

VIVACE

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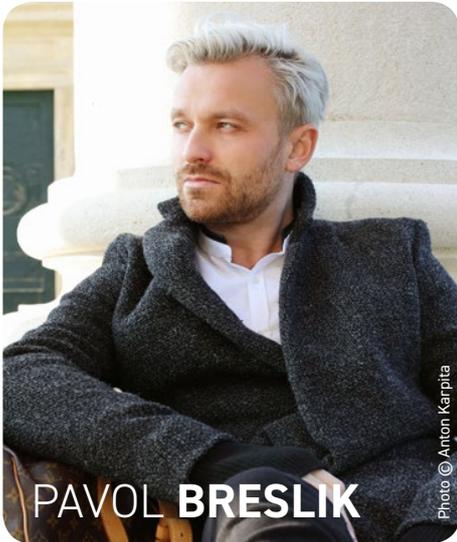




Photo © Martin Kubička

Dear friends,

Joy and sorrow belong together, they are integral parts of life and music alike. In my present editorial, joy relates to congratulations to Prof. Zuzana Růžičková, who in the middle of January celebrated her 90th birthday. In her case, it is untimely to write about a legacy, as I know precious few people as active in their “productive age” as this truly exceptional lady still is today.

Sorrow relates to our memory of a precious person and musician, the conductor Jiří Bělohlávek, whose earthly journey came to an end on the final night of May. If I were to name the most essential qualities of his that have stuck in my heart, I would highlight his enormous diligence, human and creative probity, sense for detail and uttermost dedication to music. The footprints Jiří Bělohlávek has left behind are distinct indeed: in addition to hundreds of albums (he began making recordings for Supraphon back in 1972), he nurtured a whole generation of young conductors, who refer to him as their teacher and who have joined the ranks of the finest in the world. Jiří Bělohlávek always had great plans to pursue, which included a number of Supraphon albums featuring Bohuslav Martinů’s music. From among those he managed to complete, you can look forward to the release – most likely next year – of the world premiere CD of the opera *What Men Live By*.

Let us stay with Martinů for a while. Some of the recordings of his works issued last year have garnered prestigious accolades, hence I cannot resist sharing the delight I feel. On 19 April, on behalf of the Smetana Trio, Jitka Čechová took over at King’s Place in London a BBC Music Magazine Chamber Award, which the ensemble won amidst fierce competition for their CD of Martinů’s complete piano trios. The splendid recording of Martinů’s “*Vysočina cantatas*” (including *The Opening of the Springs*), made by the Prague Philharmonic Choir, conducted by its chorus master, Lukáš Vasilek, was received with acclaim by the two major British music magazines: while in its March issue Gramophone named it Editor’s Choice, BBC Music Magazine selected the album as Choral & Song Choice. These appraisals are all the more significant given the CD’s purely Czech repertoire, with the choir having succeeded, notwithstanding the language barrier, in conveying the cantatas’ singular charm.

Owing to the sheer range of Supraphon’s plans pertaining to classical music releases for this year, I cannot mention in detail each and every title. Consequently, I will just refer to one of the directions we are following – we intend to pay great attention to chamber music. In

the domain of archival recordings, it is represented by the first reminiscence of the Vlach Quartet; in May we re-released a 4-CD set of their Supraphon recordings of Beethoven works, made between 1956 and 1970, which richly deserve to be called “timeless”. Several new CDs bear witness to the fact that we are a true chamber-music superpower, as our country is home to a number of young ensembles that can be ranked among the finest in the world. Twelve years after their formation, the sparkling Belfiato Quintet have made their debut album (when you get to hear it, I’m sure you will agree with them that it was well worth the wait!), comprising pieces by Foerster, Janáček and Haas. Another wind ensemble, the PhilHarmonia Octet, will release a wonderful debut CD, featuring music by Beethoven, Mozart and Klein. No less engrossing is the new album made by the Josef Suk Piano Quartet, whose account of Dvořák’s *Quartet No. 2* has been referred to by the critic Rob Cowan (Gramophone, BBC Radio 3) as the best to date. The violist Kristina Fialová and the pianist Igor Ardašev focused on modern Czech music for viola (Martinů, Husa, Feld, Kalabis). The stellar Slovak tenor Pavol Breslik has recorded Dvořák’s engrossing songs, including the lesser-known *Cypresses*. The soprano Martina Janková dazzles on the recording she made in tandem with the harpsichordist Barbara Maria Willi, presenting a revelatory repertoire of songs dating from the late-18th and the early-19th centuries (Tomášek, Voříšek, Koželuh, Mozart, and others). For their part, the harpist Kateřina Englichová and the oboist Vilém Veverka have fascinated listeners with the virtuosity and impressionistic colours of Debussy’s and Ravel’s music. I personally am really looking forward to the release, towards the end of the summer, of a CD made by the Martinů Quartet and the pianist Karel Košárek, who have re-discovered a remarkable, little-known chamber piece by Petr Eben. One of this year’s apices will be the eagerly awaited new album of the world-renowned Pavel Haas Quartet, within which they have recorded with the pianist Boris Giltburg and the violist Pavel Nikl Dvořák’s *String Quintet in E flat major, Op. 97*, and *Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81*.

Thus ends my “brief” summary...

I hope and firmly believe that every classical music lover will find in this veritable cornucopia something to his or her taste. May peace and joy, and beautiful music, accompany you throughout the summer and on all your journeys.

On behalf of Supraphon, wishing you all the very best

Matouš Vlčinský



SU4230-2



BELFIATIO QUINTET

WE HAVE PLAYED TOGETHER
SINCE WE WERE VERY YOUNG
AND WE KNOW VIRTUALLY
EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW
ABOUT EACH OTHER...



The Belfiatio Quintet are yet another exciting Czech chamber ensemble active in the international arena. The members of the young wind quintet perform with renowned orchestras (the Czech Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra, etc.), and both as individuals and collectively have garnered accolades at competitions (Kateřina Javůrková's victory at the ARD Munich, first prize for the Belfiatio Quintet at the competition in Semmering, Austria, etc.). This acclaim, however, has not gone to their heads, with their performances above all revealing their attitude: "We enjoy it!" The debut studio album, which they have recorded 12 years after the ensemble's foundation, exclusively features Czech music dating from the first half of the 20th century. J. B. Foerster composed the Wind Quintet (his most frequently performed instrumental piece) in 1909 to commission for a virtuoso ensemble formed by the members of the Wiener Philharmoniker. The work by Janáček's pupil Pavel Haas, written two decades later, bears traces of inspiration by folk music, Janáček, as well as Stravinsky. When listening to the piece, it is difficult indeed to resign oneself to the chilling fact that this immense young talent was silenced for ever at Auschwitz. Leoš Janáček had created his wind sextet Youth just five years previously. Owing to the music teeming with joie de vivre, prevailing over languor and melancholia, one is hard pressed to believe that the artist was 70 years of age when he composed it. Youth – how apt for the Belfiatio Quintet, an ensemble sparkling with energy and inspiration!

How did you select the music for your debut album?

Jan Souček: Our first album serves to mark the ensemble's tenth anniversary. Accordingly, we have opted for the most significant quintet pieces, while at the same time focusing on Czech music, as we are, after all, a Czech ensemble. So we have chosen works by Leoš Janáček and his pupil Pavel Haas, as well as Josef Bohuslav Foerster's Wind Quintet in D major, one of the few Romantic quintets there are.

Oto Reiprich: All the pieces we have included on the album have been in our repertoire for quite a long time, we have regularly performed them at our concerts. That was one of the reasons why we have chosen these particular works.

What do you think these compositions have in common and what aspects make them different?

Jan Souček: We have selected three pieces that came into being within a mere two decades, yet they starkly differ as regards the style. When composing his Quintet in D major, Foerster was 50 years of age, so we can say that he was at the zenith of his creativity. Janáček wrote his sextet "Youth" when he was in his 70s, while Haas was only

30 when he composed his Wind Quintet. The narrow time range within which the works were written has given rise to the album's coming across as an interesting whole, even though the individual pieces are stylistically contrastive.

Which of the featured compositions was the greatest challenge for you?

Oto Reiprich: I think it was Foerster's Quintet. It was definitely the most challenging for me in technical terms.

Jan Souček: I would say it is because of the symphonic score. Even though Foerster possessed high instrumentation skills, he wrote the quintet in a very "piano" manner, with the parts not overly going into the hands of the individual instruments. Therefore, they are extremely difficult to play. Noteworthy is the fact that Foerster composed the Quintet in 1909 to commission for a virtuoso ensemble formed by members of the Wiener Philharmoniker, and upon Gustav Mahler's direct recommendation.

► **Could you reveal to us how you got together to set up your ensemble?**

Kateřina Javůrková: The idea of establishing a quintet was put forth by my brother and his classmate, when they enrolled at the music grammar school in Prague. And as at the time Ondřej Šindelář, our bassoonist, was studying with Ondřej Roskovec, a member of the Afflatus Quintet, we were very lucky to have received from him the best start.

