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A Historical Survey of Czech Music 2

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The date of the transition from the baroque to the classical style in Europe is usually said to be around 1740. The development of Czech music roughly corresponds to this, although in its case the dividing line between the two styles is by no means sharp. Social and musical events flowed at a continuous pace and only after a long lapse of time is it possible to place milestones to mark the border lines of the new style. The difficulties in precise periodization are in part due to the fact that the greatest amount of sources for the investigations of the beginnings of this period in Bohemia are still represented by church music, a sphere highly dependent on non-musical functions and ties: on liturgical ceremonies, on Latin etc. That is why admittedly one can soon speak of a frequent occurrence of the elements of the new style in Bohemia, yet they could flourish only in non-functional instrumental works determined exclusively for being listened to. In the 18th century such music was composed on commission for the music salons of the cultured aristocracy and the equally select *collegia musica* of several monasteries. Here groups of enthusiastic musicians from various social strata – friars, students, town and manor clerks, village schoolmasters, brewers and the like – used to meet to make music for their own pleasure. It was in this and for this milieu that the compositions for small instrumental groups were fashioned in the spirit of the early stages of the new style, which found its representatives among many Czech composers at home and abroad. When later the main trend of the style's development and its social significance began to be transferred to the sphere of symphonic music, requiring the existence of public concert halls and large professional bodies, the Czech composers lost the possibility of keeping up with the leading lights of the musical development. Yet the attempts were not lacking to form a permanent institution for presenting instrumental music in public. So much so that between 1616-18 there existed in Prague the Collegium Musicum performing secular music as well. A hundred years later public musical academies were arranged here under the auspices of Count L. J. Hartig. None of this though could have any lasting impact, because the aristocracy gave preference to their private orchestras. Only since the fifties of the 18th century Prague established – albeit under very modest conditions – the institution of public concerts, which did not become more than occasional supplements to the Prague musical life in the following decades.

Typical of the whole of the 18th century was the “overproduction” of musicians in Bohemia. The intensive tuition of music in schools and the fact that musical talent and skill brought considerable advantages in terms of well-being to even the poorest and under-privileged, led to the expansion of musicality. The talent of the nation that

had no other outlet in other fields concentrated on music. In the course of two generations there was such a surplus of musicians that many were forced to leave the country.

The emigration of Czech musicians reached its climax both in quantity and historical importance as from the forties up to the end of the 18th century. An accomplished musician who was not ready to resign himself to a meagre subsistence as a village schoolmaster and organist, in a lackey's livery or in a friar's frock as a “*praefectus musicae*”, or to the occasional fiddling and strumming in local inns, left for foreign lands. Not few escaped from bondage in this way. Among those for whom warrants for their arrest were issued on Bohemian territory were names that later gained European renown. The violinist František Benda (1709-86) became one of the most esteemed virtuosos, often termed the founder of the north German violin school. Later in his Autobiography he described his adventurous escape in the company of two other musicians to Poland. Jan Václav Stich-Punto (1746-1803) roamed throughout western Europe as the best player in his time of the popular French horn. Both Mozart and Beethoven composed for him. Benda as well as Stich evaded arrest, but Benda's parents were interrogated and Stich's mother – a serf in the service of Count J. J. Thun, later a famous patron of Mozart's – was imprisoned and shackled for her son's escape... Another future friend of Mozart's, the oboe and viola da gamba player Josef Fiala (1748-1816), who made himself known to audiences in Germany, Vienna, Petersburg, Warsaw and so on, was condemned for his first emigration to three years' imprisonment... In spite of this only a slender number of musicians went abroad with the prior consent of the authorities. This was only the case when agents from abroad came to Prague to hire whole ensembles to serve their masters of high social status, who had gained permission in advance from the Viennese court. Thus an eight-member band left Prague in 1767 to enter the service of the Polish Archbishop-Primate, Prince Gabriel Potocký, only some of whom returned home and the rest joined the Polish royal orchestra. In 1765 several musicians in Prague (including the composer Václav Pichl) were won over by Karl Ditters for the band of Bishop Adam Patachich in Hungary; when this group was dissolved some of the musicians continued to play in the Esterházy court orchestra headed by Joseph Haydn. In 1779 the Saxon elector and Polish king demanded the service for three years of one of the three bands(!) belonging to Count Kinský of Chlumec-on-the-Cidlina. The French ambassador to Constantinople, on entering the diplomatic service in 1785, acquired through the representative authorities in Vienna a three-member group of Czech musicians for three years. And so on.

Dozens of Czech musicians served in the bands of Austrian military regiments; in this way such prominent composers as Jiří Družecký and F. V. Kramář-Krommer, later the Viennese court composer, set out on their musical careers. Still other Czech composers were active at the Tsar's court in Petersburg. One of them – Antonín Mareš – later created new specifically Russian horn bands, which when on tour as late as in the thirties of the 19th century roused the interest of audiences in western Europe on account of their unusual sound and the mode of the musicians rendering.

The largest number of Czech musicians were absorbed by imperial Vienna, whence the inhabitants from all parts of the monarchy made their way in search of a good fortune. The Czech musicians asserted themselves in the bands of the noblemen and in theatre orchestras (the brothers Pavel and Antonín Vranický, Vojtěch Jírovec, Václav Pichl and others), the players of wind instruments also found their way into the court band. Leopold Koželuh and František Kramář Krommer even rose to the status of court composers, Jan Václav Voříšek became court organist, Josef Štěpán a teacher of the piano in the ruler's family etc. Jan Křtitel Vaňhal was so successful as a composer – especially of sinfonies – that he was one of the first to make a living as a professional composer without having to serve some aristocrat.

Bohemian musicians in the aristocrats' musical establishments in western Germany enjoyed an equally good reputation. The Bavarian Öttingen-Wallerstein family had estates also in Bohemia and hence nothing prevented him from hiring Czech musicians. The electors of Mainz had such faith in the Czechs that over the years 1724-87 they entrusted the office of court Kapellmeister to them. The first was the French horn player (!) Jan Ondráček (1680-1743), following the death the well-known composer Jan Zach took over and he was succeeded by a German from Bohemia Johann Michael Schmitt. The Palatinate-Bavarian elector ensured his orchestra in Mannheim the reputation of the best European instrumental establishment at a time when he appointed as its director the pioneer of the new style, Jan Václav Stamic; other Czechs played the violin, French horn and other instruments in this orchestra. In 1785 the elector of Köln summoned cellist Josef Rejcha (1746-95) to be the leader and later the director of his orchestra; young Beethoven played in this orchestra under his direction and also the conductor's nephew, Antonín Rejcha, later a famous composer.

A significant group of Czech composers was engaged at the court of the Prussian King Friedrich II in Berlin and in Gotha. It was here that the members of the Benda family, whose emigration is rather noteworthy, distinguished themselves, The eldest son, František Benda, used to sing in the choir of the native village as a boy, later as a student he sang in Prague and then in Dresden. When his voice broke, he returned home and then as a violinist he became a member of a succession of private aristocratic orchestras, which ultimately brought him to Vienna. In order to be free from the degrading position of a lackey, he escaped to Poland, where after a time he was engaged in the Saxony and later the Prussian court orchestra. At the court of Friedrich II he enjoyed such esteem that the Prussian king did not hesitate in complying with the wish of his musician to have the whole Benda family, secret non-Catholics, taken to Berlin in the middle of his Spring campaign in the Czech lands in 1742. Of this numerous Benda family it was Jiří Antonín Benda in particular that won fame with his melodramas.

