

VIVACE

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in Supraphon Recordings*

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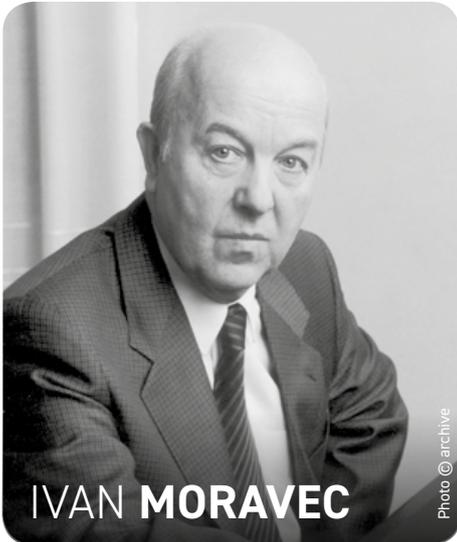




Photo © Martin Kubica

Dear friends,

our planet has just completed its annual orbit round the Sun. The beginning of a new year spurs us to glance back at the past one. Metaphorically speaking, the order of the movement of the spheres has remained one of the few certainties in our lives, as many other facets we had considered to be constants have of late changed beyond recognition. We are now learning to accept uncertainty as an element much more significant than it used to be. Yet fundamentally altered conditions also often reveal that which is essential – who is who, what we really need for life, what is expendable. And how this or that society regards culture; which countries and their representatives perceive culture as an integral part of life, cherishing it equally with other domains, and which deem it to be a superfluous “leisure-time activity”. The good news is the tenacity and creativity with which some artists have faced the novel situation. In addition to offering online concerts, many have plunged into making recordings, as well as conceiving and preparing projects for which they simply would not have time under ordinary circumstances. Others were forced to seek new jobs, because they have to earn a living ... When we get back to “normal”, nothing will be as it was before.

One of the certainties we can rely on is the passing of time. I am writing this article on the day marking Alfred Brendel’s 90th birthday, and less than two months after the day when Ivan Moravec would have reached the same age. For over half a century, both artists were among the most distinct constants of the piano and music worlds. When it comes to Alfred Brendel, last year Supraphon had the honour to work with him for the very first time, with the fruit of the collaboration being a unique DVD featuring the maestro’s lectures and a recording of his masterclass, which is about to be released. Ivan Moravec, on the other hand, worked with Supraphon throughout his illustrious career. The anniversary of Moravec’s birth is marked by the largest collection to date of his recordings, encompassing 11 CDs and a DVD. The pianist Jan Bartoš, a pupil of Moravec’s (who also participated in the making of the Brendel DVD), and Supraphon have

succeeded in obtaining a number of unique recordings, including those made in the USA, many of which had not been available to listeners for years and years. I must confess that I am really delighted by the boxset, which I consider one of Supraphon’s major recent achievements.

Last year saw other momentous anniversaries. One of them was the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven, which we have honoured by releasing a remarkable set of his string quartets the Smetana Quartet recorded before 1985 for Nippon Columbia. The recording was previously unavailable in most parts of the world. The Smetana Trio’s new Supraphon Beethoven album, which was released in September, received BBC Music Magazine’s Chamber Choice accolade. Another milestone we commemorated was the 150th anniversary of the birth of Vítězslav Novák. Supraphon paid tribute to the Czech composer by releasing a CD featuring a recording of his scarcely performed Piano Concerto and the symphonic poem Toman and the Wood Nymph, made by the conductor Jakub Hruša, the pianist Jan Bartoš and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra. Enthusiastic international responses, including The Guardian’s Classical Album of the Week, serve to prove that Novák’s music enthralled Czech and global listeners alike.

Let us now switch our attention to what is in store for the next few months. If everything goes well, we can look forward to new albums of the Tiburtina and Schola Gregoriana Pragensis ensembles, the harpist Jana Boušková, the soprano Kateřina Kněžíková and – last but not least – a recording of Karel Husa’s symphonic works (August marks the centenary of the composer’s birth), to be made by the Prague Symphony Orchestra and their new principal conductor, Tomáš Brauner.

