

THE BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ FOUNDATION
THE BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ INSTITUTE
THE INTERNATIONAL MARTINŮ CIRCLE

MARTINŮREVUE

january—april **2018** / vol.XVIII / no.1

the greek passion
in sweden

film adaptation of the opera
what men live by

the 5th volume of the
complete edition:

string quartets nos 4–7

the bohoslav martinů days
2017



the latest volume of the bohuslav martinů complete edition is now available for adoption



Josef Špaček and
Miroslav Sekera

AT THE THIRD Bohuslav Martinů Institute benefit concert, on 20 November 2017, the fifth volume of the Bohuslav Martinů Complete Edition was presented by its co-editor, Aleš Březina, the BMI's director. Published by Bärenreiter, it contains String Quartets Nos 4–7, composed between 1937 and 1947.

The concert, which took place at the Kaiserstein Palace in Prague, featured performances by the violinist **Josef Špaček** and the pianist **Miroslav Sekera**, with the artists appearing *pro bono*. They presented Bohuslav Martinů's *Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano*, H 303, and the two pieces forming Bedřich Smetana's *From the Homeland*. As a bonus, Špaček and Sekera played the first movement of the *Concerto for Violin and Piano*, H 13, which Martinů wrote at the age of 20. During the course of the evening, benefactors of the Bohuslav Martinů Institute had the chance to become acquainted with all the hitherto published volumes of the Bohuslav Martinů Complete Edition, which for the very first time makes available all Martinů pieces

in critical editions. The project's most generous sponsors this year are the RSJ financial group and its CEO, Libor Winkler; the entrepreneur Radovan Květ; and the painter Helena Konstantinová, whose family generously provided the exquisite premises of the Kaiserstein Palace for the concert. Besides being able to provide direct support through concert admission fees, donors were presented with the possibility of "adopting" specific volumes of the Bohuslav Martinů

Complete Edition.

All the four volumes published to date have been highly praised by music specialists. Especially noteworthy is the accolade of Best Edition of 2015 awarded by the German Music Publishers' Association to *The Epic of Gilgamesh* volume, and the laudatory reviews in the prestigious music publications *NOTES* and *Musikforschung*. The critical editions of Martinů's compositions have already served as the basis for their new interpretations, thus becoming part of regular concert programmes. **The next Bohuslav Martinů Institute benefit concert is scheduled to take place on 19 November 2018, again at the Kaiserstein Palace.**

Donations are welcome from anyone who is interested in the adoption, and can be sent to Fio Bank, CZ
IBAN: **CZ642010000002300633685**
SWIFT/BIC: **FIIBCZPPXXX**

More information: Aleš Březina,
martinu@martinu.cz

news

extraordinary, skilful and atmospheric music.
gramophone's editor's choice for madrigals

THE MARCH issue of the prestigious Gramophone magazine brings more great news for Czech music. Gramophone awarded the recording of Bohuslav Martinů's Madrigals by Martinů Voices and choirmaster Lukáš Vasilek Editor's Choice. An album with six choral cycles was released by Supraphon in January 2018.

"This is a delight," writes Ivan Moody in the Gramophone review. "Performances are outstanding throughout. The voices are fresh and responsive, and Lukáš Vasilek once again proves that he is a true master of choral conducting. There is also an excellent, detailed booklet note by Vit Zouhar."

Album contains *Madrigals (Part-Song Book)*, H 380, *Primrose*, H 348, *Czech Madrigals*, H 278, *Three Sacred Songs (Three Legends)*, H 339, *Four Songs About Mary*, H 235 and *Five Czech Madrigals*, H 321.

www.gramophone.co.uk



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FESTIVAL PRAGUE SPRING

www.festival.cz

20 May 2018 / 2.00 pm

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The Czech Nonet

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> Smetana Hall, Municipal House, Prague

Symphony No. 4, H 305

Czech Philharmonic

David Robertson (Conductor)



2 June 2018 / 8.00 pm

> Smetana Hall, Municipal House, Prague

Estampes, H 369

Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava

Heiko Mathias Förster (Conductor)

concert

6+7+8 June 2018 / 7.30 pm

> Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague

Symphony No. 2, H 295

Czech Philharmonic

Jakub Hrůša (Conductor)

opera

17 June 2018 / 4.00 pm

> Opernhaus, Wuppertal, Germany

www.oper-wuppertal.de

Juliette (The Key to Dreams), H 253

Johannes Pell (Musical Preparation,

Conductor), Inga Levant (Director),

Jan Freese / Petra Korink (Sets), Petra

Korink (Costumes), Rafal Dziemidok

(Choreography), Jana Beckmann

(Dramaturgy), Ralitsa Ralinova (Juliette),

Sengmin Jeon (Michel)

new president of the international martinů circle in japan



ON 16 MARCH the IMC office in Prague was honoured to receive Mrs Yukiko Sawa, the new President of the IMC in Japan. Yukiko Sawa was born in Tokyo, where she studied the piano at

Academia Musicae. She furthered her education under Prof. Josef Páleníček at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. She is currently tenured as Professor of Piano at Seitoku Univer-



sity. She loves Czech music and actively promotes it throughout Japan.

a concert in tribute to mr hideo sekine

A MEMORIAL CONCERT in Tokyo on 6 February 2018 commemorated 1 year since the death of

Mr Hideo Sekine, a promoter of Czech culture in Japan and the President of the Bohuslav Martinů Society in Japan.

The programme included the *Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 3, H 340*, performed by Nozomi Sekine (Mr Sekine's granddaughter) on the cello and Mrs Yukiko Sawa, President of the International Martinů Circle in Japan, on the piano.

Martinů's *Sonata for Piano, H 350*, was played by the Czech pianist Luděk Šabaka.

anniversary



graham melville-mason / 85 years

"HELLO, MY NAME IS GRAHAM Melville-Mason and I have just been elected Chairman of the Dvořák Society... What do you actually do as Membership Secretary?" That was my first contact with Graham many years ago and, within seconds I had a whole new job and responsibility. Backed up by the Society's new Secretary, Shawn Pullman, a new team began the process of rebuilding the fabric of the Dvořák Society. Many new friendships grew and a vigorous team developed.

For me, Czech and Slovak music have become an essential part of my life. I know this to be true of many other members as well and without the benign cajoling and example that Graham Melville-Mason always provided, it might never have happened. Edinburgh University (and later the International Festival), the Royal Navy, the BBC all go to make Graham's life. What is perhaps less obvious to some is the team that he forged with his wife, Alex, who for many, many years, has helped to make a welcome for Czech and Slovak musicians, composers, musicologists and even people such as me. It was at their home that one might meet the Panocha Quartet, Zuzana Růžičková, Petr Eben, Milan Škampa, Jan Hanuš, Jiří Bělohlávek and myriad others.

In his quiet way, Graham campaigned vigorously for Czech and Slovak music in the U.K.; in the Czech lands he did the same for British music. Personally, through his leadership, example, gentle persuasion, kindness, talks, writings and in many other ways, Graham opened to me and others a new world of music. Without Graham and Alex, my own life would have been very different and for that friendship and guidance I shall forever be grateful.

/ PETER HERBERT

A second article dedicated to Mr. Melville-Mason can be found on page 4

85 years of graham melville-mason

/ PETR VEBER

THE SEA THERE is just as blue as any other, except that it leaves little black pieces of coal on the shore. That shore is in the north-east of England, not too far from the Scottish border, just past the little town of Alnwick, which boasts a major landmark – an old, inhabited castle that supposedly served as a set for the Harry Potter films. Just a few miles down the road, a stone's throw away from the foaming waves of the North Sea, stands a house that is the home of a certain musicologist and his wife. That man is Graham Melville-Mason, who has been inseparably linked with the Prague Spring International Music Festival for the past more than twenty years. He was made an advisor to the festival in 1990 and personally attended its concerts every year until recently. And to Czech classical music as such, he has been a valued friend, expert, supporter, and sympathiser for much, much longer.

Czech music has a rich following in Britain, comprising both experts and amateurs who are active in the Dvořák Society for Czech and Slovak music. But Graham Melville-Mason clearly stands out from the rest. This scholar, writer, and promoter of music celebrates his 85th birthday this year. He headed the Dvořák Society for many years and then became its patron, and he continues to be active in the organisation even today. He is also well-known by musicians and organisers of concerts. Many, perhaps most, guest invitations to Czech soloists, chamber ensembles, and conductors to perform on the British Isles in the past decades have his inconspicuous support to thank.

The Dvořák Society, established in the Year of Czech Music in 1974 and boasting a membership seven-hundred strong, organises lectures, meetings and debates with Czech musicians all over Britain; it holds concerts of young Czech artists studying in the United Kingdom; it awards Czech and Slovak students with scholarships to the prestigious Dartington International Summer School; it publishes books and booklets; it also initiated a collaboration with the National Museum in Prague to create an international database of sources on Dvořák; and last but not least it started a fund for the reconstruction of Dvořák's villa Rusalka in Vysoká near Příbram... Another of its prominent members was Charles Mackerras, a pupil of Talich and a promoter especially of Janáček's operatic oeuvre but also of the



music of other Czechs, from the old masters to Martinů.

For Graham Melville-Mason, everything began back in the 1960s, when he taught at the university in Edinburgh and helped organise the city's international music festival, where he first experienced guest performances of Czechoslovak musicians. His fascination with the Czech musical culture continued to grow and strengthen when he was employed at the BBC in London. Czech music finally became the main focus of his professional and personal life following his retirement in 1989. He dedicated himself to the works of Czech masters and key contemporary composers; he maintained and continues to maintain numerous friendships with Czech musicians. And so it is clear that there have been few major guest appearances of Czechs in Britain that he would not have known of and even fewer performances of British artists at Prague Spring that he would not have somehow had a hand in.

