czech music *quarterly*

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František Chaloupka

Jazz Goes to Town

F. X. Brixi

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Dear readers,

We greet you at the tail end of another busy musical autumn – you can see the numerous premieres listed in our Czech Music Every Day bulletin. In the featured interview of the issue, we return to the summer intensity of Ostrava Days as Anna Heflin talks to composer František Chaloupka. You can also enjoy two historical texts, each of which explores a very different period: Petr Koronthály introduces the oratorios by the Baroque composer František Xaver Brixi, while Milan Guštar, in another translation from the recent book Ukryto v pásech (Hidden on Tape), presents the results of his research into the equipment used at electronic music studios in Czechoslovakia – this is valuable information, and presented here in English for the first time. Finally, my own text on the Jazz Goes to Town festival in Hradec Králové outlines the development of a jazz festival that has recently become much more than a jazz festival.

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

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by Anna Heflin

I Don't Trust Composers Who Talk Too Much

An Interview with František Chaloupka

After our last issue (Luboš Mrkvička interviewed by Ian Davis), we present another instance of an American composer interviewing a Czech one. In the text below, Anna Heflin speaks to František Chaloupka, composition graduate of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno, about spirituality, writing his own libretti, and, somewhat ironically, composers talking too much about composition.

Mystical, all-encompassing, and fantastically strange – such were the words that occurred to me upon hearing Czech composer František Chaloupka's music for the first time this spring in New York City. It was the 2023 world premiere of his ensemble work *The Witch Waltzers* on the SEM Ensemble concert at Bohemian National Hall celebrating cross-cultural collaboration between Czech and American composers. Czech composers Chaloupka and Petr Bakla flew out for the occasion and the concert also featured music by Petr Kotík, Christian Wolff, Pavel Zemek Novák, Pauline Oliveros, and Rudolf Komorous.

Founded in 1970 by Petr Kotík, the Brooklyn-based SEM Ensemble is a historically critical group and there is a wide artistic and personnel overlap between the Ensemble and Ostrava Days (OD). *The Witch Waltzers* was the first piece of Chaloupka's to be performed by the SEM Ensemble, but his history with Kotík and Ostrava Days dates back to 2005 and 2007, when he attended the festival as an Institute resident. Chaloupka's output is vast, and over the years, the Ostrava Center for New Music has programmed a broad array of his works including his large orchestra work *Smooth the Heaven* (OD 2009) and *Eve & Lilith* (a New Opera Days Ostrava 2012 commission).

The 2023 edition of Ostrava Days in particular showcased two substantial works by Chaloupka – the festival commissioned a new work for symphony orchestra titled *Allegory*

PHOTO: PETR KAČÍREK

of the Cave II for the Ostrava New Orchestra and programmed his flash-mob opera *Bachelor Party* (2022). Looking ahead to 2024, New Opera Days Ostrava (NODO) has commissioned Chaloupka to write a new opera, titled *Zaprodanec (The Sell-out)*.

As a 2023 OD Festival resident, I had the opportunity to attend the world premiere of *Allegory of the Cave II* and the performance of *Bachelor Party*. In the following interview, we discuss Chaloupka's newly premiered orchestral work, his upcoming opera, duality in music, narrative, the spiritual role of the audience, and Ostrava Days.

Your symphony orchestra work Allegory Of The Cave II (2023) premiered in Ostrava this year as part of Ostrava Days 2023, but looking into your catalogue, I'm noticing that you wrote another related work, Allegory of the Cave (2013), while living in Los Angeles during your studies at the California Institute of the Arts. How are these works related to one another? What inspired you to revisit this world after a decade?

Yes, I wrote the first part, called *Allegory of the Cave,* for a symphony orchestra in 2013 in Los Angeles, but I was never completely satisfied with it and I still plan to rewrite it. But reworking a piece is sometimes harder than writing a new one. Anyway, in the first part

of 2013, I was exploring that Platonic myth outside of music, in the second part, from 2023, I contrasted this Platonic myth with the Vedic philosophy of the four ages, the four yugas, which repeat themselves cyclically. Each movement symbolises one yuga (more details about the composition can be found on my website). And because in my compositions I often work with the principle of duality (and also as a reference to the composition *De Natura Sonoris* by Krzysztof Penderecki), I decided to write the second part. I just enjoyed the topic so much, even after ten years, that I didn't want to say goodbye to it. So the composition is based on completely new material that I composed from the middle of June to the middle of July this year. In the final movement, I also quote the version from 2013. I wanted there to be some connection with the first part, so they would form some kind of arc and continuity.

What brings you back time and again to the idea of duality? I've been thinking about polarity and duality recently, and how polar material is often on the verge of becoming unified. Do you think of contrasting material as polar in this way, or as truly contrasting?

I see something archetypal in duality. In the beginning it wasn't even anything clearly defined in my compositions, more of a feeling. I see duality as one of the characteristics of our material world, our illusion – we have been constantly deceived by duality. At the same time, it is a state just before union, just before Unity. So it also has this dramatic charge. Duality is very elegant. At the same time, I enjoy the charge it creates, the tension. There is no drama about Unity *(laughs)*.

The ending of Allegory Of The Cave II (2023) is so mystical and you create timbres through your orchestration and use of percussion that sound electronic and otherworldly. Do you have a personal philosophy, or approach, to orchestration?

My only approach to doing things is freedom, spontaneity, and a moment of surprise. And I try to be as authentic as possible. It may sound simple, but the opposite is true. I have no way of approaching orchestration, no preconceived charts and tables, so in fact, I always start from scratch. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't even enjoy it. If we look at the history of music from, say, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Romanticism to the music of the 20th century, we can get the impression that the history of music (that is, harmony in particular) develops in relation to what the human ear is able to detect in a harmonic series – simply put, the ability to hear develops to the ability to hear a higher and higher spectrum of harmonic series and to create and perceive more complex harmonies. The ability of human hearing, or at least the conscious use of hearing, is probably expanding. However, it is difficult to say how much of this ability is psycho-acoustic (hearing as such) and how much is aesthetic, i.e. conditioned and influenced by the times we live in. I believe that my ability to orchestrate is also related to the ability to perceive ultrasonic frequencies. And of course imagination plays a big role – the ability to imagine and hear different instrument combinations and registers.

Referencing the tradition of allegory in your orchestral work implies a kind of hidden meaning or story. Looking through your works, I'm noticing numerous mythological and biblical references including your opera installation Eve & Lilith and perhaps also The Witch Waltzers. How do you approach the idea of reference, mythos, and narrative in your compositions? Does your approach change in a dramatic format with text, like an opera, versus writing for symphony?

Even for instrumental music, I usually like to offer some context within which the artwork exists and can be perceived. It creates a certain atmosphere. Usually, I don't like to just put

individual sounds together. Some people disagree and say that music is music and any other textual accompaniment and non-musical content has nothing to do with music. I think it is up to the author what they define as a work and what falls within these limits. In fact, I also deal with different philosophies and practices in my personal life and this is naturally reflected in my compositions. But it is not a predetermined concept. It always turns out according to some natural feeling. In the case of an opera or some multimedia work – I cannot start composing the music until I know exactly what shape it will take, what stage action there will be, what each character will represent, and so on. So I usually first think about how the whole shape will look theatrically; according to what key the action on the stage will take place.

In compositions such as *Piano trio No. 1* or *Sonata for flute & loopers*, there are no references. So I don't avoid writing a piece called a symphony (even though that is already a reference to the symphonic genre of the past) or a purely instrumental chamber or orchestral piece. Of course, it's different with opera, it usually offers some context; it is almost its essence. Although even in the opera genre, of course, a work can appear completely without a narrative. But I personally like the theatrical (visual, action-based…) element in opera, and I think that it makes opera unique.

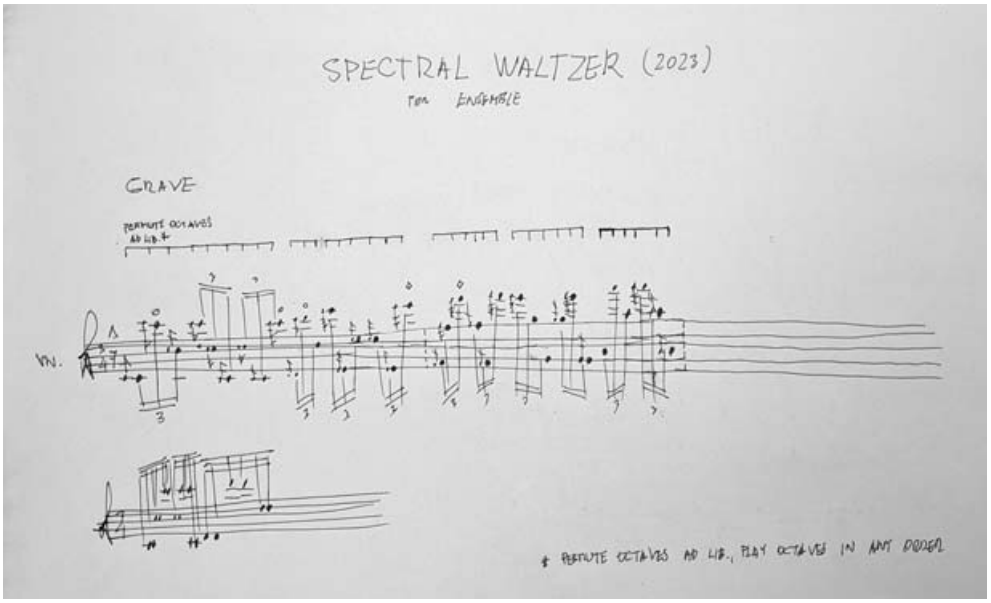
In a group lecture at Ostrava Days, you mentioned the concept of the audience as an "amplification of the concert", as consciousness that enlivens a piece. Could you say a bit more about that idea? Do you feel that the performers have a similar enlivening effect upon a work?

We know very little about consciousness. Some scientists say it can be studied only via introspection. In the West, philosophers such as Descartes, Schopenhauer, and Kant dealt with the concept of consciousness. Current quantum physics speaks of consciousness in the sense that the observer influences the course of the experiment. But I don't think we can study consciousness in a lab, because it is at the core of Life itself. I will always remember that funny quip from the composer's father, Louis Andriessen, about the German philosophers digging deep but finding nothing. Buddha spoke of consciousness circa 500 BC and I would consider his teachings comparable to the scientific methods of today. "Breath is the bridge between life and consciousness", as the Vietnamese Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh put it.

Our Western society is so confused we don't even know what to eat properly for breakfast to stay healthy. How could we study consciousness? We must strive to be conscious. Contrary to what society thinks of being smart, in my opinion, being smart is to rid yourself of suffering and not inflict suffering on others. Of course we make mistakes. The Indian philosophy of Samkhya and Yoga uses the term Purusha, eternal spirit, eternal Consciousness, immaterial formlessness, without qualities, which is the primordial cause of all things. In Yoga, they also often emphasise that one should not identify with one's thoughts or emotions, nor suppress them, but be a witness to them, observe them, be aware of them. "It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do it consciously", they say. In that sense, I think it affects a lot of situations.

Having attended the Janáček conservatory in Ostrava from 2000 to 2004, how has the Ostrava Days Festival impacted the city's music scene? What changes have you noticed that international guests might not be attuned to?

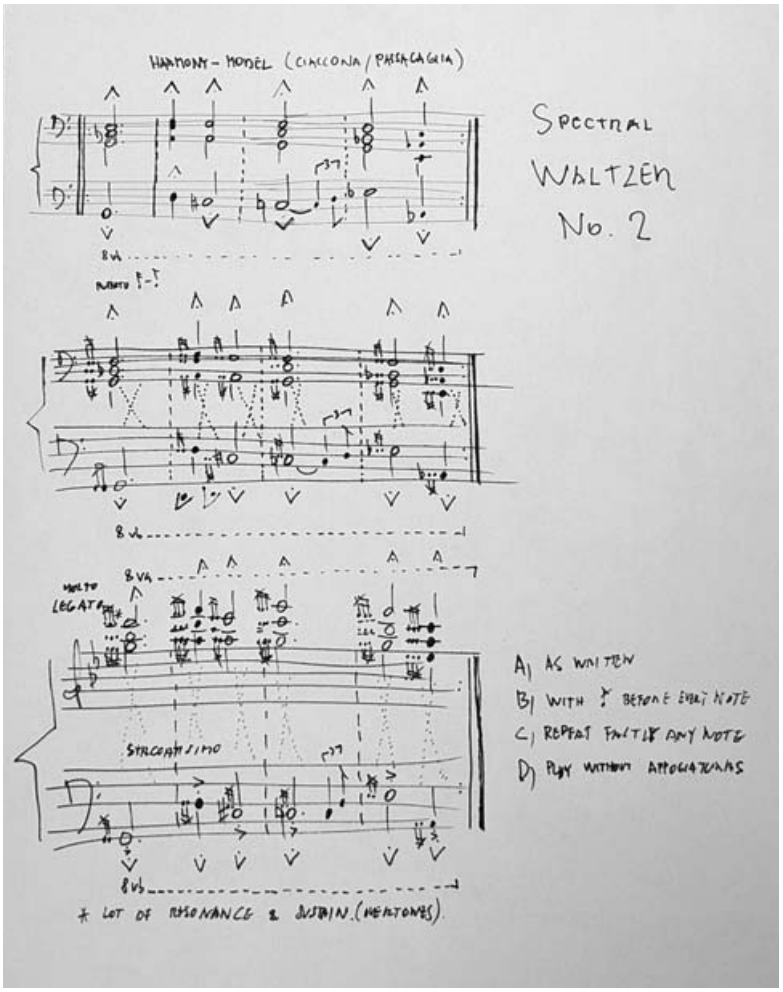
Petr Kotík and the 2001 Ostrava Days of New Music festival came up with the radical idea of giving space to avant-garde and pioneering works of the 20th and 21st centuries.



To honour the tradition, that is, the works of the 20th century, and at the same time offer context and comparison with contemporary pieces. Usually, the music of the 20th century, eighty to a hundred years old, is presented as the most radical and contemporary. There had never been anyone here before who dared to take such a risk on such a scale. They gave the opportunity not only to composers, but also to performers and listeners to develop. This symbiosis between composers, performers, and listeners is very important because it creates a community with mutual support and growth. So it has an effect on the self-confidence of the entire organism and musical culture. The festival has not only influenced the music scene of Ostrava and the Czech Republic, but the whole of Europe, and its cultural value is incalculable. I don't think foreign guests have to get used to anything. Mostly I was met with enthusiastic reactions. Imagine that I had just started studying composition at the Janáček Conservatory in Ostrava and all of a sudden big names from 20th century music textbooks appeared there. Not only on the festival programme – these guys actually came in person.

Yes, everyone who I have met has been thrilled to be there! Having attended for numerous iterations, has there been a performance of a work (not one of your compositions) that has been particularly influential? Or are there any particularly memorable conversations that stand out in your mind's eye?

