Representations of Antonín Dvořák:  
A Study of his Music through the Lens of Late Nineteenth-Century Czech Criticism

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology
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Abstract

Commenting on Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904), music critic Václav Juda Novotný declared in 1881 that “a Czech composer has to write, first and foremost, for a Czech audience.” Scholars have given considerable attention to Dvořák’s reception abroad and have shown that his path to success on foreign stages, particularly in Vienna, was not always direct. The composer’s reception in the Czech lands during the late nineteenth century was no less complicated – shaped by various cultural and political factors, as the Czechs sought to assert themselves in the fight for the nationalist cause, while remaining under Habsburg rule. Drawing on the wealth of newspaper and journal articles that were printed in the Czech press at this time, the dissertation places Dvořák’s music into its Czech context.

The topic is explored by way of three case studies that deal with Dvořák’s contributions to choral, operatic, and symphonic genres. Each of the works examined came at a significant moment in Dvořák’s career in the Czech lands. The performance in 1873 of the choral cantata Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain marked Dvořák’s professional debut; with the 1878 production of the comic opera The Cunning Peasant, Dvořák celebrated his first major triumph on the coveted Czech operatic stage; and the Prague premiere in 1881 of his first widely recognized symphony, the D major, Op. 60, proved to be crucial in defining Dvořák’s role in the
concert hall. These case studies reveal that Dvořák’s treatment in the Czech press varied depending on the unique traditions of these genres and their differing status within Czech musical culture. The project highlights the complex relationships and interactions among critics, audiences, and composers. In the politically-charged climate of fin-de-siècle Bohemia, Czech critics took ownership of Dvořák and enlisted his music to advance their own agendas. Dvořák, in turn, was keenly aware of and often catered to public tastes and critical expectations. Intertwining various realms of contextual inquiry, including nationalist rhetoric, contemporary critical discourses, and the musical repertories that were cultivated in the Czech lands, the dissertation draws attention to the multiple agents at play in Dvořák’s nineteenth-century Czech reception.
Acknowledgments

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Much of my research has involved studying Czech newspaper and journal articles from the late nineteenth century. It would have been very difficult for me to locate all of the relevant primary sources, if it were not for the careful work of Jarmil Burghauser, whose Antonín Dvořák: Thematický katalog, Bibliografie; Přehled života a díla [Antonín Dvořák: Thematic catalogue, Bibliography; Survey of life and work] proved to be an invaluable reference tool as I conducted research in Prague. A number of people contributed to making my trip to the Czech Republic a success. Among those who assisted me in obtaining materials were Zuzana Petrášková, the head of the music division at the National Library (Hudební oddělení, Národní Knihovna ČR); Jan Baťa, the head librarian at Charles University’s Music Library (Knihovna ÚHV, Univerzita Karlova); and Matěj Dočekal, the head of the Sheet Music Library of the National Theatre (Knihovna notových materialů, Národní Divadlo). In particular, I would like to
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Finally, I would like to thank my family for their patience and love. A special thanks goes to Peter and Pavla for going to such great lengths to obtain a copy of Otakar Šourek’s four-volume Život a Dílo Antonína Dvořáka [Life and Works of Antonín Dvořák] for me. I am enormously indebted to Jane for her loyal support, particularly during my research stay in Prague. Most of all, I wish to express gratitude to my parents for giving me the opportunity to study music from a young age and for teaching me to read and communicate in Czech. Little did I know, when I attended piano lessons and practiced speaking Czech at home as a child, that both of these activities were preparing me for my future career.
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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE CONTEXT: DVOŘÁK’S TREATMENT IN THE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY INTERNATIONAL AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY CZECH PRESS

Introduction

Commenting on the role of the American press in the promotion of Antonín Dvořák’s (1841–1904) “New World” Symphony, Op. 95 (1893), Michael Beckerman states that “Dvořák may be the only composer whose activity in a given time and place was so deeply affected by contact with journalists.”1 As Beckerman demonstrates, prevailing perceptions of this work were shaped in large part by the many music critics who gathered around Dvořák and sought to represent him to the American public. Though the amount of journalistic attention garnered by the “New World” Symphony at the time of its premiere was exceptional, Beckerman’s remark might be applied in some measure to Dvořák’s entire career. Indeed, throughout his life, Dvořák interacted closely with multiple critics, and his works were performed in front of diverse, international audiences.

Dvořák was reluctant to communicate directly with the public. Beckerman points to the composer’s self-ascribed inability to speak and refers to the plethora of articles that were printed in the wake of the “New World” Symphony’s first performance as Dvořák’s speech “filtered through the personalities and agendas of the journalists.”2 This disinclination to speak was undoubtedly compounded by language barriers when Dvořák was in the United States,3 but even

1 Michael Beckerman, New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer’s Inner Life (New York: Norton, 2003), 78.
2 Ibid., 78.
3 Elsewhere Beckerman observes that Dvořák was actually more communicative than usual at the time of the “New World” Symphony premiere. In Beckerman’s words “during that week, the usually reticent composer was virtually bubbling over with vital information about the new work;” Michael Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke: Antonín Dvořák and the Mask of Nation,” in Dvořák and his World, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 139.
in the Czech lands, Dvořák was known for his reticence. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Dvořák was reluctant to contribute articles to newspapers and journals, allegedly declaring on one occasion: “I always envied Wagner that he could write. Where would I be if I could write!”

Critic Boleslav Kalenský (1867–1913) testifies that Dvořák had a tendency to be taciturn in his day-to-day interactions as well. Attempting in 1911 to paint a portrait of the composer for those who never had the opportunity to meet him, Kalenský writes:

Dvořák – as everyone who spoke with him knows – was not a master of words and oration… It was often with great difficulty that Dvořák searched for the right word – for an appropriate turn of phrase [with which to express] his idea. Those, who spoke with him for the first time, were probably surprised by his taciturnity, the flightiness of his imagination, and his struggle with words. Frequently, this would lead to humorous misunderstandings and jollity. Though Dvořák lacked verbal skills, he knew how to speak in his own different language; he carried [audiences] away with his language of tones.

Dvořák’s silence in the public sphere does not mean that he was passive in the promotion of his works; on the contrary, he played an active part in his own reception, as will be shown in

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5 Otakar Šourek, Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences, trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsour (Prague: Artia, 1954), 194; Dvořák continues: “And I can’t speak either. – But listen, if I could speak I should call our nation here and I should climb up that hill and from there I should tell them something, and tell it them straight, but I can’t speak.” This quotation comes from the memoirs of critic Karel Sázavský (1858–1930), who claims that Dvořák made this statement while on a trip to the Palavský Mountains in Southern Moravia.

Chapter Five. That Dvořák never made his precise intentions and ideologies known verbally actually afforded him a certain flexibility in his music. Leon Botstein writes that “unlike Smetana, who defined the ‘true national direction’ for Czech music in prose as well as in music… Dvořák felt free to be eclectic, change directions, and borrow ideas.” What is more, since Dvořák was a man of few words, he was perhaps more susceptible than other composers to having his image moulded and manipulated in the press, which makes his reception all the more fascinating.

Though Dvořák tended to be silent, his critics were not. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an immense rise in the number of daily publications and specialized journals throughout Europe and North America. More so than in previous generations, critics had at their disposal a powerful medium through which they could voice their opinions, and their writings were accessed by a growing public. Music criticism was a thriving discipline, and the many newspaper and journal articles that were published at this time reveal much about the cultural and political climates in which they were written. In Sandra McColl’s words, journalism serves as “an ideal tool for the reconstruction of the richness of everyday life.” Belonging to a generation for which print culture was important, Dvořák was discussed at length in the press both in the Czech lands and abroad. These contemporary critical discourses provide invaluable material through which Dvořák’s reception may be traced and analyzed.

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8 Sandra McColl, Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896–1897: Critically Moving Forms (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 33. Music journalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century was not viewed as the exclusive domain of “critics;” music historians, aestheticians, and composers engaged in critical debates on a regular basis, and their various vantage points intersected on the pages of the press. Joseph Kerman emphasizes this when he writes that “the folklore of [present-day] journalism is rich in rascally tales of music critics who switched over one fine day from the sports pages to revel in a life of ignorance and spite. People tend to forget that within living memory, composers and musicologists... practiced daily journalism;” Joseph Kerman, Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 16.
Scholars have devoted considerable attention to Dvořák’s reception abroad, which will be explored in this chapter’s first section. That this has been a rich topic of research is not surprising, given the international nature of Dvořák’s career. Dvořák bears the distinction of being the first Czech composer to receive substantial recognition from beyond the borders of the Czech lands. Known to some musicians and critics in Vienna as early as 1874, Dvořák’s works started to be performed internationally in 1879. Printed scores were crucial in the dissemination of his music. With several European and American publishers standing behind him, Dvořák’s pieces appeared in print more in foreign lands than in Bohemia. The composer’s own extensive travels further helped to bolster his reputation abroad. He journeyed to parts of German-speaking Europe countless times throughout his career, made nine trips to England from 1884 to 1896, and embarked on one concert tour in Russia in 1890. Most noteworthy of all, Dvořák served as director at the National Conservatory of Music in New York from 1892 to 1895. By the end of his life, Dvořák had attained a respectable position in the international arena, though, as scholars have demonstrated, his path to success on foreign stages was not always direct.

Dvořák’s Czech reception was no less complicated. Following his death in 1904, heated debates over his legacy broke out in the newspapers and journals of Prague. Dvořák’s place in Czech music history was called into question, and the disputes that ensued were among the most

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9 In the Czech music journal Dalibor, Dvořák is described as “the first Czech to receive praise from foreigners in person!” “První to Čech, který osobně přijímá hold ciziny!” J. z. K., “Antonín Dvořák v Londýně [Antonín Dvořák in London],” Dalibor 6, no. 11 (March 21, 1884): 104.
10 It was in 1879 that Dvořák’s works were first performed in Vienna and parts of England and America; John Clapham, “Dvořák on the American Scene,” 19th-Century Music 5, no. 1 (1981): 20.
12 Klaus Döge, “Dvořák a Německo [Dvořák and Germany],” Hudební Věda 28, no. 1 (1991): 46. Dvořák’s trip to Hamburg in 1863 as a member of the Komzák ensemble was likely the first time that he ventured outside of his native Bohemia.
vehement ever to be carried out by music critics on the pages of the Czech press.\textsuperscript{13} Owing in part to the vicious spirit in which they were conducted, the so-called “Dvořák battles” have been the subject of extensive scholarly research, which will be considered in this chapter’s second section. The polemics came to a head between 1911 and 1915, though they were not limited to this timeframe; nor were the discourses exclusively about Dvořák. After 1913, the controversy extended well beyond the composer himself, as opponents of the status quo in Prague used Dvořák as a pretence to launch a full-scale attack on the musical establishment. The effects of these critical debates continued to be felt throughout much of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{14} Given their far-reaching impact, the “Dvořák battles” could hardly be ignored in the scholarly literature, and this research shows that Dvořák’s music was often just as contentious in Bohemia as it was abroad.

Dvořák’s treatment in the foreign and Czech press depended on a range of factors. No matter where and when Dvořák’s works were received, critical assessments of his music were inevitably coloured by politics, be they international or domestic. The position of the Czechs during the period under consideration was unique, since, from the 1860s onward, they sought to assert themselves in the fight for the nationalist cause, but would remain under Habsburg rule until the end of the First World War in 1918. Dvořák’s reception in a given country was thus largely contingent upon that country’s relationship to the Czech lands and, in some cases, to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Likewise, the attacks on Dvořák’s music in the early twentieth-century Czech


press were, at least in part, politically motivated. At that time, several “left-wing” critics strove to defame Dvořák, who had, by then, come to be associated with the conservative sector of the Prague public. Critical discussions of Dvořák were also shaped by many cultural factors, as each milieu in which Dvořák’s music was heard had its own sets of priorities and tastes. Often the same piece brought forth vastly different reactions from critics working in various places and times. Issues of genre emerge as recurring themes in many of these discourses; responses to Dvořák’s works were frequently predicated on whether Dvořák did or did not conform to specific expectations in certain realms of music. These issues will come to the fore even more in the subsequent chapters that investigate Dvořák’s nineteenth-century Czech reception – an area of Dvořák reception studies that has thus far remained conspicuously neglected.

Establishing Dvořák’s Place in the International Arena: Critical Debates from Abroad

During the late nineteenth century, numerous – sometimes contradictory – images of Dvořák were established in the international press. Among those to weigh in on the composer’s works were critics in German-speaking Europe, England, America, Russia, and France. That opinions were so diverse is partly a reflection of the variety of Dvořák’s music; as Beckerman puts it, “the notion of any monolithic style, whether Czech, Slavic, American, or Habsburg, is entirely alien to Dvořák.” Occasionally, promoters and critics sought to direct Dvořák toward certain styles and genres by presenting him with commissions and giving emphasis in their reviews to some elements of his oeuvre over others. While terms as varied as “pan-Slavist,” “der tschechische

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15 As described below, the “Dvořák battles” were initiated by Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962), who would later become a staunch Communist and serve as the long-time minister of culture in Czechoslovakia.
Brahms,”18 and “founder of American music” were used in reference to Dvořák, his reputation as an absolute music composer always seemed to be looming in the background; perhaps the one exception was England, where Dvořák’s choral compositions tended to dominate.

In German-speaking Europe, Dvořák became known during the late 1870s for his “Slavic” compositions, which were quite well-received by some critics and audiences. Dvořák’s Austro-German supporters had actually steered him in this direction in the first place. Though, between 1874 and 1878, Dvořák submitted a variety of pieces to the Austrian State Stipend competition19 – including ones that bore no obvious “Czech” or “Slavic” markers20 – adjudicators Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904) and Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) seem to have been particularly struck by the Moravian Duets (Moravské Dvojzpěvy, 1876). Hanslick indicates in a letter to Dvořák that he is “exceptionally fond” of the Duets,21 and when recommending them to Berlin publisher Fritz Simrock (1837–1901), Brahms suggests that they might be a “good commodity.”22 Simrock

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18 The term “der tschechische Schubert” appears to have been applied to Dvořák at least as often, if not more, than “der tschechische Brahms.”

19 In all five of those successive years, Dvořák was awarded the Stipend. For more on the Austrian State Stipend competition, see especially Milan Kuna, “Umělecká stipendia Antonína Dvořáka [The Artistic Stipends of Antonín Dvořák],” Hudební Věda 29, no. 4 (1992): 293–315.

20 David Brodbeck draws attention to this point, noting that the Serenade for Strings in E major, the Symphony in E minor, the Piano Trio in G minor, the String Quartet in E major, and the Stabat Mater were among the submissions to be given to the committee; David Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna: Language Ordinances, National Property, and the Rhetoric of Deutschtum,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 60, no. 1 (2007): 76.

21 Hanslick was an adjudicator in this competition over the course of all five years (1874–1878). In a letter to Dvořák dated November 30, 1877, Hanslick reports that his fellow stipend committee member, Brahms, “especially likes [the] Czech vocal duets, of which I too am exceptionally fond;” translated and quoted in David Beveridge, “Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation,” in Dvořák and his World, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 60; “[Johannes Brahms] hat besonderes Wohlgefallen an Ihren zwei- und dreistimmigen böhmischen Liedern, die auch mir ausnehmend gefallen;” Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 5 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1996), 87.

22 Brahms joined the Austrian State Stipend committee in 1875; in a letter to Simrock dated December 3, 1877, Brahms writes: “if you play through Dvořák’s Moravian Duets, you will rejoice in them as I did, and as publisher especially rejoice in their piquancy.... The value of the duets will be obvious to you, and they might become a ‘good commodity;’” translated and quoted in Beveridge, “Dvořák and Brahms,” 62–63. John Clapham describes Brahms and Hanslick as tireless promoters of Dvořák’s music in German-speaking Europe; John Clapham, “Dvořák’s Relations with Brahms and Hanslick,” The Musical Quarterly 57, no. 2 (1971): 246. Czech critics had mixed feelings about Brahms’s mentorship of Dvořák. While some willingly gave credit to Brahms for his
himself urged Dvořák to continue cultivating this “Slavic” style and commissioned him to write the *Slavonic Dances* in 1878.\(^{23}\) Dvořák complied readily\(^{24}\) and composed numerous other “Slavic” compositions in the late 1870s and early 1880s.\(^{25}\) Further encouragement to write works in this vein came from Dvořák’s earliest German critics. In his 1878 article for the Berlin *National-Zeitung*, Louis Ehlert (1825–1884) raves about the *Moravian Duets* and *Slavonic Dances*, predicting the immense popularity of the latter:

> I consider the *Slavonic Dances* to be a work which will make its triumphant way through the world in the same way as Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances*. There is no question here of some kind of imitation; [Dvořák’s] dances are not the least Brahmsian. Divine Providence flows through this music and that is why it is altogether popular. Not a trace of artificiality or constraint [can be detected]… The men who awaken at the present time

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\(^{23}\) In a letter dated March 18, 1878, Simrock requests that Dvořák “write pretty, ‘unforgettable’ melodies, which [he] will certainly find in the ‘Slavic’ spirit and within [himself]”; “hübsche, ‘unvergeßliche’ Melodien, Sie finden gewiß solche im ‘Slawischen’ und in sich selbst?” Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty* [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 5, 98. On occasion, German publishers would tweak the titles of Dvořák’s works in order to heighten the exotic appeal of his music; Simrock used a slightly different title, *Klänge aus Mähren* (literally, *Sounds of Moravia*), for the *Moravian Duets*, and the Berlin firm Bote und Bock changed the title of one of Dvořák’s *Furiants* to *Czech National Dances*; Döge, “Dvořák a Německo [Dvořák and Germany],” *Dalibor* 5, no. 7 (February 21, 1883): 65.

\(^{24}\) Some eight years later, Simrock would urge Dvořák to write a second set of *Slavonic Dances*. Though Dvořák eventually did compose his Op. 72 (1886), he was considerably more reluctant this time, as evident in a letter to Simrock dated January 1, 1886: “forgive me, but I am currently not in the mood to think about such merry music. Overall, I have to tell you that it will not be so easy with the *Slavonic Dances*, as it was the first time! It is devilishly difficult to do the same thing twice! As long as I am not in the right mood, I cannot do anything. After all, one cannot force it!” “verzeihen Sie recht sehr, aber ich bin jetzt durchaus nicht in der Stimmung, um an solche lustige Musik zu denken. Überhaupt muß ich Ihnen sagen, daß es mit den ‘Slawischen’ Tänzen’ nicht so leicht wird, wie das erste Mal! Zweimal etwas gleiches zu machen ist verdammt schwer! Sobald ich nicht die richtige Stimmung dafür habe, kann ich nichts machen. Zwingen kann man’s doch nicht!” Milan Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty* [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2 (Prague: Supraphon, 1988), 119.

\(^{25}\) By 1878, he had already written several works in a “Slavic” vein besides the *Moravian Duets*; among them were the String Quartet in D (1869), the third movement of which quotes the song “Hey Slavs!” (“Hej Slované!”), and the opera *Vanda* (1875). However, as Brodbeck points out, Dvořák’s work in this domain increased substantially post-1878; Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 77. Within a few years of the *Slavonic Dances*, Dvořák wrote a number of “Slavic” works, including the Three *Slavonic Rhapsodies* (1878), Mazurka, Op. 49 (1879), *Polonaise* in A for Piano and Cello (1879), *Mazurkas*, Op. 56 (1880), and *Dimitrij* (1882).
the greatest interest in the sphere of music are so terribly serious. I cannot help thinking how splendid it would be if a musician should appear once again whom we should as little think of quarrelling about as Spring.26

In a letter to Dvořák, Ehlert alleges that, after this article appeared in print, members of the Berlin public flocked to sheet music stores in droves to purchase their own copies of the Slavonic Dances.27 Critic Hermann Krigar – in his biographical sketch on Dvořák, appearing in the Musikalisches Wochenblatt in Leipzig between 1879 and 1880 – also foregrounds the “Slavic” aspects of Dvořák’s oeuvre: “what particularly heightens the charm of Dvořák’s compositions,” writes Krigar, “is the sharply etched nationality that accompanies them like a letter of safe conduct. This Slavic dowry is so much part of the composer’s blood that its characteristic quality is mixed in with almost every theme and every motive.”28 To critics like Ehlert and Krigar, the mildly-exotic “Slavic” features in Dvořák’s music gave it freshness and charm.29

Meanwhile, Dvořák’s “Slavic” works stirred contention in certain parts of German-speaking Europe. David Brodbeck shows, for example, that the Viennese reception in 1879 of Dvořák’s Third Slavonic Rhapsody was lukewarm, owing in part to political unrest and a shift in liberal ideology.30 Writing for the Fremden-Blatt, critic Ludwig Speidel’s (1830–1906) attitude toward

26 Šourek, Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences, 47 (trans. Roberta Finlayson Samsour); the original review appeared in print on November 15, 1878.
27 “In Berlin, my report brought forth a veritable storm at the sheet music stores – I say this without exaggeration and arrogance – it made a name for you in one day;” “in Berlin hat meine Notiz einen förmlichen Sturm auf die Musikalienhandlungen hervorgerufen und Ihnen, ich sage dies ohne Übertreibung und ohne Überhebung, im Laufe eines Tages einen Namen gemacht;” Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 5, 118 (letter from Ehlert to Dvořák dated November 27, 1878). The significance of Ehlert’s article was not lost on Czech critics, as one writer for the music journal Dalibor notes in 1879 that “[Ehlert] most sincerely paved the path [for Dvořák] to the German public;” “[Ehlert] tak upřímně razil mu cestu ve veřejnosti německé;” Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News],” Dalibor 1, no. 16 (June 1, 1879): 128.
29 As Beckerman puts it, “[in writing his Slavonic Dances, Dvořák] cultivated a persona that reminded the home boys that he was one of them, while appearing like a brilliant and charming Neanderthal to the big-shot Germans;” Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke,” 146.
the so-called “Slavic folk school” could not be more different from those espoused by Ehlert and Krigar. Speidel writes:

In our opinion it was not really proper to introduce the city of Vienna to the new composer from this national side. The Slavic folk school is not loved in Vienna; when faced with it the Viennese feels himself to be decidedly German. A rhapsody that is written by a Czech and proclaims itself Slavic will encounter a quiet opposition in Vienna.31

Similar ideas about this Slavonic Rhapsody were expressed by most Viennese critics, who believed that Dvořák’s music, no matter how charming, could not attain to the level of German accomplishment. Hanslick was an exception; yet, even in his review, he does not seek to highlight the “Slavic” elements of Dvořák’s Rhapsody, but to downplay them, as noted by Brodbeck.32 Unlike his colleagues in Germany, Hanslick attempts to prove that Dvořák’s piece is not so very exotic after all. Leon Botstein observes, however, that familiarity seemed to breed contempt. Both in Vienna and in other parts of Western Europe, Dvořák’s works were often met with less than enthusiastic assessments, since they lacked the kind of exotic appeal that could be found in the music of more distant cultures, like Russia.33 This produced a kind of no-win situation for Dvořák, as his works were deemed by some to be neither German nor exotic

32 Hanslick does so by invoking Schubert’s name in his review and by assuring readers that the work’s themes were not derived from national folk songs; Brodbeck, “Dvořák Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 83. For the German-language review, see Eduard Hanslick, “Feuilleton: Concerte,” Neue Freie Presse no. 5474 (November 23, 1879): 1–2; for an English translation, see Unsigned, “Anton Dvorak [sic],” Dwight’s Journal of Music: A Paper of Art and Literature 40, no. 1010 (January 3, 1880): 2.
33 Leon Botstein writes that “Czech culture and therefore ‘Czechness’ were significantly less exotic to the German public [than Russian culture]… The fact that the Czech nationality seemed more nearly Western than Slavic might appear at first blush to have been an advantage against cultural snobbery and prejudice. But familiarity worked against the recognition of the achievements of the nineteenth-century Czech cultural revival in Western Europe… The Czechs were a distinct element in fin-de-siècle Vienna, for example, but viewed more as lower-class subjects from within the Empire than as a foreign element;” Botstein, “Reversing the Critical Tradition,” 28–29.
enough. To complicate the matter, Dvořák’s critics sometimes erroneously labelled his “Slavic” works as “Czech.”

Another image of Dvořák that was constructed and consolidated in criticism from German-speaking Europe was that of the naïve and unreflective composer. Taken for granted by most German-language critics, this alleged spontaneity was seen by many as a positive trait. As demonstrated in the quotation above, Ehlert valued Dvořák’s *Moravian Duets* and *Slavonic Dances* precisely for their simplicity and lack of artifice; he expressed a sense of frustration with the overly contrived and learned works being written by some of Dvořák’s contemporaries, to which these pieces provided appealing alternatives. Brahms also repeatedly praised Dvořák’s works for their wealth of melodic ideas, while sometimes observing insufficient attention to thematic development and formal design; as Klaus Döge points out, Brahms saw Dvořák as his

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34 Scholars have since shown that Dvořák’s “Slavic” works draw upon the traditions of many different countries. For instance, the “Dumka,” found so often in Dvořák’s works, is of Ukrainian, rather than Czech, origin. For detailed discussions, see David Beveridge, “Dvořák’s ‘Dumka’ and the Concept of Nationalism in Music Historiography,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 12, no. 4 (1993): 303–325; Milan Kuna, “Dvořák’s Slavic Spirit and his Relation to Tchaikovsky and Russia,” in *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 143–154, esp. 146; Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke,” 141–147.

35 Krigar, for instance, admires Dvořák’s inherent musicality and sees it as a characteristic trait not just of Dvořák, but of Czech musicians in general; Krigar writes: “when it comes to learning a musical instrument, the native of Bohemia hardly needs the nurturing guidance or supervision of a teacher to discover and perfect his musical talent;” Krigar, “Antonín Dvořák: A Biographical Sketch,” 222 (trans. Susan Gillespie). To some extent, Czechs also thought of themselves as an intuitively musical nation, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.


37 Nowhere is this more apparent than in Brahms’s comments on the G-major Symphony, Op. 88. In a letter to Richard Heuberger, Brahms writes “too much that’s fragmentary, incidental, loiters about in this piece. Everything fine, musically captivating and beautiful – but no main points! Especially in the first movement, the result is not proper. But a charming musician! When one says of Dvořák that he fails to achieve anything great with his pure, individual ideas, this is correct. Not so with Bruckner, all the same he offers so little!” translated and quoted in Beveridge, “Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation,” 81. On another occasion, Brahms apparently stated in reference to Dvořák: “the fellow has more ideas than all of us. Other people could put together principal themes from what he throws away;” translated and quoted in Michael Beckerman, “Dvořák and Brahms: A Question of Influence,” *American Brahms Society Newsletter* 4, no. 2 (1986): 2.
antithesis, admiring those aspects in Dvořák’s works that he felt were missing from his own.\(^{38}\) Hanslick likewise looked favourably on the supposedly raw and unrefined elements in Dvořák’s music, as is evident in a review from 1887 of Dvořák’s *Symphonic Variations*: “Dvořák is not merely an illustrious, but also a genuine, original, naïve, talent,” states Hanslick; “primitive and natural, like few others, he shows an ingenious inspiration even in his weaker compositions.”\(^{39}\)

For other writers, the naïveté that they apparently detected in Dvořák’s music had decidedly negative connotations. After the composer’s death in 1904, Viennese critic Robert Hirschfeld (1857–1914) discusses Dvořák’s legacy as follows: “Dvořák’s music has no profundity. He does not, as Bruckner, dig into the depths of his soul to bring forth an Adagio. Everything came too easily for him.”\(^{40}\) Whereas Hanslick sees effortlessness as proof of Dvořák’s talent, Hirschfeld is inclined to view it as something suspect – an element that ultimately prevents Dvořák from being counted among the ranks of the truly “great” composers.\(^{41}\) An excerpt from Hugo Riemann’s (1849–1919) *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven* (1901) encapsulates the type of condescension to which this line of thinking sometimes led:

> Without doubt, the most important personality among Czech composers is Anton [sic] Dvořák. At the same time, his music often enough calls for the application of a different standard from the one usually applied to works of art of the highest level; rhythmic and melodic monomania is given free reign without a sense of limits in a way that sorely tests

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\(^{38}\) Klaus Döge, *Dvořák Leben – Werken – Dokumente* (Mainz: Schotz, 1991), 179. David Beveridge shows that our understanding of Brahms’s point of view is skewed, since his comments on Dvořák’s most formally coherent works, like the D-major and D-minor Symphonies, are missing; Beveridge, “Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation,” 82.


\(^{41}\) “Dvořák does not stand in the great line of historical evolution… Outside of the borders of his homeland, a single line, albeit one of honour, will suffice;” translated and quoted in Botstein, “Reversing the Critical Tradition,” 14.
the patience of the educated listener. One must also accept vulgar violations of primary rules of form. But in this only partially civilized being there lies an impressive creative energy, a real mastery of the grandiose.\textsuperscript{42}

Attitudes such as Riemann’s might be explained in various ways. David Beveridge notes that Dvořák’s reputation as naïve was “a corollary of his status as a Czech” and stemmed largely from prejudiced Germanic views of Czechs and Slavs as culturally inferior;\textsuperscript{43} however, the roots of this perspective were deeper, since it was by no means confined to the writings of Germans.\textsuperscript{44} Dvořák’s origins in a low social class reinforced this image. Though critics emphasized the composer’s social mobility – his rags-to-riches story was often told, as is evident in the well-known interview entitled “From Butcher to Baton” – the idea of the simple peasant remained ingrained and was cultivated, to an extent, by Dvořák himself.\textsuperscript{45} John Clapham and Miroslav Černy argue that notions of Dvořák’s naïveté also came about as a result of a general ignorance of his compositional methods; the composer’s extensive sketches and revisions, which


\textsuperscript{43} Beveridge, “Introduction,” 6–7.

\textsuperscript{44} Perhaps the most characteristic example comes from the writing of American critic Richard Aldrich: “[Dvořák’s] admirers… would have preferred to hear less of the obvious, less of the first impulse, and more of the reflection that shapes and finishes to perfection;” Richard Aldrich, “Antonín Dvořák and his Music,” \textit{New York Times} 8 (May 1904): 2; quoted in Botstein, “Reversing the Critical Tradition,” 13. Botstein also notes that this kind of view was perpetuated by Czech critic Karel Hoffmeister in his biography on Dvořák; Karel Hoffmeister, \textit{Antonín Dvořák}, trans. Rosa Newmarch (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1928).

\textsuperscript{45} Botstein discusses this idea of social mobility at length, observing that: “[Dvořák] was exotic, not merely for his Czech nature and lower-class origins but for his demonstration of how, through music, the ‘other’ might be civilized rapidly.” See his, “Reversing the Critical Tradition,” 11–27. For a copy of the interview, see Unsigned, “From Butcher to Baton: An Interview with Herr Dvorák,” \textit{Pall Mall Gazette} (October 13, 1886): 415; for a reprint of this interview, see David Beveridge, ed., “Appendix: Interviews with Dvořák,” in \textit{Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries}, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 288–293.
reveal that he gave considerable thought to the construction of his works, were not accessed by critics who made these kinds of statements.46

An additional factor that contributed to perceptions of Dvořák as a spontaneous composer was the tendency to position him in the absolute music camp. Critics of Dvořák’s generation felt the need to place composers into one of two categories, each of which had its attendant stereotypes and assumptions. Those who cultivated absolute genres were sometimes thought to be indifferent to cultural and intellectual pursuits outside of music, while those who devoted themselves to programmatic genres were considered to be more reflective and philosophical.47 American critic Henry Krehbiel (1854–1923) situates Dvořák unequivocally in the former group: “[Dvořák] helps us to keep up a love of music that is content to be music merely without striving to be philosophical and drama also... He is of all composers living, the frankest musician for music’s sake.”48 Though widespread – even among his Czech critics, as indicated above – this image of Dvořák took root particularly in Vienna, where his main advocates, Hanslick and Brahms, were staunch defenders of absolute music composition.49 Dvořák’s reputation in these

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Miroslav Černý explores three possible meanings that the term naïveté could have: firstly, it could mean completely spontaneous, unreflective creation; secondly, one could understand it as an insufficient mastery of the elementary aspects of composition technique; and thirdly, it could be referring to the blind, uncritical imitation of certain models. Černý proceeds to show that these three meanings do not apply to the works of Dvořák; Miroslav K. Černý, “War Dvořák ein naiver Komponist?” in *Dvořák-Studien*, eds. Klaus Düge and Peter Jost (Mainz: Schott, 1994), 34–39.

47 Beveridge places Dvořák within the “international dispute between advocates of absolute music (supposedly composed by intuition) and programme music or opera (involving conscious reflection).” Beveridge notes that Dvořák’s reputation in the realm of absolute music “tended to reinforce his image as a ‘nâve’ composer, and also contributed to the neglect of his vocal and programmatic works;” Beveridge, “Introduction,” 7. See also Karin Stöckl-Steinebrunner, “The ‘Uncomfortable’ Dvořák: Critical Reactions to the First Performances of his Symphonic Poems in German-Speaking Lands,” in *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), esp. 206.


49 See, for example, Hanslick’s review from 1882 of Dvořák’s *Legends* for piano: “Dvořák is so much of a genuine musician that he cannot wish to paint with note heads; he does not bind the imagination of the listeners to a poetic programme; (much to our unashamed satisfaction) he even scorns individual subtitles;” “Dvorak ist zu sehr
abstract realms proved to be a stumbling block for the reception of his works in other genres.

Karin Stöckl-Steinebrunner observes that certain Viennese critics were reluctant to accept Dvořák’s symphonic poems because they felt that Dvořák had abandoned their cause. Dvořák also struggled on more than one occasion to break through in the realm of opera, as is evident by the aborted plans for performances of *Vanda* (1875) and *Rusalka* (1901) at the Vienna Hofoper. The 1885 production of Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* (Šelma Sedláček, 1877) at that venue, to be considered in Chapter Three, created an uproar with the audience and gave rise to invidious reviews. The reasons for its poor reception were many; however, the notion that opera was not Dvořák’s domain was definitely part of the equation. In the aftermath of the event, Czech critics were convinced that the disastrous showing might have been prevented if a stronger specimen of Czech opera composition, preferably a work by Smetana, had been selected. That Dvořák was pigeonholed as an abstract instrumental music composer ultimately created a lopsided view of him in parts of German-speaking Europe and elsewhere, which has only recently started to be questioned and refined.
If Austro-Germans sometimes focused an inordinate amount of attention on Dvořák’s contributions to absolute genres, the public in England fixated, in turn, on a different portion of the composer’s output: his choral music. To some extent, the former image of Dvořák was maintained in London, where his instrumental works appeared regularly on programmes through the initiative of conductors August Manns (1825–1907) and Hans Richter (1843–1916). While at the helm of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Richter had often been restricted in his promotion of Dvořák; not so in London, where he could distance himself from domestic politics and give Dvořák a fair showing in the concert hall. Though English audiences became well-acquainted with Dvořák’s orchestral compositions over the course of the 1880s, his choral works received the lion’s share of the attention. Indeed, before the 1884 performance of his *Stabat Mater* at Royal Albert Hall, Dvořák was essentially unknown on the English music scene, though his works were given in London as early as 1879. Success in the realm of choral music made

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54 August Manns oversaw the ‘Saturday Concert’ series (1855–1901), and Hans Richter was the mastermind behind the annual ‘Richter Concerts’ (1879–1902).


56 Occasionally, the image of Dvořák as abstract instrumental music composer surfaces in reviews of his choral works. For instance, the writer for the *Morning Post* states in 1884 that “Dvořák… treats his *Stabat Mater* as absolute music;” Unsigned, “Worcester Musical Festival,” *Morning Post* (September 13, 1884).

57 The review for *The Times* writes in 1884: “it is a curious fact that this even should be the first appearance in an English concert-room of a composer whose very name was up until recently quite unknown among us;” Unsigned, “Dvořák’s *Stabat Mater*,” *The Times* (March 15, 1884). Similar statements appear in the *Graphic* (March 22, 1884) and *The Birmingham Post* (March 28, 1884). As late as September 1884, one writer refers to Dvořák as a “recently ‘discovered’ composer;” Unsigned, “Worcester Musical Festival,” *Birmingham Morning Post* (September 12, 1884).
Dvořák a household name and brought forth commissions from organizers of the Birmingham and Leeds Musical Festivals. Jitka Slavíková claims that had Dvořák not received encouragement from the English public, he might not have devoted so much energy to large-scale choral genres. Previously, Czech composers had tended to write choral works of much smaller dimensions, meant primarily for amateur performance. The grandeur of Dvořák’s choral cantata *Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain* (*Hymnus: Dědicové Bílé Hory*, 1872) – which scored Dvořák his first major success in Prague, as discussed in Chapter Two – was truly exceptional. Invigorated by the massive performing forces available to him in England, Dvořák oversaw this work’s London premiere and plunged into a period of intense choral composition during the mid-1880s. Just as Dvořák’s Austro-German promoters had urged Dvořák to cultivate his “Slavic” style, so too did his English advocates steer him in the direction of the multi-movement cantata and oratorio. Dvořák’s connection to England was thus crucial in establishing his image as a choral music composer; at the same time, it raised Dvořák’s international stature and acted as a springboard for his favourable reception in other regions.

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58 Dvořák offered up the dramatic cantata *The Spectre’s Bride* (*Svatební Košile*, 1884) for the Birmingham Musical Festival in 1885, and the *St. Ludmila* oratorio (*Sv. Ludmila*, 1886) received its world-premiere at the Leeds Musical Festival in 1886.


As demonstrated by Janice Stockigt, the London-based journal *The Musical Times* had a wide circulation and gave exposure to Dvořák throughout the English-speaking world, including Australia. Graham Melville-Mason also observes that Dvořák’s positive showing in England ultimately helped pave the way for the composer in America.

Although Dvořák introduced himself to American audiences in 1892 with a choral work (Te Deum) and was even commissioned to write an opera on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* – a project that never materialized – his absolute instrumental music was the main topic of debate among his critics in the United States. In particular, journalists preoccupied themselves with Dvořák’s so-called American style. In some ways, these discourses parallel discussions in German-speaking Europe of the “Slavic” elements in Dvořák’s oeuvre; however, the tenure of the criticism is rather different. While Dvořák’s “Czech” and “Slavic” styles were frequently taken for granted as “authentically” his, critics acknowledged from the beginning that the supposed Americanisms in his music were put on. Also, America, like England, was sufficiently culturally removed from the Czech lands so as to stave off the kinds of biases that

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63 Melville-Mason lists several instances in which Dvořák’s works were performed in America within months of their English premieres. He comments on the role of English publisher Alfred Littleton in bringing about Dvořák’s music directorship at the New York Conservatory and suggests that Dvořák’s popularity in England gave him the confidence to accept the invitation to America; Graham Melville-Mason, “From London to New York: Dvořák’s Introduction to America,” in *Dvořák in America*, ed. John C. Tibbetts (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1993), 27–32.

64 Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke,” *passim*, esp. 145; as Beckerman puts it, “though we might tend to think that Dvořák’s rendering of the Slavic spirit is somewhat more authentic than Brahms’s Magyarism, it is difficult to understand how or why this might be. Dvořák was no more familiar with the ethnographic or spiritual source of his materials than was Brahms.”
Dvořák was likely to encounter in German-speaking circles closer to home.\textsuperscript{65} More importantly, Dvořák was invited to New York for the express purpose of helping Americans find their own compositional voice and to set a precedent that they might follow, which put an entirely different spin on his “American” image, as compared to his “Slavic” persona.\textsuperscript{66} Though he had been guided and urged to pursue various styles and genres before, nowhere was this urging more overt than during his New York stay, setting up certain expectations on the part of the critics.

The premiere of the “New World” Symphony in 1893, which has received most of the scholarly attention on Dvořák’s American reception,\textsuperscript{67} was significant. Not only did it incite a wildly enthusiastic reaction from the audience,\textsuperscript{68} but it also gave critics the opportunity to assess whether or not Dvořák had been successful in the objective that had been laid out for him. In reviews of this work, discussions of Dvořák as a symphonist intersect with his image as nationalist. Krehbiel had no qualms about labelling the work as “American,” since, Dvořák seemed to put into practice views that the critic himself had long held about the nature of

\textsuperscript{65} Clapham, “Dvořák on the American Scene,” 17.

\textsuperscript{66} The invitation came from Jeannette Thurber (1850–1946). The topic of American women as patrons is addressed in Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr eds., \textit{Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860s} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).


\textsuperscript{68} Critic James Huneker testifies that “the audience, a representative one, threw kid glove conventionalism to the winds and became for a moment as crazily enthusiastic as a continental one;” the article originally appeared in the \textit{Musical Courier} (January 20, 1894); it is reprinted in James Huneker, “Dvořák New Symphony: The Second Philharmonic Concert,” in \textit{Dvořák and his World}, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 159–165; in a letter to Simrock dated December 20, 1893, Dvořák is palpably pleased: “the success of the Symphony... was grandiose, the papers say that no composer ever before had such a triumph;” “der Erfolg der Sinfonie... war ein großartiger; die Zeitungen sagen, noch nie hatte ein Komponist ein[en] solchen Triumph;” Milan Kuna et al., \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]}, vol. 3 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1989), 231; translated and quoted in Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke,” 140.
American music and its connections to folk traditions. Ultimately, Krehbiel described the Symphony as a mix of Scottish, German, Bohemian, African, and Indian elements and considered this “polyglot” character of the music to be uniquely “American.” Among the critics who stood on the other side of the debate in New York was James Huneker (1857–1921), who saw the “American” label as something of an absurdity, given Dvořák’s Czech origins: “the American symphony,” writes Huneker, “like the American novel, has yet to be written. And when it is, it will have been composed by an American. This is said with all due deference to the commanding genius of Dr. Dvorak [sic].” Dvořák’s “American” style was also contentious in Boston, where, according to Joseph Horowitz, composers and critics already had a strong sense of national identity and were apt to be resentful of the fact that Dvořák was being pitched as the “founder” of an American school of music. Critic Philip Hale (1854–1934), for

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69 Though the work received raving reviews from several critics, including Albert Steinberg and W. H. Henderson, none were as enthusiastic as Krehbiel’s, which was prepared in consultation with Dvořák and appeared in print on the morning of the performance; Krehbiel states: “it is the purpose of this writing to enable those who shall hear the symphony this afternoon or tomorrow evening to appreciate wherein its American character consists […] there need be no hesitation in saying that the music fully justifies the title which Dr. Dvorak [sic] has given it;” for an annotated reprint of Krehbiel’s article, which originally appeared in the New York Daily Tribune (December 15, 1893), see Michael Beckerman, “Henry Krehbiel, Antonín Dvořák, and the Symphony ‘From the New World,’” Notes 49, no. 2 (1992): 456–473. For a discussion of the ways in which Dvořák’s music embodies Krehbiel’s theories, see esp. 451–456.

70 Beckerman, New Worlds of Dvořák, 118–119.

71 The author of an anonymous article – typically thought to be by Huneker – even goes so far as to suggest that Dvořák had actually written the Symphony years before his New York sojourn; no matter who the author, this fabrication was an attempt to show that the piece had little to do with America. Jarmil Burghauser attributes this article to Huneker and views him as a malicious figure, who was bent upon defaming Dvořák; Jarmil Burghauser, “Metamorphoses of Dvořák’s Image in the Course of Time,” in Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 21. Michael Beckerman attempts to dispel this highly negative image of Huneker, by suggesting that the critic may not have written the article after all and by drawing attention both to Huneker’s generally positive review of the “New World” Symphony and to his role in introducing Dvořák to negro music; Beckerman, New Worlds of Dvořák, 79–98.

72 Quoted in Beckerman, New Worlds of Dvořák, 88. Huneker also writes: “Dvořák’s is an American symphony: is it? Themes from negro melodies; composed by a Bohemian; conducted by a Hungarian and played by Germans in a hall built by a Scotchman. About one third of the audiences were Americans and so were the critics. All the rest of it was anything but American;” quoted in Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke,” 141.

73 As Horowitz puts it, “in Boston, Dvořák was a controversial interloper; his intended mentorship was questioned or resented by composers and critics for whom Boston had already been acquiring the musical traditions it needed.” Those who questioned Dvořák’s mentorship included composers George Chadwick (1854–1931) and John Knowles Paine (1839–1906) as well as critic Philip Hale (1854–1934); Joseph Horowitz, “Reclaiming the Past:
instance, claimed that Dvořák had never “shown himself to be a more genuine Czech” than in the “New World.” As these discourses show, it was precisely Dvořák’s contributions to abstract instrumental genres that tended to get ascriptions of nationality. The two Dvořák symphonies that preceded this “American” offering have typically been associated with England; Dvořák’s G-major Symphony, Op. 88, even bears the subtitle “English” on its printed score, published by the London firm of Novello. Meanwhile, Dvořák’s Symphony in D major, Op. 60 (1880), which will be examined in Chapter Four, has strong connections to Vienna, prompting critics in Prague all the more to describe it as purely “Czech;” statements on this work that appeared in the Czech press were not unlike those voiced by Hale in reference to the “New World” Symphony.

Considerations of nationalism also emerge between the lines in Russian critical assessments of Dvořák’s absolute orchestral music. Overall, Dvořák’s concert tour in Russia in 1890 was somewhat of a disappointment – a succès d’estime at best. Even before the tour, Dvořák’s music had hardly been welcomed with open arms in Russia. Plans for performances of his opera Dimitrij (1882) in Moscow and St. Petersburg were quickly abandoned during the 1885/86 season, even though the work’s plot is taken from Russian history. Milan Kuna asserts that this mainly had to do with a Russian mistrust towards the Czechs, who were, after all, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In general, Kuna observes that Dvořák’s “Slavic” works, which had

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76 The St. Petersburg leg of the tour was described as such by Russian critic Hermann Laroche; John Clapham, “Dvořák’s Visit to Russia,” The Musical Quarterly 51, no. 3 (1965): 504.
78 In 1885 and 1886, Czech politician František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903) had attempted to bring about the Russian premiere of Dvořák’s opera Dimitrij (1882). An avid proponent of Slavic solidarity, Rieger believed that
thrilled the public in Germany, were not particularly well-received among the Russians, who tended to be apathetic toward the pan-Slavic movement that was so prominent in the Czech lands. The programme of the 1890 concert tour featured almost no overtly “Slavic” compositions, but Dvořák’s absolute music compositions led critics to level another kind of charge against Dvořák. Several of the reviewers describe Dvořák’s music as too learned and taxing for the audience. In reference to Dvořák’s Symphony in F major, Op. 76, for instance, Moscow critic Georgy Eduardovich Konyus (1862–1933) states that “in spite of the craftsmanship displayed by the composer, the symphony has not enough of the inner warmth of life, its musical thought does not take flight, too much of it is contrived, and it lacks sufficient immediate inspiration.” These remarks fly in the face of conventional wisdom about Dvořák, as established by many of his Austro-German critics; as stated above, images of Dvořák as a spontaneous and unreflective composer had become ingrained in the German-language press by this work – with its plot, taken from Russian history – might be appealing to audiences in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Rieger wanted this work to be staged partly because his own daughter, Marie Červinková-Riegrová (1854–1894), was the librettist. For more on Rieger and the Old Czech Party to which he belonged, see Chapter Three. Kuna points to several other reasons why the work was cancelled. Kuna, “Antonín Dvořák a Rusko [Antonín Dvořák and Russia],” passim. Kuna notes that the pan-Slavic movement in the Czech lands was a kind of reaction against the “vassal’s position” that they occupied within the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Kuna, “Dvořák’s Slavic Spirit and his Relation to Tchaikovsky and Russia,” 143. See also, Milan Kuna, “Dílo Antonína Dvořáka druhé poloviny sedmdesátých let: otázky slovanství, stylové problémy, furiant, a dumka [The Work of Antonín Dvořák during the late 1870s: Questions of the Slavic, Stylistic Problems, Furiant, and Dumka],” (Ph.D. diss., Charles University, 1954). After Dvořák accepted Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s (1840–1893) invitation to embark on a concert tour in Russia in 1890, careful thought was given to the repertoire. Items on the programme included Dvořák’s Symphony in F major, Op. 76; the Serenade for Winds, Op. 44; the Scherzo capriccioso; the First Slavonic Rhapsody; and the Symphonic Variations. (The Hussite Overture had initially been offered up, but was dismissed since it had already been performed in Moscow, and the St. Ludmila oratorio, though discussed in letters as a possible programme item, was deemed inappropriate owing to its length and the difficulty of obtaining a translation. Dvořák was adamant in his letters to V. I. Safonov and Anton Rubinstein that the Scherzo capriccioso be included on the programme.) See Clapham, “Dvořák’s Visit to Russia,” 493–500. Although enthusiastic himself, Johannes Bartz (1848–1933) indicates that audience members found the Moscow concert to be too long and the music too heavy: “from the general public, and from our Russian public in particular, full appreciation of such an individual musical master as Dvořák is not possible and cannot be expected at a first hearing. For a proper understanding and enjoyment of such intricate polyphony, such rich invention, and such original orchestration, continual attentiveness is required. And on that evening a little too much was demanded of our audience;” Politik (March 28, 1890); translated and quoted in Clapham, “Dvořák’s Visit to Russia,” 502. Georgy Eduardovich Konyus, Moskovskie Vedomosti (March 2, 1890); translated and quoted in Clapham, “Dvořák’s Visit to Russia,” 501.
the 1890s. Comments made by a reviewer in St. Petersburg also stand in stark contrast to
criticism from German-speaking Europe: “if [Dvořák’s F-major] symphony is not rich in the
quantity and quality of its themes, the development of its material is superb,” writes the Russian
critic.\(^{83}\) Such an assessment is highly atypical in criticism on Dvořák, since melodic invention,
rather than formal structure, was usually considered to be his strength. Meanwhile, Moscow
critic A. A. Komiazerzhevsky accuses Dvořák of being too cosmopolitan to be a true
nationalist\(^{84}\) – a striking accusation, given the composer’s image as a charming peasant, which
was widespread in Germany. Those who responded most favourably to Dvořák’s pieces were the
musicians in the orchestra, members of the Czech and German communities in Russia, and
especially critic Herman Laroche (1845–1904), sometimes referred to as the “Russian
Hanslick.”\(^{85}\) In spite of Laroche’s efforts on Dvořák’s behalf,\(^{86}\) Czech proximity to the Austro-
German mainstream caused Russian critics, on the whole, to consider these works by Dvořák to
be overly learned and cosmopolitan – in a word, too “German.”\(^{87}\)

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\(^{83}\) *Peterburgskii Listok* (March 12, 1890); translated and quoted in Clapham, “Dvořák’s Visit to Russia,” 504.


\(^{85}\) In a letter to Gustav Eim dated March 23, 1890, Dvořák describes Laroche as: “the leading music critic
and scholar over here, whom they call the ‘Russian Hanslick,’” “nejvýtečnější zdejší hudební kritik a učenec, říkají
mu zde ‘ruský Hanzlik;’” Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 3, 33. In a similar way, Dvořák, on occasion, referred to critic Joseph
Bennett as the “English Hanslick” (“anglický Hanslick”); see, for example, Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 2, 38; April, 24, 1885 (letter
to Václav Juda Novotný).

\(^{86}\) Laroche showed himself to be an enthusiastic supporter of Dvořák and considered the composer’s
lukewarm reception to be evidence of poor taste on the part of the Russian public. In the wake of Dvořák’s visit,
Laroche published a strongly-worded article in *Moskovskoje vědomosti* 117 (April 30, 1890), urging members of the
public and press to be more open-minded in their attitudes toward foreign composers. Kuna, “Dvořák’s Slavic Spirit
and his Relation to Tchaikovsky and Russia,” 152.

\(^{87}\) In a letter to Gustav Eim in Vienna, Dvořák reflects on his experience in St. Petersburg with the
following words: “Oh, so-called Slavic ties, where are you?” “Ó tak zvaná slovanská vzájemnosti, kde jseš?” Kuna
et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 3,
32; March 23, 1890.
Dvořák was faced with similar kinds of critiques in France, where he was viewed as a composer working within the Austro-German tradition. The Franco-Prussian war (1870–1871) had caused the French to develop something of an aversion to German culture, and the works of German composers were largely ignored in France during the late nineteenth century. Perhaps owing to the efforts of German musicians and conductors on his behalf, “Herr Dvorak” – as he was often called in various parts of Western Europe – tended to get lumped in with the Germans on the French music scene, and his music was neglected as a result.\(^8\) According to Alain Chotil-Fani, audiences were familiar with the *Slavonic Dances*, which had reached “hit-tune” status by the 1880s, but Dvořák’s works for orchestra – viewed elsewhere as his true *métier* – were virtually unknown in France.\(^8\) Part of this neglect had to do with prevailing musical tastes; the cults of Wagner and Berlioz were very prominent in fin-de-siècle Paris, making it difficult for contemporary composers – French or otherwise – to achieve recognition.\(^9\) Slavíková claims that the fact that Dvořák did not have a French publisher and never visited Paris also hindered his chances of gaining wider exposure in the city.\(^9\) While Dvořák’s music had sparked animated debates elsewhere, the French seemed to pass over it in silence.

These snapshots of Dvořák’s international reception show that multiple images of the composer were presented to the public during the late nineteenth century. At times, critics were

\(^{9}\) Ibid., 247.

\(^{9}\) Katharine Ellis shows that the cults of Wagner and Berlioz, fostered by concert organizers and impresarios in late nineteenth-century Paris, were reinforced by the French press, especially the newspaper *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, and proved to be a stumbling block to the favourable reception of other composers in that city; Katharine Ellis, “*La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 1834–1880: The State of Music Criticism in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1991). John Clapham likewise notes that an overall attitude of caution prevailed in France at this time, leading concert organizers to be highly selective when choosing repertoire; Clapham, “Dvořák on the American Scene,” 17.

unified, but, more often than not, their opinions intersected and clashed in various ways, as individual biases and the specific musical tastes of each cultural milieu were brought to bear on these discussions. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, Czech critics of the nineteenth century had a whole different set of issues to contend with. Their assessments of Dvořák were not coloured by racial prejudices in the way that some German critiques were; neither did Dvořák hold the same kind of mystique for them as he did for critics in England and America. The notion that Dvořák’s style had somehow become “American” while he was in New York was no doubt laughable to critics at home, as is indicated by Dvořák’s own outburst at the suggestion.

Yet, some of the ideas that were debated by Dvořák’s international writers emerge in contemporary Czech criticism as well. Much like his foreign critics, the Czechs had to negotiate Dvořák’s image as nationalist with his cultivation of abstract instrumental genres. Not only Russian, but certain Czech critics expressed fears that Dvořák was becoming “too German” in his orientation. What is more, these bodies of criticism on Dvořák did not exist in vacuums. While press from within Bohemia was not likely to get much attention abroad, Dvořák’s international reviews were scrutinized by the Czechs and shaped their own thinking about the composer’s works in many ways. As demonstrated above, Dvořák’s music sometimes prompted his foreign critics to polemicize, but perhaps nowhere were the critical debates more heated than

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92 James Huneker writes: “he scared one at first with his fierce Slavonic eyes, but was as mild a mannered man as ever scuttled a pupil’s counterpoint;” quoted in Beckerman, New Worlds of Dvořák, 81; the original appears in James Huneker, Steeplejack, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 67.

93 According to Dvořák’s secretary Josef Kovařík, the composer made the following pointed statement some months after the premiere of the “New World” Symphony, having become irritated by the debates about the “American” aspects of this piece: “so I am an American composer, am I? I was, I am, and I remain a Czech composer. I have only showed them the path they might take – how they should work. But I’m through with that! From this day forward I will write the way I wrote before!” Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke,” 141; the original comes from an un dated communication entitled “Poznámky ku vaši stati ‘Americká tvorba Antonína Dvořáka’ [Notes for your Study ‘The American Works of Antonín Dvořák’],” 2.
among the Czechs in the period following Dvořák’s death, when his works were met with both adulation and malign.

**Questioning Dvořák’s Place in Czech Music History: The “Dvořák Battles” in Bohemia**

During the early-twentieth century, a group of Czech critics launched an attack on Dvořák, calling the composer’s legacy into question. Issues of genre were central to this anti-Dvořák campaign. The ringleader of the group, Zdeněk Nejedlý\(^{94}\) (1878–1962), subscribed to a linear view of history, which led him to privilege the Wagnerian music drama and Lisztian symphonic poem over all other genres of music. According to Nejedlý, only composers who made substantial contributions to these so-called progressive genres warranted mention in narratives of music history. In some respects, Nejedlý’s ideas were not markedly different from those articulated by Czech critics of the early 1870s, including Václav Juda Novotný (1849–1922) and Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910), who likewise championed these genres in the name of progress and modernity. However, while the earlier critics tended to be flexible in their approaches, Nejedlý was uncompromising in his adherence to the notion of linear progress.\(^{95}\) At the time of the “Dvořák battles”\(^{96}\) (ca. 1911–1915), ideas about genre that had long been held by many Czech critics were bent to the purposes of Nejedlý and his group.\(^{97}\)

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\(^{94}\) Jarmila Doubravová suggests that the “Dvořák battles” really ought to have been called the “Nejedlý battles,” since the outspoken critic played a crucial role in the whole affair; Jarmila Doubravová, “Music on the Pages of Moderní revue or the Growth of Modern Czech Music,” in *Aspects of Music, Art, and Religion during the Period of Czech Modernism*, ed. Aleš Březina (Bern: Peter Lang Publishers, 2009), 163. Active on the Prague music scene since the early 1900s, Nejedlý was no stranger to controversy. By 1911 – the year in which the debates over Dvořák broke out in full force – Nejedlý had already stood at the centre of several disputes, including one (1906–1907) that involved Prague Conservatory director Karel Knittl (1853–1907). For more on the “Knittl affair,” see Brian Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theatre, 1900–1983* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press), 43–48, esp. 44–45; Stanislava Zachařová, *Z Bojů o Českou Hudební Kulturu [The Battles for Czech Musical Culture]* (Prague: Academia, 1979), 31–97.

\(^{95}\) Ottlová, “The ‘Dvořák Battles’ in Bohemia,” 127.

\(^{96}\) The “Dvořák Battles” are sometimes referred to as the “Dvořák Affair.” Brian Locke, for example, uses the latter designation; see Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 54–58. I use Marta Ottlová’s terminology,
Following from this rigid stance on genre, members of Nejedlý’s circle\textsuperscript{98} developed an unswerving devotion to Smetana – and, to a lesser degree, Zdeněk Fibich (1850–1900) – since both of these composers were considered to be at home in the realms of the music drama and symphonic poem. Dvořák was portrayed as their polar opposite and cast in a negative light by comparison. In a parallel to the Wagner-Brahms dichotomy, Smetana was seen as progressive and Dvořák as reactionary. Already in 1901, Nejedlý states:\textsuperscript{99} “Fibich is the true follower of Smetana, whereas Dvořák is the negation of the direction [taken by both] of these masters. For this reason, the famous Czech threesome should correctly read: Smetana-Fibich vs. Dvořák.”\textsuperscript{100} Such views became increasingly pervasive during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Significantly, Nejedlý and his adherents published most of their slanderous articles on Dvořák in a journal that they had entitled \textit{Smetana};\textsuperscript{101} meanwhile, Prague’s long-standing music publication \textit{Dalibor}, which had actually been founded in the early 1870s for the purpose of countering...
certain attacks made on Smetana, now became the mouthpiece for the defense of Dvořák. In the journal that bore his name, Smetana was depicted as nothing short of a martyr for the Czech cause – a victim of the “conservative” musical establishment that strove to promote Dvořák’s works. This kind of “Smetana vs. Dvořák” rhetoric prompted one of Dvořák’s supporters, Jan Löwenbach (1880–1972), to voice a plea in 1911, urging critics to refrain from glorifying the former composer, while impugning the latter.

In addition to praising Smetana’s operas and symphonic poems, the critics in Nejedlý’s clique sought to denigrate Dvořák’s achievements in these “progressive” genres. Most of the negative criticism on Dvořák from this period was directed at the composer’s operas. Olga

102 The journal’s title reflects this purpose. Contributors to Dalibor – in its second run (1873–1875) – defended Smetana, after his opera Dalibor (1865–67) had come under fire in the writings of several critics, most notably František Pivoda (1824–1898). In one of the first extensive articles to appear in Dalibor, back in 1873, Hostinský had set about the task of refuting certain “charges laid against [Smetana’s] opera,” namely, “its non-national direction” and “its ‘Wagnerism;’” Hostinský sought to make “readers… come to recognize [Smetana’s] Dalibor as the most national of all [Czech] serious operas;” Otakar Hostinský, “Smetanův Dalibor [Smetana’s Dalibor],” Dalibor 1, no. 7 (February 14, 1873): 49; “Slibil jsem totiž, že činěné této zpěvohře výčitky stran ‘nenárodního směru,’ ‘Wagnerianismu,’… vedou na pravou míru…” For a detailed study of the controversy surrounding Smetana’s opera Dalibor, see John Clapham, “The Smetana-Pivoda Controversy,” Music & Letters 52, no. 4 (1971): 353–364. For more on the foundation of the journal Dalibor, see Chapter Five.

103 According to Brian Locke, the city’s conservative establishment at this time consisted of the Conservatory, the Artists’ Union (Umělecká Beseda), and the journal Dalibor; Locke, Opera and Ideology in Prague, 44; for examples of this “martyrization” of Smetana, see esp. 56–57. Contributors to Dalibor, in turn, sought to highlight some of the hardships that Dvořák had to endure during his life. For instance, Boleslav Kalenský argues that Smetana did very little to help Dvořák in the early stages of his career and that it was Karel Bendl who introduced Dvořák to the Czech public; Kalenský writes that “[in 1874], a year after [Dvořák’s Prague debut], Smetana gave some moral support to Dvořák, but this came a bit late;” “Smetana rok po tom poskytl mravní pomoci Dvořákovi, pravda, ale již trochu – pozdě;” Boleslav Kalenský, “Dvořáková I: Prof. dr. Zd. Nejedlý a Dvořák [Nejedlý and Dvořák],” Dalibor 34, no. 5 (November 25, 1911): 39; see also Boleslav Kalenský, “Dvořákova II: Dvořák v licenci Fibichově a Hostinského [Dvořák in relation to Fibich and Hostinský],” Dalibor 34, no. 8 (December 16, 1911): 63–64.

104 Löwenbach writes: “it is necessary to reject the absurd method that pits two composers as incomparable as Smetana and Dvořák against each other, impugning Dvořák in the name of Smetana… Such parallels lead to absurdity these days. Dvořák is being reproached, after years of hardship in his life and career, for his sudden glory and his peaceful, cosmopolitan later life. This reproach makes it seem as if it were Dvořák’s fault that he did not come to a tragic end like Smetana… Musicology and music criticism have far more serious purposes than establishing, from beyond the grave, an artistic antagonism between masters, which never actually existed;” “dlužno a limine odmítnouti absurdní methodu, která dva zjevy tak nesouměřitelné, jako Smetana a Dvořák, stavi proti sobě a jménem Smetanovým Dvořáku potirá… tato parallela zahájí dnes již k absurdnostem. Dvořákovi po letech tuhého zápasu životního a uměleckého vytýká se náhla jeho sláva a jeho pozdější klidný, skoro měšťákůvž život. Tato výtka působí takovým dojmem, jako by bylo Dvořákovou vinou, že neskončil tak tragicky jako Smetana… Hudební věda a hudební kritika má úkoly mnohem vážnější, nežli živiti až za hrob umělecký antagonism dvou mistrů, jehož nikdy nebylo;” Jan Löwenbach, “Smetana contra Dvořák?” Hlídka Času 6, no. 337 (December 6, 1911): 5.
Settari asserts that it was, in fact, Nejedlý’s 1901 review of *Rusalka* that started the “inglorious anti-Dvořák crusade” in the first place.105 Also in 1901, Hostinský wrote a controversial overview of Dvořák’s operas, though it was not *Rusalka*, but *Dimitrij* that bore the brunt of his criticism.106 Stanislava Zachařová and Miloš Jůzl claim that Dvořák himself was offended by Hostinský’s study and had a hand in preventing its publication; it would not appear in print until 1908.107 Though Hostinský is considerably milder in his tone than Nejedlý, the two critics touch on some of the same issues. Poor text declamation108 and lack of drama are the main charges laid against Dvořák’s operas in both articles; in criticizing these elements, the writers seek to prove


106 Hostinský’s study was solicited as a contribution to a collection of essays on Dvořák, prepared by Boleslav Kalenský on the occasion of the composer’s sixtieth birthday celebration in 1901. The article was evidently regarded as unsuitable for the collection, and the entire project came to a grinding halt in 1902. For more on Hostinský’s attitude toward *Dimitrij*, see Chapter Three.

107 Zachařová, 95; Miloš Jůzl, *Otakar Hostinský* (Prague: Melantrich, 1980), 272. The article did not appear in print until well after the composer’s death – first as a separate brochure in 1908 and then in 1912, as part of the collection of essays for which it was originally intended; Otakar Hostinský, *Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naší hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music]* (Prague: Mojmír Urbánek, 1908); Otakar Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naší hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” in *Antonín Dvořák: Sborník statí o jeho díle a životě [Antonín Dvořák: A Collection of Essays about his Work and Life]*, ed. Boleslav Kalenský (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1912), 208–225; see Appendix 8 for a lengthy excerpt of this article in English translation.

