

# VIVACE

*Classical Music Review  
in Supraphon Recordings*

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017



TOMÁŠ NETOPIL

Photo © Marco Borggreve



PAVEL HAAS  
QUARTET

Photo © Lukáš Kadeřábek



JAN  
BARTOŠ

Photo © Lukáš Kadeřábek



MANFRED  
HONECK

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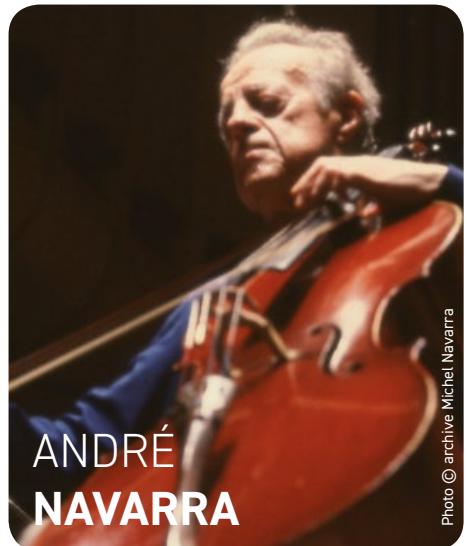
ZUZANA  
RŮŽIČKOVÁ

Photo © Martin Kubica



MARTINŮ QUARTET & KAREL KOŠÁREK

Photo © Petra Hájková



ANDRÉ  
NAVARRA

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Dear friends,

I started my last editorial by congratulating **Mrs Zuzana Růžičková** on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the present one, my first thought is dedicated to giving our farewells to this extraordinary personality who passed away on 27 September. I am sure many other people will share my view when I say that I am truly going to miss being around her and experiencing the inspiring talks full of attention, deep insight, humour and amazing kindness. Another void is left behind by **Václav Riedlbauch** who passed away on 3 November. I do not know many other people who served Czech music with such fervour and professionalism and in so many different areas. A modest and selfless person, Riedlbauch dedicated his entire life to music, which in his case is no exaggeration. He left a deep imprint on the shape of many institutions he administered, having served as the artistic director of the National Theatre in Prague, head of production at the Panton publishing house, general director of the Czech Philharmonic orchestra, Minister of Culture and, of late, director of Bohuslav Martinů Foundation. Besides this, he found time to be an excellent music teacher and – probably with greatest passion – composer. Some of the wonderful recordings of Martinů's work published recently by Supraphon would not have seen the light of day had it not been for his initiative, support and enthusiasm. Just as with Zuzana Růžičková, I feel grateful that our paths have crossed.

Leafing through this issue of Vivace, I am happy for all that we achieved and that we can offer to you, experienced listeners. To quote a BBC Music Magazine reviewer, **Pavel Haas Quartet** has come up with yet another triumph. Their recording of Dvořák's quintets featuring pianist **Boris Giltburg** and a PHQ founding member, violist **Pavel Nikl**, became the above-mentioned magazine's Recording of the Month. Please take all the "medals" they have received (Gramophone Editor's Choice, Sunday Time Album of the Week, etc.) as an invitation to listen to their outstanding recording.

The name of **Bohuslav Martinů** appears twice in this season's offer. First, we proudly present the premiere recording of the **Epic of Gilgamesh** in the original English version featuring prominent soloists, the Prague Philharmonic Choir, the **Czech Philharmonic orchestra** and conductor **Manfred Honeck**, which I personally find to be the event of the year at Supraphon. The first reviews (Sunday Times Album of the Week, BBC Radio 3 CD Review Disc of the Week) seem to confirm my view. **Tomáš Netopil** and Czech Radio Symphonic Orchestra recorded Martinů's Bouquet of Flowers sixty years after Karel Ančerl's fundamental recording came out. It came out in November and is complemented by a studio recording premiere of the Philharmonic Dances by Jan Novák. I believe this composer (at times "jazzing" in a nearly-Bernstein way) will come as a surprise for many of you just as it did for me.

Let us proceed from Martinů to **Petr Eben** (1929–2007) whose chamber work has shamefully been neglected. This deficit was now taken care of by the **Martinů Quartet** with pianist **Karel Košárek**, their recording of Eben's work being deep and fascinating. I am happy to see the name of Petr Eben in Supraphon's editorial calendar and in such grasping interpretation to boot.

The Supraphon debut made by **Jan Bartoš** is deserving of the praise it received by music critics. The pianist whose name appears side by side with his teacher's names, Ivan Moravec and Alfred Brendel, came up with a recording of **Mozart's concertos** that makes its mark despite vast international competition. The first of these, Concerto in d minor K 466 played with the Czech Philharmonic, at the same time represents a lovely memory of Jiří Bělohlávek.