I don't trust composers who talk too much. Usually, I only trust those who say what is necessary. For example, I have some problems with similar conversations that we are having right now. On the one hand, I'm glad that I got to brush up on my thoughts on various topics, but on the other hand, I've never fully trusted words. Where there are words, there are problems. Words are used to solve problems, but they often cause the most problems. I understand the use of words and speech to play. Games or problems, take your pick *(laughs)*. People just can't keep quiet. Because of the drama constantly running in our heads, we can't see reality as it is. A man is what he is when he is silent. I also sometimes sense that a lot of those composer debates are intellectualism, simply showing off. But I had very nice conversations with composer Bernhard Lang, who gave me his practical experience with



opera, with composer Richard Ayres, conductor Bruno Ferrandis, as well as other musicians, about specific things.

New Opera Days of Ostrava (NODO) commissioned you to write Eve & Lilith (2012) for their inaugural opera festival, and you will be premiering a new opera at NODO 2024. Can you share something about this new composition? How has your approach to opera been informed by your experience at NODO in 2012?

The opera for the next year of the NODO festival is called *Zaprodanec* (*The Sell-out*) and is based on my own libretto. As a kind of "medium", subject, we chose the historical figure, teacher of nations and icon of Czech culture Jan Ámos Komenský (John Comenius), whose theological and didactic writings were sponsored by the Swedish arms industry. However, the realities of the opera are completely contemporary. The cast includes an orchestra of almost forty musicians, plus a choir and soloists. This is the project I am currently working on the most. Even here in Spain during my three-week artist residency. I learned from the opera-installation *Eva & Lilith* from 2012 mainly in terms of organization – it was only performed as a kind of torso. Opera, whether chamber or orchestral, will always represent a complex production in which many parties participate, and opera houses, festivals,

PHOTO: PETR KAČÍREK

or the authors themselves usually have no tools that would provide a clearly defined framework – everything is created on the fly and each project is unique and different. The infrastructure is perhaps slowly being born, and we can only hope that funds for new works will only increase.

Have you written a libretto before? Regardless, what has that process been like for you? Do you write the libretto and the music simultaneously?

I wrote the libretto for my chamber opera-installations *Eve & Lilith*, *Chata v Jezerní kotlině* (*Cottage in the Lake Basin*, 2016) and the flashmob opera *Rozlučka se svobodou* (*Bachelor Party*, 2022). I used to write songs and lyrics, and just as I couldn't imagine singing someone else's songs, I can't imagine composing music to someone else's words. Content-wise, I find it hard to find someone you resonate with, and technically, I don't even find it appropriate. The text already contains a lot of information such as colour, texture, meaning, atmosphere, meter, and rhythm, and therefore forces you into a certain musical position. I find it more organic when the music and the text are created at the same time. When it comes to the opera stuff, first of all I think about the scene and the stage situations, I just cannot start composing in a vacuum. I have to know the motivations of the characters first, I enjoy inventing stage situations that would then somehow correspond with my music. So I think first and foremost as a writer, stage designer, or director. This is also the case with the opera I am currently preparing for the NODO 2024 festival. It seems to me that this way I can afford much more, that the singers' actions can be much more musically accompanied.

by Ian Mikyska

Waves of Joy or Voices of the Future?
Three Decades of the Jazz Goes to Town Festival

In this text, Ian Mikyska presents an overview of the history, development, and future prospects of the Jazz Goes to Town festival, which has taken place in the Eastern Bohemian regional capital of Hradec Králové for almost three decades. Waves of Joy and Voices of the Future – the subtitles of the last two editions – also mark out the opposing poles of a spectrum on which the festival operates: in simplified terms, between progressive trends and marketability. We spoke about these topics and many others with present and past members of the festival team.

The Jazz Goes to Town festival (Jazz jde městem in Czech) has taken place annually in Hradec Králové since 1995 – this year was the twenty-ninth edition. Each year, for a whole week, jazz – and not only jazz – fills the centre of the city, which boasts many modernist masterpieces by Josef Gočár, one of the founders of modern Czech architecture. The festival was founded by jazz flutist and music journalist Martin Brunner, a native of Hradec Králové. He acted as director and dramaturg at the festival for almost two decades, until 2015, when it passed to kontrapunkt, a cultural non-profit organisation that also organises the Regiony theatre festival and runs the Walk Thru public space gallery (both in Hradec Králové). kontrapunkt is led by Barbora Hodonická, the first festival dramaturg was Zdeněk Závodný, improvising musician and long-time director of Divadlo 29, the home of alternative culture in the neighbouring city of Pardubice, who curated the 2015–2019 editions, followed by saxophonist and composer Michal Wróblewski (see our interview in CMQ 2021/4), who is responsible for the last four volumes, 2020 to 2023.

This year, concerts took place both in cozy spaces (the Artičok café, Klub č. p. 4), slightly larger halls that still had a chamber feeling (Hradec Králové City Library, Klicpera Theatre – Studio Beseda), and larger and more representative venues, too (the Bio Central cinema and the Church of Priest Ambrož). In the past, concerts also took place at the Aldis Congress Centre, the Drak Theatre Studio,

the neo-Renaissance Adalbertinum or the Museum of Eastern Bohemia. Major concerts were also hosted by the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra, sometimes also with the participation of the orchestra itself (as in the final concert of 2021, which featured premieres by the legendary German composer Heiner Goebbels and Czech composers Michal Nejtek and Peter Graham). This is a broad range of spaces: from the stuffy underground spaces of "No. 4" (Klub č. p. 4) to the magnificent interwar Philharmonic Hall by architect Milan Babuška or the spacious auditorium of the Bio Central cinema.

This range copies the scope of the programming – during the tenure of the last two dramaturgs, the word "jazz" has been taken to denote various modern and progressive trends. Under Martin Brunner, the programme would also feature important names from experimental jazz or free improvisation, such as the legendary Art Ensemble of Chicago at the very first festival (1995), the Vienna Art Orchestra (1997), the Aki Takase and Alexander von Schlippenbach piano duo (1998), and the quartet of free jazz legend Archie Shepp (2007). There was also space for Czech groups of an experimental persuasion, such as Muff (2001 and 2012), Limbo (2013), and Mocca Malaco (2008), a band led by future festival dramaturg Michal Wróblewski and trombonist Štěpán Janoušek, who was a member of this year's resident ensemble at the festival (more on that later).

Martin Brunner focused on variety and audience accessibility: "I was inspired primarily by the Prague International Jazz Festival. Our aim was to put on a jazz festival with a broad range – we had blues and Dixieland, but also modern and experimental jazz." Brunner himself is a native of Hradec Králové, and the reasons for starting the festival in the mid-1990s were clear: "Not much happens here. We always had to travel to Prague to hear music like this." He also considered it important to meet the audience halfway: "I keep saying that it should be a festival that anyone can enjoy, even Mrs. Nováková from the outskirts of the city."

The city itself has been an important partner to the festival – before it was established, one of Martin Brunner's students was the daughter of the then mayor, who supported the idea of a jazz festival from its inception. The city hall also proposed the name (its Czech version, seldom used today, "Jazz jde městem", would be better translated as "Jazz walks through the town"), along with the concept

PHOTO: LUKÁŠ VESELÝ

of a festival that would occupy the entire city centre. Brunner always had qualms about this approach: "Someone on the board visited the theatre festival in Avignon and they liked how theatre was put on everywhere, in every little pub and on the squares. I never promoted this model – people would run from one pub to another, making a racket, there would be no peace for the musicians or the listeners that were really interested in the music. It was all kind of loose, the city lives and breathes the festival, everyone had a beer and the mood was jolly. I was never a fan of the idea. But city hall was stuck on the question 'And what about the pubs?' – they weren't interested in whether the programme featured Marty Ehrlich or Lester Bowie, they wanted to know how many pubs would be involved."

This illustrates several specificities of organising cultural events in regional cities, which Brunner himself confirms: "It's not like in Prague, where someone gets a subsidy and does a festival without anyone telling them what to do. Here, the situation is different – politicians push their own opinions, and I was never one of 'the clique', so I wasn't particularly popular in this environment. Only two of us worked on the festival, me and my partner Marcela Kirschová, and we were simply tired. What's more, I was prevented from organising two editions, 2005 and 2006 – these were produced by an agency from Brno that siphoned off the funds and left behind an enormous amount of debt."

It therefore comes as no surprise that after two decades, Martin Brunner decided to pass the festival on. The cultural non-profit kontrapunkt then assumed responsibility, led at the time by Martina Erbsová. Its current director, Barbora Hodonická, took over in 2018. How does she remember the transitional period? "The change was accompanied by great expectations but also much uncertainty. That is also why we did not receive funding from the Ministry of Culture the first year. The following year, however, our marks went up from 2.33 points to 7.33 and the support generally began increasing," says Hodonická. The changes concerned not only the production team and the programming but also the audience: "I won't lie – we lost part of our devoted listeners, but for almost a decade, and especially after the arrival of Michal Wróblewski as dramaturg, we have been trying to target (and create) a new and younger audience, but we also try to show the original fans of Jazz Goes to Town what makes our current selection special and how jazz has developed from its early days a century ago until today."

Approaching new audiences is one of Hodonická's principal aims: "When I'm sitting in the hall after a year of preparation and enjoy the concerts (and yes, I even manage to enjoy them sometimes, despite all the nerves), I wish that more people could hear them. We are not dissatisfied with the attendance, and it is generally rising, but the festival definitely has a greater potential. In the future, we would like to focus more on the educational aspect of cultural festivals, which is closely related to outreach, a perennial theme of mine. We are interested in young musicians at elementary music schools, but also in the teaching of music at elementary and high schools. I think we will definitely add programmes and workshops for these groups in the future, for students and their teachers."

Some of these modes of outreach is already present in the festival programme. For the last four editions, there has been a free festival pass on offer for students at art universities, along with highly affordable accommodation. The students are mostly at jazz departments, but from the world of classical music, too, there are also a few composers and performers of a more experimental bent. This is a well calculated move: not only does this bind together the scene of young musicians, who also have the opportunity to come to know the most interesting developments in jazz taking place in Scandinavia, Western Europe, and the United States (often discussing with the visiting musicians well into the small hours), but this "young blood" also bears a considerable influence on the festival itself: every concert includes an engaged and excited group sitting near the front. If Hodonická talks about how they "try to show the original fans of Jazz Goes to Town what makes our current selection special", it is remarkable how such a "fanbase" can help in this respect – at many of the more challenging concerts of this year's edition, it was clear that the initial misgivings felt by many local listeners were partially dispelled by the enthusiastic approach of this small group. The potential for the future is enormous – I can easily imagine after-concert jam sessions taking place at the festival, with students participating actively and thus further increasing the lively and community feeling of the festival. Another festival activity aiming to support the development of the Czech jazz scene introduced by current dramaturg Michal Wróblewski is called The Shape of Jazz to Come, after the eponymous 1959 album by saxophonist Ornette Coleman, one of the founding documents of free jazz. In Hradec Králové, however, the title refers to the resident ensemble, made up of different players each year,

who spend the duration of the festival rehearsing a new programme that they then present at one of the closing concerts. The compositions are by all members of the ensemble, bringing the format closer to the Scandinavian model of jazz education, which expects every performer to also be a creative individual who writes their own scores (or text or graphic scores, as the case may be). The first ensemble of this kind (made up entirely of women) performed at the 2020 festival, and since 2022, the group has also included one musician from the international scene: last year, it was German saxophonist Luise Volkmann, this year's edition hosted Amalie Dahl from Denmark, who was stepping in for Polish drummer Szymon Gasiorek, who unfortunately fell ill at the last moment.

This is how Wróblewski describes the genesis of the idea: "I saw similar residential projects at other festivals, like Nickelsdorf or Frankfurt. I didn't think the result was particularly successful in either case, but I liked the potential. It's not a ground-breaking idea, I was also took part in similar residencies at other festivals. But it's quite a complex alchemical process to come up with a line-up for the resident ensemble that is a good fit on both the musical and human level, and yet represents a challenge to the musicians, providing them with new and inspiring impulses. That's a very important component of these residencies."

And what impulses did listeners receive at this year's festival? The above makes it clear that the programming is an alchemical balancing act – attendance vs. experiment, the local vs. the international, and trying to find the perfect space for all of it, too. At a glance, it might seem like the festival has had a narrower focus on modern jazz since (and it is true that there hasn't been much blues or Dixieland on the roster since then), but even so, this is a broad and disparate field, with the organisers' selection making for a highly diverse result.

The first evening of this year's edition, which took place in the cozy Artičok café, presented two Czech projects. 2in2out, a quartet playing restrained modern jazz, is led by saxophonist Nela Dusová, a student at the jazz department at HAMU (the Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) and also a native of Hradec Králové. They were followed by HLASkontraBAS Oktet with the unusual line-up of four female vocalists and four double basses.

The Shape of Jazz to Come

PHOTO: ANNA BAŠTÝŘOVÁ

The core of the ensemble is a duo of double bass (Petr Tichý) and voice (Ridina Ahmedová) with live looping. The original idea for the octet was to replace the digital looper with live musicians, but at the festival, the ensemble presented a recently commissioned programme of compositions by Czech, Norwegian, and Icelandic composers.

The second day began with an afternoon concert by The Bopportunists and their leader Osian Roberts at the same space. Roberts is a Welsh saxophonists who has lived in Prague for years. The Bopportunists is a project focused primarily on early bebop of the 1940s, which Roberts performed by leading Czech jazz players, double bassist Tomáš "Kaštan" Baroš and drummer Marek Urbánek.

The evening programme, however, moved to a focused black box theatre, Studio Beseda, the small stage of the Klicpera Theatre, and the programme also demanded a different kind of concentration. First up were Hirsute, a quintet from the French city of Lyon. Pianist Anne Quillier leads the group and also composed the entire repertoire. Certain topics began appearing at this concert that we later discussed with Martin Brunner, who described certain trends in European jazz as follows: "I like free jazz, too, but what I like about jazz is the energy, the fact that it swings. Today, I feel like there is style of loose improvisation – I call it 'mountain mist'. It's missing the energy and it's more like painting with tones." Though in this particular quotation, the subject is freely improvised music, and the concert by Hirsute was, to a large extent, through-composed, but these are two sides of the same coin. Here, too, the emphasis was not on energetic and exhibitionist solos. Instead, we heard the influence of French (post-)impressionist music (Debussy; Ravel; Satie) or film scores – the entire set then had an almost cinematic or narrative atmosphere; the instrumental solos always fulfilled a particular purpose in the narrative, never serving as the *raison d'être* of the music. The entire concert had a fragile, almost magical atmosphere, playfully ornamented by the frequently surprising drumming of Guillaume Bertrand. The architecture of their set did away with the standard measures used to convince audiences, which can be useful at similar festivals (starting the concert with a loud and "show-offy" piece, for instance). Until about halfway through the concert, it was unclear to what extent the leader of the project (pianist Anne Quillier) has a grasp of jazz improvisation, but during a solo with a long, arching development, she confirmed that there could be no doubt as to her capability at tonal improvising, and that the sometimes likeably naive sound of Hirsute is a decision and not a matter of necessity.

PHOTO: LUKÁŠ VESELÝ

Lucia Cadotsch

The evening ended with a performance by the Berlin-based group Speak Low, which, while seemingly led by Swiss singer Lucie Cadotsch, mostly features saxophonist Otis Sandsjö and double bassist Petter Eldh, both from Sweden. They played a selection of older jazz standards and songs from popular music, often transformed beyond recognisability, presenting them in a context that is perhaps best described by the word "post-jazz": many notes but few regular rhythms; rubato; longer, focused sections; extended techniques on the saxophone; repetitions. Cadotsch presented the songs in a crystalline, reduced form, perhaps sterile for some – for me, her restrained interpretation in this chamber setting held a great deal of charm.

