



Escape from the Cell: Smetana's Opera *Dalibor*

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Abstract

When he was asked to write the inaugural opera for the 1868 opening of the Czech National Theater, Smetana was an established leader in the Czech community of Prague. His opera *Bartered Bride* had achieved remarkable success. As opera conductor of the Provisional Theater, he produced contemporary operas, including French grand opera in a theater so small that it once fit within the architectural space now occupied by the stage of the National Theater. For his opera *Dalibor*, he drew on his intensive experience as a composer, conductor, and performer of a wide repertory of the music of his time. Through his friendship with Liszt, he was able to study that composer's *Faust* and *Tasso*, as well Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. His excellent compositional technique enabled him to create theatrically remarkable music that is also analytically significant. For example, the rigorous prison music, based on principles of Baroque polyphony, literally demonstrates the restrictions of imprisonment; its musical material is transformed in lyrical passages of emotion and transcendent love. Smetana's remarkable ingenuity seamlessly binds these diverse elements, by continually adapting his own version of the characteristic motive to the given dramatic context. This hybrid form also enables us to trace the impact of Antonín Reicha's expansion of Baroque polyphonic techniques on the music of Smetana's predecessors, as well as on twentieth century modernism.

Keywords

Romantic opera; Czech national movement; Franz Liszt; Antonin Reicha; Baroque polyphonic techniques; Characteristic motives

Smetana's second historical opera, *Dalibor*, was composed to celebrate a significant milestone in the history of the Czech national movement: the founding of

Národní divadlo (the Czech National Theater) in 1868, a venue in which the cultural achievements of that movement could at last be properly produced. Smetana rose to the occasion by writing his most ambitious work up to that time. Thus, it is not surprising that *Dalibor* also marks a significant milestone in the evolution of Smetana's mature style, and even more importantly, in the development of Czech music. His musical background and experiences are reflected in a daring mixture of compositional styles, skillfully and meticulously used to portray intense dramatic effects. The operatic genre enables substantial, lasting changes to the underlying basis of music itself. Architectural form becomes continuity; non-musical references take on structural significance; free transformation of style responds to the dramatic situation, as well as the composer's broader intentions.

A particularly notable achievement is Smetana's application of Baroque compositional principles to the genre of opera. Similar techniques have also been found useful for twentieth-century music composition and analysis. Passages portraying the imprisonment of the hero are based on ingenious use of melodic fragments such as motives and cells. The term "cell" has consistently been used in music analysis to indicate a group, usually of three to four pitches, that preserve their interrelationship under the traditional operations of Baroque fugal practice. *Dalibor* also contains large groups that (including repetitions) span the entire chromatic scale. Cells are juxtaposed with their transpositions to create other elements used in Baroque polyphony, such as the chromatic sequence. Such early steps toward atonality generally arise through dramatic necessity, as they often did in mid-Romantic historical opera. This path enabled Smetana to escape from strict concepts such as the cell to the freedom of his mature style.

The Historical Context

When Smetana began writing operas, a robust Czech tradition for historical drama had already been established by Václav Klicpera. Czech theaters in Prague were presenting French historical grand operas, which were, in part, fashionable because of political ties between Paris and the Czech national movement.¹ They were also performing historical operas by Czech composers. As a result, Smetana was able to depend on an established theatrical style for his historical operas, in which the continuity of their music was assured by dramatic flow rather than by the aesthetics of formal design.²

Dalibor particularly reflects the influence of operas that Smetana conducted at the Provisional Theater (Prozatímní divadlo), particularly French grand operas

¹ Pavla Horská, *Prague–Paris* (Prague: Orbis, 1990).

² See Marta Ottlová and Milan Pospíšil, *Bedřich Smetana a jeho doba* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1997), for a comprehensive discussion of this topic.

portraying historical conflicts. His contemporaries recognized that his activity as an opera conductor was also research for his activity as a composer.³ Smetana also reviewed a wide variety of Czech performances of international and Czech operas during 1864 and 1865 for *Národní listy*.⁴ These reviews reveal Smetana's opinions, as well as the realities that he would face when conducting at the Provisional Theater.

Since Smetana had participated in the 1848 uprising in Prague, he would have had a personal understanding of these operas.⁵ These themes had evolved in the creative arts, generation by generation, from the time of the French revolution. The opposing forces in their plots were portrayed in a new, extremely dramatic musical language that challenged the very meaning of art. For example, the plot of Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* is based on the St. Bartholomew's Massacre and the tragic expulsion of the Huguenots from France. Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* has a plot much like that of *Tannhäuser* or Gounod's *Faust*: in the end, the son of the Devil is saved by love.

These operas, like *Dalibor*, consistently portray the psychological state of the characters. Heroes and their friends are usually accompanied by the brilliance of major keys. Villains and their evil deeds are represented by music that stretches the limits of tonality. Devils are often associated with constructions based on the "devil's interval," the diminished fifth (C-Gb), as well as the doubly diminished seventh (C-Eb-Gb- A), which consists of two diminished fifths; since these forms are tonally ambiguous, they, can challenge the very meaning of key – as the devil can challenge propriety. These constructions are used in *Robert le Diable* to heighten dramatic effects. Wagner's *Tannhäuser* goes further on this path with the atonality of the Venusberg music – a realm clearly separated from the more conventional music of the real world.

In a review of Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, the grandest of the French grand operas, Smetana observed that such an opera could only be performed in small theaters as a miniature resemblance with severe cuts. Nevertheless, he thought it was the finest of Meyerbeer's operas.⁶ Perhaps that is why he ensured that *Dalibor* could be successfully performed in small theaters without such restrictions.

³ Josef Bartoš, *Prozatímní divadlo a jeho opera* (Praha: Sbor pro zřízení druhého Národního Divadla v Praze, 1938), 231. See the chapter "Smetana jako dirigent," on pages 122–264.

⁴ Václav Hanno Jarka, *Kritické dílo Bedřicha Smetany, 1858–1865* (Praha: Nakladatelství Pražské akciové tiskárny, [1948]).

⁵ The impact of this uprising on Smetana's life and work is discussed in Vladimír Helfert, *Tvůrčí rozvoj Bedřicha Smetany: Preludium k životnímu dílu* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, 1924), 80–95, chapter entitled "Rok 1848." See also Václav Holzknecht, *Bedřich Smetana: Život a dílo*, 2nd ed. (Praha: Panton, 1984).

⁶ Jarka, *Kritické dílo Bedřicha Smetany*, 122–123, 126–127.

