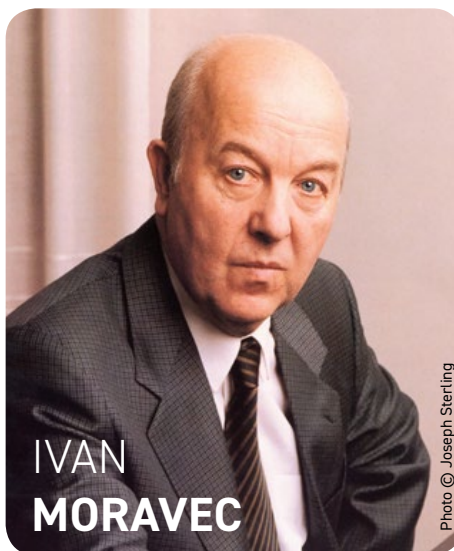


VIVA CE

*Classical Music Review
in Supraphon Recordings*

SPRING / SUMMER 2018





Dear friends,

I cannot but dedicate these lines prefacing the spring and summer issue of Vivace to another legend of Czech music who recently passed away and – as I firmly believe – enriched the heavenly choirs and stirred the music debates (not only on Janáček) that I picture as taking place

there... Professor Milan Škampa (1928–2018) deceased on 14 April, just two months short of his 90th birthday. A violinist of international reputation, he accepted the offer made by the Smetana Quartet in 1956 and in the course of a few months adopted the viola as the instrument of his future professional life, learning the whole quartet repertoire of the ensemble by heart. Without him, the more than 30 year-long career of the Smetana Quartet is hardly conceivable. The stories shared at the wake in St. Agnes Monastery by Škampa's students (Miroslav Sehnoutka of the Panocha Quartet, Jaroslav Pondělíček and Petr Žďárek of the Czech Philharmonic or Pavel Nikl, a founding member of Pavel Haas Quartet) witnessed how deep an imprint Milan Škampa left as a teacher of viola and chamber play. Besides these two roles as a musician and pedagogue, we must not omit his musicological research, especially in the field of Janáček's music. His enthusiasm resembled an avalanche taking with it all who were willing to listen and learn. His knowledge, which largely exceeded the sphere of music, was enormous and enabled him to perceive things from unusual perspectives. Regardless of the fact that during the last period of his life he depended on the help of those close to him, he continued to absorb new information with the open-mindedness of a child, radiating energy and joie de vivre that was hard to resist. I believe all of us who had the pleasure of knowing him personally are going to miss him.

With only a bit of poetic hyperbole, the previous six months of Supraphon editing outcomes might be called a time of dreams come true. This is confirmed by interviews with various artists included in

this issue of Vivace. The Martinů Voices with choirmaster Lukáš Vasilík have launched their long-planned recording of complete chamber choral work by Bohuslav Martinů. Their thorough preparation combined with the highest interpretation qualities bears fruit: the recording has won critical acclaim and has been awarded the Diapason d'Or, Gramophone Editor's Choice and five stars by the BBC Music Magazine. Vilém Veverka has fulfilled a dream of his by recording a complete set of trio sonatas by the greatest Czech baroque composer Jan Dismas Zelenka together with the Ensemble Berlin Prag (three of his colleagues are members of Berliner Philharmoniker). This dream included the top-class recording studio Teldex in Berlin and baroque music specialist Reinhard Goebel in the role of an advisor. Similarly, the new recording of the complete Moravian Duets by Dvořák is a fulfilled dream of mezzo-soprano Markéta Cukrová. Not only was the recording made on Dvořák's original 1879 Bösendorfer, but the names of all participating personalities (soprano Simona Šaturová, tenor Petr Nekoranec and pianist Vojtěch Spurný) promise an extraordinary listening experience. Pianist Jan Bartoš whose Mozart debut attracted a lot of critical attention on the international scale last year, avows in an interview his life-long love for Beethoven and his music, considering him to be the greatest composer of all times. His affection found its expression in a double album including a very personal selection from Beethoven's oeuvre from his early works all the way to his last piano opus. Dagmar Pecková had been cherishing the idea of recording Mahler's Song of the Earth for decades and only now she materialized it, thus inserting a symbolic last gem into the mosaic of her Mahler discography.

The above was just a sample of the reading and – first of all – listening menu brought to you by Supraphon for the upcoming summer months. I wish you a pleasant reverie whether it may be somewhere in the open air or at home listening to the music of your choice.

On behalf of Supraphon, wishing you all the very best
Matouš Vlčinský



Milan Škampa

Photo © František Karoch



LUKÁŠ VASILEK: YOU MUST TAMPER WITH MARTINŮ'S CHORAL MUSIC

"Performances are outstanding throughout. The voices are fresh and responsive, and Lukáš Vasilek once again proves that he is a true master of choral conducting. There is also an excellent, detailed booklet note by Vít Zouhar," wrote Ivan Moody in his review of Martinů Madrigals that was selected as Editor's Choice in Gramophone March issue. All above confirm that Lukáš Vasilek and Martinů Voices have made the best of the autograph scores, getting as close as possible to the composer's intentions, in all the articulation and dynamic nuances. Now you can take a detailed look at the whole process of creating this awesome recording with choirmaster Lukáš Vasilek in our interview.

Your new album, titled Madrigals, presents Bohuslav Martinů's complete choral oeuvre. Do you deem it to be extensive?

Even though all the pieces have fitted on to a single disc, I would say that the album is extensive indeed. The compositions may be quite short, yet they are highly concentrated. Each of them bears its own story, which is rendered by means of a large volume of music, with the listener actually having to absorb a great variety of stimulations – intellectual, expressive, as well as purely musical.

Did Martinů prescribe the type of ensemble who should perform the cycles?

In the titles or secondary titles, Martinů used such words as "madrigal", "song" or "duet". That indicates that he might have had chamber formations in mind. On the other hand, the texture of some of the cycles' sections is very compact, the phrases are difficult as regards breathing, while the required sound is too big. Had it not been for the titles, one could thus assume that Martinů had a larger chorus in view. We have opted for the chamber form in which, in my opinion, the pieces sound perfect, although it is extremely demanding for the singers.

What was your aim when recording the album? What do you perceive as its added value?

We have included Martinů's music in virtually all our programmes – we like singing it. After all, our choir does bear his name. When it comes to the new CD, the great advantage was that we did not only rehearse the works with regard to their recording, we also performed them at several concerts. I could thus say that we had absorbed the pieces and that which we recorded was a truly thought-through and digested interpretation – that was our goal. As such a luxury is not commonplace in professional practice, it is – I hope – the added value. Naturally, Martinů is known abroad, yet his vocal music, the choral in particular, has scarcely been performed. Few recordings of Martinů's choral pieces are available, so we will perhaps arouse greater interest in this significant part of the Czech choral oeuvre, actually one of the most significant.

In his booklet notes, Vít Zouhar writes that Martinů's musical idiom was particularly influenced by Czechoslovak folk music, English madrigals and Debussy. As a conductor, do you agree with this claim?