A Prague miller by trade, Josef Mysliveček excelled in melodic inventiveness to such an extent that at the age of twenty-six he was in a position to decide to go to Italy to compose Italian operas. Almost thirty of his operas were actually produced not only in Italy but also in Prague, Munich and elsewhere in his lifetime. Jan Ladislav

Dusík (Dussek), the son of a village schoolmaster, dedicated the life and work to the piano. At first as a teacher, later as a popular virtuoso he made the whole of Europe his stage: Holland, Germany, Russia, Lithuania, Italy, France and England. He served the Polish Prince Radziwill, the Prussian Ludwig Ferdinand and finally the famous French politician Prince Talleyrand-Perigord. France, where Dusík died, is also connected with Antonín Rejcha (Reicha), a musical theoretician and teacher. His *Traité de melodié* (Treatise on Melody) was published in the course of one century (1814-1911) eleven times and was translated into several languages, as well as his *Theory of Harmony*. Rejcha was nominated a member of the French Academy and a knight of the Legion of Honour etc.

Many Czech musicians had a leaning towards the theatre. They composed and performed for school plays in church schools, they wrote mischievous little skits for carnival tide, and on going abroad they again sought out the theatre. The character of their musical talent and education led the vast majority of these musicians to compose unpretentious merry light operas for the general public. Very popular, for instance, were the comic operas by Benedikt Žák (Schack) (1758-1826), who was also an eminent tenor. His friend Mozart entrusted him with the role of Tamino in the first production of *The Magic Flute*. Also the German operas by V. Jírovec (Gyrowetz) (*Der Augenarzt – The Oculist*, 1811), by P. Vranický, P. L. Mašek and others were staged in German speaking theatres. Vranický's *Oberon* (1790) was for a long time the most successful and from the musical point of view the most mature representative of the type of folk-fairy-tale opera, to which František Vincenc Tuček (1765-1821), for years active in Pest (Hungary) also had a close affinity. In the theatre orchestras in Vienna, in Bratislava, in Pest, in Warsaw, in Ljubljana and elsewhere many Czechs were active, some as opera producers and impresarios, and in the countries of eastern Europe they helped to establish music theatres in the vernacular. Jan Steffani did so in Poland (the opera *Krakowiaci i górale*, 1794), Arnošt Vančura in Petersburg (*Chrabryj i smielyj vitjaz Arkhideich*, to the libretto by the Tsarina Catherine II, 1787), Josef Chudý in Hungary (*Pikko herceg és Jutka Persi*, 1793). Only Josef Kohout (1736-93) strayed into the sphere of French comic opera. His *Le Serrurier* (*The Locksmith*, 1764) was staged in many European theatres and was presented in Czech, German and Swedish translation.

What did those who did not leave the country compose? Local musical production centred on compositions for the needs of the church, still representing the main musical institution in the country. The chief support of church music continued to be – especially in the country -baroque hymn-books. With the exception of large churches in the cities and those of the rich monasteries, the Czech churches mostly had one-manual organs with a modest number of stops and a preferred middle section suitable for accompanying the congregations. The organ compositions based their style mostly on older south German and Austrian models. The precious few noteworthy compositions from this period are connected with the names F. X. Brixi, J. Seger, K. B. Kopriva.

František Xaver Brixi (1732-71) was doubtlessly the most outstanding personality of this period with regard to local church music. He was the son of the Prague schoolmaster and composer, Šimon Brixi. He acquired several years of thorough musical tuition among the Piarists and at the age of twenty-seven he took up the appointment of the most prominent post a musician in Bohemia could have: he became the *regens churi* at the Cathedral of St. Vitus' in Prague. Although he never left the country during his brief life, his compositions were copied and circulated in all the catholic countries of central Europe. The charm of Brixi's extensive works, including oratoria, festive and short masses, litanies and vespers etc., lies in his unique approach in combining and alternating folks-like melodies, teeming with rhythm, with a masterful command of counterpoint. Even in sections of minor extent he provided a variety of expression that continually offered something new to the listener. At the same time the number of his parts was usually small, the authors concentrating on vocal and violin parts. He applied his art of musical characterization in mischievous Latin operas based on the school milieu (his father composed them earlier as well), in which he wittily caricatured the schoolmaster and the disparity between his self-confidence and his actual musical knowledge (*Erat unum cantor bonus; Luridi scholares*).

In spite of this good-natured ridicule from the more talented and more erudite colleague, it was none other than the village schoolmasters, who, through their educational work, made the largest contribution in enhancing the musicality of the Czech nation in the 18th century. Thanks to these people, who had the closest contacts with the ordinary folk for whom and with whom they made music, Czech culture of the 18th century can display, besides the demanding works to Latin texts, also the compositions to Czech texts, written mostly for the Christmas season. The Christmas pastorales, as these compositions were called, regardless of their form or arrangement, enjoyed exceptional popularity. The story of the Nativity here was transposed to the Czech village, the shepherds were changed into musicians, who came to the crib with their instruments to offer the only thing they had in abundance – music. Their joy was expressed by the rich use of folk-dance elements, which in this way unexpectedly penetrated into the church. By the end of the century there appeared Czech pastorale masses, quite defying the liturgic regulations and rather reminding of a musical folk festival. Because of their secular character, the strict reformers of church music in the 19th century (the Cecilian Movement) banned Brixi's pastorales and other compositions from the church repertoire.

In this brief outline mention can be made by name of the only representative of the Czech schoolmasters, whose works soon gained all-national significance: Jakub Jan Ryba (1765-1815). He too was the son of a schoolmaster and in his profession he suffered such mortification at the hands of the local priest and feudal overseers that one day he gave preference to voluntary death. Ryba was an educated man, enthusiastically professing the ideas of enlightenment and rejecting the traditional ridiculing of the "country bumpkin". His attitude as a teacher and composer was guided by a sense of social responsibility and for the national awakening. He

published text-books for youth, including a manual of musical knowledge; since Blahoslav's *Musica* (1558) this was the first book of its kind to be published in Czech. He also composed secular songs and church compositions to Czech texts. His Christmas mass "Hej, mistrě"(Come, Master, Arise; 1796) enjoys exceptional popularity to this day.

Composers living in Prague had better possibilities for asserting themselves. Concentrated around the main Prague church choirs and aristocratic palaces, they formed an influential group, skilfully making use of their social contacts. They taught music in the aristocratic families, to whose members and bands they dedicated their works, composed divertimentos and partitas, sinfonie and concertos and light dance compositions. A representative of this group was the conventional composer František Xaver Dušek (1731-1799), who with his wife Josefina, a celebrated singer, have gone down in history as Mozart's hosts during the latter's stays in Prague. The only great personality of Prague was Václav Jan Tomášek of some two generations younger. A self taught composer and pianist he held a position aside from the Prague musical institutions. Aside, not because he was enchanted by Mozart and Dusik, not because he regarded Beethoven critically and rejected Rosini, but for his broad cultural outlook and for his unconcealed exacting attitude towards music. Goethe held Tomášek in high esteem for the sensitive way in which he put his poems to music; Tomášek's pupils above all prized his thorough theoretical grounding in harmony. Tomášek gave Europe one-movement piano compositions, which he termed Rhapsodies, Dithyrambs and Eclogues, a genre that had no precedent in traditional musical schemes. Following hundreds of patternized classical piano sonatas and variations on a given theme, a free lyrical form appeared, which enabled the ascending romanticism (Schubert) to return phantasy and a rich palette of expression to the world of the keyboard.