Smetana conducted Gounod's *Faust* on January 4th, 1868; Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* on March 20th, 1868; and *Les Huguenots* on June 25th, 1868. The premiere of *Dalibor* took place on May 16th, 1868.⁷ Smetana conducted and performed other works in Prague, for example, on his 1865 orchestral concerts at Žofín.⁸

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This paper is based on the first edition of *Dalibor* (1884), a vocal-piano score published by Smetana's friends in the year of his death.⁹ It seems to reflect revisions that Smetana made with Ervín Špindler before the 1870 performance.¹⁰ Since that time, efforts have been made to make the libretto more singable, to alter its content, and even to change the plot. Between 1927 and 1932, performances of *Dalibor* at the National Theater (Národní divadlo) were based on versions that had official approval.¹¹

The critical edition of *Dalibor* was published in 1950, also as a vocal-piano score.¹² For the examples from *Dalibor* in this study, locations are given for both the relatively rare 1884 vocal-piano score and the 1950 vocal-piano critical edition. Although the 1884 version is our earliest and best printed source for revealing Smetana's compositional intentions, the 1950 source is much more readily available. Its text has been altered for contemporary Czech singers and listeners. Texts from the libretto quoted in this study are from the 1884 edition. Jaroslav Jiránek provides additional useful information, as well as additional examples of motives and their variants.¹³

The translations of libretto texts from the 1884 edition are merely intended to provide information. They are not intended to be sung.

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⁷ Bartoš, *Prozatímní divadlo a jeho opera*, 231.

⁸ Holzknecht, *Bedřich Smetana*, 168–169.

⁹ Bedřich Smetana, *Dalibor: Zpěvohra o třech jednáních*, libretto by Josef Wenzig, music by Bedřich Smetana, piano arrangement by the composer (Praha: Nákladem Družstva ctitelů Bedřicha Smetany, 1884), 134.

¹⁰ Jaroslav Jiránek, *Dílo a život Bedřicha Smetany. Smetanova operní tvorba, I: Od Braniboři v Čechách k Libuši* (Praha: Editio Supraphon, 1984), 243–45.

¹¹ Jitka Ludvová, *Až k horkému konci: Pražské německé divadlo 1845–1945* (Praha: Divadelní ústav / Academia, 2012), 489.

¹² Bedřich Smetana, *Dalibor: Zpěvohra o třech jednáních*, libretto by Josef Wenzig, Czech translation by Ervín Špindler, piano arrangement by the composer, rev. František Bartoš, 9th ed. (Praha: Hudební matice, 1950).

¹³ Jiránek, *Dílo a život Bedřicha Smetany*, 229–315.

The Influence of Strict Baroque Polyphony

Antonín Reicha taught the techniques of the chromatic fugues by J. S. Bach and other Baroque composers to his students at the Paris conservatory. It is unlikely that Smetana was directly influenced by Reicha's music. However, Dr. Jiří Kopecný recalls from Dr. Jiří Vysloužil's commentaries that Smetana's teacher, Josef Proksch, owned Reicha's books in German translation.¹⁴ We know that Smetana respected the music of Reicha's students Liszt and Gounod. According to the Czech poet Jan Neruda, Smetana said, "Liszt led me into the world of art."¹⁵ After hearing a performance of Gounod's *Faust*, Smetana remarked, "[This opera] is excellent. I have only one wish: that someday I may write something similar."¹⁶

The Baroque fugal repertory for minor keys contains many passages that approach atonality. One of the minor scales that was used has mutable 6th and 7th degrees. The Neapolitan cadence was achieved with the flatted second scale degree as the root of the Neapolitan chord; the sharped third, as the third of the chord based on the major key of the scale; the sharped fourth, as the third of the major seventh chord on the natural second scale degree. Thus, it was not difficult to present all twelve notes of the chromatic scale within a few measures.

Antonín Reicha was able to adapt Baroque polyphonic techniques for use in the early Romantic era. His contributions to the fugue are discussed in depth by Jaroslav Smolka.¹⁷ A collection of Reicha's fugues has been recently published.¹⁸ Among the fugues in that collection that are particularly relevant to this study are:

17: Chromatic subject used in combination, all twelve notes of the chromatic scale in the stretto (measure 54 ff.)

19: Subject is a chromatic scale, used in combination

¹⁴ "Reicha's contribution to the development of the fugue in our region must be sought in indirect influences; it may be revealed through distant reflections in Smetana's music of the work of Beethoven and of Reicha's most important students." ("Tak musel Rejchův odkaz fugového vývoji hledat cestu domů poměrně dlouho jen nepřímou a mohl se projevit některými vzdálenými reflexy, prostředkovanými tvorbou Beethovenovou z nejvýznamnějších Rejchových žáků, až v díle Bedřicha Smetany." Jaroslav Smolka, *Fuga v české hudbě* (Praha: Panton, 1987), 304.

¹⁵ Josef Bartoš, *Smetana ve vzpomínkách a dopisech*, 8th ed. (Praha: Topičova edice, 1948), entry 97 ("Jan Neruda"), 102.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, entry 54, ("Aleš Heller"), 69. On p. 236, Bartoš notes that Aleš was the son of Ferdinand Heller, who was the co-founder of Smetana's music school in Prague and the author of *Vzpomínky na Bedřicha Smetanu* (Praha: Klub pens. Sóloistů Národní Divadla, 1917).

¹⁷ Smolka, *Fuga v české hudbě*, 278–305. See also Olga Sotolová, *Antonín Rejcha* (Editio Supraphon, 1977), for a thematic catalog which includes the subjects of Reicha's fugues.

¹⁸ Anton Reicha, *36 Fugues pour le Piano-Forté*, ed. Václav Jan Sýkora (Prague: Bärenreiter, 2012).

21: chromatic scales, doubly diminished seventh chords, inversions

26: Exact transpositions with exact inversions; extensive use of combinations of figures that produce all twelve notes of the chromatic scale

In Smetana's opera *Braniboři v Čechách*,¹⁹ the use of chromaticism in the transition to Act III, scene iii "Díky Bohu, svoboda kyne!" ("Thanks to God, freedom beckons!") resembles a similar technique in a passage from one of Reicha's fugues,²⁰ see Example 1a, 2a.

Example 1a Reicha, *Fugue no. 30*, p. 135.



Example 1b Smetana, *Braniboři v Čechách*, p. 189.

L'istesso tempo.
(Stmívá se valně)



¹⁹N: Eojdiž

H. M. 37.

¹⁹ Bedřich Smetana, *Braniboři v Čechách: Zpěvohra v třech dějstvích*, libretto by K. Sabina, music composed by Bedřich Smetana (Praha: Fr. A. Urbánek a Synové, 1928), 189.

²⁰ Reicha, *Fugue No. 30*, 135.

