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A Clash over *Julietta*: The Martinů/Nejedlý Political Conflict and Twentieth-Century Czech Critical Culture

Thomas D. Svatos

We know and honor our Smetana, but that he must have been a Bolshevik, this is a bit out of hand. With equal difficulty will we digest that Dvořák was a bourgeois composer and Fibich a proletarian.

Bohuslav Martinů, "On Music and Tradition," 1925¹

This study focuses on the rivaling politics of the modernist composer Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) and the socialist music critic Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878-1962), two of the most important voices in Czech critical culture during the inter-war years. Martinů was a leading proponent for the acceptance of foreign styles and ideas in Czechoslovakia and a significant composer on the American East Coast. Nevertheless, his politics and aesthetics are virtually unknown outside of his home country.² Nejedlý was the dominant figure in twentieth-century Czech musicology and an authority for several generations of scholars, yet his contributions to Czech musical thought have been neglected or misunderstood.³

In order to illustrate how the politics of Martinů and Nejedlý clashed, I focus on the reception of Martinů's surrealist opera *Julietta, or The Key to Dreams*,⁴ premiered at the

For their contributions to this study, I would like to thank Michael Beckerman, Bruce Brown, John MacKay, Jaroslav Mihule, Christopher Norris, and Jon Snyder. Musical examples can be streamed on-line at <http://www.thomasdsvatos.com>

- ¹ Bohuslav Martinů, "O hudbě a tradici" ["On Music and Tradition"] *Přítomnost* (5 November 1925). Reprinted in Bohuslav Martinů, *Domov, hudba a svět [Homeland, Music, and the World]*, ed. Miloš Šafránek (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1966), 99-102.
- ² For a recent study dealing with Martinů's aesthetics from his American years, see Thomas D. Svatos, "Reasserting the Centrality of Musical Craft: Martinů and his American Diaries," *The Musical Times* 2 (2009): 55-70. For a synoptic overview of Martinů's life and works that takes into consideration his checkered reception in Czechoslovakia, see Thomas D. Svatos, "Bohuslav Martinů" *Orel Foundation* <http://orelfoundation.org/> (2009).
- ³ For an introduction to the debates led by Nejedlý, see Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theater, 1900-1938* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 36 ff.
- ⁴ For reference in this study, I rely on Bohuslav Martinů, *Julietta*, piano reduction by Karel Šolc (Prague: Melantrich, 1947). Also see the new critical edition Bohuslav Martinů, *Julietta, ou La clé des songes*, ed. Aleš Březina (Prague: Dilia, 2004). For additional literature on *Julietta*, see Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů: his Life and Works*, tr. Roberta Finlayson-Samsourová (London: Allan Wingate, 1962); Jaroslav Mihule, *Martinů. Osud skladatele [Martinů: the Fate of a Composer]* (Prague: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2002); Vladimír Karbusický, "Der erträumte und nacherlebte Surrealismus. Martinůs Oper "Juliette ou La clé des songes," *Theorie der Musik. Analyse und Deutung. Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, Vol. XIII (Laaber-Verlag: Laaber, 1995), 271-336; Lydia Goehr, "Juliette fährt nach Mahagonny or a Critical Reading of Surrealist Opera." *The Opera Quarterly* xxi/4 (2006), 647-674; Ivana Rentsch, *Anklänge an die Avantgarde. Bohuslav*

Prague National Theater in March 1938, at the twilight of the First Czechoslovak Republic. By this time, both Martinů and Nejedlý had secured firm bases of support in the Czech musical world through which to promulgate their ideas. To promote and realize his opera, Martinů - working from his residence in Paris - could rely on the experimental theater director Jindřich Honzl and the internationally renowned conductor Václav Talich. And to repudiate the work, Nejedlý - preoccupied at this time with his studies on Soviet culture⁵ - could rely on his numerous students; so fervently do Nejedlý's students uphold their teacher's agenda that I shall refer to them here collectively - both teacher and students - as the "Nejedlý School."

The opposing views of Martinů's artistic team and the Nejedlý School will reveal the production of *Julietta* as a battleground for liberalism and socialism, or modernism and thematically inspired art. It was a battle that Martinů won in Prague's wider cultural press, but only for a short period of time, as the Czech discourse on both modernist and socialist art abruptly ended with Nazi Germany's occupation of the country over the next 12 months. And with the onset of communist dictatorship in 1948, when Nejedlý's views came into force as official policy, Martinů's ideas were stifled once again.

It is the goal of this study, therefore, to revisit a debate that was suspended indefinitely by two totalitarian regimes, the second of which lasted until 1989. During the forty-year communist period, it was virtually impossible to discuss Martinů's criticisms of Nejedlý, but even until today, a detailed investigation of their opposing views has yet to be recorded.⁶ Further obscuring this conflict is the fact that Martinů's criticisms of Nejedlý were almost always oblique, an aspect of Martinů's polemic strategy I shall attempt to reveal.

These factors determined the particular style of this study, where I synthesize remote, if not forgotten source criticism into an investigative narrative. My goal, on the one hand, is to make accessible to Anglophone readers an unknown critical world. But I also have in mind today's Czech musical milieu, whose issues on national music have remained largely a private affair and gain little feedback from scholars abroad.

Martinůs Opern der Zwischenkriegszeit (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007); Katrin Stock, "Der Einfluss von Surrealismus und Poetismus auf Bohuslav Martinů und seine Oper 'Julietta'." *Musikkonzepte - Konzepte der Musikwissenschaft. Bericht über den Internationalen Kongress der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung*, Vol. II (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), 677-683; *Das Musiktheater Bohuslav Martinůs im Lichte der neueren Opernforschung*, ed. Aleš Březina and Jürgen Maehder, Kongressbericht Bregenz 1999, Prague 2000 (Berlin: Peter Lang Verlag [in print]); *Der französische Surrealismus im Musiktheater des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Aleš Březina and Jürgen Maehder, Kongressbericht Bregenz 2002 (Berlin: Peter Lang Verlag [in print]).

⁵ See for example Nejedlý's *Sovětská hudba [Soviet Music]* (Prague: Pavel Prokop, 1936) and *Lenin*. 2 vols. (Prague: Odeon-Jan Fromek, 1937, 1938).

⁶ Although I am concerned primarily with how Nejedlý's views were transmitted by his students through their reviews of *Julietta*, I shall cite the following (negative) reviews of Martinů's works by Nejedlý himself: on Martinů's cantata *Czech Rhapsody*, see Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Smetana ix/4* (7 February 1919): 60; on Martinů's orchestral *Half-time*, see Zdeněk Nejedlý, "Druhý večer mezinárodního hudebního festivalu" ["The Second Night of the International Music Festival"] *Kritiky (1923-1935) [Reviews (1923-1935)]* (Prague: SNKLHU, 1956), 104-107. For the short recommendation letter Nejedlý wrote for Martinů in 1910, see Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů. Život a dílo [Bohuslav Martinů: His Life and Works]* (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1961), 57.

Martinů and Nejedlý

With the premiere of his surrealist opera *Julietta, or The Key to Dreams* at the Prague National Theater on 16 March 1938, Bohuslav Martinů, then 47 years old, could take satisfaction not only in the merits of his great artistic achievement: the performance was also a vindication of the aesthetic stance he had taken in the Czech musical world. From his earliest years, Martinů's guiding belief held that the reception of Czech music had been dominated by a metaphysical, "German" ideology which was attuned neither to Czech sensibilities nor the developments of contemporary music internationally.⁷ His battle over the reception of Czech music was an on-going struggle that dated back to the 1920s, when from his Parisian residence he wrote a series of polemically charged essays in which he denounced the Czech critics for their antiquated norms.⁸ But with the staging of *Julietta* at the nation's most symbolic musical venue, Martinů could claim a victory in his attempt to bring full recognition to the modernist paths he felt the most influential critics had dismissed or disregarded.

In his writings from the 1920s - which I shall call his "Parisian" music criticism - Martinů's remarks on "German metaphysics" are vague and unqualified. And it might seem that his generalized references to "the critics" at home would make it difficult to place his thoughts into a specific polemical sphere.

But a number of themes from his Parisian writings might help us contextualize his ideas. First, he was greatly dismayed by the one-sided favoritism given to programmatic expression and the proclivity of Czech critics to appraise musical works on the basis of hermeneutics. According to Martinů, these tendencies had made composers overly reliant on set programmatic narratives, leaving form and musical content a secondary concern. Second, Martinů was also dissatisfied with the unwillingness of critics to relinquish their predilection for romanticism in its tragic-heroic sense, where audiences commiserate in suffering and become inspired by "victory" in the face of overwhelming odds. For Martinů, the consequence of this antiquated ethos was that it encouraged bombastic climaxes instead of the kind of balance and restraint the new idioms required.

⁷ In 1925 Martinů writes: "I am addressing all of my colleagues, but especially the critics, who are now most important above all. For anyone who has followed the critics at work over the past ten years, several things are as striking as they are unsatisfying. Most striking is the effect made by the one-sided and stubborn adherence to one direction, to one branch of aesthetics that completely renounces everything that does not fit within its frame. [...] It is possible to say that a certain 'prescription' has become established for appraising works. It is a direction that has changed its estimations on the same works over the course of time (Debussy, Suk), despite the fact that it imposes its authority as the only possible direction. It possesses all of the characteristics of the old German aesthetic and accepts those works influenced by German culture with impunity and without deliberation; it likewise denounces every form of expression dependent on a different perception. My feeling is that this aesthetic, at the expense of pure music, has deprived us of the joy in music - the cheerfulness and energy of life - through an overt display of the most various psychological complications, through metaphysics. It is self-evident that, over time, false conclusions were made on many matters which became transformed into complete dogma and that it was upon this basis that critical opinion was built and perpetuated." From Bohuslav Martinů, "Ke kritice současné hudby" ["Towards the Criticism of Contemporary Music"] *Listy Hudební matice* iv/6 (1925). Reprinted in Martinů, *Domov*, 41-43.

⁸ See Thomas D. Svatos, "Martinů on Music and Culture: a View from his Parisian Criticism and 1940s Notes," Ph.D. diss. (UC Santa Barbara, 2001), 1-75.

Martinů's Parisian criticism does much to explain his stylistic development during his eighteen-year residence in France. It was during this time that he embraced a vast array of styles and ideas of which each can be seen as a rejection of the programmatic-romantic school, from Stravinsky, jazz, and Dadaism during the 1920s, to neo-classicism and surrealism in the 1930s. Yet while imbibing these streams at the epicenter of the modernist movement, his preoccupation with the critics at home never ceased. In fact, the frequency with which he invokes the Czech critics in his writings suggests that his entire stylistic trajectory during his Parisian years was an aesthetic rebuttal to specific individuals and ideas. Thus, we may ask, who in the Czech critical world during the inter-war period so desperately needed program music and hermeneutics? And what purpose could these vestiges of an ostensibly by-gone era serve?

To answer these questions, we may begin to examine the life and work of Zdeněk Nejedlý. Nejedlý was an influential writer and charismatic lecturer who went to great lengths to define the course of Czech music. Unlike Martinů, who viewed musical creation as autonomous craft, Nejedlý's ideas were deeply political, as he saw in music a suitable vehicle for promoting national and social initiatives. Nejedlý's point of departure was equally historical, as his teleology began with Smetana, Fibich, and the "victories" of modern Czech music, and extended to a number of less-recognized contemporaries such as Otakar Ostrčil and Josef Bohuslav Foerster. The extent to which Nejedlý was an authority in Prague's musical life can be seen by his numerous affiliations and activities. By 1909 he was already a full professor at the Prague University, where he trained many of his future colleagues. He was also the Chair and principal speaker of *The Musical Club*, which sponsored a lecture series for music enthusiasts through which he popularized his ideas.⁹ And several periodicals became an outlet for his views, with his own journal *Smetana* serving as the flagship of his political platform.¹⁰

The importance of Nejedlý in Czech cultural history cannot be underestimated, as he forms a continuous link between the aspirations of the nineteenth-century Czech nationalist movement, early Czech Marxist aesthetics, and - as a minister in the first purely communist Czechoslovak governments from 1948 until his death - the indoctrination of socialist realism as a state-sponsored ideology. I begin, therefore, with an examination of Nejedlý's early music criticism in an effort to reveal the aesthetic foundations of his thought. Here we shall see how Nejedlý appraises not only important Czech composers, but also the leading voices of fin de siècle Europe such as Debussy and Strauss. Next, I will examine Martinů's theatrical project from the 1930s, which was conceived in response to the Wagnerian aesthetic he felt held sway over Czech musical thought. We shall then see how Nejedlý's students interpret Martinů's theatrical works and *Julietta* in particular. The opposing views over *Julietta* shall clarify the aesthetics of Martinů and the Nejedlý School and serve as the diagnostic material for my own reading of the debate over Czech music in general.

