



v budově **Narodního**

Ve středu 16. března 1938 o 19^{1/2}

B. Martinů:

Julietta (Snář)

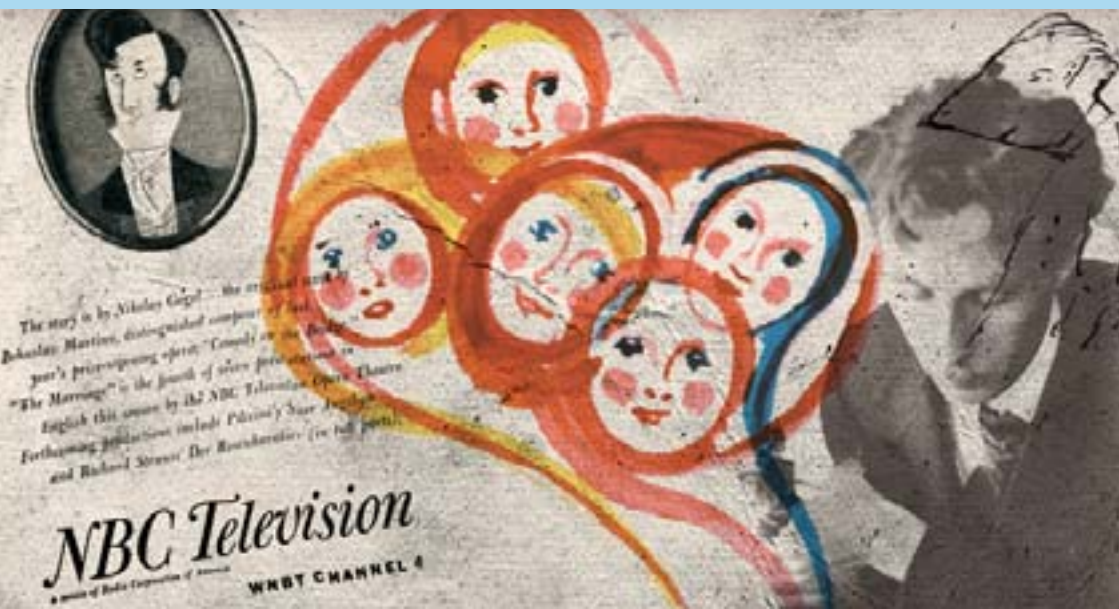
Lyrická zpěvohra o třech jednáčích, Text G. Neveux, Překlad B. Ma

Dirigent: **Václav Talich**

Režie: Jindřich Honzl J. h. — Výprava: František Muzika — Chora

A POCKET GUIDE TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF **BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ**

JAROSLAV MIHULE / 2008



The story is by Nikolai Gogol... the original work by Bohuslav Martinů, distinguished composer of the year's prize-winning opera "Comedy on the Bridge" "The Marriage" in the form of seven presentations in English this season by the NBC Television Opera Theatre. Forthcoming productions include Puccini's "Nurse Angelica" and Richard Strauss' "Der Rosenkavalier" (in full parts).

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František Martinů, colored drawing from a scrapbook



FROM POLIČKA TO PRAGUE

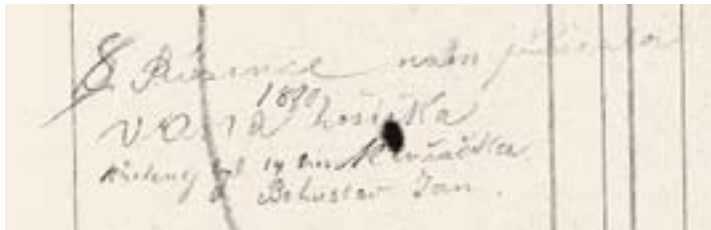
1890 – 1922

On The Polička Tower ^{1.1}

Bohuslav came into the world in a tiny room on the gallery of the church tower where his father, Ferdinand Martinů, apart from being a shoemaker, also carried out a unique job as the tower-keeper, bell-ringer and watchman.



Polička - St. James' Church and the Bastion



"On December 8th, the crow brought us a male, a boy, and on Dec. 14th he was baptized as Bohuslav Jan."
(The composer's father made this entry in the family chronicle.)

A Loving Family ^{1.2}

It was the mother who energetically took charge of the whole family. She was the paragon of order and discipline: strict, pious – a Roman Catholic, naturally, as were most inhabitants of this hilly region.

Of course, she loved all of her children. With Ferdinand Martinů she had five; and the youngest and probably the most coddled was Bohuslav, born to the accompaniment of the festive ringing of all the bells, as the town celebrated on that day the holiday of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. To be born high above the ground, almost within the reach of the sky, seemed in itself to promise an exceptional life ahead.

Also his brother František and his sister Marie had their own special talents. František graduated from art school and made use of his artistic skills above all





At about three

as a restorer and conservator of church art objects in his homeland as well as abroad. Marie, who after finishing her apprenticeship and a subsequent internship in France opened a clothes boutique in Polička, spoke French and Esperanto and studied stenography. The parents thus had a good reason to be proud of all their children.

The Journey to Music^{1,3}

The boy grew up secluded from the world at large. His mother recalled many incidents from his youth, including his delight in playing with paper soldiers and his first imaginative attempt at music making. With two sticks of wood he «played» the violin. Some time later, at the annual fair, his father bought him a toy fiddle and a small drum. Full of joy, Bohuš kept walking around the tower terrace fiddling and drumming.

Bohuš is second from the right, sitting



Young Martinů lived nearly twelve years in that tower. He was tall, thin and feeble. More than once in his early childhood his father would have to carry him up the stairs on his shoulders in order to save him the exhausting climb up those one hundred and ninety-three steps that separated them from the life of the town down below.

Bohuslav had hardly started going to school when his parents entrusted him to the care of a Polička music teacher. Mr. Černovský had no particular qualifications for such professional activity, but Martinů never forgot that humble Polička tailor. An old photograph shows his robust figure contrasting with the naïve faces of his pupils. Bohuslav seems to be somewhat frightened of the camera. Many of his funny self-portraits, with which he decorated his letters to friends and classmates, show a clever small mouse, a being that prefers to be hidden, satisfied, merry, not aggressive but which knows how to take care of himself.

As his education progressed, his talent was becoming step by step more obvious. He was enjoying first successes as a young violinist. He played with the adults in a local amateur quartet; and, in 1905, gave his first public "concert" in the neighboring village of Borová. In fact, after one of his performances, the local newspaper published an impassionate appeal to the Polička public:

We have here a gifted and promising young man... All that is required is for some generous rich benefactor or business firm to take note of this needy young fellow so that he can attend the Conservatory. I believe that one day he could bring honor both to his rich benefactor and Polička. He who can, help!

And the support was really forthcoming. During the summer holidays of 1906, Karolina Martinů set out with her youngest son for Prague in order to introduce him to renowned musical experts; and in the fall of that year Bohuslav Martinů successfully passed the entrance examination for the violin class of the Prague Conservatory.



The Conservatory was housed in Rudolfinum, later known as The House of Artists, a beautiful neo-renaissance building (built 1876-1884), but classes took place also in other parts of Prague.

At the Conservatory ^{1.4}

The Prague Conservatory had been at the turn of the century a highly exacting school, proud of the roots which led to its foundation in 1811 and on to its brilliant period with Antonín Dvořák as professor of composition. But after his death in 1904 many things changed, and Martinů found himself a student at an institution whose rigid and overly academic approach might have appeared insensitive and even hostile to him and his fellow students of music. What was even worse was that, contrary to his recent experience in Polička or at the little inn in Borová, no one was enthusiastic about his violin playing.



„Dávám se všem' hrub'."

I am devoting myself to violin exercises.
(It is hard to „exercise a violin" if you hold the bow with the left hand)

Also, he was now turning more and more to composition. In his early musical childhood he already made an attempt at a string quartet entitled **Tři jezdci (Three Riders)** based on a poem by the famous Czech poet Jaroslav Vrchlický.

The more his personality matured in the exciting Prague cultural milieu of the time the faster the Conservatory became dissatisfied with his work there. After the 1909 vacation he decided to switch over to the organ department where composition was then taught. However, not even in the composition class was he successful. On the contrary. On June 4, 1910 he was expelled from the Conservatory „**for incorrigible negligence!**“

After his dismissal from the Conservatory, composing became a permanent challenge to him - he composed regularly almost every day until his death, “condemned” to write music, at first without any hope of performance or appreciation. From this time on, an uninterrupted flow of compositions was coming from this pen of an independent musician. The accusation by the Conservatory of «incorrigible negligence» thus appears even more absurd today.

I have a new cap.

The style „Run away“!

Czech language and
teaching theory - failed

Harmony - failed

History of music - failed

Violin - failed

Practical teaching

demonstration - good



Prague and a Life Crisis ^{1.5}

At home his parents were patient, but naturally also disappointed and dissatisfied with the way their son was progressing. He owed a great deal to them, but even his next attempt to vindicate his musical ambitions did not succeed. He took the State examination required for a private music teacher's license. Surviving letters and documents show, however, that he failed again.

“That state exam is taken by people who don't even know what music is and they pass it, but here am I devoting my whole life to it, career, and everything... What kind of a person am I supposed to be in order to earn such a certificate?”



His fight with a piano

He did not let the adverse result of the state examination discourage him, and on a second try a year later he passed it.

His struggles in those Prague years are typical of his entire life style. **“Everything can be achieved if we really want it and if we have the patience to go for it.”**

However, out of this jumble of temporary difficulties there suddenly emerged another notable encounter: that with Stanislav Novák. They got acquainted at the Conservatory. His future friend Novák had also come to Prague from a little country town, his head full of great plans, and firmly determined to bring them to their logical conclusion. The career of this young violinist was brilliant in comparison with that of Bohuslav, and progressed rapidly. He became an outstanding Czech virtuoso and very soon occupied the prestigious position of leader at the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, a post that he was to hold from 1917 to 1936. Bohuš and Stáňa stayed together and helped one another to make the difficulties and poverty of student life more bearable. Their common dreams are also depicted in Martinů’s sketchbook.

