

THE HISTORY OF CZECH MODERN FOLK MUSIC

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Folk-music groups first appeared in Anglo-Saxon countries. In the 1960s the movement started to gain world-wide attention. Although the **1960s** saw an enormous boom of folk music around the world, **in the Czech Republic the first signs of such a boom were just appearing**. A general characteristic of folk music of the 1960s is the fact that its musical vocabulary is expanded with elements of rock, cabaret songs, and of other movements in modern popular music. The imaginary borders of the genre and the folk music public were also expanding proportionally. Around the world, the folk music scene was assuming massive dimensions, while in this country it was possible to detect the activity of only a few individuals acting independently. Therefore, we will focus on those pioneers of Czech folk music.

It would be naïve to look for a certain point or moment when and where the history of Czech folk music began to develop. It would be better to seek out the sources, causes, and fertile ground in which Czech folk music was able to grow. For the beginnings and for the further development of folk music in this country, there are **two areas of characteristic sources of inspiration**. The first is the **taking over and imitation of creations from around the world**. The outside world was long viewed in this country as a model worth copying. Thus in the repertoire of Czech folk artists we find such names as Dylan, Baez, the Weavers, the Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul and Mary, Donovan, Simon and Garfunkel, Vysotsky, Okujava, and many others. The creations of folk musicians also have their roots **in relation to the Czech tradition of social singing**. Many singers consider their predecessors to have been representatives of the *Osvobozené* theater and the related era of so-called small theaters. The folk song movement in Czechoslovakia has been thus a reaction to folk music trends around the world and an organic outgrowth of the Czech environment.

The first American folk singers came from among the people, and they sang the music of the people. In this country the situation is somewhat different. This is given by the relationship to Czech folklore, which went through many extreme changes during the twentieth century. A typical example is the pseudo-puritanical approach during the 1950s, which caused musicians to later distance themselves from folklore. The avalanche of folksongs and dances, performed everywhere and constantly broadcast on radio prevented generations from feeling the need to draw on that treasury.

During the time we now consider to have been the beginning of Czech folk music, i. e. during the 1960s, there appeared in the field on popular music interest in experimentation, looking for among other things different, foreign folklore, etc. There appeared on the Czech market recordings of spirituals and arrangements of American folk songs, and there were even books published on those subjects. There gradually grew an awareness of American folklore. Groups were formed that included in their repertoire American and other folk music (e. g. **Spirituál Quintet, Rangers, Folk Singers**). The foreign artists whose work was most often taken over are listed elsewhere in this study. An important event in support of folk music was Pete Seeger's concert tour of this country in 1964. Seeger promoted folk music, folk instruments, and especially collective singing and amateur music making.

Interest in Czech folklore began to awaken when the excessive promotion and general pressure of the 1950s had been forgotten. A new era of searching and careful experimentation began. Urban folklore was discovered, and Sušil's collection of folk songs became the center of attention among interpreters. Some groups also focused on older music – Czech songs from the renaissance and from the time of the National Revival, etc. (e. g. the groups **Skiffle Kontra, Minnesengři**).

Another seminal aspect of Czech folk music was (and still is) **poetry**. The creation of songs is closely related to poetic expression, and a lyrical vision of reality. The representatives of our first generation of song writers attribute their inspiration to such sources as beatnik poetry, or poetry of every day life.¹ Practically from the beginnings of our folk music we can follow its close bonds to Czech and foreign authors. It is interesting that folk music chose poems and titles that diverge at a great distance from the officially sanctioned literature. We should name at least Karel Hlaváček, Jiří Orten, Václav Hrabě, Josef Kainar, Larwernce Ferlinghetti, Bulat Okujava, and Alan Ginsberg.

