czech music *quarterly*

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David Danel

Young Czech Conductors
Ostrava Days
Rafael Kubelík

Národní divadlo

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Dear readers,

The topic of the current issue is up-and-coming Czech conductors. Although we do not even attempt to claim that our overview of promising and established young Czech conductors is exhaustive, it does, in my opinion, provide quite a good insight into the fact that the number of high-quality young conductors in the Czech Republic is perhaps somewhat higher in per capita terms than it is elsewhere. A historical counterpart to Jindřich Bálek's article and an interview Tomáš Hanus gave to Dita Hradecká is represented by a biographical sketch penned by Nikol Kraft dealing with one of the modern-time giants of Czech music and conductor of international renown – Rafael Kubelík. Next year marks the centenary of Kubelík's birth. This magazine has traditionally declined to make too big a deal of various anniversaries (I for one believe that distinguished figures should be written about out of principle, not just because of an arbitrary date on the calendar), hence we feature a piece about Kubelík in accordance with the issue's thematic focus. At the same time, however, we can hope that on the occasion of the Kubelík centenary various printed media will publish other articles about this fascinating artist, highlighting more and more facets of his professional life and legacy. Take our article as an hors d'oeuvre in this respect.

Enjoy the magazine
Petr Bakla

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cover: Philip Glass Ensemble, Ostrava Days 2013 (photo by Martin Popelář)

by Petr Bakla

DAVID DANEL
"YOU CAN'T LOSE YOUR SENSE OF CURIOSITY"

David Danel is a superb violinist, yet it always seems to me that playing the violin is just something he happens to do. I know of precious few other musicians with such enthusiasm for contemporary music who at the same time would verify this enthusiasm through long-term continuous activity in the quite often bleak Czech conditions. Danel plays and organises, he has personally backed up a remarkable number of remarkable events, or has at least been around the fringes. I find him exceptional for, among other things, his evident interest in music as music (and everything about it and far removed from it), not only music as something that is played on the violin. This is perhaps one of the reasons why he plays the violin so well and this is perhaps why with a lightness of touch and sense of certainty he boldly embarks on adventures others would have cold feet about.

David Danel will be performing Luigi Nono's monumental piece for violin and electronics La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura at Prague's DOX contemporary art centre on 13 November. A few days earlier, he and his Prague Modern ensemble will present it at La Fabrika within the sixth edition of the Contempuls festival.

A rather inane question to start with, but when we consider the usual curriculum of classical musicians it's almost de rigueur: how did you come to engage in new music? Was there any sudden epiphany?

My "getting into" new music cannot be delimitated by a single specific epiphany, of the kind like when someone hears, for instance, Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* or George Crumb's *Black Angels* as performed by the Kronos Quartet and has

PHOTO: KAREL ŠUSTER 2x

the feeling that it has opened up a new world to them… It was rather a continuous process, a wandering, during which I was shifted forward or elsewhere by various encounters, conversations, listening or performance experiences. One of the first crucial factors was the music history lessons with Miloš Navrátil at the Ostrava Conservatory. Professor Navrátil regularly wrote down on his "Don't Miss!" notice board radio and TV programmes and broadcasts, films and exhibitions he deemed, well, unmissable. He was an advocate of so-called authentic early music performance, an ardent champion of new music (that's why his notice board abounded in references to broadcasts from the Warsaw Autumn), he would play us Pink Floyd, Yes, the Beatles' White Album and Revolver… His lessons were mainly about listening, debating, confrontation, replete with references to the visual arts, and they remained deep within me for a long time to come. During the time of my studies, I was also shaped by various engagements of my classmates/composers at festivals, in Ostrava, at the Forfest, yet another crucial milestone was my being invited

to join the MoEns (still Mondschein at the time) ensemble after I had left for Prague. Discussions with the ensemble's members, active exploration of scores, encounters with composers, audience responses, the feedback from my wife, who was also bewitched by the universe of new music and modern art, all this was so variegated, new, intriguing and intense that I began feeling that it was something I simply had to pursue, the path I had to take, no matter how my co-players in the orchestra might ridicule it. Then there was my friendship with Dano Matej from Bratislava, who opened up to me the world of open scores, the world of Cage, Riley, Brown and other experimentalists, which actually only nicely rounded off everything. And by the time the conductor Michel Swierczewski joined the Prague Philharmonia, with whom I was playing at the time, and mooted the idea of launching a cycle of contemporary music concerts, Le Bel Aujourd'hui, and when Renáta Spisarová contacted me inviting me to join the Ostravská banda, my performance direction was clear. I still enjoyed plenty of classical concerts with the Prague Philharmonia, yet the apex of the season for me wasn't, say, concerts with Natalie Dessay or Magdalena Kožená but performing Messiaen's *Des canyons aux étoiles* before a packed Rudolfinum, with the audience not altogether having a clear idea of what to expect, or tours with Petr Kotík and the cosmopolitan Ostravská banda. I should also mention my experiences from the visual arts scene, from the Tate, MoMA, Vienna, Bilbao, Prague, or experiences from philosophy lectures… I find it almost impossible to believe that you can read Bernhard and Beckett, love Rothko, Malich, Pollock, Miró and Gaudí and then be closed to Cage, Ligeti, Stockhausen or Carter. I think that sometimes the visual arts open your ears too.

Your answer makes it clear that you don't view music and the world through the violin, yet I would still like to ask about the instrument. When it comes to various techniques and manners of playing applied in contemporary compositions, have you been able to make it all out yourself, merely on the basis of listening to recordings and studying scores? And has there been any piece whose mastering in technical terms represented a breaking point for you?

It's similar to the case of the first question: I probably don't have specific breaking points. Well, I know it was important to master Berio's *Sequenza*, to patiently seek Scelsi's microtones and to learn how to read his multiple staves fluently, to figure out Xenakis's rhythmic structures, not to let myself get confused in Reich, to unravel the dramatic-musical instructions of Kagel's quartets, etc. But since those compositions and challenges approached me somehow gradually, I don't recollect any clear-cut breaking point. Bach's sonatas and partitas, Bartók's too, will always remain a challenge, as will Berio's *Sequenza* or Boulez's *Anthèmes*. Finding within oneself absolute peace and humility for Feldman or a sense for late Nono may for some be just as challenging as deciphering various parallel layers in the case of relatively old Ives. As regards particular playing techniques themselves, some of them you puzzle out during improvisation (and then you may be disappointed that they have been used by a number of composers and colleagues/performers for a pretty long time), some you learn by listening, while others you get to gradually by conjecturing the composer's not always unambiguously formulated intentions. Yet owing to experience, gradual refinement of the sensation and intuition for various types of aesthetics, one can hope to get close to the original notion, or even shift it a little bit. Nevertheless, I have in my drawer a few pieces I have yet to learn and play somewhere, and I already look forward to further discoveries and encounters.

Do you listen to recordings of the pieces you rehearse?

It mostly depends on the situation, on my time and mental space. I try to listen, yet now and again I stop in my tracks and tell myself that I don't want a cast-in-stone opinion and that I want to approach the music as brand-new, as if written yesterday. This approach is, in my opinion, not totally amiss even in the case of so-called early music, yet it requires a certain scope of experience, aesthetic and theoretical preparedness, it cannot serve as an excuse for a lazy performer who has an unshakable confidence in himself and doesn't feel the necessity to confront a different opinion. Of course, if I start having doubts as to whether I'm going in the right direction or whether I understand all the instructions, recordings and their being (mostly) available online are a great help – they can, naturally, be both a guidance and a "warning".

As a composer myself, I know that there is a certain tension resulting from the fact that performers would often seem to have different criteria for that which makes a good piece a good piece (and a bad piece a bad piece). Can you too sense this, a person of an adventurous nature with a wide scope of knowledge and range of vision? What is actually necessary so as to make a composition "work" in terms of who stands on the stage?

Yes, I do occasionally perceive these discrepancies. But I think they are simply natural: it's probably impossible to expect a work to satisfy all those concerned, even though that actually should be the ideal denouement of the creative process. You, as the lead character, who is the only one to have passed through all its phases; one of your colleagues who will enjoy the actual decipherment of the work by looking at the score; a performer who will de-virtualise your piece; a listener who will read or not read your notes on the work and, open or closed beforehand, tired or, contrariwise, ready to listen, will expose himself /herself to it. These are simply quite diametrically different levels of perception. For me, every one of them is fascinating and cannot be separated from actually performing music. So as to make a composition work from my, that is, the performer's, point of view, I simply have to work on myself – I must be able to find the scope for its thorough exploration, to find sufficient humility and openness, not merely "rely" on routine experience and, most crucially, not let anything take away the curiosity and passion for the new. To want. That it is often desperately difficult to accomplish this in today's "industrial" music business, both of us know. Well, and the rest is a mystery and God's mercy, if I am to add a dash of hyperbole. Compositions calculated in the direction of the audience don't give me pleasure.

You are the driving force behind Prague Modern, an ensemble specialised in contemporary music, which was engendered from the Prague Philharmonia, if I am not mistaken. Can you briefly describe Prague Modern's past and present?

The Prague Modern project was brought forth in 2008 by the aforementioned Michel Swierczewski, at the time the main guest conductor of the Prague Philharmonia, in the wake of several, from our viewpoint quite successful, seasons of the Le Bel Aujourd'hui cycle. Originally, Michel wanted to extend the orchestra's range and portfolio with a more contemporary global repertoire, as well as more informed performance of early music. Therefore, he came up with the idea of the chamber cycle of contemporary music Le Bel Aujourd'hui, which, in collaboration with the French

Institute and its then visionary director Didier Montagné, the Prague Philharmonia carried out. Michel started from Debussy, Bartók, Janáček, Stravinsky and Schönberg, and he wanted the players gradually to get accustomed to performing new music as a matter of course, familiarise themselves with world-renowned 20th-century avant-garde composers, and he sought to help them to master modern playing techniques. Yet, unsurprisingly, it transpired that not everyone can be turned into a new music enthusiast, but there were a few who did take a liking to Michel's conception and let themselves be drawn in. It seemed that the next logical step was gradual anchoring of the ensemble's line-up. Therefore, the overarching title Prague Modern emerged and a few initial concert projects under the aegis of the Prague Philharmonia took place. Nevertheless, the reality of the operation of an established yet continuously developing orchestra didn't provide sufficient scope or money for fulfilling bold visions, and so, at the end of 2009, the ensemble disaffiliated and the civic association Prague Modern was born. Even though the ensemble has to date functioned as a project, in this time it has received invitations to prestigious festivals (Musica Strasbourg, Festival Besançon, Contempuls), has toured Slovakia and Romania, received residence at a small-scale festival in Turkey, while its student offshoot, Prague Modern Young, was founded, recruiting young people interested in new music. We are excited about our co-operation with Slovakia's Veni Academy project, as well as such internationally recognised figures as Pascal Gallois, Christophe Desjardins, Stephan Winkler, Miroslav Srnka, Francois Sarhan, Roland Kluttig, Rosemary Hardy and Jonathan Powell, and pieces specially written for our ensemble have been piling up. Undoubtedly, it will take a while before the ensemble settles down when it comes to its line-up, background and regular activities, but I really believe in the idea. The interest on the part of young musicians

in collaborating with Prague Modern Young is also extremely inspiring, and encouraging for further work.

Another of your key activities is the string quartet fama Q. It seems to me that playing in a string quartet must be a quite splendid manner of getting into contact with very representative areas of new music. How come that, unlike many other traditional chamber formations, the string quartet enjoys such great attention on the part of contemporary composers?

It occurs to me that it would actually be interesting to pinpoint a composer at the end of his/her career who, when it comes to the string quartet, doesn't have a single creative "notch" or at least an attempt in the drawer… Perhaps all creators have a period when they give over to the sound of the string quartet or need to grasp it somehow, tame it. It was once said that the string quartet and the male choir are the most sonically perfect and compact formations. I would agree wholeheartedly with this statement and I myself would one day like to step into the seemingly infinite landscape of string-quartet sonority as a composer. Whether you lose yourself in Lachenmann's soundscapes oscillating between noise and tone or, on the other hand, the abstract parts of Bach's *The Art of Fugue* as performed by a quartet, it still works wonderfully. Even Cage's open scores can be interesting in a quartet… Perhaps only Webern is not among the most interesting in this respect. Another colossal positive, in my opinion, is the fairly good compatibility between the string quartet and electronics, and I have the feeling that the two parties still have something with which to enrich each other sonically. What's more, four people is quite a family in itself. Democracy can be complicated here, but it's necessary, a manifestation of confrontation may occasionally be healthy, yet it is destructive over the long term at any rate. And as regards logistics, this formation is almost ideal…

What significant concerts and projects do you have in store?

I'm looking forward to the "resounding" of the Negrelli Viaduct with Prague Modern Young on 20 September, performing Luigi Nono's *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* for solo violin and electronics at DOX within the Contempuls festival, as well as Jarrell's marvellous *Cassandra* with Prague Modern at La Fabrika within the same festival. I'm relishing too new compositions for the repertoire of fama Q within the ISCM World New Music Days in Košice, Slovakia, and, most currently, the exhausting yet incredibly inspiring marathon of new music as well as old avant-garde pieces at the Ostrava Days in August, the entire merry-go-round of encounters, debates and exchange of views… Of major significance and absolutely crucial for Prague Modern will be the release of the debut CD with Pascal Gallois conducting and our first independent season in 2014.

A hypothetical question to end with: if you didn't play the violin, what would you like to do?

To round off my education somewhat and give lectures on something like, let's say, Nono-logy or Eco-logy at a fine university, and write books. To blog. To be a covert conceptual artist. To open a restaurant where I would do the cooking, a café

or a bookshop. To work out how to get rich by fair means and then proceed to sponsor festivals, composers, artists, creative people and, by doing so, perhaps change the milieu around us a little. But when I am not playing, I teach and am a dad, that is also quite creative, it has beautiful overlaps and at the same time it keeps one's feet firmly on the ground.

David Danel

Born in 1974 in Havířov, David Danel studied the violin at the Janáček Conservatory in Ostrava in the class of Ladislav Gořula and at Ostrava University (today the Faculty of Arts of Ostrava University) in the class of Prof. Zdeněk Gola. He also attended master classes given by Eduard Grač. He won Beethoven Hradec and the Leoš Janáček Competition in Brno. As a soloist, he has performed with the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra Ostrava, Capella Istropolitana, Slovak Chamber Orchestra, Talich Chamber Orchestra, Brno Chamber Soloists (with whom he toured Spain), appeared at the Dartington Summer Festival, New Music Evenings in Bratislava, New Music At Home, Forfest in Kroměříž, Afyonkarahisar Müzik Festivali (Turkey) and performed within the concert cycles of the Slovak Philharmonic, Alles im Fluss (Passau), Le Bel Aujourd'hui (PKF – Prague Philharmonia), Phillips Collection LEC Series (USA), Music Gallery Toronto (Canada), etc. As a chamber player, he has worked with artists of such renown as Rosemary Hardy, Martin Helmchen, Reto Reichenberg, Ivan Šiller, the Bohuslav Martinů Quartet, Klára Kormendi, Milan Pala, Yuval Gotlibovitch, Robert Cohen, Přemysl Vojta and Ewald Danel. As a soloist or a member of the fama Q quartet, he often makes premiere recordings and performs works by contemporary composers. He is artistic director of Prague Modern and a member of the ensembles Ostravská banda, MoEns and early reflections. From 2000 to 2011 he was a member of the Prague Philharmonia. Since 2012 he has taught at the Jaroslav Ježek Conservatory in Prague and since 2005 has regularly given lessons within the Crescendo Summer Institute of the Arts in Hungary and music performance training in Opočno, Czech Republic.

by Jindřich Bálek

A FEW THOUGHTS ON YOUNG CZECH CONDUCTORS

When viewed from outside, Czech music has a number of noted conductors. Indeed, some even use the term "Czech conducting school". The question, however, is whether we can talk about a continuous conducting tradition. When it comes to the younger generation of Czech conductors, their stories are rather individual – yet that's the way it has to be if they are to become distinct figures. Young Czech conductors are in demand, both at the regional and the "top" levels. Let us then highlight a few names and a few connections.