In conclusion, I shall evaluate the legacy of Martinů and Nejedlý. Today, despite his emigration to France and exile in America, Martinů's position as the "successor"

⁹ A detailed study of the *Hudební klub* is Petr Čornej, "Hudební klub v Praze" ["The Musical Club in Prague"], *Z bojů o českou hudební kulturu [From the Battles Over Czech Musical Culture]*, ed. Stanislava Zachařová (Prague: Academia, 1979), 117-164.

¹⁰ For an enumeration of journals that supported Nejedlý's platform, see *Dějiny české hudební kultury 1890-1945 [The History of Czech Musical Culture 1890-1945]*, Vol. I, Prague: Academia Praha, 1972, 117.

to Janáček - if not in style but in stature - is for the most part secure. But since the end of communist rule, Nejedlý has not been taken too seriously. In fact he has been largely ridiculed by musicologists for his "narrow-minded" views and censured for deeds many would describe as criminal; among music scholars, of course, he is best known for his life-long project to destroy Antonín Dvořák. My project, therefore, has been to scrutinize the reviews of the Nejedlý School not merely for a common agenda, but for a guiding aesthetic that can be treated dialectically. My conclusion is that such an aesthetic does exist, and that - despite the aversion we may feel towards his politics and demeanor - we must understand Nejedlý as a serious thinker who brought specific contributions to Czech critical culture as a whole.

Nejedlý's Musical Aesthetics

Nejedlý's writings have been estimated at almost 4,000 works,¹¹ from the most trivial on peripheral cultural subjects to the most monumentally conceived, of which most are incomplete. Thus the following exposé does not purport to capture his complete ideology or aesthetic, but focuses instead on a number of key modalities and the general characteristics of his style.

First, the stylistic direction that Nejedlý championed from his earliest years was "Neo-Romanticism," a term offering an interesting case study in the semantics of Czech music criticism. Apart from being a designation for musical production during the second half of the nineteenth century, or a signifier for the desire among composers to embrace theoretical systems in general,¹² neo-romanticism according to Nejedlý is somewhat equivalent to the "New German School," a term more commonly found in the English-language musicological literature. Nejedlý's conception of neo-romanticism does include Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, but within the Czech milieu it was Smetana and Fibich who were its primary exponents, as these composers had managed to synthesize musical and literary genres and had thus raised the expressive potential of music to a more complex, higher sphere.¹³

For having embraced neo-romanticism with their tone poems and melodramas respectively, Smetana and Fibich were championed by Nejedlý for having broken with provincialism and for having followed "progressive" international trends. From outside the Nejedlý paradigm, citing progress in connection with a composer or work might seem shamefully tendentious, but it resounds ubiquitously throughout his writings with confidence and challenge. Indeed, embracing progress raised the premium of a composer's activities: not only were composers to demonstrate a synthesis of music and ideas, but by exhibiting their political views through their works, they were elevated to the center of social debate. In fact, the mission of a "composer of ideas"¹⁴ was to produce statements of political

¹¹ See Stanislava Jonášová-Hájková et al., *Bibliografie díla Zdeňka Nejedlého [A Bibliography of Zdeněk Nejedlý's Works]* (Prague: ČSAV), 1959.

¹² See Jim Samson, "Romanticism," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. John Tyrrell (London: Maxmillan Publisher Limited, 2001).

¹³ This paradigm is discussed by Nejedlý's university colleague Otakar Zich in the aesthician's *Symfonické básně Smetanovy [Smetana's Symphonic Poems]* (Prague: Hudební matice Umělecké besedy, 1924), 1-28.

¹⁴ Nejedlý's notion of the "ideový skladatel," or "composer of ideas," can be also understood as "programmatic composer," or composer of thematically inspired music.

conscience, and staying silent - notwithstanding gaining support from an "incorrect" political persuasion - could result in open rebuke in the journals under Nejedlý's control.

This, in fact, was the fate of the most internationally renowned Czech composer in the years following his death: during the infamous "Battle over Dvořák," which rose to a feverish level during the period ca. 1911-13, the Nejedlý School characterized Dvořák as unintellectual, bourgeois, and reactionary, or the sheer antithesis of modern nationalist aspirations.¹⁵

Rather than reexamining the Dvořák affair, it will be more useful to see how Nejedlý responded to a different challenge to his concept of neo-romanticism and progress: Debussy and "impressionism." Nejedlý's views on Debussy are worthy of note, as the French composer had been Martinů's greatest inspiration before his Parisian years and his first alternative to the influences of the "Germanic musical world." Nejedlý, however, viewed "Debussy's impressionism" in pejorative terms. Nejedlý argued that impressionism was flawed by the fact that the composer seeks to create a musical analogy to painting, which makes its impact immediately and through vision alone, whereas music can only be understood through a chronological succession of events. For Nejedlý, the idea of musical impressionism was a contradiction, since, by default, all music is impressionistic in its momentary effect, but without continuous definition through a stream of ideas, a narrative, or extra-musical narrative, cannot be understood.¹⁶

This is the paradigm that Nejedlý employed in his dismissive assessment of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, which was featured on an orchestral program in Prague in 1909.¹⁷ The work on the same program that most captured his imagination, however, was Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*, and his highly charged commentary reveals much about his style and political priorities:

Richard Strauss's *Eulenspiegel* is the exact opposite of Debussy in its aims. It is music of realistic feeling in its entirety. The music of Strauss stands in opposition to "the exterior," or a mere decorative that lacks true spirit. *Eulenspiegel* is among the best works of this composer: here the music is roguish along with Eulenspiegel, it shouts with him, whistles, laughs, cries, angers people, etc. Once again, is it not the "non-musical," as it portrays "Eulenspiegel," that directly awakens the human spirit? Is it not just the opposite from intervening in the work of a painter? [...] What gives us so much pleasure in "Eulenspiegel" is not the portrait of Eulenspiegel - but the portrait of ourselves.

¹⁵ For an overview of the Dvořák debates, see Locke, 54-58 and Marta Ottlová, "'The Dvořák Battles' in Bohemia: Czech Criticism of Antonín Dvořák, 1911-15." *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 125-133.

¹⁶ For an account of the changing semantics of the term impressionism during this period, see Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, "Impressionismus," *Terminologie der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995), 203-13.

¹⁷ Nejedlý writes, "Sight has the ability to gain an 'impression' all at once. Music, however, is an art that is based exclusively on chronology. In music, I never hear a work all at once, but only its immediate cross-section of this or that moment. My memory only retains what I have heard such that I may recognize the whole. Yet memory does not retain the composition at once, but chronologically. For this reason "impressionism" in the sense of the technique of painting is unnatural, from which follows: a façade. If a composition does not advance, it is not developmental enough and then bores me, for my memory forces me to join together into a whole what I am hearing at the moment, which in itself is for the most part insignificant. See Zdeněk Nejedlý, "V. Novák, C. Debussy, R. Strauss," *Den 20* (20 January 1909), reprinted in Nejedlý, *Kritiky (1907-1909) [Reviews (1907-1909)]* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1954), 405-409.

Here Eulenspiegel is merely a pretext: when we listen to this work we feel in reality that there is a part of Eulenspiegel even in us, that we too sometimes have the desire to whistle, shout, stand on our heads, trip someone up, but with the police, this does not allow for a "good tone." [...] Play "Eulenspiegel" at the beginning of a masked ball and the furor of the Gods will be unleashed. However, paint one-hundred Eulenspiegels, each one better than the next, show this to an audience and it will also laugh, but the effect of Eulenspiegel will not be nearly as strong. For it is *musical* impressionism through which "Eulenspiegel" can turn an audience into a band of rogues and through which the fiery melodies of "The Mute of Portici" could inspire revolution and bring down royal thrones. Is this weak impressionism? And is the impressionism of Debussy strong next to this? Eulenspiegel gave the most fitting response during Sunday's concert.¹⁸

According to Nejedlý's progressive, neo-romantic conception, the "realism" of Strauss's *Eulenspiegel* had been made possible through the composer's effective use of referential gestures, i.e. the music shouting, whistling, laughing, etc. In other words, Strauss had firmly embraced the mimetic potential of musical gestures to trigger concrete interpretations and a socio-political response. With such concrete definition in literary terms, a performance of *Eulenspiegel* could allow listeners to have a vicarious experience and the opportunity to put to use in their lives any lessons the work might provide. This had been made possible by Strauss's "truly" impressionistic style. Thus, regardless of whether he knew anything about the true nature of Debussy's artistic aims, Nejedlý - through his quasi-oratorical style - has subverted the popular notion of impressionism to the one work on the program that could provide the most desirable socio-political reading. And this kind of subversion was commonly practiced by the orthodox musicologists of the Nejedlý School, who - in opposition to those compositions that "remained silent" on issues of national or class conscience - would favor works that could inspire revolutionary sentiment and bring about social change.¹⁹

Martinů's Theatrical Aesthetic

Both Nejedlý's ideas and critical style were anathema to Martinů's thought, and within the Czech musical milieu, there was perhaps no other composer whose values were so diametrically opposed. In his Parisian music criticism, Martinů had already noted the corrupt word-play of the Czech critics, and the public's incomprehension of Debussy was only one example among many where criticism had rendered a disservice to contemporary music.²⁰ Martinů had also remarked on how the politics of music criticism had led composers to prescribe national or socialist themes as a sure recipe for success. On the contrary, Martinů described musical creation as a kind of subconscious assimilation of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See for example Jaroslav Jiránek, "Nepodceňujme morální a politický význam hudby" ["Let us not Underestimate the Moral and Political Significance of Music"], *Hudební rozhledy* xii/14 (1959), 577-78. Here both Auber's opera and Berg's *Wozzeck* are seen as exemplary in the mission of music to bring about social change.

²⁰ In 1928 Martinů remarks, "A phraseology of ideas created an entire system of mutually supporting values. If "a" was said, then without thinking, we would have a plethora of ready-made ideas that were intellectualized to infinity which no one attempted to verify whether or not they are true. [...] It took every effort to rescue a good many works with this system, but in reality, they were rescued only for a certain period of time. It seemed that it would be any day that this system would be struck to the ground. But it has still not been struck down and we find the elements of this critical style in practically every music review and essay." See Bohuslav Martinů, "O současné hudbě" ["On Contemporary Music"], *Přítomnost* (3 May 1928), reprinted in *Domov ...*, 81-85.

experiences rather than a direct expression of ideas in literary terms.²¹ And he became explicit about this notion during his later years, when he warned against musically "conditioned responses" and the "falsified emotions" that frequently result. His thoughts on musical creation are succinctly captured in his article about his cycle of medieval mystery stories *The Plays of Mary* (1933-34), where he writes, "in essence, my principle is very simple, it means not using music to express something music cannot express. [...] In principle, I distance myself from musically "expressing" with all things conscious."²²

This was Martinů's point of departure for just one of his stage works from the 1930s, when he consciously worked towards a new Czech theatrical aesthetic. What this entailed in part was work with materials that pre-dated the romantic era in an effort to "fill in the gaps" of a folk opera tradition that had been restricted largely to fairy tales and village scenes.²³ Resulting from this project was his "singing-ballet" *Špalíček* (1931-32), where he combined in vaudevillian form the children's games, nursery stories, and legends that had been captured in albums from Counter-Reformation Bohemia. Another stage work from this time was his Czech commedia dell'arte *Theater Behind the Gate* (1936), where he employed pantomime and ballet performed by an itinerant theater ensemble in a setting reminiscent of an ancient fair.

A primary concern in all of these works had been to purge from the musical theater vestiges of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which meant working with the music, text, and stage individually rather than merging them together to signify events and emotional states.²⁴ It had become Martinů's view, in fact, that the ideas of the Wagnerian music drama had left opera overly psychological and burdensome to the listener. For this reason he developed a number of distancing devices, including the use of highly disparate elements within the framework of quickly changing scenes. He admits that this technique may disorient the audience in the short term, but gives viewers the opportunity to collaborate with the composer so they may arrange the elements in their minds in a uniquely personal way.

Another vestige of the Wagnerian aesthetic he wished to diminish was the proclivity in libretti and musical settings for a character's psychological development to be the central means by which the narrative unfolds. He explains his particular solution to this tendency in his commentary to *The Plays of Mary*:

The development of a role is not restricted to one personage, or to the actor presenting the role, but is expanded such that it is taken over by a dance performance, or sometimes by the chorus, or directly through commentary which at a given moment takes over the story's narrative through an explanation of the spoken word. Therefore, both the action and plot leap around in a certain way; they are not concentrated on one personage but diverge to the entire stage.²⁵

²¹ See Svatos, "Reasserting ..."

²² Bohuslav Martinů, "Hry o Marii" ["The Plays of Mary"], *Listy Hudební matice* xiv/5-6 (1934-35). Reprinted in Miloš Šafránek, *Divadlo Bohuslava Martinů [The Theater of Bohuslav Martinů]* (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1979), 215-224.

²³ For his own synopsis of his efforts for the stage, see Martinů's 1941 autobiography (written in third person) in Martinů, *Domov ...*, 320-321.

²⁴ See Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů: His Life and Works*, tr. Roberta Finlayson-Samsourová. (London: Allan Wingate, 1962), 159.

²⁵ See Šafránek, *Divadlo ...*, 209.

