

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

- Czech composer, conductor and critic. The first Czech nationalist composer and the most important of the new generation of Czech opera composers writing from the 1860s. His eight operas established a canon of Czech operas to serve as models for Czech nationalist opera and have remained in the Czech repertory ever since. Such was the force of his musical personality that his musical style became synonymous with Czech nationalist style, his name a rallying point for the polemics which were to continue in Czech musical life into the next century (GROVE).

- The sudden loss of his hearing in autumn 1874 meant that he was forced to give up his place in the theatre.
- Deafness in no way crushed Smetana's spirit or diminished his musical imagination; on the contrary, throughout all the final decade of his life, he took advantage of being able to compose undisturbed. Immediately after becoming deaf, while still in Prague, he completed the first two movements, *Vyšehrad* and *Vltava*, of his symphonic cycle *Má vlast* ('My Fatherland'); the remaining four movements were written in Jabkenice over the next five years. During his final decade he also wrote the two string quartets (the first of which, subtitled 'Z mého života' – 'From my Life', movingly portrays the onslaught of deafness) and other works... (GROVE)

- In the Czech musical and cultural world Smetana gradually became recognized as the chief representative of a Czech national music. This process of equating Smetana's personal style with a national style was consolidated through the second half of the 1870s and continued after his death.
- He is also regarded as the father of Czech opera (first to write operas in Czech, which became a stable part of the repertory of Czech theatre).

- Opening of Czech provisional Theatre: 1862
- 1866 Smetana became the principle conductor of this theatre

Operas (eight)

- 1862-3: *Braniboři v Čechách* ('The Brandenburgers in Bohemia')
- 1866: *Prodaná nevěsta* (The bartered Bride)
- 1868: *Dalibor* (premiered within the ceremony of laying fundamental stone for the National theatre)
- 1869-1872: ceremonial opera *Libuše*
- 1881 : final opening of the Czech national theatre and after the fire again in 1883 (*Libuše*)



Das neue böhmische Nationaltheater in Prag. Nach einer photographischen Aufnahme von J. Seidrich in Prag.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MU3Wqe96paE>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf46A0C3KZU&feature=fvwrel>