May the advent and Christmas time fill you with joy. I hope that the interviews and articles you find on the following pages will be no less inspiring than the great music captured on the recordings, which, I hope, can bring light and inspiration to you in the upcoming holiday season.

Matouš Vlčinský



Zuzana Růžičková, Iva Milerová and Matouš Vlčinský

Photo © Martin Kubica

# PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

## A FRIENDLY ENCOUNTER WITH BEAUTIFUL MUSIC

Seven years after they triumphed with Dvořák's quartets (Gramophone Award Recording of the Year), the Pavel Haas Quartet have returned to Dvořák. To quote the Sunday Times: "In this repertoire, they are simply matchless today." For the recording of his quintets, they invited along two guests: the Israeli pianist Boris Giltburg (winner of the 2013 Queen Elisabeth Competition) and one of the PHQ founding members, the violist Pavel Nikl.

Pavel Haas Quartet with Boris Giltburg and Pavel Nikl

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get album

Photo © Marco Borggreve



Veronika Jarůšková



Marek Zwiebel



Radim Sedmidubský



Peter Jarůšek

Photo © Marco Borggreve

### **How did you arrive at the idea of recording Dvořák's quintets Opp. 81 and 97?**

Veronika Jarůšková: We decided to make a recording of the two works out of friendship. Boris Giltburg is a kindred soul to us, as a musician and a human. We first got together three years ago in the Netherlands, where we performed Dvořák's Piano Quintet. And we could immediately feel that we understood one another completely.

Peter Jarůšek: We are not only connected as musicians; we also feel a personal affinity. I would say these aspects are like communicating vessels. We are close friends, and in the future we would like to perform together other quintets too.

Veronika Jarůšková: Pavel Nikl, our former colleague and founding member, had no doubts as to the project. I personally would call the album a friendly encounter with beautiful music.

### **How often have you given performances with musicians outside your ensemble?**

Peter Jarůšek: We have naturally most frequently played in the basic configuration, as a string quartet. Now and then, we have been afforded the opportunity to perform with a guest, mainly in the second half of our concerts, and we then play as a quintet. Of late, we have often been joined by Boris Giltburg or Denis Kozhukin, another top-notch pianist. We have always really enjoyed our performances together, even though the two musicians are different.

Veronika Jarůšková: In February 2018, we are scheduled to perform sextets, and we will again be joined by the violist Pavel Nikl, and the cellist Tomáš Jamník. Sextets require superlative and seasoned chamber players, possessing an extraordinary sense for chamber music. The concerts are part of the "Czech It Out" project, within which we and several other Czech soloists and ensembles will be appearing at the new hall of the Elphilharmonie in Hamburg.

### **When a renowned and well-coordinated quartet and a superb solo pianist get together, who determines the character of the music? How did it go during your recording sessions?**

Veronika Jarůšková: I don't think anyone was the boss. The music itself was paramount. So we simply strove to honour the music. Given that Boris Giltburg is a soloist of global calibre, he is a fantastic chamber player, possessing an incredible sense for musical colour.

Peter Jarůšek: What was of major significance was that we had played the two Dvořák quintets at numerous concerts. Hence, we had the feeling that the time was ripe. We did consider another option – quintets by Brahms and Dvořák – but we really wanted to record the two Dvořák pieces at the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum in Prague.

### **Did you make the album with the usual recording team?**

Peter Jarůšek: Yes, we did. We are happy to work with Jiří Gemrot and Karel Soukeník. They are outstanding professionals and we would like to record all our albums with them.

### **What repertoire will you be performing in the new concert season?**

Marek Zwiebel: We have always thought over our repertoire approximately two years in advance. Subsequently, the agency would present our ideas to the promoters and organisers of concerts. Our repertoire during the current season includes Schubert's String Quartet No. 13 in A minor, "Rosamunde"; Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 7; and Dvořák's String Quartet No. 14 within our first programme; and Stravinsky's Concertino and Ravel's String Quartet in F major within another concert programme.



Pavel Haas Quartet with Pavel Nikl

Photo © Marco Borggreve

# MARTINŮ'S BOUQUET OF FLOWERS

## REDISCOVERED AFTER 60 YEARS

In collaboration with Czech Radio, Supraphon released an album made up of a new recording of Bohuslav Martinů's Bouquet of Flowers and the premiere studio recording of Jan Novák's Philharmonic Dances in November. Available on both CD and for download, it features the two works' splendid performance by the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Tomáš Netopil, the solo singers Kateřina Kněžíková, Michaela Kapustová, Jaroslav Březina and Adam Plachetka, the Prague Philharmonic Choir and the Prague Philharmonic Children's Choir.