One thing should be made clear from the very outset – there is a generation gap between Czech conductors. On the one hand, we have the eighty-year-old Libor Pešek and the almost seventy-year-old Jiří Bělohlávek; on the other, there are conductors talked of as belonging to the up-and-coming generation, with the most distinguished among them being Tomáš Netopil and Jakub Hrůša. It would seem that in the "Normalisation" era of the 1970s and 1980s young potential conductors did not receive the appropriate impulses. A similar "generation gap" can, however, be observed in a number of other areas of the humanities, whereby we have the generation of "old legends" and the generation of "young hopes". Today, the young generation is slowly becoming the middle-age generation; natural continuity is evidently an extremely scarce phenomenon in Czech culture. In this connection, we must raise the question of who teaches young conductors. And we get back to the major role played by Jiří Bělohlávek, who, among other things, has been a very devoted teacher and professor at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague since 1997.

Yet the personality of a teacher is not in itself decisive for the future artistic path of a conductor. Legends are told about great conductors who had totally unknown teachers. On the other hand, technique must not be underestimated, and it is undoubtedly good that

Bělohlávek is a consistent teacher. He himself possesses a highly "objective" conducting technique and encourages his pupils to become comprehensible to the orchestra. Bělohlávek banishes from the students' heads the conviction that conducting is just a sort of elegant magic, making them instead understand that a conductor has to reflect precisely that which he really tells the orchestra through the gesture. But not even that guarantees that the conductor is respected by the orchestra. To attain this, other gifts are necessary, including the indescribable charisma. Václav Talich, for instance, does not have a direct successor of his calibre, while the celebrated Sir Charles Mackerras admitted that he had learned the most during face-to-face meetings, by attending rehearsals and discussing scores.

Conducting is not a discipline for child prodigies. What is really important is that a young conductor has someone and somewhere to conduct. Memories of student days are often amusing, with many conductors saying that while at school they had the chance to conduct a pianist at the very most. Accordingly, an essential role is played by the professional ensemble a young conductor is afforded the opportunity to lead. And should it happen that a conductor wins a competition, the invitation to appear as a guest with renowned orchestras is a truly great reward.

As regards the opportunities afforded to the finest young Czech conductors, serving as a prime example is the atmosphere in which the chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic was recently selected. The names of Jakub Hrůša and Tomáš Netopil, both of them in their thirties, were mentioned among the candidates. Yet the Czech Philharmonic is not overly fond of young conductors, or would by no means want to have one in the chief's post. The convenience of engaging Jiří Bělohlávek as the chief conductor is beyond dispute and, what's more, the orchestra members' dream of being led by an established conductor of the "mature generation" has come true. But the fact that many of the orchestra members have long been of the opinion that a chief conductor younger than fifty years of age simply doesn't have the desired experience and authority is rather quaint and manifests insufficient self-reflection. I believe that this type of mindset is simply wrong, with the very history of the Czech Philharmonic serving as proof. Both Talich and Kubelík were very young when they assumed the post of the orchestra's chief conductor. It is natural when a renowned orchestra helps a young conductor at the outset of his/her career – and the conductor will return it to the orchestra after having matured artistically. Hence, in this regard I consider it the most logical if in a few years' time Hrůša and Netopil would be the two candidates to succeed Bělohlávek. After all, in the world of such stars as Dudamel or Nezet-Seguin a very young chief conductor is an entirely normal thing.

I don't want to be unjust to anyone, but there are indeed merely two names most commonly referred to in relation to the young generation of Czech conductors – those of **Tomáš Netopil** and **Jakub Hrůša**. Yet when we talk about young conductors, we should also mention other names: **Tomáš Hanus, Marko Ivanovič, Charles Olivieri Munroe** (of Canadian origin), as well as **Zbyněk Müller, Jan Kučera, Ondřej Vrabec, Marek Štryncl…** I don't claim that I can list all our promising conductors, since they are various and characteristic types of stories. Let us therefore focus on the two most distinct ones.

Tomáš Netopil
(b. 1975) first gained attention by winning the 2002 Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition in Frankfurt, which opened up for him the gates to the world. Besides studying at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague with Jiří Bělohlávek, he attended the Royal Academy in Stockholm under the tutelage of the renowned pedagogue Jorma Panula. Netopil originally played the violin, which is a clear advantage for a conductor. Although his victory at the Solti competition was soon known at home, it took months, or rather years, before he first conducted an orchestra in the Czech capital: the Prague Symphony Orchestra, performing Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. He arrived with a clear opinion and resolved to raise enthusiasm among the players.
With the Prague Symphony Orchestra, Netopil also made his debut recording for the Supraphon label, featuring Josef Suk's Symphony in E major and Dvořák's *Symphonic Poems* from the cycle *Nature, Life and Love*. Owing to his being engaged with the ensemble, he could also conduct in Prague Smetana's *My Country*, with the recording of Netopil's lively and forcibly built interpretation being released by the orchestra itself. His first performance with the Czech Philharmonic took place later. Far more frequent than in Prague were Netopil's appearances in Brno (which for a native

Tomáš Netopil

of Kroměříž was perhaps natural), and noteworthy is the fact that he made his very first recordings, at the end of the 1990s, with the Symphony Orchestra in České Budějovice, South Bohemia.

In 2003, Netopil was still referred to as a novice, even though in that very year his career began assuming international dimensions. In 2004 he gave his first performances in Cleveland and Seville, to great acclaim. *"I have always felt the desire to lead an orchestra,"* Netopil said, recalling his violin studies at the Kroměříž Conservatory, where he had a chance to do so. The next year, he stood before a symphony orchestra during conducting training in Olomouc. Yet the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, where he studied the violin and conducting, did not satisfy his ambitions. *"As a student, almost all the time you only get to conduct a pianist. You are trained in gestures, analysing scores, yet you don't learn the most important thing – communication with the players. Not to mention the possibility for conductors to get a residency abroad, which didn't appear at the school for twenty years."* As he found it necessary to further hone his skills, he enrolled at the Royal Academy in Stockholm. The aforementioned triumph at the prestigious Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition followed: Netopil was one of the three contestants to progress through three challenging rounds. His victory resulted in his being given several concert opportunities and also aroused interest on the part of two music agencies in London and Vienna. He ultimately concluded an exclusive contract with the Austrian company.

Another springboard was Netopil's stay in Aspen, Colorado, where every summer the recreation centre in the mountains hosts hundreds of musicians at training courses. *"Together with another seven hundred musicians – composers, instrumentalists and singers – I spent almost ten weeks in Aspen."* The director of the Aspen summer school, David Zinman, has played a significant role in Netopil's artistic development. Conductors are prepared there in all aspects, including the repertoire. At the end of the stay, Mr. Zinman gives an award to one of the students, who is granted free participation the next year and invited to perform with the Cleveland Orchestra. In 2003, Tomáš Netopil, the only Czech present, received the prize.

The turning point in his domestic career finally occurred in 2009, when he accepted the post of chief conductor of the National Theatre Opera in Prague, where he was invited by its equally young Artistic Director, Jiří Heřman. Even though he couldn't have anticipated that he would be music director at the National for just two seasons, he plunged into his work with immense verve. In one of the interviews, he said: *"Once you succeed in involving the players in preparation and study in several projects, the result is heard immediately. An ensemble whose players constantly rotate and circulate in performances of a repertory theatre loses the sense for chamber music in a symphonic orchestra. Yet this problem instantly disappears in more focused projects, when you have available the same group of players."* This chapter in Netopil's career finished because the National Theatre's organisational and financial difficulties disallowed further collaboration. And if a young conductor wants to appear abroad, he has to confront the fact that engagements are usually planned one year longer in advance than in the Czech Republic.

Tomáš Netopil has gained invaluable foreign experience, working with German, Italian and Spanish orchestras. *"Dresden and Munich are different worlds. Otherwise it is difficult to compare. In Valencia, for instance, orchestras concentrate for three weeks on a single production entailing twelve performances. They are well prepared but there are other problems. In Valencia, I was doing The Bartered Bride and it was a really tough nut to crack. Suddenly I had before me an orchestra, ninety per cent of whom were young graduates from prestigious schools in America and Europe. But they had no experience with opera whatsoever."* On another occasion, Netopil described his engagement in Turin, where he was preparing a production of *Idomeneo*: *"The orchestra has immense experience with the opera repertoire, it even has a symphonic series, it's a staggiona type, yet it plays before an audience of seventeen thousand people. Accordingly, preparing Idomeneo in such a theatre is a problem. That is one of the reasons why I really looked forward to the production at the Estates Theatre in Prague, the space for which Mozart actually wrote his operas."* Netopil is extremely open to performing on historical instruments. *"I would like to mention a remarkable*

experience I had with the orchestra in Lugano, Switzerland. I was exploring a Mozart programme, it was an orchestra I didn't know at all, but their preparedness and discipline in the classicist sense of the word was incredible. You arrive at the first rehearsal, the orchestra players have clarinas, Baroque timpani, natural horns – and each and every one of them is informed in historical performance. From the very beginning, you can wallow in creating phrases and in matters in which you take real pleasure. In my opinion, the next development stage of traditional orchestras is their embracing the world of Baroque ensembles."

Tomáš Netopil's international career entails regular guest appearances at the Bavarian State Opera, where he explored Busoni's scarcely staged opera *Doktor Faust*, and at the Semperoper in Dresden, where he has undertaken Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Halévy's *La Juive*. When it comes to the relation between symphonic and operatic conducting, he doesn't like pigeon-holing but does admit: *"It's a great plus when a conductor masters both, in terms of music and philosophy. It's more interesting not to stay in just one world."*

He has a very close affinity to orchestras in Italy, where he has alsso regularly performed. In 2011, Netopil was presented with the opportunity to raise his profile considerably since he had time in the week when the Berliner Philharmoniker needed a conductor to stand in for the recently deceased Sir Charles Mackerras. (Jakub Hrůša had to turn down the offer because of a prior engagement in London.) It was moving to see the sheer excitement with which Netopil entered the stage to conduct Dvořák's *Symphony No. 7* in its original version and Martinů's *Three Fragments* from the opera *Juliette*. Another high-profile appearance was at the anniversary Mozart Salzburg festival in 2006, where he conducted Mozart's opera *Lucio Sila*. And there have been numerous other prestigious engagements, as listed in his official agency biography.

I think that the great forte of young conductors in general is their communicativeness. Netopil has said in this respect: *"Feedback from the orchestra is essential. If the conductor and the players interconnect it works."* As for the specificities of the present time, he deems it crucial to overcome the pitfalls of the music business, which to date he has succeeded in doing: *"Everything is speeded up nowadays. Attaining an orchestra's singular sound is not cultivated, alternation of conductors in various positions is faster. New stellar singers come and go, because they aren't able to manage their own schedule. Conductors may not burn out so quickly, but they too have to consider thoroughly which ways to choose."* When it comes to his model conductors, he is reserved. He holds Sir John Eliot Gardiner in very high regard, but in the case of newer music he likes various things with various conductors.

Following his departure from the National Theatre, in the 2012/13 season Netopil was again a freelance artist. In the 2013/14 season he assumed the post of Generalmusikdirektor in Essen. He was greatly encouraged to succeed Jiří Kout at the Prague Symphony Orchestra, yet he hasn't had overly positive experience with Czech institutions, perhaps even bad luck. Nevertheless, in addition to his debut album, he and the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra have made another two recordings, one of them featuring Dvořák's two cello concertos with the young soloist Tomáš Jamník, the other comprising Janáček's orchestral works. Netopil's most recent significant performance at home was at this year's Prague Spring festival, where he conducted the Czech Philharmonic performing Aaron Copland's *Symphony No. 3*. He debuted in Essen on 19 September with Voříšek's *Symphony in D major* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*. We have a great deal to look forward to.

Jakub Hrůša

(b. 1981) was very young indeed when he started to conduct seasoned orchestras – from the very beginning he had to gain respect, since even the youngest members were older than he was. Yet he always succeeded, and today no one disputes his authority. Jakub Hrůša is perhaps the most distinct pupil of Jiří Bělohlávek, with whom he has frequently been compared. He himself characterises his teacher as follows: *"Naturally, every outstanding pedagogue leaves a bold imprint. I too subconsciously and wittingly bear within his signature. His way of teaching is, however, very open and actually urges one to question and even be different. He is stricter in insisting on perfect mastery of the manual technique. This is perhaps why having been taught by him is discernible."* Hrůša was also influenced by the fact that he did not study at a conservatory but a grammar school, after which he directly enrolled at the Academy of Performing Arts. He gained his first significant conducting experience with the Prague Student Orchestra, with whom in 2002 at the international competition in Neerpelt, Belgium, he came first and won the "Summa cum laude" prize. In 2004 he and the Czech Student Orchestra concluded the prestigious Young Euro Classic festival in Berlin. At his graduation concert, he performed Josef Suk's challenging symphony *Asrael* to acclaim and was soon offered representation by a noted music agency. Before he had reached the age of twenty-five, in addition to being afforded the opportunity to give concerts at home, he had appeared as a guest with dozens of foreign orchestras. *"Probably the most fundamental point is the ability to defend your ideas when you get to the lectern,"* Hrůša said

Jakub Hrůša

in one of his first interviews, yet instantly added that there is not a moment when he wouldn't know what to study, pointing out the importance of beauty and the emotional dimension in music.

