

# Czech composers active in the 1st half of the 20th century

- Josef Suk (1874-1935)
- Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)
- Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942)
- Pavel Haas (1899-1944)

## Josef Suk (1874-1935)



„Under Dvořák, Suk graduated from the conservatory in 1892 with his *Dramatická ouvertura* op.4. He was Dvořák’s favourite pupil and in 1898 married his daughter Otilie (Otilka). Simrock had published his *Serenade for strings* op.6 (1892) in 1896 on Brahms’s recommendation and by the turn of the century Suk was regarded, with Novák, as the leading composer of the modern Czech school. In 1922 he was appointed professor of composition for the advanced classes of the Prague Conservatory, where he trained 35 composers, including Bořkovec, Ježek, Hlobil, **Martinů** ... and several others.“ (GROVE)

## Major works by Suk

- Serenade for strings op.6 (1892)
- op.16 suite, *Pohádka* ('Fairy Tale', 1899–1900)
- *Asrael* symphony op.27 (1905–6).
- *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale Saint Wenceslas* for String orchestra (also string quartet version), op. 35a (1914)
- march *V nový život* ('Towards a New Life', op.35c, 1919–20), won an award at the 1932 Olympics at Los Angeles

## Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959)

- „Czech composer. Although he spent most of his creative life away from his native Czechoslovakia, he is widely regarded, after Janáček, as the most substantial Czech composer of the 20th century.“ (GROVE)
- Large operatic work (surrealistic operas, Julietta, Greek Passion after Kazantzakis)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eATLId3SPHM&feature=related>

- symphonic works, concerts etc. (among them 6 symphonies)
- various vocal compositions (solo, choruses etc.)
- Various chamber music
- **Le Jazz (1928) a movement for vocal and orchestra**

## Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942)

- Czech composer and pianist of German descent. Died in concentration camp in Bavaria.
- Wikipedia (eng): „Born in Prague of Jewish-German origin, Schulhoff was one of the brightest figures in a generation of European musicians whose successful careers were prematurely terminated by the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany. Despite making important contributions to the development of European classical music during the early 20th century, their works have largely languished in obscurity, including Schulhoff's.“
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIImo6DutIHA>
- Esquises de jazz (piano)

## Pavel Haas (1899-1944)

Czech composer, born in Brno.

Studied composition at the Brno Conservatory in Janáček's masterclass (1920–22). „Haas took the style of Janáček as his starting point, and came closer to Janáček's compositional method than any of his other pupils.

However, he developed this in his own way and soon achieved a mature individuality in the Wind Quintet op.10, the Piano Suite op.13 and the opera *Šarlatán* ('The Charlatan'). During the German Occupation he suffered persecution on account of his Jewish origin, performances of his compositions were banned, and neither he nor his wife were allowed to work. He was imprisoned in Terezín concentration camp (1941–4), where he continued to compose, including ... the Study for Strings (1943). Haas died in a gas chamber at Auschwitz.“ (GROVE)



## Selected works

### ■ Radio overture (1931)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrzs9z79R2w&feature=related>

(I am sound..., I am wave, bearing the sound... I am microphone... we praise mankind's spirit and are looking for amplion... I am amplion... Bearing in my entrails sound, waves and microphone... and my entrails are by man's hands given to the billions of eustachian tubes... I am the interpreter of continents... )

### ■ Study for strings (1943)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxNSZ47DYA8>