Zdeněk Fibich as Viewed by Leoš Janáček¹

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1. Zdeněk Fibich in Janáček's correspondence

On the composition of chords and their connections

We learn about Z. Fibich for the first time from Janáček's correspondence with František Augustin Urbánek in 1896 in connection with the composer's request to the Czech Academy of Sciences and Art for financial support for his work "On the composition of chords and their connections". Mr. Urbánek writes to L. Janáček on 28 November 1896 as follows: "Dear Sir, you can ask the Czech Academy for support for "On the composition of chords and their connections" anytime and directly. Those who should pass judgment on your work are 4th Class, i.e. Dr. Dvořák, Fibich, Foerster and Chvála and not Prof. Dr. Hostinský, who does not have compositions and music papers in the Czech Academy. I have spoken about your concern with Mr. Fibich [...], who promised me every support for you. May you please act in accordance with it." Janáček's request for financial support was preceded by the publication of the abovementioned theory by Urbánek who, however, did not pay him off. Besides, his request was even stored at the Academy unnoticed for some time. Therefore, at the beginning of 1897 Janáček addresses his friend from a civic school, František Bílý, the then secondary school professor of the First Czech middle technical school in Prague and a member of the Academy of Sciences as follows: "My dear friend, František Urbánek's publishing house published my work 'On chords and their combinations'. The composer Fibich promised to support my prospective request to the Czech Academy by all means. Encouraged by this I made a request in December 1896-I did not get anything for the work from Urbánek but I will at the second publication; however, I am grateful to him for the publication—and I have still

¹ The topic is divided into four parts according to the kinds of sources used to gain information from.

All quotations for this paper were translated by the translator of the paper since no official translations exist. Letter from F. A. Urbánek to L. Janáček, Music History Department of the Moravian Museum, Janáček Archive (hereafter BmJA), A 106.

not had any answer. Does it take so long? Would you mind asking on an occasion—you probably know better whom to approach? Whether I could hope to get anything or not? All the best, Yours faithfully, Leoš Janáček." František Bílý informs Janáček how the situation proceeded in several subsequent letters: "My dear friend, a meeting of 4th Class was held the day before yesterday and your paper was placed into Fibich's and Förster's report. You will undoubtedly be granted probably 200" (14 March 1897). Janáček had not been given the promised payment until June 1897, when F. Bílý writes to Janáček: "My dear friend, 1) 200 granted. Congratulations. (To be approved by the plenum yet)."

Amarus

The abovementioned volume of the correspondence with F. Bílý and F. A. Urbánek is also concerned with another topic, namely Janáček's cantata Amarus, which was completed in 1897, specifically on 21 May 1897. In a letter dated 24 May Janáček again asked his friend F. Bílý to help him to get approval from Jaroslav Vrchlický to use his text for a composition. It is evident that Janáček has already sent a score to A. Dvořák for a review; F. Bílý played the role of a middleman, who handed over the score to J. Vrchlický, who accepted the work very warmly. He writes to Janáček on 8 June 1897 as follows: "My dear fellow! I am delighted at your having found my poem 'Amarus' worth setting to music. I am convinced that you have fully succeeded and I maintain that no other people need to intervene. I am allowed to announce that at the Academy's meeting on 1 June you were granted 200 gold coins for your work after the proposal of the reporters (Messrs. Fibich and Chvála). Although I am not a musician, I tried my utmost to make it work, not having any idea about your letter, which arrived two days later. With all respect, Yours faithfully Jar. Vrchlický." F. Bílý suggests that Janáček has his composition published at F. A. Urbánek's and proposes Zdeněk Fibich as a reviewer for the publication since he hoped for Fibich's support. Janáček asks Vrchlický to hand over the composition to Fibich, who could give him a testimonial. However, Urbánek refuses to publish the composition since it is too costly: "Amarus is too costly. Shall I return it?" (11 January 1898). As a matter of interest, Janáček also offered the composition to the publishing house Universal Edition in 1917. This institution did not respond either. Amarus was not published for the first time until 1938 by the publishing house Hudební matice in Prague.