The first Czech orchestra Hrůša helmed was the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Zlín (2005–2008). Soon after assuming the post, he and the ensemble were invited to Prague Spring. Then, amid fierce competition with 90 conductors from around the world he won and in September 2005 became assistant to the chief conductor Myung-Whun Chung at the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Previously, from 2002 to 2005, he had served as assistant to two chief conductors at the Czech Philharmonic – Vladimir Ashkenazy and Zdeněk Mácal. He could thus attend all the rehearsals and ultimately was given the opportunity to stand in at a concert within the Bohuslav Martinů Fest. *"At the Czech Philharmonic, it was above all educational – I had the chance to observe all the orchestra's activities; rehearsals, concerts, communication with conductors, when you even come to know things that could not be published. When a crisis situation occurs, you can be afforded the chance to stand in, to be a ´substitute´, which actually happened to me at the Czech Philharmonic. I am grateful to the orchestra for their willingness to co-operate..."* As for his role of assistant at the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Paris, he commented as follows: *"It's amazing that I can be in real contact with distinguished artists I have not seen in Prague such as, for instance, Pierre Boulez and Valery Gergiev. It's also a reality check for performance artistry. Sometimes uplifting, at others disillusioning. Moreover, it is very useful to view the domestic musical life from the distance of another country."*

Since the 2008/09 season Jakub Hrůša has been chief conductor of the PKF – Prague Philharmonia, where he succeeded Kaspar Zehnder. The orchestra, founded in 1994 by Jiří Bělohlávek, is an ideal match – a young conductor in the Czech Republic can hardly imagine a better one. Hrůša sets the programmes of seasons, himself choosing the works to be presented. At his inaugural concert, he performed Beethoven's *Ninth*. Other works that soon followed included Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 14* and, of course, pieces by the Classicist masters, as well as 20th-century music. A typical trait is that over the long term he has also led the orchestra, originally established as a "chamber" ensemble, to focus also on the grand symphonic repertoire, giving it a somewhat modern and slimmer form. Accordingly, in addition to its core fare, made up of Classicist compositions, the PKF – Prague Philharmonia performs Brahms or Dvořák symphonies and a host of opera projects. Hrůša's endeavours were justified by the orchestra being invited to open the 2010 Prague Spring festival with Bedřich Smetana's *My Country*. And their "slender" version of the work met with an enthusiastic response. By the way, Hrůša is the youngest conductor to have opened Prague Spring.

Jakub Hrůša formulates his opinions of musical interpretation in an extremely pregnant manner. He is open to various approaches, yet his preferences are evident. "*My ideal is the ability to guide an orchestra at any time, as well as to know when not to lead it… The way of conducting manifests itself essentially in the overall result. I think that if a conductor is not precise, it is simply audible in the music – and*

I don't judge whether it is good or bad. It depends on specific examples." In another interview, he defined the role of conductors: "*The purpose of our work is not to allow the music rendition on stage to become a stereotype and resign to the artistic dimension of the performance. Not to be a mere executor but to remain an inspirer of creative work."* And as to his model artists? "*When it comes to conductors, my teacher Jiří Bělohlávek is definitely number one, followed by, in the past, Leonard Bernstein, Sergiu Celibidache, and, the present, Claudio Abbado. Even though Bernstein's nature is not consistent with mine, it is really inspiring to touch his artistry at least through recordings and films. Celibidache is a titan as regards his intellectual grasping of music! His recordings encompass a quality that I haven't found elsewhere. This cannot be changed by his sometimes unbearable 'style', for instance, his slow tempos of slow movements, for which he had plenty of arguments. His reactions are simply an amazing schooling in phrasing, motivic work, building of gradations, tectonics of all kinds. What one can embrace above all is his personal courage to reflect upon music in a non-traditional manner. Abbado is a certain antipode to Celibidache. In his case, I always find the most natural path to music I can imagine."*

Jakub Hrůša's recordings have been acclaimed too. His debut album with the PKF – Prague Philharmonia features Antonín Dvořák's *Waltzes* and *Czech Suite,* other CDs Dvořák's *Serenades for Strings* and *Wind Instruments*, as well as Josef Suk's *Serenade for Strings*. The disc he made with the cellist Jiří Bárta contains Josef Bohuslav Foerster's *Cello Concerto*. With the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra, Hrůša recorded an album of Leoš Janáček's music, and the live performance of the aforementioned opening concert at the 2010 Prague Spring featuring Smetana's *My Country* was released by Supraphon.

In 2010 he was appointed permanent guest conductor at the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra and artistic director of the Glyndebourne on Tour project, within which every autumn for three successive years he prepared an opera: *Don Giovanni*, *La bohéme* and *Rusalka*. At the summer Glyndebourne Opera Festival he also performed Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. He said that appearing at the festival was one of his dreams come true, since he was provided with the exclusive opportunity to focus for several weeks on artistic work solely.

Before receiving the Glyndebourne engagement, Jakub Hrůša mainly gave symphonic concerts. He declared: *"I don't want work on opera to prevail in my career; I would like to dedicate approximately two thirds of a season to concerts and only one third to opera."* The list of the orchestras Jakub Hrůša has conducted to date bears witness to his meteoric rise. To name but a few: the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, SWR Symphony Stuttgart, WDR Symphony Cologne, NDR Symphony Hamburg, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Royal Flemish Philharmonic. Furthermore, he has also worked with a number of orchestras in Japan and the USA (Washington National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Seattle Symphony). *"I particularly like working with German orchestras, who regularly have a generous rehearsal time and are characterised by their intensive approach to the given task,"* Hrůša said. And his opinion of the Czech Philharmonic? *"It's an orchestra to which I will never be indifferent with regard to its history and tradition, but so far we have only discussed my regular guest appearances. The possibility of my becoming its chief conductor is just media speculation."* The current season with the PKF – Prague Philharmonia opened with an original programme made up of a Mahler song cycle, Martinů's *Field Mass* and Wranitzky's *Symphony in C minor*. Hrůša is currently preparing performances of Dvořák's *Symphonic Poems* after K. J. Erben, as well as Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*.

Another promising young Czech conductor is **Tomáš Hanus** (b. 1970). He too studied with Jiří Bělohlávek, at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno. In 1999 he won the International Conductors' Competition in Katowice, Poland. To date, he has mainly worked for opera and, similarly to Netopil's engagement in Prague, his tenure as music director of the National Theatre in Brno was very short (2007–2009). In the 2006/07 season, he made a successful debut at the Opéra National de Paris (Bastille) with a production of Janáček's *The Makropulos Case*, while at the Bavarian State Opera he first appeared with Janáček's *Jenufa* and returned with Dvořák's *Rusalka*. At the Deutsche Oper Berlin he conducted Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and at the Theatre Basel Scartazzini's opera *Der Sandmann*. Noteworthy too are his appearances at the Mostly Mozart festival in New York, collaborations with the Gävle Symfoniorkester in Sweden, the National Philharmonic in Warsaw and Milan's I Pomeriggi Musicali. Tomáš Hanus had also performed with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Switzerland's Musikkollegium Winterthur at Zurich's Tonhalle. In one of his most recent interviews for the Czech media, he said: "*The fact that you don't hear much about me particularly applies to Brno and the Czech Republic. I have worked in Basel, Berlin, Lyon, Munich, Paris, Madrid, Copenhagen, Dresden, etc., as well as at Prague Spring. I have so many offers that I can't accept them all and have to choose carefully. I have no answer to the question of why I am not seen more often at home, since I have*

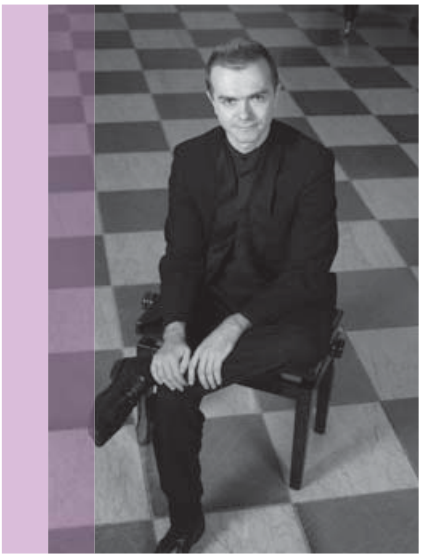
never built a wall between myself and the Czech domestic scene. At one time, this situation was an issue for me, yet today my schedule is really busy and I feel happy travelling abroad. My recent concert at Prague Spring – with France's Ensemble Intercontemporain – was the only one in our country for over two years. But I still have a very warm relationship to our country and culture."

An interview Tomáš Hanus has given to Dita Hradecká can be found on the following pages.

Charles Olivieri Munroe
www.olivieri-munroe.com

Marko Ivanović
www.mivanovic.com
See also CMQ 3/2012

Ondřej Vrabec
www.vrabcovi.cz/ondra-en
See also CMQ 1/2008



Marek Štryncl
www.marekstryncl.cz

Zbyněk Müller
www.zbynekmuller.com

Tomáš Hanus
www.tomas-hanus.com
See interview in this issue

Jan Kučera
www.nachtigallartists.com

by Dita Hradecká

TOMÁŠ HANUS:
I MYSELF AM RESPONSIBLE FOR MY REPUTATION

Over the past decade, Tomáš Hanus's career has developed at a heady pace. The modest conductor, who we previously saw before Czech orchestras, is now in great demand throughout Europe, with the critics lavishing superlatives on his performances, particularly in Janáček operas. At this year's Prague Spring festival he proved to be adept in contemporary music as well, conducting Ensemble Intercontemporain.

How did you studies proceed and what was your path to music before enrolling at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts?

As a child from a family of musicians, I was surrounded by music from a tender age. I am really grateful to my parents for striving to show me the path to honest work. I have always gravitated towards conducting; I was interested in it even when I was a kid – at a child's level. When at the age of ten I conducted in public for the first time, which was actually a birthday present, my parents didn't let themselves be allured by the possibility of my further conducting performances, which suggested itself. So I studied the violin, thus gaining invaluable experience as an instrumentalist.

Later on you eventually studied with Jiří Bělohlávek. Is it difficult to step out of the shadow of a famous artist and find one's own direction?

I don't know whether it's difficult, since Jiří Bělohlávek never intended to overshadow me. He was a teacher who afforded me great freedom, only offering me his experience and immensely competent guidance – respecting the fact that others simply have to be different. Of course, he influenced me and I gradually absorbed that which he'd taught me, yet it was an entirely natural development, without any conscious stepping out from his shadow, drawing the line. Owing to our foreign engagements, our everyday mutual working proximity couldn't continue, but we have remained friends.

What other, including non-musical, experiences and events helped you when seeking your own musical expression?

It was definitely the intensive seeking of the purpose of life during my studies and later on the path of faith, which for me is not necessarily just faith in God but also belief in the Human, one's value and originality. I am not aware of having sought my own expression in the sense of longing to be "different", I rather wanted to open myself so that a composition sounded as beautiful and as truthful as possible.

How did you manage, as a student of Brno's Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts, to be guided by Jiří Bělohlávek, who at the time was working in Prague?

I cherish the fact that the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts enabled me to officially study with Jiří Bělohlávek, even though they didn't have to allow it and could have considerably complicated my studies. Yet Professor Zouhar, the head of department, and Professor Piňos, as well as the conducting teachers, behaved like true gentlemen and supported me. And Professor Trhlík selflessly attended the rehearsals for my graduation concert on behalf of Jiří Bělohlávek and helped me as though I were his own student. I am grateful for it. I was thus provided with all the major conditions so as to learn something.

How long does it take, in your opinion, for a conductor to mature? It's undoubtedly a complex profession requiring a certain degree of personal maturity, even though today we can see on stages "stars" barely twenty years of age.

It takes a very long time indeed. Speaking personally, it would seem a lifelong journey. A journey that cannot be "learned" in advance, a journey fraught with seeking, finding and losing… That would be a long tale to tell. Yet I ardently support giving young conductors a chance. Admittedly, there are extremes in both directions, sometimes good looks and youth are taken as an essential qualification, while at others morbid distrust of young conductors prevails. During the time I was starting out, the latter was rather the case in the Czech Republic, sometimes it verged on a certain type of ageism in reverse. It was an immensely difficult period. I could breathe much more freely abroad, since the orchestras there weren't interested in popularity or grey hair but the performance itself. And they were able to show it.

Have you always gravitated towards opera? Do you consider yourself primarily an opera conductor?

I have always gravitated to both opera and concert music, and it was merely a concurrence of circumstances that resulted in my making the first vital steps towards an international career in the opera genre. Gerard Mortier entrusted me with the premiere of The Makropulos Case at Paris's Opéra Bastille, which led to subsequent invitations to other outstanding opera houses. Recently, this ratio has begun to balance out; for instance, during my two-month guest engagement in Munich in the spring of 2013 I conducted two opera productions, as well as a concert featuring Rudolf Buchbinder (Mozart's Piano concerto in D minor) and Mahler's Seventh.

You have also directed a large institution – the Janáček Theatre Opera. Did this two-year engagement teach you a "lesson"? What are your memories of the time spent there and do you feel like settling down in any – Czech or foreign – opera house or orchestra in the future?

Well, I recall my engagement at the Brno opera house as the most difficult period of my life to date. I really suffered from not being able to lead the company in the direction I considered right. But I also have fond memories of a number of fabulous people who worked there. The lesson I have learned is that never again will I make the same mistake. I am still willing to direct an opera house or an orchestra, yet only on condition that I would be able to work there on my terms.

What is, in your opinion, the "curse" that continues to afflict the National Theatre and the State Opera in Prague? What should be done so as to make it function normally? Do you know any example of a good foreign model?

That's a really difficult question to answer. I don't know the situation in detail, but I dare say that the meddling on the part of the Ministry of Culture over the past few years seems to have been incompetent in the extreme. Theatres in general need to be headed by true personalities who together with their teams are afforded the opportunity to actually accomplish something and not be sacked according to the politicians' momentary whim. Nor should they be dictated what to do. Moreover, they should be paid a decent salary so they don't have to supplement it with other activities and can therefore fully engage in their work and live a decent life. It's virtually impossible for an artist who rehearses in the morning, teaches or performs somewhere in the afternoon and then in the evening has to perform again to give the best possible performances over the long term. There are different models abroad, and they function properly. It's not that one model would tower above all the others. But it greatly depends on the particular theatre's management, that is, the specific implementation. In a number of European cities, theatre is deemed a crucial part of life to a much greater extent than is the case here, with their audiences being made up of a far wider spectrum of people.

Abroad you have gained renown above all as a conductor of Czech operas, Janáček in particular. Do you feel a special affinity to the composer?

Yes, I do. Janáček means a lot to me. But I'm glad that now I can also sink my teeth into works by "non-Czech" composers – at the beginning of the next season I will explore, for instance, Il Barbiere di Siviglia at the Teatro Real in Madrid.

How do you perceive it when a Czech work (be it Rusalka or Jenufa) is undertaken by foreign stage directors and artists? Do they ever ask you for advice?

I think that it's absolutely normal for Czech operas to be considered part of the global cultural heritage, and so I deem their being staged by foreign directors an entirely natural matter. Some of those who turn to me as a conductor discuss the conception, others don't. Martin Kušej, who directs a Rusalka production in Munich, for instance, familiarised me in detail with his concept, yet he pursued his own path. Not that he didn't communicate with me during the rehearsals, what I am saying is that he had his conception and we rather discussed details. Modern stage direction can be good or bad, I cannot voice an overall point of view. The Munich Rusalka is liked by some, disliked by others, but

many acknowledge its power and the depth of the production's message.

Are, in your opinion, Janáček's works comprehensible around the world – can, let's say, a Japanese audience empathise with Katya Kabanova's fate?

Yes, I think they can.

Going back to the time of your debuts abroad – how do you remember your first performance in a foreign country? What surprised you, how did you feel?

One of my first engagements was a performance of My Country with the Dresden Philharmonic. As I have indicated earlier, I was surprised by the natural respect with which the musicians worked with me. That is, my age was not seen as a hindrance, whereas at home I was used to a different approach.

Do you have any ritual you observe prior to an important concert or stage performance? Something you would never do, or something you always do...?

I don't have any ritual, I only try to find the time for a short afternoon nap. I never overeat or let myself be distracted by anything. I always browse through the respective score.

Concerts with Ensemble Intercontemporain deviate somewhat from your current agenda. How did you come into contact with the ensemble and how does contemporary music enrich you?

