

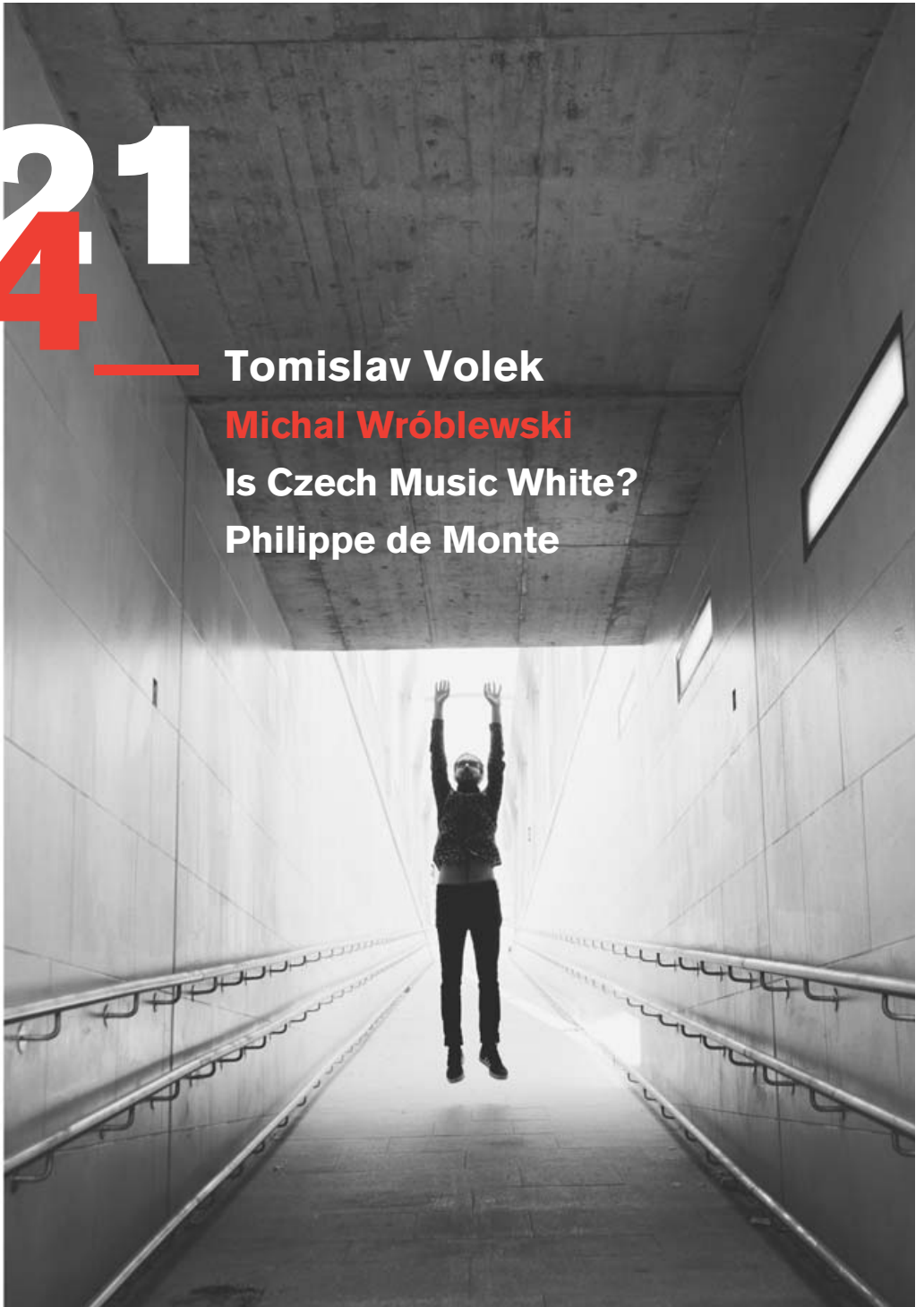
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— **Tomislav Volek**

**Michal Wróblewski**

**Is Czech Music White?**

**Philippe de Monte**



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## Dear readers,

we welcome you at the tail end of another busy autumn, though this one perhaps a little busier than most given how many events were postponed from the lockdown period that lasted from October of last year to May of this year. Our overview of events in Czech music at home and abroad makes it clear just how many premieres of contemporary music took place, but you can also look to our interview with the composer, saxophonist, and organiser Michal Wróblewski for other optimistic developments on various Czech scenes.

One of the issues Michal touches upon in his interview is the need to avoid copying models from abroad and finding specificity and originality. Attached to this issue is a CD by the remarkable composer and artist Milan Guštar, whose approach to sound and listening transcends all borders and manifests a deeply considered inventiveness. You can learn more about Guštar's thinking in a short but personable text by Petr Ferenc, but there is no better way to think through this music than by listening.

Looking further back into history, we present an interview with Tomislav Volek, the legendary Czech musicologist and Mozart expert, and an introduction to the life and works of Philippe de Monte, a late Renaissance composer who spent decades working at Habsburg courts in both Vienna and Prague. Even these texts, however, look to the future – our introduction to Monte was written by Jan Baťa, a musicologist at Charles University leading a project whose aim is to create a complete online edition of the composer's works. Finally, bridging the gap between past and present is Michael Beckerman's text on race in Czech music, navigating an American perspective with a consideration for the historical realities of other places and times

*Wishing you a peaceful and musical holiday season,*  
Ian Mikyska  
deputy editor-in-chief



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# Tomislav Volek at 90

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Tomislav Volek has a unique position in the world of Czech musicology and music history. His fate, like that of many, was dictated by political developments following several crucial turning points in Czechoslovak history: 1948, 1968, 1989. His response to these events, however, was utterly unique. In this interview, conducted by Milada Jonášová, first a student and later a colleague of Volek's, elements of the musicologist's personal life mix freely and supplement the development of his academic interests.

On October 11th 2021, Tomislav Volek, the doyen of Czech musicology, celebrated his 90th birthday. He has contributed several articles to Czech Music Quarterly and he was discussed on these pages in 2015, on the occasion of the publication in Vienna of a two-volume edition of his essays, *Mozart, die Italienische Oper des 18. Jahrhunderts und das musikalische Leben im Königreich Böhmen* (*Mozart, 18th-century Italian Opera, and Musical Life in the Bohemian Kingdom*). Internationally, Volek is best known for his research on Mozart, which he continues in spite of his advanced age, as the reader will have occasion to discover in the interview that follows. He is an expert on 18th-century Italian opera, which existed in Prague since 1724 in the form of an Italian “teatro impresariale”, available to all paying spectators, bringing up a considerable audience over a period of eighty years, an audience that then distinguished itself in the face of history by enthusiastically accepting the works of Mozart. In the Lobkowitz family archive, Volek discovered unknown sources detailing the creation of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony. He provided many new findings to contribute to the history of Bohemian castle ensembles, built up the foundation of Czech musical iconography, and much else besides. During the period known as normalisation, which followed the Soviet invasion of 1968, his career as a researcher was greatly affected by his being expelled from the Academy of Sciences for refusing to withdraw opinions he had published, so he had to spend thirteen years as a “freelance musicologist”, accepting any offer that came his way. He was rehabilitated in 1990, when he returned to the academy, resumed lecturing at the musicology department of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, and additionally secured his habilitation. In 2010, he was named an honorary member of the Mozart Society of America, while in 2017, he was awarded honorary membership of the Akademie für Mozart-Forschung at the Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg for his services to Mozartian research. Allow me to introduce this interview with a personal reminiscence.



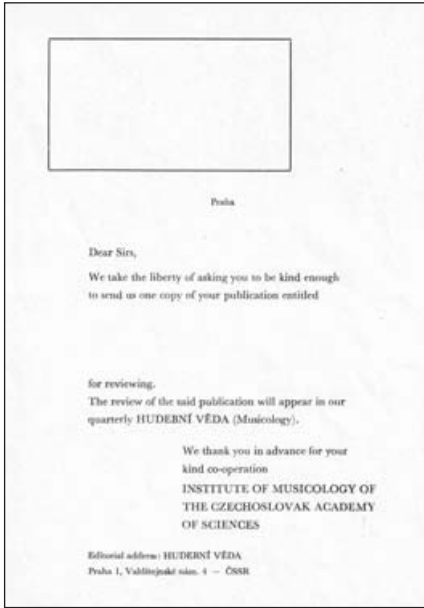
*During my high school studies – this was in October 1987 – my father took me to the Theatre of Music in Prague to attend a lecture by Dr. Tomislav Volek: “200 Years of Operatic Interpretations of Don Giovanni”. On our way home, I said to my father: this is the subject I want to study. My dream came true. I became a student of musicology and of Volek’s specifically, and, years later, even his colleague at the Academy of Sciences. I was always impressed both by the breadth of his reading and by his capacity to find original approaches to surviving historical material – and not just in terms of history but with many questions of ethics and world-view as well. I know he was highly inspired by the contextualism of his philosophy professor, Jan B. Kozák, and he also attended lectures by Jan Patočka, the pre-eminent Czech phenomenologist. Today, he counts Teilhard de Chardin among his greatest inspirations in this field. With that in mind, I allowed myself to surprise him with the following question:*

*I know that you even found positives in the Marxist philosophy that was forced upon you.*

As a member of a generation that, studying in the 1950s, had eight hours of Marxism a week (!), I had to read many works by Marx and Engels. I did not have much love for the latter, especially due to his incredibly hateful journalism against the Czechs in 1848, of whom he had worse things to say than the Nazis did a century later. But there is one sentence in his *Antidühhung* that I will claim allegiance to for the rest of my life: “Every kind of thing has a peculiar way of being negated in such manner that it gives rise to a development.”

This finding of Engels’s helped me back in the 1950s as I was forming my position vis-a-vis the repulsive communist totalitarian regime in which I was forced to live. How is a decent person with an education in the humanities to operate within it; how to behave towards it; how to negate it? Is he to invest his vital energy in making public his disapproval of the politics of the ruling regime and therefore have himself locked up? Sit in prison without being able to participate in broadening the state of knowledge in his beloved field?





I chose other paths and forms of resistance, which could be described as the paths of an academic dissident. I decided to remain within the confines of my field, importing into the Czech musical world – so full of embarrassing communist dogmas – information about new academic work abroad through the means of articles, reviews, and brief abstracts in academic journals. In order to acquire them, I had a species of request card printed in English and German, which I would send to publishing houses abroad asking for review copies. In the case of significant researchers whose works I had had the chance to study, I wrote them personal letters in which I asked them for offprints of other works of theirs.

*Over the years, this intelligent form of anti-totalitarian rebellion was also noticed abroad. The German musical encyclopedia, MGG, for instance, says of you: “(...) he introduced alternatives to Czech Marxist dogma through reviews and articles about significant international researchers (Georgiades, Bessler, Merriam, Lissa, ao.)”.*

In hindsight, I am most proud of my text about Thrasybulos Georgiades. After the war, this native of Greece became the director of the musicology department in Munich, where I was introduced to him in 1965 at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek by the Mozart expert and an excellent friend of mine, Robert Münster. Professor Georgiades, of whom it was known that he very rarely gave individual consultations, was so amazed during our short conversation in the library's music study room that this unknown assistant lecturer from a Communist country knows his book *Musik und Sprache* and his studies from the *Mozart-Jahrbuch* – and even has some questions about them! – that he invited me to his apartment for a conversation that stretched out to over two hours. As a parting gift, he gave me offprints of other essays, and this contact later led to my essay *The Inspiring Thrasybulos Georgiades*, published in 1967 in the *Hudební věda* (Musicology) journal, which was in fact the first essay on the oeuvre of this original musicologist. Some time later, as a token of their recognition for my pioneering treatise on their esteemed professor, my Munich colleagues gave me the newly published two-volume edition of Georgiades's *Kleine Schriften*.

*The remarkably strong motivation of the young Tomislav Volek to establish academic contacts abroad, not exactly common in his generation, must surely have been built on some pre-existing foundations.*

The foundation of these activities of mine was probably an inborn need dictated by my genetic code: to always be interested in the broader, international context. One factor was doubtless the fact that both my grandfathers studied abroad, one in Switzerland and the other in Prussia. They owned radio receivers of decent quality and would always follow German-language broadcasts. They would visit cafés to read newspapers and magazines from abroad. Across our family, the Nazi occupation fortified us in secretly listening to the BBC and the Voice of America. After the war, I began attending the Prague offices of the British Council every Monday to collect their radio bulletins (I still have some issues). Even more often, I would visit the American Information Service, which also had an excellent library



*Roundtable at the conference of the International Musicological Society in Ljubljana, 1967  
Left to right: Volek with Pierluigi Petrobelli (Rome), Karl Geiringer (USA), Daniel Hearts (USA), Gerhard Croll (Salzburg)*



*Volek opens the Stamitz exhibition in Havlíčkův Brod, presenting new sources on the local Stamitz dynasty (see Czech Music Quarterly 3/2017)*

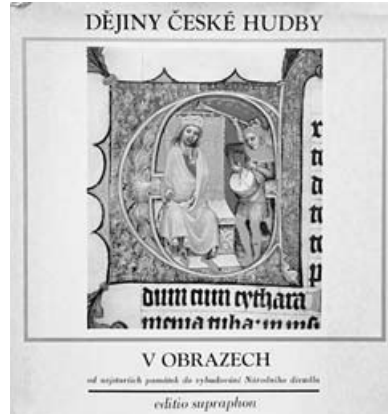
with many magazines. Twice a week at the YMCA, we would listen to lectures about England, its universities, and other – after an hour in the gym or pool. What’s more, one of my grandfathers, a teacher by profession, who also gave me a foundation in music, would tell me stories, clearly enchanted, about a concert and lecture by Adalbert Schweitzer in Prague, and about how his native city of Proseč awarded, during the period of the rise of Nazism, the so-called *Heimatrecht* (“homeland law”) to the great German writer Thomas Mann so that he could become a Czechoslovak citizen and acquire a passport, allowing him to travel and later emigrate to the United States. It is also in my genes that I fundamentally detest primitive party politics and any kind of unreflected fandom. Since my high school studies, I have been supported in my interest in the broader world also by a line from Rainer Maria Rilke’s collection of poems *Das Buch vom mönchischen Leben* (*The Book of Monastic Life*): “Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen” (“I live my life in widening circles”).

*Could you reminisce about how, in September 1961, i.e. exactly sixty years ago, you wrote a letter to the US, to the greatest among musical history synthetists at the time, Professor Paul Henry Lang (1901–1991)?*

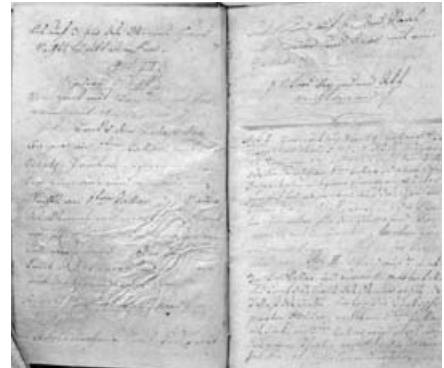
By then, I was already in my thirties and I had some knowledge about the history of Czech music, so I could take the liberty of writing to the author of the remarkable synthesising treatise *Music in Western Civilization* with a comprehensive commentary on music in Bohemia. As a musicologist of European origin who came to the US from Hungary in 1928, Lang was preciously devoid of all ethnocentric prejudices and was capable of including, in the 1941 survey mentioned above, valuable sections on Bohemian music of the 18th century. But the letter that the president of the International Musicological Society received from one of the countries of the so-called Socialist camp in Europe from some assistant was in fact a response to his extensive and (for good reason!) highly critical editorial in *The Musical Quarterly* (1961, no. 3), in which he discussed the production of Supraphon, the *Musica Antiqua Bohemica* edition, recordings of Antonín Dvořák’s music, etc. Professor Lang only replied on March 23rd 1963, but he did so with a dense, three-page letter. He mentioned many of the pressing problems of contemporary musicology, described the editorial practice of the journal he ran, and finally offered to print a paper of mine in *The Musical Quarterly*, fifteen to eighteen standard pages long, for which he needed no other recommendations, as my letter served as sufficient proof of my expertise. This was, of course, highly flattering, but try writing a paper in 1963 Prague for such a renowned journal, when you have no inkling of what might have been published since the war on your chosen topic in Germany, England, America,



*Volek's pioneering essay, published in Hudební věda 1967, no. 3*



*The cover of Volek's History of Czech Music in Pictures (1977), which comes in three language versions*



*Notes by the theatre manager at the 1782 Viennese premiere of Mozart's singspiel Die Entführung aus dem Serail, published by Volek in Mozart Studien 25, Vienna 2018.*

and elsewhere. In Czechoslovakia, we did not even have access to any post-war editions of historical music, such as the German and Austrian *Denkmäler* and magazines connected to them like *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*. There were no post-war editions of the *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* or *Acta musicologica*, and the Prague university library was only slowly beginning to subscribe (after an interruption brought about by the war and Communist idiots) to journals such as *The Music Quarterly*, *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, or *The Musical Times* of London, with *Die Musikforschung* coming a little later. Thus, I never published in *The Musical Quarterly*, which Lang directed until 1973.

