

# Bohuslav Martinů NEWSLETTER

Vol. V, No. 1, January – March 2005

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Martinů Festival in Prague, 2004**

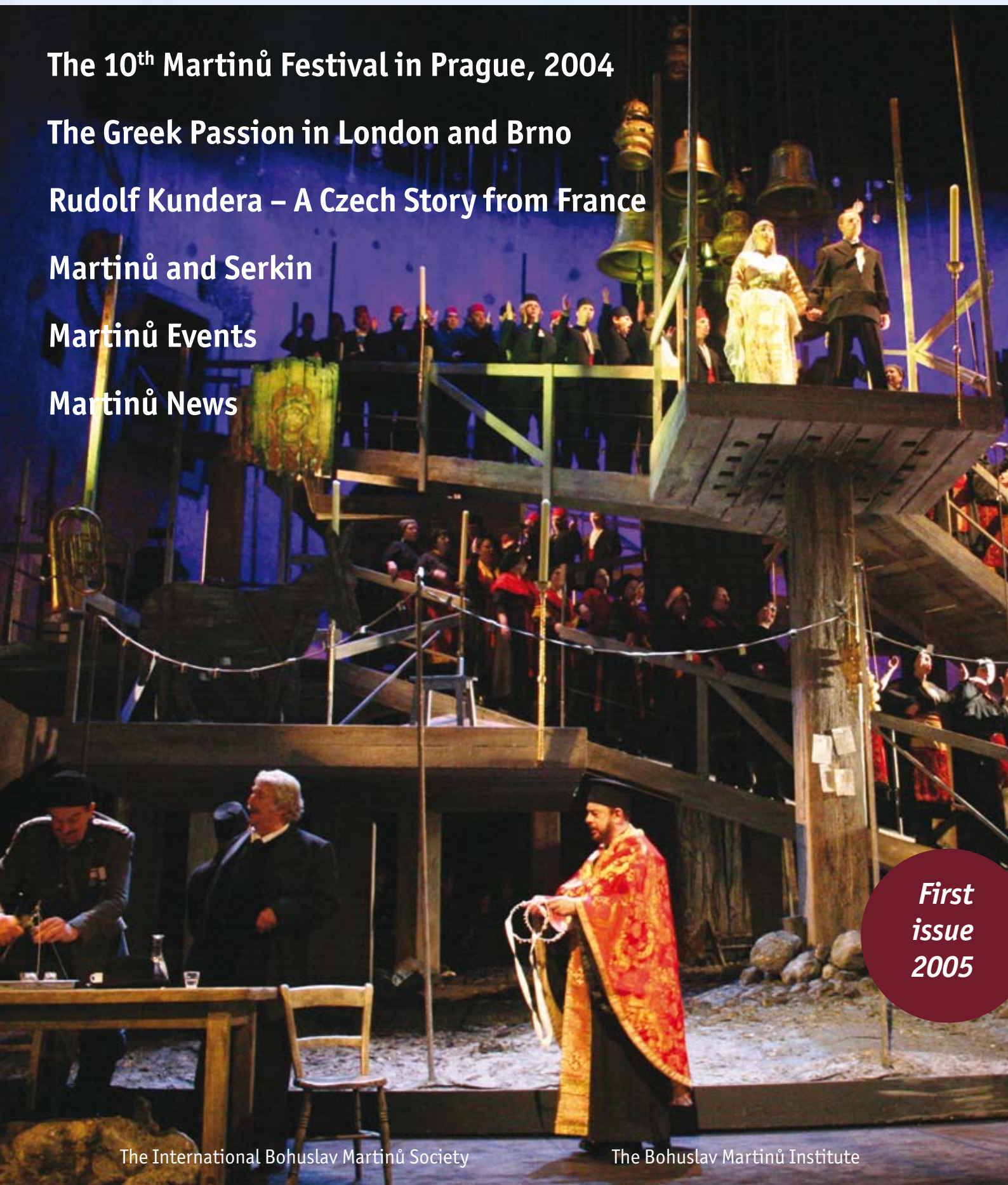
**The Greek Passion in London and Brno**

**Rudolf Kundera – A Czech Story from France**

**Martinů and Serkin**

**Martinů Events**

**Martinů News**



*First  
issue  
2005*

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The Greek Passion performance  
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### Municipal Museum Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička offers

a permanent exhibition dedicated to the life and work of B. Martinů, a guided tour to Martinů's birthplace in the St. James church tower and for registered researchers archive materials concerning Martinů. Further information available at [www.muzeum.policka.net](http://www.muzeum.policka.net) and [www.policka-mesto.cz](http://www.policka-mesto.cz)



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## Dear readers,

The first issue of 2005 is dedicated mainly to Martinů festivals and events connected with the year of Czech Music 2004. The article About Janáček closes our series of Martinů's texts on Czech composers; in the next issues we would like to focus on Martinů's friends and contemporaries and researches of correspondence.

Any comments and contributions will be welcome!

Zoja Seyčková, Jindra Jilečková - Editors

## Members' Diary

### Dear friends,

in this text, I would like to introduce the Martinů Choir (Pěvecké sdružení Martinů) from Třinec that joined the IBMS last year.

In 1955, a small women's choir was founded and it soon grew into a large mixed choir under the baton of artistic director Jindřich Sedlák. In 1957, prof. Václav Štývar took Mr. Sedlák's place and stayed with the choir for almost 50 years. The ensemble studied and performed works by Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček, Křička; cantatas by Fibich, Martinů, Händel, Liszt, Tučapský and other great authors. In 1965, the choir decided to take the name of Bohuslav Martinů, for during the years of performing his works, it became closely attached to the composer. The Martinů Choir Třinec even received (in 1970) an official permission from Charlotte Martinů to use Martinů's name. It decided to promote Martinů's work in times, when he was neglected in his own country because of his residence in the west.

The ensemble's activities crossed the borders of the republic many years ago; it had performed in Germany, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, France, Estonia, Latvia, Italy, Austria and received many evaluations at home as well as abroad.

Recently, the choir is directed by Mgr. Daniela Slawińska, a graduate of the conservatory in Ostrava; the repertoire includes - except of Martinů's works - music of the renaissance, baroque, classicism and romanticism.

This year, the Martinů Choir from Třinec is going to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

**On this occasion, I would like to ask you, dear readers, for any information about a possibility to perform; it would be an honour (and a kind of celebration of our anniversary) to establish new musical connections and give more concerts anywhere, where people are interested in listening to good music. I believe our cooperation could be fruitful and the results pleasing for both sides. Please, e-mail at [anna.hankusova@seznam.cz](mailto:anna.hankusova@seznam.cz).**

Sincerely,  
Anna Hankusová, Pěvecké sdružení Martinů, Třinec

## Announcements

# Missing manuscript wanted

Appeal to readers – the manuscript of

## Tre Ricercari

Dear all,

we are looking for Martinů's autograph of Tre Ricercari and would really appreciate any information about it. The only traces we have are the title page in the Library of Congress, Washington, and sketches of this work deposited in Moravské Zemské Muzeum in Brno. If you know anything that could help us, please, let us know at the BM Institute.

## Ladies and Gentlemen:

I founded, on Oct 1, 2004, a free online discussion group on YahooGroups named „Bohuslav Martinů Discussion Group“. We are growing fast and include conductors, composers and soloists, as well as musicologists and ordinary music lovers. We would like to promote the music of BM and find other fans of his music to join with us. We would also like to promote all respected institutes and societies that honour the memory and music of BM. Please visit us and join at: <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/BohuslavMartinuDiscussion/>  
Also please spread the word! Tell us how we can mutually benefit each other in our common cause.

Thank you!  
Lawrence J. Lemer, [ljwlpb@yahoo.com](mailto:ljwlpb@yahoo.com)

## The third meeting of the Editorial Board

for the Complete Critical Edition of the Works of Bohuslav Martinů is going to take place on

### 14 - 15 May 2005

at the Bohuslav Martinů Institute. The meeting will not be open to the public. The topic of the discussion will be the form of the first volume of the complete edition.  
(Lucie Berná)

# The Tenth Bohuslav

This year's Festival, though being on a more modest scale than some previous ones, owing to financial problems, nevertheless maintained the usual high level of quality, and even yielded for me two major discoveries.

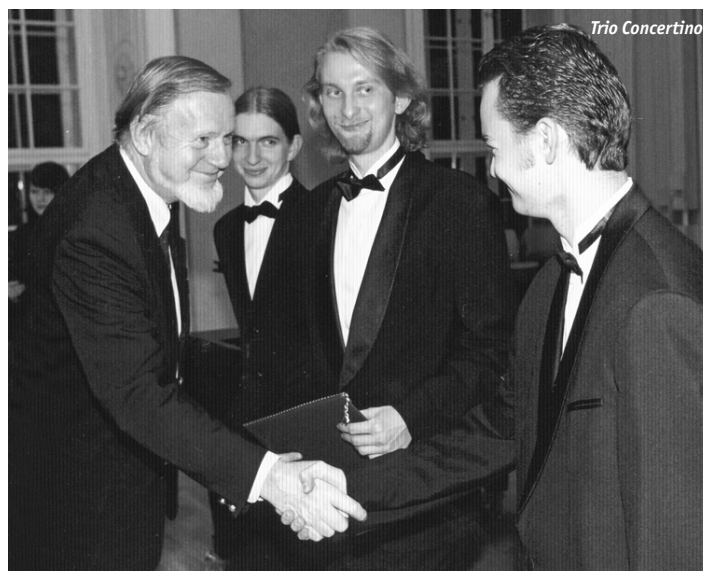
Prague, 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>

The first took place at the opening concert, a slightly belated homage to Viktor Kalabis for his eightieth birthday (which was actually celebrated last year). The young Penguin Quartet, although founded ten years ago when its members were still teenager students, has already made a brilliant national and international career, but still continues studying. I heard these outstanding young artists for the first time performing the Third of Kalabis's seven String Quartets (1977), one of his very best pieces, whose three movements feature his highest qualities of concision, stylistic and thematic unity and elegance, not precluding expressive intensity and momentum. The composer got an enthusiastic ovation and acknowledged that he could not have dreamt of a better performance. The "Penguins" showed immaculate intonation, amazing tonal variety, perfectly clear articulation and an exceptional sense of architecture, all at the service of vital but never exaggerated expression. They confirmed these outstanding qualities in Martinů's rarely played and definitely underrated Third Quartet (H.183), the most concise and possibly most experimental and "advanced" of his seven numbered Quartets, the sharp-witted percussive sonorities of its outer movements enhanced by a slow movement of unexpected emotional intensity, sometimes even looking forward to the more celebrated Fifth Quartet, H. 268. The work ideally suits the "Penguins'" qualities and thus it was a joy to hear it again the following day when they repeated it as winners of this year's Martinů Foundation's competition.

As to the opening concert, its first part had featured the excellent harpsichordist Monika Knoblochová performing Martinů's late Sonata for Cembalo, (H.368) and Kalabis's fairly recent and outstanding Preludio, Aria and Toccata: The Adventures of Sisyphus, composed, like all his works for the instrument, for his wife Zuzana Růžicková.

In the aforementioned Concert of the Laureates, the Penguin Quartet dominated head and shoulders, the second prize winner in the String Quar-

tet category, the Icarus Quartet from Brno clearly not playing in the same league. Their performance of Martinů's Second Quartet, H. 150, suffered from unclear intonation and thus from a lack of tonal clarity and transparency, from permanent fortissimos and expressive violence totally alien to the composer's actual inspiration. Maybe it would suit Shostakovich, but certainly not Martinů, so it is hard to understand that this young group should have won the prize for the best Martinů performance, which should clearly have gone to the Penguins. From the two awarded Piano Trios, the Trio Concertino (first prize) gave a very good performance of Beethoven's c minor Trio (one does not see the point, within a competition devoted to Martinů's music), whereas the Ester Trio, performing his Bergerettes (H.275) convinced rather by the individual qualities of its members



(especially the cellist Dominika Hošková) than by its as yet imperfect balance (the pianist Ester Godovská being mostly too loud).

The third concert featured the young and brilliant Smetana Trio, playing Martinů's Cinq Pièces brèves (Trio No. 1), H.136, and Trio Nr.2 in d minor, H.327,

in excellent performances, especially the cellist Jan Páleníček (the celebrated and lamented pianist Josef's son), who gave an outstanding rendering of Martinů's Third Sonata for Cello and Piano, H. 340, again slightly marred by too loud a piano (but the acoustics of the Martinů Hall have some problems, to be sure!). However, the most interesting part of the evening was

the participation of mezzo-soprano Olga Černá singing largely unknown songs by Martinů. Her rather beautiful tone colour and expressive qualities were at their best in the Czech songs, especially in the two lovely and moving Ballads to Folk Poems, H.228, but also in two miniatures from 1939, A Love Carol, H. 259 and A Wish for Mother, H. 279 bis. But her performance (a world premiere!) of the youthful three Goethe Lieder, H.94, (1915), interesting but still fairly unpersonal pieces, suffered from faulty German pronunciation, and nor was her French any better in the pretty Christmas Songs; *H 184 bis* and in Saltimbanques (another world premiere), the third and only surviving of the Three Apollinaire Songs, H.197 from 1930. In this very short and witty miniature, of which she alone possesses a copy, I could not judge whether the rather problematic rhythmic accentuation was due to the composer or to the performance, for I was unable to examine the still unpublished score.