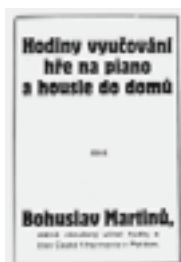
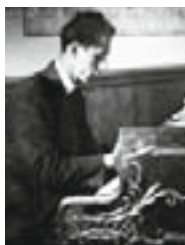


When we are in Paris
(Two lions of high society- „N’est-ce pas, mon ami?“)

When we are in London
(A distrust for the Channel:
Do you see? It is Kanál de la Manča.)

A Music Teacher in Polička ^{1.6}

When the First World War broke out, Martinů succeeded in avoiding military service on the grounds of ill health. He lived alternatively between Prague and Polička, but hunger and lack of money eventually made him settle in the safe environment of his native town beginning with the summer of 1916. Polička could provide more favorable living conditions than the capital, which year after year experienced more and more economic troubles. There he began to teach music, play with local amateur musicians, study French and, of course, compose.



As a music teacher
in Polička



Václav Talich (1883-1961,
photo by Josef Sudek
1924)

Martinů's apprentice years seemed to be slowly drawing to a close. His first period as a young composer can be classified as a period of decadence. The sadness and melancholy of the fin-de-siècle were also his own feelings at that time - at least in the programs of his orchestral scores, of which he never heard a single note.

Accordingly, several days after his dismissal from the conservatory he wrote **Smrt Tintagilova (The Death of Tintagiles, 1910)** for large orchestra, the inspiration for which came from a play by the Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck, whose plot was filled with the atmosphere of occult horror. Similar qualities had attracted also the attention of Claude Debussy, who used as the libretto for his famous opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* a play by Maeterlinck permeated by the same mood. Martinů felt very close to him and later confessed: «**Debussy was the greatest revelation of my life.**»

Many of other Martinů's works of those and later years fell into oblivion and not even the composer himself showed any interest in them, as each further stage in his development only put this youthful period more and more behind him. There were some exceptions, e.g. the collection of songs **Nipponari** (1912), for female voice and chamber ensemble, or „**Loutky**“ (**Puppets**) for piano, simple, mood-inducing compositions (such as **Columbine Dances, Harlequin, or The Sick Puppet**) which acquired early popularity and were favored particularly by young pianists. Martinů continued in the writing of this free cycle from about 1910 up to 1924. There are exceptions: a piano cycle **Pupetts** (about 1910 - 1924) or e.g. two collections of songs, **Nipponari** (1912), for female voice and chamber ensemble, and **Magic Nights** (1919) for soprano and orchestra accompaniment. Neither **Magic Nights** nor **Nipponari** are marginal works. They have only been undeservedly forgotten and even now convey a certain feeling of nostalgia for the charms of Prague at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Czech Philharmonic and Josef Suk ^{1.6}

While in Polička, he was still able to stay in touch with Prague thanks to his friend Novák. He even found temporary employment in the string section of the Czech Philharmonic. After the Czechoslovak Republic came into existence in 1918 he was able to continue to work there as a permanent member of the orchestra.

That symphonic body was extremely important for Martinů's growth. Here he penetrated the secrets of the ingenious structure of a large symphonic orchestra of outstanding quality and found unique opportunities for study. All the more so given that the Czech Philharmonic was then led by Václav Talich.

The Czech Philharmonic soon gave him a real chance as a composer. His **Czech**

Rhapsody, a cantata for baritone, mixed chorus and orchestra, inspired by the liberation of the Czech nation from the Habsburg monarchy and the dominance of Vienna, was included in the program of the 1918-1919 season.

In spite of all his successes (e.g. the National Theater in Prague accepted his full-length ballet **Istar**) he himself did not feel fully satisfied. On the contrary. And so, in 1922, when Josef Suk became teacher of composition at the Prague Conservatory, Martinů, at the age of 32, enrolled in his master class. He admired music of this Dvořák pupil, and his technical craftsmanship gave him assurance that this time he had found the right tutor.

He was not disappointed in Suk's personality. In a short time he learned a great deal from him. His teacher had a direct link to Václav Talich and to the Czech Philharmonic who were paying special attention to Suk, then one of the top Czech composers. Martinů deeply enjoyed their lifelong friendship.

Disappointed, on the contrary, was Suk. One can feel the atmosphere during the reception at the Municipal House in Prague after the successful performance of the **Czech Rhapsody** caught in the sketchbook by Martinů. However, the drawing already hints that the talented student is about to leave his master, and why. It was in the fall of 1923 when he wrote the following sad message to his friend:

To Stanislav Novák, Polička, October 13, 1923

Dear boy,

Father has left us forever. I cannot write anything now. It's terrible here. Within five minutes the last struggle was over, as if a candle went out, without him putting up a fight or realizing what was happening. We had all gathered around him and he was so content. I played the piano for him. He lit a cigar and was so happy that we all wished for him to be able to get up soon. Then within an hour he peacefully left us. Throughout his life he was always unobtrusive, on the sidelines, and he died the same way. That is the one thing that gives us relief. He didn't know he was going and didn't suffer. I will tell you everything when I come. Just think of us on Sunday at half past three when we will have a funeral instead of a concert.

A couple of days later Bohuslav Martinů left for Paris to remain there until 1940.



Josef Suk (1874-1935)



"After the Rhapsody at Repre"
"I am getting ready for Paris!"



Composer's parents Ferdinand
and Karolina Martinů around 1920

B. Martinů:

Julietta



PARIS AND THE AVANTGARDE

1923 – 1940

Stařenka
Hadačka
Julietta
Michal
U
Pob
Slepec
Trombonec
Strážník

Anna Petridesová
Josef Celerin
Josef Klika
Marie Veselá
Marie Podvařilová
Antonín
Ludáš

Ota Horáková
Jaroslav Gleich
Miloslav Jeník
Táňa Tomanová
Stanislav Muž
Luděk Mandouš
Josef Vojta

Stary námožnik
Mladý námožnik
Hlas dívky
Stará dáma
Obyvatelé městečka
Děje se v lese na k
přímožského městečka

Noční hlídač
Hlas řeka
Skupina šedých postav
Osoby z prvního jednání
Děje se v úřední kanceláři
náměstí přímožského mě

Popis jednání větší přestávka. Mezi představením přístup do hlediště přísně zakázán.

Národní divadlo:

19. listopadu 1935 hod.: **Pani Bovaryová** (v předpl.)
20. listopadu 1935 hod.: **Julietta** (v předpl.)
21. listopadu 1935 hod.: **Václav Talich**

Jarmila Nová

To Paris as a Student Again ^{2.1}

The fact that the studies with Suk lasted merely one year was due to an unexpected development, which altered the direction of Martinů's life for many years. He got an opportunity to travel to Paris on a modest stipend and to study composition with Albert Roussel, one of the most striking personalities of modern French music.

But by that time, surprisingly enough, Martinů already knew both Paris and the music of his future teacher; for almost immediately after the borders had been opened in 1918, he had participated as a member of the orchestra of the Prague National Theatre in a great tour abroad.

Paris, the centre of world affairs in those years, complex and attractive, had enchanted him, just as Prague had done a long time ago at the beginning of the 20th century.



In the atelier of his friend, painter Jan Zrzavý (Paris, rue Pouchet, photo by Jaromír Čihař 1924)

The Czech Colony ^{2.2}

Paris provided him with many new friends, in the first place from among his fellow-countrymen, as many other Czech artists found an inspiring environment there. They included painters like Jan Zrzavý, František Kupka, Josef Šíma, František Tichý, František Muzika, and later Rudolf Kundera, all whom had found, just as Alfons Mucha so well known for his art nouveau paintings and posters a generation before, a haven in Paris. Then there were writers such as Vítězslav Nezval, Vilém Závada, Mucha's son Jiří, as well as many musicians, including Rudolf Firkušný, the pianist and the greatest pupil of Janáček, all responding to the heady atmosphere of Parisian left bank. Bit by bit Martinů became fully integrated into Parisian life. It was not easy at all. Other expatriate Czech artists had similar experiences. In his memoirs, the painter Josef Šíma recalls:

“The first three years they were an agglomerate of impressions, acquaintances, contacts, quests, reading, listening and at the same time it was necessary to discover what to do in order to earn one's living because the stuff I considered real work I could not sell, nobody was interested.”

Since the second half of the twentieth century the paintings of such artists as Kupka, Zrzavý, Šíma, Tichý and several other members of the Czech colony sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Albert Roussel (1869-1937)



Georges
Ribemont-Dessaignes
as seen by Josef Šíma

Josef Šíma's memoirs contain his drawing of an intellectual with an ironic grin and aristocratic mien – Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, the French playwright. He provided Martinů with small dramatic sketches for use as operatic librettos. „Ribemont-Dessaignes was in the same financial boat as I,“ observes Šíma, „he had to write many insufferable things to be able to write his own which financially brought nothing, absolutely nothing at all. Many others, if not all of us, were in the same situation.“ Martinů most certainly as well.

Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes was the author of the texts of three “French” operas by Martinů and actually guided the composer into experimental dimensions - we need only to recall the opera **The Knife's Tears** (*Les larmes du couteau*, 1928) with a hanged man on the stage, or **Three Wishes** (*Les trois souhaits ou Les vicissitudes de la vie*, 1929), which makes use also of jazz music, and combines opera with spoken word and film shots - but out of all that work (i.e. from all those operas, several ballets etc.). Martinů did not hear a single note and did not receive for it a single franc!