Bohuslav Martinů and Jan Novák shared similar fates – both of them left their country and wandered around the world. The two composers also had a relationship as a teacher and pupil. Novák referred to his six-month study with Martinů in New York in 1947 as having had a major impact on his development as a music creator and human. Martinů's influence is palpable in Novák's Philharmonic Dances (Choreae Philharmonicae, 1956), three symphonic fantasies that provide wide scope for showcasing the virtuosity of both the soloists and the groups of instruments.

Matouš Vlčinský, Supraphon's producer, said: "The present recording of the work – the very first made in a studio – helps us to pay off our great debt to Novák, an artist who gave preference to being a 'free exile' over having to breathe the oppressive air in his homeland, reigned over by a totalitarian regime. The album's centrepiece is a new account of Martinů's Bouquet of Flowers, a landmark recording of which was made back in 1955 by Karel Ančerl, conducting the Czech Philharmonic. The composer never got to hear the piece performed in public, yet he did have the chance to listen to the gramophone record sent to him

at Schönenberg, where he had found a temporary home."

Some 60 years later, the Bouquet of Flowers has now been let blossom in its entire beauty by Tomáš Netopil, one of the most distinguished contemporary Czech conductors. Traditional Moravian songs were for Martinů a major and irreplaceable source of inspiration, one that had a marked influence on his singular musical idiom. "The popularity Czech composers enjoy abroad is in part down to the national folk music and natural musicality, which Janáček, Martinů and others recast into a refined symphonic form," Tomáš Netopil added.

The new album, which is available on both CD and for download, features the solo vocalists Kateřina Kněžíková, Michaela Kapustová, Jaroslav Březina and Adam Plachetka; the Prague Philharmonic Choir, conducted by Lukáš Vášilek; the Prague Philharmonic Children's Choir, conducted by Jiří Chvála; and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tomáš Netopil.

The album has been recorded with generous support from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation.

# JAN BARTOŠ

## MOZART'S MUSIC AS A FUSION OF COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

Jan Bartoš's Supraphon debut album features Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K 466, and Piano Concerto No. 12 in A major, K 414 ("a quattro"), recorded with the Czech Philharmonic, conducted by the late Jiří Bělohlávek (K 466), and the Doležal Quartet (K 414). Jan Bartoš duly uncovers the deepest layers of the architecture of and the emotions encoded in the Mozart works. The pianist guides the listener through the ominous, demonic even, Concerto in D minor like through a mystery story. The more joyous nature of the Concerto in A major is further highlighted by the transparent texture of its chamber version for string quartet.



Photo © Marek Bouček

**Why did you decide to include the 2013 live recording of Mozart's Concerto No. 20 in D minor on the new Supraphon album?**

The recording was made during one of the Czech Philharmonic's subscription concerts, conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek. When Supraphon turned to me with the proposal for the release of the new album, the recording immediately sprang to mind, because I am happy with it in all respects. A year later, the Doležal Quartet and I made a recording of the other piece featured on the CD, Concerto No. 12 in A major.

**And why did you opt for Concerto No. 12 in A major?**

I had it in my repertoire and, coincidentally, it was the first work I performed within my collaboration with Jiří Bělohlávek. At the time, I played it with him and the Prague Philharmonia. I returned to the concerto when I learned that there is also a chamber version of it, for piano and string quartet. It appeared to me very interesting to juxtapose on the album two different universes – the chamber and the symphonic.

**And what conduced you to put the two works on a single album?**

The said contrast and the opportunity to show the different facets of Mozart's music. What is more, a pianist should play differently with a string quartet and a symphony orchestra. And this also applies to the hall in which the music is performed. When you are on the stage at the Rudolfinum, opposite another forty instrumentalists, you simply play differently to when you are in a smaller room, with a chamber ensemble.

**What do you deem the most appealing aspect of Mozart's music?**

I admire Mozart's music for its possessing multiple layers. No other music is as diverse as his. I personally refer to it as a fusion of

comedy and tragedy. Mozart can be human and transcendental, ironical and compassionate at the very same moment.

**Concerto No. 20 in D minor has been recorded on countless occasions. Are you one of those who strive to approach every new account in a novel way?**

If someone aims to do so a priori, I consider it a bad approach. I think that the most important thing is to play it truthfully, in line with your sincerest conviction. Such an approach should always result in a new quality.

**Besides studying at the Academy of Performing Arts, you have also been educated in the Netherlands and the USA. What did you find the greatest benefit of studying abroad?**

Throughout my life, I have been fortunate indeed to have had excellent teachers. Even though I have always retained my own style, each and every one of them has made an indelible impact on me. Generally, my studies abroad were vital in numerous regards. In New York in particular, I was exposed to fierce competition, which, however, is the only way to make you aware of what direction you should pursue and what your position in life is. And when amidst such a competitive environment you gain success at competitions and concerts, it enhances your self-confidence, which is absolutely essential for your further development. The opportunity I had in Amsterdam and New York to attend concerts, opera performances, as well as workshops led by the greatest musicians, has undoubtedly had a huge influence on my evolution.