The final concert of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra should have been conducted by Claus Peter Flor, who had to be replaced at the last minute out of health reasons by a very young Czech conductor in his mid-twenties, a

# Bohuslav Martinů Festival

## 8 December, 2004



Penguin Quartet

in a difficult programme which he managed to take over without any changes, including the Suite from Janáček's Cunning little Vixen, the lovely Serenade for Winds by Dvořák and two major and very contrasting late Martinů masterpieces. Isabelle van Keulen gave a most beautiful rendering of the Rhapsody-Concerto for Viola, H.337, a deeply moving utterance of utmost simplicity and deep emotional power, the very opposite of a showy display piece and yet one of the most searching works ever written for the instrument. And the Festival ended with an electrifying performance of Martinů's flamboyant symphonic testament, the 1957 – 58 The Parables, H.367, one of his most advanced and complex scores, of redoubtable difficulty both for the players and the conductor, probably a reason for its fairly infrequent performances. But it is absolutely the equal of the more celebrated Fantaisies Symphoniques, H. 343, and here Jakub Hruša was able to fully display his outstanding talent. His style is never overblown or exaggerated, and yet he allows the music to unfold its full expressive scope. Moreover, he gives the very free and apparently rhapsodic (but in reality supremely coherent and integrated) structure, the final climax of Martinů's ultimate "phantasy" style, its full formal unity and continuity. For

Isabelle van Keulen  
and Jakub Hruša



disciple and protégé of Jiří Bělohlávek, Jakub Hruša, who turned out to be the Festival's second major discovery in this, his first appearance at the head of the Philharmonic and even of a major symphony orchestra. He scored a triumph which should definitely launch a great career, displaying the most outstanding technical mastery and musical qualities

his first full exposure to a Philharmonic subscription audience, he could not have chosen a more testing work, and his triumph was fully deserved. The Penguin String Quartet and conductor Jakub Hruša henceforth take their place at the very forefront of young Czech performers.

Harry Halbreich

Olga Černá



The concert on 8 December in the 2004 Martinů Festival included songs by Martinů as rendered by Olga Černá. After her performance we asked her a few questions.

• In this concert you sang Martinů's 'Saltimbanques' – the only preserved song from the cycle Three Songs to Poems of Apollinaire, H. 197, from 1930. You also gave the world premiere of his early Songs to Texts by Goethe, H. 94, from 1915. How did it feel to give the premiere of this work? And how did you like these songs?

I regret very much that not all of Martinů's songs have survived. On the other hand I'm glad in the case of 'Saltimbanques' (The Comedians) that we at least have a torso of this cycle. Apollinaire was one of Martinů's favourite authors during the time he lived in Paris. He didn't conjure up 'Automne malade' (Sickly Autumn) until two years later, so for now it remains a mystery what the music of the first two songs in the cycle was like. We know their titles, their dedicatee, and their translator. But where should we look for them? It's a great adventure.

Although this was the first performance of the Goethe songs, I didn't have the feeling that I was doing something extraordinary. Performance of unknown works, in this case from the composer's early period, often reveals the creative growth of a beginning genius. Anyway the idea came from the Martinů Institute.

• What was the atmosphere like during the concert? What is it like working with pianist Jitka Čechová?

For me the atmosphere during the concert was unusual. It was recorded by Czech Radio, and premiering pieces for the purposes of a recording sometimes means not being equally communicative to the audience. Jitka Čechová and I have recorded many unknown songs by Martinů which will be released this spring on the Naxos label. We recorded them in Trhový Štěpánov under quite adverse conditions.

It's wonderful working with Jitka. She's always interested in every detail. I mean she's interested in the circumstances of the origin of the work, has a sense for deciphering illegible places in the autograph and is consistent about it, and has a feeling for diction (which is quite important in singing) as well as the intensity of the overall performance. I think we have similar desires and strivings in this regard, which both of us have acquired

independently from performing in small ensembles.

• How did you come to perform music by Martinů? What is it about it that attracted you?

From Ervin Schulhoff to Martinů is not such a big step. My horizons have broadened from Czech folk song and treatments thereof to German and French influences. Moreover, these two jazz propagators had something in common in their fates in life, and I was attracted by the variety of genres in their outputs. I have come to appreciate Martinů for his simplicity, depth, and humour.

• How is Martinů received outside the Czech Republic?

I think musicians love him and non-musicians are still testing him a little. Now nothing will be to his detriment. Not even his first attempts!

• How often do you sing Martinů abroad, and how do people there respond?

I have included his songs in my programs several times. The Czech ones are mostly folk songs, not demanding for the listeners; the audience reacts spontaneously to their emotional charge. The French songs are colourful in their sound, and his childlike playing with a million verses requires a bit of comedy in the rendition. German is rather an exception, but he composed German numbers – eins, zwei, drei – into one Czech nursery rhyme with Czech phonetic spelling: ajne, cvaje, traje, staveli jsme maje, na svatého Frantiska, priletela jeptíska (One, two, three, we put up the maypole; on St. Francis Day a nun flew in). In one concert in Germany they even recognised that an encore titled 'Hadanka' (Riddle) had to do with a tomcat. They shouted at us 'Kater Mikes'.

• Are your musician colleagues abroad also interested in Martinů?

Yes. I have the feeling that the major challenge of learning to sing in Czech doesn't bother them. They're interested in our culture.

• Thank you for the interview.

Žoza Seyčková



Czech Philharmonic Orchestra with  
Isabelle van Keulen and Jakub Hruša

# The Bohuslav Martinů Festival 2004 in Prague

Prague, 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2004

This year's tenth annual Bohuslav Martinů Festival in Prague offered interesting programming and very good performances as always. The opening concert on St. Nicholas Day was a tribute to Viktor Kalabis, who served for many years as president of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation. His *Přihody Sisyfovy* (The Adventures of Sisyphus) and String Quartet No. 3 were suitably complemented by works of Martinů: the Sonata for Harpsichord, H. 368 and the String Quartet No. 3, H. 183. The exemplary performances were in the hands of the young: harpsichordist Monika Knoblochová and the Penguin Quartet. The next evening, on 7 December, was devoted to prize-winners from the foundation's contest. The chamber concert on 8 December, consisting entirely of music by Martinů, was entrusted to members of the Smetana Trio and mezzo-soprano Olga Černá. Their program was dominated by two trios – the Piano Trio No. 2, H. 327 with its wonderful slow movement, and the strikingly-pulsating Piano Trio No. 1, H. 193. Cellist Jan Páleníček and his wife, pianist Jitka Čechová, also performed the Cello Sonata No. 3, H. 340; more than the cellist I was fascinated by the outstanding performance of the pianist, who is indisputably the leading artist in the Smetana Trio at the present time. Ms. Černá took advantage of her chance to make a striking presentation in little gems from Martinů's song output, including for example three miniature Christmas Songs, H. 184 bis, *Saltimbanques*, H. 197 (The Comedians), and *Songs to Texts by Goethe*, H. 94, betting correctly on little-known repertoire. But she failed to convince me that she could succeed as a singer if she were to be compared with others in an international forum.

Luboš Stehlík

## A Jubilee Celebration of B. Martinů

Luboš Stehlík, Petr Veber



Viktor Kalabis



Monika Knoblochová

The German conductor Claus Peter Flor fell ill and shuffled the cards a week before the concert, not only for the organisers of the Bohuslav Martinů Festival but also for Jakub Hruša. This twenty-three-year-old assistant to Mácal with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra suddenly had a chance

for which others wait ten years, to prove his abilities in a substitution. He seized the opportunity boldly on 9 December and stood up to the task fully. He led the orchestra with fine gestures and with surety, and was sufficiently confident and prepared. Under his baton the music

flowed within the proper boundaries and was quite convincing. Hruša's performance suggested that both his talent and his training are excellent, and he is indisputably a great hope – perhaps the greatest – among the young generation of Czech conductors. He was not sparing with dynamics. Thus Talich's suite from Janáček's *Přihody lišky Bystroušky* (The Cunning Little Vixen) – an opera with which Hruša has authentic experience in the theatre – sang out with great fervour as it should. Two mature, late compositions by Bohuslav Martinů – *The Parables*, H. 367 and his *Rhapsody-Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*, H. 337 – depicted an execution with bold dynamic layout but also showed much lyricism.

The Philharmonic was almost extravagant that evening in pouring out intense, beautiful sound. In so doing it supported violist Isabelle van Keulen, who gave Martinů's score a unique charge through her intelligent, sonorous, and gentle tone and her smooth technique. In this assemblage only Dvořák's wind serenade, with its small group of instruments and non-symphonic sound, seemed to have come from somewhere else – a departure perhaps too strikingly unusual – but it was played in a cultivated and balanced manner. The placement of Martinů in the company of other Czech composers, as compared with previous years of the festival when the Philharmonic played only his music, was an accommodating gesture toward the audience. At the same time this programming conception showed that Martinů can be and actually is an absolutely normal part of the repertoire.

Petr Veber

Reprinted from the  
Czech musical magazine *Harmonie*,  
(2005/1).

**The Greek Passion,**  
September 2004,  
Covent Garden, London

The Greek Passion, an opera written for (but originally rejected by) the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1957, was long overdue for performance in Britain's leading opera house. Finally premiered in 2000, last September/October saw the revival of this work with six virtually sold-out performances (this is a review from 25 September 2004). It is hard to imagine a better-qualified conductor for this work than Charles Mackerras who was first to suggest reconstruction of the original 'London' version done by Aleš Březina. With orchestral playing as expert and passionate

exceptional with his dramatic account of the priest reaching almost biblical proportions. When at the end, with almost sanctity itself personified, he led the crowd of respondent refugees through the audience (where they unexpectedly emerged from the darkness of the stalls) no-one could doubt his contribution. This stressed the depth of the work, which in a less careful production could easily be forced to the brink of bathos.

Promising Juanita Lascarr as Lenio was another leading light in the cast. Her performance was a marvel of sonic and technical brilliance while still finding room for the subtleties of Martinů's spine-tingly lyrical moments. I only wished that she sang Kateřina. Lascarr would certainly

austere but powerful symbol of renewal. Peter Sidhom as priest Frigorie and Timothy Robinson as Yannakos also lived up to the challenge as well as other smaller roles. With such accomplished performers, the arching lines took on organic shape and flow and with Mackerras's propensity for colour it all fitted the serenity of Martinů's conception rather brilliantly. The production team - director David Pountney, designer Stefanos Lazaridis, costumes Marie-Jeanne Lecca, lights Davy Cunningham - hardly put a foot wrong. Pountney's direction was on the simple but effective side stressing the terseness of the work. One's spirits rose as the curtain went up; the rotating stage offered a constant feast of effusively beautiful architecture:



From Brno Performance  
Willard W. White as Fotis

# The Greek Passion

## Performances in London and Brno

as this, the mood was set more or less from the opening bars of the introduction. This was followed by the spirited chorus of the villagers with precursory sounding church bells, a concept which made one increasingly aware of how much thought Mackerras put into this demanding score. His tempos which felt natural - one of the irresistible characteristics of his conducting finesse - were a sheer delight. Every detail was meticulously woven into the music that had a clear sense of direction. A highly sensitive but never rushed collaboration between the orchestra, soloists and chorus, exquisite harp solos that disturbed the tonal surface like a guilty conscience, awe-inspiring spirituality and darker-than-ever sonorities that reflected every change of mood and scenery typified this. Mackerras, together with a thrilling account of Willard White's Fotis, were the driving forces of this production. White's vocal poignancy was

be more truthful and vocally convincing in this role than Marie McLaughlin who, at least it seemed to me, concentrated more on her looks than her potentially gracious role. This sadly sapped the music of some of its momentum. Another pivotal figure, Christopher Ventris as Manolios, certainly did not lack in technique, his flexible tenor voice was assured and mellow, but lacked White's bindingness and as a result his approach seemed a bit broad and flaccid. The moment when Manolios was murdered, the stage was suddenly flooded with white light - an

ladders, various staircases spinning to the heights of the theatre tower interspersed by icons of Christ painted on wood as we know them from orthodox churches, a toy-like wooden donkey and sheep, as well as a massive contrast of refugee costumes against the colourful and winsome garments of church procession. All in all, this was a performance of great power, a genuine operatic jewel.