In order to give a full characterization of the environment in which the genre later termed "folk" was formed, it is necessary to add an abbreviated description of the societal atmosphere in our country in the 1960s. At that time a younger generation raised its voice, distancing itself utterly from the cultural policies of the 1950s. The proclaimed musical model of mass singing and so-called cabaret music that was to inspire the folk tradition² (see above) did not suit that generation. Besides the above-mentioned **orientation toward American folklore**, the attention of teenagers concentrated on everything that represented a statement of disagreement, of **social protest** (rock, hippies, etc.). Thus the 1960s saw the massive growth of beat and rock production. A great number of rock clubs were opened, and just in Prague there were nearly 300 amateur big-beat groups. Many song writers got their start in that environment, permeated with a desire for entirely informal expression and resistance to everything that was official. Beginning in the spring of 1968, Charles Bridge in Prague became a favorite place for folk production of that persuasion. That is where **Jaroslav Hutka** (*1947) and **Petr Kalandra** (1950–1995), **Miroslav Paleček** and **Michael Janík** (both *1945), and **Vlastimil Třešňák** (*1950) as well as many others got their start. In March 1968 the Festival of Protest Songs and Poetry was held in Prague.

Another place where there appeared music that we now call folk was **Porta**, the festival of country and tramp songs (first held in 1967 as Porta Bohemica). The foray of folk musicians into the latently surviving world of the Czech tramp song was already seen at the earliest annual festival events. Because the share of folk music being performed at Porta constantly increased, I will deal with that subject later. This ends the discussion of the roots of Czech folk music and the formative influences and of the musical and societal atmosphere of this country.

We are now entering an era when the identification of folk music is easier because the number of concerts and other tangible forms of performing increased, and because folk musicians began to associate. "Prague singing sessions were held at Park kultury, the club U Orfea, the Klub školství, in theaters, and elsewhere. These were programs combining the spoken word, theater or pantomime, often even discussion and reading of poetry or the artistic displays of the main protagonists. Frequent themes were Bob Dylan and other representatives of the folk movement abroad, English and American folk songs in the original language, beatnik and Victorian poetry, etc."³

The singers began to form associations, in order to create an 'artistic program', to inspire each other, and to help each other avoid problems with the authorities. The following facts are supported by the memoirs of Jaroslav Hutka. Among the first folk groups were *Pod plachtou* (1968) and *Tyjátr písničkářů*, founded in 1971. An important point in the history of Czech folk music is the year 1972, when at the initiative of **Zuzana Michnová** (*1949) and Jaroslav Hutka the association of folk singers **Šafrán** was founded. In addition to the artists named above, the association also included **Vladimír Merta** (*1947), Vlastimil Třešňák, **Dagmar Voňková** (*1948), **Petr Lutka** (*1952), Jiří Pallas (manager), and **Miroslav Kovářík** (master of ceremonies). They performed in the clubs SAKS and Tesla, in the Ateliér theater, and in clubs and festivals around the country. They invited guests to their programs (M. Kocáb, V. Mišík, etc.) and they held contests. One of them, the contest *O ptáka Noha*, brought attention to **Josef Nos** (*1949), **Miroslav Janoušek** (*1963), and **Jan Burian** (*1952) who accompanied himself at the piano unlike others using acoustic guitar. They later became leading figures of Czech folk music. Šafrán published several singles, and J. Hutka had released two albums of Moravian national songs. The second of them even became the record of the year, and Hutka took fourth place in *Zlatý slavík*, well known chart of the magazine *Mladý svět*. Šafrán members were intensely disliked by the Communist authorities, who began to place various limitations on the group's activities. For example, on the record jacket of Hutka's recording the author's name could not be listed, and the profile album of the association could not be sold at all (it was finally released in 1989! by Supraphon). The association Šafrán ceased to exist in 1977, when its main organizer J. Pallas emigrated to Sweden. It should not be forgotten that the event which preceded the breakup of Šafrán and to a certain extent even caused it was the signing of Charter 77 by several members of the association. Having come into conflict with State Security, the signers were isolated from the rest of the population. The singers could only perform at private events. After

a rigged trial, J. Hutka left Czechoslovakia in 1978. In 1979 V. Třešňák was virtually banned from performing. In April 1982 he was forced to leave the country.⁴ Among other folk artists who left the country for political reasons were **Bohdan Mikolášek** (*1948) and **Karel Kryl** (1944–1994). Abroad they formed a group of Czech folk-singer emigrants. Pallas founded the exile publishing house Šafrán (among other things, in 1977 an LP was published with the title *Zakázání zpěváci druhé kultury* – Banned Singers of the Counterculture, and records by V. Třešňák, J. Hutka, K. Kryl). Hutka published his songs and magazines (that is what Hutka called his pamphlets) using the name Fossil. Since 1969 K. Kryl had been performing abroad. That singer was already very popular in this country in the sixties, especially for his first LP entitled *Bratříčku, zavírej vrátka*, which for many years was a symbol of protest against the occupation of this country.