The invitation to work with them also followed my debut in Paris at the Opéra Bastille, where the people from Ensemble Intercontemporain's management had seen me. Thus the invitation to give a concert in Prague paradoxically came from them. Contemporary music opens up to me entirely undreamt-of worlds and is just fantastic, especially with such brilliant musicians.

Your schedule is really packed – is this mainly owing to your agency's efforts? Can a conductor of your capacity do without an agent nowadays? How do you actually perceive the "business" that classical music is willy-nilly surrounded by?

The idea that a packed schedule is solely an agency's doing is only widespread in the Czech Republic, and it is a false notion. Interest in an artist mainly results from the success garnered, and good references too for that matter. The fact that an artist is repeatedly invited somewhere is deemed the best proof of satisfaction on the part of the respective orchestra and its management. I'm sure that there are other paths too, but they don't allure me. For me, an agency is significant in that it provides a service, as well as a certain respectable brand, yet I myself am responsible for my reputation. Business as such is neither good nor bad, again everything depends on people. And I must say that I have been quite lucky with the people I've encountered.

Are there any limits you would never go beyond when it comes to popularisation of classical music?

Yes, absolutely, but I have yet to face such a situation.

How do you manage to balance your professional and family life?

Even though we have a big family, it hasn't been too great a problem, thanks to my wife. Yet I view the personal and professional parts of my life as a single whole, I strive to keep the two in harmony.

If one of your children decided to study music, would you try to talk him/her out of it?

I really hope that my children grow to love music. In the event that one of them wanted to study it, I would honestly warn against all the pitfalls. But I would only try to talk them out of it if they didn't possess sufficient talent.

A couple of rather general questions to end with… How do you think opera as an institution and artistic genre will evolve? And what about models of orchestras' functioning and their role?

To be honest, I cannot predict how it will evolve, yet I can describe certain signals I perceive today that may reflect in the future. It's above all a combination of singing and acting. Some superb singers are such good actors that it takes your breath away. Accordingly, opera is likely to be less a "concert

in costumes" and increasingly become a live combination of music and dramatic performance. This is really viable and powerful, and I would like this direction to be taken. Moreover, opera attracts young people too; it really is "Gesamtkunstwerk". For a long time now, opera orchestras have ceased to play the role of mere accompaniment, with the top-class ensembles especially being able to conjure with sound and concurrently excel in technical brilliance. Live sound, sound as a communication tool, is undoubtedly another thrilling aspect of the operatic art.
As regards orchestras in general, it has been continuously confirmed that quality usually wins recognition. Although there are various models, they only function when they bear in mind that one aspect is crucial: superlative musicians in collaboration with a superlative conductor. And when human consonance and mutual enrichment is added… I think that orchestral music has an immense potential to address audiences, touch them. Orchestras should to an increased degree nurture the young generation too (many of them do it, and do it well), so as to afford the young the opportunity to discover them. Besides professionalism, the sincerity and truthfulness of an orchestra's performance is very sensitively perceived by young people.

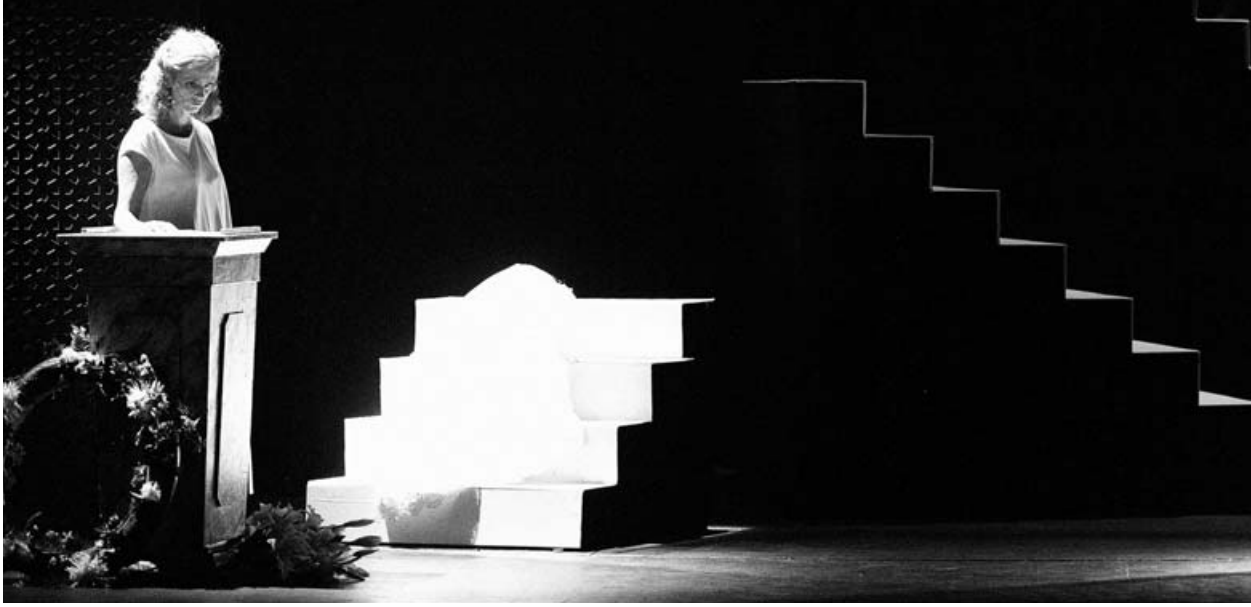
Tomáš Hanus

Born in 1970 in Brno, where he studied at the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts. He first gained recognition after winning the conducting competition in Katowice, Poland, in 1999.
As an assistant conductor to Jiří Bělohlávek, he worked on a production of Janáček's Katya Kabanova at the Finnish National Opera (2003) and of Smetana's The Devil's Wall at the National Theatre in Prague (2001). In 2007 he was appointed director of the National Theatre Opera in Brno, a post he held for two seasons.
Today, Tomáš Hanus is renowned worldwide primarily as a conductor of Janáček operas. In the 2006/07 season he debuted to great acclaim at the Opéra National de Paris with The Makropulos Case. In the 2009/10 season he returned to Paris and again garnered deserved esteem with the Janáček opera. He also prepared The Makropulos Case for the National Theatre in Prague. In the same period, he debuted with Janáček's Jenufa at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, where he subsequently returned to conduct Martin Kušej's controversial production of Dvořák's Rusalka.
He has appeared at the Mostly Mozart festival in New York, worked with Sweden's Gävle Symfoniorkester, the National Philharmonic in Warsaw and Milan's I Pomeriggi Musicali.
His other successes include a debut with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, guest appearances with the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, co-operation with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and conducting the distinguished Musikkollegium Winterthur at the Tonhalle in Zurich.
Tomáš Hanus's schedule for the previous season was extremely hectic. He debuted at the Theater Basel, conducted The Cunning Little Vixen at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin and also presented the Janáček piece at the Opéra de Lyon. He again returned to the Bayerische Staatsoper, to work on a revived production of Jenufa and on a new staging of Hänsel und Gretel. In addition to regular trips to Munich, he is soon scheduled to debut with the Royal Danish Opera, the Gran Teatre del Liceu Barcelona and the Teatro Real Madrid. Furthermore, he will conduct Rusalka at the Finnish National Opera. The Semperoper in Dresden has engaged him for the staging of a new opera by Miroslav Srnka.
His non-opera engagements are numerous too. They include, for instance, working with orchestras of such renown as the Bayerisches Staatsorchester, Camerata Salzburg, Madrid Symphony Orchestra and Ensemble Intercontemporain, with whom he appeared at this year's Prague Spring festival.

by Boris Klepal

OSTRAVA DAYS – LONG CONCERTS YOU NEVER WANT *TO END*

Founded in 2001 by the composer, conductor and flautist Petr Kotík, the biennial Ostrava Days festival has been part of Czech musical life for twelve years. This year's 7th edition (12–31 August 2013) was in a way very similar to the previous ones – young composers from around the world gathered in Ostrava and met with their more experienced colleagues at workshops. The festival culminated in nine intensive days of concerts, which showed the quality and competitive strength of the students' compositions alongside time-proven contemporary music works, and often tested the audience's stamina too. Unusual interest on the part of the media was aroused by a concert that took place a week prior to the main event: the role of warm-up band was undertaken by the Philip Glass Ensemble.



Salvatore Sciarrino: Lohengrin

PHOTO: MARTIN POPELÁŘ 10x

In terms of organisation, putting on a Philip Glass concert was certainly extremely complicated, yet if the aim was to capture the attention of the mainstream media and allure a wider audience, then it was a sheer masterstroke. What's more, Petr Kotík opted for a solution that avoided musical compromises – the Philip Glass Ensemble performed the complete *Music in Twelve Parts*. The concert took place on 16 August at the recently completed multimedia Gong hall in Lower Vítkovice, a former industrial zone with mines, a coking plant and blast furnaces, which since 2002 has been listed as a cultural monument. Rebuilt from a gas-holder, Gong is a captivating venue and Glass's machine-like music splendidly fitted there. The spontaneous standing ovation that burst out after the almost six-hour concert, including intermissions, was by no means merely an expression of respect for the venerable composer. The next day, the magnificent concert was linked up to by a series of performances that took place in the above-ground buildings of the former Michal mine.

The Ostrava Days busy concert programme began a week later with Petr Kotík's *Many Many Women,* written to a text by Gertrude Stein. The performance at the House of Culture lasted almost six hours, without a break. Last year, I heard a fragment of the composition during the Beyond Cage festival in New York and now I am absolutely certain that it is not gratuitously lengthy. *Many Many Women* takes effect slowly, with the music crawling in your mind inconspicuously, hence it needs to be long. The piece is written for three pairs of wind instruments and three pairs of singers, each of them mostly leading their quasi-choral parts in parallel fifths. The blending together of the individual parts forms a mesh of chords which makes the listener embark upon an unusual adventure. Its scope notwithstanding, *Many Many Women* is conceived in a considerate manner, with the individual pairs being provided with sufficient pauses. With the exception of minor details, the performers in Ostrava mastered their parts without vacillation. With regard to the fact that the official opening concert was only due on Sunday, *Many Many Women* was actually still part of the pre-programme. On Saturday, this also included the Electronic Music Mini Marathon, conceived as a homage to Luigi Russolo, during which about a dozen artists appeared.

The official opening concert commenced with the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra Ostrava performing Carola Bauckholt's *Helicopter* with a solo by the sound poet Jaap Blonk. For the second time,

Philip Glass Ensemble

Daan Vandewalle

Petr Kotík: Many Many Women

I heard the Janáček Philharmonic playing Christian Wolff's *individuals, collective* – since last year's premiere, their performance has improved yet they still have a lot of work ahead. Wolff forms small instrument groups in the orchestra and makes of the orchestra members momentary soloists, with the sources of sound constantly moving from one place to another, playing with the audience and actively involving them in that which is going on. The composition, however, requires that the musicians play games too, which for the time being seems to be an insuperable problem for the Janáček Philharmonic. A great success was the concluding *Graal théâtre*, a violin concerto by the Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. It is basically a conventional piece, including two cadenzas, but the Janáček Philharmonic had evidently revived and the soloist, Hana Kotková, delivered her part with the utmost brilliance. Her placing emphasis on detailed work with the timbre and sustained tone without vibrato shifted the performance in the direction of the present.

The international Ostravská banda, the ensemble-in-residence of the Ostrava Days festival, had their showcase evening the next day. The excellent concert was seasoned with several soloists. Daan

Canticum Ostrava, conductor Jurij Galatenko

Vandewalle dazzled when performing Petr Bakla's *Piano Concerto* – three constant streams of music in high strings, low strings with low clarinets, and solo piano. A wonderful piece which, in addition, nicely concurred with my inner time and ended precisely at the moment when I had the feeling that it should end. Another noteworthy composition that was heard in the first part of the evening was Carl Bettendorf's *Horizont,* splendidly working with timbres and rhythms on a single tone. As for the second part of the evening, an exquisite double-bass solo was delivered by František Výrostko in Franco Donatoni's *Lem II*. Impressive too was Petr Cígler's edgy ciaccona *Über das farbiche Licht der Doppelsterne*. The nature of Christian Wolff's *Trust* is similar to that of *individuals, collective*, yet the Ostravská banda interpreted the piece with understanding and absorption, hence it came across much better than the Janáček Philharmonic's performance on the previous day. Petr Kotík's *Nine + 1* formed a slightly poly-stylistic conclusion to the evening, the beginning sonically evokes a jazz band, while the piano at the end sounds Impressionistic.

Petr Kotík and the Ballet of the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre

Dresden's Elole Klavietrio opened a long evening of chamber and solo compositions featuring a well-compiled programme, ranging from industrial sounds of prepared instruments made ring in unorthodox ways in Michael Maierhof's *Exit E* to Salvatore Sciarrino's gentle *Trio No. 2,* linked up to by

Pauline Kim Harris

Conrad Harris

Charlemagne Palestine

Sciarrino's *Capriccio No. 4* for solo violin as delivered by Hana Kotková. The succession of solo performances, occasionally interspersed by ensembles, was long indeed. I was especially impressed by John Zorn's *Passagen* for violin (Pauline Kim Harris), Isang Yun's *Monologue for Bassoon* (Stefanie Liedtke) and Iannis Xenakis's *Theraps* for solo double-bass (fabulously performed by John Eckhardt). The final performance was given over to Charlemagne Palestine, who filled the House of Culture with the sound of tinkled glasses, piano with accordion and double-bass, and, above all, organ, gradually gaining intensity. Although he adroitly negotiated the deliberately unseemly registers, the effect of his performance soon drained away.

The Ostrava Days festival is most noteworthy for concerts whose inner essence is a training course for young composers. Their pieces are included in the evening programmes themselves and are not usually shifted to separate concerts at less attractive times. Works by young and established composers are played by the same orchestras, which pay sufficient attention to their rehearsal. Both the audience and the composers can thus form their own opinions of the piece in question and don't have to dwell too long on performance shortcomings. At the same time, it is extremely illuminative – sometimes even relentlessly so – to place pieces by fledgling composers alongside, for instance, Ustwolskaya, Feldman and Ligeti, which was the case at the concert at the St. Wenceslas Church. Mojiao Wang's *Singing About Love* was somewhat lost between Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* and György Ligeti's *Horn Trio*. On the other hand, I found Wang's piece more sensitive and elaborate than Galina Ustwolskaya's *Composition No. 2 "Dies Irae"* and more restrained in terms of instrumentation than Johannes Kalitzke's *Schuberts Traum*. *Dies Irae* is a power composition for piano, eight double-basses and wooden cube, but I must admit that I found it a waste of the talent of so fabulous a percussionist as Chris Nappi. *Schuberts Traum* – a setting of a text from Franz Schubert's diary – is an over-orchestrated piece that gives so much scope to the musicians that it seems afraid of not giving each of them enough to play. In a way, direct juxtaposition was dangerous even for established composers.