I sincerely hope that all your and the musicians’ wonderful plans and dreams will come to fruition, and also that we will again be able to see each other at live concerts.

I wish you good health, hope and joy.

Matouš Vlčinský

IVAN MORAVEC 90!

In November 2020, Ivan Moravec, deemed by many the finest 20th-century Czech pianist, would have celebrated his 90th birthday. To mark this significant anniversary, Supraphon released the largest ever compilation of his unforgettable recordings titled *Portrait*. The release, encompassing 11 CDs, features the most significant and unique recordings Moravec made between 1962 and 2000 for Supraphon and several US labels. The set also included a DVD with a documentary and previously unseen footage from the Czech Television archives.

The position Ivan Moravec occupied among pianists of global calibre was clearly confirmed in 1998, when a 2CD volume featuring his recordings was included in the Philips Records “Great Pianists of the 20th Century” box set. The UK’s Gramophone lauded Moravec as “the pianist’s pianist”, while France’s Repertoire referred to him as “the most closely guarded secret of the classical music world”. On 9 November, music lovers all over the world commemorated the 90th anniversary of the artist’s birth.

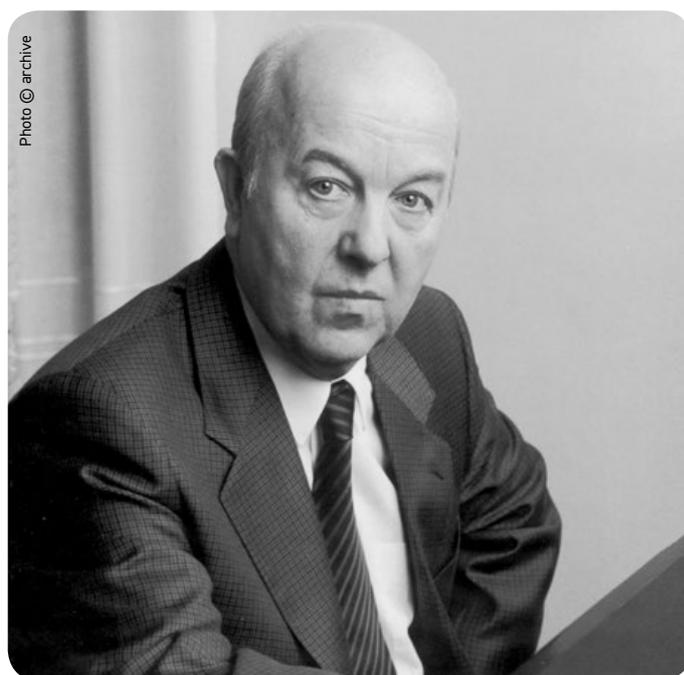
“We simply could not overlook such a major anniversary. Ivan Moravec recorded for several, mainly American, labels; hence, his recordings are quite scattered and often unavailable. We saw a great opportunity for a great project. Mrs Zuzana Moravcová, the pianist Jan Bartoš and Supraphon have succeeded in putting together a collection that constitutes a true portrait of Moravec. The compilation includes his core repertoire, as well as unique recordings that are now being released on CD for the very first time. We took great pains over seeking out the most authentic sources and paid great attention to the sound; wherever it was possible, we remastered the original analogue tapes, while in some cases we had to transfer the tracks from a gramophone record, since there is no other source. The audio quality of the majority of the current recordings is better than it ever was,” said Matouš Vlčinský, Supraphon’s classical music chief producer.

The bulk of the recordings were made for the Connoisseur Society in the 1960s, but the set also contains pieces for Supraphon, Dorian, Nonesuch and Vox. It comprises the complete Moravec’s repertoire of Beethoven, Schumann, Debussy, solo Franek, Janáček and Chopin’s Mazurkas. The booklet provides an exhaustive account of the pianist’s artistic development, from the early 1960s to the end of the millennium.