Martinů and
Ribemont-Dessaignes
– a drawing of Adolf
Hoffmeister (Paris 1928)

The Knife's Tears, stage
design by Vojtěch Štolfa,
State Theater Brno, 1969



For some time he was in regular contact with Jan Zrzavý. He and Jan Zrzavý became close, and the two found lifelong mutual understanding and friendship. **“Martinů talked to me for the first time once in the café Deux Magots. He had a cold and was poorly dressed. The two of us then walked home together, we both lived near each other in the vicinity of Place Blanche in Batignolles. Thereafter we visited frequently the Café Rotonde and stayed late. The metro would have already ceased operating and so we would walk from the Rotonde to Avenue Clichy, through whole Paris, which was beautiful. We talked all the way. Later he married Charlotte. They lived in rue Mandar, and every week I had lunch with them at their place.”**



In 1926 Martinů found his life partner among the audience in the tent of the Paris Circus Medrano: a French woman, Charlotte Quennehen, a fragile but energetic being, who helped him overcome the difficult obstacles of the next decades.

The marriage promised to bring more peace and calm. His feelings for Charlotte were strong, and the reason for such a long wait before marriage seems to have been a combination of the Parisian life style, lack of money and maybe even the wish of Martinů's mother that he marry a Czech girl from Polička.

Martinů's artistic vision and humor were indeed special (Jan Zrzavý and Martinů in Paris)



With Jaroslav Ježek

Jaroslav Ježek appeared from time to time in Paris, where his close associates, the actors and clowns Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich, shot their musical film comedies.

The drawing of Ondřej Sekora offers a glimpse of their standard of living: the caricature of the composer is accompanied by a typical gadget of the time: a spirit cooker, with a meager meal.



He studied swing thoroughly already in Polička (drawing from around 1920)

The role of jazz was for him a fascinating example of how the time dictates its own form of expression. Due to the influence of jazz there was a huge increase in the use of rhythmic elements in his music. The degree of the impact of jazz music on Martinů's development during those years can be clearly seen first in two of the then published Sonatas for Violin and Piano, as well as in other compositions such as the ballet **La revue de cuisine (The Kitchen Revue, Kuchyňská revue, 1927)**.

The period between 1926, the year of his first meeting with Charlotte Quennehen, to about 1930 represents Martinů's jazz infatuated years. The most pronounced examples of his reminiscences of the world of swing appear in two compositions with obvious titles: **Le Jazz** and the **Jazz Suite**, both from the same year 1928.

"Bohuslav had a naturally positive attitude to life, and appreciated all those small and great gifts and joys of the earth and nature. We have less than the others, he used to tell me - his wife recalled - but enough to make us happy."
Charlotte Martinů

International Success ^{2.3}

"I heard Petrushka at a concert. It's real pandemonium. A pity that you [in the Czech Philharmonic] don't play it. Here among the French works which are mostly, *entre nous*, terribly bedraggled, this is like a bombshell, but one exploded in a masterly manner. I've also discovered that he is a heavy drinker!"

Actually, it was with orchestral movements **Half-Time (1924)** and **La Bagarre (Tumult)** that Martinů successfully presented himself to the Paris audience of that time and to that of Prague as well. With these two compositions he found himself at the opposite pole from his previous endeavors. Probably the artistically most provocative work combining "vulgar" sport and "noble" music was written by Martinů in 1924. On his first summer holiday, when he came again to Polička, the score of a symphonic movement, **Half-Time** occupied all his free time. Dynamic music of new strength and vitality, conceived in a modern manner glorified the emotions vented at a sports stadium by an excited crowd at a football match, a game of which Martinů was an enthusiastic fan.



Stravinsky as seen by Pablo Picasso (1920)
© Succession Picasso
2007

Another symphonic movement, **La Bagarre (Tumult, 1928)**, was of a similar nature, evoking the dynamism of the crowds and their energies. After he finished the score, it occurred to Martinů that Paris had recently witnessed just such an event - the tumult of tens of thousands of people enthusiastically welcoming the airplane in which Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic Ocean for the first time nonstop. This memorable event is noted in the supplementary dedication in the score. Martinů informed Lindbergh about his composition and received an answer: a letter expressing Lindbergh's thanks.

The **Second String Quartet (1925)** sought to confirm the self-confidence of the composer and to open for him new perspectives of absolute musical communication. On that account his effort was close to some of the aspirations of those in his generation who were taking part in the rise and development of neo-Classicism in the 1920's and 1930's. That this was not merely a passing episode for him can be seen from several later compositions.

The **Piano Concerto No. 1 (1925)** arrived with something new. In contrast to popular piano concertos, proudly displaying their brilliance and massive symphonic sound, it offered lively playful music, free of the abstruse conflicts and tempestuous emotionality of the recent epoch.

As Martinů was at this time becoming a composer in demand, news about his latest works came also to Prague. Václav Talich was immediately interested. **"I'm conducting in London and would like a Czech novelty. Could you give me your Hurly Burly [meant La Bagarre] or ... what do you call it?"**



Head filled with music, haggard face, possibly with signs of hunger, but in the background the bird wings of the Eiffel Tower trying to reach the sky and a view from the height of the earthly goings-on, just as he experienced it in Polička

A drawing of Martinů by Adolf Hoffmeister (1930)



Watercolor by Karel Svoboda "A recollection on the concert Feb. 11, 1925 Paris, Châtelet".



František Muzika's drawing was published in the paper with the remark: "Bohuslav Martinů, a Czech Parisian, whose compositions are winning him recognition in America, France and Germany." His fame was growing at home as well.

Karel Svoboda's
costume designs for the
production of *Špalíček* in
Ostrava, inspired by folk
tradition

Although Talich did not conduct the premiere, he often included **La Bagarre** in his programs from that time onward. Martinů had to be very pleased to receive such a letter confirming his position on the European contemporary music scene. Nevertheless, he gave the score first to somebody else, **Serge Koussevitzky**. The latter conducted the legendary “Koussevitzky Concerts” in Paris between 1921 and 1928 of which Martinů was a frequent visitor. To his immense joy the celebrated conductor accepted it and took the composition with him to the United States. The premiere of **La Bagarre** with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky took place in Boston. Apparently it was a hit. “**Last night’s concert by the Boston**



The Miracles of Our
Lady, stage design by
Jan Vančura, Brno State
Theater, 1990



Symphony Orchestra at the Albee Theater was a triumph for all concerned..”
(The New York Times on December 7, 1927).

The Appeal of Home ^{2.4}

The bonds by which he had been tied since childhood to Czech culture were never broken. Although some nationalistic echoes had been heard in his earlier works, now, in the thirties, they acquire greater significance. His return to traditional tonality and a preference for diatonic melodies with simple harmonic support increases, but not to the exclusion of modern idiom. Side by side with the excursions into unusual realms for inspiration, and with the daring compositional experiments of the Paris years, there emerge from his compositions tones and moods by which Martinů attaches himself more and more to the land of his birth.

His ballet **Špalíček (A Czech Year, 1932)** with chorus and orchestra, was designed in the form of a full-length revue of games, fairytales and rhymes according to Czech folk customs during the four seasons - a dance portrait of a “Czech Year”. The scenes change quickly; the tales that serve as the basis for the story are a mixture of various folk plays and national customs set to the text of folk poetry.

The Czech Operas ^{2.5}

The conception which Martinů incorporated in the ballet **Špalíček** had been quickly reasserted by him. He produced a large group of theatrical works specially designed for Czech theatres. **Špalíček** was thus followed by the operas **Hry o Marii (The Miracles of Our Lady, 1934)** and **Divadlo za branou (The Suburban Theater, 1936)**. Both are indicative of the immensely fruitful manner in which folk poetry melded with the very personal aspects of Martinů's contemporary artistic style.

In **The Miracles of Our Lady** Martinů draw his inspiration from village performances that grew out of the folk tradition of the theater which has roots akin to in the

entire cultural life of Europe. They bring to life medieval dramatic pieces based on biblical themes and on loose renditions of legends played already from the beginning of the twelfth century – for instance at St. George monastery at Prague castle. "I wish to make real theater, and therefore I am returning to subjects which were once such a theater."

The gallery of personalities which affected Martinů's life in his Paris years would not be complete without one figure particularly characteristic of the Czech culture of the

twentieth century: the poet Vítězslav Nezval. In addition to a lyrical disposition, which they shared, they were drawn to each other also by Paris itself, to which Nezval was during the years of his surrealistic searches strongly attached. Their collaboration yielded an operatic jest **Hlas lesa (Voice of the Forest, 1935)**, a whimsical comedy about highwaymen and a great love, intended for the radio. He proceeded in a similar vein further on, this time with an even more pronounced comic element in a libretto whose story line he took over from an over hundred years old theatrical piece by Václav Klicpera (1792-1859): **A Comedy On the Bridge (1935)**, a humorous tale about love and jealousy was finished on December 10, 1935 in Paris and Martinů composed it once again with a modern medium in mind – radio.

This cheerful opera received an immediate and warm recognition when it premiered on Czechoslovak Radio. It enchants by its lyricism, but also the cordial swiftness with which the drums are played, the horns sounded and the cannons fired, all of which with military accuracy.

Czech culture at ease in Paris (photo 1934): Charlotte Martinů with a painter, a composer and a poet – Jan Zrzavý, Bohuslav Martinů and Vítězslav Nezval.



Paul Sacher, Juliette and Munich ^{2.6}

The Swiss conductor Paul Sacher performed in 1933 with the Basel Chamber Orchestra the **Partita (Suite No.1)** and thus introduced to the Swiss public for the first time a hitherto-unknown Czech composer. It was a success; and Sacher, who was taken by the music himself, asked him for another composition.

The Swiss multimillionaire and his wife Maja Sacher were well-known sponsors of modern artists and many European composers were at times their guests. Even Martinů did not turn down an attractive offer of a fall sojourn in the beautiful environment of the Swiss mountains in 1938.