Vanda Prochazka  
(Harmonie, November 2004)

### From the reviews of The Greek Passion

London, September 2004:

17. 9. 2004,  
Financial Times (London) p. 15, Arts & Style • "The Greek Passion Royal Opera House, London" • By Andrew Clark  
Martinů's The Greek Passion is described here as a "richly musicked theatrical parable" and "masterpiece of moral self-examination" that accurately portrays the extremes of human nature. Clark enthusiastically praised the production, particularly the set design, lighting and the performances of the "flawless ensemble", led by Christopher Ventris (as Manolios) and conductor Charles Mackerras.



She found Martinů's word setting to be "lumpish" and the score "fragmented". Still, she had good things to say about Christopher Ventris's performance as Manolios, the orchestra and the "gratifying plethora" of folk elements in the production.

17. 9. 2004,  
The Times (London), Features • "The Greek Passion" • By Robert Thicknesse  
Though impressed by the strong cast and Charles Mackerras' interpretation of Martinů's extraordinary music, Thicknesse was unimpressed by the overall production, stating the over-the-top drama becomes uninvolved with the help of uninteresting blocking and little change in setting, however stunning it may be.

19. 9. 2004,  
Independent on Sunday (London) p. 26, First Edition: Features • "Classical: Beneath the Sugar Something Glams" • By Anna Picard  
Picard found The Greek Passion to be a "drab opera" of "unwonderful" music—minus the first three minutes of Act III.

19. 9. 2004,  
Sunday Telegraph (London) p. 8, Review: The Art • "Villagers at Play" • By Michael Kennedy

The Greek Passion is described as a "very fine piece" (though the reviewer does not think so highly of some of Martinů's other works) that makes "a stimulating if uneven theatrical experience". Kennedy speaks highly of the production, as well as of the performances given by all the performers conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras.

19. 9. 2004,  
The Observer p. 11, Review Pages • "Review: Classical: No home for the huddled masses" • By Ed Vulliamy  
Vulliamy calls The Greek Passion a masterpiece that is "one of art's most powerful allegories", where Martinů's score shows his "distinctive, rich Czech lyricism" and mastery of realism. Especially noted here are the powerful performances of Willard White (Fotis) and Christopher Ventris (Manolios).

20. 9. 2004,  
The Independent (London) p. 20, Features • "Opera: Heaven and Earth Show" • By Edward Seckerson  
Seckerson calls The Greek Passion a "people's opera" that is "very moving" and full of "fantastical, whirring textures". He marvels at how the "decidedly filmic" aspects of the opera are conveyed through Stefano Lazaridis' magnificent set design and how superb the entire Royal Opera ensemble is, both principals and chorus.

Prepared by Alicia Kim,  
volunteer at BM Institute

### From the reviews of The Greek Passion

Brno, January 2005:

.. It seems like Brno have already experienced the climax of their season. While last January/February was dedicated to Janáček, it was now Martinů's turn. The Greek Passion was the show that closed the Czech Music 2004 project. Lots of scenes were genuinely moving. The story left an incredibly strong impression, individual roles were real and acted like in a theatre. The open ending evoked a real feeling of dejection and a need for catharsis. Indeed, a remarkable theatrical experience!

Simona Polcarová, Rovnost, 18 January 2005  
Translated by Vanda Prochazka

...London's Royal Opera House performance of The Greek Passion taught Brno a few useful lessons. These were possibly more important for the domestic operatic life than the fact that it was the Czech premiere of the 'London' version.

Lesson one: The renowned designer Stefanos Lazaridis gave a lecture on fantasy. He showed what it means when the action on the stage is genuinely alive, with real acting that inspires..

Lesson two: The Czech audiences could finally see the 'standard' level of the opera performers abroad. Despite the fact that most of the cast were not exactly famous their stage and vocal abilities greatly outshone our soloists, including the National Theatre in Prague.

Lesson three: The performance showed that even Czech theatre can rise to a challenge. Under the baton of German-Danish conductor, Christian von Gehren, the orchestra played with great discipline and propensity for colour, and the chorus showed that more can be done than just standing around and gazing.

Věra Drápelová, Mladá fronta Dnes, 18 January 2005  
Translated by Vanda Prochazka

## North American Debut Tour Of Kinsky Trio Prague

The young Czech piano trio formerly known as the Martinů Collegium Praga is now called the Kinsky Trio Prague, in honour of the Czech aristocratic family who were also patrons of Beethoven. Its members, violinist Lucie Sedláková Hůlová, cellist Martin Sedlák and pianist Vladimír Strnad announced the name change just prior to their arrival in the U.S. in mid-October for the Trios North American debut tour. With all the bookings, programs, and publicity materials for the tour long completed, it was too late for any name change to be used during this tour so the trio performed in USA and Canada as Martinů Collegium Praga.

Their U.S. tour started on the 26th of October in Memphis, Tennessee with a capacity audience in the Harris Concert Hall of the Memphis University. The tour continued in Jackson, Mississippi, at Millsaps College Bell Concert Series and was followed by several concerts in Florida. Other successful concerts were held in Macon, Georgia, Greenville, South Carolina, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Birmingham, Alabama. Besides these 12 concerts the Trio also prepared and presented several educational programs for students at local Universities which highlighted the connections of the Czech composers Dvořák and Martinů to the USA.

On November 21, at the end of the tour the Kinsky Trio Prague performed for the first time under its new name in Toronto at „Nocturnes at Masaryktown“ and for the Toronto Mozart Society on November 24.

The North American tour of Kinsky Trio Prague/ Martinů Collegium Praga featured mostly Czech programs and coincided with the worldwide celebration of the „Year of Czech Music.“ The American audience appreciated that programs also included in U.S. lesser played works such as Martinů's Bergerettes and Trio nr. 2 in d minor.

All concerts on the Trios tour were a great success and they enjoyed enthusiastic audiences and standing ovations everywhere.

The Oak Ridger (Tennessee) wrote that the trio „stands out like a rare gem among fine jewels...Definitive performances made the whole affair seem like an insiders' view of the moods and personality of the Czechs“; „the players were role models in ensemble playing“.

The Birmingham News praised the now Kinsky Trio's „remarkable precision“ in Martinů's Bergerettes, and called their performance of Dvořák's Trio in f minor „a joy to hear in this lucid reading“.

On 26 and 27 November 2004 the Divadlo Komedie (Comedy Theatre) hosted a project titled 'Twice Martinů'. Its creators—members of an association called the Prague Pocket Opera—deserve credit for another interesting presentation in the field of 'chamber opera', in that they decided to perform two operas by Bohuslav Martinů in a single evening: *Les larmes du couteau*, H. 169 (*Tears of a Knife*) and *Ariane*, H. 370 (*Ariadne*). These works formed an interesting programming unit – both are short operas lasting no more than forty-five minutes, with relatively small casts and instrumentation. *Les larmes du couteau* is one of Martinů's first operas, while *Ariane* was the last opera he began. The coherence of the evening was also assured by the fact that the operas were performed *attacca* without an intermission. The idea of a program conceived in this way, with participation by young performers, promised much – though not all expectations were fulfilled.



'Twice

# Martinů'

## *in the* Comedy

*Les larmes du couteau* is a little work born in the atmosphere of the 1920s in Paris. Martinů chose a bizarre text by Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes about an amazing relationship between a mother and her daughter, about love both for a dead man hanging on a noose and for Satan, and about changes of identity. All of this – seemingly nonsensical and 'dadaist' – proves to be bearable in the opera. The musical numbers, actually rather traditional formally, are coloured with an accordion, a banjo, and a tenor saxophone, for example, in addition to the classical instruments. The singers, of which there are only three – in this case Andrea Priečovská, Marika Žáková and Josef Moravec, with the male singer having to perform more than one part – managed their roles well in terms of both singing and acting. The simple staging idea with movable multi-purpose panels that can be used in both operas is not bad in and of itself, and is certainly a suitable solution to the problem of limited finances. Various coloured panels, supplemented by 'surrealistic' props such as an iron skeleton of a rocking horse, a bicycle, and a chair, formed the set of the first opera. The result did not seem innovative in any

way but rather somewhat impromptu; however the staging of the first part did maintain its style.

In the second opera – *Ariane* – the set was very simple, filled out with film projections on the walls. Here, too, the idea in itself could work, because musically we find ourselves at once in a completely different world – noble and heroic, coming from ancient times and the Baroque simultaneously. The story from ancient Greece as treated by Georges Neveux can be portrayed even with minimal staging means. In Neveux's version and probably in this staging as well, the ancient myth is shifted to the background: the main motif is the relation between *Ariane* and the mysterious *Theseus* and his identification with the *Minotaur*. Despite all the efforts and the perhaps good intentions of the staggers, however, the effect of the set (including the projections), the costumes, and the stage direction for me was as though we were watching an old operatic production by Czechoslovak

Television from the 1980s. This assessment may be a little harsh, and perhaps unjust, but from young artists I would expect a little more than hard, realistic depiction of the content of the sung text. Here, too, the singers sang well, but *Irena Houkalová* bit off more than she could chew in the very challenging coloratura role of *Ariane*.

What is more than praiseworthy in the whole project and what I consider to be its maximum contribution is the effort to present works which otherwise we don't have much of a chance to see on the stage. Praise goes also to the Comedy Theatre, which does not resist projects outside the traditional scope of a non-musical theatre and on the contrary places a lot of stock in its multi-genre programming. Unfortunately the theatrical space was not entirely suitable for opera. Room for the orchestra was created in place of the first several rows of seats, and thus the placement itself made the orchestral sound somewhat too loud. The orchestra



Photo: © Dorothea Bylica

Les larmes du couteau

# Theatre

consisted of members of the Berg Chamber Orchestra, who played excellently under the guidance of conductor Marko Ivanović.

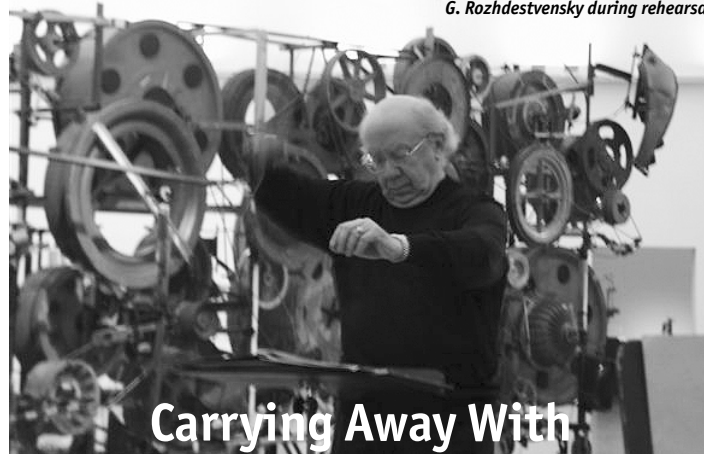
Eva Velická

The initiative and civic association called the Prague Pocket Opera appeared suddenly on the capital city's cultural scene almost as a miracle, inconspicuously and not aggressively, without great pressure and without advertisement. Nevertheless its opening project 'Dvakrát Martinů' (Twice Martinů), which was not a part of the Bohuslav Martinů Festival but was recommended by it, had twice a full hall. A team assembled specially for this occasion presented the one-act operas *Les larmes du couteau* (Tears of a Knife) and *Ariane* (Ariadne) in the Divadlo Komedie (Comedy Theatre) on 26 and 27 November 2004. Evidently there is really a lack of chamber opera in Prague and a demand for it, so the people who are expressing and realising their artistic urges in this

new project apparently struck the right chord. Both operas were given essentially as a unit, and the staging was appealingly young, not contrived, and well-mastered. This space, untraditional for opera, helped induce a suitable atmosphere and influenced both the overall approach and the resulting feeling, which was one of informality, directness, lack of affectation, and of course very small distance between the auditorium and the stage – a situation in which the staggers mostly strove to find advantages. Supporting the project musically were conductor Marko Ivanović and the Berg Chamber Orchestra; they successfully mastered both the score in the first half of the evening, more bizarre and thinner as regards number of instruments, and the more massively – orchestrated and more classically – conceived late work in the second half. Stage director Daniel Balatka succeeded in escaping from the type of portrayal typical of student and studio productions, especially in *Ariane*, moving in the direction of appropriate stylisation, elegance, and fanciful additions. Somewhat surer and better than Andrea Priečhodská, Marika Žáková and Josef Moravec, who sang and acted rather well in *Les larmes du couteau*, were the (more experienced) soloists in *Ariane* – Irena Houkalová, Václav Šibera, and František Zahradníček. The Prague Pocket Opera showed invention and perhaps also the potential to become a viable addition to our cultural life. Its intention is to appear 'on the scene' probably only once in a while. Perhaps it will show a fortunate hand in choosing suitable works again next time, as it did on these occasions.

Petr Veber (reprinted from the *Harmonie* magazine)

G. Rozhdestvensky during rehearsal



Carrying Away With

# Modern Music

A success for the International Music Festival B. Martinů

A success for the International Music Festival B. Martinů in Basel, 2004: the 10th music festival B. Martinů has come to a successful end with the guest performance of the world famous conductor Gennady Rozhdestvensky along with the Ensemble Basilisk in the Jean Tinguely Museum. It is the former Czech president Václav Havel who has taken over the patronage for the 10th anniversary in 2005, and Vladimír Ashkenazy and Heinz Holliger will be conducting.