Jaroslav Smolka demonstrates that Smetana had a background in Baroque polyphony through the Czech tradition and was skilled in fugal composition.²¹ His examples display chromatic scale segments; cells containing chromatic pitch spans; modulating sequences; and ingenious use of cells. Smolka analyzes measures 8–464 of *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) as a fugue.²²

Baroque polyphonic techniques were carried forward well into the nineteenth century, especially by the piano sonatas by Reicha's friend Beethoven. There also is a notable example in Beethoven's *Symphony no. 9*, last movement. The words "Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen [...]" ("Do you fall prostrate, millions?") are set to an exposed line of eleven unique chromatic notes. The twelfth note, B natural, is the third of the G major chord which follows, and the first note of the next section. Karel Benda's opera *Lejla* begins with a 7-measure passage in which eleven of the chromatic notes appear. It is followed by the dramatic entrance of the twelfth note, B flat, as the first note of a theme (see Example 2, measure 8).²³

Example 2 Benda, *Lejla*: Vorspiel, p. 1, measures 1–8.

The image shows a musical score for measures 1-8 of the Vorspiel from Karel Benda's opera *Lejla*. The score is written for Piano and Violin. The Piano part starts with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'c. b.' (crescendo) marking. The Violin part enters with a piano (p) dynamic and a 'poco a poco più mosso' marking. The score includes various dynamics like 'f', 'p', and 'scendo', and performance instructions like 'più acceler.'

The Dalibor Motive

Nejedlý identifies the Dalibor motive as the rhythmic shape and the falling interval of the last three notes of the canon that opens the opera (see Example 3a, last two beats of measure 7, first beat of measure 8).²⁴ Its rhythm and contour

²¹ Smolka, *Fuga v české hudbě*, 321–342.

²² *Ibid.*, 334–336.

²³ Karel Benda, *Lejla: Veliká opera v pěti jednáních*, based on the novel by Bulwer, libretto by Eliška Krásnohorská, music by Karel Benda (Praha: Ed. Grégra a F. Dattla, n. d.), vocal-piano score, first two acts only, 3.

²⁴ Otakar Nejedlý, *Zpěvohry Smetanovy* (Praha: Státní politické literatury, 1954), 98.

resemble the opening motif of the *Fidelio* overture (see Example 3b).²⁵ Nejedlý's assertion appears to be based on the fact that the name Dalibor is usually set to that rhythm, and the frequency of falling fourths in the allegro section of Jitka's aria in the same scene (page 9, first system): "Do žaláře mu svitne záře!" ("Radiance surrounds him as he goes to prison!") The cry "Dalibor" is followed by its expansion in the accompaniment, and its evolution into a recognizable form of what seems to be the strongest generating motive of the opera (see Example 3a, measures 1–8).

Example 3a Smetana, *Dalibor*, 1884 edition.

1884: Act 1, p. 3, measures 16–23.

1950: Act 1, p. 13, measures 16–23.

Example 3b Beethoven, *Fidelio*, overture, beginning first measure.

²⁵ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Fidelio: Oper in zwei Akten*, partitura (J. Simrock, 1847; reprinted Budapest: Music Budapest Kft, [1993]), 1. When Smetana was asked how his name was pronounced, he replied by singing the music of the opening phrase of the *Fidelio* overture, "Smetana, Smetana, Smetana sprich aus!" Bartoš, *Smetana ve vzpomínkách a dopisech*, entry 19 ("Wendelin Weisheimer"), 34. The structure of this phrase is similar to that of the Dalibor motive: its rising line consists of three iterations of a pattern, and is also followed by a falling interval (see Examples 3a, 3b).

The first 21 notes of the Dalibor motive are often used independently; they seem to be the first part of the motive. They are built from transpositions of a simple cell: G-A-Bb. It can be combined with its own transpositions, inversions, retrogrades, retrograde inversions, and permutations.

The first seven notes consist of G-A-Bb / C-D Eb plus the beginning note of another transposition, F.

All seven notes are transposed up a minor sixth: Eb-F-Gb / Ab-Bb-Cb / Db.

And they are transposed again: B-C#-D / E-F#-G / A.

At this point, the first 21 notes contain all the notes of the chromatic scale. Using a term created for of twentieth-century musical analysis, this situation can be described by saying that the first 21 notes are dodecaphonic. Using another term from twentieth-century musicology, we can also say that the group of these first 21 notes are built from simple objects whose pitches combine well: it is combinatorial. It is rare, but not impossible, to find passages from Smetana's era that are both dodecaphonic and combinatorial. It is much rarer to find one that can also be heard as tonal! The last 5 notes of the motive are also used independently; they seem to be the second part of the motive.

In this study, all 26 notes are identified as the Dalibor motive, while observing that the two parts are often used independently.

A battle motive cited by Vladimír Zvara is derived from the cell of the Dalibor motive.²⁶ In the example below, it is used in combination with itself. Its intervals change, but its rhythm, contour, and articulation remain the same.

²⁶ Vladimír Zvara, "Príznačné motívy v Smetanovo *Daliborovi*," *Hudební věda* 4 (1992): 316–27; here 323–24. This study was the result of the Smetana seminars led by Dr. Marta Ottlová, held in the institute of Hudební věda FF UK 1990–91. It contains several examples of motives that were identified there. The battle motive accompanies the testimonies of Milada and Dalibor during Dalibor's Act I trial. Zvara is a dramaturg as well as a musicologist. He has written extensively on Jan Cikker's twentieth-century opera *Janošík*, about a Slovak folk resistance hero who somewhat resembles Dalibor. Its score is well worth an extensive study.

Example 4 Smetana, *Dalibor*.

1884: Act I, scene ii, p. 13, system 3, beginning measure 4.

1950: Act I, scene ii, p. 26, system 3, beginning measure 1.

The image displays a musical score for Example 4 from Smetana's opera *Dalibor*. It is presented in two systems. The first system shows a piano accompaniment with a 'cresc.' marking. The second system features a vocal line with the lyrics 'Hrad Plos-ko-vi-ce pře-pad s vojsky svý-mi' and a 'Recit. f' marking. The piano accompaniment in the second system includes dynamic markings of 'ff', 'p', and 'p'.

The *Dalibor* motive is the first melodic statement in the opera (see Example 3a). *Dalibor* is imprisoned because he avenged the death and dishonor of Zdeněk, his comrade in arms, by killing the man who was responsible – a burgrave, a member of the ruling class. His motive evokes the somber thoughts of a knight who has acted according to his convictions, but must now be judged by the king doing so. As the opera continues, the *Dalibor* motive changes empathetically with *Dalibor*'s fortunes and moods, as well as the perceptions of those around him.

The motives in *Dalibor* are strongly interrelated. At times they are combined, fragmented, or expanded. Classifying their modifications is often a subjective task. For example, the *Dalibor* motive is a minor-mode version of the Zdeněk melody, which in turn is reflected in the Act II love duet of *Milada* and *Dalibor*.