Martinů had much confidence in his theatrical ideas, but he was often dissatisfied with the artists of the National Theater who were assigned to perform his works. He was particularly disappointed with the stage directors, whom he found encouraging the actors to embellish the narrative with their gestures and through such histrionics attempting to "inform" the audience about the import of certain scenes.²⁶ But with the production of *Julietta*, Martinů could rely on a team of chosen collaborators with whom he corresponded extensively to implement his ideas. Most important among these was the Liberated Theater's stage director Jindřich Honzl,²⁷ his closest conceptual collaborator, and the conductor Václav Talich, who had been recently appointed to the National Theater as its artistic director following the death of Otakar Ostrčil in 1935.

Václav Talich had been one of Martinů's most important supporters since the time Martinů played second violin in the Czech Philharmonic under Talich's direction (1920-23). And it was Talich who premiered and stood by Martinů's *Half-time* (1924), despite the controversy the orchestral work raised when it was largely panned by the critics as being an imitation, if not plagiarism, of Stravinsky's Russian ballets.²⁸

But one of the results of Talich's appointment to the National Theater was the revival of the music journal *Smetana*, which became a primary platform of opposition to Talich's new administration.²⁹ As it had been under Nejedlý's leadership, the newly reinstated journal was once again a leading voice for socialist views on national music, and Talich's activities were constantly viewed with disapproval. For having taken engagements in the past with orchestras abroad, Talich was characterized by the writers of *Smetana* as a "pretentious star-conductor" whose attention would not be fully devoted to the legacy of the

²⁶ According to Martinů's biographer Miloš Šafránek, the composer's irritation came to a breaking point at a rehearsal of *The Plays of Mary*, when the otherwise calm and reticent Martinů launched into a fury of outbursts against the stage director, bringing the rehearsal to a temporary halt. Šafránek does not give details about the histrionics the stage director prescribed, but he does refer to the scene where Sister Pascaline stands on the scaffold between life and death as crucial for an understanding of the composer's approach to the stage. See Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů: The Man and his Music* (London: Dennis Dobson Limited, 1946), 120. In a letter to Václav Talich regarding the production of *Julietta*, Martinů remarked that he would direct the opera himself, as the stage directors currently engaged at the National Theater are weak. See Šafránek, *Divadlo*, 74.

²⁷ Established as an independent ensemble in 1927, the Liberated Theater became synonymous with the acting of the comic duo Voskovec and Werich and the jazzy show tunes of Jaroslav Ježek. During the 1930s the ensemble became increasingly anti-Fascist; it was forced to end its activities in late 1938 due to Czechoslovakia's new subservience to Nazi Germany following the Munich Accord. Honzl was among the ensemble's founders. For a fine introduction to this subject, see Jarka M. Burian, "The Liberated Theatre of Voskovec and Werich," *Educational Theatre Journal*, xxix/2 (May, 1977), 153-177. Martinů's biographer Šafránek writes that the participation in the 1938 production of *Julietta* of the avant-garde, radical-leftist Honzl was protested by factions within the National Theater. See Šafránek, *Divadlo*, 75.

²⁸ For more on the controversies surrounding Martinů's *Half-time*, see Svatos, *Martinů on Music and Culture*, 27-38.

²⁹ The revival of *Smetana* saw ten editions during the years 1936-38 before being discontinued due to the demise of the First Republic. See Marie Svobodová, *Hudební periodika v českých zemích 1796-1970 a na Slovensku 1871-1970 [Music Periodicals in the Czech Lands 1796-1970 and Slovakia 1871-1970]* (Prague: Státní knihovna ČSR, 1979). For a fine study of the politics and culture of the five-and-a-half month Second Czechoslovak Republic that followed, see Jan Gebhart and Jan Kuklík, *Druhá republika. Svár demokracie a totality v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě [The Second Republic: the Contention of Democracy and Dictatorship in Political, Societal, and Cultural Life]* (Prague: Paseka, 2004).

theater.³⁰ Furthermore, economic pressures had recently led the theater administration to raise prices, and it was felt that Bedřich Smetana, the spiritual father of the stage, was becoming the property of the moneyed class.³¹

The revival of *Smetana* gives us the chance to see the Nejedlý School at work in the face of Martinů's theatrical project and *Julietta* in particular. On the day before its premiere, Martinů and Honzl gave a talk on *Julietta* for *The Society for Music Education*,³² and both artists had made several statements in the press about the nature of the opera and the production. Thus, apart from the work itself, *Smetana*'s contributors had a good deal of material upon which to formulate a response. Before turning to their reviews, however, we should first examine Martinů's remarks about his opera, his libretto based on Georges Neveux's eponymously named play,³³ and some of the key compositional decisions he made.

Martinů on *Julietta*

In his article for the journal *Národní divadlo*, Martinů's initial task is to clarify the record on his earlier efforts for the stage.³⁴ He denies he was trying to be a reformer in the sense of Monteverdi, Gluck, or Wagner, as some critics had suggested, as his primary impulse had been to de-emphasize or accentuate certain conventions that had become exaggerated or neglected over recent years. In addition, he wanted to relieve the audience from the ongoing pressure mandated by Prague's critical culture to find some kind of higher philosophical aim behind each new production. He enumerates these aims in rhetorical terms:

Is the work supposed to be educational, spiritual, popular, entertaining, social, related to current events, accessible to everyone or only to a circle of amateurs? Should it be more theatrical, less theatrical, should it be liberated? As you can see, an entire complex ensues from which it is possible to deduce almost anything you want through sophistry or verbal manipulation.³⁵

Martinů's contention here is that by raising such questions about a work's purported social mission or theoretical design, a greater distance comes into place between the audience and the artist's actual conception. In practice, he maintains, the composer and director are far more concerned with how to handle the problems of the stage in a purely idiomatic way.³⁶

³⁰ See Josef Bartoš, "Nebezpečí režimu Talichova" ["The Danger of Talich's Regime"] *Smetana* 1 (8 August 1936), 5-6.

³¹ See Přemysl Pražák, "Obchodní duch a Národní divadlo" ["The Spirit of Business and the National Theater"] *Smetana* 13 (4 March 1937): 99-100.

³² The composer's notes to his lecture were printed as Bohuslav Martinů, "Hra 'Ne doopravdy'. Syllabus přednášky o hudebním divadle" ["A Play 'Not for Real': a Lecture Syllabus about Musical Theater"], ed. František Popelka (Polička, 1983). The notes provide an idea of the themes Martinů discussed during his talk.

³³ The original play from 1927 can be found in Georges Neveux, *Théâtre* (Paris: Julliard-Sequama, 1946).

³⁴ Bohuslav Martinů, "Národní divadlo," xv/5 (1937-8). Reprinted in Šafránek, *Divadlo ...*, 274-276.

³⁵ See Šafránek, *Divadlo ...*, 275.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 275. Martinů does not provide much insight into how the theater should be dealt with idiomatically, but he does compare it to the requirements of instrumental writing: "It is just like the way

He then stresses the role of "psychology" as the central reason behind his decision to set Georges Neveux's play.³⁷ In his earlier essays, Martinů argued that romanticism had left an entire repertoire of commonplace gestures for certain emotional situations, and that audiences were still unable to cope with contemporary works where psychological states are not signified in conventional ways. Citing "heroism" and "reconciliation" as sentiments that had gained standardized mimetic treatment, he once even wrote that "heroism can be demonstrated in other ways than by a fanfare of trombones, and reconciliation need not always rise through the higher register of muted violins."³⁸

In his essay for *Národní divadlo*, Martinů continues to discuss psychological depiction by explaining how musical works are still commonly resolved through cathartic conclusions, regardless of what the subject matter calls for.³⁹ Reflecting on this formulaic practice, he writes, "a scheme had been in practice: exposition - battle - victory, from which a superficial solution can result [...]. All of my subjects are chosen with respect to diminishing and disciplining this element into the form of the whole."⁴⁰

In light of his thoughts on "conventional" musical psychology, we see why Neveux's play so much appealed to Martinů. Indeed, the subject matter of *Julietta* immediately brings into question what expressive role music should have next to "events" so inherently surreal: in a dream, the book-dealer Michel returns to the coastal town where he had been once captivated by a girl's singing, but now realizes to his surprise that the town's inhabitants have no memory. After losing his orientation through the bizarre events that transpire in his attempt to relate to the townspeople, Michel, in the "Office of Dreams," must finally decide whether to exit his dream, or continue his search for Julietta in a state of insanity. Martinů informs:

In Julietta, the primary concern is not following an exact psychological function. Julietta is a dream, therefore a certain psychological process has already been brought over to a different sphere and to a different design. Indeed, an inner process is involved here, but it branches out from the path of common psychological laws. It is, so to speak, the psychology of a dream, i.e. fantasy. During each step, during each change of scene, we find something unpredictable and unforeseen. We encounter people who have lost their memory, which already interferes with psychological conclusions. Julietta herself is a symbol of desire - all of the girls in the play are named Julietta and everyone is searching for this single name. Is it always this one and only Julietta? Does she exist at all, or is she merely fiction, a thought? The entire play is essentially a confrontation between fiction and reality, a confrontation seen from a special angle, from the atmosphere of a dream, where fiction often strongly outweighs reality, where things fabricated, fantastic, and impossible become reality, and where concrete and objective reality assumes the form of complete improbability and simple fiction.⁴¹

it is necessary to give the oboist and all of the 'winders' [wind instrument players] time to breathe so they can continue playing."

³⁷ Ibid., 275-6. Martinů writes, "Let us take a look at the element that is the subject of various misunderstandings: the accentuation of feeling, i.e. the accentuation of the inner process and the musical expression of the individual. This element can often allow the music a freedom of expression, but it can also weaken this expression such that it veers away from the formal aspect of the entire work. Thus, more precisely spoken, it concerns the psychological process."

³⁸ See Martinů, "O současné hudbě," or *Domov...*, 81-85.

³⁹ See Šafránek, *Divadlo*, 274-276.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 275-76.

⁴¹ Ibid., 275.

Thus if Martinů had been looking for a place to demonstrate the antithesis of clichéd musical depiction, he had certainly found an ideal subject matter in Neveux's surrealist play. And one of the most striking and uncanny confrontations between fiction and reality comes in Act II, Scene 3, where "Father Youth" - in the presence of an astonished Michel - invents stories for an aged couple about the youthful days of romance neither can remember. To underscore the peculiarity of this moment, Martinů writes in a layered polytonal chord stream for piano alone in a style clearly inspired by the inter-war French milieu (Example 1).

Like his previous efforts for the stage, Martinů's setting is often episodic, which corresponds with Michel's phantasmagoria. For the barrage of bizarre episodes that Michel experiences, Martinů alternates orchestral passages with piano, accordion, French horn, and double-reed solos as well as choral echoes, melodrama, and purely spoken dialogue. The orchestral writing heard during Michel's encounters with the townspeople often has a rhythmically motoric character in a neo-classical style; in relation to Julietta - or the idea of Julietta - it is lyrical, if not static. The vocal style - which Martinů referred to as "spoken melos"⁴² - is quasi-recitative and usually detached from the orchestral dialogue. One exception to this, however, are the reprises of "Julietta's Song," or the haunting melody that had brought him back to the coastal town. It is a focal moment of the opera, articulated in a fully intoned, lyrical style (Example 2). Julietta's Song is among a handful of recurring motives, which also include a quotation from the sound world of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (Example 3),⁴³ what has been called the "motive of memories" (Example 4),⁴⁴ and a tender, lyric passage that cadences on the "Julietta Chords" (Example 5).⁴⁵

Martinů and Honzl's dramaturgical conception for the opening and closing of the opera is significant. Unlike an earlier Prague production of Neveux's play, where a dreaming Michel is shown lying asleep at the outset,⁴⁶ the collaborators immediately place him entangled in his first subconscious episode, attempting to find out the location of *The Sailor's Inn* from the young and old Arabs. The opera's "conclusion" is also significant, and departs entirely from Neveux's play. At the moment Neveux's Michel is definitively shut out from his dream, Martinů's states the tender passage once again (Example 5). Michel - lost in his nostalgia - has chosen to remain in his dream, and the sequence of episodes is to start over, it seems, beginning with his encounter with the two Arabs. But now, with Michel having

⁴² See Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů: His Life ...*, 169.

⁴³ At the moment shown in Example 3, Michel - in his frustration - has seemingly just shot and killed Julietta, who was escaping into the distance. The fundamental issue of Martinů and quotation has yet to be addressed in the specialized literature on the composer.

⁴⁴ For more on the musical references in the work, see Harry Halbreich, *Bohuslav Martinů - Werkverzeichnis und Biografie*, zweite, revidierte Ausgabe (Mainz: Schott Music, 2007), 163-172.

⁴⁵ The Julietta chords refer to the harmonic progression Martinů first used when Michel finally "finds" Julietta. See Bohuslav Martinů, *Julietta*, Piano Reduction by Karel Šolc (Prague: Melantrich, 1947), 78, system 4, mm. 7-8. Here the chords can be seen in Example 5, mm. 10-13. By his early American period, the progression became a ubiquitous part of Martinů's musical syntax; it can be described as a plagal cadence from a dominant thirteenth chord on the subdominant to the tonic, which he often repeats immediately thereafter a whole-step lower.