On Thursday evening, the festival took place, for the first time, in the new building of the Hradec Králové City Library, which might have seemed a little inhospitable upon entering, but thanks to the darkened hall and sensitive light design, the audience soon found itself transported to a different world. (Overall, the work of the lighting designers and sound engineers must be highlighted – their level of professionalism, dedication, and creativity is unfortunately far from the standard in Czechia.) The original line-up was for this evening to begin with a performance by Czajka & Puchacz, a duo made up of Slovenian pianist Kaja Draksler and drummer Szymon Gasiorek, who could not come for a reason that seems today – thankfully – like a relic from the past: they contracted covid. They were substituted by the Polish duo Hałvva: Kamil Piotrowicz on piano and synthesisers and Jacek Prościński on drums. Their take on free

Halvva

Marek Pospieszalski Oktet

improvisation includes electronics, glitches, noises, off-kilter rhythms, and long repetitions, using all of these elements to construct extended and dense sections. Both Polish ensembles on this year's programme (more on the second one below) were also the year's two most experimental concerts, confirming the fearlessness and wealth of ideas on the contemporary Polish jazz scene.

The evening concluded with a concert by American double bassist Luke Stewart and his Silt Trio (with Brian Settles on saxophone and Chad Taylor on drums). Stewart is a rising star in American experimental jazz. He is a long-time resident of Washington D.C. and has also performed with numerous legends of American experimental music, including Wadada Leo Smith and Archie Shepp. But even this concert was not the free jazz "freak-out" some imagine in relation to American experimental jazz: the concert began with the trio walking through the audience with various forms of shakers, flowing seamlessly into playing music on the stage. There were relaxed grooves, rhythms with reminiscences of African music, and hints of John Coltrane in his *A Love Supreme* period.

Friday's packed programme began at 5 p.m. with a performance by legendary pianist Emil Viklický, who recently celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday, in a duo with bass clarinettist Pavel Hrubý. This was an effective connection of several of the concerns discussed in the first half of the article: Viklický is popular in Czechia and his concert drew a large crowd to the Petrof Gallery, but his duo with Hrubý is also a relatively recent project (their album *Between Us* came out at the end of 2020) that sees both members contribute compositions, and its fragility, intimacy, and gentle interplay position it musically northwards.

Then came the first of two evenings at Bio Central, which opened with the Marek Pospieszalski Oktet, who introduced a selection from two CDs, the first of which (published in 2022) is inspired by the work of male Polish composers of the 20th century, while the second (2023) focuses on female composers, including names such as Zygmunt Krauze, Bogusław Schaeffer, Andrzej Panufnik, Agata Zubel, and Elżbieta Sikora. The inspiration was rather loose; these were abstract homages rather than examples of direct compositional influence, but the resultant music (all written by Marek Pospieszalski) was certainly none the worse for it: on the other hand, it is surprising how many new and effective sonic situations he managed to find for his ensemble, including the use of analogue reel-to-reel tape delay directly on the stage. Drummer Qba Janicki was one of the stars of the concert, using his drums and cymbals as signal sources for his "soundboard", dazzling the audience both with his effective combinations of acoustic and electronic sounds and his unique approach to drumming itself. For many of the musicians present, this concert was a revelation, and the fact that few of them had heard of Marek Pospieszalski before then clearly attests to how little we in the Czech Republic take notice of our largest neighbour. How much fascinating Polish art do we miss? And not just jazz, but contemporary music too – not to mention literature and film.

PHOTO: LUKÁŠ VESELÝ 3x

Silt Trio

After this explosive performance, the following concert, by the Concept Art Orchestra (CAO) fell a little flat. This somewhat unfortunately named big band (it has nothing to do with conceptual art and the form of contemporary big band jazz it mostly performs is miles away from musical conceptualism), established and led by trumpet player Štěpánka Balcarová, performed along with Norwegian composer and conductor Helge Sunde. For this project, Sulge wrote several pieces, accompanied by single pieces by several Czech composers and CAO members: saxophonist Luboš Soukup, trombonist Jan Jirucha, and Tomáš Sýkora on electronics, for example. It is hard to avoid feeling that in this case, the combination of tradition and experimentation didn't quite come off: most of the pieces began with an "experimental" introduction that made use of both acoustic and electronic sounds, often in highly impressive combinations, but these ideas always gave way to the "big band sound" in strict rhythm – the introductions never went beyond their roles as introductions; never developed into "real music". The evocative photographs of the Norwegian landscape projected onto a screen behind the orchestra also did little to enhance the experience; this particular audiovisual pairing gave off a cheap impression, almost like a student work. The Concept Art Orchestra did present another sample of leading players on the Czech jazz scene, this time with a transformed instrumentation, with part of the wind section replaced with the Epoque Quartet on strings, and this group once again confirmed how at home they are playing in various worlds and genres.

The last concert on Friday, performed by a quartet that calls themselves the Rusty Cowboys, began at half past ten in the evening. The hall of Klub č. p. 4, a pub/club located on one of the main squares in the city, was filled to the brim – listeners were even standing and sitting in the corridor that connects the hall to the bar. These four students of jazz at HAMU play contemporary jazz without taking much heed of genres and purity. Jazz is more an ideological foundation and a musical approach that then exists in a world of folk music (the group's leader and chief composer, Alois Zatloukal is originally from Moravia), country, rock, and Americana. Zatloukal often uses effects on his violin that we are more accustomed to hearing on electric guitar, and guitarist Jan Bára also drew the audience in, playing with a calm and sensitivity far beyond his years.

The final day of the festival was once again tied to Norway. The five o'clock concert took place in the Church of Priest Ambrož, a visually pure functionalist church designed by architects Josef Gočár and Josef Havlíček. The original plan was a solo organ performance by Kaja Draksler, who was replaced by Streifenjunko, a duo composed of Eivind Lønning on trumpet and Espen Reinertsen on saxophone – both also play in the legendary Christiana Wallumrød Ensemble, as well as with the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, with whom they travelled to perform in Hradec Králové that evening. This was a brilliant dramaturgical move by Michal Wróblewski – he got a great concert without even having to buy new plane tickets.

Trondheim Jazz Orchestra

In a sense, Streifenjunko is an extreme of "mountain mists"; the hazy improvisation that Martin Brunner was talking about. There is no musical energy in the traditional sense, just as there are no fast cuts or a dynamic form. Their music is quite, calm, and meditative, but it also demands technical skills at the highest level, often making use of extended techniques. The duo then makes use of these innovative elements in extended and concentrated pieces, staying with the models and sounds and exploring them. The acoustic environment of the church, so simplified in shape and form, complemented their performance excellently. The duo began performing 2005, and in recent years, they have relied heavily on electronics in addition to their instruments (as you can hear on the 2018 CD *Like Driving*). An acoustic concert without any amplification was thus, in a sense, a return to their roots, and one that fit perfectly in this holy site.

And then we were back at Bio Central for the final concert, with its auditorium of almost four hundred seats – on that evening, it seemed pleasantly full. First to perform was the residential ensemble, that is, The Shape of Jazz to Come, Vol. 4, with a line-up of Amalie Dahl (alto saxophone), Štěpán Janoušek (voice and trombone), Jan Pudlák (piano and synthesisers), Ian Mikyska (guitars and viola da gamba), and Kristýna Švihálková (vibraphone and drum kit). This is a diverse group: Švihálková is a classical percussionist and also a composer who often explores multimedia situations. Janoušek and Pudlák have a more grounded foundation in the jazz scene, but Pudlák also has wide-ranging interests including twelve-tone music and extended piano techniques, while Janoušek is also active as a singer (e.g. with the Skety vocal sextet) and a composer in both jazz and experimental music. Amalie Dahl was another substitute from the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra roster. While she is originally from Denmark, she works mostly on the Norwegian experimental jazz scene, where she is considered one of the most striking young talents. And finally, Ian Mikyska, a composer in the world of contemporary music, an improvising musician, and also the author of this article. The music and the manner in which it was communicated reflected this diversity: there was some free improvisation, some of the pieces had strictly notated parts, some pieces used graphic or text scores, and Dahl taught the ensemble her piece in the "old school" manner: by listening, repeating, and remembering. The line-up of the ensemble clearly reflects the connections between experimental jazz and contemporary music that exist on the Czech scene – after all, in December, the Prague-based Berg Orchestra (see CMQ 2019/1) will perform a programme of world premieres by Štěpán Janoušek, Michal Wróblewski, Jan Jirucha, and Lucie Páchová – a vocalist who was a member of the first festival ensemble in 2020.

It is hard to imagine a more striking end to the festival than a performance by the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra (TJO). This legendary Norwegian big band was founded in 1999, but their concert at Jazz Goes to Town marked the group's very first time in Czechia. TJO is a project-based group – they prepare a concert programme with a guest leader and potentially release it on CD. Among these guest leaders are significant musicians on the Norwegian scene, including Kim Myhr, Christian Wallumrød, and Johan Lindvall, but also international and more mainstream jazz stars like Chick Corea and Pat Metheny.

At this concert, TJO performed music by double bassist Ole Morten Vågan, with whom they have recorded two albums: *Happy Endlings* (2018) and

PHOTO: LUKÁŠ VESELÝ 4x

Plastic Wave (2022). This is daring, energetic, and intelligently composed music, but it was also fantastic to see each of the members of the ensemble get a solo during the course of the ninety-minute concert, with varying degrees of accompaniment. The phenomenal Swedish vocalist Sofia Jernberg (who already performed at the festival in 2021) began her solo entirely on her own, other solos were accompanied by the whole big band, including conducted improvised entries of the entire wind section. The orchestra's combination of technical mastery, ensemble cohesion, spontaneous energy, and great creative daring suggests where Czech contemporary jazz might, hopefully, be headed in the future.

If we attempt to assess this year's festival by comparing the Czech and international groups, it might seem like the Czech scene is somewhat conservative. But this would be misleading, as the 2023 edition was something of an outlier in this respect: previous years saw performances by the power-jazz trio Frisk, from the neighbouring city of Pardubice; Uthando, a group composed of young jazz musicians all of whom also compose for the group; the Prague Improvisation Orchestra, the most active large improvising ensemble in Czechia; the highly rhythmical experimental trio Endemit; Lucie Páchová's group with music inspired by various folk traditions, Talaqpo; and the energetic young trio Jungle Debris.

All things considered, this is one of the most interesting festivals in Czechia, and not only because of the programming, but also thanks to everything beyond it – outreach, offers for students, the resident ensemble, and accompanying programmes (this year, the Pardubice-based music journalist Jan Hocek paid homage to his recently deceased colleague Petr Slabý in a listening session). After all, Martin Brunner also conceded that given the geographic proximity of several other, more "standard" jazz festivals, it is perhaps positive that Jazz Goes to Town has a clearer profile focused on modern jazz. And it seams like the production team has a clear vision for future developments: "Since we focus on music that is not direct and commonplace, like other music is, we know that our work has to be persistent and the results will come slowly and gradually," says Michal Wróblewski. We wish the team all the best in their future endeavours – the impact of the festival on the development of jazz music in Czechia, as well as on its creative connections with other genres and worlds is significant, and we can only hope that it will continue to grow. After all: studying jazz at the university level in Czechia has only been possible since 2010 and the up-and-coming generation has broader horizons and easier access to technical skills, as attested to by the numerous groups of young musicians who have performed in Hradec Králové in recent years.

CZECH MUSIC EVERY DAY

EVENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2023

As far as contemporary music is concerned, October and November are among the busiest months in Czechia, and this year was no exception. Festivals including Hudební současnost (the Musical Present) and Dny soudobé hudby (Days of New Music) presented dozens of new – primarily chamber – pieces by Czech composers ranging in age from students to the oldest generation. Interesting premieres were also programmed by the Archaion Kallos festival of Byzantine music, the Czech Chamber Music Society, Moravian Autumn, Silberbauer's Musical Podyjí, MusicOlomouc, and the Prague Lieder Society, a group aiming to popularise the chamber song genre and present unjustly forgotten works of song.
Czech orchestras and ensembles were also busy premiering new pieces. The Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra presented *Poltron V. que tu es*, *Pragmatic Observations from Erotic Life*, setting erotic poetry by 17th century French satirical poets, composed for orchestra, mezzo-soprano, and baritone by Šimon Voseček. The PKF – Prague Philharmonia included two new pieces by Lukáš Sommer on its programme, while the Moravian Philharmonic presented *Templum Honoris*, a composition dedicated to the 450th anniversary of the university in Olomouc, created by Marek Keprt, Vít Zouhar, Jan Vičar, and Tomáš Hanzlík, all composers closely tied to the university. The Berg Orchestra commissioned new pieces by Petr Hora and Pavel Šabacký and Ensemble Terrible presented four new works featuring Martin Debřička's solo saxophone.

OCTOBER

2 October 2023, Gothic Tower, Academy of Performing Arts, Prague. Archaion Kallos. Philokalia of Today: Hesychia – Sound of Silence. **Tomáš Pálka, Michaela Pálka Plachká: sound performance and interactive sound installation (world premiere).** Jana Krejčí – clarinet.
2 October 2023, DOX+, Prague. ESPAÑA! | … contemporary Spanish music. **Petr Hora – *The Canvas: El lenguaje de Jesús* (world premiere).** BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.
3 October 2023, Trisia, Třinec. Musical Present. **Pavel Nesit: *Elákuvaše* (world premiere).** Lukáš Kolek – saxophone, Eva Kolková – piano.
6 October 2023, Church of St. Clement, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Vlastimil Peška: *On a String Hill* (world premiere).** Martinů Quartet. **Pravoslav Kohout: *Elegy* (world premiere).** Veronika Vaníčková – flute, Veronika Coganová – clarinet, Martin Pelan – bass clarinet, Martinů Quartet, Ondřej Melecký – double bass. **Afrodita Katmeridu: *Pamphlet* (world premiere).** Veronika Vaníčková – flute, Martin Pelan – bass clarinet, Yukie Ichimura – piano, Adéla Štajnochrová – violin, Martin Stupka – viola, Jitka Vlašánková – violoncello. **Jan Fila: *Stained Glass* (world premiere).** Drahoslav Gric – organ.
10 October 2023, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Michaela Augustinová: *Five and a Half Songs About Heaven* (world premiere).** Veronika Kaiserová – soprano, Michaela Augustinová – piano. **Romana Schuldová: *Eight Dances for Two Violins* (world premiere).** Duo ECO.
12 October 2023, Löw-Beer Villa, Brno. Small Concert of Chamber Music. **Markéta Brothánková: *Psalm 150* (world premiere).** Trio Aperto.
14 October 2023, Martinů Hall, Prague. Czech Chamber Music Society. **Jan Kučera: *Intrada and Arietta* (world premiere).** Kateřina Javůrková – French horn, Pavel Svoboda – organ.
16 October 2023, Kaiserstein Palace, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Adam Hermuth: *Three Pieces***

Jana Vondrů (ConTRIOlogy)

***for Piano Solo* (world premiere).** Michaela Augustinová – piano. **Elena Kiral: *An Apple* (world premiere).** Anna Matoušková – flute, Elena Kiral – piano. **Jan Beran: *6 Studies for Piano "Was in den Dingen irrt"* on poetry by R. M. Rilke (selection of 4 etudes from the cycle) – world premiere.** Barbora K. Sejáková – piano

17 October 2023, Besední dům, Brno. Moravian Autumn. **Martin Brunner: *Moving Silhouettes* (world premiere).** Trio Bohémo.