108 E. Hoffer responded to the *Rusalka* review. In his rebuttal, Hoffer seeks to give Nejedlý a dose of his own medicine, by drawing attention to instances of improper text declamation in Smetana’s operas: “first of all [requirements of declamation] are not a particular characteristic of the music drama, but rather only a technical means [to an end]. To illustrate, I provide two examples: *The Bartered Bride* is, in many places, very badly declaimed; it, therefore, is not musically Czech. Wagner’s music dramas are remarkably well declaimed in German; if we translate the text, so that the Czech words are entirely correctly declaimed (in terms of prosody and syntax), we have to declare them to be musically Czech, based on [Nejedlý’s] theory;” “poprvé [požadavek deklamační] není pražádný odlišný znak hudebního dramatu, neboť požadavek správné deklamace máme na př. i po jednoduché písní; po druhé není to žadný znak hudby národnostně charakterisující, nýbrž pouhý prostředek technický. Aplikace příkladem uvádí jen dvě: *Prodaná Nevěsta* je namnoze velmi špatně deklamována: tedy není hudebně českou. Wagnerova hudební dramata jsou znamenitě deklamována německy: přeložíme-li si text jejich tak, aby české slovo v nich bylo naprosto správně (prosodicky i větně) deklamováno, výhlasiti je musíme podle teorie autorovy za hudebně české;” E. Hoffer, “Ke kritice *Rusalky* [Response to the *Rusalka* Critique],” *Rozhledy* 11, no. 9 (June 1, 1901): 223–227, esp. 224.
that Dvořák’s operatic works are insufficiently Czech and insufficiently Wagnerian – in essence, not enough like the serious operas of Smetana. Nejedlý’s conclusions, in particular, show just how rigid he was in his commitment to the music drama as the only possible approach to be taken by Czech composers in the realm of opera:

*Rusalka* is not a music drama, just as Dvořák’s earlier operas are not. Since we cannot imagine a different shape to opera than music drama, *Rusalka* is, in its overall intention, an erroneous and bad work […] In the name of Dvořák’s true followers, we have to ask the master most earnestly not to be taken off course by flattery, which leads him to paths that are fatal for him, and to return to the domain where he reigns supreme in the world: chamber music. His symphonic poems and his operas will always take away from his great glory in history – a glory that he has ensured with his absolute music compositions.\(^{109}\)

Nejedlý could not phrase it in plainer terms: Dvořák had failed in his attempts to write works in these “progressive” genres and ought to have steered clear of them. The obituary that Nejedlý wrote following Dvořák’s death, though relatively cordial on the whole, contains a similar biting remark: “the supreme recognition that Dvořák received [during his life],” writes Nejedlý, “rids us of at least one sorrow, which gripped our hearts at the deaths of Smetana and Fibich.” He continues:

These two masters died before they could say all that was stored within them, and before that which they said gained recognition and understanding […] With Dvořák, it is different. Dvořák lived to see the fruits of his efforts, he attained recognition that could escalate no further, and he communicated all that was in him. That he wanted to say more than he was able will always be to his credit.\(^{110}\)

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\(^{109}\) Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Dvořáková *Rusalka* [Dvořák’s *Rusalka*],” *Rozhledy* 11, no. 8 (May 25, 1901): 208; “*Rusalka* není hudebním dramatem, jako jím nebyly dříveště opory Dvořákovy. Protože však nemůžeme připustit jiný útvar zpěvohry než hudební drama, jest *Rusalka* již v celkové intenci dílo chybné, špatné […] Ve jménu pravých citelů Dvořákových musíme mistra prosíť co nejsnažnější, aby se nedal svést lichocením, jež ho boje na dráhy jemu v budoucnosti osudné a vrátit se tam, kde je dnes neomezeným pánanem světa, k hudbě komorní. Jeho symfoniccké básně a jeho zpěvohry vždy budou Dvořákoví ujímát v historii na veliké slávě, již si pojistil svými výtvory absolutně hudebními.”

\(^{110}\) Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Antonín Dvořák: Pohled na jeho životní dílo [Antonín Dvořák: An Examination of his Life’s Work],” *Osvěta* 34, no. 6 (1904): 524–525; “toto svrchované uznání, jehož se Dvořákoví dostalo, zbavuje nás při smrti jeho aspoň jedné bolesti, jaká nám srdece svírala při smrti Smetanově i Fibichově. Tito dva mistři zemřeli dříve, než mohli říci, co v nich bylo uloženo, a než to, co řekli, došlo uznání a pochopení […] U Dvořáka bylo jinak. Dvořák dožil se ovoce svých snah, došel uznání, jež se stupňovatí nemohlo, a řekl vše co v něm dřímal. Že chtěl říci více, než mohl, bude mu vždy sloužit ke cti.”
In stating that Dvořák’s recognition “could escalate no further,” Nejedlý implies that public attention to the composer had become excessive. Even more telling, though, is Nejedlý’s comment that Dvořák had exhausted all of his creative powers by the end of his life – a comment that was undoubtedly meant to undermine the significance of Dvořák’s operatic and programmatic output, as the composer devoted himself almost exclusively to these realms in the final years of his career.

Since Nejedlý believed that contributions to “progressive” genres were the only ones that counted from the perspective of posterity, the next logical step in the anti-Dvořák campaign was to omit Dvořák from discussions of Czech music history. Nejedlý employs this strategy in his book *Czech Modern Opera after Smetana* (Česká Moderní Zpěvohra po Smetanovi), published in 1911; instead of portraying Dvořák as the polar opposite of Smetana – as someone, who took his operas in a different direction – Nejedlý excludes Dvořák from his study altogether.\(^\text{111}\) Nejedlý explains the omission by claiming that Dvořák struggled throughout his career to find his own dramatic voice and did not have much of an impact on younger generations of Czech opera composers.\(^\text{112}\) While ignoring Dvořák, Nejedlý devotes ample space to discussions of the operas of Fibich and also addresses the works of Josef Foerster (1833–1907), Karel Kovařovic (1862–1920), and Otakar Ostrčil (1879–1935). The book was part of a deliberate effort to eliminate Dvořák from the Czech opera canon, illustrative of what Brian Locke calls “a new era where Czech identity was defined more by exclusion than by acceptance.”\(^\text{113}\)

\(^{111}\) According to Nejedlý, this struggle culminated in Dvořák’s final opera *Armida* (1903), which he characterizes as a veritable shipwreck; Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Česká Moderní Zpěvohra po Smetanovi* [Czech Modern Opera after Smetana] (Prague: Knihkupec C. K. České University, 1911). For more on this omission, see Chapter Three.

\(^{112}\) Nejedlý, *Česká Moderní Zpěvohra po Smetanovi* [Czech Modern Opera after Smetana], 162.

\(^{113}\) Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 44.
Even though Nejedlý and others in his circle had little use for Dvořák in the field of opera, they did acknowledge the composer’s skill in genres of absolute instrumental music. This too, however, was ultimately seen as a flaw. In his 1901 study, for example, Hostinský praises the orchestral parts in Dvořák’s operas, but considers the composer’s inordinate focus on musical aspects to be an impediment to dramatic progression. Even critic Karel Stecker (1861–1918), who came out on the pro-Dvořák side of the debate, felt that Dvořák’s inherent musicality made him ill-suited to writing for the operatic stage; in Stecker’s words:

Opera was never Dvořák’s medium. Dvořák’s tendency to favour older forms of opera and his willingness to make compromises for the sake of the music, at the expense of the drama, suggest that Dvořák was unable to deny himself like Gluck and forget that he is a “musician.” All of this hinders us from considering Dvořák’s dramatic works to be his finest.¹¹⁴

To the Nejedlý group, Dvořák’s talent as an instrumental music composer only stood in the way of his being able to write truly dramatic opera.

Dvořák’s cultivation of abstract genres also posed a challenge to those who sought to map out Czech music history on a linear plane. Having dismissed Dvořák’s contributions to “progressive” genres, these critics did not quite know where to place his other works within their schemas. This line of thinking led several critics to assert that Dvořák really belonged to an earlier era – one that was untouched by Smetana’s reforms. Such a stance is evident, for instance, in Nejedlý’s statement that “Dvořák supplied ex post facto what had been missing [from Czech

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Jůzl, Otakar Hostinský, 272; “opera nebyla nikdy vlastní půdou Dvořákovou; již náklonnost Dvořáková k starší formě opery, ústupky, jež činí nejednou straně čistě hudební na úkor dramatičnosti, okolnost, že Dvořák nedovede jako kdyysi Gluck tak se zapříti, aby ‘zapomněl, že jest hudebníkem’ atp., vše to nedovoluje nám hledati přední význam Dvořákovu ve tvorbě dramatické.” Elsewhere Stecker writes along similar lines: “Dvořák, in the outpouring of his fantasy when writing dramatic works, often fails to remind himself of the characteristic, well-known statement made by Gluck: ‘before I start composing, I try to forget that I am a musician,’ which results in the musical aspects being conformed to the dramatic;” “Dvořák začasté v proudu vlnění fantasie opomněl ve tvorbě své dramatické připamatovatí sobě karakteristickou známu výpověď Gluckovu: ‘Prve než začnu skládati, snažím se zapomenouti, že jsem hudebníkem,’ t. j. podřiďovati v opěře účin hudební účinu dramatickému;” Karel Stecker, “Kantáta a Hudba Cirkevní [The Cantata and Sacred Music],” in Antonín Dvořák: Šborník statí o jeho díle a životě [Antonín Dvořák: A Collection of Essays about his Work and Life], ed. Boleslav Kalenský (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1912), 247.
One of Nejedlý’s students, Vladimír Helfert (1886–1945), takes this idea even further, placing Dvořák in the Classical period:

Currently, it is possible for us to look at Dvořák’s works with the passage of time, which allows, even forces us calmly to separate the grains from the weeds; it is necessary to behold in Dvořák a certain Czech compositional type, which completes the picture of Classical music [in the Czech lands]. It is the compositional type of the Czech musician (muzikant), with all of his merits as well as his large shortcomings and his internal discord… Dvořák came late; he came at a time when this muzikant element, as an expression of the era and culture, belonged to the past. We needed a composer like Dvořák about one hundred and fifty or more years ago.116

Here, Helfert uses the term muzikant or “village musician” in a derogatory sense, as a means of underscoring Dvořák’s lack of education and lack of professionalism.117 Above all, Helfert considers Dvořák to be hopelessly regressive, since, according to the critic, the image of the Czech muzikant dates back to the “Counter-Reformation, especially the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”118 Perhaps no pithier distillation of Nejedlý’s perspective on the matter exists than the following excerpt from an article published in 1912; Nejedlý states bluntly:

Vladimír Helfert, “Více Dvořáka! [More Dvořák!],” Česká Kultura 1, no. 4 (November 15, 1912): 115–116; “Dnes, když je nám možno na Dvořákovo dílo pohlížeti z časové perspektivy, která již dovoluje a dokonce i vynucuje si klidné prosévání zrn od plevele, nutno ve Dvořákově spisovatě určitý skladatelský typ český, jenž obraz naší klassické hudby uceluje. Jest to skladatelský typ českého muzikanta, a to muzikant se všemi přednostmi, ale také se všemi velikými nedostatkry a vnitřními rozpory… Dvořák přišel pozdě; přišel v době, kdy naše muzikantství jakožto projev doby a projev kultury náleželo již minulosti. Skladatel rázu Dvořákovova bylo nám třeba před stopadesátí a více lety.”

Karin Stöckl-Steinebrunner observes that the label “Bohemian muzikant” was also used by some of Dvořák’s German critics “as a contrast to the ‘philosopher’ composers, the reflective (reflektierend);” Stöckl-Steinebrunner, “The ‘Uncomfortable’ Dvořák,” 206. These binary opposites come to the fore in Theodor Helm’s review from 1900 of Dvořák’s The Wild Dove (Holoubek): “the full-blooded musician Dvořák, who in his earlier works presented himself as the complete prototype of the merrily creating ‘Bohemian Muzikant,’ has recently been putting himself more frequently in the camp of the reflecting programmatic composers;” “der Vollblutmusiker Dvořák, welcher in seinen früheren Werken so recht das Prototyp des schaffenslustigen ‘böhmischen Muzikant’ vorstellte, sich neuerdings immer häufiger ins Lager des reflectirenden Programm-Componisten begibt;” Theodor Helm, Musikalisches Wochenblatt 31 (February 15, 1900): 99; translated and quoted in Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 121–122.

Czech original: “[doba] protireformáční, hlavně na konci 17. a v 18. století.” Helfert ultimately sees Dvořák as a threat to Czech audiences, who cry out for “more Dvořák,” without realizing that exposure to his music causes them to “[lose] the ability to take notice of works that are truly modern and [of] cultural [value]:” obehcnstvo po čase ztrácí schopnost vnímati díla skutečné modern a kulturní;” Vladimir Helfert, “Více Dvořáka! [More Dvořák!],” Česká Kultura 1, no. 4 (November 15, 1912): 118.

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I am not interested in Dvořák. For me, he represents a past and dead chapter in Czech music where there is nothing much to research… Dvořák means the same to me as Mendelssohn in German music, on a reduced Czech scale and my knowledge of history tells me enough about the fate of the Mendelssohnian type of personality… He belongs to the past and we must wait until time eats away what has to be eaten away. Then he will die a natural death. These kinds of dying individuals have never interested me, even less so, when elsewhere over here, new, beautiful art is being born, at which we may gaze with our heads held high and with clear-sightedness.119

Nejedlý categorically rejects Dvořák’s output, enlisting particularly distasteful imagery of rot and decay.120 As Nejedlý placed little value on the areas that were typically thought to be Dvořák’s strengths – namely, symphonic and chamber music – he believed that Dvořák’s legacy might be characterized as “a past and dead chapter in Czech music.”

Critics in Nejedlý’s group further questioned the originality of Dvořák’s music.121 Leon Botstein points out that this too stemmed from a teleological conception of music history; pieces that were deemed to be original were likely to stand the test of time, while those that merely imitated were bound to fade into oblivion.122 Although each of the critics in the Nejedlý crowd


120 In her astute commentary on this passage, Mary Kalil points not only to Nejedlý’s anti-Semitism, but also to his deep sense of insecurity about Czech culture in general; the phrase “Mendelssohn, on a reduced Czech scale” was meant to give Dvořák a kind of double-negative designation; Kalil, “Reports from Offstage,” 82.

121 Already in his 1901 review of Rusalka, Nejedlý accuses Dvořák of being unoriginal, claiming that “whole phrases” were taken from Smetana’s Dalibor, Karel Kovařovic’s The Dogheads (Psohlavci), Smetana’s Libuše, and Wagner Das Ring des Nibelungen – references that, according to Nejedlý, “are recognizable even to the layman” (“pozná [to] každý laik”); Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Dvořákova Rusalka [Dvořák’s Rusalka],” Rozhledy 11, no. 8 (May 25, 1901): 208.

122 Botstein, “Reversing the Critical Tradition,” 15; Botstein explains: “the criteria of dominance, influence, and originality (analogues to the idea of successful mutation and to the victors in the struggle for survival and natural selection) were used to validate aesthetically a normative sequence of style and periodization.”
found fault with Dvořák in this regard at one time or other, ¹²³ Josef Bartoš (1887–1952) was most bothered by it, detecting a heavy reliance on foreign models in Dvořák’s music. ¹²⁴ In his 1913 book Antonín Dvořák: Critical Studies (Antonín Dvořák: Kritická Studie),¹²⁵ Bartoš depicts Dvořák as a plagiarist, and hence, as someone who was unable to contribute anything new to Czech musical culture. That Dvořák’s works were generally held in high regard was, in Bartoš’s view, merely a reflection of audience ignorance; as Bartoš puts it, “the world did not check where Dvořák took his property from; they thought everything was his own invention, and that is why they believed he was so original.”¹²⁶ Critics in the Nejedlý group found it convenient to take up this mode of argumentation, since demonstrating that Dvořák merely sought to mimic certain “foreign” models served as proof that he was insufficiently Czech, especially in comparison with Smetana.¹²⁷ Bartoš also saw Dvořák’s eclecticism – his willingness to switch styles and genres – as evidence that the composer did not have a firm artistic vision of his own.¹²⁸ Once again this

¹²³ Helfert detects certain “inconsistencies” in Dvořák’s style, resulting from a mix of influences, and Otakar Zich draws attention to Dvořák’s “eclecticism;” Otakar Zich, “Dvořákův význam umělecký [Dvořák’s Artistic Significance],” Hudební sborník 1, no. 3 (1912–1913): 145–180.

¹²⁴ This notion was not limited to the writings of the anti-Dvořák crowd in the Czech lands, but can be found in some of Dvořák’s international reviews as well. In an article from the mid-1890s on the St. Ludmila oratorio, for instance, Viennese critic Heinrich Reinhardt (1865–1922) states that “all Dvořák’s art... is not sufficient to cover up the often quite painfully palpable lack of invention... he merges completely into his famous models and becomes an epigone;” translated and quoted in McColl, Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896–1897: Critically Moving Forms, 182.

¹²⁵ Josef Bartoš, Antonín Dvořák: Kritická Studie [Antonín Dvořák: Critical Studies] (Prague: Josef Pelcl, 1913). This was a scandalous publication that even Bartoš would eventually come to regret; Burghauser, “Metamorphoses of Dvořák’s Image in the Course of Time,” 21.


¹²⁷ Ottlová notes that there was a tendency among Czech critics to atomize works and identify their constituent parts, separating the Czech elements from the foreign ones. Ottlová, “The ‘Dvořák Battles’ in Bohemia,” 130.

¹²⁸ Josef Bartoš writes: “the Slavonic period of Dvořák’s artistic creation is usually taken to be the time when Dvořák first arrived at a completely individual style. We are doubtful of this, however, for even the pieces generally referred to as ‘Slavic’ are not yet free from all influences. The Slavonic Rhapsodies, for instance, contain reminiscences of Wagner and Smetana, the Slavonic Dances [draw] upon Smetana, Schubert, and Brahms, etc. This [period of] focus might better be characterized as [a period in which] Dvořák latched onto the styles of Schubert and Smetana. Indeed, it is not Dvořák’s own, purely individual style that forms the foundation of Dvořák’s ‘Slavic’ expression. The best proof that Dvořák did not establish his own, definitive style is the circumstance that, soon
statement is borne out of the conviction that only those genres in which Smetana reigned supreme were the ones that ought to be taken up by Czech composers. Jarmil Burghauser aptly summarizes the views held by members of the anti-Dvořák camp when he writes that “the principal philosophy of this group was to depict Dvořák as a primitive, incapable of any artistic reflection, a conservative, even a reactionary in style, haphazardly mirroring the most diverse influences.”

As these battles demonstrate, Dvořák’s reception in the Czech lands was not without controversy. In 1912, the polemics escalated to such a point that members of the Prague musical establishment rallied together and signed a protest, decrying the slanderous articles that had been written about Dvořák. The statement was published in several prominent newspapers, including the leading Prague daily Národní Listy:

For some time now, a group, coalescing around the music journal Smetana, has been waging a battle against Antonín Dvořák. We give full freedom to every substantive and respectable critique; however, we cannot look on calmly, [when we encounter] pronouncements that are untrue and insulting… It is our duty to object publicly to these expressions of fanatical prejudice, and we protest against their crude and base tone, in afterward – after a very short period – he abandoned the Slavic style, and following that time, his style changed markedly; the Slavonic period lasted five years (at the most); “slovanská doba Dvořáková uměleckého tvoření pokládá se zpravidla za období v němž Dvořák dosáhl svého naprosto osobitého výrazu. O tom však dlužno pochybovat, neboť i skladby všeobecně zvané „slovanskými” nejsou ještě prosty vlivů. Tak ‘Slovanské Rhapsodie’ na př. mají reminiscence z Wagnera a Smetany, ‘Slovanské Tance’ ze Smetany, Schuberta, a Brahmsa, atd. To soustředění jakékoliv lze snad nejlépe charakterizovat Dvořákovým příchýlením k Schubertovu a Smetanovu. Ano, a ne vlastní, čistě osobní styl Dvořáků tvoří podklad ‘slovanského’ výrazu Dvořáková. Nejlepším dokladem toho, že Dvořák nedošel tehdy vlastního definitivního svého výrazu, je mi okolnost, že se brzy po nějaké zvláště krátké době, ze slovanského výrazu probírá a že po té době jeho výraz sílně se mění: trvat’ vlastní slovanské období pouhé (anevjejvše) pětilití;” Josef Bartoš, “Dvořáková Hudba Komorní [Dvořák’s Chamber Music],” Smetana 3, nos. 2–3 (October 18, 1912): 26–29, esp. 26.


which immature and uneducated people presume to speak about a master of world renown.\footnote{[Various Signatures], “Protest,” \textit{Národní Listy} 52, no. 346 (December 15, 1912): 4; the same statement appeared in \textit{Venkov}, \textit{Právo Lidu}, and \textit{Čas}; “Již delší dobu vede skupina, sdružená kolem hudebního listu Smetana soustavný boj proti Antonínmu Dvořákoví. Každá věcné a slušné kritice přiznáváme plnou volnost, nemůžeme však přihlížeti klidně ku projevům nefaktním a urážlivým… Máme za svoji povinnost ohraditi se veřejně proti těmto projevům fanatické zaujatosti a protestujeme proti jich hrubému a nízkému tónu, jímž dovolují si mluviti lidé nezralí a nevychozovati o mistru významu světového;” for the last sentence of this excerpt, I use the translation that is quoted in Locke, \textit{Opera and Ideology in Prague}, 58.}

Nejedlý had declared “there is nothing much to research” about Dvořák, as quoted above; however, the period immediately following the battles witnessed an upsurge in scholarly activity on the composer. Among Dvořák’s most avid supporters to emerge onto the scene was Otakar Šourek (1883–1956), who produced a meticulous four-volume book on the life and works of Dvořák, the first edition of which was published between 1916 and 1933.\footnote{Otakar Šourek, \textit{Život a Dílo Ant. Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Ant. Dvořák]}, 4 vols. (Prague: Hudební Matice Umělecké Besedy, 1916–1933).} In spite of the efforts of the pro-Dvořák circle and the change of heart experienced by some members of the anti-Dvořák camp – Helfert, for example, eventually expressed a sense of regret about having been part of Nejedlý’s group – the “Dvořák battles” had a far-reaching negative impact.\footnote{Odřich Pulkert notices a decline in the number of Dvořák opera productions at Prague’s National Theatre between the years of 1905 and 1917, even though both directors who stood at the Theatre’s helm during those years, Karel Kovařovic (1862–1920) and Otakar Ostrčil, were Dvořák supporters. Pulkert, “Dvořák’s dramatisches Oeuvre im gesellschaftlichen Kunstbetrieb und sein Widerhall seit seinem Entstehen bis 1945,” 194–195. For all of the statements they made against audiences, members of the anti-Dvořák circle actually believed that they had the support of the public behind them. In addition to the decrease in the number of Dvořák operas performed, Helfert allegedly observes a decline in attendance at concerts in which Dvořák’s music was featured; Vladimír Helfert, “Více Dvořáka! [More Dvořák!],” \textit{Česká Kultura} 1, no. 4 (November 15, 1912): 118.} Exchanges between these two distinct groups would continue well into the 1910s, though Locke notes the ‘Protest,’ published in the press in 1912, marked a shift in the debate away from
Dvořák himself and toward the musical establishment. Ottlová argues that vestiges of these battles persisted in Czech music scholarship long after the disputes themselves had ceased.

In her concluding remarks, Ottlová looks forward to an era when music historians will, to quote Antonín Srba (1881–1961), “[be] unconfused by Hostinský’s theories and Nejedlý’s judgements.” To a degree, that era was 1870s Prague. Dvořák had not yet been typecast as a reactionary in those years. When he first entered into the public eye in the early 1870s, he was actually hailed in the Czech press as a composer writing “from the most modern perspective,” and these early Czech discourses on Dvořák will be explored in Chapter Two. Nor was Dvořák viewed as Smetana’s antithesis. Though Smetana was quickly becoming a towering figure in Czech musical culture, notions of “Czechness” were not so narrow at this time as to preclude Dvořák’s inclusion in the discussion; in fact, the names of Smetana and Dvořák were frequently coupled together under a common nationalist banner. Already active on the Prague music scene, Hostinský was one of several critics to describe Dvořák in 1878 as Smetana’s successor in the realm of comic opera, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Moreover, the image of the Bohemian village musician or “musikant” – disdained by members of the Nejedlý circle – had positive connotations throughout much of the late nineteenth century, when simplicity,

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134 Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 58. Nejedlý responded to the “Protest” in the press not by focusing on Dvořák, but by seeking to discredit the thirty-one individuals who had signed the document in the composer’s defense; Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Boj o Dvořáka II: Personalie [The Battle over Dvořák II: Personal Data],” *Smetana* 3, nos. 9–10 (January 3, 1913): 102–105.

135 As an example, Ottlová cites Miloš Jůzl’s monograph on Hostinský from 1980, where Dvořák’s international success is still portrayed as a spiteful act towards Smetana. In Jůzl’s words, “it was in the year when Smetana became deaf (1874) that Dvořák scored his first significant success as a composer... In the year, when Smetana died (1884), Dvořák triumphed in London...” “v roce Smetanova ohluchnutí (1874) začínají první větší úspěchy mladého Dvořáka... v roce Smetanova úmrtí (1884) dosáhl Dvořák velkých úspěchů v Londýně;” Jůzl, *Otakar Hostinský*, 265; Jůzl’s uncritical reliance on the work of Zdeněk Nejedlý is problematic, and the book often betrays Jůzl’s strong Communist bent, which is not surprising in view of the book’s publication date; quoted and translated in Ottlová, “The ‘Dvořák Battles’ in Bohemia,” 132–133.

136 “The truth about Dvořák that we feel while listening to Dvořák’s music will only be told... when a historian arrives who is unconfused by Hostinský’s theories and Nejedlý’s judgements;” “pak vysloveno bude o Dvořákově, co cítíme při poslechu... až dostane se mu historika nezměněného theoriem Hostinského a úsudky Nejedlého;” translated and quoted in Ottlová, “The ‘Dvořák Battles’ in Bohemia,” 132.
directness, and rurality were prized as uniquely Czech traits.\textsuperscript{137} In many respects, the polemics of the 1910s would have been unimaginable to Czech critics writing some thirty or forty years earlier.

At the same time, certain issues that would become central in the “Dvořák battles” were already percolating among critics in these previous decades. As noted above, Nejedlý adhered rigidly to ideas about genre that had been formulated by Czech critics in the early 1870s. Already then, “progressive” genres were given priority over the ones that had been inherited from the Classical era. Both Hostinský and Novotný urged Czech composers to embrace these newer genres of music and keep up with the spirit of the times, claiming that this was the only way in which Czechs could really make their mark in the international arena; ironically, Dvořák’s reputation abroad rested primarily on his contributions to genres that most Czech critics considered to be outdated. Even at home, absolute music was taken to be his niche,\textsuperscript{138} and critics had to reconcile his cultivation of abstract instrumental genres with their own theories; these issues will be examined in Chapter Four. As in the twentieth century, Dvořák’s Czech reception during the nineteenth century was largely dependent on attitudes toward genre, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters.

\textsuperscript{137} Beckerman describes a kind of “interpenetration, [occurring] at the deepest level of what we have called ‘Czechness,’ where conventional barriers between urban sophistication and rural naïveté, progressive and conservative approaches, and popular and serious styles are dissolved;” see Beckerman, “In Search of Czechness in Music,” 71.

\textsuperscript{138} On this matter, it is instructive to compare a statement made by an anonymous critic in Dalibor in 1879 with one made by František Hejda in the same journal a decade later. The earlier critic writes: “out of our Czech composers, the one who was best able to rule both the theatre and the concert hall… was Dvořák;” meanwhile Hejda imagines a much narrower sphere of activity for Dvořák: “over the course of several years, Czech music has matured, reaching a height and perfection that is praiseworthy and honourable. We looked on with enthusiasm as Smetana founded our very own Czech opera [and] we admire the unsuspected wealth of original creations that bear the name of Antonín Dvořák in the realm of instrumental and chamber music.” G., “Listy z Venkova [Papers from Rural Areas],” Dalibor 1, no. 12 (April 20, 1879): 96; “z českých skladatelů nejlépe se podařilo i zde našemu Dvořákoví opanovat v divadle i v koncertě a nakloniti sobě všecky myslí.” František Hejda, “Hudební epíštoly: Opera a koncert na českém venkově [Musical Epistles: Opera and Concert in Czech Rural Areas],” Dalibor 11, nos. 14–15 (March 30, 1889): 107; “minulá léta česká hudba vyspěla k výši a dokonalosti obdivu- a úctyhodné. Sledovali jsme s nadšením vytvoření vlastní české opery Bedřichem Smetanou, obdivujeme netušené bohatství originalních výtvorů, jež v instrumentalní a komorní hudbě naši nesou jméno Antonín Dvořák.”
Outline of the Dissertation

Dvořák’s relationship with the Czech public – namely, his critics and audiences, during the late nineteenth century – forms the focus of the next four chapters. The topic is explored by way of three case studies that deal with Dvořák’s contributions to choral, operatic, and symphonic genres. Each of the works examined came at a significant moment in Dvořák’s career in the Czech lands.

Chapter Two examines the circumstances surrounding the performance in 1873 of Dvořák’s choral cantata *Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain* (*Hymnus: Dědicové Bílé Hory*, 1872). This overtly patriotic composition is currently all but forgotten, but its Prague premiere marked Dvořák’s professional debut – an event that would be mentioned on the pages of the Czech press for several years. Many cultural and political factors aligned to make this work’s first performance a success. Dvořák managed to exceed public expectations in the realm of choral music, prompting audiences and critics to be unreserved in their praise. Recent political events gave the subject matter of the text – taken from Czech history – a unique currency. The chapter further considers *Hymnus* against the backdrop of the intense Wagner debates being waged among Czech critics at this time, while highlighting the work’s hitherto neglected but far more patent references to Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*. The lukewarm English reception of *Hymnus*, also traced in this chapter, reinforces just how much the piece was wedded to its context in early-1870s Prague.

Another important juncture is addressed in Chapter Three. Having achieved a certain standing with his compatriots by the late 1870s, Dvořák knew nonetheless that he would never truly be taken seriously without scoring a major triumph in the theatre, as opera was nurtured and valued in the Czech lands more than any other genre. With the 1878 production of his comic
opera *The Cunning Peasant* (Šelma Sedlák, 1877), Dvořák was able to break through on the coveted Czech operatic stage. The chapter draws attention to the ways in which Dvořák tailored this work to the tastes of audiences at the Prague Provisional Theatre. Its design betrays a sensitivity to the politics that had come over the Theatre in the mid-1870s. The opera also contains blatant nods to existing Czech comic opera repertories, which helped to secure its initial popularity with the Czech public. Perhaps more so than any other Dvořák work, *The Cunning Peasant* prompted critics to discuss connections between Dvořák’s operas and those of Smetana. In addition to foregrounding these discourses, the chapter examines the reactions of Czech critics to performances of this opera in Dresden and Vienna.

Chapter Four investigates Czech perspectives on Dvořák’s cultivation of the symphony – a genre that was generally neglected in the Czech lands, not only because it seemed to stand in the way of the “progressive” direction promoted by most critics, but also because it had decidedly “German” connotations. The Prague premiere in 1881 of Dvořák’s first widely recognized symphony, the D major, Op. 60, proved to be crucial in defining his role in the concert hall. In spite of the work’s conspicuous allusions to the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms, critics in Prague sought to show that the work was, in fact, a “Czech Spring Symphony,” to quote the reviewer for *Dalibor*. The chapter explores the strategies used by Czech critics to take ownership of Dvořák in the symphonic realm. Reviews of this Symphony are analyzed in light of German-Czech politics of the early 1880s and Czech music criticism, where clear preference was given to the symphonic poem.

The concluding chapter focuses on the various agents at play in Dvořák’s Czech reception and maps out the specific roles of critics, audiences, and the composer himself. Critics enlisted Dvořák’s music to advance their own agendas and served as mediators between Dvořák and the
larger Czech public. Audiences, in turn, appeared to have remarkable sway over critical opinion. The chapter ultimately underscores the active part that Dvořák took in cultivating and maintaining a certain image for himself in the Czech lands.
CHAPTER TWO

“SINGING A GRAND HYMNUS OF THE NATION”: DVOŘÁK’S PRAGUE DEBUT

Introduction

In the fall of 1878, the newspaper *Národní Listy* published a feuilleton on Antonín Dvořák, written by critic Václav Juda Novotný (1849–1922).¹ Though the newspaper reported regularly on musical matters – keeping readers particularly well-informed about happenings at Prague’s Provisional Theatre – rarely were such items front-page material.² Before proceeding to invite the public to an up-coming concert of Dvořák’s music, Novotný reflects on some of Dvořák’s past accomplishments, beginning his article as follows:

The name of the young composer Antonín Dvořák gleamed in public for the first time in March of 1873, when our youthful choral society “Hlahol” performed Dvořák’s *Hymnus* for mixed chorus with orchestra, for which the composer excerpted the words of Hálek’s poem *Heirs of the White Mountain*. It is a breathtaking moment, the most touching in the whole poem, when Mother Country blesses her awakened children; the feelings of the poet brim over [and] his immense love for the country is expressed with fiery words. This grandiose image overwhelmed the whole soul of the young composer, who boldly lifted himself to new heights on the wings of poetic enthusiasm using grand musical forms. This very complicated piece paved its way to the hearts of the Czech audience, and the name of the hitherto unknown composer appeared at once among the ranks of our foremost composers.³

Novotný is referring to the Hlahol choral society’s performance of Dvořák’s cantata for mixed chorus and orchestra *Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain (Hymnus: Dědicové Bílé Hory,*

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² Reports on musical matters were typically confined to the third or fourth page of *Národní Listy*, appearing under the heading “Literatura a Umění” [“Literature and Art”].

³ “Jméno mladého skladatele Antonína Dvořáka zalesko se poprvé na veřejnosti v březnu r. 1873, kdy junácký náš spolek pěvecký ‘Hlahol’ provedl ve svém koncertě Dvořákův ‘Hymnus’ pro smíšený sbor s orkestrem, k němuž skladatel vyňal slova z Hálkový básně ‘Dědicové Bílé Hory.’ Jest to úchvatný moment, nejdojemnější z celé básně, kde matka vlast žehná zbuženým dětem; cit básníka tu překypuje, nesmírná jeho lásky k vlasti razí si tu cestu slovy plamennými. Obraz ten velkolepý uchvátil celou duši mladého skladatele, jenž v mohutných formách hudebních směle se povznesl do výše na křídlech basnického nadšení. Velmi komplikovaná ta skladba rázem si proklesla cestu k srdečním českého obecenstva, a jmeno neznámého dosud skladatele zastkvělo se pojednou v řadě předních naších komponistů.”
1872) that took place at the New Town Theatre in Prague on March 9, 1873. The concert had left such an impression on Novotný that he continued to rave about it more than five years later.⁴

Novotný was not the only Czech critic to wax lyrical about the 1873 performance of *Hymnus*. The story of the work’s successful premiere quickly became an indispensible part of Dvořák’s biography, not to be omitted from any Czech account of his life and achievements. Some Czech writers present a rather distorted view of the event, implying that, from that moment, Dvořák’s reputation among the Czechs was secure. Boleslav Kalenský, for instance, paints an overly simplistic picture in his biographical sketch of Dvořák from 1912, when he states that “Dvořák, who was celebrated from this evening onward, once again took to his working table and with double the zeal undertook to compose more.”⁵ Other writers allow their enthusiasm for the premiere to translate into praise for the work itself. In the obituary for Dvořák that appeared in several of Prague’s most prominent newspapers, the anonymous author not only describes the 1873 concert as a turning point for Dvořák, but also characterizes the piece as one of Dvořák’s finest: “it was only in 1873,” the author writes, “that Dvořák was able to bring himself before the public for the first time, with a very deep work, *Hymnus* from Hálek’s *Heirs of the White Mountain*; on account of its grand scale, distinctive characteristics, and well-handled technique, it still earns a spot among Dvořák’s most remarkable works.”⁶ Critic Karel Stecker (1861–1918) writes about *Hymnus* in similarly glowing terms in his chapter on Dvořák’s choral

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⁴ Novotný attended the *Hymnus* premiere, and his review of the concert is discussed below.


compositions for the 1912 omnibus; as Stecker puts it, “Hymnus is a composition of unusual artistic maturity, and even though it comes from Dvořák’s first creative period, it will always be counted among the most ripe of his works, indeed among the most grandiose choral pieces ever written.”

Dvořák did much to perpetuate this enthusiasm for Hymnus, often mentioning its premiere as an important benchmark in his career. On the title page of the work’s second autograph score from 1880, he adds the inscription “my first success at a public concert.” Passing references to the performance can also be found in various interviews and letters. According to the Sunday Times, Dvořák stated in 1885 that Hymnus “gained a great success and gave [him] vast encouragement,” and in an 1886 interview for The Pall Mall Gazette, he allegedly spoke of the mid-1870s as a time when he was “pretty well-known [at home and in his own circles] as the composer of a Bohemian Patriotic Hymn.” As late as 1901, Dvořák looks back on the Hymnus premiere in a letter addressed to the Hlahol choral society; his reference to the exact date of the performance nearly three decades later shows just how much the moment was ingrained in his memory. A special concert was eventually organized in Prague in 1898 to celebrate the twenty-


8 The following inscription appears on the title page of the work’s second autograph score (S76–1438): “První můj úspěch ve veřejném koncertu” (Dvořák Museum, Prague).


10 Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 4 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1995), 208; in a letter to the Hlahol choral society, dated April 23, 1901, Dvořák writes, “it was with sincere joy that I read your dear letter, in which you congratulate me for having achieved highest honours (member of the House of Lords), and I am doubly glad about it because it is at the same time an unforgettable reminder of my first ascent (March 9, 1873) as a composer, when back then Hlahol so happily performed my Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain under the direction of Karel Bendl;” “s upřimou radostí četl jsem Váš milý dopis ve kterém mi blahopřejete k mému nejvyššímu vyznamenání, a dvojnásob se z toho těším,
fifth anniversary of Dvořák’s breakthrough. *Hymnus* was not included on the all-Dvořák programme, which consisted entirely of orchestral compositions; however, the timing of the concert in early March left little doubt as to which occasion was being commemorated. The purpose of the 1898 concert is made clear in the reviews, but critics report that those in attendance were kept in ignorance of the jubilee; this suggests that, more than a public celebration, the commemorative concert was an event of personal significance to Dvořák.

In spite of the excitement that *Hymnus* seemed to generate in 1873 and the ways in which the public was constantly being reminded of its premiere during the decades that followed, its place in the collective consciousness of the Czech people was ultimately short-lived. Currently, it is one of Dvořák’s most obscure works, rarely performed and largely unknown even to Czech audiences. Given its present unfamiliarity, it is difficult to imagine that Czech critics would have ever taken knowledge of the work for granted, using turns of phrase in their reviews, such as “we [might] recall other vocal pieces by [Dvořák], for instance his grand *Hymnus*” or “for Dvořák, the best libretto would be a serious one [...] let us remember [his] *Hymnus*.” The

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**Footnotes**

11 Dvořák describes the commemorative performance in a letter dated March 19, 1898; Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty* [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 4, 125–126; the concert took place on March 12 and the all-Dvořák programme included two symphonic poems: *The Noon Witch* (*Polednice*), Op. 108 and *The Golden Spinning Wheel* (*Zlatý Kolovrat*), Op. 109 as well as the First *Slavonic Rhapsody*, Op. 45.


14 This phrase appears in a review of Dvořák’s choral work *Psalm 149* (*Žalm 149*); -ý, “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 9 (March 20, 1879): 71; “vzpomene-mu-li na jinou jeho skladbu z oboru vokální, na př. na velkolepý jeho Hymnus z Hálkový básně Dědicové Bílé Hory...”

15 Hostinský makes this statement in a review of Dvořák’s opera *The Cunning Peasant* (*Šelma Sedláček*); Otakar Hostinský, “Původní novinky české zpěvohry [Novelties in the realm of Czech Opera],” *Osveř* 8, no. 10 (1878): 748; “Pro Dvořáka arci bylo by nejpříměřenějším libreto vážné [...] vzpomeňme si na Dvořákův *Hymnus z Hálkových Dědiců Bílé Hory.*” (See Appendix 4 for a full English translation of this article.)
disconnect between the critical attention that the work garnered in the past and its current neglect can be explained when *Hymnus* is placed into context. So much of its early success depended on cultural expectations and political circumstances that were particular to Prague in the 1870s. At that time, Czech audiences were accustomed to choral concerts of very modest proportions, and the grand spectacle delivered by the Hlahol choral society on this occasion caught those present by surprise, as did the emergence, seemingly out of nowhere, of a talented, young Czech composer. The performance also came in the midst of heated debates on the nature of Czech music. The cultural significance of the Hlahol concert was not lost on Prague’s leading critics, who were in dutiful attendance, and some of them used Dvořák’s *Hymnus* to draw broader conclusions about the state of vocal music in the Czech lands. Above all, *Hymnus* was received so favourably at its premiere because it addressed a historical subject that had strong political resonance. The work’s allusions to the seventeenth-century Battle of the White Mountain (Bíla Hora) were timely in 1873. Only a few years earlier, Czech politicians had waged and lost their own battle in the Austrian parliament, causing the concert attendees to relate in a unique way to the struggles depicted in the *Hymnus* text.

Dvořák’s *Hymnus* is inextricably bound to a specific time and place. In fact, its genre, by definition, has implications of something that is occasional or out of the ordinary. Preferring to translate *Hymnus* as *Ode*, David Beveridge considers it most fitting to define the work as “a ceremonious poem on an occasion of public or private dignity in which personal emotion and

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16 The word “hymnus” is difficult to translate into English. One might be tempted to call it a “hymn” (see, for example, the above interview with Dvořák for *The Pall Mall Gazette*, where it is translated as such); however, the English term “hymn” has religious connotations, whereas the original title does not, though it is associated with a certain sense of devotion and gravity. Perhaps a more fitting translation than “hymn” might be “anthem,” since “hymnus” has patriotic implications and the term is closely related to the Czech word “hymna,” which means national anthem. Though David Beveridge’s term “ode” does seem fitting, I prefer to use “hymnus” because it is the most recognizable, appearing in nearly all of the English-language scholarly literature on the work. It is also important to note that the word is not really Czech at all, but of Latin origin and that it was not determined by Dvořák, but by the poet Vítězslav Hálek.
general meditation are united.”¹⁷ This occasional nature is also emphasized in Malcolm Boyd’s
definition of the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century cantata; as Boyd writes,
“the term ‘cantata’ seems to have been particularly favoured for commemorative or occasional
works on a fairly large scale and with a strong sense of public involvement.”¹⁸ Since *Hymnus*
was so closely connected to conditions in 1870s Prague, efforts to transplant it into new contexts
were relatively fruitless. Although it was performed quite frequently in the Czech lands toward
the century’s end, *Hymnus* failed to earn the same kind of critical acclaim in subsequent years
that it had at its first performance. Likewise, Dvořák’s attempts to bring *Hymnus* to England, by
way of several performances, a publication, and even a dedication to the English people, was not
overly successful. The overwhelming impression of the *Hymnus* premiere lingered with the
Czechs for some time; the piece itself did not.

**Between History and Allegory: Hálek’s *Heirs of the White Mountain***

If a poet wants to be heard in wider circles under these stormy circumstances… he must
reach [people] with powerful metal strings, with a bold hand and sing a grand hymnus of
the nation, recounting its efforts and desires and experiencing its sorrows. Only such a
song will capture the whole nation... For this reason, we are grateful to Hálek that he was
able to strike a chord [with us] and we hope that he has ingratiated himself to the wider
audience. *Heirs of the White Mountain* is a poem with political tendencies [and is]
appropriate for our time in particular. Our time has provided the impetus for it, and
reading Hálek’s poem, we are reminded of our current political battle.¹⁹

¹⁷ David R. Beveridge, “The Choral *Ode (Hymnus)*: Dvořák’s First Major Public Triumph,” unpublished
chapter in his book on Dvořák’s life and works. Beveridge takes this definition from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
¹⁹ Unsigned, “Dědicové Bílé Hory [Heirs of the White Moutain],” *Národní Listy* 9, no. 200 (July 22,
1869): 1; “Chce-li za těchto pobouřených poměrů básník v širších kružích dojít slyšení... musí smělou rukou
zasáhnouti v mohutné struny kovové a zapěti velebný hymnus národa, vylíčiti snahy a tužby jeho a zastesknouti si
steskem jeho. Jen taký zpěv uchváti celý národ... Proto povděčení jsme Hálkoví, že udeřil na tuto strunu a doufáme,
že tím zavděčil se širšímu obecenstvu. Dědicové Bílé Hory jest básně tendenčně politická, která právě za naší dobu
přišla vhod. Vždyť doba tato zavdala k ní podnět, a my čtoucí básně Hálkovu bezděky vzpomínáme si na nynější
svůj zápas politický.”
Such was the response in *Národní Listy* after Czech poet Vítězslav Hálek (1835–1874) published his *Heirs of the White Mountain* (*Dědicové Bílé Hory*) in 1869. Having accused the younger generation of poets in the Czech lands of devoting too much energy to lyric poetry, the anonymous critic praises Hálek’s *Heirs of the White Mountain* for its political relevance and upholds it as a model of the type of poetry that ought to be written under these “stormy circumstances.” Although it would not be counted among Hálek’s best-known works, the poem earned some acclaim in the late 1860s, since it seemed to hold up a mirror to Czech society by exploring a highly controversial event in the nation’s history. The White Mountain,20 to which the title refers, is situated on the Western outskirts of Prague, and its unimposing appearance—hardly warranting the designation “mountain”—would make few suspect that it was the location of a decisive battle fought on November 8, 1620 between the army of the Bohemian Estates and imperial forces with Bavarian support. Howard Louthan gives a sense of the significance of this battle when he writes: “in a two-hour struggle the Habsburg coalition eventually broke the flanks of its opponents and then marched into the Bohemian capital virtually unopposed. Though White Mountain may not have been a military struggle of epic proportions, it was a critical turning point in the kingdom’s confessional struggle.”21 Indeed, the battle itself did not last long, but its impact was far-reaching, and the deep-seeded conflict that sparked the episode on White Mountain had already been raging for some time.

It was two years earlier, on May 23, 1618, that three senior imperial officials were seized by members of the Protestant Bohemian nobility and thrown out of the window of Prague Castle. This rebellious event is widely recognized as the start of the Thirty Years’ War, a war which was

20 Although David Beveridge argues that the term “Bílá Hora” should not be translated into English, I continue to use “White Mountain” because it appears most often in the scholarly literature.
fought to a large extent on Bohemian soil and had a devastating impact on the political, economic, and cultural life of the Czechs. Although there were many factors that led to the so-called defenestration, the act was prompted chiefly by the Habsburgs’ failure to grant full toleration to the Protestants in Bohemia. Emperor Matthias refused to abide by the Letter of Majesty that had been drawn up in 1609 by his predecessor Rudolf II, guaranteeing religious liberty to “nobles, burghers, and subject peasantry.”22 Throughout his reign, Matthias became known for his pro-Catholic policies and centralizing efforts, but the greatest provocation came in 1618, when imperial Catholic authorities attempted to destroy two newly built Protestant churches and the protests of the Czech Estates to the Emperor in response to this fell upon deaf ears. Open rebellion broke out in Bohemia, beginning with the defenestration, which, in Hugh LeCaine Agnew’s words, “symbolized a decisive break between the Estates and the Habsburg King.”23 The Protestant Estates took various other radical steps in the months that followed, including the election in 1619 of Frederick of the Palatinate as King of Bohemia in place of the newly ascended Emperor Ferdinand II; however, this uprising proved to be of short duration.

The whole conflict came to a head at the Battle of the White Mountain. Though the Czech army was strong during the first part of the battle, imperial troops intensified their attacks and the Czechs suffered a hard defeat, the consequences of which were dire. Derek Sayer calls the battle “without any doubt the most cataclysmic event in modern Czech history.”24 Bohemia lost the independence that it had formerly enjoyed and became part of the Austrian Empire, remaining under Austrian rule for the next three hundred years. Added to this loss of political freedom was a loss of religious freedom. The Renewed Land Ordinance, issued in 1627, required all non-

23 Ibid., 66.
Catholics either to convert to Catholicism or to leave the Czech lands within six months. The Czechs plunged into a period of economic uncertainty and cultural stagnation, later referred to as “temno” or “darkness” by the fin-de-siècle Czech novelist Alois Jirásek (1851–1930).

Jirásek is one of many writers, poets, journalists, and historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who sought to reinterpret the Battle of the White Mountain and its significance in Czech history. It was especially during the period of national revival that the White Mountain became a powerful symbol, a kind of national graveyard, to which pilgrimages were made. Journalist Karel Havlíček (1821–1856) often reminded readers of “the shame of White Mountain” in his newspaper articles as an incentive for Czechs to resist domination from Vienna.25 The White Mountain united Czechs with a common sense of loss that seemed to transcend religious and political barriers. Jaroslav Goll (1846–1929), a historian of Dvořák’s generation, goes so far as to state in 1875 that he cannot “imagine a Czech [person] of any religious denomination or political party, who, when speaking about the consequences of White Mountain, could remain entirely calm and cool...”26 A reference to White Mountain is even engraved into the cornerstone of the National Theatre in Prague. Cut from the Říp Mountain,27 where the first Czechs are purported to have settled, the cornerstone bears the inscription: “from Říp [the] Czech took his home, on the White Mountain he expired, [and] in Mother Prague he arose from the dead.”28 In view of its prominence in nineteenth-century Czech culture, it is not unusual that Vítězslav Hálek would select White Mountain as the subject of his poem.

26 Ibid., 143.
27 The Říp Mountain is located approximately fifty kilometres north of Prague.
Though classified as a poem, Hálek’s *Heirs of the White Mountain* might best be described as a drama in rhymed verse, since it runs to eighty-seven pages with a plot, characters, and bracketed directions, suggesting that Hálek had intended for it to be staged.29 The work also has elements of allegory; chief among them is the Czech nation’s portrayal as the martyred “Mother Country”30 – characterized in the stage notes as “bareheaded, clothes worn, with an expression of utter despondency.”31 Set in 1640 – some twenty years after the infamous battle and in the throes of the Thirty Years’ War – the drama features both historical and fictional characters, who describe the aftermath of White Mountain to the blissfully ignorant “genius.” These testimonies are triggered by the genius’s opening question: “what offence has this nation committed that it should be driven out from the land like a flock of cattle?”32 At the genius’s behest, the heirs of the White Mountain rise from their graves and tell their stories. First, the offenders speak of their crimes. Among them is William Lamormaini,33 who worked as Jesuit confessor to Emperor Ferdinand II and took an active part in the catholicization of all secondary and post-secondary institutions in the Czech lands. Another historically based villain in Hálek’s drama is Karl von Lichtenstein, an army general who, together with the Emperor, planned and oversaw the brutal public execution of twenty-seven members of the Protestant Bohemian nobility in 1621.34 The group of offenders is rounded out by Jacob Bassevi, a financier, highly esteemed by the Emperor

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29 I have not been able to find any evidence that it was ever performed as a staged play.
30 The Czech original is “matka vlast.”
31 Vítězslav Hálek, *Dědicové Bílé Hory: Báseň [Heirs of the White Mountain: Poem]* (Prague: E. Grégr, 1869), 14; “prostovlasá, šat sedraný, s výrazem nejvyšší zoufalosti.”
32 *Ibid.*, 8; “Čím národ provinil svůj žití den, že jako stádo mrskán z změ ven?” The “genius” is one of several allegorical characters in Hálek’s drama.
33 *Ibid.*, 91; in the appendix of the poem, Lamormaini is described as follows: “Lamormaini, a Jesuit, and as confessor to Ferdinand II having unlimited influence, was the main source of all of the misery that befell upon the Czechs after the Battle of the White Mountain as well as [being behind] the rapid measures taken by the Emperor against German Protestants. Allegedly, he brought 100,000 Protestants into the clutches of the Church.”
34 Louthan, 22–34.
and entrusted with the task of confiscating and redistributing the property of the Bohemian Estates. The allegorical figure of “Disunity”\(^3\) is given the last word in this section, claiming a historic right to the Czech lands.

In the second half of the drama, the victims take the stand. The names of most are left unspecified in order to heighten the loss of identity that the period after White Mountain seemed to bring for the Czechs. One character, for instance, is called “nameless”\(^3\) and speaks of being driven out of the Czech lands on penalty of death. Other victims include the character simply identified as “a mother,” who recounts the violent conditions of her forced conversion to Catholicism.\(^3\) The drama concludes when Mother Country finally re-emerges – having recovered from her wounds, much to the amazement of both the offenders and the victims – and is crowned triumphantly in the presence of her sons and daughters.\(^3\) Having been made aware of the plight of the Czechs at the same rate as the audience, the impartial genius shows sympathy to those who endured hardships at the hands of the “bloody heirs” and encourages Mother Country to persevere in spite of her tortured past.

Music plays a pivotal role throughout the drama. In keeping with the funereal tone of the opening, Hálek includes excerpts from the Office for the Dead at the moment when the Mother

\(^3\) The Czech word is “nesrovnost.”
\(^3\) The Czech word is “bezejmenný.”
\(^3\) Though her identity is ambiguous, Hálek is quick to point out in the appendix that she represents many who were coerced in this way: “For the purposes of conversion, among other methods, [the authorities] tormented mothers by binding them so that they could not reach their infants; [these mothers] had to listen to their [babies] crying and were forbidden to nurse them so long as they did not promise to become Catholic;” “Na obrácení víry užíváno mimo jiné také muk těch, že matky takovým spůsobem byly spoutány, by k němluvňátkům svým dosáhnouti nemohly, pláč jejich poslouchati musily, a dotud kojiti je nesměly, dokud by neslibily, že katoličkami se stanou;” Hálek, 93.
\(^3\) Hálek, 83 and 84; Lamormaini cries out: “How can it be that her life avoids the grave and there can be no blow strong enough to kill her,” meanwhile the chorus of miserable people is overwhelmed with joy, shouting: “oh, moment of bliss, sweet moment – our country lives, our mother lives!” Lamormain: “Což její život hroby přelétí, a není rány, jež ji osmrtí?” Sbor zoubužených: “O chvíle blahá, chvíle sladká – nám žije vlast, nám žije matka!”
Country is mourned.\footnote{Hálek, 7; “A porta inferi erue, domine, animam ejus. Et lux perpetua luceat eis. A custodia matutina usque ad noctem speret Israel in Domino.”} Also, on occasion, Hálek indicates that certain verses are to be sung rather than spoken,\footnote{The opening sequence, for example, calls for alternating groups of singers in the mountains, lowlands, forests, and valleys.} and he incorporates various “choruses” to provide commentary on the unfolding plot.\footnote{Most prominent among these are the “Chorus of the bloody heirs” (“Sbor krvavých dědiců”), representing the offenders, and the “Chorus of the miserable” (“Sbor zobužených”), representing the victims.} Midway through the drama, an ensemble of musicians enters the scene with the promise that music will have a healing effect on the downtrodden Czechs.\footnote{Hálek, 51–61.} Though allusions to music abound, the most powerful statement is reserved for the ending. After bearing witness to the atrocities that resulted from the lost battle, the characters join together in the concluding \textit{Hymnus}, expressing sorrow over their suffering, but also hope for the future. Acting as a kind of antithesis to Disunity’s monologue, which closed the first section, this final statement unites the characters and summarizes in microcosm the theme of the entire drama. \textit{Hymnus} ends with declarations of love for the Mother Country, the last line of the penultimate verse containing the words: “let us love her [...] as no nation has loved before.”\footnote{Ibid., 87; “Milujme ji [...] jak žádný národ ještě nemiloval.”} It is this concluding \textit{Hymnus} – twenty-eight lines in length, divided into seven verses – that forms the text of Dvořák’s composition (see Table 2.1 for the full text). The passage lends itself well to musical setting, as Hálek’s own directives indicate that it is to be sung by all of the choruses,\footnote{That Dvořák would choose to score the work for a large ensemble (see below: “A ‘Monster’ Concert: Hlahol’s 1873 Performance and the Czech Choral Tradition”) makes sense in light of Hálek’s stage notes, specifying that \textit{all} of the choruses ought to sing the closing \textit{Hymnus}.} surrounding Mother Country as she gazes up to the heavens.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textit{Andante con moto e molto espressivo} & \\
\hline
Jak pramen, jenž zpod oše krok svůj máči & As springs anoint the ground beneath the adler, \\
Ty’s matko zrozená k věčnému pláči; & So Mother, thou must bend ever a-weeping, \\
Tvá slza kropí břehy v stínu spící, & Thy tear drops flow on banks in shadow sleeping. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\footnote{\textit{Andante con moto e molto espressivo} is a tempo marking used by Dvořák to denote a moderately fast allegro with expressive motion.}
A ty tam bdiš co vrba truchlící.  
A mournful vigil like a willow keeping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tvá hlava těžká, srđce žalem puká</td>
<td>Thy head is heavy, and thy heart is broken,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jsoúť v posměch luze užasná tvá muka</td>
<td>Thou suff'rest sorely, yet the rabble mocks thee,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rány tvé jak stlané na staletě!</td>
<td>Thy painful wounds through centuries engraved;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Však znej se matkou, nás co svoje děti.</td>
<td>O thou our mother recognize thy children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tvou hlavu¸ na svá řádla položíme,</td>
<td>Thy head shall find repose from ills so cruel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O její tíž se v srđci podělíme</td>
<td>From hearts to thee we proffer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A ve svou lásku v duše odchůz měkký</td>
<td>With deepest love this haven we would offer,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tě zavinem jak klenot vzízata vděky.</td>
<td>Embracing thee like gold that clasps a priceless jewel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I v říze těsně pod chuďickým krovem</td>
<td>E’en in a hovel in a shabby garment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lze duši okřát přivětivým slovem,</td>
<td>Kind words of comfort heal the soul that’s weary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lze dozrát k času, až zas rykne v slávu</td>
<td>The time is coming when it will call loudly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O, svěř nám v úkou posvátnou svou hlavu!</td>
<td>O let us shelter thy head so sacred!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro non tanto, quasi maestoso</td>
<td>Let’s make our hearts our mother’s living shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jíž klejme z srđci živou matce střechu,</td>
<td>By her we’ll stand till death will take us from her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jíž stújme k ní do posledního dechu!</td>
<td>We’d love her still should vultures swoop to tear us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kdy její vše až v kapku krve rudé</td>
<td>Then that dear heart no longer is poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To srđce drahé nebude víc chudé.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co bez ní vše ta sláva světa širá,</td>
<td>What use this glorious world if she is wanting,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kdy její ruka svět jen otevírá!</td>
<td>For she along unlocks all of its treasure!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milujme ji, byť sup nám srđce kloval</td>
<td>O love ye her, tho’ sore your heart is bleeding,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milujme ji, jak žádný národ ješt’e nemiloval</td>
<td>We’d love her still, as nation never loved its country before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poklekněm k ní u zbožném zanícení</td>
<td>Kneel brothers all, with ardour sing ye her praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pozvedněm ruku u bratrském chvění,</td>
<td>Our trembling hands shall loyally salute her,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A necht’ nám cesta slavná, třebať krátká</td>
<td>And may we know her glory, even briefly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeť jedna vlast, jediná jen matka.</td>
<td>One fatherland, and only one dear mother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.1:** Text of *Hymnus*: Vítězslav Hálek’s original Czech version and John Clapham’s English translation

Dvořák’s decision to turn to a text by Hálek in the early 1870s was well-timed not only because of the favourable reception of the poet’s *Heirs of the White Mountain* in 1869, but also because of Hálek’s reputation in general. Unlike Dvořák, who was still very much unknown in the Czech lands at that time, Hálek was already recognized as a talented poet, and attaching his name to the project would have given it considerable prestige. For more than a decade, Hálek had been visible on the cultural scene in Prague. He was a founding member of the Artists’
Union (Umělecká Beseda), established in 1863, and acted as its president for a time. Hálek’s name would have also been familiar to audiences at Prague’s Provisional Theatre, since it was his play King Vakušín (Král Vakušín) that was performed at the Theatre’s opening in 1862. This event had been highly anticipated, providing incentive for many Czech composers to set pen to paper in response to Count Jan Harrach’s call for a national opera. When no opera was deemed suitable, Hálek’s play was selected, which was certainly a high honour, even if its reviews were only lukewarm. Hálek’s work as poet and playwright was quite extensive and varied; however, his lasting acclaim in Bohemia rested primarily on a set of Evening Songs (Večerní Písně) that he had written early in his career and that would eventually inspire song cycles both from Dvořák and Smetana.

Given Hálek’s reputation in the Czech lands in 1873, some scholars argue that the success of Hymnus at its premiere can be attributed more to him than to Dvořák. Several instances of apparent name-dropping lend support to this interpretation. Out of all of the poets, Hálek’s is the only name to appear on the concert poster and in promotional articles advertising the Hlahol performance. Also, Dvořák dedicated the initial version of Hymnus to Hálek; the poet is clearly identified as the dedicatee, in Dvořák’s hand, at the top of the second page of the original score. 

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45 For a full discussion of the Umělecká Beseda, see Kelly St. Pierre, “Revolutionizing Czechness: Smetana and Propaganda in the Umělecká Beseda,” (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2012), passim.
46 Count Harrach’s opera competition is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.
47 An opera was performed at the Theatre on its second night, but it was not the work of a Czech composer; Cherubini’s Les deux journées was given in Czech translation.
48 The reviewer for Národní Listy, for example, praises Hálek’s skill as a poet, but does not consider this particular play to be his best work; Unsigned, “Divadlo [Theatre],” Národní Listy 2, no. 273 (November 19, 1862): 3.
49 Dvořák composed a series of Evening Songs in 1876, while Smetana wrote his in 1879.
Although the dedication was never published, this gesture might be understood as Dvořák’s way of acknowledging, albeit privately, the role that Hálek had played in the work’s early success. While it may be giving too much credit to Hálek to state that he had more to do with the triumph of *Hymnus* than Dvořák, the work was premiered at a time when audiences were disposed to respond positively to a Hálek text.\(^\text{52}\)

Hálek’s renown would prove to be rather fleeting. After his sudden death of pneumonia in 1874, less attention was paid to the poet. Only one of his plays, *Záviš of Falkenstein* (*Záviš z Falkenštejna*), was staged at the National Theatre during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. What is more, Hálek’s reputation became tarnished when Czech poet and critic Josef Machar (1854–1942) published a highly negative article on him in 1894, exactly twenty years after his death.\(^\text{53}\) In it, Machar accuses Hálek of not conducting enough research for his historical dramas and calls *Heirs of the White Mountain* an “unsuccessful patriotic mysterium,” overflowing with allegories and symbols, entirely devoid of any deep opinion on seventeenth-century Czech history.\(^\text{54}\) The very aspects that had been praised in the 1869 review of *Heirs of the White Mountain* were now the object of Machar’s censure; while the earlier critic commends Hálek on his ability to write politically charged poetry and to avoid the empty sentimentality that had so enthralled Czech poets of his generation, Machar finds Hálek’s work to be overly idealistic and naïve. Looking back on Machar’s article some fifty years later, Vítězslav Tichý views this criticism of Hálek as nothing more than a thinly veiled effort to promote the poetry of

\[^{51}\] S76–1436, Dvořák Museum, Prague.
\[^{52}\] At a time when good Czech-language opera librettos were hard to find, a quality text of any kind was not to be taken for granted. Poor texts would be a hindrance to Dvořák on more than one occasion; for instance, critics agreed that perhaps the largest stumbling block to the wider success of Dvořák’s opera *The Cunning Peasant* (*Šelma Sedlák*) was its libretto, written by Josef Otakar Veselý (See Chapter Three).
\[^{54}\] *Ibid.*, 10; “nepodařené vlastenecké mysterium.”
Jan Neruda (1834–1891) at Hálek’s expense. Critic Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962) corroborates Tichý’s interpretation and condemns Machar’s attack on Hálek, even though Nejedlý had used the same kinds of strategies against Dvořák in his own campaign to “restore” Smetana to his proper place in Czech history. Regardless of Machar’s motivations, the article from 1894 suggests a shift in the way that Hálek was perceived in the Czech lands toward the century’s end, further underscoring that the height of Hálek’s appeal came in the 1860s and 70s – at about the time that Dvořák’s *Hymnus* was first performed at the Hlahol society’s concert.

A “Monster” Concert: Hlahol’s 1873 Performance and the Czech Choral Tradition

In his *History of Prague’s Hlahol (Dějiny Pražského Hlaholu)* published on the occasion of the society’s fiftieth anniversary, critic Nejedlý writes: “the extraordinary concert in 1873 continues to be the ultimate juncture ever reached by Hlahol in terms of grandeur under the leadership of Bendl. It was certainly one of Hlahol’s most memorable achievements throughout the course of its entire fifty years of existence.” Though Nejedlý’s statements should always be taken with a degree of caution, several aspects of the 1873 performance were truly exceptional for a choral society that had taken an active part in Prague’s musical life ever since its foundation.