The DVD presents unique material too – from the oldest Czech Television footage capturing Moravec in action to an intriguing one-hour documentary showing the artist at the very peak of his illustrious career. *“I am one of those fortunate enough to have known Ivan Moravec in person. I think that the documentary and the recordings*

alike provide a faithful account attesting to what a great artist and exceptional man he was; they are very personal and intimate, touching the listener’s heart. With this portrait, we strove to mediate a close encounter with Ivan Moravec,” Matouš Vlčinský added.

Portrait affords in high audio quality more than 17 hours of music recorded by Ivan Moravec, a pianist whose virtuosity has been admired worldwide.



IVAN MORAVEC AS REMEMBERED BY CONTEMPORARY PIANISTS

Supraphon asked five major Czech pianists to convey their own memories of the great artist. The words of Jan Bartoš, Slávka Vernerová Pěchočová, Ivo Kahánek, Miroslav Sekera and Jitka Čechová provide a portrait of the extraordinary musician. Their accounts are completed by reminiscences of the American pianist Murray Perahia.

Jan Bartoš: The first time I saw Ivan Moravec play live was when I was eleven years of age. That evening I was so dazzled that I decided to become a pianist too. His playing was seismographically sensitive and sincere, while also being firm and resolute. Such was Moravec himself too. The Portrait boxset affords you the opportunity to rediscover the artistry of one of the world's greatest pianists.

Slávka Vernerová Pěchočová: Every day, whenever I sit down at the piano, Ivan Moravec is by my side. I practise on the very instrument which he himself played throughout his life and which he gave to me. I could say that I still hear his voice, as I heard it twice a week over the nine years during which he gave me intensive lessons and another ten years during which he was my attentive and kind-hearted artistic mentor up until his passing. "Go back to that which you already had! Don't play in gloves! Don't disturb your circles! Fortune favours the prepared! Keep exercising! Et cetera ...". When recalling him, I must first and foremost highlight the sheer integrity and honesty with which he, as a teacher, approached us all, as well as his personal sincerity. He loathed mediocrity, pretence and pushiness. Now I do my utmost to be the keeper of the flame. Ivan Moravec has left behind a large void!

Ivo Kahánek: Along with Rudolf Firkušný, Ivan Moravec is still considered the most distinguished Czech pianist that ever lived. Even though I was not a pupil of his and our encounters were rather sporadic and brief, I was truly enthralled by his obsession with attaining the perfect musical expression. I think that his meticulous work, paying attention to the tiniest detail, gave his creations the hallmark of a certain definitude, as though they were edged in stone. I find this humble approach to interpretation increasingly inspiring, particularly at the time when pianists are often expected to take the very opposite path.

Miroslav Sekera: I was fortunate indeed to have been given several opportunities to attend maestro Ivan Moravec's class and to consult him about certain compositions. His indefatigable work on detail was truly astonishing. I could observe his unceasing comparison of recordings, with the aim to make his next performance even better. His perpetual seeking of the perfect performance! And he required the very same from his students. Thanks to his fastidious work and colossal talent, he conquered concert venues worldwide. Some of his recordings are deservedly deemed to be true benchmarks.

Jitka Čechová: Ivan Moravec was a great professional, entirely dedicated to his mission of presenting the beauty of great composers' music to audiences all over the world. His style reflected the desire for achieving the perfect performance, for getting as close as possible to the core of the composer's notion. His recordings of Mozart's concertos, and pieces by Beethoven and Chopin, have inspired me since my childhood. As a conservatory student, I was immensely honoured to hear him at concerts in Prague, as well as to become a pupil of his. I thus had the chance to view close up Moravec's style of work, his way of approaching the piano, the piano sound and specific interpretation. I was fascinated by his never-ending desire for refinement. He would focus on the tiniest details of the score, which he explored thoroughly. A considerable role in the preparatory phase of rehearsing music was

played by his profound knowledge of the most relevant recordings of the respective pieces. When he found out that, because of a disgruntled neighbour, I faced difficulties with everyday practicing, for some time he lent me his portable mechanical keyboard, which he took everywhere on his travels, using it on board planes and in hotels so that he could retain the maximum playing condition. What a great school of life fraught with the joys and woes of the pianist...