Yes, there is no doubt as to his having been influenced by traditional music, as the folk texts alone attest to. In his pieces, we can clearly recognise the melodies and rhythms we know from Bohemian and Moravian folk songs. And it is also beyond doubt that Martinů was inspired by the English madrigal tradition, with the similarity

- being especially palpable in English-language Renaissance compositions. When it comes to Debussy, it may be questionable, though, as he actually only wrote a single choral cycle a cappella, *Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans*. In a way, it does sound similar, yet it is difficult to say whether this short piece could have served as a major source of inspiration for Martinů.



The cycles date from between 1934 and 1959. Do they reflect the development of Martinů's compositional style?

Absolutely. The oldest piece, *Four Songs about the Virgin Mary*, for instance, is really splendid, yet one can sense that at the time Martinů was still somewhat struggling with the choral texture. The other, later, choral works are more stable in this respect. Nevertheless, each of the cycles is different, and each of them is difficult to render in its own way.

How did Martinů actually write for singers?

Working out the vocal parts is quite difficult. It may sound good, even come across as easy and light when a choir has rehearsed the music and absorbed it properly. The aim, of course, is to attain that the audience feels precisely that way at a concert. Yet the path is quite thorny for the performers. The voices are often led almost instrumentally, the chords are not easy to tune, the rhythms occasionally do not match the correct Czech declamation. By and large, you must tamper with Martinů's choral music – actually, it is necessary to complete it to a certain degree. Yet when you do take the trouble, it is well worth the effort, and genuine gems come into being.

What texts did Martinů use?

The pieces featured on our album are exclusively set to Bohemian and Moravian folk poetry. In terms of the themes, most of them focus on love in all its forms – desire, amorousness, bickering, pining. Two of the cycles treat spiritual topics, yet in a specific manner, that is, on the basis of the traditional retelling of well-known sacred subjects, presenting stories from the lives of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. They are in fact folk fables that, with a lightsome hyperbole, set serious spiritual themes into the Bohemian and Moravian rural milieu.

What is the parallel between Bohuslav Martinů and the name of your ensemble?

Martinů bests renders the music period we most often feature at our concerts. What's more, he was a Czech composer, and we enjoy performing his works. When we took all these aspects into account, it was clear as to how to denominate our choir. In this connection, there

is also quite an interesting parallel with our new album. We were, of course, aware that Martinů Voices would somehow be expected to make a CD containing Bohuslav Martinů works. But we did not want to take the plunge, since we knew of the tricky nature of his choral pieces. Hence, we waited for a long time before deciding to embark upon such a project. That is one of the reasons why our debut Supraphon CD did not feature music by Martinů but Jan Novák, who, by the way, deserved an album that would redeem the debt on the part of Czech choral scene.

How many singers participated in the recording of the album?

We have made it in our basic configuration, that is, 13 singers – four sopranos and three other voices each. Depending on the repertoire, we have accomplished a few other projects with a higher number of singers, mostly about 25. That was, however, not the case of this CD.

Martinů's music as recorded by Martinů Voices at the Martinů Hall... Was that an intention?

We sought a hall with specific acoustics, and I think that the Martinů Hall was an ideal choice. Its acoustics are interesting, and it is pleasant to sing and work there. Yet the fact that the hall is named after the composer whose music we recorded there is a coincidence.

Did you work with the same recording team as previously?

Yes. We had collaborated with the recording director Milan Puklický and the sound engineer Jakub Hadraba previously on other projects, and I think it works well between us. In addition, the two gentlemen have always been patient with me, otherwise it would not be possible. I am grateful to them, and the result will, I believe, confirm that our co-operation agrees with us.

You invited the pianist Karel Košárek and the violinist Jakub Fišer to participate in the recording. What criteria did you base your choice on?

The manner in which they play so the choice was clear. I had previously collaborated with the two artists on several Martinů Voices and Prague Philharmonic Choir projects. I have the feeling that we understand each other as regards the desired objective of our joint recording.

What is the pillar of the Martinů Voices repertoire?

By and large, it is the music by Bohuslav Martinů's contemporaries, composers of the first half of the 20th century or so. Our blood group is Poulenc, Ravel, Debussy. Yet we also pay significant attention to more recent and contemporary music. Of late, we have also focused on Romanticism – we quite enjoy Brahms's pieces, for instance. Virtually all of our programmes include Renaissance music, which helps us to trim the purity of sound. Moreover, our size and the manner of our singing have naturally made us incline to Baroque and Classicist music too. Accordingly, we don't shun anything, we perform whatever may agree with us, even though the pillar of our repertoire remains 20th century creation.





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MARKÉTA CUKROVÁ:
THE RECORDING OF MORAVIAN
DUETS IS A DREAM THAT I HAVE
HAD IN MY HEAD FOR YEARS



Petr Nekoranec, Simona Šaturová, Markéta Cukrová, Vojtěch Spurný

The distinguished mezzo-soprano Markéta Cukrová's path to music was not direct. The sought-after, admirably versatile Czech singer studied English and literature at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague. After graduating, she worked as a translator of literary texts, yet her musical talent, genes and family influence have ultimately prevailed. *"I hail from a family of good amateur musicians,"* she said. *"My mother, a biochemist by profession, actively devoted to choral singing. No wonder, then, that I myself had similar inclinations while still a child."* Markéta Cukrová is above all known to audiences of early music concerts, collaborating with leading Czech and international ensembles and orchestras specialised in this domain – Collegium 1704, Collegium Marianum, Musica Florea, Ensemble Inégal, Switzerland's Musique des Lumières, Poland's Arte dei Suonatori, Mala Punica, and others. Yet she has also performed to great acclaim Classical, Romantic and contemporary works. Markéta Cukrová is one of the artists featured on Supraphon's new album of Antonín Dvořák's MORAVIAN DUETS.

The artist you most closely worked with on the new Supraphon album is the singer Simona Šaturová. How did you get together?

I must confess that the recording is a dream that I have had in my head for years. Simona Šaturová and I got together at the Styriarte festival in Graz, where we jointly sang some of Dvořák's Moravian Duets. It was the very first time we had performed chamber music together, and I think both of us were happy to realise how well our voices fitted together. From the very beginning, our collaboration went extremely smoothly.

How did you choose the pianist?

When selecting the pianist, I took into account a number of aspects. I sought a musician possessing experience with conducting, one who likes working with and has regularly accompanied singers, while being capable of thinking "vocally". So I naturally opted for my frequent partner and colleague Vojtěch Spurný. And I think the choice was an excellent one indeed.

Another singer featured on the album is the young tenor Petr Nekoranec. Why did you choose him?

Finding a suitable tenor is always rather difficult. I first met Petr

Nekoranec at the National Theatre in Brno, when it was staging Rossini's opera *Le Comte Ory*. I realised that he is an extraordinary musician and a fabulous person, with a young spirit and wonderful voice. Petr was prompt, he did a perfect job and fitted well with the other artists, co-creating a friendly atmosphere.

The album is noteworthy owing to the fact that Vojtěch Spurný plays the piano part on Antonín Dvořák's very own 1879 Bösendorfer piano, maintained at the Antonín Dvořák Museum in Prague. What makes the instrument so extraordinary?

I wanted our recording to be special, yet I admit that I did not hold out much hope that it could be made with Dvořák's own piano. Even though, logically, the instrument is not in the best of condition, it can still be played and it has a singular, simple sound. Fortunately, Vojtěch Spurný found the idea feasible. I myself deem the employment of Dvořák's piano the album's added value. And since the instrument could not be moved from the Villa America, the recording was made right on the spot.