⁴⁶ See Šafránek, *Divadlo*, 77-78 and 269. Honzl states that he disagreed with this particular dramaturgical decision of the 1932 Prague production, which was directed by Jiří Frejka, who had been Honzl's associate at the Liberated Theater and with whom he had had a falling out. Depictions of a snoozing Michel are found nevertheless in the Czech film version of Martinů's opera. See Bohuslav Martinů, *Julietta*, Script Writer and Director: Ivan Kašlík and Václav Kašlík (Czech Television, 1969).

joined the "figures in gray clothes," or the unfortunate souls who did not exit their dreams, several of the townspeople come out as marionettes and observe him with curiosity. The curtain falls.

Moderato
snu. (Nesmí nabytí velké důležitosti a tíhy.)

B. *p* *3* *3*
A o-pra-vdu, Vy si na nás vzpo - mí -

vi - no!

Moderato
(Piano) *dolce*

poco mf *poco* *p* *p*

B. *p*
ná - te? A už to mu - sí být tak dáv -

St. *mf* *3*
Na vás? Ja - ko by to by - lo včera!

mf *mf* *p* *poco f*

Expression marking: (Should not obtain great importance and weight.)

Babička (Grandmother): *And you really remember us?* Stařec (Old Man): *Remember you?*

As if it were yesterday! Babička (Grandmother): *But that must have been so long ago!*

Example 1: Bohuslav Martinů *Julietta*, Piano Reduction by Karel Šolc (Prague: Melantrich, 1947), pp. 104-5.

Juliette (hlas za scénou) *p* **Poco Andante**

Moderato

Mo-je lá - ska v dál-ce se ztrati-la,

za širé mo-ře, té-to no-ci. *p* S návratem hvězdy na nebi,zda vrátí se, vrá-tí i moje lá - ska!

Juliette (her voice from behind the stage): *My love is lost in the distance, over the wide ocean of this night. Will the star in the sky bring back my love once again?*

Example 2: Martinů, *Julietta*, p. 78

Poco allegro. (Quasi moderato.) Michel je jako omámen. Zastrčí pistoli do kapsy a posadí se na lavici. *pp dolce*

Neuvědomuje si,co udělal.

poco mp

pp G.Cassa

Stage marking: Michel is bewildered. He puts the pistol back into his pocket and sits on the bench. He does not realize what he has done.

Example 3: Martinů, *Julietta*, p.146

[Poco Allegretto]

Example 4: Martinů, *Julietta*, p. 133

Moderato

mf

M. Zachvíli znovu přijdu pod Tvoje o-kno, jako předešlé noci... a znovu

Moderato

p

pp

poco

M. u-ví dříve všechno, les... a obchodníka se vzpomínkami, stařečky a Ty

p

f

M. Ju - li - et - to, bu - deš tam ta - kél No tak mi od - po - věz! Mluvi

poco f

p

8

Michel: Soon I will come down under your window once again, as during the previous nights...and we will see everything again, the forest... and the memory-dealer, the old folks, and you, Julietta, you'll be there too! So answer me! Speak!

Example 5: Martinů, *Julietta*, p. 225

Smetana into Battle

We shall now look into the pages of *Smetana* to see the response Martinů received. By this time *Smetana* had come under the administration of the Nejedlý student Josef Bartoš (1887-1951), whose name is difficult to disconnect from his slavish servility to his teacher's agenda. This reputation would have been well deserved based solely on Bartoš's monograph *Antonín Dvořák: A Critical Study*, which he wrote during the fanatical years of the Dvořák battles.⁴⁷ The book is a remarkable testament to the Nejedlý School for its capacity to demolish a single composer over more than 400 pages, notwithstanding the fact that - for its time - it was the most comprehensive Dvořák biography in print.⁴⁸

In his review of *Julietta*, entitled "Bohuslav Martinů's Operatic Problem," Bartoš notes the unusual honor that had been given to a native composer by the director of the National Theater, and admits that most of the critical world had appraised the work quite positively.⁴⁹ During Martinů's talk for *The Society for Music Education*, however, he found the composer strangely unwilling to explain the principles of his compositional orientation, choosing instead to focus on Neveux's play.⁵⁰ Martinů should have had much more to say to his compatriots at home, Bartoš contends, as he lives at the center of a great Western European culture which "we may find quite sympathetic, yet to us, a bit spiritually removed."⁵¹

He then notes Martinů's desire to create a tradition of "non-romantic opera" through his careful selection of librettos that avoid "a duet of lovers at the front of the stage."⁵² He refers to *Špalíček* - with its sundry array of folk scenes in continuous fluctuation - as the composer's recourse from "conceptual drama."⁵³ Perhaps Martinů did manage to address the general audience with this work, but he finds it "a bit paratactic for the more intellectual person."⁵⁴ In *The Plays of Mary*, furthermore, the composer avoided conceptual drama once again by choosing "anti-psychological" and "illogical" subjects.⁵⁵ Then, without commentary - which comes off as a kind of tacit skepticism - Bartoš quotes Martinů's statement about diverting the psychological focus away from the individual singers to the various performing forces.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ See Josef Bartoš, *Antonín Dvořák. Kritická studie [Antonín Dvořák: A Critical Study]* (Prague: Nákladem Josefa Pelcla, 1913).

⁴⁸ Ibid. Bartoš shows, for example, that Dvořák hid behind the fluff of colorful orchestrations because he lacked the intellectual control needed for certain progressive forms. This is just one negative attribute Bartoš ties to the composer's upbringing among provincial cantors. In his afterword, Bartoš confesses that it was only after a thorough study of Dvořák's scores in seminars with Zdeněk Nejedlý that he realized the naiveté of his earlier enthusiasm for the composer. He later retracted the book.

⁴⁹ See Josef Bartoš, "Operní problém Bohuslava Martinů" ["Bohuslav Martinů's Operatic Problem"] *Smetana* 7 (1938): 94-95.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Indeed, a general skepticism pervades Bartoš's review, but in its opening sallies it is not obviously unbalanced. In fact, he even commends the composer of *The Plays of Mary* for having drawn attention to "subjects of poetic beauty that have long been overlooked."⁵⁷ From here, however, he launches into a fury of condemnation as he summarizes the composer's hitherto theatrical efforts:

Martinů is apparently not interested in man in his real likeness and it is apparent that the considerations of psychological depiction in opera appear to him as an artifact. For Martinů, the theater is not something parallel with reality where the viewer may take an interest in that human duplicity, which, in a psychological opera, is placed before the eyes with such insistence, nor may the viewer take an interest in the analogy of joy and sorrow with which the characters of a psychological drama connect and bind themselves with the viewer. The entire vicarious experience of the audience is to be excluded from the perceptual flow, and the function of the audience is thus reduced, if not completely reduced, to taking part in light theater. It is evident that Martinů's artistic procedure is a kind of hedonism towards which there has been a far greater inclination in the French theater than here at home, where, for the longest time, ethical and idealistic values have played a more substantial role. This also explains why Martinů is so inclined towards ballet. In place of a real individual, a fictitious person enters, thus giving greater opportunity for ballet to be put to use.⁵⁸

He then refutes Martinů's assertion that *Julietta* is a continuation of the theatrical path the composer had established with *Špalíček* and *The Plays of Mary*. Indeed, both of these earlier works had utilized themes from the history of the folk theater and spoke to a wider audience, but the surrealism of *Julietta* is simply incomprehensible to the average person.⁵⁹ He emphasizes this aberration by writing, "What is 'universal' and 'primary' that binds us - a people of a richer cultural life - with the ordinary person while listening to the overly refined 'Julietta'? The illogical nature of dreams?"⁶⁰

He is otherwise remonstrative of Martinů's ostensible desire to prevent the audience from having any feeling for the characters on stage. Bartoš considers empathetic viewing of this kind to be as old as the history of the theater itself and what the composer had been trying to facilitate all along. Having feeling for and empathizing with the characters was the integral virtue of *The Plays of Mary*, which led to the work's success. Contemptuously, he even inquires, "Or does Martinů believe that the medieval person had no feeling for the story of Christ? Why then were passion plays performed and carols sung during Christmas?"⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Bartoš then lists Martinů's rhetorical questions on the possible philosophical aims of the theater ("Is the work supposed to be educational, spiritual, popular," etc.). Suggestively, Bartoš concludes somewhat snidely and without explanation, "and we know very well what his credo is."

⁶⁰ Ibid. By setting off "universal" and "primary" [values], Bartoš is suggesting that these points were made by Martinů himself, although I have been unable to find such statements by Martinů in print to verify this. Otherwise, the quotations imply that this is Bartoš's reading of Martinů's intentions, or that the composer may have extemporized something of this nature during his talk for *The Society for Music Education*.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Turning to Martinů's musical setting, Bartoš describes it as "genre ennuyeux," which will probably lead to few repeat performances.⁶² The mostly robust musical style was not in agreement with Neveux's subject, and had the composer placed more emphasis on the "dream-like" subject matter, the overall impression would have been greater.⁶³ For Bartoš, this means that Martinů had failed to provide the musical setting with sufficient "psychologization," and as a result, the entire narrative came off as if it were mere reality.⁶⁴ The chaotic influences of cosmopolitan Paris, a crossroads of national cultures, has left Martinů unable to create a true synthesis of musical styles: in his emphasis on rhythmic elements, he remains dependent on Stravinsky, and in the repetition of vocal phrases, he shows his indebtedness to Janáček. In conclusion, Bartoš considers *Julietta* far behind *Špalíček* and particularly *The Plays of Mary*. According to the theory as put forth by Martinů, it is certainly not the popular, "non-romantic" opera the composer had striven after.⁶⁵

Smetana's Second Response

In another review from *Smetana*, entitled "Julietta as a Stage Issue," the theater director Henryk Bloch takes aim at Martinů and Honzl's desire to free opera from the "forced Wagnerian unification" of the orchestra and stage and thus separate the function of each.⁶⁶ As a point of departure, Bloch quotes from an interview with Honzl that had been recently printed in the theater journal *Divadlo*:⁶⁷

[...] it is necessary to part with the forced unity of the romantic-operatic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, to cleanse the expressive means of the liberated arts and arrange them anew with the goal to which they are supposed to be: *a theatrical poem*. If the era of dramatic opera stylized a forced unity of the stage and orchestra, even though they are different structures, it is now necessary to set out from the real, truthful laws of the stage and orchestra.⁶⁸

In his interview, Honzl also provided examples of how Martinů had separated and thus "purified" the function of orchestra and stage in his previous works: in order to "purify" the chorus, Martinů placed the choral ensemble in the orchestra, and in *The Plays of Mary* in particular he presented Mariken first as a singer and then as a dancer.⁶⁹ In *Julietta*, however, Martinů arrives at a new level of creation, achieving a "unity of polarities, a scintillation of continuously transforming relations, a unity that can only come about upon the

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See Henryk Bloch, "Julietta jako jevištní záležitost" ["Julietta as a Stage Issue"], *Smetana* (5 May 1938): 112-113. Later in his career, Bloch worked in film as a director and scriptwriter.

⁶⁷ See Jindřich Honzl, "Před premiérou opery Julietta nebo Snář" ["Before the Premiere of the Opera Julietta, or the Dream-Book"], *Divadlo*, xxiv (1937-38): 106. Reprinted in Šafránek, *Divadlo*, 268-270.

⁶⁸ Quoted from Bloch, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ Compare Bloch, *op. cit.* and Honzl, *op. cit.*

basis of collaboration between the conductor, director, singers, dancer[s],⁷⁰ stage designer, and everyone else."⁷¹

Bloch finds such ideas utterly foolish. He contends that the functionality and effect of both *Špalíček* and *The Plays of Mary* had depended on the closest possible coupling of the arts. He finds quite reasonable the notion of utilizing the various theatrical art forms "within their own sphere" in terms of the kinesics and singing, but this hardly precludes that the structures of stage and orchestra "cannot be unified."⁷² Bloch sees theater and opera as inviolably separate genres and considers the desire to apply purely theatrical principles in opera as sensible as using the principles of theater in cinema. To bolster his argument, he even quotes the statement by Honzl that "Cinema is theater as much as an airplane is a flying person."⁷³

Bloch writes that the basis of operatic expression is the agreement of the stage with the music and precisely what Martinů has failed to realize in *Julietta*.⁷⁴ It is the job of the composer to write in a style such that the director can "read" from the score the necessary requirements for the stage.⁷⁵ This is why the composer needs to assume a portion of the director's task. With the composer and director "working alone," however, a musical assault occurs which leaves the stage director hostage.⁷⁶ As a result of Martinů's principle, Neveux's work has been damaged, as its text should have been realized within the composer's chosen medium of opera, or "governed completely by the musical means such that a new work results."⁷⁷ Yet Martinů allows the text to be merely sung to orchestral accompaniment, which is "perhaps with effect, but incapable of creating collectively the necessary structure for a theatrical work."⁷⁸

He then refers with a nod to Bartoš's remark about Martinů's music being too robust for the dream-like subject matter and adds that the entrances placed one after another so quickly made it impossible for the director to create appropriate scenic nuances.⁷⁹ Although he commends Honzl's effort, he considers it a losing enterprise made impossible from the start due to the way Martinů had "assaulted" Neveux's text.⁸⁰ After a

⁷⁰ There is no prominent dance role in *Julietta*. Honzl might have had in mind the "figures in gray clothes" in Act III, for which some kind of choreography was needed.