Murray Perahia: My personal association with the great Czech pianist Ivan Moravec goes back many years. Sometime in the 1980s. I had heard some beautiful recordings that he made, and in my capacity as one of the directors of the Aldeburgh festival, I invited him there to play a recital. Needless to say, it was enchanting, as was getting to know him and his lovely wife, Zuzana. Thus begun a friendship that lasted until his passing away, and which meant that in addition to seeing him every time I came to Prague, we visited with each other in foreign cities (for example, Berlin and Jerusalem) and I was lucky enough to hear other recitals and also attend fascinating master classes that he gave. Through these many years, even when we couldn't see each other, we also were able to have long conversations (both in person and on the phone) that added a lot to my understanding. I was in admiration of his artistic outlook, of his pianistic knowledge, of his complete honesty and moral integrity. He was somebody I wholeheartedly looked up to, and only regret that there wasn't more time that we could have together. What struck me about his playing was the range of colours he had at his disposal, the utter naturalness of his phrasing, the unobtrusive yet commanding technique, and a deeply human perspective, where artificiality had no place. He and his art will be sorely missed, but we do have some wonderful recordings that he left us which do capture the uniqueness on his spirit, and we do have the memories that will always be a part of us.



JAN BARTOŠ ABOUT THE ALBUM FEATURING MUSIC BY VÍTĚZSLAV NOVÁK

Last year's 150th anniversary of Novák's birth afforded the opportunity to take a closer look at his oeuvre – and to rediscover that which has been overlooked. The idea of making the first studio recording of the Piano Concerto was enthusiastically endorsed by the Czech pianist Jan Bartoš.

What was your prime impulse for exploring Vítězslav Novák's Piano Concerto and why did you decide to include the work on the new Supraphon album?

When, five years ago, I was studying the Piano Concerto in G minor by Antonín Dvořák, I ascertained that Vítězslav Novák, a renowned student of his, wrote a piano concerto too. Later on, I found out that, even though Novák's work had been performed in Prague, it was neglected. And when I first played it for myself, I resolved to learn the piece. Following several performances at concerts and positive responses, Supraphon and I agreed that Novák's concerto certainly deserved to be recorded.

Why do you think that there are so few Czech piano concertos dating from the periods of Romanticism and Modernism?

There are only three concertos from the Romantic era – Dvořák's, Novák's and Karel Kovařovic's – yet many more have survived from the era of Czech Modernism. Bohuslav Martinů alone wrote five piano concertos, Leoš Janáček composed the Concertino and the Capriccio, and intriguing concertos were conceived by Viktor Ullmann, Jaroslav Ježek, Pavel Bořkovec, Viktor Kalabis, Radim Drejsl, Petr Eben, Miloslav Ištvan, Jan Kapr and many others. Pianists have plenty to choose from.



Photo © Vojtěch Havlík



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What makes Novák's concerto difficult to perform?

The concerto is atypical due to the long piano solos alternating with expansive purely orchestral passages. Maintaining it as an integral whole, building the long phrases and large arch is really challenging. On the other hand, it is remarkable that, as regards natural piano stylisation, the young Novák was far more dexterous than his teacher Dvořák was in his Piano Concerto in G minor.

Vítězslav Novák was reputedly not satisfied with his piano concerto. Is it true?

Yes, it is, but we should perceive it within a wider context. Novák was not satisfied with many of his works, notwithstanding that the audience responded to them keenly. He was generally highly self-critical, revising a number of his works. It is also important to understand why Novák disliked his piano concerto. Noteworthy in this connection is the fact that when Dvořák in his letters to Janáček complained that some of his conservatory student refused to write in the national style, "rather looking about the world", it was Novák in particular whom he bore in mind. Novák admired Schumann and Brahms, as well as Grieg and Liszt – and the first two movements of his concerto clearly reveal such influences. Nevertheless, Dvořák was obstinate and did not leave his student alone. And since Novák immensely respected Dvořák, he ultimately yielded to his pressure and wrote the third movement of the concerto in the Czech furiant style. Yet he would soon regret his decision and refused to perform the concerto. Only two decades later, in 1915, would he acquiesce to its being premiered, by the Czech Philharmonic.