All of you are busy, your calendars are full and, what is more, you spend most of the year abroad. Can Czech

► **audiences still hope to hear the album's repertoire performed live?**

We do intend to give concerts of the complete Moravian Duets, as the cycle has scarcely been performed in its entirety. Perhaps our

album will also serve to inspire young singers, who would include the cycle in their repertoires. Dvořák's Moravian Duets are among the best chamber vocal pieces in Czech.

ANOTHER ARTISTS TALK ABOUT THE RECORDING:

Veronika Vejvodová, the Director of the Antonín Dvořák Museum in Prague, said of the new recording of Dvořák's Moravian Duets: "We deem it to have been a unique opportunity to capture the current sound of Dvořák's piano, which is part of our permanent exhibition and is not regularly played. What is more, the project's having been undertaken by superlative artist and a prestigious label was a guarantee for the album's high quality and the best way of presenting one of the rarest exhibits at our museum."

The pianist Vojtěch Spurný added: "I consider absolutely crucial the fact that one of the recordings has been made on Dvořák's very own piano. No modern, no matter how sophisticated, instrument could have rendered his music as cogently and naturally as does the historical Bösendorfer. Its sonic, tonal and articulatory faculties are ideal to meet the requirements of the score, which can be executed entirely in line with the notation. In addition, the performers are afforded sufficient scope for fleshing out their own imagination and detailing the interpretation in the spirit of Dvořák's instructions. And, of course, touching the actual keyboard on which Antonín Dvořák used to play is an experience so emotionally overwhelming that it is simply impossible to impart in words."

The soprano Simona Šaturová pointed out: "I felt a great joy when, without long prior discussions, Markéta Cukrová and I utterly and intuitively found accord. It was the result of chemistry between us, which does not always come naturally, and was fabulously completed by Vojtěch Spurný and Petr Nekoranec. I hope that our zest for music-making will also get across to the listeners. The atmosphere at the recording sessions was really pleasant, thanks to all those who participated in it."

The tenor Petr Nekoranec said: "The recording of the Moravian Duets will always remain in my memory as something exceptional. Not only owing to my splendid colleagues, the recording team and Antonín Dvořák's wonderful music, but also as my very first making of a recording! To be honest, I was surprised by how painstaking a process it actually is. And recording with Dvořák's piano was an absolute sensation. The instrument's sound is incredibly authentic and throughout the time I was thinking: Wow, this is how Rusalka must have sounded when Dvořák was composing the opera – it many even have been the instrument on which he first played its theme. A beautiful image indeed!"



Simona Šaturová, Markéta Cukrová



Photo © Martin Kubica

VILÉM VEVERKA: ZELENKA CYCLE IS A TRUE "OPUS MAGNUM" OF BAROQUE MUSIC

Reinhard Goebel, an esteemed Baroque music connoisseur, ranks Zelenka (along with J. S. Bach and G. F. Händel) among the five best composers of the first half of the 18th century. In his accompanying text, he refers to him as "grandiose and fantastic". And the cycle of six sonatas for two oboes, bassoon and continuo serves to prove that his assertion is far from being mere hyperbole, that it is a justified opinion worthy of being giving serious thought. And when these gems are undertaken by musicians as open-minded and of such superlative quality as members of the Berliner Philharmoniker, the listener can look forward to a great feast. Feast that became real thanks to Ensemble Berlin Prag and their new double album. Now it's time to give the floor to one of the members of the ensemble, renowned oboist and producer of this beautiful recording Vilém Veverka who uncovers many interesting details regarding genesis of the whole project and Ensemble Berlin Prag itself.

What was the major impulse for recording the extensive repertoire featured on the Zelenka album?

The idea of recording Jan Dismas Zelenka's cycle with Ensemble Berlin Prag had been there, at least latently, since the formation's very beginning. It was among its basic intentions – to explore, perform in concert and make a recording. The Zelenka cycle is a true "opus magnum" of Baroque music, no one had created a more essential set of trio sonatas, and not just with respect to the oboe. The motivation and the related aspiration may accompany a person/performer for several years before the right moment arrives. And you can only claim to be able to render such a highly sophisticated score after you have learned all the details of the Zelenka cycle. We were really verging on the cycle's recording for years before we intuitively felt that the right moment and the ideal constellation had occurred for us to recast the musical material and our long-term endeavours into

a magnificent album. I would specify the intention with the words: "Es muss sein".

How did you select the musical partner who would undertake the role of the additional oboist? Did you bear Dominik Wollenweber, your long-time colleague and teacher in Berlin, in mind from the very beginning?

Our long-term relationship dates back to 1998, when I first met Dominik Wollenweber. In the initial phase, it was clearly a teacher-pupil relationship. Similarly to other mentors, including Albrecht Mayer, for instance, Dominik practised the "philosophy" that teaching means showing that which is feasible, while studying means allowing the feasible to materialise, naturally, in an authentic form. Today, Dominik and I are not only professional musical partners, we are also good friends, which is, of course, motivating, as well as binding, given

- our long experience of working together. Yet neither of us wants to lag behind.

And how did you select the musicians for the Ensemble Berlin Prag project?

Dominik and I selected our co-players together. One of Europe's finest oboists, a member of the Berliner Philharmoniker and one of the most sought-after educators, Dominik recommended the phenomenal Israeli bassoonist Mor Biron, who too is a member of the Berliner Philharmoniker. In my opinion, Mor is perhaps the best Zelenka bassoonist since the time of Sergio Azzolini. What is more, he had previously worked on a number of projects with Ulrich Wolff, another member of the Berliner Philharmoniker, a brilliant Baroque music performer, who also plays the double bass, gamba and viola. And the German harpsichordist Barbara Maria Willi has been my musical partner for more than a decade, so she was logically chosen to perform the harpsichord part.

What role in the recording project was undertaken by Reinhard Goebel, a celebrated conductor and violinist, who in the 1970s founded and then for a long time led the Musica Antiqua Köln orchestra?

I would say that working with him was my most intense musical experience in 2017. When I met him, I realised that I had the honour to face a true genius. Never before had I encountered a musical figure as well-rounded as Reinhard Goebel. His awareness and profound knowledge of music is truly unique. Reinhard Goebel's contribution was essential. It was he who furnished our account with the final form. And he clearly defined the entire vision: "Record the music in such a manner that no one else would ever again feel the necessity to do it again". The sentence was precisely that which we needed to hear; it was de facto a definition of something that we subconsciously felt as being our intention. In the studio, we focused on each and every note, we did our maximum to make a benchmark recording, one that would still be exemplary in 30 years or so.

What is your view of the ongoing discussion about playing historical instruments and informed performance

of the Baroque repertoire?

I would again like to quote Reinhard Goebel, who was our supervisor. For him, musical instruments are merely the tools that serve to render the score. Thus, instruments are not the major medium. The "modern versus historical instruments" discussion does not pertain to the substance of the matter, only the manner. What is essential is the result, irrespective of the way that has been chosen.

Where was the album recorded?