**How did you select the musicians with whom you would record Concerto No. 12 in A major?**

I had heard the Doležal Quartet performing at a Czech Chamber Music Society concert at the Rudolfinum, and they highly impressed me. That is why I addressed them, and we duly agreed to work together.



**The performance of Concerto No. 20 in D minor featured on the album is conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek. How does a young man lead a dialogue with a figure of such renown as Jiří Bělohlávek was?**

While feeling a natural respect and reverence, one also felt free in his presence. Jiří Bělohlávek never had the tendency to assert his own personality, his aim was always to “serve” the composer. Whenever I suggested something regarding our interpretation, he was amazingly open-minded. Moreover, he harboured yet another outstanding quality – under his baton, the music flowed absolutely spontaneously and naturally.

**You have experienced a very special musical-human moment. You appeared as a soloist at the concert that was the very last Jiří Bělohlávek would conduct. You performed in Polička Bohuslav Martinů's Double Concerto for Two String Orchestras. How did you perceive Jiří Bělohlávek's performance?**

This may strike some as a trite observation, but I feel I have to say it anyway. I had the impression that when approaching the end of his days Jiří Bělohlávek's performances were different, he seemed to me more absorbed, humble and peculiarly reconciled.

**Is there any principle on the basis of which you choose the repertoire for your solo recitals?**

I only choose pieces that I personally believe in, pieces to which I feel a deep affinity. I like two types of recitals. The first is a programme dedicated to a single composer, as I deem it fascinating to present the amplitude of one creator's expression. The other concept rests in juxtaposing two utterly differing composers, who supplement each other in a certain respect or diverge, thus giving rise to a certain unity. Something similar to the yin and yang forces. In line with this

principle, at one of my recent recitals I juxtaposed the musical universes of Beethoven and Cage.

**Over the past few years, you have had the splendid opportunity to be in regular contact with the legendary Austrian-British pianist Alfred Brendel. What do you consider the greatest benefit of your getting together?**

I have enjoyed the fantastic privilege of being able to consult Alfred Brendel about my performances, in Prague, as well as at his home in London. It's always immensely intense when we get together. We discuss a variety of subjects, including film, literature and visual arts, and each of our sessions has been highly illuminative and inspiring for me. When we were strolling around the Convent of Saint Agnes in Prague, for instance, it was ultimately Alfred Brendel who guided us through the collection of medieval arts! Possessing a true Renaissance spirit, he is a highly singular personality, as is clearly evinced in his performances.

**Which young pianists have inspired you?**

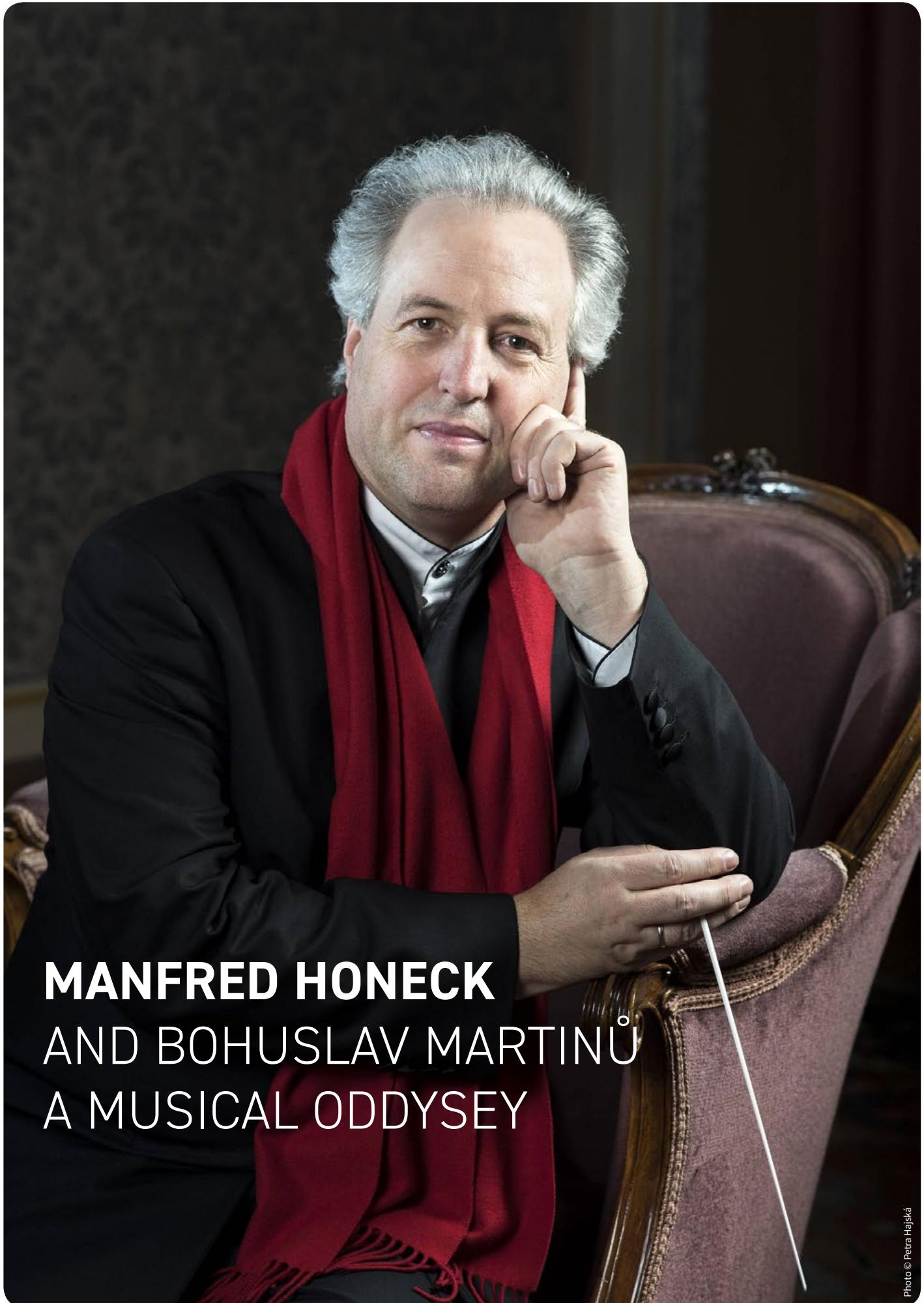
When it comes to young pianists, I have been intrigued by Paul Lewis, Till Fellner, Daniil Trifonov and Igor Levit, as they are not only brilliant players but also engrossing interpreters. Many contemporary young pianists are merely excellent players, yet, in my opinion, they have not come up with anything new in artistic terms.