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55 Vitězslav Tichý, *Basník Vitězslav Hálek [The Poet: Vitězslav Hálek]* (Prague: Nakladatelství Národní Práce, 1944), 17; “From Machar’s critical article and from other writings by him, [one gets the sense that] he was trying to push Hálek from his place and put Neruda there instead. Neruda by all means deserves the place and significance that he now holds in Czech literature, but this revival [of Neruda’s works] is occurring in a manner that is very common over here: if one is to be lifted up, another must be put down.” “Z Macharova hodnotícího článku a z jiných jeho statí vysvítá snaha, vytlačit Hálka z jeho místa a dosadit tam Nerudu. Neruda si ovšem plně zaslouží místa a významu, které zaujímá nyní v české literatuře, ale tato revise a rehabilitace se děje většinou tak, jak se takové rehabilitace u nás vůbec dějí: má-li být oslaven jeden, musí být potupen druhý.”

56 Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Tyl, Hálek, Jirásek* (Prague: Československý Spisovatel, 1951); “[Machar’s attack on Hálek] is illogical because if Hálek is truly a second-rate poet of slender talent, how could he threaten such a giant as Neruda undoubtedly is?”

57 Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Dějiny Pražského Hlaholu, 1861–1911: Památník zpěváckého spolku Hlaholu v Praze, vydaný na oslavu 50třicetileté činnosti [A History of Prague’s Hlahol, 1861–1911: In Celebration of Fifty Years of Activity]* (Prague, 1911), 71; “mimořádný koncert 1873 zůstal nejzážíším bodem, kam v mohutnosti prostředků Hlahol za Bendla došel. Byl to zajisté jeden z nejpamatnějších výkonů Hlaholu za celé padesátiletí jeho tvání.” (The emphasis is in the original.)

58 See Chapters One and Three.
in 1861. Unabashedly patriotic, Hlahol espoused the motto: “let the song reach the heart; let the heart reach the homeland” and aimed to promote the works of Czech composers in particular.\(^{59}\)

The choral group was called upon regularly to perform at various state functions, including the funerals of some of the most renowned Czech figures and the laying of the foundation stone of the National Theatre in 1868.\(^{60}\) The society also appears to have provided a space where political differences could be laid aside, since politicians from what would later become the Old and Young Czech parties were affiliated with it from its inception.\(^{61}\)

Hlahol was no stranger to pomp and ceremony. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the choral group had participated in some of the most lavish celebrations put on by the Czechs. The spectacle accompanying the laying of the National Theatre’s cornerstone, for example, was unrivaled in its splendour even by the opening of the Theatre itself. Likewise, shortly after Hlahol was founded, its leaders organized an elaborate flag-raising ceremony in 1862 to make the society’s existence official. The ceremony featured a performance of Ludevít Procházka’s (1837–1888) choral composition entitled *A True Czech* (*Pravý Čech*) and involved some of the nation’s most prominent figures, who were introduced as the society’s godmothers and godfathers; among them was Countess Turn-Taxis, who acted as Hlahol’s patron or “mother.” This kind of pageantry was common for Prague’s Hlahol, setting the precedent for

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\(^{59}\) Nejedlý refers to the year 1865 as a turning point for the Hlahol choral society; he claims that, up until then, the dominant feature of the society had been its patriotism and in the years that followed, the focus was more on the quality of the singing; Nejedlý, *Dějiny Pražského Hlaholu, 1861–1911* [*A History of Prague’s Hlahol, 1861–1911*], 54; Czech original: “zpěvem k srdci, srdcem k vlasti.”

\(^{60}\) Hlahol performed at the funerals of philologist František Hanka, writer Pavel Josef Šafařík, novelist Božena Němcová, and historian František Palacký, just to name a few; Josef Srb, *Památník Pražského Hlaholu: Na oslavu 25leté činnosti spolku z usnesení výboru* [*Commemorative Book of the Prague Hlahol: In Celebration of Twenty-Five Years of the Society’s Activities*] (Prague: Nakladem zpěváckého spolku Hlahol, 1886). For a discussion of the Old and Young Czech parties, see Chapter Three and Bruce Garver, *The Young Czech Party, 1874–1901, and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

\(^{61}\) František Palacký and František Ladislav Rieger, the two leaders of the Old Czech party, were honorary members from the beginning, as was the Young Czech Karel Sladkovský, who gave a speech at the society’s inaugural ceremony.
other patriotic choral societies in Bohemia. Even so, Nejedlý was able to make the claim that Hlahol reached its pinnacle in terms of grandeur in 1873. Advertised as a “monster” concert, the 1873 performance was held at the New Town Theatre (Novoměstské Divadlo) – a large venue, rarely used by the choral society. Hlahol concerts were typically held at the considerably smaller Žofín Hall, and the New Town Theatre was reserved only for gatherings of multiple choral societies from various parts of the Czech lands. This stately venue – modelled on the Dresden Semperoper and capable of accommodating an audience of up to four thousand people – undoubtedly contributed to the festive atmosphere on this occasion.\(^{62}\)

The use of a large performing space suggests a certain degree of confidence that the concert would draw a sizable crowd, which it did, in spite of impressive competition elsewhere in the city on that day. The Hlahol performance took place at exactly the same time as a concert of the Prague Conservatory, with renowned German violinist August Wilhelmi (1845–1908) as the guest soloist. During the 1870s, the Prague Conservatory was a very German-oriented institution that shunned all things Czech and devoted itself exclusively to the performance of works from the Austro-German canon.\(^{63}\) Faced with the decision to attend either the Hlahol or the Conservatory performances, concert-goers were in effect forced to choose between Czech and German repertoire. This circumstance did not pass over unnoticed by Czech critics, many of whom emphasize in their reviews that the Hlahol concert was well attended and that the true enthusiasts were not to be deterred either by the competing concert or the inclement weather.\(^{64}\)

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64 Critic Karel Knittl gives the most details about the circumstances of the concert in his review: -tt-, “Zprávy domácí a z venkova [News from Home and Rural Areas],” Hudobnì Listy 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1873): 95;
Looking back on the performance twenty-five years later, Josef Srb attests that “the large spaces of the New Town Theatre were overfilled and the material gains of the concert were considerable.”

The scale of the Hlahol performance was also unusually large. The orchestras of both the Provisional and Estates Theatres were invited to accompany the two-hundred-and-fifty member chorus. In its original form, *Hymnus* calls for an orchestra, with a large complement of brass and percussion instruments. Dvořák does not shy away from using certain auxiliary instruments, including piccolo, English horn, bass tuba, bass drum, cymbals, tam tams, and harp (see Example 2.1 for the first page of the original autograph score). Though some of these orchestral parts would be omitted in later revisions of the work (see Example 2.2 for the work’s instrumentation after its second revision), such performing forces were massive by late nineteenth-century Czech standards, making the work sound like a communal nationalist plea. Pavel Křížkovský (1820–1885), who was generally acknowledged by nineteenth-century critics as a pioneer in the realm of Czech choral music, tended to keep his accompaniments fairly simple, calling for either organ, piano, or, at the most, a small ensemble of wind instruments. To audiences accustomed to these kinds of accompaniments, Dvořák’s scoring choices would have seemed quite audacious.
demonstrating, as David Beveridge points out, a certain sense of unconcern about the logistics of bringing such an ensemble together – no small task in 1870s Prague.

Example 2.1: The opening page of Dvořák’s first autograph score of Hymnus (S76–1436, Dvořák Museum, Prague)

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Example 2.2: The opening page of the full score of Dvořák’s Hymnus (mm. 1–7)
Even more daring was Dvořák’s decision to compose *Hymnus* for mixed chorus. From the first, Hlahol had been an all-male choir, and repertory for male chorus tended to dominate in Bohemia during the 1860s and 70s. Just over a year before the 1873 Hlahol concert, audiences in Prague had witnessed a performance of at least one work for mixed chorus: an excerpt from Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45, which inspired the critic for the journal *Hudební Listy* to suggest that this type of choral ensemble be revived. In the critic’s own words:

> Before the last number on a programme that was somewhat too long, a part of the audience withdrew, such that the peaceful chorus (“Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen”) from Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, performed with soft shading, faded away in a lofty manner before the many remaining admirers of art music, who certainly wished, as we did, that the grandiose “mixed chorus” might soon be resurrected for purely artistic purposes.69

A few months later, in November of 1872, a mixed choral concert was agreed upon at the annual meeting of the Hlahol choral society and the date was set for March of 1873. A committee of six women took pains to assemble a ninety-member female chorus in time for the rehearsals and performance.70 In his review for *Hudební Listy*, critic Karel Knittl (1853–1907) describes the resultant ensemble as stunning, if a little unbalanced: “the large body of performers gave an imposing impression,” Knittl recalls, “and with praiseworthy diligence, the committee took care to invite many pretty female singers, creating a large – at least by Prague standards – and masculine-sounding mixed chorus.”71 In fact, the only two pieces on the programme to call for mixed chorus were Dvořák’s *Hymnus* and Charles-François Gounod’s motet *Gallia*; otherwise,

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70 These women were also entrusted with the task of selling all the tickets in advance of the performance; Nejedlý, *Dějiny Pražského Hlaholu, 1861–1911 [A History of Prague’s Hlahol, 1861–1911]*, 70.

71 -tt-, “Zprávy domácí a z venkova [News from Home and Rural Areas],” *Hudební Listy* 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1873): 95; “Obraz, jaký nám poskytovalo veliké těleso učinkujících, byl imposantní; a uznání hodnou pili postaral se výbor o to, sezvati tolik spanilých pěvkyň ku jednému věnci a substituovati veliký na Prahu zecla mužný sbor hlasů smíšených.”
the programme featured two works for male chorus\(^{72}\) and Karel Bendl’s *Song of the Fairies above the Waters (Zpěv vil nad vodami)* for female chorus, written especially for the occasion. That organizers would go to great lengths to secure the female singers and then use the full ensemble in merely two out of five numbers shows just how rare repertoire for mixed choirs was in 1870s Bohemia. This type of ensemble was to remain an anomaly, as Hlahol would continue to be an exclusively male choral society well into the twentieth century.

Dvořák’s *Hymnus* was premiered at a concert that went far beyond the average Hlahol performance.\(^{73}\) Characterized repeatedly as “exceptional” both in contemporary reviews and retrospective accounts,\(^{74}\) Hlahol’s “monster” concert in 1873 was designed to impress. The spacious venue, the large ensemble of instrumentalists and singers, and the rarely heard mixed chorus made an extraordinary concert experience for the full audience that was in attendance. Critic Ludevít Procházká expresses something of the exceptionality of the performance, when he writes: “in our circumstances, it is rare for us to experience productions of such a grand tone; particularly, the performance of large-scale vocal pieces, which rely on a sizeable orchestral body, is usually met with insurmountable obstacles. Our Hlahol, however, ... is not scared off by any such obstacles.”\(^{75}\)

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\(^{72}\) The two works for male chorus were Karel Bendl’s *The Calixtines (Kališníci)* and W. L. Želenský’s *Eagles (Orlové)*.

\(^{73}\) Hlahol averaged about six to nine concerts a season, many of which were of a considerably more casual nature, often identified as “garden concerts” (“zahradní koncerty”) or “evening entertainments” (“večerní zábavy”).

\(^{74}\) The Czech word is “mimořádný,” and it appears in several of the 1873 reviews as well as Srb’s commemorative book: Srb, 172.

\(^{75}\) P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]) (see Appendix 2 for a full English translation); “V poměrech našich jen zřídka vyskytují se produkce rázu tak velkolepého, zejména pak provedení vokálních skladeb většího rozměru, jež se opírají o velké těleso orchestra, potkává se obyčejně překážkami nepřemožitelnými. Náš ‘Hlahol’ však... překážkami nížádnými nedá se odstrašit.”
Public Expectations and Critical Contexts for Dvořák’s *Hymnus*

Not only did the concert as a whole subvert public expectations; Dvořák also seemed to do so with his *Hymnus*. Having been composing for more than a decade, Dvořák was hardly a novice by 1873, with several large-scale works, including two symphonies and two operas, to his name. Though none of these lengthier works had been performed yet, the reviewers of *Hymnus* demonstrate some awareness of Dvořák’s compositional past. Of all of the critics, Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910) appears to be the most informed, making reference in his review to Dvořák’s experimentation with a variety of genres and to a period of what he calls “artistic gestation,” in which Dvořák was searching for his own unique style. As if to dispel the myth that Dvořák had emerged out of nowhere, Hostinský indicates that the composer had been honing his skills in private for some time. In a similar vein, reviewer Karel Knittl portrays Dvořák as one who had to endure “many tests and proofs” before he could show himself to be “the most decided talent.” These comments demonstrate that Dvořák’s works were not altogether unfamiliar to critics.

The wider Czech public, however, had had little opportunity before 1873 to become acquainted with the composer, and for many, the Hlahol concert was their first encounter with Dvořák’s music. Writing in 1880 after the second Prague performance of *Hymnus*, one critic may have written this article, since they each sometimes used the pseudonym “ý,” when writing for *Národní Listy*.

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76 By that time, Dvořák had written Symphony No. 1 in C minor (1865), Symphony No. 2 in B-flat major (1865), his heroic opera *Alfred* (1869), and most recently, the first version of his opera *The King and the Charcoal Burner* (*Král a Uhlíř*, 1871).

77 Some of Dvořák’s smaller-scale works had been performed in Prague. On April 14, 1872, Bedřich Smetana conducted the overture to Dvořák’s opera *Král a Uhlíř* (*The King and the Charcoal Burner*) as part of the Philharmonic concert series in Žofín Hall. Later that year, on November 22, Ludevít Procházka brought about a performance of Dvořák’s Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 5 at a noon-hour concert in Konvikt Hall.

78 Otakar Hostinský, “Theater, Literatur, Kunst, und Wissenschaft,” *Politik* 12, no. 72 (March 14, 1873): 6; the term that Hostinský uses is “ein Gärung.” He makes brief mention of Dvořák’s three-act opera *Alfred*.

79 -tt-, “Zprávy domácí a z venkova [News from Home and Rural Areas],” *Hudební Listy* 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1873): 95; “po tolikých zkouškách a důkazech” “talent nejrozvádělnější.”

80 Václav Juda Novotný or Otakar Hostinský may have written this article, since they each sometimes used the pseudonym “ý,” when writing for *Národní Listy*. 
for Národní Listy argues that the work fared so well with the audience at its premiere because it was unexpected:

To say the least, this moment will never by wiped from our memories; all people were touched to the depths of their souls. Perhaps this was caused by the circumstance that no one expected such a grandiose work from Dvořák at that time – it was a surprise! Things are different today: Dvořák is given recognition, and the audience listens to his pieces with a happy feeling, but not with such powerful excitement of the soul. I admit that the extraordinary strength of the piece in its second performance overwhelmed us again; however, the impression from the first performance is not erased.81

Here, the critic asserts that it was largely the thrill of a new discovery that made audience members have such a strong reaction to Hymnus at its premiere. The author of one of Dvořák’s obituaries puts it another way, stating that “from this moment onward, people knew about Dvořák the composer and looked to him with the greatest of expectations.”82 Reflecting years later on the first Hymnus performance, these writers agree that, whereas the public had had no particular expectations for Dvořák prior to 1873, each of his subsequent new works was viewed through the lens of this event and was met with a certain sense of anticipation.

Audiences were allegedly surprised the most by the grandeur of Hymnus.83 Its dimensions were ambitious and its patriotism unequivocal to be sure, but in some ways Hymnus was not a serious departure from choral repertoire already being cultivated in the Czech lands during the

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81 ý., “Literatura a umění: Slovanský koncert [Literature and Art: Slavonic Concert],” Národní Listy 20, no. 69 (March 20, 1880): 3; “Tenkrát učinil velkolepě budovaný ten hymnus slohu lapidárního ohromný dojem na veškeré posluchačstvo. Nám aspoň vzněšený ten okamžik nikdy nevymizl z paměti; každý byl dojat do nejhlubší duše. Snad to spůsobila ona okolnost, že od tehdejšího Dvořáka nikdo věc tak velkolepou neočekával – bylo to všeobecné překvapení! Dnes ovšem se mají věci jinak: Dvořák jest uznán, skladby jeho poslouchá obecnost s radostným pocitem, nikoliv však s tak mohutným rozrušením duševním. Přiznávám se, že neobyčejná síla skladby v druhém tomto provedení opětě nás uchvátila; však dojem onoho prvního provedení není smazán.” These same sentiments are expressed in Dalibor, where Novotný writes, in reference to the 1873 premiere, “the surprise was felt by all;” “překvapení bylo všeobecné;” N. “Slovanské Produkce II [Slavonic Productions II],” Dalibor 2, no. 10 (April 1, 1880): 74.

82 Unsigned, “Mistr Antonín Dvořák, Hudební skladatel český – mrtev! [Master Antonín Dvořák, Czech Composer – Dead!],” Národní Listy 44, no. 122 (May 2, 1904): 2; “Od té chvíle vši se o Dvořáku skladatelí a hledí se k němu s největším očekáváním.”

83 As cited above, the critic for Národní Listy writes: “no one expected such a grandiose work from Dvořák at that time – it was a surprise!” ý., “Literatura a umění: Slovanský koncert [Literature and Art: Slavonic Concert],” Národní Listy 20, no. 69 (March 20, 1880): 3.
late nineteenth century. The content of its text, for instance, was quite conventional for that time period. As Jaroslav Smolka observes, themes from the nation’s history were common in Czech cantatas and oratorios from the 1860s to the 1890s. Subjects ranging from ancient Bohemian legends to the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century provided source material for composers seeking to appeal to the Czech public. By the early 1870s, the Hlahol society had in its repertoire choral works such as Carl Löwe’s oratorio *Hus* (1842), based on the life of the Czech Protestant reformer, and Pavel Křižkovský’s cantata *Saint Cyril and Methodius* (*Svatý Cyril a Methoděj*, 1861), written in commemoration of the two brothers who were active as missionaries in Moravia during the ninth century and became the first to translate portions of the Bible into a Slavic language using Cyrillic script. Even more topically related to Dvořák’s *Hymnus* is Karel Bendl’s grand chorus *After the Battle of the White Mountain* (*Po Bítvě Bělohorské*, 1869), which was performed by Hlahol during the 1871/72 concert season. Dvořák’s piece was thus not entirely without precedent.

Subjects from Czech history were not only prevalent in choral music; they had also been prescribed by Count Jan Harrach in 1861 as most appropriate for serious opera. Smetana’s first success on the operatic stage in 1866 came with the historically based opera *The Brandenburgers*

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85 Jan Hus (ca. 1370–1415).
86 As late as 1920–1921, Josef Bohuslav Foerster would also write a piece for male chorus on this historical theme, entitled *Bílá Hora* (*White Mountain*), with a text that is very similar in content to that of Dvořák’s *Hymnus*; “The battle was lost and the ranks [of soldiers] fled; only three hundred heroes stand by the fence. ‘Surrender now! Your defiance is pointless!’ Three hundred lean their backs on the wall... A regiment behind them, a regiment in front, regiments all around; only in the distance can one see the blue mountains, the brown cottages, the white courtyards! Not one of those by the fence gave up. The rifles thundered, the spades were active, above the oak trees tremble and the wobbling men upon men dying tumble to the ground; men upon men dying stand! The king has fled, the men lament, the country is lost, yet among its dead it stands!” “Boj ztracen byl, a na útěku řady, jen třista reků stojí u obory. ‘Téď vzdejte se! Jsou zbytečné to vzdory!’ Třista jich o zem’ opírá se zády... Pluk před nimi, pluk za nimi, pluk všudy, jen v dálí modrají se české hory, ty hnedě chaloupky, ty bílé dvory! Ni jeden nevzdal se z těch u ohrady. Zahříměly pušky, píky mély práci nad nimi duby, třesou se a kláti ob muže muž se mrtvé k zemi káčí, ob muže muž se mrtvů zůstal státi! Král utek, chlap jen úpěl, vlast’ ztracena, však ve svých mrtvých stojí!”
in Bohemia (Braniboři v Čechách, 1862–63), depicting the struggles of the Czechs during the late thirteenth century under the domination of the Brandenburgers. A work with political overtones, Smetana’s opera gives particular prominence to the chorus, which is used to represent the Czech people. Generally assumed to be the first Czech-language opera, Smetana’s The Brandenburgers was actually preceded in 1865 by Karel Šebor’s The Templars in Moravia (Templáři na Moravě), which is likewise set in the Czech lands during the thirteenth century, though the foreigners in this opera are much less villainous toward the Czechs. Whether designed for the concert hall or theatre, vocal works written by Czech composers at this time frequently drew upon themes from Czech history, and with Hymnus, Dvořák aligned himself with this tradition.

It was not by delving into the Czech past that Dvořák was able to overthrow audience expectations, but by writing a composition that was deemed to be of higher quality than other works in the genre. The very concert at which Dvořák’s Hymnus was premiered featured two additional pieces that dealt with historical themes. The programme included Bendl’s The Calixtines (Kališníci) for male chorus; named for a group of Hussites who believed that the laity ought to receive both the chalice and the bread during Communion, this work had been written for Hlahol’s tenth-anniversary celebration in 1871 and contains a reference to the oft-quoted fifteenth-century chorale “Ye who are Warriors of God.” Also among the compositions

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87 John Tyrrell, Czech Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1; John Tyrrell begins his study of Czech opera with the opening lines of Brandenburgers, stating that Czech audiences of the nineteenth century would have found these words to be immensely relevant: “But I say this: we can no longer tolerate foreign hordes here. We must now take up arms and drive the Brandenburgers from our homeland. They are destroying our country, blunting our language and under their sword our nation suffers!” Czech original: “Já ale pravím: Nelze déle tu trpěti cizácké sbory. Už potřebí se chopit zbraně a vyhnat z vlasti Branibory, již hubí zem, náš jazyk tupí, pod jejichž mečem národ úpí.”

88 Jan Smaczny, “Grand Opera among the Czechs,” in The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 374; Smaczny writes “there is a major role for the Czech people in the shape of the chorus.”

89 Czech original: “Kdož jste Boží bojovníci.”
performed alongside Dvořák’s *Hymnus* was Gounod’s *Gallia*, the text of which is taken from the lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem. Beginning with the words “solitary lieth the city, she that was full of people; how is she widowed, she that was great among nations,” the piece had resonated deeply with French audiences in the wake of France’s loss to Prussia in 1870, and it was expected to fare well when placed before the Czech public. Like Dvořák in his *Hymnus*, Gounod seeks to convey in *Gallia* the immense sorrow of a nation in the face of defeat, and since these two works are so closely related in their subject matter, comparisons between them were inevitable in the Czech press.

While acknowledging the merits of *Gallia*, Czech critics were nearly unanimous in declaring *Hymnus* to be the stronger of the two compositions. Hostinský claims in his review that “without a doubt [*Hymnus*] had the greatest effect on the audience, Gounod’s *Gallia* itself... not excepted.” He goes on to state that “with regard to Gounod’s *Gallia*, … everyone, who was looking for a grand cantata written in a monumental style, must have felt disappointed.” Procházka also writes that “the crown of victory was won by [Dvořák’s *Hymnus*]” and admits to having been underwhelmed by Gounod’s work: “although [*Gallia*] left a grand impression, it did not live up to expectations. The pen of Gounod was not equal to such a noble poetic task,

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90 Ch. Gounod, *Gallia: Motet for Soprano Solo, Chorus, Orchestra, and Organ* (London: Novello, n. d.); “Quomodo sedet sola civitas; plena populo, facta est quasi vidua Domina genitum.”

91 In two of the promotional articles for *Dalibor*, *Gallia* is singled out with the description “highly interesting cantata” (“velzejíma vá kantata”). Unsigned, “Kronika zpěváckých spolků a hudebních jednot [A chronicle of choral societies and musical unions],” *Dalibor* I, no. 2 (January 10, 1873): 13; Unsigned, “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 4 (January 24, 1873): 30.


93 *Ibid.*, 6; “was endlich Gounods ‘Gallia,’ ein Klagelied des Jeremias, für gemischten Chor, Sopran-Solo und Orchester, anlangt, so müßte sich jeder enttäuscht fühlen, der darin eine großartige in monumentalem Style geschriebene Kantate suchen würde.”

94 P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]): “palmu vítězství vydobyla sobě velkolepá, na nejmodernějším stanovisku se nalezající skladba Antonína Dvořáka ‘Hymnus’ z Hálkovy básně ‘Dedicové bile hory.’”
requiring the most intense expression of feeling."\(^95\) A more extensive comparison between these works can be found in Václav Juda Novotný’s\(^96\) assessment of the concert, in which he reaches the conclusion that *Hymnus* “rightfully ought to be considered the most superb focal point of the whole programme.”\(^97\) Using flowery prose, Novotný clearly upholds *Hymnus* as a model of how a truly ardent patriotic composition ought to sound and claims that, by contrast, *Gallia* falls flat because of its emotional reserve: “if we compare the patriotic fervour of *Hymnus* with the bland oratorio style of *Gallia*, the piece by Gounod blatantly pales like a belated star before the rays of the sun, which shine advantageously from Dvořák’s *Hymnus*.”\(^98\) No matter how they chose to express it, these Czech critics all convey the same message: Dvořák had surpassed a “great”

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\(^96\) x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 87–89. (See Appendix 1 for a full English translation.) Determining which critic wrote which article can be difficult, since Czech critics were notorious for using pseudonyms. The case of the *Dalibor* review of *Hymnus*, signed “x.,” is particularly intriguing. Scholars generally assume that this article was written by Ludevít Procházka; the first to give credit to Procházka was Boleslav Kalenský in his biographical sketch on Dvořák from 1911 (Kalenský, 85–86). Indeed, Procházka took an active part in the cultural life of Prague during the early 1870s and served as editor for the 1873 volume of *Dalibor*, which would make him a likely candidate; however, four factors point to Václav Juda Novotný as the author. Firstly and most importantly, in a series of anecdotes written for *Dalibor* in 1911, Novotný excerpts the 1873 review of *Hymnus* and actually confesses to having written it. He gives the following explanation: “It was my first year as a reviewer for *Dalibor* and my critique was reprinted in the Hlahol society’s commemorative publication; I include a quotation [from this critique] because I hope that it will be interesting for many to learn what was being written about Dvořák over here at the beginning of his path as a composer... It is more of a “hymnus” [an ode] on *Hymnus* than a review, and I read these lines from so long ago with a smile, [knowing] that I was not wrong about Dvořák, but that I had a good hunch about him already in 1873.”

\(^97\) x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 88; “právem se nazvati může nejskveljšíem ohniskem celého programu.”

\(^98\) Ibid., 89; “Porovnáme-li vlastenecký ten zápal v ‘hymnu’ s krotkým slohem oratorním v ‘Gallií,’ tu očividně bledne skladba Gounodova jako pozdní hvězda před paprsky slunečními, jež blahodárně vyzařují z ‘hymnu’ Dvořáka.”
composer of foreign acclaim, which meant that he too could now be counted among the ranks of musical “greats.” Zdeněk Nejedlý reiterates this point in his discussion of the premiere some forty years later:

Dvořák managed skillfully to beat the second grand piece in the concert, Gounod’s *Gallia*, without any doubt. The two works can be compared even in terms of content: *Gallia* is a lament on the humiliation of France during the last war. *Hymnus* taken from Hálek’s *Heirs of the White Mountain* is a work that is no less patriotic. Dvořák’s fervent sensitivity, and before a Czech audience, easily won out over the sentimental laments of Gounod. At that time, Gounod had a reputation as a master and to defeat him meant attaining mastery. Dvořák was able to do this; Hlahol, then, deserves credit, for it was there that Dvořák finally found the conditions he needed for a full victory.99

Triumphing over Gounod would have been viewed as no small accomplishment. A generation older than Dvořák, Gounod was very well respected in Prague, particularly in the realm of opera; as Jan Smaczny points out, Gounod’s *Faust* was given more times at the Provisional Theatre during the venue’s twenty-one years of existence than any other serious opera and did much to shape Czech perspectives on the genre.100 *Gallia* too was supposed to be an instant sensation in Prague, having been painstakingly acquired for Hlahol by publisher Emanuel Kittl while on his travels to Paris, but instead, Gounod – the old “master” – was upstaged by a young up-and-comer from the Czech lands.

In touting the superiority of *Hymnus*, Czech critics were not impartial judges. Writing at a time when the aesthetic stakes were high, these critics found ample motivation to portray Dvořák, and by extension Czech composers, in the best possible light. Procházka’s praise for *Hymnus*, for instance, is in keeping with the main thrust of his whole article. He opens his review

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100 Smaczny, “Grand Opera among the Czechs,” 372; between the Provisional Theatre’s opening in 1862 and its closure in 1883, *Faust* was performed 115 times.
by commenting on the state of vocal music production in the Czech lands, asserting with
discernible optimism that the Czech pieces on the programme are “not only the first fruits of an
awakening talent, but the tasty, ripe fruits of composers who are our future.” Procházka
considers Hlahol’s efforts in mounting such a concert to be of “no small service to the nation,”
and he addresses the Czech works ahead of the foreign compositions on the programme.
Hostinský also refers to the Hlahol concert as an event of cultural significance for the Czechs. He
writes of his dilemma in deciding whether to attend the Hlahol performance or the concert of the
Prague Conservatory, pointing out that being forced to choose between two quality performances
scheduled on the same evening reflects well on the musical life of the city. In the end, the choice
was clear for Hostinský, who speaks of his attendance at the Hlahol performance as a matter
duty: “the reviewer could obviously decide only in favour of the Hlahol concert. For this reason,
the concert deserved lively attention because it promised to have in more ways than one no lesser
meaning for our national artistic attempts.”

More than Procházka and Hostinský, it is Novotný who launches into a vehement defence of
Czech choral music in his review of the Hlahol concert for Dalibor, claiming that “as far as
internal worth is concerned, [the foreign compositions on the programme] stand far behind the
remarkable works, which were given to us by our home-grown artists in the victorious battle.”
Novotný’s impassioned writing did not come unprovoked, but was sparked by remarks that had

101 P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” Národní Listy 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha
[supplement]); “nebyly to pouhé prvotiny talentů se probuzujících, leč chutné, zralé plody skladatelů na slovo
vzatých, jimž kyne budoucnost.”
102 Ibid., 3; “vlasteneckému i méně proukázána služba nemalá.”
103 Otakar Hostinský, “Theater, Literatur, Kunst, und Wissenschaft,” Politik 12, no. 72 (March 14, 1873): 6; “der Ref. konnte sich offenbar nur für das ‘Hlahol’ concert entschieden. Dieses verdiente darum die regste
Aufmerksamkeit, weil sie in mehr als einer Beziehung von nicht geringer Bedeutung für unsere nationalen
Kunstbestrebungen zu sein versprach.”
104 x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” Dalibor I, no. 11 (March 14,
1873): 87; “tyto co do vnitřní ceny daleko stojí za výtečnými pracemi, jež nám u vítězném zápasu tentokráte naši
domácí umělci podali.”
been made by František Pazdírek (1848–1915) – a music publisher from Moravia, who was living in Berlin in 1873 and would later settle in Vienna to work in his brother’s publishing firm. In an article appearing in *Hudební Listy* earlier that year, Pazdírek had delivered some harsh words about music in the Czech lands, writing of the “dismal state – unworthy of the great talent of our nation – in which our musical repertoire stagnates” and arguing that “in comparison with the significant successes of other nations, we cannot yet boast to a large extent, excepting in a relatively weak department of vocal compositions, which often barely reach the conception of many a German composer.”105 Naturally, these remarks irritated Novotný, who took it upon himself to prove Pazdírek wrong and framed his whole article on the Hlahol concert as a kind of rebuttal. Quoting Pazdírek, Novotný writes at the outset of his review that he had recently been informed about “how lamentable things look in the sphere of our domestic art,” and he uses the Hlahol performance to set the record straight – or, as he puts it, “[to] decide for [himself] whether Mr. Pazdírek is right.”106 Novotný quickly dispenses with the foreign works on the programme, turning most of his attention to the Czech ones. His article culminates with an enthusiastic discussion of Dvořák’s *Hymnus* and closes with the following statement:

Some devious Mr. Pazdírek even dares to tell us publicly to our faces – and on top of that, in a Czech-language, specialized publication – that the pieces of our composers “do not reach the conception of even the most insignificant German composer!” And for such brilliant ideas the editors had to go all the way to Berlin! Perhaps they were in a deranged state, when they allowed such a pyramidal piece of wisdom to be printed below the line without blushing. Otherwise there is no way of excusing this and so, Pazdírek, kneel down and beg our masters for forgiveness.107

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105 Fr. Pazdírek, “Úvahy [Cogitations],” *Hudební Listy* (1873): “neutešený a našeho vysokého národního nadání nedůstojný stav, v jakém vážne hudební literatura naše, s kteroužto se vůči znamenitým úspěchům jiných národů v žádoucí míře ještě honosit nemůžeme, vyjímáme poměrně chudé oddělení vokálních skladeb, jichžto faktura však často sotva dosahuje koncepci leckterého německého.”

106 x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 87; “jak bídně to vypadá na poli našeho domácího umění” “mohu se tedy při vhodné té příležitosti přesvědčit, zdali má pan Pazdírek pravdu, když staví naše umělecké pod ‘leckterého nepatrného’ skladatele německého.”

107 *Ibid.*, 89; “pak se ještě opovážuje všelijaký pan Pazdírek veřejně nám do očí – a ještě k tomu v česky psaném odborním listu – říci, že faktura skladeb naších skladatelů ‘nedosahuje ani koncepci leckterého nepatrného
Though Novotný – in his many articles – had always shown himself to be a staunch supporter of Czech music, he promotes national art in this review with a greater sense of conviction than if he had not been offended by Pazdírek’s comments. Only a few weeks later, Novotný would mention Pazdírek again in reference to Dvořák. Reporting on a performance of Dvořák’s second Nocturne for orchestra *May Night (Májová Noc)*, Novotný writes “an admirable individual is on the horizon, and our national art can congratulate itself [as a result]. That is our assessment; if, however, [the contributors to] *Hudební Listy*, who predict that ‘the many beginner fruits of our musical repertoire will dissolve into nothingness,’ want to subject even this Dvořák piece to ‘Pazdírek’s scrutiny,’ what can we do?”

Not content to let Novotný have the last word on the subject, Pazdírek retaliates in *Hudební Listy* with an even more pugnacious article. It is filled with personal stabs and accusations that Novotný – to whom he refers as “Mr. X” – is determined to contradict him at all costs. Amid the petty bickering, however, Pazdírek does make a valid point: he suggests that some Czech critics, in their eagerness to approve of what they hear, tend to examine the works of Czech composers with an insufficiently critical eye. As Pazdírek puts it,

> [Mr. X] allowed himself to be carried away by the muses of Mr. Dvořák and Mr. Bendl into the Elysian Fields, which, it would seem, border on the land of the mentally unsound… I concur whole-heartedly with the basic tenet shared by all judicious reviewers: do not scare off young and promising composers with harsh and unkind criticism, [thus deterring them] from further, perhaps loftier works; I, however, decry the tactics of Mr. X… [who] misuses his review, more or less focusing on the personal circumstances of the composers – [his writing] a far cry from a scholarly discussion.

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Though he brings it across in an angry tone, Pazdírek’s claim is not wholly unfounded. As the reviews of the Hlahol concert demonstrate, *Hymnus* was premiered at a time when many critics were prepared to favour Czech works above all others. The one exception is Karel Knittl’s review appearing in the same journal that Pazdírek used to voice his objection to Novotný’s article: *Hudební Listy*. Though Knittl commends *Hymnus* for its “rich and appropriate invention,” he criticizes the work for its lack of formal command\(^{110}\) – a charge that had been frequently levelled at Dvořák on the pages of *Hudební Listy* even before the *Hymnus* premiere\(^{111}\) – and he is the only one of the critics not to make some sort of laudatory statement about how *Hymnus* was far and away the best piece on the programme. Knittl ends his discussion of *Hymnus* with a recommendation that Dvořák, “a composer with such sure talent, [ought to] strive for even surer calmness of thought when creating [a piece of music].”\(^{112}\)

The colourful exchanges between Novotný and Pazdírek are just one manifestation of a larger critical divide that took root in Prague during the late 1860s. The key players in the debate were Smetana, on the one hand, and critic and voice teacher František Pivoda (1824–1893) on the other. Pivoda advocated a type of Czech opera based primarily on Czech and Slavonic folk idioms and considered *The Bartered Bride (Prodaná Nevěsta)* in its original version to be the

\(^{110}\) Procházka also touches on this issue, stating that nothing is missing from Dvořák’s “creative genius... except the ability to elevate oneself to a greater perfection of form;” “genia tvůrčího, jemuž netřeba, leč vybouřiti se a povznést se také k dokonalé kráse formalní;” P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]). While Knittl is not the only critic to detect some flaws in *Hymnus*, the tone of his review is less enthusiastic than that of the others.

\(^{111}\) In 1916, Dvořák’s biographer Otakar Šourek would make a connection between this lack of formal clarity and the New German school; Otakar Šourek, *Život a Dílo Antonína Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Antonín Dvořák]*, vol. 1 (Prague: Hudební Matice Umělecké Besedy, 1916), 79.

\(^{112}\) “Zprávy domácí a z Venkova [News from Home and Rural Areas],” *Hudební Listy* 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1873): 95–96; “musíme p. skladateli při tak rozhodném talentu i rozhodnější poklid rozmyslu v tvoření doporučit.”
prototype of this vision. To Pivoda, Czech music, at its core, was about simplicity, naturalness, melodiousness, and formal clarity, and he felt that Wagnerian ideals flew in the face of these basic characteristics, thereby threatening the comprehensibility of the music and alienating the audience. Smetana, by contrast, rejected the notion of Volkstümlichkeit, firmly believing that Czech composers ought instead to embrace Wagner’s concept of the music drama in the name of progress and in the hope that Czech art might be able to stand up to the works being composed for the operatic stage in other European countries. Though Pivoda and Smetana had maintained an amicable relationship in earlier years, the two of them reached an impasse in 1868 with the premiere of Smetana’s opera Dalibor, which consolidated both Smetana’s Wagnerian direction and Pivoda’s firm disapproval of it. Since the two of them expressed their views publicly through the Czech press, their debate prompted other critics to weigh in on the issue and managed to polarize the musical community in Prague.

Chief among those to get involved in these polemics was Otakar Hostinský, who took a definite stance in support of Smetana with his article “‘Wagnerism’ and Czech National Opera” (“‘Wagnerianismus’ a česká národní opera”) published in 1870. In this article, Hostinský seems less concerned about identifying specific musical elements that might link a given composition to Wagner than about emphasizing the ideas that lie behind Wagner’s music. As Hostinský expresses it,

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113 Though Pivoda favoured The Bartered Bride above other operas by Czech composers, he made the claim in 1872 that a Czech opera in the truest sense of the word had yet to be written; František Pivoda, “Některé myšlenky o české opeře, jejím utvoření, rozkvětu, zachování, a působení [Some thoughts on Czech opera, its creation, flowering, preservation, and influence],” Osvěta 2, no. 1 (1872): 135.


115 Karel Knittl was one of the critics to come out on the Pivoda side of this divide.

116 This article is reprinted in Otakar Hostinský, Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu [Bedřich Smetana and his battle for modern Czech music] (Prague: Jan Laichter, 1901), 146–178.
The principle of Wagner’s music drama is, in short: complete and utter submission of all organically connected arts into one thought that gives life to the whole – that is the dramatic intension of the poet. Everything else is just a necessary result of this principle. Here, true Wagnerianism lies not in the frequent use of deceptive cadences, certain melodic and harmonic reminiscences from *Tannhäuser* or *Lohengrin*, certain methods of instrumentation that Wagner likes, etc.\(^{117}\)

The conversation about Wagner’s place in Czech opera continued well into the 1870s; as late as 1873, Hostinský was able to write in reference to the Wagner debate that it is “a matter about which all of Prague is currently speaking, [or at least] all those who are remotely interested in Czech musical art.”\(^{118}\) Wagnerism eventually started taking on a life of its own in the Czech lands as it did elsewhere at that time.\(^{119}\) More than objecting to Wagner, Pivoda – in his articles from the 1870s – railed against the specific brand of Wagnerism that Hostinský espoused.\(^{120}\) In 1872, Hostinský dissolved all ties to *Hudební Listy*, the music journal that he had co-founded with Ludevít Procházka only a few years earlier, which was now left in the hands of Pivoda, and in 1873, Hostinský and Procházka partnered again to establish a new music journal *Dalibor*, which was to serve as an alternative to the older publication. The year that Dvořák’s *Hymnus* was premiered, 1873, was the first of only three years, in which these two music journals would co-exist, and as Brian Locke observes, Hostinský used the newly founded *Dalibor* to provide a

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\(^{117}\) Hostinský, *Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu* [Bedřich Smetana and his battle for modern Czech music], 148; “princip Wagnerova hudebního dramatu jest zkrátka: úplně a důsledně provedené podřízení všech v něm organicky spojených umění v jediné, celek oživující myšlence t. j. v dramatické intenci básníkův. Všechno ostatní jest jen nutný důsledek této zásady. Zde věži tudíž pravý ‘Wagnerianismus,’ a ne v častém užívání klamných závěrů, jistých melodičkých a harmonických reminiscencí z *Tannhäusera* nebo z *Lohengrina* v jistých spůsobech instrumentace, v nichž si Wagner líbí atd.”

\(^{118}\) Fl. [Otakar Hostinský], “Kde jsme? Kam nechceme se dostati? [Where are we? Where don’t we want to go?],” *Dalibor* I, no. 2 (January 10, 1873): 10; “věci, o nichž mluví nyní celá Praha, pokud se o české hudební umění jakýmkoliv spůsobem interesuje.” (Following the example of Schumann, Hostinský writes under the pseudonym Florestan.)


\(^{120}\) Ottlová and Pospíšil, 104.
response to each of Pivoda’s more extensive articles in *Hudební Listy*. It was thus not uncommon for contributors to these two competing journals to debate musical matters in the way that Novotný and Pazdírek did and to present opposing views on the same subject.

Overall, the *Hymnus* premiere occurred at a time when audiences and critics were predisposed to respond well to the piece. Though similar in its historical leanings to other vocal repertory being cultivated in the Czech lands, *Hymnus* – a veritable attention-grabber – thrust Dvořák into the public eye in a way that none of his earlier works was able to do. Along with this new-found attention came a new set of expectations for Dvořák and the role that he might play on the Czech music scene. This was an important consideration for the many critics in attendance at Dvořák’s Prague debut, who were deeply invested in a debate on the nature of Czech music and its relation to a Wagnerian aesthetic. Wagner’s name is not invoked in any of the *Hymnus* reviews, but in 1873, the German composer was still very much the proverbial elephant in the room, creating a rift between the city’s two leading music journals and causing several critics to part company.

**Echoes of *Tannhäuser*: The Czech “Wagner” Debate and its Implications for *Hymnus***

There were many heated exchanges in the Czech press between Pivoda and Hostinský during the early 1870s. One such exchange took place just a few months before the *Hymnus* premiere. In response to Pivoda’s claim that “Wagnerism” was becoming too dominant in Prague, Hostinský is content to let the numbers speak for themselves: “our Czech theatre has not yet witnessed the performance of a single Wagner opera,” he declares, “even though almost

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122 Unsigned, “Kde jsem? Kam chceme se dostati? [Where are we? Where do we want to go?]” *Hudební Listy* (1873). (Though it is unsigned, the article is by František Pivoda, to whom Hostinský makes reference in his reply.)
all other directions are represented there.”¹²³ Indeed, the Provisional Theatre had managed to steer clear of Wagner, though, by the early 1870s, audiences in Prague had been exposed to five of the composer’s operas by way of the city’s leading German venue, the Estates Theatre: 

Tannhäuser (1854), Lohengrin (1856), Der fliegende Holländer (1856), Rienzi (1859), and Die Meistersinger (1871).¹²⁴ Hostinský continues, refuting Pivoda as follows:

Among our composers, no one is a true “Wagnerian” – that is, no one writes in Wagner’s style – not even those who belong to the group that is referred to as “Wagnerian” by those who oppose it. I asked the question who, out of our composers, really can be counted [as a Wagnerian] and I was told: almost all of our composers: Smetana, Bendl, Hřímalý, Skuherský, out of the younger composers Dvořák, Fibich... [At that], I just had to laugh.¹²⁵

This passage is instructive on two counts: firstly, it shows that stretching Wagnerism so far as to include the work of nearly all of the composers active in Prague during the early 1870s was a laughable notion to Hostinský, and secondly, it suggests that Dvořák, among others, was considered by some of the critics in Prague to be a follower of Wagner at that time. Though both Pivoda and Hostinský meant their comments primarily in reference to opera, the Wagner debate was so dominant that it filtered into other areas of musical activity.¹²⁶

¹²³ Fl. [Otakar Hostinský], “Kde jsme? Kam nechceme se dostati? [Where are we? Where do we not want to go?],” Dalibor I, no. 2 (January 10, 1873): 11; “na našem českém divadle se dosud žádná zpěvohra Wagnerova neprovedla, ačkoliv jsou skoro všechny ostatní směry zastoupeny.” (Following the example of Schumann, Hostinský writes under the pseudonym Florestan.)

¹²⁴ Ottlová and Pospíšil, 96. (The years in which these Wagner operas were performed at the Estates Theatre in Prague are given in brackets.) Though Wagner was avoided on the Czech opera stages, some of his compositions were performed at concerts in Prague. For example, Wagner’s piece for male chorus and orchestra Das Liebesmahl der Apostel had appeared on a Hlahol programme during the early 1870s.

¹²⁵ Fl. [Otakar Hostinský], “Kde jsme? Kam nechceme se dostati? [Where are we? Where do we not want to go?],” Dalibor I, no. 2 (January 10, 1873): 11; “z našich skladatelů nikdo není skutečným ‘Wagneristou,’ t. j. nikdo nepíše ve slohu Wagnerově, ani ten ne, kdo se hlásí ku straně již protivníci z příčin taktických nazývají ‘Wagnerovskou.’ Ptal jsem se, kdo z našich komponistů náleží mezi ony ukrtuvnicy a řeklo se mi: téměř všichni naši skladatelé: Smetana, Bendl, Hřímalý, Skuherský, z mladších Dvořák, Fibich... smál jsem se.”

¹²⁶ Šourek claims, for instance, that Dvořák’s opera Alfred and his String Quartets in D major and E minor are the works that demonstrate most clearly Dvořák’s fascination with the New German School. In the case of Dvořák, Wagnerism was not limited to the realm of opera. Šourek, 104.
As in his definitive study on the topic, Hostinský once again emphasizes here that Wagnerism does not necessarily lie in specific musical traits, but in broader principles.127 Perhaps one of the reasons why Hostinský stressed this idea so much was because Czech critics had a tendency to isolate certain musical features and label them as “Wagnerian.” Years later, in 1908, Hostinský enumerates these features: “in those days, our musical conservatives and reactionaries focused their attacks most readily on lush polyphony, bold harmonies, and thick orchestration. It was thought that the strangest harmonies, the most extravagant chords, [and] the sharpest cacophony arose from the brain [of Wagner, and] that his instrumentation was nothing more than continuous and deafening noise.”128 Some of this coded language that stood for Wagnerism appears in the 1873 reviews of Hymnus; however, it is not meant in a derogatory sense, since most of the reviewers were firmly positioned in the Wagner camp. Procházka, for example, seems to align Dvořák with Wagner indirectly when he observes that equal attention is paid to the chorus and orchestra in Hymnus129 and when he characterizes the work as one that arose from “the most modern perspective.”130 The former remark is not surprising, given that the

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127 In a continuation of this article, Hostinský argues that the logical outworking of Wagner’s principles could not be more “nationalistic” (“národní”) for the Czechs, since it leads composers to privilege Czech declamation and create music dramas “based on the mother tongue” (“na základě jazyka mateřského”). Hostinský highlights these ideas (included here in quotes) by printing them in a bold font, such that they cannot be missed by the reader; Fl. [Otakar Hostinský], “Kde jsme? Kam nechceme se dostati? [Where are we? Where do we not want to go?],” *Dalibor* I, no. 3 (January 17, 1873): 18.

128 Otakar Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naší hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” in *Antonín Dvořák: Sborník stati o jeho díle a životě [Antonín Dvořák: A Collection of Essays about his Work and Life]*, ed. Boleslav Kalenský (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1912); “tenkráte útoky našich hudebních konservativců a reacionářů nejraději mířily na bujnou polyfonii, smělou harmonii a sytou orkestraci. Říkalo se, že v jeho [Wagnerova] mozku vycházely nejpodivnější harmonie, nejextravagantnější akordy, nejostřejší kakofonie, že jeho instrumentace nebyla nic než ustavičná a ohlušující rámus.” (See Appendix 8 for an English translation of Hostinský’s article). Ottlová and Pospíšil make a similar point, claiming that to the Czech critics, Wagnerism meant more elaborate orchestral interludes, fuller instrumentation, richer harmonies, and worked-out gradations; Ottlová and Pospíšil, 101.

129 P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]); in his words, “the composer shows the same [degree of] powerful expression and a masterful technical adeptness [in the vocal and orchestral parts];” “jak ve vokální tak i v orkestrální části jeví skladatel stejnou mocnost výrazu i mistrnou obratnost technickou.”

130 *Ibid.*, 3; “na nejmodernějším stanovisku se nalezající skladba.”
orchestra would soon be identified as Dvořák’s true medium, but it would be very rare in later years for Dvořák’s music to be described as “modern” and in using this term, Procházka conjures up New German associations. Novotný also alludes to Wagner in subtle ways in his review of *Hymnus*, commending the work for its “truthful, expressive declamation” – a characteristic that was deemed to be particularly important by members of the Wagner crowd – and describing it as a piece that is “worthy of the new era.” Almost all of the critics make reference to the work’s “rich polyphony” – a feature that likewise had certain Wagnerian connotations according to Hostinský. Beyond that, each of the reviewers considers *Hymnus* to be complicated and demanding for the performers – perhaps unnecessarily so. Even Hostinský has his reservations about the work’s technical demands, stating that “a shortcoming, which could be considered a matter of great importance, is the needless difficulty that the work poses for the

132 x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 89; “pravdivé, výrazuplné deklamace…”
133 *Ibid*, 88–89; “kresba mistra nové doby důstojná.” If Novotný did consider the work to be reminiscent of Wagner in any way, it is curious that he was not more explicit, since he does not hesitate to liken Bendl’s *Song of the Fairies above the Water* [*Zpěv vil nad vodami*] to the second act of *Gotterdammerung* in the very same review.
134 Novotný: “the whole work is created as if from one fabric – everything moves forward in a continuous stream of truthful, expressive declamation, with lively orchestral colours in the forms of rich polyphony;” “Celé to dílo jest jako z jedné litiny – vše se hrne ku předu bezpečně přímo pravdivé, výrazuplné deklamace, s živými barvami orkestrálněmi ve formách bohaté polyfonie;” x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 89. Procházka: “the wide polyphonic stream... the richness and strength of thought reveal in this piece the extraordinary creative genius;” “široký proud polyfonický... bohatost i síla myšlenky objevují v skladbě té nevšedního genia tvůrcího;” P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]). Knittl: “he is able to bind art in polyphonic chains, which he has completely under his power;” “dovede i poutati uměním sazby polyfonické, jížto má v úplné moci své;” -tt-, “Zprávy domácí a z venkova [News from Home and Rural Areas],” *Hudební Listy* 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1873): 96. (The emphasis is mine.)
135 Novotný: “this composition places great demands on the orchestra as well as the singers;” “Skladba tato činí požadavky ohromné jak k orkestru tak k pěvcům;” x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 88. Procházka: “what can remain in the mind of the listener from a work that is so complicated and rich after one hearing only?” “co utkvéti může v mysli posluchače z díla tak složitého a bohatého po jediném pouze slyšení?” P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]). Knittl: “there were also some parts, which seemed to us to be an excellent leap forward, in spite of the great challenges that Dvořák likes to place on performing musicians;” “slyšel si jsme ještě některá místa, která se nám při nesmrtných obtížích, jaké Dvořák výkonným hudebníkům tak rád ukládá... tak výbornými skoky býti zdála;” -tt-, “Zprávy domácí a z venkova [News from Home and Rural Areas],” *Hudební Listy* 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1873): 96. (The emphasis is mine.)
performing artist.” These kinds of comments once again call Wagner to mind, since conservative Czech critics often described Wagner’s music dramas and Czech compositions modelled on them as excessively difficult. In his article on Czech opera, for instance, Pivoda – the most tenacious of the anti-Wagnerians – advocates a return to simplicity and urges composers to cultivate “a rich repertoire of easier operas that would be accessible even to a non-virtuoso orchestra.” Easiness was clearly not Dvořák’s prime consideration when he wrote Hymnus, and the reviews from 1873 reflect this.

It was not until 1880 that Dvořák’s Hymnus was performed in Prague again. By then, Dvořák had revised the score considerably, reducing the instrumentation, making the voice leading smoother and reworking the ending. Critics viewed these revisions as a manifestation of Dvořák’s attempts to write in a more refined style and started to describe the first version of Hymnus in retrospect as overly chaotic by comparison. Novotný’s 1880 review of the piece for Dalibor illustrates this trend:

[Dvořák’s] talent has transformed from the swirling restlessness of that time to the present stability, calmness, and discretion of the master; in Hymnus, the hot lava of the previous period of chaotic creation still reaches the surface in many spots; there was much exaggeration, much that disrupted the mixing of orchestral and vocal beauties in a unified whole, and for this reason the composer is to be commended that, with strict self-criticism, he managed to weed out any discrepancies and in so doing gave the whole a new grace and nobility.

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136 Otakar Hostinský, “Theater, Literatur, Kunst, und Wissenschaft,” Politik 12, no. 72 (March 14, 1873): 6; “Ein Mangel, auf den schon größeres Gewicht zu legen wäre, ist die überflüssige Häufung von Schwierigkeiten für die ausübenden Künstler.”

137 František Pivoda, “Některé myšlenky o české operě, jejím utvoření, rozkvětu, zachování, a působení [Some thoughts on Czech opera, its creation, flowering, preservation, and influence],” Osvěta 2, no. 1 (1872): 139; “[bohatého repertoáru] lehčích oper, které by i nevirtuosním orkestřím byly přístupny.” (The emphasis is mine.)

138 N., “Slovanské Produkce II [Slavonic Production II],” Dalibor 2, no. 10 (April 1, 1880): 74; “Talent jeho z vířivého kolotání tou dobou přecházel v ustálenost, klid a rozvahu mistrů; v hymnu ještě horká lava z předešlé periody chaotického tvoření v mnohých místech na povrch se dere; mnohá přehnanost, mnohá nestvůra v mšení barev orkestrálních s vokálními krásou celku rušila, a proto učinil dobře skladatel, že nyní sám sebe přísně kritizoval při revidování díla toho, že různé ty nesrovnalosti vyplenil a tím celku nové ušlechtilosti dodal.” Already in his 1873 review, Hostinský alludes to “the billowy musical sea of thoughts in [Dvořák]” (“wogende musikalische Gedankenmeer”); Otakar Hostinský, “Theater, Literatur, Kunst, und Wissenschaft,” Politik 12, no. 72 (March 14, 1873): 6.
It seems unlikely that Novotný would have considered the actual works of Wagner to be chaotic. After all, a set of acrimonious articles published on Wagner in the newspaper *Pokrok* would reinvigorate the Wagner debate later in 1880, and Novotný would emerge as one of Wagner’s most steadfast defenders among the Czechs; just as Novotný had attempted to pave the way for the wider acceptance of Liszt in the Czech lands with his series of articles on the symphonic poem in 1873, so too did he seek to make Wagner’s work more accessible to the Czech public, by publishing portions of the libretto of *Tannhäuser* in Czech translation on the pages of *Dalibor* in 1880. In his words, the purpose of this endeavour was to “prove to the audience that Wagner is not such a monster, as some make him out to be; on the contrary, many of his works are completely accessible to the Czech spirit.” Yet, it was precisely this “chaos” or “storminess” observed by Novotný in Dvořák’s first version of *Hymnus* that critics typically used as evidence of Dvořák’s fascination with Wagner.

This becomes all the more apparent when Novotný’s comments on the revisions to *Hymnus* are compared with his remarks on the one Dvořák work to undergo a complete rewrite in 1874: *The King and the Charcoal Burner* (*Král a Uhlíř*) – an opera that was deemed to be excessively tumultuous and overly demanding for the performers in its first version from 1871 and 1872.

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139 Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická básně nástin historického vývinu těchto forem [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms],” *Dalibor* I (1873): 117–21, 127–9, 135–6, 145–8, 153–6, 161–4, 169–71, 177–9, 193–6, 201–3, 209–12. (See Appendix 3 for an English translation of excerpts from this article.) These articles are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

140 Václav Juda Novotný, “Richard Wagner na jevišti českém [Richard Wagner on the Czech Stage],” *Dalibor* 2, nos. 22–24 (August 1, 10, and 20 1880): 169–172, 177–180, 185–187. By 1880, the National Theatre was on the verge of opening its doors for the first time and this circumstance also prompted critics to speak once again about Wagner, who had hitherto been absent from the Czech operatic stage. With this larger venue that was soon to be at their disposal, the Czechs had less of an excuse to avoid Wagner.

141 *Ibid.*, 169; “abychom obecněmu našemu dokázali, že Wagner není takovou příšerou, jak ho mnozí malují, ba že jsou mnohé z jeho prací českém duchu úplně přístupný.” Novotný was aided in this task by critic V. V. Zelený, who printed a satirical reply in the newspaper *České Noviny* to the “anti-Wagnerian” of *Pokrok*; Velmi Vzdálený Zelota [Václav Vladimír Zelený], “Venkovské Listy o Divadle III [Rural Papers on the Theatre III],” *České Noviny* no. 177 (July 27, 1880): 1. (Zelený is publishing here under a pseudonym.)
Novotný provides a vivid account of the dress rehearsal for the opera at the Provisional Theatre where it was decided that the work, in its initial version, could not be performed:

In the sharpest storm of sound waves, all of the individuals clenched their scores desperately and strove mercilessly [to sing their parts] at the top of their lungs; in anger, the conductor jumped to his feet and vigorously waved his baton around as if possessed – yet, all of the struggles were in vain. [The performers] could not hear themselves, infernal noise caused the whole building to shake, [and] the exhausted conductor sank into his seat in apathetic resignation, giving the waves free reign. One by one the performers stopped, fewer and fewer of them continuing in their dogged determination; the last to be heard was a clarinet, and the composer, huddling in the corner, yelled: “this is not working!”

Novotný claims that Dvořák arrived at this initial, and “at times chaotic,” version of his opera, after having spent much time engaging with the music of the New Germans. As Novotný puts it, Dvořák – having steeped himself in a New Romantic aesthetic – wanted to compose something extraordinary, but ended up with an opera that was “only possible in the fiery imagination of the composer or, at most, on paper.” After witnessing the difficulties that the performers were having, Dvořák composed an entirely new musical setting of the same text, and Novotný praises Dvořák for his ability to take a simpler, more restrained approach in his second version of the opera. It is a similar kind of progression – from chaos to restraint – that Novotný detects in the revised score of Hymnus performed in 1880.

Otakar Šourek would later make an even more explicit connection between the “turbulent” style of Dvořák’s early period and the New German School. In reference to Dvořák’s music from

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142 X., “Česká zpěvohra [Czech Opera],” Dalibor II, no. 49 (December 5, 1874): 390; “v nejprudším rozbouření vln zvukových zatíná každý jednotlivec zoufale prsty do své partie a nemilosrdně z plných plic vyraženými tony oťárá rozvinutý kolem vzduch, kapelník v rozčilení hle vyskočil ze svého sedadla a šlehá kolem sebe takto v kruhu jako poslední – vše namahání je marně; nikdo se více nestíha, pekný rámus oťára celým stavením, kapelník uštván klesá v tupé resignaci na sedadlo a nechá bez vlády bourít vlny rozpěněné nad hlavou svou – jeden za druhým přestává, řady na smrt a na život odhadlaných řidí, na posledy ještě v orkestru zakvíkli přeoukaný klatit se vzdace posledním a v koutě parketu schoulený skladatel vzdech s í z ním: ‘Nejde to!’”

143 Ibid., 389–390; “možná v tropicky rozohněné fantasi skladatelově či nanejvícě na papíře.” Perhaps Novotný uses the term “New Romantic” here to avoid the exclusively German connotations of “New German.” Novotný also speculates that the performers at the Provisional Theatre might have had an easier time with Dvořák’s score, if they were accustomed to performing the work of Wagner.
1873 and 1874, Šourek writes “the waves that had previously been rendered billowy and stormy by the spirit of the music of Wagner and Liszt were now being made calm and level, with the pure, sweetly scented, smiling breath of Smetana shining through as clear as the sun.”\textsuperscript{144} Here, Šourek places a value judgment on Dvořák’s so-called stylistic transition, contrasting the “storminess” and “billowiness” of Dvořák’s New German models with the “calming influence” of Smetana. What is more, in his detailed study of \textit{Hymnus}, Šourek tends to downplay possible associations with Wagner. Rather than seeing \textit{Hymnus} as a modern composition for its time – “worthy of the new era,” as Novotný and Procházka had expressed it in 1873 – Šourek invokes the names of Bach and Handel in connection with the piece and is adamant in stating that the work has nearly no traces of Wagner in it.\textsuperscript{145} As is evident in the subtitle for his \textit{Hymnus} discussion – “Expressions of Patriotic Romanticism” – and in the above quotation, Šourek contends that the hold that Wagner had held over Dvořák was loosening in \textit{Hymnus} in order to make way for a more definitively Czech idiom.\textsuperscript{146} These ideas are echoed in the more recent Dvořák literature. Hans-Hubert Schönzeler, for instance, claims that in \textit{Hymnus}, Dvořák “gave full vent to his national feelings and in consequence his Wagnerian leanings receded into the background.”\textsuperscript{147} Nowhere is this notion more evident than in the writing of John Clapham, who characterizes Dvořák’s two rounds of revision to \textit{Hymnus} – the second one occurring in 1884 – as an effort to purge the piece from Wagnerism, as if “eliminating... Wagnerian influence” in a work was, for Dvořák, tantamount to improving it or making it more uniquely his.\textsuperscript{148} Clapham’s remarks in particular point to a larger trend, spotted by Michael Beckerman in the work of some

\textsuperscript{144} Šourek, 166; “vlny vzduté a vzbouřené duchem hudby Wagnerovy a Lisztovy klidně, zarovnává a slunným jasem ozařuje čistý, vonný pozemský smavý dech díla Smetanova.”

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid.}, 114; “invenčních názvuků na Wagnera není tu pak téměř žádných.”

\textsuperscript{146} The Czech subtitle is “Projevy vlasteneckého romantismu.”

\textsuperscript{147} Hans-Hubert Schönzeler, \textit{Dvořák} (London: Marion Boyars, 1984), 54.

of Dvořák’s biographers, of treating Wagnerism as a disease from which Dvořák needed to be cured. Beckerman shows that, contrary to conventional wisdom, Dvořák would not be cured of it and would continue to harbour a fascination with the German composer throughout his career.