He studied and still studies Czech culture, he drove a Škoda and can speak Czech. Before he and his wife moved far north to the countryside, Graham could regularly practise his understanding of the language while accompanying his neighbour Karel Janovický when the latter walked his dog in northern London. Janovický was an exiled Czech composer and journalist who led the Czechoslovak section of the BBC World Service for many years. For many years passers-by were notified of Mr Mason's exotic interest by a red street sign behind the ground-floor window of his typical terraced brick house, which said "Besední"; it was a real Czech street sign. It was a surplus

sign from when new signs had been installed in the streets of Prague's Malá Strana neighbourhood, and Graham's Prague friends had light-heartedly presented it to him as a keepsake. Besední Street was the address of the Czech Music Fund...

Although you cannot see the sign from outside the house where he lives now, he still has it, of course. His Czech sympathies are expressed less conspicuously, but clearly enough for those in the know: the house number – three – is marked by a typical blue Prague number plate. And inside? As many discs and scores with the works of Czech composers as you might find in the Czech National Museum...

Comfortably seated in his office, surrounded by shelves crammed with music, Graham reminisced during a radio broadcast a few years back: *"There were several important moments in my life. But one of them, which relates to Czech and Slovak music, is key – a fellowship I received in 1975 to fund study trips abroad. It was my travels that led me to take a profound interest in music and to enter into equally profound personal friendships – with both famous and ordinary people. And I am very, very grateful for that, because those are things that have fundamentally enriched my life and continue to do so. The consequences have been beyond anything I could ever have imagined when I first considered applying to the Churchill Foundation for a travel grant. From my first moments beyond the Iron Curtain, I was fascinated by Czech and Slovak initiatives that led me to make so many different friends. Although some of them have since passed away, I have the most beautiful memories of them, and I am grateful to them for many things."* He summarised the past decades thus: *"I had an interesting life with few hardships. Of course, there will always be something you wish would have turned out a bit differently. For various reasons. Some of it is important, some of it is not. But I cannot complain, my life seems to be balanced."*

His health no longer permits him to travel, and so he cannot even attend the Prague Spring Festival any more. But the connections to Czech culture are still there – phone numbers, Skype accounts, new recordings, articles on the internet... And in his seclusion, fully committed to the care of his wife, Graham is grateful for the winding paths of his life that led him from the study of medicine to music, from dry land to a navy submarine, later from Britain to the Continent, from Western Europe to the east... From Scotland to England... and now, in his retirement, back north again. To where the sea is blue but leaves black pebbles of coal on the sandy beach. ■

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From the film adaptation of the opera *What Men Live By* / Photo Pavla Černá



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THE PREVIOUS ISSUE



THE BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ CENTER IN POLIČKA

offers an interesting, interactively conceived exhibition on the composer's life and work. The modern display of Bohuslav Martinů's life and work is located in the historical building of the former council school, which Martinů attended as a child. Consequently, the project also comprises a reproduction of Martinů's classroom, complete with period painting and furniture. The centre also contains an audio-visual hall and study room.

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www.cbmpolicka.cz



incircle news

—IMC BOARD MEETING 2018

THE 2018 MEETING of the IMC Board of Delegates was scheduled for 29 March. Unfortunately, a number of delegates were unable to attend, for reasons beyond their control. We therefore decided to hold a less formal working meeting and to reconvene later in the year. The working meeting, held at the Bohuslav Martinů Institute, was nonetheless very productive.

Present at the meeting were Michael Crump (Chairman), Zoja Seyčková (Deputy Chair), Aleš Březina (Committee Member), Lucie Jirglová (IMC Secretary) and Robert Simon (Delegate).

The discussion began with an overview of the current financial situation of the IMC, which has unfortunately become more straightened thanks to a reduction in grant income and the diminished exchange rate of Sterling since the UK decided to leave the European Union. Various ways to reduce production costs of the Martinů Revue without sacrificing its quality were discussed.

Another important topic was recruitment – how to attract new members and ensure that the IMC flourishes. We spoke of the problems presented by territories such as Australasia or South Africa – countries receptive to Western Classical music, but where we have few or no members. Social media may provide a way to overcome such problems, and a number of on-line initiatives were proposed. Further research is required to find the best solution, but in the meantime suggestions are welcome from any members of the IMC.

The next meeting of the full board was scheduled for December 2018, to take place during the Bohuslav Martinů Days in Prague.

Michael Crump, Chairman of IMC

—2018 SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENTS

WE WOULD REQUEST members to forward their 2018 subscription payments through their usual channels. A list of our international contacts:

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Jakub Hruša,
President of IMC

Magdalena Kožená,
IMC Patron

International Martinů Circle

GENERAL INFORMATION

Members receive the illustrated *Martinů Revue* published three times a year plus a special limited edition CD containing world premieres, historic performances and archival recordings from the annual Martinů Festival not obtainable commercially.

The IMC is supported by the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation and Bohuslav Martinů Institute in Prague.

MEMBERSHIP & SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION IN 2018

► E-MAIL MEMBERSHIP

450 CZK / 25 EUR / 30 USD / 18 GBP
(14 GBP if paying for dual membership with Dvořák Society of Great Britain)

► POSTAL MEMBERSHIP

570 CZK for members in the Czech Republic
33 EUR / 25 GBP for members in the rest of Europe
(21 GBP if paying for dual membership with Dvořák Society of Great Britain)
42 USD (35 EUR) for members outside Europe

► SUBSCRIPTION FOR CORPORATE MEMBERS: 100 EUR / includes

10 copies of each *Revue* PLUS 3 copies of the special limited edition CD

► SPECIAL RATE for music students

under 25 years of age:
10 EUR / 250 CZK

► SINGLE COPIES OF THE REVUE:

80 CZK / 3 EUR / 4 USD + postage

For further details and for single copies of the Martinů Revue contact:

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- > Eva Ryšavá, CZ
- > Shizuka Ito, JPN
- > Maki Hayashiguchi, JPN
- > Minoru Sawa, JPN

the 5th volume of the bohuslav martinů string quartets nos 4–7

/ ALEŠ BŘEZINA

WITH HIS EIGHT STRING quartets, Bohuslav Martinů is an important twentieth-century proponent of the genre. Several of these works were premiered by leading European and American chamber ensembles. This first critical edition of his last four string quartets offers the composer's last authorised versions in the main musical text; the appendices also include parts of the works as they appeared before their revision for the first printed edition. A detailed preface and critical commentary by the editor is given in both Czech and English. The generous Facsimiles section includes, among other documents, all extant drafts of the works.

String Quartet No. 4, H 256 (1937) was a result of the commission from Čestmír Puc, an important Parisian industrialist and patron of the arts of Czech origin. Martinů supervised the private premiere on 13 June 1938 and a professional recording of his work on the day after the premiere by the Lejeune Quartet. The fair copy of the autograph score was given by the composer to Čestmír Puc, in whose possession it remained permanently. Puc had it bound in a hard, decorated leather cover with a frontispiece with a colour illustration by František Kupka. The original plan to have Melantrich publish the *String Quartet No. 4* did not come to fruition. It was not until between May 1957 and July 1958 that Šafránek obtained a microfilm of the score from the Puc family, from which he made a copy of the work. In 1963 the State Music Publishers (Státní hudební vydavatelství) in Prague published the *String Quartet No. 4* (score and parts), using the microfilm reproduction



as the basis for their edition. The first edition omitted the work's dedication to Helena Pucová. The present edition corrects this and other errors, giving the text of the dedication in its entirety. As the autograph represents the only preserved source made with the composer's direct involvement, it has been chosen as the main source for this edition.

How strongly the composer's affair with his pupil Vítězslava Kaprálová was reflected in the *String Quartet No. 5, H 268* (1938) can be gleaned from drafts of the work, including the hitherto unknown fragment of the draft of the first c. 20 bars of the original introduction to the first movement, and especially the complete draft.

Martinů offered the piece to the Belgian Pro Arte Quartet, which according to two indirect accounts played the world premiere on 30 June 1938 in Hertz Concert Hall at the University of California, Los Angeles. During the Second World War the score remained in Europe, and the composer found it in September 1955 in his archives in Vieux-Moulin. It was originally to have been published by Melantrich, but Martinů asked for the rights to the work to be waived. The first printed edition of the score and parts was published by SNKLHU in 1959. The composer took part in preparing the edition to a certain extent, but he did not see the published score before his death in August 1959.



Stamic Quartet

PHOTOS VOJTĚCH JOUZA

launch of the fifth volume of the bohuslav martinů complete edition

THE DIRECTOR of the Bohuslav Martinů Institute Aleš Březina and violinist and composer Pravoslav Kohout launched the fifth volume of the Bohuslav Martinů Complete Edition on 6 March. This volume comprises a critical edition of String Quartets Nos 4–7, which Martinů composed between 1937 and 1947. The festive launch took place at the Bedřich Smetana Museum, where the Stamic Quartet performed Martinů's *String Quartet No. 7 (Concerto da camera)*, H 314.

The Bohuslav Martinů Complete Edition makes Martinů's work accessible in professionally pre-

pared critical editions for the first time. Since 2014, two new volumes have been published each year, with a total of 106 planned over the next half-century. So far, the following volumes have been published: *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Symphony No. 4*, *Chamber Music for 6–9 Instruments*, *Bureš Cantatas* and recently *String Quartets II (Nos 4–7)*. The project is prepared by the Bohuslav Martinů Institute with the support of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation and published by Bärenreiter.

