

# The Unfinished Stage Works of Bohuslav Martinů:

*New Findings from his Personal and Professional Correspondence*<sup>1</sup>

KATEŘINA MAÝROVÁ

THE CZECH MUSEUM OF MUSIC - THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, PRAGUE, CR

Based on unknown and previously unpublished letters of Bohuslav Martinů from ca. 1917 to 1958, the author discusses several subjects for musical-dramatic works this Czech composer considered but never realized: *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, *Okna do mlhy* (Windows into the Mist) by Jan Havlasa, *Stará historie* (An Old Story) by Julius Zeyer, *Svatý Václav* (St. Wenceslas) by Stanislav Mojžíš-Lom, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* by N. V. Gogol, *Accusation against the Unknown* [Le Plainte contre Inconnu] by Georges Neveux, *The Slanderer* by A.P. Chekhov, and *Alexis Zorba* by Nikos Kazantzakis. The letters are presented either in full or in quotations that contain their most important passages. Each is accompanied by commentary placing Martinů's thoughts in the context of their time. The study is a contribution toward knowledge of Martinů's aesthetic opinions and his work with literary subjects.

opera - ballet - Martinů - correspondence - Peter Pan - literary subject - Czech music of the twentieth century - Julius Zeyer - A.P. Chekhov - W. Shakespeare - N. V. Gogol - G. Neveux - N. Kazantzakis

*Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) lived at a time when technological development was quite advanced, but in comparison with today's generation of artists he was still 'deprived' of such conveniences of modern technology as e-mail, fax, and the internet. His life abroad from 1923 until his death and his cosmopolitan way of living meant he had to rely mainly on written correspondence for contact with his homeland and with many of his places of work abroad, in both personal and professional matters.*

*Fortunately for today's researchers, it has been possible to catalogue an enormous quantity of written source materials pertaining to Martinů, including a large amount of his correspondence with the most varied persons, music ensembles, associations, offices, and cultural institutions, e.g. with theatres, publishing houses, and copyright organizations.<sup>2</sup> All these assembled sources help to reveal the sometimes complicated paths of Martinů's personal life, providing insight into his inner thoughts—so closely associated with the world of musical visions and fantasy—and allow us to clarify the background against which his seemingly hidden but thus all the more purposeful struggle to realize his artistic credo was played out.*

*Martinů's preserved and published professional correspondence with colleagues in the sphere of musical theatre (e.g. with Vítězslav Nezval, Jindřich Honzl, František Muzika, and Václav Talich) demonstrates*

<sup>1</sup>) This study was first presented at an international musicological conference on *The Stage Works of Bohuslav Martinů in the Context of Their Time*, held by the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation 15-17 Dec. 2000 in Prague. The author's intent was to draw attention to some previously unknown and unpublished letters of Martinů having a bearing on the subject of the conference. For the international colloquium on "Opera and Religion" in Yekaterinburg, held on the occasion of the premiere of the first version of Bohuslav Martinů's opera *The Greek Passion* (19 April 2018), the study was further expanded to include several examples from international literature that had intrigued the composer sufficiently to make him consider using them as themes for his own stage works.

<sup>2</sup>) See Bohuslav Martinů: *Dopisy domů. Z korespondence do Poličky* (Bohuslav Martinů's Letters Home: From the Letters to Polička), ed. Iša Popelka, Prague: Mladá fronta, 1996. On p. 8 in his introduction Popelka mentions 633 catalogued letters Martinů addressed to members of his family now deposited in the Památník Bohuslava Martinů (Bohuslav Martinů Memorial) in Polička. And MAÝROVÁ, Kateřina, *Bohuslav Martinů (inventář fondu korespondence z pražských institucí a privátních zdrojů)* (Bohuslav Martinů: An Inventory of Correspondence Held by Prague Institutions and Privately), Prague: Národní muzeum – Muzeum české hudby (National Museum – Museum of Czech Music), 1989. This catalogue of Martinů's correspondence, mainly held in Prague institutions, shows 1,333 items inventoried by that time.

With establishment of the Nadace Bohuslava Martinů v Praze (NBM—the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation in Prague) and the Institut Bohuslava Martinů (IBM) in the 1990s a research centre was formed in Prague having international outreach, whose aim is to continue systematically in collecting and professional cataloguing of all accessible musical and non-musical sources related to Martinů's life and work. An inseparable part of the IBM's musicological research consists of searching for additional correspondence of Martinů and professional evaluation thereof. By 9 April 2018 there was a total with 3,645 copies of Martinů's correspondence inventoried at the IBM. The number of items of correspondence catalogued systematically can be estimated at c. 5,525.

convincingly his absolutely unbiased, open, and searching attitude toward everything related directly to finding an ideal form for any musical-dramatic or ballet subject. Martinů made public most of his fundamental artistic notions and ideas concerning musical drama, especially opera, at the times of his premieres, sometimes in argumentative articles and essays. In any case evaluation of his numerous operatic and ballet works confirms the impression that he was the type of artist who constantly sought new subjects, stimuli, and challenges to achieve the optimal artistic solution to various problems with which musical theatre of the time was concerned. Although it is clear that his operas and ballets contain certain constant elements in their subjects that always lured him toward musical treatment,<sup>3</sup> it is not appropriate to view his musical-dramatic works only as a sort of internally interconnected developmental arch.

A considerable portion of the important source materials relating to Martinů's musical and theatrical poetics has already been published in a large work by his friend the diplomat Miloš Šafránek (1894-1982), who also deserves much credit for promoting Martinů in both Czech and foreign musical circles.<sup>4</sup> In recent years continuing collection and cataloguing of Martinů's correspondence has led to discovery of new and interesting documents—letters written not only by Martinů himself but by his contemporaries and collaborators.

The points of view from which we examine this correspondence may vary widely and may include both publishing policies of various publishing houses<sup>5</sup> and e.g. Martinů's activities in seeking suitable subjects for treatment as ballets or operas. Thus from these letters we learn about Martinů's intentions and plans in the area of theatre that remained unfulfilled. He sometimes devoted considerable efforts to pondering a certain theatrical subject before deciding in favour of different, more suitable material. At other times he considered setting literary material to music only briefly, soon abandoning the idea when he realized the material was not appropriate for musical-drama treatment. In any case, however, these rejected subjects represent a part of Martinů's creative potential:<sup>6</sup> among other things they reveal one important trait of his work—openness and maximum receptiveness to the most varied inspirational stimuli. This trait was subconsciously anchored in his creative method and allowed him to devise a musical-dramatic form without clinging to a single point of view. He proceeded with analogous openness e.g. in relations with various publishing houses when he negotiated with several parties at the same time concerning publication of his operas and ballets.

#### ⌘ PETER PAN

One of the letters in which Martinů writes about a subject suitable for treatment as a ballet is an undated letter apparently written not long after 1916, addressed in all likelihood to the choreographer and ballet master of the National Theatre in Prague Augustin Berger (1861-1945).<sup>7</sup> Martinů refers to the same subject in passing in a

<sup>3</sup>) Cf. e.g. BŘEZINA, Aleš, 'David Pountney o Řeckých pašijích' (David Pountney on The Greek Passion [an interview with the British stage director on the occasion of the world premiere of the previously-unknown first version of this opera]), *Harmonie*, 1999, No. 9, pp. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup>) Cf. ŠAFRÁNEK, Miloš, ed., *Divadlo Bohuslava Martinů (The Theatre of Bohuslav Martinů)*, Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1979. Concerning Martinů's stage works see also e.g. PEČMAN, Rudolf, ed., *The Stage Works of Bohuslav Martinů*, Prague, 1967; KARBUSICKÝ, Vladimír, 'Der erträumte und nacherlebte Surrealismus. Martinůs Oper Juliette ou La clé des songes', in *Theorie der Musik. Analyse und Deutung. Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, Band 13, Hamburg: Laaber Verlag, 1995, pp. 271-336; *Opernworkshop 1999. Bohuslav Martinů: Griechische Passion*, Bregenz: Bregenzer Festspiele GmbH, 1999; DOSTÁLOVÁ, Růžena - BŘEZINA, Aleš, *Řecké pašije. Osud jedné opery. Korespondence Nikose Kazantzakise s Bohuslavem Martinů (The Greek Passion: The Fate of One Opera—Correspondence of Nikos Kazantzakis with Bohuslav Martinů)*, Prague: Set Out, 2003; and RENTSCHOVÁ, Ivana, *Anklänge an die Avantgarde. Bohuslav Martinůs Opern der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007.

<sup>5</sup>) See MAYROVÁ, Kateřina - KLOS, Richard, 'K problematice souborného kritického vydání díla Bohuslava Martinů' (Issues Concerning the Complete Critical Edition of the Works of Bohuslav Martinů), in *Kritické edice hudebních památek. Sborník příspěvků z konferencí katedry muzikologie Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci v letech 1993 a 1994 (Critical Editions of Musical Monuments: A Collection of Contributions from Conferences of the Department of Musicology of the College of Liberal Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc in 1993 and 1994)*, Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 1996, pp. 105-10.

<sup>6</sup>) Martinů's searches for inspiration for his works in world literature are discussed e.g. in MIHULE, Jaroslav, 'Bohuslav Martinů a světová literatura' (Bohuslav Martinů and World Literature), in *Hudba slovanských národů a její vliv na evropskou hudební kulturu (Music of Slavic Nations and Its Influence on European Musical Culture)*, Brno, 1981, pp. 197-202. Concerning the content of the torso of Martinů's personal library held today in the collections of the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička cf. also BŘEZINA, Aleš, 'Knihovna Bohuslava Martinů' and 'Knihovna Bohuslava Martinů II' (Bohuslav Martinů's Library [an article published in two parts]), *Hudební rozhledy*, Vol. 48 (1995), No. 3, pp. 33-35 and No. 4, pp. 32-33.