⁷¹ Compare Bloch, *op. cit.* and Honzl, *op. cit.*

⁷² See Bloch, *op. cit.*

⁷³ Compare Bloch, *op. cit.* and Honzl, *op. cit.* Either intentionally or by mistake, Bloch has misquoted the title of Honzl's essay collection as "Roztočené divadlo" ["The Theater Set Spinning"]. He is actually referring to Jindřich Honzl, *Roztočené jeviště. Úvahy o novém divadle [The Stage Set Spinning: Essays about the New Theater]* (Prague: Odeon, 1925).

⁷⁴ See Bloch, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Here Bloch adds, "If someone believes the opinion that the orchestra and stage are separate structures, there is only one thing that can be asked of the orchestra in the theater: to be quiet."

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

number of comments about the work of stage designer František Muzika and the performances of the various singers, he remarks with finality:

It is advisable to reject the musico-theatrical form represented by Julietta. Not because it is the result of a search for new paths, but because it is a search for a path that is dubious. In conclusion, it is possible to say the proscribed sentence here which is nevertheless fully in place: *the path does not go this way*.⁸¹

A Response from *Contemporary Culture*

Another negative review from the Nejedlý School comes from the "independent monthly" *Contemporary Culture*, which provided socialist commentary on virtually all branches of Czechoslovak art. The journal's mission statement from its 1936 inaugural issue reveals a fascinating picture of the socio-political program then being embraced by the Czech communist intelligentsia (See Appendix 1).⁸² The statement places a premium on artists who demonstrate social responsibility through their works towards the single cause of socialism and assumes a remonstrative stance towards any contradictory manifestations. Listed among the suspicious directions are "formalism," which is described as "art for art's sake" and "an escape into seclusion," the metaphysical and religious contemplation of the "catholic literati," the "surrealists" with their exploration of dreams, and the "purely descriptive realism" of the nineteenth century that had been unable to exploit the real potential of its materials. Although the journal boasts that its principles are taken "neither from the air nor by order from abroad," they can be seen as none other than those of the Soviet cultural orbit.⁸³ The journal's pro-Soviet leanings can be detected in numerous contributions, including a dismissal of André Gide's *Return from the U.S.S.R.*, the most famous early attempt to illuminate the inhumane civil repression then transpiring in Soviet society.⁸⁴

The eclectic gamut of styles that Martinů had embraced by this time - including his recent foray into surrealism - makes the criticism he would receive in *Contemporary Culture* predictable. *Julietta* was reviewed by the Nejedlý student Josef Plavec, who, in an earlier volume, had already written the article "Realism in Czech Music," where he enshrined realism as the guiding path in Czech music all the way back to the Hussite chorale of the early fifteenth century, through the Counter-Reformation, the nineteenth-century national revival, and on to the present day.⁸⁵

Notable about Plavec's review, entitled "A 'Dream' Opera, or What are We to Do With This?," is the sense of urgency and insistence: Martinů's work must be discredited

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² See Anonymous, *Kultura doby [Contemporary Culture]*, 1 (November, 1936): 1.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ See Fedor Soldan, "Gidova kniha o SSSR" ["Gide's book about the U.S.S.R."], *Kultura doby [Contemporary Culture]*, 1 (November, 1936): 91-92. The dismissal is not too convincing, as the best Soldan can do is to emphasize how - by writing the book - Gide had been discourteous to his hosts.

⁸⁵ Josef Plavec, "Realismus v české hudbě" ["Realism in Czech Music"], *Kultura doby [Contemporary Culture]*, 1 (November, 1936): 8-11.

at all costs, and Plavec does this by underscoring the work's "inanimate eroticism."⁸⁶ He first quotes Honzl's remark that *Julietta, or The Key to Dreams*⁸⁷

[...] is not a play with characters, it is not a solution of conflicts, it is neither descriptive of the life and manners of our times nor a tendentious play. The Key to Dreams is a poetic picture of the emotional unfolding of *an individual person*.⁸⁸

To this an outraged Plavec responds:

Today who cares about the "emotional undulations of Michel's inner world?" Is this not a bourgeois residue, this kind of pampering with individual and petty emotions - what is more with the imaginary emotions of dreams - when there are far greater and more important things to be concerned with?⁸⁹

This same kind of imperative can also be felt in the following passage, where he underscores the weakness Martinů's work engenders:

Apparently, it would be ideal to not have memory and immediately forget everything. It would be easy to rule over humanity if "complete emptiness" loomed in the minds of everyone the way the composer imagines the hero of his opera. It leaves us to ask: for whom was this written, for whose pleasure, *cui prodest*?⁹⁰

Much socialist criticism shares such urgency in its attempt to reveal bourgeois decadence, thwart capitalist domination, and empower the masses. But the high-stakes circumstances of the Sudetenland Crisis that year and the growing fascist threat placed the premiere of *Julietta* and the work's potential connotations into a particular cultural position.⁹¹ We might recall that the sensation that season at The Liberated Theater had been the allegorical *Těžká Barbora* [*Heavy Barbora*], in which the citizens of "Eidam" (like the Dutch cheese Edam) become wiser in the face of their troublesome neighbors from "Yberland," who were seeking an excuse to expand their territory.⁹² In reality, however, and apart from such comic relief, it was at any moment that the police in the Czech and Moravian border regions were preparing to carefully respond to the civil provocations of Henlein's

⁸⁶ Josef Plavec, "'Snová' opera anebo Co s tím" ["'A 'Dream' Opera, or What are We to Do With This?"], *Kultura doby* [*Contemporary Culture*], 2 (April, 1938): 185-6.

⁸⁷ "The Key to Dreams" connotes a book, or a "dream-book," where the interpretation of dreams can be found.

⁸⁸ Cited from Plavec, "'Snová' opera ..."

⁸⁹ Ibid. From here Plavec continues, "But what does this mean for society? Only a bunch of snobs can find pleasure in this."

⁹⁰ Ibid. By writing the Latin *cui prodest*, comprehensible to the First Republic intelligentsia, Plavec means "who will benefit from this?"

⁹¹ For an overview of the day-to-day events from the Teplice incident in October 1937 through to the complete Nazi takeover in March 1939, see Robert Kvaček, Aleš Chalupa, and Miloš Heyduk, *Československý rok 1938* [*The Czechoslovak Year 1938*] (Prague: Panorama, 1988). Published during the penultimate year of the Czechoslovak communist state, at least one of the contributors in the authors' collective provides obvious party-line glosses, blaming the First Republic's "bourgeois" government - through its subservience to the like-minded governments of France and Great Britain - for the Munich Accord, the decision not to fight, and the ultimate dismemberment of the country by Nazi Germany. The communist party is seen as the most resilient political force of the time.

⁹² See Burian, 173-4.

Sudetendeutsche Partei, which would form the pretext for German military intervention. It was during the very days that *Julietta* was premiered that the final touches were being placed on the Austrian Anschluss, making the geo-strategic position of the First Republic virtually untenable.⁹³ And underscoring the immediate threat at home, just one week after the premiere, on 23 March 1938, forty-nine planes flew over Prague at 6:30 am, commencing an air raid rehearsal that lasted nearly twenty-four hours.⁹⁴ Over successive waves, bombs "hit" a number of key installations, residents practiced taking cover, a full black-out was enforced during the evening, and the general preparedness of the city was evaluated.⁹⁵

Current events clearly contributed to Plavec's view of *Julietta* as a work that could only enfeeble sensibilities at a time strength was needed. But Plavec points out a number of other unfavorable attributes: Martinů has broken with the "realistic path" he had begun with *Špalíček*, *The Plays of Mary*, and *Theater Behind the Gate* and has completely abandoned the "healthy folk-root of Czech music" through which domestic audiences had been able to relate to these earlier works.⁹⁶ What is more, Martinů has completely capitulated to the fashionable artistic theories that are "more dangerous in the West than here at home."⁹⁷ Commenting on the unsuitable musical setting, he writes, "music that is in essence unreal needs something real upon which to support itself. Such reality, for example, is the sung word, but here the vocal writing is an element which disturbs rather than invigorates."⁹⁸ This is followed by a few asides on how Martinů has finally revealed himself as a complete epigone of Western styles and Stravinsky in particular.

His concluding commentary is a salvo against the administration of the National Theater for expending such enormous energy on a work that flies flat in the face of the institution's spiritual and political motto, i.e. the National Theater being a gift "From the Nation to Itself."⁹⁹ He writes:

Today is it in the interest of the nation to perform at this venue such weak plays, what is more, concoctions of foreign devices and figments of imagination of bourgeois streams that go against the common people? [...] Solace can be found in the knowledge that the entire bubble through which publicity has so much blown it up will be deflated soon enough and that the National Theater will leave in the past yet another aberrant episode. The play is so tedious, drawn-out, and boring that it will perish on its own through a justified and natural death. It will not be a shame.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ On the day before the premiere, in a special interview with the press, the Soviet diplomat Litvinov was asked if there might be Soviet intervention. His suggestive reply was that, "Some corridor will be found," a reference to the fact that the Soviet Union had no common border with Czechoslovakia at that time by which to rush in supporting troops. See Kvaček et al., 69. I was unable to find this particular quote in the newspaper *Lidové noviny* from March, 1938, although Litvinov's official statement supporting the integrity of Czechoslovakia is given prominent coverage here in the days following the Anschluss.

⁹⁴ See Kvaček et al., 52-58.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Plavec, "'Snová' opera ..."

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid. The motto is displayed above the stage at the Prague National Theater.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Two Politics Assessed

It is clear that Martinů's artistic team and the Nejedlý School represented two opposing, if not completely polarized camps within Czech musical life. The intensity of posturing in their writings is readily apparent with both sides making every effort to solidify their positions in the name of the musical arts. One wonders to what extent the statements made by the different players in this polemical drama really relate to *Julietta* as a musical work as opposed to being an emphatic effort to strengthen a guiding idea or defame the opposition. Here we note that the distorted views come not only from the Nejedlý School, whose writers seem to be driven by politics exclusively, but Martinů's artistic team as well. Honzl's account of Martinů's theatrical project, for example, seems consistent with the composer's vision, but his remarks regarding the individual details of the composer's works for the stage are sometimes inaccurate or misleading. More seriously, however, Martinů and Honzl boast in the press that the composer's theatrical project is unified in conception all the way through to *Julietta*, yet elsewhere in his writings, Martinů gives the impression that his surrealist opera is a venture into entirely new territory.¹⁰¹ Underscoring the level of politics surrounding *Julietta*, we may also note that the Nejedlý School gives Honzl - a radical leftist with emphatic Soviet leanings - a kind of reprieve for his participation in the production, placing the burden of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of Martinů and Talich's new theater administration.¹⁰² The politicization of *Julietta* is intense indeed, and one cannot help but wonder how much the hyperbole reflects all the affiliations, jobs, and political fortunes that were at stake.

Thus with the tendentious nature of the commentaries, we cannot say we have come closer to Martinů's stage works, or *Julietta* in particular in purely musical terms. Here we shall try not to disentangle or revise the commentaries towards the goal of arriving at a more authentic picture of Martinů's surrealist opera. Instead, we shall focus on the superstructures of aesthetic philosophy from this particular cross-section of Czech music criticism in order to come closer to the heart of the debate. The debate forms a climax in a particular evolution of musical thought that is specific to a nation's musical heritage, but also symptomatic of the larger conflict between realism and modernism that played such an important role in the leftist cultural politics of this time.

First, the Nejedlý School views the French musical milieu - as demonstrated by Martinů's music in particular - as the epitome of decadent bourgeois culture. In Nejedlý we could already detect an anti-French sentiment in his dismissal of Debussy's *Prelude to an Afternoon of a Faun*.¹⁰³ But anti-French feelings resound all too clearly in the assessments of

¹⁰¹ See for example Martinů's letter to Honzl from 9 June 1936, where he writes that the opera will be "a strange fantasy; in essence it will go against all of the principles that I put forth with such vehemence." See Šafránek, *Divadlo ...*, 255. Outside of this debate, Martinů's remark should come as no surprise considering the prominently "national" style characteristics of his earlier stage works in terms of their Czech themes and folk elements and the spirit and style of *Julietta*, more closely connected with the French modernist milieu.

¹⁰² For a helpful introduction to the director, see the documentary film "Jindřich Honzl," Script: A. Kisil, R. Denemarková, and J. Etlík; Camera: D. Marek; Director: A. Kisil (Czech Television, 2003). Here Honzl is quoted as having once said, "My only source of comfort comes from reading the Communist Manifesto."