**What repertoire is currently the closest to your heart?**

At the present time, I feel most at home with German music, that is, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, as well as, naturally, Czech music – I love Smetana and Janáček in particular. And I am also fond of the New York Downtown scene, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Steve Reich and John Zorn.



Jan Bartoš and Anna Bělohlávková



# MANFRED HONECK AND BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ A MUSICAL ODDYSEY

In January, Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck took over the Czech Philharmonic's subscription concerts because of the poor health of the orchestra's chief conductor, Jiří Bělohlávek. Honeck is currently director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Among the concerts where he stood in for Bělohlávek was a performance of Bohuslav Martinů's *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was also recorded. Honeck said it was regrettable that Bělohlávek was forced to withdraw from these concerts as he was a great admirer of Martinů's oratorio. Notwithstanding the circumstances, in a recent interview with Harmonie magazine he added that he felt greatly honoured to have had the opportunity to explore *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and perform it with the Czech Philharmonic.

**It was your very first encounter with the score of The Epic of Gilgamesh. Was it just an assignment or was it a joy?**

I have been familiarising myself with Czech music step by step. I received my education in Vienna, which involves learning the old classics – by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Mahler, Bruckner... Then Dvořák appeared... My first contact with Czech music was through Antonín Dvořák, followed by Bedřich Smetana and Leoš Janáček. And then Bohuslav Martinů.

**What do you precisely mean by “then”?**

Some years later. My aim was to get into the understanding of Czech music, the Czech way of thinking. Yet as I don't understand and don't speak Czech, I needed, and wanted, to decipher how Czech is pronounced, how the Czechs speak their language... and what impact this has on the music – what is the influence of the speaking to the music. It is no question, I was greatly influenced by Dvořák in this respect. I love his Slavonic Dances. And his symphonies and very much his oratorios as well! One of my favourite pieces is the Stabat mater, which I have conducted at various venues and in the next season I am scheduled to perform in Munich. Then I discovered Janáček, who also made a big impression on me, with his focus on words, his singular declamation... And, finally, I arrived at Martinů's music. From my perspective, it seems his treating, his means of expression are sometime a mixture, something of a blend of Dvořák and Janáček. I like Martinů's sense for melody, his melodic elements, his grandeur of the espressivo... In every one of his works... So – to answer your first question – I have become increasingly fond of Martinů's music, getting in love more and more.

**What you have mentioned so far surely refers to the Dvořák aspects of Martinů's oeuvre. But what about the Janáček influence...?**

I can perceive this aspect of Martinů's music in the word-concentrated rhythm. As well as, for instance, in the way he treats the percussion instruments. He doesn't allow them to be drowned out by the orchestra. If I had to compare it to food – you can have a large Wiener Schnitzel, with a lot of potatoes, or you can be served something delicate, with a finely balanced sauce. Martinů employs fewer instruments. No oboes, no bassoons, no horns... And he uses instruments in a very good way. When it comes to the percussion and his beloved piano, he utilises them in a highly specific and concentrated way. I would not venture to say that I have grasped everything in his music, yet I have been understanding it better and better. But that is nothing unusual in the case of conductors – even if I have performed something two hundred times or so, I could not claim that I have fully comprehended it, that I have reached my destination and finished with the piece. And so I am now on a journey with Bohuslav Martinů.

