Cappella Mariana and fama Q directed by Vojtěch Semerád. These opening three works represent three discrete, yet connected aesthetics and nicely set the stage for the rest of the evening.

We then moved to the lobby of the Jiří Myron Theatre where the concert would continue on for the next fifteen hours with venues alternating between the lobby and the theatre. György Ligeti's *Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano* was first on the bill. The trio is not an easy work and was given a spirited performance by Joe Betts on French horn, Alexandr Starý on piano, and Olívia de Prato on violin. Works by Earle Brown, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, and Kotik followed the trio and, according to Kotik's opening remarks, featured some of the composers responsible for creating the need for Ostrava Days. Lucier's *Key West* contained only soft vibraphone clusters creating shimmering beating patterns and Christian Wolff's use of isolated musical events in *Vibraphonist* continued his queries into quirky motivic development. Fama Q performed Earle Brown's *String Quartet*, an early work that seems to draw a lot of influence from Webern, but despite being composed in 1965, still sounded rather modern. The concert concluded with Kotik's *Three-in-One*, three

compositions happening concurrently. Hana Kotková was up on a pedestal, with melodies flowing from her violin like water from a fountain, with Kotik himself making his way through solo flute lines, and percussionist and brass players sometimes overtly disturbing the melodic lines, at other times joining in to create counterpoint.

According to Kotik, the need for these composers to ask these questions through Ostrava Days was "obvious", and the way the programme unfolded helped lay evidence to his claim. It was very clear to me that the questions Ligeti was asking through his horn trio were vastly different from the questions that Kotik, Brown, Wolff, Lucier, and others were asking.

Certainly, in the context of the Ligeti, these four composers are asking more fundamental questions about music: Kotik is asking questions about the fundamental properties of melody; Lucier, by stripping down the music and removing traditional harmony, melody, and rhythm, is asking questions about sound; Wolff is always asking fundamental questions about form through both his music and what little direct writing about music we have from him; and Earl Brown asks questions about how notation and score can be changed to generate new music.

Ligeti was not asking fundamental questions. Instead, he was on a quest to optimise his use of musical material using all the resources he had available in terms of notation, form, and instrumental technique. In this case, preceding these other pieces, his work took on the mantle of Beethoven's 9th, while Wolff and the others seemed more like Berlioz and even Brahms, seeking musical opportunities by asking different questions. In this light, I understand why Kotik would feel a need to create an organisation to support composers asking these questions.

The next concert, in the theatre proper, had a different focus: temperament and tuning. One notable work was Chiyoko Szlavnic's exquisite and ever-shifting *Gradients of Detail* performed by fama Q. This work amplifies acoustic phenomena using clustered sounds and perfectly spaced pauses of silence which allows one's ears to focus in on the smallest detail.

A surprise on the programme was Rudolf Komorous' ensemble work *Sine titulo*. Komorous is a sort of grandfather figure to Ostrava Days, with a rebellious streak shown in his programme notes, where he proclaimed that he never writes program notes, but that we should "listen with open minds." Karel Ančerl's *Music for String Orchestra in Quarter Tones* was one of the older pieces on the festival, composed in 1929. It poses a difficult question: what kind of music would Ančerl have made had he not devoted his life to conducting? The concert concluded with John Cage's *Five*, a reminder that Cage's elementary questions about music laid a strong foundation for others' musical curiosity.



The next two concerts, **From Bratislava: Výrostko and Friends** and **Dance/Music/Lights** explored two different relationships with improvisation and performance. Music seemed to burst from František Výrostko and the BraCk Players in this outstanding concert of mostly performer-composed works. It opened with energy and drama from Pauline Kim's *Crushed Coal to Dust*, followed by James Ilgenfritz's *Real & Unreal Irreversibilities*, a narrative journey sharing the challenges of performing music, and finished with Matej Sloboda's exploration of timbre *write.cut.paste_DEL*

There were only a few works that included movement or theatre at this year's OD festival and **Dance/Music/Lights** showcased dance and improvisation by the Trio Kimmig-Studer-Zimmerlin, Lilo Stahl, dancers Michael Shapira, and lights by Olaf Reuter. One element that separated this set from other works with dance with instruments was that the musical performers took part in the dance and movement, with the violinist, Harald Kimmig, having a major role in the dance. This work seemed physically taxing, but effortless. Taken together, both concerts challenge the notion of the composer as specialist, the BraCk players presenting works by performers and front-line organizers of music and *Dance/Music/Lights* blurring the lines between dancer and musician to an improvised score.

This next set, however, muddied the waters as it highlighted solo performers playing their own works as well as composers' works. It became evident as Theo Nabicht

performed his own *Zahlen die stillstehen, irgendwo in einem fernen gewöhnlichen Sommer* Ana and Maria Rodriguez's *La machine à gloire* and Nikolaus Schlierf offered his *Twelve Monkeys* and Giacinto Scelsi's *Manto 1* that the healthiest and most diverse musical ecosystem will include contributions from both performers and composers, hopefully from wild and diverse backgrounds. One of the amazing things about seeing so much music at once is that you can see a concert that challenges one idea, followed by another that in turn challenges the challenge.

After these solos, Milan Guštar's lengthy *Hard Rain*, an uncompromising generative opera about things falling from the sky, was followed by more solos covering a wide range of instruments narrowing down to the piano. First was Jon Gibson's *Equal Distribution No. 1*, a vibrant minimalist work composed for choreography by Merce Cunningham, performed without the dance by Daniel Havel, followed by Daniel Skála in a performance of his own work, *Neopaganiniana no. 1* – an etude-like piece based on the specific technical challenges of playing the cimbalom. The consonant chords and long cello notes of Miroslav Srkna *Simple Space* were a welcome reprieve, but Jason Eckhardt's solo about social justice *Compression* jarred us back into the very real problems in the world. For the final piece in this set, Alvin Lucier's *Twoings*, the city chimed in again and added some noise to Juho Laitenen's interference-inducing cello notes by accompanying the piece with the early morning street cleaning that could be heard from inside the lobby of the theatre.



As the sun came up, Daan Vandewalle began Bernhard Lang's *Monadologie XXXVI Chopin 12 Etudes*, which touched on the complicated relationships between virtuosity and existing repertoire for the piano. I was particularly impressed by Vandewalle's ability to project interrupted loops to the audience, because without a complete commitment to performing an interrupted loop, it can sound like a mistake. Vandewalle's confidence and technique was able to sell this idea, which is important because of Lang's reliance on looping as a compositional technique. I'm not exactly sure where Vandewalle got the energy to perform this piece, but he seemed to have more energy once he was done, as when he finished the piece he shouted "Good Morning Ostrava!" to the audience.

Kotik then re-emerged with three flutes and performed Morton Feldman's *Why Patterns* with Ivo Kahánek on piano and Chris Nappi on glockenspiel. At the end of a very long musical event, Feldman's thirty minute composition seemed to move by at lightning speed and ended with a descending "lament" bass line similar to the end of the Ligeti. While Ligeti didn't officially start the concert, the bass lines in both pieces felt to me like the opening and closing chords of the Andante movement of Beethoven's 7th symphony and for a brief moment, I felt like the concert was either going to run itself backwards, or begin again.

A concert like this reminded me of the saying we have here in the US: "Talk is cheap, but you need money to buy whiskey". Many people talk about presenting an event like this but the folks at OD actually *do* it – they find the will and grit and moxie to present as much music as you possibly can. I also have to say that many of the musicians performing in the morning had also performed the night before and, importantly, the audience was still present, so there is evidence that people enjoy taking part in a long event like this.

Of course, at Ostrava Days, you follow up a very long concert with another extended musical event, so later in the day, the Minimarathon of Electronic Music was presented at the Gallery of Fine Arts. This event opened with outsider artist and noise-maker Petr Válek presenting *The Vap Noise* which was part performance and part sound installation created using motors with beaters attached striking various metal, wood, and glass items. The result of these machines was a multiplicity of period rhythms, reminiscent of the ideas behind Charles Ives' ideas behind his *Universe Symphony*. The show didn't end there, however: Petr Válek threw his metal objects onto the ground, ending his set with a terrific clatter.

Tibor Szemző's hypnotic program included films with live music performed by the fama Q and a slowly thickening and repetitive solo piece for flutes and other instruments, electronics, and narration. Following Szemző



was a concert of the microtonal keyboard music where musically, Charles Ives' *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces* had a bit more life to them than the other pieces. As with Ančerl, you have to wonder what Ives would have written if he had been able to sustain his creative practice.

The final two concerts showed different sides of the relationship between popular music and concert music, the music of Steve Reich and the "noise poetry" of Svobodná místa. The Minimarathon of electronic music felt a little like a coda to the preceding events, a satisfying end to the pre-opening concerts at OD. A note for those of you keeping score at home: roughly 30 hours of music had already been performed before the **Opening Concert**.

Now the Festival Begins

In typical Ostrava Days Fashion, before going to listen to the first concert, there was a 40-minute sound installation to enjoy, Chiyoko Szlavnic's *Interior Landscape IIA*. This work made brilliant use of slightly out of tune sine waves to create a series of scintillating moments effectively defining the idea of "moving stasis."

The **Opening Concert**, the first concert in the Triple Hall Karolina, featured a large orchestra. The first work, Lucie Vítková's *Environment*, seemed to grow from Vítková's singing and playing as the composer placed themselves in between an orchestra roughly divided in half. In addition, Lucie performed a few feedback "solos" during

the piece using a microphone strapped to their foot and portable speaker. In the context of a symphony orchestra, the sound of feedback felt like a wild animal with Vítková representing a calm and collected lion tamer. The groups of the orchestra seemed in opposition until a hocketing trumpet and clarinet moment that unified the ensemble.

The concert continued with Todd Tarantino's effective and ambitious adaptation of a smaller work, *Then I Awoke Again*, which placed soprano Irena Troupová in the spotlight – singing in Anglo-Saxon, no less. One of the strongest pieces of the festival, Christian Wolff's violin concerto *Invisible Terrain* concluded the first half of the concert. Hana Kotková's controlled, expressive playing coupled with many attributes of Wolff's music resulted in a stimulating realisation of a concise and erudite work.

The second half began with Petr Kotik's *Fragment*, whose Brahmsian-orchestrated melodic lines seemed to effectively work against the meter of the piece in order to bring about exciting and interesting moments. František Chaloupka *Darwin Among The Machines* incorporated movement and theatre with an intense performance by percussionist Anežka Nováková amplified by the carefully selected and crafted musical material.

This concert is indicative of the most crucial question Ostrava Days asks: how can we present large-scale *experimental* orchestral works? Experimentation and

orchestral culture have many concerns that run counter to each other. For instance, in order to explore new ideas, there must be space and time to explore them followed by time to try out new things and then revise. When rehearsing with a ninety-piece orchestra, there simply isn't a way to do that, so it must be done with complete works presented over many years, which Ostrava Days has done.