¹⁰³ In his 1936 tract *Soviet Music*, we can otherwise note Nejedlý's thoroughly anti-French sensibilities in his depiction of Stravinsky's emergence on the Parisian scene. After describing how French music had "lost its bones" with Debussy, Nejedlý writes, "With the roughness of a primitive he pounds out his rhythms, and refined Paris jubilates once again because someone is pounding such brutal blows into

Julietta by Nejedlý's students. An example can be found in the way Bartoš frames the Czechs - in opposition to the French - as a people of "richer cultural life" for whom "ethical and idealistic values have played a more substantial role." And according to Plavec, the French cultural milieu was the place "weak" composers were more likely to capitulate to the "fashionable artistic theories" that are "more dangerous in the West than here at home." Thus, for the Nejedlý School, the heterogeneous styles of France could only destroy the more cohesive conception of Czech music they were designing to serve their political needs.

For having embraced Debussy's style in both his ballet *Istar* (1921) and his orchestral movement *The Blue Hour* (1922) - notwithstanding his outright demonstration of the sound-world of Stravinsky's Russian ballets in *Half-time* (1924) - Martinů had long been castigated as an epigone of "French fashions."¹⁰⁴ But his open acceptance of French influence on his work was a point of contention for Martinů throughout his life and also served as a sign of defiance against the Czech critics and the Nejedlý School in particular. Indeed, Martinů was greatly frustrated by the critics' incomprehension of his French leanings, which came to a poignant manifestation in an essay from his *American Diaries*¹⁰⁵ entitled "Something about that French Influence," in which he refutes the notion that his "return to Czech themes" during the 1930s was the result of his "isolation" in France (See Appendix 2).

It is worthy of note that Martinů's vehement reaction to the criticisms of his French leanings and his alleged isolation in France was probably a response to remarks of this kind by the one-time Nejedlý student Vladimír Helfert in *Czech Modern Music* (1937).¹⁰⁶

their ears. But this would not suffice for long. In order to hold himself above water, Stravinsky had to meet the needs of Parisian refinement. Doing just the opposite, however, he once again demolishes rhythm: he writes without meter, he writes freely in fourths, and he jams voices together so harshly only so he can surpass the hitherto boldness of modern music - but he also places into his instrumentation the blowing and whistling of a Russian Czar's grenadier. This is how Stravinsky amazes Paris, and Paris rejoices. For the impotent, exhausted city which does not know which way to go, this barbarian in evening dress, scented in cologne, is a great delicacy." See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Sovětská hudba* (Prague: Pavel Prokop, 1936), 115.

¹⁰⁴ In a review of a 1923 concert which contained the second portion of Martinů's three-movement orchestral triptych *Midnight Passing*, an anonymous critic writes, "The Czech Philharmonic continues with the "dumping" of Czech novelties [...] *The Blue Hour* by B.M. [...] already shows an inclination towards decadent symbolism. It is in essence the first conscious and thorough expression of French impressionism in our country. M. does not always choose the best characteristics of this style, unfortunately, which is borne witness by the many unison melodies. [...] I would like to believe that this is a temporary coquetry of a composer who will return once again to a deep, Czech conception." Adding to the contemptuous tone of the review is the critic's use of the word "dumping" in English. Otherwise, the return to a "deep, Czech conception" is most likely an allusion to Martinů's neo-romantic cantata *Czech Rhapsody*, which, of any Martinů composition known to the Prague public at this time, fits this idea the most. See Anonymous, *Nedělní příloha Československých novin [Sunday Supplement to the Československé Noviny]* (25 February 1923): 4. Commenting on the discussion that emerged in the daily press after the premiere of Martinů's ballet *Istar*, one sympathetic commentator writes ironically, "Much was said and written about how the work is filled with French spirit and by this they all had in mind something more or less musically sinful and not deep enough (it was nevertheless deemed good that a composer was found who sacrificed himself and filled in our musical rainbow with French colors!)." See Anonymous, *Listy Hudební matice* 1-2 (15 October 1924): 34.

¹⁰⁵ See Svatos, *Martinů on Music and Culture*. In my dissertation, I include many of the Martinů's diaries and notes from 1943-45 in an Urtext translation.

¹⁰⁶ See Vladimír Helfert, *Česká moderní hudba. Studie o české hudební tvořivosti [Czech Modern Music: Studies in Czech Musical Creativity]* (Prague: Tempo - list pro hudební kulturu, 1937), 109-111. Reprinted in Vladimír Helfert, *Vybrané studie I. O hudební tvořivosti [Selected Studies I: On Musical*

After discussing a number of compositions from Martinů's early Parisian period in which he had incorporated the most contemporary techniques of the European avant-garde, Helfert writes:

It was through all of these compositions that the expressive and tectonic realm of Czech music had become enriched with new, hitherto unutilized possibilities, even though in the meanwhile, the individuality of this composer could only gradually break free from these eagerly absorbed influences. But it is not here that his development has ended. As of approximately five years ago, it has been possible to observe Martinů's increasingly greater isolation. It is through this depository of appropriated influences that now shines an increasingly independent personality where the rooted and often folk-like characteristics of this native from the Czech-Moravian border region have become employed regularly with greater emphasis. Evidence of this can be seen in his dramatic works *Špalíček* (1931) and particularly *The Plays of Mary* (1934), but also his radio-opera *The Voice of the Forest* (1935).¹⁰⁷

On the contrary, Martinů contends in his essay¹⁰⁸ that the elements of French musical culture with which he came into contact during his eighteen-year Parisian residence were far more in tune with Czech sensibilities than the mysterious tenets of "German metaphysical philosophy" which the university professors had "systematically pounded" into the minds of young Czech musicians at the beginning of the century and "entangled to the point of confusion."

Thus the German metaphysical philosophy that Martinů had objected to throughout his life can clearly be linked to Nejedlý - the most eminent university music professor in Prague during Martinů's formative years - and Nejedlý's neo-romantic conception as outlined at the beginning of this study.¹⁰⁹ This realization makes it worthwhile to reconsider the import of Nejedlý's neo-romanticism but in relation to the way its guiding ideas continued to play a role for the Nejedlý School beyond the decline of romanticism as a purely stylistic phenomenon, and how its principles merged with the socialist-realist aesthetic then being embraced by portions of the Czech intelligentsia.

At the opening of this study, I describe Czech neo-romanticism as a synthesis of music and ideas, yet it is important to realize that we are not necessarily dealing with the elements commonly associated with late nineteenth-century music, such as protracted melody, prolonged appoggiaturas, chromatic harmony, narrative forms, hyper-expressivity, or rich orchestrations.¹¹⁰ Instead, neo-romanticism was more purely an ideological tool through

Creativity] (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1970), 262-264. During the 1920s, Helfert broke away from his teacher's influence after relocating to Brno, where he became a champion of Janáček. Nejedlý had already excluded Janáček from his canon of Czech composers with his review of *Jenůfa* in 1917. Demonstrating his new stance outside of the Nejedlý School, Helfert wrote a thoroughly dismissive review of Nejedlý's monograph about Fibich's collection of piano pieces *Moods, Impressions, and Reminiscences*. See Vladimír Helfert, "Zdeněk Nejedlý: Zdeňka Fibicha milostný deník" ["Zdeněk Nejedlý: Zdeněk Fibich's Erotic Diary"] *Hudební rozhledy* 2 (1925-6): 99-101; 117-118. Reprinted in Vladimír Helfert, *Vybrané studie I*, 73-83.

¹⁰⁷ Helfert, *Česká moderní hudba*, 109-111.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix 2.

¹⁰⁹ Martinů makes his most explicit references to Prague's university professors in his 1941 Autobiography. See Martinů, *Domov* ..., 318.

¹¹⁰ We may also note that in no place in his review of Strauss's tone poem does Nejedlý refer to musical style characteristics specifically.

which Nejedlý could manipulate musical life.¹¹¹ Here we can explain the ostensible contradiction of a critic who growled at almost any manifestation of modern music, championed Smetana's *Bartered Bride*, but vociferously defended Berg's *Wozzeck* following its tumultuous 1926 Prague premiere.¹¹² How Smetana and Berg had successfully conveyed socially meaningful subjects, i.e. a picture of Czech village life on the one hand and sympathy for the oppressed soul on the other, are the commonalities of the two works. In other words, Smetana and Berg had both demonstrated progress, and through a successful transmission of social consciousness, they had both created works of realism upon which the critical world could then elaborate.

It might seem that many of these concepts, i.e. neo-romanticism, progress, composer of ideas, realism, etc. had become circulated in the Nejedlian literature with such frequency and dogma that they resound merely as empty signifiers, telling us little about musical style in purely sonic terms.¹¹³ But to a certain extent, all of these terms had an interdependent, if not interchangeable relationship to the mission of a composer to convey a socially meaningful message. And to convey such a message, the composer was expected to choose a "realistic" musical medium through which the largest possible audience could apprehend the work's extra-musical intent. Since the work should be designed to communicate to the masses, "musical" realism - for the critic now taking his cues from both Nejedlý and the Soviet ideological sphere - implied a more conservative canon of genres and styles through which the habits of acculturated listening could be exploited.¹¹⁴

Communicating to the masses and acculturated listening brings us to another common criticism of Martinů's setting of Neveux's play, i.e. that it lacked what Bartoš called "psychologization," or - as it seems - recognizable mimetic responses that are developed within the work over time. The fact that Nejedlý's students never specified what dreams should sound like is among the obvious clues they came prepared to denounce the opera before the first measures even resounded. But we can expect, nevertheless, that the idioms of French modernism - conceived initially as a form of resistance to romanticism - could not be considered psychological. Thus what *could be* psychological was to be derived from the amalgam of musical signs that had been established over the course of the nineteenth century and had become embedded in the listener-response of the masses. Part of this musical psychology was the "Promethean Ethos" - made famous by the music of Beethoven's Second Period - in which "struggle" and climactic conclusions are characteristic.

¹¹¹ A further insight into the Czech musicological conception of neo-romanticism can be gained from the initial synoptic entry for romanticism in *Slovník české hudební kultury [Dictionary of Czech Musical Culture]* (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1997), 785. Whereas an English-language reference might commence discussion of romanticism with the French Revolution, extra-musical forces impacting the composer, the isolation and individuality of the artist, or certain musical style characteristics, romanticism here is suggested immediately as "an expression used today in the disciplines of art as an indication of an artistic style, or art connected with a stream of ideas."

¹¹² For more on the Prague premiere of *Wozzeck*, see Locke, 200 ff.

¹¹³ This is often the case in studies on Nejedlý's aesthetics from the communist era, when his concepts became academically codified. See for example Stanislava Zachařová, "Nejedlého polemika o Karla Knittla" ["Nejedlý's polemic over Karel Knittl"], *Z bojů ...*, 29-115.

¹¹⁴ Christopher Norris captures several of these points in his unpublished essay "Music and 'Socialist Realism': a Critical Re-evaluation," which was used as the basis for the greatly reduced entry on the subject in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. John Tyrrell (London: Maxmillan Publisher Limited, 2001).

Martinů had made clear in his writings the need to find new solutions to this convention, yet it was during these years paradoxically that the heroic aesthetic was becoming the hallmark of socialist realism as the appropriate metaphor for the oppressed to rise and overthrow the ruling class. And looking to the symphonic production from this time we find some of the first notable examples, i.e. Shostakovich's Symphony No. 3 "The First of May" (1929) and Ervín Schulhoff's Symphony No. 3 (1935).¹¹⁵

Whereas socialist music criticism seemed to solidify familiar psychological reactions in the service of political ambitions, Martinů's goal had been to break with the musical signs of the past. In Nejedlý's neo-romantic paradigm, we saw that musical psychology entailed mimetic criteria to a considerable degree, but this is not to say that concrete gestures are absent from *Julietta*, or that Martinů broke with the immediate musical past more radically than his contemporaries. What was more important for Martinů was to redefine the values by which the musical work can be apprehended and appraised. In large measure this meant accepting the new idioms and means of execution that went against Bartoš's idea of how music should be "psychologized." Martinů asserted that the order of the day was to embrace the new languages of modernism in order to cultivate a new musical psychology that responded more appropriately to the conditions of the day.

At the same time, Martinů's project also entailed making musical works unavailable to those commentators who were prepared to embrace or defame them on the basis of their political needs. Here we see the duplicity of Martinů's statement regarding the idea that he does not use music "to express something music cannot express," which was at once a reflection of his compositional beliefs but also a response to the Nejedlý School. And later in his career, Martinů expanded his ideas on musical creation by describing what would have been criticized in Marxist terms as his "formalist" compositional aesthetic, where the work is conceived first through a subconscious and then conscious vision of the whole and then realized on paper through the considerations of Gestalt yet autonomous to any external impulses.¹¹⁶ But his aesthetics of creation as he began to relate them to the Czech inter-war press was also designed to bar the Nejedlý School and other "socially conscious" critics from exploiting the work for its exegetic potential. In this sense, Martinů's theatrical project and *Julietta* in particular becomes revealed for its political, if not subversive intent. By pronouncing his works as unavailable for theoretical speculation, he was making an open affront to the Nejedlý School, who demanded that the composer create works that can yield commentary on the burning issues of the day.