Also directly juxtaposed during the festival were the two ensembles-in-residence: the Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava and the Ostravská banda. The Janáček Philharmonic is a symphony orchestra sponsored by the City of Ostrava and its repertoire is rather

conventional even though it has collaborated with the Ostrava Days since the festival's very beginning. The orchestra's performances of contemporary music have been slowly improving, yet they are still inferior to those of the Ostravská banda. The latter focuses on contemporary music, with the majority of its members being engaged in it as soloists or chamber players. And even if the technical level of the two ensembles were the same, it is evident that the Ostravská banda members are immensely zealous and enjoy playing, concentrate on it and give professional performances. Some of the Janáček Philharmonic members, on the other hand, are evidently distracted, chat to each other, ridicule the music, which they don't make the effort to comprehend, thus casting a bad light on the entire orchestra.

A case in point was their shoddy treatment of Conrad Harris, who dazzled with the violin part in Iannis Xenakis's *DOX-Orkh*. Before the final chord had died away, several members of the Janáček Philharmonic gave a loud cough. Harris's performance was fantastic, his violin sounded like a theremin with modulated timbre, it was a great experience. The Janáček Philharmonic was better in Martin Smolka's *Blue Bells or Bell Blues,* a composition working with microtones and a sound dashing around the orchestra. The symphonic concert was preceded by an afternoon given over to string quartets, of which I found Petr Kotík's *Torso* the most forcible. The piece combines a theme based on a Protestant chant with fast, nervy succession of notes, allowing these two contrastive worlds to permeate in part.

Remarkable indeed was the "Stage Friday", which took us to two Ostrava theatres and several extraordinary venues. At the Jiří Myron Theatre, the ballet company of the Moravian-Silesian National Theatre and the Ostravská banda presented Daniel Squire's choreography *univalse to witness* to John Cage's music, a parallel performance of the *Concert for Orchestra*, *Aria* and *Fontana Mix*. The spectacular show, with Squire himself appearing, strove not to connect directly to the music in terms of style, although frequently a parallel did occur in the quantity of movements and sounds. The ballet was followed by Peter Ablinger's site-specific performance *3 Places Ostrava,* which took place at the Cathedral of the Divine Saviour, the delicatessen pavilion of the Krásno meat factory and the foyer of the former Union Bank. The selfsame music created different atmospheres at the three different venues, with the wandering through the city and abrupt changes of milieu being part and parcel of the experience. One of the most eagerly awaited festival events was the staging of Salvatore Sciarrino's opera *Lohengrin* at the Antonín Dvořák Theatre. The soloist of the psychologising and parodic monodrama was the awe-inspiring soprano Marianne Pousseur, a specialist in this type of music and well acquainted with the role. A splendid performance was also given by the Ostravská banda (conducted by Roland Kluttig), sterling interpreters of Sciarrino pieces, as I have witnessed on several previous occasions. The simple, monumental and beautiful production was staged by the director Jiří Nekvasil and the set designer Petr Bazika.

The "Last Call" at the concert hall of the Ostrava Conservatory on Saturday afternoon featured student compositions, with the most

Performance at the Michal coal mine (left to right: Jon Gibson, Joseph Kubera, Thomas Buckner, Chris Nappi)

noteworthy being James Ilgenfritz's *Burnham's Folly* with a distinct bass clarinet, Michal Indrák's *Standing Wave* for two ensembles and Lorinc Muntág's Cagean *18,8*.

The festival's closing day saw performances given by the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra Ostrava and the Ostravská Banda, who in the end joined forces. Jack Callahan's *If You Cannot Ignore the Response – Delay It* brilliantly works with pianissimo of the bass drum, either independently or as the basis of the orchestral sound. Lucie Vítková's *MAsterpiece* combines a large orchestra and a small ensemble, skilfully working with dynamics and timbre. Benjamin Richter's *Farther Reaches* is based on held notes with growing intensity. In Helmut Oehring's violin concerto *Die Vier Jahreszeiten,* the Ostravská banda accompanied the superb soloist Pauline Kim Harris. Edgar Varése's composition *Offrandes* was jointly performed by the Janáček Philharmonic and the Ostravská banda, conducted by Petr Kotík, whose organisational abilities and sheer enthusiasm keep the Ostrava Days alive. He drives the festival forward and sees to its maintaining a continuously high level.

Nikol Kraft

Rafael Kubelík: A portrait

A prominent 20th-century Czech émigré, the globally renowned conductor Rafael Kubelík gained recognition owing not only to his musical activities but also his conscientious attitudes and initiatives carried out in the public interest. He worked with the most prestigious orchestras and opera houses worldwide, with perhaps his most significant tenure being his long-time serving as chief conductor of the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks (Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra). At home, he was primarily known for leading the Czech Philharmonic, an ensemble with whom he launched and ended his illustrious career. After living 42 years in exile, he was finally able to return to his homeland and in the twilight of his years gave with the orchestra several concerts that were perceived by the general public as symbolic of the beginning of the new era of freedom. Musicians revered him as a spontaneous person possessing supreme human qualities, and still fondly remember him as a thoughtful, emotional and immensely gifted artist.

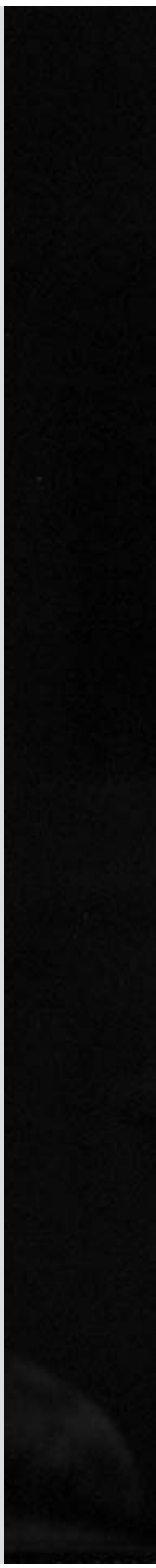


PHOTO: ZDENĚK CHRAPEK

Rafael Kubelík performing Smetana's My Country (1990)

Rafael Kubelík in the 1930s

/ Beginnings

Rafael Kubelík was born on 29 June 1914 at the castle in Býchory near Kolín, Bohemia, the son of the famous violin virtuoso Jan Kubelík and the musically gifted Hungarian countess Marianne Csáky-Széll. He was surrounded by five talented elder sisters, as well as two younger brothers, who were not so fortunate: one of them, following a carefree childhood, got seriously ill and would subsequently be afflicted for the rest of his life; the second died at the age of two. Rafael, who in his youth stayed at various family residences abroad, was initially taught by private tutors: *"Both my father and my uncle believed how a musician should be brought up. That is to understand arts, not only music, to understand literature, to read as much as possible, to know language, and to be embracing the whole culture, combining nature not only with the brain but also with the heart. This kind of Renaissance spirit was always alive in our family."* Rafael's father, who went on a number of concert tours every year, encouraged his son to play the violin, while his uncle František taught the boy how to play the piano. Kubelík said that he tried to compose music back at the age of seven or eight. "*Although I also studied the violin, since my father wished me to, I didn't actually feel like becoming a violinist. Especially given the giant shadow cast by Jan Kubelík. I wanted to become a conductor and composer."*

At that time, Rafael began attending concerts and opera performances, yet his genuine interest in conducting was only stirred at the age of 14 when he heard Schumann's *Symphony No. 4 in D minor* as performed by Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting the Berliner Philharmoniker in Prague. Prior to enrolling at the conservatory, the young Kubelík had mastered the chamber, orchestral and operatic repertoire, playing piano four hands with his uncle, practising piano scores of works ranging "from Handel to Debussy": "*I am grateful to him for opening the entire Romantic world to me through his love of Schumann. After I had heard Furtwängler, I kept imploring him to play Schumann with me four hands – and within eight years we really did play four hands the entire literature, above all Schumann and the Romantics."*

After completing his secondary school studies, he enrolled at the Prague Conservatory in 1928, where he studied the violin (with Jindřich Feld), and subsequently also composition (with Otakar Šín) and conducting (with Pavel Dědeček).

"*When conducting at a concert, he occasionally had a far-away look in his eyes. I saw his performance of Jenufa. During the overture to Act 3, you could see how united he was with the music. He gazed into the distance. Not at the orchestra but elsewhere. I witnessed him being like that frequently. When he became enchanted by a certain passage, he forgot all about his gestures and was floating in a different sphere. The final movement of Mahler's First begins with a stroke of a cymbal. During the last notes of the third movement, you could see that Kubelík was already focused on the introduction to the last movement. He then straightened up to his full height and suggested the coming of the cymbal stroke. Like a guillotine. I will never forget it. Really impressive. After the cymbal stroke, it was chaotic, yet precisely as he wanted it to be."*
(Bernd Herber, 1st violin, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra)

He recalled the atmosphere at the school with joy: "*We absorbed Czech, Slavonic, German, Italian and French culture, and the professors and students really were like a family, striving to attain something new – something new because at the time we were living in a new republic, we were a new, fresh nation. Co-existence between the Germans and Czechs in Prague was evident. I would go to the German Theatre and hear Czech operas sung in German – Kleiber's performance of Smetana's The Kiss, for instance. And, vice versa, at the Czech National Theatre I'd hear Lohengrin or Tannhäuser in Czech. In every respect, we lived in such harmony that I couldn't imagine it being otherwise.*" Kubelík also diligently attended rehearsals, where he observed the psychology of working with an orchestra: "*The principle is vital – when, where, what must be done.*" The conductors who had the greatest influence on him included Bruno Walter, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Erich Kleiber, as well as, to a certain degree, Václav Talich and Arturo Toscanini: "*Toscanini and his perfection. You can't actually say 'perfection' though. In music, perfection doesn't exist. Yet you can say 'precision'. Perfection doesn't exist, the word is nonsense. All this naturally influenced me. But you are also influenced by numerous scores, which address you and create an aura and atmosphere. The more you study, the more you see (…) when you look at a score from a greater distance, you see much greater outlines, yet these outlines form a new picture and various aspects, and these actually inspire a conductor far more than a single master does.*"

Kubelík graduated from the conservatory in all three main subjects: as a conductor with a concert on 23 June 1933 on Slovanský island in Prague featuring Dvořák's overture *Othello,* as a composer a few days later with his own *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra*, which he himself performed, while the next year he completed his violin studies with Paganini's *Concerto in D major*. During his studies, he played all the great concertos, yet, as he himself said, he finished with the violin "just in time". Even though he continued to play the piano and played it in public, he considered himself an amateur. In 1972, he performed Bach's *Concerto for Four Pianos in A minor* with Wolfgang Sawallisch, Fritz Rieger and Rudolf Kempe.

/ Early career

Rafael Kubelík's debut with the Czech Philharmonic was on 24 January 1934 at the Smetana Hall in Prague when he was just 19 years of age. It was the first concert at which he accompanied his father as a conductor, performing Beethoven's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major* and his own *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra,* concluding the evening with Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4 in F major*. After another three joint concerts, the Kubelíks discontinued their collaboration with the Czech Philharmonic, the reason being a tour of Italy and Romania and Jan Kubelík's tenth (and final) tour of America, which was planned over four years. In the USA, Rafael accompanied his father as a pianist and conductor, and gave several performances on his own. Rafael Kubelík viewed his father as a source of lifelong inspiration. Owing to his support and extensive experience, Jan Kubelík spared his son a lot of potential pitfalls and unnecessary seeking: "*No one taught me as much as my father did. He was a God to me, a symbol of music as such, giving me an example of how big problems, which every artist has to cope with, can be tackled with ease yet properly. (…) He wasn't just a violinist – through playing the violin, he sought and resolved problems of peoples and individuals.*"

Rafael Kubelík returned from the American tour before it had ended. In 1936 he was asked by the Czech Philharmonic to divide concerts between himself and the orchestra's chief conductor, Václav Talich, who had been appointed musical director of the Opera of the National Theatre. From that time on, Kubelík would work continuously with the Czech Philharmonic right up until his departure abroad, conducting dozens and dozens of concerts in Prague and beyond. Yet the beginnings were not easy. Later on, during his tenure at the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Kubelík still recalled feeling that he did not know anything or how he had even run into conflict with the orchestra's players: *"At that point, my own learning process began. Each rehearsal, each concert was a lesson for me. I observed myself as in a mirror".*

In the autumn of 1937, he had to stand in for the unwell Talich and undertake a Czech Philharmonic tour of Great Britain and Belgium. The nervousness among the orchestra members during the rehearsals with an inexperienced young conductor was rising. Prior to a preparatory concert at the Smetana Hall, a certain passage did not work, and Kubelík asked them to amend it. One of the musicians declared that if he conducted like this, they

could not play. Kubelík duly ordered them to take a break and told the respective player that he could tell him anything behind the scenes yet he was the boss on stage. "*I was 23 at the time, and that's how I thought it should be,*" he recalled years later with a smile, "*and it was the right thing to do. It wasn't democratic – on his part! I had to respond in that way. But what happened afterwards…*" Kubelík, who was anxious about further working with the orchestra, went for a walk along the Vltava so as to reflect on the matter: "*I remembered my father's advice: 'You mustn't do anything with hatred or vexation or violence. If you want to attain something, you will only attain it through love. You will convince people of your truth when you yourself love. When you yourself are good and when you open up. Otherwise nothing will come to you. How can someone understand you when you erect a wall in front of yourself? You must open yourself up – your soul, your heart.' All of a sudden, I could feel good within myself. I was happy. All of a sudden, I inwardly really knew what to do, how to conduct… At the concert, the orchestra probably expected me to start irritably. Yet I arrived in high spirits, joyful. 'Come, children, come and play, let's make music…' From that moment on it worked well.*" The following year, Kubelík undertook another large tour with the Czech Philharmonic – of Britain, Belgium and Ireland.

/ First experience with opera

In August 1939, a year after the Nazi occupation, Rafael Kubelík was appointed musical director of the Municipal Theatre in Brno, where he remained until November 1941, when the authorities closed it down. During his time in the Moravian metropolis he prepared seven operas: Smetana's *Dalibor* and *The Kiss*, Dvořák's *The Jacobin* and *Rusalka*, Janáček's *Jenufa*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and, perhaps most significantly, Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, which he would subsequently conduct on numerous occasions abroad. It was a completely new professional experience for Kubelík: "*An opera is a totally different matter to a concert in technical terms. Every conductor should get to know and work on both of them, since they supplement each other. Just as a symphony orchestra should be led melodiously and with breath, so it is necessary to keep the architectural element of the form in opera.*"
In the 1939/40 season, Kubelík's father held his anniversary cycle of ten concerts with the Czech Philharmonic, in which he was accompanied by Rafael. In July, Jan Kubelík underwent surgery, but half a year later, in December 1940, he succumbed to cancer. For his son, who in the same year fell ill with meningitis, it was a crushing personal blow amid the fraught wartime atmosphere and the beginning of his career. "*My five-month illness more or less wiped out all my previous studies, erased from my memory everything that I had accumulated there. It was horrible that it had to happen at the time when my father passed away. I stood in life on my own, without his advice. I don't believe in chance, I am convinced that it had to be that way. I had to find myself and form my future work.*" In October 1940, Rafael Kubelík was able to resume his work at the Opera.

/ Chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic

Following his departure from Brno, Kubelík assumed the post of musical director of the Czech Philharmonic. During the war, programming was restricted for political reasons – it could not include "Entartete Kunst". Approximately half of Kubelík's concerts featured works by Czech composers, including contemporary composers. When

With his father Jan Kubelík

Jan Kubelík and Rafael Kubelík performing, around 1940

it came to the foreign repertoire, the orchestra's programmes mainly included works by Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Brahms, as well as Bruckner, Haydn, Verdi, Gluck, Berlioz, Franck, Wagner, Rossini, etc. At one of the concerts, Kubelík avoided to give the Hitler salute to the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Wilhelm Frick, and subsequently had to flee and hide outside Prague for several months. After the war ended, he conducted a concert celebrating victory and freedom on the Old Town Square in Prague, at which Smetana's *My Country* was performed by the Czech Philharmonic, joined by the National Theatre and Czechoslovak Radio Orchestras. Kubelík co-founded the Prague Spring international music festival, made a tour abroad with the Czech Philharmonic and invited distinguished foreign artists to the Czechoslovak capital.

In 1945 he visited Moscow, where he conducted Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 9* (which he subsequently premiered in Prague) and met the composer in person: "*The encounter with him was sad and touching, and at the time I actually had a premonition of what the future would hold.*" Kubelík described how he met the evidently lonely Shostakovich in his dirty, unfurnished flat with two pianos on the outskirts of Moscow. The wall bore a small picture drawn by the composer's son, whom he had no time to see. After the war, Shostakovich came to Prague and, according to Kubelík, he got to see some Stravinsky, Mahler, Martinů and Honegger scores for the very first time in his life: "*He hadn't seen a note from any inter-war sheet music. Such was his genius.*"

In February 1948 the Communists took over power in Czechoslovakia and once again freedom itself was in peril. In July 1948, Kubelík performed *My Country* and left for England, where he was invited to conduct a production of *Don Giovanni* at the Glyndebourne and Edinburgh festivals. He travelled with his almost two years old son Martin and wife Ludmila. In addition to two suitcases, they brought with them Jan Kubelík's Stradivari Emperor violin, which his wife played at concerts. Rafael only revealed to Ludmila his plan not to come back on board the aeroplane. The official statement issued by the Communist regime read that Kubelík would like to focus more on his engagements abroad. Yet the artist

formulated the reasons for his departure openly and clearly: "*I left so as not to have to participate in the decay of our culture and humanity.*" While living abroad, Kubelík continued to monitor the developments back in his country but, despite being offered the chance by the government, he refused to return home under such conditions: *"As long as this regime exists, out of protest I would never go [back]. We can't make any compromises in life."* Hence, he and his wife had no choice but to live in exile.

/ Exile

Kubelík didn't have any other engagements in England but at the beginning was helped by the conductor Sir Adrian Boult, who after the war had appeared as a guest with the Czech Philhamonic and now offered Kubelík the opportunity to share concerts with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In 1950, the orchestra's management proposed to Kubelík that he take over the ensemble after Boult, yet at the time he was working in Pittsburgh and Chicago and had to stay in the USA because of his hospitalised wife. Hence, he gave preference to assuming the post of musical director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. During his three-year tenure, he presented to the rather conservative audience approximately sixty local premieres: "*The audience or, better said, our society, is entitled to hear what music has arisen and is still arising from it.*" Unheard of for those times was Kubelík's inviting the Afro-American singers Mariana Anderson and Todd Duncan. For the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's benefit, he also replaced 22 of the orchestra players – although he admitted that it was an extremely difficult decision in human terms. At the time, Kubelík also worked regularly with orchestras of such calibre as the Concertgebouw, Wiener Philharmoniker, Israel Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, etc.
From 1953, Kubelík lived in Lucerne, Switzerland. In 1954 he performed Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in London and in May 1955 Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* at Covent Garden. That October, as Covent Garden's new musical director, he opened the season with Verdi's *Otello*. Other new productions he took charge of included Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte,* Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg,* Poulenc's *Dialogues des carmélites*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, the British premiere of *Jenufa* and the first complete performance of *Les Troyens*. From the very beginning, he strove to turn Covent Garden into an opera with a permanent ensemble: "*Opera must not be merely a showcase for prima donnas. The audience's positive relation to opera can only be maintained and grow when the opera house possesses an ensemble who live among the local audience.*" Kubelík also suggested that operas be preferentially performed in English, which would make them accessible to a wider public. He praised the Royal Opera House's "amazing harmony", nevertheless, in 1958 he declined to renew his contract.

/ Golden years with the BRSO

In 1960, Eugen Jochum, who founded the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra after the war and owing to his systematic efforts had soon turned it into one of the most renowned ensembles in Europe, resigned as chief conductor. In the same year, Kubelík worked with the BRSO as a guest and his debut was such a success that he was immediately offered the chance to succeed Jochum. It was for the first time ever that, following the war experiences, Kubelík had decided to accept an invitation from Germany: "*I was not sure what I would find after the Nazis. But I found such a very strong remorse and genuine meeting of minds. I was convinced that now was the time to make a reconciliation. One can forgive but one cannot ever forget things which happened in those seven years of occupation.*" Kubelík's first contact with the BRSO was a "love at first sight" and the post of its chief conductor would prove to be the longest engagement in his professional career. Up to the present day, the players remember his tenure as the orchestra's golden era.
One of the BRSO's major tasks was to fill the archives with new recordings for broadcasting purposes, many of which were made by Kubelík. With the orchestra, he also made the acclaimed set of records of the complete Mahler symphonies, Dvořák's symphonic poems, a selection of Bruckner's symphonies, etc. Although to a certain extent he was pleased that his performances were recorded, Kubelík himself was not overly keen on listening to the discs and was rather sceptical about the recording technology. "*There is a point where I will never be sure that a gramophone record can really be a legacy of your interpretations. A real heritage is almost impossible. After all, thank God, we are still human and we are not machines. And the machines cannot reproduce the inner expressivity of the meaning of the music which comes through a direct wave.*" With the BRSO he made several tours worldwide,

With his son Martin and wife Ludmila (1950)

with the 1965 tour of Japan being particularly noteworthy, and other tours of Europe, America and Japan followed in later years. Of the 12 subscription concerts a year, he conducted more than a half, and very often he also conducted concerts within the Musica viva contemporary music series. Kubelík introduced thematic cycles into the programme – during a season, he focused on, for instance, Bach's orchestral suites or Hindemith's solo concertos, performed the complete Beethoven symphonies or presented sacred works dating from various epochs. He invited the finest soloists and conductors to perform with the orchestra in order to enhance both his and the ensemble's renown. As for Kubelík's favourite repertoire, Wolfgang Geron, a member of the second violin section, recalled: *"The problem with old music was that it sounded too monumental and emotional with him. He really loved contemporary music, and he himself composed. He advocated pieces by Amadeus Hartmann. (…) At one of my first concerts with Kubelík, we played a symphony by the composer. Kubelík bowed, yet the audience was booing, dissatisfied. He demonstratively lifted the score because he couldn't accept it. He was firmly convinced of its being significant and good. Whatever he did, he did it professionally and with absorption."*

The orchestra members agreed that it was not easy to perform with Kubelík complex contemporary scores and some operas that were more technically than emotionally based: *"He had large, not overly precise gestures. Kubelík once said: »In der Musik muss Humus sein.« (…) He focused on the whole,"* Gieron pointed out. On the other hand, all the BRSO players appreciated Kubelík's ability to read "between the lines" in scores, a gift rare even among top-class artists, and stressed that he was able to mediate the core of the music to the orchestra and audiences alike: *"He considered that which was within the music important. There are conductors who are particular about having everything together or dynamically right, yet that which is really essential is eventually lacking,"* Gieron added. At every concert, up to two hundred people who didn't get tickets for seats yet were there to hear it stood at the end of the hall. The first violin Bernd Herber remembers Kubelík as a charismatic personality: *"He was big. He entered the stage passing by the first violins. Hearing the heavy steps when he climbed the stairs alone was impressive. He posed on the stage in the urbi et orbi manner. The audience loved him even before he began conducting."*

Although Kubelík kept a certain distance, the orchestra players appreciated his human approach: *"Of course, he talked to people. He was something like the 'father' of the orchestra. One day he was performing My Country with us. After the first rehearsal, we went backstage, where a huge buffet had been laid on. We asked, how come? We were told that it was Kubelík's idea… My Country… we must celebrate it… But he wasn't in close personal contact with the musicians. (…) He was the boss! And we were the orchestra… But that's the way it should be. There are many in an orchestra who tend to make use of their good relationship with the chief conductor to their own advantage. The conductor then loses the orchestra's respect*," Gieron explained.

With Elsie Morison (1963)

Kubelík always explained his conceptions to the orchestra, however, he was uncompromising and authoritative, yet very cordial and spontaneous – when he got upset, he soon forgot about it and cracked jokes again. The players appreciated that he trusted in them, hence he did not rehearse the tiniest detail, while they could totally rely on him: *"He was a conductor who, at decisive moments, when something really mattered, put forth an incredible inner strength and was able to carry it through. That was also his psychology. We knew it was the way it worked with him,"* Gieron pointed out. Herber remarked that Kubelík deemed it important to elaborate not only musical and technical but almost philosophical aspects too. During rehearsals, he gave preference to work on phrasing – that which is significant in this or that phrase and where it should lead. He strove to achieve the orchestra's dynamic balance, he attained a refined sound, which the players defined as full, soft, fervent and dark. Kubelík required inwardly expressive playing and focused on large lines, corresponding to which was the repertoire particular to him and for which he was highly acclaimed – in addition to Czech music, primarily 19th-century composers, such as Brahms or Mahler.

As for his own compositions, Kubelík rarely included them in his programmes, and he viewed them with humility: "*For me it's important to say, through my own music, what I have lived through. I don't think it's important for a composer to be ambitious, or to be a success. I don't care for that at all. I write music because I hear it. There are moments when you want to have it born, when you can't help it; it simply goes like a geyser out of your head. And then you sit down and you write. That is for me everything. Whether it's good or bad is not my business."* Besides other works, Kubelík composed five operas, three requiems, which he wrote in the wake of his own tragic experiences, several instrumental concertos and a number of chamber pieces.

In June 1961 his wife died. Two years later, Kubelík married the Australian soprano Elsie Morison, with whom he had been working at Covent Garden on a production of *The Bartered Bride*. The couple settled in Switzerland, in Kastanienbaum on Lake Lucerne. In 1967, Kubelík received Swiss citizenship, yet even though some authors attribute Swish nationality to him he never ceased to be a Czech patriot. In 1968, in protest at the Warsaw Pact armies' invasion of Czechoslovakia and the violent suppression of the Prague Spring, he organised a boycott of artistic co-operation with the Eastern Bloc. The petition was signed by Abbado, Barenboim, Klemperer, Rubinstein, Stravinsky and many other renowned figures,

yet no official response came from Prague. Also ignored by the authorities was the 1979 open letter, co-signed by Yehudi Menuhin, in which Kubelík appealed to the Soviet supreme leader, Leonid Brezhnev, to meet the demands of Charter 77, a Czechoslovak civic initiative critical of the current political regime in the country. At the end of August 1969, the Czech Philharmonic performed in Lucerne. Rafael Kubelík invited the orchestra's members to his home and gave them commemorative medals marking the previous year's tragic events in Czechoslovakia. These medals, however, were confiscated from the players on their return to Czechoslovakia. Kubelík also demonstrated his interest in political matters at the Bavarian Radio. When in 1972 a new Act curtailing the powers of the public media was adopted, in protest he would only work at the BRSO as a guest conductor until such time as the law was amended.

/ Metropolitan Opera

In 1972, the new director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Göran Gentele, asked Kubelík to become the company's musical director for the next three seasons. For the very first time, Kubelík intended to divide his work between two music institutions. In the very same year, however, Gentele died in a car accident and the new Met management failed to honour his plans. Kubelík did conduct the first production of *Les Troyens* and a staging of *Götterdammerung*, and then continued to concentrate on his work at the BRSO. Later on, he commented on his departure from the Met by saying that his associates have to back his ideas not only with words but also with deeds.
In 1979, Kubelík resigned for health reasons from the post of the BRSO's musical director but remained its guest conductor until 1985. His last concert in Munich took place in sweltering heat on 7 June 1985. The violinist Gieron recalled the performance of Bruckner's *Symphony No. 9 in D minor*: *"After the first movement, we observed that there was something wrong with him. Then he concentrated immensely, opened his eyes after a minute, and gave the upbeat. After the second movement, however, he left the stage and didn't come back. It was a shock, for him personally."* Kubelík cancelled the concert owing to feeling unwell. In the wake of this episode, he decided to put an end to his conducting career. He believed that his responsibility was to give the maximum of his strength and he had doubts as to whether he could accept engagements planned years in advance. Afterwards, he regularly spent time in California, where the climate had a positive effect on his arthritis.

/ Conclusion

Following the collapse of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, Kubelík returned to his homeland after 42 years in exile. Paid great attention to by the general public, on 12 May 1990 he opened the Prague Spring festival with Smetana's *My Country* as the Czech Philharmonic's honorary musical director. Approximately a month later, he repeated *My Country,* conducting the Czech Philharmonic, Brno State Philharmonic and Slovak Philharmonic at a joint concert on Prague's Old Town Square marking the first free elections in Czechoslovakia – reminiscent of the concert in the same place in 1945 (liberation from Nazism – liberation from Communism). Kubelík's last concert was on 2 November 1991 in Tokyo with the Czech Philharmonic, performing *My Country*. Towards the end of his life, he was awarded numerous honours and accolades, including an honorary doctorate of philosophy from Charles University in recognition of his "lifelong artistic activity and singular contribution to the treasury of global musical culture" and the T. G. Masaryk Order (first class) for his contribution to democracy and human rights. In June 1996 a chamber concert made up of his works took place in Kubelík's honour in Munich. The artist wasn't able to attend the event, yet he subsequently phoned and thanked each of the musicians personally. Two months later, on 11 August, Kubelík died in Kastanienbaum. He is buried next to his father in the Slavín cemetery on Vyšehrad in Prague.

I dedicate the present text to my pedagogues Professors Marta Ottlová and Jan Žbavitel.

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is just out. Among others it brings ano
in the Czech Republic, articles on Kar

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Ivan Polednak, Musicologist an

We regret to announce that Monday,
musicologist, publicist and teacher Iva
music psychology, aesthetics, theory ar
the Department of Musicology FF UP, Olomouc, and Charles University in Prague a.o.), he also contributed significantly to the several volumes of the Encyclopedia of Jazz and Modern Popular Music. In 2004 he published a comprehensive biography on Czech contemporary composer Jan Klusak. Last farewell to be held on Wednesday 14 October 2009 (11.00) in the great ceremonial hall of the crematorium in Prague-Strašnice.

Bohuslav Martinů Revisited 2009

International anniversary project under the auspices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Mr. Karel Schwarzenberg. Honorary Board: Gabriela Beňačková, Zuzana Růžičková, Josef Suk. Further information here

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Jitka Čechová

Bedřich Smetana – Piano Works VI

Jitka Čechová - piano.
Text: Czech, English, German, French. Recorded: Nov., Dec. 2012, Studio Martínek, Prague. Released: 2013. TT: 75:45. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 3846-2.