However, before that he experienced the most beautiful première of his life. On March 16, 1938, after many months of intensive work, the National Theater in Prague staged his full-length opera called **Juliette or The Key to Dreams** (1937) based on the theatrical play of the French playwright Georges Neveux. The libretto, which Martinů wrote himself (in Czech), is as remarkable as the music itself. The orchestra and the conductor received a rich symphonic score essentially different from any routine opera. While composing it, Martinů was

František Muzika's stage
design study, Prague
1938



convinced that he was working for Václav Talich, and it was his deepest wish that Talich accept and dedicate his efforts to Juliette.

In this work, the dramatist and the composer placed a man into a world of delusions; Michel walks the streets of a seaside town as if he were feverish, talks to people who answer – but do not understand him. They are unable to understand him just as he cannot understand them. Together with memory they have lost the connection between things and events. Relations do not exist for them; there are only isolated, nonsensical appearances.

Michel walks among them and experiences bizarre little adventures and entanglements. In the midst of all that, he is looking for a girl by the name of Juliette, with whom he fell in love. He does meet her, but Juliette perpetually evades him – as does her song, because she, too, belongs into the town without a past.



The composer Václav Kaprál, his daughter Vítězslava called Vitulka by friends, and Martinů

Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915-1940) studied composition with Vítězslav Novák in Prague, and with Bohuslav Martinů in Paris.

Juliette was among the composer's most favorite works. He recalled its premiere often; and, as late as 1953, he inserted into his *Fantaisies Symphoniques* a nostalgic musical echo from the score of **Juliette**.

It also meant a lot to Talich. **“Most of all I call to mind the first performance of one of the creative peaks of Martinů – the opera Juliette in the National Theater.”**

During the summer of 1938 Martinů traveled as usual to Polička, where he was spending his vacation every year – also in the company of Stanislav Novák and other friends. Among them was a young talented composer and conductor, Vítězslava Kaprálová, a charming young woman whom he met recently and also assisted in Paris as teacher of composition. He went with her through her works and together they discussed new projects. The photograph shows them in Tří studně in Vysočina in the summer of that year.

When he was leaving that oasis of peace in July 1938, he was going to cross a border beyond which he was never to return again in his life. In Vieux Moulin, not far from Compiègne, where his wife had a small house and where he was spending the rest of the vacation he then began to write a new work.

It was preceded by the magnificent success of the orchestral composition **Tre ricercari** (1938) at the international festival in Venice and the completion of the **Concerto grosso** (1937), whose names bring to mind the era of pre-classic music

in which Martinů found many sources of inspiration, and not only he. Close to it had been also a group that gathered around him in the thirties, the so-called **Parisian School, Ecole de Paris**. Its members were the Rumanian Marcel Mihalovici, the Hungarian Tibor Harsányi, the Swiss Conrad Beck and later also the Russian Alexandre N. Tcherepnine. They were not linked by program principles but by warm personal friendship: a circle of composers who worked in Paris although France was not their home.

Martinů's new work proceeded further in the same vein as far as its outward shape was concerned: **Double Concerto for Two String Orchestras, Piano and Timpani** (1938). The voice and the mission of that composition were however already something new; they were prompted by the course of events that gathered day by day like heavy clouds over the sky of Europe.

To Schönenberg by Liestal, where is situated the Sacher family residence, Martinů came with the draft of the first movement, and in a very short period of time finished the manuscript of the whole composition on September 29, 1938. He dedicated it to Paul Sacher; the friendship which originated between him and the Sachers lasted till the last day of Martinů's life.

In the meantime the war avalanche got into motion. The Munich agreement was signed and the road home was definitively closed.

In the fall of 1938 it was possible to go from the park, where Martinů's statue stands today, to the other side of Polička, a purely Czech town, only with a special permit and under the pointed guns of German soldiers. Only on November 24 the demarcation line was moved outside the town – thanks to the decisive resistance of notable Polička's native sons who managed to temporarily defeat the foreign authority in the case of Polička.



The Fall of Paris ^{2.7}

Les bouquinistes du quai Malaquais (les bouquinistes - used book dealers) was the name he gave to a minor piano composition which he dedicated to his wife Charlotte. The bouquinists of Paris, with their stands, are world-renowned. However, as a Czech, Martinů had one more reason to recall their memory. It dated back to the end of 1938. **"I cannot forget a bouquinist on the bank of the Seine at the Place St. Michel, where he had a rather tough time earning a living. He knew me only to the extent that occasionally I bought from him or sold him books. He knew that I was a Czech, and there were developments that neither he nor I could change. And so he offered simply and amicably – should you need anything, come to me."**

March 1939 meant the final end of sovereign Czechoslovakia: the country was swamped by the Nazi army. The proud democracy in the midst of Central European dictatorships ceased to exist.

"I was unable to give the least thought to composing... That whole time is in my mind a total confusion."

In the summer of 1939 he left once again Paris for Vieux Moulin, where he and his wife were joined for a few days by a group of friends shown in the photograph.

Jiří Mucha gave a personal testimony about their fortunes in a biographical novel **Podivné lásky (Strange Loves)** which reflects the life of the Czech artistic colony in Paris

before the outbreak of WWII (on the cover of the book is the drawing of conductor Kaprálová by Rudolf Kundera).

The life and career of Vitulka were too short. She died of tuberculosis in Montpelier already in 1940, shortly after marrying Jiří Mucha.

During that short period in Vieux Moulin Martinů composed, almost for himself, a collection of madrigals for male and female voices to the texts of folk songs **Eight Czech Madrigals** (1939). There was no hope that they could be performed in any near future, but at least he could escape through work into a better world. Some of his compositions reflect Martinů's musical as well as human rapport with Vítězslava Kaprálová – possibly in the **Fifth String Quartet** and equally possibly in those madrigals setting to music folk poetry permeated by the spirit of lyrical love. Immediately after the war broke out Martinů volunteered for the Czechoslovak army abroad, but he was not drafted. In gloomy circumstances he thus continued his work: he approached Jiří Mucha with a request for a text that could be used for a composition which was eventually called **The Field Mass** (1939). **"Our boys are being called to duty and leaving for the south of France... I would like to send them a composition which they could perform themselves knowing that it**



From left to right Vitulka Kaprálová with Rudolf Firkušný, sitting in the front is Rudolf Kundera, in the back the Martinů couple, to the right Jaroslav Stein and Marie Krausová, the wife of the singer Otakar Kraus (photo by Jiří Mucha in Vieux Moulin 1939).
© Mucha Trust



Pondering uncertain prospects (1940)

had been written for them – that we think of them and are with them.”

The periodical *Československý boj* (The Czechoslovak Struggle) published his article *Pozdrav domovu* (A Greeting For My Home) on November 4, 1939. A short time later – in February 1940 – in the issue no. 7 there appeared a news item about him under the headline **“Martinů banned in Prague”:**

“As of the beginning of this year, the works of the greatest living Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů may not be played any more. The reason given is that he is staying in Paris and had not returned to Prague by January 25, 1940.”

In the spring of 1940 – when Paris was already bombed – its musical life continued without being substantially affected by the war. Thus he could enjoy the premiere of his first **Sonata for Violoncello and Piano** (1939) in the unique presentation by Pierre Fournier and Rudolf Firkušný – and even witness its warm acceptance by the public.

Then came the end. He was of course not willing to wait in Paris for the Gestapo which, as they learned after the war, did indeed come to their apartment. With a small amount of luggage they went to the railroad station, practically at the same time that the city fell. In every respect they resembled the tens of thousands of refugees from all over Europe aiming for Marseille and further beyond the French border. It was a difficult time for everybody.

In their flight from occupied Paris they turned south; there were masses of refugees everywhere. Eventually they got to Rancon (Haute-Vienne) where – as the composer remembered, **“my friend Charles Munch took care of us so that we had at least a roof above our heads”** – and to Aix-en-Provence. The stay in Aix was intolerably long, especially with the onset of winter and the endless trips to Marseille in an attempt to secure an exit permit.

There were thousands waiting in endless lines in front of the American Consulate in Marseille. With resignation, Martinů was ready to be directed to go to the end of the line; then suddenly and almost unconsciously, in the account of his friend and biographer Šafránek, he uttered: **“I am blacklisted.”** It was virtually a blow out of the blue, because he himself had no inkling of anything like that.

He expected the worst, but instead he heard: **“Yes, you are on the list”** – and was sent directly to the office, where he was issued a visa on the spot.

What remained of course was to cross the border – which, as dozens of emigrants have testified – was no less difficult. The plan materialized only in the spring of 1941 after a three-month wait in Lisbon.



EXILE AND THE UNITED STATES

1941 – 1952

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A New Beginning ^{3.1}

On January 11, 1941 the Martinůs reached Lisbon by the way of Spain and stayed there for over two months. On March 31 they boarded S.S. Exeter whose destination was Hoboken, New Jersey, opposite Manhattan on the Hudson river. Martinů thus could draw a line behind one stage of his life. To the Šafráněks he reports while already on the ship: **“We will land with the Exeter on Monday, March 31 – come to the ship, greetings, Martinů.”**



Miloš Šafránek
with the Martinůs
(New York 1944)

Miloš Šafránek, a Czechoslovak diplomat from the pre-war time in Paris, had tried successfully earlier to present Martinů's music to New York society. His wife, the pianist Germaine Leroux, paid great attention to “her” **Second Piano Concerto** by Martinů, and played it often: in Luxemburg, Paris, Glasgow, Prague, Bucharest. She presented it also in America before the Martinůs landed, namely in Newark with the New Jersey Philharmonic on January 22, 1941.

At that time she was getting ready for a new premiere, again of “her” Martinů: **Sinfonietta Giocosa**, a four-movement orchestral composition with piano solo which had been written for her between September and mid-November 1940 on the French soil as “dernier cadeau” – the last gift from France. Her name appeared in the dedication of this beguiling music.

