

NATIONALISM AND CHAUVINISM IN REFLEXIONS
ON THE WORK OF RICHARD WAGNER
IN PRAGUE MUSIC CRITICISM BEFORE 1885

Martin Voříšek

One of the main aims of this conference is to draw attention to the various forms of movement of music and musicians in our country. How is this theme, however, related to nationalism and chauvinism, that is, phenomena, which are basically more or less hostile to such contacts? My point of view is that it is precisely this hostility which is the link, for even a negative approach to a different culture must be understood as a certain form of intercultural communication. Unintentionally, therefore this paper serves to point out the fact, that in addition to efforts to exchange impulses, there also existed the tendency towards isolation from these impulses, towards a kind of "anticirculation".

It probably isn't necessary to somehow justify at length why I particularly chose reflexions of the work of Richard Wagner to illustrate nationally colored attacks. I would like to, though, here at the beginning, differentiate between the terms "nationalism" and "chauvinism". Considering the fact that the period under discussion is the second half of the 19th century, it is necessary to count on nationalism as simply a common phenomenon. Nationalism in the context of this period is not yet burdened with the negative connotations with which we associate it today. Therefore I consider to differentiate it from chauvinism, which I understand as an intensified form of nationalism, a priori hostile to outside influences.

Prague, to a great extent, began to become familiar with Wagner's work from the 50's. In 1853 alone, 9 concerts were held in Prague, in which Wagner's compositions were heard and in the course of that decade 4 of Wagner's operas were presented on the stage of the Stavovské divadlo: Tannhaeuser, Lohengrin, Der fliegende Holländer and Rienzi. All of these events were received with exceptional enthusiasm. I support this statement primarily with reviews and news found in a German-language publication, Bohemia, the cultural column of which accords them a very respectable standard and concentrated attention. From the year 1858, when the musical journal Dalibor was first published, it is possible to observe even the reaction of purely Czech specialist periodicals. For the purposes of this paper I used, in addition to the already-mentioned Dalibor, mainly the magazines Slavoj and Hudební listy (Musical Pages). In the case of negative reception, it definitely cannot be said to be due to any kind of nationalistic motivation – much more important than the nationality of the reviewer was the relationship to the neo-romanticism.

A noticeable change in this situation took place after changes which occurred in the cultural and political life of the Austrian monarchy at the beginning of the 60's. For our

purposes we will at least mention the removal of Alexander Bach from his function as the Minister of the Interior and then, especially, the publication of the October Diploma, which meant a certain step in the strengthening of regional self-government and awakened significant hopes in the Czech lands. In this atmosphere, the revival of Czech cultural activity gives rise to a broadly based discussion on the topic of, "What is Czech music, what are its sources, and what should be its character?" Special attention was paid to opera, which was understandably seen as a representative form and the development of Czech opera then became, to a significant degree, a matter of prestige. Wagner's creations and his reformist thinking then naturally began to be considered as one of the many starting points for Czech opera production.

At the same time as people were arguing about Czech music, they were also having arguments about Wagner. Unlike in the previous period, from the end of the 60's to the beginning of the 80's, when the most pointed discussions drew to a close, nationalistic as well as chauvinistically motivated arguments began, of course, to appear. I will now pay closer attention to these very arguments. In the course of doing so, I will base what I say on the thoughts of the pedagogues Max Konopásek and František Pivoda, whose articles in the observed musical journals are the most noticeable examples of such argumentation.