Oto Reiprich: While still students, all of us really liked the Afflatus Quintet, and when we were admitted to the Prague Conservatory, most of us became students of the Afflatus Quintet's members. I was given lessons by Roman Novotný, while Ondřej Šindelář was taught by Ondřej Roskovec. Subsequently, we enrolled at the Academy of Performing Arts, where Kateřina Javůrková studied with Radek Baborák for some time, and Jan Souček with Jana Brožková.

Jan Souček: I would like to point out an interesting thing – the majority of wind ensembles only get together at the moment when their members have launched their professional careers or have finished their studies at academies, whereas we (to be more precise, almost all of us, as since the ensemble's foundation two of our players have been replaced) have been together since the time of our conservatory studies. Kateřina Javůrková was actually still a pupil of a primary art school when she set up the quintet. I don't think that it is entirely common. As a matter of fact, everything began with our friendship, and the professional musical ambition only emerged during our studies.

Most of you play with leading Czech and international symphony orchestras. How much time do you have for giving joint concerts?

Oto Reiprich: We are currently more time-pressed than when we were still students. Owing to our duties resulting from performing with orchestras, all of us are much busier. We strive to encompass the majority of our ensemble concerts within four to five blocs a season, during which we have the time and opportunity to work together, rehearse and give concerts with great intensity. Furthermore, every summer we get together to rehearse the repertoire for the next season.

How do you select the repertoire for your concerts?

Jan Souček: If the organisers give us free rein, we have in store several programme variants. We perform a cross-section of the repertoire for our type of ensemble, ranging, chronologically, from music

by Antonín Rejcha, the founder of the wind quintet, to contemporary pieces. Our programmes include works of the French repertoire, which is the most extensive for quintet. We regularly perform Czech music, as well as 20th-century pieces and arrangements of well-known opuses. And we also like to present programmes with the piano, so we regularly perform with Lukáš Klánský.

When it comes to arrangements of well-known pieces, could you mention a few that you have included in your repertoire?

Jan Souček: We most frequently play Dvořák's famed String Quartet No. 12, the "American", as splendidly arranged by the French oboist David Walter. There are numerous arrangements we have performed, from Mozart to symphonic pieces. So as to keep our repertoire variegated and intriguing, we simply have to include arrangements. Yet our programmes are predominantly made up of original works, and one arrangement within an evening suffices.

Kateřina, how do you feel as the one and only woman in an otherwise male ensemble?

Kateřina Javůrková: I feel great. As a horn player, I am used to being surrounded by men. Yet it is different with the Belfiatio Quintet, as we are like a family. We have played together since we were very young and we know virtually everything there is to know about each other. We also spend plenty of time together without our instruments, we are a good bunch of friends. One girl in the ensemble is enough, I think :-).

Kateřina, given your busy schedule, how difficult is it for you to find time for the Belfiatio Quintet? And what role has the ensemble played in your artistic career?

Kateřina Javůrková: Of course, we have to plan our concerts with respect to the Czech Philharmonic, but my wonderful colleagues in the orchestra have many a time made it possible for me to give preference to the Belfiatio Quintet, which is a highly personal matter to me. In general, I find performing chamber music more satisfactory than playing solo. I simply enjoy working with a collective more than on my own. So I am really lucky to be a member of a permanent ensemble that has been operating for over a decade. In my professional life, the Belfiatio Quintet clearly occupies a prominent position.

Marek Šule



KATEŘINA ENGLICHOVÁ & VILÉM VEVERKA

OUR ALBUM IMPRESSIONS IS A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC



SU4212-2

Each of your albums has a refined concept, whether you record solo or with chamber partners. In this case, the concept seems at first glance to be French Impressionism, but I assume that it will not be the only connecting idea.

Vilém Veverka: I have noticed for some time now a demand for us to make an album together. I have been working with Kateřina as a duet now for almost 12 years, and someone could possibly accuse me of excessive pragmatism, but I think of this album as a missing part of our joint portfolio. As a journey to becoming even stronger as the firm Englichová & Veverka. Hence, we want to present our core repertoire, or the best and most attractive that we have to offer together.

It is sound specific, very lucid music. Did its character influence the recording of the album?

Vilém Veverka: I think that certainly yes, and it also relates to the specific nature of the harp and secondarily also the oboe. This music is very fragile and also has a hyper-virtuoso nature to it. During the recording, we have the luxury of taking outright risks, to being on the edge, and to risk something more than during a concert. An essential role here is also played by the director, Jiří Gemrot, who knows us well

even as interpreters. He knows both of our limits and immediately recognises when we go too far. This is why we like to work with him.

Maurice Ravel and his *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. How was it decided to make this Neo-Classical suite the central piece of the album?

Kateřina Englichová: Ravel offered this up himself. I came up with this proposal. I love the original piano version and the later orchestral version. The harp plays a very graceful role here and the oboe, in fact, a central role. However, I have to say that I didn't realise at the beginning what awaited me. If I decide to play the piano parts, most of the time, I adapt the harp part myself, which I intended to do even in this case. I started with an open mind, but in a month or two, I realised that an expert must handle the arrangements. I wouldn't want to corrupt Ravel or myself (she laughs). Then we came up with the idea to contact the composer Otomar Kvěch, who fantastically arranged Isaac Albéniz' *Suite Española* for me and the pianist Martin Kasík. Mr Kvěch accepted our offer and evidently enjoyed the work. Every now-and-then, I received an e-mail of the sort "Dear Kateřina, I am now looking at the third movement. Ravel is a genius!"

► **The original piano version has six movements. However, the most demanding parts are missing in some of the versions. Weren't you tempted to simplify the recording a little bit?**

Vilém Veverka: The original objective was to adapt only four parts, which are also in Ravel's orchestra version. I was sceptical in relation to the toccata. That's extremely demanding. But when I listened to the famous pianist Oleg Sokolov perform it, I said "We have to do this as well."

Kateřina Englichová: And everything started anew. At the beginning, we agreed not to do the toccata, thank god! And all of the sudden, Vilém comes, resolute and of course adamant. You know, I am essentially a very calm person, but when studying the toccata, I was raving. I wouldn't wish for anyone to be close to me at that moment (she laughs).

Vilém Veverka: I think that in all of the 12 years we played together, we have never rehearsed a piece as much as this one four-minute movement.

This composition contains a striking contradiction. Although it is thematically rather sombre, from a purely musical standpoint, it is very positive.

Kateřina Englichová: It's not gloomy at all. It's a celebration of music.

Don't you sense the tension between the ideological and musical content? It's not really about the name of the suite, but rather the fact that Ravel dedicated the specific parts to his friends who died during the First World War.

Kateřina Englichová: Yes, but through music he somehow immortalised them. Not as dead people, not at war victims that died on the battlefield, but as living, human beings he was close to.

Vilém Veverka: I consider this music to be a homage from one great composer to another great composer. Couperin was one of the most important French authors. He is still frequented today. His aesthetics are special, very filigree. I see it as a tribute of Ravel's genius to Couperin's genius.

Kateřina Englichová: Of course, we could ask what motivated Ravel to dedicate the suite to his deceased friends. He was in the war, even though he didn't fight, so a lot of antagonism remained with him. He witnessed it all but did not contribute to the fighting. He was inside and outside at the same time. My grandfather was also in the First World War, and this completely changed his life. He was an Austrian officer on the Russian front, but he spent most of the war in the reserves. Most of his friends died there. And he wasn't an artist – sure, he was a good pianist and composed, as far as I know, one piece of music – but he was an architect...

Vilém Veverka: The author of the Kolín train station. That is a wonderful functionalist building.



Kateřina Englichová: Yes, and the Žižkov freight train station. But back to Ravel. What I want to say is that the contradiction between the relief of surviving the war and the pain from the loss of loved ones is incomprehensible to us, the same as the consequences it could have. In addition, Ravel's mother died during the war, so they recalled him, and he broke down... So we can only guess what led him to such a concept. It could have been some abrupt emotional reflex.

The same as Pavane pour une infante défunte, another piece on the album.

Vilém Veverka: It's clearer with Pavane. Its tragic nature cannot be explained away.

Obviously, but Ravel himself said that the name does not have anything to do with the composition. That he simply liked the sound of "Pavane pour une infante défunte".

Vilém Veverka: Exactly, but it still sounds like some kind of commemoration. In the case of Pavane, we used an already existing arrangement, the same as with Debussy's compositions that belong to our core repertoire. The majority of the compositions on the album are originally piano pieces, but all of our arrangements are fully developed. And do you know what? It is our hidden desire for people to say after listening to it: "Isn't this better than the original?"

Kateřina Englichová: However, Luboš Sluka composed Primavera for us personally. In this case, it was not an adaptation. It's music that doesn't pretend. It is appealing but not cheap. Solely for the listener in the best sense of the word.