<sup>7</sup>) This letter was purchased by the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation in Prague in 1997 from the Erasmus antiquarian dealership in Basel, Switzerland and is now deposited with the Foundation. In addition, the Theatrical Division of the Historical Museum of the National Museum in Prague possesses memorabilia from the estate of Augustin Berger (Catalogue No. H 6 P 63/64) including a letter from Martinů to Berger of 28 August 1921. 8) Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Acquisition No. 33/1978/3, letter from Martinů to Stanislav Novák dated 'in Polička 22 [month illegible]', probably written in 1917. On pp. 3-4 of this letter Martinů writes:

Otherwise I have been working on that new full-length ballet, which I'll explain to you in Prague; it is very nice and fine, and the libretto is by me (also a little by Mr. J.M. Barie [sic], who died in England in 1888 [sic]). And I already have a whole section of it lasting half an hour.

letter to Stanislav Novák,<sup>8</sup> but only the letter to Berger, where Martinů offers his new ballet for assessment and describes its plot, allows us to understand that this was a new fairy-tale subject in no way related to his previous ballet *Stín* (*The Shadow*), and was also far removed from his future orientation toward Sumerian literature as manifested in his ballet *Istar* (191823).<sup>8</sup> However, the fairy-tale subject Martinů was considering is not lacking in elements of fiction and dreamy fantasy with major emphasis on the role of reminiscence—features characteristic of his personal style.<sup>9</sup>

*Martinů writes:*

Esteemed master!

I take the liberty of troubling you in the matter of my ballet, as to whether its performance may be expected.<sup>10</sup> Please try to exert your powerful influence with the director. After all, this ballet poses such modest demands that staging it is almost nothing for the National Theatre, and I don't have to tell you how much this would mean to me. I thought it would be with Coppélia. Master, I beg of you, let me know—can it be expected that this piece will be staged this season? And I also ask your advice in one other matter. During my last visit you spoke of a lack of ballets. Master, I would have a full-length ballet for you on which I'm presently working, and I should like your advice as to whether the libretto meets the requirements of the theatre. Allow me to give you a brief summary. I wrote the libretto myself, with partial usage of English story by J. Barrie.<sup>11</sup> It involves a young girl, Maemie,<sup>12</sup> who had herself locked in Kensington Gardens overnight. The prologue is in a children's bedroom in the morning. Maemie and her little brother are just getting up, and during breakfast their mother tells them about those gardens, about the elves, about Peter Pan, etc., until Maemie gets the idea of having herself locked in the gardens overnight, which she arranges with her brother. This is spoken. The ballet doesn't begin until the first act, when Maemie is actually locked in. (The brother runs away.) Hardly has the gate shut when the trees begin to stretch and walk about, which passes into a dance. Here and there little fairies come out and weave amongst each other. A fairy named 'Hnědinka' [a Czech translation of Barrie's 'Brownie'—translator's note] runs in and carelessly falls into some sort of puddle, from which she is rescued by Maemie. In the meantime a procession of fireflies approaches, and then a procession of elves, fairies, and the queen of the fairies and flowers Mab together with a foreign prince who, she says, has come to win the heart of one of the fairies. The fairies dance before him, but a doctor finds that his heart remains cold. Until finally Hnědinka triumphs. Maemie applauds loudly in joy over the good fortune of her friend. Everyone falls silent. They turn on her, Maemie flees, and the whole crowd chases her about the stage until Maemie collapses exhausted. But in the meantime Hnědinka has won a pardon for her. Suddenly it begins to snow and the fairies ponder how to save Maemie, until finally it is decided that they will build a cottage over her, which happens. The cottage is finished and in the distance sounds the pipe of Peter Pan. Everyone runs to the back and off the stage. This could be the end of the first act. Then: everything as before. Peter Pan enters and plays his pipe. Maemie wakes up and climbs out of the little house through the roof. Then the two are introduced and Maemie dances with Peter Pan. They kiss and Peter Pan promises to show Maemie the fairies' festival. He plays his pipe and fairies run in from all sides, etc. The prince also enters, and Hnědinka and the queen, and they watch the dance in which Maemie also participates. In the end the elves perform a sort of little play and dawn arrives, the gates open, and the whole crowd runs away. Through the gate come Maemie's little brother and their mother. Maemie runs to them and leaves with them. Along the way she tells them the events of the night. They walk off the stage and the curtain falls. This is the second act.

---

*This letter is mentioned in MIHULE, Jaroslav, Bohuslav Martinů. Profil života a díla (Bohuslav Martinů: A Profile of His Life and Work), Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1974, p. 200. That the subject had nothing to do with Martinů's later ballet Istar is evident only from the particular content of the letter now being published for the first time.*

<sup>8</sup>) Concerning the ballets *Stín* and *Istar*, including their genesis and stagings, see ŠAFRÁNEK, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 19-20 and 22-25.

<sup>9</sup>) See especially PEČMAN, *op. cit.*, in particular two studies therein: HALBREICH, Harry, 'Bohuslav Martinů und die Welt des Traumes' (pp. 57-74) and MIHULE, Jaroslav, 'Der Mensch und die Welt im musikdramatischen Schaffen Bohuslav Martinůs' (pp. 75-95).

<sup>10</sup>) Here Martinů apparently has in mind his ballet *Stín*, which he finished at Christmas in 1916 and which he was trying in vain to have staged at the National Theatre in Prague at that time. Otakar Ostrčil, dramaturg of the opera of the National Theatre during that period, criticized the work in his assessment of 2 Dec. 1919. See ŠAFRÁNEK, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup>) 'Barrie, Sir [James] [Matthew]', in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. Ian Ousby, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 66. Also 'Barrie, Sir James (Matthew), Baronet', in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 1, A-Bayes, Chicago etc., 1993, p. 916. Barrie first introduced the character of Peter Pan in stories published in 1902 under the title *The Little White Bird*. Then in 1904 came the play *Peter Pan*. The fairy tale about Peter Pan was published in London in 1911 under the title *Peter and Wendy*.

<sup>12</sup>) Martinů uses the form 'Maemie' for the name of the main heroine, whom Barrie calls 'Mamie'. For Peter Pan Martinů uses the forms 'Peterpan', 'Peter-pan', 'Piterpan', and 'Piter-pan'. Underlining of words in the translation of Martinů's letter is according to the original.

The third act takes place after a lapse of time, perhaps ten years. Maemie, now a young woman, comes to the gardens to refresh the memories of her childhood. She comes to the place where it all happened and sits down on a bench. Little butterflies circling around her head lull her to sleep, and in her sleep Maemie sees everything again. Hnědinka, the prince, the queen, Peter Pan, etc., enter, everything as before, except that the dancing seems to be in the distance (perhaps behind a thin curtain as in *Z pohádky do pohádky* [From Fairy Tale to Fairy Tale—a ballet by Oskar Nedbal— translator’s note], and most importantly this ballet, unlike the earlier one, is performed entirely by children. All the dancers are little, including Hnědinka, the prince, Peter Pan, and all the fairies—everyone. They dance and Maemie is enticed by her memories. In her sleep she begins to dance slowly with them. Then she wakes up and everything disappears before her eyes. Maemie is astonished and calls for Peter Pan. But nobody appears—only an echo comes back. Maemie is sorry about all this like a child and feels that something has disappeared from her life, something beautiful that will never return. She continuously calls for Peter Pan and goes deeper and deeper into the gardens, from which her voice can be heard growing more distant. Only the echo of the call for Peter Pan comes back again and again, and little fairies run onto the stage with Peter Pan; they want to show themselves to Maemie somehow, but it’s no longer possible. That was then, but now it’s vanished. With this the scene ends and from the distance Maemie’s voice calling for Peter Pan can still be heard.

And now I beg your pardon that I’ve interrupted your work with this long letter. And I’m so bold as to ask your opinion as to whether you might need this ballet for the theatre. I already have half of the first act completely finished, and I think during the winter I’ll complete it. So once more I beg your pardon and

remain  
in deepest respect  
Bohouš Martinů  
Polička

*Comparison of the story of Martinů’s intended ballet with J.M. Barrie’s works available in English and/or in Czech translation leads us to conclude that Martinů must have been using one of the earlier English editions of the children’s fairy tale about Peter Pan, namely Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1906). Martinů did not understand English at that time, but he may have used a German translation or, more likely, one of his friends or acquaintances may have translated the story for him, e.g. Gabriela Čechová, Alice Masaryková, or Karel Mušek.<sup>13</sup> The fairy tale of the boy Peter Pan who never grew up and his adventurous encounters with the girl Mamie in Kensington Gardens won immense popularity among young readers and was published in two more editions in 1912 and 1929 as well as in adapted versions.<sup>14</sup> The first Czech translation did not appear until 1925.<sup>15</sup> Martinů adhered to Barrie’s story only in his first two acts; the closing third act, as he described it to Berger in the quoted letter, was of his own invention.*

#### ⌘ WINDOWS INTO THE MIST

*Additional interesting documents that inform us about a literary subject Martinů abandoned in the end are two letters of his from the 1920s to the Czech literary historian, theatre critic and poet Otokar Fischer (1883-1938)<sup>16</sup> concerning the novel *Okna do mlhy* (Windows into the Mist) by the Czech prose writer and journalist Jan*

<sup>13</sup>) No separate publication of this story, e.g. as a literary supplement to the *Polička* magazine *Jitřenka* (Morning Star) or one of the Prague cultural revues of the time, has yet been found. It is possible that Karel Mušek, who had been engaged by the National Theatre as an actor in 1889, who served as a stage director there from 1902 to 1920, and who translated some of Barrie’s plays, or perhaps one of the members of the ‘English colony in Prague’ of that time, may have met Martinů and given him an outline of Barrie’s story—although in his outline of the ballet libretto Martinů tended to use Czech translations of the original English names. Cf. also ROSSOVÁ-HUSOVÁ, Marcela, ‘Karel Mušek’, in *Lexikon české literatury* (An Encyclopaedia of Czech Literature), Vol. 3/I, M-O, Prague: Academia, 2000, pp. 384-85.