Certain other tenets of experimental music, like questioning hierarchy, notation, expression and affect, form, and virtuosity, also run against the grain of orchestral culture, but we do see elements of compromise in, for instance, Christian Wolff's composition. In his lectures, he talks about disliking conductors because he doesn't like it when people "tell people what to do", yet compromises by alternating between conducted standard notation and alternate notation and conducting as the music requires. He also rebels against orchestral culture with instrument selection as he removed the cellos and violins, but in a way restored the violins by having Hana Kotková relinquish her position as soloist and sit with the ensemble mid-performance, effectively becoming the violin section. It seems like after twenty years, Wolff has found a way to bridge the gap between experimental music and orchestral culture.

Tuesday's concert, **Ostravská Banda I** began with Luboš Mrkvička's obsessive approach to pitch organisation, *For Large Ensemble, Part F*, followed by the highly structured yet jazzy sound of Jan Jirucha's *Diagonal nr. 1*. Ana Sokolović's *Evta* was one of the more technically and creatively proficient compositions presented at the festival and another Dahinden composition, *recall pollock*, was given an excellent performance by the Banda percussionists and Gareth Davis. Similar to *Theatre of the Mind* and Petr Válek's conclusion of his set by throwing metal objects on the ground, a distinct physical action was used to signify musical closure or cadence. In this case it was a group throwing rice against tam-tams in unison. Throughout the piece, the bass clarinet became more active, and the resulting sound was reminiscent of other works for percussion and a solo wind like Xenakis' *Dmaathen* or perhaps a reserved version of *Interstellar Space* by Rasheid Ali and John Coltrane. This portion of the concert concluded with Miro Tóth's depiction of sadness, *Theory of Absolute Sadness*. After the concert, we moved to another part of the Triple Hall Karolína, where the night was brought to a fulfilling close as a spatialised rendition of Iannis Xenakis' *Persephassa* thundered and whistled throughout the hall.

Three very different, yet effective approaches to vocal writing were presented in the first half of **Voices in the Cathedral**: Ana Sokolović's playful study of temptation in *Six voix pour sirènes*, Haštal Hapka's sonification of a visual depiction of Prague with *Prague in Lines*, and *Im Nebel* by Sourena Mosleh, a competent though more traditional vocal work. These pieces were followed by Raven Chacon's *Biyán* for a small ensemble. Previous to this, I had only heard Chacon's electronic works and I was quite taken by his introspective study

of lucid and powerful song-derived material. While there were no words set to this composition, his lush and detailed "song without words" was a welcome addition to a concert with voices.

Two pieces finished the concert. First, Bernhard Lang's *Hermetica V (Fremde Sprachen)* positioned Gareth Davis' bass clarinet playing as the glue connecting two groups of the Canticum Ostrava choir directed by Jurij Galatenko. Davis also bridges the gap between improvisers and what had been a somewhat hostile environment for improvisation, classical concert music. With pieces like this and others on the festival, time and time again the flawed paradigm that concert music and improvisation are at odds is proven to be completely false. Petr Kotik's deliberate *Děvín* for percussion and voices embodied an almost ritual-like quality whose lyrical form was delineated by the type of harmonisation that the singers were using (unison, fourth, or fifth.)

The evening concluded with the Brno Contemporary Orchestra's performance of *Isaiah's Prophecy*, an expansive work by Pavel Zemek Novák, whose music is fixated on monophonic melodies. In this case, Novák's severe self-imposed limitations seem to spur innovation as *Isaiah's Prophecy* is an enthralling and bold work.

The first of Wednesday's concerts, **Time for Guests**, brought the musical proficiency of Czech musicians to the foreground. The Brno Contemporary Orchestra performed four difficult works: Estera Watseka's cleverly written *I am leaving the haze behind me*, *Music From Nothing* by Michal Rataj, which showcased Martin Opršál's dexterous marimba playing, Martin Smolka's post-minimal *Rinzai and St. Francis watch yellow autumn leaves floating down the river* and Peter Graham's agitated *The Book of Vibrations (Chapter III)*.

The second concert paid homage to the contributions of pianist Fredric Rzewski, who passed away earlier this summer. It began with Dann Vandewalle and Petr Kotik sharing personal stories followed by Vandewalle's moving performance of Rzewski's *De Profundis* for speaking pianist, whose text reminded us that anything can feel like a prison. Rzewski felt that *De Profundis* was a new way of writing music, moving away from the repetition used in his earlier works, so Petr Kotik programmed a transitional work of his own, *Solos and Incidental Harmonies*.

Up hearing this piece, I had the strange realization that by sonifying data and using Markov chains, Kotik is essentially writing computer music compositions, perhaps belying his acquaintance with Lejaren Hiller. In this case, he wrote something close to a generative barn dance with Olivia De Prato fiddling away data-generated melodies along with a brass ensemble, electric bass, and steady stream of hi-hat and bongo sixteenth notes. This surprising music had a sense of optimism sometimes lacking in new music and that I've only really heard in Arthur Russell's *Instrumentals*.



The concert concluded with Vandewalle performing Rzewski's *Songs of Insurrection* and *More Music n.3*, his final composition. The last piece on the programme was *Inner Cities No. 11 – For Fredric Rzewski "Aglío, Oglío, Peperoncino Blues"* with composer (and institute lecturer) Marc Sabat on violin, ending the evening with a fitting musical send-off for Rzewski running the gamut of raucous, irreverent, rebellious, joyous, and serene.

Glissandi were the stars of the show in the first half **Ostravská Banda II**. My own piece, *Bonneville Park II*, for large ensemble and electronics, used glissandi for both overall structure and musical material to drive from movement to moment while Phill Niblock's *Exploratory, Rhine version "Looking for Daniel"* used stepped glissandi in many directions to create an ever shifting shroud of sound. Miya Masaoka's *The Energy Burns From Within* opened in a more traditional way, but quickly changed directions and became an ensemble setting of a gigantic glissando performed by the entire ensemble.

After the intermission, Petr Bakla continued the glissando theme, but in equal temperament with his *Piano Concerto no. 2* performed by Miroslav Beinhauer at the piano. In the same way that Webern always provides clues as to how to listen to his music, Bakla invites the audience to enjoy listening to his composition by accenting notes outlining symmetrical harmonies within a repeated rising line while a small group of mostly low instruments obsessively colour the low end of the piano.

Another standout work in the festival was Michal Wroblewski's *Rhythms*, which seamlessly used alternate tuning yet found melodic and harmonic clarity and vibrancy. This study in rhythm was a lesson in how to propel material in a composition forward without using strict repetition. Hana Kotková then took the stage to perform another work exploring the relationship between performers and repertoire: Bernhard Lang's *Monadologie XXXIX 2. Redux*.

The first concert of the next day was Jordan Dykstra's hour-long work, *A Known Unknown*. I was glad it was given its own concert as this compelling representation of post-Cagean use of minimal material as both surface and structure is a piece that truly rewards critical listening. The following concert, **Sound Plasma**, was performed by the Ensemble for New Music **Tallinn** with Miroslav Beinhauer on the sixth-tone harmonium. This ambitious concert presented a number of new works composed for this unique instrument and opened the door for more composers to experiment with sixth-tone tuning. The final concert of Friday, **Black Angels Songs**, was also only an hour-long single work, Miro Tóth's *Black Angels Songs*, performed by the Dystopic Requiem Quartet. This extensive work, inspired by George Crumbs's *Black Angels*, features a creative blending of electronics and acoustic strings.

Saturday began with **Last Call**, a concert featuring works by resident composers of the institute. Petr Kotik opened this concert by saying that "each of these pieces stand on their own and it was a great privilege to conduct them".

Michael Gancz's *don't do this* for four cellos showed a clarity of writing as well as a direct connection between the music and his concept. James Helgeson's *Six Opera Fragments* for small chamber group made me feel like he is a composer who takes nothing for granted and loves writing and sharing music.

Eschautomata by Ben Zucker for harp, two strings, and two winds was another exceptional composition that showed how one can get a complex musical result from non-traditional notation and instructions. David Zuckerman's consonant and mesmerising string trio *Scene In Corporate* was most similar to Wolfgang Rihm's music. The true last call was Csenge Mihalicza's bold mixed instrumental quartet *Vers*, which brought lyrical melody and harmony to the forefront. Compared to **The Coming**, the other concert that emphasised resident works, these works had a more introspective quality and a higher level of technical realisation.

Salvatore Sciarrino's significant *Studi per l'intonazione del mare* was given its own concert and its own location at the Triple Hall Karolina. The depth and lightness in both sound and concept of this work nicely complimented many of the preceding works in the festival. While watching Bruno Ferrandis conduct this large group of flutes, saxophones, and percussion surrounding countertenor Johannes Wieners, it really struck me how hard it would be to put a work like this together and I gained an even deeper respect for the staff and administration at the Ostrava Center for New Music. I can hardly imagine what Kristýna Konczynska's, Barbora Skálová's, and Jan Honeiser's inboxes look like, and they deserve a lot of praise for a difficult job well done.

The **closing concert**, a succinct offering of four orchestral compositions performed by the Prague Philharmonia conducted by Roland Kluttig, provided the grand finale for OD 2021. The first work was Petr Cígler's jubilant *Horn Concerto* fluidly played by Ondřej Vrabec. Since Cígler is a horn player himself, the whole composition utilised extended techniques on the horn, but it was the second, slower movement that made truly exceptional use of these techniques. The next composition, *The Flooding Darkness* by Stephen Morris, was a dark and brooding piece with effective textural and melodic writing. Both of these works made fantastic use of orchestral colour.

After a brief intermission, Martin Smolka again revealed his unique ability to musically depict an extra-musical idea with *Quand le tympan de l'oreille porte le poids du monde*, a rich, well-crafted piece that embodies a balance of concept, technique, and clarity based on the physical mechanism that allows us to hear. The concert – and the festival – concluded with a convincing performance of Olga Neuwirth's *...miramondo multiplo...* with Tamás Pálfalvi on trumpet.

Over time, Ostrava Days have become a critical part of an infrastructure that helps composers, especially ones interested in large-scale experimental works, develop their voice. The festival and institute provide a peer

group, venues, performing ensembles, conductors, marketing, and a patient and open-minded audience. Many participants, including myself, return home and resume the role of the musical outlier + the composer with weird ideas, or the performer presenting strange and subversive music. In this role, everything is a struggle in what is already a tough business to begin with, and it's only possible to perform and present, much less attend, a few works a year.

Over the last twenty years, a community of musical thinkers, makers, and doers has grown around the Ostrava Days festival, which is amazing given the potentially difficult challenges this music presents. Playing any sort of new music is demanding, but experimental music in particular places huge demands on composers, performers, and listeners, and many people find themselves switching between roles throughout the festival, further complicating things.