The fact that politically provincial Bohemia became in the period of classicism one of the places where this style arose and developed was confirmed by the role it played in the life of the greatest composers of the period. Gluck spent more than twenty years in Bohemia. He went to school here, he was also enrolled at the Prague University. It was here that he embarked on his career as a composer, he wrote his first sinfonie and church music here. It has also been proved that he spoke Czech; though his apparent pupil relationship to B. M. Černošský doubtlessly belongs to the sphere of legends. In the theatre seasons 1749-50 and 1751-52 he was engaged as the conductor and composer to the Prague Italian opera company. His operas *Ezio* (1750) and *Issipile* (1752) had first performances in Prague. It is characteristic for the nature of the Czech public that Gluck's "prereform" operas were successful here, but his *Orfeo*, *Alcesta* and other reform works only penetrated onto the Czech stage in the course of the 19th century.

For the twenty-seven-year-old Haydn the offer made him in 1759 by Count K. J. Morzin to take over the leadership of his private orchestra meant his first significant engagement. It was at the summer residence of the Morzins in Dolní Lukavice near Přeštice that Haydn found his first opportunity to compose a symphony. After not

quite two years Haydn left Morzin to follow up the grand offer made him by Prince Esterházy of Hungary.

Of fundamental importance for the musical repertoire of Bohemia and for its further development was the encounter with Mozart. Prague acclaimed him thanks to the successful performance of the singspiel *Entführung aus dem Serail* (Abduction from the Seraglio) by the K. Wahr company in the newly opened Nostitz Theatre in 1783. The Prague premiere of *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro) in 1786 met with tremendous response. Mozart then received assignments to compose for Prague *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *La clemenza di Tito* (1791). Equally triumphant was *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) performed in 1794 concurrently on three Prague stages: in the German original, in the Italian version, to which J. K. Kuchař composed additional *seccorecitative*s, and in the Czech translation. The enthusiastic acclaim for Mozart's genius, for which the audiences of other European cultural centres – including Vienna – expressed little understanding in those days, proved the high standard of Prague's musical tradition. And the preserved financial statements of the box-office for the season 1793-94 indicate that the Prague Mozart audiences were made up mainly of ordinary folk, who bought the cheap tickets for standing in the gallery.

The extremely intense musical life in Bohemia almost throughout the 18th century was in striking disproportion to the subdued activities in many other cultural fields, especially in literature. Towards the end of the century, however, a penetrating change began to take place in the social structure of the country, which sooner or later had to undergo a fundamental reconstruction, and this with all the consequences also for the national and cultural life of the country: the centuries long era of feudalism came to an end as the bourgeoisie grew stronger and clamoured for their rights. This all-European process engendered by economic causes, accompanied by the reformatory activity of enlightenment and symbolized by the French Revolution, had its impact on the Czech lands belatedly and not directly, and therefore it took on some specific forms. The barriers set up by police measures and censorship had a long-range effect. The reforms dictated from above by Emperor Joseph II, in an effort to adapt the multinational Austrian monarchy to the new situation, often led to unexpected and even contradictory results. The Emperor's centralistic restrictions, motivated by the interests of the state administration, had unfortunate consequences for the non-German national cultures of the monarchy. The suppression of Czech as an official language in the kingdom of Bohemia, the limitation of the number of grammar schools and the enforcing of German as the tuition language, the knowledge of which became a condition not only for entry into the civil service, but also for taking up an apprenticeship – this all led to the further stifling of the national consciousness, or even to the complete germanization of a considerable number of pupils of Josephine schools. Consequently this brought about a palpable weakening of the narrow stratum of Czech intellectuals, who were vital for the forthcoming process of national revival. On the other hand by abolishing feudal bondage (1781) Joseph II freed the peasants from the fetters of the land and thus unintentionally he created favourable

conditions for the development of the Czech national movement; the shifting of the country folk to the towns in some numbers swelled the ranks of the young Czech bourgeoisie in the course of the decades to come.

Further reforms by Joseph II had a direct influence on music. The abolition of the Jesuit order (1773) and roughly half the monasteries of other orders caused a high percentage of musicians in the country to be deprived of a livelihood. This also caused the education of young musicians to suffer, who in addition were hit by the pressure exerted on them by the educational authorities, now tending to curtail music in schools. The abolition of the Literary Brethren – in 1780 there were still over 120 in Bohemia – was accompanied by a number of other measures limiting music in the churches. Administrative steps meant the liquidation of the traditional performances of great oratorical compositions at Easter. An indirect consequence was also the decline of the old musician guilds. The end of the epoch was signaled too by the fate of the private aristocratic orchestras: in the last years of the century there were already very few. The pressure of circumstances caused the Bohemian nobility to change its mode of life; they began to take more note of economic affairs and music ceased to be a question of prestige. This leaning in another direction was apparent in the case of the Italian opera in Prague, which the aristocracy had hitherto taken under its wing and supported as a display of their privileged interests. After the triumphal success of Mozart's works this stage, moreover, began to suffer from a lack of a suitable repertoire. The majority of theatre-goers now veered towards the German singspiel and the Czech plays with songs. In April 1807 the performance of Mozart's last opera composed for Prague – *La clemenza di Tito* – ended the local era of Italian opera. It had lasted almost continually since 1724 and it was the most important source of new musical impulses for Bohemia.

The German aristocracy and bureaucracy categorically resisted the development of Czech plays with songs both for national and class reasons. This was clearly expressed by a series of bans on Czech performances in the Prague Estates Theatre (1804, 1808 and others). The Czech play with songs was once more thrust aside where it had vegetated since the forties of the 18th century and from where it had tried to penetrate onto the professional stage in the last quarter of the century: it was thrust back onto the stages of make-shift wooden theatres, to suburban inns, to the country. At this time there existed scattered about the country a repertoire of scenes with songs, *intermezzi* and miniature operas often written in local dialects to strengthen the comic effect. These musically very simple works took their themes from the life of the country folk. They ridiculed the rough manners, the imitation of lordly ways, the shoddy work of artisans, the Prussian attacks on Bohemia and so on. After the great Peasants' Rising in 1775 an east Bohemian schoolmaster wrote the Opera about the Peasants' Revolt, faithfully describing the mentality and the failure of the rebels. When at the end of the century a Czech professional opera ensemble was successfully established in Prague and met with enormous response among its audience of the common people with its performances of translated singspiele and original Czech plays with songs (the Patriotic Theatre), it seemed that the way to

setting up a Czech national opera was open. The above-mentioned bans interrupted this development. Also the publisher's V. M. Kramerius' application to be allowed to introduce a cultural column in his Czech newspaper was rejected repeatedly. This explains why at this time all critiques were written in German, as well as the first treatises on musical history in Bohemia. Among critics F. X. Němeček excelled and won international renown as the author of the first Mozart monography (1798). Much valuable historical material was amassed by the Premonstratensian J. B. Dlabáč in his Dictionary of Artists.

The aristocracy, jealously guarding their privileged social position, allowed the establishment of an insignificant imitation of the famous Viennese Tonkünstlersozietät (the Association of Music Artists in Support of Widows and Orphans, 1803-1903), it, however, thwarted the attempts initiated by the bourgeoisie to set up concert and musical educational institutions. Then – more or less forced by popular pressure – the Bohemian aristocracy opened as its prestigious institution the Prague Conservatoire in 1811, the first institution of its kind in central Europe, in many respects copying the Paris model. It was typical that V. J. Tomášek, the erudite teacher and composer, was not appointed to head it, but an unimportant German composer from west Bohemia.