To Kamila Stösslová about Fibich and Anežka Schulzová

Leoš Janáček judges and comments on Fibich's private life, and especially his relationship with Anežka Schulzová, in the correspondence with his friend Kamila Stösslová. He

³ L. Janáček to F. Bílý, BmJA, B 2215.

⁴ F. Bílý to L. Janáček, BmJA, A 3364.

⁵ F. Bílý to L. Janáček, BmJA, A 3368.

Bohumír Štědroň (ed.), Janáček ve vzpomínkách a dopisech [Janáček in Memories and Letters] (Prague, 1946), p. 104-105.

⁷ F. A. Urbánek to L. Janáček, BmJA, A 132.

compares his relationship with Mrs. Stösslová with that of Fibich and Schulzová. He puts his love affair on a pedestal and considers Fibich's affair critically, even rudely. In a letter dating 13 December 1927 Janáček writes to Stösslová: "I was extremely pleased at your interest in Fibich and his Anežka. Skip what is too erudite in the book. Remember well what is in there, what fits us and then tell me. Anežka must have been peculiar that he, a strong, robust and fine man, fell for her. And you manage peculiar magic, which magnetizes me. You did not throw your nets on me; Anežka must have thrown such a big one that he could not tear it. I am allured by the body and ingenuous soul, whereas he found a gargoyle and semanticist. He threw scores on a hump and debauchee, while I with a melody would cover your glamorous Otava waves, your little light-heeled leg, your lips, a doorway to a shrine on fire [...]"8 On 19 December 1927 Janáček writes: "Fibich-Anežka on the contrary: what they fused—their work—librettos—was to warm them up—but without success! No children! But a lot of silly useless operas [...] It is easy with us: we want to share our love but they shared pedantic work and warmed themselves up—without revealing by what." Another letter dated 20 December 1927 includes the following: "Why did Anežka and Fibich live together like two dry leaves? Impossible! Why did he not sing her praises as a woman? Why, he missed the woman's holiness and played only with a little toe. He could have proclaimed that a sun had been born but instead sat down on little ashes!"10 The lack of emotions is shown on 20 May 1928: "Fibich died at the right time; he grew tired of the lady-hunchback and the relationship was to finish anyway. As you know, after a rehearsal he walked sweating to an island, caught cold and passed away in three days. Grew tired of! What is that? I do not understand it at all. For sure he could not have loved her enough; it could not have been a huge lifelong love. I prophesied it. The Sulc family was respected in Prague. No, the very idea of getting tired of you, I cannot imagine it!"11 Janáček's last note comes from one of his very last letters (19 July 1928): "We talked about Fibich-Anežka. She was said to be as ugly as night and clawed him. And I know my Kamilka, black and beautiful as a dark night with shining stars. No claws but little swift and soft fingers."12

⁸ L. Janáček to Kamila Stösslová, BmJA, E 525; Svatava Přibáňová (ed.), Hádanka života [Life's Riddle] (Brno, 1990), p. 264; John Tyrrell (ed.), Intimate Letters. Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová (London, 2005), p. 161-162.

⁹ L. Janáček to K. Stösslová, BmJA, E 528; Svatava Přibáňová (ed.), Hádanka života (Brno, 1990), p. 269-270; John Tyrrell (ed.), Intimate Letters. Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová (London, 2005), p. 169-170.

L. Janáček to K. Stösslová, BmJA, E 529; Svatava Přibáňová (ed.), Hádanka života (Brno, 1990), p. 270-271.

L. Janáček to K. Stösslová, BmJA, E 633; *Ibid.*, p. 374–376; John Tyrrell (ed.), *Intimate Letters. Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová* (London, 2005), p. 284–285.

L. Janáček to K. Stösslová, BmJA, E 685; Svatava Přibáňová (ed.), Hádanka života (Brno, 1990), p. 413-414; John Tyrrell (ed.), Intimate Letters. Leoš Janáček to Kamila Stösslová (London, 2005), p. 332.