Composers are tasked with writing individually vibrant pieces in order to separate themselves from the pack and, ideally, help inform the audience on how best to listen to them. Performers then have to follow in lock-step with the demands of the art: mastering different notation systems, learning different tuning systems, being flexible enough to un-learn technique while remaining technically proficient, remaining open to new ideas, and mentally and physically prepared enough to help realise composers' works. Then the work is presented to the audience composed of composers and performers involved in the festival and local audience members who truly sit and listen to the music.

I think I most acutely understood the importance of Ostrava Days when this year, I thanked Bernhard Lang for some advice he had given me about string writing eight years ago. He replied with something to the effect of "Thank you for saying that, but we are all helping each other by not taking this experiment for granted". What he was saying was that we all rely on the unique opportunity that Ostrava Days presents for composers and that it really is bigger than any one of us.

Especially after the necessary isolation resulting from the global pandemic, Ostrava Days 2021 was rich and rewarding. Attending the festival reminded me that seeing live concerts is an irreplaceable experience and truly the lifeblood of music. There were a few things missing from past festivals like large-scale opera or works with theatrics and the larger established pieces, like Xenakis and Sciarrino, were on a smaller scale than, say Stockhausen's *Gruppen* and Feldman's *Neither*. At the same time, this small void was filled by a larger than normal number of substantial works and performances by Czech musicians.

Over the next two years, I will be lucky if I hear as many new compositions as I did in ten days, and rather than lamenting the dearth of new music in my normal life, I will spend my time looking forward to OD 2023.

HUMANITY AND THE CULTURAL BASEMENT

*An interview with organiser
Pavel Straka on bringing the music
of Karel Reiner back to life*

Pavel Straka is known to fans of free improvised music as a tireless organiser of concerts that bring musicians of varied generations and backgrounds together in diverse constellations, sometimes accompanying (silent) films. However, Straka is also involved in other projects, one of which brings together the contemporary music scene with Czech Jewish history.

His inspiration is the life of Karel Reiner (1910–1979), a native of Žatec, a city some eighty kilometres north-east of Prague. Reiner was a student of Alois Hába and Josef Suk, a collaborator of the theatre director E. F. Burian, and an editor at the magazines *Rytmus* and *Přítomnost* (The Present). As a pianist, he performed concerts both at home and abroad, promoting contemporary Czech music. Due to his Jewish roots, he had to give up all public activities after the German occupation, and in 1943, he was interned in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) ghetto, where he resumed his activities as a pianist and composer. He was imprisoned in the concentration camps in Auschwitz and Kaufering, near Dachau and escaped the march of death. His music has recently been recorded by the quartet *Květovaný kůň* and he is now receiving further interpretive attention, which is a good reason to interview the person who set these events in motion.

How did your relationship with Karel Reiner begin? And what was the impulse for this current project, an exhibition and performance titled *Reiner(kace)*?

My relationship with Reiner has to do with the fact that in 2008, I was employed at the Terezín Memorial. Reiner was affected by the Nuremberg Laws and was imprisoned both in the Terezín Ghetto and other

Nazi repressive institutions. In 2012, I worked with the artist Tomáš Polcer on his exhibition *Arché*, which took place in the burial room of the Jewish cemetery in Louny. It occurred to me that the event could be complemented by a performance of the melodies Karel Reiner wrote in the Terezín ghetto, which only survived in the memories of the actors from the play *Esther* (Reiner's notation did not survive and the transcription of the melodies was done by his wife Hana and the musicologist Milan Kuna). I approached the clarinetist Michal Hrubý and asked him whether this seemed like an interesting idea, and he put together a quartet composed of the singer Zuzana Hanzlová (formerly of the ethno-folk-rock group *Neočekávaný dýchánek*), the harmonium player Jaroslav Svoboda from *Traband* (a group playing “dechno”, a combination of *dechovka* – wind band music – and *techno* – editor's note), and the jazz double bassist Petr Tichý. Over time, the quartet's repertoire expanded to include melodies from other cycles by Reiner including *Květovaný kůň* (*The Flowered Horse*), *Listopadové popěvky* (*November Ditties*), and *Tři písně milostné* (*Three Love Songs*). They also recorded an eponymous album.

In 2020, I was approached by Otakar Löbl and Petr Šimáček, who wanted to commemorate the hundred and tenth anniversary of the birth of Karel Reiner



Karel Reiner

in Žatec through a documentary exhibition - they are both engaged in the activities of natives of Žatec both in the Czech Republic and in Germany. They also expressed an interest in arranging performances of some of his musical works. As the Květovaný kůň episode seemed like a closed book, me and the Bosnian singer Aida Mujačić, with whom I often collaborate dramaturgically, had the idea of her preparing some reinterpretations.

Due to the epidemiological restrictions, however, the opening almost took place on the hundred and eleventh anniversary of Karel's birth, on June 20th 2021. The exhibition title, *Reiner(kace)* is derived from the word reincarnation ("reinkarnace") - we wanted to bring Reiner's work back to life.

In Aida Mujačić's interpretation, Reiner's music is mixed with other influences - improvisation, the music of Sephardic Jews, and Balkan music. For an uninitiated listener, it is hard to decipher the proportion and origins of the individual components. What are we hearing? And what kind of path led to this result?

Our idea of reinterpretations of Reiner's melodies (from the play *Esther* and the cycles *Květovaný kůň*, *Listopadové popěvky*, and *Tři písně milostné*) arose from the fact that throughout his life, Reiner did not stay in one place, and that all music - this is, in fact, universal - speaks of the place and time of its creation; it is not static, though in a certain sense, it is timeless. Reiner was also a musicologist, he studied the music of the Middle East and the Balkans, he was a musical collaborator of E. F. Burian, whose 1930s avant-garde theatre D 34 also worked with folklore. That was, shall we say, one motivation for our approach, the other being that we think that there is great humanity and love in his work. Along with his friend Norbert Frýd (*a writer,*

journalist, diplomat, and a close collaborator of Reiner - editor's note), Reiner created the cycle *Květovaný kůň*, which was specifically intended to bring joy to children who were chased out of private schools. *Esther* was made as a clear allegory of the Holocaust and standing up to evil in the form of Nazism. These are topics that remain valid, and are specifically reflected in the fact that Aida is from the former Yugoslavia, where she experienced war as a little girl, as well as similar experiences with education as children in the Terezín ghetto. Connecting the melodies with the Balkans (though in our approach, South Moravia is practically the Balkans, as an expression of the colourful nature of the musical world) was not only a question of creating a link to Aida's place of birth and Reiner's academic interests but also a reflection of the fact that until relatively recently, Bosnia and Herzegovina was part of the same state as present-day Czech Republic (Austria-Hungary). After all, we can discover the effects of that by reading Norbert Frýd's family chronicle, *Hedvábné starosti* (*Silk Worries*), in which Frýd divulges that his father, as a soldier, admired the Bosnian Sevdalinkas (*a Bosnian genre of love songs - editor's note*). Certain tendencies towards improvisation that are audible in Aida's approach have to do with the fact that music should be, in as broad a sense as possible, dynamic - it must always manifest the place, time, and listeners - at that specific moment of encounter.

We should also mention that in her renditions of the music of Karel Reiner, Aida made use of a prepared piano (the fact that it seems out of tune refers partly to Reiner's attempts at composing for and playing the quarter-tone piano, partly to the fact that tuning was not particularly important in the context of the Terezín ghetto). It was also a partial imitation of the cimbalom (Reiner was a close collaborator of the Moravian microtonal pioneer Alois Hába, so



Left to right: Otakar Löbl, Pavel Straka, Aida Mujačić

we also wanted to hint at this connection), as well as an expression of the experience of the cultural basement (cultural performances in Terezín took part in basements, while Aida spent part of her childhood in former Yugoslavia in basements, playing the piano). Technically, this involved the use of duct tape to determine the tones used, which also resolved the issue of dampening the strings.

Karel Reiner's life was full of dramatic changes - from the avant-garde and microtonality through the part of a Communist cultural dignity and an official fall from grace. Is there an element that connects his opinions and music from various periods?

I don't see any particularly noticeable breaks in his work. Of course, in the 1950s, he wrote an enormous amount of choral pieces about the construction of socialism, but as a member of the left-wing avant-garde, he was already writing these in the 1930s, though not in such numbers. Before the war, he even wrote one such song with lyrics by the poet Jiří Orten, which would be sung as a sort of anthem by those excluded from public life by the Nuremberg Laws as Jews that were members of the clique around Reiner and his wife (the couple only got married during the war). I see in Reiner's oeuvre a fascination with passion for life, beauty, and children. And not only those whom the Nazis sent to their deaths. The poetic documentary film from 1958 *Motýli tady nežijí* (*Here Are No Butterflies*), with music by Reiner, includes all these topics.

To what extent has Reiner's legacy as a composer been explored? Can we expect more surprises in the archives?

We weren't really looking to explore Reiner as a composer whose legacy is in the sheet music. In this respect, his work and personality has been surveyed

in Milan Kuna's monograph, which included an interpretation of the composer's autobiography. Like I said, the music from the Terezín play *Esther* did not survive in manuscript form, but only in the memories of the actors (Jan Fischer, Hana Pravdová, and Zdenka Fantlová). Another question is why perform Reiner's songs and theatre music (for E. F. Burian's *D 34*, for instance to Václav Kliment Klicpera's play *Každý něco pro vlast - Everyone Does Something for the Homeland*) strictly and precisely. Reiner wrote *Tři písně milostné* and *Listopádové popěvky* for the musical section of *Eva* magazine, which were intended to be played by women at home or for their friends. How could they really have sounded in such domestic performances? A certain interpretive freedom has to do with the fact that the composers of the musical avant-garde (Jaroslav Ježek, E. F. Burian, Erwin Schulhoff) were more than a little inspired by jazz and were working on making classical music less classical; less serious - as in Schulhoff's *Sonata Erotica* and *Symphonia Germanica* (the first is a precisely musically inscribed rendition of a female orgasm, the second an extremely short screaming and rambling rendition of *Deutschland über alles* - editor's note). We would like to include all this in our conception, though more metaphorically, as yesteryear's jazz is today's mainstream.

What are your further plans? Will Reiner(kace) continue, say, in the form of a recording?

There is plenty of time to make a recording once Reiner's melodies resound through various spaces, convincing listeners that the topic of genocide (including the Holocaust) in music need not take the form of the expected weeping - instead, it can be a repeated challenge to *live*. At the same time, Reiner's oeuvre urges us to avoid being one step up from musical pathology and life support for a museum body extracted from behind a glass panel. The places in which the voice of Aida Mujačić resonates with Sephardic Jewish songs sung in Judeo-Spanish (also known as Ladino) - and they are often synagogues - logically come to mind first, as do the spaces of the former Nazi ghetto in Terezín. Near the synagogue in Krnov, a memorial to the transports is being created from a cattle truck of that era - we have arranged that when the memorial opens in June 2022, the *Reiner(kace)* programme will be performed there. The place of birth of Norbert Frýd's ancestors, Drmoul near Mariánské Lázně, offers a connection between the era preceding the "tragic 20th century" and our present and future.