It was all about the beginning of a new stage; once again Martinů had found himself in a situation when everything that he had been doing until then seemed to have lost its meaning. The need to start the struggle anew was unavoidable – to assert himself as an artist, to acquire a distinguished position in the musical world, and last but not least to be financially secure.

In the United States he had good friends among those performing artists who liked his musical style, which was particularly important for the new beginning. Not only Germaine Leroux but also Rudolf Firkušný played his piano concertos and chamber compositions. Serge Koussevitsky, George Széll, Arthur Rodziński, Erich Leinsdorf, Eugen Ormandy, Leopold Stokowski, as well as other famous conductors displayed a deep interest in his orchestral works.

Through a series of premieres Martinů gains entry into the musical life of the United States. After the triumphal successes celebrated there half a century ago by Antonín Dvořák, the music of a Czech composer is once again winning the favor of the American public.

One of the earlier compositions, **Concerto Grosso** (1937) led the way. By a stroke of luck, the conductor George Széll brought a copy of its score with him from Prague, where

he was professionally active for several years. Martinů was thereafter able to write home to Polička with pride, that he had just returned from Boston where his **Concerto Grosso** had an exceptional success.

“Everybody was enthusiastic, the orchestra as well as the conductor. The Boston Symphony Orchestra is by far the best orchestra in the whole world and there are really only exceptional players. The conductor is Koussevitsky who performed Bagarre seven years ago.”

Koussevitsky challenged him also to write a symphony – a first in his voluminous list of compositions. For a long time he hesitated to compose it and awaited the premiere with easily understood trepidation. **“You will understand that I was happy when the reaction was positive.”**

After the premiere, on November 22, 1942 New York Herald Tribune printed an enthusiastic article.

One visitor’s impressions from hearing the **First Symphony** (1942) were so astounding and powerful that he came to ask the composer, hitherto unknown to him, to write a concerto for him. That visitor was the world-renowned violin virtuoso Misha Elman, who thus provided the stimulus for the **Second Concerto for Violin and Orchestra** (1943).

It did not take long for Martinů to find another selfless friend, the Czech-American violoncellist and organist Frank Rybka, a pupil of Janáček, who made the United States his home already many years ago. Because of that it was not difficult for him to find for Martinů comfortable accommodations near the Rybkas in the part of New York City called Jamaica. They formed a cordial friendship and became very close, almost like two brothers. An expression of Martinů’s feelings about that relationship can be found for instance in the dedication of his **Sonata for Violoncello and Piano No. 2** from the end of 1941.



With Serge Koussevitsky
(New York 1941)



With Frank Rybka 1942

Under him are the two closest ones to him - Jan Werich with Jiří Voskovec. Standing next are Martinů and Egon Hostovský. Below them from the left Hugo Haas, under him Adolf Hoffmeister and Jan Löwenbach. Opposite them is the cartoonist Antonín Pelc (the only one working), above him Professor Roman Jakobson, conductor Hermann Adler and painter Maxim Kopf.

A Memorial to Lidice ^{3.2}

Together with the first symphony he was entertaining ideas about the next one. In the meantime, however, came appalling news: in the first half of June 1942 the Czech village of Lidice near Kladno had been turned into charred rubble by Nazi soldiers, its men shot, women and children dispatched to concentration camps.

The name of Lidice was supposed to be erased from the maps as well as from the consciousness of the Czech nation. A storm of condemnation of the atrocity arose all over the world and was joined also by the voice of Bohuslav Martinů: he created the orchestral composition **A Memorial to Lidice** (1943), which embodies his pain over the suffering of his nation. A meditative, mournful music sounds as a kind of epilogue following a terrifying drama - and at the end of the composition a drastic motif of French horns supported by strings plunges into a moving chant, as if the human soul shook under an unexpected blow of misfortune. Martinů incorporated into this work the famous quote from the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony known as The Destiny Symphony. Those four tones held during the war an extraordinary symbolic meaning. In an unusual presentation on a special kind of kettle drum or tympani they became the signature of freedom radio transmissions and could be heard beyond innumerable borders during covert listening to BBC Radio. To listen to it in almost all of occupied Europe meant to risk long jail terms, even the death penalty.



One of his last songs is precisely "The Victorious V" which "brings a new life to freedom and shouts that we will win".

Those four tones were brought to a new life as the symbol of the hope for the victory – for in the Morse code they stand for the letter **V**, **as in Victory** – also by another Czech exile in America: Jaroslav Ježek.

Unfortunately Ježek did not live to celebrate the victory for he died in New York City on January 1, 1942. On the cartoonist Pelc's Christmas toast he is looking down on his compatriots already from some other world.

In Martinů's **Second Symphony**, too, there briefly resounds an eloquent quote aiming to make its music topical: the fanfare from the Marseillaise bidding „**Aux armes, citoyens!**“, „**To arms, citizens!**“ Meeting that challenge were, among others, the compatriots working in the armaments production to whom the composer wanted to dedicate the symphony. Above all it had been, however, a moral imperative, obeyed in its most perilous form by those who decided to bear arms in the Czechoslovak army abroad, and for whom Martinů composed **The Field Mass** right at the beginning of the war.

From the war years have been preserved photographs from New York, in which Martinů is pictured together with young men serving in the Czechoslovak army in RAF uniforms. Their tasks included the transportation of aviation technology from the United States to Europe. The Martinů's were most certainly full of friendly admiration for those heroes who daily sacrificed their lives for the victory of humanity.

The New York photographer Josef Macháček established in New York City a famous photographic studio.



Sitting in the right corner Josef Macháček, in the left corner his wife, next to her Flying Officer Karel Novotný (311 Sqdn RAF), standing on the left Egon Hostovský, on the right Alén Diviš also signed the photo. The remaining ones are the Martinů's, Jindra and a young airman who could not be identified.
New York City, 1943



The little lion on the lapel of the composer's jacket speaks of the memories of home; a symbol of proud Czech statehood, the leaping two-tailed lion is the best understood image expressing Czech patriotic sentiments. In 1936 Polička had it installed on the top of its town-hall tower.



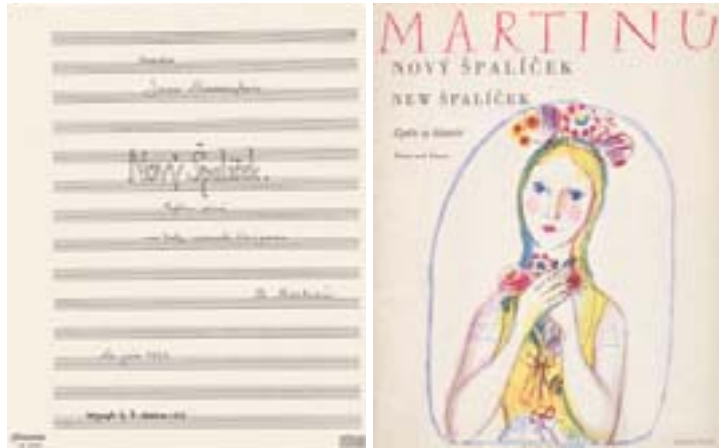
Martinů in 1942 (photo Josef Macháček, New York City)

Memories of Home From Beyond the Ocean ^{3.3}

With the books *Pisničky na jednu stránku* (Seven Songs on One Page), *Pisničky na dvě stránky* (Seven Songs on Two Pages) or *Nový Špalíček* (A New Czech Year) to the texts of folk songs Martinů opens a window into the world of folk art with which he has been intimately in touch all of his life. Now they became also a symbolic view of the distant home.

Karel Svobinský's visualization of the idea of the work.

In New York Martinů gets to know Jarmila Novotná. This star of the Metropolitan Opera liked to sing the songs which he wrote (when he was “not composing”) to the texts of folk poetry – sometimes accompanied on the piano by Jan Masaryk. Next to the large forms thus appear from time to time in the creative work of Martinů little intimate compositions, so typical for this composer.



The tenderness of those compositions stands in strange contrast with the environment in which they originated – that is among the skyscrapers. Several photographs from different years captured the composer walking in the Central Park. As if he went there to hide. **“The only thing that I desired at that time was to catch breath, to get a rest. But that is something that cannot be done in New York... Believe me, those endless avenues and streets are not exactly the best source of inspiration... No, I cannot say that I have only happy memories of New York. Really, the best thing to do was not to think at all and find something that would keep you busy...”**

Rudolf Firkušný, Charlotte and Bohuslav Martinů, Antonín Svoboda – by the lake in Central Park (New York City, 1943)

With Antonín Svoboda (Central Park, New York City, 1945)



A welcome counterbalance to all bouts of depression were his friends. He enjoyed being with them for instance during their summer sojourns in Darien, Connecticut, which can be reached after not too long a ride by train from New York City in the direction of Boston.

Nearby lived the Šafráněks, Rudolf Firkušný visited regularly, the painter Alén Diviš, the Macháčekcs and other Czech-Americans often came. Among them stood out Mario Korbel, the creator of one of the composer's busts. A blacksmith's son, he left at the age of seventeen for the United States – without any money and without knowing any English. In the course of just a few years he managed to acquire sufficient means to pursue his goal – to become a sculptor. He studied his artistic discipline at the turn of 19th century in Munich as well as in Paris.

After his return, a successful career was awaiting him in Chicago, Detroit, and then above all in New York City. One thing he was sure of:

“The word Czech had been only a nebulous concept.

But the names Smetana, Dvořák, Ema Destinn, they were the magic formulas that opened for us the doors and hearts of Americans. Our artistic excellence had been the first and most efficient Czech ambassador in the world. If we did not have any culture, no living soul would pay any attention to us!”

The close relationship of the composer to fine arts and those creating them manifested itself fully in yet another personal bond: he numbered among his best friends the painter Alén Diviš, to whom he devoted after the war an insightful memoir.