<sup>14</sup>) This book was published as retold by D.S. O’Connor under the title *Peter Pan Keepsake* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907), and in an adaptation by G.D. Drenman as simply *Peter Pan* (London: Mills & Boon, 1909). I thank Graham Melville-Mason for this information, and Michaela Freemanová for help in comparing the English editions.

<sup>15</sup>) BARRIE, J.M., *Petr Pan v Kensingtonském parku* (Peter Pan in Kensington Park), trans. Jirka Malá, Prague: Pražská akciová tiskárna, 1925, in the series *Dětská četba. Sbirka knížek pro děti* (Children’s Reading: A Collection of Books for Children), ed. Milena Jesenská.

<sup>16</sup>) *Památník národního písemnictví v Praze* (Memorial of National Literature in Prague), Literary Archive, in the collection from the estate of Otokar Fischer, Acquisition Nos. LA PNP 43/56-67/92. The first of the letters is dated ‘In Polička, 8 May 1920’, and the second ‘Polička, 24 July 1920’. Cf. also MOURKOVÁ, Jarmila, *Inventář literární pozůstalosti Otokara Fischera* (Inventory of the Literary Estate of Otokar Fischer), Prague: Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví, 1990, Inventory No. 487, p. 21.

Havlasa (1883/1964),<sup>17</sup> whom Martinů had asked directly for permission to use this story as the basis for an opera libretto.<sup>18</sup> The two letters to Fischer indicate he was still considering the subject in late July 1920, as shown e.g. by the part of the first letter where he describes in some detail the content of the second and third acts of the intended opera. The mystical, symbolic orientation of this work would place it still within Martinů's first compositional period. However, the path to the then-fashionable Japanese subject was not simple.

The papers from Havlasa's estate include a printed copy of four stories published under the collective title *Four Japanese Tales* (Prague: Czechoslovakian Foreigners' Office, 1919).<sup>19</sup> Martinů apparently received the third of them, called 'The Darling of the Gods', with a girl heroine named O-Take-San, for musical treatment some time before he and the writer agreed on use of a different Japanese story of his for an opera, namely *Okna do mlhy*, as described in detail in Martinů's letter to Fischer which corresponds to that novel.

The uncatalogued part of the papers from Havlasa's estate includes a letter he wrote to his long-time friend Miloslav Haluza dated 9 November [should be December] 1959 where he says:

Sometime in 1920 Martinů wanted me make *Okna do mlhy* into a libretto for him, but I told him I no longer had time because we were preparing to leave for Brazil. With my permission he wrote the first act himself, and (he said) set it to music, but he asked me to get him staff paper in Paris for the whole score. I did so, and sent him the package from Paris, but he never even thanked me.<sup>20</sup>

Martinů treated Havlasa's work freely, keeping only the names of the main heroes O-gin-san and Genzhiro in this story of unhappy love, and two important sites of the action—The Maidens' Mountains and Yoshiwara.<sup>21</sup> He then asked Otokar Fischer, a renowned literary expert, for advice:

Honoured sir!

I take the liberty of describing for you the continuation of the story. The first act ends in reconciliation. O-gin-san parts with Genzhiro and an off-stage chorus ends the whole act. Act II. The chrysanthemum festival in Tokyo, in Yoshiwara. Hustle and bustle in the streets, prominent use of the chorus. Genzhiro enters with his sister, who tells him that O-gin-san's father has been imprisoned and that O-gin-san has sacrificed herself and gone to Yoshiwara to work as a geisha. Genzhiro is crushed and throws himself into the streaming crowd to look for her. O-gin-san enters and recalls Takasaki and Genzhiro. Suddenly she stops and feels Genzhiro's closeness, his presence. Genzhiro enters. Their meeting, highly dramatic, and their agreement to submit to fate and death together. The whole act is very busy, with constant assistance from the chorus during the festival, thus laid out broadly.

Scene change. A meadow in the Maidens' Mountains (from the first act). A short act in which the two lovers part with the land, with everything, recall their childhood, etc. A completely reconciled, luminous, and calm act, in which the approaching death is a redemption and affirmation through faith in the happiness that both will experience at their next meeting. They come to the edge of a chasm and throw themselves down.<sup>22</sup>

Act III. A meadow in the Maidens' Mountains. Mild bustle on the stage. Pilgrims take turns going to the temple. Genzhiro arrives, decrepit, chaotic, and mad. The crowd talks about him and explains his love and his failed attempt at a shared death. Genzhiro shows complete indifference to everything. A large chorus of pilgrims comes to the temple from afar. During the worship service some well-known sayings are heard and attract Genzhiro's attention. He reminisces about experiences of the past. When he recalls O-gin-san, her voice is heard calling him from off stage, and it seems to Genzhiro that he sees a black butterfly flitting about. He follows it to the edge of the chasm and plummets into it. This whole monologue including the off-

---

<sup>17</sup>) Cf. TAXOVÁ, Eva, 'Havlasa, Jan', in *Lexikon české literatury (An Encyclopaedia of Czech Literature)*, Vol. 2/I, H-J, Prague: Academia, 1993, pp. 106-08.

<sup>18</sup>) See ŠAFRÁNEK, op. cit., pp. 27-28. Havlasa's letter granting Martinů permission to write his own libretto using his Japanese subject is dated 20 March 1920.

<sup>19</sup>) *Literary Archive of the Memorial of National Literature in Prague, papers from the estate of Jan Havlasa, Acquisition No. 24/2000.*

<sup>20</sup>) Cf. also Havlasa's postcard of 2 May 1920 sent to Martinů from Paris. This postcard is found in the papers from the estate of Marie Martinů, deposited in the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička.

<sup>21</sup>) Remotely resembling Havlasa's subject is Julius Zeyer's 'Japanese novel' *Gompači a Komurasaki (Gompachi and Komurasaki)*, published in Prague by Eduard Valečka in 1884. Joe Hloucha conceived the theme of tragic love differently in his series of stories *Polibky smrti (Kisses of Death)*, published in Prague by Josef R. Vilímek in 1912, where one of the heroes in the story 'Chrámová tanečnice' (*The Temple Dancer*) is the knight Kuroda Gendžiró.

<sup>22</sup>) The subject of shared suicide of lovers is frequent in Japanese drama and literature, where the term 'shinju' means death out of love. In Havlasa's novel the main characters O-gin-san and Genzhiro—the pair of lovers condemned by fate—decide to commit suicide together under the wheels of a passing train. However, only O-gin-san dies; Genzhiro survives, but is psychically disturbed and has a permanently disfigured face.

stage aria of O-gin-san is periodically interrupted by a spoken parlando of the chorus of pilgrims chanting out their prayers and waxing into a sort of religious delirium, constantly strengthening, so this act promises to be very effective dramatically.

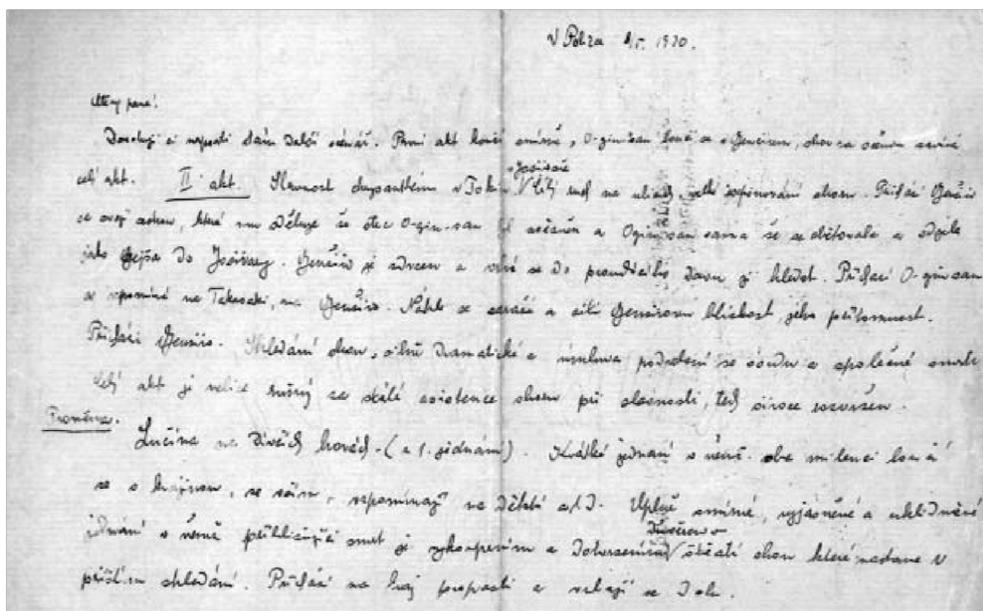
Scene change. Apotheosis. (Everyone in the background, only vaguely visible).

The white shadows of a funeral procession. Genzhiro kneels. O-gin-san enters and lifts him to herself, and both walk into the distance on a luminous path. Here of course the whole apparatus is deployed. High choruses of women and children, orchestra of piccolos, flutes, and violins off stage, etc.

With this the opera ends. In the whole work, however, I'll make changes according to how I proceed in composing it and according to how long the individual scenes are, so that it will be unified. But only occasional changes—the main action remains. I thank you for your willingness and trouble. Please let me know your opinion and your advice; I shall be glad to be guided by them. Allow me to congratulate you on the success of Heracles. With cordial greetings and respectful regards to your gracious wife, in deep respect B.