The majority of feudal forms of the musical life in Bohemia did not die out because they failed to fulfil a social function, but again due to interference from without in the form of administrative restrictions. Meanwhile the local bourgeoisie was still too weak and incapable of substituting the extinguished musical institutions for new ones corresponding to the changing forms of social life. There was a particularly perceptible lack of public concerts of orchestral music. As a result of these disproportions the first decades of the 19th century was a period in which Czech music no longer kept up in many fields with the musical developments in Europe.

The structure of Czech society of those days still impeded the formation of a compact and, with regard to types and forms, a fully developed national culture. As yet the forcible confining of vocal production in the vernacular to compositions for the common folk was not conducive to imprinting Czech music as a whole with those characteristics that always follow for music from a conjunction with the national tongue. This severance from the inspiring power of the word and mother tongue did not, however, deprive Czech music of every characteristic feature. Some traits were the direct result of the nature and type of social assignment. This only rarely led the composers towards any large-scale forms, to any skill in elaborating on a musical theme over a long section. On the contrary they were usually commissioned to write works of small dimensions; these works not only corresponded to the social needs, but also to the mentality and aptitudes of the Czech composers. Their natural musical talent was nurtured from their youth by simple dance melodies (see František Benda's memories of playing in inns at dances in his young days), which consisted of the stringing together of eight-bar phrases without modulations. Attention was paid to the melody and the distribution of the accents to suit the needs of the dance. The

listening and performing habits of the majority of Czech composers were formed on this basis, from which their own work emanated later. From the artistic point of view this was rather a primitive technique, especially in comparison with the rich counterpoint of the baroque music, but in the European context it became an aesthetic novelty (roughly as from the thirties of the 18th century), whose more mature forms made a strong impact upon a considerable section of foreign audiences. Jan Václav Stamic was capable in the favourable Mannheim conditions of combining this heritage of spontaneous Czech musicality with the advanced tradition of the Italian opera sinfonia. He not only laid the foundations of the classical four-movement symphony, but what is more of modern symphonic art. He did not excel in the melodious inventiveness of the Italians, nor the Germans' elaborated construction of tonal plans, but he was a pioneer in elevating rhythmic-metric relations to one of the dominant components of composition. He applied the usual Czech stereotype of stressed regular pulsations and at the same time disturbed this metric norm by a whole system of asymmetric accents. The European music so gained an orchestral movement, based on the inner rhythmic-metric, thematic and dynamic conflict, which Mozart and Beethoven made full use of.

In spite of no small effort musicologists have not yet succeeded in defining the individual features of the musical structure of a particular national style. For it was always possible to prove that the cited elements are not the exclusive preserve of a particular nation. Nevertheless the differences of the national musical traditions and styles are beyond all doubts and on listening to such music they are just as recognizable as the characteristics of the personal styles of eminent composers. None of the above-mentioned features of Czech music were a singularly Czech trait; they can all be found in the music of the day among other nations too. The special character of Czech music in the period of classicism is, however, apparent in a summarizing view investigating the whole and comparing it with the musical culture of the surrounding countries. In such a comparison the different manner of performing music must also be borne in mind, for in actual musical practice the music of individual nations is mutually more diversified than can be assumed only by reading musical scores.

The 19th century in Europe was an era of vast social changes and conflicts. These were presaged and inspired by the French Revolution. The structure and the division of political power in many European states was alien to the ideas of national self-determination and democratic rights guaranteed by a constitution as proclaimed by the middle class on the ascent. Therefore revolutionary conflicts were inevitable. Where out-dated feudal relations hampered the progress and expansion of production forces – and this was the case of the multi-national Austrian monarchy – there the conflicts were unavoidable. Whereas England and France broke the monopoly power of their respective aristocracies, and innerly strengthened by the success of the industrial revolutions turned their interests towards the building of colonial empires, whereas 38 states and statelets of the German Bund set their

objective at the unification of the German nation into one mighty entity, which was to include the Austrian Slavs as well, the Habsburgs in their monarchy were incapable of offering anything beyond a convulsive attempt to preserve the state of affairs in the good old style. The emperor, the aristocracy, the police and the whole bureaucratic machinery represented the supports of the conservative regime, which following the state bankruptcy in 1811 was unable to promote the industrialization of the country and keep up with western Europe.

The legal inequality of the nations of the Austrian monarchy – the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Slovenes, Croatians, but also Italians, Hungarians, Rumanians etc.- could not let them rest in a state of passive inactivity, as the rulers would have wished, in this century of nationalism. Of course each of these nations faced a different situation, having experienced a different history, having stocked up a different set of values and having a different social structure. The determining features that left a marked impression on the development of Czech nationalism was that, following two centuries of economic, social and cultural oppression, the nation was insufficiently prepared to accept the ideas of nationalism at the point when they were sprouting in Europe. The nation had been weakened too much. In some respects it was at its very nadir. Before it could assert its political rights, it had to find strength to revive itself from within and prove to Europe its viability even in unfavourable conditions. This prolonged the road to be on par with other European nations numerically stronger.

Great complications and conflicts arose from the existence of the politically and culturally influential German minority, who held the reins of the political representation of the country and who also sought their own solution of the national question in the country. It was the Germans who actually raised the issue, when towards the end of the 18th century – in opposition to the Josephine reforms – they began to revise their attitude to the Viennese central government. The in the main French speaking and nationally fully indifferent aristocracy with its awakened local – not national! – patriotism had but one interest in mind: to defend its hitherto acquired privileges in the country, including the overall power over the subjugated people. Guided by this narrow class interest the Bohemian aristocracy began to point out their historical rights in the Bohemian kingdom and supported the initial steps of research into history. Their Diets were again inaugurated with the traditional ceremonies in Czech, the highest burgrave welcomed Emperor Leopold II in Prague for the coronation in Czech, and so on. The begun study of Bohemian history approached now with enlightened tolerance – headed in the first generation by the native Germans from Bohemia G. Dobner, M. A. Voigt and others – first removed the thick deposit of anti-reformational teachings regarding the condemnable past of the Czech heretic nation. Thanks to the remarkable results, especially in uncovering sources, it soon began to function also among the broad masses as a new fount of national pride. The ensuing development proved that most of the aristocracy had nothing more in mind than to take advantage of this situation to further their own interests by identifying themselves with the historic rights of the country. When the Czech speaking lower social strata began to seize spontaneously on the idea of

national self-determination, most of the aristocracy showed a negative attitude towards this movement, considering themselves threatened as a class.

The process of forming a modern Czech nation was fraught not only with external obstacles such as the resistance of the Viennese government to any kind of reform and decentralizing tendencies, but also with internal obstacles. The Czech middle class, on whom the responsibility for the course of this process lay, since there was a lack of a national aristocracy, (which was an essential difference as compared with the situation in Poland or Hungary) was economically weak, its political thinking was backward and it took a long time before it managed to form its own political leadership in the given conditions. It was more successful in the sphere of science and culture. Linguists in particular made a penetrating contribution by reverting to the written Czech language of the humanistic era and by drawing up a programme to enrich Czech with new expressions from related Slavonic languages, so forming a modern language norm. The five volume Czech-German Dictionary by Josef Jungmann in the thirties crowned this “language” phase of the national revival. Thanks to the successful solution of this fundamental problem the up-and-coming generation was able to extend the national horizon to further spheres, including questions of home policy. An expression of these endeavours was the revolutionary year of 1848.