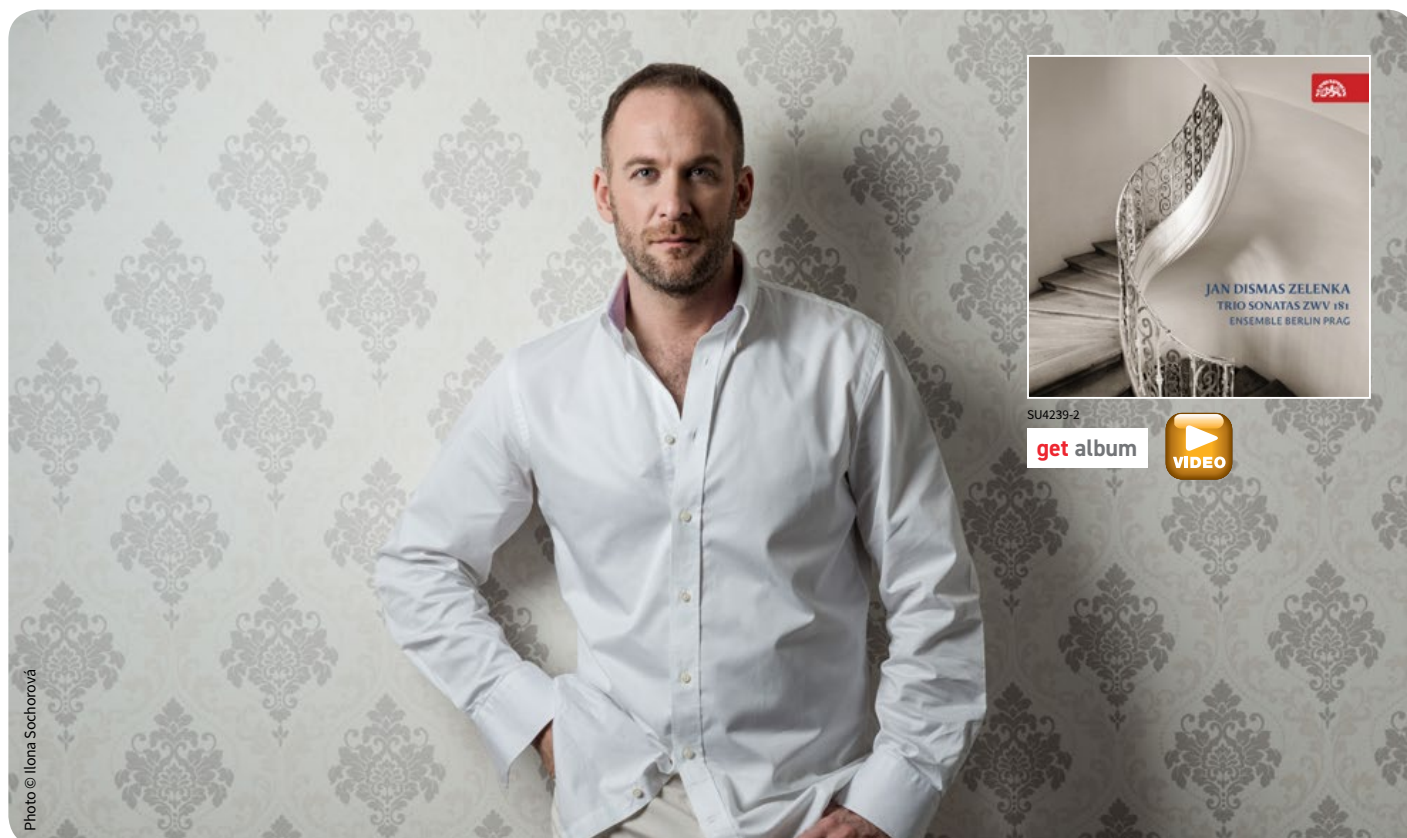
We recorded the album at Berlin's Teldex studio, believed to be one of the best studios in the world. That made the recording expensive, yet we agreed that we should not be thrifty when it comes to a project of such great significance. After all, it was one of the reasons why I participated in the project as a co-producer.

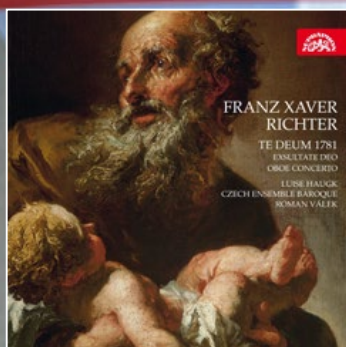
How often do Ensemble Berlin Prag give concerts?

Since the very beginning, we have adhered to the principle that all our concerts should be exclusive events. We have mainly rehearsed in Berlin. As three of our musicians are members of the Berliner Philharmoniker, we have planned our performances accordingly. Our aim is to turn every single concert of ours into an exceptional event, for us and the audience alike. Without trying to give an exhaustive summary, I would like to mention the most prestigious stages on which we have appeared. In December 2017, we debuted within a Berliner Philharmoniker cycle. We have performed at a number of major festival in the Czech Republic, including Prague Spring, Smetana's Litomyšl, Contentus Moraviae, Moravian Autumn and Janáček May. We have given concerts in other European countries too. I am pleased that we have succeeded in establishing and asserting the Ensemble Berlin Prag trademark precisely in line with our ambitions.

What about the Czech-German aspect of your formation?

In connection with Ensemble Berlin Prag, I would like to highlight the idea that it serves as a kind of cultural bridge between the two countries. Our formation is thus an exemplary platform of Czech-German collaboration, symbolising the process of understanding, in music and beyond. Noteworthy too is that we above all play Czech music.





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Photo © Tino Kratochvíl

ROMAN VÁLEK: THE MUSIC OF F. X. RICHTER INSPIRES ME MORE THAN PURE ROCOCO

Although both the life and work of the composer Franz Xaver Richter were rather varied and eventful, neither of them has been fully researched. Together with Czech Ensemble Baroque, an early music ensemble playing on period instruments, Supraphon has been striving to make the work of this Mannheim- and Strasbourg-based composer with Czech roots accessible to wider public. Their joint venture consists in a series of three recordings, the latest of which we have talked about with the ensemble's conductor Roman Válek.

After two albums with rather dismal music, this recording presents a completely different Richter – brighter and more joyful, if you will.

Absolutely! When conceiving the first recording we went backwards, so to say. We took Richter's Requiem written in the bleak key of E-flat major, a piece that the composer pampered throughout all his life. In his time, tonality was viewed differently: nowadays, the E-flat minor key is one often used in blaring brass band music while in Richter's time, it referred to sadness or even mourning, same as, for example, C minor. That is where we took it from. Our second project was the Good Friday oratorio Descent from the Cross, and this time we wanted to intersperse those pieces with something antithetic – festive music in D major and an oboe concerto played. I hope this concept is going to work with listeners; for my part, I am very satisfied with the final shape of the recording.

There is another interesting aspect to the recording,

which is the place where it came into being.

Yes, we managed to incorporate the unique and intact architecture of the church in Luleč (then Lileč), a village near Vyškov, Moravia. This place of pilgrimage is truly beautiful – when you enter the church, it is like entering Richter's time. There does not seem to be any architectural intervention at all, which is why the space works very well for the recording of baroque music. If we want to combine the sound of the Mannheim orchestra with the oratorio music of the Strasbourg cathedral, St. Martin's church in Luleč is a great place to do that.