"All of the published volumes are now a regular part of concert life, they are used for recordings and are establishing a new standard for the publication

of works by top Czech composers," says of the project Aleš Březina, co-editor of the new volume. The volumes with the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Cantatas*, for example, were used for acclaimed recordings released by Supraphon. The recording of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* with the Czech Philharmonic was named Disc of the Week by BBC Radio 3 last year, and recently the Prague Philharmonic Choir's recording of the *Cantatas* was nominated for the BBC Music Magazine Award in the choral category.

All four volumes that have been published so far have also been appreciated by the scholarly



The festive launch in the Bedřich Smetana Museum

The autograph score has been judged to be the main source for the edition because it served as the engraver's copy for the printing (SNKLHU in 1959) partially with the composer's cooperation, so it contains the composer's final authorized version. Although the degree of Martinů's involvement in the final form of the printed score should not be overestimated, it has been used as a reference source.

Martinů returned to the string quartet genre in 1946 because of a commission from Harvard University in Cambridge, MA. He started composing the *String Quartet No. 6, H 312* (1946) in mid-October, and finished it on 25 December 1946. The premiere took place on 1 May 1947. The revisions to the performance material made in Martinů's own hand are apparently from a later date, possibly from as late as the preparations of the work's printed edition. Martinů offered the *String Quartet No. 6* to Melantrich and signed the contract for the publication on 15 December 1947 in New York.

musicological community. The very first volume – *Epic of Gilgamesh* – received the award of Best Edition from the German Music Publishers Association and positive reviews in the prestigious magazine *NOTES* and the musicological journal *Musikforschung*.

For reasons of illness, the Martinů Quartet was replaced by the Stamic Quartet, which was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque de l'Académie Charles Cros Paris for its recording of the complete Martinů String Quartets. The members of the quartet Jindřich Pazdera (1st violin), Josef Kekula (2nd violin), Jan Pěruška (viola) a Petr Hejný (cello) performed *String Quartet No. 7, H 314*. ■

As a consequence of the communist putsch in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the first printed edition of the pocket score did not come out until 1950, when it was published by the newly founded National Music Publishing House, Orbis. Martinů was not involved with its preparation.

The main source for the present edition is the autograph score, which represents the final authorized version. The parts in a foreign hand have been assessed as a reference source bearing all

the final revisions of the autograph score as well as the later changes to the metronome markings, and the printed score is also a reference source, which clarifies passages with inconsistent articulation markings and adds missing accidentals.

Martinů finished his *Concerto da Camera (String Quartet No. 7), H 314* (1947) on 24 June 1947. Shortly thereafter, he made corrections to the musical text mainly involving altered articulations, but also, to a lesser extent, pitches. The reasons for this unusual title are not obvious, and Martinů never specified them. The Kroll Quartet premiered the work on 10 January 1949 at New York's Times Hall. The publication, offered by Martinů to four different publishers in succession (Melantrich, Boosey & Hawkes, Leduc and finally the Southern Music Publishing Co.) was delayed until the middle of 1958. The composer was dissatisfied with the parts, in which the page turns had not been handled appropriately. The main source for the present edition is the printed score (PS), representing the most complete form in the final authorized version. The autograph score (A), period reproduction of the autograph score (RA) and parts in a foreign hand (PA) were chosen as reference sources. On the basis of these sources, obvious errors have been corrected, as have omissions in markings of articulation and dynamics, but also of pitches, appearing in PS. In addition, RA was used to document selected passages before the last revision of the work. ■

winners of the bohuslav martinů foundation competition 2017

Winners – Cello 2017

- 1st prize: Aneta Šudáková
- 2nd prize: Kristina Vocetková
- 3rd prize: Vilém Vlček

The award for the best interpretation of a Bohuslav Martinů's work and Special prize of the Life of an Artist Foundation (Nadace Život Umělce) for the best performance: Aneta Šudáková

The Viktor Kalabis and Zuzana Růžičková Foundation's award for the best interpretation of a work by Viktor Kalabis: Kristina Vocetková

Jaroslav and Zorka Zich Prize for the best interpretation of a contemporary composition: Vilém Vlček

Winners – Voice 2017

- 1st prize: Zdislava Bočková
- 2nd prize: Lucie Kaňková
- 3rd prize: Ivana Pavlů

The award for the best interpretation of a Bohuslav Martinů's work: Lucie Kaňková

Přemysl Pražák Prize for the best interpretation of a composition of the participant's own choosing: Lucie Kaňková

More info and photos: www.martinu.cz or www.facebook.com/souteznadacebm



▲ Winners in the Voice Category

martinů days /

impressions from the festival by patrick lambert

I REPORTED at some length and in considerable detail on last year's festival after attending ten events. My attendance this year was less complete, since I arrived after the opening pair of choral concerts (5, 6 Dec.) and I was away from Prague during the middle part, causing me to miss five further events. However, my impression was that the dramaturgy of the festival, again expertly devised by the Director of the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation, Professor Václav Riedlbauch, was just as stimulating. It is terribly sad that he did not live to see it come to fruition, having died on 3 November 2017. The festival concerts were dedicated to his memory.

Festival audiences were, of course, treated to a choice selection of Martinů's orchestral, vocal, instrumental and chamber works. In addition, however, the programming allowed us to hear music by earlier Czech masters (Jan Václav Stamic, Dvořák, Suk and Vítězslav Novák), contemporaries of Martinů (such as Jaroslav Křička, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Arthur Honegger, Frank Martin and Václav Trojan), and successive generations of his compatriots. This latter group included Jan F. Fischer, Hurník, Eben, Feld, Raichl, Bláha and Teml, all born between the wars; Milan Slavický, Václav Riedlbauch and Ivan Kurz from the immediate post-war period (all born the same year 1947), and Otomar Kvěch, Ondřej Kukul and Martin Hybler from the following two decades. Whereas in the previous year Ivo Bláha was named composer-in-residence for the duration of the festival in recognition of his 80th birthday, this year that honour went to Ivan Kurz, former Dean of HAMU, who turned 70 in November 2017. We had the opportunity of hearing several of his compositions, some from the 1970s and others more recent, including the premiere of his orchestral piece *Return of the Prodigal Son*.

As previously, the venue for most of the festival events was either HAMU's elegant Martinů Hall or the comfortable new Concert



9 December 2017, Karel Košárek, Stanislava Vavřínek and Pardubice Chamber Philharmonic

Hall of the Prague Conservatoire. It was on the wide stage of the latter that I had my first sighting of Martinů's music: *Sextet for Piano and Wind Instruments, H 174*, which closed the first half of a **7 December concert** of 20th-century Czech music mounted by student woodwind players, conducted by Pavel Trojan jr., the son of the Director of the Conservatoire. This same Sextet had been included in last year's festival, but I felt that this youthful performance was more closely in tune with the light-hearted jazzy elements in this piece, written in 1929. Other works in the programme requiring the piano were Ivan Kurz's *Song from Brittany*, dating from 2003, and Jan F. Fischer's *Seven Letters*, composed in 1971 and addressed to the avant garde ensemble Sonatori di Praga, which had flourished in the early 70s led by the flautist Petr Brock, who subsequently emigrated. Dispensing with the piano, the second half opened with Václav Riedlbauch's beguiling *Flute Book*, an enchanting series of instructional pieces for various combinations of flutes, performed with great skill, concentration and discipline by a group of five young flautists –

a charming way of paying tribute to the departed professor. This was followed by Ilja Hurník's brilliant *Esercizi for flute oboe, clarinet and bassoon* with its witty fugue characterised by rapid repeated notes, a piece from the early 60s well worth reviving. The concert, which demonstrated the high standard attained by students of the Conservatoire, was rounded off by Otomar Kvěch's somewhat neo-romantic *Nocturnalia*, dating from the 90s.

In the previous festival, Prof. Riedlbauch contributed very sympathetic informative notes for the printed programmes, and it is a great pity that he was unable to do this again, since the programme leaflets on sale gave only the composer's dates, no movement titles, and only sometimes the dates of individual compositions, leaving the audience guessing much of the time.

This was not the case however with the concert given the following evening on **8 DECEMBER** in the Martinů Hall by the Academic Chamber Soloists conducted by Leoš Svárovský as part of HAMU's orchestral cycle "The Best".

december 2017

PHOTOS: ZDENĚK CHRAPEK

The booklet (in Czech only) contained not only useful details about the compositions and performers but also a tribute to the late Prof. Riedlbauch written by Jiří Hlaváč, chairman of the BM Foundation Board. The programme included an early piece by Ivan Kurz: *Vivat Kamila!*, a four-movement suite for strings, written in 1973 in celebration of the birth of the composer's daughter and based on an appropriately child-like melody. Then came Dvořák's *Romance*, Op. 11, the solo violin part played rather coolly by Kiriko Omura, and Martinů was represented by his **Serenade for Chamber Orchestra, H 199**, dedicated to his teacher and friend Albert Roussel. For the second half, a very full orchestra was joined by the Kalliope Trio of Prague for the world premiere of Kukul's *Triple Concerto* Op. 50 "Fight for Joy", commissioned by the trio as a counterpart to his *Piano Trio* Op. 39 "Fight with Adversity". It turned out to be an extraordinary, single-movement composition, performed with great conviction and virtuosity by the soloists, highly impassioned and outrageously "larger than life" with its colossal climaxes that swamped the hall. Václav Trojan's *Sinfonietta armonioso* for chamber orchestra from 1970, placed at the end, inevitably proved to be rather an anti-climax, and it has to be admitted that the immense impact of Kukul's new work eclipsed the modest charms of all the other pieces on the programme.