Martinů

*So far it has not been possible to determine whether Fischer answered Martinů or in what way.*



Bohuslav Martinů's Letter to Otokar Fischer/Polička, on 5 May, 1920, manuscript, quotation from the first page of the letter / The Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature, Inventory No. 43/56

### ⌘ AN OLD STORY

Another idea of Martinů's that remained unrealized was that of setting Julius Zeyer's comedy *Stará historie* (*An Old Story*) to music as a comic opera. In 1922 he corresponded in this matter with the Czech Academy for Sciences, Literature, and Art, asking the institution's Section IV for permission to set the play to music.<sup>23</sup> So far neither a libretto nor any music for this opera have been discovered. It is interesting, however, that Zeyer's play may have provided an idea Martinů used fifteen years later in his opera *Julietta*: a crocodile as a symbol for ridiculing a rejected suitor. Although with Zeyer this motive is only episodic (see p. 8 in Act I in the 1906 edition),<sup>25</sup> in *Julietta* the scene of *Julietta* ridiculing Michel during their meeting in the forest constitutes one of the most dramatic moments. The original text of Neveux's play:

<sup>23</sup>) See ŠAFRÁNEK, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Cf. also MAÝROVÁ, Kateřina, 'Korespondence Bohuslava Martinů s Českou akademií věd a umění' (*Correspondence of Bohuslav Martinů with the Czech Academy of Sciences and Art*), independent supplement to *Hudební věda* (*Musicology*), Vol. 37 (2000), Nos. 1-2, especially pp. 23-24. 25) ZEYER, Julius, *Dramatická díla II (Stará historie – Sulamit – Šárka)* (*Dramatic Works, Vol. II: An Old Story, Sulamit, Šárka*), Prague: Unie, 1906, pp. 1-85, especially p. 8.

Si c'est bien cette image-la, il me semble que vous étiez complètement ridicule et que j'ai ri seulement parce que l'appartement de mes parents est plein de crocodiles empaillés ramenés des colonies, et que vous m'avez rappelé le plus gros de ces crocodiles.<sup>24</sup>is paralleled by a sentence in Czech saying:

You were utterly ridiculous, and I laughed because we had many stuffed crocodiles at home and you reminded me of the biggest one!<sup>25</sup>

*Without attempting to determine which source (Zeyer or Neveux) was primary for the crocodile symbolism in Julietta, we can be certain that this symbol was a relatively frequent migratory motive in the European literary and dramatic tradition of the first third of the twentieth century.*

### ⌘ SAINT WENCESLAS

*In the 1930s, i.e. just at the time Martinů was beginning to seek an ideal subject for his new, modern conception of operatic drama, he was fascinated for a time with the story of svatý Václav (St. Wenceslas) from Czech national history.<sup>26</sup> In his article 'Poznámky k cyklu Hry o Marii' (Notes on the Series The Plays of Mary)<sup>27</sup> he mentioned that he sought material in Czech folk theatre and in Medieval liturgical drama. From here the path led to a subject symbolically connected with the figure of Prince Wenceslas, martyr and patron of the Czech lands, as we learn from correspondence Martinů exchanged from March through June 1933 with the playwright and theatre critic Stanislav Mojžíš-Lom (1883-1967), director of the National Theatre in Prague from 1932 to 1939.<sup>28</sup>*

*Martinů established written contact with Lom in a letter of 3 March 1933, which shows that already at that time he was interested in some legends about death from Brittany, and that he had a basic outline sketched for his future opera Hry o Marii. Otherwise he wrote:*

*I would probably prefer the style and form of folk plays, and not a full-length opera but rather three or four plays contrasting and not long. Something from fragments of our myths, but adapted in folk style, rather roughly, in rural fashion so to speak, almost in the style of Medieval plays, where I could utilize that which was called even earlier 'la musique profane'. I am giving you my idea only in rough outlines, because I myself don't yet have a precise subject through which to explain my conception definitely, but in any case they would be old plays or legends adapted for the modern theatre.*

*Of Martinů's four preserved letters to Lom it is the last two that have the greatest importance for our purposes here. The third letter, sent to Lom from Paris on 8 April 1933, indicates that the proposal for Martinů to treat the St. Wenceslas story came from the author of the drama Svatý Václav himself.<sup>29</sup>*

Respected sir,

---

<sup>24</sup>) NEVEUX, Georges, *Théâtre. Le Voyage de Thésée, Juliette ou la Clé des Songes, Ma Chance et ma Chanson*, Paris: René Juliard, 1946; see especially p. 168 in *Juliette ou la Clé des Songes*. This play was first published in May 1930 as a supplement to the Parisian journal *Les Cahiers de Bravo*.

<sup>25</sup>) Cf. MARTINŮ, Bohuslav, *Julietta (Snář)*. *Lyrická zpěvohra o 3 jednáních (Juliette or The Key to Dreams: A Lyrical Opera in Three Acts)*, piano-vocal reduction with text prepared by Karel Šolc, Prague: Melantrich, 1947, Act II, Scene V. Cf. also BOSKOVITS, M., 'Krokodil' in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, Vol. 2, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, Rome, etc.: Herbert, 1990, p. 659.

<sup>26</sup>) Martinů had already been inspired by the melody of the medieval chant *Svatý Václav (Oh, St. Wenceslas)* in his cantata *Česká rapsodie (Czech Rhapsody)* from 1918.

<sup>27</sup>) See MARTINŮ, Bohuslav, 'Poznámky k cyklu Hry o Marii' (Notes on the Series The Plays of Mary), *Divadelní list (Theatrical News)*, Vol. 10, No. 14 (Brno, 2 Feb. 1935). Cf. also ŠAFRÁNEK, op. cit., pp. 206-08.

<sup>28</sup>) Martinů's correspondence with Mojžíš-Lom is deposited as part of Lom's papers in the *Literary Archive of the Memorial of National Literature in Prague (Acquisition Nos. 57/68/1572-75)*. Cf. also KIRSCHNEROVÁ, Jana, *Inventář literární pozůstalosti Stanislava Mojžíše-Loma*, Prague: *Literary Archive of the Memorial of National Literature*, 1981, editions of inventories No. 385, p. 24. In all there are four letters from Martinů to Lom, dated 1) Cannes, 3 March 1933 (a request for collaboration on a libretto for a new work in the style of folk plays, in the manner of *Legenda o sv. Dorotě (The Legend of St. Dorothy)*); 2) Paris, 29 March 1933 (asking whether Lom intended to collaborate on the new opera), 3) Paris, 8 April 1933 (proposing for the first time collaboration on a St. Wenceslas story), and 4) Paris, 25 June 1933 (giving information on his ideas about theatre and his opinions on the relation between libretto and music, using the example of Lom's play *Svatý Václav*). Three copies of Lom's replies to Martinů's letters are also contained in his papers. Cf. LA PNP, Acquisition Nos. 57/68/3593-95). See KIRSCHNEROVÁ, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>) MOJŽÍŠ-LOM, Stanislav, *Svatý Václav. Tragická hra z českých dějin (St. Wenceslas: A Tragic Play from Czech History)*, Prague: Aventinum, 1929. The play was first performed on 28 September 1929 in the National Theatre in Prague on the occasion of the millenium of Wenceslas's death, directed by Karel Hugo Hilar. Later Lom reworked and published his drama (Prague: L. Mazáč, 1935). It was given for the first time in this new version with a new staging, again with Hilar's stage direction, in the National Theatre on 7 June 1935.

I thank you heartily for your letter and for the proposal concerning the drama about St. Wenceslas. If we agree on the basic treatment of the drama as a stage mystery, then I assure you that the subject would strongly entice me to work. I, too, would not think of this form as a celebratory opera, but rather more as a staged oratorio, if I can so define it. Treatment as an opera would be somewhat of an impediment to me, and I don't think it's even feasible at the present time. If you agree with my opinion, I would be very glad if you would send me your drama, possibly with your suggestion for treatment, and I would write you my adaptation, which you would correct according to your wishes. Although the work would be written for the stage, I should like mainly to avoid the theatrical pathos of opera, which would certainly be a distracting factor especially in a work with a historical subject. A simple, rather depersonalised, rather human treatment would interest me much more, and I think this is your opinion as well [...]

*The reasons why in the end Martinů abandoned the St. Wenceslas story are suggested indirectly in the last of his letters to Lom, sent from Paris on 25 June 1933:*

Respected Sir,

I apologize for answering so late. I have much work, and as soon as I had time I turned my attention to your play so that I could write you something definite about my opinion and my work. I must confess frankly that I'm still rather at a loss. Of course I like your play very much, but so far I don't see the precise character that an operatic treatment would take. And I don't want to handle this matter superficially: this project is too serious, and I don't want to approach it without knowing the full range of possibilities. Also it would be the first work of this type for me, and I should like to undertake it with precise awareness of what I want to do. So far I have only a sort of sense of the direction the work would take, and that is rather a musical treatment, which is always threatened by the particular staging, where, as I have already written, I should like to avoid everything operatic, but I would also like to prevent the play from being boring. I know that you yourself would adapt the play for the operatic stage, but so far I can't define my opinion concerning this adaptation because I don't yet have a proper idea either of the whole or of the individual components. Actually I have a certain idea of the whole, but this is not yet enough for realization. And precisely for a work of this type it is important to have a very detailed image of it worked out in one's mind, and that means thinking the matter through very thoroughly, for which I haven't yet had as much time as is needed. I would like the layout of your play, but nevertheless I think that for musical expression it would be necessary to leave only the most major structural components, without secondary scenes. However a somewhat brief, almost telegraphic style of dialogue would bother me very much—but that would be a matter of adaptation. Also, the issue of Wenceslas/Boleslav would have to be presented more quickly. Anyway, these are all questions of adaptation for a musical play. In my opinion the play would last two hours at most, and the whole character would be calm, ceremonial, like a legend, with two or three points of dramatic intensification, which I would call rather outward, i.e. staged, e.g. the second scene, at the castle, or in Henry's tent. As concerns the internal drama, that would of course be the conflict between Boleslav and Wenceslas, and the death of Wenceslas, but it is precisely here that I should like to avoid romantic dramaticism, and I should prefer that the musical expression not depart from the tone of a legend, i.e. inward rather than outward tragedy. Now, however, there is the question of whether this treatment is sufficient for a staged operatic performance to be effective—a question I would be able to answer only when I come to know your proposal for an operatic adaptation. As concerns the folk scenes, I think they would be out of the question. I think they would look rather like filler, and I have the impression it would be necessary to use the chorus rather as accompaniment or as an interpreter of the action. The scenes with the seer would I think be good.