*You are a great fan of humour and our interview would be well served by a little levity. Could you tell us a little about how you were first allowed to participate in an academic conference in the so-called West? It was 1964, you were thirty-three...*

That's truly one for the history books! The most powerful ideological organisation in the field of music in Czechoslovakia was the Composers' Union, whose most influential dignitary was the overly ambitious Jaroslav Jiránek. He decided to send a sizeable delegation to the 9th congress of the International Musicological Society in Salzburg, so that even the "decadent, bourgeois West" would understand that in Czechoslovakia, valuable musicological work was being done – under his leadership, of course. There was only one unexpected problem with this noble idea (which was fully sanctioned by the highest party committees): Jiránek realised that it was simply unthinkable that none of the papers he proposed would contain a single critique of some new work from the "bourgeois camp". But where could one find such a paper, seeing as none of the good comrades had any ideas about such literature? And so he heard through the grapevine that some assistant lecturer from a musicology department had, at one union meeting, said something critical about some work of musicology published in West Germany. He immediately instructed his secretariat to bring this person to him. This Volek, of course, expressed his willingness to speak in Salzburg about the book he had, by chance, mentioned in passing at the Composers' Union. Jiránek noted that my paper would be on Walter Wiora's *Die vier Weltalter der Musik* (*The Four Ages of Music*) and included my name in the delegation. However, as I wasn't a comrade, I had to pay for half of my travel expenses out of my own pocket...

*As a diligent reader of the international musicological literature, you became a vivifying panellist at conferences, both formally and informally, an effect I later experienced personally on numerous occasions. As your experience grew, you evidently felt like a fish in water at many of these events – once, you even presented a paper titled "In Praise of Conferences".*



If, when exploring a particular historical issue, I come across the omission of certain connections, I believe it is my duty to present these for discussion. So I prepare a paper titled something like “Problems With Some Unobserved and Misinterpreted Facts”. Or it might be a direct question: “Warum hat Mozart einen solchen Text gewählt?” (“Why Did Mozart Choose Such a Text?”). I amused one conference – and particularly those writing about the conference – with the title of my paper: *Mozartsche Fragmente und Beethovensche Rente – zwei historische Tatsachen von großer Aussagekraft (Mozart’s Fragments and Beethoven’s Annuity – Two Historical Facts with Great Implications)*. The contents of this paper, however, are such that no German or Austrian colleague would ever take them into account and cite them, as they refer to facts that are not at all aligned with their patriotic sensibilities...

*However that may be, in the community of Mozart researchers, you were labelled “der Denker” – “the Thinker”. And since your texts are so readable, all of your writing published in other languages have found a readership – certainly not a common occurrence in the case of Czech musicologists. A case in point: In April 2006, this magazine published your essay “What Did Prague Mean for Mozart?”, in which you mostly discussed the creation of Don Giovanni and La clemenza di Tito, i.e. Mozart’s operas written for Prague. In America, responses to this publication appeared even in books as specialised as Mozart and the Nazis: The Abuse of a Cultural Icon, published by Yale University Press. Its author, Erik Levi, had the following to say about your essay:*

“(...) In his anniversary article “What did Prague mean for Mozart”, published by the Czech Music Information Center in April 2006, Tomislav Volek, President of the Czech Mozart Society, refrained from mentioning the Freedom Party’s (BRD) campaign. More worrying to him was the Germano-centric orientation of some relatively recent scholarly work on the composer. The main target for his criticism was Das Mozart-Lexicon, a 900-page tome edited by the distinguished Viennese scholar Gernot Gruber. Volek noted, with a mixture of outrage and irony, the absence of a dictionary entry on Prague as one of the cities that played an important part in Mozart’s life. This omission was deemed even more inexplicable given that the lexicon featured detailed articles not only on Salzburg and Vienna, but also on Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, and Mainz. Nor did the Mozart-Lexicon include a separate article for Milan, even though three of the composer’s operas were premiered there. From such evidence, Volek argued that ‘we can reasonably conclude that we are dealing with a certain systematic historical distortion in a book produced by a German publishing house. Can it be that someone, somehow, wants to give readers the impression that Mozart is primarily a phenomenon of German-speaking lands, with a few episodes in Paris and London?’ Volek pointed an accusatory finger especially against Gernot Gruber, who had not yet gotten over ‘the habit of an embarrassingly politicised view of historical facts that afflicted his earlier book, Mozart und die Nachwelt (1985)’. Among the historical facts Gruber has distorted in this work is the claim that Mozart was an important factor in the fight against the Czech nationalistic movement in Prague. He noted that ‘if a text like this had been written during the war, at the time of the Nazi Occupation of Prague, it would not be so surprising, but in 1985?’”

*Recently, one of your Mozartian essays again garnered an immediate response. It was published in 2018 in the Mozart Studien yearbook under the title “Notizen des Inspizienten zur Uraufführung von Mozarts Entführung aus de Serail” (“Stage Manager’s Notes from the Premiere of Mozart’s Die Entführung aus dem Serail”) and it is based on a valuable archival discovery you made, which, though it happened many years ago, you did not have time to adequately process given your position as a “freelance musicologist”.*

We must not forget that after my Communist colleagues kicked me out of the Academy of Sciences at the end of the year 1976, I had to spend the following thirteen years toiling away as a so-called freelance musicologist without a regular income, forced to constantly come up with and propose to various institutions such texts and programmes that could harbour hopes of being accepted, published (soon), and remunerated (soon). After the revolution, I had to focus on my university lectures. And, furthermore, in the case of the discovery of the libretto



*Tomislav Volek and Milada Jonášová  
at Bertramka, 2014*

from the 1782 Viennese world premiere of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with the theatre manager's notes, another unlucky twist of fate affected the narrative: in August 2002, Vltava unleashed on Prague what is known as a 100-year flood, which caused serious damage to the part of the collections of the Czech Museum of Music that also contained that Viennese libretto. Once the document was made available to researchers again, following a period of several years during which it underwent a complex drying and disinfection process, the handwritten notes of the stage manager of the Burgtheater were, in many places, barely legible. But we did not lose the valuable evidence on the use of stage sets from previous productions of other operas. This did not escape the attention of the Wiener Staatsoper, who premiered a new production of *Il Seraglio* in 2020. The premiere was attended by my Viennese colleague Helena Dearing, with whom I once attempted (to no avail) to resolve a different matter in relation to some historical material, and she immediately informed me about the programme note to the production, which included a mention of my 2018 article. Incidentally: the solution of the problem of attribution in the case of the Viennese document, which remains outside the interest of the academic community, would contribute valuable findings to Mozartian research!

***In the 1960s, you also explored the field of musical anthropology.***

Thank you for this reminder. If only it would become general knowledge that if science is to study the musical differences of various ethnic groups, it cannot make do without the anthropological approach. Only this approach is capable of considering the totality of all manifestations of musical activities as behaviour that is “modelled” and “adopted by learning”. I consider Alan P. Merriam's *The Anthropology of Music* one of the seminal works on music and I am a little conceited about the fact that I was the first to report on it in Czechia. You see, my path to this field led through philosophical anthropology, particularly the works of Arnold Gehlen (1904-1976). I first heard his name at Patočka's lectures on Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, after which I read Patočka's essay *Gehlenovy názory o úloze umění v antropogenezi* (*Gehlen's Position on the Role Played by Art in Anthropogenesis*), published in 1965 in the *Divadlo* (*Theatre*) magazine. I even arranged - through correspondence - a consultation with Gehlen in Aachen, where he lived at the time. But that Sunday afternoon was no great success: my attempts to discover his opinion on possible applications of his concept of anthropogenesis (also known as hominisation) to the field of musical activity was not of importance to him. Music was entirely outside of his field of interest. He finished me off by saying that he had probably paid less than a hundred marks in total for all the concerts he had attended during the course of his life... He was an expert in humanity's visual manifestations, beginning with cave paintings, and this was what he used as a foundation on which to build his interpretation of anthropogenesis. Even so, the Gehlenian inspiration was of capital importance to me, what with its examination of the human as an “acting being”, which, having lost its instincts (*Mängelwesen*), created its own environment (*Lebenswelt*, *Umwelt*, a network of institutions, “second nature”, etc.).

*A greatly enriching experience for you was a three-week stay in the USA, where you travelled only a year after your forced departure from the Academy of Sciences. The Communists in your field wanted to exclude you from all academic activities, yet you secured permission for your journey to the United States from all the appropriate “higher positions”. How do we interpret this?*

In a way, it was a miracle, but it was also connected to some highly specific aspects of the Communist arrangement of public affairs. I left the Academy at the end of 1976, but a few months later, my book *Dějiny české hudby v obrazech* (*The History of Czech Music in Pictures*) was published by Supraphon. Barbara Renton, whom I assisted in Prague as she worked on her dissertation on Bohemian musical inventories, brought the book with her to New York and introduced Professor Barry S. Brook to the English-language version of my book. He had recently established the Research Center for Music Iconography at the City University of New York and expressed an interest in my experience, as an author, with creating the first treatment of the history of the music of a particular ethnic group on the basis of an extensive use of iconographic documents, and invited me to a conference he organised in 1978. No one today can imagine what a Kafkaesque process I had to endure to acquire all the requisite papers. A small illustrative anecdote: the first confirmation I needed that there were “no objections” to my journey was from the foreman of the committee of the so-called street organisation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Only no Communists in my place of residence were allowed to tell me who the foreman of the committee was, or even where they met! After a few days of asking questions in vain, one old Communist – who held me to be the “most decent person around”, because I sometimes helped carry her shopping to her door – told me in secrecy where the street organisation had its meetings and when the foreman would be there. She’d already put in a good word for me. The final “no objections” stamp had to be given by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, upon my request. This looked terrifying, but seeing as all my conflicts with Communists had taken place only among musicologists and they had no record of me at the Central Committee, I received the longed-for “no objections” stamp and I could go to the offices of the Čedok travel agency and buy a plane ticket to New York.



*Tomislav Volek in New York in 1978*

*The importance of these three weeks spent in America to your further life and academic work was enormous. You were also lucky to have experienced concerts by two great figures of the Czech interpretive tradition – Rafael Kubelík and Rudolf Firkušný – in New York and even meet them in person.* Yes, that was – and remains – unforgettable and, in a way, incommunicable. There were other strong experiences too: my first encounter with Orwell’s epochal *1984*, which then swallowed up my nights in New York, a visit to the Museum of Flight in Washington DC, and others.

*Soon after that, you began a research project of many years in the colossal Lobkowitz family archive, focused primarily on Beethoven.*

After years spent rummaging through the thousands of accounting documents in the family archives (specifically the “Wiener Kassa-Rechnungen” fond), I managed to find bills related to orchestral rehearsals of a new symphonic piece by Beethoven, *Eroica*, and my

essay “Beethoven’s Rehearsals at the Lobkowitz’s” for London’s *The Musical Times* (1986) was even translated into Japanese. The interest of the Beethoven-Archiv in Bonn in my findings led to the publication of *Beethoven und Böhmen* (1988), for which I – in my capacity as a “freelance musicologist” – put together a group of Czech authors. I will say nothing of the amount of print errors that the German editors left in our texts...

***Pedagogical activity is also an important part of your career:***

Teaching skills are probably in my blood: both my grandfather and his brother were teachers, as was one of my brothers. When I began lecturing about musical Classicism – this was 1958 and I was an assistant lecturer at the music history department of the faculty of arts –, I was mostly interested in relaying both the historical realities and the creation and development of the style in an engaging manner. During the period known as political normalisation, the Jan Deyl Conservatory for Visually Impaired Students engaged me to teach music history in the highest class. After the fall of the Communist regime, I could return to the Academy (despite the opposition of the surviving Communists) and I also began lecturing on selected topics at the faculty as an associate professor: Mozart’s operas, 18th-century Italian opera in the Bohemian Kingdom, the interpretation of music of the 17th and 18th centuries. Perhaps the most specific in its approach was the series *European Music – A Comparative Study*, in which I could apply not only my knowledge of music history but also certain findings from musical anthropology.



*Tomislav Volek takes Princess Diana on a tour of Bertramka, May 9th 1991*

***Your seminar also gave rise to the first post-revolution doctoral dissertations. Given the requests from and needs of the department, you were habilitated in 1998 with a collection of studies on 18th-century Italian opera in Bohemia. And it would also be appropriate to mention, in such an overview, your position as government commissioner for the 1991 celebration of the bicentennial since Mozart’s death.***

That happened quite late, in November 1990. In only a few weeks, I worked out a budget for the project, which the government accepted without proposing a single change. But after the project had been running successfully for several months, the minister of culture, Milan Uhde, told the government that he would personally take over the agenda and the function of the commissioner was therefore superfluous. This was, of course, not true, and the consequences were, in many respects, dismal. Rafael Kubelík resigned from his post as chairman of the honorary committee in protest against Uhde’s behaviour. Shortly after that, Uhde, who turned out to be utterly incapable as an organiser, passed the event on to the Pragokonzert agency and the project ended up amassing considerable debt.

***This scandalous behaviour in Czech musical life was hopefully made up for by the Viennese editorial project dedicated to you on your 85th birthday, a two-volume collection of your essays – sometimes updated and with expanded musical and iconographic documentation – titled Mozart, die italienische Oper des 18. Jahrhunderts und das musikalische Leben im Königreich Böhmen. Mit der Don-Juan-Studie von Vladimír Helfert (Mozart, 18th-century Italian Opera, and Musical Life in the Bohemian Kingdom. With Vladimír Helfert’s Don Juan Study, Hollitzer Verlag 2016), on which I had the good fortune of participating as one of the two editors. We – your students – are delighted that you are still active at ninety, occasionally publishing critical notes on the ills of contemporary Czech musicology on your website, [www.viaddonore.cz](http://www.viaddonore.cz).***

I follow the dictum of my beloved French writer, Stendhal, on the need to “unmask those who feign honourableness”. And I believe that in today’s post-Communist Czechia, there are still too many “good people” wearing those masks.

# BLESSED BE INEVITABILITY

**This issue of Czech Music Quarterly comes with a CD featuring musical compositions by the organologist, composer, computer programmer, and designer of electronic, electroacoustic, multimedia, and interactive systems, Milan Guštar. As an introduction to his musical thinking, we present this short, philosophical, and passionate text by Petr Ferenc.**

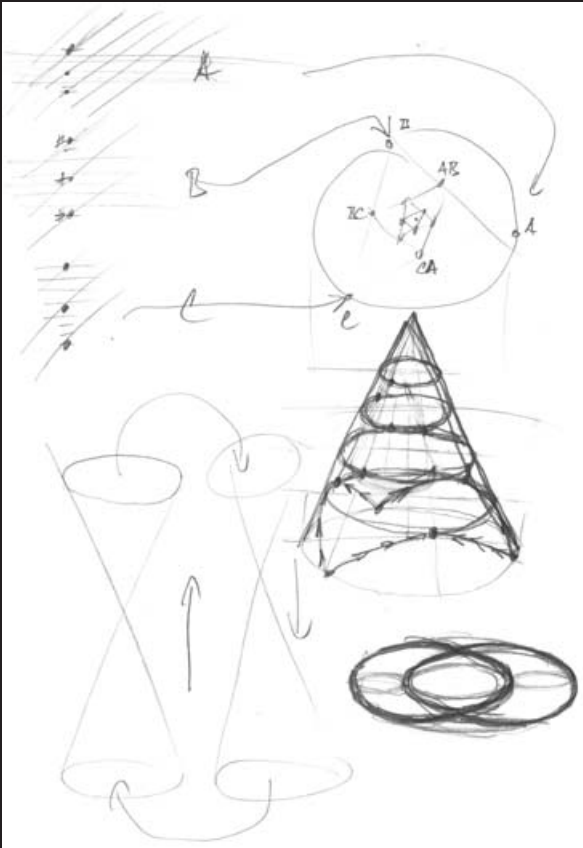


I will be personal, as this music touches me deeply – by virtue of what it is and also due to the cultural context it exists in. I only saw a musical performance by Milan Guštar for the first time in 2012. He sat down at a computer whose screen was being beamed onto a projection screen. It contained a thousand numbered frames, each of which represented one tone generator. Over the course of forty minutes, Guštar gradually turned each of them on by clicking on them with his mouse – the order in which they were triggered was not determined in advance – thereby filling the hall with a veritable tempest of interference. The piece was called *Flex 10* and it worked on me like a balm, and not only thanks to its sound. It is uncompromising and yet perfectly simple, a combination that is not easy to achieve.

Another of Guštar's *Flexes*, number 1, is an hour-long gradual rise of a sine wave from the depths of infrasound to the heights of ultrasound. In *Flex 99*, the trajectory is inverted – top down. Listening to Guštar's CDs, which

come in simple sleeves bearing the score to the piece (a line stretching across a music staff), several remarkable effects can be observed. One of them is physical: the listener is sometimes tickled around the stomach, as on a roller coaster. The second reveals that every CD player, i.e. players of digital media, which it is now fashionable to deride for their "lifelessness", responds to such musical contexts in a different way. Some will display an error message, while others play back what they can read, so even before anything is heard in *Flex 1*, the speakers begin resonating. A CD walkman "censors" the frequency, perhaps because it is primarily intended to play music through headphones. While on a desktop player, both *Flexes* begin with silence, on a discman, they begin playing back immediately – and buzzing, too. The music's effects on the playback devices and the human body are doubtless interesting, but even more interesting is their influence on our experience of time and the simplicity of means through which they achieve this effect.