Possibly because of Prof. Riedlbauch's demise, programme details of the festival were announced rather belatedly and not entirely accurately. In the on-line announcement, I was excited to discover that the Trio Bergerettes, who in 2016 had greatly impressed me when they stepped in at a late stage to replace the Bohuslav Martinů Piano Quartet, would be giving a concert in the Martinů Hall on the morning of Saturday 9 December. It turned out that there had been some misunderstanding and the ensemble were giving their recital not as part of the Martinů Days at all, but as part of the Czech Chamber Music Society's season. No matter, I attended it anyway and was very grateful to have been informed about it on the BM Institute's web site since it was quite simply a wonderful concert in which the Mar-

tinů item was the one after which this trio takes its name – *Bergerettes*, H 275. They performed thrillingly, convincing us that the music was well and truly in their blood and bones. The other works, all of them played with style, were Haydn's "Gypsy" *G Major Trio*, V. Novák's "Balladic" *D minor Trio* and a jazzy and very entertaining *Sunset Suite* in six dance movements by 89-year-old Luboš Sluka, here receiving a first performance in its version for

presented their concert under the title "Tribute to Jan Václav Stamic" (marking the composer's tercentenary) in the Martinů Hall. Sadly, there was no more than a sprinkling of people in the audience, though the players could at least console themselves that Czech Radio Vltava was recording the event for future broadcast. Juxtaposed with works by Stamic were two 20th-century compositions sharing the same title: *Sinfonietta giocosa*, the first by Miroslav



13 December 2017, Lucie Kaňková

piano trio as commissioned by the players. The very useful programme booklet included a further tribute to Prof. Riedlbauch, written by Ludvík Kašpárek, dramaturgist of the Czech Society for Chamber Music.

It has to be said that Václav Riedlbauch's charismatic presence and organising energy were sorely missed at the festival events and many of them had a dispiritingly poor audience turn-out. In 2016, he had succeeded in drumming up a much better attendance. This was felt especially on the Saturday evening **(9 DECEMBER)** when the Pardubice Chamber Philharmonic conducted by Stanislav Vavřínek

Raichl, dating from 1996 and receiving a post-humous premiere, the other one being Martinů's sprightly, neoclassical composition, H 282, written in France in 1940, in which the orchestra was joined by the pianist Karel Košárek (who was to give a solo recital of jazz-inspired pieces the following afternoon). The musicians gave of their best, despite the desultory number of people in the audience, and one could not but help noticing the low-key atmosphere to this event.

The next concert I was able to attend took place on the evening of Wednesday **13 DECEMBER**

in the Conservatoire's Concert Hall, featuring the South Czech Philharmonic under their dynamic conductor Jan Talich. I found the programme highly stimulating, opening as it did with a delightfully well-crafted and concise *Serenata Giocosa for Chamber Orchestra* composed in 1965 by Jindřich Feld, a musician who deeply admired Martinů and had been deeply frustrated that the Cold War political situation had prevented him from being his pupil. This was followed by Ivo Bláha's interesting *Passacaglia on a Theme by J. S. Bach for Cello and Strings* from 2011, played with great virtuosity by Michal Kaňka, cellist of the Pražák Quartet. Then came a further early work by Kurz, again for strings: *Summer Music*. After the interval, we heard Milan Slavický's *Morning Thanksgiving*, which begins with an evocation of bird song (maybe the crowing of a cockerel?) and progresses through rising waves of ever-increasing intensity to culminate in the joyous ringing of tubular bells. This is an effective piece by an unfairly neglected composer who would have been 70 in 2017. The evening ended with two Martinů items: the deeply moving final aria from *Ariane, H 370*, most beautifully sung with impressive breath control by the soprano Lucie Kaňková (daughter of the cellist Michal Kaňka), followed by the ever-fascinating *Toccata e due canzoni, H 311*. Again, one has to say that the concert deserved a far larger audience and it was a pity that there was only minimal information given in the printed leaflet, which did not even list the date of Milan Slavický's composition.

The following evening, on **14 DECEMBER**, the newly founded ensemble Martinů Strings, directed by Jaroslav Šonský, presented a cleverly devised programme in the Martinů Hall. The first half juxtaposed two *Double Concertos*, one for flute and piano, composed by Jiří Teml in 2009, the other for flute and violin, H 252, composed by Martinů in 1936. The brilliant flute soloist was Jaroslav Pelikán, who was partnered in the first piece by the pianist Daniel Wiesner. Both soloists performed with impressive virtuosity, and unusually for a flute concerto, the flautist was often required to double on piccolo, which proved to be surprisingly



20 December 2017, Semyon Bychkov with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra

effective. In the Martinů concerto, the flautist was partnered by Jaroslav Šonský, who had arranged the orchestral part for strings alone. However, my impression was that it robbed the music of much of its colour and essential character. The second half presented youthful works by Martinů and his one-time teacher Suk. This was an opportunity to hear a very early composition, written by Martinů in 1907 when he was 17: *Posvícení (Village Feast or Harvest Festival) for flute and strings, H2*. Again, there was no information in the printed programme, but it is my understanding that this was in the performing version prepared for Bärenreiter by Michael Crump. The music proved delightful, as long as one was not expecting it to sound like Martinů. It made me think of Smetana. A beautiful performance of Suk's beguiling *Serenade in E-flat major, Op. 6*, traditionally broadcast by Czech Radio on Christmas Eve (but not this year!), acted like a balm on the proceedings, sending the sparse audience home with smiles on their faces.

On **15 DECEMBER**, back at the Prague Conservatoire the next evening, we were treated to a fine concert given by the Hradec Králové Philharmonic Orchestra under its inspirational conductor Miriam Němcová, which, to my

delight, included Martinů's *Symphony No. 4, H 305*. The concert opened with the premiere of *Return of the Prodigal Son*, recently composed by Ivan Kurz, who had become well-known during the 1980s for his series of orchestral pictures inspired by philosophical and religious ideas. Martinů once declared that there is "always some programme in a musical piece; it reflects the inner life of an artist, his conviction and his conception of the world, his struggle to express himself". Unfortunately, the audience for Kurz's evidently programmatic new piece was offered no information as to the thinking behind it, and I confess to being completely bewildered by the music. I found far more enjoyment to be gained from the next piece, the *Oboe Concerto Op. 26*, by 40-year-old Martin Hybler, who had been a pupil of both Ivan Kurz and Václav Riedlbauch, and had scored great success with this work when it was premiered in the Rudolfinum in 2005. It was inspired by the Moravian Folk Song "Lásko, Lásko", which is quoted very softly during the course of the piece, like some distant, half-forgotten and unattainable dream of the past. The solo part, played with the utmost virtuosity by Vilém Veverka, exploits every possibility offered by the instrument, almost to excess. The oboist enters with a high sustained single note, just as in

Martinů's concerto for the same instrument, only here it is held, with the aid of circular breathing, for an astonishing length of time, and thereafter the general character of the piece is riotous and invigorating. Part two opened with Jaroslav Křička's *Northern Nights*, Op. 14, a cycle of most wonderfully beautiful songs for mezzo-soprano to poems by Konstantin Balmont, translated by the composer's brother Petr Křička. The first of the set, *Albatros*, is perhaps the best known. Its soaring, Rachmaninov-like melody and the overwhelming climactic gradation were particularly well suited to the powerful voice of the soloist Michaela Zajmi. The Martinů connection here was that Jaroslav Křička was a friend and rival, who secured the desirable teaching post at the Prague Conservatoire left vacant by Suk's death in 1935. A thoroughly convincing performance of Martinů's **Symphony No. 4, H 305**, a challenging piece that is not easy to bring off, completed a highly enjoyable concert.

On Monday **18 DECEMBER**, I attended a further orchestral concert, this time given in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum. The collaboration with Czech Radio featured their Symphony Orchestra under the baton of the Polish conductor Michal Nesterowicz in a programme entitled "Winter Dreams", named after Tchaikovsky's *First Symphony*, with which the concert ended. Part one again combined Martinů with his teacher Suk, whose *Fantastic Scherzo*, Op. 25, was followed by an enchanting performance of **the Rhapsody-Concerto, H 337**, in which the viola player Maxim Rysanov was the highly persuasive soloist. It was gratifying to witness how very popular the radio orchestra is with the Prague audience, judging by the storm of genuinely enthusiastic applause that ended the concert.

The final chamber concert of the festival was given in the Martinů Hall by the Martinů Quartet plus distinguished guests: the clarinetist Ludmila Peterková, the harpist Kateřina Englichová and the pianist Karel Košárek. It provided the opportunity of a rare encounter with the mysterious and scintillating **Chamber Music No. 1 for Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Harp and Piano, H 376**, from Martinů's last year 1959. This was followed by Petr Eben's *Piano Quintet*,

composed in the early 90s, a dramatic piece with a fascinating second movement intermezzo scored entirely for pizzicato strings, including piano: the pianist is required towards the end to reach into his instrument and pluck the strings. Part two opened with Feld's *String Quartet No. 3* in three beautifully crafted, brief movements and the concert ended with Vitězslav Novák's *Piano Quintet in A minor* Op. 12. When Novák had sought Dvořák's permission to dedicate this piece to him, his teacher had famously told him to go away and write something better, but I have the feeling that had he had the opportunity to hear the Quintet in a performance as fine as the one given by Košárek and the Martinů Quartet, he would have accepted the dedication with alacrity. Likewise, Martinů, who once declared that he did not and had never liked Novák's compositions, would surely have been converted by this truly compelling performance in which the music attained near orchestral textures. Quite simply, we heard these players on top form throughout the recital, and it was a tragedy and greatly to the musicians' disappointment that the audience was so sparse. People tried to explain to me that there were just too many concerts in Prague during December and that potential audiences had Christmas on their minds anyway. This, however, did not seem to affect the audience turnout so seriously the previous year – perhaps the Martinů Days had been given more aggressive publicity in 2016. It does occur to me that December may not be the ideal month to hold such a challenging festival, even though it ties in with the fact that the composer was born in December; perhaps linking it to the date of his death at the end of August instead could result in greater audience attendance...