I apologize once more for writing to you only in a summary fashion. I should be very glad to learn your own opinion, even if only in outline, for adapting the play for performance as an opera.

With cordial greetings and respect,

B. Martinů

P.S. I think it would be good to treat the play as though it were to be written for performance in the open air (e.g. at a castle, as you write), that one could avoid many things that are accepted mechanically in theatrical treatment on stage, and which consequently could evoke the possibility of a new treatment in theatrical performance.

*Lom's answers indicate that he welcomed Martinů's interest. Already in his first letter, of 7 March 1933, he mentioned that he would prefer a full-evening treatment of one legend rather than several different subjects—and*

as a possible subject he suggested his own play about St. Wenceslas. But he also pointed out his heavy work load as director of the National Theatre in Prague. In his opinion he would not be able to engage in artistic collaboration until the next year. A month later, on 3 April 1933, Lom wrote to Martinů that he had been thinking over the matter and reached the following conclusion:

What would suit your purpose best is if I were to adapt my drama about St. Wenceslas as a heroic mystery play about this prince and saint—but for a full evening, because the subject requires this, and besides audiences reject a program put together from several smaller units.

*He asked that Martinů, provided he agreed, tell him what kind of adaptation of the drama he would need and by what deadlines.*

*Lom's third letter, of 16 May 1933, finally concerns his own ideas for how the St. Wenceslas subject should be treated:*

[...] I imagine the material much simplified for your (and my) purpose. I want to preserve motion on the stage, divided into three levels: the foreground for small folk scenes (the Quack in Old Czech literature), the middle for big solos, the background for choruses. [...]

Musically and dramatically I am laying it out provisionally in three parts, all centred around the St. Wenceslas motive (in the broadest sense of the word, not just the motive of the chant):

First: Prince Wenceslas confronting his Czech homeland. (The Seer, representing pagan myth, will take on greater importance here than in the drama.)

Second: St. Wenceslas confronting the Holy Roman Empire; the well-known defeat of Henry the Fowler.

Third: St. Wenceslas confronting the brotherhood: the defeat of Boleslav's bloody deed. Denunciation of the murder. New humankind, new faith: Let us not perish!

Please write me in the greatest possible detail how you imagine the action as a basis for your composition, so that we understand each other well. I think it must not be called an oratorio at all, and we'll think more about the idea of a mystery play. Perhaps it suffices to call it a legend, but there is enough time for all that. [...] Interest has already been expressed also in a performance somewhere at the Prague Castle—for example in the third courtyard between the castle and the church. This pertained to my play, but I think this new composition could be used for this much more suitably, once it gets established at the National Theatre. And I have a request as a lay person: use the St. Wenceslas chant as much as possible, especially at the end. An analogy to Smetana's use of 'Warriors of God' is still awaited [...]

*The exchange of opinions between Martinů and Lom shows that while the dramatist imagined a celebratory, showpiece work lasting a whole evening, the composer argued for a completely different vision, unlike the traditional understanding of an operatic drama still based on the theatrical and operatic aesthetic of the nineteenth-century. The tragic story of Wenceslas's death as a martyr resisted the use of folk, 'profane' elements and it may have been precisely the tone of pathos in Lom's drama that dissuaded Martinů from an operatic treatment of this material.*

### ⌘ A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

*In early September 1935 the composer contacted the Czech avant-garde director Jindřich Honzl (1894-1935), as he was intrigued by the idea of a musical setting of Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>30</sup> Martinů explains the notion in more detail in his letter from Paris from 3 September 1935: "The way I imagine it is full of beautiful 'painted' flowers, stylised in clean, simple colours, all the way up the set, strewn everywhere, even in the sky, trees, but not a forest, with stars in between, in short, everything mixed together even in the action, to avoid any kind of mood or Stimmung and to bring us into a kind of fantastic and real world, if it can be describe as such. But that is something of an 'aperçu', it would all depend on your conception of how to get it all on the stage in a theatrical sense, and I think that you might be interested in the problem, as it promises tremendous possibilities. The delicate elements would have to be entrusted to a librettist, but if we all put together a new idea of approaching the subject, I think we would not do much harm to Shakespeare. You could choose someone who would put it into verse yourself. Please give the matter some consideration, there is no hurry, and when I come to Prague (probably in December), I hope we could discuss the matter in more detail. It*

---

<sup>30</sup>) See ŠAFRÁNEK, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

intrigues me greatly, and I would like to implement what I have in mind at least once, that is, to create the whole work in collaboration from the very outset, thus to give the thing a uniform direction, spirit, mode of expression before I sit down to the music. I think that the subject matter is worthy enough and that it will interest you as a director as well. If you find the time, please write me your thoughts on the matter, and I would start to ponder it. I also think we could have simultaneous scenes (due to the ensembles) on several different sections of the stage. I imagine the décor to be practically the same the whole time, just placed differently and with different lighting, an opportunity for Francis Muzika. Please let me know what you think.”<sup>31</sup> Honzl's most closely dated extant reply to the composer's correspondence, from Prague, 23 October 1935, only indirectly indicates that the director had probably relinquished the offer of collaboration himself, being overburdened by work and existential worries. In late 1935 and early 1936 Shakespeare's comedy was adapted for the Paris theatres by the French playwright and surrealist poet Georges Neveux (1900-1982), with whom Martinů soon entered into collaboration on another “dreamlike” work of opera, “Julietta, or The Key to Dreams”. It appears that in the end, the dreamy, enigmatic, surrealist atmosphere of Neveux's contemporary play appealed to the composer's aesthetic more than the classic comedy of the old genius.<sup>32</sup>

### ⌘ EVENINGS ON A FARM NEAR DIKANKA

In the Opera Survey published in the thirteenth issue of *Literární noviny* (3 May 1935), the conclusion of Martinů's article, focused on his future plans, includes the first mention of his intention to create a musical setting for the cycle of Ukrainian short stories and fairy tales of the Russian author and playwright Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*: “... With regards to my other plans, I intend to write a ballet, *The Key to Dreams*, and a comic opera, an adaptation of Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*.”<sup>33</sup> Many years later, the composer commented somewhat critically on his unrealised proposal in a letter to Miloš Šafránek from Rome from 16 May 1957: “... I looked through it myself, it is well thought-out but quite off the mark scenically, a muddle, but the subject is nice.”<sup>34</sup>

### □ ACCUSATION AGAINST THE UNKNOWN

In 1953 the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation provided the composer with a scholarship to compose a new opera. Martinů did not have an exact plan for what he would write, but he hoped to find a suitable text for his future work of opera in Europe. He found it in a bookshop in Paris – it was “*Accusation against the Unknown*”, a play by his friend Georges Neveux that piqued his interest. However, after intense preparations of the libretto, including the creation of several scripts, the timing of each scene, and the performing forces, he abandoned the subject, apparently due to the overly conversational character of the original play. Martinů consulted his operatic adaptation of the play with Neveux, and the 40 pages of French commentary in the extant correspondence is a unique testament to the ingenuity with which the composer transformed playscripts into operatic librettos.<sup>35</sup> M. Šafránek summarises the plot of the unfinished torso of the opera thus:

“... Neveux's play, which takes place in Russia circa 1910, has no simple theme. The public prosecutor of a nameless provincial town receives an unusual visit. Three men and one woman come to his flat to file a suit

<sup>31</sup>) Op. cit., pp. 71-72, with an incorrect indication of the date.

<sup>32</sup>) It can therefore only be conjectured whether he would have actually set Shakespeare's work to music if Honzl had accepted the proposal. Neveux's play “*Juliette ou la Clé des Songes*” was premiered in Paris on 7 March 1930 at *Théâtre de l'Avenue*, and its subsequent stagings caused quite a stir among theatregoers. Martinů was introduced to its text later that year, when it was published as a supplement to the May issue of *Bravo*, and he was immediately enamoured of its poetic and lyrical sentiment. The opera *Julietta* was composed in Paris between 17 May 1936 and 24 January 1937; Martinů wrote the Czech libretto for it himself, based on the aforementioned surrealist play by Neveux. It enjoyed a memorable Prague premiere at the National Theatre under the baton of Václav Talich on 16 March 1938, with Martinů also in attendance. Jindřich Honzl was the guest director, and the superb set design was created by the painter, stage designer, and illustrator František Muzika (1900-1974). Cf. ŠAFRÁNEK, op. cit., pp. 73-85 and 251-281. For the access to the quoted letters between Bohuslav Martinů and Jindřich Honzl I am thankful to Mgr. Zita Škořepová-Honzlová, Ph. D.

<sup>33</sup>) Cf. ŠAFRÁNEK, op. cit., p. 72, and pp. 245-250 (Documents Nos. 57 and 58) for the two published versions of the synopsis of Martinů's contemplated opera. The autograph original of the survey contribution is housed in the National Museum – Czech Museum of Music in Prague, in section G, nonmusical records, under Catalogue No. G 11 778. Martinů sent it to the newspaper from Paris on 15 April 1935. Four extant original synopses of unfinished works are now housed in the Municipal Museum – Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, under Catalogue No. PBM Na 51-54.

<sup>34</sup>) Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Archives, Catalogue No. PBM Kmš 855.