19 October 2023, Chapel of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Marios Christou: *Echoes of Lithurgy* for piano trio (world premiere of a new version).** Trio Bohémo. **Milada Červenková: *Seven Folk Songs from Horácko* for male and female voice and piano (world premiere).** Benedikta Klára Obrusníková, Ondřej Líňa – voice, Milada Červenková – piano.

21 October 2023, Pfarrkirche, Unterretzbach, Austria. Silberbauer's Musical Podyjí: Cimbalom and Organ in the Old Style. **Lukáš Sommer: *Sonnet 94*; Jiří Lukeš: *Heiliger Wenzel* (world premieres).** Kateřina Málková – organ, Michal Grombiřík – cimbalom, Josef Kovačič – bass.

22 October 2023, Salsita Club, Prague. Prague Lieder Company: Strings Suit Songs. **Miloš Štědroň: *Cantigas y Estampidas* for two female voices and string quartet; Terezie Švarcová: *Vier Gedichte von Christian Morgenstern* for two female voices and string quartet (world premieres).** Irena Troupová – soprano, Jana Hrochová – mezzosoprano, Graffe Quartet.

24 October 2023, Ostrava City Library / Mariánské hory, Ostrava. Musical Present: Mosty/Bridges. **Matouš Niziol: *A Short Story* for cello and piano; Markéta Kapustová: *Moments* for violin, violoncello, and piano; Markéta Dvořáková: *Ministories* for piano; Michal Janošík: *A Piece for Piano* (world premiere); David Sikora: *Emptiness* (world premiere).** Markéta Brixi – violoncello, Trio Vario, J. Polášek – piano, and others.

24 October 2023, Czech Brethren Evangelical Church of John Amos Comenius, Brno. **Ondřej Kyas: *Exsultet* for choir, historical instruments, strings, and percussion (world premiere).** Ensemble Versus and historical instrument players (choirmasters Vladimír Maňas and Patrik Buchta), Ensemble Opera Diversa, conductor: Gabriela Tardonová.

26 October 2023, cellar, Husa na provázku Theatre, Brno. ConTRIOlogy: Concert of Premieres III. **Matouš Hejl: *The Wind Rose in the Spring Mountains*; Ian Mikyska: *Curling*; Vojtěch Dlask: *Trois mélodies sur les textes de la Querelle de Brest de Jean Genet*; Tomáš Vtípil: *Minulo* (world premieres).** Tomáš Vtípil – electronics, ConTRIOlogy.

29 October 2023, Art Centre of Palacký University – Atrium, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Ivo Medek: *The Blurry Silhouettes* (world premiere).** Ensemble for New Music Tallinn, conductor: Arash Yazdani.

31 October 2023, Lobkowicz Palace, Prague. **Lukáš Sommer: *Vain Vitellia*; *Late Reggae of Bach* (world premieres).** PKF – Prague Philharmonia.

1 November 2023, Chapel of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Vít Micka: *Covid Christmas* for recorder quartet (world premiere).** Anna Vopršalová, Anna Vološinová, Amálie Černá, Michal Reiser – recorder. **Jiří Smutný: *The Last Rose.* Songs for a higher voice with**

-NOVEMBER

PHOTO: EMA MIHALOVA

Patrik Kako conducting Ensemble Terrible

OCTOBER–NOVEMBE

recitatives (world premiere of this version). Veronika Kaiserová – soprano, Martina Hájková – piano. **Pavel Hrabánek: *Impact*. Music for oboe, violoncello, and piano (world premiere).** Liběna Séquardtová – oboe, Pavel Chovanec – violoncello, Daniel Wiesner – piano.

3 November 2023, Venuše ve Švehlovce, Prague. Why to eat bacon and eggs every day? **Matouš Hejl: *Concerto for Saxophone*; Patrik Herman: *Grisaille*; Barbora Tomášková: *Agni*; Michael Blažek: *Roar* (world premieres).** Martin Debřička – saxophone, Ensemble Terrible, conductor: Patrik Kako.

4 November 2023, Martinů Hall, Prague. Czech Chamber Music Society. **Kateřina Horká: *Saxophone Quintet* (world premiere).** Czech Saxophone Quartet, David Eben.

4 November 2023, Grieghallen, Bergen, Norway. Bergen National Opera. **Leoš Janáček: *Katya Kabanova* (premiere of a new production).** Directed by: Barbora Horáková Joly, conductor: Jiří Rožeň. Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Edvard Grieg Vocal Ensemble, members of the Bergen Philharmonic Choir. Following performances: 6, 8, and 10 Nov 2023.

6 November 2023, Rudolfinum, Prague. **Šimon Voseček: *Poltron V. que tu es, Pragmatic Observations from Erotic Life* on texts from the collection *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques*, Paris 1622 (world premiere).** Jana Kurucová – mezzo-soprano, Daniel Luis de Vicente – baritone, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Robert Jindra.

6 November 2023, Archa Theatre, Prague. INVISIBLE SIGNALS | … human existence, community and solitude. **Pavel Šabacký: *Resonant* for baritone and ensemble (world premiere).** Vojtěch Šembera – baritone, BERG Orchestra, conductor: Peter Vrábel.

8 November 2023, Municipal House – Smetana Hall, Prague. **Kryštof Marek: *Concerto for French Horn and Orchestra "Memories"* (world premiere).** Zuzana Rzounková – French horn, Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.

9 November 2023, Besední dům, Brno. PETR FIALA 80 & BRAHMS 190. **Petr Fiala: *Hommage à Leoš Janáček* (world premiere commissioned by the Brno Filharmonic).** Brno Philharmonic, conductor: Robert Kružík.

13 November 2023, Art Centre of Palacký University – Atrium, Olomouc. MusicOlomouc. **Petr Kotík: *Antonio / Collage* for solo percussion with entries of violin and French horns (world premiere).** Martin Opršál – percussion, Hana Kotková – violin, members of Ostravská banda.

14 November 2023, Church of St. Clement, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Ivo Bláha: *Divertimento for Harp* (world premiere).** Hedvika Mousa Bacha – harp. **Simonne Draper: *Espanola* for violin and harp (world premiere of a new version).** Beautiful Strings. **Pavel Trojan: *Sonata for Accordion* (world premiere).** Ladislav Horák – accordion. **Martin Kux-Král: *Fiore* for mixed choir (world premiere).** Prague Singers, choirmaster Stanislav Mistr.

15 November 2023, Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava – Chamber Hall, Ostrava. Musical Present: Concert of Ostrava Composers. **Petra Šuško: *Returns* (world premiere).** Daniel Svoboda – clarinet, Markéta Brixi – violoncello, Eva Kolková – piano. **Blanka Hosová: *Monologues* for clarinet and piano (world premiere).** Daniel Svoboda – clarinet, Blanka Hosová – piano. **Jan Grossmann: *František Emmert*, sonata for solo**

violin (world premiere). Jakub Černohorský – violin. **Benedikt Holčák: *Amber* (world premiere).** Benedikt Holčák, Jan Borák – percussion.
17 November 2023, Reduta, Olomouc. Concert on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the University of Olomouc. **Marek Keprt – Vít Zouhar – Jan Vičar – Tomáš Hanzlík: *Templum Honoris* (world premiere).** The Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra Olomouc, conductor: Tomáš Brauner.
19 November 2023, Martinů Hall, Prague. Prague Lieder Company: Songs For and With Children. **Darja Kukal Moiseeva: *Underwater* for soprano, tenor, girl's voice, and four-hand piano (world premiere).** Lyrics: Olga Moiseeva. Jana Sibera – soprano, Ondřej Holub – tenor, girl's voice, Jan Dušek, Bohumír Stehlík – piano.
20 November 2023, Corpus Christi Chapel, Art Centre of Palacký University, Olomouc. Opera Schrattenbach. **Tomáš Hanzlík: *Eco-Toilets* (world premiere).** Libretto: Jaroslav Svoboda. Ensemble Damian.
22 November 2023, Chapel of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Karel Pexidr: *Rhapsody for Zelí-Potkan Orchestra* (world premiere).**
Zelí-Potkan Orchestra, conductor: Václav Benjamin Špíral. **Jakub Novák: *Concertino for Clarinet and Strings* (world premiere of this version).** Milan Arner – clarinet, Piccolo coro & Piccola orchestra, conductor: Marek Valášek. **Miroslav Kubička: *A Tree,* a song cycle on Vladimír Holan's poetry for baritone and strings (world premiere of a new version).** Jan Kukal – baritone, Piccolo coro & Piccola orchestra, conductor: Marek Valášek. **Jiří Teml: *Psalm 16* for mixed choir and chamber orchestra (world premiere).** Piccolo coro & Piccola orchestra, conductor: Marek Valášek. **Zdeněk Zahradník: *Suite for Strings* (world premiere).** NeoKlasik Orchestr, conductor: Václav Dlask. **Michal Müller: *Kunigunda Rostislavna* on text by Richard Korow for mezzo-soprano, solo viola, and strings (world premiere).** Eva Garajová – mezzo-soprano, Jan Přeruška – viola, NeoKlasik Orchestr, conductor: Václav Dlask.
27 November 2023, Chapel of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Prague. Days of Contemporary Music. **Lukáš Hurník: *The Book of Tendernesses* for soprano and piano (world premiere).** Bronislava Smržová – soprano, Ivana Michalovičová – piano. **David Lukáš: *Sakura* for flute and piano (world premiere).** Adéla Vrátilová – flute, Stanislav Mühlfait – piano. **Věra Čermáková: *The Stories no. 6 and 4* for shakuhachi (world premiere).** Petr Matuszek – shakuhachi. **Ondřej Kukal: *Ho-Kla-Fa-Kla* (world premiere).** In modo camerale. **Jiří Laburda: *Sonata No. 2 per organo solo "Parabolae Sti Francisci"* (world premiere).** Linda Sítková – organ. **Jan Bernátek: *Magnificat* for choir and organ (world premiere).** Bach-Collegium Praha, choirmaster Jiří Mátl, Linda Sítková – organ.
28 November 2023, Löw-Beer Villa, Brno. Small Chamber Music Concert. **Omar Rojas: *Urban son* (world premiere), Josef Klíč: *Malinconia invernale*** (world premiere). Ensemble Frizzante, Trio Aperto.
29 November 2023, Church of St. Laurence, Prague. Konvergence: fragile-sky. **Tomáš Pálka: *space-silence-spirit*** (world premiere). David Danel – violin, Ondřej Štochl – viola, Egli Prifti – piano. **Michaela Pálka Plachká: *Sky, clouds, mountains*** (world premiere). Egli Prifti – piano.

Hidden on Tape
Part 2

In this second contribution to our series of selected translations from Hidden on Tape (Ukryto v pásech), an anthology of new texts on the history of Czech and Czechoslovak electroacoustic music, organologist, and composer Milan Guštar, whose portrait CD accompanied our last issue of 2021, presents an in-depth exploration of the technological conditions for experimental electronic music in Czechoslovakia before 1989.

Electroacoustic Music in Czechoslovak Studios

MILAN GUŠTAR

The creation and performance of instrumental music has long been connected to technology. Musicians need musical instruments to play, composers need to know these instruments in order to be able to use them in their compositions. The creation of electroacoustic music, in contrast to traditional art music, relies on the technology in the studio to a much greater extent. An important part of realising electroacoustic compositions is the purposeful creation of new sounds and sound colours and the transformation of existing ones. This process traditionally took place in sound studios and recording studios, making use of various technical means and methods available at the time. The studio equipment, and especially the skills and invention of the sound technicians and Tonmeisters (a German term for the leading sound engineer, literally "sound master") greatly influenced the resultant sonic form of the works created.

Just as the development of musical instruments is related to the development of materials and the techniques used to process them, the evolution of the technology employed to register, transmit, record, and reproduce sound has to do with the progress of technology more generally, particularly precision mechanics and electronics. Technical developments in these fields also influenced the creation of electroacoustic music, whose realisation depends on the state of the studio technology. The demands made by composers, musicians, and studio technicians also influenced how studios were equipped and the methods of working in them.

In the third quarter of the 19th century, the first instruments used to record and play back sound were invented: the phonograph and the gramophone. Composers soon began experimenting with these devices, exploring the possibilities of transforming recorded sounds using changes to the playback speed, using them as sound sources in their compositions and also as tools for creating montages of recorded and processed sounds.

PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ

Milan Guštar performing on Antares 2 and Číslizvuk (Digisound), Ostrava Days 2023

The late 19th century saw the birth of electronics as a technical field making use of the "subtle" properties of electricity. The first practically applicable electroacoustic instruments were created in the 1920s, when electronic oscillators became available, as well as sufficiently powerful amplifiers and adequate loudspeakers and microphones. The development of electronics accelerated in the 1930s, when the industry was heavily restructured following the economic crisis. In the course of the decade that followed, studios were gradually equipped with tape recorders, which replaced devices that recorded directly onto gramophone records. This new technology allowed for sound to be recorded onto magnetic tape, then edited, and the result transcribed onto a matrix from which gramophone records could be produced. The possibility of repeated recording, cutting, and editing became new creative means that could be used to create more complex compositions. Non-standard forms of editing and other methods could lead to considerable transformations of the recorded sound, achieving unusual sonic effects. Multi-track reel-to-reel tape recorders, which appeared two decades later, allowed for the gradual recording of individual tracks, completely altering the studio workflow and opening up the possibility of making recordings that would be impossible using other means.

The possibilities of recording, editing, and reproducing sound were significantly expanded by the digital processing of analogue signals, which began taking hold in studios in at the turn of the 1970s and '80s. When manipulating digital data, even numerous processing steps do not degrade the audio quality, and highly complex operations can be undertaken with no particular effort. The digitisation of sound allowed artists to treat sound in numerical form, just like other forms of data, which led not only to the possibility of practically unlimited digital manipulation of sound but also to new compositional methods and principles.

The State of Studio Technology in the Second Half of the 20th Century

In technologically developed countries, the equipment used in sound studios developed quickly following the end of the Second World War. The results of military research were applied to technology, previously restricted information and production technologies spread to various countries as spoils of war. The economy was revived and the entertainment industry developed as a consequence of this. Thanks to a greater availability of both information and material, sound engineers would often construct their own instruments. The biggest studios, which were connected to major companies, made use of their research and development departments. The number of companies focused on the development and production of audio technology also increased.

Post-war studios were monophonic. Recordings were done on one or very few microphones, levels and spaces were adjusted by adjusting the placement of the musicians. Mixing desks only had a few inputs and only allowed for changes in amplitude. Individual filters were used to change the frequency spectrum: low-pass and hi-pass filters or band-passes within the range of one octave or a third of an octave. If artificial reverberation was needed, physical echo chambers were used, or else mechanical reverb devices making use of plates and springs. Cutting machines for gramophone records were used for recording, record players for playback.

In some experimental studios, gramophone record players that offered the possibility of changing the speed and direction of playback were used to achieve sonic effects such as transposition or time inversion. Records with closed loops were used to create short sound loops. Synchronised players allowed for the mixing of several recorded sounds, thus creating new recordings by layering individual tracks. This process could be repeated several times while still retaining an acceptable sound quality. By sensitively manipulating the player's tone-arm, short bursts of sound could be extracted from the record, achieving similar results to those later attainable – with much greater precision and ease – by splicing magnetic tape.