**And does Martinů sound to you similar to any other European composer, or do you consider his music, his sound, unique?**

He is totally unique. Martinů is Martinů. When you switch on the radio and they are playing music you don't know, you can guess what it is. And you recognise Martinů immediately. He has a singular idiom. Just as Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček do. By the way, in my opinion, this is one of the greatest compliments you can give a composer – that you can recognise his or her musical language, his or her musical thinking, way of harmony or rhythm... That is precisely what makes a composer a composer. Furthermore, one can say from which country Martinů is coming, what training or tradition he linked up to. Yet his music also reveals the influence of French culture, the Impressionists in particular, but in the end he was always himself. He didn't turn into a Debussy or a Ravel, even though he did use some of their techniques. Martinů remained himself. As far as I'm concerned, this is the true mark of a genius.



**When we listen to The Epic of Gilgamesh, it comes across as an utterly modern piece. How do you perceive Martinů within the context of 20th-century music? Was he an avant-garde artist?**

It depends on what we deem to be avant-garde. Are we talking about harmony, rhythm...? We can think of the conception, the instrumentation, that is, the sound... These are the different levels on which we can focus. I would say that Bohuslav Martinů was always a composer of melodic music. He never concentrated on the rhythm alone, for instance. His music has something in it that can be allowed to simply resonate. He lets it blowing. He didn't hesitate to compose in parallel thirds or sixths, singing elements. All of a sudden, it may sound like folk music! Like traditional Czech folk music! When you compare Martinů with the Second Viennese School, which emerged sometime between 1910 and 1920, it is far more extreme, although its adherents – Schoenberg, Berg... – wrote their works some 40 years earlier than Martinů completed his Gilgamesh. What, then, can be deemed progressive? The Second Viennese School...? We know that not everyone in Europe took part in this line. Just look at such composers as Alexander von Zemlinsky, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Walter Braunfels, Franz Schmidt... All of them great creators – and they didn't in any manner engage with the Second Viennese School! Not in the slightest. Nevertheless, on their paths they introduced new elements to music, changing harmony in their own way. For instance, Braunfels, who, unfortunately is totally unknown, paved the way, discovering a musical idiom that was no one else's but his... And this is also the case of Martinů. He didn't pursue the progressive avant-garde line.

#### **So, was he a traditionalist?**

I again must say that it all depends on one's perspective, on the position you occupy. Yes, Pierre Boulez and the entire generation who came up with their creations in the wake of World War II, that's something totally different. The very opposite indeed. Martinů didn't look in that direction at all. And why was that? Because he drew upon an entirely different tradition: the Czech musical tradition, which has always been naturally based on melody, on singing. And emotion.

#### **Martinů's music is not based on construction, then?**

That isn't exactly how I would put it. Martinů's music, of course, does have a sort of skeleton, mainly a rhythmic base. And the overall concept must be clear, there is no doubt about that. Yet Martinů was not particular person of mathematics, he adhered to some rules, albeit his own. It is not that the brain tells you what emotions have to do, the very opposite is the case: emotions tell the brain how to breath to the score. That's a really important aspect. And you find here great sounds. Martinů's music harbours extraordinary, unusual sonic strands, little pieces of progressive elements, either as regards harmony or, more generally, sounds. At the time he was writing Gilgamesh, in the 1950s, Martinů was at the peak of his creative powers. It is one of his best pieces.

**Yet at the time he also wrote The Opening of the Wells, a simple chamber work – one that very Czech in nature. But Gilgamesh is not so Czech, it is more international. Do you also perceive it that way?**

Well, it is not as much as it might be Czech, yet it is still pretty Czech. What I really enjoy are the number of very Czech traits, either in the rhythm or the melody, traits that emerge in both the solo and the chorus parts. Or the way the strings sing their phrases! That is truly exceptional. Yet the piece also contains totally different passages: for instance, the one in the third section, with Gilgamesh beseeching the deceased Enkidu to return to the Earth. It sounds as though his friend's voice is coming from the tomb. The manner in which Martinů expresses it is highly intriguing. These passages are markedly influenced by French music. Martinů applies glissandos, and creates very foggy, unclear sounds. The effect is like that of a Monet painting. Then the percussion instruments join in, producing regular, extremely dramatic pianissimo strokes. And a muted trumpet is heard. Martinů duly succeeded in evoking ancient times. The Epic of Gilgamesh dates from 1200 BC. Martinů rendered an astonishing atmosphere. The dead man comes back to life... What a magical moment! In the end, Gilgamesh asks Enkidu: What did you see? And Enkidu, that is, the entire chorus, replies: I saw... And a harp plays along... The substantial questions remain unanswered. These are musically amazing moments, great effects. People have always reflected on their lives, we naturally ask what ensues after death. And Martinů opened this very subject. He could have ended the oratorio in a totally different way, pompously, celebrating Gilgamesh, a great hero. Instead he chose to raise questions, questions every person is compelled to ask. Yet he does not give any answer. Applying the technique of French Impressionism.