<sup>35</sup>) Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, draft of the composer's handwritten script with timing – see Catalogue No. PBM Na 66.

against the Unknown, they want to register their accusation and end their lives by joint suicide. Each of them has a completely different motive. Konstantin Adamovich Kopak lived in poverty and hunger for 20 years but has been unhappy since he won a million roubles in the lottery. He keeps thinking of the millions of starving people that he cannot feed as he can himself. He wakes up in the night and hears the voices of the hungry. He would like to give all the money away, but he does not want to starve like he used to. So he files a suit against God for being unable to sleep and for going hungry for 20 years.

Michel, a student of medicine, and Dora, a young married couple, were separated for two years. Michel was held captive after the war in Manchuria. When they were reunited, they found that their present life differed from their memories, that they had become estranged. They promised God they would love and be faithful to each other unto death. "God had no right to unite us and then separate us. I file a suit," says Michel, "for abuse of trust."<sup>36</sup>

### ⌘ THE SLANDERER

*In Martinů's letters to the poet Miloslav Bureš of 20 April 1956<sup>37</sup> and 22 May 1956<sup>38</sup> he mentioned an idea to adapt a short story by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov as a one-act comic opera.<sup>39</sup> The letter of 20 April identifies the story as *The Slanderer* and briefly describes its content.<sup>40</sup> Martinů's interest in this subject is also documented by a typed synopsis of the libretto with a hand-written annotation by him found among the papers of Bedřich Slavík.<sup>41</sup> Another typescript synopsis and a photocopy of an English edition of this story by Chekhov, which Martinů probably used as his basis, are deposited among materials from the estate of Charlotte Martinů.<sup>42</sup> Martinů was fascinated by this comic story about an embarrassing experience of a calligraphy teacher named Sergey Kapitonich Akhineyev, and it was only his advancing fatal illness that prevented him from realizing his plan for 'a new Bartered Bride'.*

*Bohuslav Martinů worked with every literary subject very independently and creatively, with an understanding for the final theatrical form of the intended ballet or operatic work. The works he did not realize are no exception in this respect. His preserved personal and professional correspondence attests to the breadth of his interests in Czech and worldwide literature and the inspirations he found there, and offers further possibilities for research continuing along the lines of the sampling in the present study.*

---

<sup>36</sup> Cf. ŠAFRÁNEK, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-100, 281-283, and 402-403, which reprints one page from the draft of the script with pretiming for Act I.

<sup>37</sup> Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Catalogue No. PBM KB 6.

<sup>38</sup> ) Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Catalogue No. PBM KB 645.

<sup>39</sup> ) MĀYROVĀ, Kateřina, 'B. Martinů – jeho přátelé, žáci a současníci ve světle korespondence, dochované v pražských institucionálních i privátních fondech' (Bohuslav Martinů—His Friends, Pupils, and Contemporaries in the Light of Correspondence Preserved in Prague Institutional and Private Collections), in *Colloquium Bohuslav Martinů, His Pupils, Friends and Contemporaries*, Brno: Ústav hudební vědy Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity (Institute of Musicology of the College of Liberal Arts of Masaryk University), 1990, pp. 105-11.

<sup>40</sup> ) CHEKHOV, Anton Pavlovich, *Celá Rus (All of Russia) (selected stories)*, 'Klevety' (*The Slanderer*), Prague: Vydavatelstvo Družstevní práce, 1950. This story was first published separately in St. Petersburg in 1883 in the magazine *Oskolki* (No. 46, 12 Nov. 1883, pp. 4-5).

<sup>41</sup> ) *Literary Archive of the Memorial of National Literature in Prague*, Acquisition No. 110/2000. Bedřich Slavík intended to write a book about Miloslav Bureš, for which purpose he borrowed selected materials from Bureš's family; this is how a copy of the synopsis made its way into Slavík's estate.

<sup>42</sup> ) This synopsis of the libretto is catalogued in the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička (in the set of nonmusical autographs of Martinů, Catalogue No. PBM Na 55). Martinů used the English translation by Herman Bernstein, published in *The Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, London, 1901.



*The National Theatre in Prague / Period picture postcard*

### ⌘ ALEXIS ZORBA

*Martinů was first acquainted with the literary works of the Greek writer, poet, playwright, and philosopher Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) in 1954, and he visited the author in person in September of the same year in the French city of Antibes, where the renowned novelist was residing. Before starting work on his last opera, “The Greek Passion”, composed to the libretto he himself had written based on Kazantzakis’ novel “Christ Recrucified”,<sup>43</sup> his attention was caught by another of the author’s works. The simple human wisdom of the Greek peasant Zorba appealed to Martinů’s understanding of the world at the time. His plans for a musical setting of “Zorba the Greek” are documented both in his wife Charlotte’s book “My Life with Bohuslav Martinů”<sup>44</sup> and in the composer’s correspondence with the Brno composer Zdeněk Zouhar (1927-2011)<sup>45</sup> and later also with Martinů’s first biographer, the diplomat Miloš Šafránek (1894-1982).<sup>46</sup> It was Kazantzakis himself who persuaded Martinů to change the subject matter he would use for his composition, and so he set to work intensely on “The Greek Passion”, which has survived in two alternative, London and Zurich versions, which differ in both the text and the music.<sup>47</sup>*

*English Translation: David R. Beveridge and Adam Prentis*

---

<sup>43</sup>) For more on the relationship between Martinů and Kazantzakis, see DOSTÁLOVÁ-BŘEZINA, *op. cit.* (footnote 4).

<sup>44</sup>) See MARTINŮ, Charlotte: *Můj život s Bohuslavem Martinů (My Life with Bohuslav Martinů)*, Editio Supraphon, Praha 1978, p. 100; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Editio Bärenreiter, Praha 2003, pp. 156 and 158.

<sup>45</sup>) See ZOUHAR, Zdeněk – ZOUHAR, Vít: *Milý příteli. Dopisy Bohuslava Martinů Zdeňku Zouharovi/Dear friend: Bohuslav Martinů’s Letters to Zdeněk Zouhar*, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Olomouc 2008, p. 84 – Martinů’s letter to Zouhar from Nice, 7 Oct. 1954 (orig. in Czech): “... Zorba is the best novel I have read in many years.”

<sup>46</sup>) See Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, B. Martinů’s letters to M. Šafránek from Rome, 26 July 1957, Catalogue No. PBM Kmš 857, and from Nice, 04 Nov. 1958, Catalogue No. PBM Kmš 884.

<sup>47</sup>) See DOSTÁLOVÁ-BŘEZINA, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-49.

*J. M. Barrie: Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*

*Illustration from p. 81 of the Czech edition*

*Pražská akciová tiskárna, Prague 1925, in the series Dětská četba. Sbirka knížek pro děti, ed. Milena Jesenská, translated by Jirka Malá, Library of the Museum of Literature, Catalogue No. M 165 h 32*





*Sigismund Bouška: Mythical Monster: Illustration to the novel Windows into the Mist by Jan Havlasa / ink drawing, watercolor, unsigned, undated / Art Collections of the Museum of Literature, Inventory No. 7/94-62*

Paříž 8/9. 1933.

Vážený pane,

Děkuji Vám velice za Vaše dopis i za návrh  
objevit dramata o L. Béclově. Jakkoli se objeďujeme v  
sahatím našem dramatu jako scénického mystéria  
bylo Vaše myšlénky že by mohl být velmi lákavý  
pro Vás. Já bych také nemohl na tuto formu jako  
na slavnostní operu myšlénky opírat jako, možná, že by  
mohl definovat scénické oratorium. Řekli bychom operu  
by mi poměrně předstílel, a myslím že není sou-  
časně ani větší možnost. Přodávatel se s mým ná-  
vrhem, byl bych velmi rád. Bylybych mi poslal Vaše  
dramata, případně s možným datem čtení a já bych  
Vám napsal svůj návrh, kterým byste mohl Vaši vůli  
realizovat. Běs to že by dílo bylo posláno pro scénu.  
Měl bych se hlavně soustředit kreativním postupem  
operu, který by světlé přívětivé měně, volně s  
díla s historickým světem. Proti, opíše odobrnění

LA 57/88/1674

opíše lidové řešení ty naše mnohem více zajímavě a  
mnohem lépe než to : náš návrh.

Co se týče četky knižní, samostatné práce  
je to nám zcela zřejmé, když bychom jen odložili  
na chvíli neproblematičtější práci (s tímto míněním  
například : například : naše - jednotné řešení, což nemůžeme  
jisti dříve vypracovat, když nám zatím ještě problém  
selhání Dobrá. Doklad, jako to se pracuje velmi dobře a  
poměrně rychle, třeba jen podle manuálu práce parti-  
kularů, které dost často objeví se ve skutečnosti pro každého.  
Samostatné hlavní řešení a zejména každý samostatný  
musel definice máti například : s finančními podmín-  
kami souhlasím.

Děkuji za list a za vaše odpovědi a jsem

zřejmě spokojen s tím.

B. Martin

8. 4. 1933.