2. Music, librettos and books by Z. Fibich in Janáček's estate

Janáček's estate contains two librettos of the opera *The Bride of Messina* published by F. A. Urbánek's publishing house in 1884.¹³ Both lack Janáček's famous notes; however, one of them has a wellworn appearance. Janáček's bookcase also includes Fibich's music, i.e. a score of *The Bride of Messina* (signed by Janáček on the front page),¹⁴ a short score of *Hedy* with Janáček's pencil notes¹⁵ and finally the orchestral parts of *Othello*, provided by F. A. Urbánek's publishing house in Prague and inscribed by Janáček.¹⁶

Janáček probably used the short score of *Hedy* for an analysis of the opera published in the magazine *Hlídka* [Sentinel].¹⁷ His notes in the score are sometimes critical, sometimes complimentary (mainly concerning the opera's dramaturgy). For instance in the 1st act when Hedy meats Juan for the first time: suddenly Hedy shivers under the stranger's look as if she anticipates an approaching disaster: "The looks surely show no astonishment". Some time later when Juan speaks: "Spain, my homeland, good nobleman I am, Don Juan Tenorio", Janáček notes down "no Spaniard until now?" Then Janáček corrects Hedy's words for himself: a cavernous, rocky sea in which he brought everything—"where he brought it all". In the 2nd act Janáček asks when Hedy speaks: oars' strokes reached the ear at the bank's path: "are these oars"? He probably commented on the melody in b1 triplet figures which clearly imitate the rowing rhythm. Finally in the 3rd act Janáček showed his appreciation with the word "brilliant" in Konstantin's aria: "Hark his voice, mind the warning."

Janáček possessed the orchestral parts of the symphonic poem *Othello* which were supplied at the beginning of 1898 by F. A. Urbánek, who informed him on 11 January as follows: "I provide the stage-rights of Fibich's *Othello* for 16 gold coins only if you buy the printed score and copied parts. It is always necessary to wait for the copy for about 8–10 days. You are always required to contact me in the matter of Fibich's compositions." Unfortunately it is impossible to state where, when or whether it was performed at all. In the library of the organ school, which was founded by Janáček, there is, apart from the music and librettos, also a book by Zdeněk Nejedlý: *Zdenko Fibich, Founder of the Scenic Drama* (Prague, 1901); the book is signed "Kallal" on the cover and lacks Janáček's annotations.¹⁹

¹³ BmJA, JK 518, JK 520.

¹⁴ BmJA, A 50.404.

¹⁵ BmJA, A 50.402.

¹⁶ BmJA, A 50.403.

Hlídka, 14 (1897), p. 594-604; Eva Drlíková, Theodora Straková (eds.), Leoš Janáček. Literární dílo [Leoš Janáček: Literary Work] I/1-1 (Brno, 2003), p. 255-258.

¹⁸ F. A. Urbánek to L. Janáček, BmJA, A 132.

¹⁹ BmJA, KV 42.

3. Janáček's programs with Z. Fibich's work

Apart from the correspondence, music and librettos, Janáček's estate contains 28 programs with Z. Fibich's work. Janáček had not started systematically acquainting himself with Fibich's work until approximately 1916. He might also have collected and archived concert and opera programs from the beginning of the 20th century. Janáček is certain to have attended the performance of *Hedy* on 5 May 1916 in a Prague theatre. He noted down his impressions from the concert in the program as follows: "In a cloakroom. Brzobohatý, Zamrzla, Polák, Horvátová (Hedy), Rejhola, Kovařovic, Maixner. What a show! Unforgettable!" Janáček attended the opera for the second time in 1919 in a theatre in Brno²¹ as well as another opera—*Šárka*—in 1921.²² This opera was conducted by F. Neumann. Although T. Straková maintains that Janáček attended *Šárka* in a Brno theatre as early as 1898, his program for this performance is not preserved.