There was more to the 1970s than just Šafrán and emigrants. The stages were active at the same time in several theaters (performing in Semafor was the duo M. Paleček – M. Janík), clubs, and university dormitories. Singers performed at Porta and in the “**underground**” (Svatopluk Karásek, Charlie Soukup). In November 1971 the Folk and Country Club was founded. That organization presented the F&C festival from 1969–1972, the Folk Song Festival from 1970–1972, and at the same time it became the main presenter of Porta. The new club was located in the Malostranská beseda and ten years later it moved to the club Na Petynce. Its main contribution was in that it was able to take in an ever growing number of folk musicians and to organize various events for them. At the 1970 Folk Song Festival the singer Zdena Lorencová (*1947) attracted attention. Already before that she had recorded Czech and Slovak folk songs for the same French record company that two years earlier (1968) had released Prague folk music performed by V. Merta (the first Czech modern folk record was thus made in France!).

Porta may be considered to have been an important folk venue during the 1970s. One reason was because the bigger annual festivals got ‘approval’ only three or four times, while another reason was because in 1973 Porta was divided by genre (tramp was moved to Litomyšl, country to Jablonec, and folk was put at Český Krumlov). In the introduction to the book *Brnkání na duši*, M. Konečný writes that Porta has also been a witness to a special phenomenon apparent in the beginnings of Czech folk – a dual approach to modern folk music. The production of soloists and groups here represented two extremes in the conception of folk. Bands strove for perfection of vocal and instrumental color, imitating examples from around the world, while for the folksong soloists, the color was only a means. They emphasized the text – the message, internal self-revelation, their generation, and the world where they live. As time passed this difference disappeared. Within bands there appeared personalities as author / interpreters and on the other had soloists also began presenting foreign material.⁵ Generally, it may be said that in the second half of the 1970s **one period in the history of Czech folk music ended**, the period of the assimilation of folk music from around the world. A certain part of the repertoire of our folk singers continued (and still continues) to come from foreign authors, but this became a much smaller

percent. Folk groups, which were formed by the hundreds during that decade, strove for their own poetic message. Of even more importance is the fact that they began to display considerable individuality. Some of them have already been mentioned – they attracted attention by winning prizes at various contests and festivals in Prague. The rest of the new names have in common that they were not hatched in the Prague folk music incubator.

Apart from Prague, folk music was especially active in Southern Bohemia and in Moravia. Folk music events in Český Krumlov attracted enormous attention. In that region groups were formed that later found their place among the folk music elite (e. g. **Nezmaři**, 1978). Also the local school of pedagogy provided a strong base for folk music. **Slávek Janoušek** (*1953) got his start there. Universities were also centers of amateur music making elsewhere in the country. From among the groups making headway on the increasingly competitive folk music scene, we should at least mention **Heuréka** (1976) from Prague, playing folk music from around the world and the group **Kantoři**, formed 1972 by pedagogy students in Hradec Králové and focusing on Czech old folk songs. The strong inspiration of folklore was and still is typical for the **Ulrych** brother-sister team with the group Javory.

Intense folk music activity also got underway in Moravia in the 1970s. We will examine it briefly. At that time the singer **Karel Plíhal** (*1958) from Olomouc began to perform, first with the group Plíharmonie, and later by himself. Plíhal was a personality who constantly stimulated the folk music scene, and he became an inspiration for the formation of other folk groups. In 1977–1979 in Olomouc there took place the nationwide finale of Porta, and at the dormitories of Palacký University regular folk music meetings were held on Thursdays. From among regional groups I should mention Piano and Damián from Olomouc and the biggest folk group in this country – Entuzisté from Přerov. Beginning in 1976 the event *Folk kolotoč* was held in Ostrava-Poruba (Milan Kaplan was the organizer). The event was held for each of nine years, for the last time in 1984 at Břeclav.