102, rue de Vanves  
Paris 14<sup>e</sup>

Paris 3/9 1935

Milí přátelé,

ne rovele! Vy si asi budete myslit že nemám nic jiného než psát vám si  
rympteti pro Vás rukou a otáče si Vás ne více dotazovat. Ale mi je a mnou  
si připínat. Sdílejte Vám na vždy pro to comédie delu ať, hlavně mně bít  
radit, kol jsem si občas ne jině ale mně se takhle. Myslím že to je spíše  
spektácle ale kolí myslím že by se to dostal a více prostřední vyžaduje. Ale  
že se Vás uprati ne více jině, jestli že Vás to zajímalo a jak se mnou  
to spolek? Jedná se o Shakespeara "Ten noci svatojánské" Mendelsohn si  
to bude sítel předcházet mně, jako standard, ab myslím že se proto-  
tomu hořej vyfial. Ale myslím že by: sítel více jině, jind než  
on, a sítel že se o to pokusit. Nic že se ovšem mně přehangrament  
odpovědi pro mně bít problém. To by Vám prosím poděti ať  
bude sítel více stonáček. Za první do jakej míry je mně náhled  
~~o Shakespeara volá? Vlastně náhled více sítel více, mně plin~~  
to že by Vás sítel, hlavně že se poděti. Sítel by mně "mně mně"  
a kol myslím že by se mně vyfial. Já sám že hlavně klad  
Dívka ne to rympteti se sítel atmosféru, stimmung, kromě náhled  
myšlen sítel se konkrétní věci jak formy kol hudby a sítel ostaknit,  
ne ovšem realomus ale kolí se sentimentálně, myšlen vyžadit Dívka  
calon povstí jak se vyžadit občas, kol hudby a spíše, hudbě.  
Mně že se sítel jakej: realite on. Já by si to předtěl jak  
hvoří "rympteti" hvoří, slyšovaní a sítel jednoduší bavaš,  
pro celí oční si náhled, sítel více sítel i po mně, stimmung ale ne  
les, hvoří, mně kromě sítel více sítel Dívka, i sítel  
sítel se sítel jakej kolí náhled a stimmung a oční se  
jakej: fantastické ale mně kolí kolí mně mně ovsté. To  
je ovšem jenom jakej: "rympteti" mně že náhled se mně koncept  
jak postavit si se mně sítel mně a myslím že by Vás tento  
problém náhled, mně sítel občas mně mně.



Pomluva.

Kapitonich ucitel kaligrafie vdava dnes svoji dceru natalii za profesora historie a geografie.  
Tanec, zpev a hudba. Cisnici najmuti pro tento okamzik behaji jako blazni v cernem fraku a bieleu kravatu, jsou z Clubu.

O pulnoci, Akhinejev se jde podivat do kuchyne, zdali je vse pripravene pro suppe. Kuchyn je plna keure a vune od smazenych hus, kacen a jinych veci, vse je pripravene na stolech. Kucharka Marfa, tlusta a s cervenym oblacem beha a vse rovna.

Ukaz mi lososa, Marfusko, rika Akhinejev a mne si ruce. "Jaka vune pekna. Mchl bych snisti celou kuchyn. Ukaz mi lososa, rychle.

Marfa zvedne pomasteny papir z tucneho lososa, s kapraty, olivami a mrkvi. Akhinejev je v nadseni, sehne se a voni k lososu a pri tom mlaskne zni to jako prasknuti bicem. Chvili se obdivuje a znovu mlaskne a luskne prsty.

Aj, aj. To vypada jako spravna hubicka. Kdo pak se to tam liba? rekne ve vedlejsim pokoji asistent Vankin. Otevre dveře do kuchyne strci tam hlavu. Kdo pak se to zde liba? Oh, oh. Moc pekne, nadherne, Sergej sam a Marficka. "ekny stary pan, se zenskejma se libat duverne.

Vubec jsem nikoho nelibal, co to pevidasmy blazne. (Rika Akhinejev v rezoacich) Ja jen tak lusknul prsty radosti nad tim ohromnym lososem.

Te muzete rikat nekomu jinemu. Vsak vim co jsem slysel. (Rika Vankin se sirekym usmevem a odejde do salonu.

Te dabel vi co z tohohle muze vzniknout, (mysli Akhinejev) on ted pujde a bude to kazdemu vypravovat, ten ulicnik. Vsak vime jak pomluvy vznikaji a jak budu zkompromitovan pred celym mestem, ten surevec. Te takhle nesmi zustat.

Opatrne vejde do salonu a vidi jak Vankin septa neco do ucha jeho neteri ktera se smeje. "Oba jsou nad pianem"

Akhinejev: Uz je to zde. To ji pevida o mne, cert ho vezmi. Muj Boze neco se musi podniknout takhle to nesmi zustat. Ale co? Jak to zaridit /? Surevec to je, ulicnik.  
"krabe se na hlave a premysli.  
Mezi tim hoste vejdu z jidelny. Zpev a rozhovor. gratulace neveste.

Akhinejev vezme stranou souseda Padekoije. Uz na to prisel co delat. "Prave jsem byl v kuchyni a mame tam lososa takhle velikeho, pres dva metry predstavte si, to je rozkes, hahahaha. Ano... a mimechodem, skoro bych byl zapomnel. To je uplna anekdota o tom lososu. "redstavte si, koukam na lososa a radosti si lusknu rty, tak pikantni to bylo a zrovna v tom okamziku ten blazen Vankin vejde a pevida : ha ha ha. a pevida: Aa, ah ah aah, keho pak zde libate oh oh, Marficku predstavte si, kuchtu. skaredou kuchtu, jako opice vypada a on si myslí ze ja se s ni libam. Podivny chlapec, ne?

Dko je podivny? "rimisi se do rozmluvy Tarantulev.

Akhinejev: Ale mluvime o Vankinsovi. Ja jsem byl v kuchyni a s radosti nad lososem, dva metry, dovedet si te predstavit a najednou vejde ten podivin ..... (Vyklada zase historii)

Je to k smichu. Vidite mne libat Narfu? Radeji bych psa polibil. Uvidi jineho souseda se zenou a jde k nim.

Akhinejev, k nim duverne: "Mluvíli jsme o Vankinovi, vlezl do kuchyně a povídá. A a j, tak vy se zde líbáte, haha. . Byl opilý a nebe se mu něco zdálo. Já a líbat Marfu, rádeji bych kácačku políbil a pak jsem ze naty, ty blázne. Zkratka mne sesmesnil.

Kdo vás sesmesnil, sousede, se ptá katecheta. Vankin, říkám vám, (Akhinejev říká) A to je celá historie, stojím v kuchyni a Vankin strčí hlavu do dveří a povídá: a j, a j.... (a tak dále)

Hosté odcházejí, Akhinejev je spokojen. "Tak teď jim to můžeš říci, budou se smát smát do obličeje, Nemluv nesmysle, pitomče, my už víme jak to bylo tak s tím přestan.

Akhinejev vypije na raz dva sklenice vodky a jde do jídelny za hosty.

---

Ale, já to smůla. Člověk mluví a pan Bůh mluví. Čert provedl svoji a ani to chytráctví Akhinejeva mu v tom nezabránilo. Za týden po této události ve středu.....

Prisel k němu ředitel školy. "Podívejte se, Sergeji Kapitanovici, nezlóbe se ale moje povinnost je vám to říci. Zdá se a lidé o tom mluví že máte intimní poměr se ženskou, dokonce s vaší kucharkou. Ani to moje věc ale... jste učitel, no zkratka, líbejte se jak chcete ale ne tak otevřeně, prosím vás, jste přece pedagog, nejste?

Akhinejev zůstal jako solný sloup, vše se mu v hlavě točí. Sedne ke stolu kde mu jeho žena přinese oběd ale nemá chuť k jídlu.

Žena se ho ptá: "rec nejis. Na co myslis? Styska se ti po Marfusse, vid. ty Kupide zamilovaný. Já vím všechno, ty Mahomede, lidé mi vše povedeli otevřeli mi oči, ty barbare. A dá mu facku. Odejde.

Vankin klepe na dveře. Akhinejev: "Aha dobře že jsi přišel, ty neznábohu, pomlouváči. Pokryl jsi mě blátem před celým světem. Proč jsi mne pomluvil?

Vankin: "Ja/ pomluvil? Koho? Co jste si to vymyslel?

Akhinejev: "A kdo to řekl všem sousedům že jsem líbal Marfu? Nebyl jsi to ty? To jsi nebyl ty, vid ty vrahu.

Vankin mrká očima je jak ve videní. "Ja jsem nikomu nic nerekla, vůbec jsem na to zapomněla. A t mne Bůh trestá, at ztratím zrak a at umru, jestli jsem nekomu jediné slovo o tom řekl komukoliv. At nemám ani dům ani domov. To jsem nebyl já kdo to reznal.

Akhinejev mu uveril. " Ale kdo to byl? Kdo? Ptám se vás, kdo to byl?

PBM Na 55

Bohuslav Martinů: The typewritten synopsis of the libretto to the planned comic opera according to A. P. Chekhov's short story "The Slanderer". Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Catalogue No. PBM Na 55a-b.



P. v. 7/9/57

Il faut trouver moyen de faire 3 acts.

Action se passe de l'après-midi jusqu'à la nuit.  
Minuit sonne. Possible prolonge le serouement  
jusqu'à morning avec le soleil se levant and  
chœur chantant en s'éloignant ?