These thoughts aside, I have one more event to comment on – the final concert of the Martinů Days festival, traditionally a co-operation with the Czech Philharmonic. The Martinů Days brochure contained some unfortunate misinformation, announcing a programme and conductor quite different to the actual concert given on **20 DECEMBER** in the Rudolfinum. The change was probably necessary because of the death of the orchestra's Chief Conductor

Jiří Bělohlávek. Nevertheless, the event turned out to be an impressive occasion, allowing the opportunity of hearing the orchestra under its incoming chief conductor Semyon Bychkov. The work chosen was the **Double Concerto for Two String Orchestras, Piano and Timpani, H 271**, Martinů's powerful masterpiece written at the time of the Munich crisis in 1938. It received a highly disciplined performance under maestro Bychkov's exacting direction with precise contributions from the pianist Ivo Kahánek and Michael Kroutil, the orchestra's newly appointed principal timpanist. The concert opened with an entertaining piece composed in 1969 by Luboš Fišer entitled *Double for orchestra*, in which march music by his baroque era near namesake Johann Fischer is juxtaposed and finally melded with 20th-century compositional techniques. It is scored for a very full orchestra with prominent brass, so during the protracted platform change, Aleš Březina was interviewed about Martinů by the musical journalist Pavel Ryjáček. Again, the printed programme contained a tribute to Prof. Riedlbauch, one-time Director of the Czech Philharmonic. The second half of the concert was devoted to the huge symphonic poem *Ein Heldenleben* Op. 40 by Richard Strauss. Strauss was not a composer greatly loved by the young Bohuslav Martinů, especially after struggles with his very demanding string writing had caused him to be relegated by Talich to the back desks of the Czech Philharmonic. Needless to say, the present-day orchestra, which demonstrated itself to be in fine fettle under their new conductor's direction, sailed through the difficulties of Strauss' over-bloated and somewhat preposterous ego trip, retaining great clarity even in the loudest and most strenuous moments. ■

director's notes on the completed of bohuslav

/ JIŘÍ NEKVASIL

INTRODUCTION

In August 2017, I was given the opportunity to direct a film adaptation of Bohuslav Martinů's one-act opera *What Men Live By*, H 336. The operatic film builds loosely on the form of my previous three adaptations of short and medium-length theatrical works by Bohuslav Martinů, which I had made some time ago for Czech Television (co-produced by Supraphon). Those were the one-act opera *Tears of the Knife*, H 169 and the mechanical ballet *The Amazing Flight*, H 159 in 1998 and the radio-opera *The Voice of the Forest*, H 243 in 2000. These three projects were (and still are) intended as part of a broader series that interprets the less-frequently staged yet remarkable non-feature-length theatrical works of Bohuslav Martinů through the medium of original (mainly television) films. This loose cycle is entitled "Bohuslav Martinů – Theatrical Bibelots". The prospective dramaturgy of the series includes the film adaptations of the ballets *The Strangler*, H 317 and *On Tourne!*, H 163 (for puppets), the original French-language version of the opera *Alexander Bis*, and the operatic fragment *The Day of Good Deeds*, H 194. None of these works has been filmed before and all of them are partly or almost completely unknown. The shorter durations of the works provide an interesting challenge to the interpretive possibilities opened up by film techniques – possibilities that differ from those available in theatre (although I apply a degree of theatrical stylisation in each of the films). The highly stylised form of opera essentially requires a different approach to adaptation for film than do more naturalistic story-telling. The shorter duration and attractive visual treatment in fact have a greater potential to keep the viewers (even those not used to opera) focused and receptive to more demanding music-dramatic works. For these reasons I regard it as a very inspirational and personally well-suited form for adapting other remarkable twentieth-century works of music and contemporary opera, which opens up an interesting avenue for people to become familiar with them. Furthermore, in live opera



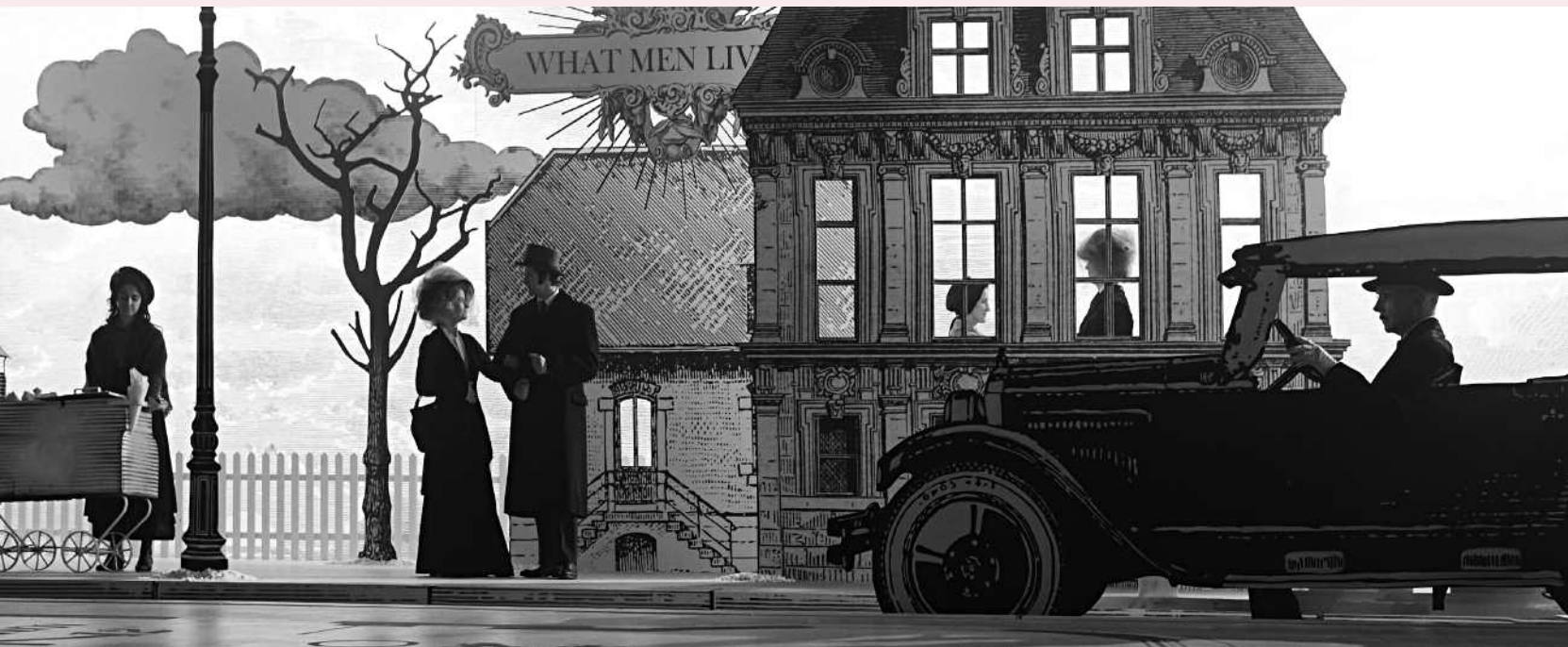
productions, audiences (and theatres) are not too partial to programmes consisting of several shorter operas (regardless of their quality), and so such works are not staged very often. They also present many limitations to the producers, and many of them are more suited to smaller theatres or studios because of their limited cast, which is another impracticality that opera houses often struggle to circumvent. The present concept of operatic films is a way to introduce the work to a much broader audience over a much longer period of time compared to live theatrical productions. The first three opera adaptations enjoyed a very positive reception from audiences and critics alike. *The Amazing Flight* and *Tears of the Knife* were awarded a Golden Crystal at the Golden Prague International Television Festival in 1999, and *Tears of the Knife* also won the Grand Prix and Most Original Direction Award at the Screening Stage Arts Festival in Brussels that same year.

THE FILM ADAPTATION OF WHAT MEN LIVE BY

Despite this success, the next instalment in the cycle – the film adaptation of the opera *What Men Live By* – will be released a full seventeen years later. The reasons were several, including but not limited to the reluctance of Czech

Television to invest in the funding of a highly artistic music project without a co-producer. The main issue was the absence of a recording of the music. For the previous two opera adaptations (*Tears of the Knife* and *The Voice of the Forest*), Supraphon provided new studio recordings conducted by Jiří Bělohlávek to be released on CD and used for the film adaptation (with the yet-to-be accomplished intention of also releasing these films on DVD), while *The Amazing Flight* made use of an older, pre-existing recording conducted by Václav Nosek. For the present adaptation, the main task was to find an optimal way to create a suitable recording, which represented a significant expense in the film's production budget. Supraphon no longer had the interest (or perhaps even the means) to create a studio recording for release on CD in parallel with its use in the film, as in the previous cases. The option of creating a new recording primarily for the film was also considered, although this would have entailed considerable expenses. In the end the opportunity presented itself to use a live recording that had been made during three concert performances in December 2014, with the Czech Philharmonic under the baton of Jiří Bělohlávek. The work had not been performed in the Czech Republic for many years

film adaptation martinů's opera **what men live by**



(the opera had been previously staged in Brno in 1989, for only the second time ever here), and this was the first Czech performance of the work to use the original English libretto. The character of the recording significantly influenced the overall concept of the film. In the previous opera projects (*Tears of the Knife* and *The Voice of the Forest*), the casting of the solo roles was decided in consultation with

Supraphon to ensure that the soloists would be suitable types and actors for the film as well. The singers in *What Men Live By* were cast exclusively by the artistic direction of the Czech Philharmonic with the primary requirement of ensuring the superb quality of both the concert performance and the resulting recording, with no regard for the needs of a potential film, which had not yet been confirmed by Czech

Television at the time. When it was finally decided to produce the film using this recording, I opted to cast actors in the solo roles who would be better suited to the needs of the film both in type and in character. The link between the recording and the film (that is, the people who perform in both) is formed by the tenor Jaroslav Březina in the role of the narrator and by the members of the chamber ensemble Martinů Voices. The casting of the other characters is not conceived as actors playing a singing role with playback (a complete visual representation of the singer including the imitation of his or her song), but rather, in our film the actors play out the situation in the opera in relation to the playback, only synchronising with the vocals in certain important moments and then diverging again. The spoken voice of the narrator (which was interpreted by a different artist at the concert than the sung passages of the role) is only heard off screen.