A sketch of *Flex Nr. 33 – Do nut*

I love a definition I once read and for whose source I never bothered searching: music as “sounding thought”. I do occasionally adjust it to the more appropriate “sounding thought in time”. I think it contains everything that music often isn’t and should be – and in the present perhaps more so than at any time in the past.

With the development of recording and playback technology, music found itself in front of the mirror of its own past, and began working with its history (to a much greater extent than at any time in the past) both intentionally and unintentionally, whether in the form of stylistic fidelity, programmatic eclecticism, or a simple incapability to break free of what everyone else is playing. With every other recording that’s published and every video that’s uploaded to YouTube, artists seem to lose manoeuvring space, the white spots on the map of the sonic universe gradually disappearing.

We can call to our aid a purely logical consideration and state, disdainfully, in cold blood, and with a clear conscience, that the possibilities are, after all, endless. But we will never be a hundred percent certain. And

then – there’s infinity and infinity: we achieve one through incessant expansion and the other through division. There is reason to believe that this second infinity is that in whose name further and further derived sub-genres of sub-genres are created. And even if the first infinity were true, how can we conceive of it mentally and how do we realistically attain at least the borders of our own little field within it? And is such an expedition even a dignified and desirable act?

Milan Guštar is one of those who attempts to avoid both infinities – meaning both the desire to conquer what is new and to demarcate one’s field by narrowing the scope – and instead use the very foundation blocks of sound and an analytic mind as their central creative tools. And it is not only in his own music that Guštar manifests his creativity and resourcefulness: his programming and design/ engineering bring to life installations by visual artists including Veronika Bromová, David Černý, Kryštof Kintera, and his journalistic activities have enriched us with two books on the history of electrophones. From an outside perspective, his musical compositions and performances – available on his website, [www.uvnitr.cz](http://www.uvnitr.cz) – seem to be in the shadow of these endeavours, but they are certainly not a marginal activity for Guštar.

The series of *Flexes* discussed above, pieces with unanchored, constantly transforming pitches that create cradles, seas, crosses, meetings and divergences of paths, or simply trajectories going up and down, which he has been creating since 1999 (there should ultimately be ninety-nine in total, but they are not created in numerical order; the boundaries have been set and the space between them is gradually filled in) are not the only manifestation of his compositional thinking. They are, however, the most significant demonstration of the composer’s method.

Guštar is interested in the elementary questions regarding the perception of music and sound – pitch and interval, the interaction of tones and their arrangement in space and time. Questions, that is, that the vast majority of musicians consider to have been answered once and for all, creating on their foundation the constructions of various styles. Guštar outlines and develops them in a compositional universe based on mathematical principles or a generative or algorithmic foundation (often, the programme is supplied with input data and the performance of the piece can take place without the presence of a performer). “I consider music the most abstract of all art forms,” Guštar said in an interview for *HIS Voice* magazine. “And because it is itself, the artist, the composer, has absolute freedom. (...)



PHOTO: KAREL ŠJUSTER 2x

It's similar to mathematics, which is also independent of its surroundings."

I have already suggested that in addition to a clearly focused mind, Milan Guštar's oeuvre also demonstrates something else: a respect for time, i.e. an element of which each of us only is only allotted a certain portion and which we do not how to use correctly when perceiving art. With the development of recording and playback technology, music found itself faced not only with the mirror of its own past but also with the permanent threat of being switched over to something else or being skipped over, rewinded, clicked through, as if we didn't know that one can only fast forward to an earlier end.

Thanks to the radio and other media, a running time of over three or four minutes can be considered virtually an act of civil disobedience, which is perhaps why many people create long forms. There are many multi-hour multi-albums, internet streams lasting entire weeks, vast fields of ambient sound...

But there is also a minimalism that desires to lend our perception of time a more serious progression, desires to make time felt, enjoyed, suffered through... This is also the path of Milan Guštar, who subscribes to the legacy of minimalism. His interest in Pythagorean, mathematical relationships between tones, microtonality, and the rhythmic beatings of frequency interference can be taken to refer to the "linear" minimalist works of composers of a previous

generation: La Monte Young, Tony Conrad, or Phill Niblock. Despite these external similarities, however, we must remember that the motivation to walk the path of an almost ascetic compositional austerity is different and deeply personal in the case of each of these artists. Guštar's most palpable reference to minimalism is in the *Flexes*, pieces that are difficult to break away from despite their extended duration and predetermined development. Of course we know theoretically what will happen in the course of the following minute, but we simply cannot wave it away, go make a cup of coffee, read for a bit, and then fast forward to the end. With his simple means, Guštar gloriously forces us to live every moment. The power of his music rests in the fact that listening to it is direct inspiration, not a dialogue mediated and filtered through a network of references. And the irreversibility of the ongoing processes and the inevitability of their suspected end are more crushing than the often obstinate but still arbitrary respect for genre. So that they do not lose everything, Guštar's pieces are just the way they *have* to be.

But it would be meaningless to flatten Milan Guštar's music to a purely intellectual, socio-political, and musicological affair. I agree that music is the most abstract of all art forms. This means that however through-composed it is, it leaves space for the listener's own imagination and capacity for wonder. After all, the quote from the interview continues thus: "In both music and mathematics, aesthetics is often the measure of quality."

czech music | interview

by Ian Mikyska



PHOTO: RADOŠLAV TŘESA

THE NAME OF MICHAL WRÓBLEWSKI WILL, BY NOW, BE WELL KNOWN TO FANS OF CZECH IMPROVISED AND JAZZ MUSIC, BUT ALSO TO AUDIENCES AT CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CONCERTS AT THE OSTRAVA DAYS FESTIVAL AND ELSEWHERE.

## Searching for Freedom

an interview with composer

## Michal Wróblewski

IN THIS INTERVIEW, WE DELVE INTO MICHAL'S BACKGROUND, THE VARIOUS SCENES IN PRAGUE, OSLO, AND BERLIN, AND THE NEED FOR MUTUAL SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT AMONG MUSICIANS.

On the day when me and Michal were to meet to do this interview, saxophonist Michal Hrubý posted the following update on social media: “I had a dream today in which Michal Wróblewski participated in a cycling race. He was in the lead by one day and six hours. When I asked him how he had managed it, he said he had driven part of the race by car.” This dream, however, has no real basis in reality, as Michal can certainly not be accused of taking “the fast track” – quite the contrary, seen retrospectively, his career manifests a tireless work ethic, whether this means countless of hours of honing instrumental technique (first in a jazz framework, later in terms of sonic exploration of the saxophone); leading groups, writing for them, touring and organising; a relatively late change of focus to the world of contemporary composed music; or, more recently, organising a concert series, acting as dramaturg of a jazz festival, and co-running a record label.

*Do you come from a musical family? What was your path to music?*

I'm not from a musical family at all – my granddad played in a wind band as an amateur. In preschool, I saw that the girls would attend recorder classes and I wanted to join them. I was

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about four years old and the teacher didn't want to teach a child that young, but I managed to convince him somehow. I then switched to the clarinet because he was a clarinet player. Me and the other clarinettists in his class attended a wind band that also had a big band attached to it, and the big band needed a saxophone player. My teacher tried to convince me not to play the saxophone, because he thought I would ruin my clarinet embouchure. But in the end, the bandleader – Antonín Keller, former trombone player in the FOK Prague Symphony Orchestra – convinced my parents to have me learn the saxophone as well. A few months later, I was completely immersed in the instrument.

*How old were you then?*

Twelve. And about half a year after that, I discovered that there was something called a conservatory, somewhere I could attend high school and dedicate myself to music, so I began preparations for the entrance exam to the Jaroslav Ježek Conservatory.

*So you were focused on jazz from the age of twelve?*

Essentially, yes. I had two excellent teachers, Jan Koliha on saxophone and Michal Matzner on clarinet, the latter of whom unfortunately died prematurely. Jan was interested in jazz, he had friends at “Ježkárna”, he'd lend me records, so that was where I first heard Miles Davis' Kind of Blue, Charlie Parker... I tried transcribing these recordings by ear and I was really into it all. I was working exclusively on jazz before starting at Ježkárna, and even the first two years of study, I was mostly learning the style of Kenny Garrett (a saxophone player in the post-bop and fusion idioms – editor's note).

*And you studied the full six years at the Jaroslav Ježek Conservatory?*

Yes, but during the last two years, I was also studying at the Higher Specialised School appended to the same conservatory.

*And then you went straight to the jazz department at the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts (JAMU) in Brno?*

Yes. My mum convinced me to do that, because everyone in our family has at least one university degree. I think she might even have filled in the application form for me. But what motivated me to go to JAMU was that I was thinking about doing an Erasmus exchange, travelling abroad and trying something else.

*At one point in your studies did your interests shift from Kenny Garrett to, shall we say, “different” music?*

Around my third year at the conservatory, when I put together a band called Mocca Malacco. Dan Panchártek, who played bass in the band, brought us loads of music on DVDs that I hadn't heard of before, especially the majority of Dave Holland's discography as a leader, all the way back to the 1970s. That was where I heard the recordings of Holland's quintets: the first with Steve Coleman and Kenny Wheeler on saxophone and trumpet and the second with Chris Potter on saxophone. That was our greatest inspiration for Mocca Malacco. And it was through them that I got to older recordings, John Zorn and the New York Downtown scene, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and others.

*Then you spent three years at JAMU.*

I applied for the Erasmus programme in my third year, but I wasn't accepted anywhere. When I applied again, it worked out, so I intermitted my studies so that I could go to Norway on Erasmus. Once I was there, I formally concluded my studies in Brno and applied straight to the master's programme at the same school in Oslo – the Norwegian Academy of Music.

*It's been eighteen years since you began studying at the Jaroslav Ježek Conservatory. How do you think the Czech scene of experimental music with a jazz foundation has developed?*

The transformation is enormous. Back when we started Mocca Malacco – and mind you, that wasn't a particularly experimental band; most of the solos were based on a harmonic progression or a groove, and though there were moments when we played “freely”, we didn't really know that's what we were doing – there weren't many bands like that in our generation. Or rather, no one really took any paths other than imitating American groups. There weren't many opportunities to hear different approaches in the generation above us, either, with the important exception of Vertigo (formerly the Vertigo Quintet

– editor's note), which we considered the most experimental music on the scene, and NUO, Nuselský umělecký orchestr (Nusle Art Orchestra), so generally musicians around saxophonist Marcel Bárta and keyboard player Vojtěch Procházka.

Since then, the situation has changed completely. There are more and more students as old as we were back then that are interested in this music, and they often have a much better technical foundation than we did. And I think this change has mostly taken place over the last five, seven years.

*How much do you think this has to do with the creation of jazz departments at two art universities – first at JAMU in 2010 and then at HAMU (the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) in 2016?*

When I attended the Higher Specialised School at the JJC, there were a few people who were interested in experimenting: the Slovak guitarist Michal Matejka, for instance, or Marian Friedl, who was very open to everything. When I came to Brno, the scene there was very interesting. I met musicians I'd never known about, like saxophone players Radim Hanousek and Pavel Zlámal or composer Jaroslav Šťastný (Peter Graham). They were also closely tied to JAMU, a school that was attended by students with an interest in improvisation and experimental music, even though this was not the focus of the school.

As for Prague: the Higher Specialised School at JJC has a crucial influence on the development of this form of music, and HAMU is really only continuing in this tradition – a lot of students come to HAMU from the Higher Specialised School, where they'd already encountered free improvisation or other forms of experimentation, so they are open minded and the school can serve as a further extension.

*One of the ways in which you support the development of the improvised and experimental music scene in Prague is through the Hybrid Session, a concert series that also includes an open jam that you organise along with George Cremaschi, an American double bassist who has been central to the improvised music scene in Prague for years.*

The Hybrid Sessions are a continuation of Solo Wednesdays, the series we organised with you and George at the Scout Institute on Old Town Square. Both series are inspired by what I saw abroad, especially in Norway. The way Hybrid Sessions works is that the evening begins with a duo set by two invited musicians, followed by several sets of open free



improvisation. We write down a list of names and try and distribute them into groups – usually four groups, with three to six members in each one – so that we bring together people who haven't played together much before (or at all). The series is frequented by musicians from different scenes (improvised, jazz, classical, experimental) and we try to choose the duos to also bring different worlds together and instigate new encounters. We sometimes succeed in creating really bizarre instrumental combinations across genres.

The aim of this series is to interconnect the scene – Prague hasn't had an open improvisation session for years – the last I know of was Improvising (Ob) sessions, organised by guitarist Petr Zelenka. The series takes place in Hybernská 4 (hence, partly, Hybrid Sessions), a relatively new space in the centre of Prague administered by Charles University, and they have a great cohesive function for the scene, serving as a platform where the experimental music community can meet, where new projects can come to life, where musicians can become passionate about exploring these types of music. Personally, I find the greatest joy in the fact that many classically trained musicians attend the sessions, some of them regularly. I am also glad that the event has found such a receptive community, so we don't really need to worry about promotion and we still get lots of arrivals (both musicians and audience members) who enjoy the evenings immensely.

*I wanted to use the Prague scene and Hybrid Sessions as a means of getting to a theme I find interesting in relation to your work: Prague, Czech culture, the writing of Bohumil Hrabal, beer drinking... What does this mean for you, as a person, as an artist?*

My relationship to that component of Czech culture is somewhat ambivalent. I'd say some musicians around me are much more influenced by it, like Marcel Bárta or the trombonist and composer Jan Jirucha, who really live this "Czechness" and for whom the culture you're talking about – and particularly in Prague – is a powerful life-force. I also have a soft spot for all this, and it's clear to me that I can never quite get rid of it, but some elements of it seem dangerous at times: sometimes it has a tendency to small-town thinking, refusing outside influences, keeping to one's own, or fear (of course, I am not talking about the people I mentioned).

I don't think this aspect is particularly important for my work or my thinking about music or culture. But I love it, which I best realised when I lived in Norway.

If I had stayed in Czechia, it would probably have gotten on my nerves after a while – before I left, I was the biggest critic of Prague and the Czech Republic in general. But in Norway, I realised that I feel more and more invested in it; that it's far more useful for me to be here than in Norway or on another scene that already has a lot of momentum. What's happening here now is much more interesting to me than scenes full of internationally famous superstars, like Berlin or New York.

*More interesting how?*

You can have elitism even within improvised and experimental music – a hierarchy within the scene, the "stars" who have more of a reputation by their name than by the interesting things they're doing now. The same is true of jazz, contemporary music, or any other genre. There's nothing like that here, of course, because we are entirely unknown to the world. In a way, this is what makes the scene interesting – the projects emerging here are really different. It's not like it was when I was fifteen, with everyone trying to play like the American musicians we knew, but when they came over, everyone would just go home, open-mouthed, to practice harder, and even so, it was never – barring a few exceptions – at the same level as the American bands. But now, there's music happening here that can be – not in all cases; we're definitely at the beginning of the journey – interesting to anyone, anywhere. I used to have this problem: I was travelling or playing abroad and people asked me to recommend them some music from the Czech scene – I had to think hard and there wasn't much to choose from. I'd think of someone – they're a fantastic musician. But then I realised that there are fantastic musicians in every country. You need something more, character, personality, something you can't find elsewhere. And Czech-ness can project into that.

*Do you think, then, that there is greater freedom here in comparison to larger, more developed scenes?*

Definitely. But that doesn't mean – particularly regarding the future – that the scene should be closed off. I think it might just be a matter of time before it begins opening up – also through the contacts young musicians made at various exchanges and studying abroad – and when Czech experimental music starts being interesting for international festivals.

*I'd like to now talk about a turn in your career that happened some four or five years ago – a transition from being an improvising and composing musician who leads his own experimental groups with a jazz foundation*

*to a composer of contemporary music whose pieces are performed by other musicians. What motivated this change and how did it work, practically speaking?*

It happened in Norway, although I wasn't really involved with contemporary music while I was there. I studied a master's programme called Improvised Music, within which you are free to work on pretty much everything, though there is a tendency towards non-artificial music: folk, improvised, noise, even popular music. The transition started happening because I realised more and more clearly that composing is, in fact, the most important thing for me.

*More important than playing the music?*

In a way, yes. Maybe you can't say that, though - it's just something else. But it was a component that was becoming more and more important for my development. It was clear to me that it had to progress somewhere, beyond the idioms I was operating within before then. Beyond writing something that would sound good when I played it with my band. When I returned to Czechia, I knew I needed something that would push me further and give me a good reason to justify coming back from Norway and still moving forward. I wanted to do a PhD and this seemed like a good way to explore composition, so I applied to JAMU in Brno. Although I originally applied with material that was essentially my attempt at imitating something that sounded like contemporary music, thanks to lessons with Jaroslav Štátný, encounters with composers at the Ostrava Days festival, and intensive listening, I progressed relatively quickly. I was twenty-eight at the time and I felt that I have to learn fast, that I have to use what I already know about music to reach what I want to express through this form.