The International Music Festival B. Martinů has already taken place for the 9th time. It is with great enthusiasm that pianist and director of the festival Robert Kolinsky has established the festival that has become an important asset in Basel musical scene. It is unnecessary to be scared of the idea of contact with modern classical music, as the opening concert in the Stadtcasino showed. The guest composer James Macmillan, who was present, has created a precious piece of art with his piano quintet "For Max", a superb jewel that will stay on for a long time. With its quiet pace it left room for quite a number of associations to musical history. B. Martinů's works interpreted by the renowned Emperor Quartet and Robert Kolinsky pointed out the creative spectrum of the late composer who passed away in Liestal in 1959.

## Martinů as jazz musician and film composer

The classical musician Marko Letonja appeared as jazz pianist with jazzy compositions by Martinů thus contributing essentially to the extraordinary success of the Martinů festival, as did conductor Gennady Rozhdestvensky – of Russian origin – together with the Ensemble Basilisk and the spectacular production of "The Strangler".

It is a fact that Martinů's music is quite unusual. With its wide range the festival made some astounding Martinů discoveries, amongst which a promotion film for "Baťa".

TV speaker and advertising expert Frank Baumann led through "The Film Night" with promotion films and trailers by Martinů. Film music composer Niki Reiser awarded with an Oscar came as a special guest and made his imprint on the event. The opening night as well as the jazz concert and the Rozhdestvensky guest performance were sold out and were much to the taste of the public. These events dedicated to Martinů and to other composers of the 20th century were a huge success both artistically and from the point of view of organisation.

## 2005: anniversary

There are many surprises awaiting the public this year. As this year's festival will stand under the sign of the 10th anniversary of the B. Martinů International Music Festival, it will bring quite a number of important artists to Basel. The beginning will be marked by a symphony performed by the Sinfonieorchester Basel under the direction of Vladimír Ashkenazy, and will be concluded by the oboist Heinz Holliger. The former Czech president Václav Havel under whose patronage the activities are has been invited to give a speech.

[www.martinu.ch](http://www.martinu.ch)

*Painter's Studio,  
R. Kundera, 1951*

On 9 January 2005 the painter Rudolf Kundera died in the town of Cassis in the south of France. He came from a famous family of Brno, but unlike his two relatives – the novelist Milan and the poet Ludvík – he was neither celebrated nor damned in Bohemia or Moravia, let alone described in encyclopaedias or textbooks. Not because he didn't belong in them but more because he didn't have time for that. And also because freedom and free creation were more important for him than anything else.

'Painting? That's my trade, and only then my pleasure. I didn't know how to do anything else, and so I had no choice but to draw and paint from dawn to dusk,' said Rudolf Kundera. The French know mainly his portraits of Paul Valéry, the pianist Clara Haskil, the cellist Pablo Casals, the Mauriac family, and Man Ray; they also buy his landscapes and harbours. And what about the Czechs? Few in our country know that Rudolf Kundera painted a large mural for the Hussite Church in Tuřany near Brno, that he worked with Alfons Mucha, and that he was a friend of Mucha's son Jiří as well as Bohuslav Martinů, Vítězslava Kaprálová, Rudolf Firkušný, Rafael Kubelík, and other Czech artists. He was perhaps the last of that very strong and creative generation.

He always believed in and bet on chance. And it was chance that took him to the studio of Alfons Mucha. In the 1920s the master chose him at the School of Decorative Arts in Brno to help him restore his grandiose *Slovancké epopeje* (Slavonic Epopee). Later Kundera was admitted to the academy in Prague, but he still went frequently to the villa of the Muchas in the Bubeneč district where he helped paint base coats on large canvasses and became friends with the Mucha children: Jaroslava and the younger Jiří.

The opportunity of a lifetime came in 1936 when Kundera received a Prix de Rome, awarding him a study residence in Italy. It was with Alfons Mucha that he travelled around that country, criss-crossing the cradle of European painting. And three years later Mucha's son convinced him to move to Paris: 'Come have a look at the Louvre, it will change your life, he wrote to me. And the old man added his own persuasion: the Muchas needed to send some warm underwear to their prodigal son who was

wandering around the world. So my fate was decided by warm underwear. It saved me from the fascists,' Kundera laughed when he recalled that time.

He arrived in the City on the Seine in March 1939, and he and Jiří Mucha moved into a studio on the rue Val-de-Grace. Alfons Mucha had worked and lived there many years earlier and now his son invited the master's friends – whose portraits Kundera painted. This was the beginning of his collection of famous likenesses.

The young Mucha and Kundera spent the



*Martinů and Kundera  
in France, ©PBM*

last months of peace with Czech friends – with B. Martinů, Vítězslava Kaprálová, Hugo Haas, Rudolf Firkušný, and other artists who had also found their first refuge from the Nazis in France. Kundera often reminisced about that strange time when war was knocking at the door but Paris lived as though in one big carnival. 'We had a good time, enjoyed life, and travelled often to

# Rudolf Kundera or A Czech



*Martinů with friends (R. Kundera,  
J. Mucha, R. Firkušný and V. Kaprálová)  
in Vieux Moulin, 1939/40, ©PBM*

the country house of the Martinůs, but we also constantly worked and created. Bohuš Martinů composed his *Polní mše*, H. 279 (Field Mass) for Czechoslovak volunteers who were staying in Agde. The text was written by Jirka Mucha, and the work was sung for the first time in France by Ota Kraus.'

During that time Kundera also made portraits of all his friends – he sketched Mucha, Firkušný, and Kaprálová with several precise strokes of the pencil showing their typical gestures or postures, but for Martinů he made regular portraits 'with pencil and also in oil. We spent whole hours together in silence. It took a long time before he began talking. But then he was very open and kind. Often he even helped me translate letters into French, with which language I was still struggling at the time. And I found out from others – not from him – that he was helping Kupka. That painter was living in poverty then and Bohuš, though not exactly well off himself, supported him however he could.'

It was at that time that Kundera made

his two best portraits of the composer, and Martinů for his part composed a little piece for the painter called *Prání mamince*, H. 279 bis (A Wish for Mother). In 1939 Kundera's mother turned fifty and Martinů wrote a musical congratulation for her 'from afar' to a text by Jiří Mucha. 'This little piece had its premiere on 14 December 1939 in our flat in Passy, where we later also celebrated Christmas. Ruda Firkušný played the piano and Ota Kraus sang. Then I sent the manuscript to my mother in Brno,' Kundera recalled.

When Hitler attacked France all of Paris fled to the south. Most Czechs headed for Marseille, which became the waiting station for freedom – i.e., for an American visa. The Martinůs waited for it as did also both Rudolfs – Firkušný and Kundera. Those two passed time during the long weeks with concerts Firkušný gave in houses of wealthy citizens of Marseille, where Kundera – of course – made portraits of those personages. In the end, however, chance was again decisive for his life: 'Marguerite Fournier once invited us to Cassis. I'll never forget

Photos and paintings reprinted  
from the book „Rendez-vous  
with Rudolf Kundera“  
by Irena Jirků, 1999

# ra n Story from France

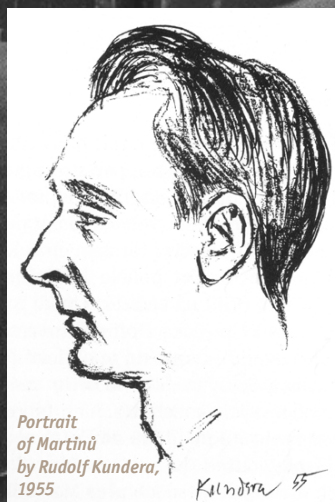
that morning: I saw the cliff of Cap Canaille, the blue sea, and there was nothing to debate. What would I paint in America?’

In Cassis he rented a studio and immediately set about painting. When the police came looking for emigrants and foreigners without documents he closed himself in there for whole days. And painted. Nevertheless he wound up in prison several times. When he was threatened with deportation, meaning a concentration camp, he was helped by Countess Lilly Pastré. He hid in her chateau in Montredon along with other artists, refugees from all over Europe – Casals, Haskil, and many others – during the last months of the war.

After the war Kundera returned home for a time, and in 1946 he mounted a major exhibition in Prague in the building called ‘U Topičů’ which all Prague came to see. Two canvasses were purchased by Hana Benešová. But then came the communist take-over in February 1948, and Kundera headed back for the south of France. ‘I wanted to be finally free once and for all.’ For the next fifty years he lived in Aix-en-Provence and by the old harbour in Marseille, but he often returned to Cassis. There he painted, rested, and looked after children. And Czech friends, now famous, came to visit him. Martinů and his wife Charlotte spent their vacations there regularly until the composer’s death. Jiří Mucha came

on visits from Prague, and from America Rudolf Firkušný. Kundera himself did not suffer from any excess of patriotism. He had no appetite to mount exhibitions at home under the communist regime, but travelled there regularly as a French citizen: ‘Prague has a special light. I need to make the rounds of my favourite places and chat with friends; I go to Moravia to visit my family,’ he told me years ago. He grew accustomed to regular gatherings with Jiří Mucha and Josef Páleníček. And in the early 1990s he was also at the concert of the Prague Spring Festival were Rudolf Firkušný and Rafael Kubelík appeared again after many years abroad. Then the three friends went to the Hotel Paříž for duck. And they did not hide their emotions.

Over the course of fifty years Kundera exhibited his works almost all over the world, but not at home. Not until 1996 did his friends and relatives in Brno mount a magnificent retrospective. Then came exhibitions of posters (1998) and drawings (2002); the city of Brno awarded him honorary citizenship, Czech Television made a documentary film about him, and with support from the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation and Jiří Wald a book of his memoirs was published in 1999. In it he of course reminisced – often with his characteristic sense of humour – primarily about friends of his who had already departed. About the



Portrait  
of Martinů  
by Rudolf Kundera,  
1955

strong and creative generation of which he was the last witness. With his death this interesting chapter in the history of Czech culture has come to an end.

But actually it has not ended – it can never end. We still have all the wonderful compositions, recordings, and books – and the drawings and paintings of Rudolf Kundera.

Irena Jirků

## Rudolf Kundera

Born 9 March 1911 in Tuřany near Brno, died 9 January 2005 in Cassis

- 1 From 1930 to 1936 he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, in the studio of Professor Franz Thiele.
- 2 For his large painting *The Light of Truth* he received a Prix de Rome, a prize from the Italian Royal Academy, and a stipend for a study residence in Italy.
- 3 During the war he lived in Paris, then later in the south of France where he settled permanently in 1948.
- 4 He exhibited his works almost all over the world; his first independent exhibitions in his home country were in Brno in 1937 and in Prague in 1946; further such opportunities did not arise until fifty years later.
- 5 Paintings and drawings by Rudolf Kundera are owned today by collectors, museums, and galleries both in France and in the Czech Republic. The *Light of Truth* hangs permanently in a church in Tuřany.

Painter's Studio,  
R. Kundera, 1951



Rudolf Serkin

## Erik Entwistle

Among the many distinguished performing artists who worked closely with Martinů, Rudolf Serkin was one of the most prominent, and the collaboration between Serkin and Martinů on the piano sonata stands out as an especially interesting chapter in the lives of both men. The few surviving correspondences relevant to this subject offer a glimpse into the relationship between composer and pianist and raise issues worthy of further exploration.

Considering the rather different musical milieus inhabited by Martinů and Serkin, theirs was at least a serendipitous artistic union. One could begin with their respective childhoods, which were geographically close but worlds apart culturally, and find fertile ground for comparisons between their very different paths in life. Indeed, although both artists grew up in Bohemia, life for Martinů in Polička, on the eastern extreme of the region bordering Moravia, could hardly have been more contrasted with Serkin's experiences as a boy of Jewish descent living in the Sudetenland town of Eger (now Cheb). Their later respective sojourns in France and Germany reflected a further divergence. But as exiles in post World War II America, both musicians found common ground, and a unique collaboration was born.

Martinů began work on the piano Sonata, H. 350 on November 26, 1954 and the piece was finished three weeks later on December 16th. We learn incidentally from a letter home to his family in Polička dated December 5, 1954 that Martinů had promised to write something for Serkin some years ago, and was only now fulfilling that pledge (See Bohuslav Martinů, *Dopisy domů*, ed. Iša Popelka).