THE PRODUCTION TEAM

The film's core production team is largely composed of the same people who worked on the previous three films of the cycle. Radim Smetana was the producer from Czech Television, Ilona Jirásková headed production,



Boris Machytka was responsible for the editing, and Miro Gábor was in charge of the camera.

One of the new additions to the principal creative team was the scenographer Jakub Kopecký, who designed the set and art of the film, and even co-authored the film's concept with me. Jakub Kopecký is one of the best current set designers of the younger generation with a distinctive visual style, who mainly works in theatre. Our collaboration on the film was immediately preceded by our joint endeavour at the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre in Ostrava – the production of Benjamin Britten's opera *The Rape of Lucretia*, which was premiered in March 2017. The costumes were created by another new member of the team, Zuzana Krejzková, one of the best Czech costume designers, whom I have worked with regularly since 2004.

For many years *What Men Live By* (completed by Martinů in February 1952) was erroneously described as a television opera, based on a misleading entry in Miloš Šafránek's book *Divadlo Bohuslava Martinů* (The Theatre of Bohuslav Martinů), which states that the first televised performance of the work was in New York in May 1953. The performance is not documented in any way, and the author's own conception and dramatization of the work cast serious doubts on the claim, if not refute it completely. The score of the work contains the composer's theatrical conception in his introductory remarks on the staging (as is the case in other of the theatrical works of Bohuslav Martinů), including a sketched floor plan of the stage together with the location of the choir and the narrator.

THE CONCEPT

The opera is to be performed in the style of a miracle play; both the action of the actors and the setting of the scene should be hinted at rather than depicted in full. The story is demonstrated and not played out realistically. The opera is more of a scenic cantata of sorts, even in its treatment of time. The overall structure of the work is conceived in a similar way; the composer revisits his inspirations by folk theatre, although in a completely different way than in his similarly inspired operas from the 1930s



(*The Plays of Mary, Theatre Behind the Gate*) – not just because of the work's more frugal cast. The composer called the composition an "opera-pastoral" in reference to the musical form of the pastorate – a short cantata with a rural Christmas theme, which was typical in Czech musical culture and especially popular among village teachers in the past. Although there is no mention of Christmas or anything related to the season in the work itself, the overall feeling of the opera strongly evokes the festivity associated with Christmas or Advent. This feeling was experienced by many in the audience, myself included, during the concert performance of this practically unknown opera at the height of Advent in December 2014. The Christmas motive provides a framework that is also fulfilled by our film adaptation. The libretto of *What Men Live By* was written by the composer himself (the opera was originally in English, and English was used for the recording as well) and draws on a short story by Leo Tolstoy titled "Where Love Is, God Is". Note must be made of another oft-repeated error in Miloš Šafránek's book, which gives the title of the source story as "Pohádka o ševci" ("The Shoemaker's Tale"). Both the opera and its source text share a relatively simple plot. The setting is a small town. The poor and lonely shoemaker Martin Avdeitch lives and works in his humble workshop, which is located in the basement of a house. He sees the world through a little window that looks out onto the street, and so he mostly observes the feet of passers-by and the shoes they wear, many of which he has repaired himself – and so he recognises people mainly by their shoes. One day he is visited by a friend, an old farmer and pilgrim, who responds to Martin's pessimistic,

reclusive mood by advising him to search for answers and hope in the Bible. When his friend leaves, Martin opens the Bible at random and begins reading about how Jesus and his disciples visited the rich Pharisee (Luke 8:36–50). He ponders the words from the story and hears a voice, as if Jesus himself was telling him: "Martin, I will come to visit you tomorrow!" The next day, Martin watches and waits to see if Jesus will visit him. He sees an old war veteran sweeping the snow from the street, and he invites him inside to warm up by the fire with a mug of tea; he also invites in and gives food and a coat to a lonely woman with a baby; in addition, he helps mediate a quarrel between a young boy and an old lady about an apple stolen from the latter's basket. The day slowly comes to an end and Martin is sad that Jesus did not come, despite what the voice had promised. In the darkness of his home and his sorrow he hears voices that tell him that Christ had visited him in the persons of all the people he had helped that day. Martin is overjoyed by the realisation and reads a passage from St Matthew's Gospel about the Last Judgement (chapter 25:31–40), where he finds explanation in the text of verse 40: "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

The film was shot at Czech Television's studio No. 4, which is the biggest on-site studio of Czech Television. The designer Jakub Kopecký created a set on two levels. The ground floor represents the small workshop-bedroom of the shoemaker Martin Avdeitch, the opera's protagonist. The first floor contains a view of the street of the small town, which Martin observes through the basement window from

his work bench and where he occasionally intervenes. It is a kind of cross-section of the house, or rather, a part of its basement. The decorations are imbued with several layers of stylisation. The furnishing of the workshop is excessively realistic, full of tools and shoes and shelves with lasts and all the necessary paraphernalia of a shoemaker. The workshop juts out into the street. Each side of the room leads off into a grey corridor – a kind of metaphysical

contemporaneous design aesthetics of the 1950s – an atmosphere that, in its second level of denotation, is to evoke the period when the work was composed. We begin with a shot looking into the room, like a kind of living family photo, in which the father (also playing Martin Avdeitch) is sitting on a couch, with the mother holding a little baby (also playing the Woman and Child) on his left and the grandmother (also playing the Old Woman) on his right; behind

Although the original story is set in a Russian town and the English libretto retains the Russian names of the characters, there is nothing Russian in the music of Bohuslav Martinů. The visual style of both the costumes and the sets suggests a highly stylised reminiscence of early twentieth-century provincial America. The choir is located in another abstractive black-and-white area (its black-and-white background matches the backdrop of the street). The choir is shot along the axis, as if it formed a fourth wall of Martin's room through the commentary it speaks to him. Only for its last performance does the choir enter the street and walk up to Martin's window, where it gazes down upon him as it vocalises the message contained in St Matthew's Gospel (Mt 25:40). Besides the solo roles and the choir, the film includes a cast of 13 dancers and actors who create scenes and situations from life on the street. Their movement is also kept at a stylised level (choreography by Dana Gregorová).

We set out on the path of stylisation when shooting the film itself, influenced in part by the poetics of theatre (the visual design of the sets, the mostly axial composition of the shots). We created film illustrations that draw on the music, and much of the rhythmic and semantic aspects are attributed to the editing.

In closing I would like to express my gratitude for the wonderful support provided by the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation and its director at the time, Professor Václav Riedlbauch (1947–2017). We dedicated the film to the memory of the great Czech conductor Jiří Bělohávek (1946–2017), the conductor of the recording that served as the basis of the film. If I am not mistaken, it was also Jiří Bělohávek's last operatic recording. I trust that the effort we put into the visualisation of Martinů's opera-pastoral *What Men Live By* will be appreciated by the audience and that it will immerse them in a beautiful world and help promote this remarkable opera, which is still one of the least known works of Bohuslav Martinů's brilliant musical-theatrical oeuvre. ■

Jiří Nekvasil is a director of the film adaptation of Bohuslav Martinů's opera What Men Live By



space. On one side it serves as Martin's path out into the world and back again. On the other side, it leads to his bed. Martin leaves the realistic setting of his workshop and traverses the long grey corridor to enter a dark, empty space containing a solitary bed. The small, crowded space of the workshop expands into an incorporeal, almost metaphysical world of darkness, which symbolises the grief and loneliness of Martin's soul. The street outside is markedly contrasted – it is stylised as a black-and-white spatial illusion. The flat black-and-white backdrop of the houses is far from realistic – we find ourselves in the enlarged world of a pop-up picture book, as is shown in the opera's overture. The film is introduced by a scene from a completely different environment. It is a stylised living room based on the

them stand the uncle (also playing Stepanovich, the old soldier) and the grandfather (also playing the Old Farmer/Pilgrim). The son (also playing the Small Boy) sits on the floor in the front holding a wrapped present. The first bars of the overture bring us inside the room. The boy unwraps the present – it is a book, which he opens. As the book opens, we see the pop-up illustration inside it unfold – it is the street. We enter the book and slide through a small, illuminated window into the basement workshop of Martin Avdeitch – into the story itself. We return to the living room towards the end of the opera. A view of the room through a Christmas tree depicts the situation as a family get-together at Christmas. The joyful family atmosphere connects with the lonely Martin's sudden joy in recognising the presence of Jesus.

dr. františek popelka turns 85

THOSE INTERESTED in Bohuslav Martinů and his music are surely also familiar with Dr. František Popelka, an ardent promoter of the composer's legacy. This year, he is celebrating a significant anniversary (he was born on 19 February 1933 in Polička). The "Dr." before his name is important for the Polička natives because it distinguishes him from his father, František Popelka sr. (1908-1989), a violinist, bibliophile, museum curator and an "old-school" enthusiast, who too was a great champion of Martinů's music. In order not to be mistaken for his father, Dr. Popelka also signed himself as "Iša", the children's form of his first name.