I have mentioned several festivals where the Czech folk music scene was presented. In reality, all of the events were under strict state supervision. The texts were subject to review, performances were banned in particular regions, and there were also other sanctions and limitations.

From among the many other artists from Prague and elsewhere, we should mention at least the following: the duo **Bodlák – Vondrák** (both *1954), **Josef Streichl** (*1949), **Oldřich Janota** (*1949), **Jiří Dědeček** (*1953), **Jim Čert** (with the unusual accompaniment of the accordion, *1956), and several representatives of tramp songs striving for deeper lyrical expression: **Jaroslav Velinský** (Kapitán Kid, *1932), **Wabi Ryvola** (1935–1995), and **Stanislav Wabi Daněk** (*1947).

The list of new personalities from the late 70s and early 80s could go on and on, because the folk music scene was growing constantly. For society at that time, folk meant a certain current of revival. The tramp song and country music genres took a back seat because they did not provide as much room for verbal expression as folk music. Never having been defined, folk music constantly took on new musical and

textual procedures and methods. While abroad the figure of the protest singer was no longer relevant, in this country the popularity of folk singers increased because the public was very grateful for the more or less hidden political allusions. I would, however, like to point out that folk music was more than social criticism. Although there were some musicians who intentionally tried to be labeled as being political, the vast majority of singers considered their songs of protest to be a natural part of creation and an expression of their personal point of view.

As I have already said, in the early 80s the generation of Šafrán (V. Merta maintained his outstanding level of performance) was joined by another group of singers that replaced the exiles and started a **boom of folk music in this country**. Festivals, especially Porta, again played a major role. The folk music public now numbered in the tens of thousands, and the range of the musical content grew together with the expanding expressive means of folk music. Porta began to lose the image of being a gigantic tramp meeting and replaced it with the meaningful melodic and topical directness of lyrical expression. Folk music became the counter to official pop music. To the great displeasure of the state authorities, who had long tried to keep folk music from becoming popular, folk music gained a mass following, this in spite of the fact that record companies, radio and television gave folk music almost no coverage. The members of the new generation of Czech folk singers include **Jaromír Nohavica** (*1953), Karel Plíhal, **Pavel Dobeš** (*1949), and **Robert Křesťan** (*1958) as the most important representative of the Moravian school, as well as **Ivo Jahelka** (*1954), **Václav Koubek** (with accordion accompaniment, 1955), and **Pavel Lohonka Žalman** (*1946). Attracting attention in the second half of the 1980s were **Michal Jůza**, a poet and recitor, and **Pavel Karas**, an experimenter who used themes from antiquity and who created, among other things, folk opera. The following actor / singers followed on the tradition of singing in the theater: **Marek Eben** (*1957) and **Iva Bittová** (*1958). From the tramp scene I should mention **Jaroslav Samson Lenka** (the leader of the groups Máci and Hop Trop) and **Jan Nedvěd** (*1946) with the group Brontosauři. The singers often surrounded themselves with larger musical groups, and besides that there were also folk groups that only made appearances as a whole. Unfortunately, I cannot go into more detail about that here, so I will briefly provide some information. Besides the already mentioned Spirituál quintet, the group **Nerez** featuring Zuzana Navarová, Vít Sázavský, and Zdeněk Vřešťál was active since 1982 on the Czech music scene. Since the beginning of the 1970s, Zuzana Michnová had been writing songs and singing with the group **Marsyas**. The groups **Folk Team** (1973–1974), **AG Flek** (1977), **Bukanýři** (1970) and Marsyas introduced new folk-rock style. Folk instrumental music thus was expanded to include 'harder' means of expression.