By speaking about Konopásek in connection with disagreements about the concept of Czech music, I am basically coming into conflict with his efforts. Konopásek, after all, was primarily endeavoring to comprehend the character of a universal Slavonic music, while considering Czech music to be a subordinate phenomenon. Thus far we could consider Konopásek to be a representative of naive pan-slavism. But in addition to this pan-slavism, his views also characterize a marked aversion to all which is non-Slavonic and to all things German in particular: "Only the Slavonic world can be without worries about its national source of music ever drying up... The Germans' national source of musical arts, for example, has already dried up almost completely. Even now they chase after a kind of World Music, which should grow out of the soil of a kind of Music of the Future, and have completely given up thinking about a German Music of their very own. German Music is for them only an empty phrase, just like the expressions German loyalty, faithfulness or fidelity, German culture and I could go on and on... Every German works sweaty-facedly towards the goal of giving birth to something the world hasn't heard yet. That is the only aim of every German composer of the recent period. All else in composition, that is in so-called German composition, is expediency and drudgery." Considering the fact that in the quoted portion Wagner's music is only hinted at in the phrase "music of the future", it is fairly clear what Konopásek's position was in regard to the personality and work of this German operatic reformer. I place my emphasis on the word "German" because this fact is apparently much more important to Konopásek's negative opinion than Wagner's operatic reforms.

It's a bit of a different situation in the case of the vocal pedagogue František Pivoda, who was, at the same time, a leading personality in the Czech anti-Wagner opposition. As a supporter of traditional bel canto singing technique it is understandable that he could hardly accept the principles applied in the interpretation of Wagner's operas. Unfortunately, however, he sometimes lets himself get too carried away by the discussion and some of his arguments sound much too superficial. He tries to come up with a sort of ideal of isolation from German influence and very emotionally accuses Wagner's defenders of treason. I quote from the article, "Where are we? Where are we heading? Where do we want to be?" (Hudební listy 1873): "As for the quarrell which is going on as a result of Wagner's newfangled innovations and into which we could have been dragged only by irresponsible foolhardiness, we should have stayed far away from this dispute for a good long time to

come. Why? Because healthy common sense demands that we first deal with the musical matters of our own homeland and only then may we begin to consider whether it is really beneficial for us to get mixed up in matters which are totally foreign to the Czech character and ferment of some kind of transient period, and, I regret to say, we are already serving, to a large degree, in the ranks of fighters for a cause which has nothing whatsoever to do with us! Isn't this an esthetic 'battle on White Mountain'? I'm sorry to say that it is! It was necessary to recruit warriors of the Czech nation in order to, together with formations of well-led foreign innovators, wear and break down Czech strength!"

A similar note is also sounded by Pivoda's article, *Supporters and Opponents*, which was published in installments in Hudební listy starting with the first issue in the year 1875. Even though Pivoda, in accordance with his own words, tries here to find a middle road between Wagner's defenders and opponents, his antipathy to German music is still quite obvious: "A sense of music and singing especially, is only to a minimal degree of German origin, as you can see by the quantity of its concentration among contemporary Germans. At least history is unable to say even a single word about the love of the old Germans for song and music. This interest began to appear among them for the first time when they conquered Slavonic tribes, who were then forced to become members of the nationality of their conquerors... through their industry and endurance they also attained the right to boast of having music of their very own, their own German music, to which goal they were scarcely helped by their own original musical sense nor can be said by any genuine talent." Pivoda later calls Wagner a "mere German" and speaks of his music as being boring and empty. In the interest of objectivity I would like to remind you once again, that Pivoda brought against Wagner also many rational objections and the above mentioned thoughts should not be taken as casting a shadow over the undoubted contribution of this Czech pedagogue.

The end of this period of conflicts over Wagner can be roughly marked by the year 1885, when Lohengrin was played in the National Theater, which was greeted by both Wagner's opponents and supporters. It was also, to some extent, a matter of uniting against a common competitor, embodied by the New German Theater. If we look objectively at Czech anti-Wagnerian opposition from the 50s through the beginning of the last century, then we can clearly see that basically there are more scholarly reasons brought into the discussion than nationalistic or chauvinistically-motivated attacks. It was the goal of this paper to more or less point out that even this type of argument arose in the heart of the debate to some degree. If we seriously wanted to decide whether it really was carried on this way in only a few isolated cases, or whether it was a matter of a broad trend in thinking of the period, it would, of course, be indisputably necessary to do research in much greater detail.

