

Z orchestrální tvorby uvedme Concertino grosso, Symfonické etudy, Koncert pro dva hráče na bicí nástroje a orchestr, z vokálních skladeb sborový Trojlístek, Kantátu z veselých not, Kratochvilky, Paměť, Všemi hlasy, Starojaponské písně pro soprán a klavír, cyklus písní pro mezzosoprán a klavír Doma. Z původní novákovsko-sukovské orientace a poznatků z nových směrů hudby v 60. letech si Pavel Čotek vytvořil osobitou syntézu, která je pro jeho tvorbu charakteristická dodnes.

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THE OLOMOUC FESTIVAL OF SONGS

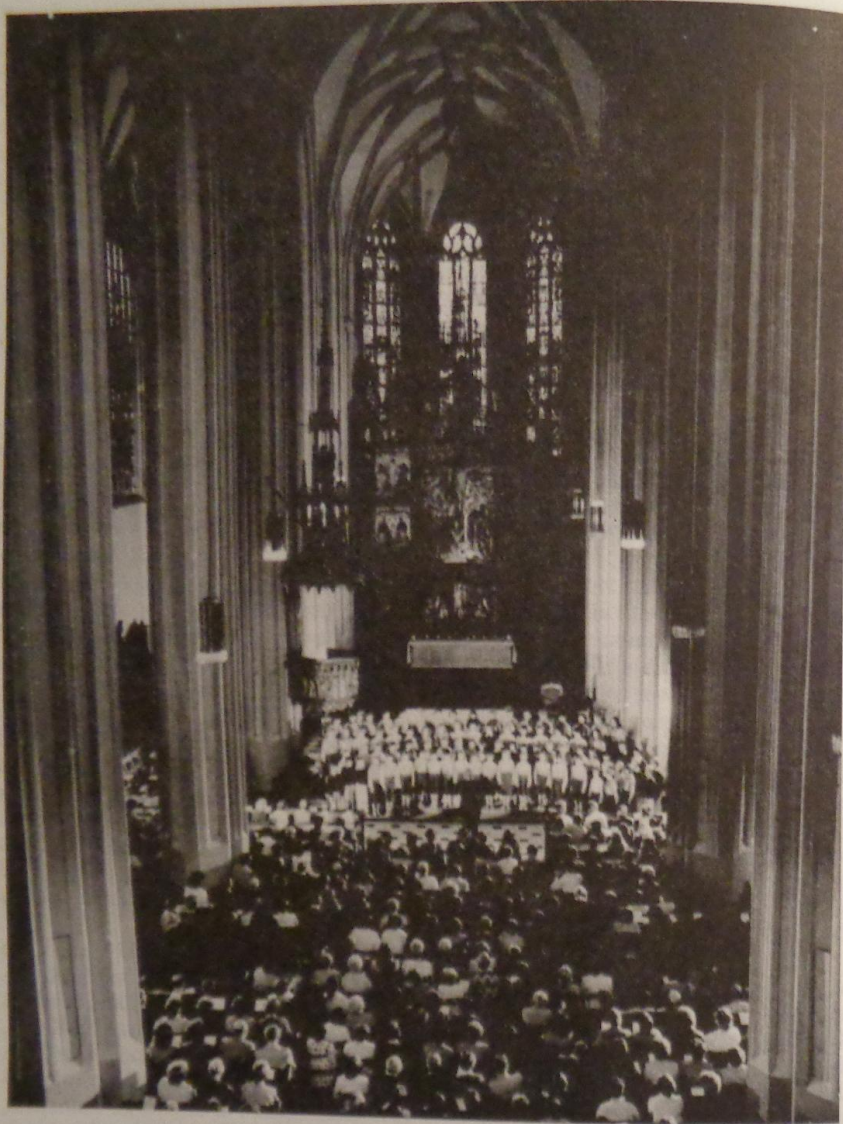
Jan Vičar

Olomouc, one of the oldest cultural centres in the Czech lands and now a city with a population of one hundred thousand, had already gained the attention of European musical circles during past centuries. After a bishop's residence was established in 1063, a high standard of vocal music was cultivated here and this tradition was further developed at the court of the Archbishop of Olomouc from 1777. Music was also taught at Olomouc University, founded in 1573. The city attracted prominent musicians – Jacobus Handl Gallus was there in 1579–85 and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart spent several weeks here with his parents in 1767. Ludwig van Beethoven composed his *Missa Solemnis* for the Olomouc Archbishop Rudolf and the City Opera in Olomouc provided Gustav Mahler with one of his first conducting posts in 1883. German culture was dominant in the town until the beginning of the twentieth century.