Vilém Veverka: True. We played it for the first time in 2015 in the Orlicke Mountains in a small church. Mr Sluka was present. He has a cottage nearby. I can still describe all of the details of that day. It was such an extraordinary experience. And his Gabbione per due usignuoli, which in translation is A Cage for Two Nightingales, as if we had returned back to Pavane, I have that feeling. In mood and form.

Kateřina Englichová: I like this composition very much, even if it is not for the harp in the original. It's much more contemplative, slightly in the direction of jazz.

Vilém Veverka: Do you think? I wouldn't say so.

Kateřina Englichová: Not that it was jazz, but the harp in essence is rather long-winded, blues-ish.

That reminds me that I have heard several jazz versions of Pavane.

Kateřina Englichová: Provided it is done by good musicians with taste, I have no problem with it.

Vilém Veverka: Ah you see, if jazz musicians can adapt Ravel, then why can't we two do it as well!



ZUZANA RŮŽIČKOVÁ

THE SOVIET INVASION THREATENED TO FINISH OUR RECORDING SESSIONS

Photo © Martin Kubica

In addition to a lifetime dedication to the music of living composers, the core of Zuzana Růžicková's achievement in winning a place for the harpsichord in the modern concert hall has always been the music of J.S. Bach, and so it is only fitting that the focus of Supraphon's latest release from Růžicková's considerable legacy is dedicated to the concertos for harpsichord and orchestra of the composer whom she says "saved" her life. Under the baton of her close friend and colleague Václav Neumann, these recordings of the concertos represent Růžicková's playing at a time when she was emerging as one of the post-War period's re-eminent international harpsichord soloists.

Růžicková and Neumann established the Prague Chamber Soloists in the early 1960s following the harpsichordist's difficult experience with the authorities of the then Communist state which in the late 1950s forbade her debut as soloist in Bohuslav Martinů's harpsichord concerto with the Czech Philharmonic. Of course, as a so-called "feudal" composer, J. S. Bach was no less ideologically suspect than Martinů, but somehow under the guise of "old music" he was given a pass (though just barely). As Růžicková herself remembers:

"In the early 1960s there had been considerable interest across Europe in smaller chamber orchestras along the model of Marriner's Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and such ensembles as the

Slovak Chamber Orchestra were set up in this country to play both Baroque and modern music for smaller forces. I was asked by members of the Prague Symphony Orchestra whether I would like to join them as a soloist and continuo player in their newly-formed ensemble of eleven players. We asked Václav Neumann whether he would take it upon himself to direct us, as he was himself an excellent chamber musician, having formerly been a member of the Smetana Quartet. He accepted on the condition that we have twelve rehearsals of about four to five hours each before our first performance, the idea being that we would work as a chamber group with the same intimacy of a quartet.



Photo © archives

The first concerts were of Mozart, Bartok, Kalabis (the famous Czech composer and Růžicková's husband) and, of course, Bach. After each concert we'd all sit together over a glass of wine and discuss the concert as though we had played a chambre performance. And Neumann and I, for all our constant rehearsing, had almost no need to rehearse. We had the same basic musical chemistry. Sometimes, in repeated performances of a concerto, he would accompany me differently without my saying a word, remarking to the orchestra, 'today, Zuzana's mood is different.'

Whilst the concertos BWV 1054–1058 were recorded during the liberalisation anticipating the "Prague Spring," the concertos BWV 1052 and 1053 (the "great" D minor and its equally sizeable cousin in E major) were recorded just under a month after the Soviet invasion of Czecho slovakia in 1968, the original sessions having been cancelled due to noisy interference from the actual invasion itself. Růžicková even recalls that the sessions for these two concertos still had to be interrupted due to the occasional crack of gunfire or the rumble of tanks passing by the Rudolfinum. One might be tempted to observe that Fate itself was conspiring to drive home the idea of music – particularly the music of Bach, which played a life-saving role in Zuzana Růžicková's own experiences in the Nazi concentration camps – being made against the backdrop of remarkably trying historical circumstances. Růžicková recalls:

"We had some worries about those last two concertos, since we had put them off until the end and then the Soviet invasion threatened to finish it altogether. We didn't even know who from the ensemble would already have emigrated or wouldn't show up to the sessions. Miraculously, everyone showed up to the recording. Still, though, the recording of the D minor concerto was really quite stressful; I think you can hear that."

The anxious language of "authenticity" which has, for better or worse, surrounded the harpsichord in the last five decades means that inevitably one must ask whether there is any point at all in re-issuing these recordings. To be sure, Růžicková and Neumann's approach is an avowedly "modern" one, which is to say that it takes the score itself rather than a pre-ordained set of performance practices as the starting point for the interpretive decisions. Neumann's players use instruments set up with modern necks and steel strings, and Růžicková's harpsichord – a 1954 so-called "Bach Model" by the Ammer

firm in the then-German Democratic Republic, is really anything but authentic or historically-informed. In our own age, it is pointless to take seriously the myth of the "Bach harpsichord" with the four-foot register on the upper manual and various other monstrosities which have little to do with Bach's own sonic world. So why even try and defend these recordings as "authentic?"

It should come as no surprise that when these recordings were issued in 1969, they quickly became an international best-seller in the Supraphon catalogue and introduced an international listening public to the art of Zuzana Růžicková and gained a mainstream acceptance of a direct identification of the harpsichord with a repertoire which even in the 1960s was still taken seriously only when the piano was involved as soloist. For all that research into playing styles and organology has done for the music of Bach – and for at least two generations of listeners who have come to expect "correct" Bach – it might be said that the musical message of these recordings makes questions of authenticity simply irrelevant. Has there been a recording of the A major concerto with a third movement so perfectly crafted, with a dialogue of articulations so deftly projected as what we hear in this document? What other recording of the "great" D minor concerto (BWV 1052) is there with such a sense of gravity and mystery? Is there a middle movement of the F minor concerto (BWV 1056), save perhaps that of Ralph Kirkpatrick (with the Lucerne Festival Strings on DG/Archiv in 1958), in which the harpsichord's voice is expressed with such a sense of indescribable longing and despair?

Equally worthy of our attention is the accompaniment from Neumann and his band, who respond with panache to Bach's writing whilst making more than the best of totally modern equipment. One can only imagine how the sound of the group would have developed had it survived past the 1960s (Neumann had to cut short his commitment once he was named general music director of the Czech Philharmonic in 1968), but nonetheless the ensemble's character as a sensitive, responsive, virtuosic group of musicians is well-defined and remains as the standard for these concertos.

Mahan Esfahani



Photo © Martin Kubica



SU4226-2

DAGMAR PECKOVÁ

I CHOOSE THE SONGS ACCORDING TO WHAT MY SOUL TOLD ME

Photo © Ilona Sochorová

Your previous Supraphon album, titled *Sinful Women*, focused on the Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss repertoire, music that is not only challenging to perform but also demanding to listen to. Your new recording, *Wanted*, pays tribute to Kurt Weill. How was your journey from *Sinful Women* to Weill?

Sinful Women was a project in which I had to attune both my voice and my mind to the world of grand opera. And as I have always gravitated to songs, particularly those dating from the era of the Germanic Late Romanticism (Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler), I wanted to continue to pursue in this direction. I think that it is the most natural path for the evolution of my voice. When following this musical line, you simply have to come across Kurt Weill. I first encountered his music back in 1992, in Stuttgart, where I was singing in his opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. I remember the staging team and I pondering how to approach the music, and at the time I told myself how great it was. Some time later, while travelling in a car, I happened to catch on the SWR 2 radio station a programme dedicated to Kurt Weill and Bertold Brecht, which really fascinated me. So I ordered

a set of sheet music right away and plunged into Weill's creations. I also became acquainted with the story of his wife, the Austrian singer Lotte Lenya, and began discovering the enthralling recordings of some of his songs made by such amazing classical singers as Teresa Stratas, Brigitte Fassbaender and Anne Sofie von Otter. The general public mainly knows Weill's songs as performed by Ute Lemper, yet in my opinion her interpretation is somewhat shifted towards the present time, so as to accommodate to a mass audience. When I realise that I was a sort of pioneer in the Czech record industry as regards Gustav Mahler's songs, I would also like to do something similar with Kurt Weill's music. That is the main reason why I have made the new album.

Do you think there is a clue as to how to perform Weill's music? In terms of the vocal technique and expression.

When it comes to the technique, the basic thing is to manage your voice, so that it can negotiate the pitfalls of the individual parts. We should bear in mind that the vocal parts in the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, for instance, are immensely difficult,

- ▶ meeting all the criteria of challenging opera technique. Yet still and all, they should be performed like songs. Then you must start seeking an emotional path, pursue the feeling the music evokes in you. It entails plenty of emotions, self-expression, as well as surrounding influences.

Kurt Weill's oeuvre is relatively extensive. How did you choose the songs featured on the new album?

According to what my soul told me, absolutely. There are, of course, pieces the singer simply cannot leave out, the Alabama Song, Barbara Song and Surabaya Johnny, for instance. I personally am really fond of *Der Abschiedsbrief* and the French chansons. And, logically, I have also included on the album some of the music Weill wrote in America, as it is a pivotal part of his oeuvre.