Wagnerism is implied yet never declared in the early reviews of *Hymnus*; for this reason, it is worth noting, albeit briefly, some of the ways in which Dvořák uses the composer he admired so much as a model. David Beveridge hears reminiscences of the prelude to *Das Rheingold* in *Hymnus*, especially in some of its strictly orchestral passages; however, Dvořák seems to be drawing even more closely upon an earlier Wagner work: *Tannhäuser*. Perhaps not coincidentally, *Tannhäuser* – and various excerpts from it – was consistently well received when placed before the Prague public during the mid- to late nineteenth century. A journalist writing for the newspaper *Pražské Noviny* in 1853 reports, for instance, that “the thunderous applause with which the march from *Tannhäuser* was greeted from the audience... proves that opposition to Wagner will never be as passionate on the shores of the Vltava as in the north.” The full opera was mounted a year later in 1854 at Prague’s Estates Theatre, and Miroslav Černý

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149 Michael Beckerman, “Dvořák,” in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (London: Prentice Hall, 1997), 278; in Beckerman’s words, “two of the most astute commentators on Dvořák’s style, Otakar Šourek and John Clapham, sometimes fall into the trap of treating the composer’s interest in Wagner as if it were a disease from which he only gradually recovered. But disease or not, he assuredly never recovered from it.” 150 Michael Beckerman, “Between a Ring and a Hard Place: Dvořák’s Homeric Wagner,” in *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer’s Inner Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 209–225; as Beckerman expresses it, “Dvořák struggled with the image of Wagner for the greater portion of his creative life.” 151 David R. Beveridge, “The Choral Ode (*Hymnus*): Dvořák’s First Major Public Triumph,” unpublished chapter in his book on Dvořák’s life and works. Specifically, Beveridge points to the common key of E-flat major. He also argues that the single pitch held in the first few measures of the instrumental introduction to *Hymnus* is similar to the opening of *Das Rheingold* and that the horn fifths in the orchestral interlude (mm. 131–134) of *Hymnus* hark back to the ending of Wagner’s prelude to *Das Rheingold*. 152 Unsigned, “Zprávy Pražské a z Venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Pražské Noviny* 29, no. 114 (May 14, 1853): 4; “Hřmotný potlesk, s kterýmž především marš z Tannhäusera od obecenstva přijat byl, dokazuje, že oposice proti Wagneroví na březích Vltavy nebude snad nikdy tak vášnivá jako na severu.” The journalist begins his review by lamenting the work’s poor reception in Dresden and Berlin, to which he later refers as “the north.”
observes that it achieved greater success than other Wagner operas at that venue.\footnote{Miroslav K. Černý, “Ohlas Díla Richarda Wagnera v České Hudební Kritice Let 1847–1883 [The Reception of Wagner in Czech Music Criticism, 1847–1883],” Hudební Věda 22 (1985): 219. Černý names Rienzi as an example of a Wagner work that did not fare too well in Prague.} \textit{Tannhäuser} was also on people’s minds at the time of the \textit{Hymnus} premiere; just a few weeks after Hlahol’s “monster” concert in 1873, the overture to \textit{Tannhäuser} was performed in Prague at a concert of the Philharmonic Society, featuring the very same mixed orchestra that had accompanied Hlahol. Though Novotný’s review of this overture for \textit{Dalibor} is conspicuously brief, he writes that “it will always remain Wagner’s most remarkable work.”\footnote{x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z Venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” \textit{Dalibor} I, no. 14 (April 4, 1873): 113; “jež zůstane vždy nejznamenitější prací Wagnerovou.” The review is strangely out of proportion. The three pieces on the Philharmonic Society’s concert programme were Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, Dvořák’s second Nocturne for orchestra: \textit{May Night} (\textit{Májová Noc}), and Wagner’s Overture to \textit{Tannhäuser}. Novotný devotes two pages to Beethoven, two paragraphs to Dvořák, and one sentence to Wagner. The brevity of Novotný’s remarks seems to imply that his assessment was understood and needed no further elaboration.} In 1880, it would be none other than the opera \textit{Tannhäuser} that Novotný would use to ward off the attacks of the anti-Wagnerians. As part of the same effort to quell Wagner’s bad Czech press, critic Václav Vladimír Zelený (1858–1892) would publish an article in 1880, in which he makes a clear distinction between Wagner’s earlier operas and the \textit{Ring} cycle, noting that while the latter might pose some difficulties, the former are completely feasible.\footnote{Velmi Vzdálený Zelota [Václav Vladimír Zelený], “Venkovské Listy o Divadle III [Rural Papers on the Theatre III],” \textit{České Noviny} no. 177 (July 27, 1880): 1; “the whole world knows that Wagner’s operas are completely different from the Nibelungs; everyone, who has even remotely glanced at our repertoire, knows that the \textit{Ring} can be performed with success only in the largest court opera houses, whereas Wagner’s operas can be performed on every stage where French grand opera is performed;” “celý svět vědí, že Wagnerovy opery jsou něco naprosto rozdílného od Niebelungů, každý, kdo jen kdy pohlédl na repertoár našich oper, ví, že Niebelungy dávat se mohou leda na největších dvorních operách s jakýmikoli úspěchem, kdežto Wagnerovy opery provést lze všude, kde hraje se velká opera francouzská.” (Zelený is publishing here under a pseudonym.)}

Just as audiences in Prague were generally more welcoming of Wagner’s earlier works than his later ones, so too was Dvořák inclined to favour them. According to Josef Kovařík, who acted as the composer’s secretary during his American sojourn, Dvořák considered \textit{Tannhäuser}
to be Wagner’s best work. Dvořák seems to have engaged with this Wagner composition on at least one occasion; scholars generally agree that the second movement of Dvořák’s Fourth Symphony in D minor, Op. 13 (see Example 2.3), composed after Hymnus, in 1874, bears a strong resemblance to the Pilgrims’ Chorus in Tannhäuser:

Example 2.3: The opening of the second movement from Dvořák’s Fourth Symphony in D minor, Op. 13 (mm. 1–7) (The string section, which is tacet in these measures, is omitted here.)

Antonín Dvořák, Symphonies Nos. 4 and 5 in Full Score (Mineola: Dover, 2008), 43.

156 Letter from Kovařík to Šourek, published in Jarmil Burghauser’s critical commentary for the facsimile edition of the “New World” Symphony (Prague: Pressfoto, 1972). During his stay in New York, Dvořák was invited by Anton Seidl to a performance of Siegfried at the Metropolitan Opera. Shocked to learn that Dvořák had heard this Wagner opera only once, Seidl was eager to reintroduce it to the composer.

157 A. Peter Brown, The Second Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Brahms, Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, and Selected Contemporaries, vol. 4 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 354. It seems significant that Dvořák begins this movement with the melody in the clarinets, since they figure prominently in Tannhäuser.
Decades later, during the 1890s, Dvořák would articulate his deep admiration for the Pilgrims’ Chorus in particular:

To my mind, the three composers who have been most successful in revealing the inmost spirit of religious music are Palestrina, in whom Roman Catholic music reaches its climax; Bach, who embodies the Protestant spirit; and Wagner, who has struck the true ecclesiastic chord in the Pilgrims’ Chorus of Tannhäuser, and especially in the first and third acts of Parsifal. Compared with these three masters, other composers appear to have made too many concessions to worldly and purely musical factors. ¹⁵⁸

The Pilgrims’ Chorus comes near the end of Tannhäuser, stated in full at the start of the third act and partially reprised in the final scene. In this sense, it can be viewed as a kind of culmination of the opera, symbolizing the redemption that the title character had been seeking. The Chorus also has certain nationalist implications, as the weary pilgrims sing of their joyful return to the homeland and look forward to God’s continued blessings upon them (see Example 2.4):

Example 2.4: Beginning of the Pilgrims’ Chorus, Act III, Scene 1 of Wagner’s Tannhäuser (choral parts only) Richard Wagner, Tannhäuser, ed. Peter Jost (London: Ernst Eulenburg, 2007).

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Beckerman, “Between a Ring and a Hard Place: Dvořák’s Homeric Wagner,” 220.
Like the Pilgrims’ Chorus, Hymnus comes at the climactic point of Hálek’s drama; in the words of Novotný, cited above, it is “a breathtaking moment, the most touching in the whole poem, when Mother Country blesses her awakened children.” The struggles and suffering have subsided, and the battle-worn heirs of the White Mountain look forward to a bright future. Dvořák seems to be channelling the Pilgrims’ Chorus especially in his setting of the third verse of Hymnus. It is here that the poetry takes a decisive turn from pity to firm resolution; addressing Mother Country, the chorus sings: “thy head shall find repose from ills so cruel, from hearts to thee we proffer; with deepest love this haven we would offer, embracing thee like gold that clasps a priceless jewel.” To signal this change in the text, Dvořák labels the section “Un poco piú mosso” and switches from 6/8 to 3/2 – the triple metre bringing him closer to Wagner (see Example 2.5). The rising melody with its triplet anacrusis also calls Wagner’s Chorus to mind, as does Dvořák’s decision to feature male voices in this passage, by starting the section with the tenors. Though, unlike Wagner, Dvořák begins the “poco piú mosso” with an imitative texture, the parts eventually converge (m. 169), becoming more homorhythmic and including fleeting moments of a cappella. Apart from this passage, Dvořák seems to be referencing Wagner’s work

159 The text of the Pilgrims’ Chorus is: “Full of joy I may now see you native land, and greet with joy your pleasant meadows. Now shall I lay down my pilgrim’s staff, for, faithful to God, I now have done my pilgrimage. By atonement and penance have I propitiated the Lord, in whom my heart delights, who my contrition crowns with blessing, the Lord, to whom my song resounds. Mercy’s salvation has on the penitent bestowed been, he once will peace and bliss obtain! He neither hell nor death does fear, therefore in all my life God will I praise. Alleluia forever!” “Beglückt darf nun dich, o Heimat, ich schauen, und grüßen froh deine lieblichen Auen; nun laß ich ruhn den Wanderstab, weil Gott getreu ich gepilgert hab’? Durch Sühn’ und Buß’ hab ich versöhnt den Herren, dem mein Herze fröhnt, der meine Reu’ mit Segen krönt, den Herren, dem mein Lied ertönt. Der Gnade Heil ist dem Büßer beschieden, er geht einst ein in der Seligen Frieden! Vor Höll’ und Tod ist ihm nicht bang, drum preis’ ich Gott mein Lebelang. Halleluja in Ewigkeit!”


161 “Tvá hlava těžká, srdce žálem puká; jsouť v posměch luze užasná tvá muka a rány tvé jak stlané na staleti! Však znej se matkou, nás co svoje děti.”
in a very basic way by scoring *Hymnus* in the key of E-flat major, which Wagner uses for all parts of *Tannhäuser* that are of a spiritual or noble nature.

**Example 2.5:** Beginning of the “Un poco più mosso” section of Dvořák’s *Hymnus* (mm. 140–145)
The “poco più mosso” is the first section in *Hymnus* to be harmonically unsettled, modulating constantly from E-flat major through E-flat minor, F minor, C minor, and D minor, and in this respect, it is quite different from the Pilgrim’s Chorus, but not unlike Wagner’s music in general.\(^{162}\) To Šourek, one of the clearest stamps that Wagner had left on Dvořák was a certain harmonic boldness.\(^{163}\) In the second half of the work, Dvořák moves confidently – and at times rather abruptly – from key to key. In making this statement, Šourek may have meant such passages as the shift from E-flat major to C major occurring at the start of the “Allegro non tanto, quasi maestoso” section (mm. 250–252) or the even more tonally disorienting move back to E-flat major coming just before the orchestral postlude marked “Andante con moto, quasi tempo I.” The latter modulation is achieved through a sequence of thirds: B-flat, G, E-flat, C, A, with the F-sharp/G-flat major chord serving as a pivot (mm. 396–412), and David Beveridge identifies this type of tonal motion as yet another way in which *Hymnus* is reminiscent of Wagner.\(^{164}\) These few examples are sufficient to show that Wagner was likely just as much on Dvořák’s mind as he was on everyone else’s.

The premiere of Dvořák’s *Hymnus* occurred in the midst of an ongoing conversation about Wagner among Czech critics. None of the reviewers of *Hymnus* dares to mention Wagner’s name, since alluding to the German composer meant laying oneself open to controversy. Wagner is, however, present between the lines in discussions of such aspects of *Hymnus* as its modernity, rich polyphony, thick orchestration, and technical demands. By the early 1880s, “chaotic” had

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\(^{162}\) For example, the passage in the overture to *Tannhäuser* marked “Un poco accelerando,” beginning at measure 228, modulates very quickly, with the bassline ascending chromatically from F-sharp to F-natural.

\(^{163}\) Šourek, 79; “the purely musical content of Wagner’s works leaves its mark in Dvořák’s harmonic boldness;” “čistě hudební obsah děl Wagnerových zanechává pak trvalé stopy ve Dvořákově smělosti harmonické.” (The emphasis is mine.)

\(^{164}\) David Beveridge highlights the sequence of modulations by thirds that comes at the end of the piece (mm. 398–412). David R. Beveridge, “The Choral Ode (*Hymnus*): Dvořák’s First Major Public Triumph,” unpublished chapter in his book on Dvořák’s life and works.
also become a code word for Dvořák’s Wagner-inspired style – used in reference to Dvořák’s works even by those critics who were Wagner’s defenders. Although critics and scholars would strive to distance Hymnus from Wagner in later years, the piece seems to point to the German composer, particularly in its harmonic language, and it has some striking affinities with Tannhäuser – a work that had been favourably received in the Czech lands. Not one to take up the writer’s pen, Dvořák remained silent in the Wagner debates of the early 1870s. Yet, in a letter to Novotný dated April 24, 1885, he would express some frustration over the never-ending polemics: “Mr. Hüffer’s review [of the D-minor Symphony] for the Times has been printed today” writes Dvořák; “if you remember the altercation with him in Worcester (it was again that unhappy and perpetual debate Wagner – anti-Wagner), you can just imagine what he is writing now!!”¹⁶⁵ No doubt Dvořák had taken part in his share of discussions on the topic.

Ein “tschechisches” Requiem?

Fully immersed in the Wagner debate, Czech critics failed to pick up on Dvořák’s even more unmistakable nod to another German composer: Johannes Brahms. Only Hostinský, in his 1873 review, detects a certain mix of styles in Hymnus, but he does not provide any specifics.¹⁶⁶ Dvořák’s indebtedness to Brahms is most clearly apparent at the beginning of Hymnus. The work opens with a lilting theme marked “Andante con moto e molto espressivo,” first introduced by the orchestra (see Example 2.6) and then sung by the full chorus (mm. 1–86).

¹⁶⁵ Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1988), 38; April 24, 1885: “Pan Hüffer v Times píše dnes… Pamatujete-li si ještě na výstup s oním pánem ve Worcestru (byla to opět ta nešťastná a věčná hádka Wagner – anti-Wagner), můžete si snadno utvořit úsudek, jak asi píše!!” Critic Francis Hüffer (1845–1889) is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.
¹⁶⁶ Otakar Hostinský, “Theater, Literatur, Kunst, und Wissenschaft,” Politik 12, no. 72 (March 14, 1873): 6; “That here and there in the ‘Hymnus’ there are certain places where there is still a mix [of styles], where it still employs a striking ‘saltus lyrici,’ this should not embitter us against the pleasure;” “Daß es hier und da im ganzen ‘Hymnus’ gewisse Stellen gibt, wo es noch etwas bunt hergeht, daß sich mitunter etwas frappante ‘saltus lyrici’ einstellen, das darf uns vor der Hand den Genuß nicht verbittern.”
Example 2.6: The opening theme of Hymnus, orchestral prelude (mm. 7–22)

Short excerpts from this theme return at various moments throughout Hymnus, mainly in the orchestral interludes (mm. 135–139, 223–228). This opening material is evocative of Brahms’s “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen”167 from his Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45 (see Example 2.7) in several ways: the E-flat major tonality; the winds, featured in the orchestral introduction; the homorhythmic choral writing; the softness of the dynamics, with swells on important parts of the text; the $V_2^4-I_6-IV$ harmony with scale degrees 8-7-8-7-6-5 in the melody in the first phrases;168 the use of the flat-III;169 and the occasional prominence that is given to the tenors.170

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167 The text is: “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth! Meine Seele verlangt und sehnet sich nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn; mein Leib und Seele freuen sich in dem lebendigen Gott. Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen, die loben dich immerdar.” “How lovely are your dwellings, Lord of Sabaoth! My soul longs and faints for the courts of the Lord. My body and soul rejoice in the living God. Blest are they that dwell in your house, they praise you evermore.”

168 This can be heard in mm. 18–23 and 57–62 of the Dvořák and in mm. 10–13 of the Brahms.
Example 2.7: “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen” from Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45 (mm. 1–17)

\[\text{Example 2.7: “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen” from Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45 (mm. 1–17)}\]


\[169\text{ Dvořák cadences in the key of G-flat major (in mm. 35–36 of the orchestral prelude and mm. 74–75 of the choral section) and Brahms briefly visits this key as well (in mm. 70–73 as part of a sequence).}\]

\[170\text{ Both Brahms (in mm. 25–33) and Dvořák (in mm. 54–55) give early emphasis to the tenors.}\]
In view of these similarities, it is tempting to speculate that Dvořák used Brahms’s piece as a model. The tone of the *Hymnus* text in its first two verses is very mournful and grave – not unlike that of a requiem. Before pledging their unwavering devotion to the Mother Country, the characters, who join together for this concluding *Hymnus*, describe the suffering she has had to endure: “as springs anoint the ground beneath the adler, so mother, thou must bend ever aweeping; thy tear drops flow on banks in shadow sleeping, a mournful vigil like a willow keeping. Thy head is heavy, and thy heart is broken; thou suff’rest sorely, yet the rabble mocks thee, thy painful wounds through centuries engraven.” These words are a far cry from the firm resolution expressed in the latter part of *Hymnus*, and Dvořák may have considered Brahms’s “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen” as an appropriate template for conveying the sombre, but conciliatory tone of this opening text. What is more, Dvořák likely heard a live performance of the Brahms work just a few months before he began composing *Hymnus* in 1872. Though Brahms flew somewhat under the radar among the Czechs during the early 1870s, this very movement, the fourth in the *Requiem*, was performed independently at a concert organized by Procházka in Prague.

Apart from its allusions to “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen,” Dvořák’s *Hymnus* has a small, but important, commonality with Brahms’s *Requiem* as a whole; both pieces were likened at various times to choral works by German Baroque composers. This was especially the case in German reviews of the *Requiem*, where critics invoke the names of past German “greats” to show Brahms’s compositional pedigree. Eduard Hanslick famously placed the *Requiem* in very exclusive company, naming Bach’s B-Minor Mass and Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* as its only

171 “Jak pramen, jenž zpod olše krok svůj máčí ty’s matko zrozená k věčnému pláči; tvá slza kropí břehy v stínu spící, a ty tam bdíš co vrba truchlící. Tvá hlava těžká, srdeč žalem puká jsouť v posměch luze užasná tvá muka a rány tvé jak stlané na staletí!”

worthy precursors. The situation was, of course, quite different for _Hymnus_ – a work that was not generally regarded by Czech critics as Dvořák’s best in the realm of choral music and was soon to be eclipsed by Dvořák’s _Stabat Mater_, Op. 58 (1876–1877) and his own _Requiem_, Op. 89 (1890). However, references to Bach and Handel occasionally appear in Czech discussions of _Hymnus_, especially those from the early twentieth century. Otakar Šourek, for instance, describes the imitative writing in the second half of _Hymnus_ as “rich, [having been] weaned on the art of Bach and Handel.” Karel Stecker is more specific in his analysis of the piece for the 1912 Dvořák omnibus, stating that “the final section, a vigorous fugato on the theme ‘kneel brothers all, with ardour sing ye her praise,’ has contours that are positively Handelian, with the orchestral figuration in particular contributing [to this impression].” Passages in _Hymnus_ – like the one at measures 315 to 322, which is conspicuously reminiscent of the ‘Halleluiah Chorus’ – do link Dvořák’s piece to choral music of the Baroque past, and in this sense, the work is similar to Brahms’s _Requiem_ (see Example 2.8).

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173 Eduard Hanslick, *Concerte, Componisten und Virtuosen der letzten fünfzehn Jahre, 1870–1885* (Berlin, 1886), 135; “today one can calmly declare that since Bach’s B-Minor Mass and Beethoven’s _Missa solemnis_, nothing has been written in this field that can take its place beside Brahms’s _German Requiem_.” “Man darf es heute ruhig aussprechen, daß seit Bachs H-moll-Messe und Beethovens _Missa solemnis_ nichts geschrieben worden, was auf diesem Gebiete sich neben Brahms’ _Deutsches Requiem_ zu stellen vermag.”

174 Beveridge claims that Brahms’s _Ein deutsches Requiem_ helped to shape Dvořák’s approach to both of these later choral works: _Stabat Mater_ and the _Requiem_; David R. Beveridge, “The Choral Ode (_Hymnus_): Dvořák’s First Major Public Triumph,” unpublished chapter in his book on Dvořák’s life and works. Jan Smaczny examines Dvořák’s interface with Baroque music and uses both _Stabat Mater_ and _Requiem_ as examples of this; see Jan Smaczny, “Dr. Dvořák steps off his World of Baroque Certainty: Dvořák and Early Music,” in *The World of Antonín Dvořák: Aspects of Composition, Problems of Editing, Reception*, eds. Jarmila Gabriélová and Jan Talich (Prague: Institute of Ethnology, Academy of Science, 2007), 310–323.

175 Šourek, 114; “imitační práce zejména v druhé části [je] bohatá, duchem umění Bachova a Händlova odkojená.” This excerpt from Šourek’s monograph is strikingly similar to Hanslick’s assessment of _Ein deutsches Requiem_ after its Viennese premiere, where he refers to the work’s “harmonic and contrapuntal art which Brahms learnt in the school of Bach;” Michael Musgrave, _Brahms: A German Requiem_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61.

176 Stecker, “Kantáta a Hudba Cirkevní [The Cantata and Sacred Music],” 230–231; “oddíl zavěrečný, prudké fugato na téma vykazuje obrysy v pravdě haendlovské, k čemuž zejména figurace části orchestrové přispívá.”

177 Wagner is known to have opposed Handelian elements in Brahms’s choral music, referring to the _Triumphlied_ as a piece in which Brahms adopted a “Halleluiah wig.” Musgrave, 67.
Example 2.8: Passage from the “Allegro non tanto, quasi maestoso” section of Dvořák’s *Hymnus* (mm. 314–319)

It was in fact Brahms’s reputation as the conductor of obscure Baroque choral works in Vienna that made some critics have their misgivings about the Requiem’s reception in that city in 1867. As Michael Musgrave shows, the unknown Baroque vocal pieces that Brahms had introduced at concerts of the Wiener Singverein in the early 1860s were met with certain reservations, and some feared that it would be the same with his Requiem.\textsuperscript{178} Since a performance of the full work was considered to be too risky, only the first three movements were given, and as expected, they received mixed reviews at their premiere in the Austrian capital. In spite of this early lukewarm reception, audiences eventually warmed to the Requiem, and by 1875, the work was being cast as a fulfillment of Robert Schumann’s predictions about Brahms in his “Neue Bahnen” article from 1853.\textsuperscript{179} Though not an instant sensation, the Requiem ultimately was for Brahms in German-speaking Europe what Hymnus was for Dvořák in the Czech lands; it secured his position as a respected composer among his compatriots.\textsuperscript{180}

Dvořák’s Hymnus also has some striking religious and political parallels with Brahms’s Requiem. The text of Hymnus comes at the end of Hálek’s Heirs of the White Mountain – a drama that starts with the funeral of the Mother Country\textsuperscript{181} complete with excerpts from the Office for the Dead. These funereal elements in Hálek’s drama strengthen the associations of Dvořák’s Hymnus with the requiem tradition, thereby edging it closer to the Brahms piece. Yet,

\textsuperscript{178}Musgrave, 60.
\textsuperscript{180}Czech critics understood the significance of the Requiem in Brahms’s oeuvre; in an obituary for Brahms printed in Dalibor, Karel Knittl would write “there is no musician who does not know his German Requiem, Serenade in A major, symphonies, and numerous beautiful songs;” “není hudebníka, který by neznal jeho Německý rekviem, serénádu z A, jeho symfonie, a řadu čarokrásných písní;” Karel Knittl, “Dr. Johannes Brahms,” Dalibor 19, nos. 23–24 (April 17, 1897): 173. Although both Dvořák and Brahms would eventually come to be known primarily as symphonists, their first successes at home came with choral pieces. (Dvořák would also introduce himself aboard with choral works; his breakthrough composition in England was Stabat Mater in 1883, and the first piece to be performed after his arrival in the United State in 1892 was his cantata American Flag [Americký Prapor].)
\textsuperscript{181}Interestingly, Brahms wrote his Requiem following the death of his own mother. Though this is common knowledge at present, it is unclear whether Dvořák would have been aware of it.
as requiems go, Brahms’s work is highly atypical and would appear to be an odd choice as Dvořák’s model; by straying from the standard Latin text and replacing it with passages of his own choosing from the German Lutheran Bible, Brahms provides a decidedly more Protestant take on the old Catholic rite. This too is significant for Dvořák’s *Hymnus*. Religion lay at the heart of the seventeenth-century conflict, to which the *Hymnus* text alludes, overlapping with matters of nationality. Though the veneration of Mother Country could be interpreted as having certain Marian implications, Hálek’s drama is on the whole more sympathetic toward the Protestant Czechs than their Catholic oppressors. While the events of White Mountain, and other moments in Czech history, were being increasingly interpreted through the lens of the “nation” during the nineteenth century, the battle’s strong religious overtones could not be ignored. Dvořák – himself a devout Catholic, whose loyalties nevertheless lay undoubtedly with the Protestant Czechs at White Mountain – may have turned to the Brahms *Requiem* precisely because of its Protestant spirit.

Furthermore, much like *Hymnus*, Brahms’s *Requiem* was composed and premiered against a turbulent political backdrop. Brahms wrote the work in the midst of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 – a war that put an end to all hopes that a *größdeutsch* state might one day be established. Brahms was allegedly opposed to the war, and as Daniel Beller-McKenna demonstrates, he feared that his piece, owing to its Protestant leanings and German title, would be construed as a statement in support of the largely Protestant Germans, rather than the Catholic Austrians. It was primarily these political circumstances that led Brahms to make the oft-quoted statement that he would gladly substitute “Deutsch” with “Menschen” in the work’s title. Despite his

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182 Beller-McKenna, 6.
claims of universality, the work would remain *Ein “deutsches” Requiem*, and its “Germanness” would become even more emphasized at the start of the 1870s, as its wider dissemination coincided with the Franco-Prussian War. Dvořák’s *Hymnus* was no less political than Brahms’s *Requiem*, arising at a time of similar disappointment and disillusionment among the Czechs. For all of its musical nods to Wagner and Brahms, *Hymnus*, with its nationalist text, was ultimately received as a deeply patriotic composition – its first section serving as a kind of “Czech” requiem for Mother Country in the wake of failed Czech attempts to assert themselves more forcefully within Austria, as will be shown below.

In summary, Dvořák’s references in *Hymnus* to Brahms’s *Requiem* have surprisingly gone unnoticed. Czech critics did not write about them, and present-day scholars generally take it for granted that Dvořák’s association with Brahms started only after the two composers became acquainted in the late 1870s. The music, however, would suggest otherwise. Both Brahms and Dvořák seem to draw upon choral traditions of the German Baroque in their respective pieces – an aspect that was mentioned in press reviews of each work. Dvořák’s most palpable point of contact with Brahms comes at the beginning of *Hymnus*, in the sombre opening section. While Dvořák was never explicit about whether or not Brahms’s *Requiem* had resonated with him, several elements may have endeared the work to him in 1872: the recent successful performance in Prague of its fourth movement, the role that the work played in Brahms’s reception, its appropriateness in terms of religious content, and its political currency.

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183 Beller-McKenna, 18. Daniel Beller-McKenna shows that the claim of universality was itself starting to be a very German trait at this time.
“Driven back, but not conquered”: Dvořák’s *Hymnus* and the Politics of Patriotism

The composition and reception of Dvořák’s *Hymnus* was coloured by politics in the Czech lands during the early 1870s. Jarmil Burghauser acknowledges this when he identifies *Hymnus* as the first piece in which Dvořák dared to be political.\(^{184}\) Indeed, the work was written shortly after a campaign had been mounted – with the support of Cisleithanian Minister-President Karl Sigmund Hohenwart\(^{185}\) – that sought to grant the Czechs greater independence within the Habsburg Empire.\(^{186}\) The dramatic events of the autumn of 1871 were undoubtedly still on people’s minds at the time of the *Hymnus* premiere in March of 1873. Regardless of the discussions that were going on among Czech critics on the pages of Prague’s music journals, *Hymnus* fared so well with audiences at its first performance primarily because it seemed to encapsulate what everyone was feeling in the aftermath of the recent battle waged in the Austrian parliament.

While this political “battle” was over in a matter of months in 1871, the events of that year were merely the culmination of a conflict that had been going on for several years. After the *Ausgleich*, or Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the Czechs became increasingly uneasy about their place within the Empire. The success of the Hungarians at achieving dualism with Austria naturally led to thoughts of trialism on the part of the Czechs. Moreover, Robert Kann points out that, out of the five large national groups that co-existed under Austria-Hungary, the Czechs were the only ones who were left unappeased in the wake of the Compromise; the other


\(^{186}\) Some Dvořák scholars have already made a connection between the success of *Hymnus* and political events in the Czech lands during the early 1870s. The most extensive discussion can be found in Gervase Hughes, *Dvořák: His Life and Music* (London: Cassell, 1967), 48–49.
groups had been given certain concessions and were reasonably satisfied.\textsuperscript{187} The dissatisfaction of the Czechs grew over the spring and summer of 1868, when mass open-air meetings broke out across Bohemia. These rallies, or \textit{táborý} as they were strategically named in honour of the Czechs’ Hussite forbears, occurred in places of national significance and were organized by federalists, who wanted Bohemian state rights to be acknowledged in Austria.\textsuperscript{188} It was in this atmosphere, when political demonstrations were the order of the day, that the lavish groundbreaking ceremony of the National Theatre took place in May of 1868.

Though these gatherings were effective in drawing attention to the Czech cause, foreign policy was, as Hugh LeCaine Agnew suggests, ultimately the deciding factor that made Emperor Franz Joseph I open to negotiations with the Czechs.\textsuperscript{189} Prussia was becoming a force to be reckoned with on the European stage. After having been defeated by the Prussians in 1866, Austrians were looking for revenge, and Czech cooperation was needed in the event of another war. Prussia’s victory over France and the establishment of the German Reich in 1871 gave further cause for concern. With looming international threats, Austria-Hungary could no longer afford domestic disunity during the early 1870s, and Czechs sought to take advantage of these circumstances, which appeared to be working in their favour. Chances for achieving some sort of a Czech compromise were further increased when Hohenwart, who was particularly sympathetic to the Czechs, took office as Minister-President in February of 1871.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{187} Kann, \textit{The Multinational Empire}, vol. 1, 181–182; Kann refers to these national groups as the “Big Five” (Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, and Poles); he writes that “the national claims of the two politically leading nationalities, the Germans and the Magyars, had for the time being been satisfied. The demands of two other leading national groups had at least been appeased by the Hungarian-Croatian Compromise of 1868 and the far-reaching administrative concessions which the Austrian government made to the Poles in Galicia at about the same time.”


\textsuperscript{189} Agnew, 135.

\textsuperscript{190} Since the summer of 1867, delegates of the National Party, which would later become the Old Czech Party (see Chapter Three), and the conservative landowners had chosen to enact a strategy of passive resistance,
By September of the same year, the Czechs had reason to be optimistic that their plans for bringing about a certain degree of autonomy for the lands of the Czech crown might come to fruition. It was in that month that the Emperor issued a rescript, in which he made the following statement: “mindful of the constitutional position of the Czech crown and being aware of the glory and might which that crown has brought to us and our predecessors and, furthermore, remembering the extraordinary faithfulness with which the people of that kingdom have always supported our throne, we take pleasure in recognizing the privileges of that kingdom and declare ourselves ready to renew that recognition by a coronation oath.”

This rescript gave the Czechs confidence, and having been prompted to do so by the Emperor himself, they drew up a series of Fundamental Articles in collaboration with Hohenwart’s Minister of Commerce Albert Schäffle. Though this document, if passed, would not grant the Czechs the independence that the Hungarians enjoyed in the Empire, it would secure for them a kind of separate status with respect to Austria and this would be achieved through certain constitutional adjustments. By the time these articles were presented to the Emperor for his approval in October of 1871, however, the imperial rescript had met with strong German and Hungarian opposition. Both the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Friedrich Ferdinand von Beust and the Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Andrássy raised serious objections to this course of action, leading Franz Joseph to go back on his promise to the Czechs and dismiss Minister-President Hohenwart.
Czech hopes were crushed. On October 28, 1871, the front page of *Národní Listy* reads as follows:

The whole compromise is broken, all of the debates and solemn promises, made directly to nations by the advisors to the Crown, have come to naught, the “Austrian idea” has been dismissed and abandoned and a nation so important, so powerful – a nation, without whose satisfaction the state cannot survive! – the Czech nation has once again been deterred from the goal of its just efforts, once again condemned to fight and suffer for its rights.\(^{194}\)

The effects of this episode were felt long after the autumn of 1871. Certain measures were put in place to prevent inevitable Czech protests; Bruce Garver writes that imperial authorities intimidated various Czech newspapers and nationalist organizations and suspended civil liberties in order to stifle any demonstrations before they started.\(^{195}\) Even so, Czechs showed their discontentment over the final outcome in various ways, boycotting, for instance, the Bohemian and Moravian diets in December 1872. One of the key players in this whole undertaking the Old Czech politician František Ladislav Rieger, would not be silenced and delivered a public speech, upon returning to Prague after the negotiations of 1871. His words, which were widely heeded, bear a remarkable resemblance to the text of *Hymnus*: “the Czech people have suffered a severe blow; we have lost the battle, but kept our honour unimpaired. Strangers have pressed in between us and the Crown, people who have no heart and no understanding for the state, and they have won. But we shall hold out on the path of right until a better view prevails... We are driven back, but not conquered.”\(^{196}\)

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\(^{194}\) Unsigned, “Rozhodnuto! [Decided!],” *Národní Listy* 11, no. 296 (October 28, 1871): 1; “celé vyrovnání jest opět rozbito, všechny ty úmluvy a sliby zavážné, učiněné národům přímo od rádcův koruny, jsou v nivec obráceny, jedna nalezéná ta ‘myšlenka rakouská,’ jest opět puščena a ztracena, a národ tak důležitý, tak mocný – národ, bez jehož spokojenosti tento stat nemůže obstát! – národ český znova odstrčen od cíle spravedlivých svých snah, znova odsouzen bojovat a trpět pro dobré to právo svoje...”

\(^{195}\) Garver, 57.

A few months after Rieger’s address, Dvořák began composing *Hymnus*. To write a work with a clear nationalist message at such a time would have left audiences in no doubt of his stance on this pressing political issue, and Czech critics comment repeatedly on Dvořák’s sincerity in their reviews of *Hymnus*. Procházka, for example, states that “what Dvořák gives us here is drawn from the depths of the soul: the whole tragedy of the horror-filled catastrophe and the heroic resolve for a new life are painted with appropriate, heart-wrenching sounds.”\(^{197}\) His remarks might just as easily have been applied to the political situation in Prague as to the battle at White Mountain. Novotný too asserts that “it is not merely an empty phrase, when I say that Dvořák wrote this composition ‘with the blood of his heart.’”\(^{198}\) To Novotný, it was primarily the honesty and ardour of *Hymnus* that made it win out over Gounod’s *Gallia* – a piece that he characterizes as cold and reserved; “the miserable homeland is bleeding from a thousand wounds” quips Novotný, “and Gounod composes a tame modern oratorio.”\(^{199}\) While Gounod – by Novotný’s estimation a “carefree son of France, living in voluntary exile in the palaces of London”\(^{200}\) – was far removed from the turmoil of his nation when he composed his *Gallia* and thus unable to appreciate the severity of the situation, Dvořák wrote *Hymnus* in the midst of political strife, which lent a certain authenticity to it. Whatever Dvořák’s views actually were,\(^{201}\) the conditions were ripe for a warm reception of *Hymnus* in 1873, when people in Prague were still recovering from the political upheaval of the previous few years. A work that might have

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\(^{197}\) P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]); “co nám Dvořák tuto podává, čerpáno jest z nejhlubší duše: celá ta tragičnost hrůzvplněné oné katastrofy i hrdině se opět vzužení k životu novému zobrazeno zde výmluvnými, srdečejmými zvuky.”  

\(^{198}\) x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 88; “není to věru pouhá fráze, pakliže vyslovím, že Dvořák psal skladbu tu ‘krví srdece svého.’”  

\(^{199}\) *Ibid.*, 88; “ubohá vlast’ tu krvácí z tisícerých ran a Gounod na to komponuje krotké moderní oratorium.”  

\(^{200}\) *Ibid.*, 88; “... lehkокrevný syn Francie v dobrovolném vyhnanství v nádherných palácech londýnských.”  

\(^{201}\) David Beveridge emphasizes that critics like Procházka and Novotný were personally in contact with Dvořák and were in the best position to assess Dvořák’s sincerity. David R. Beveridge, “The Choral Ode (*Hymnus*): Dvořák’s First Major Public Triumph,” unpublished chapter in his book on Dvořák’s life and works.
been considered excessively grandiose and even “chaotic” in later years was exactly what was required at that time.

“With feelings of deep gratitude”: Universality, Self-Promotion, and the English Afterlife of Hymnus

In a letter written in March of 1884 and addressed to Czech composer and conductor Karel Bendl (1838–1897), who had directed the Prague premiere of Hymnus, Dvořák describes a London performance of his Stabat Mater: “imagine the New Town Theatre about five times larger than it is,” he writes, “then you will know what Albert Hall is like, where 10,000 people listened to Stabat Mater and 1050 musicians and singers played and sang [it], accompanied by that colossal organ!” Dvořák’s enthusiasm is palpable, as he marvels at the kinds of performing forces that were available to him in England – ones that were unimaginable in the Czech lands. When more works were solicited from Dvořák for performance in that country, Hymnus was a logical choice. Having been premiered at a concert that broke Czech records in terms of grandeur, the work must have seemed uniquely suited for performance in England – a place with a rich choral tradition. That Hymnus was given an English debut in the mid-1880s is not unusual; much more puzzling is the fact that the piece now bore an English dedication.

Given the heated political circumstances of its Prague premiere and the references to seventeenth-century Czech history in its text, it is surprising that Dvořák dedicated Hymnus “with feelings of deep gratitude to the English people,” when it was published by Novello in 1885. Two other aspects of the dedication are striking. First, the dedication was made in 1885, a

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202 Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents] vol. 1 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1987), 410; “mysli si Novoměstské divadlo asi pětkrát tak veliké a poznáš, co je to Albert Hall, kde 10,000 lidí ‘Stabat Mater’ poslouchalo a 1050 hudebníků a zpěváků hrálo a zpívalo, a přitom ty kolosální varhany!” This is an exaggerated claim, since Royal Albert Hall does not hold that many people at maximum capacity.
full twelve years after the work was premiered. Emily Green observes that it was rare during the
nineteenth century for dedications to be added to pieces in repeated printings and if any change
was made, dedications tended to be removed over the course of time. While *Hymnus* did not
appear in print before 1885, the English dedication must be counted as an addition or rather a
change of mind because, as noted above, Dvořák initially dedicated the work to the author of its
text. Dvořák was able to withdraw the dedication to Hálek probably because few people were
aware of it, since the work still had only existed in manuscript up to that time, and the poet had
passed away in 1874.

The second aspect that makes this dedication unusual is that it is directed at a people.
Composer-to-composer dedications were common during the eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries. Dvořák, however, only dedicated works to four composers: Karel Bendl, Johannes
Brahms, Pablo de Sarasate, and Josef Hellmesberger (see Table 2.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dedicatee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Cypresses</em> (voice and piano)</td>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Karel Bendl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>String Quartet in D minor</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Johannes Brahms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89–90</td>
<td>Mazurka (violin and piano/orchestra)</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Pablo de Sarasate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>String Quartet in C major</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Josef Hellmesberger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123–4</td>
<td>Songs to words by Pfleger-Moravský</td>
<td>1881?/1882?</td>
<td>Karel Bendl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.2: Dvořák’s Dedications to Composers*

Other Dvořák dedicatees included critics, such as Ludevít Procházka and Eduard Hanslick;
people in positions of power, such as the Imperial Princess Stefanie and Josef Hlávka, the
president of the Czech academy of arts, sciences, and literature; and Dvořák’s friends and family
members (see Table 2.3). Otherwise, the vast majority of Dvořák’s dedicatees were

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Thus, the dedication to the English people is anomalous. The only comparable dedication is the inscription “to my nation” that appears on the printed score of Dvořák’s String Quintet in G major.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dedicatee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>String Quartet in A minor</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Ludevít Procházka (critic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Legends (piano)</td>
<td>1880–81</td>
<td>Eduard Hanslick (critic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>From the Bohemian Forest (piano)</td>
<td>1883–84</td>
<td>Stefanie (Crown Princess and Archduchess)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Mass in D major</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Josef Hlávka (President of the Czech Academy of Kaiser Franz Josef for sciences, literature, and arts, Prague)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95b</td>
<td>O sanctissima (two voices and organ)</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Alois Göbl (friend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>Sonatina in G major</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Dvořák’s children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>String Quintet in G major</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>“Svému národu” [“To my nation”]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Some of Dvořák’s Other Dedications

In contrast to Hymnus, the String Quintet has no obvious elements that critics might call “Czech;” in fact, the very genre of the string quintet likely would have been perceived as rather “unCzech” at a time when Bohemian composers, who wanted to make some kind of nationalist statement, tended to favour large-scale genres, primarily opera. Also, Dvořák’s dedication of the String Quintet contains the wording “to my nation” and not “to the Czech people” – a subtle, but important distinction. The notion of dedicating a work to a people, as Dvořák does with his Hymnus, has greater specificity, and since Dvořák encountered English people primarily as audience members at concerts of his music during his trips to England, this phrasing implies that the dedication can somehow be related to Dvořák’s English reception.

Emily Green proposes that, among other functions, dedications served as public gifts that required reciprocation. She goes on to point out that dedications did not necessarily

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206 Green, 312–339.
reciprocate dedications, but could be offered in return for other types of gifts, like good reviews. This idea of dedication as a form of gift-giving seems to apply well to Dvořák. One cannot help but notice that Dvořák’s dedication of his D-minor String Quartet to Brahms came in 1877, just after Brahms had introduced Dvořák to the Berlin publisher Fritz Simrock. Similarly, Dvořák dedicated his Wind Serenade to critic Louis Ehlert in 1878, when Ehlert’s favourable article on Dvořák was still hot off the press. In both cases, Dvořák’s dedications can be understood as gestures of reciprocation – as Dvořák’s way of recognizing the part that these men played in the furthering of his career. That the English dedication of *Hymnus* contains the words “with feelings of deep gratitude” implies that it too was meant as a gift. Dvořák may have wished to thank the English in a public way for their enthusiastic reception of his music. Although Dvořák’s works were heard in England as early as 1879, he really burst onto the English scene in 1883, the year in which he visited the country for the first time. Eight more visits to England would follow, most of them during the 1880s, and the dedication of *Hymnus* in 1885 came at about the time when Dvořák had reached the peak of his success there.

Dvořák was the first Czech composer to receive considerable recognition abroad and the desire to give credit to English audiences is understandable; why Dvořák would do it with this particular piece is less clear. An assumption that holds true for any dedication is that the dedicated work should be well liked by the dedicatee. *Hymnus* was performed at St. James’s Hall in London, in English translation, only after it had been published by Novello; this means that the dedication was in place, before Dvořák knew how *Hymnus* would fare with English audiences and critics. If the reviews that were published following the 1885 London premiere are any indication, the dedication seems to have been somewhat miscalculated. According to the critic, writing for the *Morning Post*, “the music is meritorious and effective, but does not belong
to the category of inspired creations, and the difficulties required to be conquered before an 
adequate representation of the author’s ideas can be fully realised are more than the generality of 
choral societies will likely care to overcome for so small a result as is likely to follow.”

A similar assessment is given in The Monthly Musical Review: “the performance was not very 
good, but the work itself is too complicated in construction, and therefore fails in the effect 
which is aimed at.” The English reviews were not all bad – the reviewer for The Times reports 
that the work was “favourably received” – however, these articles do call into question 
Dvořák’s decision to dedicate Hymnus, rather than another piece.

One explanation for the choice is simply that Hymnus was Dvořák’s first English 
publication. Dvořák may have wanted to include a nod to the English people on the title page of 
his first printed Novello score, regardless of which piece was actually being published. Another 
possibility is that this gesture of gratitude was orchestrated by someone else. David Beveridge 
suggests that the English dedication was in fact publisher Alfred Littleton’s idea and Dvořák 
acceded to it without giving much thought to its appropriateness. As evidence for this 
interpretation, Beveridge cites a letter from Littleton to Dvořák dated February 2, 1885: “do you 
wish the dedication to the ‘English people’ to stand: if so, I think it should be printed on a 
separate page and you should add a few words from yourself” (see Plate 2.1). Littleton’s 
request for Dvořák to add a few of his own words has led Beveridge to suspect that the idea of 
the dedication did not come from Dvořák and that the composer was merely asked to confirm it 
and help with the wording. On the back of the letter from Littleton, Dvořák begins to draft out

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\text{207 Unsigned, “St. James’s Hall,” Morning Post no. 35224 (May 14, 1885): 2.}
\text{208 Unsigned, The Monthly Musical Review (June 1, 1885): 139.}
\text{209 Unsigned, “Mr. Geaussent’s Concert,” The Times no. 31447 (May 15, 1885): 3.}
\text{210 David Beveridge made this suggestion in a conversation on December 7, 2010.}
\text{211 Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents],}
\text{vol. 6 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1997), 18.}
the dedication, jotting down the words “composed and dedicated to the English people in token of my deepest gratitude” (see Plate 2.2).

Plate 2.1: Letter from Alfred Littleton to Dvořák (February 2, 1885)

Plate 2.2: Dvořák drafts out his English dedication on the back of Littleton’s letter
Though it would later be edited out, Dvořák’s statement that *Hymnus* was “composed” for the English people is extraordinary, since he wrote the work in the early 1870s at a time when he still had no hope of it being performed outside of the Czech lands. What Dvořák is probably alluding to here are his revisions. Before submitting it to Novello for publication, Dvořák toiled over the score for the better part of three months.\(^{212}\) This was not the only time that Dvořák revised *Hymnus*; he had already reworked it extensively in 1880. Thus, the 1885 version might be understood as a new piece, requiring a fresh dedication to reflect its changing audience.

Dvořák may have altered the music of *Hymnus*, but – at least to the Czechs – its text remained the same and the overwhelming impression from the 1873 premiere was not easily erased. These factors indicate that the dedication of *Hymnus* was more deliberate than the theories presented thus far would suggest. After all, Dvořák’s correspondence shows him to be a tenacious individual, not easily bullied into making a dedication that he did not want to make.

A passage taken from the anecdotes of Josef Zubatý (1855–1931), a Czech etymologist who accompanied Dvořák on one of his trips to England, gives some insight into this intriguing issue:

Dvořák was Czech with every breath, even if he had an aversion to all loud displays of patriotism... It is interesting and instructive that the same Dvořák, who was the sworn enemy of empty radicalism, could not help but conduct himself as a Czech, body and soul, when he was abroad... Upon arriving in London [in 1885], Dvořák was surprised by posters, advertising that ‘Herr Anton Dvořák’ will conduct his new symphony on this and that date. Dvořák immediately insisted that he be addressed in Czech on the posters as ‘pan Antonín Dvořák.’ The consortium of German artists invited him at that time to an evening [celebration] being prepared in his honour; similar celebrations had been arranged in the past for Bülow, Richter, and others. With many thanks, Dvořák refused, explaining that he is not a German artist.\(^{213}\)


Here, Zubatý contends that Dvořák was more comfortable giving voice to his “Czechness” in London than Prague, and the English dedication of *Hymnus* might be a manifestation of this tendency.

Whether referring to music performed at home or abroad, by the mid-1880s, Dvořák spoke of art as lying outside the domain of politics. In a letter to Simrock dated September 10, 1885, Dvořák writes: “what do we have to do with politics; let us be glad that we can devote ourselves to the service of beautiful art!”\(^{214}\) The dedication of *Hymnus* to the English people might, then, be interpreted as an attempt to make the work’s message less obviously Czech and more universal – a patriotic plea, to which any nation could relate. In some ways, the Czech reviews from 1873 already suggest that *Hymnus* would lend itself well to such a goal. Most Czech critics discuss the work’s “patriotic enthusiasm” or “patriotic fervour,” without making specific reference to its “Czechness.”\(^{215}\) The writer of one of Dvořák’s obituaries would even claim that *Hymnus* was not Czech enough.\(^{216}\) Perhaps as a means of deflecting attention away from its specifically Czech origins, Novello added “Patriotic” to the title of *Hymnus* for its English publication.\(^{217}\) If universality was Dvořák’s aim, the English reviews indicate that he had mixed success. The critic writing for *The Graphic* in 1885 states that “as music, *Hymnus* cannot be

\(^{214}\) Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty*, vol. 2, 94; “was geht uns beide die Politik an, wollen wir froh sein, daß wir nur der schönen Kunst unsere Dienste weihen können!”

\(^{215}\) These terms are used in Novotný’s review: “vlastenecký nadšený” and “vlastenecký ten zápal;” x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* I, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 88–89.

\(^{216}\) “Finally *Hymnus* brought [Dvořák] into the light of day, but not into artistic maturity; [it] only [brought] success and public interest. This work of a smaller form shows an advanced musician, but also one who is too immersed in the models of old Classical masters. There are no signs of his own expression or of the character of Czech music.” “Konečně ‘Hymnus’ (1873) uvedl jej v jasný den, ale ne tvůrci uvědomělosti, nýbrž pouze v den úspěchu a veřejného zájmu. Dílo toto menších forem okazuje vyspělého hudebníka, však až příliš vnořeného ve vzory mistrů staroklasických. Po vlastním jeho výrazu i po charakteru české hudby není v dlouho mýchších stop;” Ad. Piskáček, and Unsigned, “Dr. Antonín Dvořák,” *Hlas Národa* no. 123 (May 3, 1904): 1.

\(^{217}\) In the aforementioned letter to Dvořák, Littleton explains the title: “we were obliged to call it a patriotic hymnus as we felt it impossible to say Fatherland while all the text was about Mother Country.” Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 6, 18; February 2, 1885.
considered apart from its essentially nationalistic surroundings”\(^{218}\) and a reviewer for *The Musical Times* writes in 1886 that “the work is so thoroughly national in feeling as to appeal only to the composer’s own countrymen.”\(^{219}\) One critic offers a different perspective, stating that “[the voices] rang out in the unaccompanied phrases at the close with a richness of quality and full volume which would have extorted the admiration of a Yorkshireman.”\(^{220}\)

The English dedication of *Hymnus* served as the inscription for a public gift. Whether it was meant as a response to the enthusiasm that English audiences and critics had shown for Dvořák’s music or as a gesture of thanks for his first English publication, Dvořák certainly had reason to express “feelings of deep gratitude to the English people.” Perhaps the gift lay in Dvořák’s attempt to take a nationalist piece, associated with a politically-charged occasion, and refashion it for an entirely new context, thereby infusing it with a greater degree of universality. Some gifts are taken by the receiver and yet never quite relinquished by the giver.\(^{221}\) This is especially true for a musical composition because no matter who it is dedicated to, it still somehow belongs to the composer. Thus, the true recipient of the dedication – the one to benefit most from the giving – could be Dvořák himself. By dedicating it to the English people, Dvořák may have used *Hymnus* as a vehicle to draw attention in the Czech lands to his personal successes abroad, while raising awareness in England of Czech national aspirations. The role of the English can be compared to the part of the ignorant genius in Hálek’s allegory, to whom seventeenth-century Czech history is told. Seeing the sufferings and hopes of the Czechs, as expressed in the *Hymnus* text, might inspire the English to make certain connections to contemporary Czech politics.

Conclusion

Many factors aligned to make the 1873 Prague premiere of *Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain* a resounding success: a text by a respected Czech poet; a controversial subject from Czech history; a well-established choral tradition in Bohemia; an extraordinary Hlahol concert; and the unexpected foray onto the music scene of a promising young composer. The performance also took place at a time when Wagner dominated debates among Czech music critics, and the Hohenwart interlude of 1871 continued to incite discussions among members of society at large. Set against this cultural and political backdrop, *Hymnus* was bound to make an impression on the audience at Prague’s New Town Theatre. The subtle nods to Wagner in the music and the allusions to recent political events embedded in the text gave *Hymnus* a unique currency. In several of the rave reviews that were printed in the Czech press following the performance, critics suggest that the work ought to be repeated at the earliest opportunity, but the moment of its premiere could not be recreated. Neither in the Czech lands nor in England was the piece received with equal enthusiasm. For all of its parallels with *Ein deutsches Requiem*, *Hymnus* did not make the transition onto the English stage as easily as Brahms’s work had done, and the effectiveness of Dvořák’s attempts at giving *Hymnus* greater universality with his dedication to the English people was limited. In the end, the remark made by the reviewer for *The Graphic* in 1885 has only to be amended slightly: “[*Hymnus*] cannot be considered apart from its surroundings in early-1870s Prague.”

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222 P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Národní Listy* 13, no. 72 (March 15, 1873): 3 (příloha [supplement]); “it would be appropriate if at the earliest opportunity, this work by Dvořák were performed again, a work that will always be granted a very honourable spot in our repertoire; for what can remain in the mind of the listener from a work that is so complicated and rich after one hearing only?” “bylo by záhodné, aby při nejbližší příležitosti skladba Dvořáková, která v hudební naší literatuře povždy zaujímá bude místo velmi čestné, opět provedena byla, neboť co utkvětí může v myslí posluchače z díla tak složitého a bohatého po jediném pouze slyšen?”

223 Musgrave, 68; “the strongest reception outside German-speaking Europe was in England, true to its choral traditions.”
CHAPTER THREE

“CUNNING” DVOŘÁK: CATERING TO CZECH AUDIENCES ON THE OPERATIC STAGE

Introduction

In his book *Czech Modern Opera after Smetana* (Česká Moderní Zpěvohra po Smetanovi), critic Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962) devotes only one page to Antonín Dvořák. He concludes his brief discussion with the following words: “it will suffice to draw attention to Dvořák’s *musical* influence [on subsequent generations of composers], but his actual operatic works can be cast aside as peripheral to the development of modern Czech opera – as strange anomalies having more to do with Dvořák’s personality than the ideological growth of the Czech music drama.”1

Published in 1911 and based on a lecture series that Nejedlý had given in Prague the previous year, the book came in the midst of the infamous “Dvořák battles.”2 Nejedlý makes it clear in this excerpt that his point of contention lies not with the “musical” side of Dvořák’s art, but with the “dramatic.”3 He categorically dismisses Dvořák’s operas mainly because of their variety and their resistance to neat classification. The over-arching agenda of the book is to promote the works of Zdeněk Fibich (1850–1900), to whom Nejedlý gives a full four chapters, while confining Dvořák to the margins of Czech operatic history.

This was not Nejedlý’s first attack on the operas of Dvořák. A decade earlier, the critic had written a rather negative review of *Rusalka*4 and had proclaimed elsewhere that “Dvořák negates

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1 Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Česká Moderní Zpěvohra po Smetanovi* [Czech Modern Opera after Smetana] (Prague: J. Otto, 1911), 162; “nám zde však stačí vytknuti tento Dvořákův vliv hudební, kdežto jeho vlastní díla operní možno při výkladu o rozvoji moderní české opery ponechat stranou jako thema zvláštní, vztahující se více k umělecké osobnosti Dvořákově než k ideovém vzrůstu českého hudebního dramatu.” (The emphasis is mine.)

2 Opera lay at the heart of these “Dvořák battles.” For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter One.

3 John Tyrrell shows that the snub was not directed at Dvořák alone, but that Janáček too was marginalized in Nejedlý’s study on Czech opera; John Tyrrell, “Janáček, Nejedlý, and the Future of Czech National Opera,” in *Art and Ideology in European Opera: Essays in Honour of Julian Rushton*, eds. Rachel Cowgill, David Cooper, and Clive Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 103–121.

4 Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Dvořáková *Rusalka* [Dvořák’s *Rusalka*],” *Rozhledy* 11, no. 8 (May 25, 1901): 205–209. Once again, Nejedly takes issue with the dramatic side of Dvořák’s opera, stating in the opening paragraph of
the development of Czech opera.”5 Nejedlý’s arguments in most of these writings are predicated on the notion that Dvořák’s operas move in a direction that is opposite to Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), whose works, in turn, Nejedlý upholds as the standard of what Czech operas ought to be like. Nejedlý accuses Dvořák of being regressive in comparison with Smetana and has trouble placing Dvořák’s oeuvre within his own teleological conception of opera composition in the Czech lands. Nejedlý’s ideas might be passed off as the idiosyncratic opinions of an outspoken critic, if it were not for the fact that he held considerable sway over the Czech public throughout much of the twentieth century, so much so that Marta Ottlová finds it difficult to conceive of a time when the work of Czech scholars and critics was not confounded by his writings.6

Such dismissive views of Dvořák’s operas, as those promulgated by Nejedlý, are nowhere to be found in Czech criticism of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, after the premiere of Dvořák’s comic opera The Cunning Peasant (Šelma Sedlák)7 on January 27, 1878, Dvořák was hailed in the Czech press as Smetana’s successor – indeed, as a composer, who was well-qualified to carry on Smetana’s legacy in the realm of opera. In a review for the newspaper Národní Listy, critic Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910) declares: “after [Smetana] came Dvořák, and in his newest work The Cunning Peasant, he proved that he is the true and honourable heir

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7 The title Šelma Sedlák has been translated into English in various ways; titles that have been used include The Peasant, a Rogue; The Scheming Farmer; and The Cunning Peasant. None of these titles truly captures the essence of the Czech original, since the term “Šelma” has no clear English equivalent, and thus defies literal translation. I refer to the opera as The Cunning Peasant throughout this chapter because it is the most familiar translation, appearing often in secondary literature written in English. In an early draft, the opera was entitled Políček knížeti, which translates as A Slap for the Duke. The Cunning Peasant is Dvořák’s Op. 37.
of Smetana’s national direction.” Other Czech critics provide similar assessments. “[With The Cunning Peasant], the talented composer walks for the first time with a sure and happy step under the banner of ‘national opera’ hoisted by master Smetana,” states the critic for the journal Lumír. Meanwhile, the writer for the newspaper Pokrok asserts that, “in his newest work, Dvořák took the direction of [Smetana] and while on this path was able to approach very closely to his master.” To these reviewers, Dvořák’s work did not lie outside of the Czech operatic tradition established by Smetana, but was unquestionably part of it.

Dvořák was, thus, described at various times by Czech critics both as Smetana’s antithesis and as his successor. Part of the explanation for this disparity in opinion lies with Nejedlý, whose comments cannot always be taken at face value, since, as has already been shown, he harboured a prejudice against Dvořák. However, by 1901, even Hostinský would amend his earlier comments in light of Dvořák’s later operas, noting that after The Cunning Peasant, Dvořák had not headed in the direction that reviewers from the late 1870s had prescribed for him. Above all, then, this points to the uniqueness of The Cunning Peasant in Dvořák’s operatic output. More than any of Dvořák’s other works in the genre, this opera aligns itself with the tastes of Czech

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8 Curiously, Nejedlý would later study music aesthetics with Hostinský. Otakar Hostinský, Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s] (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1986), 111; the original article appears in -ý., “Literatura a umění: Česká Zpěvohra [Literature and Art: Czech Opera],” Národní Listy 18, no. 46 (February 19, 1878): 3; “po [Smetanovi] pak přišel Dvořák a v nejnovější své práci Šelma Sedlák dokázal, že pravým a důstojným jest dědicem Smetanova národního směru...”


10 -f-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” Pokrok 10, no. 30 (January 30, 1878): 5; “Dvořák v nejnovějším svém díle dal se směrem Smetan[y] a na této cestě dostal se již hezky blízko k místroví svému.” While Národní Listy was the main newspaper of the more liberal party in the Czech lands (the Young Czechs), Pokrok was the primary conduit for the conservatives (the Old Czechs). These parties will be discussed in more detail below.

11 For more on this topic, see Chapters One and Four.

12 Otakar Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naší hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” in Antonín Dvořák: Sborník stati o jeho díle a životě [Antonín Dvořák: A Collection of Essays about his Work and Life], ed. Boleslav Kalenský (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1912), 208–225; though it was published in 1912, this article was written in 1901. (See Appendix 8 for an English translation of Hostinský’s article.)
audiences and critics, demonstrating that Dvořák was keenly aware of the Czech public for which he was writing.

Indevoting so much of his time to opera early in his career, Dvořák understood that he would not be taken seriously by his compatriots without scoring a major triumph on the one stage that they prized above all others – the operatic stage. Though he was hardly a novice in opera composition by the late 1870s, true success in this realm had thus far eluded him.

Dvořák’s first opera to be given in Prague – The King and the Charcoal Burner (Král a Uhlíř), mounted in 1874 – was received favourably enough, but reviews of the work were clouded by previous controversies; Dvořák had had to rewrite the opera completely because the first version was considered to be too alienating for performers and audiences, and this dominated discussions of it in the press. Dvořák’s only other work in the genre to be performed before The Cunning Peasant was his grand opera Vanda. This opera too was unable to secure Dvořák’s reputation in the theatre; its premiere in 1876 came in the midst of political conflicts among the Czechs, as discussed below, and it would later become Dvořák’s most neglected opera – the only one not to be revived when a cycle of the composer’s operatic works was arranged in Prague in 1901 in honour of Dvořák’s sixtieth birthday. Neither of the two operas that had been performed earlier in the 1870s received the same kind of positive critical attention as The Cunning Peasant.

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13 Dvořák wrote The Cunning Peasant between February and July of 1877. The opera’s early date is somewhat deceptive, as it seems to suggest that Dvořák had little experience with the genre; however, by 1877, opera was not at all new to Dvořák. Composed after Alfred (1869), the two versions of The King and the Charcoal Burner (Král a Uhlíř 1871 and 1874 respectively), The Stubborn Lovers (Tvrdé Palice, 1874), and Vanda (1875), The Cunning Peasant was Dvořák’s sixth operatic venture.

14 See, for instance, X., “Česká Zpěvohra [Czech Opera],” Dalibor II, no. 49 (December 5, 1874): 389–391. Rather than giving full attention to the new version, the author, Václav Juda Novotný, spends a good part of the review discussing the work’s first version, which had been deemed “unperformable” in rehearsal. See Chapter Two for a fuller discussion of this opera and an excerpt from this review.

15 Alfred was not performed either, but this opera, Dvořák’s earliest, had never been given and was not really on any of the critics’ radars. It is not even mentioned in Otakar Hostinský’s comprehensive study of Dvořák’s operas written in the same year as the Dvořák cycle: 1901. In this study, Hostinský expresses a sense of regret over the fact that Vanda was not included in the cycle; Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naši hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” 208–225.
many ways, this work marked Dvořák’s foray onto the operatic stage, as is evident in several of the reviews. The critic for *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník*, for example, considers *The Cunning Peasant* to be a vast improvement over Dvořák’s other works in the genre, stating that “the composer was able to cut away all that was here and there pointed out as flawed in his first pieces, alongside the beautiful aspects of his extraordinary talent.” Such views are expressed even more clearly in Emanuel Chvála’s (1851–1924) review. Chvála notes that examples of “national” music in Dvořák’s other operas had been scarce and refers to *The Cunning Peasant* as the “first step taken by the composer in the field of national opera.” Indeed, Dvořák could finally boast an operatic triumph.

The tremendous success of *The Cunning Peasant* at its Prague premiere was no accident. By the late 1870s, Dvořák was experienced enough in opera, both as a composer and as long-time violist in the Provisional Theatre orchestra, to know what would please Czech audiences. Written at a time when the comic operas of Smetana were a mainstay in the repertoire of Prague’s Czech theatres, *The Cunning Peasant* contains some conspicuous allusions to the work of Dvořák’s older contemporary, and this was certainly not lost on Czech critics. Beyond that, it incorporates into its plot certain themes and gestures that had appeared often in the operas of other Czech composers, like Vílem Blodek (1834–1874) and Vojtěch Hřímalý (1842–1908).

Overall, the design of *The Cunning Peasant* betrays a sensitivity not only to the specific tastes of opera-attendees in Prague, but also to Czech politics, which were becoming increasingly divided.

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17 Emanuel Chvála, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Lumír* 28, no. 4 (February 10, 1878): 64 (see Appendix 5 for a full English translation of this article); “prvním krokem skladatelovým na poli národní opery.” (The emphasis is mine.) Chvála describes *The Cunning Peasant* as a “sudden and definite turn [toward this style];” “tak náhlý a rozhodný obrat.”

18 Dvořák played viola in the Provisional Theatre orchestra from 1862 to 1871 – at a time when some of the first Czech operas were being introduced into the repertoire.
in the mid-1870s and had an impact on the city’s theatres. All of these factors suggest that Dvořák orchestrated his own operatic success, giving his Czech audiences and critics exactly what they wanted. Perhaps the clearest proof that *The Cunning Peasant* was tailored to its Czech public was its relatively poor showing abroad. While the opera was moderately well-received in Dresden and Hamburg in the early 1880s, its performance in Vienna in 1885 was nothing short of disastrous. An appreciation for this opera depended on a frame of reference that these non-Czech audiences simply did not have. In 1880 – two years after the Prague premiere of *The Cunning Peasant* – critic Václav Juda Novotný (1849–1922) would exhort Dvořák for catering to the German public, with the remark that “a Czech composer has to write, first and foremost, for a Czech audience.”\(^{19}\) In the case of *The Cunning Peasant*, Dvořák needed no such reproach; he was writing for the Czechs.


*The most beneficial genre for the nation*: Opera Promotion in the Czech Lands

I wanted to devote all my energy, as long as the good Lord gives me health, to the creation of opera. Not out of any conceited craze for glory, but because I consider opera to be the most beneficial genre for the Nation. People from many social strata listen to this music... My publishers know by now that I no longer will write just for them. – People harass me with questions why I do not compose this or that; I do not care for these genres anymore. They regard me as a symphonist, yet I demonstrated a long time ago my preponderant inclination towards dramatic creation.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) V. J. Novotný, “Drobné Zprávy: Dvořák co skladatel písní [Brief News: Dvořák as a song composer],” *Dalibor* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 1881): 7; “český skladatel především komponovatí musí pro české obecenstvo.” This quotation is examined in more detail in Chapter Four.

These were Dvořák’s words in an interview with the Austrian newspaper, Die Reichswehr, in 1904. Dvořák assures the interviewer that his long-term cultivation of opera is not motivated by “any conceited craze for glory;” yet, in the same breath, he points to the genre’s wide audience – its ability to reach people of “many social strata.” Like several of Dvořák’s other actions and statements, these comments draw attention simultaneously to the composer’s humility and to his interest in pitching his music to a large public. In the quotation, Dvořák identifies opera not only as “the most beneficial genre for the Nation,” but also as his own “preponderant inclination” – his “main bias.” At first glance, this remark seems puzzling, coming, as it did, at the end of the career of a composer, who had devoted himself to many different genres. On some level, it might be interpreted merely as an attempt on Dvořák’s part to dispel the notion that his domain was the symphony; his reputation as a symphonist, to which he himself refers, had haunted him throughout much of his life. The statement can be explained further when the larger Czech context is taken into consideration. Against the backdrop of Czech musical culture, Dvořák’s gravitation toward opera is not exceptional, but reflects attitudes that had been prevalent among the Czechs since the 1860s.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, opera was nurtured and valued in the Czech lands more than any other genre. A critic for the journal Světozor expresses something of the pervasiveness of opera, when he writes in 1878: “it is the most ambitious goal of every composer to be considered among the first rank of our composers in the field of dramatic music.”