New Czech musical life started to develop in Olomouc in the 1880's, thanks to the Žerotín Choral and Musical Society. At that time the composer and choirmaster Pavel Křížkovský was a central figure. Antonín Dvořák also frequently visited Olomouc and conducted his compositions there. One event of note was the premiere of his cantata *The Bridal Shirt-Chemise* and the first continental performance of his *Requiem* (after its premiere in England). Dvořák dedicated the oratorio *Saint Ludmilla* and several pieces for male chorus to the Žerotín ensemble. Also, the activity of the composers Karel Bendl and young Josef Bohuslav Foerster, and performing artists Jan Kubelík, František Ondříček and Ema Destinová was connected with the Žerotín Society.

After 1918 Czech opera was established in Olomouc and after World War II, the Moravian Philharmonic, a radio studio and later a Theater of Music and other ensembles and music institutions were set up here. Personalities such as singers Jan Kühn, Markéta Kühnová, Eduard Haken and Beno Blachut, the composer and conductor Iša Krejčí, and conductors František Stupka and Zdeněk Košler spent one part of their lives there and contributed to the musical culture in Olomouc. After renovation of the valuable Michal Engler Baroque organ, dating from 1745 and installed in St. Moritz Cathedral, the International Organ Festival was inaugurated in 1968. Musicological and musical-pedagogical research has made headway since 1946 thanks to the Departments of Musicology and Musical Education at the Palacký University in Olomouc.

When the network of professional and amateur musical life in Olomouc had been built up, an unusual event occurred: in 1972, for the first time hundreds of children –



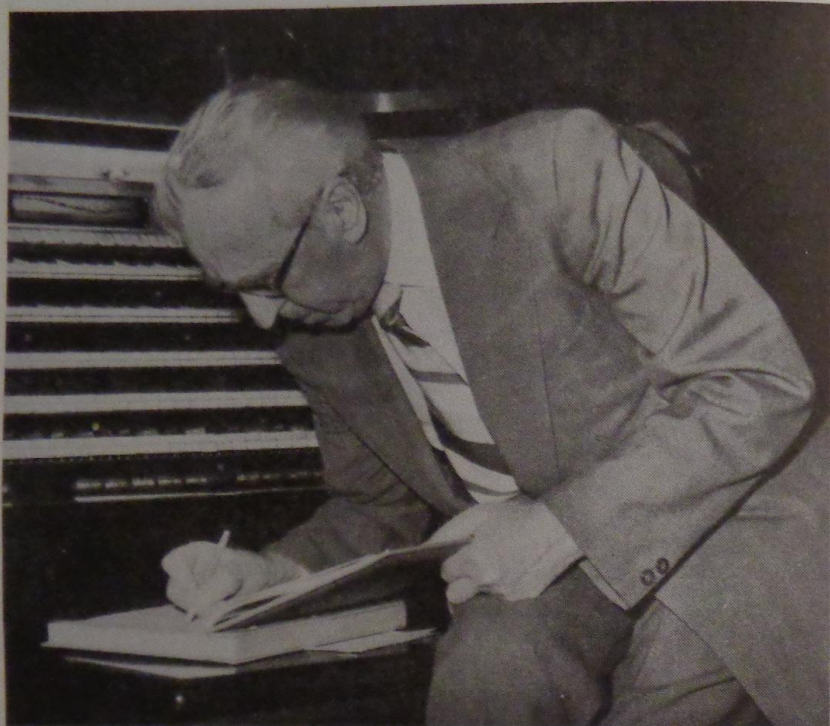
The Severáček Choir from Liberec in St. Moritz Cathedral, 1986

members of children's choirs – met in the Moravian metropolis. The gathering was the idea of two choirmasters: Karel Klimeš (1911 – 1983) and his son Jiří Klimeš (1947) who arranged this event along with dozens of willing colleagues connected with the Olomouc Children's Choir, the District House of Young Pioneers and Youth, and the Park of Culture and Rest in Olomouc. The city was brought to life by the sound of children singing and thus Olomouc became the newest member (which still seems to be the most active) of the family of established chorus festivals such as the Festival of Vocal Production in Jihlava, the Jirkov Contest of Compositions for Children's Choir, the Festival of Children's and Academic Choirs in Pardubice, and occasional events in Slovakia of the same character.