#### **Quite a complicated score!**

Yes, but not when it comes to emotion. We understand what he is telling us.

#### **Have you ever conducted any of the Bohuslav Martinů symphonies?**

As I have said, I am on a journey. The first of his works I came into contact with, in Cologne, was the Field Mass, for male chorus and orchestra, a splendid piece, written during World War II. And I have conducted the Memorial to Lidice in Pittsburgh.

**Would you like to take the oratorio The Epic of Gilgamesh to Pittsburgh and include it in one of your programmes?**

I would certainly love to! It's a truly exquisite, enthralling work.

*(Petr Veber, with kind permission of Harmonie Magazine)*



Manfred Honeck with soloists



Photo © Petra Hajská

# MARTINŮ QUARTET & KAREL KOŠÁREK

## EBEN'S MUSIC EXPRESSES HIS STATE OF MIND



Photo © Pavel Dosoudil



Petr Eben was one of the most distinguished Czech composers of the second half of the 20th century. His music gained recognition far beyond the Iron Curtain and his homeland. Best known for organ and sacred works, his chamber pieces have – unjustly – been somewhat overlooked. Eben's music reflects his fascinating life story. At the age of 15, he was deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he got to know the thin line between life and death. His harrowing experiences there resulted in an emboldening of his Christian faith, approach to people and art alike. The new Supraphon album, made by the renowned Martinů Quartet and the pianist Karel Košárek, features Eben's String Quartet, "The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart"; Piano Trio; and a premiere recording of the Piano Quintet.

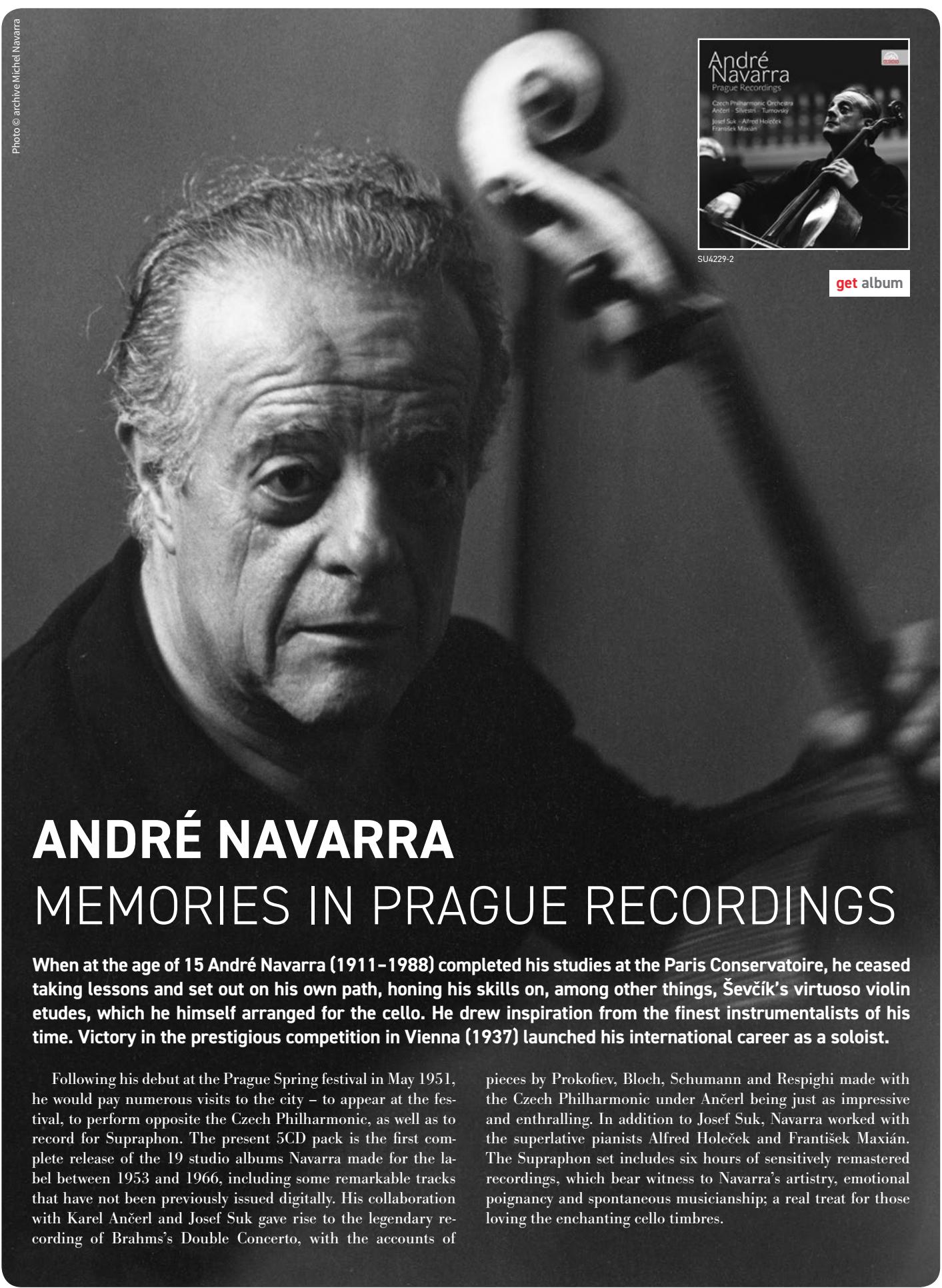
**The cellist Jitka Vlašáneková, a member of the Martinů Quartet, commented on the new Supraphon album, which has been released both on CD and digitally, as follows:**