Considering symphonic works, Janáček attended the prelude *Komenský* at a concert of the Czech Philharmonic in 1917 in Prague; he also knew the symphonic poem *Toman and the Forest Virgin* (Václav Talich conducted the Czech Philharmonic in a performance of the work in Brno in May 1921)²³ and also other symphonic poems performed at concerts for subscribers to the Czech Philharmonic in 1922 and 1924 in Prague–*Záboj, Slavoj and Luděk* and *The Tempest*.²⁴ A year before his death he heard Fibich's *Symphony No. I* in 1927, when the Czech Philharmonic was conducted by O. Ostrčil.²⁵

As to Fibich's concert melodramas he knew *The Water Goblin* and *Hakon* (he attended both in 1919 and 1926 in Brno). ²⁶ Besides these, programs incorporate Fibich's choruses, piano and chamber works.

4. Janáček about Fibich in his literary and music-critical work

Literary work

Janáček focuses on three of Fibich's works—the *Missa brevis* and the operas *Hedy* and *Šárka*. A review of the *Missa brevis* was published in 1886 in *Hudební listy* [Music Gazette]—a magazine edited by Janáček himself.²⁷ He judges the composition differently

²⁰ BmJA, JP 743.

²¹ BmJA, JP 643.

²² BmJA, JP 676.

²³ BmJA, JP 456.

²⁴ BmJA, JP 485, 523.

²⁵ BmJA, JP 583.

²⁶ BmJA, JP 131, 267.

²⁷ Hudební listy, 2 (1. 2. 1886), No. 8, p. 69-70; Eva Drlíková, Theodora Straková (eds.), Leoš Janáček. Literární dílo, I/1-1 (Brno, 2003), p. 94-95.

from Fibich's operatic works: "We would not recognize the warm-hearted composer of *The Bride of Messina* here!" On the whole he speaks positively but criticizes the style of sacred compositions in general: "However, when comparing this composition with similar ones, which are imported from Germany, Fibich's *Missa* shines pretty much and therefore I recommend it to all choirmasters."

Janáček wholeheartedly praises the opera *Hedy* in his long analysis, which was published together with an analysis of Dvořák's *Šárka* in the magazine *Hlídka* in 1897: "Totally up-to-date, exemplary plan!" and he summarizes the whole article as follows: "It lacks musical autarchy but there is a truthfulness in the melodic inflection of the fierce speech." ²⁸

Another analysis, published as a collection of essays named *Czech Music Trends*, was an analysis of the opera *Šárka* (*Hlídka*, 1899).²⁹ Janáček praises the motivic work: "Twenty-four music motives roll up in a single figure."; "It is necessary to hear the opera and fall for the effect of a plethora of thoughts. That will explain the general opinion of *Šárka* as being a magnificent work."; "Fibich takes luxurious advantage of keys, wastes them and writes plenty of plans without purpose as if he were inebriated—'wave breaks wave, ending in its lap'—at the expense of the overall effect." He finishes with the following: "Fibich is thoughtful, but lacks rhythmical wit." Janáček's last literary note about Fibich comes from the feuilleton named "To Our Troops" dated 15 September 1923, where Janáček comments thus on Fibich's music: "the dull subtlety of Fibich's tones."³⁰

Theoretical work, lectures on composition from the years 1919-1921

Janáček mentions Fibich in his notes to lectures on composition from 1921 as follows: "Emotional affinity may be found in complication! Hence music loves imitating 'the gurgling of a stream' (*Hedy*—Fibich)." Janáček refers to the imitation of natural sounds in the writing for orchestra, which attracted him so much. The note dated 13 April 1921 is similar: "Tonal association follows 'the atmosphere, circumstance' [...]. Hard work with variation. Fibich: stream gurgling. J. P. clattering windmill. Not every time do we hear it. We hear the clock stopped! May we be truthful [...]"