What led you to include Novák's cycle *At Dusk on the new album*?

Vítězslav Novák wrote many intimate lyrical pieces for the piano. The cycle is the last work dating from Novák's first, let us say, Romantic, period, while also ushering in his next creative phase, in which he embraced Moravian/Slovak folk music. Contrariwise, the two Serenades evoke the melancholy atmosphere in Prague at the end of the 19th century. Although ranking among the least-known

Novák cycles, I personally deem it one of the most engrossing of his opuses.

What about Novák's inspiration by J. S. Machar's poems?

Vítězslav Novák was indisputably the most learned major Czech composer, possessing a profound knowledge of the arts. A voracious reader, all his works reflect literary inspiration. His famous composition *Pan*, for instance, drew upon Knut Hamsun's eponymous novel. Machar was his contemporary and Novák felt a very close affinity to his subjective dark lyricism. Yet it is not programme music, Novák merely absorbed stimuli. One of the quotations reads: "I like staring into the fireplace, with the glowing charcoal silently blazing, like an aureate flaming mixture, and I feel melancholy, contemplative, like when looking at the sky at dusk". We should not forget that Novák's greatest models were Schumann and Brahms, who too had a penchant for applying German verse as mottos for their compositions.

What does working with Jakub Hrůša mean to you?

I was really delighted to have the opportunity to work with Jakub. I admire his artistic and personal qualities, but I also highly esteem how he has been promoting Czech music abroad, with his concert programmes encompassing both music by famous and lesser-known composers, in many cases of which it requires great courage. Who a few years ago could even have conceived the Berliner Philharmoniker performing Miloslav Kabeláč's *The Mystery of Time*? When I contacted Jakub, he was focusing on Novák, conducting his symphonic poems at concerts at home and abroad alike. So he responded to the idea of a joint project with enthusiasm.

What was recording with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra like? And can you sum up your hitherto collaboration with them?

My very first appearance with the orchestra was two years ago, when we performed Novák's Piano Concerto. I think they comprehend the music very well, immediately connecting with its nature.



Photo © Martin Kubica



VILÉM VEVERKA'S JOURNEY BEYOND THE BORDERS OF THE CUSTOMARY

The name Vilém Veverka is familiar to everyone who has fallen for the enchanting tone of the oboe. His path to virtuosity commenced with accolades at international competitions, and continued with gaining experience with the Berliner Philharmoniker, performances with chamber formations (Ensemble Berlin Prag, PhiHarmonia Octet), and building up an extensive repertoire, ranging from Baroque to contemporary works, a number of which he himself has premiered. Yet Vilém's horizon is even wider – his ambition is to present the oboe in a context different from that which we are accustomed to. Following several “classical” summits (Telemann, Britten, Vivaldi, Zelenka, Bach, etc.), he has made another of his dreams come true in the form of this crossover album. It would seem that the need to transcend borders is deeply encoded in his DNA. And so you will find side by side Bach, the “classics” of the second half of the 20th century (Morricone, Piazzolla, Žbirka, etc.), and also compositions Martin Hybler wrote for the present album. Everything has been thought through, every single detail refined.

The new album's content was compiled over the period of two years, as you mentioned in the booklet. Is that indeed the case?

Yes, everything was thought through to the finest detail, we left nothing to chance. We paid great attention to the selection of the works and their sequencing. It may seem that we just strung together pieces we like, pieces that listeners would be fond of too. Yet the very opposite was the case – it really did take us two years to prepare the album, with the process lasting until the very week prior to the launch of the recording, when the composer Martin Hybler brought to me the score of his Kickdown. There was absolutely nothing random or accidental about the album's planning.

How much did you think of the listeners when selecting the music for the album? Was your aim to accommodate them?