Some of the compositions are premiered as recordings on period instruments...

If we speak about studio recording on a compact disc, they are. It is true that Richter's Te Deum was recorded six years ago as a live concert for the television. However, our present project is the first to include studio recording with the necessary time and effort dedicated to it.

► **Let us look at the compositions on the disc. The trumpet symphony in D major is an example of the bright, jubilant music we talked about.**

The D major key is a very jubilant one indeed. Besides, it is most convenient for playing on keyless baroque brass instruments, so it may be partly to this technical ease that the music works so well in D major. After all, there are other pieces written in D major on this CD, namely *Te Deum* and *Exsultate*. They represent the emotional level of joy and jubilation. The oboe concerto is a different matter, being composed in F major.

Is it possible to characterise the *Te Deum* (Richter's second, by the way) as joyful music, just as the other compositions on the disc?

Richter's second *Te Deum* was composed at the time when Strasbourg was regained by the French. I do not know whether local people responded to this development with joy or sadness. Behind the borderline formed by the river there is a French enclave, while on the opposite bank there are Germans who call the region Alsatia. Even nowadays, the citizens of Strasbourg are not quite certain about their identity. For some time they were French, then Germans, then Alsations. Richter's *Te Deum*, however, was undoubtedly commissioned by the Strasbourg cathedral for a spectacular celebration of the renewed French rule over the city. That is why the music must have been expected to be festive and jubilant – and the nature of *Te Deum* reflects that.

***Te Deum* is the longest composition on the disc. Let us introduce the soloists who participated in it.**

I am proud of the fact that we were able to engage soloists recruited from the choir. That is a circumstance desired by every ensemble. Miroslav Procházka, for example, is both an excellent soloist and choir member. The same can be said about Pavla Radostová, and even Jaroslav Březina whom Czech audiences know very well from his roles in the National Theatre. In this music, it is crucial for soloists to merge in an organic way with the choral sections of the recording. This has major impact on the sound and prevents a situation when a soloist turns up as a kind of alien whose timbre, articulation or cadence is totally out of place in a given context. Richter's music is

written in a way that took this phenomenon of a “choir soloist” for granted. Our soloists are sought out and engaged by other ensembles as well – by “competition”, if you will – but this does not make me jealous. On the contrary, I am happy when Václav Luks, for example, invites some of our people to collaboration on his projects – it is in fact a confirmation of their qualities.

The last piece to mention is the above-mentioned oboe concerto composed in the F major key.

Here I would like to draw attention to the soloist Luise Haugk, the first oboist of the Akademie für alte Musik in Berlin, who is, however, an excellent ensemble and orchestral player too. In this recording, we have taken the liberty of dazzling tempos which enabled us to conceive certain melodic lines as embellishments. The result is surprising, brilliant, fantastic music. I could say that in some way we managed to evoke Mannheim where every musician was a virtuoso; when a composer wrote a concerto, he did so with a specific outstanding player in mind who took the audiences' breath away. I hope our recording will have the same effect on the listeners. I believe it brings virtuoso and emotional performance while at the same time making a natural and relaxed impression.

How would you characterize the overall compositional style of František Xaver Richter?

Richter was criticized by his contemporaries to a certain extent, but the conservative elements that were the target of the criticism, namely sequences, certain baroque principles in preludes and the leading of voices, represent from today's point of view a desirable symbiosis that works well. Baroque phrasing and articulation come together with a kind of decadence introduced by classicism. By incorporating or “conserving” sequences, ariosos and other elements in music that was already rococo or classicist in style, he created a wonderful blend. I personally find it more inspiring than pure rococo music that can be at times almost boring. I perceive Richter's style as synthesized. His work includes themes that can be found both in instrumental music and oratorios. Throughout all his life, Richter worked with a repertoire close to his heart, his specific style unlike that of any other European provenience.



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IVAN MORAVEC

PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED
RECORDINGS MADE BY THE
LEGENDARY PIANIST

- **Supraphon has supplemented the internationally acclaimed discography of the legendary pianist Ivan Moravec with other gems from the Czech Radio archives. The album contains previously unreleased recordings from the Czech Radio archives, made in 1967, 1974 and 1984. On the recording of Sergey Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D flat major, Op. 10, Moravec is accompanied by the Czech Philharmonic, conducted by Karel Ančerl. The self-same orchestra, conducted by Yuri Simonov, is also a splendid partner to the soloist in Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major. Ivan Moravec recorded Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, with the Prague Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Miklós Erdélyi.**

The bulk of the highly praised recordings made by Ivan Moravec (1930–2015), a globally celebrated 20th-century pianist, were made in studios. Yet owing to radio microphones, we can also savour some of his extraordinary performances at Prague concert halls. From 1962, Moravec appeared on 20 occasions at the Prague Spring International Music Festival alone. The recording of Prokofiev's Concerto No. 1, made at the Prague Spring in May 1967, is one of the paramount, as well as last, recordings capturing the Czech Philharmonic under Karel Ančerl, before the conductor left for Toronto. The performance of Ravel's Piano Concerto in May 1974 is yet another unforgettable experience, and undoubtedly one of Moravec's most magnificent accounts of the piece. All the three recordings are now being released for the very first time, while as regards Grieg's Piano Concerto, dating from December 1984, it is actually the one and only recording of a Moravec performance of the piece.

The renowned music critic Bernard Jacobson, until recently a contributing editor of *Fanfare Magazine*, who has spent periods as music critic of the *Chicago Daily News* and is now working for the MusicWeb International, said on the occasion of the album's release: *"I met Moravec first around 1969 in Minnesota, where I went to review a concert in which he was the soloist with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Ivan's immediate remark at that first meeting was, 'I think Ashkenazy just played the Beethoven Third Concerto in Chicago. That must have been really wonderful!' This proved, over*

the near half-century of our friendship, to be only typical of his generosity to his fellow performers. In Paris once, he was playing lunch-time recitals for perhaps a hundred listeners in the lobby of one of the theaters on the Place du Châtelet, while the theater on the other side of the square was displaying huge posters about a Schubert series with the German pianist Christian Zacharias. I remarked on what, much as I admired Zacharias, I thought was an unjust disparity in the scale and publicity of the two projects, but Ivan immediately replied, 'Oh, he deserves it – he's a great artist.' And I enjoyed telling Leif Ove Andsnes how much admiration Ivan had expressed for the recording the Norwegian pianist had made of music by Janáček – music that Ivan had himself recorded, and on the subject of which the praise of this Czech master may be characterized as coming 'from the horse's mouth'. What does all this, you may be wondering, have to do with a Moravec disc coupling recordings of concertos by Grieg, Prokofiev, and Ravel? Well, at least the last two of these three works tend to make their impact in performance more through a relatively impersonal brilliance than for any imposingly human qualities. Under Moravec's hands, however, they evoke a distinctly more serious atmosphere and seem, without shortchanging the brilliance, to carry a heavier freight of expression." And it is indeed just as Bernard Jacobson indicates: the microphones captured Ivan Moravec in top form, possessing a romantic sweep, pregnancy of expression and ferocity, capable of rendering finely nuanced colours, yet always deeply immersed in the substance of the performed work.