For Czech music the first half of the 19th century was not a great age. Although the emigrant Czech composers of the classic era still enjoyed some successes (Dusík, Voříšek, Rejcha), at home music lost its firm footing with the changing social situation and with the exception of V. J. Tomášek there was not a single outstanding individuality among composers for several decades. If the Czech musicality was so innerly close in style to that of Mozart’s and Haydn’s, linked to the Italian musical tradition, so that a similarly orientated Czech element could immediately identify itself with it, the acceptant of the supreme Beethoven and later Berlioz, Schumann and other romantics required a considerably longer time in the Czech lands. The widening of the chasm between the works of the protagonists of musical advance and the composing of socially topical music began to appear in almost all European countries, but in Bohemia some local social events accentuated it the more. No doubt a contributing factor was that in the Czech national movement music did not enjoy such a privileged position as for example in the German romanticism. The revival movement did refer to the foreign successes of the Czech musicians of the 18th century as one of the conclusive proofs of the Czechs’ creative ability, but for comprehensible reasons it turned its attention above all to the culture of the language.

Music, which had already lost much towards the end of the 18th century, due to the upheavals incurred in its traditional institutional basis, could not expect the reinstatement of its one-time privileges from the ascending Czech middle class. The new possibilities opening up for poetry, literary and dramatic works, for journalism and for some scientific disciplines, were sound and extremely welcome from the point of view of the national culture as a whole, of course this drained away many talents and diminished social interest in music. This was apparent from the tangible

weakness, or rather complete lack, of Czech music critics and theoretical reflections, which could have served as an effective corrective agent for the limited horizon of the local musical professionals.

The traditional practical approach to music, void of any connection with the inspiring aesthetic or social ideas, was also characteristic for the activity of the key musical educational institutions in the country. The Prague Conservatoire (1811) had on its staff from the beginning a number of distinguished artists and soon they had considerable pedagogic successes to vaunt, especially among graduates of the violin (Jan Václav Kalivoda, Josef Slavík, Ferdinand Laub, Otakar Ševčík, Frantisek Ondříček and others). The Conservatoire's administrative board made up of aristocrats did not receive a subsidy from the Provincial Committee until 1855 and from the central authorities until 1855 – a marked difference as compared with the analogical and younger Viennese institution – and the entire costs were covered by voluntary contributions from aristocrats. Therefore the character of the institution and the composition of the staff had to conform to the ideas of the narrow circle of patrons. So that it was characteristic for the Prague Conservatoire to distrust new artistic tendencies – except when J. B. Kittl was its principal – and to unilaterally orientate itself on the technical aspects of musical rendering, while rejecting the Czech national demands. Although the pupils of German nationality were always a minority at the school, German was the tuition language until the seventies, which had a detrimental effect on the teaching of theoretical subjects in particular (with regard to this critical comments were made in the press as early as 1816!). The Conservatoire supplied mostly foreign orchestras with graduates. Of fundamental importance for the local musical life were the Conservatoire's carefully prepared orchestral concerts, of which otherwise there was a much felt dearth. The needs of the country were better met by the more modestly equipped Prague Organ School (1830), founded by the Society for the Cultivation of Church Music in Bohemia (Verein der Kunstfreunde für Kirchenmusik). Fair enough, its teachers were just as conservative in artistic matters, but considering its mission it took into greater account the requirements of the national culture. Firstly valuable editions of old Bohemian organ compositions came from this milieu, later also the first modern textbooks on harmony, composition and so on in Czech. A marked feature of this Organ School is that a number of prominent composers such as A. Dvořák, L. Janáček, J. B. Foerster and others issued from the ranks of its pupils.

The dominant position among the types of music was maintained by the opera, which was not undermined even by the current social changes. As the audiences varied of course, so the demands put on the opera differed. After the departure of the Italian Company (1807) and after the liquidation of Czech attempts to set up a professional musical theatre, German prevailed on the Prague opera stage. In the interest of box-office successes a German native from Moravia, Wenzel Müller, who had already gained popularity in Vienna with his unpretentious folk singspiele, was appointed conductor. He also presented these singspiele abundantly in Prague, where of course he had to supplement his repertoire with German translations of the operas

by Mozart, Cherubini, Méhul, Grétry, Paër etc. It was only under the energetic direction of the versatile and demanding Carl Maria Weber that in the years 1813-1816 the Prague opera was again raised to the standard of a significant artistic institution. The numerically weak theatre audience of those days, however, did not appreciate Weber's efforts; they almost let Beethoven's *Fidelio* become a flop (1814), they were not impressed by the first performance of Spohr's *Faust* (1816). It was of no avail that Weber engaged outstanding German singers from Vienna. The local musical authorities did not accept among themselves the "intruder" Weber, and the musician disgusted by Prague, left. For the next twenty years the directorship of the Prague opera was entrusted to a solid routinist, the South Bohemian Josef Triebensee. In his time the Prague stage kept in step with the current European repertoire, permanently displayed a good standard of interpretation and to a growing extent offered opportunities to local artists. It cannot be overlooked that from the point of view of *sujet*, opera was then definitely superior to plays in Prague. One essential thing was, however, not forthcoming: original local works. The Biedermeier mentality of the so-called Restoration period, indulging in its neat, conform and unexciting orderliness was no inspiration for artistic works. And so here too it was the idea of nationalism that took on the assignment of a strong creative stimulus.

In the musical sphere the Czech national revival began its era first of all in the composition of songs. This was around the year 1800, closely following the first manifestations of Czech modern secular lyrics. The artistically modest products were welcomed enthusiastically by the Czech society and for a certain time proved to be so satisfying that no need was felt to aim higher. The European wave of interest in folk-songs caught up with this situation. *Práč's* collection came from Russia, from Serbia there was the collection by Vuk Karadžić, J. G. Herder pointed out in a broad context the importance of folk-songs. The three volumed Slavonic Folk-songs by F. L. Čelakovský (1822-27), the Czech Folk-songs by J. Rittersberk (1825), K. J. Erben's Czech Folk-Songs and Rhymes (1862-64), the sizeable edition of Moravian Folk-songs by F. Sušil (1853-60) and other authentic collections, whose series, by the way, is still not complete, drew the attention of the Czech cultural public to the type of musical production, which is the only one to have moved continuously throughout the whole national history without being recorded until the 19th century, but for a few exceptions. What had been ignored for centuries was now in turn greeted with enthusiasm.

Scientific research into the development of Czech folk-songs today knows more than a hundred preserved melodies from the second half of the 15th and the 16th centuries. Naturally the church keys prevailed, but the group of melodies in the major keys have surprisingly much in common with the folk-songs recorded in the 19th century (chordal motion of melody, periodic phrases etc.). In the several thousand melodies and lyrics contained in the above-mentioned collections the stage of development of the folk-songs of the 18th century is above all preserved. From the point of view of themes and functions the spectrum of these songs is extremely broad and shows how song intermingled in all the situations in the life of the people.

We may find here many types of ceremonial songs, further dance songs, lyrical, military, drinking, humorous ones, songs about various professions, socially critical songs commenting on topical events etc. From the musical point of view the folk-song in the Czech lands is divided essentially into two large regions. The line of division running roughly through the middle of Moravia. The determining factor of the western type of folk-song is the musical structure to which the attached lyrics are adapted, proved above all, by the number of texts sung to one melody. Of great influence here was the traditional combining of the Czech folk-song with dancing, which made necessary the regular, symmetric construction of the melody. The structural basis are two-to-four-measure periods joined into bigger units ending with a cadence and mutually replying to each other (corresponding melodies). The major keys strongly dominate. The melody is diatonic, does not modulate, makes use of chordal and scalar progressions. The east Moravian song with its affinity to neighbouring Slovakia stems in the main from the lyrics. The flow of the melody adapts itself to the words (prose melodies) and their rendering and is abundantly ornamented. The song avoids regular schemes, is metrically free and rhythmically irregular; many of the songs have a rhapsodic character underlined in their rendering by rich agogics. In comparison with the Czech song it makes more use of the minor and church keys and modulates often. The specific features of some regions are considerably marked. The east Bohemian and north Moravian districts show some common traits with Poland, the Šumava borderland again with the Bavarian folklore (dances with changing measures, songs with Czech-German lyrics etc.).