The majority of the twenty-two pieces **Jitka Čechová** has included on her new Smetana CD were written within a relatively short time range, between 1844 and 1848. The bulk of them are works seldom heard on concert stages, and the album also contains the previously unreleased Smetana composition *Erinnerung an Weimar* from Princess Marie von Sayn-Wittgenstein's album. The largest scope in the variegated genre spectrum is given over to programme and occasional pieces, with two marches representing Smetana's "utility" oeuvre. Amid this musical kaleidoscope, Jitka Čechová was afforded a unique opportunity to showcase her artistry in various nuances of expression and frames of mind – and the pianist has made use of it to the full. As was the case of all her previous recordings, the most captivating aspects are the sheer colourfulness of her playing (*Im Walde, Das Schäfermädchen, Die Verzweiflung),* a remarkable sense of poetry (the Chopinesque *Woodland Feelings and Impressions, Pensée fugitive, Romanza in B flat major)* and drama *(Erwachende Leidenschaft, Die Verzweiflung).* Admirable too are her imagination when working with individual parts and sense for building of the melody (creative repetitions in *Die Sehnsucht,* the middle part in *Ins Stammbuch dem Wenzel Ulwer),* her brilliant and incredibly gentle fingering technique *(Caprice in G minor, Allegro capriccioso)* and, last but not least, the inspired as well as highly forcible work with agogics. Noteworthy too are the two marches, placed as "Finalstücke" at the end of the recording. Although respecting the fact that they are "utility" works and playing them with a splendid rhythmic push-off, the pianist could not resist imbuing them with a pinch of "something additional", through occasional, almost imperceptible rubatos and gentle keystroke nuances. The result is simply fabulous. I can warmly recommend Jitka Čechová's recording to all those with a profound interest in Smetana's piano oeuvre, as well as to everyone who likes listening to compositions that are not part of the regular concert repertoire.

Věroslav Němec

The Nash Ensemble

Brundibár

The Nash Ensemble.
Text: English, German, French. Recorded: St. Michael Church, Highgate, London, Feb. 2012. Released: 2013. TT: 74:03. DDD. 1 CD Hyperion CDA67973.

Music by composers interned in Theresienstadt experienced a wave of general interest aroused by the historical reflection on the period of Nazism and the Holocaust, and was again at the centre of attention in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall at the beginning of the 1990s. Much has been done to have the voices of the silenced composers heard and their works returned to the repertoire, where they deserve to be. At the time, however, many warned against the danger of isolating this music anew if it is only presented with a "Shoah" label. Putting together four leading figures who were afflicted by the same tragic fate is quite logical though. Accordingly, the album *Brundibár*, recorded by **The Nash Ensemble**, bears the secondary title *Music by composers in Theresienstadt (1941–1945).* The author of the accompanying booklet text, Simon Broughton, can be lauded for eschewing short circuits, which sometimes appear in similar cases, yet it should be pointed out that his defining all four composers as "Czech" is not entirely correct (later in the text, he describes them as "Jewish composers in Czechoslovakia). Moreover, Broughton gives inaccurate information, writing that "Pavel Haas was murdered in Auschwitz – which was the fate that caught up with *all* [my italics] the presented composers". In the passage concerning Gideon Klein in particular, the author correctly writes that he passed through Auschwitz and only died in 1945, yet the real cause of his death is not mentioned. And there is one more inaccuracy, documenting the type of problem that may arise when summary titles are given: the recording made by The Nash Ensemble, with a variable line-up, presents four works, of which, however, Pavel Haas's *String Quartet No. 2 "From the Monkey Mountains"* was created back in 1925 and has nothing in common with the composer's future fate and Theresienstadt. But what is essential is the music itself, and the music is performed briskly, with an understanding of both covert and evident folk elements in Haas's quartet (in the version with percussion) and Klein's *String Trio*, as well as the meditatively and grotesquely toned sections of Ullmann's *String Quartet No. 3.* Praiseworthy is the British composer David Matthews's arrangement of the Suite from Hans Krása's opera for children *Brundibár.* The booklet does not provide any information about Matthews, yet his website reveals that in addition to his own music (more than one hundred opuses) he has made a number of similar arrangements; for The Nash Ensemble in particular, he also arranged the Overture to Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride.*

Vlasta Reittererová

reviews

Vivaldi, Bach, Handel

Concertos & Sonatas

Václav Vonášek – bassoon, Barocco sempre giovane.
Text: English, German, French, Czech. Recorded: Pardubice Chateau, June 2011. Released: 2013. TT: 47:00. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4124-2.

It was high time for Supraphon to give a chance to **Václav Vonášek** (b. 1980). Even though, in these difficult economic times, the CD would most likely not have been released without receiving support from a sponsor, the label deserves applause. The project is worthy of attention for several reasons, with the most significant being the soloist himself. The winner of the 2009 Prague Spring competition and laureate of other contests, Vonášek is an exceptional talent. (In the Czech Philharmonic, he is "merely" an ordinary member of the bassoon group, which serves as yet more evidence of the standard of the orchestra's wind section.) He is a thoughtful musician, possesses a timbre-rich tone, spontaneous musicality, a sense of style, not to mention a reliable technique. Vonášek's solo debut album not only features pleasant, virtuoso pieces by Antonio Vivaldi, who dedicated plenty of time to the bassoon, but also contains the introvert chamber music of a Johann Sebastian Bach sonata originally written for the flute. Yet the album's apex is Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's sonata, remarkable in terms of harmony. The fact that in this case too it concerns a transcription of an originally flute sonata, combined with the delicate instrumental nakedness, presents a great challenge for the player, and Vonášek has acquitted the task with mastery. A contrast and a pleasant dividing line between the Bachs' works is a transcribed aria from Handel's opera Ariodante, in whose case, however, I consider the original more interesting… Based on their previous work together, the bassoonist invited to the recording studio the young Pardubice orchestra **Barocco sempre giovane,** who, in line of their name, play youthfully, but in some places I would rather use the word "freshly". Nevertheless, judging by this specific recording, they have still some work ahead so as to attain the tonal and performance perfection of globally renowned ensembles. The CD is furnished in the standard way, the team of the recording director Jiří Gemrot did a good job, however, in my opinion, with all the logic of selection there could have been more music!

Luboš Stehlík

Johann Sebastian Bach

Cantatas

Martina Janková – soprano, Collegium 1704, Václav Luks – conductor.
Text: English, German, French, Czech. Recorded: Sept., Oct. 2012, live, Church of St. Adalbertus, Opava. Released: 2013. TT: 59:05. DDD. 1 CD Supraphon SU 4134-2.

Three cantatas, three different worlds, three powerful works. *Weichet nur, betrübte Schatten*, BWV 202, is a wedding "pastoral", Bach wrote the weighty, gloomy *Ich habe genug*, BWV 82a, to mark the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, while the exultant *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*, BWV 51, was intended to be sung on the 15th Sunday following the feast day of the Holy Trinity. If we were to describe the mood of the three cantatas through the textual incipits, then the "become adept in love" ("Sich üben im lieben") is replaced by "I have enough" ("Ich habe genug"), and "I look forward to my death" ("Ich freue mich aut meinen Tod") is moderated in the introduction to BWV 51 by the exclamation "Exalt in God in all lands" ("Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen").

The album was recorded live during last year's St. Wenceslas Music Festival, which is reflected in its spontaneity and pulsation, yet this does not affect its technical quality. The only thing the listener has to accustom to is the soloist's few strange (not out-of-tune) tones in BWV 202, yet this is such a minor detail that it is not even worth analysing. The performance delivered by **Martina Janková** is exceptional indeed. I have listened to all three cantatas as recorded by other artists and, in my opinion, the union between Janková and **Collegium 1704** is the most impressive. Crucial in this respect is the work done by the conductor **Václav Luks** as regards the selection of instrumentalists, preparation and materialisation (chime, united "breathing", masterful choice of tempos). Just a cursory comparison: BWV 51. Recordings made by stellar singers in the past, Lucie Popp, Kathleen Battle, have been eclipsed. Although Natalie Dessay sings better than Janková, I find Luks's interpretation more inspiring than that of Emmanuelle Haïm and Le Concert d'Astrée. BWV 82a is often sung by baritones (Peter Kooy, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Thomas Quasthoff, Philippe Huttenlocher, whom I like), mezzo-sopranos (Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Angelika Kirchschlager, who made a superlative recording with the Freiburger Barockorchester), sopranos (again Dessay, Hana Blažíková) and, unfortunately, countertenors too (David Daniels, Andreas Scholl). While in BWV 202 Martina Janková is splendidly consonant with the affectionately playing oboist **Xenia Löffler**, in the opening aria of BWV 82a her objectivising tragicality is sensitively responded to by the flautist **Julie Braná**. Daintily tender and humble is the performance of the aria "Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen" (BWV 82a) exuding positive equilibrium.

One of the CD's apexes is the introduction to BWV 51, with the Baroque trumpet played by **Jaroslav Rouček**. The concluding "Alleluja" is a prime example of splendid tempo selection. I have never heard better tempo proportions and phrasing of the cantata BWV 51!

The fact that Martina Janková's soprano does have its limitations is generally known. It may

not have the breadth and timbre of, for instance, Dorothee Mields or the candour of Natalie Dessay (nor does it possess the poignancy of Roberta Invernizzi's), yet her extraordinary musicality makes it possible to utilise her potentialities to the maximum. What's more, Martina Janková's expression and work with the text are flawless, and not only in the emotionally powerful recitatives.

What can I say about the orchestra? Collegium 1704 matches the standard of the very finest ensembles and their planned recording of Bach's Mass in B minor is to be eagerly awaited since the musicians and conductor will be afforded an ever greater scope.

As for the booklet to Martina Janková's Bach album, it is furnished with an excellent graphic design and absorbing sleeve notes written by **Václav Kapsa**. The sound quality is high as well.

Luboš Stehlík

Viktor Kalabis

Symphonies & Concertos

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Jiří Bělohlávek, Václav Neumann, Zdeněk Košler – conductors, Josef Suk, Petr Škvor – violin, Zuzana Růžičková – harpsichord, Miroslav Kejmar – trumpet, Milan Langer – piano, Jiří Formáček – bassoon.

Text: English, German, French, Czech. Recorded: 1968–2013. Released: 2013. AAD. TT: 62:41, 72:50, 77:56. 3 CDs Supraphon SU 4109-2.

To mark the 90th anniversary of the birth of Viktor Kalabis (1923–2006), Supraphon has released a 3-CD pack with a compilation of his symphonies and instrumental concertos as performed by the **Czech Philharmonic** or (in chamber formation) its members. The presented music is permeated with the awareness of transience. This steadily tragic undertone is explained by the composer's wife **Zuzana Růžičková,** who was the person closest to him for over half a century, as reflections of his experiences in early youth and later years, which could not be escaped and which constantly projected into Kalabis's works. The *Concertino for Bassoon and Wind Instruments*, described by the composer himself as a "merry oasis full of well-being", evokes the feeling of clownish laughter through the tears. Kalabis is a master of form and instrumentation in both extensive and brief opuses, and he always maintains control over proportions in motoric passages as well as in huge symphonic planes. When it comes to the concertos, they reveal his profound knowledge of the selected instruments' possibilities, and as for compositions dedicated to specific performers, he takes into account the potential of the respective artist – cases in point being the *Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings*, which I consider the greatest listening experience of the entire set, and the forcible *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, with its contrastive moods (this recording, made this year at Czech Radio, is the newest, with the oldest being the *Symphonic Variations*, dating from 1968). Although we do not know what inspired the composer to write the *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, the joyful entry is again followed by a grave, tragic warning note giving rise to contemplation. *Concerto for Violin No. 1* reminds us of the exquisite mastery of the prematurely deceased **Petr Škvor**, while the *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra, "Le tambour de villevielle",* is splendidly delivered by **Miroslav Kejmar** (the Czech Philharmonic's wind section was simply peerless at the time). Of Kalabis's five symphonies, the disc contains the Second and Third (the Fourth and Fifth were released by CD MSR-Classics in the USA) plus the *Symphonic Variations for Large Orchestra* and the *Concerto for Large Orchestra*. All these compositions are emotionally charged and come across as entirely spontaneous, yet if we are to digest them to the full they require concentrated listening and thorough exploration. The accompanying notes for the sensitively prepared booklet (Daniela Bálková) were written by Zuzana Růžičková, who in a simple, unaffected manner formulates the most salient characteristics of Viktor Kalabis's life and work.

Vlasta Reittererová

Antonín Dvořák

Silent Woods: Original works and transcriptions for cello and piano

Christian Poltéra – cello, Kathryn Stott – piano.

Text: English, German, French. Recorded: Jan. 2011, Studio Gärtnerstrasse, Berlin. Released: 2012. TT: 64:35. 1 SACD BIS-1947.

Dvořák's scarce works for cello and piano have to date been recorded in their entirety by a few cellists, of whom Jiří Bárta is the only one who can boast of a complete set of Dvořák cello pieces, including the early Concerto in A major (SU 11 1467-2131). In September 2012, these were joined by a new SACD by the Swiss cellist **Christian Poltéra** and the British pianist **Kathryn Stott**, who added to Dvořák's *Polonaise in A major, B. 94, Rondo in G minor, Op. 94, B. 171,* and *Silent Woods, Op. 68/5, B. 173,* Poltéra's adaptations of the *Sonatina in G major, Op. 100, B. 183*, the final movement of the *Romantic Pieces, Op. 75, B. 150*, three famous songs with piano accompaniment, and a new arrangement of the *Song to the Moon* from the first Act of the opera *Rusalka.* The Zurich native Poltéra, a pupil of Nancy Chumachenco, Boris Pergamenschikow and Heinrich Schiff, has appeared

with leading European orchestras and also performed with ensembles performing on historical instruments, with the most significant being Gardiner's Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique. His repertoire includes numerous engrossing cello works (Dvořák, Martin, Honegger, Lutoslawski), which he has played to great acclaim on his 1711 Mara cello from Antonio Stradivari's workshop.

Whereas the present SACD is Christian Poltéra's first Dvořák disc, Kathryn Stott has previously recorded two albums featuring the composer's pieces (Chandos CHAN 10493, Supraphon SU 3909-2), and in 2007 she made a recital Smetana CD for Chandos (CHAN 10430). The SACD opens with Dvořák's *Sonatina*, which sounds graceful, not only in the second movement, Larghetto, whose broad cantilenas perhaps come across with the cello even more poignantly than in the original violin version. The first movement contains something childishly clumsy, the third as interpreted by Poltéra is a canny ditty, while the finale possesses frolicsome brilliance, although the composer's instructions as to the dynamics are respected. The second and third pieces on the disc are the *Rondo* and *Silent Woods*, adorned with pleasant rubatos against the backdrop of the piano's rhythmically solid accompaniment. Whereas the song adaptations or the *Sonatina* as performed by Poltéra sound modest and concentrated, in the *Rondo* the artists relish the virtuoso passages, becomingly combined with a flaring cantilena. The fourth and fifth pieces on the disc are Poltéra's arrangements of Dvořák's popular *Songs My Mother Taught Me* and *Good Night, My Darling* from the cycles *Gypsy Songs, Op. 55, B. 104,* and *In Folk Tone, Op. 73, B. 146.* As adapted and delivered by Poltéra, they are winsome gems; and I have the impression that their cello versions are closer to the human voice and more forcible than those in the recent recording made by Josef Suk and Vladimir Askhenazy for Toccata Classics (TOCC0100). The disc continues with the *Polonaise in A major*, interpreted by Poltéra and Stott with appropriate virtuosity and effectiveness. The final compositions on the recording, made in co-production with German Radio, are the *Larghetto in G minor* from the *Romantic Pieces*, Rusalka's *Song to the Moon* and *Lass mich allein* from the cycle *Four Songs, Op. 82, B. 157*. In the latter, the thirty-six-year-old Swiss cellist boldly competes with his German peer Jan Vogler, who included a similar arrangement on his 2005 recording of the Cello Concerto in B minor for Sony Classical (82876730142). The approximately one-hour-long SACD, furnished with a pleasing graphic design, informative booklet and track list, including the sequencing of Dvořák's works in Burghauser's Thematic Catalogue, was recorded in a high quality in January 2011 at Berlin's Studio Gärtnerstrasse.