More and more, I realise that composing is something I fundamentally need and that the music I want to write within this world is radically different from the music I perform myself. The process itself is completely different. I was used to always doing everything quickly - I spent years living in a world where it was common practice to sketch something down quickly on manuscript paper, bring it to a rehearsal, and then something would happen to it. I was very influenced by two scenes: the Chicago scene around Anthony Braxton and the AACM on the one hand, based mostly in free jazz and the jazz idiom more broadly, and the New York Downtown scene on the other, represented most emblematically by the music of John Zorn, his extreme film-edit compositions, and a particular brand of bizarre humour. And suddenly, I was listening to very different music, thinking about what I was missing in my own

expression for me to be satisfied with myself as an artist. And that's a completely different kind of music. I am still educating myself in composition and enjoying this development immensely. Although it might not look like that to others - and it usually doesn't look like that in my diary - it's the most important thing for me right now.

*Could you explain a little further the motivation that leads you to want to compose such and such music to be satisfied with yourself as an artist?*

Perhaps it fills in my personality, which I don't think is particularly free-jazzy or wild. I'm suddenly making music by poring over it for six months and thinking at the smallest level of detail (which is a skill I had to learn, a process much aided by encounters with composers who work this way). And I'm discovering that this is exactly what the music needs. I used to not think about details much. I counted on them being magically resolved on the spot - which they often are, in certain kinds of music. What I enjoy about composition is the relatively high level of control. Something you sit on until it hatches. It becomes like a meditation - work you become completely immersed in. I often work with notation software that has the capacity to play things back, and it often happens that I feel that truly new music is being created - whenever I listened to the music I used to make in the past, it was immediately clear to me that I had written it, and this was also clear to people who knew me. There was always something that prevented me from surprising myself in the composition process - though there were new ideas, the concept was still similar. I suddenly began writing music that would allow me to make discoveries as I wrote it. Music that did not flow from me in the intuitive manner. I learned to think about it more. But even so, the core of these pieces is, in comparison to the work of many other composers, highly intuitive. The element of improvisation is very important, which is partly due to the fact that my education in composition is not that extensive.

*How do you compose? At your instruments? At the piano?*

I barely write any music at the piano any more (even for my bands). I used to, and it would always lead me in some way. That can be useful too, but it never seemed too successful to me in the context of contemporary music.

*So you try to hear everything in your head, write it down as precisely as possible, and then check the results in a notation programme on your computer?*

Exactly.

*Doesn't the software then become an instrument, leading you in some way?*

It certainly does. But that's only one compositional method – the other path I take is more experimental, sometimes almost aleatoric. I try out a system which I then radically edit based on my taste and an idea of what I want to hear. I've been using this process more and more recently, even when writing “jazz” music. This is nothing new and explains why these compositional techniques were created – because the path starts somewhere else and not in my subconscious, I can arrive at something that surprises me.

*From what you've said, it seems that composing and playing – whether improvised music or music in bands you lead and write for – are fairly separate worlds for you.*

Essentially, yes. Or, rather, I used to be much more steadfast in that conviction than I am now. I visited the Ostrava Days Institute twice as a resident. The first time I went, in 2019, I felt that the two worlds are completely different and that I might do well to stop playing for an extended period and dedicate myself fully to composition, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to catch up; that it couldn't be combined with the other things I do and they wouldn't contribute anything to it. During my second stay at Ostrava Days, I realised the opposite: first off, experience in jazz and improvisation are important for what I compose and lend my music specific elements that other composers don't have, and secondly, I found out that if we're talking about composition, you could well say that a band playing a concert is one composition – most of my bands work that way, with the entire concert operating as a single piece, without breaks between the pieces. In a way, it doesn't matter to me whether it's improvised; whether there are song forms, compositions, or experimental notation. That band, that evening – or even that band as such – is something like a composition. A composition created by several people with me participating in a partial capacity. I approach most things I do in this manner. Creating the dramaturgy of a music festival can also be like a composition.



PHOTO: MARTIN ZEMAN

*So to you, composition is not merely about sovereign authorship and control but also contribution?*

What's composition? Shaping a musical experience in time. That time can mean years working with a band or six months sitting in front of a computer screen.

*You mentioned creating a festival programme, which in your case means the Jazz Goes to Town festival in Hradec Králové, a regional centre some 120 kilometres east of Prague. What was the festival like when you took over as dramaturg and how has it developed?*

Jazz Goes to Town has a tradition that I only registered partially at the time. The festival was created by Martin Brunner, and though I performed there occasionally and attended some concerts, it is only now that I'm really learning how wide its scope is – guests have included many musicians from the New York Downtown scene; the Art Ensemble of Chicago played at the very first edition of the festival. Programming a concert like that for the first season of a regional jazz festival seems almost incredible to me. Zdeněk Závodný, director of Divadlo 29 in Pardubice (a city nearby), then took over as dramaturg, and

the festival started becoming highly experimental for the standards of Czech jazz audiences. I'm trying to continue this lineage, but just like Zdeněk, I aim to avoid the programme being all about experimental music – it should reflect the jazz scene in Czechia as a whole. I was talking to Jaroslav Štátný about this recently, who told me something I hadn't fully realised before then: we often invite bands to the festival that aren't that well known in Czechia, or even internationally – rather, they form part of a local scene within which they are known. I often try to avoid “luring” audiences in with a big name; catching their attention at first sight. I'd rather try to introduce them to music that I believe is among the best of what's happening right now – and music with which they have no chance of finding this out for themselves, other than coming along to the concert. I find it important not to do a festival that only invites legends who have been doing the same things for year – my aim is to introduce the scene in various forms and offer music that is progressive and responds to the times we live in. To prove that jazz isn't a boring genre or dead music, that it can be interesting to people who follow any trends in any kind of contemporary music. That there are still many spaces to explore, and that there are bands here who are playing music they simply could not have played ten years ago.

*This year, the festival included an orchestral concert with premieres by composers Heiner Goebbels, Michal Nejtěk, and Peter Graham (Jaroslav Štátný) featuring the improvising soloists Sofia Jernberg, Susana Santos Silva, and Frank Gratkowski accompanied by the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Marko Ivanović. I see this concert as a dramaturgical connection of two musical worlds that are rather divided in your own musical practice.*

That's right, and the connections can really work marvellously. It's a shame when these worlds are closed off, and, after all, there have been many artists bringing them together for years now. The Chicago scene, for instance, has long felt the injustice of Western contemporary music viewing them as less than equal partners, although they share many principles with American avant-garde composers in particular. It's a natural connection for me, because I live both in the world of jazz and improvised music and in the world of contemporary music, and I am equally interested in both.

*Let's talk about another supportive activity of yours. At the end of last year, you co-founded Ma Records, a label for experimental music. How did that happen?*

It all started when I was leading accordionist Vojta Drnek's master's project at JAMU, where I teach part-time. Our consultations were mostly about compositional questions, but we also discussed other things, like the scene and what it needed. Vojta has an almost incredible talent for organising – he's really great at taking projects all the way and being thorough; much more so than I. We also discussed labels and the fact that it isn't easy to put out a jazz record that is even a little more complex, let alone any music that's more “out there”. At the time, I'd tell my friends that I'll definitely start a label one day, only it would take a while, as I definitely can't spare the time to do it right now (laughter).

In our discussions with Vojta, I was of the opinion that a label like that needn't be based on subsidies and grants, putting out physical releases that cost huge sums of money, but that it could instead be an online platform that would still serve a very important function. And since we started the label, the most important function for me is how the label builds a community, unifying the scene and bringing it closer together. Although we're all friends in the Czech community of jazz and improvised music, we enjoy seeing each other and so on, I'm missing that struggle for a common goal. The scene is set up so that everyone has to fend for themselves. Abroad, I saw scenes operating in less competitive ways – musicians mutually support each other so that they can make a breakthrough.

The second motivation for the creation of the label was that I would often meet musicians abroad interested in similar music, and they'd tell me I was the first Czech musician they'd met. They know where Czechia is, they've all been to Prague on holiday, but almost no one has played here (if they haven't played in Punctum) and they don't know any local musicians. In order for this to change, we need something bigger than a really popular band that will lift the scene up.

These, then, were the two primary motivations. The rest is Vojta's work – he really does a lot more in terms of organising, logistics, and technical matters. Our plan was to put out five or six records a year. Instead, we've published thirteen albums this year, because the interest was simply enormous and all the proposals we received were excellent and interesting. A lot of these recordings wouldn't have seen the light of day without the label – if you have a recording and nowhere to publish it, what can you do with it?



*Before we finish, I'd like to return to your compositions within the context of contemporary music. We've discussed motivation already, but I'm interested in what techniques, topics, and directions specifically interest you in this domain.*

I've recently been more and more interested in various forms of experimental notation, particularly text notation - forms that represent a step towards improvisation, but theoretically still represent a type of composition (at least for me). Technically speaking, in the realm of jazz composition, I ran into the blind alley of harmony, which I avoided by writing predominantly in a contrapuntal manner - most of my music doesn't have a foundation in harmonic thinking. The world of formally determined jazz, jazz standards, and so on, has put me off this a little - even though I love the music, I don't know where one could take it further, and I usually find contemporary jazz that develops the complexities of jazz harmony rather irritating, because I don't understand it (that, for me, is "intellectual jazz" in the pejorative sense). But when I discovered the world of alternative tunings beyond twelve-tone equal temperament, it provided a way out of this blind alley. I've been studying tuning for the last two or three years and I am trying to discover these elements and use them in my pieces so as to create verticalities that I find interesting.

*What tuning system or approach to microtonality do you work with?*

Mostly Just Intonation, but not exclusively. This is also a field in which I am working quite hard on educating myself.

As for other elements, I've spoken about one of them already: I always worked with edits and cuts, sharp changes, music that isn't really processual, develops quickly, and in which the logic of form is not created horizontally, specifying a trajectory from here to there, where something will move you yet further - instead, it works in blocks, with the individual blocks only making sense in hindsight.

That was also how I wrote music when my interest shifted to contemporary music, and many of my pieces were conceived in this way, only using different means. I wanted to try going entirely against that: writing music that develops slowly and that creates a whole that is meaningful as one listens, but every time I tried to write music like that, it still had elements of my sharp-cut thinking. In the last few months, I've realised that perhaps, it doesn't quite make sense to try and rid myself of something that comes naturally to me,

that arises from my personality, and that I enjoy when I listen to music. But I'd like not to be as radical - to work with movement and stasis in subtle ways; less directly.

And that, essentially, is all of it. I tried to create sonic wholes in which I always primarily consider how they move and when they stay still, when they slow down or speed up so that it all contains as little specificity as possible. The music I grew up in was very direct rhythmically and harmonically aimed for greater and greater complexity. So I try going against that - not that I don't enjoy that, but it has no place in the music I want to make. Often, when I hear contemporary music that is, in my perspective, rhythmically banal, which means that it corresponds to the "grooves" I know from other genres, I'm a little put off. I'm not a big fan of cross-overs of this kind.

*Finally, could you end by recommending to our readers some of your favourite albums from the Ma Records catalogue?*

Jungle Debris - That's a blast. All three members of the trio are amazingly talented, and they play so tight together as a band. I was there when this album was recorded, and it really reflects the spontaneous atmosphere of the session, capturing the band almost like how they play live.

Uthando - Since the entire band are represented on the album as composers, the music is amazingly diverse. It's a trip to all kinds of places. Uthando is also a perfect example of where the scene has progressed to and where young Czech musicians are headed (particularly around the jazz department at HAMU). The youngsters have created up (laughter). I like how pleasant and positive the whole record is.

I could go on like this about other bands whose albums we put out this year: TokDat, Tryptych, Endemit, JWQ, Meandér, and Pavel Zlámal PQ are all original ensembles whose music I can honestly recommend, which is also true of our latest release, Interference, by accordionist Žaneta Vítová and vocalist Annabelle Plum. All these formations are also worth hearing live.

In addition to these working bands, we also put out a special edition this year, MiniMa, which presented four solo projects - by Radim Hanousek, Vojta Drnek, Ondřej Galuška, and Ian Mikyska - and serves as a demonstration of how full albums can function like compositions.



# CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

## EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

### IN THE AUTUMN OF 2021

October and November are traditionally the busiest months in Czech contemporary music (and Czech culture in general, a situation brought about in large part by the state funding system). There are festivals across the country either directly focused on contemporary music (Contempuls, MusicOlomouc, Days of Contemporary Music) or that dedicate part of their programme to new works (Moravian Autumn, International Shakuhachi Festival Prague, Archaion Kallos, Strings of Autumn, Harmonia Moraviae). The musical offering this fall was also complemented by several new pieces commissioned by Czech orchestras. Remarkable in this context is the orchestral concert of the Jazz Goes to Town festival, which featured the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra performing new works by Peter Graham and Michal Nejtěk (see our interview with festival dramaturg Michal Wróblewski in this issue).

Looking over this list of events, we cannot fail to miss one encouraging development: In comparison with previous years, there is a significant increase in music written by women composers. It seems that even in our lands, all-male concert (or even festival) programmes will, at some point in the future, cease being standard, or will at least not be understood as unproblematic. I firmly believe the Czech cultural scene will continue in its efforts to provide space to a broader spectrum of artistic voices, supporting young female composers with specific commissions and moving away from an image of contemporary music as a purely male endeavour.

30 September 2021, Großes Haus, Theater Ulm, Ulm, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *Kátja Kabanova* (premiere of a new production)**. Directed by: Angela Denoke, music direction: Levente Török. Following performances: 3, 7, 16, 22, and 30 Oct, 6, 14, 19, and 27 Nov 2021.

3 October 2021, Gallery of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague. Archaion Kallos. Festival of Orthodox Music: Philokalia Today. Contemporary instrumental music inspired by Orthodox spirituality. **Jiří Gemrot: *Piano Quintet Dormition*, Jan Ryant Dřízal: *Makom* (world premieres)**. Radka Hanáková – piano, Sedláček Quartet.

7 October 2021, Reduta, Olomouc. **Jan Kučera: *Carpe diem* (world premiere for the 30th anniversary of the Conservatory of the Evangelical Academy in Olomouc)**. Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra with students of the Conservatory of the Evangelical Academy, conductor: Jan Kučera.

8 October 2021, Besední dům, Brno. Moravian Autumn: Weekend Marathon – Joannis Novak 100. Ludicra. Five world premieres inspired by the Latin poetry of Jan Novák's. **Jakub Rataj: *Farbella*, Lenka Nota: *Cantilena aeaea*, Barry Wan: *Anna*, David Carpenter: *Somnium*, Jana Vöröšová: *Oratio philippica* (world premieres)**. Štěpán Filípek – violoncello, BCO – Brno Contemporary Orchestra, conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.

8 October 2021, Church of St Lawrence, Prague. Konvergence. **Michaela Pálka Plachká: *parallel aspects* (world premiere)**. ensemble LUX.

9 October 2021, Music Lab, Brno. Moravian Autumn: Weekend Marathon – Joannis Novak 100. Novák<sup>2</sup>. World premieres of pieces on a theme from Jan Novák's *X Horatii Carmina*. **Daniel Šimek: *Walk in the Ruins* (world premiere)**. Mirror ensemble. **Anton Marko: *Steps* (world premiere)**. Tony Mark's Band.

11 October 2021, Art Centre of Palacký University – Atrium, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Soňa Vetchá: *Parallel***



PHOTO: HELENA HERZANOVA

*Michal Nejtěk (in the middle) after the premiere of *Lost Rituals**

**Universes (world premiere).** Ensemble for New Music Tallinn.

12 October 2021, Gallery of the Academy of Performing Arts, Prague. 648th Tuesday of Umělecká beseda.

**Pravoslav Kohout: *Concertino for Violin and Chamber Orchestra* (world premiere).** Leoš Čepický – violin, Academy of Performing Arts Students' Chamber Orchestra, conductor: Petr Louženský.

13 October 2021, Besední dům, Brno. Moravian Autumn. **František Chaloupka: *Guitar Quartet No. 2 "Eve's Aria"* (world premiere).** Iva Bittová – voice, Aleph Gitarrenquartett.

13 October 2021, Blahoslav's House, Brno. New World of Moravian Autumn: Mirrors of Brno. **Lenka Nota: *Ich bin die Zeit* (world premiere).** Zuzana Čurmová – soprano, Johana K. Kratochvilová – cimbalom, Michaela Bartošová – viola.

14 October 2021, Zlín Congress Centre. Harmonia Moraviae. **Jan Ryant Dřízal: *Solstice* (world premiere).** Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Robert Kružík.

14 October 2021, Besední dům, Brno. Moravian Autumn. **Vít Zouhar: *Undulated Waters for piano and cello octet* (world premiere).** Maki Namekawa – piano, Cello Octet Amsterdam.

15 October 2021, Convent of St Agnes, Prague. Strings of Autumn. Mikyska/Hába: Sixth-tone Harmonium.

**Ian Mikyska: *In* (world premiere).** Miroslav Beinhauer – sixth-tone harmonium.

16 October 2021, Liechtenstein Palace – Martinů Hall, Prague. Czech Chamber Music Society. **Kateřina Horká: *Intuitions for Brass Septet, Part II*, Jiří Gemrot: *Grotesques for Brass Septet* – selection (world premieres).** Czech Brass.