One day before the sonata's completion, Martinů sent a letter from his residence in Nice to the Serkin family home in Brattleboro, Vermont, unsure of the pianist's current whereabouts. He also expressed doubt, in typical broken English, about Serkin's continued interest in the new, overdue work:

# Martinů & Serkin

*My sonata is near the end and I do not know what to do with, where to send it. I have no address of Rudy and I am not sure if he still would like to have it and if he would have the opportunity to play it, so I am troubled and also am especially if he will like it, it is really extremely difficult to add something good to his tremendous repertory of masterpieces, so I am uneasy to come with my Sonata, you know how one could feel and thats exactly how I feel. Will you see him these days or is he on the opposite side of the earth. Tell him if you do not like it that I will not be vexed and if he tell frankly that it is not what he imagines and what he need really for his purpose and if it wouldn't give him a real pleasure to play and to like it so it would certainly be better to tell me et je ne serai pas facher du tout.*

The letter comes across as extremely modest and deferential, even for Martinů, especially considering that he was at the height of his powers when composing the sonata and arguably at the apogee of his career. Even so, Martinů apparently sensed that this undertaking would be something out of the ordinary for Serkin and took pains not to come across as presumptuous.

Fortunately for Martinů, Serkin did decide to learn the sonata, but it was not until two and a half years later, during the summer of 1957, that Serkin visited Martinů in Basel, Switzerland to play and discuss the work. According to Serkin's pupil Richard Goode (as related in the recent excellent biography *Rudolf Serkin: A Life*, by Stephen Lehmann and Marion Faber), Martinů was not entirely pleased with Serkin's "extraordinarily conscientious" interpretation and had quite a few suggestions to offer. The pianist's personal copy of the manuscript, now housed at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, provides testimony to this meeting with its interpretive suggestions, as well as changes in the dynamic markings and even notation, written in Martinů's hand.

A month after Serkin's performance of the sonata in Carnegie Hall on December 4, 1957 (in a program also consisting of Bach's Italian Concerto, impromptus by Schubert, and Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" sonata), Martinů typed a letter of congratulations to Serkin, this time in French:

*Cher Serkin:*

*J'étais tres heureux d'apprendre la nouvelle que vous avez donne la Sonata sur votre program de New York. J'ai recu beaucoup des lettres que c'était un success. Je vous remercie et je m'excuse de la faire avec tellement du retard. Nous esperons que nous vous verrons en Europe et je serai ravi d'entendre la Sonata un jour. Justement je corrige les epreuves et je vois que c'est terriblement difficile. Ce sera edite chez Max Eschig a Paris et je vous enverrai la copie. Nous sommes encore a Basel avec nos amis Sachers et des autres bon amis que vous connaissez et nous sommes tres bien pour le moment avant que les troubles avec les passports commence-rons. Vous viendrai certainement a Basel pendant cette nouvelles annee et nous nous rejoignons de vous revoir. Nous vous souhaitons le meilleur pour la Nouvelle Annee.*

*Sincerement  
Votre (signed B Martinů)*

Translation to English:

Dear Serkin,

I was very happy to hear the news that you performed the sonata on your New York program. I have received many letters indicating that it was a success. I thank you and please excuse me for belatedly doing so. We hope that we will see you in Europe and I would be delighted to hear the Sonata one day. Indeed, I am correcting the proofs and I am finding it terribly difficult. It will be published by Max Eschig in Paris and I will send you a copy.

We are again in Basel with our friends the Sachers and with other good friends that you know and we are well for the moment before the troubles with the passports begin.

Certainly you will come to Basel during the New Year and we would be overjoyed to see you again.

We wish you the best for the New Year.

Sincerely yours...

This is all of the correspondence from Martinů contained in the Serkin family archives; one also finds a notice of the composer's death sent by Charlotte and

in



her later acknowledgement of the condolences she received from the Serkin family. However, Serkin did fortunately retain copies of some of his own correspondence; nothing is addressed to Martinů, but there are two documents that pertain directly to the composer. The first is a hand-written draft of a letter of recommendation on behalf of Martinů, who had applied for a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation to support work on his new opera, *Mirandolina*. The actual letter that Serkin mailed to the Foundation is dated December 20, 1952, and the wording is almost identical to that of the draft. The fact that this letter was written two years before the composition of the sonata confirms that Serkin and Martinů's friendship preceded their collaboration on the sonata:

*Bohuslav Martinů is one of the outstanding contemporary composers, a true master with inspiration; although I do not know any of his operas, I feel that Mr. Martinů if given the opportunity will make an important contribution by writing an opera, knowing his extraordinary creative ability, penetrating intellect and absolute artistic integrity. I consider it an honor and privilege to say so about this great musician. Be permitted to express my admiration for this great artist.*

The second document is a letter written in response to a query from the now deceased British musicologist Michael Henderson. Henderson, gathering material in the mid-1970s for a biography on Martinů, asked Serkin for his recollections of the composer. Serkin's response, dated February 25, 1976, reads as follows:

Dec. 16, 1954

My sonata 's near the end and I do not know what to do with, where to send it. I have no address of Rudy and I am not sure if he still would like to have it and if he would have the opportunity to play it, so I am troubled and also am especially if he will like it, it is really extremely difficult to add something good to his tremendous repository of masterpieces, so I am uneasy to come with my Sonata, you know how one could feel and that's exactly how I feel. Will you see him these days or is he on the opposite side of the earth.

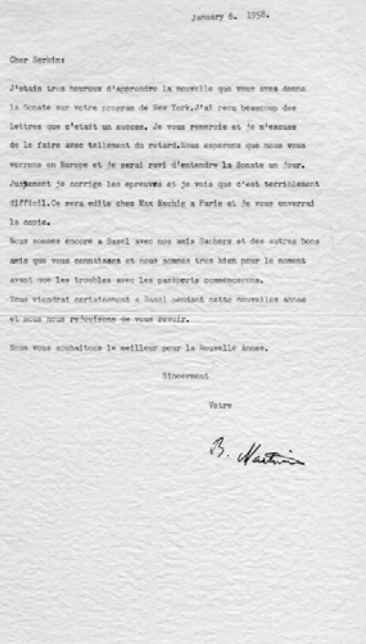
Tell him if you do not like it that I will not be vexed and if he tell frankly that it is not what he imagines and what he need really for his purpose and if it wouldn't give him a real pleasure to play and to like it so it would certainly be better to tell me et je ne serai pas fâcher du tout.

Martine  
17 bis Boulevard Montparnasse  
Nice - A. M.  
France

Dear Mr. Henderson,  
Thank you for your kind and important letter. I am more than interested in the fact that you are going to write a biography of Bohuslav Martinů. Yes, I had the honor and privilege to know him quite well during his years in the United States. He wrote the piano sonata for me and dedicated it to me. By the time I learned it he lived with the Sachers at Schönenberg in Switzerland. I didn't want to play the first performance in New York without having played it for him first. I went to Basel and played the sonata for him at the home of my friend, Benedict Vischer. I remember well that he had quite a few suggestions and criticisms which I tried to absorb. A few days later I played the very first performance in Dusseldorf, Germany and soon afterward in New York at Carnegie Hall.

It certainly would not be possible to say in a short letter what I feel about Mr. Martinů as a composer. His writing for the piano purely instrumentally was masterful. He expressed exactly his musical ideas through the piano. His piano works are not easy to play, but there is not one awkward spot in any of his piano works known to me. As a human being he was full of warmth, tenderness and generosity. To me he was always wonderful. I loved him as a true friend. I hope this small attempt might give you an idea of my feeling for Mr. Martinů as a great composer and great human being. With kindest regards...

The documents quoted here express Serkin's utmost respect and admiration for Martinů, as one would expect considering the context in which they were written. Yet they also raise some intriguing, perhaps unanswerable questions. Why did Serkin only play the sonata a handful of times? He certainly gave the piece ample exposure by performing it at both Carnegie Hall and the Marlboro Festival. Did he simply "do his duty" and then move on to other projects and pieces? Did the death of the composer in 1959, a month after the Marlboro performance, relieve him of a perceived



obligation to continue performing the work? Did he lose interest in the score, or was the sonata simply crowded out of his repertoire?

Whatever the case may be, Martinů was apparently correct when assessing the difficulty of his task in composing a new work for Serkin. After all, despite his early association with Arnold Schoenberg, Serkin was not known for his performances of new music, but rather for his dedication to the Germanic mainstream of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart. What is clear, though, is that Martinů responded to the challenge of writing a piece for Serkin with a sonata that was as serious and uncompromising as Serkin's own renowned artistry. And Serkin amply repaid Martinů with high-profile performances that would have been the envy of any contemporary composer. What a loss, then, that no recordings of Serkin's interpretation of the sonata have survived.

•••

Pianist and musicologist Erik Entwistle has recently released a CD of piano works by Martinů on the Summit Records label (reviewed in this issue) that includes a performance of the piano sonata dedicated to Serkin.



## Martinů: Piano Works Summit DCD 407

This new Summit disc from the American pianist and Martinů specialist Erik Entwistle arrived shortly before Christmas.

It was nice timing in that the opening work is a first recording of *Vánoce* dating from Christmas 1927, a charming piece in three short movements reminiscent of Debussy. There follows a sequence of works in chronological order including the three *Dumky*, a *Mazurka*, *Barcarolle* and the *Sonata* of 1954 written for Rudolf Serkin, the most substantial and demanding of the works in this collection which among others has been recorded by Rudolf Firkušný. The CD concludes with the *Adagio* composed in 1957 in memory of Václav Kaprál and his daughter Vítězslava Kaprálová.

The most comprehensive package of Martinů solo piano works came from Radoslav Kvapil in the early 1990s in the form of three CDs which many Martinů enthusiasts will already possess. The anticipated fourth CD which would have encompassed some of the later compositions never appeared.

The beauty of the new disc is that with ten premiere recordings, it fills many of the gaps in the recorded repertoire and collects together other works which can otherwise only be heard by investing in a variety of piano recital discs.

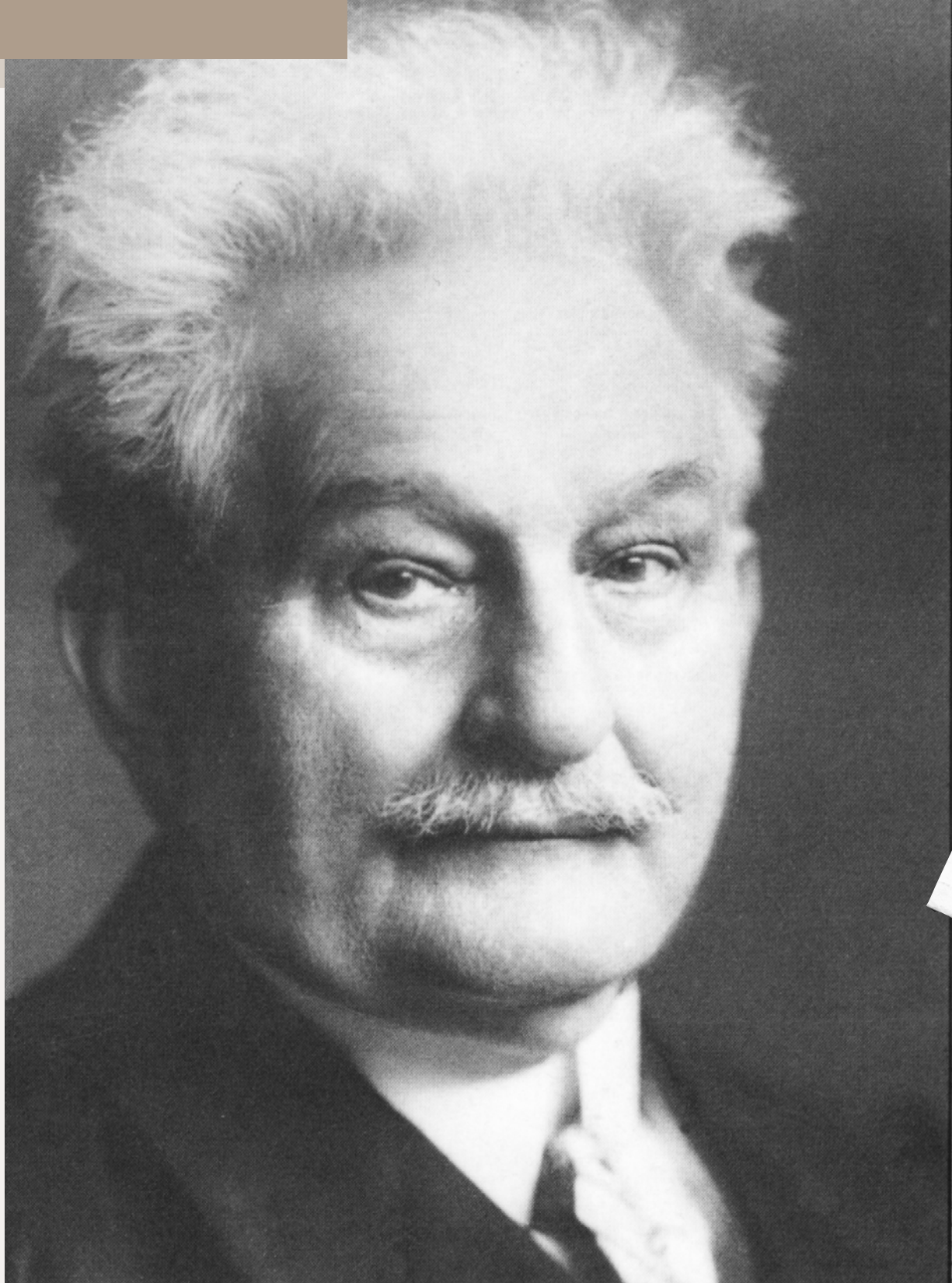
These are not one-off performances put together for the purposes of a CD release. They have matured over a period of time during which Mr Entwistle has been including them in his regular public recitals. These are finely paced and characterised performances which get to the heart of the works.