The first studios specialising in electroacoustic music were created after World War II. They were most often set up at universities and research centres, some were established by major manufacturers of electronics and studio equipment, as well as recording companies, radio stations, and music publishers. Soon, individual musicians, artists working in sound, and composers also began setting up their own specialised studios.

The 1950s

In the 1950s, recording studios were equipped with magnetic tape recorders, which allowed for studio work in the manner we are accustomed to today, meaning primarily effortless playback and editing.

During the course of the 1950s, electronic circuits began making use of transistors, an invention from the late 1940s. The replacement of vacuum tubes with smaller and more reliable components (which also had to be replaced less frequently) allowed for the construction of more complex machines. Companies began specialising in the production of studio equipment.

The first experimental studios were established, usually at universities, radio stations, and major recording companies. They included new electronic sound sources, which can be called the first synthesisers. This includes the synthesiser built by the RCA company, John M. Hanert's synthesisers for the Hammond company, and others. These were large and costly pieces of kit, built to order, with only one or several units produced at a time. Also appearing at this time were studios equipped to create sound effects for film and advertising. This included the studio of musician Raymond Scott, renowned for its extensive arsenal of unusual instruments, some partly developed by the legendary inventor Robert Moog.

The 1960s

A further process of miniaturisation of electronic devices, this time made possible by the introduction of integrated circuits, allowed for the construction of highly complex arrays whilst ensuring reliability, acceptable dimensions, and an available price.

In the second half of the 1960s, the first batch-produced modular analogue synthesisers arrived in the studios, produced by Moog, Buchla, and other companies. The use of electric guitars, electric organs, and other electrophonic and electronic instruments in popular music brought about a gradual change of the sonic ideal of recordings, with procedures previously used in electroacoustic music becoming standard in popular music too. This retroactively influenced the equipment of recording studios, with more possibilities for the use of new effect devices.

Multi-track recording became the standard, as well as gradually recording into individual tracks, layering, and overdubbing. During the course of the decade, the number of tracks available on tape recorders gradually grew – from two to three all the way to eight. In 1965, the Dolby company presented its Type A Dolby Noise Reduction system, which soon became the studio standard. It reduced the noise on tape recordings by 10 to 15 decibels, thus opening up the possibilities of working with several tracks in high quality. Film with spatialised multi-channel sound, stereophonic gramophone records, and stereophonic radio broadcasting demanded that studios transition to stereophonic operation. The use of microphones changed – the microphones were closer and their number grew. The process of manipulating the space and colour of the recordings moved to the mixing and post-production phase.

The 1970s

The technology of production of semi-conductors was further refined. The offer of components grew considerably; their quality improved while production prices dropped. This period is the peak of the "analogue era" and the beginning of the transition to digital electroacoustic devices.

The analogue synthesisers developed in the preceding decade became smaller and cheaper. Late in 1970, the legendary Minimoog synthesiser was released, soon followed by similarly compact instruments made by American, European, and Japanese manufacturers.

Synthesisers became standard equipment in recording studios and also made their way to musicians and composers. The quality of effect devices improved considerably, which allowed for more significant transformations to recordings. Studios were soon equipped with mixing desks with dozens of signal paths. Tape recorders were able to record up to twenty-four tracks onto two-inch tape.

The mid-1970s saw the introduction of the first practical digital systems for the transmission, recording, and playback of sound. In 1973, Sony introduced its PCM adapter for digital recording and playback through the Betamax video recorder. By the end of the decade, several companies had released digital sound systems, but most of these were commercially unavailable due to their demanding production process and, therefore, high price.

In the early 1970s, the Allen company began producing the first digital organ. Near the end of the decade, New England Digital produced the first models of fully digitised synthesiser, Synclavier, which, in the early 1980s, came to include 16-bit samples and the possibility of recording digital audio data directly onto hard disks ("Sample-To-Disk"). The entire system could thus serve as a fully digital, "tapeless" studio. The prices of these instruments started at $20 000, fully equipped systems were worth over $200 000. The end of the 1970s also saw the creation of a similar system, Fairlight CMI, which included innovative elements: a graphic monitor, an alpha-numerical keyboard, and a light pen. The basic version started at $20 000. Large studios could afford mini-computers that could control the process of generating and processing sound.

The 1980s

The 1980s marked the beginning of a general process of digitisation that also included the generation, processing, recording, and transmission of sound.

In 1982, Philips and Sony introduced the CD format, capable of storing digital 16-bit recordings. Digital technology thus entered the world of consumer electronics and demand for digital recordings forced recording studios to digitise too. The beginning of the 1980s saw the introduction of the first fully digital synthesiser that was financially accessible: Yamaha's DX7. Digital instruments by other companies soon followed. In 1985, Ensoniq released the Mirage sampler, priced at under $2000, thus allowing many studios access to a sampler for the first time. Around the same time, the first 16-bit computers with MIDI interfaces were introduced, which were soon being used as MIDI sequencers. Their graphic interfaces allowed for the development of the first music notation software.

Towards the end of the decade, personal computers achieved a level of development that made them serviceable for working with digital audio at a decent level of quality, and in the 1990s, they also became a commonplace tool available to composers, which completely changed the way in which electroacoustic compositions were created. A considerable portion of the work process moved from the studio, where the sound technician would "realise" the composer's ideas, to the software environment of the personal computer that the composer has entirely under their control.

The Eastern Bloc

In the Soviet Union, the heart of the Eastern Bloc, the situation regarding music and electronics was problematic and inconsistent from the very beginning. On one side was the persisting legacy of the Russian avant-garde of the 1910s, '20s, and '30s, connections with the European left, and the search for modernity and progress symbolised by Lenin's vision for the electrification of the Russian hinterlands. On the other side stood the Soviet power structures that dismissed everything that was capitalist and "Western". They rejected the compositional principles of 20th-century art music, banned "Western" popular music, and, in the 1950s, decreed that cybernetics was a bourgeois pseudo-science. Periods of strict prohibition alternated with periods of thaw, following the decision of influential individuals within the party.

After World War II, when changes in studio equipment and the related development of electroacoustic music were taking place around the world, the Eastern Bloc was born, comprised of states controlled by the Soviet Union. The bloc soon isolated itself. In the satellite states of the Eastern Bloc, similarly to the Soviet Union itself, periods during which the regime consolidated itself alternated with attempts at liberalisation. In 1946, Stalin tasked Andrei Zhdanov with responsibility for Soviet cultural policy. This meant that art forms and movements that did not correspond to the spirit of socialist realism were heavily suppressed,[1] particularly in the late 1940s and early '50s. Electroacoustic music was also decreed ideologically despicable.[2] At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, Nikita Khrushchev

presented his critique of Stalin, condemning his dictatorial practice and describing his rule as a cult of personality. The ensuing thaw was also reflected in Soviet culture, making its way to the other countries in the Eastern Bloc over the course of several years.

Several unique electronic and electromechanical instruments were constructed in the Soviet Union before the Second World War. Among the most significant are Leon Theremin's eponymous instrument, built in the 1920s, whose striking and unusual sound led to it being relatively in use for decades, particularly in film music. In 1958, Yevgeny Murzin at the Lomonosov University in Moscow invented the ANS electro-optical compositional system, which generated sound based on graphic scores inscribed onto a glass plate. In addition to many Soviet composers, the machine was also used by composers from the West.

Paradoxically, difficulty accessing information, as well as insufficient and inferior electronic components in the Eastern Bloc sometimes led to the construction of exceptional devices and unique technical approaches. Sound engineers and technicians regularly adapted or even constructed studio equipment themselves and could thus create devices based on their own ideas and needs. Even in the 1960s, the "technological chasm" between the East and the West in electroacoustics was not that great and developers in the East were able to use available components to create instruments that were on par with their Western counterparts. The swift development of electronics in the West during the 1970s (integrated circuits in particular) meant that top-tier electronics could no longer be produced in the Eastern Bloc. The digital sound systems that began appearing in the West in the late 1970s were virtually unavailable in the East, partly due to the embargo on "strategic technology", which also included high-performance digital equipment.

In the 1960s and '70s, possible sound sources in studios in the Eastern Bloc that focused on the production of electroacoustic music included laboratory tone generators along with only a few electronic and electrophonic musical instruments produced locally. Electrophonic guitars were produced in the Eastern Bloc beginning in the 1950s. In Czechoslovakia, production began in the mid-1950s under the Resonet and Neoton brands, later joined by the legendary Jolana. Small electric pianos were also manufactured in the Eastern Bloc, like the Czechoslovak Klavichord from the late 1950s or the Claviset by the East German Weltmeister company from the early '60s.

Probably the first batch-produced mobile electronic organ in the Eastern Bloc was the single-manual, polyphonic Ionika, first introduced to the public at a fair in Leipzig in 1958 and produced from 1958 to 1965 in the German Democratic Republic. Promotional material from 1962 written in Czech also suggest using Ionika for "studio recordings, acoustic experiments, and spherical sounds".

A highly unique instrument is the Subharchord monophonic synthesiser, which had an unusual way of synthesising "subharmonic spectra" – several units were produced in the GDR in the early 1960s.

Around the same time, many companies began producing compact electronic transistor organs. In Czechoslovakia, the most popular were by local companies Jolana and Delicia, complemented by German instruments Vermona and Weltmeister.

Beginning in 1969, the company known as Česko-slovenské hudební nástroje (Czechoslovak Musical Instruments), based in Hradec Králové, began producing a model of electric organ, Pastorale, under the brand of the Petrof company. This instrument included rotary electromagnetic generators, tonewheels, whose construction was inspired by the Hammond organ.

The Situation in Czechoslovakia

The international isolation and technical deficiencies of the Eastern Bloc were also manifested in the equipment of Czechoslovak sound studios following World War II. Standard "Western" sound equipment was not available on the market, nor were the newly developed electrophonic and electronic musical instruments. It was practically impossible to travel and import Western goods. One obstacle among many were the unfavourable exchange rates for Eastern currencies, which meant that importing anything from the West was all the more costly. Only state institutions like the radio, television, or music publishers had access to studio equipment. Western equipment only appeared in these studios during the political thaw of the 1960s. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries in 1968, the period that followed, generally referred to as the normalisation era, brought personnel changes at all major institutions, also leading to a deceleration of the technical development of recording studios. A new thaw connected to an influx of modern equipment only took place in the 1980s. At this time, digital equipment also began appearing in Czechoslovak studios.

The development of studio, transmission, recording, and reproduction technology was the task of Výzkumný

ústav rozhlasu a televize (VÚRT; Research Institute for Radio and Television) and Výzkumný ústav zvukové a obrazové techniky (VÚZORT; Research Institute of Sound and Image Technology). Studio electronics were mostly manufactured by the Tesla company. Electrophonic and electronic instruments, mostly guitars and organs, were built by companies grouped under the parent company Československé hudební nástroje (Czechoslovak Musical Instruments). Also available were devices and musical instruments built elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, primarily in East Germany.

In the 1950s, contemporary Western music was scorned; its creation and promotion were not supported. The first information about electroacoustic music began appearing in Czechoslovakia in the mid-1950s.[3, 4, 5] The first relevant mention was in the article "Hudba, která se rodí v laboratoři" ("Music Born in the Laboratory"), published in *Literární noviny* (*The Literary Newspaper*) on November 18th, 1961.[6]

January 1963 saw the establishment of the Cybernetics Committee of the Czechoslovak Union of Composers. The following year, at the first seminar of electronic music, the name was changed to the Committee for Electronic Music. In 1963, following an impulse from the Cybernetics Committee, an agreement was drafted about collaboration in the field of electronic music between VÚRT, Czechoslovak Radio, Czechoslovak Television, and the Union of Composers: a specialised research department was established at VÚRT and an experimental studio was constructed in Plzeň (Pilsen; a city some hundred kilometres south-west of Prague) under the auspices of the Czechoslovak Radio.[7]

From the 4th to the 7th of May 1964, the radio studio in Plzeň hosted the First Seminar of Electronic Music – a meeting of sound engineers and technicians, music theorists, and composers, which included lectures and discussions as well as providing participants with the opportunity to become acquainted with the studio equipment and practically test out working in the studio on the realisation of electroacoustic compositions. To this end, three "laboratories" were established at the sound studio of the Czechoslovak Radio in Plzeň, furnished with the equipment that was available at the time. Sources of audio signal included generators of sine, saw, and square waves made by Tesla, a frequency-modulated sine wave generator by Brüel & Kjaer, a beating generator of sine wave signal by Philips, and a noise generator with a third-octave band-pass filter made by VÚRT. The signal could be edited with the use of a sharp cut-off filter, a block of signal modifiers (which included an adjustor for bass and treble frequencies, a speech filter, a noise effect generator, and a rhythmiciser), an effect modulator, and an effect reverberator, all produced by VÚRT. One highly unique instrument was the Rotofon time regulator – a tape recorder with rotating heads which allowed for independent changes of playback speed and transposition of the recorded audio signal. The signals were mixed in a VÚRT mixing console with six inputs, expanded with added inputs to a total of fifteen. Recordings were made on a Sander & Janzen 103a tape recorder from Germany and a Lyrec stereophonic tape recorder from Denmark.[8]

After a successful first meeting in Plzeň, the second seminar of electronic music took place from the 14th to the 16th of June 1965 at Studio A in Karlín, Prague. The programme included an overview of Czechoslovak studios focused on the realisation of electroacoustic pieces, which included five workplaces: the Experimental Studio of the Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava, the Electronic Music Studio at Czechoslovak Television in Bratislava, the Experimental Studio for Electronic Music at VÚRT in Prague, the Czechoslovak Radio studio in Plzeň, the Czechoslovak Radio studio in Brno, and the Electroacoustic Laboratory at the Institute of Musicology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague. The Electroacoustic Laboratory, however, was not intended for the realisation of pieces but for related theoretical research.[9]

Equipment Used

Given that the studios lacked modern equipment particular to the creation of electroacoustic music, input material generally consisted of commonly used sound sources recorded using traditional means, which were then processed by filtration or by transforming the time and pitch. Sound objects developed in this manner were then further processed and connected using the methods of tape music, that is, cutting and splicing magnetic tape. Methods involving electronic synthesis were used less frequently, and in those cases, the sound sources were generally confined to electronic generators of elementary signals.

Another limitation in the creation of electroacoustic music was the frequent lack of studio time. Electroacoustic music was not a priority and the allocated studio time was usually not sufficient to repeatedly and thoroughly listen to the recorded material, let alone attempt a deeper analysis or try out various possible methods and solutions. What's more, many compositions were realised in regular studios whenever these were not used for other work, meaning nights, weekends, and holidays.

Antares 1 (left) and Antares 2 (right)

Recording

When recording sound for electroacoustic compositions, the same microphones were used as for other studio work. It seems that microphones by the German company Neumann were the most prevalent, though there were also microphones by RCA (USA), AKG (Austria), and many other companies.

As it has now become impossible to track down the particular brands and models of microphones in use, and as in most electroacoustic compositions, the choice of a particular microphone exerts only a minimal influence on the resultant sound form, microphones will not be listed with the studio gear. We can assume that all studios were equipped with adequate microphones and selecting among them was not a limitation during the realisation of electroacoustic pieces.