21 For more on Dvořák as a businessman, see Chapter Five.
23 See Chapter Four.
of the musical life of Prague in the latter half of the nineteenth century revolved around securing a proper venue for opera performance. For decades, Czech energies were invested in building a National Theatre (Národní Divadlo)\(^{25}\) – a project that was broached already in the 1840s, when the only performing space available for opera in Prague was the Estates Theatre, run by German Bohemians and open to the Czechs only for an hour on Sunday afternoons.\(^{26}\) Plans for the National Theatre waned under the restrictive regime of the Austrian Minister of the Interior Alexander Bach during the 1850s, but gained momentum again following the October Diploma of 1860, which ushered in a “general loosening of political conditions,” as Hugh LeCaine Agnew puts it.\(^{27}\) As funds were gathered for the National Theatre, it became apparent that an interim performance space would be necessary. Several summer theatres were raised up in Prague at various times, including the New Town Theatre (Novoměstské Divadlo)\(^{28}\) and the New Czech Theatre (Nové České Divadlo).\(^{29}\) In 1862, the Czechs were able to secure a state-funded Provisional Theatre (Prozatimní Divadlo), which was built on part of the lot that had been acquired for the National Theatre and remained in use until 1883.\(^{30}\) These efforts to establish a Czech theatre in Prague sent a clear message: opera composition was to be a priority in the Czech lands.

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\(^{25}\) For a study of the National Theatre movement in Prague, see Stanley Buchholz Kimball, *Czech Nationalism: A Study of the National Theatre Movement, 1845–1883* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964). The opening of the National Theatre is discussed in some detail in Chapter Four.

\(^{26}\) The Czechs used this venue to perform Czech translations of standard operatic works.


\(^{28}\) The New Town Theatre saw the premiere of Dvořák’s *Hymnus* and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. Germans and Czechs shared this theatre, as it was built to be a second venue of the Estates Theatre, which would explain why it opened in 1859 before the October Diploma of 1860.

\(^{29}\) The New Czech Theatre opened in 1876 – much later than the New Town Theatre.

What is more, beginning in the 1860s, Czech composers were urged explicitly to work in the genre. In preparation for the opening of the Provisional Theatre, Count Jan Harrach announced a Czech opera contest on February, 10 1861, soliciting both comic and serious contributions. Harrach stipulates, “as far as music and singing is concerned, I lay down as the first and the chief requirement… that [the opera] should have a truly national character.”

No entries were received in time for the Theatre’s inaugural performance in 1862. It was not until 1863 that a Czech opera would be given at this venue; even then, the selected work – František Skuherský’s (1830–1892) *Vladimír, God’s Chosen (Vladimír, Bohův Zvolenec)* – was actually a revised Czech version of an opera that had been composed originally in German: *Der Apostat*.

Embarrassed that no Czech opera of substance was available for performance at the venue in its early years, composers were determined to remedy the situation. The twenty-one-year period of the Provisional Theatre’s existence witnessed a surge in the number of operas being written by Czech composers, including Smetana, Blodek, Hřímalý, Josef Rozkošný (1833–1913), Karel Bendl (1838–1897), Karel Šebor (1843–1903), Fibich, and Dvořák. By the time the National Theatre opened its doors in 1883, it could draw from a rich repertory of Czech operas, and its presence in the city provided additional incentive for composers to be prolific in the genre.

Living in Prague essentially from 1857 onward, Dvořák could not help but be affected by this kind of environment. Perhaps not coincidentally, Dvořák composed his first, albeit German-language, opera *Alfred* in 1869 – the year after the National Theatre’s lavish ground-breaking
ceremony. His other early operas followed close upon, and he composed no fewer than six within the span of less than a decade. While Jan Smaczny observes that, “after 1869, there was no single period of any length in [Dvořák’s] composing career when he was not engaged in some kind of operatic project,”34 Dvořák dedicated himself to the genre with the greatest intensity at the beginning of his career, when he had only his Czech audience to consider. After his international breakthrough in the late 1870s, his contributions became somewhat less frequent.35 Another factor that certainly motivated Dvořák, as well as other Czech composers, to take up the genre was its prominence in the press.36 The theatre-going public was large, as noted by Dvořák in the quotation above, and opera reviews tended to be published in newspapers that enjoyed wide readership, rather than being confined to specialized journals. Aesthetic debates of the late 1860s and early 1870s centred on opera. Though questions were raised among critics about the types of operatic works that would be most appropriate for Czech composers to cultivate,37 the issue of whether Czechs ought to write operas at all seems never to have been interrogated. If


35 Operatic works do not cross borders as easily as works in other genres. Also opera did not seem to be a high priority in some of the places where Dvořák became active abroad; England was known for its choral tradition and Vienna was the hub of absolute music composition in the late nineteenth century.

36 The theatre was given far more public exposure than the concert hall. Hostinský makes this observation when he writes: “it was a great exception, when an instrumental composition was greeted with half the attention and achieved only part of the popularity in wider circles as any opera;” “byla to vzácná výjimka, když skladbě instrumentální dostávalo se třeba jen části oné pozornosti a populárnosti v kruzích nejširších, již hlavně nabývala kterákoliv opera;” Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naší hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” 225.

37 At the forefront of these debates, which raged during the late 1860s and early 1870s, were questions about the extent to which Czechs ought to adopt the Wagnerian music drama and whether the latter could be reconciled with a distinctly national brand of Czech opera. See Chapter Two for a fuller discussion of this topic. For further reading see John Clapham, “The Smetana-Pivoda Controversy,” Music & Letters 52, no. 4 (1971): 353–364; Marta Ottlová and Milan Pospíšil, “K motivům českého wagnerismu a antiwagnersim [Motives of Czech Wagnerism and anti-Wagnerism],” in Bedřich Smetana a jeho doba: Vybrané studie [Bedřich Smetana and his time: Selected studies] (Prague: Knížnice Dějin a Současnosti, 1997), 96–110; Brian Locke, Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theatre, 1900–1938 (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), esp. 22–28.
Dvořák wanted to attract considerable journalistic attention, he needed to compose operas. Regardless of his own inclinations, certain pressures were exerted on him in Prague of the 1870s to embrace this genre, and in a sense, he catered to the Czechs simply by making opera a significant part of his output.

**Political Contexts for *The Cunning Peasant*: Appeasing the Young Czechs**

*The Cunning Peasant* was one of many operas to receive its premiere during the era of the Provisional Theatre, and with this work, Dvořák shows that he was not insensitive to the politics that had infiltrated the venue. The opera’s first performance in early 1878 occurred in the aftermath of disputes between two political parties: the Old Czechs (Staročeši) and the Young Czechs (Mladočeši). Though the term “Young Czech” was in use as early as 1863, the party was not founded officially until 1874 as an alternative to the National Party, which, by default, became known as the Old Czech Party, though the distinctions between the two had nothing to do with age. In essence, the Old Czechs believed that it was in the best interest of the Czech people to remain under Austrian rule, working within the framework of the Habsburg monarchy and in cooperation with the Bohemian nobility. Among those who stood at the head of the Old Czech Party were historian and politician František Palacký (1798–1876), who became known as the “Father of the Nation,” having risen to nearly legendary status by the 1870s, and Palacký’s son-in-law, František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903), who emerged as the party’s staunch leader.

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38 The terms Old Czech and Young Czech were in common use during the nineteenth century, but the more official names of the parties are Bohemian/Czech National Party (Česká národní strana) and Czech National Liberal Party (Národní strana svobodomyslná), respectively. These are Jeremy King’s translations of the party names; though he translates “svobodomyslná” as liberal, the term literally means “free-thinking” or “independent.” Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Bohemians: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 32 and 73.

after Palacký’s death. In comparison with the Old Czechs, the Young Czech Party advocated a greater degree of liberty for the Czech people, stating in their program that they wish to achieve “the recognition and realization of the independence and self-government of the Czech lands on the basis of valid and inviolate state rights.” The Young Czechs disapproved of aristocratic privileges, had no desire to work together with the Bohemian nobility, and pushed for separation between church and state. Included among the ranks of this party were Karel Sladkovský (1823–1880), František Tilšer (1825–1913) as well as newspaper editors Edvard (1827–1907) and Julius Grégr (1831–1896).

Even though the two parties had very different political platforms, Bruce Garver argues that the Old and Young Czechs actually can be seen as complementary parts of the same political movement. Their split occurred not so much over differences of opinion concerning long-term goals, as it did over the tactics by which those goals might be achieved. In response to the centralizing efforts of Austrian Minister-Presidents Schmerling and Auersperg, the Old Czechs enforced a policy of passive resistance, initiating a boycott of the Reichsrat. The Young Czechs disagreed with this decision, believing that they ought to take an active role in the institution, no matter how flawed and inadequate they deemed it to be. Their return to the Reichsrat in 1873, in defiance of the Old Czech policy, led directly to the establishment of a separate party the following year. While the Young Czechs considered it necessary to break from the existing party and widen the political spectrum in the Czechs lands, the Old Czechs saw the establishment of a multi-party system as ultimately counterproductive, since it divided the energies of the Czechs,

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40 Garver, 78. As Jeremy King points out, in using a “historical, state-rights rhetoric,” these Young Czechs were not unlike the Old Czechs; King, 74.
42 Garver, 79.
who, they believed, would do better to rally together to fight for the common Czech cause. The political spectrum widened further still with the foundation of several new parties in the 1890s; by then, the Young Czechs had a clear majority, and the Old Czechs had essentially lost all of their power.  

The schism between the Old and Young Czechs was strongly felt at various institutions in Prague. It impacted the press during the 1860s and 70s, as newspapers and journals were divided along political lines. _Národní Listy_ came to be associated with the Young Czechs in 1863, two years after the newspaper was founded under the leadership of Julius Grégr. At the same time, the Prague daily _Pokrok_, established in 1867 by Jan Stanislav Skrejšovský (1831–1883) – initially under the slightly longer title _Národní Pokrok_ – became the main vehicle of the Old Czechs. Skrejšovský was also owner of the German-language newspaper _Politik_ and the music journal _Hudební Listy_, both of which have an Old Czech bent. As these parties were consolidated, many individuals were compelled to come down on one side or other of this divide. A frequent contributor to _Národní Listy_ in the 1860s, Smetana made no secret of his sympathies with the Young Czech Party. His music, in turn, was championed by the Young Czechs, and he was quickly co-opted as the party’s poster boy. This meant too that Smetana often came under attack in the city’s Old Czech papers, most especially in the writings of František Pivoda (1824–1898), who acted as music critic both for _Pokrok_ and _Hudební Listy_.

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45 Beránková, 162. _Pokrok_, which translates as “progress,” would seem to be a misnomer for this newspaper. In 1886, its name was changed to _Hlas Národa_, which means “the voice of the nation.”  
46 Clapham, “The Smetana-Pivoda Controversy,” 358. Though it cannot be assumed that contributors to these publications subscribed fully to the opinions of one or the other party, the political slant of each source did play a role in determining the types of articles to be published in it and certain points of emphasis.
It has usually been assumed that Dvořák’s loyalties lay with the Old Czechs. He was a devout Roman Catholic, and this party tended to attract a following from among members of the Church. Also, during the 1880s, Marie Červinková-Riegrová (1854–1895) – the daughter of the Old Czech leader František Rieger – would write librettos for two of Dvořák’s operas. Most likely, efforts to connect him with the Old Czechs in a public way were initiated by the party leaders themselves. Brian Large suggests that Rieger – who had initially promoted the music of Vilém Blodek, having selected him as a puppet for the Old Czechs – turned his attention to Dvořák following Blodek’s death in 1874, perhaps taking advantage of Dvořák’s apparent political neutrality. According to Large, Rieger’s attempts to harness a composer for the purposes of the Old Czechs was a direct response to the overwhelming Young Czech support that Smetana’s music had garnered. Whatever Dvořák’s actual political convictions were, he was slowly becoming entangled with the Old Czech Party in 1870s Prague.

Meanwhile, the more liberally minded Young Czechs started to dominate the Provisional Theatre during the mid-1870s. A change in administration occurred at the Theatre in April of 1876, at which time Rudolf Wirsing, a Young Czech, took over as director, and the Theatre’s Consortium (Družstvo), which formerly had many Old Czech members, now had a strong Young Czech presence. This led the Old Czechs to boycott opera productions at the venue for nearly a year. The boycott had an impact on the reception of Dvořák’s Vanda, which was premiered on

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47 The two operas were Dimitrij (1882) and The Jacobin (Jakobín, 1887–88). Jan Smaczny claims that Dvořák’s collaboration with Červinková-Riegrová had “no political overtones as far as Dvořák was concerned;” Jan Smaczny, “A Study of the First Six Operas of Antonín Dvořák,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1989), 3.

48 Since Dvořák did not write articles for any Czech newspaper or journal, there are no sources that would suggest what kind of a stance he took in relation to these two parties. Rarely does he venture a clear opinion on a political issue in his letters. He certainly did not lend himself openly to the Old Czech cause in the way that Smetana had done for the Young Czechs.

April 17, 1876, right after the change in theatre leadership had taken place. Hostinský claims that the effects of this dispute were still felt in November of 1876, when Smetana’s comic opera *The Kiss (Hubička, 1875–76)* was premiered; in Hostinský’s words, “about half of the Czech audience did not even step foot into the theatre [at that time].”\(^{50}\) Eventually, a United Consortium (Spojené Družstvo) was formed at the Provisional Theatre in 1877, with representatives from both political groups.\(^{51}\) Though it would appear that the conflict had been pacified by the time *The Cunning Peasant* was premiered in January of 1878, the events of the previous two years were not easily erased from people’s memories.

Dvořák’s decision to offer *The Cunning Peasant* to the Provisional Theatre administration in the summer of 1877 was timely, since it was a work that the increasingly prominent Young Czechs were likely to approve. His last opera to be given at this venue, *Vanda*, had been pan-Slavic, both in its music and in its dramatic content, based on an ancient Polish legend. Of the two political parties, the Old Czechs were the ones, who tended to be proponents of pan-Slavism, and an opera like Dvořák’s *Vanda* would have undoubtedly appealed to their tastes; indeed, Milan Kuna argues that the main reason why Dvořák came to be associated with the Old Czechs in the first place was because of his cultivation of a pan-Slavic style and the party’s keen interest in this movement.\(^{52}\) In contrast to *Vanda*, *The Cunning Peasant* draws upon material that is unequivocally Czech, and the work alludes to the comic operas of the hero of the Young Czech Party: Smetana. Having already found favour with the Old Czechs, Dvořák seemed to be

\(^{50}\) Otakar Hostinský, *Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu [Bedřich Smetana and his Battle for Modern Czech Music]* (Prague: Jan Laichter, 1901), 413–414. Rather than seeing this as a hindrance, Hostinský asserts that the absence of the Old Czechs actually bolstered Smetana’s reputation, since the reviews published by the Young Czechs were all positive.


striving, with this opera, to win over the Young Czech faction of the Provisional Theatre audience and the many party supporters who stood at the theatre’s helm in the late 1870s.

**Conforming to Convention: Veselý’s Libretto and the Czech Comic Opera Tradition**

Some aspects of Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* were, of course, dictated by the libretto, which came from the pen of the young and relatively obscure poet and playwright Josef Otakar Veselý (1853–1879). Known to have made several outrageous statements, Veselý envisioned for himself the role of literary reformer – “saviour of… pathetic [Czech literature],” as he phrased it.⁵³ He died too early to attempt to make good on his inflated promise. Though he wrote a number of theatre pieces, including the libretto to another opera – Bendl’s *The Montenegrins* (*Černohorci*, 1881), his collaboration with Dvořák on *The Cunning Peasant* would ultimately be his only claim to fame.⁵⁴ While Veselý spoke of revolutionizing Czech literature, the libretto to *The Cunning Peasant* could not be more conventional. In its setting, structure, and plot, it is reminiscent of the librettos of countless other comic operas that had appeared on the stage of the Provisional Theatre. If it was Dvořák’s aim to compose a work that would be in line with the theatre’s existing repertory, Veselý’s libretto was a suitable vehicle.

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⁵³ Veselý also declared that he would be able to write works of a calibre that “had not been achieved since the time of Shakespeare;” Otakar Šourek, *Život a Dílo Ant. Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Ant. Dvořák]*, vol. 1 (Prague: Hudební Matice Umělecké Besedy, 1916), 176.

⁵⁴ Though he harboured delusions of greatness, his prolificacy cannot be denied. At the time of his death from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-six, he had completed three comedies, three tragedies, two opera librettos, and spoke of having subjects in mind for forty-six dramas. At least two of his comedies were staged in Prague during his life to moderate success. Veselý’s treatment in the Czech press following his untimely death is respectful. The obituaries describe him as a poet of talent and potential, reporting that he was given a rather elaborate funeral, complete with a procession through the streets of Prague and wreaths that had been donated by the Artists’ Union (Umělecká Beseda), the literary society Slavia, and the directors of the Czech theatre; Unsigned, “Denní Zprávy: J. O. Veselý,” *Národní Listy* 19, no. 292 (December 7, 1879): 2; Unsigned, “Jos. Otakar Veselý,” *Posel z Prahy* no. 293 (December 9, 1879): 3. His name is mentioned in secondary literature only in connection with Dvořák.
The Cunning Peasant conforms to established traditions, by being set in the Czech countryside. When making his opera contest announcement in 1861, Count Harrach provided clear specifications: serious operas were to be “based on the history of the Bohemian crown,” while comic operas were to be “taken from Czech-Slavonic national life in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia.” One of the first composers to follow Harrach’s prescription for comic operas was Smetana, who collaborated with librettist Karel Sabina (1813–1877) to create The Bartered Bride (Prodaná Nevěsta) – a work that invokes idyllic rural Bohemia. Premiered at the Provisional Theatre in 1866, The Bartered Bride was actually not an instant success and failed to elicit the same kind of enthusiasm from audiences as Smetana’s serious opera, The Brandenburgers in Bohemia (Braniboři v Čechách), which had been given at this venue earlier that year. Part of the reason for the lukewarm response was the political situation; on the verge of the Austro-Prussian war, Czech audiences seemed hardly to be in the mood for light-hearted comedies. Brian Large claims that audiences were also put off by the work’s village setting, which was something of a novelty to them. Large explains:

The Prague audience not only failed to respond to The Bartered Bride, but, coming as they did from society or middle-class circles, found the plot too naïve, even too rustic. It was, after all, one of the earliest Czech operas to be set in a village milieu where the

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55 Josef Bartoš, Prozatimní divadlo a jeho opera [The Provisional Theatre and its Opera] (Prague: Sbor pro zřízení druhého národního divadla, 1938), 94; “z dějin koruny České;” “vzaté z národního života československého v Čechách, na Moravě nebo Slezku.”

56 Czech composers at this time generally seemed to gravitate toward serious genres of opera. All of the entries that had eventually been submitted to Count Harrach’s competition were in the serious opera category; Tyrrell, Czech Opera, 126.

57 The Bartered Bride had its Prague premiere on May 30, 1866, and the Austro-Prussian War broke out seventeen days later (on June 16). Brian Large comments on the political situation at the time of the work’s first performance: “there was a great deal of unrest and many feared the outbreak of war, which, if it materialized, would inevitably affect Bohemia. In this tense and uneasy atmosphere, The Bartered Bride, with its feeling of relaxed comedy, hardly stood a chance;” Large, 165–166. Gerald Abraham also asserts that the looming threat of war played a significant role in the opera’s initial lukewarm reception and claims that, when the work was brought back to the Provisional Theatre stage after the war (in October of 1866), it already fared much better; Gerald Abraham, “The Genesis of The Bartered Bride,” Music & Letters 28, no. 1 (1947): 39.
dramatis personae were ordinary folk and not the conventional aristocratic characters whom the public were used to seeing on the stage.\textsuperscript{58}

The tide would turn quickly. \textit{The Bartered Bride} rose in popularity following its performance in 1870, after Smetana had finished his many rounds of revision and arrived at the opera’s definitive version.\textsuperscript{59} By the mid-1870s, \textit{The Bartered Bride} had become the quintessential Czech opera – considered by many to be more characteristic of Smetana than any of his serious operatic works. A rural setting, which had bothered audiences in the past, now became an indispensable ingredient to any successful Czech comic opera. \textit{The Cunning Peasant} lies firmly within this tradition; it has rurality embedded in its very title.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Large, 165. According to Large, poor attendance at the first performance of \textit{The Bartered Bride} also contributed to its less than enthusiastic reception. Some of the regular theatre attendees in Prague were likely absent, since the work’s premiere took place on one of the hottest days of the year and coincided with a holiday. The reviewer for \textit{Národní Listy} indicates that audience numbers were still low during the opera’s second performance on June 3: “unfortunately, even this time, the attendance was not as high as this novelty would deserve;” “bohužel, že i tentokrátě návštěva nebyla taková, jakby toho novinka tato byla zaslouhovala;” Unsigned, “Literatura a umění: Smetanova \textit{Prodaná Nevěsta} [Literature and Art: Smetana’s \textit{The Bartered Bride}],” \textit{Národní Listy} 6, no. 152 (June 5, 1866): 3. The opera was cancelled after only two performances.

\textsuperscript{59} It is curious that, within a few years, this opera, with its putatively shunned rural setting, became enormously popular. In essence, the element that changed during that time was \textit{The Bartered Bride} itself. Smetana wrote no fewer than five different versions of the opera; each version was given its own performance(s), allowing members of the Prague public to observe the ways in which the composer modified the work over the course of the late 1860s. In its earliest form, it was a two-act opera, with spoken dialogue and only twenty musical numbers, approaching closely to the operetta or Singspiel traditions. Among other revisions, Smetana added several boisterous dances and choruses, introduced a change in scenery, divided the opera into three acts, and generally transformed it into a weightier composition. The most notable alteration came in the fifth version ( premiered on September 5, 1870), when Smetana replaced the spoken dialogue with recitative, thus positioning the work unequivocally within the realm of comic opera. For more on the different versions of Smetana’s opera, see Abraham, “The Genesis of \textit{The Bartered Bride},” 36–49. In his 1874 review of the work for \textit{Dalibor}, critic F. P. Laurencin strives to account for the work’s immense popularity: “even though its libretto is overly simplistic in its exposition, conflict, and resolution, and it lacks the depths of the soul of life, one cannot deny that it stands out for the natural flow of the plot; an often healthy, fresh element of humour; and the successful portrayal of individual characters taken from rural life […] it easily holds the attention of the audience;” “jakkoli jest toto libreto co do exposice, zaužení, a rozřešení růzu poněkud lehkonohého a postrádá všeho hlubšího života duševního, přeče nelze upřít, že celkem prospěšně vyniká přirozeným proudu deje, mnohdy zdravým svěžím živlem humoru jakož i zdařilou kresbou jednotlivých charakterů z plného života venkovského vztatých […] snadno udržet může poslušiče;” F. P. Laurencin, “Smetanova \textit{Prodaná Nevěsta} [Smetana’s \textit{The Bartered Bride}],” \textit{Dalibor} II, no. 12 (March 21, 1874): 89.

\textsuperscript{60} František Pivoda makes a connection between Czechness and rurality when he write that, in \textit{The Cunning Peasant}, “[Beaumarchais’s \textit{Le Nozze di Figaro}] is taken out of the salon and transported to a rural setting, perhaps so that it might be Czech?” “Látka není původní; z poboční osnovy výtečné Beaumarchaisovy \textit{Figarovy svatby} z kruhu salonní society přenesena je na půd selskou, proto snad, aby byla českou?” František Pivoda, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: \textit{The Cunning Peasant}],” \textit{Hudební a Divadelní Věstník} 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 228. The work’s connections to \textit{Figaro} will be discussed in more detail below.
Rural locales were a safe choice for comic operas in 1870s Prague not only because they were sure to please, but also because such operas could be easily staged. The same sets and costumes were used repeatedly at the Provisional Theatre, which certainly helped give audiences the impression that these works were part of a unified repertory. On the libretto of *The Cunning Peasant*, Veselý indicates that the plot is to take place in the town of Domažlice, rather than leaving the name of the village unspecified, as was the usual practice. As a result, new costumes were ordered for the opera’s premiere, designed to reflect the dress that was native to the Domažlice region, and in this way, *The Cunning Peasant* distinguishes itself from other works of its kind. Even so, casting the story in this particular town was hardly a novel idea. Though it had not been invoked on the operatic stage before, Domažlice, located in Western Bohemia near the German border, was already a fixture in nineteenth-century Czech literature, mentioned often in the works of such writers as Karel Jaromír Erben (1811–1870) and Božena Němcová (1820–1862). Educated audiences would have recognized this reference and been aware of its significance.

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61 Tyrrell, *Czech Opera*, 31; Tyrrell writes that “the appearance of a new set was usually hailed as a particular attraction.”

62 Many of the critics comment on the costumes, especially in articles that were published leading up to the premiere. “The production will be rich and a large portion of the costumes, particularly the national dress of Domažlice, will be completely new;” “Výprava bude bohatá a větší část kostímu, zejména kroje domažlické, úplně nova;” Unsigned, “Literatura a umění: Z českého divadla [Literature and Art: From the Czech Theatre],” *Národní Listy* 18, no. 24 (January 25, 1878): 3. “The piece will be meticulously staged; a large portion of the costumes, especially those from the Domažlice region, are new;” “Vypraven bude kus pečlivě; větší část kostumů, obzvláště kraj domažlický, jsou nové;” Unsigned, “Denní Zprávy ve prospěch stavby národního divadla: Z českého divadla [Daily News for the benefit of the building of the National Theatre: From the Czech Theatre],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 27 (January 27, 1878): 5.

63 These literary references were historically based. Domažlice was the site of the *Hussenflucht*, as discussed below; Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1965), 70. It was also the location of a peasant rebellion from 1692 to 1695, which would later become the subject of a novel by Alois Jirásek (*Dogheads, Psohlavci*, 1883–84) and an opera of the same name by Karel Kovařovic (1895–1897). These nineteenth-century writers looked upon Domažlice as the place where Czechs had struggled and succeeded against their German aggressors. It became a symbol of Czechness to them. Sayer, *Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History*, 131–132.
Much like its setting, the plot of *The Cunning Peasant* is thoroughly conventional. Rather than being based on original material, the storyline is a veritable mix of themes and gestures, taken from those comic operas that had been most successful in Prague. For the main conflict of the story, Veselý relies heavily on Sabina’s libretto to *The Bartered Bride*. The notion of two suitors vying for the same peasant girl – one of her father’s choosing and one of her own – would have undoubtedly brought Smetana’s best-known opera to mind for most audience members. Even the names of some of the characters from *The Bartered Bride* are retained in *The Cunning Peasant*. In each of the two works, the female protagonist’s true love – the peasant boy, whom she ends up marrying – is called Jeník, though the one in *The Bartered Bride* is much more proactive than the character of the same name in *The Cunning Peasant*. Tenor Antonín Vávra (1847–1932) performed both roles in Prague during the 1870s, sealing the connection between these two characters even further. The other suitor in *The Cunning Peasant* is Václav, whose name is a formal version of Vašek, his counterpart in *The Bartered Bride*. Though less ridiculous, Václav’s role is similar to Vašek’s; both are the sons of wealthy landowners and considered to be the most suitable prospective husbands for the female protagonists. Additional parallel characters between the two operas have different names. Martin, the title character of *The Cunning Peasant* and the heroine’s father, can be likened to Kecal, the marriage broker in *The Bartered Bride*; classic buffo characters, these men concern themselves with bringing about financially lucrative marriages. Like Mařenka in Sabina’s libretto, Bětuška plays the role of the

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64 While the Jeník in *The Bartered Bride* takes charge of his own fate and comes up with a clever scheme to ensure that he marry the heroine of the opera, Mařenka, the Jeník in *The Cunning Peasant* is very passive, and it is certainly through no effort of his own that he eventually winds up marrying the female protagonist, Bětuška.


66 Unlike Vašek, whose personality is fully drawn and whose characteristic stammer is integral to the comedy of Smetana’s opera, Václav plays a very minor role in Dvořák’s opera. He is not even mentioned in Karel Hoffmeister’s rather detailed synopsis of the opera for *Meziakti*; Karel Hoffmeister, “Dvořáková Šelma Sedlák [Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Meziakti: Divadelní Věstník* 2, no. 6 (September 26, 1901).
pious and morally upright peasant girl in Veselý’s text. In their broad strokes, the operas tell the same basic story; yet, their titles indicate different points of emphasis. *The Bartered Bride* revolves mostly around the arranged marriage, while the central event in *The Cunning Peasant* is the trick that Martin devises in order to thwart Jeník’s courtship of his daughter, Bětuška.

The clever scheme in *The Cunning Peasant* was also not without precedent on the Czech stage. With Václav as his accomplice, Martin sets a trap for Jeník in the opera’s first act, removing the ladder from beneath Bětuška’s window and replacing it with a barrel into which Jeník is supposed to plummet. The prank misfires, when an entirely different character, the chamber servant Jean, falls prey to it at the opera’s climax in the second act. Jean is punished in this way for attempting to court Bětuška himself. By adding this twist to the plot, Veselý departs from *The Bartered Bride*, but not from other Czech operas. This type of slapstick humour was common, leading the reviewer for the newspaper *Pokrok* to observe that suitors in Czech comic operas have a curious habit of taking tumbles. The gimmick can be traced back to Víťa Blodek’s comic opera from 1867, *In the Well* (*V Studni*), the text of which is by Sabina, the librettist of *The Bartered Bride*; in an attempt to court a peasant girl, the wealthy suitor Janek falls into a water well at the opera’s conclusion, as suggested by its title. A similar comic effect can be found in librettist Jindřich Böhm’s (1836–1916) and composer Vojtěch Hřímalý’s 1872 opera *The Enchanted Prince* (*Zakletý Princ*), where one of the characters slips accidentally into a water fountain. These operas were well known to audiences, having become staples in the

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67 In their reviews, Czech critics do not tend to discuss the plot similarities between *The Bartered Bride* and *The Cunning Peasant* in any detail; these parallels would have probably been obvious to audiences, needing no explanation.

68 Hostinský claims that the character Jean, with his French name, is actually a stock character in old Viennese comedies; “Jean je karikatura z Vieneňských frašek, zejmena starších;” Otakar Hostinský, “Původní novinky české zpěvohry [Original New Works of Czech Opera],” *Osvěta* 8, no. 10 (1878): 746. (See Appendix 4 for a full English translation of this article.)

Provisional Theatre repertory by the late 1870s, and allusions to them in *The Cunning Peasant* would have been instantly recognizable. If it was Veselý’s aim to capitalize on familiarity, this comedic gesture seems to have been somewhat miscalculated. The writer for *Pokrok* ultimately considers Jean’s fall to be a poorly chosen development in the plot, stating that “this vulgar and over-used effect is what we deem to be the main flaw of the newest dramatic-musical work, especially considering that, whereas Sabina and Böhm used it incidentally, Veselý builds the whole plot around it.” Critic František Pivoda writes along similar line in his review: “the librettist does not consider it beneath him to include such over-used gags as falling into barrels, boxes, wells, and water ducts.”

Slapstick humour is not the only commonality between *The Cunning Peasant* and *In the Well*: the character Veruna appears in both works with exactly the same name and function. She micromanages the affairs of the characters, bringing about the eventual marriage between the heroine and her beloved in each of the stories. Veruna’s part belongs to a larger Czech tradition; a number of comic operas incorporate into their plots the role of an elderly figure who lends advice to the main characters and intervenes in the action. Among the works to conform to

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71 František Pivoda, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník* 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 228; “Ba ani opotřebovaných šprýmů, jako padání do sudů, beden, studní a vodojmů nejen že se neštítí libretista, nýbrž kde jiní jich použili co vedlejších hříček, založil libretista na drsném tom effektě hudební dráma svoje.”

72 František Pivoda describes Veruna’s role: “a superficial impression was created by the secretive dealings of old Veruna, who continually hides behind fences, bushes, and shrubs; eavesdrops; prises; mixes the plot up in light of her findings; and could be the title character;” “k příliš mělkým dojmům náleží tajemnické úřadování staré Veruny, která se ustanoví za ploty, kroví, besídky a houštiny schovává, vyslychá, vyzvídá, děj dle toho zapletá a titulníreky ní kusu být by mohla;” František Pivoda, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník* 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 228.
this tradition are Smetana’s *The Kiss* from 1876 and Dvořák’s *The Stubborn Lovers (Tvrdé Palice)*, which was composed in 1874, but would not be performed in Prague until 1881.\(^{73}\)

While librettist Veselý draws upon *The Bartered Bride* for the conflict in *The Cunning Peasant*, he turns to Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* for its resolution. *The Cunning Peasant* already channels *Figaro* in its mixing of upper- and lower-class characters, which was not typical of Czech comic operas;\(^{74}\) however, the connections between the two works go deeper. In the middle of the first act of *The Cunning Peasant*, a visiting Duke makes a grand entrance in the village, bringing with him an entourage that includes his long-suffering wife as well as chamber servants Jean and Berta, who are romantically linked. It does not take long for the Duke – and Jean – to become enthralled with Bětuška, setting up a situation that parallels Count Almaviva’s infatuation with Susanna in Mozart’s opera. This parallel was made obvious to the public at the premiere of *The Cunning Peasant*, when the part of the Duke was entrusted to baritone Josef Lev (1832–1898), who had developed a reputation for his portrayal of the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.\(^{75}\) It is Veruna, who eventually brings resolution to the plot of *The Cunning Peasant*, by prescribing the same cure for marital infidelity as the one given in Mozart’s opera; she instructs the Duchess and Berta to surprise their men by dressing in peasant clothing and pretending to be Bětuška at a moonlit rendezvous in the garden. Such a blatant nod to *Figaro* was not to be missed by audiences and critics, especially considering the opera’s immense popularity in Prague.

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\(^{73}\) It is the old man Řeřicha, who helps the lovers out of their predicament in Dvořák’s *The Stubborn Lovers*. Though much less active than Řeřicha, the role of Father Paloucký in Smetana’s *The Kiss* is comparable. The elderly Paloucký does not assist in bringing the lovers together, but he does offer words of wisdom, foreseeing the trouble that the couple would come to have.

\(^{74}\) Characters tended to belong to the same social stratum in Czech works of this genre. In the three comic operas by Smetana that had been performed in Prague to that point (*The Bartered Bride, The Kiss*, and *The Two Widows [Dvě Vdovy]*) , all of the characters are part of the same social class.

\(^{75}\) Bartoš, *Prozatimní divadlo a jeho opera [The Provisional Theatre and its Opera]*, 244. Karel Čech, who had played Bartolo in *Figaro*, was cast in the role of Martin at the first performance of *The Cunning Peasant*. 
Ever since the successful performance of *Figaro* at the Estates Theatre in 1786 and the premiere of *Don Giovanni* at the same venue a year later, Prague audiences had developed something of an obsession with Mozart. František Xaver Němeček (1766–1849) provides a first-hand account of the excitement that *Figaro* generated in the city:

It is the simple truth when I tell you that [*Figaro*] was performed, almost without a break, throughout the whole winter, and that it helped promoters completely to overcome their very [unsettled] financial situation. The enthusiasm which it evoked among the public was unprecedented. People could not get enough of it. One of our best masters, Mr. Kuchař, very soon made a pianoforte arrangement of it, with parts for wind instruments, as well as a chamber music quintet and an arrangement in the form of German dances; in short, *Figaro*’s songs were to be heard in the streets, in the gardens, and even the harp-player in the local tap-room had to twang out ‘Non più andrai,’ if he wanted anybody to listen to him.76

While visiting Prague for the performances of his operas, Mozart is alleged to have uttered “meine Prager verstehen mich” – a phrase that was repeated often by the Czechs in subsequent years.77 The Mozart cult continued to be strong during the nineteenth century.78 One proof of Mozart’s renown is the frequency with which his works were performed at the Provisional and National Theatres, even though the operas of German composers were generally considered to be the domain of the Estates Theatre.79 That Mozart’s operas were performed in Czech translation at

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77 No evidence exists to confirm that Mozart actually made this statement. Most recently a variation on this phrase was used as the title for Marc Niubó’s survey of Mozart materials in the collection of the National Library in Prague; Marc Niubó, *Moji Pražané mě uctívají: Mozartův kult v Praze v 1. pol. 19. století a Mozartův památník v Klementinu [My Prague Citizens Worship Me: Mozart’s Cult in Prague during the first half of the 19th century and Mozart’s Memorial in Clementinum]* (Prague: Národní Knihovna, 2006). Letters exchanged between Mozart and his father suggest that the composer himself was grateful for the keen interest in *Figaro* that Prague audiences had shown, considering that the same opera had been met with Opposition and intrigue in Vienna; see Leopold Mozart’s letters to his son (April 18, 1786 and January 12, 1787); Hans Mersmann, ed., *Letter of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, trans. M. M. Bozman (New York: Dover, 1972), 229, 232.

78 Jiří Hilmera claims that outside of Prague, *Le Nozze di Figaro* was given twenty-five times in Czech theatres from the 1780s to 1900. The number of performances in Prague during that timeframe was undoubtedly much higher because the residents of Prague in particular were very proud of their connections with Mozart. Jiří Hilmera, “Mozart v Čechách [Mozart in the Czech lands],” *Hudební Věda* 44, no. 2 (2007): 167–180.

79 Jan Smaczny, “Daily Repertoire of the Provisional Theatre Opera in Prague: Chronological List,” *Miscellanea Musicologica* 34 (1994): 9–139. The Provisional Theatre and its affiliated venues in Prague saw no fewer than one hundred and three performances of various Mozart operas, twenty-seven of which were of *Le Nozze*
these venues made his works even more accessible to the public. By the late nineteenth century, audiences in Prague had adopted Mozart as a kind of “honorary Czech.” By referencing Figaro in his libretto to The Cunning Peasant, then, Veselý seems to be playing to these tastes. Whether he was successful in his endeavour is another matter. While some reviewers mention the plot’s similarity to Figaro without offering any comment, others see this as a poor tactic on Veselý’s part, since his libretto was bound to pale in comparison with the original that was held in such high esteem.

In later years, Veselý’s libretto to The Cunning Peasant would be criticized quite heavily in the Viennese press, as discussed below. Even Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904), Dvořák’s staunch supporter in the Habsburg capital, would use words like “old-fashioned,” “stupid,” “boring,” and “childish” to describe the text in his 1885 review of the opera. The Czechs too would eventually come to regard Veselý’s work as not particularly strong. Reflecting on The Cunning di Figaro. (The affiliated theatres included the Theatre on Zofín Island, the New Town Theatre, and the New Czech Theatre.) Although Le Nozze di Figaro was given a considerable number of times (27) in that time frame (1862–1883), both Don Giovanni and Die Zauberflöte were performed even more frequently (39 and 30 times respectively). In the years leading up to the premiere of Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant, Figaro was actually not heard very often at the Provisional Theatre, having been performed only once in 1876 and not at all in 1877, but by then a deep-seeded familiarity with the work had been established among opera-goers in Prague.


81 “The libretto by Mr. Veselý, which gives a similar impression to that of The Marriage of Figaro, limps far behind Beaumarchais as far as plot and the importance of its arrangement for the foundation of the music, diction, and versification are concerned;” “Libreto p. Veselého, jež obírá se dějem podobným onomu ve Figarově svatbě daleko pokulhává za rozdělením děje, důležitým jeho uspořádáním pro tvar a základ hudební, dícké a versifikaci dramaně Baumarchaise;” Unsigned, “Produkce: Opera [Productions: Opera],” Hudební a Divadelní Český Věstník 1, no. 28 (February 1, 1878): 226. “Other motives of the plot, the punishment of the disloyal count, are imitations of The Marriage of Figaro, with the difference that in this story the trustworthy relationship between the Countess and her maid Susanna is totally natural, whereas in Veselý’s story, we do not understand how the Countess can confide about the most delicate matters in the peasant girl, whom she has just met for the first time!” “Jiný motiv děje, potrestané záletnictví knížete, jest nápodobením Figarovy svatby, s tím ovšem rozdílem, že v této zpěvohře důvěrný poměr mezi hraběnkou a její komorou Zuzankou je zcela přirozený, kdežto u Veselého nepochopujeme, jak se může kněžna v nejdelikatnějších záležitostech svěřit – šafářce, kterou před chvíli teprv ponejprv spojili!” Otokar Hostinský, “Původní novinky české zpěvohry [Original New Works of Czech Opera],” Osvěta 8, no. 10 (1878): 746.

Peasant over a year after its first run, a critic for the journal Dalibor claims that “[the opera] did not penetrate with its full effect right away” and attributes this mainly to its libretto, which, he writes, “has already been dismissed decidedly.” By the mid-1880s, Czech critics became convinced that it was, in fact, the opera’s “unfortunate text” that posed the largest barrier to its wider acceptance.

No matter how flawed it seemed to critics in later years, the libretto did not stand in the way of the opera’s initial success in Prague in 1878. Though critics found some of Veselý’s more obvious references to works of the past a bit excessive, they generally reacted favourably to his libretto and were forgiving of its weaknesses. After the work’s premiere, the writer for Světozor called Veselý’s text “quite entertaining,” stating that “with few exceptions, it distinguishes itself as nice, light, and canorous diction.” In spite of a few misgivings, the critic for Pokrok is also rather complimentary in the final analysis: “Veselý’s layout stands out for the quick way in which the plot is advanced and contains many successful scenes, which cause the viewer to forget several of the less happy details.” Though Pivoda is not impressed by the “over-used gags” that are incorporated into the plot, he admires the librettist’s ability to transcribe the words of Czech peasants, which, in his view, lends realism to the opera. Even Hostinský’s discussion

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83 G., “Listy z Venkova [News from Rural Areas],” Dalibor 1, no. 12 (April 20, 1879): 96; “nepronikla hned plnou působivostí svou, toho byly příčiny mnohé, z nichž nejzávažnější nebyly ani ty nedostatečné síly pro veškeré partie ani chudý na nástroje orkestr, ale zajisté onen operní text, který už sice na mnoze došel rozhodného odsouzení.”

84 Unsigned, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vidni [Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant in Vienna],” Národní Listy 25, no. 321 (November 22, 1885): 3; “neštastný [text].”

85 Unsigned, “Rozmanitosti: Divadlo [Miscellanea: Theatre],” Světozor 12, no. 5 (February 1, 1878): 62–63; “Libreto J. O. Veselého... doustí baví a až na některé nechvalné výminki vyznamenává se pěknou, lehkou a zpěvnou díkci.”

86 -F., “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” Pokrok 10, no. 37 (February 7, 1878): 5; “Ostatně osnova Veselého vyznamenává se rychlým vyvíjením déje a mnohou zdařilou scénou, pro niž divák rád zapomíná na leckterou méně podařenou podrobnost.”

87 František Pivoda, “Opera: Šelma Sedláč [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” Hudební a Divadelní Věstník 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 228–229. On the other side of the spectrum, the critic for Pokrok objects to the use of
of the libretto in his 1878 review is surprisingly positive; he highlights the flexible outline of the plot as well as the appropriate and effective arrangement of the scenes. All in all, Czech critics appeared to be reasonably satisfied with Veselý’s work after the opera’s first set of performances.

The text proved not to be a hindrance to Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* for a number of reasons. Certain allowances were made for librettists in Prague at this time. Hostinský spends a large part of his review of *The Cunning Peasant* sympathizing with their plight and urging audiences not to judge them too harshly. Critics likewise knew how difficult it was for composers to obtain quality librettos. Dvořák himself struggled with this on more than one occasion. In an article from 1881, Novotný would make note of Dvořák’s ability to write strong operas, even when faced with less than ideal texts:

ordinary speech and deems certain expressions to be unsuitable for poetic verse; -f-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 30 (January 30, 1878): 5.

88 Hostinský, *Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s]*, 153; the original is found in Ť., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Narodní Listy* 18, no. 47 (February 20, 1878): 3.

89 “It is undeniable that so far the librettist stands in an unusual, unenviable position in relation to the audience and criticism over here. The writing of the libretto is, after all, laborious and apart from a thorough knowledge of dramatic technique, requires some musical talent, so that the composer might have before him such poetic shapes that are appropriate for musical expression…We expect from a dramatic poet, if he writes librettos much more than when he writes works without the help of music: and yet what kind of a reward does he receive for such difficult self-denial? Even if his libretto were the most meticulous, he will never garner the attention of the audience to such an extent as seductive virgin Musica with her colourful, magical robe. An opera composer will always carry away for himself the full measure of the praise; he is the one whom the audience exclusively honours and yet he did not do anything but describe in radiant colours a statue, which in its essence was already finished!” Hostinský, *Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s]*, 152–153; the original is found in Ť., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” *Narodní Listy* 18, no. 47 (February 20, 1878): 3.

90 Except for *Dimitrij* and *The Jacobin*, which were both set to texts by Marie Červinková-Riegrová, each one of Dvořák’s operas has a different librettist. Dvořák often preferred to revise or rewrite his operas, rather than searching for entirely new material. The situation did not seem to get easier with time. Even as an established sixty-year-old composer of world renown, Dvořák placed a notice in the newspaper, publicizing his search for an opera
Dvořák cannot boast of well-chosen librettos; out of all of our musical masters, he is doing the worst in this respect, and he is to take much of the blame himself because he is not careful enough when choosing texts on which to base his operas. If we think of *Vanda*, *The King and the Charcoal Burner*, or *The Cunning Peasant*, our memories of the composer’s beautiful and original shapes is always made dim by some devilish libretto or other… [However] it is a strange irony that has plagued the best musical masters for many years: the worse the libretto, the better [the composer] does with the accompanying music!\(^9\)

In some respects, Veselý’s formulaic, even cliché, libretto actually worked in Dvořák’s favour in 1878 because it gave the composer the opportunity to write an opera that would be part of Prague’s mainstream. Within the span of just over a decade, the Czechs had developed a distinctive comic opera tradition of their own, and the public welcomed new contributions to this repertory with open arms. Rather than viewing the adherence to well-established operatic norms as a weakness, Czech critics and audiences of the 1870s seemed to delight in it. This was especially the case in discussions of the music of *The Cunning Peasant*, which was viewed by many as Dvořák’s first step on a well-trodden path that had been laid out by his operatic predecessors.

“Die kleine Oper war für das Prager czechische Publikum geschrieben”

Veselý’s attempts to cater to the Czech public did not always go over well with critics; Dvořák’s efforts, on the other hand, were consistently greeted with praise in the Czech press. In various reviews that were published after the Prague premiere of *The Cunning Peasant*, Czech critics commend Dvořák for paying heed to his audience. Hanslick would later be the most
forthright on the subject, declaring in his 1885 review of Dvořák’s piece, that “the small opera was written for the Prague Czech public,” though this was hardly meant as a compliment. That Hanslick considered Czech audiences to be provincial is well known; he had once written to Dvořák: “it would be desirable for your things to become known beyond your narrow Czech fatherland, which in any case does nothing for you.” In some respects, Hanslick seems to be raising a very real practical matter in both the Cunning Peasant review and his early letter to Dvořák, suggesting that the composer’s works would have a relatively small chance of being widely disseminated, if they were designed for a specifically Czech audience and written on a Czech text. At the same time, an element of cultural snobbery is certainly palpable in the Viennese critic’s writing. Even Hanslick’s description of The Cunning Peasant as a “small”

94 Another one of Hanslick’s letters to Dvořák (dated June 11, 1882, and cited in Chapter Four) can be understood in this light: “the world expects larger vocal works from you and those will hardly completely satisfy, if they are not felt out from and composed based on German poetry. You should not, I believe, persist in always composing only on Czech texts for a very small public, while your large public is put off by poor translations and easily makes a skewed assessment [of your work];” “die Welt erwartet von Ihnen auch größere Vokalkompositionen, und diese werden kaum vollständig befriedigen, wenn sie nicht aus deutscher Poesie herausempfunden und herauskomponiert sind. Sie dürfen, glaube ich, nicht dabei bleiben, immer nur böhmische Texte zu komponieren für ein sehr kleines Publikum, während Ihr großes Publikum mit schlechten Übersetzungen abgespeist wird und leicht ein schiefe Urteil fällt;” Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 5, 387. Here, Hanslick communicates an honest opinion on how some of Dvořák’s vocal works tend to be received in parts of German-speaking Europe, especially when they are performed with poor German translations; he seeks to offer some practical solutions on how this might be remedied. (It is in the same letter that Hanslick invites Dvořák for an extended stay in Vienna.) Hanslick knew, likewise, that Dvořák’s Czech operas were not likely to have as wide a reach as those that were written in German, French, or Italian – languages that were considered to be “Weltsprachen.”
95 In the Cunning Peasant review, Hanslick makes the following statement, discussed below: “the whole intrigue [Martin’s prank] is calculated for an astonishingly naive public” (“die ganze Intrige ist auf ein erstaunlich harmloses Publikum berechnet”); Hanslick, *Am Ende des Jahrhunderts (1895–1899)*, 135. This implies that Hanslick does not think very highly of the Czech audiences, for which Dvořák was writing. Hanslick’s letter to Dvořák from November of 1877 (in which Hanslick suggests that “it would be desirable for [Dvořák’s] things to become known beyond [his] narrow Czech) has similar implications. In his commentary on this letter, David Beveridge detects a certain ethnocentrism: “Hanslick was correct in suggesting that Dvořák’s music was not known outside his ‘Czech fatherland.’ And Brahms’s intercession was indeed to alter the situation in short order; within two years, Dvořák would have an impressive list of works published by Simrock in Berlin, and his music would be heard
opera has connotations of inconsequentiality. Whatever his opinion of the Provisional Theatre public, Hanslick agreed with his Czech colleagues on one point: Dvořák’s opera was wedded to its context in late 1870s Prague.

Hanslick continues his critique of The Cunning Peasant, by stating that “the subject, the character of the music all suggest that a small stage ought to be used.”97 His assessment came after the work had been given at the Vienna Hofoper – a venue that he deems to be ill-suited for Dvořák’s opera. While the small scale of the work, in terms of spectacle, was considered to be problematic on the large Viennese stage, the opera’s size was entirely appropriate for the Prague Provisional Theatre. Built on a site that measured a mere thirty-two by twenty meters, the Provisional Theatre could seat no more than three hundred and sixty-two people, with standing room for an additional three hundred and forty.98 Smetana voiced frequent complaints in Národní Listy in the early 1860s about the narrowness of the stage, the distorted acoustics resulting from the Theatre’s small size, and above all, the limited space allotted to the orchestra.99 By the 1870s, however, composers had learned to cope with the venue’s dimensions and designed their operas accordingly. Calling for nine soloists, The Cunning Peasant is not an inordinately small opera by Provisional Theatre standards.100 More so than his contemporaries, Dvořák gives a substantial

96 On some level, Czechs in fin-de-siècle Bohemia delighted in “malost” or “littleness,” and it became an important part of their identity, particularly during the 1890s. Derek Sayer argues that this was a brand of nationalism that focused on the Czechs as a little people, coming from a little nation; the term was often used in humorous and self-deprecating contexts. Sayer, 119.
97 Hanslick, Am Ende des Jahrhunderts (1895–1899), 133; “das Sujet, der Charakter der Musik weisen es an eine kleinere Bühne.”
98 Tyrrell, Czech Opera, 27.
100 Smetana’s The Bartered Bride and The Kiss call for roughly the same number of main characters. Both Dvořák’s The Stubborn Lovers and Smetana’s Two Widows have fewer soloists than The Cunning Peasant. While
role to the opera chorus, integrating choral passages into the whole work, rather than confining them to the opening and finale, as was the usual practice in Czech comic operas at that time. The chorus is often split into male and female ensembles, alternating on the stage, which too betrays a sensitivity to the limitations of this performing space.

Another aspect that would later bother Hanslick is the length of *The Cunning Peasant*; in his review, he points out that “[the work] does not fill one theatre evening.”\(^{101}\) Though short in Hanslick’s estimation, the length of Dvořák’s opera was not exceptional in Prague at the time of its premiere. Written in two acts, *The Cunning Peasant* aligns itself with several other Czech comic operas of the 1870s, including those works in the genre by Smetana that had directly preceded it: *Two Widows (Dvě Vdovy)*, performed at the Provisional Theatre in 1874, and *The Kiss* from 1876.\(^ {102}\) Dvořák’s comic opera in one act, *The Stubborn Lovers*, had been rejected by the Provisional Theatre committee in 1874 – set aside for a full seven years before it was finally premiered in Prague at the New Czech Theatre in 1881 – and Otakar Šourek asserts that the main reason for its rejection was its brevity.\(^ {103}\) *The Cunning Peasant* was, thus, well within the norm, with its two acts. Taking approximately two hours to perform, this opera was generally not regarded in the Czech press as unusually short. The reviewer for *Pokrok* even describes the work’s length as optimal, noting that “the brevity of some sections does not leave the listener unsatisfied, nor does the long duration of others tire the listener out.”\(^ {104}\) Though critics waged

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\(^ {101}\) Hanslick, *Am Ende des Jahrhunderts (1895–1899)*, 133; “sie füllt nicht einmal quantitativ einen Theaterabend.”

\(^ {102}\) The initial version of *The Bartered Bride* had been in two acts as well. Even in its expanded three-act form, *The Bartered Bride* still has fewer scenes than *The Cunning Peasant* and runs only about a quarter of an hour longer.

\(^ {103}\) Šourek, *Život a Dílo Ant. Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Ant. Dvořák]*, vol. 1, 128.

\(^ {104}\) -f-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 37 (February 7, 1878): 5; “hudba jeho ani přílišnou úsečností posluchače nezůstavuje nespokojeným, aniž opět přílišnými délkami jej neunavuje.”
discussions on other issues concerning *The Cunning Peasant*, including the relative proportions of the two acts, the work’s division into scenes, and its dramatic pacing, none of the reviewers saw the opera’s length as inadequate for an evening’s performance.

In its scope and length, *The Cunning Peasant* is not unlike other Czech comic operas from the era of the Provisional Theatre; at the same time, this work seemed to trigger a unique response from the public at its premiere, as is evident in the reviews. In a statement that mirrors Němeček’s account of audience reactions to *Figaro* in the eighteenth century cited above, the critic for *Pokrok* describes the memorability of the tunes in *The Cunning Peasant*; “the melodies have such an impact,” writes the reviewer, “sounding fresh, original, and yet so familiar to the Czech ear, such that they stay with the listener for a long time afterward, haunting one in almost an intrusive manner.” These impressions are corroborated in *Národní Listy*, where the reviewer speaks of the audience being “electrified” by the work’s “fresh, melodious character of

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105 Pivoda considers the first act to be too long in comparison with the concise second act, comparing this imbalance to a piece of architecture standing on an uneven platform. He suggests a shortening of the first act, believing the whole opera to be unnecessarily long; František Pivoda, “Opera: *Šelma Sedlák* [Opera: *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník* 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 227–228. Ludevit Procházka, on the other hand, prefers the first act, considering the second to be too superficial and short; Ludevit Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” *Dalibor* 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 245.

106 The critic for *Pokrok* complains that the scenes are too fleeting, often calling for a character to appear on the stage for only a moment; Unsigned, “Denní zprávy ve prospěch stavby národního divadla: Z českého divadla [Daily News for the benefit of the building of the National Theatre: From the Czech Theatre],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 27 (January 27, 1878): 5. Pivoda echoes this complaint, objecting to Veselý’s tendency to split the opera up into many little scenes; František Pivoda, “Opera: *Šelma Sedlák* [Opera: *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník* 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 228.

107 This issue is broached by the earliest critics, but Dvořák’s early biographer Otakar Šourek would later have the most to say about this: “the conflict unwinds gradually over the course of the entire long first act, while the resolution happens very suddenly, and while the stage is completely dark, such that its comic elements and overall impression completely miss the mark;” “Zaužení připravuje se pozvolna průběhem celého dlouhého prvního aktu, aby náhle a nezřetelně v samém závěru bylo provedeno (stane se tak vlastně za scénou), rozuzlení provede se pak s velkým chvatem, nezřetelně a za úplně tmavého jeviště, že nepůsobí jasně a jeho dojem i komika mine se úplně cíle;” Šourek, *Život a Dílo Ant. Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Ant. Dvořák]*, vol. 1, 176–177.

108 -f-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 37 (February 7, 1878): 5; “působivost libezně svěžích, originálních a přece sluchu českému tak povědomých melodií na paměť tak jest rozhodná a ona tak v ní utkvi, že pak posluchače dlouhou dobu téměř až dotěrávě pronásleduji.”
a purely national spirit, which can be heard in almost every tune.” 109 Pivoda also comments on the extraordinary reaction of the audience to the “songs” in Dvořák’s opera; “the public is taking a great interest in this new work,” he asserts, “[greeting it] every time with very good attendance, giving it undivided attention from the beginning... to the end. That Dvořák’s songs entertain and in parts... move [the audience] is evident on all faces.” 110 Another reviewer observes that Dvořák’s “folk-inspired” melodies have “a powerful impact on the Czech-Slavonic ear.” 111 As these examples show, the opera’s tunefulness is underscored in the reviews. 112 While many Czech critics of the 1870s advocated a continuous approach to melodic construction in the realm of serious opera, taking their directions from Wagner, most of them agreed that works with distinct and memorable numbers – “melodious” works, as Hostinský phrases it 113 – fared better with audiences in the realm of comic opera; The Cunning Peasant was proof of this. 114

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109 Unsigned, “Literatura a umění: Z českého divadla [Literature and Art: From the Czech Theatre],” Národní Listy 18, no. 27 (January 30, 1878): 2; “Svěží jeji melodičnost ryze národní duch, jenž z každého téměř nápěvu vane, elektrisovaly obecnost...”

110 František Pivoda, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” Hudební a Divadelní Věstník 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 229; “Obecnost zajímá se velice o nové dílo toto pokudžé velmi četnou návštěvou, věnuje mu bedlivou pozornost od počátku… až do konce. Že Dvořákovy zpěvy baví a v částech… rozněcují, viděti je na všech tvářích...”

111 Unsigned, “Produkce: Opera [Production: Opera],” Hudební a Divadelní Věstník 1, no. 28 (February 1, 1878): 225; “Dvořák sáhnul do nevyčerpatelné hlubiny našich krásných zpěvů národních a unešen jich čarovnou mocí utvořil dílo v jich smyslu a duchu na ucho československého posluchače mocně účinkující.”

112 This “melodiousness” (melodičnost) is identified by the reviewer for Národní Listy as a specifically Czech characteristic along with “lightness” (lehkost) and “capriciousness” (rozmarnost). Unsigned, “Literatura a umění: Z českého divadla [Literature and Art: From the Czech Theatre],” Národní Listy 18, no. 26 (January 27, 1878): 3.

113 Looking back on this period, Hostinský asserts, in his more general comments on Czech opera, that “melodious” works tend to be more popular; he claims that, when placed before Czech audiences, excessive complexity and artifice hinder a comic opera, instead of enhancing it; Hostinský, Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu [Bedřich Smetana and his Battle for Modern Czech Music], 388. Many of the critics single out specific numbers in The Cunning Peasant, such as the Duke’s aria in the first act or the duet between Jeník and Bětuška in the second act. In 1882, Fritz Simrock published a Potpourri for piano solo, consisting of sixteen of the most familiar tunes from The Cunning Peasant; Anton Dvořák, Potpourri für Clavier aus der Oper Der Bauer ein Schelm (Berlin: Simrock, 1882).

114 Emanuel Chvála favours a more continuous approach to melody even in comic opera; Emanuel Chvála, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” Lumír 28, no. 4 (February 10, 1878): 64.
Pleasing the audience was indeed a high priority in *The Cunning Peasant*, as demonstrated by an adjustment that was made to it in later years. Following its premiere, the critic for *Pokrok* singled out the ballet music in the first scene of the second act, predicting that it will seem too “dark and learned” for many listeners.\(^{115}\) The passage begins and ends in E-flat major, but modulates both to closely related and distant keys, venturing as far afield as E major. These changes of key are managed through a series of sequences, which may have seemed excessive to the reviewer. The tonal disorientation is compounded by a slight sense of rhythmic disorientation, as several of the phrases have irregular lengths (see Example 3.1). This ballet music was replaced with Dvořák’s *Slavonic Dance*, Op. 46, No. 3 in A-flat major for the opera’s three performances in the fall of 1880.

\(^{115}\) *Pokrok* 10, no. 37 (February 7, 1878): 5; “mnohéma ano zdáti se bude [baletní hubda] přiliš ‘temnou a učenou.’”
Example 3.1: Excerpt from the Ballet from Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*, Act II, Scene 1 (piano-vocal score)

Though it is unclear whose decision this was, Václav Vladimír Zelený (1858–1892) claims that the choice was made in the interest of the audience.\footnote{Zelený writes: “We are sure that the audience happily heard such a valuable concert piece; it is, nevertheless, undeniable that the difference between the purely musical fantasy and a dance piece is large, even if in...}
Emanuel Chvála analyzes Dvořák’s relationship to Czech audiences extensively in his review of *The Cunning Peasant*. It has already been noted that this opera was considered by many to be a turning point in Dvořák’s operatic output, and according to Chvála, this change in direction was borne out of a desire to be more comprehensible to a broad audience:

He, who still remembers the time when Antonín Dvořák introduced himself to our wider circles as a dramatic composer, indeed as a composer in general, with his opera *The King and the Charcoal Burner*, also knows that in spite of its great reception, the composer quickly came to the conclusion that his work cannot gain the kind of popularity over here that was achieved by other Czech pieces. Though the recognition back then was wide, there certainly was only a small few who really meant it from their hearts. The majority of the audience and performers looked for and found difficulties in the score by our standards, and these were insurmountable for the piece to be maintained as a permanent part of the repertoire; some found the work too hard to listen to, others too demanding to sing, and it happened that after several performances, the opera *The King and the Charcoal Burner* was placed into the archive for a long period of rest. The same fate awaited Dvořák’s second opera *Vanda*. What was the point of an ingenious conception, or the ingenious work to the composer, if he did not give sufficient heed to ensure that the musical expression would be comprehensible to the wider audience? [...] In his new opera *The Cunning Peasant*, [Dvořák got] onto the track that Smetana set out for Czech musical art. With his new work, Dvořák proved beautifully that preserving the life principles of our national opera, as handed down by Smetana, does not infringe on the individuality of the artist.117

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117 Emanuel Chvála, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Lumír* 28, no. 4 (February 10, 1878): 64; “Kdo se ještě pamatuje na onu dobu, kdy Antonín Dvořák svou operou *Král a Uhlíř* uvedl se co dramatický skladatel, ano co komponista vůbec v naše širší kruhy, ten také ví, že i přes skvělé přijetí, kterého se skladbě jeho dostalo, přec záhy již komponista musel nabýti přesvědění, že dílo jeho u nás nemůže dosáhnout populárnosti jiných skladeb domácích. Byť i bývalo uznání tenkrátě všeobecné, tož zajisté byl poměrně jen malý hlouček oněch, jinž šlo o sdrc. Větší část obecenstva a účinkujících sil hledala a našla v partitúře obtíže pro naše poměry a trvalé údržení se skladby na repertuáře přímo nepřekonatelné; jedněm zdála se hudba příliš těžkou ku poslouchání, druhým obtížnou ku zpěvu, a tak stalo se, že po několika představeních opera *Král a Uhlíř* uložena do archivu ku dlouhému snad odpocinku. Stejný osud stihl druhou zpěvohru Dvořákovu *Vandu*. Co byla platná geniální koncepce, co duchaplná práce skladateli, který nehleděl dosti k tomu, aby se v hudebním výrazu i širšímu obecnству stal srozumitelným?... v nové své opéře Šelma Sedlák nastoupil dráhu, kterou tak zdarně Smetana českému hudebnímu umění byl proklenl. Dvořák novým svým dílem skvéle nám dokázal, že šetřeným životních zásad naší národní opery, Smetanou podaných, nijak nemusí trpěti individualita umělčova.”
In essence, Chvála characterizes *The Cunning Peasant* as Dvořák’s concession to a specifically Czech audience. In his view, the kind of comprehensibility achieved in *The Cunning Peasant*, had still been lacking in *The King and the Charcoal Burner*, even in its second version. Though, later in the article, Chvála points to certain aspects of Dvořák’s art that could still be improved,\textsuperscript{118} he sees the wide appeal of *The Cunning Peasant* as the work’s greatest success.

Czech critics did not state it directly, in the way that Hanslick would in 1885, but their reviews affirm that Dvořák’s opera “was written for the Prague Czech public.” When offering this work for performance at the Provisional Theatre, Dvořák demonstrated an awareness of the idiosyncrasies of the venue and the audiences that populated it. According to critics, those in attendance at the premiere of *The Cunning Peasant* responded to the opera’s tunefulness and easy accessibility. Pivoda provides a further explanation for the work’s popularity, writing that “the reason for its success is the non-foreign, national direction that it takes.”\textsuperscript{119} In making this statement, Pivoda undoubtedly wished to point out that *The Cunning Peasant* had managed to steer clear of Wagner; Pivoda had, after all, been outspoken in his disapproval of the hold that Wagner seemed to have on Czech composers and critics.\textsuperscript{120} Later in the review, Pivoda specifies this “national direction,” drawing attention to the way in which the work engages with the operas of Smetana; other critics wrote about the opera in much the same way.