Diviš's journey to the United States had been a dangerous one, taking him not only across Africa, but also through jails in France and the Sahara. There he lived through numerous terrifying experiences. **“Diviš's world is telling us that not everything is in such a good order in this perfect world of ours; he makes us think about matters that we would rather prefer to avoid...”** (Bohuslav Martinů).



The Martinů's with the painter Alén Diviš



Alén Diviš, The Desert – artist's gift to the composer

The picture of the Polička tower, a permanent reminder of the roots of his personality.
Bohuslav Martinů (1942)



A Teacher Again ^{3.4}

In the summer of 1942 he was invited on the initiative of Serge Koussevitsky to teach composition at the Summer School of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Lenox, Massachusetts, known as the Tanglewood Music Center, after previous engagements there of Paul Hindemith and Igor Stravinsky. All of his students, Frank Amey, John Cowell, Allan Hovhaness, Spencer Hoffman, H. Owen Reed (and particularly his favorite from later time, Earl George), praised his “master classes” even during their later careers of composers in their own right. He went to teach there again in 1946 and 1947.

Martinů had a talent for communicating with young musicians. He was remembered also by his onetime Polička students, e.g. in the collection of documents which was published at the occasion of the 65th birthday of Bohuslav Martinů by Zdeněk Zouhar. In one of the contributions another one of his students, the composer Jan Novák, quotes a humorous testimony of Vítězslava Kaprálová about Martinů, the teacher: “...what I write on one day, the next day he crosses out, a worse school there cannot be.” However, the very opposite was true: the work of those two distinguished composers, Kaprálová and Novák itself proves it.

For several years Martinů had been on the faculty of Mannes College of Music in New York City as Professor of Composition, and from 1948 to 1951 he lectured at the prestigious Princeton University. During the academic year he traveled to Princeton always on Thursday mornings and returned by train to New York City. The list of his students includes such names as Nathaniel Burt, Vernon Perdue Davis, Vernon D. Gotwals, Charles E. Hamm, Donald Macinnis, Charles Rosen, Elias Tanenbaum, many of whom achieved highly prominent positions. **“Martinů dutifully spent Thursday afternoons on campus. Charles [Rosen] and I [William Steinberg] would meet the two-car shuttle train from Princeton Junction, take him to Lahièrè’s for lunch (at least it had a French name, and one could get a glass of wine there - wine that always caused**

him to make a face), and then sit in the Pekin Room, a quaint octagonal exrescence to the student center, where we would talk and listen to records. Afterwards we would feed him tea (richly laced with bourbon) and take him back to the train. It was a strange contrast to one's public views of him receiving and rather shrinkingly acknowledging ovations at concerts and at the American premiere of that future staple of opera workshop productions, **The Comedy on the Bridge**". (William Steinberg). When he was still an unsuccessful student fending for himself in Prague before the First World War, he could have met during his wanderings through the streets of Prague a certain university docent, Albert Einstein, who lived in the old city quarter under the Prague castle. Their lives intersected again during World War II right there in Princeton. At the end of 1943 Martinů brought to the famous physicist his **Five Madrigal Stanzas** for violin and piano. Einstein, an enthusiastic amateur violinist, accepted the dedication with pleasure.

Serge Koussevitsky (1874-1951), lived outside Russia from 1920 (France, United States). From 1924 to 1949 the conductor and musical director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A mon cher Boguslav Martinů avec admiration et amitié - 1943. (To my dear Boguslav Martinů with admiration and friendship)

The Period of Symphonies and Great Successes ^{3.5}

A great supporter of Martinů had been particularly an American with Russian roots who admired him ever since the premiere of **La Bagarre**: Serge Koussevitsky, who alluded to their common Slavic background by using the Russian form of Martinů's first name in the inscription on a portrait of himself. And it was the 'American' Martinů who was to honor Koussevitsky in a unique fashion: the **First** and **Third Symphonies** both have the name Koussevitsky in their dedications.

Naturally, the premieres of both were presented by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Koussevitsky. Interestingly, it was the conductor himself from whom the impetus came for Martinů to compose them: in a letter of February 24, 1942 Koussevitsky asked Martinů to write for him an orchestral composition and added: "it would fulfill my deepest wish if you would dedicate the work to the memory of Natalie Koussevit-





Before the premiere of the Third Symphony

“The Third Symphony is my pride. It is tragic in its mood and I was very homesick when I was writing it. If my friends will be telling you that I am modest, then I am telling you that I am not. In my mind its model had been Beethoven’s Eroica.”

“I consider it my first real symphony.”

(Martinů for The New York Times on January 7, 1951)



His symphonies became the focus of interest at the colloquium in Buenos Aires.

Charles Munch (1891-1968), from 1949 to 1962 the chief conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

sky” (the conductor’s late wife). As for the Third Symphony, it had been written to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Koussevitsky’s affiliation with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Already in October could Koussevitsky confirm that he had received the score of the first symphony, and not only that: **“I am deeply moved, particularly by the Largo movement, which is so lovely and expresses the feelings that I have in my grief. It is a consolation for me that such a beautiful work was created to commemorate my wife.”**

In the postwar years, Charles Munch came to the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the center in Tanglewood. He had friendly ties with Martinů from the thirties. In fact it had been on Martinů’s recommendation that Vítězslava Kaprálová came to the Paris conservatory in order to study conducting specifically with Munch. During the flight of the Martinůs from Paris, Munch was very generous in helping them; and, as a conductor, he had given the Czech composer invaluable exposure before the outbreak of the war.

“I consider him to be one of the greatest living composers. I am always deeply moved when I am conducting the third movement of his First Symphony. - Martinů has told me so much about his country that I liked it well before I got to know it.”

(Charles Munch during his stay at the music festival Prague Spring 1947).

As a conductor, Munch was exceptionally appreciative of the music of the Czech maestro; **Fantaisies Symphoniques**, also known as the **Sixth Symphony** (1953) of Bohuslav Martinů is closely linked to his vision of the work of the conductor of a symphonic orchestra. **Fantaisies Symphoniques** premiered with Munch in 1955 in Boston, and it was a triumph.



Peace - the Joy and the Pain ^{3.6}

“At the beginning of May 1945 we lived through the unforgettable days when the war and Nazi terror ended. Immediately we sent a telegram to Stáňa Novák who responded promptly. Unfortunately, it was also the last time we heard from him, as he died shortly thereafter, on the 20th of July, 1945. Our grief was profound, and for Bohuř the joy of being able to travel to Europe again was not the same any more. From Polička came also the distressing news about mother’s death in March 1944. Bohuř had very hard time putting up with those news, he could not come to terms with the prospect of returning to Czechoslovakia without meeting those two souls so dear to him, his mother and his best friend.”

(From the reminiscences of Charlotte Martinů)
At that time he was finishing the **Fourth Symphony**, strongly marked by confidence in the future of the postwar world and permeated by the jubilant atmosphere of the last days of the Second World War. But even after completing it he did not make the trip back home of which he dreamt so often. Again and again, up to the last days of his life, he was making plans to do so; but none of those plans ever materialized.

In 1946, after finishing the **Fifth Symphony**, which he dedicated to the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Martinů had a serious accident. He fell from the balcony of the Searl Castle in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, from where he used to travel with his students to attend the concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and to lecture in nearby Lenox at the Tanglewood Music Center. Throughout all that time Martinů stayed on the American continent; he crossed the Atlantic only in 1948 to vacation in France and Switzerland.

Maja and Paul Sacher
with the Martinůs -
Schönenberg 1948



A Divided World and the Cold War ^{3.7}

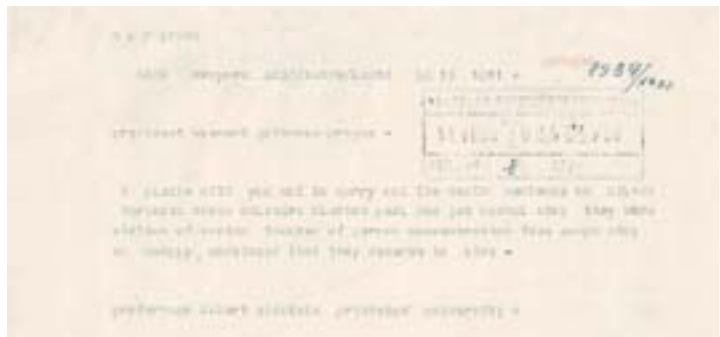
In the meantime, however, life in his home country was taking a different turn. His good friend Jan Masaryk, who had been for many years the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Great Britain and later became Minister of Foreign Affairs, according to an official report committed suicide. The suicide story was met with general disbelief; it was all but inconceivable that Masaryk would take his own life.

Martinů learned about his death on the day that he completed his Third Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1948), which he composed for Rudolf Firkušný and which was to be presented in Prague. He was appalled. To mark his shock he wrote after the last bar of the score “**New York, March 10 – Jan Masaryk’s death**”.



Albert Einstein's wire
to the President of the
Czechoslovak Republic

In the course of next months and years the prisons filled with political adversaries as well as innocent victims. Jan Masaryk's successor as Foreign Minister, Vladimír Clementis, found himself after a show trial on the scaffold. Czechoslovak airmen who survived the Battle of Britain were being rounded up, and among those arrested was also the author Jiří Mucha who eventually received a six-year sentence for "espionage". Among the victims of the regime was also Dr. Milada Horáková, a prominent woman politician, already victimized by the Nazis, who sentenced her to eight years in jail for her role in the resistance movement: she was sentenced to death and executed. The sentences drew impassionate protests from prominent personalities all over the world – Martinů among them, together with his Princeton acquaintance Einstein.



Within the circle of Martinů's friends and acquaintances the ramifications of the trial of Dr. Horáková were soon felt. The previous persecution of the conductor Václav Talich acquired with the communist takeover a new context. Josef Palivec and Martinů became friends in the twenties in Paris, where Palivec held the position of the chief of the press section of the Czechoslovak embassy, and they were also linked by a common friendship with the Masaryk family. Winding up in jail sentenced for ten years had been a strange fate for a Czechoslovakia's resistance fighter who barely escaped death in a Nazi prison.