Martin Jemelka

Capriccieto galante

Roma 1639

In Cordis Ensemble
(Kateřina Ghannudi – triple-headed Baroque lute, Jan Krejča – theorbo, Renaissance lute, Baroque lute, Miloslav Študent – archlute, Renaissance lute, Baroque lute).
Recorded: April 2011, the Bethlehem Chapel, Prague-Žižkov, Parish Congregation of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Prague.

This is a title that will take you by surprise. The CD's booklet comprises a thirty-six-page "Baroque comic book". And since there is no information about the duration, label and copyright, nor any other information about this remarkable project, only a reference to the ensemble's website, we have no choice but to quote the project's father, Miloslav Študent: "Compositions by Italian virtuosos of the first half of the 17th century, performed as they may have sounded at a specific, albeit fictitious, gathering of three instrumentalists – Caterina Baroni, Antonio M. Ciacchi and Arcangeli Lori. During the 1639 carnival in Rome, the three musicians met at a rehearsal for the staging of Vittori's opera Galatea. They all got on splendidly, so one evening they got together in the workshop of the lute-maker Michel Todini to have a chat over a few glasses of Chiaretto and try out some of Todini's new instruments. They played their favourite pieces, which they all knew, as well as a few new ones, still smelling of ink..." The 21 compositions on the disc are accompanied by pictures created by Kurt van der Basch (b. 1975), an artist living in Prague and mainly working in film. I leave it upon the CD's buyers to form their own opinion of the "comic book"; it will certainly have both champions and opponents. The music on the disc, however, is truly intriguing, perhaps even breakthrough in a way, since it does not take the usual path of similar projects and is extremely forcible in terms of performance. The instrumental parts impressed me more than the four sections including singing, even though the voices of the man (Študent?) and the woman were pleasant to listen to. I especially liked the pieces *Folia* by Giovanni Ambrosio Colonna, *Canzona detta la Funubre* by Giovanni Paolo Foscarini, *Canzona 22. La Lugarina* by Tarquinio Merula and the anonymous *Spagnoletto*. The recording also contains an "educational" track – within a small area, Donino Garsi's *Battalia* guides you through the rhythmic typology of the time. The names Trabaci, Foscarini, Colonna, Lori, Vittori, Piccinini, Kapsperger, Frescobaldi, Azzaiolo will perhaps not tell you much, yet they were composers of engrossing works of music which, when given a high-quality performance, are also able to captivate the 21st-century listener.

Luboš Stehlík

Karel Reiner

Music for Cello

Sebastian Foron – cello, Matti Raekallio – piano, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Zdeněk Mácal – conductor.
Text: English. Recorded: Dec. 2010, Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague; June 2011, Yamaha Studio, Fifth Avenue, New York. Released: 2012. SACD. TT: 77:31. Toccata Classics TOCC 0083.

Works by Karel Reiner have hardly ever been performed on a concert stage. Although five years ago Milan Kuna's monograph containing the complete list of compositions was published and Reiner's name has been referred to in connection with the World War II period and its consequences, as well as in relation to the era of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, his music has been seldom performed live. In December 2012, the German cellist **Sebastian Foron** and the **Czech Philharmonic** conducted by **Zdeněk Mácal** premiered Reiner's *Cello Concerto,* and the recording made at the concert is featured on this CD, alongside the cello pieces *Sonata Brevis* and *Elegy and Capriccio*, and the *Verses for Viola and Piano*. Foron has also dealt with Reiner's creation as an editor, thus having paid off the debt we in the Czech Republic owe to the composer. Reiner experienced a turbulent fate. The son of an opera singer and subsequently teacher in Žatec, his mother tongue was German. He studied law and musicology, was one of the first pianists to play a quarter-tone piano and as a member of the interwar musical avant-garde wittingly declared himself a part of Czech culture. He miraculously survived several Nazi concentration camps before joining the Communist party and vehemently participating in the building up of the socialist cultural policy, which eventually swallowed him and later on banished him as "unenlightened" – twice, in the 1950s and again after 1968. A complex personality indeed, yet so similar to many others of his generation.

The booklet contains an interview conducted by the cellist Sebastian Foron with the German composer, conductor and pianist Alfred Thomas Müller, who knew Karl Reiner personally. In 1976, Müller was scheduled to conduct the world premiere of Reiner's opera Ševcovská pohádka (The Cobbler Fairy Tale) in Lutherstadt-Eisleben, yet the authorities cancelled the performance. As the composer later found out, the ever-vigilant East German censors had "discovered" that Reiner was one of the signatories of the "Two Thousand Words" manifesto in Czechoslovakia (they were wrong, however). Yet Müller does not talk about this, in the interview he comments on Reiner's music as a connoisseur and friend. The CD booklet also features an interview with another contemporary witness, Doris Grozdanovičová, who met Reiner, as well as Pavel Haas, Viktor Ullmann and Gideon Klein, as a co-prisoner in the Terezín concentration camp. Reiner wrote the *Cello Concerto* between 1941 and 1943; although he revised it after the war, he did not include it in the list of his compositions. It is thus owing to Foron that we have come to know the work, which, its structural disunity notwithstanding, definitely did not deserve to be repudiated. The *Sonata Brevis* is the second piece Reiner composed after WWII, while the *Elegy and Capriccio*, written between 1957 and 1960, bears witness to the young Reiner having a penchant for jazz (or that which was considered jazz). The *Verses for Viola and Piano* dates from 1975, the very end of the composer's life. The composition's first movement contains an enthralling minor motif reminiscent of the thematic material known from Shostakovich: a distant yet pregnant echo of klezmer music. Sebastian Foron plays the *Verses* in the original viola register (with the exception of the final chord), with this arrangement perhaps even doing the work good in terms of sound. Also participating in the masterful chamber recordings is the pianist **Matti Raekallio**, who has displayed an understanding of Reiner's style.

Vlasta Reittererová

Bedřich Smetana

Libuše

Marie Podvalová – soprano, Theodor Šrubař – baritone, Karel Kalaš – bass, Beno Blachut – tenor, Ludmila Červinková – soprano, Marta Krásová – alto, Prague Czechoslovak Radio Choir, Jiří Pinkas – chorus master, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Alois Klíma – conductor.
Text: Czech, English. Recorded: Apr. 1949, Studio 1, Czechoslovak Radio, Prague. Released: 2013. TT: 167:35. AAD. 3 CDs Radioservis CR0623-2.

A classy box set of the archival radio recording of Smetana's opera *Libuše* with **Marie Podvalová** in the titular role is one of the most notable projects so far this year. Back in 1949, Podvalová was a star of the commencing golden era of the National Theatre in Prague, as were **Theodor Šrubař**, possessing a gorgeous velvet baritone, and the other soloists **Karel Kalaš, Beno Blachut, Ludmila Červinková** and **Marta Krásová**. Their artistry and the appeal of Smetana's festive opera are captured on this carefully remastered recording. The album's implementation, however, had to overcome a number of obstacles – the original sound tracks have, unfortunately, not been preserved in the radio archives, therefore the recording director and sound engineer had to work with the first copies of the original recordings on 11 tapes

of a differing technical quality. None the less, even more than 60 years on, the resulting album documents the astonishing performance standard of the singers, the choir and the orchestra, as well as the period's approach to Smetana's paramount work. Comparing the brilliant vocal delivery of Marie Podvalová and Theodor Šrubař with today's conception also highlights their noticeable dramatic skills, even though in the meantime the performance style has shifted further. Nevertheless, the singers' evident absorption can still be deemed a great contribution, one that can serve as an example for many a contemporary opera artist. The entry of Chrudoš and Šťáhlav brings with it a gamut of magnificent male voices, primarily those of Kalaš and Blachut. Šrubař excels in the role of Přemysl not only in the famous aria *Ó, vy lípy* (Oh, you lindens); his vocal performance in general can be branded timeless. The power of the choir and the refined accompaniment by the orchestra, conducted by **Alois Klíma,** enchant the listener even after six decades, as they deliver the masterpiece with the typical Smetana atmosphere of the introductory scenes. The original intention to stage Smetana's festive opera to mark the coronation of Franz Josef as King of Bohemia in 1872 was abandoned, hence the composer saved the work for the gala opening of the National Theatre in Prague in 1881. Up to the present day, *Libuše* has remained an opera that is only performed on special occasions. Accordingly, it is not a regular repertoire piece. The fanfares welcoming Přemysl to Vyšehrad, delivered here by the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Klíma with the utmost brilliance, are still played at significant official state events. Libuše's prophecy in the opera's finale, masterfully performed by Marie Podvalová**,** is an overwhelming experience that crowns the demanding project.

Marta Tužilová

František Benda

Violin Concertos

Roman Patočka – violin,
Prague Chamber Orchestra
Without Conductor.
Text: Czech, English. Recorded: 2009, Church of Saints Simon and Jude, Prague. Released: 2011. TT 72:14. DDD. 1 CD Radioservis CR0528-2.

Roman Patočka (b.1981) is one of the most promising young Czech violinists. He studied with renowned pedagogues (D. Zárubová, I. Štraus, S. Ashkenazy, S. Picard) and attended master classes given by R. Ricci, H. Shaham, I. Haendel, V. Gluzman and other outstanding artists. He is the laureate of a number of international competitions: Prague Spring (2003 – 2nd prize), the Václav Huml Competition in Zagreb, Concours Flame in Paris, Max Rostal Violin Competition in Berlin, Pablo de Sarasate Competition in Pamplona and Leopold Mozart Competition in Augsburg (2009). At the present time, he performs as a soloist, as well as a member of the Talich Quartet. The **Prague Chamber Orchestra Without Conductor (PKO)** was formed in 1951. In the 1970s and 1980s it was an unrivalled ensemble with which numerous superlative instrumentalists and soloists gave concerts and made recordings. This album is a prime example of the PKO linking up to this tradition. The violinist and conductor František Benda (1709–86), considered one of the crucial figures in the transition from Baroque to Classicism, mainly lived and worked in Dresden and Berlin, where his family, including the younger and equally famous Jiří Antonín Benda, moved from Bohemia to join him. The Benda family's musical tradition lives on. In addition to approximately 160 trio sonatas and solo capriccios (extremely valued in his time yet unfortunately unpublished to date), František Benda wrote numerous violin concertos, of which some twenty-eight have been discovered. With great sensitivity and exquisite taste, Roman Patočka has chosen and explored four of them: the *Concertos in A major, E flat major, C major and D major*. The three-movement structure of the concertos conforms to the time of their origin, but their singularity and musical spirit often transcend it. This was also evident to Benda's contemporaries. The renowned music connoisseur of the time Charles Burney wrote: "(…) His style is so truly *cantabile*, that scarce a passage can be found in his compositions, which it is not in the power of the human voice to sing. He is so affecting a player, so truly pathetic… His style is not that of Tartini, Somis, Veracini, nor that of the head of any one school or musical sect, of which I have the least knowledge: it is his own and formed from that model which should be ever studied by all instrumental performers, good singing." Roman Patočka's fully meets this criterion. His tone sings, his phrasing and each note are vivid, plastic and breathing. The Prague Chamber Orchestra used to provide the soloist with a great advantage – the possibility to determine and handle the orchestral score according to his own notion. I do not know whether this is the case now too. Compared to the soloist's melodiously flowing delivery, occasionally the orchestra "treads" with an almost Prussian-like military curtness and mechanical metronomicity in nearly rectangular-aligned notes. This stark contrast may be deliberate, yet at this juncture I would like to quote one of Benda's contemporaries: "Benda not only influenced his pupils, he transferred his manner of play to the entire royal orchestra."

Well, Patočka did not do so with the PKO. Nevertheless, the recording is of a remarkably high quality and praiseworthy indeed. It should be listened to by all those interested in paramount works of Czech music and superlative young soloists.

Pravoslav Kohout

Contempuls 6

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Michael Jarrell – Cassandre (Prague Modern)

9th November
Slowind (Slovenia)
Arditti String Quartet (Great Britain)

13th November*)
Luigi Nono – La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura
(David Danel, Jan Trojan)

15th November
Magnus Andersson (Sweden)
Ensemble Linea (France)

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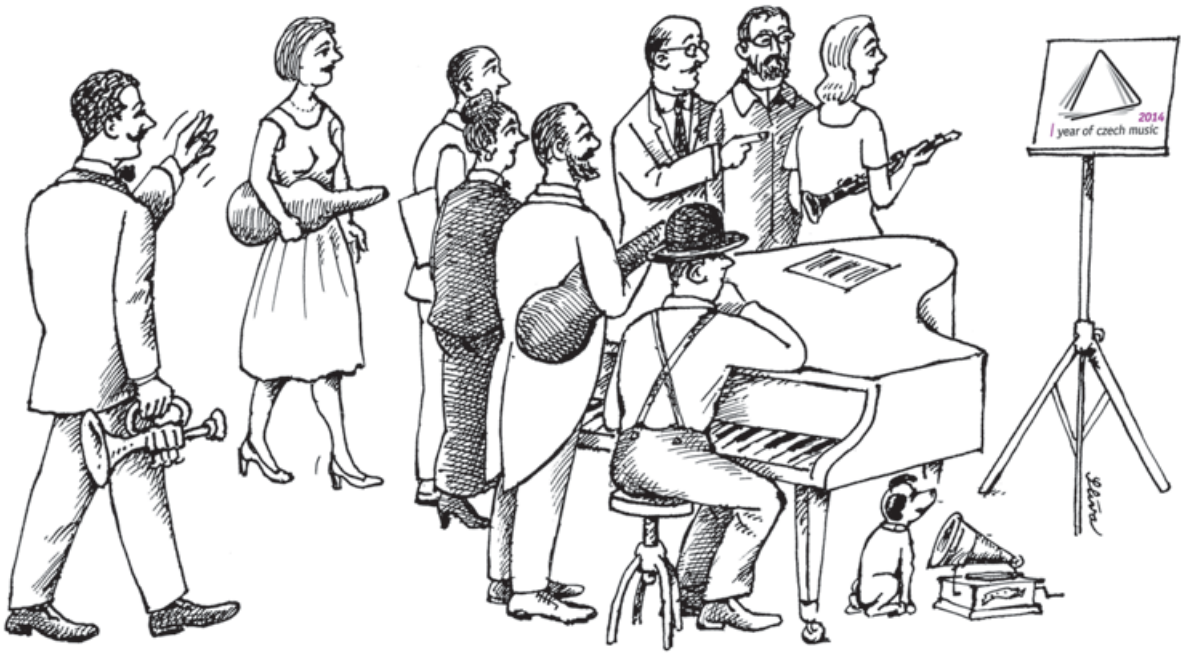

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