The last note on Fibich also comes from the composition lectures, specifically from "Complication Composition". Janáček mentions Fibich in connection with A. Dvořák, V. Blodek and J. Kàan, when he writes about a compositional proportion, originating

²⁸ Hlídka, 14 (1897), p. 594-604; *Ibid.*, p. 255-258.

²⁹ *Hlídka*, 16 (1899), p. 36-41; *Ibid.*, p. 271-275.

³⁰ Československé armádě pozdravy a vzkazy [Greetings and Messages to the Czechoslovak Army], (Prague, 1923), p. 61; *Ibid.*, p. 527.

BmJA, S 86, Eva Drlíková, Leoš Faltus, Svatava Přibáňová (eds.), Leoš Janáček. Teoretické dílo, I/2-2 (Brno, 2007–2008), p. 172.

³² BmJA S 85, *Ibid.*, p. 241.

from silence, which is filled with sound, i.e. instrumentation. The proportion differs with every composer.³³

Translated by Ivana Kočová

Zdeněk Fibich gesehen von Leoš Janáček

Zusammenfassung

Janáček interessierte sich für das Werk von Zdeněk Fibich, der nur 4 Jahre älter als Janáček war. Janáček auch veröffentlichte mehrmals über das Werk Zdeněk Fibichs geteilte Artikel und Kritiken in veschiedene musikalische Zeitschrifte (*Missa Brevis, Die Braut von Messina, Hedy, Šárka*). Im Nachlass Janáčeks befindet sich auch die Partitur von der Oper *Hedy*, Orchesterstimmen für die symphonische Dichtung *Othello* und auch die Partitur von der Oper *Die Braut von Messina* (dazu auch 2 Librettos der Oper). Ausserdem besuchte Janáček die Aufführung diesed Oper oder studierte die Partitur wahrscheinlich zwischen 1884 and 1886. Beziehung Janáčeks mit dem Werk von Fibich war positiv aber wechselvoll. Janáček interessierte sich für Werk seines Kolleges aber wir können auch behaupten, dass seines Werk provoziert ihn keineswegs nicht. Einerseits bezeichnete Janáček Fibich als sinnvoll Komponist, andererseits schrieb er über Abstinenz von der rythmischen Invention. Janáček wertete Instrumentation Fibichs (besonders in der Oper *Hedy*). Er wird überzeugt, dass Fibich bemühte sich den realen Klang im Orchestr imitieren.

Zdeněk Fibich pohledem Leoše Janáčka

Shrnutí

Prozkoumáním fibichovských pramenů z Janáčkovy pozůstalosti vyšlo najevo, že Janáček se o dílo svého současníka (který byl pouze o 4 roky starší) živě zajímal. Janáček o Fibichových skladbách publikoval články a kritiky v různých hudebních časopisech (referáty o skladbách *Missa Brevis, Nevěsta messinská*, *Hedy*, *Šárka*). V Janáčkově pozůstalosti se také nachází partitura opery *Hedy*, orchestrální hlasy symfonické básně *Othello* a také partitura opery *Něvesta messinská* (vedle této také 2 vydání libreta opery). Kromě toho také Janáček pravděpodobně navštívil představení této opery nebo studoval partituru asi někdy mezi léty 1884–1886. Celkový vztah Janáčka k Fibichovu dílu byl vesměs pozitiv-

³³ BmJA, S 90; *Ibid.*, p. 316.

ní, ale nijak zvlášť vyhraněný. Fibichovo dílo ho sice zajímalo, ale nijak neprovokovalo. Ve svých článcích se Janáček o Fibichovi na jedné straně vyjadřuje jako o duchaplném skladateli, chválí jeho bohatou tématickou práci a práci s tóninami, na druhé straně však o něm později píše jako o skladateli mdlých tónů a konstatuje absenci jeho rytmického vtipu. Z hlediska instrumentace si všímá dvou momentů v jeho díle – zurčení potůčků a veslování v *Hedy*, které hodnotí jako snahu napodobit skutečný zvuk obou dějů ve zvuku orchestru.

Keywords

Zdeněk Fibich; Leoš Janáček's letters, critics.