The best-known of all Kurt Weill songs is *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer*, from *Die Greigroschenoper*, perhaps familiar to everyone. Yet the album *Wanted* includes another 14 songs, which many people will perhaps be hearing for the very first time. Why should, in your opinion, music lovers buy your new CD?

Precisely because I don't like the fact that the world only knows this one song. Weill wrote it just a few days before the premiere of *Die Greigroschenoper*, to commission from its main singer. Yet he didn't like it, and hence it is performed at the very beginning, actually beyond the framework of the opera's action. I would like to point out that, in my opinion, Kurt Weill wrote many better and more intriguing melodies, which take you to a different universe, and I also think listening to them may become addictive.

All the songs on the CD *Wanted* are in brand-new musical arrangements. Could you reveal to us how they came into being, and who you asked to create them?

When putting together the album, we deemed it to be important to unify the entire sonic component. At the same time, we bore in mind how we could perform the project live, that is why we also chose the number of musicians with regard to the number of players who would be on stage. Some of the songs have been arranged by the conductor and composer Jan Kučera, some by Lukáš Sommer, and some by the trumpet player Miroslav Hloucal. All the arrangements had to be approved by the sheet music publishers, as well as by the holders of the copyrights to Kurt Weill's pieces. I believe that all of them are satisfied with the outcome.

You are not the only one to sing on the new album. You selected as your partner the baritone Jiří Hájek, a soloist of the National Theatre Opera in Prague. How did you get together?

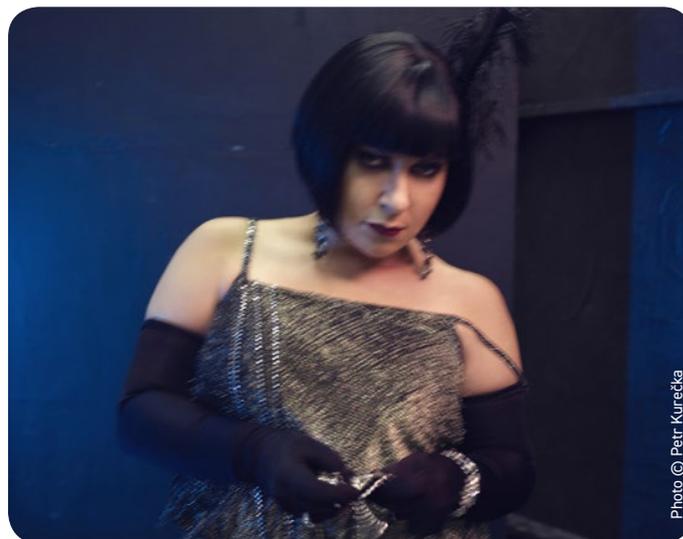


Photo © Petr Kurečka

Our working together resulted from the necessity for me to have a vocal partner on the album, and also during the stage performances. I was seeking someone to create the role of Mackie Messer and sing with me on the duets, deliberating about whether he should be an actor/singer or an opera singer. And one night I saw Jiří Hájek performing in a National Theatre production and I really liked both his singing and acting. In addition to the duets, he also performs two solo songs on the album.

Kurt Weill composed his music in Germany, France and the USA, using the languages of the three countries. Which of them do you find the easiest to sing? Perhaps the pieces in German, as Germany has become your second home?

Yes, you are right, and I could even venture to say that I know subconsciously the nooks and crannies of the language. Occasionally, I find it easier to express emotions in German. On the other hand, singing in French is wonderful, yet I must admit it is quite a challenge for me.

Where did you record the album?

The recording sessions took place at the Czech Radio studio in Karlín. The premises were far from ideal, though. For the first time ever, I was recording with earphones and didn't feel entirely at ease – even though we did record it concurrently, each of us was divided by an acoustic wall. I simply cannot help thinking that the best is when you have the entire music ensemble behind you.

Marek Šulc



Photo © Petr Kurečka



MARTINA JANKOVÁ

A SINGLE SONG CAN ENCOMPASS THE ENTIRETY OF HUMAN FATE



SU4231-2

- **“How could it have happened that the ample and valuable song tradition, once so popular in our country, has faded away?” asks the Czech soprano Martina Janková, adding: “A single song can encompass the entirety of human fate!” The internationally acclaimed singer, a long-time member of the Zurich Opera, is doing her utmost to bring songs back to the concert stage and CDs. Her bright, sparkingly nimble voice has been captured on albums of Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů songs. Her new Supraphon album, titled PRAGUE – VIENNA, presents vocal works by Czech and Austrian Classicist composers, dating from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. A number of the graceful songs featured on the recording will be a revelation for the listener. The pianist and harpsichordist Barbara Maria Willi, who has compiled the album’s repertoire and who accompanies Martina Janková on a fortepiano, has recently discovered some of the pieces in archives.**

Barbara Maria Willi says that that you have been inspired by Eduard Möricke’s novella Mozart On His Journey to Prague.

Yes, that’s right. Barbara was fantastic when it came to selecting the repertoire; she possesses an immense knowledge. The project was her idea. When she showed me all the musical gems, I didn’t hesitate and immediately agreed to participate in the album. It was a huge revelation for me too.

In the Classical era, the musical route between Prague and Vienna and Vienna and Prague was well travelled, as attested to by your album. Were you surprised to learn that songs journeyed between the cities too?

In the past, songs used to enjoy immense popularity in Prague and Vienna alike. I don’t understand how it could have happened that the ample and valuable song tradition has faded away. I’ve been giving it plenty of thought, discussing it with fellow musicians. The other day, I talked about this phenomenon with Ivo Kahánek, who loves performing songs and has been striving to promote them in our country. He shares my opinion that songs have not been paid sufficient attention to. They once enjoyed great popularity, yet the tradition has disappeared!

Why do you think it has disappeared? We have so many wonderful songs, composed by the likes of Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček, Martinů, Novák, Eben...

Yes, there are plenty of songs out there, yet they are rarely performed on concert stages. Such minor musical forms haven’t been attributed the value they possess. That is strange indeed, as the Czechs are fond of small forms – we really like chamber music. There are so many chamber ensembles here! Chamber music is much favoured, so why is it not the case of vocal pieces?

What may have caused the current situation?

Some have told me that the academies give preference to arias, arias, and yet more arias, since everyone desires to perform the “grand” forms. As if the small forms were inferior, less intriguing, even though they often bear astonishing ideas expressed by global poets. Perhaps we have inherited this approach from the previous regime, when only grand voices were considered to be worthwhile. It would seem that grand Russian voices held sway. Even the ample Baroque and oratorio tradition was ignored (as well as creations by Mendelssohn, Brahms, etc.) until the time when it was resurrected by Messrs Luks, Štrýnel and others.

And you are one of those who have striven to revive this tradition.

I am not sure whether I have been successful in this respect, but I do my utmost to present songs, as well as participate in performing lesser-known oratorios. Such performances have included Myslivoček’s *La passione di nostro Signore Gesu Cristo* and Jan Dismas Zelenka’s masses at the Prague Spring festival, for instance. In December, we will deliver Bononcini’s forgotten oratorio *San Nicola di Bari* at the Sts Simon and Jude Church in Prague, we are planning to perform Rossini’s *Petite messe solennelle*, and other works. When it comes to Czech songs, I have always tried to put them into context with the international pieces, whose performance has a great and vivid tradition. We have also actually done this on our new album,

on which Mozart and Haydn’s songs are juxtaposed with those by Koželuh, Voříšek and other composers.

Barbara and I understood and inspired each other. We felt happy to be able to bring to the light true gems that have been forgotten. And just as splendid has always been my collaboration with the pianist Ivo Kahánek. We have jointly recorded songs by Janáček and Martinů. Our aim is to draw the audience’s attention and rediscover such beautiful vocal pieces.

Worthy of mention in this connection is the Supraphon edition Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague, which to date has encompassed a number of releases, including your album. What is your opinion of the series?

It’s a truly wonderful project. In this respect, I would like to mention Václav Luks, owing to whom I have discovered numerous splendid pieces. These include Jan Dismas Zelenka’s works, which for a long time I previously hadn’t had in my repertoire. Of late, however, I have often performed Zelenka alongside Bach.

And alongside Mozart and Haydn on the new CD...

And when I perform Brahms, it is usually alongside Dvořák. By and large, I have always striven to place a Czech counterpart next to a foreign composer, with the aim to show that in no respect did our composers lag behind the celebrated global creators. We try to demonstrate that the Czechs too have their song tradition. Even though dormant at the moment...

On the album, you sing the pieces by W. A. Mozart, V. J. Tomášek, Leopold Koželuh, Joseph Haydn, Jan Václav Voříšek and others in the original German. Yet the booklet contains the lyrics both in German and Czech, so all the listeners will be able to understand what they are about.