The Olomouc Festival of Songs (*Svátky písní Olomouc*), held for four days every year around the beginning of September, is usually a non-competitive review of the top children's choirs. Excellent choirs from ordinary primary schools have also been represented and a contest of children's choirs has been a part of the festival several times. The festival has not been confined to Czech and Slovak children. The second festival in 1973 was attended by choirs from Halle in Germany, from Komló in Hungary and from Celje in Yugoslavia. Of the fifty-odd choirs from other countries which have visited Olomouc to date, we should mention a few that have left a lasting impression: The Ellerhein Choir from Estonia under choirmaster Heino Kaljuste in 1974 and 1975 was in all ways excellent and presented the inspiring compositions of Veljo Tormis. The Bodra Smyana from Bulgaria under Liliana Bocheva in 1978 and the Children's Choir of Romanian Radio and TV under Eugenia Vacarescu in 1985 and 1986 enthralled audiences with contemporary Bulgarian and Romanian compositions of an exceptionally demanding character in technique and also with lively arrangements of folk songs. Hungarian school choirs have confirmed the remarkable standard of Hungarian music education almost every year. Great success was also scored in 1986 by the school choir Vox Aurea from the Finnish town Jyväskylä, which won applause for its untraditional stage presentation as well as for the avant-garde compositions of Pekka Kostiaainen and choirmaster Kari-Ala Pöllänen. The Anchor Choir from Jerusalem, which consists of less than twenty children lead by Arnon Merez, gave one of the best performances in the history of the festival in 1990. Its crystal voices, near by unbelievable sense of hearing, beautiful Czech pronunciation and soft performance of Czech folk songs indeed inspired everybody.

The international character of the festival grew through the bi-annual international contest of top children's choirs *Iuventus Mundi Cantat*. The winner in 1987 was the Gewandhaus-Kinderchor from Leipzig under choirmaster Ekkerhard Schreiber, and in 1989 the excellent Estonian ensemble the Kurekell Choir under Lennart Jõela. The third contest *Iuventus Mundi Cantat* in 1991 was less successful. It was not possible to award the first prize, and furthermore, for the first time in its twenty-year history, the Festival of Songs had economic problems and some traditional activities had to be canceled.

Leading Czech choirs have also provided unforgettable musical experiences every year for audiences made up of hundreds of choirmasters, music teachers, composers, writers of song texts, critics and children's choir enthusiasts. The exceptional technical virtuosity, and period-style presentation of both modern and Renaissance pieces by the Brno Kantiléna under Ivan Sedláček, the youthfully thrilling yet artistically mature performance of the Bambini di Praga Choir directed by Bohumil Kulínský, as well as the disciplined and polished singing of the Kühn Children's Choir under choirmaster



Dmitri Kabalevsky in Olomouc, 1976

Jiří Chvála, are all contributions without which it would be difficult now to conceive the high international standard of children's choral singing. And every performance of the Severáček Choir from Liberec under choirmaster Milan Uherek has always (and perhaps most remarkably in 1990) certified that the Severáček Choir, thanks to its high musicality, its retention of child-like spontaneity and its original repertoire (often dedicated to the ensemble), has a unique position in Czech music culture of the last thirty years. Festival audiences were witnesses to the rising artistic curve of the last choirmasters Jiří Skopal, Tomáš Motýl, Vladimír Petržílka, Jiří Klimeš, and some ensembles such as the Radost Choir from Prague and the Permoník Choir from Karviná.

The premieres of the winning entries in the composition contest, held since 1976, and the participation of prominent personalities in the music world have left many lasting impressions. In 1976, for instance, the Moravian Philharmonic and combined children's choirs performed Dmitri Kabalevsky's cantata *On Dawn, Spring and Peace*, under the baton of the composer himself. This performance, along with a studio recording of the festival signature tune by the Olomouc composer Pavel Čotek, can be found on the first company. Festival guests of note have included Czech National Artists Jan Seidel, Jiří Pauer and Jan Hanuš, who had friendly meetings with the children. Petr Eben, whose compositions were introduced most frequently, visited the festival regularly, and among prominent guests from other countries was also the „Estonian Stravinsky“, Veljo Tormis.