Already in 1957, the musicology graduate from Masaryk University in Brno conceived the first large Martinů exhibition at the Polička Museum (followed by another one in 1973, and the installation of the updated display in 1984). For a long time, František Popelka jr. worked as an editor for the Supraphon label in Prague. From 1984 to 2000, he served as a musicologist at the Polička Museum, profiling and



processing its ample Martinů collections. Polička's reputation and prestige were markedly enhanced by the revival in 1984 of the Bohuslav Martinů Monument exhibition, marking the 25th anniversary of the composer's death. František Popelka has curated a number of exhibitions and written a plethora of articles. Especially noteworthy is his book *Martinů and Polička*, an exclusive publication that further promoted the artist and his native town alike, and in its own way also demonstrated the author's moral standing – although the manuscript was handed over in the middle of 1989 (before the Velvet Revolution), not a single sentence had to be omitted or replaced when it was published in the spring of 1990. Throughout his life, František Popelka has been an ardent, self-sacrificing promoter of Martinů's music, a bastion of scholarly expertise and a helpful colleague.

He initiated and curated the first few editions of the Polička 555 festival (from 1992) and the Martinů Fest (from 1996) – both of which happily continue to this day.

We wish František Popelka all the very best on his birthday, good health and continued satisfaction!

DAVID JUNEK,
Municipal Museum – Bohuslav Martinů Center
in Polička

THE GLORY of a father may be a shining jewel for the son, but he who seeks honour must attain it for himself...

This holds true in the case of František ("Iša") Popelka (b. 1933), who celebrated his 85th birthday this year, even if the family calling is dynastic and one is afforded the necessary background and acumen at home, which may accelerate the rise to the top.

Iša Popelka's father, František Popelka (1908-1989), who knew all the members of the Martinů family, was an accountant by profession, but he was also a skilful violinist and an ardent promoter of culture. In the 1930s, he began gathering Martinů-related materials, thus laying the foundations for the collection that is currently maintained at the Bohuslav Martinů Centre, part of the Municipal Museum in Polička. By installing the very first independent permanent exhibition at the Museum in 1945, František Popelka sr. established the Martinů tradition. It was he who in 1945 proposed that the square by the Saint James Church be named after the composer, and it was he who in 1947 inspired the reconstruction of the room in the church tower in which Bohuslav Martinů was born and its opening to the public. He organised cultural events and held lectures. In 1948, František Popelka sr. co-founded a music school that in 1949 – after obtaining the composer's consent – was christened the Bohuslav Martinů Music Institute (subsequently, the Bohuslav Martinů Music School). A few years later, the composer's name had to be removed, but in 1988, the 40th year of its operation, it was given the official title the Bohuslav Martinů School of Arts. Popelka's endeavours were thus crowned with success after four decades, and still during his lifetime.

František Popelka jr., who, so as not to be confused with his father, began using "Iša" as his first name, studied musicology at Masaryk University in



Brno. In 1957, following his graduation, he created his first large-scale Martinů exhibition at the Polička museum.

For many years, he worked for the Supraphon label. From 1984 to 2000, he was employed at the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial, processing Martinů-related documents. His relentless efforts led to the publication of the books *Martinů and Polička* (1990, Panton) and *Letters Home* (1996, Mladá fronta). Iša Popelka initiated and compiled the programmes of the first editions of the Polička 555 festival (from 1992) and the Martinů Fest (1996). A keen promoter of Martinů who for decades has striven to present the composer's legacy both at home and abroad, he is a true expert, always ready to give advice and provide help to those around him. Iša Popelka is wholly dedicated to the subject of his interest – Bohuslav Martinů.

Some musicologists grow together with "their" composer to such an extent that it is difficult to

separate the two. (A prime example in this regard was Nejedlý and "his" Smetana.) Iša Popelka is not of this ilk. At the very moment when he entered Martinů's circle, he took up the position of a devoted "secretary", a connoisseur serving his idol with the utmost professionalism, without basking in glory, now and then enduring hardship and the disfavour of those in power (experienced even more acutely by Popelka sr. in the early 1950s), yet unceasingly emphasising the importance of Martinů's music in his own country and beyond.

There are several genuinely profound experts on Martinů's personality and oeuvre around the world. Iša Popelka is one of these. The sheer scope of his work is formidable indeed. He has written dozens of Martinů-related articles, essays, lectures, prepared dozens of music editions and concert programmes. When strength wanes and new enthusiasts emerge, following the footsteps of their predecessors, they can pursue a wide road, as the Popelka family has explored the archives in Polička so thoroughly that the young researchers can simply focus their attention on the documents that are yet to be processed. That which the Popelkas took on has been completed. Iša Popelka has also provided us an example of language that is concise, readable, noble and thoroughly congenial, a mode of expression that serves as an appropriate model for all promoters of Bohuslav Martinů and his work.

Having accomplished his mission, he can certainly be satisfied. With his diligence and love, he can serve as a shining example for all those working to preserve the Czech national legacy. Let us hope that Iša Popelka has many more years left to savour life and the joys it affords, even at a ripe age. ■

IVAN ŠTRAUS

professor václav riedlbauch (1947–2017) and the realities of life

/ JIŘÍ HLAVÁČ

WHEN I WAS BIDDING my last farewell to the distinguished Czech musical and cultural figure at the funeral hall of the Strašnice crematorium in Prague, I thought of the hundreds of perceptions relating to my encounters with him over the past 48 years. Václav Riedlbauch and I became acquainted back during the time of our studies and subsequently we were to meet regularly and work together in a number of cultural institutions. And over the decades, we both came to know the intricate nooks and crannies of human nature within the realities of an artist's life.

Václav Riedlbauch was born on 1 April 1947 in Dýšina, near Plzeň. As a child, he took up the accordion, which he would later on study at the Prague Conservatory with Professor Smetana. From 1962 to 1968, he also studied composition under Zdeněk Hůla. Subsequently, he attended the class of Václav Dobiáš at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, from which he graduated in 1973 with the piece *Symphony with Refrain*. He further honed his skills within residencies in Italy (Accademia Chigiana in Siena) and Poland. Václav Riedlbauch taught at the Prague Conservatory and – until 2016 – at the Faculty of Music and Dance of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

As a composer, he was initially influenced by Janáček, Hindemith and Impressionism, but before long his typical straightforwardness and sonic roundness manifested itself. His music earned numerous accolades in competitions held by the Ministry of Culture. Riedlbauch's most accomplished works include the ballet *Play with Macbeth*, *Allegri e pastorali for Wind Quintet*, *Temptation for Flute and Piano*, *Concerti e trenodi for Wind Octet*, *Deadly Rondos for Orchestra*, *Desire Songs for Tenor and Piano after Poems by Rabindranath Tagore*, *Defile for Organ*, and *The Curtain, Movement for Organ*. In December 2017, Radioservis released the CD *Reminiscence*, featuring Riedlbauch pieces that demonstrate his great creative invention and distinctiveness: *String Quartet No. 1* (performed by the Kocián Quartet), *Parallel to an Old Dutch Christmas Song* (performed by the flautist Jan Riedlbauch and the guitarist Miloslav Klaus), *Cathedrals – Toccata for Organ* (performed by Václav Rabas), *Singing at the Wedding for Female Choir after Sappho* (performed by Iuventus paedagogica), *Stories for Bass Clarinet and Piano* (performed by Due Boemi di Praga), *Concerti*



PHOTO TOMÁŠ VODŇANSKÝ

e trenodie (performed by Collegium musicum Pragense), and *Temptation and Act, Macbethian Analogy for Symphony Orchestra* performed by the Czech Philharmonic, conducted by Václav Neumann). The CD booklet contains my personal tribute to the composer:

"I deem Václav Riedlbauch to be one of the most distinctive and most versatile figures of his generation. Over the decades, he earned general respect and recognition for his compositional, educational, cultural, managerial and organisational activities. He was an artist possessing an extraordinary spiritual potential, erudition, passion and determination, one pursuing his mission with extreme diligence and humility. For five decades, I perceived and admired his work for Czech music, always carried out with an awareness of this music's special position within the global context."

Václav Riedlbauch was an ardent and capable music organiser, dramaturge and educator for many, many years. Hence, a few observations are in order.

His organisational work adhered to an organic system and order. Even though his desk was usually cluttered with printed materials, letters and notes, he would always ultimately deliver what was expected of him and arrange the necessary contracts. A meticulous planner, Václav Riedlbauch did not like chaos and improvisation at the last minute. Much like in his compositional

work, he drew up a framework, a form which he subsequently held to. Starting with a sketch, he further specified its details and it evolved into the final form, which needed no further modifications.

When putting together concert programmes, he drew on his knowledge of the particular pieces and his familiarity with the musicians to whom he could entrust the performance or recording. I was astounded by his knowledge of compositions I myself was not even aware of, as well as his relentless efforts to discover and promote great talent among young musicians. He built the confidence of these young artists as much as possible and would personally make them aware of possible connections and opportunities for future collaboration. He was always able to identify their fortes and limitations alike.