16 October 2021, Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra. Jazz Goes to Town. **Peter Graham: *JOGOTOTO (Joy Goes to Town)*, Michal Nejtěk: *Lost Rituals* (world premieres).** Sofia Jernberg – vocals, Frank Gratkowski – saxophone, Susana Santos Silva – trumpet, Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor: Marko Ivanović.

19 October 2021, Palacký University Art Centre – chapel, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Ivo Medek, Sára Medková, Vít Zouhar: *TiAmo* (opera about women in various life situations) – pre-premiere.** Directed by: Rocc. ISHA trio, Ivo Medek – percussion, Vít Zouhar – electronics, Lukáš Medek – video.

29 October 2021, Divadlo X10, Prague. **Pavel Nesit: *Concerto for Clarinet and Ensemble, op. 52* (world premiere).** Martin Adámek – clarinet, Ensemble Terrible, conductor: Patrik Kako.

30 October 2021, DOX Centre – DOX+ Multifunctional Hall, Prague. Contempuls 11. **Soňa Vetchá: *Labyrinth* (world premiere).** Meitar Ensemble, conductor: Yuval Zorn.

30 October 2021, Archa Theatre, Prague. International Shakuhachi Festival Prague: JAPAN UNLIMITED.

**Jan Rösner: *Words and Verses* (world premiere).** Marek Kimei Matvija – shakuhachi.

1 November 2021, Church of St Clement, Praha. Days of Contemporary Music. **Pavel Kopecký: *Six Minipreludes* (world premiere).** Václav Peter – organ.

1 November 2021, Archa Theatre, Prague. **Michal Nejtěk: *... son frère le mystère* (world premiere).** Gareth Davis – bass clarinet, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

NOVEMBER



PHOTO: JARO SUFFNER

*Katja Kabanova, Komische Oper Berlin*

2 November 2021, Paralelní polis, Prague. Echofluxx: Ensemble Terrible. **Jan Kotyk: *Soběpodobné melodie (Self-Similar Melodies) for string trio and electronics (world premiere)***. Markéta Dominikusová – violin, Šimon Truszka – viola, Jakub William Gráf – violoncello.

2 November 2021, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Ivan Zelenka: *Flétny si povídají (The Flutes Are Talking)* – world premiere**. Robert Heger, Dana Hegerová – flute. **Jindra Nečasová Nardelli: *Tráva na troskách (Grass on Ruins)* – world premiere**. Karolína Cingrošová Žmolíková – soprano, Vítězslava Krahmerová – recitation, Tomáš Víšek – piano. **Zdeněk Zahradník: *Fantasia su un corale for oboe, two clarinets, French horn, string quartet and piano (world premiere of a new version)***. Ema Kupková – oboe, Ludmila Peterková, Anna Paulová – clarinet, Zdeněk Bělohradský – horn, Quartet Apollon, Barbora K. Sejáková – piano.

3 November 2021, Na cucky Theatre, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Ivo Medek: *Blending 2 (world premiere)***. UME DUO.

10 November 2021, Libeň Synagogue, Prague. Syn.surround. **Soňa Vetchá: *perná+četná=černá?***, **Jan Rösner: *For String Trio, Percussion and Electronics (world premieres)***. Miriam Magdalena Haniková – violin, Šimon Truszka – viola, Andrej Lekeš – violoncello, Lukáš Brabec, Matouš Hrábek – percussion.

11 November 2021, Church of St Clement, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Simonne Draper: *Legenda Lila (world premiere of a version for guitar and oboe)***. Duo Kerberos (Nikola Prokopcová – guitar, Magdalena Klárová – oboe). **Jan Bernátek: *Saint Ludmila – cantata for mixed choir, mezzosoprano solo, and organ (world premiere)***. Lucie Hilscherová – mezzosoprano, Linda Sítková – organ, Bach Collegium Praha, conductor: Jiří Mátl.

12 November 2021, Church of the Holy Saviour, Prague. ***Do nikam (To Nowhere)*. Poems with musical accompaniment. Lyrics: Jana Štroblová, music: Hanuš Bartoň**. Radka Fidlerová – recitation, Alfred Habermann – organ.

12 November 2021, Church of St Clement, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Jaromír Vogel: *Duo Blani for violoncello and harp (world premiere)***. Jiří Hošek – violoncello, Pavla Vondráčková Jahodová – harp. **Věra Čermáková: *The Story (selection no. 1) for shakuhachi (world premiere)***. Petr Matuszek – shakuhachi. **Ondřej Kuka: *“Rumba” Duo for two cellos (world premiere)***. Miroslava Vlasáková Stránská, Jiří Hošek – violoncello. **Jiří Teml: *Memento a Tanec for violin and accordion (world premiere of a new version)***. Julie Svěčená – violin, Ladislav Horák – accordion. **Josef Vejvoda: *Magnificat for mezzosoprano and mixed chamber choir (world premiere)***. Kristina Kubová – mezzosoprano, Prague Singers, choirmaster Stanislav Mistr. **Jan Vrkoč: *Credo pro smíšený sbor a varhany (world premiere)***. Prague Singers, choirmaster Stanislav Mistr, Jakub Černý – organ.

13 November 2021, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Pavel Hrabánek: *String Quartet no. 3 (world premiere)***. Sedláček Quartet. **Milan Báchorek: *Třesky plesky, hezky slezsky for two boy voices, piano, and small percussion instruments (world premiere)***. Jakub Seriš, Jiří Semančík – voice and percussion, Kateřina Dvorská – piano. **Jan Beran: *„Měsíc pomalu sklouzne z prostoru“ for piano quintet (selection)***

SEPTEMBER-NO

– world premiere. Veronika Böhmová – piano, members of the Sedláček Quartet. **Vít Micka: *Introduction and Toccata for piano solo (world premiere of a new version)***. Václav Mácha – piano. Lukáš Hurník: Reorganisation for clarinet and piano (world premiere of a clarinet version). Jana Černohouzová – clarinet, Marie Wiesnerová – piano. **Ivo Bláha: *Snapshots for piano (world premiere)***. Daniel Wiesner – piano.

15 November 2021, House of Arts, Brno. Ensemble Opera Diversa: ConTRIOlogy, concert of premieres II. **Radim Hanousek: *Synesthetic Week***, **Ondřej Kyas: *City***, **Jiří Lukeš: *Temporal Excitations Echoes Excitation***, **Daniel Skála: *Studie obsahovosti 2: Charaktery***, **Michal Wróblewski: *Game No. 4 – Con trio logic (world premieres)***. ConTRIOlogy.

15 November 2021, Martinů Hall, Prague. Orchestral Concert of the Composition Department of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Ramin Kuliev: Tone Shades, **Pavel Nesit: *Behind the Glass***, **Milica Ivanić: *Interwoven touches of currents***, **Jan Jirucha: *Trombsonore***. Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, conductor: Petr Louženský.

16 November 2021, Grandhotel Ambassador, Karlovy Vary. JazzFest Karlovy Vary – Sokolov 2021. **Kryštof Marek: *Suite No. II. for soprano saxophone, piano and chamber symphonic orchestra (world premiere)***. Milan Krajč – saxophone, Kryštof Marek – conductor, piano, Karlovy Vary Symphony Orchestra.

16 November 2021, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Michaela Augustinová: *Úvaha o časech minulých (Contemplation on Times Bygone) – world premiere***. Tomáš Karpíšek – double bass, Petr Novák – piano. **Jan Slimáček: *Three Nocturnes (world premiere)*** Aneta Prokopcová – flute, Věra Müllerová – piano. Romana Schuldová: Variations on Folk Songs (world premiere). Vítězslava Krahmerová – recitation, mezzosoprano, Petr Novák – piano. **Karel Pexidr: *Selanka for oboe and piano (world premiere)***. Kateřina Trojanová – oboe, Petr Novák – piano. **Roman Haas: *Cello Quartet no. 2 (world premiere)***. Andrej Lekeš, Vladimír Kubálek, Petr Špaček, Matyáš Keller – violoncello.

19 November 2021, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Milada Červenková: *Kaliya lila – rhapsody for violoncello and harp (world premiere)***. Jitka Vlašánková – violoncello, Kateřina Valášková – harp. **Jiří Laburda: *Dialogues for Two Double Basses (world premiere)***. Tomáš Karpíšek, Gonzalo Jiménez Barranco – double bass. **Jitka Koželuhová: *Danksagung – Motive eines Lebens for flute, clarinet, two violins, violoncello and piano (world premiere)***. Jaroslav Pelikán – flute, Ludmila Peterková – clarinet, Viktor Mazáček, Jan Jouza – violin, Tomáš Stražil – violoncello, Jitka Koželuhová – piano. **Jan Fila: *Autumn Rhapsody (world premiere)***. Eliška Brožková Pospíšilová – clarinet, Andrea Mottlová – piano. **Marios Christou: *Esperinos (world premiere)***. Andrea Mottlová – piano.

20 November 2021, NorrlandsOperan, Umeå, Sweden. **Miloš Vacek: *The Emperor's New Clothes (1962, Swedish premiere)***. Directed by: Natalie Ringler, music direction: Ville Matvejeff, Ruut Kiiski. Following performances: 27 and 28 Nov, 2, 28, 29, and 30 Dec 2021, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 Jan 2022.

21 November 2021, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Jaroslav Krček: *String Quartet no. 8 Six Sketches, op. 177 (world premiere)***. PiKap Quartet. **Edvard Schiffrauer: *Žalobej (world premiere)***. Kristýna Fílová, Miloslava Vítková, Petra Nová, Šárka Mistrová – voice.

22 November 2021, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Eduard Douša: *Six Characteristic Pieces for Piano (world premiere)***. Eva Doušová – piano. **Karel Janovický: *Sonata for Violin and Piano (world premiere)***. Jana Vonášková-Nováková – violin, Petr Novák – piano. **Jiří Smutný: *Epigrams for Lower Voice and Piano on Poetry by A. S. Pushkin and J. Neruda (world premiere)***. Roman Janál – baritone, Barbora K. Sejáková – piano. **Luboš Sluka: *Lullabies for Soprano and Piano (world premiere)***. Helena Hozová – soprano, Barbora K. Sejáková – piano.

24 November 2021, Smetana Hall, Municipal House, Prague. **Ondřej Brousek: *Prague Café (world premiere)***. Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.

25 November 2021, Besední dům, Brno. **Michal Nejtěk: *The Basement Sketches for symphonic orchestra and piano (world premiere)***. Nikol Bóková – piano, Brno Philharmonic, conductor: Dennis Russel Davies.

27 November 2021, Komische Oper Berlin, Berlin, Germany. **Leoš Janáček: *Katja Kabanova (premiere of a new production)***. Directed by: Jetske Mijnsen, music director: Giedrė Šlekytė. Following performances: 5, 8, 22, and 25 Dec 2021, 9 and 22 Jan 2022.

28 November 2021, Besední dům, Brno. Autumn Concert of Kantiléna. **Zdeněk Král: *Magdalenka, a cycle of short pieces for children's choir based on poetry by Jiří Jelínek (world premiere)***. Magdalenka (Kantiléna's children's choir), Marek Paľa – piano, Anežka Moravčíková – double bass, Lukáš Krejčí – vibraphone and percussion, choirmaster Veronika Novosádová.

## Is Czech Music White?

When I was growing up, I was fairly certain that engaging with what I called “classical music” was something like an “ethical activity.” Listening to the Schubert Quintet in C major in 1960, I wasn’t aware of possibly messy issues pertaining to sexuality or exoticism, and I, like virtually all my peers, did not think of my listening in racial terms. Sixty years on, we all know that classical music in the United States, writ large, is implicated in problematic histories in myriad different ways.

Whether we focus on Jim Crow practices in symphony orchestras and opera companies over the years, the immense disparities in educational opportunities and resources, the cultural barriers that let some in and keep others out, or even the commercial appropriation of Black traditions, no one can dispute the impact of ideas of race on American music. When we add to this the role of slavery in establishing the American economy in the first place and further factors including overseas colonies, the genocide of Native Americans, and the historic treatment of non-White minorities, we indeed have a legacy to reckon with that touches all aspects of our culture, including, of course, music.

Over the last decade, but especially in the last few years, a range of theoretical approaches have emerged which argue that White people in the United States – including progressives and liberals – are, at best, naive about their place in the world, underestimating the advantages they have in a society where the cards have been stacked

in their favour from the beginning. Critical race theory, which broadly argues that racism exists not so much at the level of the individual, but instead permeates the culture on every level from the economic to the legal, is related to discussions around Whiteness, White privilege and the “White frame”. The last named refers to ways of seeing the world that, although they only represent part of the population, are nonetheless treated as normal and neutral, disenfranchising and marginalising people of colour.

But that is the United States, which has its own history and therefore a responsibility to reckon with a tarnished past. What about places that did not have slavery, did not have colonies, or were nations that emerged when minorities within larger empires insisted on self-government? And specifically, as a scholar of Czech music, I have been asking myself how discussions of Whiteness might apply in this area. Well, let’s begin with the easy part: we can assume that any of the music we might call Czech, when played *in* the United



States, becomes implicated in the history of that country, and thus automatically involves itself in issues of race. This would be true whether it is played by an American ensemble or a European one. Thus, whether we call a particular substance “Czech music” or “Russian music” or “Norwegian music”, it is not, when played in the United States, exempt from interrogation and association with historic and systemic bias.

But what about on its own turf, how do we think of it then? This inquiry of mine is not an idle construct, or simply a pretext for an essay. It is a pressing matter. Because, as we shall see, just as one could argue that even in places like Budapest, Prague, and Oslo, the issue of race is inescapable, it is not clear at all that the same conditions apply as do in New York and Los Angeles. I would therefore like to consider a couple of “Czech” pieces and explore them in various ways.

Let us begin with one of the earliest pieces usually identified with “Czech national music”: a dance from *The Bartered Bride* by Smetana.

Is this music “White”, or, if you will, does it make sense to think about it within the context of “Whiteness” studies? Again, this composition was written in the middle of the 19th century in a culture where there were effectively no people of African descent around, and probably far less than one tenth of one percent people of colour, none of whom were enslaved, nor did the economy depend upon them. So, for example, the lack of people of colour in Czech orchestras, historically, was not necessarily a result of bias or discrimination (which is not to say that bias and discrimination did not exist), nor was this music itself appropriated from a despised racial group. If anything, we’d have to shift quickly to a Marxist axis, and then we *could* argue that the oppression of the peasantry created conditions of exploitation and appropriation which are part of this sound world. However, that is not a racial issue but an economic one. So, in this case, my view would be that in its own historical context, Smetana’s dances



Cover of the “first” *Černý cikán*

are not an example of “White” music in a way that’s particularly meaningful.

And there’s another reason why speaking about “the White Frame” might be misleading here, at least in terms of any notion of the Czechs as White. From the point of view of a certain German mainstream, Smetana and all his colleagues might as well have been seen as people of colour, because they certainly were considered culturally inferior, unable to compete with Germans in areas ranging from philosophy to counterpoint, and from intellectual sophistication to structure. And the very elements that could seem to be the very essence of Czechness – punctuated rhythms and folklike intonations – were understood by the dominant (German) culture as elemental, earthy forces that could only have emerged from more primitive peoples. Let us shift to another time and place and listen to a little waltz:

### **Černý cikán**

“Černý cikán” (The Black Gypsy) is a classic *dechovka* (wind music) waltz, cobbled together

in the 1970s from the text of a 1914 cabaret song and an unidentified popular melody (this latter fact was explained to me by the man who created the piece, Adolf Školka, leader of the Budvarka ensemble). The song tells the lurid story of a black-eyed Romani man who sneaks into a village, seduces a young White woman – who has been thoroughly erotised by him – sets the fields on fire, and is stabbed and possibly killed (in the original 1914 version he dies, it is ambiguous in the 1977 song). The first three words of the chorus, “Kdo to byl?” (Who was it?) are delivered with excitement and alacrity, the last three “Cikán, černý cikán” (Gypsy, the black gypsy) follow in smooth falling motion. It is obvious that in this case, ideas about race, and specifically about Black and White issues, are front and centre. The caricature of the Roma as a sexualised violator of “White” norms, seducing village maidens, is seen from a White frame, and is part of certain musical constructions that clearly involve race. The fact that the text, with all its potential drama and violence, is set as a lilting waltz adds another layer to the racial profiling: one of cluelessness; and even the title of the song and its English translation have distasteful, even racist connotations for many today.

Whether the Roma in the Czech Lands are seen as objects of pity and sentimentality, as in Foerster’s melodrama *The Gypsy Child*, or as the destabilising seductresses of Janáček’s *Diary of One Who Vanished* and *The Makropulos Affair*, or even as a source of “authentic” expression in Moravian music, there are certain cases in which we cannot avoid finding strong parallels in the relationships between the music of darker and lighter folks and issues of exploitation, caricature, and racism.

Here, we might pause for a moment to partially second guess ourselves on the issue of *The Bartered Bride*. After all, Smetana was greatly indebted to Liszt’s model of national music, which itself was derived, at least in part, from overheated fantasies about Romani spontaneity and expression. While the musical elements in Smetana’s operas are quite different from anything in Liszt’s music, we might consider his work something like a “second cousin once removed” to Lisztian ideals, in which race is certainly implicated.