To Karel Novák: **"I am waiting daily for any news from you, what are you doing, how has the situation affected you, and also because I do not know what is the current position with respect to the piano concerto which I have completed with great difficulties. Firkušný is not in New York, and so I do not know what his plans are [...]"** Firkušný, together with Kubelík and Martinů, suddenly found themselves isolated from the environment in which they grew up and with which they were inherently connected. In Prague, the doctrine of "socialist realism", a totalitarian aesthetic theory calling for the didactic use of literature, art, and music to develop the communist consciousness of the masses, ruled the day. In its local version, it included among the "ideological enemies" e.g. Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schönberg and Bohuslav Martinů.

NBC Television

A Division of Radio Corporation of America

WNBT CHANNEL 4



THE LAST YEARS

1953 – 1959

...nede vore 1-11 slyv noke msi ...
Dokl 1. 11 za dopisu a zpravy.
Jiny 1. v Par ...
... 16. ...
... s ...
Skoda ze isi opustil olan 'et do Vermontu musl
to tam nekne ale zase se notejis s prateli
v duxbury ode mne
Munch bude snad hrati Parable v Becansden, to je
blisko a t-k do zarj snad us budu moc se trochu
pohybovat.
Jinak 11 novinky nemohu dati byl jsem mimo
svet a tak toho mnoho nevim. Sacher ...
Gilgamesh ve Vidi a nepohlj same ...
velky nasech.
Musim uz skoncit zacnam byt un ...
Doris a Jibaw 11 napise o nar.
Veem nerne pracujiny pre eme se Charlie.
Nada z cast.

Edwin

A Return Without Returning^{4.1}

Before finishing his **Fantaisies Symphoniques**, Martinů made up his mind to leave the United States for good. Finally, the departure took place; during the fifteen years which passed since the summer of 1938, when he came home for the last time, the world changed beyond recognition.

He was now carrying an American passport, equipped, however, with a stamp saying that it may not be used for trips to Czechoslovakia, the country which he would had liked to visit more than any other.

There were still many friends on the opposite side of the iron curtain. Among them Marcel Mihalovici with his wife, the pianist Monique Haas, and other members of the Ecole de Paris. Georges Neveux got in touch with new ideas for operatic work.

In June, Martinů was invited to be a member of the jury of the competition for the prize of the Queen Elisabeth of Belgium in the field of musical composition. Together with him there were Frank Martin, Francesco Malipiero, Nadia Boulanger and other composers. From Brussels Martinů went on via Amsterdam to The Hague, where he had been invited as a guest of the Die Haghe Sanghers choir. The singing ensemble performed the **Field Mass**, to Martinů's delight in Czech, and the composer then promised to write for the choir an original choral composition. The finished cantata was then given the name **The Mount of Three Lights** (1954).

At that time he already knew that the door to a long-term residence in Europe had been successfully opened, and his wish to return thus at least partially fulfilled. Before him he had no less than two worry-free academic years (1953-54 and 1954-55), thanks to a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation in New York City. He decided to continue his work in France, namely in Nice, a city that both Charlotte and he loved.

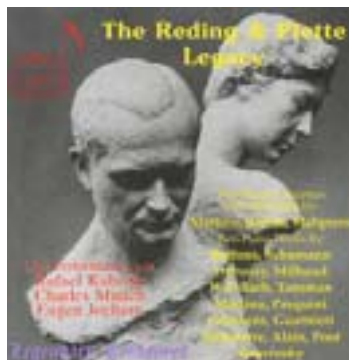
His work plan included also a project which he had been nurturing since 1948 - **The Epic of Gilgamesh** for solo voices, narrator, mixed choir and orchestra.



The reunion of friends after living through their war experiences. From left to right Tibor Haršányi, Martinů, Conrad Beck, Marcel Mihalovici (1949)



With the conductor Paul Sacher at the premiere of Gilgamesh.



The premiere belonged naturally to Paul Sacher, to whose wife Maja the composition was dedicated. It took place on January 24, 1958. It is worth mentioning in this context that *Gilgamesh* was then performed on May 28, 1958 at the Prague Spring Festival with Václav Smetáček conducting the Prague FOK Symphony Orchestra with soloists. At the time of the rehearsals for that concert came a letter in which can be found also the following words: **“My warmest greetings to all. I am sorry that I will not be able to hear at the Prague Spring that Sumerian *Gilgamesh* by Bohuslav Martinů”**. They were written on May 14, 1958 by the poet Josef Palivec – from the Ilava prison where he had been incarcerated from 1950 to 1959.

At the beginning of September 1955 the Martinůs traveled to Besançon, where Rafael Kubelik conducted, among other compositions, the *Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra*. The solo parts were played by the Belgian piano duo, Janine Reding and her husband Henry Piette.

At the festival began also the composer’s lifelong friendship with the Rebers from Basel. Willy and Charlotte Reber loved music and traveled to the festival because of Rafael Kubelik. They were joined by the chaplain Max Kellerhals, serving in Liestal, and later in Frick.

Looking Back Into the Past ^{4.2}

Using various forms, Martinů now returns to the question of the meaning of human life. His innermost philosophical concerns mark each of his orchestral works that follow the ***Fantaisies symphoniques***.

On his way to Italy in the summer of 1952, and again in 1954, he stopped over to visit his friend from the prewar years, the painter Rudolf Kundera. The artist decided after his flight from Paris at the beginning of German occupation to settle permanently in southern France in the vicinity of Cassis. Showing Martinů around,

Janine Reding remained faithful to her musical discipline as well as to Bohuslav Martinů: after the death of her husband she began organizing international competitions for piano duos. One of them took place in Polička (6. – 9. 7. 1995).

In the forest above Liestal, on the so-called Schleifenberg. The picture exudes harmony in search of which Martinů traveled to meet his devoted and exceptionally well educated friends the Rebers and chaplain Max Kellerhals (in the picture).



The Queen of Saba

he draw his attention, among other things, to the fifteenth-century mural paintings of Piero della Francesca in Arezzo. Martinů was so thrilled by that wonder of the renaissance that he attempted to translate the profound wisdom of the artist's message into music. In 1955 his encounter with Piero resulted in three orchestral movements called **The Frescoes of Piero della Francesca**. Rafael Kubelik, to whom the Frescoes were dedicated, conducted their premiere in Salzburg at the beginning of 1956.

Apart from the symphonic prelude **The Rock** (1957) and **Trois Estampes (Three Engravings, 1958)**, it was, above all, **The Parables** (1958), composed for Charles Munch and completed a year before Martinů's death, that once again displayed a meditative depth which can be reached only by a mature creator.

The last two piano concertos – No. 4 called **Incantations**, and No.5, the **Fantasia Concertante**, equally reveal a strong desire to overstep the bounds of reality and move on to a

higher philosophical level. Writing about the **Incantations**, Martinů explicitly calls them **“a manifestation of the disturbing search for truth and the meaning of life”**, and at the same time refers to them as **“an homage to music, which is the musician's refuge, strength, and an instrument of struggle.”**

Here Is My Home ^{4.3}

As the situation behind the iron curtain after 1953 began to ease, and a brief period of political “thaw” came about, the absurd rejection of Martinů's music by local ideologues turned less intransigent, and the personal attacks quieted down. At the same time attempts to establish an amicable contact with him by those who felt the existence of a strong and lasting bond were becoming increasingly frequent.

The display of interest from the Czech side offered the composer an opportunity to revisit home at least in his mind and through his music. It is thus easy to understand Martinů's enthusiasm when he came across the poems of Miloslav Bureš, who like him hailed from Polička. Bureš succeeded in evoking by his verses rooted in the folk tradition everything that once had been the composer's childhood and home. Enchanted, Martinů began right away to compose to the poems a cantata which he called **The Opening of the Wells** and which he finished in a matter of days.



With Miloslav Bureš in Rome in 1957

It had been truly a lucky coincidence that brought them together. In the cantata **The Opening of the Wells** (1955) for soloists, female (children's) choir, recitation, two violins, viola and piano the two authors brought back to life an ancient rite – the welcoming of the spring: in it children symbolically practice magic through incantations and dances over the forest springs, cleanse them from the deposits of spring mud, thus bidding farewell to winter while opening wide the road to new life. After the success of **The Opening of the Wells**, Martinů, continuing in his collaboration with Bureš, composed still other chamber cantatas celebrating the wisdom and poetry of their native Highlands: **The Dandelion Romance, Legend of the Potato Haulms and Mikesch from the Mountains**.

Bureš was accorded the distinction of being the guest of the Martinůs during their sojourn in Rome. Martinů had been appointed professor at the American Academy in Rome (1956-57) and could fully dedicate himself to his work because the appointment had more the character of an honorary guest – **the composer in residence** – and did not make great demands on him as far teaching duties were concerned.

The Last Operas ^{4.4}

The prewar **Comedy on the Bridge** is one of the few modern operas capable of making the listener laugh out loud: this also may have been the reason why, after its presentation in the United States in 1951, it won the New York City Critics' prize as "the opera of the year". Translations appeared in German, French,

What Men Live By
- stage design by
Karel Zmrzly, Brno State
Theater 1989



English, Italian and many other languages, and the **Comedy on the Bridge** was performed on dozens of stages, in small theatres and on television.

Then, amidst all those propitious developments, Martinů received a request to write a short television opera. Since 1937 (when he composed a humorous operatic piece **Two Times Alexander** to an original libretto **Alexandre bis** written in French by André Wurmser) he had totally neglected opera as a musical genre, despite his love of the stage. In the course of a single year, Martinů finished altogether two projects. **What Men Live By**, after Tolstoy, dates from the beginning of 1952, **The Marriage**, based on Gogol, was completed in October.