"The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart is Petr Eben's one and only string quartet. It was commissioned by the Smetana Quartet, who would premiere and record it. I have heard that the ensemble were not entirely happy with their recording, yet I personally believe that their feeling was utterly subjective, rather pertaining to its technical quality. Nonetheless, for many years the idea of making a new recording of the piece, extraordinary both in terms of musical expression and technical performance, was in the air. Given the exceptional nature of the work, we felt greatly honoured to have had the opportunity to undertake the task. We had previously explored numerous Czech and international 20th- and 21st-century compositions, yet Eben's music is utterly singular, also bearing witness to which are the other pieces included on our new album. The Piano Quintet was commissioned by the globally celebrated Nash Ensemble, which gave its premiere. Yet the making of its first recording seemed

to have been waiting for us. Eben did not aim to attain compositional virtuosity and perfection per se, he strove to convey his state of mind, to communicate a philosophical idea, to create a musical image as a labyrinth and paradise alike. And Eben's one and only Piano Trio was a splendid supplement to the album."

**The pianist Karel Košárek said:**

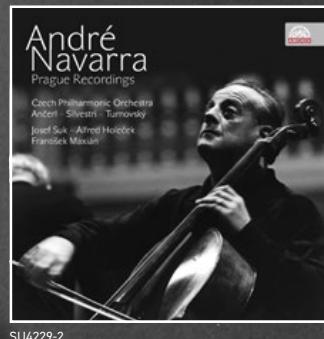
"Even though it may sound like a cliché, it is true – when musicians understand each other as professionals and humans, it is the most ideal combination, as is clearly evident in the outcome. I felt privileged to have been afforded the opportunity to perform and work on the album with the Martinů Quartet, just as I am really pleased and happy that the CD has been named 'Labyrinth'. The title precisely represents that which I feel when playing these Eben pieces for some time – a journey to a clearly set destination, whose nooks bring about a new picture, new view and emotion, as well as beauty in a variety of forms."



**ANDRÉ NAVARRA**  
**MEMORIES IN PRAGUE RECORDINGS**

**When at the age of 15 André Navarra (1911–1988) completed his studies at the Paris Conservatoire, he ceased taking lessons and set out on his own path, honing his skills on, among other things, Ševčík's virtuoso violin etudes, which he himself arranged for the cello. He drew inspiration from the finest instrumentalists of his time. Victory in the prestigious competition in Vienna (1937) launched his international career as a soloist.**

Following his debut at the Prague Spring festival in May 1951, he would pay numerous visits to the city – to appear at the festival, to perform opposite the Czech Philharmonic, as well as to record for Supraphon. The present 5CD pack is the first complete release of the 19 studio albums Navarra made for the label between 1953 and 1966, including some remarkable tracks that have not been previously issued digitally. His collaboration with Karel Ančerl and Josef Suk gave rise to the legendary recording of Brahms's Double Concerto, with the accounts of pieces by Prokofiev, Bloch, Schumann and Respighi made with the Czech Philharmonic under Ančerl being just as impressive and enthralling. In addition to Josef Suk, Navarra worked with the superlative pianists Alfred Holeček and František Maxián. The Supraphon set includes six hours of sensitively remastered recordings, which bear witness to Navarra's artistry, emotional poignancy and spontaneous musicianship; a real treat for those loving the enchanting cello timbres.

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