Aida Mujačić introduces schoolchildren - and others - to her wartime experiences in the Bosnian city of Tuzla on the background of teaching Balkan songs. A similar approach to Reiner's work, to his fate and not only his art, seems more than worthwhile to us (unlike the kitsch performance of Yiddish songs that are often used to satisfy the prerequisite of "something Jewish" being played at any event related to the Holocaust, as if the Holocaust and other genocides were not a universal human experience).

Czech Music and Infectious Disease

The question of music and infection is not an idle theme, or something that arises only because of current events and may be soon dispensed with. Rather, it is part of the question that nags those of us who study music: how do we frame the connection between music and the rest of the world?

As I am sure the reader is aware, this is not a topic I would have ever imagined writing about before the current pandemic. In fact, the first time it occurred to me in any form was during the last “live” talk I gave, at the Czech Center in New York on March 12th 2020, at the very beginning of the present crisis. We were introducing a programme about Janáček linked with an exhibit there. As I was thinking about the composer at that moment, it occurred to me that some of the icy fears beginning to stir within many of us were well-known to Janáček and his contemporaries. After all, his two children both died of infectious diseases before the age of twenty-five, and this had a profound effect on both his personal life and his creative activities.

Infection and World History

“...one can properly think of most human lives as caught in a precarious equilibrium between the microparasitism of disease organisms and the macroparasitism of large-bodied predators, chief among which have been other human beings.”

William H. McNeill: *Plagues and Peoples*

“Because diseases have been the biggest killers of people, they have also been decisive shapers of history. Until World War II, more victims of war died of war-borne microbes than of battle wounds. All those military histories glorifying great generals oversimplify the ego-deflating truth: the winners of past wars were often merely those bearing the nastiest germs to transmit to their enemies.”

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*

“In the course of many years of preoccupation with infectious diseases, which has taken us alternately into the seats of biological warfare and into the laboratory, we have become increasingly impressed with the importance – almost entirely neglected by historians and sociologists—of the influence of these calamities upon the fate of nations, indeed upon the rise and fall of civilizations.”

Hans Zinsser, *Rats, Lice and History*

A Visit to Mysliveček

Mozart and his father had many quarrels, but there is one that is particularly curious. When the composer decided to visit his old friend Mysliveček in 1777 – they had met in Bologna seven years earlier – the ever-priggish Leopold strongly disapproved. It turns out that Mysliveček was suffering the effects of tertiary syphilis (he claimed the illness was a result of a fall from a carriage...) and that his nose had nearly been burned off by an incompetent physician. Despite Leopold’s sense of disgust, Mozart insisted on visiting him and described the encounter in detail including the immortal phrase, “if it were not for his face he would be the same old Mysliveček”.

While the above example of the effect of infectious disease on something called “Czech music” may well be considered incidental, it ushers us into a consideration of the problem on a scale both national and international. Mysliveček’s greatest successes were indeed international, and he thus joins “non-Czech” composers such as Schubert, Donizetti, Glinka, Paganini, Schumann, Wolf, and Delius, whose careers and lives were profoundly impacted by syphilis. And to this we can add the sufferers from tuberculosis (Weber, Grieg, Chopin, Lily Boulanger, Purcell, Pergolesi, C. P. E. Bach, and Szymanowski); cholera, malaria, and plague (Rossi, Monteverdi, Obrecht, Purcell, and Tchaikovsky) and then a huge number of musicians suffering from all manner of sepsis, bacterial infections, and skin lesions. And of course, it’s likely that infection played a role in Mozart’s death, although in his case, as with many other composers, we are not sure of the exact diagnosis (there is a wonderful article by Lucien Karhausen titled “Mozart’s 140 Causes of Death and 27 Mental Disorders”).

If the course of European music broadly was thus impacted by infection, we may say that the same is true for anything we can call “Czech music.” This goes further than the considerable hits to lifespan on account of infection—in other words, why we do not have Schubert’s 23rd Symphony, Purcell’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, or Mozart’s *Faust*—but there far more to it than that, and we might begin by asking whether one can actually *hear* infection in Czech music. And the answer is a resounding “yes”!

Smetana’s Tinnitus

This passage, one of the most notorious in Czech music, is an autobiographical one.

The image displays a musical score for Smetana's "Tinnitus" in three systems. The first system features a treble and bass staff with a melody in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. Dynamics include *sf* and *ff*. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with a tempo marking of 200 and dynamics of *sf* and *ff*. The third system is marked "Meno presto" and features a treble staff with chords and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *pp*, *cresc.*, and *fp*. The score is written in a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 2/4 time signature.

The composer made it clear in several comments that this was a stylised version of an actual autobiographical sonic sensation:

... my perception of the beauty of national music, and the happiness resulting from this interrupted by my ominous catastrophe (my emphasis) - the beginning of my deafness...

Letter to Srb Debranov, April 12, 1878

I believed that I had to describe the beginning of my deafness and I attempted to represent it in such a way as it has been done in the finale of the quartet with the high E's of the first violin. Before going quite deaf I was haunted for many weeks every evening between six and seven o'clock by the strident whistle of the A-flat major sixth [sic] chord A-flat-E-flat-C in the highest piccolo octave, uninterruptedly for half an hour and often for a whole hour without being able to free myself of it. This happened regularly, daily, an evil omen, as it were, for the future! I therefore sought to describe this fearful catastrophe that has befallen me by the shrill E in the finale (my emphasis). Therefore the E must be played fortissimo throughout.

Letter to Franz Liszt, May 23, 1880

Now, it is unclear what Smetana actually knew about the causes of his condition, and though it is most widely believed that he was suffering from the effects of syphilis, there is a competing theory that the cause was osteomyelitis, or even that he had both conditions. For our purposes, however, it does not really matter, since both syphilis and osteomyelitis are the result of infections (although obviously one is far more stigmatised than the other, as demonstrated by Leopold's behaviour).

We can continue with the impact of infection on Smetana's sonic world by invoking the *Second String Quartet*, which, depending on one's view, either proves that dementia caused by infection counter-intuitively plays no role, since some might consider the music to be coherent, powerful, and logical, or that it more or less aligns with Smetana's reported statement that, "I'm writing one more thing, but only to show what happens in the mind of a musician when he's in the kind of state I'm in".

We might consider, however, that in Smetana's case, the role of infection had a much earlier, and equally profound impact.

Bedřich Smetana, Opus 15
(1824-1884)

Violine

Violoncello

Klavier

This is the opening of the *G minor Trio*, written in memory of his brilliant young daughter, Bedřiška, who perished from scarlet fever. In at least four letters and work lists over a period of twenty years, he made it clear that the Trio originated as a memorial to his daughter: “The loss of my oldest daughter who was an unusually talented child was the stimulus for my chamber work, that is the Trio in G Minor,” and in other places he makes his passions even more stark, stating that his “unforgettable” daughter was “torn away” from him, and that her premature death from scarlet fever was unforgivable.

The descending chromatic fourth at the opening, the jagged rhythms and solo line *sul G* give it the air of a *recit*, as if a single entity were speaking. And we may further note the likely reference to Clara Schuman’s *Trio* in the same key.



While we can only speculate on this connection, it suggests that Smetana had hoped his daughter would grow up to be a famous musician, like Clara, and thus he set his funeral opening as a kind of double-edged memorial. Thus composers like Smetana were not only impacted by their own diseases, but also by the tragic deaths of those close to them, which may have contributed to the depth of their musical palettes.

Kaprálová’s Letters

The period around World War II was devastating for the future of Czech music. As Milan Slavický has noted, at least three cultures were destroyed: Czech culture, German culture, and Jewish culture, and he might well have added Romani culture as well. The future of concert music was seriously impacted by the deaths of Pavel Haas, Hans Krása, and Gideon Klein, all of whom died in the camps, and Erwin Schulhoff, who died of tuberculosis, but just as much by the death of Vítězslava Kaprálová. Daughter of Václav Kaprál, one of Janáček’s students, and herself a student of Martinů, she was the definition of a rising star before the uncertainties and chaos around wartime led to her evacuation from Paris to Montpellier and her final illness at the age of twenty-five.

We can encapsulate her situation by invoking three letters. The first is from Lucien Tesnier to Lenka Vojtíšková describing in detail the circumstances surrounding Kaprálová’s demise. This section of the letter proceeds from her admission on May 24th, 1940, noting her high fever, the procedure of a lateral laparotomy, blood transfusion, and finally that the patient suffered from stomach problems, agitation, and ataxia, and died during the night.

Montpellier, le 10 Mai 1946.

Madame LENKA VOJTÍŠKOVÁ
Spojená 3
PRAHA XVIII
Tchécoslovaquie

Madame,

J'ai bien reçu votre lettre du 21 Mars 1946, et j'ai transmis au plutôt celle que elle contenait à Mademoiselle ULLRICHOVÁ, qui a du s'occuper de la chose de son côté et vous a déjà écrit à ce sujet. Si de mon côté je ne vous ai pas répondu plus tôt, c'est que j'ai d'abord voulu recueillir des renseignements très complets et bien confirmés avant de vous les transmettre.

J'ai maintenant une documentation sérieuse et aussi complète que possible et c'est pourquoi je suis en mesure de répondre ci-après à votre aimable lettre.

Non, je n'avais jamais entendu parler de Madame KAPRALOVÁ-MUCHA, mais ce que vous me dites d'elle, sa valeur musicale, sa très vive sympathie pour votre patrie, et le sort touchant et tragique de cette malheureuse jeune femme suffisent pour que j'ai tout fait pour essayer de vous éclairer sur tout ce qui la touche pendant son séjour à Montpellier, et les derniers jours de sa trop brève existence.

Madame KAPRALOVÁ VITĚSLAVA est effectivement venue se réfugier à Montpellier en 1940, venant de Paris, où elle habitait 12, Square Albanie /XVIème arrondissement/. Née le 24 Janvier 1915 à Brno, elle avait 25 ans. Elle était épouse de monsieur Mucha, avec lequel elle était mariée depuis très peu de temps, une quinzaine de jours environ.

Elle est entrée à l'hôpital Saint-Eloi, le 24 Mai 1940, et a été hospitalisée à la salle Fuster, dans le service Gynécologique dirigé alors par le Professeur LAPYRE, qui dirige maintenant un autre service tandis qu'il est remplacé au Service Gynécologique par le Professeur AIMES, 8, rue André Michel, Montpellier, qui a beaucoup voyagé et a gardé un souvenir ému de Prague, est grand ami de votre pays, et un de ceux grâce auxquels j'ai pu obtenir le plus grand nombre d'informations. Le 15 Juin, la salle Fuster ayant été réquisitionnée par l'armée qui désirait y placer de nouveaux malades, Madame KAPRALOVÁ fut trans-

Description de la maladie de Madame KAPRALOVA
d'après le docteur AIMES:

Madame Kapral Victoria, épouse MUCHA, âgée de 25 ans, de Brno, est entrée, le 24 Mai 1940 aux Cliniques Saint-Eloi, Salle Fuster, pour douleurs abdominales et masse dans la fosse iliaque droite.