A year later in Nice Martinů continued to concentrate on operatic work. His first idea had been to put to music another play by Georges Neveux, **Plainte contre inconnu (A Complaint Against Unknown)** which has remained but a fragment. He then considered a libretto based on Dostoyevsky's *Demons*, but turned away from that, too. In the end he opted, surprisingly, for an Italian text based on Carlo Goldoni's popular play *La locandiera*. He named the opera after its flippant heroine **Mirandolina** (1954).

After finishing the lighthearted opera **Mirandolina**, Martinů worked during the last five years of his life on two more operas, whose themes seem to have portended the fateful approach of the end of the composer's life's course: **The Greek Passion** and **Ariane**.

The Greek Passion was based on a novel with the same name by Nikos Kazantzakis (published in the United Kingdom as **Christ Recrucified**, and known

Maria Tauberová excelled as the postwar Juliette as well as *Mirandolina*. At the funeral of her life partner, the conductor Jaroslav Krombholc, sounded symbolically a musical quote from Juliette (photo Jaromir Svoboda).





in its immensely successful film adaptation as **He Who Had to Die**). At some point Martinů learned that the famous Greek author was living in a small house by the sea on the French Riviera in the vicinity of Nice, and decided to seek him out in person.

Intuitively, Kazantsakis had from the very first moment full confidence in the composer's creative skills, and it was with his consent that Martinů then proceeded with the daunting task of writing the libretto of the future opera.

The great art of the Greek émigré writer inspired Martinů by the authenticity and vitality of his fictional characters as much as by its touching lyricism and the mysticism of certain episodes.

At the world premiere of the **Greek Passion**, which took place at the Municipal Theater in Zurich with Paul Sacher conducting - unfortunately already after Martinů's and Kazantsakis' death - it became immediately clear that the public had been offered a truly exceptional work.

During the exhausting work on the Greek Passion, Martinů relaxed in a way which was typical for him.

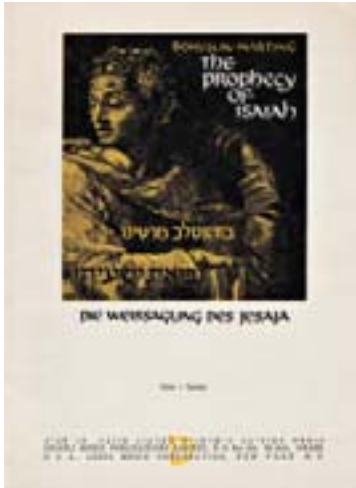
The „new little opera” - written in order to take a rest - was *Ariane*, completed in the spring of 1958 to a French libretto by Georges Neveux (after his play *Le voyage de Thésée*), a close friend since the time of their common work on *Juliette*.



Zurich 1960 (stage design by Theo Otto, directed by Herbert Graf, conductor Paul Sacher)
On the right: Brno 1962 (stage design by Josef A. Šálek, directed by Oskar Linhart, conductor František Jílek)

The premiere of the first version of the opera at the festival Bregenzer Festspiele in coproduction with the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in 1999 (photo Karl Foster)

The Martinůs with Maja Sacher at Schönenberg in 1959



The sleeve design made use of Michelangelo's Isaiah from the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Isaiah's Prophecy, the score

The Parting With the World ^{4.5}

At the age of sixty-eight, Martinů continued to devote himself to his work as if he had unlimited strength. But while his fervor showed no signs of abating, his body was attacked by an insidious disease.

On November 14, 1958 Martinů underwent in a Basel hospital surgery for stomach cancer. His convalescence lasted until the spring of next year, when he traveled with his wife Charlotte to France. There he wrote, among other things, his last chamber cantata **Isaiah's Prophecy** for the strange ‚biblical‘ ensemble of trumpet, viola, piano and timpani, male choir and three solo voices (soprano, alto and baritone). This unusual combination of sounds melds into a musical image of the Apocalypse.

Afterward Martinů once again returned to the Czech folklore, and in five-voice madrigals to the texts of Erben's collection of folk songs, brought back in his mind his home and Polička.

The end of the life of the Czech composer was doubly painful: the physical suffering was accompanied by the anguish of his separation from home. At the canton hospital in Liestal, Switzerland, hidden behind a wall of dense trees, the doctors tried in vain to stop the spread of the cancer.

He entered the hospital in May, and after a one-month stay decided to leave it of his own accord. He asked to be driven to Schönenberg so that he could be with his wife and friends. He even composed – a few bars for the children at the musical school in Polička. They were his last ones, and with them his musical legacy became final.





On August 8, on the advice of his physician, he returned to the hospital in Liestal. One of Martinů's prewar friends, the pianist Josef Páleníček, took the last existing picture of him there.

The last few days of his life were filled with increasing suffering. He was fed artificially while his body continued to fight the disease. His devoted admirer, Chaplain Max Kellerhals, united him with Charlotte according to the Roman Catholic wedding rite. On August 28, 1959, after a year of painful struggle, he succumbed to his incurable illness at seven-thirty in the evening.

Bohuslav Martinů was buried on September 1st, 1959, in Schönenberg in the open space at the edge of the forest close to the house in which he worked on his Double Concerto in 1938 and where he had taken refuge since 1955. On the grave was placed a stone slab with a cross and a simple inscription:
BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ – COMPOSITEUR TCHÈQUE

The view of Liestal from Martinů's hospital room
Photo by Werner Koller



Photo by Josef Páleníček (1959)



The Sachers made the body embalm and take the death mask.



Thanks to the comprehension of Paul Sacher and particularly of his wife Maja, twenty years later the remains of the composer were exhumed and in the summer of 1979 reburied in his homeland, at the cemetery of his native Polička. The event took place at the explicit wish of the composer's widow, herself already buried in Polička, that her husband be entombed together with her on the side of his ancestors and family. With that the circle of the composer's fate closed in on itself.



The Care for the Composer's Legacy ^{4.6}

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A travers la ville de Polička, en suivant les traces de Bohuslav Martinů 4.7



1 Bohuslav Martinů Center in Šaffova Street No. 112. The building is that of a former boys' junior high school which little Martinů attended from 1897 and on whose faculty he was at the time of World War I as teacher of violin. Until 1929 the school also housed the municipal theater with an entrance on Tylova Street. Since 1934 the seat of the Municipal Museum.

2 The baroque town hall, Polička's architectural pearl which together with the plague column figure on the list of Czech national cultural monuments. A part of the third floor had been since the end of the 19th century occupied by the municipal library, where also the Martinů family members went to borrow books. The former town hall has been since 1994 the seat of the municipal gallery containing permanent exhibitions dedicated to antique art from the Polička region, the picture gallery of the Hohenems family, regional modern art and the reflections of Martinů's work in the visual arts.

3 The building housing the mayor's office on the square, No. 160, where the family Martinů moved in 1902. Ferdinand Martinů was employed there as an attendant-porter with the use of an apartment. Currently the seat of the Polička Municipal Authority.

4 The Neo-Gothic St. James' Church where Bohuslav Martinů was baptized and where funeral services for him and his wife took place before they were laid to rest at the Polička cemetery. The memorial plaque by the entrance to the tower, created by Josef Kadlec was the first memorial by which the town paid tribute to its famous son. It was unveiled in 1957 while the composer was still alive. In order to "commemorate our church" Martinů wrote A Hymn to St. James (1954)

to the text by Father Jaroslav Daněk, the Polička Dean.

5 The room in the church tower which was used as the tower-keeper's living quarters where Bohuslav Martinů was born. It still looks the way it did at that time, thanks to František Martinů and his sister Marie who donated to the museum its original furnishings. It has been open to visitors since 1947.

6 House No. 76 in the Otakarova Street where the tailor and enthusiastic musician Josef Černovský lived, first music teacher of Bohuslav Martinů.

7 The Tyl House, an important municipal cultural center. For the occasion of its festive opening in 1929 Bohuslav Martinů composed a Prelude for piano, which he then himself played at the festivity. Apart from many other cultural and social events it hosts every year in May the festival Martinů Fest.

8 St. Michael's cemetery with the tomb of the Martinů family and the grave of the poet Miloslav Bureš. Together with the composer are buried in the tomb his parents, siblings and also his wife. The author of the gravestone, erected in 1984, is Milan Knobloch.

9 House No. 182 in the Svěpomoc Street where the Martinů family lived from 1923. In its garret Martinů wrote during his vacation sojourns a number of compositions. In the house was also located a clothing boutique owned by his sister Marie.

10 The road toward Borová where Martinů experienced his first public success as a musician in the tavern U Dostálů. In the time of World War I Martinů had been a frequent guest of the Čech family at the local Czech Brethern parsonage. After the village of Borová he named one of his piano cycles (Borová, 1930).

11 The town park, where Martinů liked to walk. Martinů's statue which stands there was unveiled in 1990. Its designer is Milan Knobloch.

12 House No. 8 in Masarykova Street where Martinů taught violin and piano between 1916 and 1920.

13 The Royal Alley leading to Liboháj, where in the early twenties Martinů used to go for walks almost daily. On his way up to the Šibeníční vrch (Gallows Peak), he passed the Jan Hus memorial by Vojtěch Eduard Šaff, built in 1929.

14 House No. 56 in Eimova Street, the birthplace of the writer and poet Miloslav Bureš. The Bureš family residence was otherwise in No. 88, Hegerova Street.

15 Bohuslav Martinů Fine Arts Elementary School, which sustains the town's musical tradition and promotes the composer's work among the young generation. It was named after Martinů in 1949 with his consent. The school was originally located at No. 318 in Husova Street. In the course of its existence it had moved several times, and since 1999 it has been located in the reconstructed mansion at No. 34, Československé armády Street.

16 The railroad track which since the end of the 19th century has been linking Polička with Skuteč and Svitavy. Martinů traveled on it in his youth not only to Borová and other neighborhood places, and to Prague as a student at the Conservatory, but later also to Paris.

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Jaroslav Mihule

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