At the time, Bohemia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the national revival yet to enter the general awareness. Prague was said to be a suburb of Vienna... Many Czech composers lived in Vienna, spoke German, and wrote music to German texts. German was an official language.

You and your father have translated some of the lyrics into Czech, using an archaic form of the language which comes across as authentic and lovely. Did you attempt to evoke the era of the national revival?

We didn’t want to modernise the poetic language; I don’t think it would have been appropriate.

Barbara Maria Willi was your partner as regards the album, not merely an accompanist to your voice.

I have had the opportunity to work with several instrumental soloists par excellence, top-notch performers of songs, including Roger Vignoles, Charles Spencer, Gérard Wyss and Ivo Kahánek. All of them are superlative solo players, none of them is a mere accompanist. That means that I have always had an equal partner. It concerns a duo of two soloists – chamber music as it should be. Had they only been accompanists, the songs wouldn’t have come across as they should. After all, the composers wrote them for both a virtuoso pianist and a virtuoso vocalist.



Photo © Daniel Havel

JOSEF SUK PIANO QUARTET DVOŘÁK'S MUSIC CANNOT BE PLAYED WITHOUT "ADDED VALUE"



SU4227-2

The top-notch young performers associated in the Josef Suk Piano Quartet approach the world of music with humility. They speak about their teachers with sincere reverence, refer to their idols as masters with a capital M, and deem concerts and presentations to be honourable undertakings... The violinist Radim Kresta, the violist Eva Krestová, the cellist Václav Petr and the pianist Václav Mácha have won a number of international competitions, and their performances at home and abroad have met with great acclaim. The perfectly co-ordinated ensemble have just completed for Supraphon an album featuring Antonín Dvořák's and Josef Suk's Piano Quartets. We discussed the new CD with Eva Krestová and Radim Kresta.

Your present album pays tribute to the abundant Czech chamber music tradition. Which figures or ensembles do you most cherish?

Radim Kresta: Logically, we have linked up to that which we have learned from our teachers. I was a pupil of Professor Václav Snítíl; he was an amazing person, a member of the Vlach Quartet, the Czech Nonet and the Smetana Trio. Eva studied with Professor Jindřich Pazdera, a member of the Stamic Quartet. Václav Petr was a pupil of Professors Michal Kaňka and Daniel Weiss, while Vašek Mácha studied with Maestro Ivan Moravec. All of them towering figures, each of them inspired us with something. What is more, throughout our studies we were in contact with the violin virtuoso Maestro Josef Suk.

Did you know Josef Suk well?

Radim Kresta: He did not overly devote to teaching. His most renowned student was the superb virtuoso Ivan Ženatý, which is audible when he plays. I also used to meet Maestro Josef Suk in connection with my chamber orchestra. I had the honour to work with him. What is more, Suk made a major impact both on violinists and ensembles through the Suk Trio's splendid recordings of seminal chamber music. By and large, he has thus influenced us too.

Dvořák's Piano Quartet No. 2 is an extensive and challenging piece. Which part of it do you like the most, and which is the most difficult to perform?

Eva Krestová: Each of the quartet members may like different parts of the work. The second movement opens with a splendid cello solo, so I think that Vašek Petr probably likes this very section the

most, whereas I, as a violist, am really fond of the third movement, as it is highly articulated, joyous and poetic.

Radim Kresta: Antonín Dvořák's Piano Quartet No.2 is exceptional, as well as difficult to perform. I perceive it in relation to other pieces. For instance, we have frequently played the opus alongside Johannes Brahms's Piano Quartet No. 1. Both of them are colossal: Dvořák's piece lasts almost 38, Brahms's 43 minutes.

Radim Kresta: When it comes to the Brahms quartet, its form and structure is astounding, it is a single "grand temple", virtually a large symphony. Dvořák's quartet too has a sophisticated form, yet it is a work of a starkly different ilk, with everything in it primarily governed by inspiration. The composer himself said that the themes kept rolling in, so many of them and so quickly that he could hardly manage to write them down.

How does it vent itself during performance?

Radim Kresta: At first glance, Dvořák's piece may seem to be somewhat simpler than that of Brahms. But appearances can be deceptive! There is a catch: the work cannot be performed without "added value". You may play everything, each and every one of the notes correctly, but that still wouldn't be doing it justice. If your performance lacks something that simply strikes your heart, it is not "complete". On the other hand, Brahms's music, which we find amazing and which we love and really enjoy playing, can be delivered precisely as it is written. Dvořák must be performed with a particular empathy, you should bear in mind that you are doing it so as to warm someone's heart, so as to pass on the emotions it harbours.



Eva Krestová: That is perhaps also the answer to the question of what makes the piece so difficult to interpret. In addition to learning the intonation, it is extremely challenging to express its extraordinary emotionality, while retaining the composition's order.

You have said that the piano quartet is an ideal formation, since it provides numerous options to a chamber music lover. And it can virtually replicate a whole orchestra.

Eva Krestová: Yes, absolutely, since the piano is capable of encompassing plenty of harmonies peculiar to the orchestra. The piano and the strings are able to create many timbres, which can be additionally worked with. Attaining this may be more difficult for us, yet when it turns out well it's just fabulous!

Radim Kresta: The quartet can also express an utterly intimate atmosphere owing to the strings. On the other hand, thanks to the piano we can also play dynamically monumental passages. That is why we deem the piano quartet a formation ideal for the chamber music experience.

You have been a flexible ensemble, performing in all kinds of configurations.

Radim Kresta: Yes, we have also performed at concerts as a duo, string or piano trio. In the formations that suggest themselves, the combinations the organisers wish to have on the stage. We have even performed as soloists within a single evening, each of us appearing accompanied by a chamber orchestra.

Josef Suk's Piano Quartet, featured on your new album, has an intriguing first movement, coming across as an explosion of a passionate youth. The initial impression is that the music is totally different from Antonín Dvořák's piece. Yet the movements that follow comprise lyricism, delicate poetics. How do you perceive the differences and similarities between Suk and Dvořák?

Radim Kresta: Suk wrote his quartet under the supervision of Dvořák, who, however, afforded him great freedom – and it is evident in the music! In a way, he respected the emotionally charged 17-year-old. When we were exploring the work – which he has actually been doing ever since our quartet's foundation – we faced a problem. The first theme, as you yourself said, is an explosion. It possesses an immense dynamism, it is torrential music. Right at the beginning, we had to bear in mind the sound of the following movements. We had to find, discover diverse moments in the composition. It takes some time for the music to mature within the performers, for them to be able to approach the explosive elements with a distance, while also being able to express the innermost emotions in the more tranquil passages.

Eva Krestová: It has often been mentioned that Suk was composing the work under Dvořák's guidance, yet Dvořák did approve the

passages that are in places overly forced (the dynamic marking *fff* often appears in the notation). And he let them be, even though, a mature and seasoned chamber music composer himself, Dvořák would have not written it that way. I have the feeling that he supported Suk's youthful passion and turbulence, letting him pursue his own path.

You have succeeded in prestigious competitions. Which of the numerous accolades you have received have been the most significant for your international career?

Eva Krestová: Perhaps the victory in the Premio Trio di Trieste, owing to which we gained an agency representation and were invited to give concerts abroad.

Radim Kresta: Yes, this competition, one of the most prestigious ones for chamber ensembles featuring a piano, was very important indeed. The victory was really instrumental in enhancing our international career.

Before you assumed the moniker Josef Suk Piano Quartet, you were called Ensemble Taras. Why Taras?

Radim Kresta: Upon founding a piano trio, more than a decade ago, I was seeking an apt name for it. It was an extremely lengthy process. After having gone through all the available dictionaries, I had failed to find a suitable name, so I decided to choose it according to what or whom I really like. And I simply love Leoš Janáček's music, his *Taras Bulba* in particular ...

Of course, Taras, it should have occurred to me! The trio soon expanded and then would continue as a piano quartet up to the present day. And you named it after the violinist Josef Suk.

Radim Kresta: We were suggested the name by the Czech Chamber Music Society, with the kind permission of Marie Suková, the virtuoso's widow. The Suk Trio, whom we have had the honour of succeeding, was a true phenomenon, the embodiment of an immense and celebrated chamber tradition. And a great responsibility for us, so we must do our utmost to do justice to our name ...

What plans do you have for the next few months?

Eva Krestová: At the end of August and the beginning of September, we are scheduled to tour Japan, which we are really looking forward to, especially because together with the Panocha Quartet we will be performing Dvořák's sextet. And we will also play Dvořák's and Suk's piano quartets. Moreover, we are scheduled to give concerts in Italy and Slovakia, as well as in Prague, within the Days of Contemporary Music. In the spring of 2018, we will embark on a tour of Brazil.

Agáta Pilátová



PAVOL BRESLIK

I WOULD THROW A STONE INTO THE RIVER AND SEE WHAT RIPPLES IT WOULD MAKE

Your new Supraphon album presents some of Antonín Dvořák's songs. What position do songs occupy in your repertoire?