Finally, I have just returned from Texas, where I saw a wonderful production of the opera, set in a church in Praha, Texas with an oil derrick in the background. In this version, the dancers in the *Tánc komediantů* (*Dance of the Comedians*) were coded as Central Asian, reminding us that whether or not the original conception of a work involved race in any way, a given production can make choices, intentionally or not, which bring that element to the fore.

### The “New World”

We might now ask what happens not when “Czech music” comes to the United States, but when it is created on American soil by a Czech musician. In short, a work such as the *Largo* from the “New World” Symphony.

Coming to terms with this one will take some teasing out. For the sake of devil’s advocacy, let us begin by taking as dim a view as possible of this composition – a work I deeply admire. In this scenario, Antonín Dvořák is brought to the United States at an incredible salary. To make his first major splash, he creates a symphony using traditional German/international symphonic material, which he supplements with a few touches of Czechness, but mostly with naïve references to African and Native American music, which, by his own admission, he manages to confuse in the process. In this purposely dark telling, his salary, probably equivalent to several hundred thousand dollars today, is earned by using borrowed materials from interlocutors who are never paid a cent for their work. Harry Burleigh sings beautiful slave songs to the maestro, but Harry never gets a penny. Isn’t this simply part of the exploitation of people of colour that needs Whiteness Studies to put it into sharp relief?

Well, yes and no. The main reason that Dvořák ends up modelling African American *melos* is that he has been taken under the progressive wing of American music, along with Jeannette Thurber and Henry Krehbiel. Thurber, you may remember, started the National Conservatory both to provide a place where people of colour could study, but also to jump start a school of American composition. Both Thurber and Dvořák wanted to show that the music of African Americans could



Still of Pavel Haas listening to the *Study for Strings* in the *Terezin Propaganda film*

be foundational in the creation of an American music. While one can, of course, consider that a very White move seen from today's perspective, it is probably best to be cautious about taking too critical a stance in relation to progressive moments of the past. Or if we must do so, it should be with the rueful acknowledgement that certainly, our own views may be similarly dismissed in the not-too-distant future. So again, while one could view the *Largo* in terms of exploitation and historical discrimination (particularly after one of Dvořák's students made up the "spiritual" words "Goin' home" to it using Black dialect), this symphony and the moment in which it was created are genuinely ambiguous in that regard, and I do not, after a long time thinking about it, believe that it will yield to any single theoretical framework. This may remind us that in humanistic investigation, the purpose of research is not always to establish genuine certainty – rather, it is at the very point where certainty ends that many of our most important inquiries begin.

Furthermore, any critique of Dvořák from the vantage point of race, appropriation, and exploitation becomes confused when we run

headlong into the racist disparagement of his thoughts on African American music emanating from Europe, and from Boston. And we may note the irony of the Boston composer, Amy Beach – who should be valorised as an intrepid woman composer – writing her *Gaelic Symphony* one year after the "New World" to demonstrate and enshrine America's White roots and its Anglo-Irish heritage.

#### **Pavel Haas, *Study for Strings***

Certain compositions included in the domain of "Czech Music" do involve us in issues of race, but not quite in the same way as a Beethoven concert played in Los Angeles. Pavel Haas' *Study for Strings* is a notorious composition from the Terezin Ghetto, memorialised in the famous clip of Karel Ančerl conducting it as part of an intended (and never finished) Nazi propaganda film. This was part of the shameful Potemkin Village effect the Nazis had in mind: how could one possibly think they were exterminating these people if one could see on camera that they were well fed and enjoying a lovely concert? The Nazi's might have considered Haas "merely" a Jew, and a Jew he was,

but he saw himself solidly within the “Moravian branch” of the Czech national tradition, along with his teacher Leoš Janáček and his fellow prisoner, Gideon Klein.

Let us begin, once again, with an extreme view: one could argue that if this work were to be performed in a context which seeks to feature images of Jewish degradation in order to advance a militaristic Israeli agenda for the purpose of oppressing Palestinians, it would force us to consider questions of Whiteness and race, no matter what our political views. But a more measured opinion might focus on the reality that Haas and his fellow prisoners were in the camp because they were considered to be members on an inferior race, and the fact that we now claim to disbelieve the German claim of racial supremacy, and in effect, now consider Jews and Germans to be “of the same race”, is irrelevant to Haas’s situation in 1944. To talk about Haas’s *Study for Strings*, on its own terms, as being “White” might miss the mark by a pretty long shot. While it is true that the Terezín composers, as a group, had opportunities in their earlier lives that most African Americans never had, the fact that they, along with thousands of fellow inmates, were all killed for racial reasons, certainly gives them more in common with oppressed African Americans than with White supremacists of any stripe. And once again, the fact that we might consider the Terezín composers White *now* does nothing to change that.

Of course, the idea of Czech music is a complicated concept from the very start, but whether we like it or not, those reading this are likely its stakeholders and “curators” – and, to be fair, its critics as well. I hope to have suggested that it is also deeply complicated to think about whether Czech music is profitably understood through the lens of Whiteness. When *The Bartered Bride* was performed at the Metropolitan Opera in 1909, a company in which people of colour were prohibited, Whiteness creeps into the consideration, even as we acknowledge that for many, the “Czech” opera may have been coded as “non-White” and the conductor, Gustav Mahler, a converted Jew, might also have been thought of in that way. The same opera, performed in the Czech Lands, probably needs a more useful lens, even with the most critical eye and ear.

And if such things are true for “Czech music” and “Hungarian Music”, etc., they are true for classical music broadly as well. For once again, when we involve American orchestras playing “international repertoire”, the problematic history of the United States has to be part of the story. But would the same notion of a putative “White frame” really be the most useful way of understanding such things as the destruction of Western instruments during the Cultural Revolution in China, where political systems and economics were primary factors, or even a concert last week of the Seoul Philharmonic?

In the end we have a Schrödinger’s Cat moment: Czech music is both White and not-White, depending on the piece, the time and place, who is listening and a range of other factors. While the serious issues and problems of the United States are not simply transposable to other realms, they can stimulate a kind of thinking which may lead us to say, “We know what Czech music is when you do not ask us, but when you ask... we realise we had better think about it some more.”

# Philippe de Monte

## *from 1521 to 2021*

In 2021, we will mark the five hundredth birthday of Philippe de Monte (1521–1603), who spent the last two decades of his life in Prague as *maestro di capella* to the emperor Rudolf II. Despite the fact that he was one of the most prolific composers of his time, he remains to this day considerably overshadowed by his contemporaries Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525/26–1594) and Orlande de Lassus (1532–1594), with many of his works unavailable in modern editions or recordings. In the following text, Jan Bata, a musicologist at Institute of Musicology at Charles University introduces the Flemish composer, as well as the current state of research and the possible futures of an online complete editions project.

### The Past

The composer was a native of Mechelen, the centre of the County of Hainaut (a region now split between France and Belgium), where he was born in 1521. There is no further information about the composer's birth or the first years of his life. It is assumed that he gained his introductory musical education in his home city, at the cathedral of St. Rumbold. Monte then left for Italy, where we have evidence of his activities from the end of the 1540s until the mid 1550s, specifically in Naples and Rome. He then returned to his home country, only to depart again, this time for England. He spent the years 1554 and 1555 there in the music chapel of the Spanish king Philip II of Spain, or rather in the services of his wife, Mary I of England (Mary Tudor). He maintained the friendships he established during his engagement through correspondence, often including considerably younger composers.

After his departure from England in 1555, Monte attempted to secure the post of chapelmaster of Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria, but he did not

succeed. The post was taken up by Orlande de Lassus a year later, whom Monte subsequently met personally and maintained correspondence with. Monte then headed to Italy again, where he spent several years supported by various patrons. His traces lead through Genoa, Florence, and Rome. When Jacobus Vact, Kapellmeister to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor, died at the beginning of the year 1567, the emperor and his emissaries began searching for a successor. Even Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina himself was being considered, but in the end, Philippe de Monte was chosen and named the court chapelmaster in 1568. At that point, he could hardly have suspected that he had set himself up for a long thirty-five years of service to two Habsburg emperors.

Monte was not only highly valued for his personal and artistic qualities by his musical colleagues – his art was appreciated by the imperial court, too: in 1572, Maximilian named him the guardian of the treasure of Cambrai, and five years later, he was awarded a canonry by Rudolf II (canonries were a device through which emperors frequently





Raphael Sadeler Sr. (1560–1632): Philippe de Monte (1594)

supported deserving musicians who were also clerics). Monte, however, never made use of this prebend, as his numerous requests for retirement were repeatedly declined by the emperor. Philippe de Monte died on July 4th 1603 in Prague, and was buried in the Basilica of St. James in the Old Town of Prague, as specified in his will.

The composer spent almost half of his life directing the imperial music chapel. What did this ensemble look like? The origin of the German word *Kapelle* (band or ensemble; *kapela* in Czech) is related to the word *Kapell*; chapel (*kaple* in Czech), a sacred space in which church services were officiated in the presence of the ruler. Providing musical accompaniment to such rites was among the primary functions of the court ensemble. The ensemble – also known as a *Capellnparthey* in this period – had a fixed position in the hierarchy of the court. It was mostly composed of men – adult and boy singers, chamber musicians, an organist, and other persons occupying positions related to music in the imperial chapel (the almoner; chaplains; the teacher to the boy choristers; copyists; a tuner). There was also another musical ensemble – the trumpeters and drummers, who were not, however, fully part of the chapel. Instead, they were grouped with the equerry (*Stallparthey*; the officers in charge of the stables), which had to do

with their originally military and later representative function. Many phenomenal musicians of European stature passed through the imperial chapel during Rudolf's reign – at its height, the group consisted of around sixty musicians.

All this suggests that the imperial chapel mostly performed sacred music. With some degree of hyperbole, we can thus state that Philippe de Monte composed much of his sacred music with a view to the abilities and assets of this group. His preferred genres of sacred music included motets (250 pieces), spiritual madrigals (131 pieces), and masses (37 in total). Monte's secular output, however, was much greater, particularly in the field of the Italian madrigal. This too could, of course, be useful at the court: at various festivities and ceremonies, as well as in the emperor's private chambers. But Maximilian or Rudolf are not the only one's to whom Monte dedicated his collections of madrigals, of which there are thirty-five (!) in total. Among the list of dedicatees, we find both secular and church dignitaries, wealthy aristocrats, and experts in music who were able to appreciate the composer's art.

Some of his contemporaries described his style as *musica reservata*, a term that contains several meanings, beginning with a close relation between the music and the text and also including rhythmic and chromatic nuances (and social aspects, too: the Grove Music Online dictionary defines *musica reservata* as music “reserved for a particular section of the public, whose members regarded themselves as connoisseurs”). All this can, indeed, be found in Monte's music. But it is apparent that his highly original compositional style transformed during the course of his long artistic career, even though it was always based in the art of vocal counterpoint, a style for which composers originating from the area now known as Benelux were famous already in the 15th century. Philippe de Monte, however, had a great sensitivity for words set to music, and his contrapuntal craft was always unconditionally subordinated to the text. These artistic qualities, which all of Europe had a chance to acquaint itself with (mostly thanks to the work of prestigious printing houses in Venice and Antwerp), led to Monte being appreciated literally across all of Europe by both professionals and laymen.

If we stand in wonder when faced with the number and quality of Monte's works, we cannot but help asking ourselves: How could such a famous composer, whose oeuvre is just as extensive and significant as that of Palestrina or Lassus, fall into



Hans von Aachen (1553–1615): Rudolf II. (1606/1608)



Philippe de Monte: *Missa Confitebor tibi Domine* (manuscript, Prague, National Museum – Czech Museum of Music, sign. AŽ 33, f. 121r)

oblivion so soon after his death? There are multiple possibilities, but let us mention two here, at least. Firstly, Monte was celibate, so after his death – unlike Palestrina and Lassus –, he had no one to actively maintain his legacy. Secondly (again in contrast to the two more famous composers), he did not write a work that became the stuff of legends, like Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli* or Lassus' *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* and *Psalmi poenitentiales*, which would secure him constant popularity throughout the centuries that followed. Philippe de Monte stands squarely in the shadow of Palestrina and Lassus, and outside of the interest of musicology, too. This is why his oeuvre is still not available in a modern, complete edition (both attempts in the past failed).

### The Present

The five hundredth anniversary of Monte's birth is therefore a more than adequate reason not only to remind ourselves of the existence of his music, but also to initiate a new wave of academic interest in this composer and his oeuvre. It was with this ambition that the two-day international symposium, *Philippe de Monte at 500*, was organised by the Musica Rudolphina research centre along with the Prague Archbishopric, the Institute of Musicology of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, and the Association for Central European Cultural

Studies, under the auspices of His Eminence Cardinal Dominik Duka, Archbishop of Prague, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the Foundation of the Czech Music Fund. The symposium took place in the Cardinal Beran Hall at the Archbishop's Palace in Prague on the 19th and 20th of August 2021. The programme consisted of ten papers by experts from Czechia, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Spain, and the USA. Given the pandemic situation, some of them were presented over the internet or played back from video recordings. The contributions were divided into four sections, focusing on the composer's work, its reception, and a discussion of various sources.

The opening section (*The Composer and His Works I*) began with a presentation by the doyen of Monte studies, Robert Lindell (Vienna) and his keynote *How the Fleming Filip van de Bergh became Filippo di Monte, the most prolific composer of Italian madrigals*, in which he summarised the current state of knowledge about the composer's life and work. Ferran Escrivà-Llorca (Universidad Internacional de Valencia), in his paper *Philippe de Monte as understood by Pietro Cerone*, meticulously analysed an extensive treatise by Pietro Cerone (1566–1625), *El melopeo y maestro, tractado de música theorica y pratica; en que se pone por extenso; lo que*



*Philippe de Monte: Il quarto libro de madrigali à quattro voci (1581)*

*uno para hazerse perfecto musico ha menester saber* (1613; the treatise presents 849 chapters in a total of 1160 pages), which repeatedly cites pieces by Monte as model works. Marc Desmet (Université de Lyon – Université de Saint-Etienne) presented a brilliant analysis of Monte’s treatment of the poetic form of the sonnet – *Belga apud Gallos. Philippe de Monte and the treatment of sonnet form in the Sonetz de P. de Ronsard (1575): madrigal or chanson?*

The following block of papers (*Itinerary of Sources*) provided crucial findings about sources related to Monte in the United States. Petr Daněk’s (Academy of Performing Arts, Bratislava) contribution, *Thou shalt not steal. (Exodus 20:15). On the fate of the so-called Sabbateni Collection in New York*, convincingly proved that the Bohemical collection of vocal part books now stored at the New York University Library (Fales Library and Special Collections) originally belonged to the bishop’s library in Litoměřice (a city some 60 kilometres north-west of Prague), from where it was stolen in the 1970s. Erika Supria Honisch (Stony Brook University, New York), in a paper titled simply *Philippe de Monte in Chicago*, brought our attention to a recent acquisition by the Newberry Library in Chicago, in which the bass part of the originally six-voice set of part books of Saxon origin contains a heretofore unknown five-voice setting of the German song *Weiss ich ein Megdlin reine* by Monte.

The *Transmission of italianità* block of papers focused on the migration of repertoire between Italy and Central Europe and the reception of Monte’s works in the Mediterranean. Stanislav Tuksar (Zagreb), in his paper *Musical conditions in Split at the time of Philippe de Monte in Prague and the reign of Rudolph II (1576-1612)*

pointed out the remarkable and rich musical culture of Split, as well as the significant and as yet unexploited resources of the Franciscan monastery there, which also include a print of Monte’s motets from 1593. Daniele V. Filippi (Milan) focused his attention on reception of the spiritual madrigal in Central and Northern Europe through the works of Philippe de Monte (*Philippe de Monte and the culture of the spiritual madrigal north of the Alps*). The block concluded with an essay from Gilberto Scordari (Bari) titled *Two madrigals of Philippe de Monte in Francesco Baseo’s Primo Libro di Madrigali a cinque voci (Venice, 1573)*, in which he brought attention to contact between Monte and Baseo, contact that seems to have been a lot more direct than we had previously assumed.

The symposium concluded with a section titled *The Composer and His Works II*, which began with Kateřina Maýrová (Prague) and her overview of Monte’s compositions that survive in the Rokycany collection of part books (*The sacred works of Philippe de Monte in the Rokycany music collection*). The very end of the conference took the form of a discussion, *Towards the online critical edition of Monte’s work*, led by Jan Bata and Jan Bilwachs (Charles University, Prague), which presented the vision of a renewed collected edition of the music of Philippe de Monte. The conference also included an accompanying programme in the form of concerts of music by Philippe de Monte and his contemporaries performed by the Gontrassek vocal ensemble and organist Tomáš Flégr.

In the international musicological society, the year 2021 mostly resonated with the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Josquin Desprez (1450/55-1521), which is why *Philippe de Monte at 500* was one of the few conferences (if not the only one) to pay considerable attention to Monte. The ongoing pandemic and the uncertainty that results from it (as well as the disruption to international travel) meant that the auditorium in Cardinal Beran Hall was not as full as one could expect under normal conditions. Thanks to online connectivity, however, the event found perceptive listeners not only in Czechia, but also in Europe and overseas. Doubtless also thanks to the short video invites in Czech, English, German, and Spanish that are available – along with samples from the conference concert – on the YouTube channel of the Musica Rudolphina research centre.