Yes, it was. I would say that I wanted to accommodate the listeners. When selecting the music for the album, I strove to imagine being one of them. I had in mind pleasing myself and the listeners alike. All of the pieces are important to me, I like them and feel an affinity to every one of the works.

The new album contains two refined arrangements of classical pieces. One created by Marián Varga (of the third movement of Joseph Haydn's Concerto in D major

for piano), the other by Martin Hybler (of Antonio Vivaldi's Concerto in F major for oboe). What led you to include them on the album?

The primary impulse was Marián Varga's art-rock arrangement dating from the 1970s, which captivated me several years ago. From there it was a short step to turning to Martin Hybler and asking him to treat Vivaldi's music.

How did you get to the Miroslav Žbirka and Led Zepelin songs?

As regards Miroslav Žbirka, the idea to feature his music on the album came from Martin Hybler, who has collaborated with him for years. I had the opportunity to acquaint myself with the Žbirka song more than a year before the recording began. The producer Matouš Vlčinský immediately agreed with putting it on the album. When it

comes to Led Zeppelin's Kashmir, I deemed it to be a certain challenge – of entering the world beyond art music and seeing whether I was capable of working on such a piece. I must admit that it was quite a lengthy process, but owing to Vít Chudý, who arranged the song, the result is really good.

Could you tell us something about Ultimate W Band, who accompany you on the new Supraphon album?

The ensemble is made up of musicians who rank among the finest in our country – Lukáš Polák, Karel Untermüller and others, every single one of them simply superb. When we look at the name, “ultimate” refers to the performance quality, as well as the repertoire. The “W” logically evokes my name, indicating that I myself am at the helm. I believe that my colleagues are just as excited about the project as I am.



BEETHOVEN ACCORDING TO THE LEGENDARY **SMETANA QUARTET**

In the year of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven, Supraphon reminded of a unique art of the legendary Smetana Quartet in a superb recording of the Beethoven's complete string quartets recorded at the turn of the 70's and 80's in Prague for Nippon Columbia. This splendid 7CD box-set is the very first release on CD beyond Japan.

The Smetana Quartet are a true legend. For over four decades (1945–1989), the ensemble gained critical acclaim and enthused audiences all over world, particularly in the UK, USA and Japan. They attained perfect chime and extraordinary flexibility in voice leading, resulting in part from their playing the entire repertoire by heart. The quartet performed Beethoven's works throughout their existence – following Smetana, he was the composer on whose music they focused the most and whose complete quartets were in their repertoire from 1974 onwards. They explored some of Beethoven's pieces for several years before including them in their concert programmes. In collaboration

with a Supraphon team, in 1978 the ensemble embarked upon a colossal project, which in 1985 came to fruition with the release on Nippon Columbia of a recording of the complete Beethoven string quartets. Even though the past decade has seen significant changes pertaining to interpretation and technology, the Smetana Quartet's account of Beethoven's works is by no means a "museum exhibit", with their vivacity and dynamism still entralling today's listeners. The recording, carefully digitally remastered from the original analogue tapes, is the very first release beyond Japan. Lovers of perfect sound are afforded the opportunity to listen to it Hi-Res 24 bit/192 kHz.



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Smetana Quartet was:

Jiří Novák – 1st violin
Lubomír Kostecký – 2nd violin
Milan Škampa – viola
Antonín Kohout – cello

www.smetanovokvarteto.cz



SMETANA TRIO AND THEIR INTERPRETATION OF BEETHOVEN'S PIANO TRIOS

The 250th anniversary of one of the greatest composers of all time was an irresistible impulse for the Smetana Trio. Their new addition to the Beethoven discography possesses all the parameters of the ensemble's previous, highly acclaimed recordings and will undoubtedly cause quite a stir.

Glimpsing through the Smetana Trio's discography, this appears to be your first Beethoven album. Is that indeed the case?