Nejedlý's deterministic paradigm had long made it clear throughout the Czech musical world that the composer was either politically engaged as a "progressive," or simply avoided political involvement due to a regressive penchant for autonomous communication. Being labeled a regressive by the Nejedlý School was a double jeopardy for any such composer, whose sensibilities could be further vilified as being an exponent of "muzikantství," or the desire for pure music-making that had been a part of the Czech cantor tradition since the Bohemian Counter-Reformation. For Nejedlý, *muzikantství* was what had stifled national music before Smetana had arrived on the scene but had become

¹¹⁵ Ervín Schulhoff (1894-1942), a German-Jewish composer of Czechoslovak nationality, embraced socialist realism following his visit to Moscow in 1933. After finishing his Symphony No. 3, he briefly considered entitling each of its three movements after the villages in Eastern Czechoslovakia affected by the hunger riots in 1935.

¹¹⁶ See Svatos, "Reasserting ..."

dangerously manifest in Dvořák and other later composers; Nejedlý even pointed out the school scene in Dvořák's opera *Jakobín* as evidence of the composer's ties to an embarrassing cantor tradition.¹¹⁷ Martinů, on the other hand, positioned his works as being immune to political discourse and in solidarity with a musical heritage that was exemplified by spontaneity and craft. Here Martinů turned the pejorative of the Nejedlý School into a premium by underscoring the Czechs' "natural" and "healthy" proclivity for musical craft. For Martinů, musical craft was the saving grace of a tradition that - once the metaphysics of music criticism have been overcome - will fully adjust to the new idioms of the day and open the way for a new era in national music.

With these remarks on the debate, we shall summarize the arguments that were made over *Julieta*. First, the Nejedlý School expected the composer to captivate the audience through a master narrative of universally accepted emotional sentiment through which the work's purpose and meaning can be understood. This explains Bartoš's remark about "psychological" opera, where classic dualities such as "joy" and "sorrow" enable characters to "connect and bind themselves" with the audience such that a powerful and vicarious experience takes hold. Such an experience, according to Bloch, should be facilitated by the composer through an unambiguous coordination of all available theatrical means. These remarks show - despite every effort to position Smetana at the foundation of Czech music - how much the Nejedlý School's core musical values were driven by the Wagnerian aesthetic. This is corroborated by Nejedlý's remark from as late as 1932 that "until this time, we have no musical language other than Wagner's, the language that emerged with *Tristan* in particular."¹¹⁸

Negating the Wagnerian aesthetic is a recurring theme in Martinů's writings. For Martinů, continuous thematic representation via leitmotifs and protracted psychological meditation only invited politically driven interpretations of a kind he considered predetermined. Instead, Martinů's project involved having the audience play a greater role in constructing and, if at all, "interpreting" the work for themselves. One solution was to diffuse the elements of musical theater such that the narrative is left underdetermined. The audience was thus presented with what Honzl called a "unity of polarities," or "a scintillation of continuously transforming relations."

Next, the Nejedlý School demanded social progress through artistic works that could edify the public. Here Martinů's decisions regarding the beginning and ending of *Julieta* assume a particularly confrontational position. Since Michel is *not* shown asleep at either the opening or conclusion, the narrative is not framed such that it can be viewed as a study in misguided ideals. Thus for the commentator searching for realism, Martinů's solution seems to leave spectators apprehending Michel's fate as one that they too should embrace. In other words, since Michel does not exit the Office of Dreams, the commentator guided by "social responsibility" is not provided with the clear message to reject the nostalgic insanity of dreams. Martinů's conclusion might allow for a deep philosophical reading about the nature of obsession and insanity, but it was exactly this kind of contemplation that was aberrant to the Nejedlý School's more immediate and concrete idea about art, which should be didactic and uplifting at its core.

¹¹⁷ See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Umění staré a nové [Art Old and New]*, ed. Josef Hanzal and Jaroslav Střítecký (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1978), 7-8.

¹¹⁸ See Nejedlý, *Umění ...*, 90-97.

Thus we have seen two clearly contradictory valuation systems in operation in Czech musical life. We see the writers of the Nejedlý School as exegetes who - under the influence of Nejedlý's particular solution for national music and ultimately socialist realist doctrines - demanded thematically inspired art. They practiced a system of persuasion through which they could justify their vision of national and socialist culture and generate public opinion in favor of those cultural figures they found both politically expedient and aligned with their ideals. Music as a form of persuasion clarifies the premium the Nejedlý School placed on mimetic criteria: producing familiar, concrete musical gestures was a proven means by which to communicate to a wider and more conservative audience and thus a sign of a composer's greater social concern.

Martinů, on the other hand, insisted on breaking with the musical signs of the past and negating political reception. By negating political reception, he attempted to position himself as a kind of untouchable with an artistic project that could fulfill the needs of the new age. Here we note how the confrontation between Martinů and the Nejedlý School runs parallel with the larger trans-European debate among leftist commentators of the time regarding the relationship of modernism to the masses: does modernism reflect the new conditions of man in society on a metaphysical level, or does it negate the aspirations of a new socialist society?¹¹⁹ In music, a major contributor to this debate was Theodor Adorno, who - through his patronage of the Second Viennese School - saw modernism as a reflection of society's increasing fragmentation but paradoxically a means of expression that the masses could not comprehend.¹²⁰ Martinů, however, under the influence of the "antithetical" French milieu, also saw modernism as a reflection of contemporary society but in more optimistic terms, even exulting in its potential to capture the frenetic energy of the new age. What is more, Martinů believed that the masses *should* participate in the understanding of new styles. Evidence of this can be seen in the way he addresses in certain works quotidian experiences and events, for example the Parisian cabaret (*Kitchen-Revue, The Three Wishes*), the excitement of the football pitch (*Half-time*), the public's fascination with a transatlantic crossing (*The Amazing Flight, La Bagarre*), and a theater project that was to return audiences to the roots of folk theater and make them genuine participants in determining how the work can be construed.

Towards the Legacy of Martinů and Nejedlý

In this study, we have seen two irreconcilable pursuits: Martinů's desire to sideline the ideologically inspired critics, which became a kind of ideology onto itself, and Nejedlý's mandate that the critics should "lead the debate" with the right to censure those musicians viewed "socially irresponsible," even if in the most vindictive terms. My intention has been to capture both points of view in more purely aesthetic currency, without appraising the aims of either party. My rationale comes in response to the ethical difficulties that emerge with Nejedlý, who returned to Prague from Moscow after the Second World War

¹¹⁹ See *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Georg Lukács*, afterword by Fredric Jameson (London and New York: Verso, 1992) and Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

¹²⁰ See Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, ed. and tr. by Robert Hullot-Kentor, (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

and quickly assumed ministerial posts.¹²¹ Within the context of the First Republic, the tactics of the Nejedlý School might still be deemed "fair play," as disturbing as their pronouncements might have been for those who came under their attack. But as a government minister, Nejedlý could now enforce his views. Following the Red Army's liberation of Prague, Nejedlý quickly ordered for Talich's incarceration based on the conductor's alleged collaboration with the Nazis, an ordeal that lasted six weeks before Talich was acquitted.¹²² And with the onset of communist dictatorship in February 1948, Talich was banned from performing in Prague's musical venues, which was lifted only in 1952 during the thaw in the Communist Party's hitherto radical cultural policies.¹²³ Martinů, who for several reasons did not manage to return to Czechoslovakia before the communist coup, was officially censured during the Stalinist Period by the new "young guard" of communist musicologists,¹²⁴ who would take their cues from both Nejedlý and the latest Soviet decrees. For his seemingly permanent emigration status, Martinů became a *persona non grata*, similar to the way Stravinsky was treated in the Soviet Union. It was only in 1955 that the ban was lifted on the publication of Martinů's works, but the ruling concerned only those works that "had not surrendered to French modernism," eerily confirming the composer's concerns from ten years before about how his Parisian-era work would be viewed.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Nejedlý's ministerial posts included Minister of Culture (1945-6), Minister for the Protection of Labor and Social Care (7/1946-2/1948), Minister of Education, Science, and Art (2/1948-1/1953), and Minister without Portfolio (10/1953-1962). Derived from Jiří Knapík, *Kdo byl kdo v naší kulturní politice 1948-1953 [Who was Who in Our Cultural Politics 1948-1953]* (Prague: Nakladatelství Libri, 2002), 172-3. The important biographical dates of Nejedlý's entire career are outlined in František Červinka, *Zdeněk Nejedlý* (Prague: Melantrich, 1969), 371 ff.

¹²² See Talich's letter of defense written just before his imprisonment, where he describes how, to his protest, he was named a member of the Anti-Bolshevik League during the occupation. Otherwise, the conductor attempts to give a detailed account of himself as a musician in the national limelight who tried to sustain morale through quality performances of patriotic works while continuously defending himself from exploitation for official political purposes. See Václav Talich, *Dokument života a díla [Václav Talich: a Document of his Life and Work]*, ed. Herberta Masaryková (Prague: Státní hudební vydavatelství, 1967), 199-206. For a new study offering fresh perspectives on the relationship between Nejedlý and Talich, see Jiří Křest'án, "Srdce Václava Talicha se ztratilo: k problému národní očisty" ["Václav Talich Has Lost {His} Heart: On the Purging of the Nation"] *Soudobé dějiny* xvi/1-2 (2009): 69-111; 243-275.

¹²³ See Jiří Knapík, *V zajetí moci. Kulturní politika, její systém a aktéři 1948-1956 [In the Captivity of Power: Cultural Politics, its System, and Participants 1948-1956]* (Prague: Nakladatelství Libri, 2006), 238, 298, 338, 356.

¹²⁴ Miroslav Barvík, Jaroslav Jiránek, and Antonín Sychra were among the most prominent of these figures. For a study devoted to the first of these, see Thomas D. Svatos, "Sovietizing Czechoslovak Music: The 'Hatchet-Man' Miroslav Barvík and his Speech *The Composers Go with the People*." *Music and Politics* iv/1 (2010): 1-35.

¹²⁵ See Knapík, *V zajetí ...*, 239, 338, and Appendix 2 of this document. One of the results of the ruling was the publication later that year of Martinů's folk cantata *The Opening of the Wells*, which led to a full-scale Martinů revival. Conveniently for the communist cultural politicians, however, the work's enormous popularity helped revise Martinů's image substantially: instead of a modernist musician engaged in a heated critical debate during the "Bourgeois Republic," the innocuous chamber cantata commemorating Martinů's native Moravian Highlands was received as an epic, nostalgic hymn symbolizing the composer's heart-felt desire to return home. In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, *The Opening of the Wells* is still the composition most commonly associated with Martinů among the general population.

During the forty-year communist period, Nejedlý's views were indoctrinated into the academic mainstream, helped not only by his presidency of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, but also through the work of the Zdeněk Nejedlý Cabinet,¹²⁶ which had as one of its primary goals the publication of a complete edition of Nejedlý's writings. Although streams of thought were gradually tolerated alongside Nejedlý's official view of the cultural heritage, open polemicization equated to a form of professional suicide. Resulting from this was an underground tradition of Nejedlý criticism that continues somewhat to this day, which - as we might understand - is characterized by ridicule and disdain.¹²⁷ And after the Velvet Revolution, when virtually all interest in Nejedlý as a "positive" force had disappeared, striking cases could be found of radical revisionism, with extreme sensitivity voiced over new critical studies about musicians who fell victim to Nejedlý's polemics in the past.¹²⁸

With this in mind, reviewing the writings of the Nejedlý School from the inter-war period on equal grounds with Martinů's artistic project might bring some dismay in light of the fact that - due to the institutionalization of Nejedlý's ideas - Martinů became disenfranchised, with his work being unable to fully speak for itself.¹²⁹ But if we look past this unfortunate legacy, we see that, without Nejedlý's paradigm for Czech music, Martinů's development as a composer would have not taken place. Thus we cannot simply disqualify Nejedlý's contributions, as much as we may revile him for his actions. Indeed, one of the results of Nejedlý's influence and ultimate rise to power was the fact that Martinů took his antithetical vision about Czech music into emigration and exile, leaving its true origins unknown or misunderstood to this day.

¹²⁶ See Jiří Křest'an, "Kabinet Zdeňka Nejedlého (1953-1990)" ["The Zdeněk Nejedlý Cabinet (1953-1990)"], in print.