### **The Future**

Although the two-day international symposium contributed many previously unknown facts



about the works of Philippe de Monte and its reception, mediated new academic connections, and all the papers presented will be published (in completed and extended form) in the online journal *Clavibus unitis*, this composer deserves greater and more consistent attention.

We stated in the introduction that Monte remains, to this day, eclipsed by his contemporaries Palestrina and Lassus, with his works often unavailable in modern editions or recordings. But it is particularly the lack of availability of Monte's printed music in a modern, critical edition that is a pressing problem not only from a musicological perspective but also as regards performance practice. This lack is what the *Philippe de Monte Online* project, currently under development, aims to address – its ambition is to make Monte's oeuvre available in electronic form online in such a manner that it might conform to the most rigorous demands placed on an academic critical edition.

Barring the “pioneering” times of the 19th century, when the first attempts to publish modern editions of Monte's compositions took place, there were two efforts to publish his collected works in the 20th century (Charles van den Boren – Julius van Nuffel, eds. *Philippe de Monte opera*. Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1927–1939, 31 volumes; René Bernard Lenaerts et al., eds. *Philippe de Monte opera. A New Complete Edition*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975–1988, 13 volumes). However, neither of them was completed, with only highly respectable remnants of the editors' original intentions remaining – even so, however, this means that we have at our disposal about three thirds of the masses, most of the motets and other liturgical pieces (e.g. the *Magnificats*), and most of the sacred madrigals. On the other hand, their activities left out all the French chansons and Italian madrigals – a decision that is hard to comprehend in the case of a composer who devoted a considerable portion of his creative skills to the madrigal.

*Philippe de Monte Online* wants to begin where the previous collected editions stopped short. It therefore primarily attends to Philippe de Monte's secular works. The editors are planning to include the two previous editions in PDF form on the project's website, thus making it the true centre-point of modern Monte research. Preparations for the project will take place in 2022 and 2023: putting together a comprehensive list of sources, assembling a broader international editorial team, formulating working versions



*Philippe de Monte: Sonetz de Pierre de Ronsard (1575)*



*A snapshot from the conference*

of the editorial principles, and resolving the technical and legal parameters of the project. The online editions will then begin being published in 2024, at an ideal periodicity of two volumes per year.

Given the enormous scope of Monte's oeuvre, online publication seems like the only possibility today – it is considerably cheaper than a traditional print publication and has a truly global and practically immediate reach. We cannot expect this project to run without difficulties, particularly in its beginnings, but the ten years of experience acquired by the Musica Rudolphina research centre, its international acclaim, and also its personnel are all good reasons to remain optimistic. After all, we need only look to Philippe de Monte's personal motto for a model: *Rien sans peine!* (No pain, no gain!)



**Bohuslav Martinů**  
**Tři přání aneb Vrtkavosti života**  
**(Les trois souhaits, ou Les vicissitudes de la vie)**

Josef Škarka, Lucie Kašpárková, Jorge Garza, Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová, Lucie Hilscherová, Jana Hrochová, Václav Morys, Aleš Burda, Veronika Rovná Holbová, and others, Jazz Vocal Quartet (Lukáš Červenka, Jaroslav Kotyk, Ondřej Sikora, Jan Zielesnik), Michal Bárta - piano, The Orchestra and Choir of the Opera of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre, Jakub Klecker - conductor. Recorded: Oct. 2015, Antonín Dvořák Theatre, Ostrava. Published: 2020. Director: Jiří Nekvasil.

Text: CZ, EN (sung in the Czech translation). TT: 75:25 + 66:47. 2 CD National Moravian-Silesian Theatre and Czech Radio

**B**ohuslav Martinů's third opera, *Tři přání*, written in 1929, is literally "a child of its time". Avant-garde Paris, where the composer had, by that point, been living for six years, was a crossroads of cultures, artists, and styles, all of which surrounded and inspired Martinů. The work is subtitled "opera-film" and its libretto was written by the Dadaist poet and playwright Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, with whom Martinů had begun collaborating in 1925. He was looking forward to a modern adaptation of a fairy tale with surrealist elements and decided to create a new opera as if it were a film (this information is taken from a letter to his future wife, Charlotta). Temporal overlaps in this narrative about a magical nymph who promises the couple who freed her three wishes evoked in the composer a layering of musical sections, alterations of purely operatic sequences with dramatic (theatrical) ones. The orchestral sound is augmented by a piano, saxophones, and percussion, and the work contains

a cinematic adaptation of the story, which mingles on stage with the live performance. The demands to produce the opera were spectacularly high and the planned Berlin production, which was to take place shortly after the work was finished, never took place. In fact, Martinů did not live to see *Tři přání* performed. The premiere took place in 1971 under the leadership of Václav Nosek in Brno. A second production was premiered in Prague in 1990, and the 2015 staging in Ostrava is only the third Czech adaptation of this opera. Led by stage director **Jiří Nekvasil**, it was a young team at Ostrava's National Moravian-Silesian Theatre that produced the opera, led by the then-newly-named musical director **Jakub Klecker** and dramaturg **Eva Mikulášková**. This live audio recording presents a remarkably demanding and mostly excellently performed film-opera with soloists whose parts placed great demands on them not just vocally, but also as actors and operetta singers. Martinů connected all these stage arts into a single fantastic and unique kaleidoscope. The story of an older couple, Just (sung by **Josef Škarka**) and his wife Indolenda (sung by **Lucie Kašpárková**), develops when a trapped magical nymph, Nulle (**Jana Hrochová**) asks them to free her in exchange for three wishes. The three wishes, however, represent banal desires for riches, youth, and love. Martinů set the modern, Dadaist-style libretto to neo-classical music with jazz passages reminiscent of Gershwin or Ježek. The symphonic sections are instrumented with a high degree of precision and the vocal parts are uncompromising, always demanding the maximum from the singers. We must mention, at the very least, **Eva Dřízgová-Jirušová**, who sang the part of Ebloia wonderfully. Another excellent soprano is **Veronika Rovná Holbová**, who sang the exotic role of Dinah. The **Jazzový vokální kvartet** (Jazz Vocal Quartet) also had several opportunities to shine, first in a ballad in the second act, where Martinů shows

excellent knowledge of jazz elements without compromising on his highly personal operatic conception. He has the capacity to connect extremely diverse genres, dramatic, comic, or ironic, musically worked out to the smallest details, even in heightened scenes with overlapping voices and screams. The conclusion of the story, where more space is given to the orchestra, Martinů added an effective spark of originality, already suggestive of his later symphonic works. *Tři přání* ends with a sad sigh from Just: *Ah, life is so hard*, presented highly authentically by Josef Škarka. Bohuslav Martinů's *Tři přání*, with all its diversity and demands, received a professional and compact performance in Ostrava, providing new possibilities for approaching this utterly exceptional work.

Marta Tužilová

**Bohuslav Martinů**  
**Works for Cello and Piano**

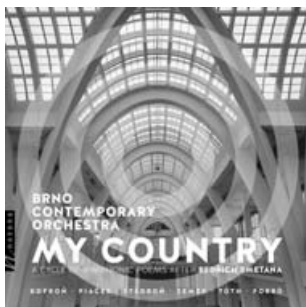
**Petr Nouzovský - violoncello,**  
**Miroslav Sekera - piano.**  
 Recorded: Prague, HAMU Studio, 2020. Published: 2020.  
 TT: CD1 54:43, CD2 37:27.  
 2CD Arcodiva UP 0229

**I**t is a welcome fact that many Czech and international performers are now including the works of Bohuslav Martinů in their repertoire. There is no doubt that it is a legacy that is among the most vigorous in the labyrinthine universe of 20th-century music. A significant event documenting Martinů's multi-layered chamber oeuvre is this new double CD by cellist **Petr Nouzovský** and pianist **Miroslav Sekera**, titled *Bohuslav Martinů: Works for Cello and Piano*. The recording brings together well known and half forgotten pieces connected by Martinů's unique



musical style and its typical attributes: burning melodies, a jazz feeling, syncopated rhythms, folkloric references, and neo-Classical and neo-Baroque elements. This polystylistic mix is heard in the opening *Seven Arabesques*, which, despite being a transcription of violin music, sound excellent on the cello. The following *Nocturnes* are subtitled *Four Etudes for Cello with Accompaniment*. These rhythmic and melodic pieces employing a remarkable use of contrast, with their intensity of expression, go far beyond the limits of instructive music. The instructive aspect is, however, brought to the fore in the *Miniature Suite*, which places greater demands on the piano part. One of the composer's best known chamber pieces is the *Variation on a Slovak Folk Song*, Martinů's rendition of the folk song *Keby som ja vedela (If Only I Knew)* in characterful variations presented in effective dramatic cuts. The second disc contains the *Six Pastourelles* from his Paris period: the unconventional timbres of the *Andante*, the agile rhythms of the *Allegretto moderato*, the progressive harmonies of the *Adagio*, and finally the meditative depth of the last two pastourelles prove that Martinů included countless inspirations in his highly original form of expression. Another "flagship" for cellists are the *Variations on a Theme by Rossini*, dedicated to the phenomenal Russian cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. The second disc concludes with *Arietta*, a light and popularly styled work that includes uniquely transformed elements of jazz. I enjoyed this recording for the brilliance and lively musicality of the performers. Martinů's music affords a broad range of possibilities and Nouzovský and Sekera presented an ideal, energetic rendition. One cannot fail to notice their phenomenal interplay, precise dynamic shadings, and broad range of work with rubato, agogics, and phrase structure. Hand in hand with their interpretive grace is the sonic quality of the recording, which comes with a brief but adequate text introduction. After successful recordings of the cello sonatas and concertos, Nouzovský has concluded his mission and is thus the first cellist in the world to record on CD all of Martinů's pieces for the cello. Although we cannot perceive art through the lens of such "firsts" (which can often lead us astray artistically!), it is congenial that this achievement belongs to a Czech artist and, most importantly, that such high quality albums are the result. This excellent recording should certainly not be absent in the discographies of collectors and fans of Bohuslav Martinů!

Milan Bátor



## Brno Contemporary Orchestra My Country

Brno Contemporary Orchestra,  
conductor: Pavel Šnajdr.  
Recorded Nov. 2020, Janáček Theatre  
Recording Studio, Brno. Published:  
Oct. 2021. TT: 69:35.  
1 CD Navona NV6349

Six Revisions of the National Classic – It has been over three years since celebrations of a hundred years of the independent Czechoslovak state, and one of the fruits of art inspired by this anniversary now makes its way to us in the form of a recording. The Brno Contemporary Orchestra, or rather its dramaturg Viktor Pantůček and conductor Pavel Šnajdr, approached six Czech and Slovak composers on the occasion of the historical jubilee to have them struggle with the nationalist musical colossus that is Bedřich Smetana's cycle of symphonic poems, *Má vlast (My Country)*. The recomposed versions of *Má vlast* were performed at a concert in Brno's Convent of the Brothers of Charity and are now out on CD on Navona Records. In his review of the premiere for HIS Voice, Boris Klepal pointed out the most important aspects of the individual pieces and came to the conclusion that the event represented "a refreshing change to all the high and mighty and generally artistically bare celebrations of Czech statehood". How does this music fare when it is listened to outside the context of the official celebrations, from a greater distance? A great benefit of this collection is that it offers a sample of six approaches to how one can write "music about music"; six possibilities on how to work with the fact that the listener probably knows what is being referenced and contributes certain associations linked to the original. We can also divide these approaches into two subgroups. The first emphasises

the fact that these are paraphrases and the working method is either collage or variation, allowing us to follow the musical logic of the original. This first group includes Marek Piaček's *Aqua Mater*, Miloš Štědroň's *Šárka*, and Daniel Forró's *Each of them*, however, uses collage and variation in their own specific manner. Piaček lets loose on Baroque pomp and circumstance and the subject of Vltava becomes *Kočka leze dírou (a Czech children's song and rhyme, believed by some to have inspired the theme from Vltava, though it seems that the melody – which is also the main theme of the Israeli national anthem – comes from an older source, the most likely candidate being the Swedish folk song Ack, Värmeland – editor's note)*. Smetana's original is then filtered into a ballroom slow dance with rustling brushes on the drums, a carnival racket, and gentle music as if from a TV fairytale. Miloš Štědroň, in his version of *Šárka*, also switches between genres. The drama of the original is maintained, but a number of stylistic shifts and sonic details lightens it or shifts it into a picturesque form. The whimpering glissandos, rattling percussion, and the rhythm of tango and other dances leads us from the 19th-century nationalist legends of Alois Jirásek to Jaroslav Žák and Vlastimil Rada's *Bohатырská trilogie (A Heroic Trilogy – a 1959 book parodying bad adventure novel – editor's note)*. The third "collagist", Daniel Forró, first develops his version of Blaník as a more or less traditional variation on the central theme of Smetana's composition, i.e. the Hussite chorale. Six minutes in, however, we hear an explosion and the sound of the orchestra is replaced by the artificial timbres of a digital keyboard that races through the most superficial musical allusions one can connect to the Czech lands. The Austrian and Czech anthems, Nazi marching whistles, the 1950s socialist song *Kupředu levá (Left Foot Forward)*, the *Ode to Joy*, and a few measures of orientalist clichés, concluding in a deluge of retro sci-fi effects. This is followed by a return of the acoustic instruments with a recapitulation of the chorale and other themes from *Má vlast*, which are interwoven by melodies taken from elsewhere (including a few notes from Leoš Janáček). In the coda, the musicians sing "drunkenly" as modern day Hussites. Balancing out the three pieces that work openly with collage and polystylism are three compositions whose authors decided to dissolve the original more thoroughly in order to create more unified structures. This includes the first piece on the record, Petr Kofroň's *Castle*, for which the composer used only the basic

*vlast*, making it less simple and direct. And it is the breadth of compositional approaches that make the collection interesting. It makes clear that Smetana's musical legacy and its historical baggage can be used ironically - but it also contains plenty of purely musical inspiration for the composers of today.

Matěj Kratochvíl

### Dvořák: The Complete Piano Works

**Ivo Kahánek - piano.**

Text: CZ, EN, GE, FR. Recorded: 2021, Martinů Hall, Prague.  
Published: 2021. TT: 5:03:02.  
4 CD Supraphon SU 4299-2

building blocks of *Vyšehrad*, turning them into his own stronghold in three layers. The first layer is composed of tireless string runs that move from the top to the bottom of the instruments' range and back. The second layer consists of alternating percussion hits and rolls performed on various instruments that seem to be trying to rip apart the string rush. Finally, there is a third layer: wind instruments bringing a measure of peace to this neurotic music. All three elements push against one another and intermingle without being directed to any particular goal. The music could continue in this manner for another ten minutes and it would be neither more nor less interesting. This is not meant as a critique, rather an attempt at capturing Kofroň's minimalist approach to form, which seems to exist "outside time". In a sense related to minimalism is A *Shorter Letter to Bedřich Smetana*, the title of Pavel Zemek Novák's revision of *Ž českých luků a hájů* (*From Bohemian Fields and Groves*). Although he works with the principle of the unison, so defining of his compositional style, you probably wouldn't notice on first listening to the piece. Thanks to subtle instrumental transformations, the melodic line is constantly shifting, getting wider and narrower and changing colour. Its cadence is a source of tension, first calming down into a portly declamation only to run off at high speed once again. Miroslav Tóth conceived of his piece *Lost in Tábor* as a meditative nocturne where the central theme is suggested by microtonally gliding voices and harmonies underpinned by a gently walking bass line. All this develops in two long build-ups concluding in a striking statement of the theme. Close at hand is a comparison with the collective composition *100 Years* by the Pražská šestka (Prague Six) group of composers, published last year and originally created to mark the anniversary of the Czechoslovak century as a six-part retrospective. However, there is less historic-political content in BCO's *Má*

The piano oeuvre of Antonín Dvořák is relatively extensive: it contains fourteen numbered opuses and a number of unnumbered minor works. We rarely encounter Dvořák's piano pieces on the concert stage, barring the exception of the *Humoresque op. 101/7*, which is among the most popular works in the worldwide piano repertoire. Pianists generally avoid Dvořák's piano music, claiming that its instrumental texture is "unpianistic". Radoslav Kvapil was the first to make a complete recording of Dvořák's piano works, over fifty years ago. Another two complete sets appeared abroad at the turn of the millennium: the first was made in the late 1990s by the Ukrainian pianist Inna Poroshina for the ESS.A.Y label, while the second came out on Naxos in 2004, featuring Norwegian pianist Stefan Veselka. **Ivo Kahánek** established himself as an excellent Dvořák performer in 2019, when Supraphon put out his unique recording of Dvořák's *Piano concerto in G minor op. 33*, which he made with the Bamberg Symphony conducted by Jakub Hrůša. The recording gathered a number of prestigious international awards, crowned by the 2020 BBC Music Magazine Award. And at two unforgettable Dvořák recitals at last year's Dvořák's Prague festival, Kahánek again confirmed that he is predestined to assume the task of making a new complete recording of the composer's piano works. The four-disc set was, again, published by Supraphon. The recording took place from March to June of 2021, with the pianist introducing audiences to his Dvořák set at the Dvořák's Prague festival on September 8th 2021, on the 180th anniversary of Antonín Dvořák's birth. It is interesting that in the ordering of the pieces, Kahánek mostly followed