Jitka Čechová: Yes, it is. When I glance at our history and recordings, it is quite logical that we first focused on Czech music, then on global Romanticism and 20th century. And now we have embraced Classicism, which, although having often been taboo, is indisputably the core repertoire. Beethoven's trios have been recorded by numerous ensembles worldwide, so the question arises as to the extent to which a new album can present novel performance.

Was the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth the main impulse for the making of your double album?

Jan Páleníček: Absolutely. It was one of the major stimuli for us and the Supraphon label alike. Ludwig van Beethoven's music is extremely challenging to perform. I personally perceive it as a bridge between Classicism and Romanticism, the style that his later opuses actually ushered in. It thus depends on the sensitivity of the

performers to realise in which of Beethoven's creative periods they find themselves.

What factors made you choose the four piano trios that you have recorded?

Jitka Čechová: We based our selection on the periods in which they were written. They provided a splendid cross section through Beethoven's oeuvre. The album contains Opus 1, dating from the Mozart period, as well as Opus 97 (the "Archduke Trio"), which is a grand Romantic symphonic piece.

I assume that the recording of the album was preceded by numerous concerts at which you performed the works. Are preparations for making CDs anyhow specific and do they differ from preparations for concerts?

Jan Páleníček: When you know that you are about to make an album featuring specific works, the preparations run throughout the respective season. When it comes to the recording itself, we strive to



render the primal substance of the composer's intention. The scores provide us with a number of signposts, yet it is upon us as to how we decide to interpret the music.

Talking about scores – how important is the selection of the music material?

Jan Talich: The question is difficult to answer in general. Every artist may answer differently. There are musicians who give preference to modern editions, while others rather reach for urtext sources and facsimiles. The editions are inconsistent, none of them reveal conclusively how Beethoven wanted the music to sound. In my opinion, it is good to procure the latest versions, as their editors seek to include everything in the scores. Yet I think you must ultimately approach it in your own way and pursue your own path.

As regards the performance aspect of the trios, does Beethoven afford equal scope to all three instruments?

Jitka Čechová: We know from history that this type of piano

trio crystallised during the era of Classicism. In his early works, Beethoven still foregrounded the piano, and only later did the other two instruments become equal, which is clearly palpable on our double album.

Jan Páleníček: I would like to add that in the case of the cello you can see that the requirements grow with the increasing opus numbers. The apex of Beethoven's cello music is definitely the Triple Concerto for violin, cello and piano, one of the works we have performed frequently and gladly. The cello part is immensely challenging.

Which pieces do you like to combine with Beethoven's trios at concerts?

Jitka Čechová: We have often performed his works along with 20th-century music, with one of the wonderful combinations being Beethoven and Shostakovich.

Jan Páleníček: Beethoven's music is so incredibly communicative and so stylistically distinct that it always fits wonderfully with 20th-century, as well as Romantic pieces.



DOLEŽAL QUARTET PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD MYSLIVEČEK



Photo © Vojtěch Havlík



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Josef Mysliveček's quartets are characterised by wonderfully refined slow middle movements. Even more unique are his oboe quintets. For a long time, they were only known owing to Leopold Mozart's reference to them in a letter to his son Wolfgang, dated October 1777 – Mysliveček wanted Leopold Mozart to offer his quintets and other pieces to the Archbishop of Salzburg. Only due to the initiative of the performers featured on this album, primarily the oboist Michaela Hrabánková and Václav Dvořák, the first violinist of the Doležal Quartet, have the missing oboe parts for three of the six quintets been retrieved in private collections across Europe. The CD thus contains world premiere recordings of rediscovered Mysliveček works, whose significance is further enhanced by a stylistically sensitive interpretation.

Is your new album your first collaboration with the Supraphon label?

The Doležal Quartet had previously worked with Supraphon on a Jan Bartoš album. We made with the pianist a live recording of Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 12 in A major, "A Quattro", KV 414/386a, which is included in his Mozart project. In the second part of the CD, Jan Bartoš is accompanied by the Czech Philharmonic conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek.

The Josef Mysliveček works on your new album are world premiere recordings. How did you rediscover the pieces?