A partir du 31 Mai, sa température s'est élevée et s'est maintenue au-dessus de 39-40°. Tous les examens pratiqués ont été négatifs: TAB, analyses du sang, des selles, des urines, hémocultures, radiographie; on a pensé à une septicémie bacillaire à point de départ iléo-coecal.

Le Professeur RIMBAUD, appelé en consultation, n'a rien trouvé, au point de vue médical, pour expliquer l'hyperthermie; il a conseillé une laparotomie exploratrice.

L'état de la malade s'est aggravé et on a dû recourir aux infections de sérum et à la transfusion sanguine.

Le 15 Juin 1940, sous anesthésie locale, une laparotomie latérale exploratrice a permis de constater l'absence de tout phénomène inflammatoire; la tumeur perçue par la palpation faisait corps avec le coecum, elle était lisse, sans adhérences. Cette néoformation ne parissant pas en évolution et l'état de la malade étant très précaire, on a dû refermer l'abdomen. L'opérée a reçu, le lendemain, une nouvelle transfusion. Dans la nuit: ventre souple, agitation, ataxo-dynamie. La malade a succombé dans la nuit.

The second is her last letter to her husband Jiří Mucha:

Jiří

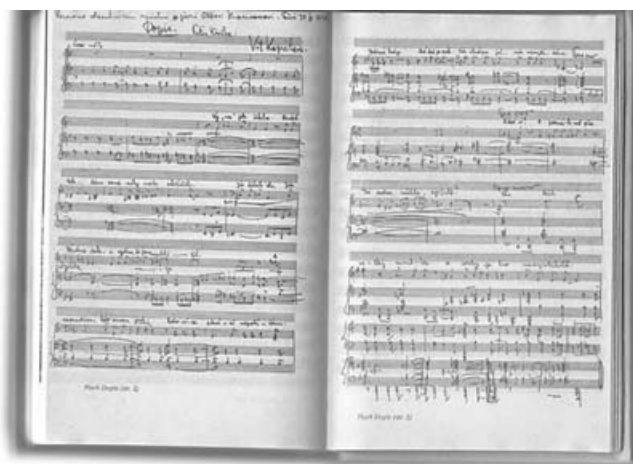
mám vysokou horečku, profesor
mí chce operovat, tá církev. ďáblu, mně někdy
máže že je mně lépe. Vypravuji mně
injekcemi velmi, smad dnes více, než
mi-li, prof. říká, v pond. Musis s mím
mluvit. Chci abych Ti telegrafovala, ono to
zakázáno Bízet.

Je mi úplně vyčerpáno, přijď! Vitka.

In this second letter, she says: “Jiří, I have a high fever. The professor wants to operate but that church she-devil [referring to one of the nuns at the hospital] keeps telling him that I’m better. They inject me and I throw up. Maybe they will operate today... If not, the professor said on Monday. I must speak with you. I wanted to send a telegram but it is forbidden. Come! I am completely depleted. Come. Vitka.”

Most sources say that she died of tuberculosis, and some even mistake “miliary tuberculosis” with the non-existent “military tuberculosis” (perhaps conflating it with her *Military Sinfonietta*). But as Karla Hartl has pointed out, there is no evidence of that in the letters about her condition. There is always guesswork involved in diagnosis at a distance, but it is possible that the symptoms point to something like typhoid fever. This uncertainty reminds us, as we noted with Mozart, both how difficult it is to be entirely sure of the disease in such cases, and the impact on musical developments of the scourge of infection.

Finally, we may note that Kaprálová’s last song is titled The Letter. Reprinted in its entirety in Jiří Mucha’s *Podivné lásky* (*Strange Loves*), a novelistic adaptation of his wife’s life, it is in itself a kind of farewell song. For such a miniature, however, it contains quite a bit of programmatic baggage: the composer mentioned to Mucha its connection to Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*; it almost certainly has something to do with her relationship (and parting) with Martinů; and it may even have been a school exercise for Nadia Boulanger.



Olga, Leoš, and Jenůfa

Despite our concerns about proper diagnosis, some assessments seem firm: Janáček died of pneumonia, although the exact circumstances are somewhat murky. At seventy-four, he was at the peak of his powers and in no way sickly. But I will not focus on the end of his life but rather on the beginning of what led to his international career: the composition of *Jenůfa*. It is well known that infectious disease played a role in the composition of this work since Janáček's beloved daughter, Olga, was dying of typhoid as he finished the work in 1903. He dedicated the opera to his daughter's memory, and said famously "I would bind *Jenůfa* simply with the black ribbon of the long illness, the pain, and the sighing of my daughter Olga and my little boy Vladimír". In a heartbreaking scene, documented both by Janáček's wife and his housekeeper in their memoirs, the dying Olga asked Janáček to play *Jenůfa* for her as a Christmas present.

In the opera itself, we may remember that when Kostelnička returns empty handed, Jenůfa nervously asks where her baby is and Kostelnička tells her that the child died – of a fever. The moment I want to focus on is when Jenůfa refers to that radiant, happy child, "chlapčok radostný", for I believe this is something like an authentic moment of personal mourning, and a formative moment, parallel to Smetana's *Trio* documenting the composer's growing capacity for emotional depth.



The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "tož u - mřel můj chlap-ček ra - dost - ný, můj chlap-ček". The piano accompaniment is in G major and 4/4 time, featuring a prominent bass line with a low register and a treble line with chords and moving lines. The score is written on two staves, with the vocal line on top and the piano accompaniment on the bottom.

Fever in the Forest and Rusalka in Quarantine

When I was speaking to my colleague David Beveridge about the question of infectious disease and Czech music, he expressed the opinion that Dvořák could not really be included in such a study. And indeed, while there is a letter in which Dvořák expresses some fear of influenza, and we know that several of his children died of various diseases, there does not seem to be the kind of explicit biographical link that we have seen with Smetana and Janáček. But I believe there is a connection, and I will attempt to suggest that two of Dvořák's greatest heroines may be seen in the light of this essay's general investigation.

We know that parts of the “New World” Symphony were based on Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha*, and my own research has suggested that the Largo is a composite (as Dvořák suggested) of two different scenes from the poem. The famous outer sections are based on Chapter X, “The Wooing” and the interior part on the chapter called “The Famine,” chapter XX in which Hiawatha’s beautiful young wife, Minnehaha, perishes:

In the wigwam with Nokomis,
With those gloomy guests that watched her,
With the Famine and the Fever,
She was lying, the Beloved,
She, the dying Minnehaha.
“Hark!” she said; “I hear a rushing,
Hear a roaring and a rushing,
Hear the Falls of Minnehaha
Calling to me from a distance!”
“No, my child!” said old Nokomis,
“‘T is the night-wind in the pine-trees!”
Come not back again to suffer,
Where the Famine and the Fever
Wear the heart and waste the body.

We can, I believe, actually hear the dying of Minnehaha in the following passage, the effects of fever and ebbing strength as she collapses, chromatically, and dies; as explicit a musical portrait of death from infectious disease as anything in the repertoire.



This passage is then followed by a stylised funeral march.

This practice of a musical “dying” followed by a funeral march is replicated a few years later in *Rusalka*, and I will use this as a transition to my most speculative construction. I would like to suggest that, in addition to whatever else it is about (and it is about many things), *Rusalka* may be thought of as a metaphor for infectious disease, whether or not its librettist and composer were even fully aware of it. From the beginning, *Rusalka* is unnatural. She undergoes surgery, rendering her pale, perhaps feverish. She is shunned at the palace, rendered socially mute, and when she tries to return to her home, she is *doubly quarantined*: her loving sisters will no longer go near her, practising an extreme form of social distancing. There are no masks to be worn at the pond, no half measures to inhibit the transmission of disease. A final “proof” of *Rusalka*’s infectious nature is the kiss which kills the Prince. He, at least, according to the prayers of the heroine - and Dvořák’s music - is ushered up to heaven, while she presumably goes off to infect others, and all of us, with her deadly virus.

I would like to express my thanks to the following people for their assistance with this article: David Beveridge, Jiří Kopecký, Lorraine Byrne Bodley, Dr. Susan Lucak, Dr. Karen Roos, Geoffrey Chew, Dr. Karen Beckerman, and Olga Mojžíšová, as well as the editors of this journal. I am grateful to Karla Hartl of the Kaprálová Society for providing material and advice, especially the first letter cited in the text.

CZECH MUSIC EVERYDAY

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

IN THE SUMMER OF 2021

As far as contemporary music is concerned, the summer in Czechia was almost like summers before the pandemic. A number of the traditional summer festivals took place, presenting several new works. The standout event, as always, was the eleventh edition of the Ostrava Days festival, which offered a ten-day programme packed with experimental orchestral, chamber, and electro-acoustic music including musical marathons, happenings, and site-specific projects. As far as Czech composers were concerned, the festival presented works by the doyens of contemporary music (Peter Graham, Rudolf Komorous, Petr Kotík) as well as successful composers of the young and middle generations (Petr Bakla, Petr Cígler, František Chaloupka, Luboš Mrkvička, Michal Rataj, Lucie Vítková) and beginning composers and participants in the Ostrava Days Institute (Haštal Hapka, Michal Wróblewski, Jan Jirucha). These pieces were complimented by the world premiere of *Music for String Orchestra in Quarter Tones*, a student piece by one of the most significant Czech composers in history, Karel Ančerl (born 1908 in Tučapy, died 1973 in Toronto). For more on the festival, see our review by Devin Maxwell in this issue.

Of the other, more traditionally focused festivals taking place in smaller cities, new works were presented at the Leoš Janáček International Music Festival, Smetana's Litomyšl, the Treasures of the Broumov Region festival, Kuks Music Summer, Musical Kroměříž, or Silberbauer's Musical Podyjí, established only last year. Unrelenting in its activities was Prague's Berg Orchestra, which presented not only concert works, but also a dance performance inspired by Terry Riley's cult-status *In C*. As for events abroad, we mustn't fail to mention the first collective performance (so far) of four parts of a series of one-movement orchestral works *Move 01-04*, which Miroslav Srnka composed between 2015 and 2020.

22 June 2021, Experimental Space NoD, Prague. Contemporary Music Series S: Musical Delicacies from PKF, or Concert as a Reward. **Petr Wajsar: *Fagofonik* for two bassoons (world premiere)**. Matěj Rothbauer, Štěpán Jínek – bassoon. **Miloš Orson Štědroň: *Somewhere*, music for an animated film for piano, cello and guitar (premiere of the concert suite)**. Stanislav Gallin – piano, Lukáš Pospíšil – violoncello, David Holý – guitar.