Ivan Moravec and Václav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic

DAGMAR PECKOVÁ

ON MAHLER'S DAS LIED VON DER ERDE

Since the beginnings of her international career, mezzo-soprano Dagmar Pecková has had a close connection to the work of Gustav Mahler. This is, among her other projects, documented by the highly appraised recordings with Jiří Bělohlávek and his Prague Philharmonia made under the Supraphon label in the late 1990s. To enhance the intimate character of *Das Lied von der Erde*, Pecková decided to use Schoenberg's chamber arrangement. By creating this recording she has fulfilled her dream and also put the last gem into the mosaic of her Mahler discography. In our short interview, Pecková ponders over her journey as a singer towards this unique work and talks about the motives that led her to initiate the new recording that she made in Prague in collaboration with tenor Richard Samek and Schoenberg Chamber Orchestra under the leadership of Petr Altrichter. You will also learn between the lines why she chose the painting *The Souls of Dead Mothers* by Dominik Mareš to be featured on the booklet.

Dagmar, what made you record the *Song of the Earth*?

I first performed the *Song of the Earth*, a work filled with sadness and reconciled departure from this world, when my mother was dying. I think it was only due to my emotional state at the time that I was able to grasp the thoughts hidden underneath the lyrics. For the first time in my life I experienced the feeling of having become a medium between the composer and the listeners. And this soulful work certainly helped me better understand the demise of the person so close to my heart into the "distances that are blue and bright... forever... forever". Subsequently I flew out into the world with the *Song of the Earth* – I sang it in Paris under the baton of Charles Dutoit or with the Cleveland orchestra under the leadership of Christoph von Dohnányi. For fifteen years without a break I was sharing the eternal sorrow contained in this work with audiences all over the world. I know there are outstanding recordings such as the one sung

by Christa Ludwig and conducted by Herbert von Karajan, but this did not discourage me from my intention to try and leave an imprint of my soul on the interpretation of this work, thus fulfilling an old dream of mine.

What do you appreciate in Schoenberg's chamber arrangement?

I first became acquainted with Schoenberg's version on the stage of London's Wigmore Hall. I feel it gives the singer space for chamber vocal expression. I can sing even the quietest passages in a way to express what I feel without jeopardising audibility or singing under any kind of pressure. Although it has to be said that the chamber version is played by top soloists – it would be wrong to assume that the less musicians there are, the weaker the sound. This is not true at all.

Photo © Ilona Sochorová



SUPRAPHON TO HONOUR JIŘÍ BĚLOHLÁVEK'S LEGACY BY RELEASING RECOLLECTION, A SET OF 8 CDS

In May, Supraphon released an exquisite set of Jiří Bělohlávek's pivotal and unknown recordings alike. Made up of 8 CDs, the compilation, titled *Jiří Bělohlávek – Recollection*, pays tribute to the most noted Czech conductor of the past half a century. *"The selection of Jiří Bělohlávek's recordings was made less than a year after his passing away. It above all serves to recollect the extraordinary musician and human,"* said Matouš Vlčinský, Supraphon's producer.

Jiří Bělohlávek's career can be briefly summed up in terms of his greatest accomplishments: his serving as the chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, his guest performances with the Berliner Philharmoniker, the New York Philharmonic and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, his acclaimed appearances at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and other prominent events; his being awarded the title of CBE and the honorary doctorate from the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Yet Jiří Bělohlávek himself would perhaps give preference to recalling his recordings. The present selection of 23 from among the almost 300 recordings he made for Supraphon between 1971 and 2016 attests to his remarkable artistic ripening at the head of several prominent Czech orchestras, starting with the Brno Philharmonic (the energetic account of Janáček's music in 1977, now for the very first time on CD) and ending with the Czech Philharmonic and the Prague Philharmonia. The cornerstone of Bělohlávek's repertoire consisted of works by Antonín Dvořák (The New World Symphony), Bedřich Smetana (My Country), Josef Suk, Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů, whose music Bělohlávek championed all over the world.

Bedřich Smetana – My Country. Antonín Dvořák – Symphony No. 9, "From the New World"; Serenade in E major, Op. 22. Josef Suk – Fantastic Scherzo, Op. 25; Fairy Tale, Op. 16*; Serenade for Strings in E flat major, Op. 6. Leoš Janáček – Sinfonietta*, Taras Bulba*. Zdeněk Fibich – Symphony No. 3 in E minor, Op. 53. Bohuslav Martinů – Rhapsody (Allegro symphonique), H 171; Tre ricercari, H 267; Overture, H 345; Parables, H 367; Estampes, H 369. Maurice Ravel – Ma mère l'oye (My Mother Goose)*, Pavane pour une infante défunte*. Béla Bartók – Divertimento; Concerto for Orchestra*. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Symphony No. 38 in D major, "Prague". Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy – Symphony No. 4 in A major, "Italian", Op. 90. Arnold Schönberg – Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night), Op. 4. Pavel Haas – Study for String Orchestra. Gustav Mahler – Adagietto (Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor), Urlicht (Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection")

* on CD for the first time

Czech Philharmonic, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Prague Philharmonia, Brno Philharmonic / conductor: Jiří Bělohlávek



► RECOLLECTIONS OF JIŘÍ BĚLOHLÁVEK

Magdalena Kožená – soprano: „Jiří Bělohlávek inspired me not only as a brilliant conductor, but also as a wise and kind person possessing a peculiar sense of humour. I feel greatly honoured to have been one of the singers he regularly worked with and to have had the opportunity to ripen next to him.”

Paul Hughes – general manager of the BBC Symphony Orchestra: “Jiří Bělohlávek’s last concert with his beloved BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus was Dvorak’s mighty Requiem Mass and a more fitting tribute to the music making of this extraordinary man it would be hard to imagine. His relationship with the BBC-SO spanned 20 years there are so many memories, but I would single out the pride with which he brought the orchestra to the Prague Spring Festival, and the award-winning performances and recordings of Czech operas and Martinu symphonies. There was always a sense of family with Jiří, we were his musical family and his family were our family.”

Jakub Hrůša – conductor: „Jiří Bělohlávek was a dear friend of mine. There is now no one like him to give me such valuable, thorough and highly cultivated feedback, critical words, erudite encouragement.”

Dagmar Pecková – mezzo-soprano: “When I think of Jiří Bělohlávek, I recollect the beginning of my artistic career and his generous support, the concerts we gave together, our making of recordings of music by Mahler, Wagner and Brahms, as well as our spiritual connection at the time of our most intense collaboration.”

Štefan Margita – tenor: “In Jiří Bělohlávek, we have lost a splendid conductor, who had done a lot to build up the good reputation of the Czech Republic abroad. He was a truly unique ambassador of Czech music!”

Adam Plachetka – bass-baritone: “Jiří Bělohlávek was an extraordinary artist and person alike, a towering figure of our music and social scene. We greatly miss him on the stage, as well as in private.”