In order to tell the full story of folk music in the 1980s, I would like to describe the environment where the folk music was performed. While folk music is mostly associated with the intimate environment of clubs, small halls, and university dormitories, during the 1980s there were larger festivals and exhibitions. With the growing number of singers, there was also a growing number of venues where folk music did not have to

share the spotlight with interpreters of country or tramp songs. Events of this kind took place for example in Český Krumlov (Letokruh), České Budějovice (Písničkáři 82), Tišnov, Jistebnice, Lipnice, Svojsice (Letorost and Slunovrat), Valašské Meziříčí (Valašský Špalíček), Mikulov (Otvírání folkových studánek) and elsewhere. In Brno in 1983 J. Vondrák even founded a Folk Theatre. The site of the Prague F&C club (already given a new neutral name: the Club of Youthful Art) Na Petynce, and the festival Porta were other centers of folk events. I have already made some mention of the situation with Porta. I would like to add a comparison. The history of that festival can be seen as a mirror of Czech folk music and also of the formation of the socially critical feeling of the public. Porta is in any case a subject worthy of broader discussion.

One might say that at the start of the 1980s there was a sort of folk mania in this country. Folk was no longer an interest of a minority of students and intellectuals. The music attracted an unprecedented number of listeners. It was that intangible conspiratorial atmosphere felt by the people at most folk concerts that attracted the general public. The singers were more and more open, and their texts were personally and politically relevant. The musicians were making a direct appeal. Many of them got directly involved in dissident activities. "Contact was being renewed with emigrant singers. In October 1988 and June 1989 there were concerts by J. Hutka and V. Třešňák in Budapest (with the guest Slávek Janoušek). On 3 and 5 November 1989 there took place in Wrocław a seminar of Czech political and intellectual exiles with representatives of the Polish Solidarity movement, at which P. Dobeš, J. Nohavica, J. Hutka, J. Nos, P. Rímský, J. Streichl, K. Kryl, and others made appearances. Nohavica and Streichl, who met with Kryl during a visit to Vienna, formed the core of the ad-hoc group *Nezůstali venku*. The exile was not fully rejoined with his country until the revolution."⁶ During 1989 there was mounting social tension. All meetings of the authors and interpreters of folk music now had a clearly political message. The methods of their personal protests, artistic pressure, and one might say their acts of resistance had much in common with the way in which the revolution in this country took place. Therefore, it is not surprising that during the days of the November revolution it was they who made appearances in front of hundreds of thousands of demonstrators. "On 22 November Jiří Dědeček made a recitation from the balcony of the building Svobodné slovo; Marta Kubišová with C&K Vocal sang the national anthem; on 23 November at the same place the Spirituál kvintet and Jaromír Nohavica played; on 24 November Vladimír Merta performed; on 25 November Jaroslav Hutka sang the song *Náměšť* at Letná. On the last day of November Karel Kryl landed at the Ruzyně airport and later there came others (Vladimír Veit, Bohdan Mikolášek, Oskar Petr, Jaroslav Jeroným Neduha...). Naturally, the singers traveled to schools and factories, where they, together with other singers, musicians, actors, and artists, promoted the mass civic movement. The events of November were the pinnacle of the singers' efforts, the goal of the nearly twenty-year-long evolutionary journey of a few enthusiasts, and later of cultural currents, of Czechoslovak intellectuals, and in the end of both nations."⁷

November 1989 marked the end of one chapter of the history of Czech folk music. Czech folk music is now in an entirely different situation than the situation that prevailed practically during the entire period of its development in this country.