1 July 2021, Hukvaldy Chateau Park. Leoš Janáček International Music Festival: Epilogue. **Hanuš Bartoň: *Wind Quintet* (world premiere)**. Parnas Wind Quintet.

6 July 2021, Church of the Raising of the Holy Cross, Litomyšl. Smetana's Litomyšl. **Jan Kučera: *Judge of All World, God. Meditation on a song from John Amos Comenius's hymn book from 1659* (world premiere)**. Czech Horn Chorus, Aleš Bárta – organ.

12 July 2021, The Loop Jazz Club Hostivař, Prague. Prague Proms. **Michal Vejskal: *Wild Animals* (world premiere)**. Prague BRASStet.

JUNE-SEPTEMBER



PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER

BERG Orchestra

16 July 2021, Gabriel Loci – St. Gabriel Monastery, Prague. Soundspace. ... site specific – music & space. **Jan Rösner: For strings and 2 frame drums, Petr Hora: Frames / Autonomy of a Fragment (world premieres)**. BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

17 July 2021, Church of St Barbara, Otovice. Treasures of the Broumov Region. **Tomáš Ille: Summer Nocturnos (world premiere)**. Milan Polák – clarinet, Zuzana Rzounková – French horn, Jiří Bárta – violoncello, Terezie Fialová – piano.

24 July 2021, Church of the Holy Trinity, Kuks. Kuks Music Summer. **Martin Hybler: Memento Mori, op. 51 (world premiere)**. Tomasz Soczek – organ.

4 August 2021, Church of St Michael, Vernéřovice. Treasures of the Broumov Region. **Tomáš Ille: Halali. Hunting fanfare for horn quintet (world premiere)**. Participants of the Summer Horn Courses.

17 and 18 August 2021, Archa Theatre, Prague. **INSPIRAce. Music & dance performance inspired by the groundbreaking composition In C by Terry Riley (world premiere)**. Music: Tomáš Reindl. Choreography: Sylva Šafková. Performers: 420PEOPLE, Orchestr BERG & Tomáš Reindl / Omnion.

19 August 2021, Greenhouse of the Flower Garden, Kroměříž. Musical Kroměříž. **Lukáš Sommer: Dvořák Airlines for string orchestra (world premiere)**. String orchestra of the Dvořák Prague Youth Philharmonic, conductor: Tomáš Netopil.

20 August 2021, Jiří Myron Theatre, Ostrava. Ostrava Days: The Long Night: 18 hours – 1080 minutes. **Petr Kotík: Three-In-One (world premiere)**. William Lang – trombone, Marco Anastasio – tube, Tamás Schlanger – percussion, Petr Kotík – flute, Hana Kotková – violin. **Rudolf Komorous: Sine titulo (world premiere)**. Daniel Havel – flute, Arthur Klaassens – oboe, Marta Bílá – cor anglais, Irvin Venyš – clarinet, Lukáš Daňhel – clarinet, Silvia Ruiz Perez – bassoon. **Karel Ančerl: A Piece for String Orchestra in Quarter Tones (1929, world premiere)**. ONO (Ostrava New Orchestra), conductor: Ondřej Vrabec.

22 August 2021, Triple Hall Karolina, Ostrava. Ostrava Days: Orchestra Opening. **Lucie Vítková: Environment (world premiere)**. Jiří Havrlant – harpsichord, Daniel Skála – cimbalom, Lucie Vítková – accordion, Jan Nepodal, Anežka Nováková – percussion, Daan Vandewalle, Alexandr Starý – piano, ONO – Ostrava New Orchestra, conductors: Jiří Rožeň & Ondřej Vrabec. František Chaloupka: Darwin Among The Machines (world premiere). ONO – Ostrava New Orchestra, Kristýna Švihálková – percussion, conductor: Jiří Rožeň.

23 August 2021, Triple Hall Karolina, Ostrava. Ostrava Days: Ostravská banda I. **Luboš Mrkvička: For Large Ensemble, Part F (world premiere)**. Ostravská banda, conductor: Ondřej Vrabec. Jan Jirucha: Diagonal nr. 1 (world premiere). Chris Nappi – vibraphone, Ostravská banda, conductor: Jiří Rožeň.

24 August 2021, Cathedral of the Divine Saviour, Ostrava. Ostrava Days: Voices in the Cathedral. **Haštal Hapka: Prague in Lines (world premiere)**. Canticum Ostrava, choirmaster: Jurij Galatenko.



PHOTO: MILOS ŠÁLEK

Tomasz Soczek performing Martin Hybler's *Memento Mori*

25 August 2021, BrickHouse (Hlubina Coal Mine), Ostrava. Ostrava Days: Time for Guests. **Michal Rataj: *Music From Nothing* (world premiere)**. Martin Opršál – marimba, Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr. Peter Graham: *The Book of Vibrations* (Chapter III) (world premiere). Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.

26 August 2021, Triple Hall Karolina, Ostrava. Ostrava Days: Ostravská banda II. **Petr Bakla: *Piano Concerto no. 2* (world premiere)**. Miroslav Beinhauer – piano, Ostravská banda, conductor: Bruno Ferrandis.

28 August 2021, Triple Hall Carolina, Ostrava. Ostrava Days: Closing Concert. **Petr Cígler: *Horn Concerto* (world premiere)**. Ondřej Vrabec – French horn, PKF – Prague Philharmonia, conductor: Roland Kluttig.

5 September 2021, Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary, Vranov nad Dyjí. Silberbauer's Musical Podují. **Anton Aslamas: *Dozrávání*, Michaela Pálka Plachká: *...a světlo věčné at mu svítí* (world premieres)**. Alexej Aslamas, David Pokorný – violin, Kateřina Málková – organ.

6 September 2021, KKL Luzern – Concert Hall, Luzern, Switzerland. Lucerne Festival. **Miroslav Srnka: *move 01-04 for orchestra* (first complete performance of all the existing parts from an ongoing series, first performance of the revised versions of move 01-03)**. Bamberg Symphony, conductor: Jakub Hrůša.

13 September 2021, Savarin – former riding school, Prague. International Shakuhachi Festival Prague. **Anna Vtípilová: *Whale Song* (world premiere)**. Marek Kímei Matviija – shakuhachi, Annabelle Plum – voice, Žaneta Vítová – accordion. **Martin Klusák: *Kwaidan*. New composition with staged elements based on Japanese ghost stories themes (world premiere)**. Directed by: Viktorie Vášová. John Kaizan Neptune – shakuhachi, Roman Zotov – performer, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrabel.

24 September 2021, Grandhotel Ambassador, Karlovy Vary. Opening concert of Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra's 187th concert season / Dvořák's Karlovy Vary Autumn. **Karel Šimandl: *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra no. 2* (world premiere)**. Jan Šimandl – piano, Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Jiří Štrunc.

HUMANISTS IN RENAISSANCE BOHEMIA AND MUSIC V

JIŘÍ TŘANOVSKÝ (1592-1637)

*The most significant Central European hymnographer
between the Renaissance and the Baroque*

Jiří Třanovský (1592-1637) was the author of approximately a hundred and eighty spiritual songs, which makes him probably the most significant hymnographer in Central Europe. He is claimed by Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Poland, and, particularly, Slovakia, where his work was put to good use up until the end of the 20th century. He was a typical humanist scholar of his time. The degree to which his work is useful and timeless, however, shows that he was more than a common humanist of the period. Třanovský was truly an exceptional author. A closer look at his oeuvre reveals a hymnographer with a broad range of knowledge and a high degree of sensitivity, capable of accurately capturing an idea in limited space.

During the religious turbulence of the 17th century, many archival records connected to Třanovský's activities in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia were irretrievably lost. Despite many uncertain passages, we can now draw at least a contour of his difficult life. He was born on April 9th 1592 in the small city of Těšín (Cieszyn; Teschen, now on the Czech-Polish border) to a family of wealthy citizens, receiving an education in the Lutheran faith. He was first educated at the local Latin school. Early in his youth, he left to study in the Lusatian city of Guben, later moving further towards the Baltic Sea, specifically to the city of Kolberg (now Kołobrzeg in Poland), home to a significant Latin school that emphasised classical poetry.

The first precise date regarding Třanovský's activities comes from Wittenberg. On the 13th of April 1607, he was matriculated at the university, a bastion of Lutheran orthodoxy. He concluded

his university studies in 1611 at the age of nineteen. The minimal age for entering the priesthood, however, was twenty-four. The young Třanovský therefore became a teacher at the gymnasium of St Nicholas in Prague's Malá Strana (Lesser Town). This was when he wrote his oldest surviving song. It was published in the now lost collection *Applausus cumarum desideratissimi sanctisimique puelluli (Applause for the Cradle of the Most Desired and Sacred Boy, 1611)*. The song was in Latin, its subject was the birth of Christ, and it was to be sung by the school choir. In 1612, he was in Třeboň as a personal tutor to Adam, Count of Schwarzenberg (died 1664) and returned to the school in Malá Strana a year later. The first surviving proof of his poetic activities is found in a collection of laudatory poems, *Nuptiis Reverendi Viri (The Honourable Man's Wedding, 1613)*, dedicated to a friend of Třanovský's on the occasion of his wedding. After a short stint as a teacher

1/ Comenius University in Bratislava, Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty



*Title page of *Odorum Sacrarum Sive Hymnorum* (Brzeg, 1629)*

in Holešov, Třanovský arrived in the Moravian city of Valašské Meziříčí in 1615, remaining there for several years. He first took up the position of rector at the local Latin school and probably also worked as a teacher.

He was ordained the following year and remained in the city as a parish priest. The first years were fruitful and peaceful. He married and started a family. He was employed as a priest and as the secretary of the Evangelical consistory in Olomouc. He was also active as a writer, composing numerous prayers and liturgical texts that he only published decades later. This short careless period in Třanovský's life is concluded by a significant theological work. He prepared for print a Czech translation of the Augsburg Confession with a remarkable introductory study, in which he showed himself to be a passionate defender of the Lutheran faith. The work manifests his theological skills, routine knowledge of scripture, and linguistic dexterity. The study anticipates Třanovský's ability to capture the core of the problem, which is a skill he later used as a hymnographer, when he was asked to present

dense theology in a comprehensible manner, and in verse to boot. His *Konfessý Augspurská* was published in 1620 in Olomouc. The year 1620, however, also brought war to the region, inaugurating a series of catastrophic events in Třanovský's life. The Battle of White Mountain led to a brutal process of recatholisation. Třanovský and his family fled to Těšín from the imperial army. He later returned to the plundered city. In 1621, Valašské Meziříčí and the adjacent village of Krasno burnt to the ground. The city was invaded by the imperial army once more and Jiří Třanovský, as an Evangelical priest, was imprisoned. There was a plague epidemic in 1624, claiming over two thousand lives, including Třanovský's children. Furthermore, Třanovský developed problems with his eyesight that would stay with him for the rest of his life. In 1625, half blind, he escaped to Těšín once more, never to return to Valašské Meziříčí.