\textsuperscript{118} In particular, Chvála recommends Dvořák adopt a more flexible melodic approach in future operas – one that reaches beyond strictly delimited arias.

\textsuperscript{119} This would have been an important consideration for Pivoda, as he disapproved of the way in which Czech critics and composers had embraced Wagnerian principles; František Pivoda, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník* 1, no. 29 (February 8, 1878): 227; “Dokonalého úspěchu toho má co děkovat směru necizáckému, nám přibuznému a prostonárodnímu – směru.”

\textsuperscript{120} For a more thorough discussion of Wagner’s place in Czech music criticism of the 1870s, see Chapter Two.
Positioning Dvořák in Relation to Smetana

It was pitiable when, just a year ago, Smetana complained that his *Bartered Bride* had reached acclaim with so many of our audiences and not with our composers; now he has true confirmation; a very talented representative of the younger generation of composers [Dvořák] barely set foot on Smetana’s path of comic opera [composition] and was able to achieve such a success. And those parts [of *The Cunning Peasant*] that are most similar to *The Bartered Bride* were the best liked (for instance, the duet between Jeník and Bětuška in the second act) and show best that Dvořák did not give up his own artistic personality and individuality. This example of Dvořák’s will not remain without a following, Lord willing; for it is only on this path – whereby a talented artistic group focuses around an excellent direction, given by an individual [Smetana] – that an artistic school can be created.121

Such was Hostinský’s response to Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* in the journal *Osvěta* in 1878.

Hostinský was not the only critic to invoke Smetana’s name; Dvořák’s older contemporary is mentioned in nearly every article on *The Cunning Peasant* that appeared in the Czech press, directly following its premiere and during the 1880s. Though opinions differed with regard to particulars, Czech critics strove to position Dvořák’s work in relation to a larger Czech operatic tradition – the starting point of which, to them, was Smetana.

Discussions of *The Bartered Bride* were inevitable in reviews of *The Cunning Peasant*, considering the similarities between the works in terms of plot and the familiarity of Smetana’s opera.122 In the quotation above, Hostinský links these two operas together, citing the duet

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121 Otakar Hostinský, “Původní novinky české zpěvohry [Original New Works of Czech Opera],” *Osvěta* 8, no. 10 (1878): 748; “Bylo to věru tklivé, kdy Smetana v oboru komické opery ještě před rokem sobě stěžoval, že jeho *Prodaná Nevěsta* vydobila si uznání toliko našeho obecenstva, ne však našich skladatelů; nyní dáno jest mu malé zadostiu činého: výtečný nadaný representant mladší generace skladatelské, sotva že jednou nohou vkočil na dráhu Smetanovy komické opery, již domohl se skvělého úspěchu. A právě to, že místa slohu *Prodaná Nevěsty* nejprůběžněji nejvíce se líbila (jako na př. dvojzpěv Jeníka a Bětušky v druhém jednání), nejlépe dokazuje, že Dvořák tím nikterak nezadal své vlastní umělecké povaze a osobnosti. Tento příklad Dvořákův nezůstane bohá bez následování; vždyť jenom touto cestou soustředěním se nadaného skupení uměleckého kolem vynikající směr, určující individuality může se vytvořit umělecká škola.”

122 Critic F. P. Laurencin expresses something of the popularity of *The Bartered Bride*, when he writes in 1874 that “it commanded a victory more than once on the Prague opera stage and over the course of a short time, it became popular in the lands of the Czech crown, with due cause;” “Opanovala *Prodaná Nevěsta* více než jedenkráte u skvělého větší prázské opery a stala se během krátké doby v zemích koruny české všim právem populární;” F. P. Laurencin, “Smetanova *Prodaná Nevěsta* [Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride*],” *Dalibor* II, no. 12 (March 21, 1874): 89. This is an excerpt from the first of eight articles on the work that was published in *Dalibor* in 1874. Laurencin provides a detailed description of each number in the opera.
between Jeník and Bětuška in the second act of Dvořák’s work as evidence. Eliška Krásnohorská (1847–1926), Smetana’s librettist for The Kiss, refers to the same example in a letter dated February 28, 1878. Addressing Smetana, Krásnohorská states emphatically: “[Dvořák] has borrowed from your Act I duet in The Bartered Bride. Other parts are almost copies!” Though occurring at different moments in their respective plots, “Rozlučme se dráha” from The Cunning Peasant (Example 3.2) and “Věrné milování” from The Bartered Bride (Example 3.3) are both lyrical duets, in which the lovers pledge devotion to each other. Each duet begins with a tenor solo in the high register; the soprano soon joins in with recitation-style interjections on the fifth scale degree.

Example 3.2: Duet “Rozlučme se, drahá” from Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant, Act II, Scene 2
Antonín Dvořák, Šelma Sedlák [The Cunning Peasant] (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1913), 188.

123 Krásnohorská would collaborate with Smetana on his last three operas: The Kiss, The Secret (Tajemství, 1877–78) and The Devil’s Wall (Certova Stěna, 1879–1882). She also supplied the libretto for Viola – an opera that remained incomplete at the time of Smetana’s death.

124 Quoted in Large, 423.

125 Dvořák uses a quotation of Smetana’s love duet “Věrné milování” from The Bartered Bride in the piano introduction to his tenth Biblical Song “Zpívejte Hospodinu píseň novou.”
Example 3.3: Duet “Věrné milování” from Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride*, Act I, Scene 2

In addition to this concrete example, Krásnohorská discusses the structure of *The Cunning Peasant*, asserting that the dramatic progression of the first few scenes leaves listeners with little doubt as to its model. Writing to Smetana, she proclaims: “I do not wonder [Dvořák] was seduced; for his libretto is very similar to your Act I of *The Bartered Bride*. First a gay chorus, then a lament by a girl, then a duet for the girl with her lover, then an intervention by the father and the suggestion of a rich bridegroom, and so on!”126 While Hostinský and Krásnohorská allude to specific moments in Dvořák’s opera that remind them of *The Bartered Bride*, most critics confine their remarks to generalities in this regard. One reviewer from 1878 writes simply that Dvořák attains “a loveliness [in *The Cunning Peasant*] that was formerly seen only in Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride*;”127 another critic, reviewing the work after an 1883 performance,

126 Quoted in Large, 423.
127 Unsigned, “Produkce: Opera [Productions: Opera],” *Hudební a Divadelní Věstník* 1, no. 28 (February 1, 1878): 225; “[skladatel podal dílo] tak půvabné, jaké jsme před tím nacházeli jen v Smetanově *Prodané Nevěstě*."

describes *The Cunning Peasant* as belonging to a Czech operatic trilogy, along with *The Bartered Bride* and Hřímalý’s *The Enchanted Prince*. Comments like these suggest that the critics sought to situate Dvořák’s work at the centre of a Czech comic opera repertory.

More so than *The Bartered Bride*, it is actually Smetana’s *The Kiss* that is mentioned in reviews of Dvořák’s opera. *The Kiss* was premiered at the Provisional Theatre in late 1876, and Dvořák had allegedly attended the performance, bearing witnessed to its success first hand. The event was undoubtedly still fresh in people’s minds in early 1878, and this is reflected in assessments of *The Cunning Peasant*. Writing in *Národní Listy*, Hostinský predicts that Dvořák’s work will “become a favourite of audiences in the same way as Smetana’s *The Kiss*, of which it is a blood-related sister.” The critic for *Světozor* goes so far as to claim that Dvořák looked to the earlier opera as a kind of model for his own work:

*The Kiss* was an appropriate model for him, but not a model that he wanted to imitate; rather one to which, based on his own imagination, he created a compelling counter response (*protiobraz*); and even if the composer Dvořák did not achieve in this work the kind of harmony of all parts, those characteristics, purity, and stability of the national style, which we rightly admire in the music of Smetana, he can still look at his opera with great satisfaction – a work with which he has gained a second spot among our dramatic composers.

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128 “*The Cunning Peasant* belongs to a trilogy of unusual jewels in the diadem of comic Czech opera, which are: *The Bartered Bride*, *The Enchanted Prince*, and *The Cunning Peasant* – according to the lady in the seat in front of me on the ground floor;” “*Selma Sedlák* náleží do třetice zvláštních drahokamů v diadému komické opery české, jež jsou: *Prodaná nevěsta*, *Zakletý prince* a tedy *Selma Sedlák* – pravila švitořivá předáčka má v sedadlech v přízemí;” B, “Z divadel: Opera česká [From the Theatres: Czech Opera],” *Divadelní Listy* 4, no. 7 (March 4, 1883): 60.

129 Krásnohorská claims that Dvořák was present at the premiere of Smetana’s *The Kiss*. Mirko Očadlík, ed., *E. Krásnohorská a B. Smetana: Vzájemná Korespondence* [E. Krásnohorská and B. Smetana: Correspondence] (Prague: Topič, 1950), 110.

130 Hostinský, *Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých* [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s], 111–112; the original can be found in -ý., “Literatura a umění: Česká Zpěvohra [Literature and Art: Czech Opera],” *Národní Listy* 18, no. 46 (February 19, 1878): 3; “jest patrno, že nová tato práce se stane rovněž tak miláčkem obecenstva jako Hubička Smetanova, jejíž jest vlastní sestrou.”

131 Unsigned, “Rozmanitosti: Divadlo [Miscellanea: Theatre],” *Světozor* 12, no. 5 (February 1, 1878): 62–63; “Hubička byla mu vhodným vzorem, ake nikoliv vzorem, jejž chceme napodobit, nýbrž k némuš dle vlastní fantasie tvoríme stejně závažný protiobraz; a třeba skladatel Dvořák v dile svém nedosáhl ještě onoho souladu všech částí, té případně charakteristiky a té ryzosti a ustálenosti slohu národního, jakým se právem obdivujeme v hudbě Smetanově, přece s velkým zadostučněním může patřiti na svou zpěvohru, kterouž zaujal druhé místo mezi našimi dramatickými skladateli.”
A more extensive analysis of the opera’s relationship to Smetana’s *The Kiss* is provided in *Pokrok*. In the first of two articles on *The Cunning Peasant*, the reviewer writes as follows:

We do not consider some reminiscences [of Smetana’s *The Kiss*], which have more to do with details of construction (*podrobnosti faktury*) than with melodic motives, to be [Dvořák’s] fault; they are completely natural, can scarcely be avoided, and apart from these, Dvořák’s imagination and thoughtfulness is evident on every page of the score.132

The critic’s comments in the second article are in a similar vein: “we have already hinted that the influence of Smetana’s *The Kiss* on the composer is discernible in this work; nevertheless, we do not agree with those, who see Dvořák as a talented and happy imitator.”133 Reiterating his earlier point, the critic assures readers that Dvořák “does not imitate, but imbibes the spirit of Smetana’s music, creating independently.”134 As proof of this assertion, the reviewer brings attention to the peasant Martin’s “Dobrá jdi si tedy k němu,” from the third scene of act one in *The Cunning Peasant* (Example 3.4) and Father Paloucký’s “Jak jsem to řek,” from act one, scene three of *The Kiss* (Example 3.5) – arias, which, in the critic’s view, might be considered complementary.135

Though they are set in different keys, both are cast in 2/4 time, with a prominent underlying triplet rhythm. The arias begin with a series of downward leaps and proceed in a quick patter style of vocal composition that alludes to the buffa tradition. Perhaps the most conspicuous similarity comes at the end of the two numbers; the arias conclude with lengthy melismas, which stand out, as the text setting in both operas is otherwise largely syllabic.

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132 -ř-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 30 (January 30, 1878): 5; “některé reminiscence, které měné se vztahují k melodickým motivům, jako více k některým podrobnostem faktury, neklademe mu za vinu; jsouť zcela přirozené, nelze se jim témtř ani vyhnouti a kromě toho originální vyhnežavost i důmyslnost Dvořákovy jeví se na každé stránce partitury.”

133 -ř-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Zpěvohra [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Opera],” *Pokrok* 10, no. 37 (February 7, 1878): 5; “již dříve jsme podotkli, že se v něm patrně jeví vliv Smetanovy Hubičky na skladatele, nikterak však nesouhlasíme s oněmi, kteří v Dvořákově spatřuj jaksi jen nadaného a šťastného imitatora.”


Example 3.4: Martin’s aria “Dobrá jdi si tedy k němu” from Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*, Act I, Scene 3

Example 3.5: Father Paloucký’s aria “Jak jsem to řek” from Smetana’s *The Kiss*, Act I, Scene 6

For all of the critics’ efforts to show that Dvořák’s work aligns itself with Smetana, none of them refers to the aria “Jak úzko mi a bolno,” appearing at the end of the first act of *The Cunning Peasant* (Example 3.6); here, the reference to Smetana is unmistakable. Bětuška sings of her anxiety over her impending arranged marriage to Václav and asks God to intercede, so that she might marry Jeník instead. This aria bears a strong resemblance to heroine Vendulka’s “Jak zapomněl by na ten krásný čas,” from act one, scene seven of Smetana’s *The Kiss* (Example 3.7). Like Bětuška’s aria, Vendulka’s comes at a moment of uncertainty in the opera, as she contemplates her former love for Lukáš and shows a sense of trepidation for the future. A textual similarity seals the connection, as the arias begin with the word “jak” (*how*).

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136 Vendulka also makes mention of the moon, which, along with the style of melodic ornamentation, is reminiscent of “Casta Diva” from Bellini’s *Norma* (1831).
Example 3.6: Bětuška’s aria ‘Jak úzko mi a bolno’ from Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*, Act I, Scene 14

Example 3.7: Vendulka’s aria “Jak zapomněl by na tak krásný čas” from Smetana’s *The Kiss*, Act I, Scene 7
Both arias are marked “andante,” written in 3/4 time, and scored in A major. Above the opening F-sharp minor chord with an E-sharp appoggiatura in the bass, the voice sings a relentless C-sharp, in a kind of recitation style that is moulded to the sorrowful text. Such an overt nod to Smetana is rare in Dvořák’s oeuvre.

Two themes emerge from these Czech critical discussions of The Cunning Peasant and its position with respect to the operas of Smetana. Firstly, in nearly all of the articles, the critics are adamant in stating that, in spite of similarities to Smetana, Dvořák’s work is entirely original. Hostinský deflects attention away from Smetana, by writing: “it is apparent in The Cunning Peasant that Dvořák knows not only Smetana but also numerous other opera composers, as well as Bach and Beethoven… That this knowledge of the masters does not lead to slavish imitation is proof of [Dvořák’s] true talent.” Chvála phrases it another way; while arguing that Smetana’s national direction is the “only valid one,” he emphasizes in his review that there is room on the operatic stage for many composers: “the limits of the musical national precept,” writes Chvála, “are not so narrow, such that no one besides Smetana would be able to develop a different talent to the fullness of its power, at the expense of originality.” On the whole, critics are pleased

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137 After the first two phrases, Dvořák takes the material in a direction that is quite different from Smetana’s. He introduces contrasting material beginning in G major, before bringing about an elaborated return of the opening material in A major. Smetana’s approach is more through-composed; the material from the start of the piece does not come back in the vocal part, though it is reprinted in the accompaniment.

138 “[Dvořák came to] the firm conviction that the direction, initiated by Smetana in the realm of national opera, leaning on Czech musical elements, is the right and for the sake of the future the only valid one;” “[Dvořák nabyl] pevné přesvědčení, že mistrem Smetanou pro národní operu vytknutý, o české hudební živlý se opírající směr jest pravým a pro budoucnost jedině platným;” Emanuel Chvála, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” Lumír 28, no. 4 (February 10, 1878): 64.

139 “[Dvořák came to] the firm conviction that the direction, initiated by Smetana in the realm of national opera, leaning on Czech musical elements, is the right and for the sake of the future the only valid one;” “[Dvořák nabyl] pevné přesvědčení, že mistrem Smetanou pro národní operu vytknutý, o české hudební živlý se opírající směr jest pravým a pro budoucnost jedině platným;” Emanuel Chvála, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” Lumír 28, no. 4 (February 10, 1878): 64.
with what they consider to be Dvořák’s attempts to follow in the footsteps of Smetana and are eager to declare that is not to be seen as a detriment to Dvořák’s own individuality.

A second theme is evident in many reviews and expressed most clearly in Krásnohorská’s letter to Smetana:

You told me after the premiere of The Kiss that Dvořák showed you a certain animosity and a lack of understanding. The irony of fate is that he must hear from all sides that he has taken your [opera] The Kiss as his model. Despite his gifts, he never met with as much success as when he followed in Smetana’s footsteps – Smetana, who seemed to him too simple-minded and original! Dvořák’s operas are beautiful mosaics, but not paintings as yours. Despite an obvious talent he is neither poet, dramatist nor musical architect. These qualities are not lacking in some part, but totally. I see the difference between The Kiss and The Cunning Peasant as between a masterpiece and an improvisation… But happily there are also exceptions. The melodies are truly Dvořák’s and have their own character – wild, exuberantly gay, with marked rhythms and stormy tempi, which give the opera a certain monotony, for really soft, tender moments are missing. The most firmly drawn character is the Duke. He has a noble, almost Chopin-like character, which does not change so kaleidoscopically as those of the other persons. Your poetic and profoundly dramatic qualities are the crown of your art, which so far has not been reflected, even minutely, in the work of Dvořák. He is, nevertheless, very interesting musically. Perhaps he lacks a general literary education, and it is to be regretted that his gifts are modelled on your works!... Though I liked the music of his choruses in The Cunning Peasant, I learnt to value your merits all the more.141

Though none of the reviews are worded quite so strongly as Krásnohorská’s letter, the underlying message is the same; like Krásnohorská, the critics agree that The Cunning Peasant, no matter how well received, cannot dislodge the work of Smetana from its position of superiority on the Czech operatic stage. By the late 1870s, the popularity of The Bartered Bride, in particular, had grown to such massive proportions that it proved a stumbling block for the

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141 Large, 422–423; Smetana replied as follows on March 1, 1878: “Your remarks about Dvořák show your good sense and just criticism! You so correctly assessed what is missing – general education! He’s a gifted musician, but with little else, and so, alas, are the rest of the younger composers! Apart from music they have had no other education, and even then it is one-sided. Harmony, counterpoint and instrumentation are the sum total! They lack knowledge of form, working out of motives, how to create melodies from themes which grow phrase by phrase into transitions or periods, not to mention the aesthetic side of the art! They only study this superficially when they have to write songs or choruses for an opera. But this does not apply to Dvořák. Judging from his work he seems to have studied musical form, but what he lacks is what you so cogently expressed. The declamation of Dvořák’s texts is really ordinary, almost banal. Something like this should not be allowed!” Large, 423–424.
Czech reception of even Smetana’s later operas, let alone the operas of other composers.\textsuperscript{142} In such a climate, the best that Dvořák could hope for, when aligning himself with a distinctly-Smetana brand of comic opera, was second place in the eyes of the Czechs. Such ideas are communicated in another exchange between a composer and librettist – this time, it is Dvořák, addressing Marie Červínková-Riegrová, who would collaborate with him on two operas in the 1880s. Nearly a decade after the premiere of The Cunning Peasant, Dvořák writes:

If only people would take a more genuine and sincere interest in local art here at home; the way things have proceeded thus far is not alright, nor is it nice or terribly patriotic. Over here, an opera is well liked, perhaps very well liked – it is performed for one, two, or maybe three years, then less and less until it fades into oblivion. And of all that was written nothing will remain except always and forever that Bartered Bride!\textsuperscript{143}

Dvořák’s frustration over the dominance of The Bartered Bride may have provided impetus for him to turn away from the Smetana model in the early 1880s and strive to find his own unique voice in the realm of opera. By the early twentieth century, a group of Czech critics would use Smetana’s style as a yardstick of Czechness and label works that did not measure up as overly foreign.\textsuperscript{144} Even though, during the 1870s and 80s, critical perceptions of Czech nationalism were still broad enough to encompass the music of more composers than just Smetana, there was

\textsuperscript{142} Large, 187. Ironically, Hostinský points out that The Bartered Bride was conceived as a mere trifle to prove that Smetana was capable of handling a lighter form; Hostinský, Bedřich Smetana a jeho boj o moderní českou hudbu [Bedřich Smetana and his Battle for Modern Czech Music], 384.

\textsuperscript{143} Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1988), 252; June 23, 1887: “Jen kdyby se u nás trochu opravdu omládali a upřímější o našem domácím umění myslelo, a[le] tak, jak to až dosud jde, není to v pořádku a ani to není hezké a příliš vlastenecké. U nás se opera líbí, třeba velmi líbí – dává se jeden, dva nebo tři roky, pak pořád méně a méně, až se na ni zapomene! A z toho ze všeho nezbyde nic, nežli věčně věků ta Prodáná Nevěsta!” In the case of The Bartered Bride, Dvořák’s “giant marching ahead” is not the composer of the piece or even the piece itself, but rather audience perceptions of the piece. Dvořák’s struggle, as laid out in his letter, was not against Smetana’s opera per se, but against what Czech audiences had made of it.

\textsuperscript{144} This is demonstrated in the quotation from the writings of Zdeněk Nejedlý cited above. See also Brian Locke, Opera and Ideology in Prague: Polemics and Practice at the National Theatre, 1900–1983 (Rochester: University of Rochester Press), 18–22, 38–43. Lébl and Ludová claim that though the tendency to compare the two composers arose largely after Smetana’s death, a “healthy rivalry” had already developed between them while Smetana was alive; Vladimír Lébl and Jiříka Ludová, “Nová doba (1860–1938) [The Modern Era],” in Hudba v českých dějinách: Od středověku do nové doby [Music in Czech History: From the Middle Ages to the Modern Era], ed. Vladimír Lébl (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1983), 392.
already a sense among critics that opera was Smetana’s domain.\textsuperscript{145} \textit{The Cunning Peasant} secured the respect of audiences and critics for Dvořák in the realm of opera, but, by channelling Smetana, Dvořák was also bound to be overshadowed by his older contemporary\textsuperscript{146} (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2 for the performances of \textit{The Cunning Peasant} in Prague from 1878 to 1904).

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\textbf{Table 3.1:} Performances of \textit{The Cunning Peasant} at the Provisional and New Czech Theatres, 1878–1883\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{145} Jan Smaczny argues that while there was no unified style in Czech serious operas in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Czech comic operas were perhaps too unified; this has largely to do with the role of \textit{The Bartered Bride} in defining the genre; Smaczny, “A Study of the First Six Operas of Antonín Dvořák,” 28.

\textsuperscript{146} In a statement that is similar to Dvořák’s outpouring in his letter to Červinková-Riegrová, V. V. Zelený expresses frustration over the prominence of \textit{The Bartered Bride} on the Czech operatic stage, when he writes, with a tinge of irony: “why should we worry about \textit{The Kiss}, \textit{The Two Widows}, \textit{The Secret}, Dalibor, Vanda, The King and the Charcoal Burner, The Montenegrins, and other superfluous works, when we have \textit{The Bartered Bride}?” Velmi Vzdálený Zelota [Václav Vladimír Zelený], “Venkovské Listy o Divadle III [Rural Papers on the Theatre III],” \textit{České Noviny} no. 177 (July 27, 1880): 1; “nač se starat o Hubičku, Dvě Vdovy, Tajemství, Dalibora, Vandu, Krále a Uhlíře, Černohorce a jiné a jiné zbytcenství, když máme Prodanou Nevěstou?” (Zelený is publishing here under a pseudonym.)

\textsuperscript{147} These statistics are taken from Smaczny, “Daily Repertoire of the Provisional Theatre Opera in Prague: Chronological List,” 9–139.
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<td>Adolf Čech</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 9, 1895–May 24, 1896</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Adolf Čech</td>
<td>Edmund Chvalovský</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 11, 1897–March 28, 1897</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adolf Čech</td>
<td>Edmund Chvalovský</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 14, 1901–September 24, 1902</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mořic Anger</td>
<td>Robert Polák</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 3.2: Performances of *The Cunning Peasant* at the National Theatre, 1883–1904

**Procházka, Schuch, and the Dresden Production of *The Cunning Peasant***

Critics in Prague viewed *The Cunning Peasant* through a uniquely Czech lens. Having a general familiarity with the operas being written in the Czech lands, these critics were able to draw parallels between Dvořák’s work and those of other Czech composers, identifying the ways in which *The Cunning Peasant* fit into the Czech opera tradition. Meanwhile, when the work was mounted in Dresden in 1882, it was likely the first Czech opera that many German critics had heard. To them, the work was plucked out of its Bohemian context, and they were faced with the task of assessing the opera on its own terms and in relation to the wider operatic repertory. Without the Czech background, these foreign critics inevitably had a harder time than the Czechs understanding why Dvořák had chosen this material; at the same time, it is within these non-Czech reviews that Dvořák is finally able to step out of the looming shadow of Smetana and be assessed as an opera composer in his own right.

Even in articles penned before *The Cunning Peasant* was performed outside of Bohemia, several Czech critics use their reviews of Dvořák’s opera as platforms for more general discussions of Czech composers and their place within a broader European context. A critic for

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149 It can be assumed that Dvořák’s foreign critics had neither the ability nor the inclination to read Czech criticism on *The Cunning Peasant*. The same cannot be said of Czech critics, who read foreign reviews of the opera with great interest.
Humoristické Listy writes that artists must first gain reputations with their compatriots, before being capable of making names for themselves elsewhere.\textsuperscript{150} Hostinský agrees, specifying, in his article for Národní Listy, how this recognition abroad might be attained.\textsuperscript{151} In his view, it is only after Czech composers incorporate new forms and techniques into their works that they will receive attention at the international level:

> Let us not be afraid of more perfect technique and progress in general, let us study musical models of the leading nations, let us take ownership of the results of artistic development, new forms, and if we then express our feelings of longing for the national spirit in this artistic form, we will receive recognition from the wider artistic world. Let us not limp behind them, but rather in the same row as them; we need to raise our Czech voice, if we want to be heard by others.\textsuperscript{152}

Regardless of the formula laid out by these critics, dictating success at home first and then abroad, quite often just the opposite was true in the Czech lands. In many cases, it was only after works by Czech composers achieved recognition on foreign stages that Czech audiences and critics really started to take notice of them.

Foreign attention led the Czechs to revisit The Cunning Peasant in the early 1880s. By then, the excitement that the work had generated in Prague after its premiere had cooled, and after three performances in the fall of 1880, Dvořák’s opera was cast aside for over two years. The year 1883, however, saw a rise in the number of performances.\textsuperscript{153} The increased attention to this work could be attributed to the opening of the National Theatre and the attendant revival of

\textsuperscript{150} As an example, the critic mentions that Rossini was first well liked in Italy before he could be of interest to the Germans; Unsigned, “Antonín Dvořák,” Humoristické Listy 20, no. 7 (February 16, 1878): 49–50.

\textsuperscript{151} Hostinský, Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s], 109–112; the original review is found in -ý., “Literatura a umění: Česká Zpěvohra [Literature and Art: Czech Opera],” Národní Listy 18, no. 46 (February 19, 1878): 3.

\textsuperscript{152} Hostinský, Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s], 110; the original review is found in -ý., “Literatura a umění: Česká Zpěvohra [Literature and Art: Czech Opera],” Národní Listy 18, no. 46 (February 19, 1878): 3; “Nebojme se zdokonalené techniky a pokroku vůbec, studujme hudební vzory češských národů, osvojme si výsledky uměleckého vývoje, formy nejnovější, a pakliže vyslovíme cesty duchu národního v této formě umělecké, dojdeťe též uznání v širém světě uměleckém. Ne pokoušáváme se jinými, nýbrž v stejně s nimi řádě musíme pozvedati českého hlasu, chceme-li být i od ostatních slyšeni.”

\textsuperscript{153} See Tables 3.1 and 3.2 above.
certain older operas, including *Libuše* (1871–1872) and *Dimitrij* (1882) in the serious opera category as well as *The Bartered Bride* and *The Cunning Peasant* in the realm of comic opera. More likely, though, the interest in *The Cunning Peasant* in 1883 was incited by reports of its success abroad. Few Czech critics who wrote about the opera thereafter failed to mention that the work was performed in Dresden and Hamburg. The Czech journal *Divadelní Listy* announces in early 1883 that “[*The Cunning Peasant*] has just been performed to great success in Dresden and Hamburg.”¹⁵⁴ Later that year, a critic for *Dalibor* prefaces a review of the work’s Prague performance with a reminder that “Dvořák’s popular *The Cunning Peasant*... celebrated great triumphs in Hamburg and Dresden.”¹⁵⁵ Even several years after these performances, the writer for the journal *Lyra* notifies readers that “*The Cunning Peasant* has thus far been given in Hamburg and Dresden, as is well known, and in both places, Dvořák’s music was given flattering recognition by the critics.”¹⁵⁶ In all of these reviews, the Czech writers use the performances of *The Cunning Peasant* in German theatres as tangible evidence of the opera’s worth, indicating that Czechs ought to follow suit and reconsider this work. After pointing to the opera’s international accolades, the critic for *Dalibor* notes that the performance of *The Cunning Peasant* in Prague in the fall of 1883 gave the impression of a novelty, which suggests that the work was still relatively unfamiliar to Czech audiences, though its premiere had taken place nearly five years earlier. In another article for *Dalibor* in early 1883, the reviewer describes the

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situation in very plain terms: “[The Cunning Peasant] is hardly known in Prague; only after its performance in Dresden and Hamburg did the majority of the audience become aware of it.”¹⁵⁷

Ludevít Procházka (1837–1888) was more optimistic about the Czech public’s acquaintance with Dvořák’s opera. Writing in November of 1882, Procházka begins his report on its Dresden production with the words: “I assume that Dvořák’s opera is familiar enough to our countrymen.”¹⁵⁸ Translated into German by Emanuel Züngel (1840–1894), The Cunning Peasant – Der Bauer ein Schelm – was performed at the Dresden Hofoper on October 24, 1882. That the Dresden performance of the opera took place was largely the result of the efforts of two men: Procházka and Ernst Edler von Schuch (1846–1914). Procházka, a Czech music critic and concert organizer, worked in Hamburg and Dresden for several years during the 1880s and thus acted as a natural point of contact for Czech composers, who wished to have their works performed in German-speaking Europe. In 1881, a year before the Dresden performance of The Cunning Peasant, Procházka was instrumental in arranging for the Hamburg production of Smetana’s Two Widows.¹⁵⁹

Schuch too played a significant role in bringing about the Dresden performance.¹⁶⁰ Known for his support of contemporary music, he oversaw the performance of fifty-one world premieres and the addition of one hundred and seventeen works to the repertory. Given Schuch’s broad

¹⁵⁸ Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 244; “Předpokládám, že krajanům mým rozkošná zpěvohra Dvořákova jest s dostatek známá.”
¹⁵⁹ Throughout his career, Procházka championed the music of Smetana in particular, his devotion to the composer having been ignited when he attended Smetana’s piano school as a youth. Perhaps it was Procházka’s partiality to Smetana’s works that led him to promote The Cunning Peasant in the fall of 1882, rather than Dvořák’s more recent contribution to the genre: Dimitrij. Procházka’s devotion to Smetana also begs the question of why the older composer was not given priority over Dvořák on the stage of the Dresden Hofoper; though many factors were undoubtedly at play, it was likely Dvořák’s international reputation in genres other than opera that endeared him to the Dresden opera administration.
¹⁶⁰ Schuch began work at the Dresden Hofoper in 1872, taking over as sole conductor in 1882 and assuming the position of general director in 1889.
musical tastes and his penchant for novelty, it is not surprising that he was willing to undertake the German premiere of Dvořák’s opera. In his review of The Cunning Peasant performance in Dresden, Procházka gives credit to Schuch, testifying that, “as far as the production is concerned, nothing was neglected that could add to the interest of the novelty.” Procházka also mentions that Dvořák, who witnessed this Dresden premiere, was pleased with the quality of the performance: “the composer himself basked in the perfect beauty of sound,” he writes, “in the softness and freshness of the interpretation, for which the orchestra has long been renowned.”

Overall, Procházka characterizes the Dresden performance of The Cunning Peasant as a success. Apart from praising its quality, he notes that a number of Czechs were present and that “the audience listened to it from the beginning to the end with discernible enjoyment.”

Observing that Germans are stricter in their assessment of the work than Czechs, Procházka writes: “the measuring stick that is given to the creations of Czech artists in foreign places is... much stricter than here at home; it is determined only by absolute aesthetic principles.” He later hints that these “absolute aesthetic principles” are not as impartial as he makes them seem, writing that “in the present day German assessments of Czech music are skewed by politics.”

Procházka suggests four aspects of the work that could be improved. The first is the poverty of

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161 Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 245; “co do úpravy nebylo niceho opominuto, co novince mohlo dodati většího ještě interesu.”

162 Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 245; “Sám skladatel kochal se v té dokonalé krásě zvuku, v té jemnosti a svěžosti přednesu, jakouž orkestr ten ode dávna se vyznamenává.”

163 He does mention that the choruses were performed in a livelier manner in Prague than in Dresden.

164 Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 244; “Obecenstvo naslouchalo ji od počátku až do konce s patrnou zálibou.”

165 Procházka does not provide any specifics to clarify his comment, stating only that he considers it all the more admirable that Dvořák’s opera was able to fare well, in spite of unfavourable circumstances; Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 244; “Měřítko, jež klade se v cizině k výtvorům umělců českých, jest ovšem mnohem přísnéji jako u nás doma, ježto rozhodují tuto pouze absolutní zásady estetické.”

166 Ibid., 244; “v době nynější na mnoze pře buď zjevná nepřízeň aneb aspoň jistá zatajená trpkošť, kterouž Němci následkem právě vládnoucich poměrů politických ke všemu, co českého jest, pohlížeji.”
the libretto – a point, on which he does not deem it necessary to elaborate presumably because so much ink had already been spilled by Czech critics concerning the libretto’s flaws. Next, Procházka finds the work’s similarities to *Le Nozze di Figaro* in terms of plot to be problematic, observing that this annoyed the German public far more than it had audiences in Prague. Procházka’s third point of contention lies with the second act, which he considers to be too “superficial” and “short.” Finally, he finds fault with the German translation of the libretto, taking the opportunity to offer a warning to other Czech composers: “if they want to be successful in Germany with their operatic works, they must always see to it that they get a good translation; a mere transfer of the text is absolutely inadequate.”

Appended to Procházka’s review of the work are excerpts from several German newspapers in Czech translation. Wishing to cast the opera in the best possible light, Procházka omits negative comments concerning the libretto that were printed in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, though he acknowledges the omission. Parts of the reviews that gauge the reaction of the Dresden audience are included. According to reports published in the *Dresdener Journal*, “the audience received the opera very well;” the critic for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* writes that “the artist’s virtuosity inspires from the attentive listener all due respect for his talent and art;” and the writer for the *Dresdener Nachrichten* alleges that “the greatest effect on the German audience

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167 Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” *Dalibor* 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 245; “Varujeme vůbec skladatele naše, chtě-li s úspechem dramatickými svými pracemi v Německu dobře pochodit, aby opatřití sobě hleděli vždy překladu vzorného, pouhé přelejvání textu jest naprosto nedostatečné.” Procházka seems to think that no translation at all was required.


was garnered by the beautiful melodies and rhythms of Slavic character...“

While the latter critic points to the work’s “Slavic” elements as garnering the attention of the German audience, the reviewer for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* seems to downplay these elements, claiming that only some of the motives in the opera have a national character. Several of these German reviews contain discussions of *The Cunning Peasant*’s simplicity, melodiousness (*Neue Freie Presse* and *Dresdener Nachrichten*), as well as a certain softness (*Dresdener Nachrichten* and *Frankfurter Zeitung*), which the writer for the *Dresdener Nachrichten* in particular upholds as a refreshing contrast to the loud and bombastic style that the Dresden theatre-going public is accustomed to hearing in grand opera. In his article on the piece for the *Musikalisches Centralblatt*, Emil Naumann (1827–1888) claims that Dvořák’s work left a refreshing impression in the midst of an operatic draught in German-speaking Europe; as he phrases it, “Dvořák with his extraordinary talent has the ability to help us find a way out of the boredom caused by a lack of dramatic music.”

Though his review is generally favourable, Naumann objects to the recitative passages in Dvořák’s opera, arguing that the composer ought to have used spoken dialogue instead; this indicates that, in his view, *The Cunning Peasant* belongs more in the category of Singspiel or operetta than comic opera. Of the German reviews excerpted, the least favourable assessment of *The Cunning Peasant* comes from the pen of Carl Banck (1809–1889) of the *Dresdener*

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172 The same critic likens the opera to Léo Delibes *Le roi l’a dit*.


174 “[The recitative] does not have a favourable impact on the audience, forcing one to yawn in places where he ought to be laughing...”; “recitativy... přece nepůsobí půvabně na posluchače, nutice jej spíše zivati tam, kde by smáti se měl a pookřáti” (Procházka’s Czech translation of Naumann’s review); Em. Naumann, “Drobné Zprávy: Musik. Centralblatt [Brief News: Musik. Centralblatt],” *Dalibor* 4, no. 34 (December 1, 1882): 270. He also finds fault with Dvořák’s tendency, especially within the recitative sections, to illustrate every word of the text with some kind of musical gesture.
Journal, who points to the excessively short phrases; monotonous rhythms, in which duple time dominates; a lack of singability; harmonic emptiness; and orchestration that, in spite of its skilfulness, could be more colourful. Banck’s critique is not all bad – he does praise Dvořák’s music for its overall originality and points to some numbers that he considers successful – however, most of his words of commendation are directed at Schuch and the other performers rather than Dvořák. He writes that the composer was “certainly very grateful to our court theatre for such an extraordinary performance of his work,” suggesting that Dvořák was not likely to have heard such a quality production of this opera in his homeland.

The spectrum of perspectives on The Cunning Peasant to which Czech readers were exposed was widened when the publishers of Dalibor included a reprint of a review of the Dresden performance from the Polish journal Echo muzyczne. The writer for this journal marvels at the success of Dvořák’s opera in spite of existing conflicts between Czechs and Germans. The critic states that the Dresden audience was able to forget about politics and simply enjoy the fresh rhythms, masterful orchestration, and particularly, the Slavic elements, which “[gave] the opera – according to the German listeners – greater beauty and originality.” The political commentary in this article is vague and strangely unsympathetic toward the Czechs, as it emphasizes the brutality that the Germans suffered at the hands of the Czechs and makes mention of the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century several times. Seeing the performance of The Cunning Peasant as indicative of more friendly relations between the two nations in the future, the critic describes

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175 Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy: Německá Kritika o Dvořákově Opeře Šelma Sedlák [Brief News: German Criticism of Dvořák’s Opera The Cunning Peasant],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 246; Dresdener Journal: “skladatel... dojista bude velmi vděčen našemu dvornímu divadlu za tak vyznamenávající provedení svého díla” (Procházka’s Czech translation of Banck’s review).


177 Ibid., 278; Echo muzyczne: “Żivel słowanský... [přidával] – podle úsudků německých posluchačů, opěře ještě více půvabu a originálnosti.”
Dvořák’s appearance on the stage as follows: “Dvořák showed himself on the stage, the heir of the horrific Hussites, whose gaze frightened armies of Germans! His appearance awakened an even louder storm of applause.”

That favourable foreign reviews appeared in Czech translation on the pages of Dalibor once again shows that Czech critics were eager to draw attention to Dvořák’s international achievements as a means of inspiring greater interest in the composer at home. The need for German approval is puzzling, in some ways. After all, the Czechs and Germans of Bohemia were becoming increasingly segregated during the 1880s. Each of the two groups had its own distinct cultural institutions in Prague, and interactions between them were avoided. Furthermore, only two years earlier, several Czech critics had accused Dvořák of being too eager to court a German audience. Alan Houtchens observes that Dalibor stopped publishing articles on Dvořák for a brief period toward the end of 1880 because the editor of the journal Novotný felt that Dvořák had given in too readily to certain language demands dictated by German publisher Fritz Simrock. In some of his articles from this time, Novotný even worries that Czechs may lose Dvořák to the Germans, who – he predicts – will start referring to the composer as “unser Dworzak.” This, however, no longer seemed to be a threat in 1882, when the same journal Dalibor provided extensive coverage of the Dresden performance of The Cunning Peasant, with

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180 Houtchens, “A Critical Study of Antonín Dvořák’s Vanda,” 27. Novotný’s objections had to do with the titles and texts in the publications of some of Dvořák’s vocal works. Simrock printed them in German only and Novotný wished to see the Czech version, alongside the German in these scores. For more on this topic, see Chapter Four.
181 V. J. Novotný, “Dvořák co skladatel písni [Dvořák as a Song Composer],” Dalibor 2, no. 28 (October 1, 1880): 222.
excerpts from the German press. Dvořák’s ability to reach a German audience was now viewed in a positive light – quite possibly as the composer’s greatest asset – whereas previously it had been met with scorn. This might be explained in various ways. The Dresden reports were, after all, written not by Novotný, but Procházka – a Czech critic, who had no objections to collaborations with Germans, as he had left Prague in 1879 to pursue a career in German-speaking Europe. Beyond that, misgivings were likely put to rest because of the nature of The Cunning Peasant itself. Perhaps critics deemed the content of The Cunning Peasant to be sufficiently Czech as to prevent any German from saying “unser Dworzak,” when hearing it. As long as these foreign reviews emphasized the operas’s “Slavic” qualities, The Cunning Peasant was considered to be safe from any Germanizing efforts.

However, The Cunning Peasant did not escape certain alterations before being presented to audiences in Dresden and Hamburg. Apart from the translation of the text into German, the plot of the story was transferred to “Upper Austria.” The decision to change the opera’s setting was likely made by none other than Simrock, who included the specification “die Handlung spielt in Oberösterreich” in the printed score of the piece, published in 1882. According to Klaus Döge, audiences in Hamburg – more so than those in Dresden – were bothered by the discrepancy between the “Czech” music and the “Austrian” setting. Döge claims that this mismatch was the main element that prevented the opera from securing a permanent spot in the repertory, but it did not deter the work from enjoying moderate success when it was debuted in Hamburg.

Overall, Czech readers are kept much less informed of the Hamburg performance of The

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Cunning Peasant. A correspondent by the name of F. Ptáček simply reports that the work was given in Hamburg on January 3, 1883 and offers no further commentary.\textsuperscript{183}

In the end, the success of The Cunning Peasant in Dresden can be attributed to several fortuitous conditions: Procházka’s efforts to pave the way for Dvořák on German stages; the presence in Dresden of Schuch, a meticulous conductor, with eclectic musical tastes; an audience that was willing to set political issues aside in order to give the opera a fair chance; and German critics, who, by and large, embraced the “Slavic” aspects of the work, rather than seeing them as a threat to Teutonism. For the Czechs, who, some twenty years earlier, barely had an operatic tradition of their own, this was seen as a significant event indeed. Procházka describes it as “a new, happy prospect in regards to the progress, with which our nation is gaining ever-greater recognition in the artistic world.”\textsuperscript{184} Though The Cunning Peasant did not earn a lasting place in the Dresden repertory, Philipp Ther claims that it whetted the appetite of the Dresden theatre-going public for Czech operas.\textsuperscript{185} Even so, it would be more than a decade before another Czech opera was performed in Dresden. Smetana’s The Bartered Bride was not given there until 1894 at the Residenztheater and 1899 at the Hofoper.\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{183} F. Ptáček, “Česká hudba v cizině [Czech Music Abroad],” Dalibor 5, no. 4 (January 29, 1883): 38.
\textsuperscript{184} Ludevít Procházka, “Z Ciziny: Z Drážďan [From Abroad: From Dresden],” Dalibor 4, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 244; “Byť to zase nový, radostný zjev v důsledném postupu, jimžto národ náš v světě uměleckém domáhá se uznání vždy většího.”
\textsuperscript{185} Philipp Ther, Národní Divadlo v Kontextu Evropských Operních Dějin: Od založení do první světové války [The National Theatre in the Context of European Operatic History: From its Foundation to the First World War] (Prague: Dokořán, 2008), 79.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 79–80.
An “Execution” at the Hofoper: Czech Perspectives on the Viennese Scandal

Dvořák inscribed the score of his *St. Ludmila* oratorio with the following pointed remark: “completed in the days when *The Cunning Peasant* was executed in Vienna.” In this statement, Dvořák is referring to the 1885 Viennese premiere of his comic opera – an event that incited riotous behaviour in the audience and severe criticism in the Viennese press. According to newspaper reports, a group of protestors in the upper galleries of the Hofoper showed their disapproval of *The Cunning Peasant* by whistling and hissing throughout the performance, which caused such a disruption that several of them had to be arrested. Some Czechs were also in attendance, and their hearty applause allegedly provoked the protestors to even louder demonstrations. The opera was given a second performance in Vienna – this time to a nearly empty house – before being withdrawn. The drop in attendance at the opera’s reprise was likely triggered, at least in part, by poor reviews, since critical assessments of a work played a large role in determining Viennese public opinion of that work. As stated by one critic writing for *Národní Listy*, “the Viennese audience... swears by the newspapers, and already during [the] second performance of Dvořák’s opera the theatre was empty.”

While Dvořák’s reception in Vienna prior to this event had not been without its complications, the riot brought about by *The Cunning Peasant* was truly unprecedented for

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187 Jarmil Burghauser, *Antonín Dvořák: thematický katalog, bibliografie; Přehled života a díla [Thematic catalogue, Bibliography; Survey of life and work]* (Prague: Bärenreiter Editio Supraphon, 1996), 251; “Dokončeno ve dnech popravy Šelmy Sedláka ve Vídni; Praha, 23/11/1885.” (It was the second part of the oratorio that he had completed.) Dvořák may have picked up this phrase from Czech critic Ed. Moučka, who writes in his review of the event for *Dalibor* that “Vienna executed Dvořák’s cute opera;” “tak tedy Vídeň Dvořákovu roztomilou operu vskutku odpravila;” Ed. Moučka, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedláček ve Vídni [Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* in Vienna],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 44 (November 28, 1885): 432 (see Appendix 7 for a full translation of Moučka’s two articles).
188 The Viennese premiere of *The Cunning Peasant* took place on November 19, 1885.
Dvořák. David Brodbeck suggests that the opera’s negative reception had less to do with *The Cunning Peasant* than with the politics in the Habsburg realm during the 1880s.\(^{191}\) At a time when the Czech nationalist cause was gaining ground and Austrian Minister-President Eduard Taaffe had granted the Czechs certain small concessions, many Germans in Austria felt compelled to reject anything that might pose a threat to the privileged status of German language and culture. Based on this analysis, it would appear that Dvořák’s fate was sealed long before the first notes of *The Cunning Peasant* were sounded at the Vienna Hofoper. The incident takes on new meaning when considered from the perspective of the Czech critics, who followed Dvořák’s international career with great interest and were eager to voice their own opinions on the matter in the newspapers and journals of Prague. These Czech critics remained largely unconvinced that all Czech operas – whether by Dvořák or by another composer – would have been greeted with the same kind of disdain. Although the Czechs were often the first to acknowledge that Viennese judgement could be clouded by blind prejudice, the critics were unanimous in declaring that the fault lay mainly in the decision to stage *The Cunning Peasant*, rather than another opera. These views, as expressed in the Czech press, are significant not because they offer a more plausible explanation for the riot, but because of what they reveal about the Czech critics and their attitudes toward *The Cunning Peasant* in the 1880s.

Success at the Vienna Hofoper eluded Dvořák for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the political situation of the time. Brodbeck argues that the rioters, who were members of a radical pan-German student movement, were motivated to action not by *The Cunning Peasant* itself, but by the composer’s ethnicity.\(^{192}\) Proof for this claim is provided by


Viennese critic Josef Königstein, who writes in his review of the opera for the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* that yellow slips of paper were passed out among the students in advance of the performance, urging them “to prevent Czech music from appearing in Vienna.” Königstein also points out that the police were on-hand at the theatre, anticipating that a riot might break out. As Königstein puts it, “the police were informed of the scheme and about thirty detectives... were assigned to the gallery... the police brigade at the sentry post in the Giselastraße had been increased considerably in order to nip every out-breaking scandal in the bud.” This suggests that the protests were premeditated – planned before these students actually had a chance to familiarize themselves with Dvořák’s opera.

In general, the pan-German movement, of which these students were a part, was acquiring momentum in Austria during the 1880s under the leadership of Georg von Schönerer. Although the movement had already attracted a considerable following during the 1860s and 70s, it intensified after Eduard Taaffe took up the office of Austrian Minister-President in 1879 and initiated certain policies to appease the Czechs. Three measures in particular helped Taaffe win the support of the Czechs in the early 1880s. The first was the Stremayr Language Ordinance, which came into effect in April of 1880, establishing Czech, as well as German, as an

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196 Seton-Watson, 221.
external administrative language in Bohemia and Moravia. The second measure was a change to the election system, which granted Czechs a greater degree of control in the Bohemian Diet. And the third was the division in 1881 of the Prague University into two distinct Czech and German institutions. Naturally, these concessions sparked resentment among the Germans in Bohemia and in Austria at large. William McGrath claims that Taaffe’s polices drove most of the remaining moderates among the students in Vienna into radical pan-Germanism, and though they would later distance themselves from it, many of Austria’s leading intellectuals were involved in the *deutschnational* movement in their youth. Apart from advocating closer partnerships with Germany, these pan-Germans devised the so-called Linz program, proposing a change to the borders of Austria to exclude two outlying Slav territories, so that German populations might be in a majority. Even though the Linz program did not materialize and the pan-Germans ultimately had very little political power, they had a strong ideological impact, as demonstrated by the riot at the performance of *The Cunning Peasant*.

Brodbeck further shows that, like the rioters, the opera’s harshest Viennese critics belonged to a new generation of German liberals, who subscribed to an increasingly ethnic, rather than civic, view of nationalism. Instead of seeing Germanness as something that might be attained through education and acculturation, these liberals thought of German identity as inbred and

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197 The Stremayr Language Ordinance is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.
202 All of these factors combined to create a highly unfavourable environment for the reception by the German Viennese of an opera that was quite blatantly Czech. It did not help that the performance fell on the Empress’s name day.
203 Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” *passim*. 
unchangeable and were thus predisposed to disapprove of any Dvořák opera because it was not German. Such a stance is demonstrated in Theodor Helm’s (1843–1920) review for the *Deutsche Zeitung*, where he writes that “in this music is found, in addition to many trivialities that please only a Slavic-national ear, many pretty melodies and a number of fine orchestral effects as well.” This statement is rife with condescension, implying that while the “many trivialities” in the music might pass muster with the unrefined Slavs, they could not possibly garner the interest of the more sophisticated Viennese audience. Though Helm concedes that the music has some merits, he dismisses the work completely in his final assessment, deeming it to be undeserving of such a fuss; in his words, “the utter dramatic worthlessness of the Dvořák-Veselý opus is not worth partisanship for or against.”

Robert Richard is even more severe in his review of the work for the *Deutsche Kunst & Musik-Zeitung*, describing *The Cunning Peasant* as having been “devoured” by the Viennese public. He follows this up by commenting that while the phrase “speak no ill of the dead” normally holds true, this is not possible for *The Cunning Peasant*, where everything is bad. Such a categorical rejection of the work in all of its particulars suggests that the politics of the day had clouded his judgment. With the exception of a

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204 These differences in attitude are evident in two speeches that were made in Prague in the fall of 1885. In an address made on October 17, 1885, just one month before Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* came before the Viennese public, Old Czech leader František Ladislav Rieger said: “make peace with the idea of the nationalities, which is the dominant idea of our time and the really constructive idea... Austria, if she allies herself with this idea, will find in it a powerful helper; for the protection of all the nationalities united under the sceptre of our Empire must make her strong and powerful.” This led a Germanized Czech by the name of Swoboda to retort with the following statement: “If the Czechs in Bohemia are made into Germans, that is in my view no deadly sin, for they rise from a lower step to the sunny height of a highly civilized nation. But to seek to Czechize the Germans in Bohemia is quite another thing; that would be a disgrace unheard of in the pages of world history. That is the difference, Dr. Rieger, between Germanization and Czechization!” Seton-Watson, 224–225.

205 Theodor Helm, *Deutsche Zeitung* (November 20, 1885); “in der Musik findet sich neben vielem Trivialen, nur einem slavisch-nationalen Ohr Genießbaren auch so manche hübsche Melodie und eine Menge feiner Orchestereffekte;” translated and quoted in Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 107, 123–124.

206 Theodor Helm, *Deutsche Zeitung* (November 20, 1885); “Im Grunde verlohnte die gänzliche dramatische Werthlosigkeit des Dvorak-Vesely’schen Opus gar nicht eine Parteinahme für oder wider;” translated and quoted in Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 107

207 Robert Richard, “Der Bauer ein Schelm,” *Deutsche Kunst & Musik-Zeitung* 12, no. 42 (November 25, 1885): 1; “De mortuis nil nisi bene... Wie ist dies aber möglich... dasselbe in Der Bauer ein Schelm gerade das Allerschlechteste ist?”
few traditional liberals, like Hanslick\textsuperscript{208} and Josef Königstein, who ends his review by asserting that “what is beautiful remains beautiful whether it was created by a Russian or a German, an Italian or a Czech,”\textsuperscript{209} the politically driven German critics and protestors seemed determined to make a scandal of *The Cunning Peasant*. Dvořák was not given an opportunity to redeem himself on the Hofoper stage, since the event marked the one and only time that a Dvořák opera was performed at that venue during the composer’s life.

In the aftermath of the event, Czech critics were quick to offer their interpretations. Many agreed that the whole Viennese affair might have been avoided if a different opera had been selected for performance. They considered *The Cunning Peasant* to be inappropriate because it was too overtly Czech for Vienna, as it had been designed to appeal to the tastes of audiences at the Provisional Theatre in Prague in the late 1870s. More so than Dvořák’s other operas, *The Cunning Peasant* is bound to a particular time and place, as demonstrated above.\textsuperscript{210} Since Czech operas were unknown in Vienna, audiences could not appreciate the work’s many connections to the existing repertory; nor could they place the opera into some kind of broader Czech context. The writer for *Národní Listy* accounts for the opera’s controversial Viennese showing by pointing to its Czechness, which, to him, makes it inappropriate for foreign performance. He also

\textsuperscript{208} Hanslick’s review was found by the Czechs to be the least offensive; the critics for *Národní Listy* and *Lyra* testify that all critics in Vienna, except for Hanslick, “mock the opera” (*Národní Listy*) and “[unleash] their venom on the Peasant [not having] even one good thing to say about it” (*Lyra*). Unsigned, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vídni [Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* in Vienna],” *Národní Listy* 25, no. 321 (November 22, 1885): 3; “mimo Hanslicka všichni ostatní kritikové ironisují operu.” Unsigned, “Šelma Sedlák ve Vidni [The Cunning Peasant in Vienna],” *Lyra: Orgán Hudebního Spolku Dalibor v Hořicích* 3, no. 7 (December 15, 1885): 2; “Druhý den vrhli se veškeré kritikové – mimo Hanslika v N. Fr. Pr. – na Šelmicku a nenechali na něm nit dobrou.” For this reason, Hanslick’s was the only one of the Viennese reviews to be partially reprinted in Czech translation on the pages of *Dalibor*; an excerpt of Hanslick’s review is quoted in Ed. Moučka, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vidni [Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* in Vienna],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 44 (November 28, 1885): 433–434.


\textsuperscript{210} Unlike *Vanda* and *Dimitrij*, both of which are based on pan-Slavic material, and *Rusalka* and *Armida*, which have more universal plots, *The Cunning Peasant* strives to be Czech. The only other Dvořák opera that specifies a Czech setting is *The Jacobin*. 
laments the fact that Dvořák’s opera *Dimitrij* had not been chosen instead, asserting that this more-recent work would have had a better chance of faring well on the international stage:

If *Dimitrij* had been given, it decidedly would have been well-liked; it would have surprised given the immense poverty of opera production, and from Vienna it would have made its way to all European stages, pushing Dvořák to the first ranks of operatic composers. That had to be prevented and for that reason the relatively weak and purely Czech comic opera *The Cunning Peasant* was chosen; its unhappy text, which is impossible for the foreign stage, kills at least half of the effect of the lovely music. Dvořák’s friends, who know the conditions here, warned Dvořák long ago and intently not to allow this particular opera to be performed first. Dvořák allowed [this to happen] after all and now he must see that his opera is being treated as a failure.211

The critic for the journal *Lyra* sees the situation in much the same way and questions Dvořák’s judgement not only in allowing this opera to be performed, but also in agreeing to have the libretto twisted out of shape.212

Efforts had been made to downplay the Czech elements in Dvořák’s opera. The German translation of the text – prepared by Züngel for performances of the opera in Dresden and Hamburg – was considered inadequate for Vienna and had to be revised extensively so that it might please the more-demanding Viennese public.213 As in the Dresden and Hamburg productions, the plot was designated as taking place in “Upper Austria,” rather than Domažlice.

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211 Unsigned, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vídni,” *Národní Listy* 25, no. 321 (November 22, 1885): 3; “Kdyby se byl *Dimitrij* dával, byl by se rozhodně líbil, ba on by byl při nesmírně chudobě operní produkce velice překvapil a z Vídně byl by nastoupil vítečnou cestu po všech jevišťích evropských a byl by Dvořáka posunul do přední řady také operních komponistů. Tomu se musilo zabránit a proto sáhlo se k poměrně nejslabší a také čistě české opěře komické *Šelma Sedlák*, jejíž neštastný na velkém cizím jevišti nemožný text už napřed zabíjí aspoň na polovic účinek rokošné hudby. Přátelé Dvořákoví, znající zdejší poměry, dávno a důklivě Dvořáka varovali, aby nedopustil, by zrovna této jeho opěře dana byla přednost. Dvořák předče to dopustil a nyní musí vidět jak se s jeho operou jedná jako s propadlou.” (The emphasis is mine.)


213 Recognizing that Viennese audiences are more demanding than those of Dresden and Hamburg, one critic for *Dalibor* states that Emanuel Züngel’s German translation of the libretto, which had been labelled inadequate by Ludevít Procházka, will have to be reworked for the Vienna performance. The task of reworking the text was entrusted to a singer at the Vienna Hofoper by the name of Mayerhofer, who also performed the part of the Duke in the production. In Hanslick’s view, the new text was an improvement over Züngel’s. Whether Mayerhofer’s work with the libretto helped or not, these extra efforts show that the Vienna performance of *The Cunning Peasant* was viewed as an event of some importance; Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy: Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák [Brief News: Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 9 (March 7, 1885): 84.
This change in location was likely done out of sensitivity to these German-speaking audiences; the town of Domažlice had certain anti-German associations, since it had been the site at which Czech armies joined together to drive Germans out of Bohemia during the Hussite Wars of the fifteenth century, in what is referred to as the *Hussenflucht*. Presumably, it was thought that such references needed to be removed from the work in order for it to be successful in the German-speaking world. This measure, however, missed the mark with audiences in Vienna, irritating them even more than it had in Hamburg. Hanslick addresses the issue in his review, decrying attempts to purge the opera of its Czechness. His comments on this are worth quoting in full:

More noteworthy, even baffling is the statement in the Berlin libretto: “the plot takes place in Upper Austria.” From where did this nonsense come? The character of the music is distinctly Slavic; everyone can hear that, after a fleeting listen to the first number; indeed one has to say this already about the overture: the work is set in Bohemia and is played out among Bohemian peasants. A composer, who would wish to characterize these melodies as Upper Austrian, belongs in the observation room of a mental hospital. Dvořák naturally had no part in this; in his original, the characters, who in translation are called Regina, Conrad, and Gottfried, have typical Czech names: Bětuška, Jeník, and Václav. These original names should have been retained; *The Cunning Peasant* is first and foremost a national-Bohemian opera, a work of Bohemian country life and as one cannot disturb this character in Dvořák’s music, so one should not look to deny it or to transplant it to a different country. Which German translator of the opera *Carmen* would write in the libretto: the plot takes place in Steiermark, just to make it more popular here? ... One must give distinctly national works with all their particularities or not at all.

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214 Seton-Watson, 70.
215 Hanslick’s criticism of the Germanized names of the characters seems unfair, considering that this was a common practice in Vienna and not at all particular to *The Cunning Peasant*.
Echoing Hanslick, Edvard Moučka – the Viennese correspondent for the Czech journal *Dalibor* – objects to the idea of removing some of these Czech elements, pointing not just to the neutrality of the sets, but also the costumes, which, he declares, were deliberately non-descript. In Moučka’s view, when the nationality of a work is ambiguous, it becomes bland, and the characters turn into mere caricatures, lacking any depth. Conceived as a gesture that might make the work more relatable to Germans, the opera’s changed setting and neutralized costumes offended the very audiences that they were supposed to please. To the Viennese, far worse than a Czech peasant singing Slavic melodies on the Hofoper stage was one who did so, while claiming to be Upper Austrian.

In addition to arguing that *The Cunning Peasant* was too Czech for Vienna and yet bland when its Czech elements were removed, critics writing in Prague in 1885 considered this Dvořák opera to be insufficiently representative of Czech achievement in the genre. To some extent,
these kinds of opinions had already been expressed at the time of *The Cunning Peasant*'s 1878 Prague premiere. The dominance of Smetana’s operas in general, and *The Bartered Bride* in particular, has already been shown. Czech critics were, thus, surprised that the task of paving the way for Czech opera composers in Vienna had been entrusted to Dvořák, with his *Cunning Peasant* as the vehicle. It was probably Dvořák’s international renown that endeared him to the Vienna Hofoper administration; by 1885, he had been able to achieve success beyond the Bohemian borders in essentially all genres other than opera. Also, as early as 1879, his grand opera *Vanda* had been under consideration for performance in Vienna, though – after extensive negotiations – the idea of staging it was eventually abandoned.²²¹ For better or worse, Dvořák was the one who officially brought Czech opera to Vienna and the larger significance of this was certainly not lost on Czech critics. In the days leading up to the performance, an article appeared in *Dalibor*, suggesting that the stakes were high and that the outcome of the event would have far-reaching repercussions: the critic predicts that “if this novelty breaks through with the rigorous audience of the Viennese opera, *Dimitrij* will not be far off on the horizon and maybe Dvořák will pave the way for other Czech composers to the stage that is supported by the state – a stage that has so far been sealed off to them.”²²² Initial reports in Prague of the event are

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²²² Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy: Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák [Brief News: Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 9 (March 7, 1885): 84; “Prorazí-li tato novinka u rigorosního obecenstva videňské opery, nebude od Šelmy Sedláčka daleko do uvedení *Dimitrij* a možná, že otevře Dvořák i jiným českým skladatelům cestu na prkna jeviště podporovaného státtem, která jim zůstávala dosud urpurně zaterasa.”
actually quite optimistic, and journalists seem to be reluctant to characterize it as a complete failure right away.223

High hopes quickly turned into disappointment, when the work’s poor Viennese reception started to sink in. The journalist for Národní Listy comments on the scope and severity of this operatic loss by asking the reader:

[After such a performance] who would want to prove, with the hope of a [positive] outcome, that The Cunning Peasant is not Dvořák’s best opera – that he himself wrote the excellent grand opera Dimitrij on a good text by the spirited Mrs. Červinková? Who would want to convince the Germans that The Bartered Bride, The Kiss, and Two Widows are valued much more in the Czech lands than The Cunning Peasant? [Who would want to explain to them] that, apart from Dvořák, we also have Smetana, Bendl, Rozkošný, Hřímalý, Bloček, Fibich, etc. and that these [composers] have [written] operas that will certainly reach success on the large stage and will be more understood and well-liked than The Cunning Peasant?224

Clearly, Dvořák was supposed to act as a kind of ground-breaker, through whom the likes of Smetana, Bendl, and others could make their way to the Viennese operatic stage. After The Cunning Peasant’s scandalous reception, Vienna was perhaps more closed off to these other composers than ever. Smetana’s operas were not to be performed at the Vienna Hofoper until

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223 The writer for Národní Politika claims that the performance went off better than had been expected after the dress rehearsal and that the work “was received by the large audience, which filled all areas of the theatre, with frequent loud praise;” “Byl přečetným posluchačstvem, které naplnilo divadlo ve všech prostorách, přijat častou hlučnou pochvalou;” Unsigned, “Různé zprávy [Various News],” Národní Politika 3, no. 319 (November 20, 1885): 2. Relatively positive reports also appear in Národní Listy: “According to news from Vienna, Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant had honourable success there, though we would not be the least bit surprised if the work of our fellow countryman, be it filled with extraordinary musical beauty, were refused under the present circumstances by the angered Viennese, who have long stopped being the friendly do-gooders that they allegedly once were;” “Dle zpráv došlých z Vídně měl tam Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák úspěch velice čestný, ačkoliv bychom se byli pranic nedivili, kdyby dílo našeho krajana, přes to, že oplyvá nevšedními hudebními krásami, bylo za nynějších poměrů od rozeštvaných pánů Vídeňáků, kteří dávno již přestali být těmi přítelebními dobráky, jakými prý byli dříve, odmítlo;” Unsigned, “Denní kronika [Daily Chronicle],” Národní Listy 25, no. 319 (November 20, 1885): 2.