The presentation of the Summit disc is exemplary. The notes written by the pianist himself provide some fresh insights into this repertoire in addition to which there are touching reminiscences by Hope Castagnola for whom *Merry Christmas 1941* was written and by Sarina Tcherepnin, grandchild of the dedicatee of *The Fifth Day of the Fifth Moon*.

The recording has a natural sound and immediacy which add to the enjoyment of this disc. The total playing time is 79,5 minutes.

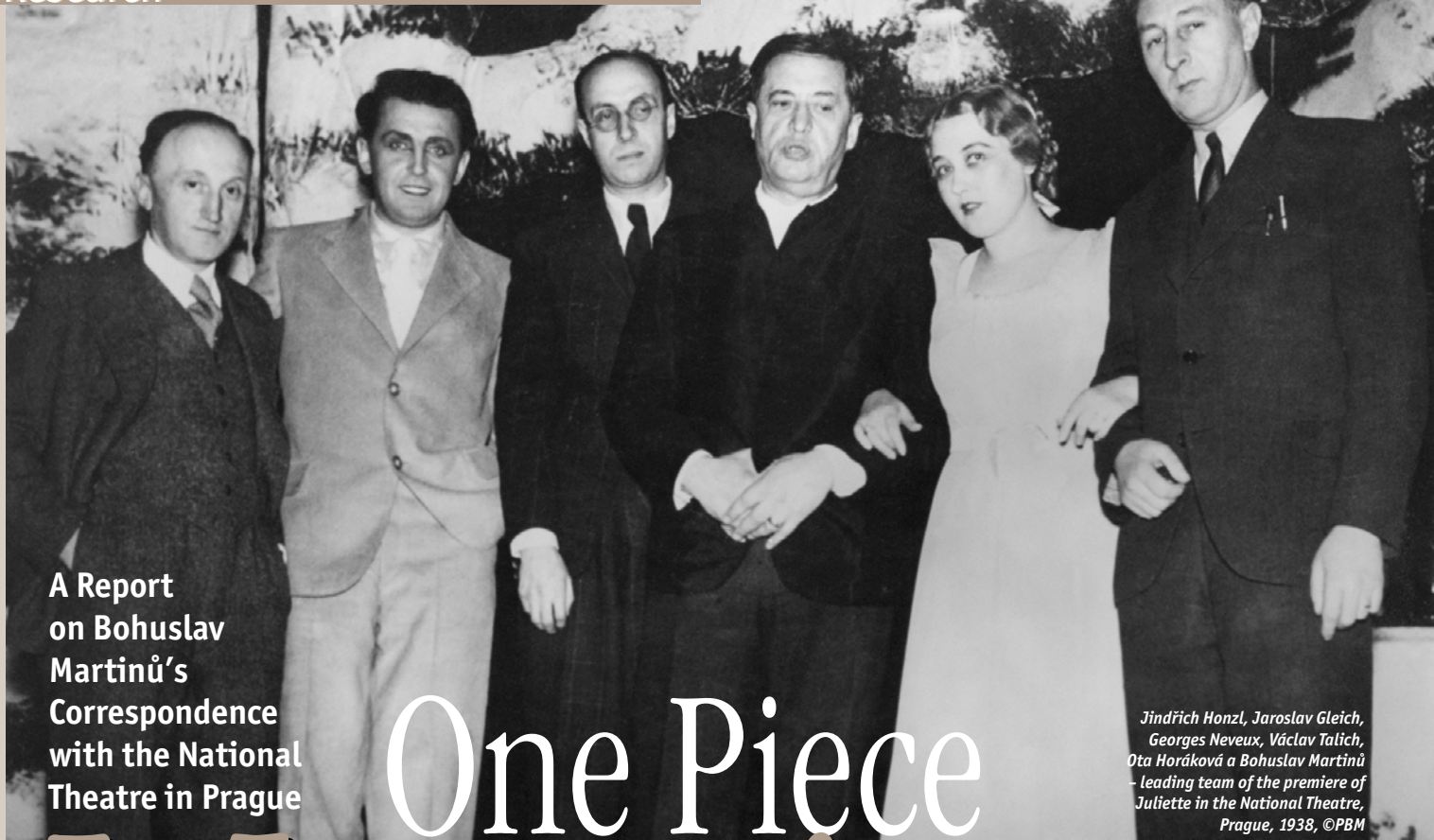
Greg Terian

After Martinů wrote about his admiration for Antonín Dvořák (see BM Newsletter No. 1, 2004, p. 14.), a year later he was asked to participate in a survey held by the compendium Valašsko (Moravian Walachia) pertaining to musical folklore research in Czechoslovakia and the collecting work done by Leoš Janáček, which Martinů highly esteemed. Martinů's opinions on methods of musical folklore research are formulated as answers to several questions posed to the participants in the survey: about the relationship between Czech art music and folk music, about the values of musical folklore of the Beskydy and Javorníky mountain regions, and about the tasks which should be undertaken by Czech folklore researchers. In response to the last question, pertaining to particular and current issues with which Martinů could not be familiar because of his long-term residence abroad, he provided some of his thoughts regarding arrangements of folk songs and his own relationship to musical folklore.



# About Janáček





Jindřich Honzl, Jaroslav Gleich, Georges Neveux, Václav Talich, Ota Horáková a Bohuslav Martinů – leading team of the premiere of Juliette in the National Theatre, Prague, 1938, ©PBM

A Report on Bohuslav Martinů's Correspondence with the National Theatre in Prague

# One Piece

# Mosaic *in the*

*The letters Martinů exchanged with the National Theatre in Prague comprise only a small fraction of the large quantity of his correspondence that has gradually been gathered at the Martinů Institute in Prague. Copies of these letters were obtained from the National Theatre Archive. They reveal the composer's artistic interests and help complete our picture of some substantial events in his life during the period between the two world wars.*

Martinů was in written contact with the National Theatre over the course of two important periods in that institution's history, during which two extraordinary artists headed the opera there: Otakar Ostrčil from 1921 to 1935, and Václav Talich from 1935 to 1944, then again briefly in 1947-48. Martinů negotiated with them regarding performances of some of his operas and ballets, and tried to influence the choice of artists that would share in the productions.

It is clear from the correspondence that Martinů exercised a great deal of patience in matters concerning performances of his works and that he worked purposefully to further his standing as a composer. For the premiere of his new ballet Istar, H. 130 on 11 September 1924 he waited three seasons after its acceptance into the National Theatre's

repertoire. In the end the production was very well received by both the audience and the press, which meant a lot for the beginning composer. Another significant success in collaboration with the National Theatre was the premiere of Špalíček (The Chap-Book), H. 214 on 19 September 1933. This ballet aroused interest abroad as well. Via the National Theatre in Prague performing materials for Špalíček were loaned to the National Theatre in Belgrade, where for somewhat unclear reasons the production was not realised and only two years later, following various confusions, were the loaned materials returned to the proper places.

Besides the National Theatre, the Moravian Theatre (Zemské divadlo) in Brno also had a long-lasting interest in new stage works by Martinů. That institution was responsible for such successes as the highly-acclaimed premiere on 23

February 1935 of the full-evening 'folk opera-oratorio' Hry o Marii (The Plays of Mary), H. 236, which Martinů had offered at the same time to the National Theatre in Prague. Ostrčil placed this work in the National Theatre's programming plan before his departure from office, and his successor Talich gladly took on the task of conducting it. Again we can trace the attention Martinů devoted to performances of his works. When this opera was placed in the National Theatre's repertoire he expressed an interest in writing an article for the theatre's bulletin in which he wished to mention the new expressive means used in his work. During the course of negotiations he arranged for the National Theatre to temporarily lend the score and piano-vocal reduction to the Bedřich Smetana Foundation, where he wished to apply for an award. He also repeatedly advocated use of František Muzika's sets from the Brno production, and expressed his opinion on the choice of other artists as well.

Of key importance for further performances of works by Martinů was assumption of administration of the National Theatre Opera by Václav Talich. Martinů had known Talich since the time when he played at the third stand of

the second violin section as a regular member of the Czech Philharmonic from 1920 to 1923. They admired each other artistically and strove to find job opportunities for each other. Gradually their collaboration grew into a close friendship. After the death of Suk Martinů repeatedly asked Talich in letters to support his application for a position as professor at the conservatory (in 1935-36 and again in 1939). He also mentioned that he was considering a definitive return to the Czech lands, which however was thwarted by the ever-more-complicated pre-war situation.

The culmination of Martinů's and Talich's joint artistic efforts was the premiere of Juliette, H. 253 on 16 March 1938 at the National Theatre in collaboration with stage director Jindřich Honzl, set designer František Muzika, and choreographer Joe Jenčík. This modern stage creation attracted great attention in Prague despite the tense political situation. The composer himself considered the premiere of Juliette to be an extraordinary event. He was present at the rehearsals and was happy to be able to collaborate with people with whom he had a good understanding. Then Prague was awakened from this beautiful operatic dream for several years by war, after which Talich was accused of collaboration with the Germans and imprisoned for six weeks. Martinů could not comprehend the indirect reports that came to him. He tried to encourage his friend in letters, and offered him various work opportunities abroad. In difficult times reminiscences of Juliette gave both of them energy.

Šárka Krejčí

# Martinů EVENTS

# 2005

We give only a selection from Martinů's works.

## CONCERTS

### March

4, 5 and 6 March 2005



Music Hall, Cincinnati, USA  
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra  
Paavo Järvi - Conductor  
Lukáš Vondráček - Piano  
Symphony No. 2, H. 295 (together with Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor and Symphony No. 3 by Brahms)  
The Martinů will be recorded with Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 on March 13 and 14, 2005 and will be released on Telarc in the 2005-6 season.

11 March 2005, 1<sup>00</sup> p.m.  
Midday Concert for Radio live from Studio Kaiserslautern, Southwest Radio Symphony Orchestra  
Fantasia Concertante for Piano and Orchestra, H. 366

12 March 2005, 7<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Barbican, London, UK  
BBC Symphony Orchestra,  
Jiří Bělohávek - Conductor, Kate Royal - Soprano, Karen Cargill - Mezzo, Robert Murray - Tenor, Matthew Rose - Bass, BBC Symphony Chorus  
Memorial to Lidice, H. 296  
Symphony No. 6 - Fantaisies Symphoniques, H. 343  
Pre-concert talk: 6<sup>00</sup> p.m.,  
Prompt Corner: The music of Bohuslav Martinů

16 March 2005, 8<sup>00</sup> p.m.  
Opéra Bastille, Paris, France  
Orchestra of the Opéra National de Paris, Jiří Bělohávek - Conductor  
Memorial to Lidice, H. 296

31 March 2005, 7<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra,  
Neeme Järvi - Conductor  
Jana Brožková - Oboe  
Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, H. 353  
[www.ceskafilharmonie.cz](http://www.ceskafilharmonie.cz)

### April

1 April 2005, 7<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
2 April 2005, 3<sup>00</sup> p.m.  
Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
Czech Philharmonic Orchestra,  
Neeme Järvi - Conductor, Jana Brožková - Oboe  
Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, H. 353

2 April 2005, 0<sup>30</sup> p.m.



Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
Prague Philharmonia with students of the Jan Neruda Grammar School, Bambini di Praga and Jan Rezníček.  
Stanislav Vavřínek - Conductor  
Prepared and conducted by Ilja Šmíd  
What Have You Done Now, Bohouš? (Concert for children introducing the life and work of B. Martinů; see review in the 2/ 2004 BM Newsletter)  
[www.pkf.cz](http://www.pkf.cz)

11 April 2005, 7<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
Czech Trio  
Piano Trio No. 3 in C Major, H. 332

14 April 2005



House of Arts, Zlín, CZ  
Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra Zlín, T. Netopil - Conductor  
Dialogue's Idea  
Ouverture, H. 345

17 April 2005  
Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
The Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Jiří Petrdlík - Conductor, Aleš Ulrich - Violin  
Memorial to Lidice, H. 296  
Concerto da camera, H. 285

19 April 2005  
Olga Černá and Jitka Čechová: recital in Hamburg.  
Olga Černá and Jitka Čechová were invited to perform in Hamburg at the celebrations of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of partnership between Hamburg and Prague. Songs by Brahms, Dvořák, Foerster, Mahler and Martinů will be on the program.