Kvapil's recording. In comparison to Kvapil's set, however, Kahánek's version includes several more pieces: the early *Polka Pomměňka* (B 1), the recently discovered and as yet unpublished *Polka Per pedes*, the *Polka in E major* (B 3), *Listky do památníku in D major* (Album Leaves, B 109/i) and *E flat major* (B 158), the eight-bar *Otázka* (*Question*, B 128bis) and *Dvě perličky* (*Two Little Pearls*, B 156), which Dvořák wrote on a series of commission for young pianists. Dvořák's piano music is usually of an intimate, salon character - we barely encounter virtuosic passages as in Liszt or Chopin. If we are to identify influences, we would be closer with Schumann, or perhaps Grieg. But what is typical of Dvořák - and perhaps even more apparent in his piano works than elsewhere - is his phenomenal melodic invention. The piano pieces are generally not extensive, and many composers would choose to save their ideas on such a small space. But Dvořák is almost profligate in his use of melodic ideas. He scatters them around, offering them to us with a charming directness, new and new and each more beautiful than the last. Ivo Kahánek approaches Dvořák with great humility, attempting to respect the notation (although in some cases, this really is impossible, even with the best of intentions). He works sensitively with time and manages rubatos that seem so obvious and natural we barely even notice them. But, if necessary, he can - particularly in the dance numbers - apply his perfect sense of rhythm. Dvořák's piano textures are often of an orchestral nature, and the pianist is well adept at conjuring up suggestive colours in such pieces. And Kahánek is virtually a master at discovering hidden internal voices. The greatest admiration, however, should be reserved for his cantilena. He has a remarkably song-like, soft tone and can develop melodic lines with extreme sensitivity. Dvořák's music truly sings under his fingers. Selecting the best of the eighty-seven tracks on the album is practically impossible. Each

track contains something that makes it worth listening to repeatedly. Kahánek's "exhibition piece" is the five-moment Suite in A major op. 98, from whose "orchestral" texture the pianist selected only the best (it is worth mentioning the fact that Dvořák later orchestrated the piece, and also that the "un-orchestral" two-voice texture in the final movement seems to lead us back all the way to Scarlatti). Subtle employment of colours, striking pedal work, and an almost painterly depiction of atmosphere are the marks of the "programme" pieces from the *Poetické nálady* (*Poetic Tone Pictures*) op. 85: *Noční cesta* (*Night Journey*), *Na starém hradě* (*At the Old Castle*), *Rej skřítků* (*Goblin's Dance*), *Na táckách* (*At the Tamulus*), *Na Sváté hoře* (*At Svátá hora*). In the *Tema con variazioni* op. 36, Dvořák's most extensive and demanding piano work, we can appreciate Kahánek's wonderful technique and sense of architecture. And I should definitely not fail to forget the series of smaller pieces that represent veritable kaleidoscopes of ideas and moods, and which Kahánek presents with remarkable invention and imagination: the *Silhouettes* op. 8, *Waltzes* op. 54, *Ecloques* op. 56, *Mazurkas* op. 56, or *Humoresques* op. 101. Concisely put: Kahánek's complete set of Dvořák's piano music offers close to five hours of pure beauty. And I am sure that I will return to it often and gladly.

Věroslav Němec

### Jistebnický kancionál Sound of the Bohemian Pre-Reformation

**Tiburtina Ensemble, Barbora Kabátková** - director. Text: CZ, EN. Published: 2021. TT: 59:50.  
1 CD Supraphon SU 4291-2

The Supraphon label recently put out an interesting new recording of early music. Under the leadership of **Barbora Kabátková**, the renowned female choir **Tiburtina Ensemble** recorded the spiritual songs from the famous *Jistebnický kancionál* (*Jistebnice hymn book*). The recording presents an interesting selection of twenty-one pieces of various forms used for various occasions, including the well-known *Buoh všemohúcí* (*God Almighty*) a *Jezu Kriste, štedrý kněže* (*Jesus Christ, Generous Priest*). The Jistebnice hymn book was created in the 15th century and contains remarkable information about pre-Reformation spiritual art. It contains original spiritual songs, but especially contrafacts and adaptations of classical Latin choral texts



and melodies in Old Czech. The nobility and beauty of the songs attests to the deep piousness and erudition of their Hussite creators. Special attention is paid to the crucial difference from the Catholic liturgy, i.e. Hussite communion under both kinds, which the recording reflects through seven songs in a chapter titled "Jezme život, píme život" ("Let us eat life, drink life"). The Tiburtina Ensemble brings together experienced performers of early music and the group among the most significant European ensembles of Medieval and early Renaissance music. Over the course of their thirteen years of activity with an almost unchanged line up, they have found an unmistakable interpretive approach and characteristic sound. The group's leading exponents - sopranos Hana Blažíková and artistic director Barbora Kabátková - have since become important solo and ensemble singers in leading European ensembles performing Baroque and Renaissance music. This combination of the songs of the Jistebnice hymn book and a well-led specialised ensemble provides a pleasant listening experience. The spiritual songs, tropes, offertoriums, and even the single conductus all sound luscious, with elasticity and certainty in the melismas and fast sections. The overall beauty of the project is much aided by the charm of the sweet sounds of Old Czech. The language, however, is also related to what I believe to be the greatest interpretive problem of this recording. When **Barbora Kabátková** works with a smaller ensemble, such as in the tropus *Hospodine pro tué vzkriesenie* (*Lord for Your Resurrection*), which features only three singers, they manage to pronounce the words together, leading to a beautiful result. But if all the singers sing at once, a combination of the unusual linguistic formations, disjointed vowels in the higher register, and the technical demands of the melodies make the text considerably incomprehensible. Its attempts to maintain a joint energy

and phrasing make the recording seem rushed in places, and a little stubborn. Perhaps an occasional moment of calm or transposing the music lower would allow the most important element to stand out, which, I believe, for those who created these songs, was a comprehensible and powerful transmission of the contents. The texts, however, can be found in the excellently compiled booklet, which contains both English translations and a knowledgeable introductory text about the Jistebnice hymn book by **Hana Vihová-Wörner** and a personal note by Barbora Kabátková.

Čeněk Svoboda

### Ondřej Štochl Echo fragile

**Martin Opršál** - percussion,  
**Žereza Horáková** - violin, **Ondřej Štochl** - piano, **Irena Troupová** - soprano, **Ensemble LUX Wien, Brno Contemporary Orchestra, Pavel Šnajdr** - conductor, Ensemble Konvergence, PKF - Prague Philharmonia, Ilyich Rivas - conductor.  
Text: CZ, ENG.  
Published: 2021.  
TT: 01:14:06. 1 CD Radioservis SU 4299-2

Nine years ago, I listened to Ondřej Štochl's first profile CD, *Na cestě k vládnosti* (*On the Path to Kindness*), which mapped his path as a composer between 2004 and 2010. Now, thanks to Czech Radio (Radioservis), who acted as a publisher, and support collected in an online crowdfunding campaign, Štochl presents another chapter, containing works created between 2016 and 2021 with one "historical" detour to 2007. The last CD demonstrated the composer's path



from drama to a highly original version of reductionism, working deftly with silence and the flow of time. The present collection confirms, at first listening, that gently shaded tones and an overall sense of restraint of expression are still at the centre of Štochl's attention, which, after all, is confirmed by the title of the album: *Echo fragile*. Sonically, the CD offers a broad palette of colours from the solo vibraphone to various chamber ensembles all the way to a soloist with orchestral accompaniment. The opening, with the piece *Advent* (2019), belongs to the solo vibraphone, played here by Martin Opršál. The instrument is sounded in waves from its deepest to its highest tones with the occasional use of a bow, its waves merging together into hypnotic spaces. On several occasions, the sound of the vibraphone is joined by the performer's voice, though this is only noticeable during concentrated listening. *Pramen z jeskyně bezmoci* (*Spring from the Cave of Helplessness*, 2016) was written for Ensemble Lux, a string quartet based in Vienna. Almost Romantically arched melodies alternate with spaces full of harmonics, scratches, and other techniques broadening the sonic palette of the strings. The eight-minute work flows by as a series of episodes, each of which is characterised by a particular combination of melodic and timbral elements. The two series of *Microludes*, each numbering five pieces (the first written in 2016 and the second between 2018 and 2021) are performed by Štochl on the piano and Tereza Horáková (born 1999, originally a student of Štochl's) on violin. In the booklet, the composer describes them as a time-lapse cycle focused on as great a reduction of means as possible. The pieces, which clock in at between one to almost three minutes, always revolve around a single idea, whether this be an arpeggiated chord figure or melodies played in alternations of unison and dialogical echoes. The feeling that this is a highly fragile dialogue between two people

is symbolically confirmed at the end, when a short bit of singing is added to the two instruments. Nested between the two cycles of *Microludes* is *Živý motýl* (*Living Butterfly*, 2019) for soprano and chamber ensemble, setting a text by an eight-year-old autistic child. The eight lines, which contain a poetic philosophical reflection on beauty and its usefulness, is examined from all sides during the course of the piece, and the voice of Irena Troupová accompanied by the Brno Contemporary Orchestra transplants it to various emotional levels. The strange poetics of the text comes across best when the singer sings the least and approaches the spoken word. Dramatic operatic diction seems to shift the text onto slightly inappropriate ground. *Kvintet* (2017) for violin, cello, piano, and guitar seems like an extension of the idea of the *Microludes* onto a larger ensemble. The four miniatures, played here by Štochl's "home ensemble", Konvergence (Štochl co-founded the group and is highly active within it as a composer, performer, and organiser – editor's note), are much more dramatic than the *Microludes*, and also more interconnected. The individual voices constantly intermingle, their onsets marked by rhythmic pulsations that are then overlaid by new layers. A counterweight to the opening *Advent* is *JLN – nostalgie a naděje* (*JLN – Nostalgia and Hope*, 2017) for solo vibraphone (played, as in the case of solo piece, by Martin Opršál) and an orchestra divided into three groups (the PKF – Prague Philharmonia conducted by Ilyich Rivas). The composer has stated that the central theme of the piece is resonance, the selection of the vibraphone therefore being guided by the fact that it is an instrument that resonates with impulses that reach it. The soloist and orchestra are very closely connected, as if the sounds of the solo instrument were truly able to receive the notes from its orchestral surrounding, and, vice-versa, its part surounding into string spaces, trumpet echoes, or deep rolls from

the drums. After the orchestra fades out to pianissimo, it is time for the chamber *Epilogue* (2007) for alto flute, viola, and cello, again performed by Konvergence. It alternates sections of restless melodic movement with spaces in which there is space to slow down, only for the voices to run off again. The music of Ondřej Štochl, as it is arranged on this CD, can be a little misleading. After hearing the album for the first time, one can feel that one has heard seventy-five minutes of quiet and calm music. Only later does one realise that in truth, there are many loud moments, as well as places that are expressive and rhythmically striking. They are so successfully integrated with the whole, however, that a quiet string harmonic can have the effect of an entire orchestra, and a solid striking of the piano keys can seem like the quiet rustle of a bird's wing. Loud notes can be just as fragile as the most delicate of sounds. Ondřej Štochl accompanies his pieces with commentaries that do not have the character of the programme note in the Romantic sense but often provide relatively significant direction towards a particular listening perspective and spheres of associations. Despite their stimulating nature, it is perhaps best to listen to this music before reading the text. You can then compare the composer's ideas with how the music directed you.

Matěj Kratochvíl





## SVĚT A DIVADLO

A BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE ABOUT  
THE WORLD OF THE THEATRE  
AND THE THEATRE OF THE WORLD

Svět a divadlo, a bilingual Czech-Slovakian magazine was founded in 1990 and since then it has created a unique image of local, Slovakian as well as world theatre. SAD interprets theatrical events as part of a wider cultural, philosophical and socio-political context. In each issue SAD publishes one play that has not been previously published in the Czech Republic. The authors contributing to SAD are among the greatest experts in the theatrical field – Czechs, Slovaks as well as others.

**the world of the theatre** SAD offers the reflection of local as well as foreign theatre predominantly in the form of comprehensive and detailed reviews and analyses of theatrical performances. Portraits of important personalities of the theatre world and of theatre groups are also included in the form of overviews/summaries as well as the reflection of local and

foreign theatre festivals. Original interviews are also incorporated regularly, especially the so-called “questioning” cycle. Occasionally, SAD also includes articles concerning the visual arts, film and new technologies.

**essays and (new) philosophy** Each volume year is dedicated to a certain “series”, concerning theatrical issues in a wider and predominantly philosophical or sociological perspective. The most frequent contributor to these series has been Miroslav Petříček, who – apart from his own cycle called Imagination in the 20th century – has prepared series of translations and commentaries on themes such as myths, time, “end of postmodernism”, fashion and others.

**plays** SAD has up to now published more than 450 plays, original as well as translations, sometimes written on commission of the magazine itself.

**bonus** Each year subscribers can look forward to a free bonus (publications, DVDs, CDs). E.g. *The Zero Hour of Christoph Marthaler* (reviews and interview), *Europeans* (interviews with European theatre practitioners), Petr Lébl: *Poems*, a collection of dramatic trifles *Standa Has a Problem*, Mozart's *Requiem* (DVD) by Petr Nikl, David Mamet: *Theatre* etc.

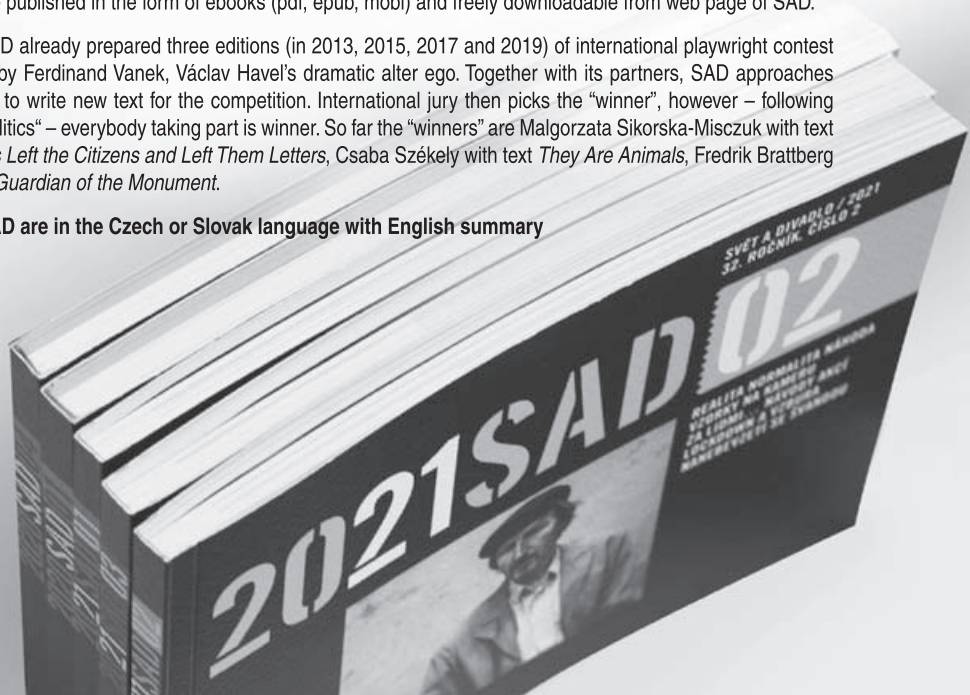
**and more** Each year SAD organizes a theatre critics' survey, on the basis of which the Theatre Critics' Awards (previously Alfréd Radok Awards) are awarded. In 1993 it founded and up to 2001 it has created the artistic program of the International Festival Theatre in Pilsen. SAD also organized (with various partners) nine editions of Tremendous Triffels, festival of theatrical “miniatures”, followed by special project – Tremendous Triffles for Home, webpage offering small productions to be presented at one's own premises. Stage readings or drafts of performances, mostly of authors published in SAD, are also part of the magazine's tradition.

**eWAT** – every two years SAD collects best articles and publishes them reedited in English in so-called WAT (World and theatre). Since 2012 the anthologies are published in the form of ebooks (pdf, epub, mobi) and freely downloadable from web page of SAD.

**Ferdinand Vaněk Award** – SAD already prepared three editions (in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019) of international playwright contest of short political plays named by Ferdinand Vanek, Václav Havel's dramatic alter ego. Together with its partners, SAD approaches (mostly) European playwrights to write new text for the competition. International jury then picks the “winner”, however – following Havel's idea of „non-political politics” – everybody taking part is winner. So far the “winners” are Małgorzata Sikorska-Misczuk with text *The Country, Where the Hearts Left the Citizens and Left Them Letters*, Csaba Székely with text *They Are Animals*, Fredrik Brattberg with *Position* and S.d.Ch. with *Guardian of the Monument*.

The texts in the magazine SAD are in the Czech or Slovak language with English summary

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