Exile

In the spring of 1626, Třanovský is in the small city of Bielsko (now in Poland). He was a court preacher here, as well as a parish priest in the Church of St. Nicholas. His sovereign – and later also his friend and patron – was Johannes Sunech of Jesenice. During his stay in Bielsko, he published one of his most important works, a collection of four-voice odes titled *Odorum Sacrarum Sive Hymnorum* (*Sacred Odes, or, Hymns*). The work was published in three volumes in 1629. It contained a hundred and fifty Latin odes. The individual volumes are dedicated to three cities and their leaders: Brzeg and Oleśnica in Poland and Levoča in Slovakia. The odes were intended for church services and were to be sung by students at Latin schools.

Třanovský's direct inspiration, however, was a 1611 collection of Latin psalms, *Odae Sacrae* (*Sacred Odes*), by Jan Campanus Vodňanský. This collection alternates between rhythmical – i.e. rhymed – poetry of the Medieval type with ancient metrical poetry. This was also Třanovský's approach to odes, taking the classical odes of Horace as a model. The melodies are found at the very end of the collection: four-voice vocal writing rendered in white mensural notation typical of the period. The odes are set in a homophonic chordal texture. The cantus firmus is included both in the tenor, i.e. in the older form of writing for more voices, or in the descant, which we can consider a more modern style. The rhythm is determined by



An extract of the notation of Genus I of Třanovský's four-voice ode (*Odorum Sacrarum Sive Hymnorum*, Brzeg, 1629)

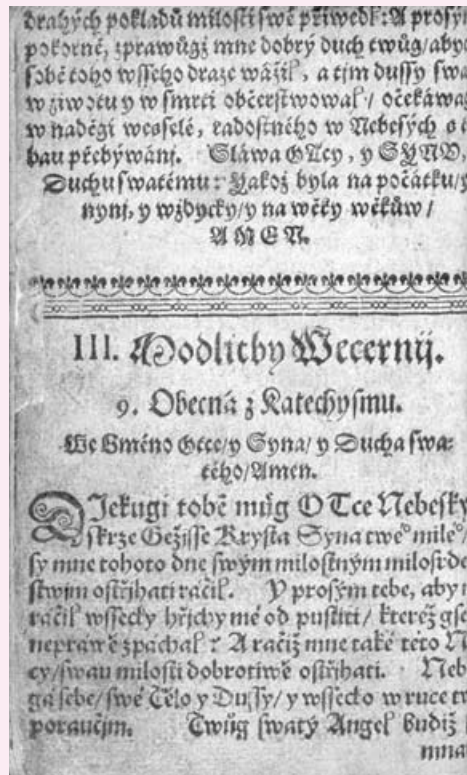
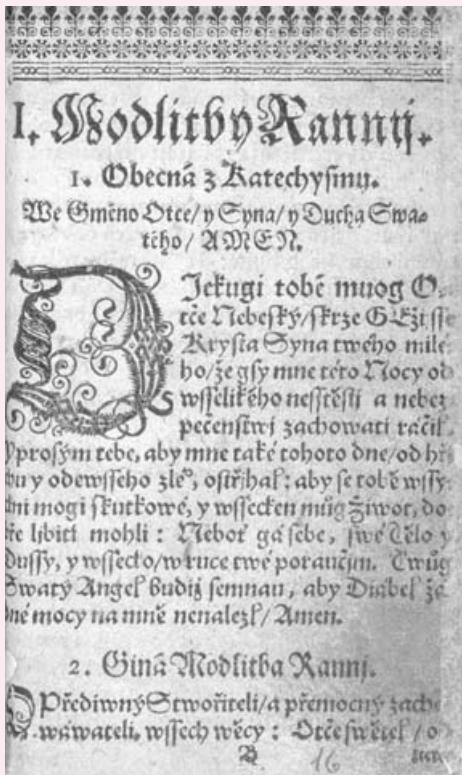
the poetic metre. The aim was to recite the text as precisely and with as much emphasis as possible. Musically, Třanovský's odes were probably influenced by the German teacher Statius Olthoff (1555–1629) who set the psalms of George Buchanan (1506–1582). Also part of the *Odorum Sacrarum* was an extended text titled *Dissertatio brevis et perspicua de Christiano-gentilismo in carminibus...* (*A Short Dissertation and Explanation on Christian-Paganism in Poems...*). In this essay, Třanovský criticises the practice of Christian authors of the time who use metaphors from ancient mythology in their poetry.

The raging Thirty Year' War, however, soon made its way to Silesia and caught up with Třanovský in Bielsko. He was forced to take his family and flee once again, this time to Hungary. In 1629, he left for the Orava Castle, where he was temporarily under the protection of Count Gaspar Ilesházy. He spent a short time as castle preacher and engaged in lively contact with the local Evangelical church structures. This probably played a part in his invitation to become a pastor in Liptov in 1631. He was tasked with managing the church in Svätý Mikuláš (now Liptovský Mikuláš) and the adjacent village of Okoličné. Svätý Mikuláš and the surrounding villages were predominantly Evangelical.

Following the tense situation in the region he grew up in and which he was forced to hastily abandon, Třanovský found peace in Hungary. However, the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, which he was constantly escaping, had weakened his health considerably. During his stay in the Liptov region, he was once again plagued by problems with his eyesight, making his work considerably

more difficult. During his time in Svätý Mikuláš, Třanovský published his most significant work. In 1635, he published a collection of prayers titled *Phiala Odoramentorum* (*A Bowl of Odours*). The prayers are assembled with a view to the needs of pastors. They are relatively extensive. Třanovský recommends reading them in more than one sitting. Several of the prayers are conceived as minute sermons, including instruction, admonition, and delight. Třanovský calls this form thinking through prayer and mentions as a model the church father Augustine of Hippo (354–430) or the later Johann Gerhard (1582–1637). Třanovský's prayers are characteristic in their great emphasis on the entire church – both the individual and the congregation. The book contains prayers that can be used both in private and in public, for pastors as well as laymen. It is clear that the collection was not created all at once – Třanovský wrote and translated the prayers throughout the duration of his career as a pastor, finally publishing them while in Svätý Mikuláš. The only dated prayer bears the inscription 1624: a prayer for the end of the plague that he wrote in Valašské Meziříčí – Třanovský lost two children to the plague. His prayers are remarkably personal and intimate. They project Třanovský's difficult life experience, solutions to which he sought primarily in prayer.

In addition to more extensive works, Třanovský also used his time in Svätý Mikuláš to prepare for print a small volume titled *Formulae Puerilium Colloquiorum Latina, Bohemica et Germanica lingua* (*A List of Boys' Conversations in the Latin, Czech, and German Language*) – a book of trilingual conversations in Latin, Czech, and German. It is proof that Třanovský was active



The Phiala Odoramentorum prayer book (Levoča, Vavřinec Brewer, 1635)

as a pedagogue even during his time as a pastor. The book was originally compiled in the 16th century by the music theorist and composer Sebald Heyden (1499–1561) as a Latin-German conversation book for the students at the Latin school in Nuremberg. It then appeared in various language extensions. The Czech translation by Jan Vopatovský is from the end of the 16th century. Třanovský made an updated version, as he considered knowledge of Latin indispensable. Latin, however, was not the only language he considered important – there is also German, and Czech too, “meaning Slovak” (“seu Slavonicum”), which was also making its way through Europe. It is interesting to note that Třanovský equates Slovak and Czech. The dialogues are constructed in such a way that the students like them – they are short, yet useful. It is clear that Třanovský had an excellent feeling for pedagogy. He points out on several occasions that his works are to serve for people’s education. His texts are usually divided into short numbered segments so as to make them easier to remember. That is the essence of his didactic writing system. *Formulae Puerilium* was published in 1635 and was primarily intended for use at the school in Svätý Mikuláš.

Editor and Hymnographer

Towards the end of 1635, Třanovský completed and sent to the printers his most significant work, the songbook *Cithara Sanctorum* (*The Saints’ Harp*). At the time, he could have had no idea that his hymnal would dominate Lutheran households in the region for almost four centuries. The songbook was printed in 1636. The songs and other texts are unnumbered. It is difficult to determine the number of songs in the first edition due to the segmentation of some of the texts. Altogether, the songbook portion contains four hundred and seventy text units including antiphons and biblical texts, particularly psalms. There are four hundred and three songs proper, all anonymous. Třanovský lists neither their author nor the source in which he found them. Neither does he sign his own songs. The only exception are two authors whose names he always gives: Martin Luther and Philipp Nicolai. A rarity is a Latin note under the song *Ježíši, dárcu milosti* (*Jesus, Giver of Mercy*): “Omnes Auctoris prima ist haec, praëijt Odas: Qua juvenis Christum, saepe colebat, ovans.” (“Of all the author’s songs, this is the first with which he praised Christ since his youth.”) This suggests it is Třanovský’s oldest song.



Konfessý Augspurská (Olomouc, Kryštof Kutč, 1620)



The title page of Nuptiis Reverendi Viri, a collection of laudatory poems (Praha, Matěj Pardubský, 1613)



Konfessý Augspurská – title page (Olomouc, Kryštof Kutč, 1620)

From a literary perspective, the compiler worked from older Czech translations of the Bible (Melantrich's Bible and the Bible of Kralice), the Jena edition of Luther's works, and period songbooks predominantly of Czech and Moravian origin. A more significant language group is that of songs of Latin origin. Mostly, these were songs known throughout Europe. Třanovský also included in his songbook several songs which he encountered in Hungary. Connecting all these influences (German, Czech, Latin, and Hungarian) into a single whole is what makes the songbook unique. Around a third of the repertoire – an impressive hundred and eighty songs – had never been recorded in earlier sources. They are both original songs and translations from German and Latin, and we ascribe their authorship to Třanovský.