His work as an educator was built on the principles of co-operation. I never experienced him showing the slightest tendency to bossiness. Václav Riedlbauch was one who advised and inspired, and he did not like to hide behind the title associated with his professorship in composition. I attended his seminars, at which he pointed out the specificities, or discrepancies of various pieces, whose creators he, however, never castigated or ridiculed. He served as an example to students by his profound knowledge, his humility and boundless enthusiasm.

As a manager, Václav Riedlbauch encouraged team spirit. He was capable of motivating his colleagues, inspiring, instructing and enthusing them. Whenever I used to visit him at his director's offices at the National Theatre and the Czech Philharmonic, as well as at the Ministry of Culture, I met with a pleasant working atmosphere. Towards the end of his life, Václav Riedlbauch and I shared an office at the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation, where we would discuss our oftentimes divergent opinions and visions regarding the management strategy, yet we never failed to reach agreement as to a way forward. Progress was something that Václav Riedlbauch always identified, sensed, and ultimately achieved.

And in the spirit of the following poem:

"Waiting for the rain, for tomorrow and for Godot.

Waiting for the better within us, for what Saturday will bring.

People while away the time by waiting
So as to perhaps one day understand
That which is given by silent eternity
And by loud solitude."

swedish premiere of the first version of the greek passion, H 372 I

premiere performance:

14 september 2017

wermland opera, karlstad, sweden

SELECTED REVIEWS

the greek passion

It is praiseworthy indeed that the Wermland Opera has been the first in Sweden to undertake the staging of the challenging opera by the Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů. The Karlstad company opted for the work's first version, which only received its premiere in 1999, in Bregenz.

[...] The production features a plethora of refined nuances. Bohuslav Martinů's Neo-Classicist score encompasses numerous styles, including Orthodox chant. Now and then, one even thinks of Benjamin Britten. Nevertheless, the linear musical current seems too often to be disrupted by spoken dialogue or the Narrator in the third person, who was brilliantly performed by Peter Kajlinger.

The excellent cast includes seasoned singers portraying the two priests – the baritone Marcus Jupiter and the bass Johan Schinkler. Splendid too was Carl Ackerfeldt in the role of the kind-hearted, vivacious and naïve postman Yannakos, rehearsing to play Peter's disciple in the Passion Play. He does not ride a donkey, but a velocipede, adorned with a palm wig. Charlotta Larsson lent her wonderfully resonant soprano voice to a highly emotional characterization of the widow Katerina, a village prostitute. Katerina has an ambivalent relationship to the shepherd Manolios, who flounces between his natural human lust and his sacred task, which he sees in his assigned role of Jesus, appearing in his dreamy visions. His identification with Jesus and his almost militant moral stance give rise to aversion on the part of the other villagers, and Manolios is banished as the black sheep of the flock. This leads to his death within the Passion Play. Niklas Björling Rygert presents the role – one could say – in a boldly ideological manner, but, amidst the numerous dialogues and spoken passages, it ultimately provides a certain coherence.

In the final scene, the director lets a mute boy with a broom walk across the stage. His innocence and pure heart serve to highlight the contrast with the deficiencies of the world of the adults. Nonetheless, the idealisation of a child also symbolises

a romanticised view of irresponsibility and childishness. Isn't it a symbol of the present era too?

[...] The comprehensive programme notes inform the audience that the opera is set in a "community house" somewhere in Sweden, which seems to be a somewhat unnecessary symbol. (*The "Folkets hus" is a house providing space for citizens' meetings, study and cultural events, with the main idea being to promote democracy, education and local communities. The institution has existed for over a century, and community houses operate throughout Sweden – translator's note.*) The set might instead have involved premises belonging to a church, which would have been far more logical, as the Passion Play and its preparations are referred to in the very title of the opera. Everything – the secular and religious scenes alike – takes place in a single hall with many doors in the backdrop. The upper floor on the gallery, which represents the Sarakina mountain, is where the life of the group of refugees proceeds. Owing in part to the lighting designed by Fredik Glahn, the setting comes across as rather surrealistic.

The stage director Mira Bartov eschewed a black-and-white interpretation of the piece. The refugees are certainly victims, yet their religious leader threatens to ignite a dangerous situation in the village. The sentimentally conceived figure of the mute boy, who is evidently supposed to function as a good muse and bring the volatile priest to his senses, is an unnecessarily disturbing element.

OPERA, 4/2017, Henry Larsson

not an ordinary refugee wave

The orchestra in full lustre, an accordion, engrossing choruses, glockenspiel, pastoral flutes, church music and extrovert solo explosions. The truly sublime score was heard for the very first time in Sweden, as performed by the Wermland Opera.

The Greek Passion, a work by the Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů, written in the 1950s, proved to be a dark glittering pearl.

[...] The production, directed by Mira Bartov, is set in a community house somewhere in Sweden. This placement, however, does not do the opera any good; it rather obscures the action. And I am of the opinion that theatre directors' now commonly-voiced mantra that "the story should be able to take place anytime and anywhere" results in all the stories being flattened into a pulpous misery.

The libretto is based on a novel by the author of the celebrated book *Zorba the Greek*. A group of refugees seek protection after their village has been destroyed by the Turks. They bang on the doors of their compatriots, who, however, have a plethora of reasons for being afraid, reasons why



Widow Katerina (Charlotta Larsson) and Manolios (Niklas Björling Rygert)

they cannot help the needy, particularly the fear that the Turks could burn down their village too.

Precious few operas take on subjects such as this, which is why I feel a little sad that, in this case, an opportunity has been somehow wasted. Nevertheless, the production is attractive. Gunnar Ekman's scenography reflects the changes in seasons in the changed settings of the tables in the hall, and the proximity to the sea is represented by the feebly glaring faces of the refugees. The grim atmosphere and various transformations of emotions are also stressed by Fredik Glahn's lighting.

The cast was meticulously selected. Marcus Jupiter as the psychopathic priest comes across as almost satanic, Niklas Björling Rygert is a sensitive and suffering Manolios, Carl Ackerfeldt excels as the jovial and opportunistic Yannakos, and Johan Schinkler dazzles as the priest Fotis, roaring when he asks for help for the destitute fugitives. Charlotta Larsson's Katerina is deeply touching in the emotional scenes. This, however, is not an opera with standard arias. The drama would move forward more smoothly were it not

for the spoken passages, which hold back the action – all the more so given that they are in English, as the [first version of the] opera was written for Covent Garden.

EXPRESSEN, 15 September 2017, Gunilla Brodrej

a greek drama for our time...

Although Bohuslav Martinů's opera *The Greek Passion* received its premiere back in 1961 (in Zurich), after the composer's death, only the intrepid have ventured to stage it.

[...] The two creators still vividly recalled the horrors of the Second World War, including the forced mass migration of people, the concentration camps and all the consequences. The Greek Passion is a work that directly reflects the moral dilemmas of our time, the problem of refugees and the problem of humanitarian responsibility.

The story is set in a Greek village whose inhabitants are preparing the annual Orthodox Passion Play. Grigoris, the authoritative priest, assigns the roles, adding moral advice. Over the course of time, the chosen actors begin, in some way

tions. In addition to dramatic situations, Martinů also affords scope to deliberations, contemplations and lyrical passages.

[...] Bohuslav Martinů's operas have not been frequently staged in Sweden. The 1937 work *Comedy on the Bridge* is actually the only one of his operas that had ever been performed here – at the Grand Theatre in Gothenburg in 1954 and in 1971 (as a school performance), and at the Municipal Theatre in Malmö in 1956. In the 1990s, BIS Records released a CD featuring Martinů's orchestral and chamber music in performances by the Malmö Symphony Orchestra.



Priest Fotis (Johan Schinkler), Manolios (Niklas Björling Rygert) and Despinio (Maria Mayer)



Priest Grigoris (Marcus Jupither)



Priest Fotis (Johan Schinkler)

PHOTOS MATS BÄCKER

Nikos Kazantzakis's eponymous 470-page novel was recast in the form of a 40-page English libretto, a fruit of the collaboration between Martinů and the writer himself. The creative struggle with the subject was a lengthy one, and when Martinů finally submitted the commissioned work to Covent Garden, the opera house harboured a host of doubts. As such, the composer was compelled to revise the piece. Later on, *The Greek Passion* would be performed in many places, in Czechoslovakia and other countries across Europe.

The novel impressed Martinů by its depiction of a rural milieu with its attendant ethical and psychological problems, as presented by Kazantzakis. Martinů characterised the book's atmosphere as "myth – fairy tale – play – mystery – dream".

or other, to identify with their respective parts. The tranquil life of the village is disturbed by the arrival of starving refugees, who have been hounded out of their home by the Turks. They beg for help. When one of them dies of exhaustion, rumours spread that he had cholera. The majority of the villagers become frightened and insist that the refugees leave.

Martinů was a thoroughly Czech yet also cosmopolitan composer, playing a "multi-stringed instrument". The mass in the prelude passes over into a peasant celebration of the Resurrection, with the bass of the priest Grigoris replaced by the tumult of the lively throng of villagers. The choruses throughout the opera render easy-to-grasp and often highly impressive mood transforma-

Until this autumn, when the Wermland Opera got together a good ensemble for the production (sung in English, with Swedish surtitles), *The Greek Passion* had never been staged in Scandinavia.

OPUS, 16 September 2018, Carlhåkan Larsén

Wermland Opera Orkester, Wermland Operas Kör, Johannes Gustavsson (Conductor), Mira Bartov (Director), Marcus Jupither (Grigoris), Niklas Björling Rygert (Manolios), Charlotta Larsson (Katarina) a Johan Schinkler (Fotis)

Translated from Eva Ahlen's Czech translation from Swedish / Abridged

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