22 and 23 April 2005  
Dr. Anton Philipszaal, Hague, Netherlands.  
Residentie Orchestra The Hague  
Christopher Hogwood - Conductor  
La revue de cuisine, H. 161

25 April 2005, 7<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ  
Prague Philharmonia,  
Jiří Bělohávek - Conductor, Roman Patočka - Violin, Prague Philharmonic Choir, Jaroslav Brych - Choirmaster, Zdena Kloubová - Soprano, Jaroslav Bězina - Tenor, Roman Janál - Baritone, Roman Vocel - Bass, Boris Rösner - Recitation  
Gilgamesh, H. 351

### May

27 May 2005  
Chateau Chapel, Saalfeld, Germany

28 May 2005  
Heidecksburg, Rudolstadt, Germany  
Thüringer Symphoniker Saalfeld-Rudolstadt, Toni Steidl - Conductor  
Serenade for Chamber Orchestra, H. 215

### June

5 June 2005, 8<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Opéra National, Palais Garnier, Paris, France,  
Arnaud Nuvolet, Klodiana Skenderi - Violins, Natalia Tchitch - Viola, Jean-Marie Ferry - Cello, Jérôme Verhaeghe - Clarinet, Nicolas Pinard - Bassoon, Mickael Cliquennois - French horn, Laurent Malet - Trumpet, Jean-Yves Sebillotte - Piano  
La Revue de cuisine, H. 161

18 June 2005  
Koblenz, Germany  
SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden  
Sylvain Cambreling - Conductor  
SWR Vocalensemble Stuttgart  
The Epic of Gilgamesh, H. 351

23 June 2005  
St. Sebald, Nürnberg, Germany  
Nürnberger Philharmoniker  
Gerd Albrecht - Conductor  
Magic Nights, H. 119

## FESTIVALS AND OPERAS

Antonín Dvořák  
Music Festival  
Příbram  
(May - June 2005)



EXPO 2005

Czech Music Week, 23 - 29 May 2005, Expo Hall:  
Czech National Day 24 June 2005:

23 May 2005  
Theatre, Příbram, CZ  
Bohuslav Martinů  
Philharmonic Orchestra Zlín  
Jakub Hruša - Conductor  
Symphony No. 4, H. 305

Polička Fest  
(18 - 22 May 2005)

(The program has not been completed yet.)

Ravenna Festival,  
Italy  
(18 June - 24 July 2005)



16, 18, 20 July 2005, 8<sup>30</sup> p.m.  
Teatro Alighieri  
Opera North,  
Martin Andre - Conductor  
David Pountney - Director  
Stefanos Lazaridis - Scene  
Marie-Jeanne Lecca - Costumes  
Juliette (The Key to Dreams), H. 253

[www.ravennafestival.org](http://www.ravennafestival.org)

Czech Music Week

"The Czech Music Week" has been conceived as a showcase for top, Czech interpreters of classical music - young soloists and chamber ensembles representing the next generation of musicians. Most concerts (approximately 5-7) will be held in the Expo Hall, a concert hall with 500 seats, currently being built at the exhibition grounds.

Pianist Adam Skoumal will perform Loutky I., H. 137, Martinů Quartet: Quartet No. 2, H. 150, Martinů Trio: Trio No. 2, H. 327 and violinist Roman Patočka: Czech Rhapsody for Violin and Piano, H. 307

Czech National Day - 24 June 2005

On 24 June 2005 the entire exposition grounds will belong to the Czech Republic and the presentation of its cultural wealth.

The culmination of the whole day will be a gala evening concert with the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, conducted by Petr Altrichter. Leading Czech interpreters of the younger and middle generation will appear as soloists at the gala evening concert - cellist Jiří Barta will perform Dvořák's Klid lesa and passages from cello concertos by A. Dvořák and B. Martinů. Violinist Hana Kotková, Prague Spring laureate, will perform Dvořák's Mazurek and Romance, and Martinů's Czech Rhapsody adapted for violin and orchestra (Japanese premiere of the orchestration by Jiří Těml).

Concertos will alternate with orchestral compositions by A. Dvořák (overture to V přírodě /In the Realm Nature/, a selection from his Slavonic Dances), B. Smetana (Vltava /The Moldau/, Z českých luhů a hájů /From Bohemian Meadows and Groves/, Skočná and Polka from the opera Prodaná nevěsta /Bartered Bride/) L. Janáček (Sinfonietta, Liška Bystrouška) and B. Martinů (The Parables, H. 367).

The prestigious evening will be under the direction of Jiří Nekvasil and Vladimír Darjanin with architectural elements in the capable hands of academic architect Daniel Dvořák. The evening's programme coordinator will be Aleš Březina.

(Excerpted from the website [www.expo2005.cz](http://www.expo2005.cz))

## The City Council of Ostrava

announces a selection process for the position of

# Director of the Janáček Philharmonic of Ostrava, a government-subsidised non-profit organisation

### Required qualifications:

- college degree,
- familiarity with the functioning of a government-subsidised non-profit organisation,
- at least three years experience in a managerial position,
- excellent organisational, communications, and managerial abilities,
- active knowledge of English required, knowledge of an additional major foreign language desirable,
- no criminal record,
- for citizens of the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, certification that the applicant did not collaborate with the former regime to the detriment of innocent people,
- substantial knowledge in the field of music.

### The application must include:

- indication of the selection process, first and last name, title, date and place of birth, country of citizenship, place of permanent residence, date, and signature;
  - curriculum vitae giving information on previous employment and professional qualifications;
  - certified copy of document proving highest level of education achieved;
  - extract from the Criminal Register no older than three months; for foreigners an analogous document;
  - for citizens of the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, certification that the applicant did not collaborate with the former regime to the detriment of innocent people or confirmation that such certification has been requested;
  - conception in writing regarding the activities of the organisation and its director.
- Payment terms according to current government regulations.

Applications should be: delivered in person to the receipt desk of the Office of the City of Ostrava or sent by registered mail by **8 April 2005** to the address:

Magistrát města Ostravy  
odbor kultury, školství, mládeže a sportu  
Mgr. Lukáš Curylo  
Prokešovo náměstí 8, 729 30 Ostrava  
Czech Republic

On the envelope write: „**Neotvírat, výběrové řízení!**“ (Do not open, selection process)

Expected assumption of duties by the chosen applicant: 1 July 2005.

# Martinů

## in London

In 1919 Martinů took part in a three city tour of Western Europe as a violinist in the enlarged Orchestra of the National Theatre in Prague. This fact is briefly confirmed in the English language biographies of Martinů by both Safránek and Large; Large commenting that Martinů was included in the orchestra thanks to the influence of his friend Stanislav Novák [1, 2]. This short paper tries to indicate the nature of the tour, to list the artists involved and, as far as London is concerned, to note how the visit was received.

# 1919

### Richard Beith

The Tour: The visits to England, France and Switzerland were to demonstrate the cultural aspirations of the new Czechoslovak Republic which had only been founded on 28 October 1918. Perhaps there was also an element of saying „Thank you“ to some of the nations which had supported the creation of the new democracy. The tour proceeded from London to Paris and on to Geneva. Certainly it was this tour which initiated Martinů's fascination with the city of Paris.

In addition to the augmented National Theatre Orchestra (90 players) conducted by Karel Kovařovic, soloists were the noted soprano Emma Destinnová and the violinists Karel Hoffmann and J. Kocián. The pianists Jan Heřman and Václav Štěpán gave chamber music recitals with the Czech (Bohemian) Quartet. Czech choral tradition was represented by both the Prague and the Moravian Teachers' Choirs. The two facsimiles of London and Geneva concert announcements shown here are based on part illustrations shown by Stolařík [3].

London's reaction: Rosa Newmarch was a well-know British enthusiast for Slav music in general and for Czechoslovak music in particular. She penned a detailed review of the London season which makes fascinating reading [4].

She showed her appreciation in her opening paragraph:

The Czechoslovak Festival, held at Queen's Hall and Wigmore Hall between Monday, May 26, and Wednesday, June 4, has left us wondering what to admire most: the innate musical capacities of this valiant and rapidly-advancing people or the courage and foresight of the new Republic which did not shrink from equipping and sending to London over two hundred artists to speak to us in the one language that admits of no misapprehensions.

Based on her review it is possible to tabulate some of the works played at the Queen's Hall concerts though she did not have the space to comment further on the 'enjoyable' chamber concerts at the Wigmore Hall.

Rosa Newmarch commented that the audience was 'rather sparse' for the afternoon concert, but that:

By Monday 2 June, the achievements of the Czechoslovak musicians had become the talk of the town, and hundreds of applications for tickets to the final concert at Queen's Hall had to be refused.

Rosa Newmarch was obviously greatly taken by the singing and repertoire of the two choirs. She noted that:

Besides their appearances at Queen's Hall, the Moravian and Prague Choirs sang at the Royal College of Music, and were deeply touched by the kindly welcome accorded to them. They also took part in a service of thanksgiving for their deliverance 'from centuries of oppression' held at Christ Church, Westminster Road, when they sang, among other things, the glorious 13th century hymn 'Svatý Václav'.

So what effect did this musical, patriotic and political event in London have on Martinů? Did he leave any written record of his comments and thoughts? Did he send postcards of London to his friends back home in the new Republic? London can't have made much of an impression, he only came back once again, in 1938, and that was to accompany Kaprálová to the IJSCM Festival.

Editor and writer would be fascinated to receive comments via the editorial office.

References:

- [1] Miloš Safránek, Bohuslav Martinu, His Life and Works, London, Alan Wingate, 1962
- [2] Brian Large, Martinu, London, Duckworth, 1975
- [3] Ivo Stolařík (editor), 60 Year of the Moravian Teachers' Male Voice Choir, Ostrava, 1963
- [4] Rosa Newmarch, „The Czechoslovak Festival“, The Musical Times, London, 1 July 1919, p. 334-336.

# Martinů

# News

## Grammy Award Nomination

<http://www.grammy.com/awards/grammy/47noms.aspx#30>



Recording of  
**Bohuslav Martinů**  
Symphonies  
Nos. 3 and 4

(Jiří Bělohlávek – conductor, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, label Supraphon) was nominated for Grammy Award in Category 96 – Best Orchestral Performance (Award to the Conductor and to the Orchestra.)

## Articles and Studies

- The most recent issue of The Kaprálová Society Newsletter includes an article "Love's Labour's Lost: Martinu, Kapralova and Hitler", by Alan Houtchens. This newsletter is disseminated only in electronic form, at the internet address <http://www.kapralova.org/journal4.pdf>.
- An article by Harry Halbreich titled 'A Life-Long Story' has been published in Czech Music, 2004, No. 3, pp. 10-13.
- An article by Jan Trojan (born 1926) titled 'Pastorale v díle Bohuslava Martinů' (The Pastorale in the Music of Bohuslav Martinů) has been published in Opus Musicum, 2004, No. 6, pp. 6-12.
- The November 2004 issue of the magazine Vesmír ([www.vesmir.cz](http://www.vesmir.cz)), Vol. 83 includes an article by Emanuel Vlček titled 'Poslední věci B. Martinů' (The Final Affairs of B. Martinů).

## Exhibitions

An exhibition titled *Fotbal! Sedmdesát let od římského finále (1934 – 2004) (Soccer! The Seventieth Anniversary of the 1934 Finals in Rome)* is on display in the National Museum in Prague from 2 November 2004 to 31 March 2005. It includes a caricature of Martinů titled *Half-Time*.

## Obituaries

### Doris S. Rybka,

wife of Frank Rybka, died on November 27th, 2004, at the age of 98. All members of the Rybka's family were good friends of Martinů, as you could have read in the 2/2004 issue of the BM Newsletter. Doris was the dedicatee of Martinů's piece for piano *Dumka No. 3*, H. 285 bis.

### Prof. František Smetana

(14 May 1914 – 25 November 2004)

František Smetana was a well-known cellist, chamber player, and teacher who received many awards for his artistic achievements. A pupil of the legendary pedagogue K. P. Sádlo, he played in the Czech Nonet and founded the Smetana Trio then later the Prague Trio. With his wife, the pianist Dolly Urbánková, he gave concerts abroad. In 1948 he was arrested and sentenced to a year and a half in prison for activity against the state. After his release he wanted to teach but was refused by both the Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts. And so he accepted an invitation to emigrate to Jamaica, and then he moved to USA. First he taught at Iowa State University, then in Richmond, Virginia. When he retired he was named professor emeritus. He was an active member of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, founded by exiles in the USA, which meant that all his phonograph recordings were removed from stores and libraries in Czechoslovakia. He was supposed to be forgotten. He began travelling home again only after the Velvet Revolution of November 1989.

František Smetana was an enthusiastic promoter of works by Bohuslav Martinů. He gave the Czech premiere of the Third Sonata for Cello and Piano at the Rudolfinum in Prague on 20 October 1955.