Selective discography of Czech folk music

Vladimír Merta: *Ballades de Prague*, Vogue 1968, France
Skiffle Kontra, Supraphon 1968
Karel Kryl: *Bratříčku, zavírej vrátka*, Panton 1969
Paleček – Janík, Supraphon 1971
Spirituál kvintet: *Písničky z roku raz dva*, Supraphon 1972
Hana a Petr Ulrychovi: *Nikola Šuhaj Loupežník*, Panton 1974
Jaroslav Hutka: *Stůj, břízo zelená*, Supraphon 1974
Šafrán, Supraphon 1977
Vlasta Třešňák: *Zeměměřič, Šafrán 78*, Sweden 1979
AG Flek, Panton 1983
Písničky Wabi Daňka / Rosa na kolejích, Supraphon 1984
Bratři Ebenové: *Malé písně do tmy*, Panton 1984
Brontosauři: *Na kameni kámen*, Panton 1985
Dagmar Andrtová-Voňková, Panton 1986
Žalman a spol., Panton 1987
Bittová – Fajt, Panton 1987
Zakázaní zpěváci druhé kultury, Oktober, Sweden 1987
Slávek Janoušek: *Kdo to zavinil*, Supraphon 1988
Pavel Dobeš: *Skupinové foto*, Panton 1989
Karel Plíhal 1985–1989, FT Records 1992
Vlasta Redl: *Staré pecky*, Monitor 1992
Jaromír Nohavica: *Mikimauzoleum*, Monitor 1993

ENDNOTES

1. Merta, V.: Folk-bluesová kytara a harmonika. *ARTeM* 1992, p. 18. Pravděpodobné vzdálenosti (Rozhovor Miloše Čermáka s Jaroslavem Hutkou). Praha 1994, p. 45.
2. Kotecký, J.: O české populární hudbě a jejích posluchačích. Praha 1990, p. 269.
3. From the interview with M. Konečný (the chairman of Czech Folk and Country Club), Praha 9. 4. 1996. Audiorecording by author.
4. Čermák, M.: Pravděpodobné vzdálenosti (Rozhovor Miloše Čermáka s Jaroslavem Hutkou). Praha 1994, p. 77–116.
5. Dobiáš, J.: Brnkání na duši. Praha 1992, p. 12. Autorem úvodního slova je Michal Konečný.
6. Vlasák, V.: Písničkáři v listopadové revoluci. *Hudební rozhledy* 1990, n. 4, p. 187.
7. Ibid. 6

GESCHICHTE DER TSCHECHISCHEN FOLKMUSIK

Zusammenfassung

Die „folk music“ – Bewegung entstand ursprünglich im angelsächsischen Gebiet. In den sechziger Jahren fand sie weltweit einen lebhaften Widerhall. Während die sechziger Jahren einen großen Folk – Boom in der ganzen Welt mit sich gebracht haben, konnte man in unserem Lande in dieser Zeit nur erste Signale hören. Für die Anfänge, aber auch für die Weiterentwicklung des Folks bei uns sind zwei Bereiche der Inspirationsquellen kennzeichnend. Die erste Quelle ist die Übernahme und die Nachahmung der weltbekannten Werke, (Dylan, Baez, Weawers, Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul a Mary, Donovan, Simon und Garfunkel, Vysockij, Okudschawa usw.) Eine andere Quelle der Schöpfung von Folkmusikern stellt das Anknüpfen an die inländischen Traditionen der Liebe des Volkes zum Gesang dar. Viele Folksänger bezeichnen als ihre Vorgänger Repräsentanten des Theaters „Osvobozené divadlo“ (Befreites Theater) und die daran anknüpfende Ära von den sogenannten kleinen Theatern. Zu den weiteren formgebenden Faktoren des tschechischen Folks gehörte (und gehört bis heute) die Poesie. Insbesondere die Folkmusik-Schöpfung zeigt ihre sichtbare Verwandtschaft mit der dichterischen Ausdrucksweise und mit deren Wahrnehmung der Realität. Die Repräsentanten unserer ersten Generation der Folkmusiker geben als eine Quelle ihrer Inspiration zum Beispiel die Beat – Poesie oder die Alltagspoesie an.