Generating

In the early days, laboratory tone generators were used to generate sound, offering signals in basic shapes: sine waves, square waves, triangle waves, saw waves, and a few others. Also available were noise generators complemented by filters that allowed for the adjustment of the frequency envelope (the shape of the spectrum) of the generated noises. The most readily available devices were by local producers Tesla and Křižík, while those of the highest quality were by the Danish company Brüel & Kjaer.

VÚRT also applied itself to the production of studio sound generators. Some machines from its production are compatible with a system of studio equipment in use at the time called Sdružená rozhlasová koncepce (Associated Radio Concept), and are therefore labelled with the acronym SRK. Among the sound generators in production are the EG-1 effect generator or the SRK-SG-1 noise effect generator.

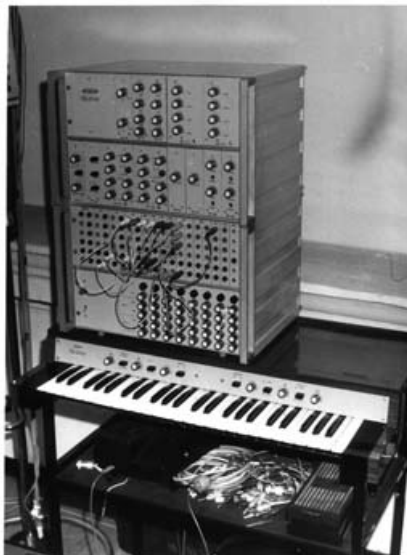
Between the first half of the 1960s and the early 1980s, VÚRT developed and produced several synthesisers that were used in selected studios:[10,11]

1964 – MS-1 – manual synthesiser
1968 – MS-2 – manual synthesiser
1974 – programmable synthesiser
1978 – Číslizvuk (Digisound) – modular synthesiser
1979 – Antares – monophonic synthesiser
1981 – Antares 2 – monophonic synthesiser

Electric guitars (in production since the mid-1950s) were used primarily in popular music and were not part of the equipment at studios focused on "experimental art music". The same is true of small electric pianos.

One of the first generally available electronic keyboard instruments was the East German vacuum tube organ, Ionika, produced since the late 1950s. It also made its way into certain Czechoslovak studios, where they were also used to create electroacoustic music. One of the first documented uses is Zdeněk Liška's score for the sci-fi film *Ikarie XB 1* (see CMQ 2/2018 for more on Liška).

Many studio technicians addressed the lack of adequate electronic sound sources by constructing their own. As early as the late 1950s, Jaromír Svoboda, a sound engineer at the Barrandov film studios, constructed an electronic instrument for Zdeněk Liška, which the composer used to produce the "music of the future" and sound effects for the 1962 film *Muž z prvního století* (*The Man from the First Century*). Also at the Barrandov studios, a modular system was gradually developed beginning in the early 1970s: ASYZ, Analyzátor a syntezátor zvuku (Sound Analyser and Synthesiser), which could generate and process audio signals. Technicians at the studios in Bratislava constructed numerous sound generators. Tape recorders often served as a sound source – in addition to standard playback, they also allowed for the creation of audio loops.



Číslizvuk (Digisound)

MS-2

Processing

Devices used for processing, adjusting, and modifying sound are collectively referred to simply as "effects". Among the first effects in common use were filters, which at first served mostly to correct sound signals but later also became a creative means for radical interventions in the sonic spectrum. Filters were produced by numerous companies, among the best were those by the Danish firm Brüel & Kjaer.

Another common effect type were effects employed to generate artificial reverberation. Echo chambers were used regularly, that is, rooms of the appropriate size with walls built out of acoustically reflective material. These rooms were equipped with speaker systems to activate the space through sound and microphones to record the reflected sounds. Reverb plates represent a more compact solution to this problem. A frequently used model was the 140 by the EMT company, first produced in 1957. A much cheaper alternative was the spring reverb. The AKG BX 20 model appeared in the late 1960s. The 1980s saw a gradual transition to digital reverberation effects.

Beginning in the 1960s, VÚRT produced effects in small batches. These included:

SRK-UH-1 bass modifier
SRK-UV-1 treble modifier
CF-3 speech filter (universal filter) (12dB/octave)
OŘF-1, OŘF-2, and OŘF-3 sharp cut-off filters
EM-2 effect modulator
ER-2 effect reverberator (spring reverb)
SO-1, SO-2, and SO-3 – inductive drivers

A unique device was the Rotofon effect tape recorder, also labelled a CR-1 time regulator. It was the result of a collaboration between VÚRT and Krátký film (Short Film) and allowed for independent changes to the pitch and speed of recorded sound.

Circuits and modules that formed part of measuring instruments, mixing desk, or music synthesisers were also used to process audio signals. The studios in Bratislava made use of Subharchord modules, the Barrandov studios used blocks from the ASYZ system.

As with sound generators, many sound technicians built their own effect devices. Many effects were built in Bratislava based on documentation provided by the Polish Radio Experimental Studio in Warsaw.

Mixing

The first mixing desks were monophonic and generally only allowed for amplitude control of the input signals. They were gradually equipped with filters and other circuits. The number of input and output channels also grew, as did the variability of signal flow.
In Czechoslovakia, mixing consoles were mostly produced by Tesla Elektroakustika Bratislava. Beginning in the mid-1950s, there were also batches of mixing desks produced by NRK (Nová rozhlasová koncepce; New Radio Concept) and SRK (Sdružená rozhlasová koncepce; Associated Radio Concept), later joined by transistor consoles made by TRK (Tranzistorová rozhlasová koncepce; Transistor Radio Concept) and others.

Recording

The first recording studios made use of cutting machines for vinyl records. By the late 1920s, similar devices were also used in radio broadcasts. In 1933, the Radiojournal company[12] began using the Blattnerphone – a magnetic recorded that inscribed signal onto steel tape. It was much easier to operate than the gramophone cutting devices – recordings could be deleted and copied. However, it was impossible to cut and splice the steel tape in the same way as later plastic magnetic tape.

Following World War II, tape recorders were used regularly in Czechoslovak studios. The most frequently employed included the monophonic models R28, SJ100, and SJ103 by the East German company Sander & Janzen (SAJA). The SJ100 was a newer version of the R28 that allowed for mechanical speed changes from 38 cm/s to 76 cm/s. The SJ1030 had three speeds to choose from: 9, 19, and 38 cm/s.

Soon after the new standard for stereophonic gramophone recordings was introduced in 1958, stereophonic records began appearing on the market and studios around the world were equipped with technology for stereophonic recording and editing. Even in Czechoslovakia, the transition to stereo began in the 1960s. Studer C37 tape recorders, produced in the early 1960s, already made stereophonic processes possible, and in 1964, the Czechoslovak Radio acquired a four-track Studer J37 tape recorder. Tape recorders with twenty-four tracks began making their way into Czechoslovak studios at the turn of the 1970s and '80s.[13]

A frequent method used to create electroacoustic compositions was editing. It was virtually only the narrow, ¼" tape that was used for cutting and splicing. Some of the more advanced tape recordings had in-built mechanisms for editing, which simplified the process considerably.

Measurement

Although globally, there were already measuring devices intended for musical use (such as the Stroboconn stroboscopic tuner, produced by the American Conn company since the 1930s), experimental studios mostly made use of electronic laboratory measuring devices. Common DC and AC voltmeters made it possible to measure the amplitude of electrical values, oscilloscopes were used to visualise sound waves and the mutual interactions of sonic and modulating signals, while digital counters were used to set the frequencies of the generators precisely.

The most readily available measuring devices were produced by local companies Tesla and Křižík and a few companies in the Eastern Bloc. The best devices were, again, by the Danish company Brüel & Kjaer, whose generators and filters often served to generate and edit signal in experimental studios.

Electroacoustic Music Studios

The majority of electroacoustic music was created in the "official" studios of large institutions – radio, television, and universities. Electroacoustic music was also made in improvised, semi-amateur conditions, with artistically remarkable results.

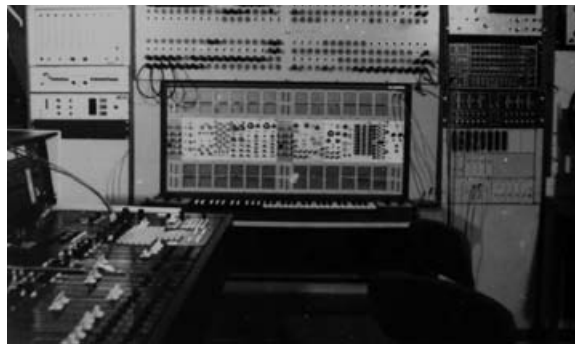
When mapping the history of experimental studios, it was impossible to date the individual events with precision. A long time would often have passed between the original idea, the construction of the studio, the test operation, and the official opening, and different writers would place the "establishment" of the studio at different stages in this process. Furthermore, some studios focused on electroacoustic music were created as part of other, pre-existing studios, so the precise time of establishment cannot be determined at all.

Even more difficult was mapping the equipment used at the studios. Only a few equipment lists from certain studios have survived, and we can probably assume they are incomplete. Some devices were gradually adjusted, perfected, and reconstructed, discarded equipment often remained in the studio as decoration and keepsake. It is also difficult to identify the individual devices. Different writers use different terminology, often missing precise designations of models, types, and names. Custom-built equipment and devices produced at the individual studios for their own use generally have no model designations at all. Different sources use different names for the same device; sometimes the manufacturer changed the product name, too. It is likely that some of the items in the list are simply different names for the same device.

The Electronic Music Studio at Czechoslovak Television in Bratislava

In 1960, sound technician Ivan Stadtrucker was tasked with starting a studio in the new headquarters of the Bratislava section of Czechoslovak Television in the former Tatra Banka building. This sound studio was to be used to create "electronic and concrete music for theatre, television, and film". In 1961, Ilja Zelenka used the studio to produce his electronic music for

ASYZ (Sound Analyser and Synthesiser)



ARP 2500 in Bratislava

Miroslav Horňák's World War II film *65 000 000*.[14] Since then, the studio was generally referred to as the Studio for Electronic Music. In 1965, there were changes in personnel and the organisational structure that led to a gradual reduction of the studio's activities, with the production of electroacoustic music gradually migrating to the Experimental Studio of the Bratislava radio. The Bratislava sound studio of Czechoslovak Television ceased to exist in 1969.

Work in the studio focused on sound for film and television – autonomous compositions were only created in the form of etudes and experiments. During the studio's existence, the scores for almost fifty films were created here.

The studio equipment was documented primarily halfway and towards the end of its existence.[15, 16, 17, 18]

Signal sources:
1961 – sine wave generator (probably RFT 205)
1961, 1964, 1969 – VÚRT SG-1 white noise generator with a third-octave filter
1964, 1969 – saw wave generator
1964, 1969 – square wave generator
1964 – 4 sine wave generators
1964 – Brüel & Kjaer sine wave generator
1964 – Ionika electronic organ (GDR)
1964, 1969 – three-speed Lyrec record player
1969 – VÚRT MS-1 manual synthesiser
1969 – Subharchord (GDR)

Signal modifiers:
1961, 1969 – ring modulator (personal production)
1964 – spring reverb (personal production)
1964 – Dynacord tape echo
1964 – Tesla, VÚRT, and RFT filters
1964, 1969 – VÚRT third-octave filters
1964, 1969 – tape recorder with gradual speed change in a range of two octaves
1969 – chorus
1969 – vibrato
1969 – staccato
1969 – rhythm generator
1969 – electronic switch
1969 – RFT OF-1 octave band-filter
1969 – RFT TZ1-3 third-octave filter
1969 – VÚRT ORF-1 band-pass with bandwidth regulator
1969 – band-stop filter with bandwidth regulator
1969 – selective band-pass
1969 – formant filter unit
1969 – EMT plate reverb
1969 – 2 Dynacord tape echos
1969 – VÚRT CR-1 Rotofon time regulator

Mixing:
1969 – Tesla 126 twelve-track mixing console

Recording:
1961 – 4 monophonic tape recorders
1964 – 3 Sander & Janzen SJ 100 tape recorders, 38 cm/s
1964 – Sander & Janzen SJ 103 tape recorder, 9/19/38 cm/s
1964 – Telefunken M5 tape recorder, 9/19/38 cm/s
1964 – 2 synchronised tape recorders with 16 mm perforated tape (personal production)
1964 – FTP Barrandov synchronised tape recorder
1969 – 4 Sander & Janzen SJ 103 tape recorders, 9/19/38 cm/s

1969 – 6 synchronised tape recorders with 16 mm perforated tape (personal production)
1969 – synchronised tape recorder with 35 mm perforated tape
MAIHKA portable reporting tape recorder

Others:
1969 – timing pulse generator

Experimental Studio of the Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava

In 1965, a new studio was established in the Czechoslovak Radio building on Lenin Square in Bratislava – the department, which was to produce sound effects and incidental music for radio plays, was called Triková režie (Special Effects Studio). At the turn of 1967 and 1968, it relocated to larger spaces,[19] acquired new equipment,[20] changed its name to Experimental Studio and also began producing autonomous electroacoustic music. In 1977, the name changed again, this time to Electroacoustic Studio, and the original name only returned after 1990. In 1985, the studio moved to the new radio building on Mýtna Street.[21] Here, the transition to digitisation began.