Almost all of the motives in this opera are generally customized for specific dramatic contexts. They form a web of referential material which serves to support the plot. At times they are obvious; at other times they may be only perceived subconsciously. *Dalibor* also contains motives that behave like Wagnerian leitmotives. Their referentiality is symbolic; their form is relatively constant. An example is the fanfare that opens the opera, which seems to symbolize power.

Baroque Techniques in Dalibor: Useful Terminology

Combinatoriality is a term that was developed for twentieth-century European music theory. It describes the ability of a pattern or motive to combine with its variants and other compositional entities.

The major scale was historically described as the combination of two tetrachords that are related by transposition: C D E F and G A B C. The harmonic minor scale is the combination of two unlike tetrachords: C D E \flat F and G A \flat B C; then rearranging the notes to obtain patterns such as C E \flat D F and A \flat B G C will not affect the combinatoriality of these tetrachords. This concept was found useful in Baroque polyphony. It was expanded in the twentieth century to describe combinations of groups that included all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, like the Dalibor motive. This property is also called *dodecaphonic concentration*.

Dodecaphonic concentration can arise naturally in the Baroque polyphonic style: in canons and inventions; in a fugue subject with its transpositions, inversions, and retrogrades, and countersubjects; in strettos and passages leading to cadences. Transferring these techniques convincingly to other styles requires compositional skill as well as the ability to communicate successfully with the audience.

Liszt's music, especially his symphonic poems, influenced Smetana.²⁷ In his October 28th, 1858 letter to Liszt, Smetana inquired when the *Faust Symphony* would be published.²⁸ The first theme of Liszt's *Faust Symphony* is a *dodecaphonic sequence with four occurrences* (see Example 5).²⁹ Like the Dalibor motive, its transpositions are at the interval of a sixth.³⁰

Example 5 Franz Liszt, *Faust Symphony*, first theme.



²⁷ Helfert, *Tvořící rozvoj Bedřicha Smetany*, 121–131.

²⁸ Karel Teige, ed., *Dopisy Smetanovy: Kommentovaný výběr* (Praha: Fr. A. Urbánek, 1896), 20.

²⁹ László Somfai, “Die musikalischen Gestaltwandlungen der *Faust-Symphonie* von Liszt,” *Studia Musicologica* [Budapest], Akadémiai Kiadó, T. 2, Fasc. 1/4 (1962): 87–137 see especially footnotes on page 98. This article available through *jstor*, but it is more reliably accessed by searching the internet by its title.

³⁰ Franz Liszt, *Faust Symphony* (New York: Kalmus, no. 376, [n.d.]), 1. Beginning of first movement (*Faust*). This example is taken from Somfai, “Die musikalischen Gestaltwandlungen der *Faust-Symphonie* von Liszt,” 98.

Smetana may also have noticed the evolution of compositional techniques in Beethoven's piano sonatas. There are examples of chromatic sequences evolving into powerful first movements in the introductions of Beethoven's *Pathétique* and *Appassionata* piano sonatas. In the introduction to the *Pathétique*, the strict repetition of the sequences is altered; when Beethoven senses that a pitch in a sequence can be replaced with a better pitch, he does not hesitate to make the change. In his final piano sonata, op. 111, the first movement reveals Beethoven's personal synthesis of Baroque techniques and compositional rigor within the genre of the piano sonata. The first movement is in contrast with the second movement, the *Arietta*, which represents his personal synthesis of lyricism and transparency. Among Beethoven's string quartets, similar observations can be made about contrasts between the rigor of his string quartet in Bb, opus 133, *Die grosse Fuge* and the transparent spirituality of the third movement of his string quartet no. 15 in A major, opus 132, *Heilige Dankgesang*. For Mozart, a single work is enough: the rigor of the arias of the Queen of the Night, the realism that Tamino and Papageno must face, and the idealism of Sarastro are combined in a single masterwork. Since a composer's use of such traits is a highly personal, attempts to generalize them will necessarily be subjective.

In *Dalibor*, Smetana transfers similar techniques to the context of Romantic opera. The purpose of his music is to communicate mood, drama, expressivity rather than to comment "artistically." As dramatic action intensifies, it begins to take over the traditional role of large form. Then tonality tends to refer to continuous action rather than to hierarchical form. This situation is typical of the genre of "rescue" operas composed shortly after the French Revolution. *Fidelio* and *Dalibor* are related to that genre.

The three realms of the opera are represented by strictly different music styles. Music influenced by Baroque polyphonic techniques generally represent Dalibor's imprisonment. King Vladislav's music generally depends of tightly organized, conventional patterns in static, traditional harmony; when his authority is challenged in the third act, that organization begins to lose its peaceful coherence. The Zdeněk/Milada music is freely written, lyrical, securely unfolding in love to expanded tonality.

Keys

Smetana's association of specific keys with dramatic situations may have been influenced by Mozart's late operas, particularly *Figaro* and *Zauberflöte*.

- G minor, D minor – Dalibor imprisoned, sentenced
- Db – Vladislav's established law
- G major, E major – hope for Dalibor's rescue³¹
- F# major – Dalibor's impressive appearance; his strength; his fate
- C major – Milada's harp arpeggio as she enters the courtroom; the optimism of Dalibor's supporters at the end of the first act
- B major – transcendence; Dalibor's exit to prison; Milada's death
- Ab major – affection, love
- F major, A major; the spirit of rebellion
- D major – hope, victory; final chord

The tonic chords of these keys – or even just their tonic notes – can be inserted in any music context for quick references. Smetana avoids the devil's interval (the open diminished fifth); he does not consider Dalibor to be a devil. But Smetana does use the doubly diminished chord to indicate disaster.

Form

The scenes in Act I generally conform to the “numbers” opera pattern. Even so, the throne room scenes (ii–v) form a dramatic entity.

In the 1884 edition, Act II consists of three groups of scenes (“proměny”), each with its own sets: Dalibor's supporters in front of a pub, the jailor's lodgings, and Dalibor's cell. The first group contains a single scene, depicting the world outside of the prison. The second group is also a single scene, ending with an interlude depicting Milada's descent into Dalibor's cell. The third group consists of two scenes which form a dramatic entity. The first scene contains Dalibor's aria “O Zdeňku” (“O Zdeněk”), the second scene is the finale of the act, ending with Milada and Dalibor pledging eternal love.

In the 1884 edition, scenes i–v of Act III follow the “numbers” opera pattern. Scene v is the finale, ending with the death of Milada; it includes material for scenes vi–vii. It is followed by scene iii, the epilogue. The identification of scenes

³¹ Jiránek, *Dílo a život Bedřicha Smetany*, 269, identifies G major.

in Act III varies in later editions; the 1944 edition and the 1950 critical edition follow the pattern of Act II of the 1884 edition, each in its own way.³²

The discrepancy among editions with respect to the identification of scenes, especially the irregular numbering of scenes in Act II and III, may document efforts to edit the opera for specific performances. For example, when Otakar Ostrčil conducted it in 1924, he returned, as far as possible, to the original version. A critic wrote that the dramatic tension of the performance rose as far as the Act II scenes with the jailers, but then it fell into a series of static, lyric-epic tableaux that merely presented aesthetically beautiful music.³³ The current practice of performing entire acts – as far as possible – without a break preserves dramatic continuity, and seems to eliminate this problem.