224 Unsigned, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vídni [Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant in Vienna],” Národní Listy 25, no. 321 (November 22, 1885): 3; “Kdo by dnes chtěl s naději na výsledek tu dokazovat, že Šelma Sedlák není nejlepší opera Dvořáka, že on sám napsal výbornou velkou operu Dimitrijho na doprý text duchaplé pé. Červinkové, kdo chtěl by předvěděčovat Němce, že Prodaná Nevěsta, Hubička, a Dvě Vdovy v Čechách mnohem více se cení nežli Šelma Sedlák, že máme kromě Dvořáka ještě Smetanu, Bendla, Rozkošného, Hřímalého, Bločka, Fibicha, a j. a že tito maji opery, kteréž na velkém jevišti bezpečně dosáhnou úspěchu a více budou porozuměny a libiti se nežli Šelma Sedlák.”
nearly a decade later; *The Kiss* was given there in 1894, and *The Secret* (*Tajemství*, 1892) followed in 1895.\(^{225}\)

In the wake of the *Cunning Peasant* controversy, several Czech critics also alleged that the whole incident was orchestrated by members of the Vienna Hofoper administration to portray Czech opera in the worst possible light. They argued that a weak opera was chosen on purpose so that it might give Viennese critics an excuse to unleash invective on Czech art. The implication is that a stronger work – in the Czech critics’ estimation – would have been able to safeguard itself against the prejudice of an Austrian crowd. Moučka takes this notion of a conspiracy the furthest, claiming that the administration had Dvořák’s opera *Dimitrij* in its possession and could well have mounted it, instead of *The Cunning Peasant*. Although Moučka’s own biases as a Czech in Vienna were undoubtedly brought to bear on this assessment, his ideas are not completely unfounded. Hanslick is known to have liked Dvořák’s *Dimitrij*; he had travelled to Prague in 1882 for the express purpose of attending the opera’s premiere. Access to performance materials might have been gained easily through him. One critic, writing for *Dalibor* in 1882 – three years before the Viennese scandal – predicts that *The Cunning Peasant* will not fare well in the Habsburg capital:

> It is important to give recognition to Professor Hanslick, who is constantly drawing attention to the excellent operas of Dvořák… I do not doubt that Dvořák, in any event, would soon be able to pave out a path to foreign stages, but the efforts of Hanslick, more privately than through the press, have a great deal to do with it… The theatre audience is much wider and on average much less acquainted with music than the concert audience; on the other hand, [the theatre audience] is much more entangled in national and political prejudice, and for this reason, it would certainly be best to disarm them with such an imposing work as *Dimitrij* is according to all reports, and then to show the comic operas. For this it does not follow that it

\(^{225}\) The German titles for these works are *Der Kuß* and *Das Geheimnis* respectively. Both *The Bartered Bride* and *Dalibor* were performed at the Hofoper shortly thereafter, during the 1896/97 season. Sandra McColl notes that, while some Viennese critics considered the performance of Smetana’s operas in Vienna to be shamefully overdue, others used their reviews as an opportunity to uphold the operas of German composers and urge the Viennese to be weary of the “inundation of [their] musical life with Slavic works.” Sandra McColl, *Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896–1897: Critically Moving Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 88–98, esp. 89.
is necessary to be afraid for the success of *The Cunning Peasant*, if it is indeed the first Dvořák opera to be performed in Vienna. For even if the weak parts of the libretto, enlarged in the eyes of the Viennese by their Czech origins, which will probably be the target of their rude jokes, even if they caused negative evaluations to predominate at first, it would have to change in time. This is partly because of the high value of Dvořák’s music and partly because the Germans are grossly lacking in comic operas of the type that are overflowing with musical thought, like *The Cunning Peasant* or *Stubborn Lovers*. Only this much is for sure: the path of *Dimitrij* would be shorter and more successful.  

Though this critic is more optimistic than those who wrote after the 1885 Viennese performance, he already suspects *The Cunning Peasant* will be the “target of... rude jokes” in the Austrian capital. The scandal was, in many ways, foreseeable even to the Czechs, leading critics to conclude that it had been purposely arranged.  

Moučka claims that the conspiracy extended to aspects of the performance. In his view, an inferior conductor and poor singers were selected for the production, so that the opera could not be heard at its best:

> Instead of entrusting the singing roles to the best voices, of which there are many in the institution, the two most important roles (the Duke and Martin) were given to Mr.

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226 V. V. Z., “Dopisy z Vídně [Letters from Vienna],” *Dalibor* 5, no. 31 (November 1, 1882): 244; “To uznání sluší zde vysloviti prof. Eduardu Hanslickovi, že neustal obraceti pozornost dvorní opery k výtečným operám Dvořákovým... Nepochybují sice, že by Dvořák za každých okolností brzo již si proklestil cestu na mnohá cizí jeviště, ale ono usilování Hanslickovo, ještě větší asi soukromí než tiskem, má o to zajisté tak zásluhu... Divadelní obecenstvo jest mnohem širší a průměrně mnohem méně znalé hudby než koncertní, s druhé strany mnohem zarytnější v národní a politické předsudy a proto bylo by jistě nejlépe, je nejprv odzbrojiti činem tak imposantním, jakým podle všech zpráv jest *Dimitrij*, a pak teprve ukázati mu opery komické. Z toho však nenásleduje, že by se bylo právě potřebo bátí o úspěch *Šelmý sedláka*, bude-li ve Vídni první operou Dvořákovou. Neboť i kdyby slabé stránky libreta, zvětšené v očích Videňáků jeho českým původem, který arcí bude terčem jejich sprostého vtipu, pravím i kdyby způsobily, že by úsudek nepříznivý nabyl v první chvíli převahy, časem musilo by se to změnit. Jednak pro velkou cenu Dvořákovy hudby, jednak pro to, že mají Němci zouláfý nedostatek nových komických oper a jmenovitě takových, které by hudebními myšlenkami přetékaly jako *Šelma* a *Tvrdé Palice*. Jen tolik jisto, že by cesta *Dimitrijem* klesťená byla jim kratší a ještě úspěšnější.”

227 The author of another article, printed in *Dalibor* in 1882, also suspects that *The Cunning Peasant* will be received poorly in Vienna: “[There] is talk among the Czechs, who are close to the world of opera, quite seriously of the possibility of a performance of a Czech work by the present opera company, for which the name of Dvořák is in the forefront and most well-known here. Professor Hanslick earnestly asked the opera commission to prepare *The Cunning Peasant*, although I think that a serious opera would be more appropriate, whether it be *Vanda* or *Dimitrij*, unless a good revision of *The Cunning Peasant* would be done successfully;” “mluví se však mezi Čechy, blízkými opěře, zcela opravdové o možnosti provodení některé české práce zdější operou, při čemž arcí v popředí jest jméno Dvořákovo, zde známější. Prof. Hanslick důkladně vyzýval správu opery, aby ujala se *Šelmý sedláka*, ač mlsím, že by se lépe hodila opera vážná, budíž to *Vanda* nebo příšti *Dimitrij* – leč by se podařilo, pomocí libretu *Šelmý* šťastným přepracováním;” Unsigned, “Dopisy z Vídně [Letters from Vienna],” *Dalibor* 4, no. 7 (March 1, 1882): 52–53.
Horowitz and Mr. Mayerhofer, who are talented actors, but singers with very small voices. They were not able to do much as singers, and the parts themselves did not allow them to do much as actors. The direction of the opera should have been entrusted to the conductor with the greatest musical sensitivity, preferably to director Jahn, who is always able to compensate for a lack of effective contrast through the soft shading of individual phrases. Instead, the opera was given to conductor Hellmesberger Jr., who treats everything as if it were ballet music.228

Though Moučka does not consider *The Cunning Peasant* to be without its weaknesses, he writes that “a keen and well-intentioned performance would have been capable of hiding some of the flaws and presenting the strong points of the work.”229 Whether or not there is any truth to Moučka’s assertion, multiple sources – both Czech and German – report that the musicians did struggle to take the work seriously when performing for an empty theatre during the opera’s second night. In his final analysis, Moučka divides members of the Hofoper audience into three distinct camps: those who liked the opera and had “retained the ability to make healthy aesthetic judgments about true beauty;” the blind fanatics, railing “against all things Czech;” and those who were jealous “over the fact that Vienna is fading more and more to the background in comparison to the artistic production of Prague.”230 Though in this last remark Moučka may be getting carried away by his own nationalist sensibilities, his comments do suggest that audience members were not as unanimous in their reactions to *The Cunning Peasant* as some Viennese

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229 Ed. Moučka, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vídni [Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* in Vienna],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 44 (November 28, 1885): 433; “obezřelá a dobrou vůli prodehnutá správa by byla dovedla nedostatky tyto co možná zkrýt i předností díla, jichž je nepoměrně více, nejlepším světlem ozářit.”

230 Ed. Moučka, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vídni [Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* in Vienna],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 44 (November 28, 1885): 432; “ona malá část obecenstva, která zdravý aesthetický úsudek pro pravou krásu si zachovala, byla s hudbou jeho velice spokojena... Na jedné straně byla to šílená vášeň slepých fanatiků proti všemu českému, na druhé sůravá závisť vzdělějších, že Videň před uměleckou produktivností Prahy vždy více a více do pozadí ustupuje.”
critics would have the readers believe. In passing, Moučka likens the whole affair to one of the most infamous riots in operatic history: the Paris premiere of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* in 1861, when members of the Jokey Club whistled and shouted throughout the performance in protest of the Princess Pauline Metternich.

The political-charged atmosphere in Vienna during the 1880s prompted many audience members to head to the Hofoper production of *The Cunning Peasant* with their minds made up about what they were going to hear. The writer for *Národní Listy* acknowledges as much when he writes that “Czech artists do not have to feel sorry when their creations do not come before the Viennese audience during these irritable times. [The Viennese audience] persistently refuses to give recognition to a work, no matter how splendid it might be, and to an artist, no matter how world-renowned, when he is Czech.”\(^\text{231}\) The writer for *Národní Politika* reaches the conclusion that Czech composers do not need Viennese approval in order to know their worth; as he puts it, “for us, the opinion of an irritated mob is not what determines [the success of this work], though the [rioters] seem to have caught the attention of [the newspapers].”\(^\text{232}\) Favourable reviews from German-speaking Europe caused *The Cunning Peasant* to grow in the Czech critics’ estimation, but depreciation from Vienna was not about to bring the opera down in their eyes. Even so, Czech critics were persuaded, and perhaps harboured the delusion, that the outcome at the Hofoper would have been better with a different opera – one that was less blatantly Czech and held in higher regard in Czech musical circles than Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant*. Hostinský, known

\(^\text{231}\) Unsigned, “Dvořákův Šelma Sedlák ve Vídni,” *Národní Listy* 25, no. 321 (November 22, 1885): 3; “Ostatně čestí umělců nemusí litovat, když nynějších rozeštvaných dobách se svými uměleckými výtvory nepředstupují před obecnost videnšké, které zarputile vzpírá se uznání i sebe známenější dílo, i sebe lepšího, v celém světě uznaného umělce, když je – Čechem.”

\(^\text{232}\) Unsigned, “Různé zprávy [Various News],” *Národní Politika* 3, no. 319 (November 20, 1885): 2; “Pro nás však nerozhoduje úsudek poštvané luze, který patrně Tagblattu a Bohemii velice imponuje.”
to have disapproved of Dimitrij, was probably the only Czech critic who would not have supported a performance of Dvořák’s later opera; yet, even he writes in 1878 that:

The best libretto for Dvořák would be a serious one, with true poetry, perhaps even pathos, in which lyrical moments might give way to large ensembles (let us remember Dvořák’s Hymnus from Hálek’s Heirs of the White Mountain) – such a text would guarantee an even more beautiful success than can be detected in The Cunning Peasant.

Coming from a Czech vantage point, these critics were familiar with the many operatic works that had appeared on the stages of the Provisional and National theatres in Prague and were bothered by what they deemed to be a case of misrepresentation in Vienna. Although these critiques do not cast The Cunning Peasant in the most positive light, the ultimate reaction that the Viennese episode seemed to inspire in the Czechs was sympathy. Jarmil Burghauser touches on this idea, when he claims that, after what happened in Vienna, Czech audiences became more enthusiastic about The Cunning Peasant. Dvořák’s opera was given a brief run at the National Theatre in Prague in late 1885 and three performances in Brno in 1886, before being set aside.
once again.\textsuperscript{237} Though this upsurge in interest did not translate into a considerable increase in performances at home for the long term, the incident did force Czechs to revisit a work that had by then started to become somewhat neglected in the Czech lands and re-evaluate its place in the Czech opera repertory.

Conclusion

Dvořák wrote The Cunning Peasant with the hope of finally landing a major operatic success in Prague. After the first version of The King and the Charcoal Burner was rejected at the Provisional Theatre for its complexity, The Stubborn Lovers was denied performance for its brevity, and Vanda was mounted in the midst of a conflict between the Old and Young Czechs, Dvořák was able to arrive at a compromise with The Cunning Peasant. The opera was designed to be accessible both to performers and to the Czech public; though still light and relatively short, it was a weightier work than The Stubborn Lovers had been; and political tensions did not stand in the way of its wider acceptance in Prague. Dvořák won the favour of the audience and attracted a following from a number of critics, most notably Otakar Hostinský, who took notice of Dvořák as an opera composer for the first time after the Cunning Peasant premiere.\textsuperscript{238} In fact, in 1901, when Dvořák’s work in the genre would start to be called into question by some critics like Nejedlý, Hostinský would cite his review of The Cunning Peasant from 1878 as proof of his early advocacy of Dvořák’s operas.\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{237} See Table 3.2 above.

\textsuperscript{238} Hostinský admits in his review for Osvěta that he does not know any of Dvořák’s earlier operas: “the reviewer unfortunately does not know the earlier operas of Dvořák; comparing them to The Cunning Peasant and tracking [his] progress is thus impossible;” “referent bohužel nezná dřívějších oper Dvořákových; porovnávati je se Šelmou Sedláčkem a konstatovati jakýsi pokrok, není mu tudiž možno;” Otakar Hostinský, “Původní novinky české zpěvohy [Original New Works of Czech Opera],” Osvěta 8, no. 10 (1878): 747.

\textsuperscript{239} Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naši hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” 222–223.
By entering a domain that had long been considered Smetana’s, Dvořák lay himself open to be compared with his older contemporary. While the allusions in *The Cunning Peasant* to the comic operas of Smetana worked decidedly in its favour in the late 1870s, Dvořák would inevitably be consigned to second position in this category of opera composition, in the Czech critics’ estimations. It was perhaps for this reason that Dvořák quickly ended his engagement with the works of Smetana in his next operatic venture, catching many Czech critics by surprise, as he diverted from the path that they had set out for him. Dvořák’s later operas demonstrate much more of an effort to conform to a broader European, rather than specifically Czech, tradition; yet, it was none other than *The Cunning Peasant* that was deemed suitable for Dvořák’s international operatic debut. In spite of the inadequacy of the text’s translation into German, *The Cunning Peasant* succeeded in Dresden and was mainly appreciated by German critics for its “Slavic” qualities, much like the *Moravian Duets* and *Slavonic Dances* that had directly preceded it. The situation was entirely different in Vienna where the opera’s “Czechness” was looked upon with scorn and gave rise to scandal. Back at home, Czech critics considered this Viennese snub to be evidence of German bigotry and a deliberate ploy to close off the Hofoper to other Czech composers; they enlisted the sympathy of readers toward a work that had fallen victim to prejudice. Though the popularity it had enjoyed at its premiere was never reinstated in the Czech lands, fin-de-siècle Czech critics generally looked back on the first performance of *The Cunning Peasant* as the moment when Dvořák was finally able to strike a chord with Czech audiences in the realm of opera.

Several critics suggest in their reviews that the title of Dvořák’s opera is inappropriate, arguing that the peasant Martin’s actions are not terribly “cunning.” Of all the conventional gestures that were embedded into Veselý’s libretto, Martin’s prank was considered to be the
most cliché – labelled by Pivoda as an “over-used gag.” Hanslick writes: “over the joke, an empty barrel subordinating the lover, both of the ingenious inventors, Martin and Conrad (Václav) want to laugh to death; but the ones who do not laugh are the audience, at least those at our Court Opera. The whole intrigue is calculated for an astonishingly naive public.” Even Hostinský – though he does not frame it in the same condescending terms as Hanslick – remains unamused by Martin’s jokes:

The whole “cunningness” of the peasant Martin – who says of himself that he is a “calculating bird” and that “jokes come from every fiber of [his] being” – lies in the fact that instead of a ladder, on which the poor farmer Jeník comes to visit Martin’s daughter Bětuška, he places a barrel with a splintered plank beneath the window of her chamber… we [might] add that even this one and only “clever trick” does not work out for Martin, because his victim turns out to be someone else.

In view of Martin’s failed attempts at craftiness, it might be argued that the “cunningness” of the opera as a whole lies in another direction – that is, in its ability to appeal to the tastes of the Provisional Theatre audiences. Dvořák had tailored his opera to his Czech public and in so doing, managed to secure a place on the coveted Czech operatic stage. Aware of Dvořák’s own small town roots, critics perhaps believed that he was better qualified than other composers to

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240 Hanslick, Am Ende des Jahrhunderts (1895–1899), 135; “Über den Witz, dem aufkletternden Liebhaber ein leeres Faß unterzustellen, wollen sich die beiden genialen Erfinder, Martin und Conrad, zu Tode lachen; aber wer nicht mitlacht, ist das Publikum, wenigstens das unserer Hofoper. Die ganze Intrigue ist auf ein erstaunlich harmloses Publikum berechnet.” (Rather than necessarily calling Dvořák’s music naïve – as many of Dvořák’s critics did, especially those from German-speaking Europe – Hanslick applies the term to the libretto and ultimately to the Czech audiences for whom this opera was designed.)


242 Commenting on Dvořák’s “peasant” persona, Jarmil Burghauser writes: “the stress on the ‘ruralness,’ ‘folk character,’ and ‘earthingness of Dvořák’s music, leading – with a substantial amount of misunderstanding – to characterizations like ‘a peasant among composers,’ arose gradually during the 1880s. This ‘angle’ was undoubtedly promoted by the composer himself, who very keenly understood that it provided him with a very specific ‘trademark,’ singling him out from his contemporaries who stressed their ‘philosophical,’ literary, and/or esoteric positions within the general neo-romantic trends leading to the fashionable styles of the fin de siècle.” Jarmil Burghauser, “Metamorphoses of Dvořák’s Image in the Course of Time,” in Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 19.
access the idealized rurality that they so craved in the comic opera genre. The real title character of the piece, then – the true “cunning peasant” – might be Dvořák himself.
CHAPTER FOUR

A “CZECH SPRING SYMPHONY”: CLAIMING DVOŘÁK ON THE CONCERT STAGE

Introduction

In reference to Antonín Dvořák’s Symphony No. 6, Op. 60, Michael Beckerman writes: “it is perhaps the most conventional of Dvořák’s symphonies – a kind of dues-paying to the Viennese symphonic tradition.”1 Indeed, discussions of Dvořák’s Sixth Symphony typically focus on its connections to Vienna. This is not surprising; Dvořák wrote the Symphony specifically for the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra to be performed during the 1880/81 season, he dedicated it to Viennese conductor Hans Richter, and he solicited Brahms’s opinion on the score before submitting it to publisher Fritz Simrock. Although the work was eventually rejected by the Vienna Philharmonic, its many allusions to the symphonies of Brahms and Beethoven have been analyzed extensively by scholars2 and have led David Brodbeck to describe it as a piece in which Dvořák “speaks German with an unusual degree of clarity.”3

Dvořák’s Czech critics tell a different story. After its premiere in Prague on March 25, 1881 as part of the city’s Slavonic concert series, it was dubbed “Czech Spring Symphony” in the music journal Dalibor.4 Contemporary Czech critics repeatedly drew attention to the

4 N., “Z Koncertní Sině [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 83; “jarní česk[a] symfoní[e].” (See Appendix 6 for a full English translation of this article.)
Symphony’s Czechness, calling it “a work with an eminently Czech character” and “purely Czech in the shape of all of its motives.” Nowhere is this reading of the Symphony more apparent than in a statement made following its performance in Brno in 1883; “we Czechs were in a state of bliss” the critic recalls, “over the fact that this orchestral masterpiece speaks to us in pure Czech.” The critic goes on to assert that the language of the Symphony is a kind of refined Czech such that “even the Germans could not resist [it].” Regardless of the work’s Viennese associations and the comparisons to Austro-German composers being made in the German press, Czech critics were certain that when they listened to Dvořák’s Symphony, they were hearing Czech.

These two conflicting narratives may seem irreconcilable; however, a study of the Symphony’s Czech context reveals that, in portraying the work as a distinctly nationalist composition, Czech critics were laying claim to Dvořák. Political tensions and Dvořák’s growing international renown in the early 1880s made Czech critics eager to take ownership of the composer, giving Czech labels to a work that could be interpreted as conforming to the Austro-German tradition. Dvořák’s Symphony was debuted in Prague in the wake of the controversial Stremayr language ordinance – an ordinance that widened the rift between the Czechs and Germans of Bohemia and Moravia, giving rise to the kind of territoriality that is evident in reviews of this work. Its Prague premiere also came after a period of negative attention to Dvořák in the Czech press over his apparent willingness to allow exclusively German titles and

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5 N., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” *Dalibor* 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 83; “dílo rázu eminentně českého.”
6 -ý., “Dramatické umění a hudba: Koncerty [Dramatic Art and Music: Concerts],” *Národní Listy* 21, no. 75 (March 29, 1881): 5; “[je to dílo] ryze české v útvaru všech motivů.”
texts to appear on his printed scores. Suspecting that Dvořák was beginning to give priority to the German public, Czech critics were quick to redirect the composer’s focus toward audiences at home. By concealing the Symphony’s Viennese background and emphasizing its “Czech” elements, these critics sought to appropriate the work and use it to promote their nationalist agendas.

It was especially important for Czech critics to do so in the case of the symphony – a genre that had long held German connotations. Prior to Dvořák, the symphony was not cultivated to a large extent in the Czechs lands,9 where opera reigned supreme as the medium with which composers could best serve the Czech cause; Dvořák himself would later identify opera as “the most beneficial genre for the Nation.”10 Operatic works and other types of vocal compositions were used as a means of drawing boundaries between Czech and German culture in mid-to-late-nineteenth-century Bohemia, pushing instrumental genres to the periphery.11 Writing in 1901, Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910) exposes the disparity in treatment between instrumental works and opera that was pervasive in the Czech lands during the 1860s and 70s:

If it was said of someone that he is first and foremost an instrumental composer, an absolute musician, many would see in this if not a direct degradation of his artistic worth, then at least an attempt to relegate him to a less worthy field. In comparison with opera, our activity on the concert stage was so weak [during the 1860s and 70s], in spite of all of Smetana’s well-known efforts to the contrary, such that the instrumental compositions of

10 The translation here is provided by H. Alan Houtchens, “A Critical Study of Antonín Dvořák’s *Vanda*,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987), 32. The original may be found in “Bei Meister Dvorzak,” *Die Reichswehr* no. 3612 (March 1, 1904): 7. See Chapter Three for a longer excerpt and fuller discussion of this quotation.
our masters could only find favour with a small number of people, who were part of the Czech musical intelligentsia. It was a great exception, when an instrumental composition was greeted with half the attention and achieved only part of the popularity in wider circles as any opera.\textsuperscript{12}

As Hostinský observes, Czech composers who devoted themselves primarily to instrumental genres were inevitably perceived as second rate.\textsuperscript{13}

Moreover, if a Czech composer wanted to make a patriotic statement in the realm of instrumental music, the symphonic poem was deemed to be the most appropriate vehicle, particularly after Bedřich Smetana set the precedent with his well-known cycle \textit{Má Vlast} (\textit{My Country}, 1874–79). The symphonic poem had not always been welcomed by the Czechs with open arms. During the early 1870s, it had been a point of contention among Czech critics. To some of these critics, the New German direction, and its attendant genres, which had been so readily embraced by Smetana and Zdeněk Fibich, seemed to run counter to the nationalist path that they envisioned for Czech composers.\textsuperscript{14} By the 1880s, however, a reasonable consensus on the matter was reached. Under the leadership of Hostinský, many critics agreed that Czech

\textsuperscript{12} Otakar Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naši hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” in \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Sborník statí o jeho díle a životě [Antonín Dvořák: A Collection of Essays about his Work and Life]}, ed. Boleslav Kalenský (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1912), 225: “Řeklo-li se tedy o někom, že je v první řadě skladatel instrumentální, hudebník absolutní, přemnoží viděli v tom nelí přímé degradování jeho hodnoty umělecké, tož alespoň pokus odkazovat ho do oboru méně cenného. Bylť tehdy náš ruch koncertní přes všechny známé snahy Smetanovy u porovnání s operou tak slabý, že instrumentální sklady naších mistrů obraceti se mohly jen k nevelkému počtu hudební intelligence české. Byla to vzácná výjimka, když skladbě instrumentální dostávalo se třeba jen části oné pozornosti a populárnosti v kružích nejširších, již hlavně nabývala kterákoliv opera.” Even though this article appeared in print in 1912 as part of a collection of essays on Dvořák, Hostinský acknowledges in a footnote on p. 221 that he wrote it toward the end of 1901 and made no changes in preparation for its publication. This means that Dvořák’s final opera \textit{Armida} is excluded from the discussion. (See Appendix 8 for an English translation of the full article.)

\textsuperscript{13} Václav Juda Novotný also asserts that audiences at concerts tended to be smaller than in the theatre; by the same token, he claims that concert audiences tended to be more discerning: “in the concert hall, we do not ever have to take the widest circles of listeners into consideration as we do in the theatre or church, for we always assume that the concert audience has a higher education and is more able to make an assessment;” “v koncertu nemusíme nikdy bráti ohledu na nejširší kruhy posluchačstva tak jako v divadle či v kostele; neboť u koncertního obce v pleskáme vždy vyšší vzdělání a schopnost k posuzování;” Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická báseň: nástín historického vývinu tétoho forem: Doba nejnovější – Liszt [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms: Most Recent Times – Liszt],” \textit{Dalibor} I, no. 24 (June 13, 1873): 194. (See Appendix 3 for an English translation of excerpts from this article.)

\textsuperscript{14} The strongest opponent was František Pivoda; see John Clapham, “The Smetana-Pivoda Controversy,” \textit{Music & Letters} 52, no. 4 (1971): 353–364. Chapter Two contains a fuller discussion of this matter.
composers could adopt the Wagnerian music drama and Lisztian symphonic poem, without having to forfeit their Czech identity. Rather than being dismissed, these New German genres were promoted as ones that lent themselves remarkably well to expressions of Czech patriotism.\textsuperscript{15} No similar philosophy was articulated for the symphony, which was considered, if not outright inappropriate for the Czechs, then at least outmoded, flying in the face of the progress that was valued so highly by most critics. In such an atmosphere, Dvořák’s inclination toward the symphony was unusual.

The Sixth Symphony – henceforth referred to as the D-major Symphony\textsuperscript{16} – was critical in determining Dvořák’s role in relation to the genre. Czech audiences were aware that this was not the composer’s first symphony. Two other Dvořák symphonies had already been performed in Prague; the E-flat-major, currently known as Dvořák’s Third, was premiered in the city in 1874 conducted by Smetana, and the F-major, now referred to as his Fifth, was given in 1879 under Dvořák’s baton. Yet, the D-major Symphony was pitched to the wider public as Dvořák’s first contribution to the genre. Since none of the composer’s earlier symphonies had been published,\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} A similar trend can be seen in the music of the “New Russian School,” as demonstrated by critic Vladimir Vasilievich Stasov (1824–1906), who, in his essay “Our Music,” observes a Russian affinity for programmatic genres: “one more feature strongly characterizes the musicians of the New Russian School, and that is their extreme inclination toward ‘program music’… The overtures of Weber, Mendelssohn, and Berlioz are also ‘programmatic’ – all of this music is far removed from the ‘absolute’ music of bygone times. Glinka followed this path in his instrumental works… What Glinka began has been continued by his successors and adherents. Practically without exception Russian symphonic music is programmatic;” Richard Taruskin and Piero Weiss, eds., \textit{Music in the Western World: A History in Documents} (Belmont, CA: Thomson Schirmer, 2008), 335–336.

\textsuperscript{16} The D-major Symphony, Op. 60 is Dvořák’s Sixth Symphony; however, it was generally known as his First during the late nineteenth century, since it was his first work in the genre to be published. Subsequently, Dvořák’s Seventh Symphony was published as his Second; his Fifth as his Third; and his Eighth and Ninth as his Fourth and Fifth respectively. The composer’s first four symphonies remained unpublished and largely unknown during his life. Dvořák himself adhered to this numbering system, as demonstrated in a letter to Hans Richter dated February 11, 1902; Dvořák explains that “the D major is first (1880), D minor second (1885), F major third, though it was composed in 1875 (thus before both of the aforementioned symphonies)... [and] published in 1887, G major is fourth, and the American ‘From the New World’ is fifth;” German original: “Die D dur ist die erste (1880), die D m[oll] die zweite (1885), die dritte F dur, obwohl im Jahre 1875 komponiert (also vor den beiden erstgenannten), aber im 1887 im Druck erschienen, die G dur die IV. und die amerikanische ‘Aus der Neuen Welt’ ist die V;” Milan Kuna et al., \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]}, vol. 4 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1995), 238. It was not until 1916 that Otakar Šourek, Dvořák’s earliest biographer, sorted out the numbering of these works and acknowledged all nine of Dvořák’s symphonies. In order to avoid confusion, I refer to the Sixth as Dvořák’s D-major Symphony.
Simrock identified this work as Dvořák’s Symphony No. 1 on the title page of its printed score in 1882. The D-major was also the first Dvořák symphony to be heard in concert halls around the world.\textsuperscript{17} For most foreign audience members, this was their earliest encounter with Dvořák as a symphonist – an area that would soon be heralded as his niche.

Concerned about how Dvořák was being portrayed both at home and abroad, Czech critics strove to align the composer’s cultivation of the symphony with Czech nationalist aims. Since the symphony, as a genre, lacks explicit extra-musical associations, it offers the possibility for various meanings to be inscribed into it. Karen Painter puts it well when she describes the symphony as “an open arena to be invested with meaning... prey to the broadest cultural and political aims.”\textsuperscript{18} Dvořák’s foreign fame during the late 1870s had rested upon works with Czech or Slavic titles – pieces, such as the Moravian Duets, Slavonic Dances, and Slavonic Rhapsodies, which left audiences, Czech or otherwise, in little doubt as to the composer’s ethnic ties. The D-major Symphony was different, bearing no obvious markers of nationality. As such, it lay itself open to be claimed as a “Czech Spring Symphony” at the time of its Prague premiere.

\textit{“The most German of musical genres”: Czech Perceptions of the Symphony}

Much of how Dvořák’s piece was received had to do with prevailing views of the symphony as a uniquely Austro-German genre. Germans themselves reinforced the perception, boasting of their achievements in this area. The notion is evident as early as 1824 in the writing of critic Adolph Bernhard Marx (1795–1866), who asserts that “the more light-minded nations, for example, the French and the Italians, have never produced anything substantial in the entire

\textsuperscript{17} By 1885, the work had been performed in many cities beyond the borders of the Czech lands, including Amsterdam, Boston, Bristol, Budapest, Cologne, Dresden, Frankfurt, Graz, Hamburg, Leipzig, London, Rotterdam, Vienna, Zagreb, and Zürich.

genre [of the symphony] – they could never understand and grow to like it; therefore among other things they have fallen far behind the Germans, for whom the symphony is characteristic.” 19 Elsewhere, Marx is even more direct, calling the symphony “virtually the exclusive property of the Germans” (ausschliessliches Eigenthum der Deutschen). 20 Robert Schumann saw the genre in a similar way, as is evident in his oft-quoted statement at the beginning of his 1839 review of new symphonies by German composers:

When the German talks of symphonies, he means Beethoven; the two names are for him one and indivisible; his joy, his pride. As Italy has its Naples, France its revolution, England its navigation, so Germany has its Beethoven symphonies; the German forgets, in his Beethoven, that he has no school of painting; with Beethoven he imagines that he has again won the battles that he lost under Napoleon; he even dares to place [Beethoven] on a level with Shakespeare. 21

In addition to describing Beethoven’s symphonies as the nation’s pride and joy, Schumann labels the genre as specifically German in the last sentence of his study: “long live the German symphony,” he writes, “and may it blossom and prosper anew.” 22 Though Schumann is likely

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being a bit facetious here, his remarks are representative of a stance toward the symphony that was becoming increasingly widespread.23

These kinds of views persisted for generations, surfacing again, for instance, in the writing of August Reissmann (1825–1903). In his entry on “Germany” for the Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon of 1880, Reissmann broadens the scope of the German domain to encompass essentially all genres of absolute music, stating that “[the] sonata, symphony, overture, etc. are German in the truest sense of the word.”24 Karen Painter observes that the symphony continued to be considered “emblematic of German musical traditions”25 during the fin-de-siècle, treated by some critics as a safeguard against the onset of modernism. Painter remarks that Germans, and to some extent Austrians, “harboured an imaginary proprietary claim to the symphony” well into the early twentieth century, even after the death of Mahler, at a time when the genre was dwindling in German-speaking Europe, while thriving elsewhere in the

23 The reasons why Germans took possession of the symphony are far too complex to be discussed at any length here. Sanna Pederson and Barbara Eichner provide compelling discussions of the issue. See Pederson, “On the Task of the Music Historian,” 5–30, esp. 12–14 and Barbara Eichner, History in Mighty Sounds: Musical Constructions of German National Identity, 1848–1914 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 229–272. Pederson explains that, during the early nineteenth century, at a time when Germany was not yet unified politically, a great deal of emphasis was placed on culture (Kultur) as a means of creating national identity. Though opera was more prestigious, Germans could not justify claims of exclusivity in this realm, owing to its strong Italian connections. Choral music was not held in very high regard, as Eichner points out, because of its association with amateur music-making, leaving instrumental music for the taking. The symphony proved to be a particularly suitable genre for inciting feelings of national pride in the Germans, since it ranked high in the estimation of the early Romantics. Its aesthetic superiority had been established in German criticism; in his well-known review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony from 1813, E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) had famously labelled instrumental music as the most “purely romantic” of all arts – music, “which scorns all aid, all admixture of other arts, and gives expression to its own peculiar artistic nature;” E. T. A. Hoffmann, “Beethoven’s Instrumental Music,” in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism, eds. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 236; originally published in E. T. A. Hoffmann, “Beethoven’s Instrumental Music,” Zeitung für die elegante Welt 13 (December 9–11, 1813). Such statements as those made by Hoffmann – as well as Marx and Schumann – were also backed by a strong Austro-German symphonic tradition; the contributions of the First Viennese School to this genre were quickly becoming staples in concert halls throughout Europe.


25 Painter, 50.
Western world. These few examples show that perceptions of the symphony as “the most German of musical genres” were deeply rooted. Such opinions were not held merely by German critics; Barbara Eichner claims that if a poll had been conducted among general concert-attendees of the nineteenth century, they too would have probably identified the symphony as typically German.

This notion can likewise be detected in late nineteenth-century Czech discussions of the symphony. Perhaps the most thorough study of the genre for Dalibor was offered by critic Václav Juda Novotný (1849–1922) in 1873. In a series of eleven articles on the sonata, symphony, and symphonic poem, Novotný traces the symphony from its Ancient Greek roots through to Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and the early Romantics. He takes an unabashedly teleological view of music history and demonstrates how the older genre of the symphony led to the more complex and sophisticated symphonic poem. In the section on the early nineteenth century, Novotný makes note of a certain German affinity for instrumental music:

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26 Painter, 5.
27 Ibid., 3.
28 Eichner, 229.
29 Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická básně: nástin historického vývinu těchto forem [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms],” Dalibor I (1873), 117–21, 127–9, 135–6, 145–8, 153–6, 161–4, 169–71, 177–9, 193–6, 201–3, 209–12. (See Appendix 3 for a lengthy excerpt from these articles.)
30 Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická básně: nástín historického vývinu těchto forem: Doba nejnovější – Liszt [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms: Most recent times – Liszt],” Dalibor I, no. 22 (May 30, 1873): 179; “A person can somehow paste a ‘symphony’ together because he has exact forms before his eyes; he need only proceed following an ordinary template and will bring the well-known four movements of the ‘grand symphony for large orchestra’ into God’s light. What, however, is one to do with the ‘symphonic poem,’ where there is no template, where there are no prescribed forms and paragraphs, where the wretched person does not even know ‘what is and is not allowed?’ He who wishes to compose a ‘symphonic poem’ must know how to do more than a mere musician; he must know more than those who belong to the so-called ‘old school,’” Czech original: “‘Symfonii’ dovede takovýto člověk předc nějak slepit, poněvadž má předepsané formy před sebou; potřebuje jen dle obyčejně šablony si počinat a známé čtyři věty ‘velké symfonie pro velký orkestr’ přivede předc s pilí a namáháním na světlo boží. Co však počítí si má se ‘symfonickou básní,’ kde není žádná šablona, kde nejsou předepsané formy a paragrafy, kde člověk ubožec ani nevi ‘co je a co není dovoleno?’ Kdo chce komponovat ‘symfonickou básně,’ musí umět něco více než pouhý muzikant, musí více věděti než ti, které počítáme k tak zvané ‘staré škole.’”
While the French grand opera with its internal nothingness, unhealthy to its core, inundated the whole world with its glory, while Italian opera stood, finding great favour in the eyes of its large audience (though it was already drawing toward its demise), all of the creative strength of the new era in Germany was limited to the realm of instrumental music, which is less accessible to the wider public, but cultivated with pleasure amid the more educated circles of the audience.  

In his eagerness to denigrate French and Italian opera and uphold German instrumental works, Novotný adopts a stance that is not unlike that of A. B. Marx, whom he cites on several occasions. Novotný’s survey of the work of past symphonists, however detailed it may be, is incidental to his main point: that the symphony had outlived its usefulness, having been preempted by the symphonic poem. It is only in his discussion of the latter that Novotný mentions the contributions of the Czechs. He makes no reference to Dvořák in his symphonic overview, which is understandable considering that the composer was still largely unknown in the Czech lands in 1873 and had completed only two symphonies to date, neither of which had been performed.

Less excusable is Dvořák’s absence from the entry on the “Symphony” in Otto’s Encyclopedia (Ottův Slovník Naučný). Published between 1888 and 1909, this encyclopedia was widely considered to be the most authoritative reference source in the Czech lands. It appeared in print at a time when Dvořák’s symphonies were performed regularly on international stages. Dvořák’s exclusion might be interpreted not as a ploy to downplay the composer’s

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31 Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická báseň: nástin historického vývinu těchto forem [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms],” Dalibor I, no. 20 (May 16, 1873): 162; “mezitím co francouzka velká opera se svou vnitřní nicotou baví najednou bezpečně, která v mezích svého obecnictví už ztratila svou moc s podporou obecenstva, obmezovala se veškerá tvůrčí síla nové doby v Německu u obor hudby instrumentální, kterážto méně jsouc přístupná širším obecnictvu, s oblibou jest pěstována hlavně mezi vzdělanějšími kruhy obecnictva.”

32 The absence of any reference to Dvořák’s symphonies is curious, given the encyclopedia’s aim to present a distinctly Czech perspective on a variety of matters; according to the editor, “[the encyclopedia] was not a copy of a foreign work adapted to our conditions. It was a work through and through Czech, original, written from our national and Slavonic standpoint;” Derek Sayer, The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 96.
accomplishments, but as a way of demarcating the symphony as a genre that is somehow foreign to the Czechs. Though the author does not place geographic limits on the symphony, the focus of the entry is squarely on the output of Austro-German composers. The symphony, thus, seemed to carry German connotations for Czechs writing both at the beginning of Dvořák’s career and at the end of it.

One of the reasons why Czech critics associated the genre with the Germans was perhaps because Czechs themselves did not have a firmly-established symphonic tradition of their own. With his opera The Cunning Peasant (Šelma Sedláčk), Dvořák was able to draw from a rich repertory of comic works that had been performed on the stage of the Provisional Theatre; such deep-seeded “national” traditions were simply not there for the symphony. During the eighteenth century, composers of Czech origin, who wrote symphonies, mainly did so as Germans and Austrians, rather than as Czechs. Notable contributors to the genre included Franz Xavier Richter (1709–1789), Johann Stamitz (1717–1757), and Johann Vanhal (1739–1813), all of whom made careers for themselves in German-speaking Europe. These émigrés are not viewed as lying wholly outside of a Czech narrative – many are mentioned, at least in passing, in surveys of Czech music history – however, it would appear that, while composers with Czech roots were

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34 See Chapter Three for a fuller discussion of this opera.
35 Widely acknowledged as having played a pivotal role in shaping the early Classical symphony, Stamitz – who hails from southeastern Bohemia – fled to Mannheim while still a student at Prague University. His inability to find an appropriate salaried position in Prague ultimately motivated his immigration to the Palatinate, and his first compositions came after he had settled in the German city that would become his home. Richter too saw fit to leave his native Moravia; like Stamitz, he is most closely associated with the Mannheim school, though he travelled extensively and his symphonies were published in several European capitals. A generation younger than his two compatriots, Vanhal – who was born and raised in eastern Bohemia – took up residence in Vienna in 1760, where he devoted his energy to the composition of symphonies for nearly two decades and where he remained for the rest of his life. See Eugene K. Wolf, The Symphonies of Johann Stamitz: A Study in the Formation of the Classic Style (Utrecht: Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema, 1981), 14.
36 All three are discussed, for example, in Vladimír Lébl, ed., Hudba v českých dějinách: Od středověku do nové doby [Music in Czech History: From the Middle Ages to the Modern Era] (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1983).
inclined to write symphonies, eighteenth-century Bohemia did not provide a suitable
environment to foster these inclinations. Church posts were available in abundance in Prague, for
instance, but the city’s secular institutions tended to be poorly endowed. The only viable option
for many composers was to leave the Czech lands, as more employment opportunities, both in
opera and instrumental music, were available to them beyond the borders of their homeland. This
pattern of emigration in the eighteenth century may have given nineteenth-century critics the
impression that composers who wrote symphonies in the past were also ones who had defected
to parts of German-speaking Europe – ones, whom the Czechs had effectively lost to the
Germans.

During the early Romantic period, the symphony became somewhat of a neglected genre
among the Czechs. Jan Smaczny manages to compile a respectable list of Czech-born composers
who wrote symphonies at that time, however, their works hardly constitute a unified tradition.
Following in the footsteps of their predecessors, some of these composers sought positions in
parts of German-speaking Europe. For example, the most prolific Czech composer of

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Jan Smaczny argues that composers of Czech origin, who found employment in foreign places, should not be
excluded from a history of the Czech symphony; as he puts it, “to see the work of these composers, many of whom
left their native land in childhood, from a purely Czech point of view would be to deny them their full role in a
history which belongs more properly to a broader consideration of the European symphony […] conversely, an
approach [to the Czech symphony] which excludes the works of Czechs who lived abroad would eliminate from
consideration the most renowned Czech symphony of all, Dvořák’s Ninth ‘From the New World’ […] Thus any
consideration of the Czech symphony has to be something of a compromise hedged around by questions of style as

Daniel Freeman writes that it was almost impossible for a composer to secure a position as
Kapellmeister in a secular musical establishment during the mid-eighteenth century, since many noble families were
forced to reduce their household costs and could not afford to give permanent employment to musicians due to
ongoing political instability; Daniel E. Freeman, Josef Mysliveček, ‘Il Boemo:’ The Man and his Music (Sterling
Heights: Harmonie Park Press, 2009), 27.

Smaczny, “The Czech Symphony,” 223–231; composers from this era to be included in Smaczny’s
study are Václav Jan Křtitel Tomášek (1774–1850), Jan Václav Voříšek (1791–1825), Johann Wenzel Kallivoda
(1801–1866), Leopold Měchura (1804–1870), Jan Bedřich Kittl (1806–1868), Václav Jindřich Veit (1806–1864),
and Alois Hnilička (1826–1909).
symphonies in the early nineteenth century, Johann Wenzel Kallivoda\textsuperscript{39} (1801–1866), wrote all seven of his symphonies (1825–1843) after he had relocated to Donaueschingen, and Jan Václav Voříšek (1791–1825), who showed particular promise as a symphonist, in Smaczny’s estimation,\textsuperscript{40} waited until he was settled in Vienna before making his one and only contribution to the genre in 1821. For those who remained in the Czech lands, symphonies did not tend to occupy a substantial portion of their total output. Václav Jan Tomášek (1774–1850)\textsuperscript{41} – the sole composer in Prague to write symphonies at the start of the nineteenth century, according to Jarmila Gabrielová\textsuperscript{42} – worked in the genre for only a short time at the beginning of his career, producing three symphonies over the span of six years (1801–1807); ultimately, he became far better known for his songs and piano pieces. Likewise, Václav Jindřich Veit’s (1806–1864) one symphony (1859), though hailed as a significant work,\textsuperscript{43} is quite exceptional in his oeuvre, which consists by and large of chamber and choral compositions. Overall, Czech composers, at least those who chose to stay in the Czech lands, seemed to write symphonies in fits and starts during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Rather than belonging to a repertory that was carefully cultivated over the course of an extended period of time, these symphonies stood on the periphery of musical activity in Prague, leading Vladimír Lébl and Jitka Luďová to write that

\textsuperscript{39} Much like his eighteenth-century predecessors, Kallivoda is better known under his German name than under the Czech cognate: Jan Václav Kalivoda.

\textsuperscript{40} Smaczny, “The Czech Symphony,” 227–228.

\textsuperscript{41} Though Tomášek stayed in Prague and took an active part in the city’s musical life, he maintained ties to the Austro-German mainstream by keeping up personal acquaintances with some of its key composers, including Haydn and Beethoven. He was also a key player in the “Mozart cult” that was developing in Prague at the start of the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{42} Václav Jan Tomášek, Thesaurus Musicae Bohemiae: Seria B – Sinfonia Grande, Op. 17, ed. Šárka Jedličková (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1989), x (Jarmila Gabrielová provides the preface for this work); the last of his symphonies is also available: Václav Jan Tomášek, Thesaurus Musicae Bohemiae: Seria B – Sinfonia Re Maggiore, Op. 30, ed. Šárka Jedličková (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1990). The Prague-born composer Jan Kaňka (1772–1863) wrote one symphony – in E-flat major (1808) – that was roughly contemporaneous with Tomášek’s.

“in Czech music of the first half of the nineteenth century, the genre of the symphony nearly disappeared.”

What is more, the two “Czech” symphonies that were likely most familiar to audiences in Prague during the mid-nineteenth century had strong connections to German traditions. One of these is Jagdsymphonie (1837), the second of four symphonies (1836–1858) to be composed by Jan Bedřich Kittl (1806–1868), the long-time head of the Prague Conservatory. In his decision to write a “hunting” symphony, Kittl places himself alongside the likes of such Austrian composers as Leopold Mozart and Joseph Haydn. The work also calls Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony to mind in its use of descriptive subtitles for all of its movements, as was noted by several contemporary critics. With its allusions to German symphonies of the past, Kittl’s Jagdsymphonie enjoyed remarkable success in German-speaking Europe, garnering the interest of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Spohr.

The other symphonic work that concert-goers in Prague encountered in the 1850s was Smetana’s lone contribution to the genre, which too has German associations. Composed quite
early in his career, in 1853, the *Triumph-Sinfonie* (“Triumphal” Symphony)\(^{49}\) was meant to celebrate the engagement between Emperor Franz Joseph and Princess Elizabeth of Bavaria.\(^{50}\) Not only did Smetana dedicate the work to the royal couple, but he also sent it to Vienna with the hope that it might be performed at their wedding and was disappointed when his score was completely ignored.\(^{51}\) In keeping with its Imperial tone, the Symphony incorporates quotations of the Imperial anthem in three of its four movements.\(^{52}\) The anthem’s appearance is brief and subtle in the first movement; it is treated as thematic material in the second; and its most obvious and full statement is reserved for the closing measures of the finale, where the reference is unmistakable\(^{53}\) (Example 4.1):

\(^{49}\) The full title that appears on the opening page of Smetana’s autograph score from 1853–1854 is “Triumph-Sinfonie mit Benützung der österreich. Volkshymne für große Orchester von Friedrich Smetana, Op. 6.”

\(^{50}\) Smetana claimed that he was inspired to write the symphony when hearing about the engagement; however, it has since come to light that Smetana completed the Symphony in February of 1853 and the engagement was not announced until August 1, 1853; Brian Large, *Smetana* (London: Duckworth, 1970), 58.

\(^{51}\) Large, 58–59.


\(^{53}\) Although the anthem plays a prominent role in the Symphony, Brian Large speculates that the work was actually rejected by the Imperial Court because the allusions to the anthem were not blatant enough; Large, 59.
Example 4.1: Coda of the Finale from Smetana’s “Triumphant” Symphony (mm. 695–699)
Bedřich Smetana, Slavnostní Symfonie (Munich: Musikproduction Höflich, 2004), 237.
This gesture seems puzzling, given Smetana’s reputation as the quintessential Czech composer and the overtly nationalist nature of his operas and other works.\(^5^4\) Part of the explanation lies in the “Triumphal” Symphony’s early composition date. Unlike Dvořák, Smetana belonged to a generation that was more versed in German than in Czech, and it was not until later in the century that the Czechs really started to assert themselves in the fight for the nationalist cause.\(^5^5\) As a result, composers in the 1850s would have found no inherent contradiction in pledging allegiance simultaneously to their nation and to the Empire at large. Furthermore, in his recent study on Czech perceptions of the Emperor, Hugh LeCaine Agnew draws attention to Franz Joseph’s role as the titular King of Bohemia; although the Emperor’s long-awaited and repeatedly-deferred coronation in Bohemia never did occur and his visits to the Czech lands were met with varying degrees of enthusiasm and coldness, Czechs in general seemed to demonstrate an attitude of loyalty to him throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.\(^5^6\) A journalist, writing in 1874, speaks of the Czech people’s ability to separate the ruler – whom they welcomed – from his advisers – whom they treated as their political opponents.\(^5^7\)

Even if a blatant tribute to the Emperor was not to be interpreted as disloyalty to the Czechs at the work’s premiere in 1854, Smetana’s “Triumphal” Symphony was neglected for nearly thirty years, not to be revived again until 1882. In a review for *Dalibor* following the 1882 performance, the critic does not fail to mention the plethora of pieces that Smetana had

\(^{5^7}\) *Ibid.*, 97.
composed since his early Symphony, stating that these other works “celebrate the spirit of Czech music.” The implication is that Smetana’s reputation as Czech nationalist would not be threatened by a single and highly exceptional composition written in praise of the Emperor. The reviewer also assures readers that the Imperial anthem’s appearance in the Symphony was borne out of the specific occasion for which the work was written. At the suggestion of conductor Adolf Čech, the subtitle of the Symphony was changed for its revival from “Triumphal” (“Triumfální”) to “Celebratory” (“Slavnostní”), further emphasizing the occasional nature of the material. The very fact that a Czech title was being used for the Symphony in the 1880s, rather than a German one, indicates a marked change in attitude since the 1850s. In the interim, during the Symphony’s period of neglect, the only part of it to be played a few times as an independent piece was the Scherzo. Though universally acknowledged as the strongest movement in the Symphony, it seems to be no coincidence that the Scherzo is the one movement that lacks a reference to the Imperial anthem and as such, it was the least likely to cause offence. Smetana was not the only Czech composer to write a piece in honour of the wedding of Franz Joseph and Elizabeth; František Zdeněk Skuherský (1830–1892) did so as well, and it is striking that he also considered the symphony to be the most suitable vehicle. Rather than seeking to impress the Imperial couple with a typically “Czech” genre, both men attempted to reach the Habsburgs on their own terms with the “German” symphony. Together with Kittl’s Jagdsymphonie, these

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58 -ý., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 4, no. 13 (May 1, 1882): 100; “[díla] na oslavu hudebního ducha českého.”


60 It was the Scherzo that received the warmest praise at the work’s 1854 premiere, and Dvořák seems to have been particularly fond of it; upon hearing the movement at a rehearsal, he is alleged to have said: “[now] that was a Scherzo! As long as I live I will never write one like it;” Smaczny, “The Czech Symphony,” 231.
works demonstrate that Czech composers, even ones as nationally-minded as Smetana, approached the symphony with a German frame of reference.

“Making German musicians out of the sons of Czech parents”: The Pro-German Direction of the Prague Conservatory

German connotations for the symphony were reinforced by a divide in the musical life of Prague between the theatre and the concert hall. For much of the nineteenth century, the scope of the Czechs’ reach in the realm of instrumental music was limited, owing in large part to the fact that the one institution that dominated the concert scene in Prague seemed to have a German mandate. From its inception in 1811, the Prague Conservatory, which took a leading role in the training of instrumentalists for orchestral jobs in the city and abroad, had privileged German repertoire. The institution’s first director Friedrich Dionys Weber (1766–1842, director from 1811 to 1842) was a staunch Mozart enthusiast and did much to strengthen the city’s growing Mozart cult during the 1830s. Its second director Kittl (director from 1843 to 1865) aimed to establish a concert series that would rival that of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. To this end, the Conservatory’s curriculum was centered around the works of Austro-German composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Such an approach had its advantages; it made the borders to German-speaking Europe more permeable to Czech musicians and attracted an illustrious group of visiting artists, including Liszt, Spohr, and Clara Schumann.

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By the time that Josef Krejčí\textsuperscript{62} (1821–1881) took up the position of Conservatory director in 1866, however, Prague’s Czech population had become increasingly dissatisfied with the institution’s repertoire choices, and complaints were voiced frequently in Czech newspapers and journals. Even though Krejčí’s approach was not a drastic departure from those taken by his predecessors, critics started to raise objections at this time. Not only had Krejčí gotten the position as director over fellow candidate Smetana – a circumstance that Michaela Freemanová shows was taken as the triumph of the cosmopolitan over the nationalist\textsuperscript{63} – but, on the verge of the Austro-Hungarian compromise, Czechs were no longer content to curb expressions of patriotism. Such feelings of discontent would persist and intensify over the course of the next decade. In a report on one of the Conservatory’s orchestral concerts in 1875, featuring the works of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Viotti, Spohr, and Kretschmer, an anonymous critic for \textit{Dalibor} is palpably irritated by the Conservatory’s lack of attention to the works of Czech composers:

Unfortunately we must affirm that [the Prague Conservatory] directs itself \textit{constantly toward foreign [works]} and completely ignores all that is domestic, be it the most outstanding, with the thinly veiled jealousy of its own conceit. Let the infamous administrators of the Conservatory make no mistake about their ultra-German direction: if they want to earn friends among [members of] the Prague audience and on the Prague music scene, the core of which must always be found on the \textit{Czech} side – and this must be something that a \textit{Prague} artistic institution would want – it is certain that they will never reach their goal by proudly ignoring outstanding Czech composers. Why does director Krejčí avoid with such consequent apprehension, for instance, the symphonic pieces of our Smetana, Skuherský, Fibich, and Dvořák, who always have a greater power of attraction for our audience than the works of hitherto unknown German novices? It goes to show that our audience turns away from such an institution, which, in its stubborn Germanism, is concerned about things other than the elevation and bloom of local art. After all, the Prague Conservatory was founded in its day and brought to life for this very purpose: so that it might tend to the elevation and bloom of musical art in the Czech

\textsuperscript{62} Krejčí was not an unfamiliar figure on the Prague musical scene; his and Dvořák’s paths crossed, when Krejčí became the director of the Prague Organ School in 1858, while Dvořák was still a pupil there.

kingdom! Lo and behold, inconsiderate, partial passion has led astray the artistic institution that was supposed to be the adornment and pride of Prague’s musical life!!

In an article written in 1878, Otakar Hostinský echoes this earlier criticism. He objects to the Conservatory’s German orientation as well as the poor quality of instruction given there, claiming that, if young musicians in Prague wish to get a thorough education in music, they ought to attend the Prague Organ School. Drawing attention to the following that some Czech composers had attracted in German-speaking Europe, Hostinský asserts that “if even the Germans are not afraid to place Czech pieces on their stages, why should the Prague Conservatory, which is not an exclusively German institution, deign to make German musicians out of the sons of Czech parents!”

Hostinský goes on to make a connection between poor attendance at Conservatory concerts and the German focus of the institution, stating: “many are surprised and cannot understand why [seats at] the Conservatory concerts are always so empty! It is completely natural; the Conservatory avoids Czech composers and for this reason Czech audiences avoid Conservatory concerts.”

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64 Unsigned, “Zprávy z Prahy a z Venkova: Koncert pražské konservatoře [News from Prague and Rural Areas: Concert of the Prague Conservatory],” Dalibor III, no. 51 (December 18, 1875): 409–410; “bohužel ale musíme doložiti, že směruje neustále jenom k cizině a vše co domácího, a byť to bylo sebe výtečnější, úplně ignoruje se špatně zakryvanou žárlivostí osobní ještěnosti. Necht’ se slavné ředitelství Konservatoře ve svém ultraněmeckém směru nemýlí: chce-li v pražském obecenstvu a v pražském hudebnictvu, jehož jádro hledati dlužno vždy na české straně, získat si přátel – a na tom ji co uměleckého ústavu příškému přec zůřejí musí – tož jisté jest, že pyšným ignorováním výtečných skladatelův českých cíle svého nikdy nedojde. Proč se vyhýbá p. ředitel Krejčí s tak konsekventní úzkostlivostí na př. symfonickým skladbám našeho Smetany, Skuherského, Fibicha, a Dvořáka, jež mají vždy pro naše obecenstvo daleko větší kouzlo a přitažlivost, než práce neznámých posud u nás nováků německých? Mám to úkaz zcela přirozený, že obecenstvo naše odvrazi se od ústavu takového, jenž v zarytém svém germánství o věci jiné se spíše stará, než o povznešení a rozkvět umění domácího. A přec byla pražská konservatoř právě jen za tím účelem za onoho času zařízena a v život uvedena, aby starala se o povznešení a rozkvět umění hudebního v království českém!!” (The emphasis is in the original.)

65 Otakar Hostinský, “Kritika Programů Konservatoře [A Critique of the Programs of the Conservatory],” Národní Listy no. 82 (April 2, 1878); reprinted in Otakar Hostinský, Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých: Výbor z operních a koncertních kritik [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s: Reviews of Operas and Concerts] (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1986), 259; “když i sami Němci nelekaží se českých skladeb na svém jevišti, což by činili měla pražská konservatoř, která přec není ústavem výhradně německým, na dělání německých muzikantů ze synů českých rodiců!”

66 Ibid., 260; “pak se mnozí diví a nemohou pochopiti, proč jest v koncertech konservatoře vždy tak prazdro! Jest to zcela přirozené; konservatoř se vyhýbá českým skladatelům, české obecenstvo se proto vyhýbá koncertům konservatoře.”
When Dvořák’s *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46 finally appeared on a Conservatory programme in 1879, the occasion was celebrated in *Dalibor* as one that had been long in coming. Even so, the decision to perform the *Slavonic Dances*, rather than another work, seemed to betray a certain sense of insecurity; the Conservatory administrators programmed the piece only after they had witnessed its immense popularity abroad, suggesting that they needed international, and perhaps German, approval before they could consider the work to be appropriate for performance by the Conservatory orchestra. The critic for *Dalibor* subtitles the article “Miracle” and writes:

The Prague Conservatory, which up until now did not acknowledge the value of any musical works unless they were German and only prepared German repertoire for annual concerts, has recently ventured to include a work by a Czech composer, namely the *Slavonic Dances* by Dvořák. However, first Dvořák’s *Dances* had to be performed at the Crystal Palace in London before the Conservatory could consider them worthy of being performed. We are happy about this, though; at least now this is a good start leading toward a better path.67

Indeed, a “better path,” as far as the Czechs were concerned, would come during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.68 Michaela Freemanová characterizes the arrival of director Antonín Bennewitz (1833–1926) in 1882 as a turning point and describes the period of his

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67 Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy: Zázrak [Brief News: Miracle],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 10 (April 1, 1879): 81; “Pražská konservatoř, která dosud neuznávala jiné literatury hudební než německé, z níž vybrála látku pro své výroční koncerty, odhodlala se v nejnovější době k tomu, že provede v příštím svém koncertu dílo českého skladatele a sice ‘Slovanské tance’ od Dvořáka. Dříve však musely Dvořákovy tance v londýnském křišťálovém paláci provedeny býtí, než skladbu tu uznala konservatoř za hodnu provedení. Než i tomu jsme rádi; aspoň jest dobrý počátek jednou učiněn k lepší cestě.” Josef Srb Debrnov comments on this issue as well in his article for *Dalibor* on the Prague Organ School; he observes a certain reluctance on the part of the Conservatory’s leaders to perform Czech music, stating that it was only through the efforts of a certain Mr. Smolař that one small part of Dvořák’s *Slavonic Dances* was performed at the Conservatory concert; J. S. Debrnov, “Varhanická škola v Praze [Organ School in Prague],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 19 (July 1, 1879): 147–148.

68 The announcement that Josef Krejčí would be stepping aside was announced in *Dalibor* already in January 1880. Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News],” *Dalibor* 2, no. 2 (January 10, 1880): 15; “The new refreshing wave that has come over our musical life has not failed to have an impact on the administrators of the Conservatory. Let their energetic decision – one that will only be beneficial to the institution – be given sincere praise. Mr. Krejčí, who has, until now, served as the director of the Conservatory and who has earned a sad reputation here with his exclusively German direction, though he was Czech by birth, has retired; he will be replaced temporarily by Prof. Bennewitz...” “Nový osvěžující proud, který v našem Životě hudebním zavládl, i na správu konservatoře nezůstal bez účinku. Budí již za energické rozhodnutí její, jež ústavu tomu bude jen na prospěch, upřímná pochvala. Dosavadní ředitel konservatoře p. Krejčí, jenž smutnou si u nás získal památku svým výhradně němčíšským směrem, ač rodem byl Čech, dán jest na odpočinek, na jeho pak místě je prozatímním náčelníkem ústavu dosazen p. prof. Benevic...”
directorship, which lasted until 1901, as the time when the Conservatory turned into a national institution.69

The Rudolfinum Concert Hall as a Site of German Identity

In spite of the change that seemed to come over the Conservatory with Bennewitz at its helm, the notion that instrumental music, and specifically the symphony, was the domain of the Germans persisted in Prague well into the 1880s. The opening of the Rudolfinum concert hall in 1885 serves as a case in point. An event that was heavily criticized in the Czech press as an overly German affair, the inaugural concert for Rudolfinum featured works that were, by and large, written by Austrian and German composers. The first item on the programme was the Austrian national anthem, leaving listeners in no doubt of the new institution’s ultimate allegiance. This was followed by Beethoven’s Overture *Die Weihe des Hauses*, Op. 124 – a piece that had been commissioned for the opening of Vienna’s Theater in der Josefstadt in 1822. The remainder of the programme was a showcase of works by the Austro-German “greats,” with an excerpt from Wagner’s *Lohengrin*, organ pieces by Bach and Mendelssohn, and solo songs by Wagner and Schumann, concluding with the “Halleluiah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah* sung in German translation. Dvořák’s *Slavonic Rhapsody*, Op. 45, No. 2 was included as the token Czech item on the programme and as the one work by a living composer.

Articles penned in the aftermath of the event show an obvious difference in opinion between German and Czech Bohemians. A reviewer for one of the city’s German newspapers, the *Prager Tagblatt*, seems generally satisfied with the event, singling out Dvořák’s *Rhapsody* as the only inappropriate piece because of its insufficient reverence:

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Dvořák’s Second *Slavonic Rhapsody* [...] would have been better suited for another occasion than the celebratory programme of the opening of a new artistic temple, according to the taste of many. The darkly orchestrated places, and especially the ending of Dvořák’s *Rhapsody*, left nothing to be desired in terms of effect, but the most effective is not always the most reverent and the “consecration of the house” is, after all, the matter at hand.70

The writer for *Dalibor* stands on the other side of the spectrum, predicting on the day of the Rudolfinum concert that it will be “a German manifestation,” “a mockery of our compositional and performing arts,” and “a concert with an anti-national tendency.”71 A thorough review, appearing a week later in *Dalibor*, acts as a direct response to the *Prager Tagblatt* article. Insulted at the suggestion that Dvořák’s *Slavonic Rhapsody* is not lofty and reverent enough, the critic raises objections to the suitability and quality of some of the German items on the programme, referring to Mendelssohn’s Sixth Organ Sonata as a “wholly worthless composition [that] did not satisfy any high demands” and describing Wagner’s *La tombe dit à la rose* and Schumann’s *Frühlingsnacht* as “two worthless songs from the Viennese streets.”72

The reviewer for *Dalibor* is bothered not only by the repertoire choices, but also by the decision to invite solo musicians from Dresden and Vienna for the occasion, which sends the message that Czechs do not have performers of their own to do the job:

The great duet from Wagner’s *Lohengrin* was performed beautifully by Miss Malten from Dresden and Miss Schläger from Vienna, two excellent singers, though our home-grown artists Mrs. Mosrová and Miss Sittová would have been able to sing that fragment at least as well as the foreign prima donnas. The third guest was the organist Mr. Fischer,

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71 Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy: Z Rudolfina [Brief News: From Rudolfinum],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 5 (February 7, 1885): 45; “ten koncert má býti pouhou manifestaci německou, ... program byl volen jako na posměch kvetoucího našeho produkujícího a reprodukujícího umělectva ... koncert s tendencí protinárodní.”