Jiří Heřman – opera stage director: “When recollecting Jiří Bělohlávek, I would like to highlight that he introduced to the world a number of Czech conductors, including Tomáš Hanus, Jakub Hrůša and Tomáš Netopil. And as a professor at the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, he shared his viewpoints and ample professional experience with other future Czech conductors. He will thus remain with us, since his students will continue to pursue his path, promoting his knowledge of and approach to music. By nurturing young talent, Jiří Bělohlávek ensured a vital part in the continuity of Czech music.”

Josef Špaček – solo violinist and concert master of the Czech Philharmonic: „Jiří Bělohlávek has left an indelible footprint in the history of Czech music. An outstanding artist, to whom I felt great respect, he was also a good-hearted man, capable of making those around him happy. His legacy will stay with us for ever.”

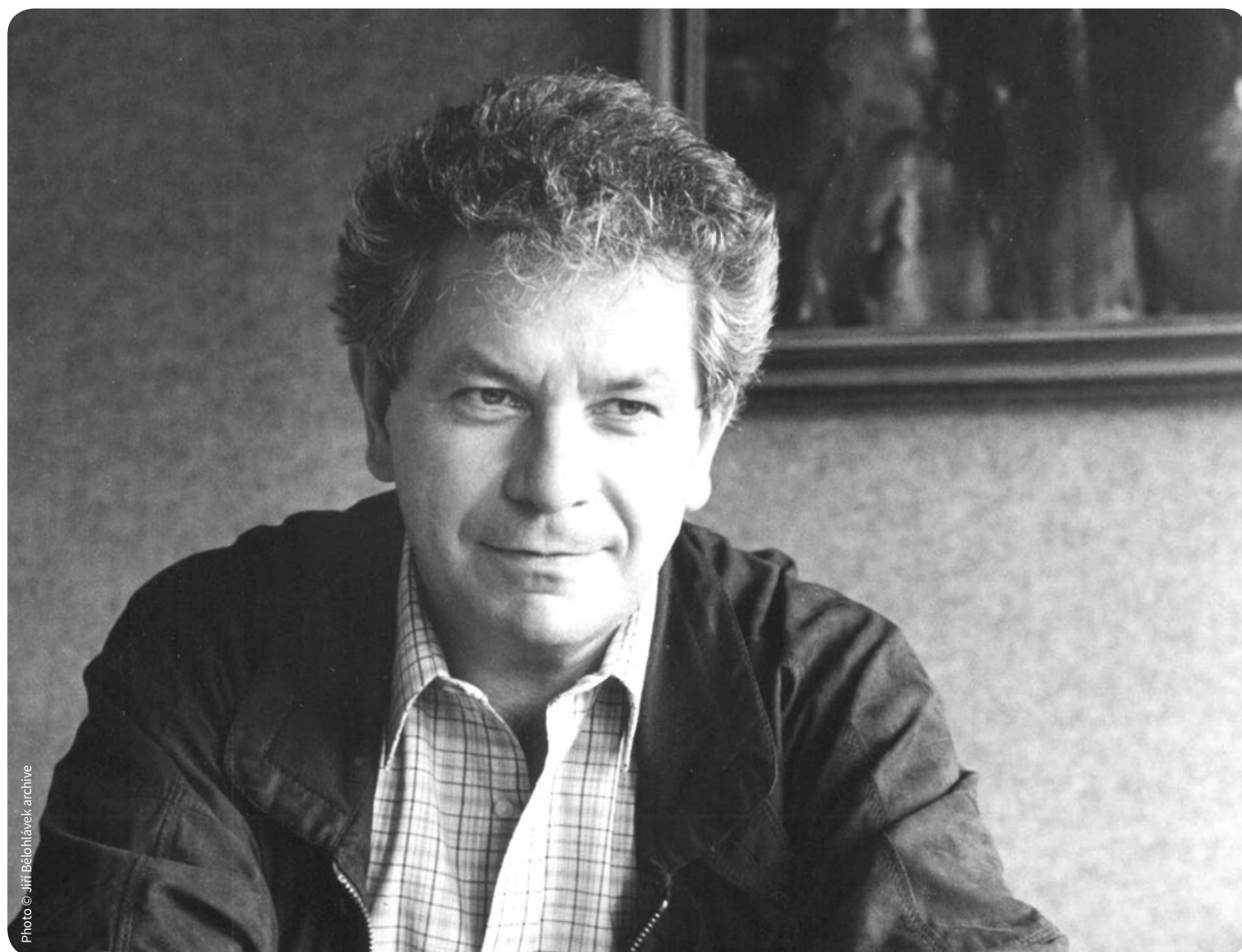


Photo © Jiří Bělohlávek archive



Photo © Antonín Kratochvíl

JAN BARTOŠ: BEETHOVEN WAS THE GREATEST REVOLUTIONARY IN THE HISTORY OF MUSIC

His Mozart debut recording, made with the Czech Philharmonic and the conductor Jiří Bělohlávek (Supraphon 2017), caught the attention of the specialist international press. Jan Bartoš's phenomenal, and highly critically acclaimed, ability to blend sophisticated architecture and profound emotionality has to an even greater degree manifested itself in his conception of Beethoven's music. As performed by him, Beethoven softly speaks, sings and roars alike. Bartoš has discovered a universe abounding in emotion and contrast, an image whose colours astonish and burn into your memory. We talked to Jan Bartoš on the occasion of the release of Supraphon's new, double album of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonatas.

What was the main impulse for you to make a recording of Ludwig van Beethoven's works?

The answer is simple. In my opinion, Beethoven is the greatest composer of all time. That which prompted me to make the album was my lifelong interest in his music and personality. The idea of recording his works has been on my mind for a very long time indeed.

What do you think of Beethoven's personality?

I myself am fascinated by the range of his personality, virtually encompassing everything, which duly reflected in his music. When it comes to the pieces on my album, they render a variety of features – masculine energy and elegance, in Opus 2, nobleness and earnestness, in Opus 14, passion and extreme drama, in Appassionata. The final Sonata and Bagatelles teem with compassion and love, while harbouring mystic visions... I deem Beethoven to be the greatest

revolutionary in the history of music. His highly personal approach changed everything. Without him, Romanticism and the further evolution of music are simply unimaginable – he was linked up to by Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, Shostakovich, and dozens of other major composers. Beethoven essentially transformed many genres, and his final pieces showed the path to the distant future.

How did you select the new album's repertoire?

I wanted to put next to each other different types of works, so as to highlight the sheer diversity of Beethoven's music. Such an approach conforms with me more than consistent chronology or thematic cohesion. The pieces featured on the album are among those I love the most. And I had the opportunity to explore them with my dearest mentors, including Ivan Moravec and Alfred Brendel.

► **What are the greatest pitfalls of Beethoven's piano works?**

His compositions are perfectly built, everything is logical, everything fits together like a puzzle. Consequently, now and then his music may come across as predictable, or overly rational. Yet I have identified the same problem with Johann Sebastian Bach. Owing to the absence of instructions and notes, Bach affords the performers great freedom of interpretation – what some may perceive as slow and almost sacred, others may feel as being fast and dance-like. In my opinion, this type of freedom is out of the question in Beethoven's case, as his precise notation provides a relatively clear notion of this or that piece's character. Yet it is necessary, and indeed imperative, to "psychologise" the rigorous structure of his works – the interpreter should brace up to the variability of emotions and nuance everything to a greater extent. This, however, is my opinion, and I am sure that some colleagues of mine would disagree with me.