¹²⁷ In the aural tradition, musicians and music scholars often point out that Nejedlý was unable to write about music, referring to the critic's massive but incomplete Smetana biography as a "history of brewing," since Nejedlý left extensive details about Smetana's father, a brewer, but stopped short of discussing the composer's important early works. See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Bedřich Smetana*. 4 vols. (Prague: Hudební matice Umělecké besedy, 1924-33). Another common trope concerns how Nejedlý was purportedly jilted by Dvořák after requesting permission to marry the composer's daughter Otilka, which became the grounds for the young music critic's vindictive agenda. See Rudolf Pečman, *Útok na Antonína Dvořáka [Attack on Antonín Dvořák]* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1992, 161-164). For a review of the historical underpinnings of Nejedlý's polemics, see Locke, 28 ff. Some of the best recent scholarly work on Nejedlý in the Czech Republic has come not from musicologists, but from twentieth-century historians. See for example Jiří Křest'an, "'Poslední husita' odchází: Zdeněk Nejedlý v osidlech kulturní politiky KSČ po roce 1945" ["'The Last Hussite' Departs: Zdeněk Nejedlý in the Snares of the Cultural Politics of the Czechoslovak Communist Party after 1945"] *Soudobé dějiny* xii/1 (2005): 9-44. A reliable biographical account examining the dynamics of Nejedlý's personal and professional life has yet to be written.

¹²⁸ Note the poor editorial decisions made in the presentation of Michael Beckerman, "Dvořák a úzkost" ["Dvořák and Anxiety"] *Opus Musicum* xxx/6 (1998): 227-244 and the impulsive and misinformed conclusions of Jindra Bártová, "Podivnosti kritických soudů v českém hudebním časopisectví na počátku století" ["The Peculiarities of Critical Judgments in Czech Music Journalism at the Beginning of the Century"] *Opus Musicum* xxxi/4 (1999): 9-23.

¹²⁹ 1938 was the last year Martinů visited Czechoslovakia. After the occupation of France in 1940, Martinů settled in New York, where he began what became the most successful portion of his career. Complications in his U.S. residency status after the war and a near fatal accident in 1946 hindered him from returning home before the communist coup in 1948. In 1952, he acquired U.S. citizenship, which prohibited him from visiting the countries of the Soviet block, including Czechoslovakia.

Appendix 1: Contemporary Culture Mission Statement¹³⁰

Contemporary Culture is an independent monthly with a firm program and a thoroughly developed theoretical foundation. It is not an organ, political party, or merely a publishing-house journal, and it will not tire readers with advertisements or commercially influenced articles. Instead, its aim is to present a critical picture of today's cultural life and contribute to its development. For this reason it takes into account all expressions of cultural production in an appropriate sociological light. It intends to dedicate the most attention to literature, theater, and film due to the broad social resonance and important societal function of these media.

Contemporary Culture stands upon the theoretical foundation of a new, critical realism that captures societal events in their entire breadth with a clear social conscience. The primary principle of critical realism is the effort to articulate the relationship between the modern artist and reality through the most progressive and effective means of artistic expression. By demanding responsibility from the artist through the method of a direct response to reality, critical realism distinguishes itself from those artistic directions, which, on the peripheries of the primary stream, cultivate a formalistic cult of art for art's sake and deviate from the burning issues of the time through an escape into artistic seclusion, a metaphysical or romantic orientation of trivial directions with the desire for religious contemplation (the catholic literati), the subconscious and dreams (the surrealists), or the defunct veneration of bygone lifelike forms (the ruralists), which bar the innumerable adherents of these groups from the principle field of vision in the investigation of contemporary culture. The new critical realism also distinguishes itself from the descriptive realism from the end of the nineteenth century which only recorded facts but was unable to classify them or bring them under artistic control, as it did not see in them their entire breadth and social contingencies.

*The principles by which *Contemporary Culture* wishes to guide itself are taken neither from the air nor by order from abroad. They grow from reality and from the special conditions of today's cultural life on Czechoslovak territory with historical retrospection. Czechoslovakia remains the one democratic and culturally progressive country in central Europe. There are already enough directions that emerged with the platform: catch up with Europe! Concerning the freedom of spirit and the freedom of cultural production, most of Europe is already behind us. Even this fact is necessary to evaluate critically.

Appendix 2: Martinů's Essay "Something about that 'French' influence"¹³¹

Something that has accompanied me throughout my whole life is a certain reproach, a criticism (thought of as a reproach) of the French influence on my work. My residence in France and what I extracted from it is almost like some national sin that weighs against me, and each new composition is observed for the extent to which I have or have not been eliminating this influence. For me, each such claim is the greatest proof of

¹³⁰ *Kultura doby* [*Contemporary Culture*], 1 (November, 1936): 1.

¹³¹ This translation is based on the original manuscript of Martinů's essay, which is archived as file "75/95/15" at the Bohuslav Martinů Memorial in Polička in the Czech Republic. Based on manuscript evidence, I have dated the essay to Fall, 1945. He probably wrote it in anticipation of his return to Czechoslovakia from the U.S., which never transpired. See Svatos, *Martinů on Music and Culture*, 133-147.

incomprehension and misunderstanding, and partially, of the will to not want to understand. Let's take this apart.

There is a certain hypocrisy in our relationship to French culture which has not found its way from the phase of comprehension and criticism, i.e. we admire and celebrate it, yet we do not believe in it and pronounce it "superficial." By superficial, we mean not serious enough, not deep enough, artificial, which is possible to understand from the perspective of our general training which, in a calculated way, pounded this into us for the longest time through a German metaphysical philosophy and a mysterious ideology into which all of man's problems and mysteries were placed, but also through common, calculated propaganda. This state of affairs developed to such an extent that we¹³² pronounce something superficial, but at the same time talk about it as if it were great culture. We do not miss an opportunity when we seemingly find a fault, an insufficiency, or something *manqué*. In essence, it is mental laxity, especially at a time we see the great insufficiencies of German metaphysics and how terrible its consequences were for us¹³³ and those many mysteries and problems that exist only on paper.

Here it is necessary to decide. If we really consider French culture superficial (at least in music), we can shape our judgment accordingly and deduce the consequences upon which we will firmly stand, but we should then not say: "Well, it is, but is not [superficial]." It is our responsibility at the present time to amend our opinion, even when different orientations do not benefit us. Of course it is not my intention to suggest making a choice between these two directions. I only emphasize that if I consider something "superficial," then I do not make it one of my problems.

But to get to the facts. What compelled me to get to know French culture were more consequential issues. In my youth, when I could not yet analyze or reflect upon anything, I had already felt instinctively that many of the views that were presented to us are found neither in our national spirit nor national expression and cannot find acceptance anywhere, and that we are dealing with matters that have been artificially sustained and lead our natural spiritual development towards a field which is not Czech expression and becomes instead a caricature and an unnecessary waste of energy. Perhaps I have exaggerated everything, but this unease was in me and confirmed each step of the way, although the great majority of past and contemporary works of that time confirmed my opinion. In short, I saw up close that our natural expression and national character corresponds to concreteness and healthy thinking rather than the various mysteriously entangled metaphysical systems that were pounded into us and evidently seemed to be far more valuable and deeper, despite the fact that the depth was plainly verbal and in reality "superficial," without proof or weight, at least for me. I also felt that this kind of interpretation does not agree with the spiritual expression of our eminent people¹³⁴ in whom I have always found concreteness, a healthy sensibility, and a healthy artistic emotional attitude rather than mysteries and problems.

¹³² Refers to the Czechs.

¹³³ Here Martinů is linking "German metaphysical philosophy" - through which he claims the Czechs were trained in music - with the destruction of the First Republic at the hands of Nazi Germany.

¹³⁴ Martinů is referring to the admired cultural figures of the Czech Lands.

Thus I went to France, not to find my salvation, but to confirm my point of view. And here we find the great error that is incomprehensible to many. Because I am a musician, they assume that I went because of music, most likely because of Debussy in particular. And here we can place our finger on the pain, because opinion becomes centralized on French culture, "it is but is not [superficial]." It is self-evident that a person in such a position knows French expression very little.

But in order to come to a conclusion, Debussy was not the reason I went to France, and even if he had been, then as a musician, it would have not taken me nearly twenty years to realize this. There is a single conclusion from all of this: the ones who are superficial are those who talk about something they do not know anything about. In other words, we are superficial, and not French culture or German metaphysics. If lightness appears in my work, aha! - there is that influence. If it is the color of the sound, then we see how a Czech composer can become "influenced." You see that all of this is childish. What is no longer childish, however, is when each composition is searched for the extent to which I "saved" myself from this influence, or how I lost or found my expression such that I have abandoned or am abandoning these influences - you clearly feel the naive, one-sided logic and incomprehension. Thus what I went looking for in France was not Debussy, impressionism, or musical expression, but the actual foundations upon which Western culture lies and which, in my opinion, reflect our national character much more than a labyrinth of mysteries and problems.

For this reason, the Czech elements I brought to France were not destroyed, but on the contrary supported and enhanced through maturity and brought to an organic order, which, if I am not mistaken, follows only that line which Smetana and Dvořák began. If I arrived at clarity and conciseness of form and expression, it is not because I "liberated" myself, or "became independent" of those influences, which, according to their opinion, seemingly obstructed me in that isolation, or at any rate, obstructed the realization of my national awareness. This is where the error lies.¹³⁵

There is a great misunderstanding here which is necessary to rectify once and for all. This conclusion¹³⁶ is derived from a certain one-sided, deductive logic where the fundamental conclusions are false. We can analyze this.

Until 1918, our music was in a kind of political opposition, if not directly through a program, than at least through national feeling and expression. Our music was for the most part romantic as well, or derived from romanticism. Surrounded for years by calculated German propaganda and philosophy, most of our ideologues (trained in this philosophy) did not look for how our national expression and character differs or could differ from this philosophy, but how it *fits in* and how, as a result, our characteristic national profile becomes manifest. There was a "discrepancy" here which many people at home had already begun to suspect. Our training and its inertia was nevertheless derived from this philosophy and, through its vagueness and lack of precision, it allowed for various interpretations and conclusions. One of these conclusions concerned that emotional, mysterious, messianic romanticism which is simply so removed from our people. We are definitely not a

¹³⁵ In the original manuscript, Martinů crosses out everything up to this point from the words "For this reason ..." at the beginning of the paragraph.

¹³⁶ Martinů is referring to the erroneous conclusion of the Czech critics that he had achieved clarity and conciseness in form and expression by liberating himself from foreign influences.

sentimental nation, but all of these prophets make us into a sentimental nation and by doing this they (the awakeners!!)¹³⁷ also act as if they were adding the aureole of a greater and better humanity. But our people are not like this. Instead you will find in them a simple, healthy sentimentality, a strictness rather than abandon, sobriety rather than hysterical enthusiasm, a sense for a natural, simple explanation and a simple relationship to things. There were plenty of people who warned against this and national character became the subject of reflection and opinion (see Peroutka).¹³⁸ Our art had always defended itself against this influence; it had to if it wanted to remain sincere (see painting, music - even Smetana, literature - see Nezval).

Ideologues dominated the situation, nevertheless, and they considered themselves more important than the artists themselves such that their interpretations appeared to be more complex and more mysterious and thus somehow "better" and "deeper" (this invariably was the consequence of being trained in this philosophy). We can easily return to certain articles in which meaning was drowned out in a flood of verbal apotheoses. The whole matter became nonsense and most people had already rejected it, despite the fact that its influence was so powerful that no one had the courage to say anything in public. And this is understandable, because the battle was uneven. It was as if we they were battling against great human principles which had assumed an absolute value and which - through their mysteriousness and verbosity - seemed to contain a greater value than ordinary common sense which could have simply and without concealment expressed a conclusion, or an ordinary statement without magic and without the possibility to inflate it and create a balloon out of it such that it will look bigger and thus deeper (these two concepts were somehow connected). It is quite difficult to prove what is "deeper," of course, and according to everything, it seemed that what is more entangled is also deeper, and it is easier to entangle things than to put them in order. And here, evidently, there was a danger. There is a culture that has order and proportion in its agenda, as well as exactness and clarity in form, i.e. a simple, healthy sensibility. Battling against this culture was necessary, as the entire system would otherwise collapse. And this is how the battle went. All of these qualities were pronounced "superficial," i.e. they remained on the surface of things but did not go into "depth." This was very serious because there is little that people fear more than the suspicion of superficiality. You can figure out for yourselves the type of confusion this created in the minds of the youth. So the entire process became easier, only those things from Western culture were chosen that were necessary.

¹³⁷ By "prophets" and "awakeners," Martinů is referring to certain Czech critics and historians, who, under the influence of Herder's ideas and the example of German romanticism, mythologized, exaggerated, and even falsified Czech cultural values to create the notion of a people with a great history and tradition.

¹³⁸ A reference to the eminent journalist of the First Republic, Ferdinand Peroutka (1895-1978). He was close to the first Czechoslovak president Thomas G. Masaryk and the writer Karel Čapek. He was incarcerated in Buchenwald during World War II, went into exile in 1948, and worked for Radio Free Europe thereafter. After 1950, he lived in the United States. By making this reference, Martinů may have had in mind Peroutka's essay collection *Jací jsme [The Way We Are]*, reissued in Ferdinand Peroutka, *O věcech obecných (Výbor z politické publicistiky) [About General Matters (An Anthology of Political Journalism)]*, 2 vols. (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1991), 19-70.

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