Referentiality

Characteristic (“příznačný”) motives, as used in *Dalibor*, arise in response to the dramatic context. As a result, they are more adaptable, more subtle, and more eloquent than motives that are restricted to a single symbolic meaning.

The introduction to Act I, scene ii, p. 11 (the beginning of *Dalibor*'s trial in the throne room) consists of a reference which is much more than a motive. It is a layered heterophony of repeated patterns, an expansion of the principle of the Baroque passacaglia.³⁴ It is conventionally tonal, reflecting the calm that King Vladislav strives to maintain (see Example 6).

³² Bedřich Smetana, *Dalibor: Opera v třech jednáních*, libretto by Josef Wenzig, vocal-piano score arranged by the composer (Praha: Hudební Matice Umělecké Besedy, 1944), 13th ed.; vocal-piano score, *Dalibor* (1884); *Dalibor* (1950).

³³ Ludvová, *Až k hořkému konci*, 489.

³⁴ Jiří Bořkovec, “Yesterday the Opera *Dalibor* Was a Failure at the Czech Theater – and Yet Every Note Was a Gem. – August Wilhelm Ambros,” booklet accompanying the LP recording *Bedřich Smetana: Opera in 2 Acts*, libretto by Josef Wenzig and Ervín Špindler, conducted by Václav Smetáček (Praha: Supraphon, 1980), Supraphon 1416 2921–1416 2923, 2. Bořkovec does not provide the source of the quotation in the title.

Example 6³⁵

1884: Act I, scene ii, p. 11, beginning measure 1.

1950: Act I, scene ii, p. 23, beginning measure 1.

Più Audante. ♩ = 60.

The musical score consists of five systems of staves. The first system shows the piano introduction with dynamics *pp* and *sempre pp*. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system introduces the Clarinet part (*Clar.*) with dynamics *pp* and *dol.*. The fourth system features the Trombones (*Trombe na jevišti.*) and Flute (*Fl.*) parts, with dynamics *sf* and *sempre cresc.*. The fifth system continues the orchestral and piano parts.

³⁵ Note: the remainder of the examples are taken from the 1884 edition of *Dalibor*.

The king begins the proceedings by stating that Dalibor has been disturbing the peace of the realm for a long time, and now has committed another offense. He calls Milada, sister of the victim, to testify. In her grief and anger, she cries out for vengeance. She sings a remarkable duet with Jitka, Dalibor's ward, who is in the audience (1884 edition: the duet begins p. 24, system 4, measure 5, Allegro; 1950 edition: the duet begins p. 42, system 4, measure 1). The duet is appropriately based on lines that are inversions of each other; the singers are expressing opposing opinions of Dalibor. The duet begins with the accompaniment of a complete chromatic scale rising to Milada's first note. Her vocal line starts with a palindrome based on the incipit of the Dalibor motive. Milada: "Mám jej snad zřítí? On bratra vrah! Jak bouří krev mi v útrokách!" ("Do I behold him? The murderer of my brother! My blood boils with rage!") The inversion of the Dalibor motive in Jitka's vocal line seems to reveal her courage in the face of disaster and her faith that Dalibor might be found innocent. Jitka: "Stůj bože nyní při mně, vyslyš můj hlas!" ("Stand by me, Lord, hear my voice!")

The isolated pitch Ab acquires its own significance here. It will represent the growth of Milada's love for Dalibor throughout the remainder of the act. Although this duet is chromatically dense, there is no Ab from Milada's entry in the 1884 edition from p. 25, system 5, measure until the first measure of p. 27, where its dissonance expresses her psychological tension: it appears a minor ninth above the G in the bass. In the 1950 edition, the first Ab is on p. 42, system 4, measure 5 (see Example 7).

Example 7

1884: Act I, scene iii, p. 26, systems 3–4.

1950: p. 44, systems 1–3.

cresc.
 Mám jej snad zří - ti? On bratra vrah! Jak bouří
cresc.
 Stůj bo - že ny - ní při - mně, vyslyš můj hlas!
 krev mi, krev mi v ú - tro - bách, jak bouří krev mi v ú - tro - bách!
 Za to jen pro - sím, v bídě jej spas, za to jen pro - sím, v bídě jej spas!

Scene iv, p. 27 begins with a F# major *Maestoso* passage as Dalibor takes the stand. Milada is surprised at his knightly bearing and appearance. She expresses her reaction in the F# major, the key of Dalibor's fate. His testimony comes to a climax over increasingly ominous chords, ending in fortissimo C minor. A dramatic, almost Mahlerian musical gesture accompanies his voice. "Však přísahal pomstu, hroznou pomstu! Že Ploskovice Litoměřicům pomáhaly, nuž lehly popelem / pochodeň na hrob Zdeňkův!" ("I swore revenge, terrible revenge! Since [the castle of] Ploskovice had given aid to the murderer (the lord of Litoměřice), I burned it down, as a torch for the grave of Zdeňek!") The gesture consists of the "battle" variant of the Dalibor cell, its repeat, and a forceful arpeggio ending in an augmented fifth chord. As his anger intensifies, the gesture rises in pitch (see Example 8).

Example 8 (Beginning of gesture on previous page of 1884 edition not shown.).

1884: Act I, scene 4, p. 36.

1950: Act I, begins p. 56, third system, measure 3.

Recit. (*con forza*)

Však pří - sa - hal jsem pomstu, *marcatissimo*

hro - znou pomstu! *sempre marcatissimo*

že Plosko - vi - ce Li - to - mě - ři - cům po - má - ha - ly,

nuž lehly popelem Pochodeň na hrob Zdeňkův!

Vladislav observes that Dalibor has incriminated himself. Dalibor responds that a man cannot give up his rights. He says, “A kdybys ty mi, králi, v čestě stál, na trůně nebezpečně by’s nedlel dál!” (“And, o king, if you stand in my way, you will not be safe on your throne!”) This is, of course, a treasonous statement. The audience gasps; the judges quickly reach a verdict. Now that it is too late, Milada asks the judges to forgive him. Dalibor realizes that he must accept his fate. “Nuž vedte mne v žaláře noc a muky” (“Now lead me into the night and darkness of prison”) in the dark key of Db, is set to long repeated notes. The accompaniment is dodecaphonic, combinatorial; each line of spans a segment of the chromatic scale (see Example 9).

Example 9

1884: Act I, scene iv, p. 44, system 3.