The collection, study and popularization of folk-songs and simultaneously the migration of country inhabitants to the towns created conditions for the up-and-coming burghers to carry on uninterruptedly, and now as a programme, the folk-song culture. In fact the imitation of texts and the popular response to folk-songs was such that a new type of so called “folkyfized” song came into being. Art-songs with piano or guitar accompaniment diffused through print became a characteristic part of Czech music from the twenties to the forties of the 19th century. (The publishing of new songs was one of the main tasks of the monthly *Věvec ze zpěvů vlasteneckých* [Wreath of Patriotic Songs] published 1835-39 and 1843-44; its literary supplement was the first Czech musical journal). In the final analysis, of course, the Czech art-songs of this period were more significant from the sociological and ideological point of view rather than from the artistic.

Although some of these songs were termed “romantic” in their time, it seems more suitable to consider them, and with them the whole first half of the 19th century in Bohemia, rather as a preparation for romanticism. Beside the sublime patriotic moods, anacreontic rhymes and sentimental lyric verse, there appear also such themes as “my grave” or “in the churchyard”, but their insipid form do not allow them to be termed as anything more than works with a little pre-romantic colouring. Besides, the negative reaction to the artistically strong launching of romanticism in the poetry of the “torn assunder Byronite” K. H. Mácha (1810-1836) proves that the young middle class did not even have among their literary critics the

necessary sense of appreciation of the new artistic trends. The cult of social entertainment begrudged sufficient space for other themes.

The enormous interest in songs, arias and piano transcriptions was exploited to build up a livelihood for several new music publishers and dozens of private schools where the piano was taught. The results of this publishing and pedagogic activity were applied in the burghers salons and in the dance halls at “patriotic socials”, where new poems were also recited. The century long unity of Czech music with the dance could in these new conditions bring forth an original Czech dance. The polka, whose musical pre-history can be traced back into the Czech past many dozens of years before the period of its social rise in the thirties of the 19th century, spread its way throughout Europe and across the seas. The lithe movement in 2/4 or 4/4 time supplemented the more salon-like Viennese waltz. The name of the dance is connected with the general wave of sympathy towards the Poles, who following the suppression of the revolt in 1830 passed through the Czech lands when emigrating to the west.

The national culture in the process of revival could not, of course, do without its own opera permanently. The Czech drama had shown some success, especially with regard to comedy, the Czech theatre audience had grown in numbers and so the attempt was again made to assert Czech in operas. In 1823 – seventeen years after the Czech performance of the *Abduction from the Seraglio* – again Czech was heard on the stage of the Theatre of the Estates. A group of enthusiastic students and “singers for love”, as the amateurs were nicely called, produced a repertoire piece of the period – Weigl’s *Swiss Family*. The audience’s response was motivated more out of national sympathies, nevertheless this move opened the direct way to the foundation of the Czech opera. After Weigl there followed in quick succession Cherubini’s *The Water Carrier* and Weber’s *Der Freischütz*, Rossini, Méhul, Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* etc. The Czech opera productions also drew the attention of literary circles and gave the impulse to the first big discussions about the specific literary problem: should the opera libretto be translated with regard to metre or stress? It was left to practice to make the decision, and so within a short time a number of opera translations appeared; Mozart’s operas and *Der Freischütz* even in several versions. Here it is interesting to note that the older generation was of the opinion that the opera translation should submit to the music view-points even at the price of a deformation of the language. Josef Jungmann himself in his translation of the *Abduction from the Seraglio* (1825) was guided by these viewpoints, moulded no doubt too by the tradition of performing vocal music in Bohemia in the 18th century, which was in the main church music to Latin texts subordinate to the musical component. In the new social situation when the ideas of nationalism raised the language and its rights to the heights of a social value, the younger generation were opposed to any kind of language deformation and in their theoretical debates insisted that Czech texts be put to music not only with an unequivocal regard for quantity (the length of syllables), but also above all that the stress be respected. The artistic realization of this demand,

which supposed to provide the works of Czech composers with more marked national features, had to wait for Smetana and his contemporary poets.

In 1826 the Czech opera company – in part now a professional body – was in a position to stage the work of its member, František Škroup, a lyrical singspiel with the title role of the Tinker spoken and sung in Slovak. Musically entirely the work of an epigone, it nevertheless fulfilled its basic social mission: an original composition from the pen of a Czech composer in the vernacular became a fact indeed. Following this success, Škroup abandoned his studies of law and accepted the appointment of second conductor in the Estates Theatre. From 1836, when he headed the Prague Opera, he more than once found that his dramaturgic plans went against the grain of the theatre box-office and the authorities. For instance, Škroup presented for the first time in Prague Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1843), but the performance was never repeated. The audience wanted Donizetti. Meyerbeer's *The Huguenots* were permitted to be staged only after the libretto was completely revised in accordance with the demands of the censors and under the new title *Die Ghibellinen in Pisa* (1840). By the end of his employment in the Prague Opera Company (1857) Škroup had also managed to present four of Verdi's operas and three of Wagner's. In the Czech national consciousness he has made his indelible mark with the song *Kde domov můj?* (*Where is My Home?*), from the music to the play *The Shoemakers' Holiday* (1834), which thanks to its popularity has later to become the National Anthem. Otherwise, of course, Škroup's works in no way strengthened the national character of Czech art-music and this also applies to the other composers of this period. The provincial character of the local production was outstripped by the lyrical talent of the composer of church music R. Führer (1807-1861) not counting the aging Tomášek and J. B. Kittl. All this was a scanty yield as compared to the previous period.

A landmark in the further social and cultural development in Bohemia was the year 1848. The mighty revolutionary wave that arose in January with the anti-Austrian revolt in Italy, and in February with the rising in Paris, swept over all Europe. Czech national life too suddenly transferred its stress to the political sphere. The speed with which after the long years of the silencing of political activity two basic political conceptions were formed in the ranks of the Czech bourgeoisie – the liberal and the radical democratic – was conditioned by the preparatory work accomplished by journalism devoted to the arts, too. (At the beginning of 1848 37 magazines, including 17 in Czech, concerned with various aspects of entertainment were published in Prague.) The complications and the mutual criss-crossing of social, national, state and other relations and interests on the European continent helped the old order to such an extent that, when the disturbances calmed down, the only immediate positive result of the revolution proved to be the abolition of the "corvée" (the work of unpaid labour due by the vassal to the feudal lord) in the Austrian monarchy. The risings were suppressed by military force one after the other in Naples, Milan, Paris, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and elsewhere. The monarchs again retracted from the promised reforms tending towards some democratic changes. The

Habsburg absolutism reasserted its rule for further decades. Mercilessly it strangled political and cultural life, spied on people, imprisoned them and had them deported. The irony of history lies in the fact that the politically inexperienced Czechs, following their national interests and trusting the perfidious Habsburgs, in actual fact contributed by their loyalty to saving the shaken Habsburg monarchy in 1848. They were manoeuvred into this position by the outrageous aims of the Pan-Germans – conferring in the Frankfurt Diet – to embody the Austrian Slav nations, regarded as an element without rights, into a unified German grand state, and on the other hand by the threat of the expansion tendencies of despotic Tsarism. Aware of these dangers, the Czech bourgeoisie formulated in 1848 the idea of Austroslavism: the Austrian monarchy, in which the Slavs had a numerical superiority, could be changed by peaceful parliamentary means into a democratic Federal State guaranteeing the same rights to all citizens and nationalities. This idea essentially remained the basis of the political thinking of the Czech bourgeoisie until the disintegration of the monarchy (1918). In spite of the fact that the Emperor and his government put every obstacle in the way of this tendency, they could not, however, prevent the advance of industrialization, which caused an unrestrained disruption of the anachronic feudal relations, engendered the numerical growth of the bourgeoisie and gave rise to a proletariat and in conjunction with it forced a gradual democratization. This included the assertion of the rights of the Czech nation.