Melodically, the collection is dominated by repertoire of Czech and Moravian origin. Identifying the oldest instances, we find around thirty different Bohemian hymnological sources. In the German-speaking area, we find the names of well-known composers of the 16th and early 17th centuries, including Johann Walter (*Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort – Maintain Us, Lord, In Your Word*), Melchior Vulpius (*Christus der ist mein Leben – Christ is My Life*), Nicolaus Hermann (*Wenn mein Stündlein verhanden ist – When My Hour Comes*), Bartolomäus Gesius (*Du Friedenfürst, Herr Jesu Christ – You Prince of Peace, Lord Jesus Christ*), Nicolaus Decius (*O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig – Oh, Innocent Lamb of God; Allein Gott in der höh sey Ehr – Honour God Alone*), Hans Leo Haßler (*Herzlich thut mich verlangen – I Wish from My Heart*), and others. Most of the German repertoire is from the first half of the 16th century. There is a marked preference for songs from older Lutheran sources such as *Eyn Enchiridion (A Handbook, Erfurt, 1524)* and *Eyn geystlich Gesangk Buchleyn (A Book of Spiritual Songs, Erfurt, 1524)*. Třanovský enjoyed using Calvinist metrical melodies, and he set his new texts to melodies from French psalms. These melodies are more frequent in the songbook than Třanovský's own



Cithara Sanctorum (Levoča, Vavřinec Brewer, 1636)



A sample of the notation in the Cithara Sanctorum (Levoča, Vavřinec Brewer, 1636)



Cithara Sanctorum. Třanovský's ex libris is on the left, on the right is the beginning of the psalms (Levoča, Vavřinec Brewer, 1636)



Formulae Puerilium Colloquiorum Latina, Bohemica et Germanica lingua (Levoča, Vavřinec Brewer, 1636)

new melodies. Current scholarship suggests that the collection contains twelve of Třanovský's original melodies. He generally avoided using his own earlier works as a foundation for the songbook. He only adapted one melody from his collection *Odarum Sacrarum Sive Hymnorum*. All three works were later published in Levoča by his friend Vavřinec Brewer. In 1636, Třanovský fell seriously ill. We know little of his illness, only that he was confined to his bed for eight months. He died on May 29th 1637. He did not live to see the second edition of his songbook published.

The oeuvre of Jiří Třanovský stands on the borders of the Renaissance and the Baroque. In his education and in formal terms, Třanovský was a typical humanist man of letters with a passion for Latin and the forms of classical poetry. The content, however, belongs to the Baroque. He does not allow anything to enter into his works that is of non-Christian origin, that has no foundation in scripture, or that is theologically untenable. As the editor of his songbook, he tastefully selected a combination of songs of various origins, which he then implanted into the context of the Lutheran orthodoxy. He selected and arranged them so that his work survived and remained up to date for centuries after it was first published.

Prepared in collaboration with the Musica Rudolphina research centre.

**Vítězslav Novák:****Orchestral Works, Vol. 1
(South Bohemian Suite /
Toman and the Wood Nymph)****Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra,
conductor: Marek Štílec.**Recorded: Reduta, Olomouc,
Oct. 2019. Published: Dec. 2020.

Text: EN. TT: 56:11.

1 CD Naxos 8.574226

Vítězslav Novák: Orchestral Works, Vol. 1. This is the title of a new CD and a multi-volume recording project by the Naxos label in collaboration with Marek Štílec and the Olomouc-based Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra. I will be perhaps too honest: A similar project should have been undertaken by the Czech Philharmonic years ago, headed by one of its Czech principal conductors (Zdeněk Mácal or Jiří Bělohlávek). Alternatively, it could have hired representatives of younger conducting generations – Tomáš Hanus, Jakub Hrůša, or Tomáš Netopil. This did not take place, so virtually simultaneously with Jakub Hrůša, Jan Bartoš, and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, who recently recorded Novák's piano concerto and the symphonic poem *Toman and the Wood Nymph* (Supraphon SU 4284-2, 2020/10), Novák's overlooked (or rather practically ignored) legacy was taken up by the Naxos label. The company chose to approach Marek Štílec, who has a similar project under his belt: a five-volume complete set of the orchestral works of Zdeněk Fibich in collaboration with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra and the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava. A discussion of which Czech orchestra should be the one to produce a referential recording of Novák's oeuvre might seem out of place and could well disqualify the Moravian Philharmonic

Orchestra, one of the Czech regional orchestras which also acts as both an operatic and symphonic ensemble. The orchestra from Olomouc, however, is in top shape on this recording. Štílec too, in tow of his Fibich project, has matured to great heights, making this first volume of the Novák set a pleasant surprise – and at a friendly price, as is usually the case with Naxos recordings. (It is also tradition that discophiles and collectors tend to overlook the production of this “cheap” label, which might well prove to be a bad decision in the case of the Novák set.) The Naxos catalogue already includes recordings of Novák's piano trio and the orchestral compositions *In the Tatra Mountains*, *Lady Godiva*, *Eternal Longing*, and *Pan*. Perhaps it was the artistic merit of Novák's compositions that inspired the company to plan a representative project dedicated to the composer's orchestral oeuvre. The first volume includes two compositions: the symphonic poem *Toman and the Wood Nymph* op. 40 (1907), from the peak of the composer's impressionist period before World War I, and the *South Bohemian Suite* op. 64 (1937) from thirty years later, one of Novák's last orchestral work. Štílec's recording of the *South Bohemian Suite* has clear contours and meticulously precise dynamics. None of the older recordings (Kubelík, Kleiber, Vogel, Šejna, Pinkas, Vajnar, Bostock) has such a clear piano part. The first two movements, however, lack that particular sonically blurred trembling on the edges of musical impressionism and expressionism that was so perfectly concocted on the archival recordings by Kubelík, Kleiber, or Vogel (the sordino of the strings of the Czech Philharmonic disciplined by Talich or Ančerl won't be replaced that easily). However, the recording certainly does not lack atmosphere, heightened through the *March of the Camps* all the way to the *Epilogue*, whose imaginary bells, however, could have been swung even more generously by Štílec. Novák's suite is a homage to the region of his birth, South Bohemia, but the Olomouc

philharmonic instinctively played with their Moravian intuition, which was deep in Novák's blood as he was a Wallachian, or Moravian Slovak. This is also true for the second composition on the album. *Toman and the Wood Nymph* is a tough nut to crack for every conductor, as they have to maintain the tension, over the course of almost half an hour, of a balladic narrative in the colours of Czech impressionism. It is a composition whose scale, instrumentation, and faithfulness to its literary inspiration all remind us of Dvořák's *Golden Spinning Wheel*. Whoever succeeds in maintaining the listener's attention with their baton can charm up a sonically unrepeatable, colourful fresco. If the conductor focuses too much on details, he can put the entire concert hall – orchestra included – to sleep. While I did occasionally yawn at some of Štílec's sometimes superficial Fibich recordings, his *Toman and the Wood Nymph* is a thrilling musical narrative whose language the Olomouc orchestra clearly understands well. I would even say they made perfect use of their role as an operatic orchestra well accustomed to subtle commentary. Before one of the Czech metropolitan orchestras makes a complete recording of Novák's orchestral oeuvre, much water will flow through the Morava and Lužice rivers. By then, we will hopefully already have this complete set of Novák's orchestral music from the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra and Marek Štílec. The first instalment of their Novák project certainly deserves repeated listens. After all, it is one of the most ambitious recordings made by an orchestra whose creation was aided by that great champion of Novák's music, František Stupka.

Martin Jemelka



Karel Husa

Music for Prague

FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra,
conductor: Tomáš Brauner.

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When composer Karel Husa arrived in Czechoslovakia in the 1990s, his name was certainly not general knowledge. Only those with a professional interest in music knew about him. In these circles, it was well known that Bohuslav Martinů, Jan Novák, Karel Boleslav Jirák, Rafael Kubelík, and Rudolf Firkušný were not the only ones by far to have left their home for good and made a name for themselves abroad as excellent musical figures that influenced – often also thanks to their Czech roots, which often make themselves known in their scores – international developments in music. Some where in touch with Husa personally, despite the inauspicious political situation, such as composer Jan Hanuš. Karel Husa’s visits in the early 1990s uncovered our unforgivable ignorance. Unlike his home, the world considered this composer and conductor one of the greatest exponents of Czech 20th-century music. His catalogue includes hundreds of pieces, and *Music for Prague* has become a staple of the repertoire, and thanks to performances by youth orchestras, it has garnered an incredible eight thousand performances. Husa is also the only Czech composer to have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize (in 1969 for his *String Quartet no. 3*). A graduate of composition with Jaroslav Řídký and conducting with Pavel Dědeček, Husa left for an exchange in France in 1946 (where he studied with composers Arthur Honegger and Nadia Boulanger, conductor Jean Fournet, and other seminal figures). Back then, he probably had no idea that world

events would keep him in France until 1954, when he would move to America, gaining citizenship in 1958. Unfortunately, the state of our general knowledge about this “American composer of Czech origin” has changed little since November 1989, despite a certain boom directly after the revolution. If it weren’t for *Music for Prague 1968*, which is usually performed in Czechia in the original version for wind orchestra but has also received performances in the definitive symphonic form, Karel Husa would once again disappear from the general consciousness. This recording is not only part of the common productions we often encounter with record publishers. It is no exaggeration to describe it as utterly unique, perhaps historical, in any case – stepping out of line. Primarily, it is the first consistently dramaturgically conceived CD with the orchestral works of Karel Husa produced in the Czech Republic. Another important aspect is the participation of the **FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra**, which was present at the beginning of Karel Husa’s compositional career. And for conductor **Tomáš Brauner**, this is the first commercial CD recording in his new position as principal conductor. Selecting from the enormous number of pieces Husa wrote must have been difficult, but the result is highly satisfying. Three pieces – three periods in the composer’s career. This is the very first complete recording of *Three Frescoes*, a magnanimous orchestral work from the 1940s created under the influence of Husa’s teacher Arthur Honegger that nevertheless displays a number of original elements. For Husa, modern compositional means are simply that – means to communicate a deep message. After the Prokofiev-like build-up in the march tempo of the first movement comes the second movement, characteristic in its grand march featuring contrasting elements (the orchestral sound mass concludes with a solo piccolo). The third movement presents a fugue constructed with enormous sonic and instrumental refinement. Above it float

repeated appearances of a Honeggerian chorale, which is heard in a sublime brass rendition at the end. The beginning of *Symphony no. 2 (Reflections)* from 1983 captures our attention with a beautiful and excellently played oboe solo, while the second, more rhythmical movement charms us with a perfectly constructed exhibition for the percussion. The entire piece is characteristic in its impressive combinations of instruments, both as solos and in groups. It is an excellent example of how elements of serialism can be softly infiltrated into music that can also occasionally produce emotionally moving passages (such as the solos of the clarinet and flute in the third movement). *Music for Prague 1968* – the only well-known piece on the album – acts as a successful dramaturgical conclusion to the CD. In contrast to other interpretations, Tomáš Brauner eliminates the overly affected and tumultuously vigorous expression, arriving at a result that is much truer and more convincing. We should have had such a representative CD of Karel Husa long ago. Even so, Supraphon deserves our praise for this production, particularly in this day and age, often so unkind to modern music. What’s more, the recording conforms to the highest technical standards (credits for which go to music director **Milan Puklický**, sound engineer **Karel Soukeník**, and producer **Martin Rudovský**, who is also – along with **Pavel Petráněk** – the author of an interesting text in the booklet). No smaller praise is reserved for the FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra. As at the beginning of Husa’s career as a composer (the young Husa conducted the orchestra in his *Overture* at his 1946 graduation concert at the Prague Conservatory, and in 1949, Václav Smetáček led a performance of his *Frescoes* at a standard concert), the ensemble continues presenting the extraordinary works of Karel Husa today.

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