How often have you performed Ludwig van Beethoven's music at your concerts?

Beethoven's music has been included in almost all my solo concerts. Last year, I combined his works with short pieces by John Cage, this year with Franz Schubert's compositions.

How big is the difference between live performances and the recording process in the studio?

My first two albums feature live recordings of concerts; hence,

I could say there is no difference. Why did I agree to make a studio recording? For several reasons. When I play Beethoven's music at concerts, I get easily enraptured by it, and thus I occasionally overdo the tempo or dynamics. But, as far as I know, it happens to virtually all pianists. Whereas it may work well, and may even be exciting, at live concerts, it does not agree with Beethoven on recordings. To give a specific example – I wanted to record the third movement from *Appassionata* more slowly than is usual, so as to comply with the tempo marking *Allegro ma non troppo*. Precious few succeed in doing so at concerts.

What major concerts have you planned for the next season?

This autumn, I will not solely focus on the music featured on my new album. Besides Beethoven, I will also pay great attention to Leoš Janáček, whose works I will present at concerts in Spain and Italy. At the end of October, I will perform his complete piano oeuvre at two recitals within the Leoš Janáček International Festival in Ostrava, as well as at other concerts. In the next season, I will perform Beethoven's Piano Concerto in E flat major and Choral Fantasy for piano, mixed choir and orchestra with the Janáček Philharmonic. In 2019, I am scheduled to give large recitals, including one on 26 January at the Rudolfinum, within the Prague Symphony Orchestra's cycle *Global Piano Music*. I feel greatly honoured, since among those who will appear within the cycle are such renowned artists as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Piotr Anderszewski, Angela Hewitt and Nikolai Demidenko.



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IDA KELAROVÁ, THE ČHAVORENGE CHILDREN'S CHOIR AND THE CZECH PHILHARMONIC MAKE THE REMARKABLE SUPRAPHON ALBUM HEJ ROMALE

Supraphon released an album that is the fruit of the collaboration between the Czech Philharmonic and the singer Ida Kelarová within a project aimed to support children from Czech and Slovak Roma settlements, ghettos and socially excluded areas. The debut studio recording made by the Roma children's choir Čhavorenge features the Czech Philharmonic, conducted by Marko Ivanović, and guests: the accordionist Lelo Nika, the violinist Ivan Herák, the pianist Ondrej Krajňák and the guitarist-songwriter Desiderius Dužda.

"Roma children do not feel welcome in society. It is really difficult for them to get out of the vicious circle of isolated settlements and ghettos to a world in which something is expected of them, a world in which they can trust in themselves and accomplish something. Even though our effort, the energy we lay out for their sake, would not evince itself in visible results immediately, I believe that there is hope for a change. The children's choir Čhavorenge affords the kids a milieu that motivates them not to give up their dreams, encouraging them to pursue their goals. I am happy that for five years now the Czech Philharmonic has together with us followed the thorny path of the children's education, although I am aware that this journey to



► *understanding may last for another few generations, or it may never even reach the destination.”* In line with this credo of hers, Ida Kellarová has for five years collaborated with the Czech Philharmonic on a project whose aim it is to give hope to Roma children.

To date, Čhavorenge have appeared at almost 40 concerts at the Rudolfinum hall in Prague (with the participation of Jiří Bělohlávek, Alice Nellis, Martha Issová, and other artists) and other venues in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and joined numerous workshops. As a result of their activities, Roma children and young people have become aware of their own specific culture, experiencing self-confidence and discovering their own paths. Following several stays within the “Romano drom” project in the east of Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, last August Čhavorenge, the Czech Philharmonic and guests plunged into making their debut album. The CD, recorded at the Rudolfinum, contains 12 vocal pieces, most of them written by the contemporary Roma composer Desiderius Dužda, and traditional Roma songs. Catchy, dance-prompting, as well as melancholic, they radiate an overwhelming energy. The booklet, furnished with texts, translations of the songs and photographs, serves to document the project, with the included reflections providing the hope that we can live not only “side by side”, but also together, that we can inspire and teach each other too.

David Mareček, the director of the Czech Philharmonic, said about the project: “When back in 2011 Jiří Bělohlávek and I joined the Czech Philharmonic, we dreamt of helping it to

become a national orchestra again – proud, self-confident, yet also kind and open. In addition to holding concerts for subscribers at the Rudolfinum, making foreign tours and recordings, we introduced educational programmes for all generations of music lovers. Five years ago, we had the idea of working with Ida Kellarová and Čhavorenge, her Roma children’s choir. The project encompassed everything we strove for: music, social and educational aspects in perfect harmony. Cohabitation between the Roma and non-Roma is a bold topic in our country, one that needs action rather than discussion. In my opinion, Ida Kellarová had been doing the best thing she can: she affords Roma children a chance for a better life. And while doing so, she is strict, highly professional. She awakens in the children their musical talent, as well as pride and the feeling of responsibility for themselves. I am happy to see the recording, which Ida, Jiří Bělohlávek and I wanted to be accomplished from the very beginning, coming into being now, and I hope that it will be more beneficial that being just a proof of our musical and human collaboration.”

This summer, Čhavorenge are scheduled to visit Romania, where they will familiarise themselves with the local Roma communities and their culture. Two high-profile concerts will take place at the Athenaeum, the most exquisite hall in Bucharest, and the choir will also perform at the George Enescu International Music Festival in Sinaia. The trip will be supported by the EU’s Creative Europe programme. In the autumn of 2018, Čhavorenge will be touring Slovakia, while concerts in Austria and Northern Ireland (Belfast) are currently in the pipeline.



Photo © Petra Hájská

LIMITED VINYL EDITION OF THE NEW WORLD SYMPHONY

Supraphon has prepared a veritable treat for true audio connoisseurs! Music lovers will rejoice at the 1972 recording of Václav Neumann and the Czech Philharmonic's legendary account of the New World Symphony, which has now been re-released on vinyl in a numbered limited edition (180 g virgin vinyl / dmm cutting), including a voucher for Hi-Res download.

Twice during his tenure as the chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic (1968–1990) did Václav Neumann undertake the significant, and wonderful, task of making a studio recording of one of the most feted and the most beautiful symphonies there are – Antonín Dvořák's Ninth, "From the New World". The first recording came into being at the beginning of 1972, at the time when the orchestra, following Karel Ančerl's era, possessed technical brilliance, yet craved emotional profundity and romantic flight, which Neumann, its new, charismatic chief conductor, duly afforded them. The album's immense magic is also enhanced by its being splendidly recorded at the Rudolfinum hall by means of the analogue technique, which at the time was at its apex.

The Supraphon label has returned to the legendary recording and re-released it on vinyl, while utilising the contemporary state-of-the-art technologies of disc-cutting (DMM, Paule Acoustics) and pressing (Schallplattenfabrik Pallas). Classical music lovers will undoubtedly be delighted: upon purchasing the vinyl record, they will find a voucher for free download of the album in Hi-Res (24 bit / 192 kHz) – they will thus have the opportunity to alternate between the luxuriance of immersing themselves in the warm sound of the vinyl and analytical savouring of all the details in the digitally remastered recording in top-notch quality.



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