### Rudolf Kundera

(9 March 1911 – 9 January 2005)

see page 10 - 11

# ALÉN DIVIŠ

## exhibition

On 10 February an exhibition on the life and work of the painter Alén Diviš, a friend of Martinů, opened in the Gallery of Prague's Rudolfinum. The exhibition will last till 24 August 2005  
curators: Vanda Skálová, Tomáš Pospiszył

In the past thirty years, for Czech art Alén Diviš (1900 – 1956) has become synonymous with the concept of the artistic outsider. The difficult to classify loner, creator of hallucinatory visions, horror scenes, and passionate religious depictions, is one of the least researched personalities in the world of Czech art, and he remains a man around whom many legends and myths are woven.

*Wedding Shirts  
By leaps and bounds  
he went ahead  
And after him the girl did  
tread (1948 - 1949)  
oil on canvas  
Polabské Museum  
Poděbrady*

Alén Diviš spent most of his life abroad. At the end of the 1920s, he made his way to Paris, at the time the capital of modern art. At the beginning of the World War II he was accused of spying and spent several months incarcerated in solitary confinement at La Santé Prison. After passing through concentration camps in France, Morocco, and Martinique, he found refuge in New York. He returned to Czechoslovakia in 1947, and during a short time kindled interest in his work. However, as the Iron Curtain descended after 1948, he found himself marginalized, destitute, and forsaken. At various stages, Diviš was influenced by Cubism and Expressionism, and in his own individual way he anticipated Art Brut and Informal painting. His work was primarily based on a powerful preoccupation with existential themes, whether inspired by his own tragic lot or by literature.

This exhibition, the largest ever devoted to Diviš, gathers together all his preserved work for the first time. It contains a key cycle of prison walls, illustrations to accompany the ballads of Karel Jaromír Erben and the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, and closes with large – format carbon drawings inspired by the Bible.

To mark the exhibition, the Karel Svoboda and Vlasta Kubátová Foundation is publishing the first extensive Alén Diviš monograph, containing several hundred colour reproductions. This book has been written by Vanda Skálová and Tomáš Pospiszył, who have managed to assemble previously unknown facts about the artist's life and work.

The exhibition also includes a screening of Martin Rezníček's documentary *Sbohem slunce* ('Farewell Sun') from 2002, which records the memories of those who met Alén Diviš in person.

Accompanying programmes include: Musical Afternoon: Diviš and Martinů (24 February) Round Table (24 March) with Diviš's contemporaries, friends and experts of his life and work, a Discussion Afternoon (31 March) on the theme of Diviš's life in the 1950s, a reminder of the approaches and life profiles of prominent artistic figures of the late 1940s and early 1950s and Film Premiere of the feature-length documentary film of the life and work of Alén Diviš (13 August 8<sup>00</sup> p.m.)

More information on the exhibition and its accompanying programmes:  
<http://www.galerierudolfinum.cz/>

## Magazines

### Welcome to the Heart of Europe

Welcome to the Heart of Europe is a bi-monthly magazine devoted to the Czech Republic published by THEO Publishing in cooperation with the Press Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was launched in 1994 and is distributed to Czech embassies and consulates abroad, missions and Czech information and cultural centres as well as to passengers on Czech Airlines flights.

It appears in five languages: English, German, Spanish, French and Russian. This magazine has published a special issue devoted to the Year of Czech Music (2004), so we can be pleased that people from all over the world will learn something not only about Martinů but about other Czech composers as well. The magazine can be ordered at:  
<http://www.theo.cz/heart.php>

## The Martinů Institute's Corner

### Newly-Discovered Letters and Autographs Letters to Ivan Herben

In the Literary Archive of the Museum of National Literature we have found additional unknown letters of Bohuslav Martinů.

The papers of the Czech journalist and politician Ivan Herben (1900-68) include three letters from Martinů. Herben was an important figure in Czechoslovakia between the wars. He was editor of two newspapers – *Tribuna* (The Tribune) and *České slovo* (The Czech Word) – from 1928 to 1938, and then editor-in-chief of the Brno edition of *Lidové noviny* (The People's News). After the Communist take-over in February 1948 he went into exile, where he helped found Radio Free Europe. Two letters addressed to Herben as editor-in-chief of *České slovo* are dated 1934 and 1937. The first of them, especially, is interesting in its content. Martinů complains about conditions in the National Theatre, as he came to know them in association with the production of *Špalíček*, H.214 (The Chap-Book). He appeals to Herben to form his own opinion about the situation in the National Theatre and to take a stand for the young. He does not have himself in mind but rather young composers in general and the future of the whole theatre. The third letter in this collection of papers is a short one from 1929 addressed to the poet Richard Weiner, who at that time was an editor for *Lidové noviny*. It is Martinů's response to a survey held by that newspaper: what he liked most was Sinclair Lewis's book *Babbitt*, and as a second title he named 'M. Obey: Jouer du triangle'. What he had in mind was André Obey's *Le Joueur de triangle*, which won a Prix Renaudot in France in 1928 and which Martinů certainly had the opportunity to encounter in that country.

Eva Velická

### Letter to Louis Krasner

Houghton Library, Harvard University Cambridge provided Bohuslav Martinů Institute with the letter from Bohuslav Martinů to the violinist Louis Krasner dated 24 April 1941. Martinů wrote it shortly after he arrived in New York. He announces he received a commission from Paul Sacher to compose a concerto for violin, string orchestra and piano (Concerto da Camera for Violin, Piano and Orchestra, H. 285); Martinů thinks Krasner would certainly be interested in it.

### A Picture Postcard

The Bohuslav Martinů Foundation has learned of another piece of correspondence written in Martinů's hand, this time to the painter Jan Zrzavý in Nemečský Brod, dated 21 August 1925. Martinů asks Zrzavý whether he has recovered from an illness, whether he will be in Prague in October, and when he will go to Paris. It is written on a postcard showing the plague column in Polička. The autograph was on sale at an auction of the Prošek antiquarian house in Prague on 10 December 2004. Unfortunately the foundation did not succeed in purchasing it.

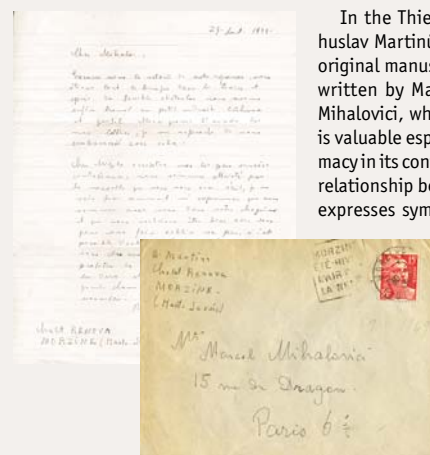
### Songs on One Page: The Autograph Found!

The Martinů Institute has had the good fortune to locate the autograph for *Písníčky na jednu stránku*, H.294 (Songs on One Page). Its owner is Patrice Chevy from France. It was given to him by Mrs. Charlotte Martinů. Until now we knew only of a facsimile of this autograph, deposited at the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička. We refer those interested in this wonderful song cycle to the excellent recording by Magdalena Kožená on her compact disc *Love Songs*.

### A Letter from Martinů to Mihalovici

In the Thierry Bodin auction hall the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation has purchased the original manuscript of a letter of 30 July 1949 written by Martinů to the composer Marcel Mihalovici, who was a friend of his. The letter is valuable especially because of a certain intimacy in its content, giving evidence of the close relationship between these two men – Martinů expresses sympathy on the occasion of some

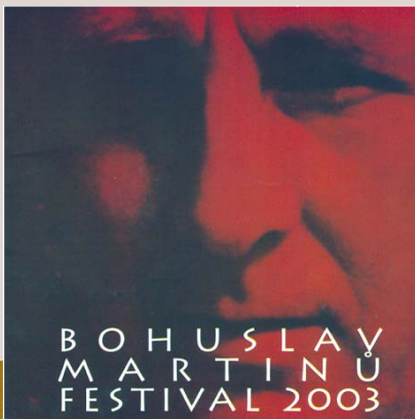
sad event that has occurred (evidently a death in the family) and signs the letter for himself as well as for his intimate lady friend Roe Barstow, whom he does not hide from Mihalovici.



### Five letters to Jaroslav Procházka

The Martinů Foundation purchased five letters by Bohuslav Martinů from the widow of Jaroslav Procházka, editor of the compendium *Valašsko* (Moravian Walachia). One of the letters includes Martinů's thoughts and ideas about Janáček and folk songs. For the English translation of this letter see page 14.

# Music by Bohuslav Martinů on CDs



## The Bohuslav Martinů Festival 2003 *Not for sale*

### *Little Suite from The Comedy on the Bridge, H. 247A*

The Chamber Philharmonic of Pardubice • Douglas Bostock - conductor

### *Sonata No. 1 for Cello and Piano, H. 277*

Tomáš Jamník - cello, Věra Langerová - piano

### *Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano, H. 303*, Marie Fuxová - violin, Ester Godovská - piano

*Marijka nevěrnice (The Unfaithful Marijka), H. 233* - Overture, Historical recording (1934)

Orchestra of the National Theatre Prague, František Škvor - conductor

### *The Opening of the Springs, H. 354* - closing section

### *Potkal jsem jeseň (I met with Autumn)*

Historical recording (1960). Ladislav Mráz - baritone, Josef Vlach - violin, Václav Snítel - violin, Josef Kodoušek - viola, Ivan Moravec - piano, Kühn Children's Choir, Pavel Kühn - choirmaster, Martin Turnovský - conductor

Text: English, Czech. TT: 61:11. Recorded 1934, 1960, 2003, DDD, Stereo, 1 CD PROMO NBM 08 2004

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CLASSICS

## Bohuslav Martinů

Fantaisies symphoniques  
Fresques · Juliette

Symphony Orchestra St. Gallen  
Jiří Kout

## Bohuslav Martinů Fantaisies symphoniques, Fresques, Juliette

### *Symphony No. 6 (Fantaisies symphoniques), H. 343*

### *Les Fresques de Piero della Francesca, H. 352*

### *Orchestral Suite from the Opera Julietta for Large Orchestra, H. 253*

Symphony Orchestra St. Gallen, Jiří Kout • Text: German, English. TT: 63:17

Recorded 2003, 2004, DDD, 1 CD BMG Ariola Classics GmbH, 2004, 82876 57740 2



## Bohuslav Martinů, Manuel de Falla

### *Concerto for Harpsichord and Small Orchestra, H. 246*

### *Promenades for Flute, Violin and Harpsichord, H. 56*

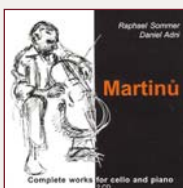
### *Two Pieces for Harpsichord, H. 244*

### *Sonata for Harpsichord, H. 368*

### *Two Impromptu for Harpsichord, H. 381*

Monika Knoblochová - Harpsichord

TT: 59:06, 1 CD, SU 3805, 2005



## Bohuslav Martinů Complete Works for Cello and Piano

### *Sonata No. 1, H. 277*

### *Sonata No. 2, H. 286*

### *Sonata No. 3, H. 340*

### *Variations on a Theme of Rossini, H. 290*

### *Variations on a Slovak Folk Song, H. 378*

### *Nocturnes, H. 189*

### *Pastorals, H. 190*

### *Seven Arabesques, H. 201*

### *Miniature Suite, H. 192*

### *Ariette, H. 188 b*

Raphael Sommer - Cello, Daniel Adni - Piano

Text: English, French. TT: 152:22

Recorded 1983, 1985, 1986, AAD, 2 CD YMCA, 2004, Jerusalem



## Karel Ančerl Gold Edition Vol. 34, Martinů

### *Symphony No. 5, H. 310*

### *Symphony No. 6, H. 343*

### *Memorial to Lidice, H. 296*

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Karel Ančerl - conductor.

Text: English, German, French, Czech. TT: 66:31

Recorded 1955, 1956 and 1957, AAD, MONO,

1 CD Supraphon SU 3694-2 001, 2004

## Music Publishing House

# EDITIO BÄRENREITER PRAHA

announces its  
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## Bohuslav Martinů

# FILM EN MINIATURE

Martinů wrote the piano cycle *Film en miniature* H. 148 during his so-called Parisian period in 1925. It is linked with *Polička*, the place, where he came from, as well as with *Paris*, where he studied composition from the year 1923. The work was originally entitled "Film en miniature. Cestou. Cyklus klavírních skladeb" [Film en miniature.

On the Road. A Piano Cycle], the final title was given either by Martinů himself or by the publisher who carried a lot of weight in this matter. The cycle was published within four years by the *Hudební matice Umělecké besedy* [Music Foundation of the Artists' Association]. Next publications of the composition were provided by the same publisher in 1949 and by the *Czech Supraphon* in 1979. There is used the original print of 1929 in both mentioned editions, which is satisfactory and respects the autograph except small divergences in the types of articulation marks and such likes. The present publication amends even these slight imperfections.

H 5709, ISMN M-2601-0338-2, price 12 EUR

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