The military failures on the Italian battlefields in 1859 brought to an end the centuries long era of absolute rule thrust upon the Czech people by the Habsburgs by the right of the sword after the Battle of the White Mountain. There now began the fruitful period of constitutional life and with it a general flourishing of culture. After the October Diploma of 1860 the concerted activities of various organizations, societies and the press were set in motion. The role played by the choral societies of the day, which were established at an avalanche rate all over the country, corresponded to the traditionally significant position of music in Czech social life. By the end of the sixties there were already 250. Similarly as in the one-time Literary Brethren societies, so here representatives of the middle class came together. The performances of the societies enjoyed great public interest. Their outings and parties accompanied by the inevitable banners and speeches often took on the character of anti-Viennese demonstrations, especially when they took place with the participation of the popular physical training organization Sokol (The Falcon), founded in 1863. The musical repertoire of the choral societies, drawing almost entirely from local works, gradually grew into broader dimensions. In the initial years a vital part of the programme were paraphrases of folk-songs with topical, usually ridiculing, allusions to politics. A similar campaigning mission was fulfilled by numerous compositions, making impassionate and sentimental exclamatory addresses to the Native Land, the Nation etc. Choirs with a tendency to improve their rendering such as the Prague Hlahol Choir (1861), the Beseda in Brno (1860), the Moravian in Kroměříž (1863) built up their repertoire from the refined choral works by Pavel Křížkovský, inspired by Moravian folk-songs. The dramatically inclined choruses by Smetana gave a new,

very demanding orientation to Czech choral works. For many decades to come Czech choir singing, both from the point of view of composition and as a performing art, became one of the prominent branches of Czech music.

In 1863 the Umělecká Beseda was founded, where writers, artists and musicians joined forces and Bedřich Smetana was elected leader of the Music section. This society introduced itself to the general public with a celebration on a grand scale of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth (1864), which was conceived as a demonstration of the programme of the progressive group of Czech intellectuals: to create a national art and maintain a close contact with the top ranking world culture. Smetana, who was responsible for the musical component of the celebrations, assigned as the centre-piece Berlioz' Symphony Romeo and Juliet and added to this his own Shakespearean March. Soon after this the Music Section of the Umělecká Beseda took up Smetana's suggestion to arrange subscription concerts of symphonic music. Another group of the members of the Music Section were commissioned to work on the unification and a complete compilation of Czech musical terminology. An attempt to cultivate a historical continuity of Czech music was the delegation of Smetana to Dresden with the task of studying the works of D. Zelenka. Much credit is due to the musical publishers of the Umělecká Beseda, the Hudební Matice (1871), which concentrated on publishing original Czech works.

For several decades, however, the national cultural life pivoted round the project of the Czech National Theatre. The first application for a licence was submitted to the authorities of the Provincial Diet in 1845. The Parliament, which used its resources to finance in the main the German operating Estates Theatre, rejected the proposal to give equal rights to the German and Czech activities in this theatre and also refused to grant a sufficient subsidy for the building of a Czech theatre. It thus turned the cultural interest of the Czech public into a political issue, experienced from the beginning of the constitutional era with a new intensity and on a national scale. Under the motto "The Nation To Itself" collections were made to erect a grand National Theatre. Thanks to the influence of a group of Czech politicians, eager to strengthen their position by a speedy success, the small Provisional Theatre was built in 1862, not suited to the needs of opera, nor adequate to any national prestige. The orchestra pit had space for only 34 players, a thirty-two member choir could barely move on the stage; thanks to considerable standing room the auditorium could hold over one thousand people. Smetana described this theatre ironically as the "entrance hall to the temple of the muses" or "an operatic rehearsal ground with stage in miniature". For all that it was he, who managed to create the Czech national opera, moreover in several genres, here in these cramped conditions. When in 1881 the National Theatre was at last opened – in this case too the existence of the music preceded the establishment of the institution – the compositions on the repertoire could be mapped out evenly, alternating local and foreign works. Opera then ceased to play the role of imported foreign goods to the Czech lands and became an integral part of Czech cultural life.

The advance of Czech cultural life, including also the fashioning of the national musical style in its entirety, came about in a rankled atmosphere of the Czech-German national conflict. Until then a numerically fairly strong camp of so-called Utraquists, avowing allegiance to both languages and to the ideology of the provincial patriotism, were fast losing ground in bourgeois circles. From the Czech side they were reproached for stagnating and adhering to old forms, and thus virtually contributing to the maintenance of a subservient position of Czech culture. In the course of the gradual polarization of the national groups the administratively influential German camp appropriated almost the entire existing institutional basis, which gave it again and again the possibility to prevail on individuals looking for a lucrative livelihood, but it lost the opportunity of concentrating its adherents around the all-inspiring cause. As opposed to the Czechs, the Bohemian-Germans were incapable of acquiring a unifying idea, neither from the heritage of the country, nor from the German world beyond the frontiers of the Czech lands, for whom they only played the role of an occasional political factor and the owner of capital. A drawback for any systematic cultural work at home was the narrowing basis of their own public and the fact that their best forces were leaving the "Bohemian Province" to integrate with the Austrian or German culture. In spite of this, of course their activity in many respects continued to be of benefit to the local musical life as a whole. While the Czechs concentrated almost exclusively on their national tasks, often understood in a very narrow sense, the moving lights leading the German cultural world turned their attention to the European horizon. They introduced to the Czech lands Liszt, Wagner and Berlioz and many distinguished European virtuosos; their mature musical critique writing served as an example to the Czechs. On the whole they took a negative view of the Czech attempts at all-round cultural independence, which was motivated by fears of forfeiting their privileged position; the German bourgeois press often argued the rights of "der geistig herrschenden Nationalität" (the spiritually ruling nationality). Nevertheless, it was the Czechs, abounding in constructive enthusiasm, who took the initiative in the cultural political activities and artistic questions after the fall of absolutism in the sixties. Simultaneously and paradoxically – the Czech party striving for independence from the Germans, by its concerted observation of or reaction to the German attitude caused itself in many fields – including musical theory, aesthetics and historiography – to be in actual fact in the wake of the German bourgeois conception.