The studio equipment was primarily documented in 1965,[22] 1970,[23] and 1980.[24]

Signal sources:
1965, 1970, 1980 – Tesla BM 344 sine wave generator
1965, 1970 – RFT 205 generator
1965, 1970 – Křižík G 571 low frequency generator
1965 – 1 or 2 Orion 1142 square wave generators
1965 – narrow symmetrical envelope generator (personal production)
1965 – narrow asymmetrical envelope generator (personal production)
1965, 1970, 1980 – white noise generator (personal production)
1965, 1970 – Fernmeldemessgerätebau Berlin 120-121 tone generator
1969, 1970 – Subharchord (GDR)
1970, 1980 – Brüel & Kjaer 1014 beat frequency generator
1970 – VÚRT EG-1 effect generator
1970 – four-tone sine wave generator (personal production)
1970, 1980 – Philips PM 5162 sweep generator
1970, 1980 – impulse generator (personal production)
1970, 1980 – Tonographie Apparatenbau H 83 b pulse generator
1972–1974, 1980 – ARP 2500 analogue synthesiser[25, 26] (sources list different years of acquisition, some even list the model number as 2015 or 2115)
1985–1986 – Kurzweil K250 digital synthesiser
Signal modifiers:
1965 – ring modulator (personal production)
1965 – Sander & Janzen SJ 100 tape recorder with variable speed (modified)
1965 – linear amplitude modulator (personal production)
1965 – amplitude pulse modulator (personal production)
1965 – vibrator (personal production)
1965 – electronic switch (personal production)
1965 – Echolette NG-51 tape echo
1965 – echo chamber
1965 – RFT plate reverb
1965, 1970, 1980 – non-linear distortion (personal production)
1965 – 2 band-passes (personal production)
1965, 1970 – narrow band-filter with three bands (personal production)
1965, 1970 – 2 VÚRT SRK-UH-1 bass modifiers
1965, 1970 – 2 VÚRT SRK-UV-1 treble modifiers
1965, 1970 – 4 VÚRT CF-3 speech filters (universal filters)
1965, 1970, 1980 – modified Sander & Janzen SJ 100 tape recorder with four playback heads and variable speed
1970 – EMT plate reverb
1970 – 6 ring modulators (personal production)
1970, 1980 – 2 amplitude modulators (personal production)
1970, 1980 – amplitude demodulator (personal production)
1970 – Klein-Hummel UE-100 universal equaliser
1970, 1980 – VÚRT OŘF-3 sharp cut-off filter
1970, 1980 – low- and high-pass filter of 6 or 12 dB/octave (personal production)
1970, 1980 – RFT TZF 1-3 third-octave filter
1970, 1980 – Peekel octave filter (modified)
1970, 1980 – two-channel selective filter (personal production)
1970, 1980 – selective amplifier (personal production)
1970, 1980 – trigger circuit with modifiable attack and decay (personal production)
1970 – two-channel regulator (personal production)
1970, 1980 – two-channel rhythmiciser (personal production)
1970, 1980 – binary frequency divider (personal production)
1970 – modified EMT OS-66 variable speed tape recorder
1980 – SAE equaliser
1980 – AKG BX20E spring reverb
1980 – single-channel trigger circuit (personal production)
early 1980s – Vocoder Sennheiser VSM 201
late 1980s – Yamaha SPX 90 II digital effect

Mixing:
1965 – unspecified mixing console
1970s or '80s – Tesla ESR/S 186 mixing console, 18 inputs, 6 outputs
1980 – Struder 169 mixing console, 8 inputs, 4 outputs
1980 – Tesla EPP 102 stereo mixing console
1985–1986 – digitally controlled mixing console, 24 channels

Recording:
1965, 1970 – Sander & Janzen SJ 100 tape recorder
1965, 1970 – Sander & Janzen SJ 103/2 tape recorder
1968, 1970 – Studer J37 four-track tape recorder
1970, 1980 – 2 Studer C37 stereophonic tape recorders
1970 or 1971, 1974, 1980 – eight-track Studer A80 tape recorder (modified)
1980 – 2 Studer A80 stereophonic tape recorders
1980 – 2 Revox A77 stereophonic tape recorders
1980 – Revox A700 four-track tape recorder
1980 – Studer A80/4 four-track tape recorder
1980 – Uher CF 240 tape recorder

Playback:
1970, 1980 – 4 Tesla ARS 635 speaker systems
1980 – 2 50 W Quad 50 E amplifiers
1980 – 2 100 W Studer A 68 aplifiers
1980 – 2 Lockwood Major speaker systems

Measurement:
1965 – Tesla TM694 E oscilloscope
1965 – Orion SE 20901 voltmeter
1970, 1980 – Metra DU-20 universal meter
1970, 1980 – Tesla BM 310 voltmeter
1970, 1980 – Tesla BM 445 E counter
1970 – VEB Fsp-10 spectrometer
1980 – Philips PM 3110 oscilloscope
1980 – NTP 177-520 C goniometer

Others:
1985/1985 – Mac computer and software

VÚRT Experimental Studio for Electronic Music in Prague

When collaboration between the East and West was restricted after World War II, the development of studio equipment in Czechoslovakia had to rely almost exclusively on its own resources. May 1949 saw the establishment of Ústav rozhlasové techniky (Institute of Radio Technology) in Vokovice, Prague, which mostly consisted on development laboratories for Czechoslovak Radio. In 1951, the institution was embedded within a structure of state research institutes and included under Výzkumný ústav spojů

MS-1

(Communications Research Institute). In 1958, it gained independence once more, this time under the name Výzkumný ústav rozhlasu a televize (VÚRT; Research Institute for Radio and Television), aimed at research and development in the fields of radio and broadcast technology, electroacoustics, and television.

As early as the late 1950s, VÚRT began using electronic devices to apply effects to sounds for incidental theatre music. The Electronic Music Studio at VÚRT was established in 1965 as an experimental laboratory for the research, development, and testing of electroacoustic studio equipment that was later used in recording studios, primarily in Plzeň and Bratislava. From its very beginning, the studio was also used for the realisation of electroacoustic compositions.[27]

The list of equipment provided here is from 1965.[28, 29]

Signal sources:
- Tesla generators of sine, saw, and square waves
- VÚRT white noise generator with in-built third-octave filter
- VÚRT SRK-SG-1 effect noise generator
- VÚRT MS-1 manual synthesiser

Signal modifiers:
- VÚRT SRK-UH-1 bass modifier
- VÚRT SRK-UV-1 treble modifier
- VÚRT OŘF-1 and VÚRT OŘF-2 sharp cut-off filters
- VÚRT CF-1 or CF-3 speech filter (universal filter)
- VÚRT EM-2 effect modulator

- VÚRT ER-2 effect reverberator
- VÚRT relay rhythmiciser
- VÚRT SO-1, VÚRT SO-2, and VÚRT SO-3 trigger circuits
- VÚRT CR-1 Rotofon time regulator
- VÚZORT ¼" monophonic tape recorder with variable speed 1:10
- Sander & Janzen 103 ¼" monophonic tape recorder, 38 cm/s, modified for variable speed ± half an octave

Mixing:
- Tesla Elektroakustika Bratislava SRK-H vacuum
- tube mixing console with 10 inputs and 4 outputs, modified for stereo operation

Recording:
- Struder C37 four-track tape recorder

Playback:
- 2 Tesla R3 speaker systems
- 4 10 W VÚRT ZV-100 amplifiers

Measurement:
- VÚRT ZI-010 indicator amplifier
- Tesla BM 354 universal counter
- VÚRT measuring echo chamber, reverberation time 4 seconds

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12) Established in 1923 and majority-owned by the Czechslovak state, Radiojournal broadcast in Czechoslovakia from 1923 to 1948, when it was superseded by Czechoslovak Radio. It was the earliest regular broadcaster in continental Europe and the second in all of Europe, after the BBC.
13) *Páskové magnetofony používané v Československém rozhlase* (*Tape Recorders Used at the Czechoslovak Radio*). Prague: Československý rozhlas (Czechoslovak Radio). Internal document.
14) KADUCH, Miroslav. *Česká a slovenská elektroakustická hudba 1964–1994, skladatelé, programátoři, technici, muzikologové, hudební kritici, publicisté, osobní slovník* (*Czech and Slovak Electroacoustic Music 1964–1994, Composers, Programmers, Technicians, Musicologists, Music Critics, Journalists, Index of Names*). Ostrava, 1994. Index of names.
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22) Ibid., pp. 117–119.
23) *Experimentalstudio des Czechoslowakischen Rundfunks Bratislava*.
24) *Studia EAH v ČSSR*, pp. 272–275.
25) *Experimentalstudio des Czechoslowakischen Rundfunks*.
26) *Studia EAH v ČSSR*, pp. 272–275
27) Ibid., pp. 74–79.
28) Ibid., pp. 84–85.
29) ŠTĚPÁN, Ivan. Elektronická hudba, pp. 98–99.

by Petr Koronthály

Brixi's Oratoria
An Unknown Portion in the Works of the Famous Composer

In this short text, musicologist Petr Koronthály briefly introduces the life and work of Czech Baroque composer F. X. Brixi and the role of the oratorio genre in his oeuvre before moving on to a more detailed exploration of the sources for one particular oratorio. Koronthály's critical edition of this text will be published next year by AMU Press next year.

František Xaver Brixi (1732–1771) was probably the most famous Czech composer of the Baroque period, that is, if we take the word "Czech" literally. He was one of the few leading Czech musicians of his time to resist the allure of emigration and remain in Prague until his death. His decision was certainly aided by the fact that he achieved what was, at the time, the most significant post in Czech musical life very early in his career – at only twenty-seven years old, he became Kapellmeister at St. Vitus Cathedral. In connection to this position, he wrote numerous masses, cantatas, and other pieces of sacred music that are relatively well known, such as the *Missa integra in D major* or the *Missa solemnis in D major*. The fact that these were popular pieces is attested to not only by their number, but also by the number of surviving copies. The practice at the time dictated that copies were made when a particular piece was performed, so the number of copies is directly correlated to the number of performances.

We can also surmise that the surviving portion of Brixi's oeuvre is merely the tip of the iceberg, not only due to approaches to musical material typical of this era, but also due to the events that were soon to come and that would prove so devastating to church music: the first nail in the coffin of Brixi's oeuvre were the "Josefinian reforms" (1781–1785), which included the abolishment of numerous monasteries, convents, and churches. While their archives of sheet music were to be passed on to the university libraries in Prague and Olomouc, in practice, many were irretrievably destroyed. 1782 saw the abolishment of the Monastery of St. George at the Prague Castle, to which Brixi had bequeathed his entire collection of music, which was thus lost (including almost all the handwritten manuscripts, with only a few exceptions).

Another aspect that negatively influenced the amount of surviving material was the stylistic

localisation of Brixi's oeuvre at the tail end of the Baroque: his music was soon banished from the choir lofts, replaced by then-modern early Classical music. And, as was common at the time, his music was either thrown out or heavily edited. The final blow to Brixi's legacy was dealt by the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, which again saw the abolishment of monasteries, and archives full of church music, highly undesirable at the time, were stored in entirely inadequate conditions as part of the party's "progressive approach" – the archive of the monastery in Želiv, for instance, was dumped out of a lorry onto the ground behind the state archive, where it was exposed to the elements for weeks, with devastating results.

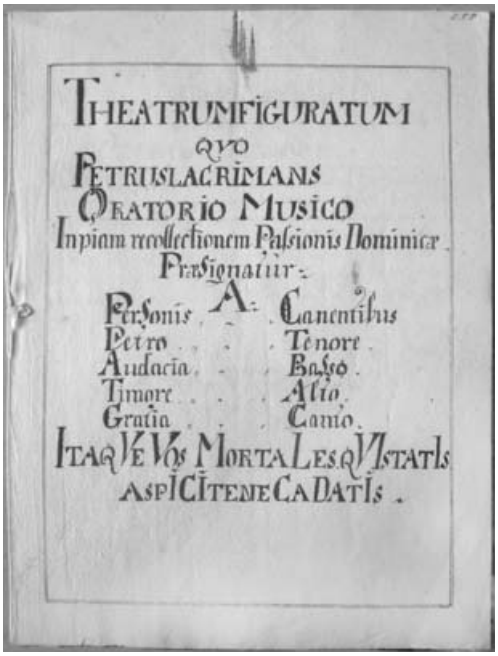
It is also true that the entire oeuvre has certainly not been explored yet, and new pieces of information are constantly being added to the RISM database about newly discovered copies of a work by Brixi.

The oratorios are a relatively small part of Brixi's oeuvre, and they have barely been mapped. We can only speculate as to the reasons why this genre is so slight compared to the other portions of Brixi's oeuvre, but there are two principal candidates: these were compositionally demanding compositions, which, given their length, were also difficult to use in practice (which in turn resulted in a relatively low fee). But once Brixi did decide to compose an oratorio, it is clear he achieved remarkable success – this is attested to not only by the subjective opinion of a researcher, but primarily by the fact that copies of his works can be found literally everywhere in the Catholic Europe of his era – both in the form of complete copies (which can be found as far apart as Wrocław in Poland and Stuttgart in Württemberg) and as individual arias or contrafacts (the same music with the addition of new text).

It is this portion of Brixi's oeuvre that is to be the focus of a new series of critical editions of these oratorios published by AMU Press – the Publishing House of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (NAMU).

The first volume in this series focuses on *Theatrum figuratum quo Petrus lacrimans*, a work discovered some time ago in collections hailing from the Premonstratensian Monastery in Želiv and even performed on the basis of this material in 2011 by the Harmonia delectabilis ensemble led by Lukáš Vendl, though on this occasion, it was performed as a piece by an anonymous author. It was only in 2016 that comparisons with other sources led to an unambiguous ascription to Brixi.

There are four complete known copies of the piece at present, of which one is stored at the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music and hails from the Želiv Monastery collections, the second is kept at the University Library in Augsburg and was originally in the collections of the Öttingen-Wallerstein family of Harburg, the third is in private hands as part of the musical archive at Schloss Wolfegg, and the final copy is in Munich, originally from the archive of the seminary in Polling. Each of these sources has its history and a detailed description is beyond the remit of this article, but we can mention at least a few points of interest. The first source (from the Želiv collection) also contains a complete libretto of the oratorio, which was probably created for the purposes of what was probably the second performance (after the presumed premiere in Želiv in 1761), taking place in 1771, written by Pr. Milone Leopold Stebral, who was at the time the highly respected musical director in Želiv. While this libretto contains numerous errors compared to the text of the oratorio itself, there is an interesting chronogram on the title page, which, in the letters $I_{TAQ}V_{E}V_{OS}M_{ORTA}L_{ES\,Q}VI_{\,STAT}I_{S\,ASP}ICI_{TE\,NE}C_{A}\check{D}_{AT}I_{S}$ ("Therefore you, mortals who stand here, look that you do not fall" – a paraphrase of the oratorio contents) contains a cipher of the year of composition, 1771 (in Roman numerals, I + V + V + M + L + V + I + I + I + C + I + C + D + I).
The youngest source (from Polling) is also linked to a point of interest – it is currently catalogued under the name Franz Seraph Feuchtmayr (sometimes written as Feuchtmayer), a music teacher at the seminary in Polling, who probably made a copy in order to perform the oratorio


THEATRUM FIGURATUM
QVO
PETRUS LACRIMANS
ORATORIO MUSICO
In piam recollectionem Passionis Dominicæ
Præsignatur.
Personis A Cantantibus
Petro Tenore
Audacia Basso
Timore Alto
Gratia Canto
ITAQVE VOS MORTALES QVI STATIS
ASPICITE NE CADATIS.

Title page of the libretto from the Želiv Monastery

with his students, but he changed about a quarter of the text – sometimes, the changes are meaningless, sometimes they are clearly motivated by an effort to make the text more comprehensible to his seminary students (replacing the classical reference to Scylla and Charybdis with a general mention of danger), at other times by an attempt to improve the poetic level of the text (not always successfully, we might add).

Attesting to the fact that the oratorio, which was probably written in 1756, was highly popular in its time is not only the existence of four complete copies, but also many contrafacts, even in several variants. The bass aria *Non speret victoriam*[1] exists not only in a separate version by Pr. Stebral, but also in a version with different lyrics made as far as Karlsruhe, while the fourth aria, *O quam est dura*, was often performed at the dean's church in Teplice (where it probably made it's way from the Strahov Monastery in Prague) under the title *Coeli amore*, and it also survived in the Strahov collections as *O Deus, ego amo te*, but with a markedly different second violin part. The fifth aria (with various edits) appeared in Adam Hiller's oratorio *Der Versöhnungstod Jesu*, providing a clear demonstration of how copyright and intellectual property was treated in the past, an approach that seems almost ridiculous in today's context. The sixth aria (*Si homines mea dona*) even appears in the collection of the Strachota family – known thanks to the musicological work of Zdeněk Šesták (see Jiří Slabihoudek's article in CMQ 2023/1) – under the title *Gaude caelum et mirare*. The quality of this text soars high above all the others and it is clear that it was written by a highly capable poet. It can also be found in several other compositions written at the time, such as the motet *Gaude caelum* by Belgian composer Charles-Joseph van Helmont (1715–1790). It is therefore quite likely that this might be a double contrafact, with the text of one piece of music combined with the music of another piece and performed together. A text with a very similar beginning is found in the Analecta Hymnica (a collection of Latin hymns assembled in 1854) and it is credited to Iacobo Merlone Horstio, but this text is very long and does not contain certain parts of the text we are interested in. It therefore remains a mystery how such an excellent text found its way to Brixi's aria. Several new texts were also appended to the final motet, one source even attributes one of them to Czech Classical composer Leopold Koželuh (1747–1818).