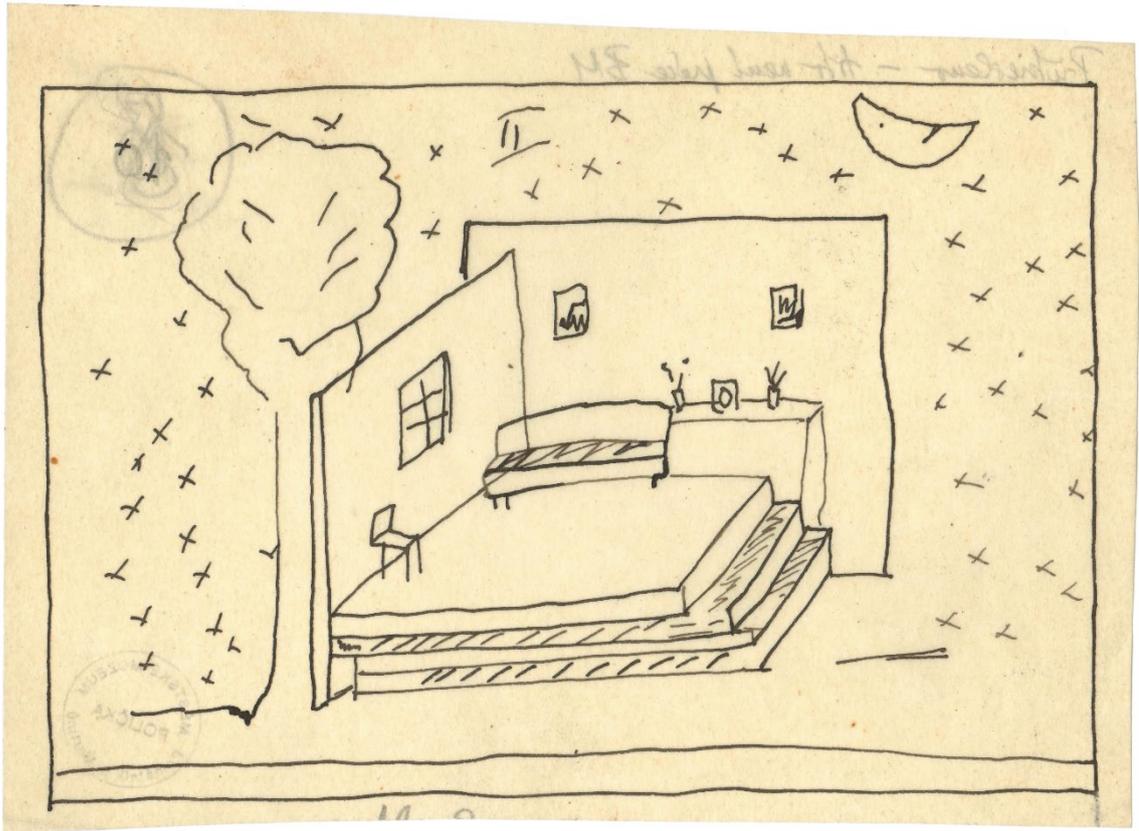
Scène in the theater. Trouver text. Procureur  
" on the street la nuit " " "  
à placer.

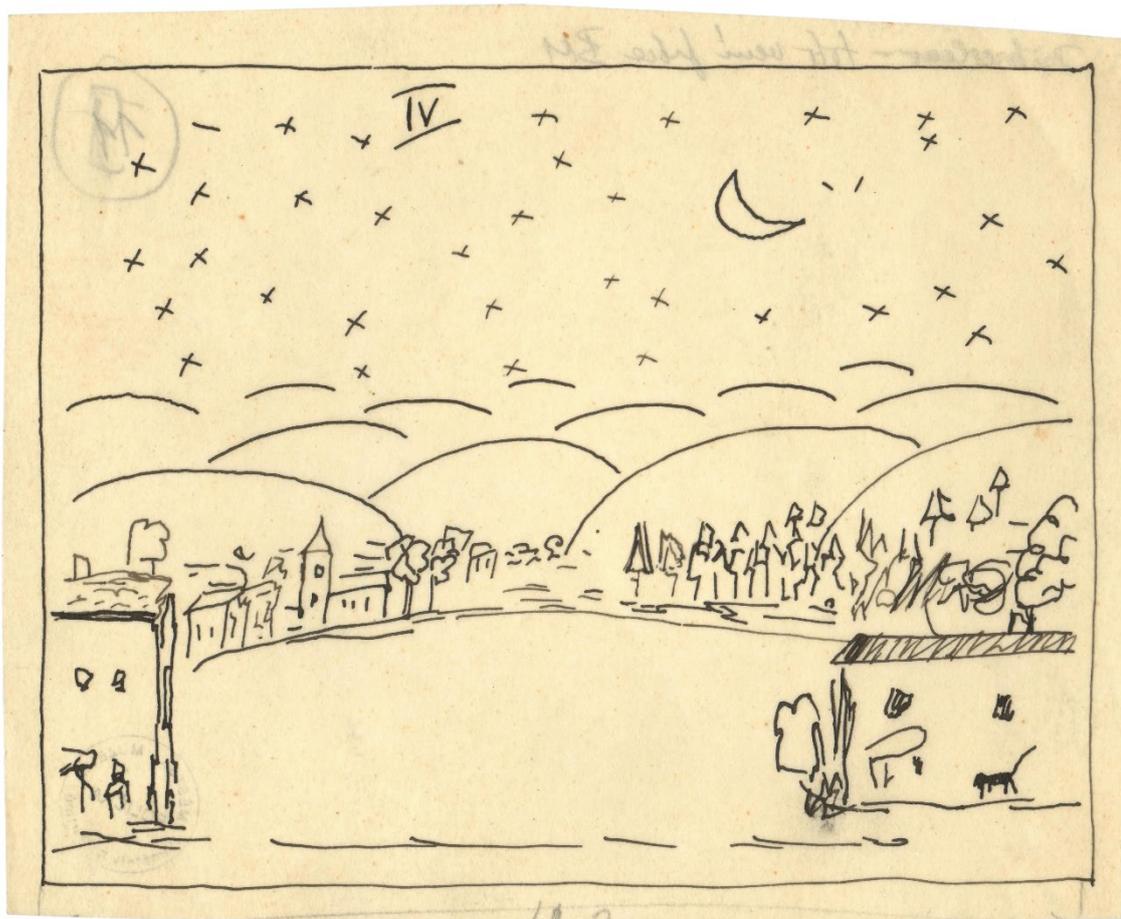
Les effect de la lumière, la scène doit être toujours  
assez éclairé pas dans l'ombre, excepte la scène  
p. 206. when la lumière s'assombrit and les  
visage serient gris. (Préparation à prison)  
(Licht éteindre la lumière ?) Voir seulement la flamme  
du gaz ?

Régler la lumière pour toutes les scènes.  
(Reflectors ?)

Il faut avoir action in 1 acte. Serait-il possible de  
représente le tableau on the screen behind. ?

Bohuslav Martinů: first page of the draft script of the opera "Accusation against the Unknown" according to the eponymous play by Georges Neveux – autograph in French. Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Catalogue No. PBM Na 66.





*Bohuslav Martinů: Drawings of the stage for the planned opera according to Gogol's "Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka" – autograph. Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Catalogue No. PBM Na 52.*

Nice Nov.4.58.

Mily Milosi:

Sestup ze sve vyse Olympijske k nam ubohym smrtelninuk zde na teto zemi. Ty to vzdy vezmes s velmi vysoka a chces mne ted zkuplovat s P; Valerym, který je ovsem na docela opacne strane ode mne a nikdy nas dva nedostanes dohromady. Take to co jsem ti psal o nic nedelani, nesmis over simplified, jedna se jen o jakousi vzdalenost, detachment a je to ovsem spise psychologicka zalezitost nez musikalni a ostatne stara historie, viz Orientalni nauky atd.

Nic jsem nedelal pro musicologa nybrz pro jeho pani. (On je myslim sekretarem Intern, )

⟨ Otazku Kazan jsem ti uz myslim dost vysvetlil, pritahl mne Zorba ovsem nejvice a i Pasija, o nichz jsem v te dobe nemel predstavu ze by sly stahnout do opery, (same case Dostojevsky) Nemel jsem rovnez predstavu ze by K. mel jiny novy roman jenom jsem DOUFAL ze ma, v cemz jsem se nezklamal, jenom ze soucasne nic nebylo prelozeno a tedy nic platno mi to nebylo. Mel novy roman který ted uz vysel v prekladu Liberte ou la mort, vysel vloni a neco jako Sodoma a comorha, popsal mi to ale sam byl pro Pasije a rekl abych se pokusil udelat libretto, tedy tak to zaclo. Sam mi na otazky neodpovidas, ptal jsem se te kdo je to ten Griffith? (prekladatel), rikal jsi ze je to nas znamy. ???

Ve Finale pouziju ty ctyri posledni sloky. Jestli budou docela na zaveru to dosud nevim, mozna ze skoncim tim sborem odchazejicich refugee (za scenou). Doufam ze to dokoncim jeste zde. >

Byli jsme v Baselu na koncerte (Sextett upraveny pro smucce. B, l tam tez Mihalovici a Monique a samozrejme C. Beck, tak byla cela parta z Ecole de Paris pohromade, to jest co z ni zbyva. Vratili jsme se hned zase sem ale uz tu zacina byti chladno a tak nevim zdali vydrzime do konce listopaadu

PBM\_Kms\_884

Co se Fanousova soudu tyce mel pravdu ze jsem mel zablacenou pelerinu  
ale o tom ostatnim to jest ze mi bylo vsechno jedno, mam urcite pochyby  
a nevim jak k tomu dosel, na tom nezalezi, ja jsem si totiz totez myslel  
o nem, tak vidis jak je tezke psat biografie. Doufam ze to doma daji  
do poradku smirnou cestou, ackoliv ten pprobhem je komplikovanejsi nez  
si mysli. Chyba je na nas vseh, ze nikdo z nasi familie nemel deti, vyjma  
Klimsovyh ovsem.

Bohuzel jsem uztl prilezitosti a odvezl vsechny knihy do Baselu, tak ted  
jsou tam.

Co se hudebnin tyce mam tezkou situaci, ja tech vytisku nedostanu na  
kopy a obycejne mi zbude jeden vytisk pro mne, nekdy ani ten ne.

Nejsem docela jist ze jsem nekomu pposlal Bilgameshe, spise si to  
objednali sami z Univ. Tak mne neobvinuj.

Ted to vis vse a muzes jiti k Eve na obed s mymi pozdravy.

Tvuj

Bohuslav



PBM Kms 884

PBM\_Kms\_884

*Example of the letter from Bohuslav Martinů to Miloš Šafránek, sent from Nice on 4 Nov. 1958, in which he mentions the novels of Nikos Kazantzakis that he is most interested in setting to music and where he notes that the choice of "Christ Recrucified" was suggested by Kazantzakis himself – typescript. Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička, Catalogue No. PBM Kms 884.*