The internationally renowned music historian W. A. Ambros (1816-76) belonged to the group of those who showed an understanding for the Czech cultural endeavours. The mechanism of the ruling power, however, in the end shackled to itself even such a personality. Young Ambros could not make a livelihood with his musicological qualifications, and so, having graduated in law, he was forced to join the civil service. In 1848 he was appointed Attorney General for matters of the press. This man, who during the revolutionary events of that year also signed the joint proclamation of Prague writers on the concord between the Czechs and Germans and a protest against the bill on the press, had to charge two of the signatories of the

proclamation in his new capacity. In March 1849 he charged the journalist Karel Sabina, later Smetana's librettist (*The Brandenburgers in Bohemia*, *The Bartered Bride*); a month later he brought a charge against a leading personality of Czech journalism Karel Havlíček, who thanks to his moving defence was acquitted by the jury. And yet one can find the name Ambros, who also wrote for Czech music journals, among the members of the Society for establishing the Czech National Theatre. He was among the first to recognize Smetana's exceptional talent, whom he termed "the whale in the Czech pond", and Smetana's first opera *The Brandenburgs in Bohemia* was recommended by him for an award in the competition for a new Czech opera (1863). As an official he again gave a high appreciation of Smetana, when the latter applied for the vacated post of Principal of the Conservatoire (1865), but he did not dare suggest him; maybe with regard for the conservative composition of the Board of Directors, maybe because he reproved him for "a doubtful continuation in the musical trends of Liszt". It was in Prague that Ambros wrote his famous *Geschichte der Musik* (*The History of Music*), it was here that he embarked on his career as a University lecturer on the history of music. Then they sent for him from Vienna. Similarly as G. Adler, who was active in Prague later, Ambros hardly touched on the problems of the Czech history of music; both left this theme to younger Czech historians, no doubt conscious that this was primarily the domain of the latter.

A younger friend of Ambros' and later his opponent E. Hanslick grew in time to be immensely prejudiced against the Czechs. His father Hanslick (!) belonged to the circle of admirers of the composer Tomášek. He translated his Czech songs into German and sent his son to him to study the theory of music; young Hanslick even wrote songs to Czech lyrics. In Vienna, however, as an influential critic and aesthete he grew biased against the Czechs, which was shown, among other things, by the repeated pressure he brought to bear on Dvořák to leave the humble Czech milieu and not to compose to Czech but to German texts.

All the positive efforts and Czech ideals of the 19th century are reflected in the works of Bedřich Smetana. A composer, who like other romantics was able to express his inner experiences (e.g. the quartet *Z mého života* [*From My Life*]), who in addition though proved himself capable in a quite unprecedented way of finding a musical form and expression for what his nation was experiencing and striving for. He projected into his ethically great and tragic life all the developing peripeteia of his age.

Born of a middle class family he showed a great musical talent from his early youth, but the road to asserting it was complicated. A German grammar school (there were no others in the country), playing for dances as a student, an enchantment with the polka. A thorough grounding in composition from Josef Proksch, the teaching of the piano in aristocratic families. In 1848 he composed marches and songs for the students' legions, in the fifties he fell under a delusion regarding the Emperor's good intentions towards the Czechs and dedicated his symphony, quoting the melody of the Austrian anthem, to him; the dedication was not accepted. True to the Czech

musical tradition he also experienced emigration; then an easing of the political situation brought him home from Sweden. Again he went in for teaching, he was a demanding music critic, a choir-master, a conductor with a considerable dramaturgical programme, a concert pianist. He applied for a government arts grant; the reference from the chief-of-police, however, characterized him as "ein sehr warmer Anhänger der böhmischen Partei" (a very ardent supporter of the Czech Party) and hence he did not receive the grant (1865). His career as a musician came to a climax in the years 1866-1874, when he headed the Prague opera company. Sudden and complete deafness forced him to retire, but his potentials as a composer did not suffer.

Smetana adored Mozart, admired Berlioz and Chopin, and highly respected Liszt, with whom he maintained friendly ties for many years. He travelled to Munich to see Wagner's new operas, was particularly enthralled by *Tristan*, yet avoided actually meeting the composer. Apart from Liszt's influence on his first symphonic poems, we cannot find any signs of Smetana's submission to foreign examples. He did not imitate. He made some concessions to his audiences, but never was he obsequious and his art cannot be merely narrowed down to national viewpoints, having just local validity. His superbly acquired technique, exceptional sense for the style of each work, polished aesthetic criteria, progressive artistic orientation and exacting standard made him a personality rising high above the Prague horizon. Since he rejected any sciolist theory of composing national operas by imitating folk-songs and advocated the ideal of a musical drama, he was declared an alien, a Wagnerian etc. by influential conservatives. Yet his deep rootedness in the local musical tradition is evident, which does not only apply to his *Czech Dances*. Points of contact with the works of Dusík and Tomášek were mediated through the piano; the use of the Hussite Chorale in several instances, on which he also based the finale of his opera *Libuše*, is the outcome of his orientation towards the period of the nation's greatness. In his eight operas, taking their themes from national history and mythology, from the life of the country folk and the middle class, in his symphonic poems, piano cycles and chamber works he gave Czech music humour and tragedy, the heroic and the comic and the long lacking monumentality. The Czech national musical style became a fact indeed.

Smetana's works were suitably supplemented by his younger colleagues V. Blodek, K. Bendl, K. Šebor and particularly by the future writer of symphonies and master of chamber music, Antonín Dvořák. Czech music again ascended onto the European forum, this time under its own name. A quarter of a century of a constitutional system was sufficient to enable the national culture to unfold to the full in all artistic directions and genres. It built up the fundamental institutional basis and found a sufficient number of personalities with creative powers in the arts to fulfil all the necessary social functions for the nation as a whole. The age long argument of the foreign ruling stratum concerning the spiritual inferiority of the Czech nation was refuted; it was nothing more than the ideological instrument of class and national oppression. The Czech nationalism of the 19th century does not lose its essentially positive character even in retrospect from the 20th century, which witnessed the most

perverse distortion of the nationalist ideas. This was a defensive nationalism of a small nation striving to save its very existence and the values it had created. An illustration is the climax of the national festive opera containing Libuše's prophecy: "My dear Czech nation shall not perish..." Here there are no desires of conquest, only a faith in the preservation of the nation's existence and the inspiring lesson that this end can only be attained by a small nation through the proliferation of its creative abilities. It of course also applies to Czech nationalism that within its framework social inequalities remained unsolved.

The fact that the continuity of the musical development was interrupted more than once in the Czech lands by interference from without, makes it imperative to search this material above all in the context of social history. In historical retrospection some characteristic features of the hundred year old musical practice of this ethnic entity stand out in the foreground:

- During the major part of its historical existence Czech music was tied to fulfilling various social functions; autonomous aesthetic viewpoints were asserted rather exceptionally.
- The share, of folk music in the total volume of Czech music was greater, its influence on the sphere of artistic music more penetrating than among the majority of west European national cultures.
- The effect of social events caused some musical genres not to be realized in the Czech context, or they appeared belatedly; this shortcoming was usually compensated by intensive activity within the framework of another genre.
- Music had a greater importance for this country and drew upon more talent than in other countries, whose nations were in a position to fully develop their potentials in other fields and in the other arts. In Bohemia music often took upon itself, at least in part, the functions of other strongly suppressed cultural branches and became the preferred field of social activity.
- As music intermingled freely with everyday life during long historical periods, it led to the formation of an animated, spontaneous type of musicality, free from complicated reflections or a speculative approach and capable of a quick adaptation through improvisation.
- The severing of the inspiratory capacity of the word at certain historical periods was compensated for by close ties with the dance, which led to the shaping of characteristic habits in composition and in interpretation.
- Valid for long historical periods was a preference for certain groups of instruments, especially the melodious instruments such as the strings and the winds, which is no doubt connected with the position of the song in Czech music.

- Being anchored down to a humble milieu with modest means at its disposal fashioned the Czech musical talent to adhere to minor forms, while monumental ones were achieved in isolated cases.
- The values created here were not usually significant for their magnanimity nor for an analytic insight. There was no leaning towards an eccentric stressing of a single component, an overloading of the capacity of musical perceivability. The values of Czech works have entirely human dimensions, lucid and accessible, usually not too sophisticated for the listener, with a preference for the happy medium. There is almost always a closer proximity to genre paintings than to monumental frescos, to the common people than to the sublime, to variety rather than to monotony.