I began devoting to songs back at the time of my studies at the conservatory in Žilina, where I performed the Gypsy Songs for the very first time. I then succeeded with a similar repertoire at the Antonín Dvořák International Vocal Competition in Karlovy Vary, where I received a prize in the song category. I have the feeling that songs have always been of great importance for us, the "Czechoslovaks", so at all times I have treasured songs in my heart.

The album features songs from the Cypresses, the Evening Songs and the Gypsy Songs. How did you choose the tracks?

The Gypsy Songs came up naturally; as I have said, I have been singing them for a long time. The pianist Robert Pechanec and I have performed them for years. The Evening Songs were new to me, or to be precise, it was the first time I had sung them. And when it comes to the Cypresses, I was scheduled to perform them once previously, at the "Dvořák marathon" in Ostrava, yet I had to cancel my appearance owing to having fallen ill. Robert Pechanec played the cycle there, and

► he was intrigued by it, so we agreed that it would be great to record the work. I think that there are actually very few recordings of the Cypresses. I confess that initially I deemed it audacious that I, as a Slovak, would venture into Dvořák's songs, but I said to myself that I would throw a stone into the river and see what ripples it would make.

What was it like singing in Czech?

I have to say that Czech is harsher than Slovak, and foreign singers will never be able to conceal their accent. Yet the most interesting aspect when working with the Czech language was the accentuation of words in the Cypresses – we should bear in mind that it was Dvořák's very first song cycle. That is one of the reasons why we invited the Czech music director Jiří Gemrot along to take part in the recording.

Throughout your career, you have very neatly combined opera and song. The singer should take different approaches to the two disciplines. How have you succeeded in this respect?

The main difference rests in the fact that when performing songs the singer is only accompanied by a pianist on stage, thus being naked. The audience merely focus their attention on the two performers, who have to be in perfect harmony, have to come across as a single brain and a single breath. On the other hand, should any difficulties arise during an opera production, you can always hide behind a prop, or somehow camouflage your indisposition, whereas it is simply out of the question when performing songs.

You have appeared at the world's most prestigious opera houses, including those in New York, London, Vienna and Munich. Do you have any time left to come back home to Slovakia?

I always strive to go back there, at least for a short time, to sleep in my own bed for one night or two. I know that is not enough, yet I firmly believe that I will have the opportunity to spend more time in Slovakia.

And can we look forward to seeing and hearing you in Prague as well?

I hope so. The worst problem is planning. My calendar is full four or five years ahead, and I am afraid to say that the Czech opera houses do not prepare their programmes so long in advance. But I hope a concert could be arranged, one made up of songs, for instance.

Artists certainly have plenty of music in their heads that they would like to record. Could you reveal to us what will be your next recording project?

There is a lot of music out there I would like to record. At the moment, I am in an album-making period. The next project will be a recording of Eugen Suchoň's songs with an orchestra in Bratislava, followed by a recording of Richard Strauss's songs, also with an orchestra.

Marek Šulc





Photo © Daniel Havel

PHILHARMONIA OCTET

THE RELEASE OF OUR CD IS THE BEST ANNIVERSARY PRESENT

The PhilHarmonia Octet was founded by two brilliant, internationally acclaimed Czech musicians – the oboist Vilém Veverka and the bassoonist Václav Vonášek. They aimed to form an ensemble made up of the finest contemporary Czech instrumentalists that would duly blend the domestic performance tradition with modern European styles and trends. The octet's players are outstanding soloists, laureates of prestigious international competitions and members of globally renowned orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, WDR Köln, Czech Philharmonic, etc.

To mark its 10th anniversary, the PhilHarmonia Octet has made a new album, presenting three different facets of the wind octet across two centuries. We talked to Vilém Veverka and Václav Vonášek.

How would you assess the ensemble's decade-long existence?

Václav Vonášek: Given that the members have been engaged in various orchestras and pursued numerous other solo and chamber activities, I deem it a success that since its establishment the ensemble's line-up has virtually remained the same.

Vilém Veverka: I agree with Václav. It is not simple to keep together eight individualities, whereby most of us also have devoted to solo projects. Ten years ago, we were young and restless (which we still are today), possessing romantic ideals (which have been slowly dwindling). I think it is good that the only difficulty we have to overcome is choosing a concert that would mean for us more than other performances. In my opinion, we have succeeded in carrying into effect our primary intention – to elevate the wind octet to the level of the traditional chamber ensembles, string quartets, and to show the audience that it is feasible.

How will you be celebrating your anniversary?

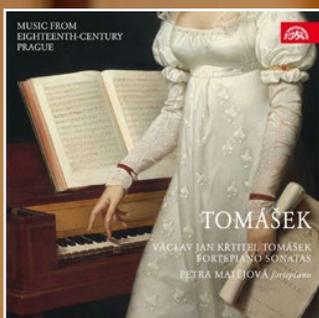
Václav Vonášek: I'd be hard pressed indeed to imagine a better anniversary present than the release of our CD, which we have recorded for Supraphon.

How did you select the repertoire for your new album?

Václav Vonášek: Mozart's Serenades, of which we have chosen the darker, weightier one, in C minor, constitute the basis of the repertoire of every similarly focused ensemble, so we have had to reach for them. Beethoven's Octet is an early work, yet many of its passages already reveal the composer's genius and sense for wind instrumentation, with the compact sound coming across as almost symphonic. And Klein's Divertimento, notwithstanding the clouds gathering above him when he was writing it, is a witty and highly diversified piece. It is simply the kind of music that precludes boring the performers or the listeners for a single moment.

Vilém Veverka: The album should be attractive not only for connoisseurs but also for those who may not have previously encountered the power of the wind octet.

Vladan Drvota



SU4223-2

PETRA MATĚJOVÁ

VÁCLAV TOMÁŠEK WAS THE UNDESERVEDLY OVERLOOKED "MUSIC DALAI LAMA" OF PRAGUE AT THE TURN OF THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

"An instrument should be approached with an open heart, then it itself will teach you," the pianist Petra Matějová says. Supraphon has just released an album of Václav Jan Křtitel Tomášek's Piano Sonatas, as immaculately performed by her. The artist talks about the composer with great ardour, admiration and understanding, as though she knew him in person. Yet just as enthusiastically has Matějová approached the music of other composers who lived during a time she is particularly fond of – the Classicist period at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries – among them Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek. Since completing her hammerklavier studies in Paris, Petra Matějová has given numerous concerts, made a number of recordings and taught at master classes across Europe. The present album aims to convince the listeners and Matějová's fellow pianists that the time has come to revive Tomášek's keyboard music and put it back on concert stages, as it so richly deserves.

► **Václav Tomášek was one of the few Czech composers of his time who did not leave his country so as to earn his living and gain fame abroad. Why?**

Definitely because when he was 30 year of age he was offered a very lucrative job by Count Buquoy, who was very keen on his music and employed him as a teacher and composer. What is more, Tomášek was provided with luxury accommodation and boarding at the Buquoy Palace in Prague, and in the summer he would stay with the Count's family at their residence in Nové Hradý. He would have been foolish indeed to turn down such an offer.

So, that was the reason why he did not pursue a career as a lawyer, even though he had studied law.

Because of Buquoy's offer, he dispensed with other activities too. He simply opted for a career as a musician. Furthermore, he was a sought-after music educator. By the time he left Buquoy's service, in 1823, when he got married, he had become a distinguished piano teacher. Tomášek ran a reputable salon and was one of the most expensive teachers in Prague. Nonetheless, at one time, he really did try to get to Vienna, and was even assisted in this matter by his pupil Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek, yet he did not succeed.

Was Voříšek a pupil of his?

To all appearances he was, yet the sources only confirm that the lessons lasted for a mere few months, for Tomášek had to abandon some of his pupils, including Voříšek, owing to lack of time. Yet although Voříšek did not study with Tomášek for long, the two became friends.

Tomášek wrote his own biography, in which he comes across as quite self-assured.

Self-confidence may well have been one of his traits, but he was a highly erudite and adroit man indeed! A notable pianist, composer and educator. No wonder, then, that he held himself in esteem, as he duly revealed in his autobiography.

Regrettably, he ceased to depict his life relatively early. What was the reason?

The reason why he failed to complete his autobiography is not clear. You'd be better off asking the musicologist Markéta Kabelková, the head of the Music History Department of the Czech Museum of Music, a specialist in Tomášek's life and work, owing to whom I actually arrived at the subject. Perhaps he stopped writing for practical reasons – in the final phase of his life, Tomášek was extremely busy with teaching. Yet the autobiography is of major importance for us, since it is the one and only more or less comprehensive source of information. Otherwise we know very little about him. We also drew upon the text when we were attempting to date Tomášek's compositions, as there are very few sources in this respect.

When did he compose the sonatas featured on your new CD?

Initially, they were thought to have been written between 1800 and 1806, yet when I explored them closely, I arrived at the conclusion that the first sonata might have been composed in 1799. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ascertain the exact date, as part of the Faculty of Law's archive in Prague has burnt down, and documents attesting to the theses and the graduates have been lost. That is where we would have found the date on which Tomášek's thesis, which is related to his music, was approved.