We can thus carefully posit that in its time, the oratorio *Theatrum figuratum quo Petrus lacrimans* belonged among the gems of Czech oratorios, and that as it is a work from early in Brixi's career, we can only look forward to what later research in this field might bring us and what other beautiful oratorios are hidden deep in our musical archives. We can also continue to strive to present these works in critical editions that will also make them available for renewed performances.

1) It is not without interest that it was regularly performed between 1950 and 1976 at the church of St. James by Josef Hercl. He acquired it from the pile of scores dumped in the courtyard mentioned above.

reviews

The Many Passions of Leoš Janáček

Editor and dramaturgical concept: Patrick Lambert.
Production: Patrick Lambert, Daniela Bálková. Text: EN, CZ. Published: 2023. TT: 5:17:52. 4 CD Supraphon SU 4328-2

With great reverence, I hold in my hands an anthology that represents the result of the life's work of British music journalist and researcher **Patrick Lambert**. It represents an amount of labour that I don't even want to imagine. The project is separated into thematic blocks that also mirror the editor's personal perspective on Janáček: 1. the Folk Tradition; 2. the Czech Case – Politics and Patriotism; 3. Family; 4. Life and Nature; 5. Friendship with Dvořák; 6. Women; 7. Russian Literature; 8. Religious Roots. No objections there. The selection of music is clear, the excellent booklet text (and selected interviews) are evidence to the clear reasoning behind it. I discovered that there are some pieces I have heard very little, perhaps once or even not at all, such as České legie (*Czech Legions*), *Adagio d moll* (*Adagio in D minor*), *Elegy on the Death of Daughter Olga*, *Intimní skici* (*Intimate Sketches*), *Předehra g moll pro varhany* (*Prelude for Organ in G minor*), and the *Graduale* for choir. In the case of cycles, the collection mostly presents a torso of the series, but thankfully, the *Glagolitic Mass* is here in full, with the natural selection of the best recording (which I believe will be very difficult to improve upon): the **Czech Philharmonic**, **Karel Ančerl**, the **Prague Philharmonic Choir** (**Josef Veselka**), **Libuše Domanínská**, **Věra Soukupová**, **Beno Blachut**, **Eduard Haken**, and **Jaroslav Vodrážka** (Prague 1963). The editor clearly has a preference for sensitively "modernised" archival recordings. Some of his choices moved me greatly and I applaud them wholeheartedly. These include selections from *Moravská poezie v písních* (*Moravian Folk Poetry in Songs*) with **Theodor Šrubař**, **Libuše Domanínská**, **Alfred Holeček**, 1958, *Slezské písně* (*Silesian Songs*) with **Beno Blachut** and **Alfred Holeček**, 1962, *70.000* with **PSMU** and **Jan Šoupal**, 1953, *Ukvalská lidová poezie* (*Folk Poetry of Hukvaldy*), with the **Prague Philharmonic Choir**, **Josef Veselka**, 1977, *Taras Bulba – Smrt Andrijova* (*Death of Andrij*) with the **Czech Philharmonic**, **Karel Ančerl**, 1961, *Věčné evangelium* (*The Eternal Gospel*) with **Beno Blachut**, the **Prague Philharmonic Choir**, **Josef Veselka**, **FOK**, and **Jiří Pinkas**, 1965, *Andante*, *Moderato*, and *Allegro* from the opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the **Czech Philharmonic** and **Václav Talich**, 1954, and others. I was delighted that the editor selected so many recordings featuring **Josef Páleníček**, though this decision was probably guided not only by Patrick Lambert's taste but also by the possibilities of the Supraphon catalogue. Relatively contemporary recordings are the exception: a selection from *Zdenčiny variace* (*Zdenka Variations*) recorded by pianist **Jan Bartoš** in 2019, the third movement of the suite from the opera *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček to the Moon and to the 15th Century* (**FOK**, **Jiří Bělohlávek**, 1999), the overture from *Káťa Kabanová* (**Czech Philharmonic**, **Charles Mackerras**, 1997), the *Adagio* from *Intimate Letters* (**Pavel Haas Quartet**, 2006), or two *Lachian Dances* (**Brno Philharmonic**, **Jakub Hrůša**, 2008). In the case of some tracks, I could have imagined a better choice of recording. The pieces I'm referring to include *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, *Intimate Letters*, *Dumka*, *Dunaj* (*Danube*), Šumařovo dítě (*The Fiddler's Child*), *Pohádka* (*Fairy Tale*), *From the House of the Dead*, and *On an Overgrown Path*. But this is a highly personal choice, and one that changes nothing about the fact that this is the most interesting box set I have come across this year, overcoming many large productions by global mega-labels. And is the dominance of selections a mistake? Quite the opposite. It is an invitation into the world of Leoš Janáček and a challenge to find recordings of the whole works on a digital platform. There is a catch, however – very often, they won't be as good as on this album… I must add that the highly readable sleeve note is supported by sensitive graphic design and well selected photographs. This is how I imagine an homage to a composer, and one that doesn't need the Year of Czech Music.

Luboš Stehlík

Czech Philharmonic, Semyon Bychkov

Mahler: Symphony No. 1

Czech Philharmonic, Semyon Bychkov – conductor.
Recorded: Oct. 2021, Prague, Rudolfinum. Text: EN. Published: Sep. 2023. TT: 55:16. Pentatone PTC 5187 043

Here we have another contribution to this new complete set of Mahler symphonies. This time, **Semyon Bychkov** and the **Czech Philharmonic** will delight listeners with one of the composer's most popular symphonies – the first. The symphony still has a special place within the Mahlerian boom that began in the second half of the 20th century. Still a Romantic piece, it already exhibits typically Mahlerian traits, but is still as popular as the peak works of the 19th century. It is also a perfect entry point for those looking to explore the composer's oeuvre for the first time. Mahler's songs serve as an excellent guide to his musical language, specifically the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*), whose musical inventiveness is also present in this symphony. Thanks to the Supraphon company, we

in the Czech lands could begin getting to know Mahler as early as the 1950s. This was when the excellent philharmonic recordings of the fourth symphony (with Marie Tauberová and Karel Šejna) and the *Songs of the Wayfarer* (with Marta Krásová and Antonio Pedrotti) were made. The first symphony became well known in the 1960s thanks to a recording by the Czech Philharmonic with Karel Ančerl. Internationally, a virtual invasion of Mahler recordings was taking place at the time, both as complete sets (Kubelík, Bernstein, later Haitink, Solti, as well as Czech conductors Václav Neumann and Libor Pešek) and as individual symphonies – and among these, the first symphony dominates. Today, we have many dozen recordings, a long list of which could be included among the very best. The competition is enormous, establishing priorities proves practically impossible. Many Mahler fans and connoisseurs thus probably struggled to shake their distrust towards Semyon Bychkov's new project with the Pentatone label. The first releases (featuring the second, fourth, and fifth symphonies) eliminated all doubts. Under Bychkov's baton, the Czech Philharmonic performs exceptionally, attesting to the group's international standard. The recently published recording of the first symphony fully confirms this assessment. The dynamic range is enormous and perfectly planned out. The excellent sound quality is also a factor, and Pentatone is famous for it – here, Czech sound engineers **Ivan Zbíral**, **Čeněk Kotzmann**, and **Jan Krček** contribute to this reputation. The opening movement is practically an exhibition in this regard – while its beginning is virtually inaudible, the build-up in the form of gradually added sound elements (absolutely clear solos) grows in a highly disciplined manner, so that the peak is entirely logical and convincing, not at all a self-serving explosion. With some orchestras around the world, we already see efforts towards opulence and grandeur in this section. Bychkov is very economical with dynamics. Everything only opens fully in the finale of the first movement. The effective Ländler of the 2nd movement (again, somewhat comically shaded in dynamics) is worked out in great detail. It is a shame that the somewhat indistinct percussion does not conclude the movement with greater force. As expected, the third movement progresses as a long, thought-out build-up. Some traditional elements (the wind and violin solos that are often aggressive on other recordings) are presented in much gentler form. The middle part of the third movement is beautiful and impressive, particularly in its varying moods of brightness and skepticism. Not even the onset of the finale is conceived as a drastic explosion, as we often witness elsewhere, but it is suitably vigorous and perfectly worked out. Saving the full sound is an appropriate decision – it opens up all the more convincingly at the very end of the piece. The second lyrical suspension in the finale acts an effective moment of retrospection. Perhaps the most valuable thing about this recording is its gradual sonic build-up over the course of the entire symphony, beginning with the opening measures and climaxing with the last chord of the finale – and even in this chord, the exceptional crescendo of the percussion section continues, a rare occurrence. An excellent contribution to the global Mahlerian repertoire! My only qualm is with the presentation of the piece (both in the booklet and on the back cover) including the word *Titan* in its title. This same form appears on numerous other recordings, in printed concert programmes, and in interviews. It is incorrect. While Mahler did originally name his piece this way, he immediately withdrew it, as the struggling hero of Jean Paul's eponymous novel (which originally inspired the composer) is a far cry from a true titan. Commercial reasons have thus repeatedly and insensitively distorted the character of these pieces. We encounter many similar cases, including designations of some pieces by Antonín Dvořák – the "American" *Suite in A major* or *Symphony No. 8 "English Symphony"*. These names were certainly not the composer's and serve only the interests of advertising. Nevertheless, these somewhat misleading titles do not negatively influence our pleasant feeling when listening, the high artistic level of this recording, and the joyful expectation of the symphonies still to come: numbers 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Bohuslav Vítek

Stolen Symphony (Fluxus & Neofluxus, Part I)

Various Artists.
Produced by: re-set production.
Co-produced by: Edizioni Conz.
Published: May 2023. 2 CD Sub Rosa SR539

The Fluxus movement and its non-conformism, conceptualism, neo-dada absurdity, humour, unusual approaches to various particular parameters of an artwork or of the institutional life of art, as well as related concepts (such as the ready-made) helped the artworld of the second half of the 20th century (and of the present) describe in greater detail some of its blurry borderlines, including dualisms such as the intentionality or non-intentionality of the artist's activities, performativity and the fleetingness of communication vs. the durability of the artefact, professionalism vs. dilettantism, personal intention vs. public expectations, purpose vs. purposelessness (which might be philosophically or ecologically more valuable), etc. Founder George Maciunas was soon joined by a wide array of artists that included Joseph Beuys, La Monte Young, Yoko Ono,

or Milan Knížák in Czechoslovakia. The aim of this compilation, curated by the Prague-based community gathered around the Opening Performance Orchestra, is to trace this history of "doing anything artistic somehow completely differently" with a focus on sound works. The first part of this compilation in the form of a double LP and double CD – both accompanied by an extensive booklet – was published this May on the prestigious Brussels-based label Sub Rosa, and the second part should be out on the same label in the Spring of 2024. At the beginning was the collaboration between the Opening Performance Orchestra and pianist Miroslav Beinhauer. He performed pieces intended for a piano that was left out in the open, battered by the elements for an extended period. The team's remarkable contacts were instrumental, leading to new pieces written for "broken piano" by composers including the American minimalist Terry Riley. The premiere recording of *Shoganigidi #1* proves that his piece fit this particular broken piano perfectly. The clicking of the damaged mechanics creates slight as well as almost beat-like textures, the melodic motifs capture the changing colours from key to key, an effect that only an instrument well past its prime can offer. The following track, a small audience clapping under the direction of a conductor (Yasunao Ton: *Clapping Piece*, 1963) is very well chosen. There are other performers, too, often with close ties to Fluxus: composer and multi-instrumentalist Luciano Chessa, who has collaborated with the Opening Performance Orchestra several times in the past, wind player Werner Durand, vocalist Anna Clementi, cellist Deborah Walker, pianist Agnese Toniutti, and pianist Nicolas Horvath. The collection of recording thus began growing to include mostly recent interpretations of the works by the classics of Fluxus as well as their younger followers, but the anthology also includes recordings that have been in various archives for decades. This results in a running time of almost 160 minutes for part one, during which even a seasoned listener of experimental music will experience perceptual dilemmas and other similarly entertaining ordeals. We can abandon traditional approaches to musical content right at the outset, as the zeroth track of the first disc is John Cage's *0'00"* (the title also expresses the duration of the piece). We probably won't feel less helpless when faced with the first performance that actually takes place in time, La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 #13 to Richard Huelsenbeck*, in which Agneste Toniutti uses a prepared piano to create "little whirlpools out in the middle of the ocean". We remain uncertain during the following five minutes with the Arditti Quartet, as with their relatively classical and measured performance, we can never be sure where Milan Knížák chose to make a collage cut in the score and where we should try to find the last remaining connections within all this, or whether we should give up entirely on finding them. We must prepare for the fact that enjoying and exploring our listening uncertainties is a stimulating principle with which to approach the entire collection. We often begin hoping in moments of uncertainty, out of which faith, as a personal pacification, is born, and faith, of course, is tied to rituals. Rituals are evoked by the two pieces that follow, *Henning Christiansen's* Wölfsflöte (1986) for layered flutes and Giuseppe Chiari's more intimate *Metodo teorico e pratico per suonare il violoncello* (1962), in which Deborah Walker runs through an encyclopedia of playing techniques on the cello. Then Petr Ferenc enters the stage as an unspectacular but uncompromising preacher, reciting Knížák's *White Process*, a sensorially more dictatorial parallel to Cage's texts on silence. The collection of pieces for solo voice mostly features vocalist, flutist, and actress Anna Clementi (on the double disc, she performs works by Sten Hanson, Oyvind Fahlström, and Dieter Schnebel, among others), but you can also hear the voice of another doyen of the Fluxus movement, Eric Anderson, reciting the mantra "it isn't bad", which opens the second CD. Of the total thirty-one tracks, there are twelve pieces for solo piano, half of them performed by Agnese Toniutti, including pieces by Philip Corner mostly involving playing the inside of the piano or even a toy piano (the eponymous *Toy Piano*, 2012). Another remarkable moment is a recording of a mass of people blowing into paper tubes – Ostravská banda and their audience performing Yoshi Wada's *Lip Vibrator*. The second disc also includes electronics, such as Terry Riley's *Ear Piece* (1962) for oscillator, which Luciano Chessa gradually tunes up over the course of five minutes. The conclusion of the album is then dominated by the Opening Performance Orchestra, partly with a radical collage lasting over twenty minutes, *Stolen Symphony*, and the very end of the anthology presents a three-minute extract from a concert in Berlin in 2014 that saw Milan Knížák and Petr Ferenc (the analogue broken part) perform with the Opening Performance Orchestra (the digital re:broken part), demonstrating the possibilities of Knížák's famous concept of working with damaged sound media, established under the umbrella term "broken music". The aesthetic of the Fluxus movement is impossible to capture with reason, and this collection of recordings captures this perfectly. Does the previous sentence seem paradoxical, especially as this review only concerns the first part of the anthology? Certainly.

Jan Faix

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