1950: Act I, scene iv, p. 69, last system.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the upper staff, marked 'Dal.' and 'cop. 100.'. The lyrics are 'Nuž ved'te mne v ža - lá - ře noc a muky, nuž ved - te mne v ža.' The piano accompaniment is in the lower staves, featuring a dodecaphonic, combinatorial texture with long repeated notes. The score includes dynamic markings like 'p' and 'dim.'.

The judges pronounce Dalibor’s sentence: he must be executed for the crime of threatening the king (1884 edition: scene 5, page 47, system 3, beginning measure 2; 1950 edition: scene 5, p. 75, system 3, beginning measure 2). Their unyielding, repetitive vocal line indicates the impossibility of an appeal. Their statement ends on a highly dissonant chord: a doubly diminished seventh chord (E-G-Bb-C#) over octave Ds in the bass. Vladislav observes that the law must prevail and dismisses the court.

Milada expresses her emotion in the aria “O jaká to bouře v ňadru mi zuří” (“What a storm rages within me”), (1884 edition: scene v, beginning p. 49, system 5, Presto; 1950 edition, scene vi). Through repetitive patterns, the aria evolves from arpeggiated doubly diminished seventh chords and chromaticism to resolute tonality as she changes her mind.

At this point, the 1884 and 1950 editions show slight discrepancies that could affect the correspondence between text and pitches. Both editions show that the note Ab, again representing the growth of Milada’s love for Dalibor, is significantly delayed. It first appears at “láska má” (“my love”) as a passing tone in the accompaniment, perhaps indicating the beginning of Milada’s recognition

of her love for Dalibor (1884 edition, p. 51, beginning system 5, measure 1). In the 1950 edition, that phrase has the text “zhynouti má” (“he [Dalibor] has to die”), p. 82, system 2, measures 4–5.

Milada's aria then comes to a sforzando fortissimo climax, as she comes to realize the consequences of Dalibor's sentence. (1884 edition: “Zemřít má? Ont' láska má!” [“Must he die? He is my love!”]), (1950 edition: “Jen pro mne zhynouti má!” [“He will die because of me!”]) This text ends on E, as the Ab reappears in Jitka's enthusiastic fortissimo response, “Znáš lásku! A vzuň se k činu již!” (“You understand love! Follow your heart and take action!”) The E-Ab (G#) interval marks a fortissimo modulation to E major for statements of the Dalibor motive and for the arpeggios in Jitka's vocal line (see Example 10).

Example 10

1884: Act I, scene v, beginning p. 51, system 5, beginning measure 1.

1950: Beginning p. 82, system 2, last measure.

The musical score for Example 10 is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal line for Milada (Mil.) and the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "má a jeho smrt já stá - le, já stá - le ne, blahá, jsem". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a crescendo. The second system shows the vocal line for Jitka (Jitka) and the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "chtě - la. Zem - řít má? Ont' lá - ska má! Znáš lá". The piano accompaniment includes markings for *rit. f. trem.* and *ff.*. The third system shows the vocal line for Milada (Mil.) and the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "skul. Láskou rady zvis! a v znuň se, v znuň se k či - nu již! Co dš tu!". The piano accompaniment includes markings for *frisol.* and *Mil.*. The score is in E major and 2/4 time.

The act concludes with another duet – in G major, accompanied by variants of the freedom motive, shown in its proper form in Example 14. Jitka explains to Milada how she can help with Dalibor’s rescue.

The adaptations of characteristic motives to their dramatic contexts are perhaps most obvious in Act II. The act’s prelude begins with a dodecaphonic sequence of dyads that will reappear during Milada’s descent to Dalibor’s cell. It then evolves through rising major scales to A major and the world of reality – the melody of the opening chorus of Dalibor’s supporters, “Ba, nejveselejší je tento svět když se touláme” (“This world is very joyful when we roam”). Its spirit recalls the Act I opening chorus of *Prodaná nevěsta*: “Proč bychom se netešili, když nám Pán Bůh zdraví dá” (“Why shouldn’t we be happy when the Lord God gives us health”).

Like Leonore, the heroine of Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, Milada has disguised herself as a boy so that she can enter the prison casually. She has earned the confidence of the jailor, Beneš, by making herself useful. That is why he does not hesitate to ask her to go to the cell of the prisoner and lend him a violin. He mentions that the prisoner is the Dalibor. Again like Leonore, she rejoices that she has an opportunity to meet the prisoner. Her aria is “Radostí nesmírnou” (“Immense joy”), (1884 edition: Act II, scene-change 2, scene iv, beginning p. 88, first system; 1950 edition: Act II, Proměna 1, scene iv, beginning p. 134, first system). But their arias are quite different psychologically. In *Fidelio*, the prisoner is Leonore’s beloved husband. Milada and Dalibor had only met before at the trial; her love is based on trust. And the plot of *Dalibor* is much more complex than the plot of *Fidelio*.

A dodecaphonic sequence with two repetitions, rising by semitones, evidently reflects Milada’s initial reaction to the depressing atmosphere of depths of the prison and the dangers of the task before her. The passage continues more freely, as Milada gains confidence in her mission. The eighth-note figuration may recall accompanying figurations in Bach’s chorale preludes; for example, *Christ lag in Todes Banden*. This figuration is later used to characterize Beneš.

Example 11

1884: Act II, scene-change 1, scene i, p. 76, system 4, beginning measure 1.

1950: Act II, Proměna I, scene i, p. 118, system 3, beginning measure 4.

The image displays a musical score for piano and voice. It consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the vocal line (treble clef) and piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line begins with a fermata, followed by a melodic phrase. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *sans presser* (without haste). The second system continues the vocal and piano parts, with *pp* marking the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line with *sempre pp* (always pianissimo) and the piano accompaniment with *pp*. The fourth system features the piano accompaniment with *cresc.* (crescendo) markings. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and a 2/4 time signature.

Milada's descent to the prison cell is described by a dodecaphonic sequence of dyads, Smetana's homage to a similar passage in *Fidelio* (see Example 12).

Example 12

1884: Act II, scene-change 2, scene v, p. 96, beginning system 1.

1950: Act II, Proměna 1, scene v, p. 145, beginning system 1.

The image displays a musical score for piano accompaniment, consisting of four systems of staves. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The score is marked with various dynamics and articulations: *pp* (pianissimo), *stacc.* (staccato), *quasi pizzic.* (quasi pizzicato), *tremollo* (tremolo), *m. s.* (mezzo sostenuto), and *espress.* (espressivo). The music features complex harmonic textures, including a doubly diminished chord (Cb-D-F-Ab) mentioned in the text.