Around six hundred Czech and Slovak compositions for children's choir were performed at concerts, and dozens of them as premieres. Some of the pieces presented for the first time made an indelible impression on listeners. For example, Evžen Zámečník's score for two choirs, entitled *Let us Create a Landscape of Song*, supplied in interpretation of the Kantiléna Choir an additional motto for the 1979 festival. Audiences at the festival have been enchanted also by Pavel Čotek's *Solfeggi*, Jan Hanuš's *Songs from Dreamland*, Otmar Mácha's *Echoes of Silesian Songs* in a deeply sensitive performance by the Ostrava Children Choir, Ilja Hurník's *Water, Sweet Water*, Klement Slavický's *Year of the Birds*, and finally by compositions of Jan Slimáček, four times the winner of the Olomouc composer's contest.

The Olomouc Festival did not consist solely of concerts in the Reduta concert hall and their transmission on radio and TV, but it was also made up of programs in the period style of Renaissance and Baroque vocal music performed in the churches of Olomouc with their excellent acoustics and architecturally imposing surroundings, concerts for children in schools, concerts given by the choirs for each other, meetings, social gatherings and processions through the city. When the weather was clement, one could enjoy the unforgettable atmosphere of *Zpívající kašny* (The Singing Fountains) – spontaneous and improvised performances of children's choirs at six Baroque fountains and the plague column of the Holy Trinity in the center of Olomouc. It was the temperamental members of the boys' choir from Plovdiv in Bulgaria who had the idea, several years ago, of continuing to sing after concerts in the open air near the fountains. This event, which has brought new life to the historic core of Olomouc, has become a tradition which is being preserved and fostered by the children themselves.

An account of the Festival of Songs should also include the specialized seminars for choirmasters, the publication of memorial volumes and prize-winning scores, works by foreign composers and arrangements of folk songs, and also the activity of the



The Singing Fountains. The Radio Choir from Bratislava, 1986

Information Centre for Children's Choral Singing, which collects and distributes all information and material concerning children's choirs.

The Festival of Songs arose „from the bottom“ – from the ideals of amateurs and lovers of children's singing. Great public response to the first festivals caused all the important local, regional and national institutions to begin to support the festival both economically and with their experts. The Departments of Schools and Culture, the Czech and Slovak Music Fund, the Union of Czech Composers, the Central House of Young Pioneers and Youth and many others were soon among the protectors and sponsors. The festival step by step became an important center around which endeavours in the musical training of children were concentrated, and, at the same time, a place of strong musical experiences and where new friendships were made. The Festival of Songs has enriched the long-standing musical tradition in Olomouc with new and remarkably attractive prospects.

LIEDERFESTTAGE OLOMOUC

Zusammenfassung

In einem der ältesten Kulturzentren der Tschechoslowakei, in dem heute mehr als hunderttausend Einwohner zählenden Olomouc (Olmütz), findet seit 1972 alljährlich auf der Neige des Sommers ein Festival der Kindergesangchöre mit der Bezeichnung Svátky písní Olomouc, d. h. Liederfesttage Olomouc, statt. In den vergangenen zwanzig Jahren des Bestehens dieses Festivals traten hier viele tschechoslowakische Spitzenchöre auf, wobei Hunderte von Kompositionen für Kinderchöre – häufig als Uraufführungen aufgeführt werden, die dann auch in Druck als Notensammelbände erschienen sind. Es wurden ebenfalls internationale Wettbewerbe „Iuventus Mundi Cantat“ und Fachkonferenzen veranstaltet, und es wurde das Informationszentrum des Kinderchorgesangs gegründet. Unter finanzieller und organisatorischer Unterstützung tschechoslowakischer und örtlicher Institutionen wurde dieses Festival zum Schnittpunkt der Bemühungen um die Kunsterziehung der Kinder, zu einer ausgeprägten Aktion, zu der wir auch im internationalen Maßstab kaum eine ähnliche finden würden.

SVÁTKY PÍSNÍ OLOMOUC

Résumé

V jednom z nejstarších kulturních center v Československu, dnes stotisícové Olomouci, se koná od roku 1972 každoročně na sklonku léta festival dětských pěveckých sborů Svátky písní Olomouc. Za uplynulé dvacetiletí na festivalu vystoupily desítky špičkových československých i zahraničních sborů a byly provedeny, často v premiérách, stovky skladeb pro dětský sbor, které byly také vydány tiskem v desítkách notových sborníků. Uskutečnily se rovněž mezinárodní soutěže Iuventus Mundi Cantat, odborné konference a bylo založeno Informační centrum dětského sborového zpěvu. Za finanční a organizační podpory československých i místních institucí se festival stal průsečíkem snah o uměleckou výchovu dětí, vyhraněnou akcí, pro kterou bychom stěží hledali obdobu i v mezinárodním měřítku.

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