NATIONALISMUS UND CHAUVINISMUS IN DER REFLEXION DES WERKS VON RICHARD WAGNER IN DER PRAGER MUSIKKRITIK VOR DEM JAHR 1885

Zusammenfassung

Nach der Zeit der bemerkenswerten Popularität, die Wagner in Prag in den fünfziger Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts zuteil wurde, kam es besonders nach dem Jahre 1870 in der tschechischen Musikjournalistik zu einem scharfen Streit um Wagners Werk. Die

Bestrebungen des Referats zielen dahin, in diesen Diskussionen Elemente von Nationalismus und Chauvinismus zu erfassen. Als die markantesten Beispiele einer auf diese Weise motivierten Argumentation wurden Artikel des Pädagogen Max Konopásek und der führenden Persönlichkeit der tschechischen Anti-Wagner-Opposition, František Pivoda, ausgewählt.

NACIONALISMUS A ŠOVINISMUS V REFLEXI DÍLA RICHARDA WAGNERA V PRAŽSKÉ HUDEBNÍ KRITICE PŘED ROKEM 1885

Resumé

Po období značné popularity, které se Wagnerovi dostávalo v Praze v padesátých letech minulého století, došlo zejména po roce 1870 v české hudební žurnalistice k ostrému sporu o Wagnerovo dílo. Snahou referátu je postihnout v těchto diskusích prvky nacionalismu a šovinismu. Jako nejmarkantnější příklad takto motivované argumentace jsou zvoleny články pedagoga Maxe Konopáska a vůdčí osobnosti české protiwagnerovské opozice, Františka Pivody.

DAS KIRCHENLIED – BEMERKUNGEN ZUR PROBLEMATIK DER MIGRATION UND DER MASSENMEDIALEN DIMENSION SEINES REPERTOIRES

Stanislav Tesař

Das folgende Referat macht sich zur Aufgabe (wie es übrigens aus dem Titel klar wird) auf die Problematik der Migration und der massenmedialen Dimension im Repertoire des Kirchenliedes hinzuweisen. Es geht um zwei wichtige und in der bisherigen Forschung wenig reflektierte Aspekte. Für das derart konzipierte Thema habe ich mich entschieden, weil ich an die Tatsache erinnern möchte, daß die einstimmige geistliche Lyrik zur Entstehung und Gestaltung des von uns hier diskutierten Prozesses der Zirkulation einen bedeutenden Beitrag geleistet hat. Dieser Umstand kann also in einer Diskussion zu Zirkulationsprozessen nicht außer acht gelassen werden. Gestatten Sie mir daher, einige Momente des von mir gewählten Themas mit folgenden Bemerkungen näher zu beleuchten.

Zunächst eine terminologische Bemerkung

Das Wort Zirkulation stellt ein Schlüsselwort unseres Zusammentreffens dar. Es ist folglich natürlich, daß es auch in der Bezeichnung von vielen angemeldeten Referaten vorkommt. In drei Fällen wurde der Terminus Migration verwendet. Beide Termini sind jedoch semantisch nicht identisch, weil sie zwei unterschiedliche Gestalten der Bewegung bezeichnen. Die Migration ist ein demographischer Terminus, er bezeichnet einen primär irreversiblen, in eine Richtung verlaufenden Vorgang, der aus einem System auf ein anderes hinsteuert. Dieser Vorgang weist zwei Gestalten auf: die der Emigration, was die Bewegung aus einem System hinaus bezeichnet, und die der Immigration, was die Bewegung von außen in das System bezeichnet. Die Zirkulation ist hingegen eine primär reversible, in das System wieder zurückkehrende Bewegung. Auf der Ebene einer realen Bewegung von Personen, in unserem Falle von Musikern (Komponisten, Interpreten oder auch Kopisten) ist die Bezeichnung Zirkulation offensichtlich berechtigt. Handelt es sich um Bewegung des Repertoires oder der Institutionen, dann hat die Zirkulation einen eher metaphorischen Charakter, weil die reale Grundlage dieses Vorgangs die Migration ist. Den konkreten Materialuntersuchungen sollte daher eine Abgrenzung des Bedeutungsfeldes der Termini Zirkulation und Migration vorangehen.