How is it that Václav Tomášek is not as well known as the other Czech composers of his time?

I assume that there are several reasons, one of them being the date of his birth. Tomášek's disadvantage is that his anniversary overlaps with that of Bedřich Smetana (editor's note: the years of birth are 1774 and 1824, respectively). The creators of concert series generally reflect anniversaries in the programmes and musicians' presentations. And Smetana is very hard to compete with. Nevertheless, I hope that in the near future Václav Tomášek will have joined the ranks of some of his contemporaries, who were discovered for the audience by musicians and musicologists in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw the beginning of a renewed great interest in early music.

You yourself have made a great contribution to Tomášek's rediscovery.

Well, I am not alone in this respect. Musica Florea, for instance, recently performed Tomášek's *Te Deum* and other vocal pieces of his. Of major significance is that Czech Radio has been publishing the sheet music of all his sonatas, so I hope they will soon become familiar among the wider public too. I myself have recorded some of the sonatas for the radio.

Years ago, Tomášek's keyboard works were recorded by the pianist Pavel Štěpán. How does his take on them differ from your performance?

As far as I know, Pavel Štěpán above all recorded the *Eclogues*, which are virtually the only well-known Tomášek pieces today. The piano is essentially different, and that duly determines the manner of performance. I play the instruments, or their copies, which were common in Tomášek's time and which starkly differ from the contemporary piano. And there is a geographic difference to take into account too. The modern piano was derived from the English type of the instrument. To put it simply, that instrument is suitable for long sound, cantilena. Whereas the Viennese piano – used across the Central Europe region – possesses other characteristic qualities; it is good for speed, articulation, "scampering". Hence, it appears that the pieces once composed for this "Viennese" instrument are difficult to transfer to the opposite pole, that is, the piano whose main property is the ability to generate long and melodious sound. Consequently, my account above all differs from the modern performances owing to my playing an older type of the instrument.

And that in turn greatly affects the manner of playing, does it not?

Yes, the entire performance depends on it, since it is mainly determined by the type of instrument. The manner of playing, the manner of using the pedal, the tempo, etc. That is precisely what the magic of that which is termed "historically informed performance" rests in. I myself do not really like the term, but I do use it, as it has become established.

Is it not the correct term, then?

That is not what I mean. It started to be applied in the 1960s, when the movement for "early music" was enjoying a great boom, and there is nothing we can do about it now. By using the term, we aim to stress the fact that we strive to play period instruments or their copies while being familiar with the historical sources too. Although, of course, no one today is able to specify how music was actually performed two hundred years ago. On the other hand, we do have available ample credible circumstantial evidence that has to be taken into consideration.

What helps you the most in this regard?

Instructional for us are, for instance, the period textbooks, in which everything is described. Sometimes, though, it is not easy to read them, as they are written in a specific language. You have to immerse yourself in the respective era, apply historical methods. Besides the textbooks, there are, most significantly, particular musical instruments. When you embrace them with an open heart - I must emphasise, with an open heart – they suggest a lot. When you are lucky enough to have the opportunity to play, spend a certain period of time with, such an instrument, it itself will teach you.

You stress the necessity of having an open heart – does it mean that there are musicians who approach historical performance without having an emotional relationship to it?

I feel obliged to emphasise the open heart because there are many keyboard players who only try to play such an instrument as they want to make sure that it is imperfect. They approach it with this intention and they seemingly do indeed verify that which they had presumed, that it is just a predecessor of our perfect modern piano. Such musicians are not likely to find anything valuable in historical instruments.

And the other type of musicians?

► Naturally, the “early” piano can be approached from a different angle. With the conviction that it is evidently more appropriate to play a two-hundred-year-old composition on a two-hundred-year-old instrument than on one that was only built two centuries after the music was created.

How did you come to devote to music history, as a performer and theoretician?

I studied the modern piano at the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts. I have always had a penchant for Classicism; I have always liked playing music dating from that stylistic era. Unlike the majority of pianists, who only begin feeling good around 1830, the Romantic period. Although I didn't eschew other eras, the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was closer to my heart. And since at the time of my studies there were few opportunities to encounter the period instruments in this country, following my graduation I left for Paris. My original intention was to attend a master class with Professor Eugen Indjic. Numerous pianists of my generation had taken his international performance classes in Piešťany, Slovakia. We really enjoyed them, and I am not the only one who subsequently decided to go to Paris and study with Indjic, at least for a short time. While in France, I started to look about to see what was going on with the hammerklavier there. It was in Paris where my interest in and decision to devote to the instrument truly ripened.

I have read in your CV that you studied for your doctoral degree within a “cotutelle” programme. Could you explain what that is?

It is a very interesting system of doctoral study, entailing joint supervision according to an agreement between universities in two countries. In my case, they were the Sorbonne and Paris Conservatoire, and the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno. I received a scholarship from the French government, on the basis of which I studied half a year in one, half a year in the other country over three years.

What was the subject of your doctoral thesis?

Jan Václav Hugo Voříšek's music, which represents a sort of transition between Classicism and the period that followed. I deliberately avoid the term “Romanticism”, for it is not precise. Voříšek's music is very Romantic as regards its content, yet is Classicist when it comes to the idiom.

Your hammerklavier is a rather precious instrument. Do you take it with you to concerts?

Yes, most of the time. I own an instrument of five and a half octaves, it is practical, relatively easy to transport, and it corresponds to the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Yet at the present time, suitable instruments are often available at more distant places, so I don't have to travel to, for instance, Poland and Slovakia, with my hammerklavier. Yet I play a different instrument on the Supraphon album.

Your CD with Tomášek's sonatas has been released within Supraphon's praiseworthy and acclaimed Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague series, which over the years has brought to light a number of discoveries. Tomášek's keyboard pieces are certain to rank among them.

Yes, it is a truly exquisite edition, and I hope it will also fill the temporal gap at the end of the 18th century. The majority of the titles have so far been dedicated to the first half of the 18th century. When it comes to Tomášek, his music may be deemed a watershed, since he wrote his sonatas in the first years of the 19th century, with the bulk of them having been composed in its first half. One of the supporting ideas of my project was the fact that, in terms of their musical idiom, seven of Tomášek's sonatas rather pertain to the 18th century. I am happy that my album has been included in the Supraphon series. With regard to the edition, I can see plenty of other Classicist chamber works and music for the solo piano.

Agáta Pilátová



Photo © Dagmar Kneřová



Photo © Martin Kubica

SU4197-2

SMETANA TRIO

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE AWARD

MEANS FOR US A TRIBUTE TO CZECH COMPOSERS AND CZECH INTERPRETERS

On Wednesday 19 April 2017, the pianist Jitka Čechová, a member of the Smetana Trio, took over at Kings Place in London the BBC Music Magazine Chamber Award for the album of the complete Bohuslav Martinů piano trios. It was the second time the ensemble has won the prestigious accolade, following the one in 2007, for its recording of Antonín Dvořák's trios. The Smetana Trio's album featuring Bohuslav Martinů's music has garnered international acclaim ever since its release: it has previously received the Diapason d'Or and has been named BBC Music Magazine's Disc of the Month, the Sunday Times' Album of the Week and Harmonie's CHOICE.

The pianist Jitka Čechová said: "We are really happy, for two reasons. First and foremost, we are pleased that owing to the BBC Music Magazine Award many more stages worldwide will now feature Bohuslav Martinů's singular music in their programmes on a more regular basis. Martinů's piano trios certainly deserve the attention of ensembles all over the world, and the album's success may inspire them to include the music in their repertoires. And from our personal point of view, we are naturally delighted that our endeavour to render Martinů's chamber music as attractively as possible has been appreciated. The trios are really variegated, each of them possessing a totally different atmosphere, thus allowing the performers to

show the amplitude of colours of Martinů's compositional styles. We were allured to and greatly enjoyed uncovering the pieces' emotional profundity, many a time veiled in highly complex rhythmic and polyphonic structures, yet always retaining the composer's Bohemian-Moravian poetic soul."

The 21 CDs that were nominated for the BBC Music Magazine Awards 2017 were released by 19 labels from all over the world. Every year, there are seven main competition categories: Instrumental, Chamber, Orchestral, Choral, Vocal, Opera and Concerto. The nominated titles represent the best of the more than 1,500 recordings which were reviewed in BBC Music Magazine during the course of the previous year. The albums shortlisted this year were made by such stellar artists as Mahan Esfahani, Rolf Lislevand, the Danish String Quartet, the Escher String Quartet, Nicolas Altstaedt, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, John Wilson, Barbara Hannigan and Dimitris Tiliakos. The winners were announced at the BBC Music Magazine Awards gala evening on 19 April at Kings Place in London. The BBC Music Magazine Awards are only earmarked for classical music and are unique in that the main categories are voted for by the public. The voting took place on bbcmusicmagazine.com/awards.