In the prelude to the scene change to Dalibor’s cell, there is a harp glissando on a doubly diminished chord (Cb-D-F-Ab). (1884 edition: scene-change 3, systems 6–7, p. 99; 1950 edition: Proměna 2, beginning system 1, measure 5). It is followed by Dalibor’s cry, as he seems to see the ghost of his friend: “Nebyl to on zas, nebyl to zas Zdeněk?” (“Wasn’t that Zdeněk?”).

Tonality returns as Dalibor remembers his friend, who also played violin (1884 edition, p. 104, system 1; 1950 edition, p. 157, system 1). His aria ends, “O kéž bych jenom housle měl, bych přičaroval ty zvuky opojné, o kterých sladce blouzním v den a noc, pak nelkal bych víc nad osudem krutým!” (“Oh, if I only had a violin, I would conjure up your enchanting sounds; with their sweet fantasy by day and night, I would not grieve so much over my cruel fate!”).

Milada enters the cell and gives Dalibor the violin. He will use it to give a signal to the rebels when he escapes. As the act ends, they sing a lyrical, freely composed duet “O blaho neskonale lásky jež jako hvězda září nám” (“O joy of eternal love, shining upon us like a star”) in the key of Ab. But a dodecaphonic

passage seems to forecast the difficulties ahead. The upper line contains the chromatic notes from C to F#, and the lower line supplies the notes from F# to B. This example is followed by a doubly diminished seventh outlined in rising octaves, and then presented as the first of a series of fortissimo chords.

Example 13

1884: Act III, scene 1, p. 118 (Largo), beginning system 6.

1950: p. 176 (Largo), system 1, beginning measure 3.

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system is marked 'Largo' and 'espresso'. It features a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include 'p' and 'pp'. The second system is marked 'Più mosso' and includes 'cresc.', 'accel.', and 'sfz' markings. The music is in a minor key and features complex harmonic textures with chromatic movement.

The jailors report to Vladislav that there is revolt in the town, instigated by Dalibor's supporters. Vladislav calms them down and dismisses them. Despite his outward poise, the accompaniment to his aria "Krásný cíl jenž panovníku kyne" ("A beautiful aim beckons to the ruler") shows his unease at having to cope with the situation. As in the first act, the judges' decision is forceful and repetitive. The king gives the order. The music turns rough and somber. Fragments of the Dalibor motive appear, but two palindromes associated with it are inverted.

In scene iii, Dalibor is ready to escape. Milan Pospíšil notes that the use of motivic material in *Dalibor* at times resembles its use in Meyerbeer's operas.³⁶ He provides an example: When the bars of Dalibor's cell are broken, the motive of freedom suddenly breaks through like the trumpet call in *Fidelio*. Dalibor's reaction: "Probůh, mně volnost kyne!" ("By God, freedom beckons to me!"), see Example 14.

³⁶ Milan Pospíšil, "Dramatická úloha Meyerbeerovy harmonie," *Hudební věda* 21, no. 4 (1984): 326.

Example 14

1884: Act III, scene iii, p. 134, system 4, beginning measure 1.

1950: Act III, Proměna 1, scene iii, p. 198, system 4, beginning measure 1.

Vivo.

Pro bůh, mně volnost ky. ne! 8...

The motive's key of D major signals the destruction of the "prison cell" material. The freedom motive also appears in Act I at the beginning of the final duet between Milada and Jitka (see example 10); also, when Milada gives Dalibor the violin in Act II, following the words "a otevřít si cestu v širý kraj!" ("to open the path to the entire region!"), (1884 edition: Act II, scene ii, beginning system 5, measure 2; 1950 edition: Act II, Proměna 2, scene iii, p. 162, system 4, beginning measure 3).

But as Dalibor prepares to give the signal, a string on the violin breaks.

As Dalibor reacts, the "freedom" key of D major modulates abruptly to a doubly diminished seventh chord (D#-F-A-C), and then to a sustained F# minor chord: "Ha! Ký to ďas! Tak náhle struna praskla! Má býti mi to špatným znamením?" ("Ha! What the devil! A string just broke! Is that a bad omen for me?").] The libretto of the 1950 edition gets rid of "devil," perhaps removing a correspondence between that word and the doubly diminished seventh chord (D#-F# -A-C) chord that consists of two devil's intervals: D#-A and F#-C! (see Example 15).

Example 15

1884: Act III, scene-change 1, scene iii, p. 139–40, system 5, beginning measure 2.
 1950: p. 206, system 4, beginning measure 2.

(Chopí se houslí a přistoupí k otvoru ve zdi; jakmile přiloží smyčec, praskne struna.)

Lento.
pp
rit.

pryě! Ha! Ký to dās! Tak náh.le struna praskla! Má bý-ti

1

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and begins with a fermata on a whole note. The lyrics are: "pryě! Ha! Ký to dās! Tak náh.le struna praskla! Má bý-ti". The piano part features a dramatic, rising scale in the right hand and a more active bass line. Performance instructions include "Lento.", "pp", and "rit.". A rehearsal mark "1" is placed below the piano part.

Nevertheless, Dalibor manages to escape and join those who are fighting for his freedom. In the midst of the battle, Dalibor finds Milada, who is wounded. She dies in his arms. He cries, “Volají mne Zdeněk, Milada!” (“Zdeněk and Milada are calling me!”), accompanied by an F# major fragment of the Dalibor motive. He returns to the battle with rapidly rising F# major scales, and is killed – in the 1884 edition, honorably as a free knight.

The opera ends with a revised palindrome based on the Dalibor motive, signifying the resolution of the plot. It begins with a rising line, D-E-F# / G-A-Bb, falling as A-G-F-Eb-D, followed by C-Bb, and then A as the fifth of a D major chord. The last four measures are in the key of freedom, D major, with the first three notes of the Dalibor motive in major, D-E-F# (see Example 16).

Example 16

1884: Act III, scene viii, p. 163.

1950: Act III, Proměna 3, scene iii, p. 198.

espress. lento (vrhne se do boje a klesne.)
vola. jí mne Zdeněk, Mi. lada!

p dolce
pp

rinz *molto cresc.* *Grandioso*

sfz *trem.* *fff*

Konec zpeváky. 6803

Synthesis

The music that may have influenced the music of *Dalibor* confirms Smetana's excellent judgement as well as his robust capability as an innovator. Almost without exception, the works that he is known to have presented previously in his concerts and recitals are still in the repertory today; their composers are among the best of that era.³⁷ He seems to have been influenced by them, but did not copy their methods. He imaginatively transformed their ideas to fit his own compositional synthesis.

³⁷ For example, see Clara Thornquist, *Smetana in Göteborg, 1856–1862* (Göteborg, Sweden: Göteborg Universitets Bibliotek, 1967). Documentation of numerous programs for Smetana's appearances as a conductor as well as a pianist.