The album's genesis started five years ago, when we got together with the oboist Michaela Hrabánková to discuss the repertoire we could perform. When it comes to Mysliveček's quintets, everyone knew that he composed them, but no one knew where the scores were. Consequently, we began an intensive quest, with the result being the rediscovery of three of the six quintets. First we found a set without the oboe part, and later on we located in private collections a copy of the complete score.

What do you play the rediscovered works from? Have the scores been published?

I myself have transcribed the music. While doing so, I compared two versions, written by different copyists. I strove for the outcome to be as authentic as possible. Within two years, we would like to have the scores published, to make them available to other musicians.

Your new album also contains Mysliveček's string quartets, which too you have recorded in world premiere. How did you select the particular pieces?

Mysliveček created over 20 string quartets. After we had played all of them, we whittled it down, and ultimately recorded the three we

deemed most inspired – two early quartets and one dating from the composer's late period, published posthumously. We drew upon the edition of the American musicologist Daniel E. Freeman, who highly valued the final version of all the three quintets and who also wrote the text for our CD booklet.

Josef Mysliveček spent decades in Italy. Is his music evidently influenced by the southern milieu?

I think that Italy was an excellent choice. Mysliveček had an immense sense for melody, hence it comes as no surprise that he was so esteemed and popular in that country. Judging by that which I have read in his monographs, he was the type of person who would have fitted right in.

How did you approach interpretation of Mysliveček's music?

I admit it was a tough nut to crack. It took us a long time to arrive at the optimal interpretation. Following several rehearsals and discussions, Michaela Hrabánková finally decided to play the modern oboe, yet we too had to accommodate to a certain degree. Striving to achieve an authentic performance, we consulted early music experts about everything. We also tried out a variety of strings, as during Mysliveček's time these instruments experienced a major development. In the end, when recording we held the bows in the Baroque manner in order to attain a softer sound.

You made the recording at the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum. Was it indeed an ideal environment?

We wanted to pay tribute to Mysliveček by making the recording at the Rudolfinum, one of the most prestigious concert venues in the Czech Republic. His music certainly deserves it. Moreover, we were again happy to have worked with Jabub Hadraba, a fabulous music director and sound engineer rolled into one.



KAREL BURIAN THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS OF THE GLOBALLY CELEBRATED TENOR

In the year marking the 150th anniversary of Burian's birth and three decades since the release of the 12CD boxset of the complete Emmy Destinn recordings, Supraphon presented a similarly precious landmark, made up of 3 CDs featuring Karel Burian (1870–1924), a celebrated Czech tenor, a Metropolitan Opera star, who also dazzled audiences in London, Paris, Zurich, Munich, Bayreuth, Dresden, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and elsewhere.

His champions included Gustav Mahler and Arturo Toscanini, who invited him to perform in their Met productions. When asked why he did not appear in German operas, Enrico Caruso answered: "I can sing something, whereas Burian can sing everything." Burian was feted as an exemplary interpreter of Wagner roles (Tristan, Parsifal, Siegfried, Stolzing), yet he also performed to great acclaim in Italian, French and Russian operas. He portrayed Smetana's Jeník and Dalibor in Czech and German alike. As an artist, Karel Burian enjoyed global renown, as a person, he lived a turbulent life, plagued by ill-fated love and spite. Seventy-two Burian gramophone recordings of arias and songs dating from between 1906 and 1913 have survived. The present set has been compiled thanks to the generous

support provided by institutions and private collectors from all over the world, who lent Supraphon the original shellac records. For the very first time, the listener has the unique opportunity to savour all the recordings made at the beginning of the gramophone era by one of the greatest opera singers of his time.

The release features arias from the operas *Der Freischütz*, *La muette de Portici*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Die Walküre*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *La forza del destino*, *Dalibor*, *Der Evangelimann*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Dimitrij*, *Werther*, *I Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Psohlavci* (The Dogheads). Songs: *Edwards*, *Jindřich*, *Malát*, *Nedbal*, *Neumann*, *Novotný*, *Picka*, *Strauss*, *Tregler*, *Vymětal*, and folk songs.