Zu den ersten Repräsentanten der tschechischen Folkmusik gehören Karel Kryl, Jaroslav Hutka, Vladimír Merta, Vlasta Třešňák, Dagmar Andrtová-Voňková, das Duo Paleček – Janík und das Spirituál kvintet. Im Jahr 1971 wurde der tschechische Folk- und Country-Club und im Jahr 1972 die Vereinigung Šafrán gegründet. Sie organisierten gemeinsam Festivals, Wettbewerbe und so weiter. Hier taten sich Slávek Janoušek, Jan Burian, Jiří Dědeček hervor. In den siebziger und achtziger Jahren waren die Massenmedien in der Tschechoslowakei unter kommunistischer Kontrolle. Als Reaktion auf diese Situation hatten die halboffiziellen Folkkonzerte eine übermäßige Bedeutung. Am Ende der siebziger Jahren trat die zweite Generation der Folksänger hervor – z. B. Jaromír Nohavica, Karel Plíhal, Pavel Dobeš, Jan Nedvěď, Stanislav Daněk, Pavel Lohonka, Ivo Jahelka. Jeder von ihnen repräsentiert einen charakteristischen Folksängertyp. Die Folksänger spielten eine große Rolle in der Zeit der samtenen Revolution im Jahre 1989. Später verschwand teilweise in dem sich stabilisierenden demokratischen Milieu das politisch motivierte Interesse für Folk.

Die Folkmusik bei uns entfaltet sich fernerhin als eine Art des (vor allem) spontanen Schaffens von Amateuren, das auf die verschiedenen Seiten des gesellschaftlichen Daseins reagiert, wobei dem Text eine primäre Bedeutung zukommt. Dieser Text, organisch mit dem Musikbestandteil verbunden, hebt den Inhaltswert des Liedes hervor.

HISTORIE ČESKÉHO FOLKU

Shrnutí

Hnutí folk music vzniklo původně v anglosaské oblasti. V šedesátých letech vyvolalo značnou odezvu i ve světovém měřítku. Zatímco ve světě znamenají šedesátá léta obrovský folkový boom, v naší zemi je to doba prvních signálů. Pro počátky, ale i další vývoj folku u nás jsou charakteristické dvě oblasti zdrojů inspirací. První z nich je přejímání a napodobování světové tvorby (Dylan, Baezová, Weawers, Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul a Mary, Donovan, Simon a Garfunkel, Vysockij, Okudžava aj). Druhý kořen tvorby folkových hudebníků se vyznačuje návazností na domácí tradice společenské zpěvnosti. Mnoho písničkářů označuje za své předchůdce představitele Osvo- bozeného divadla a na ně navazující éru tzv. malých divadel. Dalším formujícím činitelem českého folku byla (a dodnes je) poezie. Zejména písničkářská tvorba projevuje evidentní spřízněnost s básnickým vyjadřováním, viděním skutečnosti. Před- stavitelé naší první generace písničkářů uvádějí za zdroj své inspirace například beatnickou poezii, či poezii všedního dne.

Mezi české průkopníky folkové hudby patří Karel Kryl, Jaroslav Hutka, Vladimír Merta, Vlasta Třešňák, Dáša Andrtová-Voňková, duo Paleček – Janík a Spirituál kvintet. V roce 1971 vznikl český Folk a country klub, v roce 1972 bylo založeno volné písničkářské sdružení Šafrán. Společně organizovali festivaly, soutěže a další aktivity. K objevům Šafránu patří např. Slávek Janoušek, Jan Burian, Jiří Dědeček. Vzhledem k tomu, že veškeré projevy v masových médiích byly v ČSSR sedmdesátých a osmdesá- tých let pod úzkostlivou kontrolou komunistických orgánů, narůstal až neúměrně význam živých folkových, polooficiálních vystoupení. Na konci sedmdesátých let se objevila druhá generace písničkářů, reprezentovaná jmény Jaromír Nohavica, Karel Plíhal, Pavel Dobeš, Jan Nedvěd, Stanislav Daněk, Pavel Lohonka, Ivo Jahelka. Každý z nich reprezentuje svérázný písničkářský typ. Folkoví zpěváci sehráli značnou úlohu v průběhu „sametové revoluce“ 1989, poté však ve stabilizujícím se demokratickém prostředí politicky motivovaný zájem o folk částečně opadl.

Folková hudba u nás nadále funguje jako druh spontánní (především) amatérské tvorby aktuálně reagující na nejrůznější stránky společenského bytí, v němž prvotní význam připadá textu, který v organickém propojení s hudební složkou profiluje obsahovou hodnotu písně.