SU4211-5

Photo © Dušan Martiňák

KRISTINA FIALOVÁ

SUCH WISHES ARE HONOURED!

The violist Kristina Fialová, whose career has of late been soaring, has already won prestigious accolades at international competitions, made her debut at the famed Tonhalle Zürich and appeared at prominent festivals worldwide. A truly vivacious artist, she has found an ideal partner in the seasoned pianist Igor Ardašev. Her new album, titled *Czech Viola Sonatas*, features works by Bohuslav Martinů, Karel Husa, Viktor Kalabis and Jindřich Feld.

Kristina Fialová's refined taste complies with her approach to the performance of the selected pieces. During our brief conversation about her breakthrough recording, the first she has made for Supraphon, we came upon striking connections.

Kristina, was it difficult to choose the repertoire for the album *Czech Viola Sonatas*?

The repertoire of my new album has been compiled as a result of the interconnection of four composers. Bohuslav Martinů was the predecessor of and served as a great inspiration for Jindřich Feld, Viktor Kalabis and Karel Husa. Viktor Kalabis in particular drew upon Martinů's work. What is more, for many years, he worked for the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation and had great merit in promoting Martinů's music at home and abroad alike. Feld, Kalabis and Husa were classmates at the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, where they studied in the class of Jaroslav Řídký. The primary impulse for my new CD came from Prof. Zuzana Růžičková, who voiced her wish that I make a recording of Viktor Kalabis's Sonata. Such wishes are simply honoured! When exploring a well-known piece, one that has been performed at numerous concerts and widely recorded, it is difficult to create one's own musical conception and not to be affected. The advantage of a work not previously recorded is the blank sheet, the absence of interpretational deposits. Igor

Ardašev and I enjoyed great freedom in forming our musical ideas. And that is very interesting work indeed.

Why did you invite the pianist Igor Ardašev along to work with you on the album?

Igor Ardašev has been one of Europe's finest pianists for a long time, and he also has the reputation of a highly engrossing and intelligent performer, possessing a peerless talent for polyphony. That is precisely why I chose him in particular to make a recording of new compositions. I was very pleased when he accepted my offer. Working with him is a splendid musical education. He is always flawless and accurate, a musician possessing a perfectly conceptual thinking.

What are your plans in the near future when it comes to concerts?

This year, I'll be making a tour with the Mannheim Chamber Orchestra, giving a series of concerts with the Bosch Orchestra in Germany, and will be also performing with the Plzeň Philharmonic, the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic, the Prague Chamber Orchestra and others. I will also appear at concerts in Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Austria, Italy and Russia, and tour China. And Igor Ardašev and I have decided to perform some of the pieces from our new album at the Emmy Destinn Music Festival in České Budějovice.

Vladan Drvota



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SU4221-2

VLACH QUARTET TIMELESS BEETHOVEN PIECES AS PERFORMED BY THE LEGENDARY ENSEMBLE

After having paid tribute to the legacy of the Czech Chamber Orchestra (SU4203-2), Supraphon has now commemorated another ensemble connected with the violinist and conductor Josef Vlach, a gifted pupil of Josef Talich. Established in 1950, since 1954 the Vlach Quartet performed in the line-up in which it had triumphed in the competition in Liège (1955) and in which it conquered stages worldwide and made all the recordings featured on this album. Two exciting quartets, the Smetana and the Vlach, were active in Prague, ensembles whose difference represented an inspiring polarity of approaches to music interpretation. Ivan Medek thus described the personality of Josef Vlach, who with kindness and authority alike formed the quartet's soul: "Similarly to Talich, Vlach was not a scholarly artist. Yet he possessed a remarkable ability, an acute sense for that which is really strong and communicative in music. His intellect seemed to be constantly fed from an immense source of profound emotional inspiration." The Vlach Quartet recorded Beethoven's quartets within 10 years (1960-70). Given the year in which it was recorded, 1956, the "bonus" Mozart quartet in D minor is one of the ensemble's oldest recordings made soon after their victory in Liège. The presented Beethoven tracks are merely part of the Vlach Quartet's remarkable legacy, which encompasses quartet works by Czech composers (Dvořák, Suk, Janáček, etc.), as well as by Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Debussy and Ravel. And after you have listened to the fourth disc of this compilation, there will be more to look forward to.

Matouš Vlčinský

THE EARLIEST RECORDS OF TATIANA NIKOLAYEVA'S BOUNDLESS MASTERY

In the case of the pianist Tatiana Nikolayeva (1924–1993), that overused term "child prodigy" is entirely apt. She began playing the instrument at the age of three and started to compose music when she was 12. At the age of 13, she enrolled at the Moscow Conservatory, after graduating from which she intensively devoted to composition. The turning point in her career emerged in 1950; more significant in her career than winning the first edition of the J. S. Bach International Competition in Leipzig was her encounter with Shostakovich, which turned into a lifelong friendship. With her account of Bach's music, Nikolayeva inspired Shostakovich to compose his 24 Preludes and Fugues, which she was the first to perform. In February 1951, Nikolayeva was invited to Prague to join the Czech Philharmonic and make a recording of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 and several Bach pieces. The other Supraphon recordings (of works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Nikolayeva's own Concert Etudes) were completed in April 1954. Notwithstanding the small number of Tatiana Nikolayeva's performances recorded for Supraphon on magnetic tapes, their significance is indispensable indeed, as they represent virtually the oldest preserved testimony to the immense mastery of the legendary pianist, before she was discovered by the whole world.

Matouš Vlčinský



SU4216-2



SU4217-2

ANDRÁS ADORJÁN RECALLS JEAN-PIERRE RAMPAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE RELEASE OF HIS SUPRAPHON RECORDINGS

The Hungary-born flautist András Adorján grew up in Denmark, where he studied dental surgery and music in Copenhagen. He subsequently took lessons from Jean-Pierre Rampal and attended the master class of the Swiss flautist Aurèle Nicolet. In 1987, Adorján was named a professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz in Cologne, and he has taught annually at the Rampal Music Academy and other master classes. He has regularly sat on the juries of major flute competitions, and serves as President of the German Flute Society.

Photo © archives

► **At the end of March, András Adorján arrived in Prague upon the invitation of the Prague Conservatory, where he performed within the Flute Days festival and launched a new Supraphon album, featuring the remastered complete recordings the famed French flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal made for the label.**

How would you define the significance of Jean-Pierre Rampal for the flute?

Rampal played a vital role in promoting the flute, elevating it to a position comparable to that of the violin. He actually presented the flute as a solo instrument.

How did Rampal choose the repertoire he explored and performed?

A very inquisitive man, he would regularly visit libraries and archives, commission new music for the flute, discovered and rediscovered works, and whenever he deemed a piece intriguing, he would record it. Owing to Rampal's relentless exploration, we flautists have become acquainted with plenty of wonderful music.

What about contemporary music? Did he devote to that as well?

Contemporary music was simply part of his life. As I have said, he strove to raise the flute to the position of a paramount instrument – this, however, cannot be attained without playing contemporary music. Whenever he met an interesting composer, he asked him to write a new piece. Many of these works are still performed, forming the core of the flute repertoire.

You launched in Prague the release of a new Supraphon album, which features the complete recordings Rampal made for the label. What do you consider to be the main asset of these remastered tracks?

It is of vital importance not to forget about the great musicians of the past. Life at the present time is fast – so when you today ask young players to name some flute legends, few of them can recall Jean-Pierre Rampal and Aurèle Nicolet. To date, young people have not had the

opportunity to listen to many of the recordings made by the two great flautists – and the new, remastered album can change this undesired state of affairs. They don't have to hunt down the old vinyl discs or some CDs, which are no longer in the catalogue. That is why I am very happy about the release. It is a great pleasure for everyone!!

Is there any special advice that Jean-Pierre Rampal gave to you?

I think the best advice for me, as well as all my colleagues, is his idea that a musician should perfectly master his instrument. In that case, the audience doesn't perceive the instrument but the music itself.

You work as a teacher. Have you been anyhow inspired by Rampal in this respect?

Absolutely! I had several teachers, and two of them were true masters, among the best 20th-century flute educators – Jean-Pierre Rampal and Aurèle Nicolet. I think that both my playing and teaching reflects that which I have learned from the two amazing flautists. And I am certain that during my lessons I often use the very same examples and words that they themselves used ... Yet today they are my words, and I am not able to distinguish which of them I have taken them from.

What is the current interest in studying the flute?

I think the interest in studying the flute has waned since the time when I started to play the instrument. I remember that there were far more flautists than there are now. And, above all, there were many more European players than you see now. The flute boom has shifted to Asia. When I look at the flute class at the conservatory in Germany, where I have taught for the greater part of my life, the majority of the students are from South Korea. It is a pity that we do not see as many European students, and I must admit that the young people from Asia really are the best when it comes to the entrance exams.

Marek Šulc

András Adorján



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Jean-Pierre Rampal



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