Like Schubert, Smetana has the rare gift of presenting innovation and complexity so transparently that it seems to be simple. The primacy of the compositional impulse over traditional forms begins to take shape in *Prodaná nevěsta*. In *Dalibor*, form follows the impulse of the underlying creative function of the work – its energy, continuity, moods, and evocations. As in Beethoven's programmatic piano sonatas *The Tempest* and *Les adieux*, form and harmony are based on action, emotion, and dramatic flow rather than static presentation. The inflections of the text are realized through ingenious use of pitch itself rather than conventional harmony, with the support of natural articulation, nuance, and phrasing. Any recognizable musical shape can be referential. Compositional processes are transformed, adapted to the new context. These achievements may well have served as the inspiration for the dialectical process of stylistic mutation that is called synthesis in Czech music theory.

Like Gounod, Smetana is a perfectionist. Perhaps following his intuition, he tends to leap directly to the result. The intermediate steps that might have shown how the result was obtained are often omitted. However, they can sometimes be traced in *Dalibor*, enabling us to surmise how the syntheses for his mature works took shape. They are remarkable demonstrations of his compositional process, especially for the incorporation of techniques of Baroque polyphony into Romantic opera, and the use of the major version of the Dalibor motive as the lyrical foundation of passages expressing love and hope.

The transformation of Milada's feelings about Dalibor in the course of Act I illustrates this process. They range from grief and anger (see Example 7 and accompanying synopsis) to doubt, to horror at Dalibor's sentencing, to the realization that she loves him, and finally that she is willing to risk her own life to save him.

The passionate episode at the end of Act I is the psychological climax, the resolution of Milada's indecision. It begins with accompanying triplets based on the doubly diminished seventh chord (D#-F#-A-C) illustrating Milada's emotional turmoil (Presto: 1884 edition, p. 49, system 5, beginning third measure; 1950 edition, p. 79, beginning of scene vi). The moment that she realizes that she loves Dalibor is shown in Example 10. The act concludes with Milada and Jitka's triumphant cry, "Vysvobodíme jej!" ("We will free him!") in E major, anticipating of Milada's lyrical second act aria "Radostí nesmírnou" ("Immense joy"), which expresses the depth of her love and devotion. The act ends on a resolute G major palindrome based on a variant of the Dalibor motive (1884 edition, p. 55, system 1, beginning last measure; 1950 edition, p. 87, beginning third system, measure 1).

In achieving his personal synthesis as a composer, Smetana had the example of Liszt's adventurous spirit, as well as respect for Gounod's superb ability to combine meticulous craftsmanship with lyrical intensity. He used his own compositional strengths and emotional resources to establish the core of his mature style, and to create art that is still the proud possession of his country. The remarkable result is more than music. It speaks to the heart. It became the inspiration, the indispensable source for Czech national music in the years to come.

Reception

The technical brilliance of Smetana's achievements in *Dalibor* was generally not recognized at the time of the premiere. The intellectual community was more concerned about whether the opera was "Wagnerian." The libretto was controversial; it would go through many revisions over the years.³⁸ The very concept of the plot would have been a problem at the time.

However, some understood the opera's underlying purpose – to strengthen the national movement for freedom. Jan Neruda praised its emotional impact and the effect of the finale at the dress rehearsal:

God knows what uncanny magic there is in Smetana's music! There were tears in the eyes of the audience in tender moments; some rose from their seats without realizing that they were standing. The finale was monumental; it increased and increased like the slender, majestic columns and arches of a Gothic cathedral – now, now the genius spread his gigantic wings, ringing and resounding in the mighty musical realm – and when it suddenly faded away, I was in the box, exhilarated, my sight uncertain, every nerve trembling with unexpected delight [...].³⁹

In 1872, Procházka praised Smetana's approach to opera as a continuation of the Gluck tradition.

First of all, Gluck relies on his respect for dramatic truth, removing unfeeling puppets and empty pathos from the stage. Instead, he presents real people, whose speech mirrors all of their spirit, all of their nature. Instead of writing in disconnected scenes, Master Gluck abundantly and logically unfurls the speech of the heart from human individuality.

³⁸ Bořkovec, "Yesterday the Opera *Dalibor* Was a Failure at the Czech Theater," 1–2.

³⁹ Holzknecht, *Bedřich Smetana*, 199. Holzknecht gives the original citation as *Národní listy*, September 8, 1872.

Procházka mentions a significant characteristic of Gluck's artistry, the richness of his rhythm and melody, "always flowing strictly from the concept of the drama" with respect to expressive declamation "of every phrase, even of every word."

Procházka discusses the greatest operas and remarks that "whoever does not respond to these sounds with his heart does not have the gift of delight in the nature of beautiful music. From these words we can clearly infer what Gluck meant to Smetana's music; it was "a model for all time."⁴⁰

Afterword

Mahler conducted *Dalibor* in Hamburg in 1896. When he conducted the opera at the Hofoper in Vienna in October 1897, he supervised every detail of the production to ensure that the opera would be successful.⁴¹ By 1909, *Dalibor* had been translated into Croatian, Russian, Polish, Flemish, and Hungarian.⁴² It was also performed in German, the original language of the libretto. It appeared, for example, at the Deutsches Landestheater in Prague under the baton of Georg Szell.⁴³ Szell also orchestrated Smetana's first string quartet. He continued to champion music by Smetana and Dvořák in America as conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Alexander Zemlinsky, as well as nine Schönberg students, worked there.⁴⁴ One of them, Heinrich Jalowetz, was later the conductor of the Reichenberg (Liberec) opera house. His last premiere there (March 2nd, 1938)

was a new staging of Smetana's *Dalibor*, which was a very risky decision considering the intense anti-Czech propaganda of the Sudeten-German party and the inflamed nationalistic passion. However, the critics approved of the decision. ("Whoever came under the spell of the *Dalibor* opera will welcome with sincere joy its inclusion in the repertory"), and the public reacted with honor when strong applause directed at the open stage threatened repeatedly to interrupt the performance. The last reprise, on March 29th, was not only the end of the 1937/38 season, but the end of the entire history of the Reichenberg theater. As

⁴⁰ Bartoš, *Prozatímní divadlo a jeho opera*, 249–250. Bartoš gives the original citation as: [Jan Ludevít] Procházka, published April 13th, 1870, in response to a production of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis*. He does not provide the source of the quotation.

⁴¹ Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler: Vienna, the Years of Challenge, 1897–1904*, vol. 2 (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 65–67.

⁴² Ludvová, *Až k božímu konci*, 489.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 489–90. Ludvová also provides information on other performances.

⁴⁴ Jitka Ludvová, "Pupils of Schoenberg's in Czech lands," undated typescript, 2, 35. Copy obtained from Dr. Ludvová, also deposited in the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna.

of April 1st, management was taken over by a so-called working group composed of members of the Sudeten-German party.⁴⁵

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⁴⁵ Op. cit.