72 Unsigned, “Otevření ‘Rudolfina’ [The Opening of ‘Rudolfinum’],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 6 (February 14, 1885): 55; “zcela bezcenná jeho komposice vyšší požadavky nijak neuspokojila;” “[bezcenný písnič] z vídeňských ulic.”
also from Dresden, in whom we do not observe any great artist. He played Bach’s Toccata in F major at such an exaggerated tempo that a person in his right mind cannot explain it.73

In a final assessment of the Rudolfinum opening concert, the Dalibor critic characterizes the event as “a true provocation incited by the local artistically bankrupt faction;” the critic closes by stating that “this concert will always be a stain on ‘our’ Rudolfinum, and we are curious as to how much the architects of this villainy will have an influence on our Conservatory.”74 This last remark, expressing concern over the impact of the newly-opened concert hall on the Conservatory, was a legitimate one, as director Bennewitz was the conductor at the concert and the venue was to become the headquarters of the Prague Conservatory.75 Much like they had railed against the Conservatory’s German curriculum, Czech critics denounced the Rudolfinum concert and saw it as an indication of the new institution’s pro-German future direction.

Just as demonstrations of allegiance to an Austro-German tradition were evident at Rudolfinum’s opening concert, so too were references to this tradition embedded in the concert hall’s architecture. Initial plans for the hall were drawn up in 1874 by I. Ullmann and A. V. Barvitus, on the basis of which architects could submit prospective designs for the building. In addition to specifying the building’s dimensions, these men stipulated right from the beginning that the concert hall ought to be a venue “in which every Austrian is always welcome” and one


74 Unsigned, “Otevření ‘Rudolfina’ [The Opening of ‘Rudolfinum’].” Dalibor 7, no. 6 (February 14, 1885): 55; “[koncert] byl pravou provokací, vyvolanou umělecky zbankarotovanou klikou zdejší;” “koncert tento lpětě bude věčně jako skvělá na ‘našem’ Rudolfinu, a jsem zvědav jen, jak dalece budou mítí strůjcové bidáctví tohoto vliv na naší konservatoř.”

that would show a sense of “loyalty and devotedness to the Imperial family.” The winning design was by Josef Zítek and Josef Schulze, both of whom proceeded to visit several musical halls in Western Europe for inspiration and met with Richard Wagner to discuss practical matters related to the hall’s construction. Their consultation with Wagner, whose Bayreuth Festspielhaus was on the verge of opening at that time, shows that these architects sought to align themselves with the latest German innovations in the design of a performance space. As part of the design, the southern parapet of the Rudolfinum concert hall was decorated with statues of various composers, reaching back as far as Josquin and extending into the early nineteenth century. None of the composers included are Czech, and Lucie Kaucká offers an explanation for this exclusion:

There is no commemoration of any Czech or even Slavonic composer, a fact mentioned at the time by indignant Czech journalists. However, it must be pointed out that the selection of musicians was purely historical, purposefully taking no attitude towards the present or recent past (the youngest composer is R. Schumann, dead for over 25 years at the time). Therefore there is no Smetana or Musorgsky, and no Liszt, Wagner, or Brahms, either.

Kaucká’s argument is convincing; Liszt and Wagner were at the height of their popularity in the Czech lands, and the decision to exclude them seems to have been borne out of a desire to limit this “hall of fame” to composers of the past. The statues also may have been constructed to draw attention to the concert hall’s place in music history and might be interpreted as part of an effort to create a venue that would compete with the best in Europe. Czech composers, who were

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76 Vybíral, 386–387; “Um die jedem Österreicher stets wilkommen, stets mit Freude erfaßte Gelegenheit zu benützen ... mit dem geschaffenem Werke einen Akt angestammten Treue und Anhänglichkeit an des a. h. Kaiserhaus insofern in Verbindung zu bringen.”


79 Kaucká, 64.
largely unknown internationally, were perhaps deemed too provincial for such aims. Undoubtedly, many factors were at play; however, the building’s physical appearance ultimately seems to be another manifestation of the split between opera and the concert hall that was so pervasive in Prague during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Nancy Wingfield shows that public spaces were used both by Czechs and Germans in fin-de-siècle Bohemia to shape historical consciousness. Much like the statues of Josef II that were being raised up in droves in the 1880s, the images that adorned Rudolfinum could be viewed as sites of German identity.

This split becomes all the more apparent when Rudolfinum is compared with the National Theatre. In contrast to the statues at Rudolfinum, the foyer of the National Theatre would eventually be transformed into a showcase of Czech accomplishment. Images of Czech composers and writers were added to the space over time, with Smetana’s bust appearing in 1894 and Dvořák’s in 1911. Differences in the ways that these venues were funded also impacted attitudes toward them. Whereas the construction of Rudolfinum was sponsored by the Czech savings bank (Česká spořitelna) – the name of which is misleading, since it was a German financial institution – funds for the National Theatre were raised through collections over the course of several decades, with personal donations from citizen of all social strata. A comment, apparently overheard in the upper-most gallery of the National Theatre on opening night and reprinted in Národní Listy, illustrates the sense of ownership that the fundraising project incited among the Czechs: “granddaughter, look how beautiful it all is! Did you know even I gave

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82 Kaucká, 60.
something? Maybe [it was] enough to pay for a handle to one of the doors.”83 Czechs could hardly have the same kind of feeling of possession with the Rudolfinum concert hall, which did not specify any nationalist aims and was initially conceived to celebrate the savings bank’s fiftieth anniversary.

The names of these performing spaces alone betray their associations. Rudolfinum is named after the Crown Prince Rudolf, who had specific connections to Prague, having lived in the city for four years. The heir apparent was actually invited to attend the hall’s inaugural concert in 1885, but refused the invitation, allegedly due to illness; the Czech press interpreted this act as a deliberate snub on the Prince’s part and remarked sarcastically that the nearly all-German programme was apparently not German enough for the Austrian royal.84 A name such as Rudolfinum implies that ties to the Empire at large supersede all other connections. It stands in stark contrast to the National Theatre, which, by its very name, claims ultimate allegiance to the Czech nation. A desire for independence and self-sufficiency is ingrained in the motto of the whole national theatre movement: “the nation unto itself” (“národ sobě”) – displayed proudly above the Theatre’s proscenium arch.

In as much as there was a striking divide between the theatre and concert hall, the boundaries between the two were not always clearly demarcated. For instance, from the first, the large hall within Rudolfinum was referred to as Dvořák hall, not Beethoven or Schumann hall. Thus, even if the entire complex was named after a Habsburg, the main performing space in its interior bore the name of a Czech. Likewise, the inaugural performance at the National Theatre


84 For a time, after the after the Second World War, Rudolfinum was renamed House of Artists (Dům Umělců), though the venue’s original name was eventually retained.
in 1881 was not completely without its Imperial associations. Though its official opening was not scheduled to take place until the fall of 1881, the Theatre was unveiled already in June of that year, with a performance in honour of the Crown Prince Rudolf’s recent marriage to Princess Stephanie of Belgium. Looking to set a date for the Theatre’s opening, the Provincial Board had broached the idea of a performance in celebration of the royal nuptials. Most members of the National Theatre committee were against the notion of turning a national event that had been anticipated for decades into a public display of Habsburg loyalty, but, as Stanley Buchholz Kimball shows, once raised, the suggestion was hardly one that could be refused.85 Even so, Czech critics would not be deterred from portraying the event as a purely national occasion. Emanuel Chvála focuses his review of the Theatre’s opening entirely on the performance of Smetana’s opera *Libuše*, without so much as mentioning that the Crown Prince was in attendance. In the words of Chvála, “a monumental work of visual art [was] consecrated with a monumental work of musical art, and the Czech genius blessed both works in the moment when they met face to face – it was with dignity, which had always been our most fervent wish, that the dignified National Theatre was opened.”86 Otakar Hostinský also stresses the sanctity of the event in his review for *Národní Listy*, asserting that it left an overwhelming impression, from which audiences could scarcely recover. In his brief comments on the event’s Austrian connection, Hostinský notes only that the Austrian and Belgian anthems were sung by the opera chorus at the start of the performance in honour of the royal guests and that Prince Rudolf left during the second act; his wife, though present in the city, did not come to the performance at

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85 Kimball, 130.
86 Emanuel Chvála, “Otevření Národního Divadla [The Opening of the National Theatre],” *Dalibor* 3, no. 18 (June 20, 1881): 139; “monumentální dílo umění výtvarného zasvěceno monumentalním dílem umění hudebního, a český genius žehnal oběma dílům v okamžiku, kdy poprvé stáli si tváří v tvář – důstojně, jak povždy nejvřelejším bylo naším přání, otevřeno důstojně Národní divadlo!”
all. Mimicking the heroine of Smetana’s opera – the mythical Czech prophetess Libuše, who spends the entire third act predicting great things for the Czech nation – Hostinský uses his review of the Theatre’s opening as an opportunity to speak of the Czechs’ promising future in the realm of opera. He seems to take no offense at the Crown Prince’s involvement in the ceremony. In the case of the National Theatre, Daniel Unowsky’s words about Habsburg celebrations in the latter half of the nineteenth century ring true: “imperial celebrations did not seek to efface national identity; instead, official festivities defined national identity as a constituent element of a broader identification with the emperor-father, and through him, with ‘Austria’” Such could not be said of Rudolfinum, where all Czech national markers were removed and the achievements of Germans celebrated, much to the chagrin of Czech journalists.

The opening of Rudolfinum, which was characterized in Dalibor as a “true provocation,” was a far-cry from the decidedly Czech-nationalist occasion that the inaugural performance at the National Theatre had been a few years earlier. The new venue seemed only to continue in the pro-German direction of the Prague Conservatory, with which it was affiliated. Repertoire choices lay at the heart of Czech critical contentions with these institutions. Even if the works of Czech composers were gradually incorporated into the programmes at Rudolfinum, Lucie Kaucká shows that, until the First World War, Beethoven’s music was played more frequently than that of any other composer at this venue. The case of Rudolfinum was just one manifestation of the German associations that instrumental music in general and the symphony in particular seemed to hold for the Czechs. Though it was not uttered in so many words, Czech

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87 Otakar Hostinský, “Bedřich Smetana: Libuše; k otevření Národního divadla [Bedřich Smetana: Libuše; the opening of the National Theatre],” Národní Listy 21, no. 141 (June 12, 1881); reprinted in Otakar Hostinský, Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých: Výbor z operních a koncertních kritik [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s: Reviews of Operas and Concerts] (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1986), 259.
89 Kaucká, 70.
critics of the late nineteenth century saw the symphony as the property of the Germans and as such, a genre that Czechs would be well advised to avoid. In the past, the symphony had been used by Czech-born composers either as a means of penetrating the Austro-German mainstream or to pay tribute to the Habsburgs. It was a genre, to which nineteenth-century Czech composers might contribute one or two works at the most, but certainly not a vehicle for making a nationalist statement or for introducing foreign audiences to Czech music. For these reasons, Dvořák’s steady cultivation of the genre must have caught Czech critics by surprise. Jan Smaczny conveys something of the exceptionality of Dvořák’s decision to devote himself to the symphony in the first place:

Quite why Dvořák turned to the symphony in 1865 is likely to remain a mystery. The motivation for writing his first opera Alfred, albeit to a German text, is easy to explain at a time when the genre was a natural means of expression for any Czech composer with national sympathies. But Dvořák’s muse in the 1860s was unpredictable. When very few composers in Prague appeared to be writing chamber music, Dvořák produced four string quartets and a string quintet. Much the same is true of the new song cycle ‘Cypresses,’ (Cypřiše), the A major cello concerto, and of course, the two symphonies of 1865.90

Such an extended engagement with the symphony was truly without precedent in the Czech lands, so much so that Dvořák’s earliest biographer Otakar Šourek referred to Dvořák as the “founder of the Czech symphony.”91

Setting the Stage for Dvořák’s Symphony: The Stremayr Language Ordinance and its Aftermath

A rift in the musical life of Prague was paralleled by a political divide that reached a point of crisis at the time of the D-major Symphony’s composition and premiere. Dvořák’s Symphony came shortly after the Stremayr language ordinance was instituted. Named after Austrian

Minister of Justice Karl von Stremayr and established in April of 1880, the ordinance recognized Czech as an external administrative language, along with German, in certain linguistically mixed parts of Bohemia and Moravia. This meant that communication between government officials and members of the public could be conducted in Czech in these regions. The ordinance was part of a larger project, spearheaded by the reactionary Minister-President Eduard Taaffe, meant to pacify the many nationalities that co-existed in Austria. Almost immediately after putting an end to their passive politics and re-entering the Reichsrat, the Czechs had submitted a memorandum to Emperor Franz Joseph in late 1879, petitioning for linguistic equality and drawing attention to Article 19 of the Fundamental Laws of 1867, which states that “each nationality has an inviolable right to preserve and cultivate its nationality and language. The equal rights of all languages customarily spoken in the lands, in the schools, government offices, and public life are recognized by the state.” The Austrian government’s response to this memorandum was speedy; within months of its submission, Taaffe introduced the Stremayr

92 Before 1880, German had been the only external administrative language that was permitted.
93 The Badeni language ordinance of 1897 took this a step further, giving recognition to Czech as an internal administrative language in these regions; communication among government officials themselves could now be conducted in Czech.
94 In the aftermath of the failed Czech compromise under Hohenwart, delegates of the National Party initiated a boycott of the provincial diets and Reichsrat, just as they had done in the late 1860s, following the Ausgleich (see Chapter Two for a discussion of the Hohenwart interlude). Disagreements among Czech politicians over this policy of passive resistance even led to the official foundation in 1874 of two separate parties: the Old and Young Czechs (as discussed in Chapter Three); the Young Czechs disregarded these passive politics and became active in government already in 1873. It was, however, not until the late 1870s that the Old Czechs put an end to their boycott, re-entering the provincial diets in 1878 and the Reichsrat in 1879.
95 It was precisely the phrase “all languages customarily spoken in the lands” that posed a problem in the years leading up to the Stremayr ordinance of 1880. David Brodbeck explains: “whereas Czechs held that Czech should be treated as a [language customary in the land] in all Bohemia and Moravia, even in those realms inhabited mostly by Germans, the Germans insisted that only German count as such in areas where few Czechs lived, arguing that no accommodation was necessary because virtually all Czechs could speak German in any case. For that reason alone, the Germans saw the Czechs’ insistence on their point as being based not in practical need, but in political assertiveness;” Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 88.
ordinance, which was to have far-reaching implications both for the Czechs and the Germans who populated the regions in question.

The ordinance was a significant gain for the Czechs; for the first time, they were granted the right to use their native language for all business transactions with “certain designated courts and governmental agencies.”\(^97\) Peter Bugge writes that, in many respects, the ordinance merely gave formal sanction to something that was already going on in practice for some time.\(^98\) Though it appeased the Czechs, the policy placed German Bohemians and Moravians at a disadvantage, since they were far less likely than the Czechs to be bilingual. Jeremy King summarizes the situation well, when he writes that “imperial-royal civil servants who spoke only German... faced a dilemma. They could limit themselves henceforth to serving in districts and on cases in which only German was used, thereby crippling their chances for advancement, or they could tackle the humiliating chore of mastering a language widely regarded as culturally inferior, yet dauntingly difficult for non-Slavs.”\(^99\)

Naturally, Germans protested against the ordinance in a number of ways.\(^100\) Shortly thereafter, a new organization – the *Deutscher Schulverein* (German School Association) – was formed, with its headquarters in Vienna and a large following throughout Austria. The members of this organization sought to create and maintain German-language schools in areas of the

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\(^98\) As Bugge expresses it, “to a large degree the ordinance only legalized an existing state of affairs while leaving the exclusive use of German in the internal service untouched, but the German liberals protested loudly and countered by proposing that German be made the official language of Austria;” Peter Bugge, “Czech Nation-Building, National Self-Perception, and Politics, 1780–1914,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Aarhus, 1994), 159.


\(^100\) German backlash against the Badeni Ordinance of 1897 was even stronger; the policy incited demonstrations and even violence from German nationalists throughout the Austrian Empire. Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 256.
Empire where German speakers were in a minority and state-funded education was being conducted in a language other than German. The Stremayr ordinance also gave momentum to the burgeoning Joseph II cult, which idealized the rule of the iconic Emperor. The Germans of Austria were already inclined to reflect upon Joseph II’s reign, since 1880 marked his centenary; however, the Stremayr ordinance seemed to cast the Emperor in a whole new light. It had been Joseph II who had made German the official language of the state and the language of instruction in all institutions of higher education in Austria. While Derek Sayer writes that Joseph’s language policy was motivated by a desire for efficiency, rather than a desire to “Germanize” Austria, the policy was reinterpreted by Germans in the 1880s and understood in increasingly ethnic terms. Likewise, the Stremayr language ordinance served to strengthen the growing pan-German movement in Austria. In an effort to distance themselves from the other nationalities of the Empire, these pan-Germans advocated closer partnerships with Germany on the basis of linguistic ties.

A monarchy-wide census was held decennially, but, for the first time in 1880, citizens were asked to cite their language of daily use (Umgangssprache), as opposed to their national language (Landessprache). Since the census did not allow people to claim allegiance to the monarchy as a whole and contained no direct questions about nationality, language was interpreted by many as a marker of national affiliation. As Robert Evans puts it, at the time of

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101 As Nancy Wingfield points out, Czechs had established an analogous organization: the Ustřední Matice školská, which strove to defend the rights of Czech minorities in German industrial regions; Nancy Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8–9.


104 King, 59.
When the census was published in early 1881, the numbers were staggering; Czech speakers were far more widespread than anyone had previously thought, which added fuel to a debate that had already been raging for the better part of the previous year. By April 2, 1881 – a year after the Stremayr ordinance had been established – a committee met with Taaffe, seeking not only to reverse the ordinance, but to legalize German as the official state language (Staatssprache) of Austria. Similar efforts would continue to be mounted on the part of the Germans in the coming years in what William Jenks calls the “German counterattack.” On the local level in Prague, the most significant outcome of the ordinance was the split in 1881 of Charles University into two separate Czech and German institutions, with minimal contact between them. What was to be a benevolent gesture, designed to pacify relations between the diverse groups co-existing in a multi-national state, only seemed to widen the gulf between them.

The impact of these politics on Dvořák’s D-major Symphony was inevitable, since the work was written with the intent that it be premiered by the Vienna Philharmonic. The Symphony had been commissioned by the orchestra’s conductor Hans Richter (1843–1916) during Dvořák’s visit to Vienna in 1879, when a performance of Dvořák’s Third Slavonic Rhapsody had met with moderate success. By the time that Dvořák offered up the finished Symphony to Richter in the fall of 1880, however, the controversial language ordinance had been set in place, putting a damper on relations between Czechs and Germans. Although Richter assures Dvořák several times...

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107 See Judson, 196–198, esp. 197, where Judson writes that the Stremayr language ordinance helped “[accelerate] a decisive change in attitude already current among German speakers in Bohemia. These groups began to envision the possible administrative division of Bohemia into autonomous Czech and German districts as a way to protect so-called purely German areas from a growing Czech influence in Bohemian affairs.”
times in his letters that he considers the new Symphony to be beautiful, the planned Viennese performance of it was deferred several times throughout the 1880/81 concert season and eventually cancelled. Reasons for the Vienna Philharmonic’s reluctance to perform the Symphony are never fully articulated in the correspondence between Dvořák and Richter. In a letter written at the end of the season, Richter is perhaps the most candid, reassuring Dvořák that “it was not artistic reasons that made it impossible to perform [the] beautiful work [in Vienna],” but offering no further explanation. According to John Clapham, the Symphony was rejected because members of the orchestra had raised objections to performing the work of a Czech composer in two successive seasons.

David Brodbeck takes this interpretation a step further, making a connection between the Stremayr language ordinance and the Symphony’s cancellation. He points out that the Vienna Philharmonic had hardly maintained a position of political neutrality in these debates about language; in February 1881, for example, the orchestra participated in a benefit concert in order to further the cause of German hegemony. Brodbeck argues that, in spite of the Symphony’s references to the Austro-German mainstream, the work was ultimately dismissed in Vienna because it had been composed by a Czech. In other words, the Viennese did not judge Dvořák’s Symphony based on what they heard, but based on the composer’s ethnicity. It will be

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109 Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 5, 299; June 1881: “es nicht künstlerische Gründe waren, welche es mir unmöglich machten, Ihr schönes Werk aufzuführen.”


111 Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 90; Wilhelm Frey reports on this event in the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (February 22, 1881).

demonstrated below that when the Symphony was premiered in Prague, the Czechs, like the Germans, were guided by considerations of ethnicity in their assessments. These Czech critics chose to ignore the Symphony’s affinities to Brahms and Beethoven and were bent upon claiming it as their own, even if the work itself did not quite fit the bill. As a result, descriptions of the Symphony’s Czechness in the reviews are often vague. Although most critics are convinced that they hear Czech, very few of them substantiate their assertions with concrete musical evidence. More than the music, it was the politics of the day that dictated how Dvořák’s Symphony was assessed both in Vienna and Prague.

Threats of Losing Dvořák: “The covetous Germans will write ... ‘unser Dworzak!’”

The D-major Symphony’s Prague premiere in 1881 followed on the heels of some negative criticism of Dvořák in the Czech press. Only a few years earlier, Dvořák had made an international breakthrough, and since he was the first Czech composer to receive such attention outside of his homeland, the Czechs did not quite know how to come to terms with it. In some respects, Czech critics were immensely proud of Dvořák’s accomplishments, reporting regularly on his activities abroad. An issue of Dalibor from April of 1880, for example, informs readers of the incredible speed with which Dvořák’s music was being disseminated beyond the Bohemian borders and includes a list of all of the non-Czech cities in which his Slavonic Dances and Slavonic Rhapsodies had been performed to date.\footnote{Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News],” Dalibor 2, no. 10 (April 1, 1880): 78; a writer for Dalibor reports in April of 1880 that, up to that point, the Slavonic Dances had been performed in Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Hamburg, Cologne, Salzburg, Graz, Innsbruck, Braunschweig, Münster, Wiesbaden, Würzburg, Oldenburg, Halle, Breslau, Angers, London, Manchester, St. Petersburg, New York, Boston, and Baltimore; the Slavonic Rhapsodies had been given in Vienna, Budapest, Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Münster, Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Brussels, Cologne, Kassel, Nice, New York, and Boston.} Two months later, a writer for the same journal announces with discernible pride that many of Dvořák’s chamber pieces had been able to
reach audiences worldwide. In articles like these, Dvořák’s achievements are not taken as a detriment to his Czechness, but rather as representative of the triumph of all Czechs in the international sphere. They are written in the spirit of the later press coverage of Dvořák’s American sojourn, where he would be described as one, who was “called to spread the glory of the Czech name in foreign lands.”

At the same time, Dvořák’s successes abroad, particularly in German-speaking Europe, gave the Czechs cause for concern. Some critics felt that Dvořák was catering too much to non-Czech audiences at the cost of neglecting the home crowd. One such critic was Novotný, who wrote several articles for Dalibor in the fall of 1880, accusing Dvořák of pandering to the German public. In the first of these articles, dated October 1, 1880, Novotný raises objections to publisher Simrock’s tendency to print the titles and texts of Dvořák’s vocal works in German translation alone, without including the Czech originals. The article reads as an emphatic warning to Dvořák, urging him to pay more heed to Czech audiences, if he wishes to maintain a loyal following in the Czech lands:

The Czech edition of Dvořák’s Moravian Duets is completely sold out. The composer sold this work to Berlin publisher Simrock, who printed it with the German text only. No one here has the rights to a new Czech publication, and so our audience is forced to buy the German translation. A composer like Dvořák, over whom German publishers are fighting, would be able to demand the publication of each of his vocal works perhaps in five languages, not to mention German and Czech, and his wishes would always be accommodated; it is with regret that we have to take note of the fact that Dvořák has thus far not shown enough consideration toward our repertoire and audience as to take care that Czech texts and titles be printed next to the German ones. We are convinced, and it will not take long, that the covetous Germans will write of our ingenious Dvořák: “unser Dworzak!” If Dvořák cares to remain one of us – and we think that he does – he ought to

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114 Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News],” Dalibor 2, no. 18 (June 20, 1880): 142; “Dvořákovy skladby čím dále, tím většího po veškerém světě docházejí rozšíření.”

make a firm agreement with his German publishers so that he might safeguard himself against unpleasant consequences in time!\textsuperscript{116}

Here, Novotný expresses a genuine fear of losing Dvořák to the Germans. His last remark – “if Dvořák cares to remain one of us...” – is particularly striking, as it shows that, even though national affiliations were becoming increasingly consolidated in the Czech lands toward the century’s end, nationality was, to some extent, still malleable. Novotný uses terms that denote ownership, contrasting “our ingenious Dvořák” – “geniální náš Dvořák” – with a hypothetical proclamation made by the “covetous Germans”: “unser Dworzak,” where the composer’s name is purposely misspelt in order to heighten the absurdity of such a statement. With this subtle quip, Novotný marvels at what he sees as the efforts of the Germans to lay claim to a composer whose name they cannot even pronounce.

Novotný reiterates his point in another article penned some weeks later. In this case, he does not mention Dvořák by name:

Recently, we pointed quite openly to the habits of two Czech composers, who, when making their vocal pieces available to the public in foreign places, completely ignore the language of their nation. We want to believe that this was not done deliberately, but rather that the matter was left to the will and intentions of the publisher. It was, however, the abnormality of it that was bothersome in the songs: an excellent Czech composer, in whose pieces everyone is interested, and who nevertheless publishes his songs only with a German text, offends his countryman, for it is as if he were saying: I do not care to have my things sung in Czech! We spoke out against this bad habit, and everyone agreed with us; we were, however, most pleased that our words did not fall upon deaf ears for one of the composers: Mr. Václav Laub has announced to us that he asked his publisher (the Berlin firm Bote und Bock) to add a Czech text to his first book of songs \textit{Slavische}

\textsuperscript{116} V. J. Novotný, “Drobné Zprávy: Dvořákovy ‘Moravské Dvojzpěvy’ [Brief News: Dvořák’s \textit{Moravian Duets}];” \textit{Dalibor} 2, no. 28 (October 1, 1880): 222; “Dvořákovy \textit{Moravské Dvojzpěvy} v českém vydání úplně již jsou rozebrány. Skladatel prodal toto dílo berlínskému nakladateli Simrockovi, který je vytiskl pouze s německým textem. K novému českému vydání právo u nás nikdo nemá, a tak jest obecenstvo naše nuceno kupovati německý překlad. Skladatel jako Dvořák, o jehož práce se němečtí nakladatelé derou, mohl by si poručit vydání každého svého vokálního díla třeba v péti jazycech, neínut-li v německém a českém, a stalo by se vždy po jeho vůli; s politováním však musíme poznámati, že Dvořák dosud neměl tolik šetrnosti k naší literatuře hudební a k našemu obecenstvu, aby se postaral o tisk českých textů a titulů vedle německých. Jsme přesvědčeni, a nebudu to dlouho trvat, že hrabiví Němci budou psát o geniálním našem Dvořákoví: ‘unser Dworzak!’ Záleži-li Dvořákoví na tom, aby zůstal našancem – a myslíme, že záleží – tož ať různým vstoupením vůči německým nakladatelům předejde pozdějším neblahým konsekvencím ještě v čas!”
Lieder, which has thus far only appeared with a German text, and that the Berlin publisher willingly conceded to his request.\textsuperscript{117} By bringing the composer Václav Laub into the discussion, Novotný strives to prove to Dvořák that it is possible to insist upon Czech texts, when working with German publishers. The article contains even stronger language than the previous one, as Novotný sees the publications as instances of Czech composers “completely [ignoring] the language of their nation.” At a time when language was seen as a signifier of nationality, this was a serious accusation indeed. More than in the earlier article, Novotný strives to speak for the Czechs as a whole, writing phrases like “everyone agreed with us” and “[the composer] offends his countrymen.” To Novotný, Dvořák’s involvement on the international scene and more specifically, his attempts to court a German audience were only allowable as long as they did not pose a threat to the composer’s Czech identity or prevent the Czech public from having equal access to his music.

The results of this public reprimand of Dvořák were twofold. At first, he was essentially ignored in Dalibor. As Alan Houtchens observes,\textsuperscript{118} Dvořák is conspicuously absent from the journal for three months, only being given passing mention in occasional concert advertisements. In previous volumes of Dalibor, whenever Dvořák had completed a large-scale work, such as an opera or a symphony, it had been customary for the journal to print a short notice, informing readers about it. Yet, when Dvořák finished orchestrating his D-major Symphony on October 15, 1880, the composer informed his publisher:

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V. J. Novotný, “Drobné Zprávy: O hudebních publikacích v cizině [Brief News: Music Publications in Foreign Places],” Dalibor 2, no. 33 (November 20, 1880): 262; “Zcela otevřeně poukázali jsme před nedávnem k nechvalném zvyku dvou českých skladatelů, kteří při vokálních svých skladbách, jež v cizině uveřejňují, úplně ignoruji jazyk svého národa. Chceme věřit, že se tak nestalo z úmyslu, nybrž že věc ponechána byla na vůli a dobrém zdání nakladatele. Byla to však abnormita, jež hlavně při písních nemálo vadila: český komponista vyniká, o jehož skladby se každý u nás interesuje, a jenž přes vše to vydává písni své pouze s textem německým, uráží své krajané, neboť jest to tolik, jako kdyby řekl: nestojím o to, abyste mé věci po česku zpívali! Vyslovili jsme se proti zlozvyku tomu, a souhlasil s námi každý; ovšem nás nejvíce potěšilo, že slova naše aspoň u jednoho získali važného těch padla na dobrou půdu: oznámení nám pan Václav Laub, že požádal svého nakladatele (berlínskou firmu Bote a Bock), aby k prvnímu sešitu písní Slavische Lieder, který dosud vyšel pouze s německým textem, přitiskl původní český text, a že nakladatel berlínský ochotně svolil v jeho žádost.”

1880, it was passed over in silence. The message behind this silent treatment is clear: if Dvořák had seen fit to “ignore the language of [his] nation,” the writers for Dalibor would respond by ignoring Dvořák. By early 1881, however, Dvořák reached an agreement with Simrock. As a reaction to Novotný’s accusations, Dvořák had written to the German publisher in October of 1880, explaining the situation and declaring: “I am also obliged to show consideration for my countrymen, so that they too would be able to sing my songs in the Czech language.” After some hesitation, Simrock complied with Dvořák’s request, and a promise always to include Czech texts along with the German translations had managed to put Novotný’s fears to rest.

Novotný is the most direct in his last article on the subject, written after the matter had been resolved:

Of Dvořák’s pieces that have been published lately, it is mainly his Ziegeuermelodien, composed on the German translation of poems by Heyduk (the poet himself translated the poems), that are original and in all respects perfect – the best that he has written so far. That Dvořák published this, his most perfect and most Czech work in the realm of song, only with a German text was what made me the most sorry, and I communicated to him in this journal, as is well known, openly and honestly that the Czech public deserves more attention from him [and] that a Czech composer has to write, first and foremost, for a Czech audience. What good would Dvořák be to us if his works were not accessible to our audience? I have confirmed, however, that Dvořák did not do so deliberately; I have found out that Simrock will publish a new edition of these songs with Czech texts for our audience and that, next time, every vocal work of Dvořák’s will always be published with a Czech text next to the German translation. I am grateful to

119 Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 1 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1987), 231–232; October 14, 1880: “ich doch auch meinen Landsleuten die Aufmerksamkeit schuldig bin, daß sie auch meiner Lieder in böhmischer Sprache singen können.”

120 Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 5, 256–257; October 19, 1880: “den böhmischen (tschechischen) Text in Op. 55 [Ziegeuermelodien] noch unterzulegen würde die ganze Ausgabe ruinieren, hätten Sie das doch vorher gesagt! Eine neue (oder besondere Ausgabe) ist doch wieder teuer, schicken Sie mir gelegentlich ein Exemplar mit deutlich geschriebenem böhmischen Text, ich will dann sehen, wie sich’s etwa machen ließe!”

121 Given Novotný’s complaints about language, it is strange that he chooses to refer to this piece by its German title rather than its Czech one (Ciganské melodie).
our composer for this, for it eliminates the danger that his pieces could be estranged from our repertoire.\[122\]

Satisfied with the way in which Dvořák had handled the situation, Novotný, who served as editor of Dalibor at that time, was no longer compelled to give him the cold shoulder on the journal’s pages.

What followed, as a second result of this negative attention in the press, was an exaggerated need to prove to the readers of Dalibor that Dvořák’s works were, in fact, very Czech.\[123\] The review of Dvořák’s Symphony for Dalibor was one of the first extensive articles on the composer to appear in the journal after the controversy over his published scores. Written by Novotný himself,\[124\] the review, discussed below, gave the critic occasion to redeem Dvořák by characterizing this piece as a Czech nationalist composition; critics writing for other newspapers and journals portrayed it in much the same way, likely aware of the recent incident involving

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\[122\] V. J. Novotný, “Drobné Zprávy: Dvořák co skladatel písní [Brief News: Dvořák as a song composer],” Dalibor 3, no. 1 (January 1, 1881): 7; “Z posledně vydaných skladeb Dvořákových hlavně jeho Ziegeuermelodien, komponované na německý překlad básní Heydukových (básník učil překlad do němčiny sám) jsou originální a v každém ohledu dokonalé písně, nejlepší, již dosud napsal. Ze Dvořáka toto z oboru písně nejodkonalejší a nejčestější dílo vydal u Simrocka v Berlíně pouze s německým textem, toho mi právě bylo nejvíce líto, i řekl jsem mu na tomto místě, jak známo, otevřeně a zpříma, že české obecenstvo zasloužilo si větší pozornosti s jeho strany, že český skladatel především komponovatí musí pro české obecenstvo. Co by nám byl Dvořák platen, kdyby nám díla jeho nebyla přístupna? A pouze s německým textem vydána stala by se obecenstvu nášemu nepřístupnými. Přesvědčil jsem se však, že Dvořák neučinil tak zámyslně; neboť dovidám se právě, že Simrock vydá pro naše obecenstvo nové vydání těchž znamenitých písní s českým textem, a přišlože, že každá vokální práce Dvořáková vydána bude vždy s českým textem vedle německého překladu. Jsm za to pověření nášemu skladateli, neboť tím odpadne nebezpečí, že by skladby jeho mohly být odcizeny naší hudební literatuře.”

\[123\] Already in his final article on the topic of Dvořák’s vocal publications, Novotný emphasizes the irony of Dvořák’s “most Czech work” being published with a German text. (That Novotný would write this about Dvořák’s Gypsy Melodies [Ciganské Melodie], Op. 55 is another matter altogether.) With comments like these, Novotný implies that the Germans would be less likely to declare “unser Dworzak,” if it could be proven that the composer’s pieces were inherently Czech.

\[124\] N., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 83–85. Václav Juda Novotný is clearly the author of this article, though he signs it only with his initial – “N.” – rather than his full name. In his comments on Smetana’s Richard III in this review, he writes: “years ago, I provided an analysis of this piece in Dalibor; I still consider this [assessment] to be correct and I dare to bring part of it to this [discussion];” “před lety podal jsem již jednou v ‘Daliboru’ rozbor skladby té; mám jej dosud za správný i dovoluji si jej částečně uvést, na tomto vědním místě bezprostředně po živém provedení.” What follows is a lengthy excerpt from the article: Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická báseň: nástín historického vývinu těchto forem: Doba nejnovější – Liszt a stoupenci jeho u nás [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms: Most recent times – Liszt and his followers here],” Dalibor I, no. 26 (June 27, 1873): 210.
Dvořák’s vocal publications. Indeed, the incident would not be soon forgotten, as is evident in an article that appeared in Dalibor more than two years later, in 1883. Here, the anonymous author writes in no uncertain terms about Dvořák’s commitment to making his printed scores accessible to Czech audiences:

Between the lines, [Hanslick] insults our Dvořák, if he thinks that he can take him as an example of what kind of success might be achieved if one is nationally indifferent. Dvořák is a self-conscious, enthusiastic Czech – a fact that will certainly be demonstrated in the future, as it was in the past. Sometimes his publishers insulted us by ignoring the audience, for which Dvořák is writing first and foremost, but the composer himself has shown clearly that he sees it as a question of his honour that the purely Czech origins of his works never be denied, that all published vocal music have Czech words, and that they be based on a Czech text; indeed, he ensured that even his instrumental works with particular Czech significance be given Czech titles.125

It was Eduard Hanslick’s (1825–1904) review of Fibich’s Piano Quartet, Op. 11 that had incited this outburst.126 The Czech critic’s comments in response to Hanslick show, as David Brodbeck has demonstrated, how vastly Prague in the 1880s had changed since the time of Hanslick’s

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126 Though Hanslick’s assessment of the actual piece is quite favourable, the Czech critic is taken aback by Hanslick’s opening remarks. The following excerpt from Hanslick’s review is quoted in the Dalibor article: “The name of this Prague composer was completely unfamiliar to us until now, even though, according to some kind of Czech calendar, he had written numerous works, since the age of ten: operas, symphonies, overtures, and sonatas. The European music world did not know about these pieces probably because they have Czech titles and dedications and poetic titles taken from Czech legends and history. Mr. Fibich, whose musical education was conducted in Vienna, Leipzig, and Mannheim, shall, I hope, relinquish these childish fancies that would completely cut him off from the music world – a world, in which Fibich no doubt wants to be active. Among Czech youths, there are probably other talented musicians, who deserve to be known beyond their own homeland, but they deprive themselves of their futures with petty national flaunting (verily I say, this is ‘small national panache’);” “Jméno tohoto pražského skladatele bylo nám posud úplně neznámo, ačkoliv podle jakéhosi českého kalendáře hudebního od deseti let napsal četná díla, opery, symfonie, ouvertury a sonaty. O skladbách těch hudební svět evropský neví, asi proto, že mají české tituly a dedikace z části též poetické nápisy z českých bájí a dějin. Pan Fibich, jehož hudební vzdělání pochází z Vídni, Lipska a Mannheimu, nechá, jak doufám, tohoto dětínského rozmaru, který by jej úplně oddělil od hudebního světa, v nějž předce Fibich působit chce. Mezi mladými Čechy jsou asi ještě jiní nadání hudebníci, kteří by zasloužili, aby byli známi také mimo svůj domov, ale sami se připravují o svou budoucnost’ malicherným národním vypínáním (ipsissima verba jsou ‘kleinationale Grossthuerei’);” the original article appeared in Neue Freie Presse.
youth, when language was not yet taken as an earmark of nationality *per se*.\(^{127}\) For composers of Dvořák’s generation, something as seemingly trivial as the language of a work’s title could mean the difference between “nationally indifferent” and “self-consciously Czech.”

It has already been noted that Novotný’s complaints against Dvořák in 1880 were motivated by a fear of losing him to the Germans. This fear was not wholly unfounded, since there were times when the composer was being lured to Vienna by some of his colleagues. The most overt invitation came from none other than Hanslick. In a letter to Dvořák dated June 11, 1882, Hanslick offers two pieces of advice. Firstly, he urges Dvořák to familiarize himself with “good German poetry” and to use these poems as texts for his vocal works. As Hanslick phrases it,

> The world expects larger vocal works from you and those will hardly completely satisfy, if they are not felt out from and composed based on German poetry. You should not, I believe, persist in always composing only on Czech texts for a very small public, while your large public is put off by poor translations and easily makes a skewed assessment [of your work].\(^{128}\)

These words stand in stark contrast to Novotný’s, showing just how much Dvořák was being pulled in different directions. Hanslick’s second suggestion to Dvořák is that he consider spending some time away from his homeland: “in general,” writes Hanslick, “it would, in my opinion, be a great advantage for your artistic development and for your success if you lived for one to two years at a distance from Prague; Vienna would be best.”\(^{129}\) More than advising

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\(^{128}\) Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 5, 387; June 11, 1882: “Die Welt erwartet von Ihnen auch größere Vokalkompositionen, und diese werden kaum vollständig befriedigen, wenn sie nicht aus deutscher Poesie herausempfunden und herauskomponiert sind. Sie dürfen, glaube ich, nicht dabei bleiben, immer nur böhmische Texte zu komponieren für ein sehr kleines Publikum, während Ihr großes Publikum mit schlechten Übersetzungen abgespeist wird und leicht ein schiefe Urteil fällt.”

Dvořák to settle in the Austrian capital, Hanslick stresses the need to leave Prague and its “provincial” Czech audience. Understanding that such a suggestion might be met with considerable hesitance on Dvořák’s part, Hanslick continues: “you do not have to become a defector as a result. However, after such big early successes, your art needs wider horizons, a German environment, [and] a larger non-Czech public.”

Whether Czech critics were aware of Hanslick’s advice is unclear. If they knew about it, they would have certainly seen this as a potential threat, since any recommendations made by Hanslick were likely to be taken very seriously; the critic had been instrumental in launching Dvořák’s international career, and Dvořák held him in high regard. A further beckoning to Vienna may have come from Dvořák’s other staunch supporter in Austria: Brahms. Though perhaps not as forthcoming as Hanslick, Brahms does confess in a letter to Simrock dated November 7, 1887 that he had wanted Dvořák to move to Vienna several years earlier. Dvořák would not be persuaded, but the pressures that he faced from these men – especially Hanslick, who himself had left his Bohemian origins far behind – are not to be underestimated.

Even after his death, Dvořák’s legacy would continue to be haunted by the notion that he was, in some ways, estranged to the Czechs because of his international reach. A critique that

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130 Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 5, 388; June 11, 1882: “Sie brauchen deshalb kein Abtrünniger zu werden. Aber Ihre Kunst braucht nach so großen ersten Erfolgen einen weiteren Horizont, eine deutsche Umgebung, ein größeres, nicht-tschechisches Publikum.”

131 Dvořák’s reaction is likewise unclear. Scholars have not been able to locate a letter from Dvořák to Hanslick in response to this.

132 Hostinský claims that Hanslick was also held in high regard by the general Czech public. According to Hostinský, Hanslick’s views were considered by many Czechs to have “infallible” (“neomyln[ý]) authority during the late nineteenth century; Hostinský, “Antonín Dvořák ve vývoji naši hudby dramatické [Antonín Dvořák’s role in the development of our dramatic music],” 219.

would be leveled at him by the anti-Dvořák crowd of the early twentieth century was that his music was too much of an amalgam of foreign influences. Since, to these critics, Smetana’s music was a measuring stick of Czechness, any work that was stylistically distant from Smetana was bound to seem un-Czech to them by comparison. The accusation that Dvořák’s music is insufficiently Czech came as early as 1901, in Zdeněk Nejedlý’s (1878–1962) review of Rusalka, though Nejedlý limits his specific remarks to the text declamation in Dvořák’s operas and does not imply that all of Dvořák’s works are equally un-Czech. The idea of Dvořák somehow lying outside of an established lineage of Czech composers would resurface a decade after Nejedlý’s review and become the rallying cry of the anti-Dvořák camp.

Closely related to this is the charge that Dvořák’s music lacks originality, which was also prevalent among those who took a stance against the composer at the time of the infamous battles. Otakar Zich (1879–1934) was the first to argue that Dvořák had relied too heavily on foreign, mostly German, models, without considering their appropriateness. Nejedlý echoes this claim in the journal Smetana, where he asserts that Dvořák’s main problem is his eclecticism and characterizes “every one of his pieces [as] a struggle with foreign musical material.” The idea is taken even further in the writings of Josef Bartoš (1887–1952), who devotes a whole section of his controversial book on Dvořák from 1913 to proving that the composer did not have a distinct style of his own: “with [Dvořák] we can observe a trait that is truly tragic, even if, on first glance, it seemed to be very happy” Bartoš asserts; “declared a composer of world-renown at a time when he was completely dependent on his models, Dvořák was forced, during the

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134 Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Dvořáková Rusalka [Dvořák’s Rusalka],” Rozhledy 11, no. 8 (May 25, 1901): 205–209. See Chapter One for a longer discussion of this review and Appendix 9 for the full article in English translation.


second half of his life, precisely by his fateful international reputation, to create work upon work, without having the time to think them through.”\textsuperscript{137} Among the alleged “models,” Bartoš counts Bach, Beethoven, Berlioz, Boieldieu, Brahms, Flotow, Handel, Gluck, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Lortzing, Schubert, Schumann, Smetana, Verdi, Wagner, and Weber.\textsuperscript{138} That this list consists, by and large, of German composers is beside the point; Bartoš reduces Dvořák to a plagiarist – a composer, who did not have a clear identity, be it Czech or German. Such views as Nejedlý’s and Bartoš’s were, of course, extreme and motivated by the belief that the works of their favourites, including Smetana, Fibich, and Foerster, were not being performed often enough in early twentieth-century Prague in comparison with those of Dvořák. However, these examples show that, already during Dvořák’s life and certainly after his death, many Czech critics approached his contact with international, and particularly German, audiences with a mixture of pride and scepticism.

Dvořák was involved with Austrians and Germans at various points in his career, sometimes to a greater extent than certain Czech critics would have liked. Hostinský, for instance, disapproved of the apparent hold that Hanslick had on Dvořák, possibly because he felt that Hanslick was attempting to sway Dvořák’s career in a Viennese direction.\textsuperscript{139} Czech critics gladly provided statistics, boasting of how many international performances of Dvořák’s music had taken place in a given year, but they also did not hesitate to remind Dvořák that his ultimate

\textsuperscript{137} Josef Bartoš, \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Kritická Studie} [\textit{Antonín Dvořák: Critical Studies}] (Prague: Josef Pelcl, 1913), 13; “tu lze u něho pozorovat rys opravdu tragický, třebaže na první pohled se zdál naopak velmi radostným; prohlášen byv za skladatele světového jména v době úplné závislosti na svých předložbách, Dvořák naopak v druhé půli života je nucen právě tou osudnou světovou pověstí kupiti díla na díla, aniž stačí je promýšleti.” Josef Bartoš is not to be confused with the Czech musicologist František Bartoš (1905–1973).

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Ibid.}, 13.

\textsuperscript{139} See fn. 132 above.
loyalty lay with the Czechs and were eager to quell any signs that he was making the German public a priority.140

Speaking German, Hearing Czech

Language was a heated topic of debate in the Czech lands both among politicians and music critics; it had been a large point of contention for representatives in the Austrian parliament in the spring of 1880 and for Novotný on the pages of Dalibor in the fall of the same year. Becoming increasingly synonymous with nationality, the language that one used, whether for business transactions or music publications, was not insignificant, but sent a powerful message. It was against this political and cultural backdrop that Dvořák’s D-major Symphony was premiered in Prague in March of 1881. Issues of language in Dvořák’s Symphony are complicated by the fact that the genre lacks words and explicit extra-musical associations. The critic for Dalibor, cited above, stipulates that vocal compositions and “instrumental works with particular Czech significance be given Czech titles.”141 On first glance, this would seem to exclude the symphony; yet, the genre was by no means immune to language politics, as Dvořák himself would later demonstrate. Some of his most fiery exchanges with Simrock in 1885 had to

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140 Dvořák and Simrock did battle during the 1880s over issues, such as whether Dvořák’s first name ought to appear as “Antonín,” “Anton,” or simply “Ant.” on the title pages of his printed scores. This was a matter of no small importance to Dvořák. In a series of letters written during the months of July to September 1885, Dvořák makes it clear to Simrock that he objects to the practice of printing the Germanized form of his name, “Anton.” Alan Houtchens describes Simrock’s habit of using “Anton” as a thorn in Dvořák’s side; Houtchens, “A Critical Study of Antonín Dvořák’s Vanda,” 21. In a letter to Simrock dated August 8, 1885, Dvořák writes: “include only Ant., not Anton. This is good for both languages;” Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1988), 75. Simrock’s flippant response to this letter and his failure to appease Dvořák provoked the composer to the following remarks: “what I asked of you was only a personal wish, and if you cannot fulfill it, I am justified in seeing in it a lack of goodwill on your part, such as I have not come across either among English or French publishers;” “das, was ich von Ihnen verlangte, war bloß mein Wunsch, und wenn Sie mir das nicht erfüllen können, so habe ich Recht, es als eine Ungefälligkeit von Ihnen zu betrachten, die ich weder bei englischen noch französischen Verlegern gefunden habe;” Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2, 87. The second letter is quoted in English translation in Houtchens, 21.

141 Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News].” Dalibor 5, no. 9 (March 7, 1883): 89; “instrumentální díla jeho zvláštního národního významu měla též český titul.” (The emphasis is mine.)
do with the language in which the title of his Symphony in D minor, Op. 70 was to appear on the opening page of its published score.\textsuperscript{142} Language figured no less prominently in critical discussions of the D-major Symphony, moving beyond simply the issue of its title. Seeking to secure Dvořák, Czech critics set about to convince their readers of this Symphony’s Czechness. No gesture as simple as changing a text from German to Czech could be used for Dvořák’s Symphony in order to persuade the public that it was a nationalist work. In the absence of a Czech text, the critics had to find other means of doing so.

One such means was failing to acknowledge that the Symphony had anything to do with Vienna. Nowhere in these reviews is there mention that the piece was supposed to be premiered in the Habsburg capital and that its performance in Prague had been arranged only after it was rejected by the Vienna Philharmonic. Czech critics could hardly have been ignorant of the Symphony’s back story. Journalists in Prague were generally well informed about musical events taking place in other European cities, and Dalibor had a Viennese correspondent,\textsuperscript{143} who was entrusted with the task of reporting on musical activities there. Furthermore, Dvořák’s attempt to have the Symphony performed in Vienna had been quite an ordeal – one that could scarcely have been kept quiet. It involved lengthy negotiations with Richter and required Dvořák to visit the city in November of 1880. All of these factors suggest that the critics withheld this information deliberately, even if divulging it might have given them an opportunity to show that the

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\item \textsuperscript{142} Since the Czech “symfonie” differs from the German “Sinfonie” by only two letters, this was not a question of legibility, but a matter of principle. In a letter to Simrock dated August 8, 1885, Dvořák writes: “Would it not be better if you had the Czech and German titles printed separately? I think that this would help the Czech and the German public. Some do not like to see German, others do not like to see Czech. So please do this; it is in my [best] interest and the costs are certainly not so big;” “Wäre es nicht besser, wenn Sie den böhmischen und deutschen Titel auf das Umschlagsblatt extra drucken lassen? Ich glaube ja, es wäre damit dem böhmischen und deutschen Publikum geholfen. Viele sehen das Deutsche, viele das Böhmische nicht gern. Also bitte, tun Sie das, es ist auch in meinem Interesse und die Unkosten sind ja nicht so groß;” Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2, 75; also, see fn. 140 above. (Now known as his Seventh Symphony, Dvořák’s D-minor, Op. 70 was referred to as his Second Symphony during his life.)
\item \textsuperscript{143} One of the Viennese correspondents for Dalibor during the 1880s was Edvard Moučka. See Chapter Three for his remarks on the Viennese performance of Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant (Šelma Sedlák).
\end{itemize}
Austrians were prejudiced. That critics would strive to conceal the Symphony’s Viennese background is understandable. After all, Novotný would have had difficulty assuring readers of the work’s Czechness, if they knew that this “Czech Spring Symphony” had actually been designed for the Vienna Philharmonic and that Prague had only been Dvořák’s second choice for its premiere.

Dvořák’s earliest Czech biographer, Otakar Šourek, goes so far as to construct a counter-narrative for the Symphony’s origins in his monograph from 1916. In Šourek’s words,

[Dvořák’s Symphony] is a work that is, in its spirit and expression, among the most Czech! Its roots lie in the soil of the Czech countryside, and Dvořák’s love for the Czech land that gave birth to him, his love for Czech landscapes, Czech nature, and the Czech people is communicated in every bar, which sings out with full sincerity in the clearest and liveliest colours. The merriment, humour, and passion of the Czech people live in this Symphony; from it, there flows the fragrance and there sounds the song of the Czech meadows and forests. Perhaps his visit to Zlonice, for a concert that took place a day before he started writing the Symphony, reminded Dvořák of a time long past, when he was growing up among the country folk and experiencing years of happy, carefree youth. [It is possible] that his brief contact with the town, where he first became musically active, and his contact with its inhabitants inspired a work that is so joyfully youthful and warmed with love for the Czech countryside.145

Apart from claiming that the Symphony evokes images of rural Bohemia, Šourek hypothesizes that it was inspired by Dvořák’s trip in the summer of 1880 to the town of Zlonice, where he had attended school from 1853 to 1856. Šourek then proceeds to downplay the work’s similarity to Brahms’s Second Symphony. Though he recognizes that the two works are written in the same

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144 Czech critics did not keep readers in ignorance of the scandalous way in which Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant (Šelma Sedlák) had been received in Vienna in 1885; on the contrary, it gave them occasion to draw public attention in Prague to the prejudice of Viennese audiences and critics. See Chapter Three.

145 Otakar Šourek, Život a Dílo Ant. Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Ant. Dvořák], vol. 2 (Prague: Hudební Matice Umělecké Besedy, 1916), 117–118; “je to dílo duchem a výrazem z nejčeštejších! Kořeny svými tkví v půdě českého venkova a Dvořáková láska k půdě, jež ho zrodila, jeho lásku k českému kraji, k české přírodě a k českému lidu mluví v něm z každé myšlenky, z každého taktu, rozepívavajíc se s plnou upřímností v barvách nejjasnějších a nejživějších. Žije v symfonii veseli, humor i vášeň českého lidu, dýchá vvně a jásá zpěv českých niv a lesů. Snad že návštěva Zlonice u příležitosti koncertu, jenž konal se právě den před započetím partitury symfonie, ožila v Dvořákových myšlenkách dobu dávno minulou, kdy vyrůstal ještě mezi venkovským lidem a prožíval léta šťastného, bezstarostného mládí, že krátký styk s městečkem, jež bylo kdysi jeho prvním hudebním působisťem, i styk s jeho obyvatelstvem inspirovaly dílo tak radostně mladistvé a láskou k českému venkovu prohřáté.”
basic tonality and that they resemble each other at the beginning of their respective finales, he writes:

In terms of content, mood, and the character of the material, the two symphonies as a whole and in their individual parts are immensely distant. Brahms moves from the half-wistful, half-sentimental, yet noble Romanticism of the first movement, in which every accent is used apprehensively and sparingly, to the Byronic pessimism of the Adagio, and only in the shy, adorable grins of the Minuet does he start to get to the joyous mood of the final movement. In contrast, each movement of Dvořák’s symphony is an expression of life’s radiance, courage, joy, and merriment.146

Like many of the first critics, Šourek strives to weaken the work’s ties to the Viennese symphonic tradition.

That Šourek would even venture a comparison to Brahms is rare in the early Czech literature on Dvořák’s D-major Symphony. Czech critics of the 1880s do not address the Symphony’s allusions to the works of Austro-German composers, and in this way, they stand apart from contemporary foreign critics. From the first, reviewers from parts of German-speaking Europe detected some parallels between Dvořák’s D-major Symphony and the symphonies of Beethoven. Reporting on its Graz premiere in 1882, the critic for Tagespost writes of Dvořák’s Symphony: “in the first movement, it seemed as if, in some places, the gigantic shadow of Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony appeared. In general, this work tries to prove that symphonies, in the Beethoven sense of the word, are still possible.”147 Similar comparisons are offered in Morgenpost, where the critic comments on the rarity of symphonies in the Beethoven vein during the late nineteenth century: “there have been scarcely five symphonies, like this one by

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146 Šourek, Život a Dílo Ant. Dvořáka [The Life and Works of Ant. Dvořák], vol. 2, 117; “obsahem, náladou, i povahou myšlenkového materiálu jsou obě symfonie v celku i v jednotlivých částech nesmírně vzdáleny. Brahmsova přechází z polrozutěné, polorozcitlivé, ovšem nejvýš ušlechtilé romantiky ve větě prvé, v níž jakoby s každým akcentem bylo přímo úzkostlivě spočteno, v byronovský pessimismus adagia a teprve přes nesmělé, roztomile úsměvy menuetu dostává se k rozradostněné náladě věty finální. Ve Dvořákově symfonii naproti tomu co věta, to projev životního jasu, odvahy, radosti a veselí.”

147 Quoted from Tagespost and translated into Czech in N., “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art],” Pokrok 14, no. 333 (December 8, 1882): 3; “V první větě zdálo se, jako by se tu místy objevil obrovský stín heroické symfonie Beethovenovy. Vůbec snaží se to dilo důkázati, že jsou ještě možny symfonie v Beethovenovském smyslu.”
Dvořák, written since the time of Beethoven, and after this work, we can count the composer Dvořák among the foremost symphonists of our time.” Later in the review, the Morgenpost critic specifies the Beethoven connection, stating that “the construction as well as the selection of motives draws on Beethoven. There have been many students, who knew how to handle the form of the symphony, but very few of them have been able to pay attention to the content too.”

To the critic writing for the Frankfurt-based newspaper Signale, Dvořák’s Symphony seems to call to mind not only Beethoven, but also Schubert and Mendelssohn. Likewise, Hanslick points to certain “isolated echoes” of the “great masters” in Dvořák’s Symphony, mentioning Beethoven and Schubert by name in his review from 1883. Both the critic for Signale and Hanslick consider these references to the Austro-German symphonic past to be obvious, so much so that they detract from Dvořák’s originality. Rather than seeing these “echoes” as elements working in Dvořák’s favour, they treat them almost as flaws – forgivable only because they are fleeting.

Whether these non-Czech critics approved of Dvořák’s approach or not, discussions of the Symphony’s position in relation to a larger Austro-German tradition seemed unavoidable to them. Meanwhile, the issue is never broached by Czech reviewers writing in the 1880s.

The Czech critics’ silence on this subject is particularly unusual, given that Beethoven’s name appears in Czech reviews of other Dvořák symphonies. When reviewing the 1879 Prague

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148 Quoted from Morgenpost and translated into Czech in N., “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art],” Pokrok 14, no. 333 (December 8, 1882): 3; “Takových symfonií, jako tato Dvořáková, od času Beethovenových sotva asi pět bylo napsáno, i můžeme skladatele Dvořáka dle této práce počítati k prvním symfonikům naší doby... Stavba a sestrojení, respektive volba motivů spočívá na Beethovenově. Bylo již mnoho učelivých žáků, kteří dosud roucho symfonické uměli upraviti, však obsahem zároveň rozechřáli, to dosud máloktéří z nich dovedl.”

149 Included in Czech translation in Unsigned, “Česká hudba v cizině [Czech Music Abroad],” Dalibor 5, no. 10 (March 14, 1883): 99; “most effective was the scherzo, which is also the most full of originality, whereas the other movements do not achieve this originality and the reminiscences to Beethoven, Schubert, and Mendelssohn are overly patent;” “nejvíce účinkovalo scherzo, které také co do vynalézavosti nejvíce jest járá, kdežto v ostatních větách vynalézavosti této nedostává se a reminiscense na Beethovena, Schuberta a Mendelssohna přece jen příliš jsou patrný.”

premiere of Dvořák’s F-major Symphony, for example, Novotný does not shy away from discussing the work’s formal similarities to Beethoven or its indebtedness to Schumann with respect to melodic and harmonic content.\textsuperscript{151} Beethoven is also cited, albeit carefully, in the 1885 Dalibor review of Dvořák’s D-minor Symphony, Op. 70; the critic writes: “in its contour, the first movement [of Dvořák’s Symphony], Allegro moderato, has some parallels with Beethoven’s symphonic form, especially [with works] from Beethoven’s third creative period (of course this is a subjective opinion, which I would not want anyone to misinterpret).”\textsuperscript{152} By including this disclaimer in parentheses, the critic acknowledges that he might be treading on dangerous territory, but he does not avoid addressing Beethoven entirely.

In the case of the D-major Symphony, critics had just as much cause to bring Beethoven into the discussion, perhaps even more so. The work’s opening measures bear a resemblance to the beginning of one of Beethoven’s best-known symphonies: the Eroica. Both pieces feature an upward leap of a fourth in the cellos and basses, set against a rhythmically persistent accompaniment. The Eroica connection becomes more apparent later in Dvořák’s sonata-form first movement; much like Beethoven, Dvořák uses a descending, rhythmic figure, consisting of one eighth note and two sixteenths, as a transitional theme (see Examples 4.2 and 4.3).\textsuperscript{153}

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotetext[151]{V. J. Novotný, “Slovanský Koncert [Slavonic Concert],” Dalibor 1, no. 10 (April 1, 1879): 77; “[Dvořáková Symfonie] jest co do formy psána ve smyslu symfonických prác Beethovenových, v melodickém i harmonickém ohledu připomíná zejmena v první větě na vrouci výraz hudby Schumannovy…”}
\footnotetext[152]{Stkr., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 7, no. 45 (December 7, 1885): 445; “prvá věta [Dvořákovy symfonie] ‘Allegro moderato’ tvoří v kontuře poněkud paralelně se symfonickou formou Beethovenovou, najmě ze třetí periody Beethovenova tvoření (ovšem nám jenž nám nebudiž ve zlou stránku vykládání).’” Later in the review, the critic quotes from Louis Ehlert’s “Briefe über Musik” and suggests that Dvořák has provided the answer to Ehlert’s perpetual question about whether or not symphonies could be written after Beethoven. Ehlert declares: “one day there will certainly come a genius, who, to the amazement of the world, will be able to shed new light on these forms” and the Czech critic answers: “those who heard Dvořák’s opus will understand [why I am quoting the words of this accepted critic]. If today is not the day [to which Ehlert refers], it is certainly not far off anymore!” Ehlert: “přijdě dojista jednou genius, jenž v úžasu světa rozhlí je po těchto formách světlo zcela nově;” Czech critic: “kdo Dvořákovo opus slyšel, porozuměl nám dojista [proč citujeme slova na slovo vztahého kritika]. Neni-li snad dnes ještě ona doba, dalecto již asi není!”}
\footnotetext[153]{Dvořák introduces an ascending version of this rhythmic figure as accompaniment for the secondary theme. The rhythmic figure is used in this way in the coda of Beethoven’s movement (m. 631 and following). A.
Example 4.2: The first movement of Dvořák’s D-major Symphony (mm. 101–108) (string section).

Example 4.3: The first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, *Eroica* (mm. 61–68).
Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4* (New York: Dover, 1989), 108.

The second movement of Dvořák’s Symphony likewise has some elements that are reminiscent of Beethoven. A brief introduction played by the woodwinds ushers in a tranquil main theme in the strings; in terms of melody and instrumentation, this passage owes much to the slow movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The way in which Dvořák varies the opening material in this rondo-form second movement is also similar to Beethoven’s approach in the parallel movement of his Fifth Symphony. As these examples demonstrate, Dvořák, in his D-
major Symphony, does not allude to Beethoven at his most obscure, but makes conspicuous references to some of the composer’s most renowned symphonic works – ones that would have undoubtedly been familiar to critics and audiences in Prague, since Beethoven’s orchestral compositions appeared regularly on the city’s concert programmes.\(^{156}\) That Czech critics do not comment on these similarities to Beethoven suggests that the topic was taboo in the early 1880s.

Beethoven is referenced relatively frequently in non-Czech assessments of Dvořák’s D-major Symphony, as noted above; however, Brahms is given very little mention in any of the contemporary literature. It is mainly in the English reviews that his name comes up, and in most cases, he is listed as one of several composers, who had laid the foundation for Dvořák’s work as a symphonist.\(^{157}\) Brahms’s absence from these early reviews is curious, considering that he is quite prominent in much of the more recent scholarship on Dvořák’s Symphony. The notion that Brahms’s Second Symphony in particular served as a model for Dvořák has become so ingrained that it does not need to be rehearsed here. It will suffice to point out some of the more general ways in which these two works have been linked together.\(^{158}\) The closest melodic resemblance – one that is even acknowledged by Šourek – can be heard at the beginning of the finales (see Examples 4.4 and 4.5).

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\(^{157}\) Unsigned, “Richter Concerts,” The Morning Post no. 34289 (May 18, 1882): 3; Unsigned, “The Richter Concerts,” The Era no. 2278 (May 20, 1882); Unsigned, “Crystal Palace,” The Times no. 30496 (May 2, 1882): 4; Brahms’s name seems to come up in German reviews of some of Dvořák’s other pieces; a writer for the Hamburger Fremdenblatt writes as follows in May 1881: “[Dvořák’s Trio in B-flat major, Op. 21] is an interesting work in all its particulars, which remind us of another contemporary composer in terms of ideas – one, who has been recognized by the entire musical world as the best in the realm of chamber music: J. Brahms. We find true Brahms features in Dvořák quite often, namely in the B-flat major Trio;” “[Dvořákovo trio do B-dur, op. 21 je] zajímavé dílo, jež, pripomíná-li jiného novějšího skladatele, toliko k ideám onoho mistra se drží, jehož celý hudební svět uznal za nejvýšečnéjšího na poli hudby komorní – J. Brahms. Pravé Brahmsovské rysy nalezáme u Dvořáka dosti často, tak opět v jeho triu do B-dur;” Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News],” Dalibor 3, no. 15 (May 20, 1881): 121.

\(^{158}\) Scholars often point to superficial similarities, like the common tonality (D major) and the nearly identical tempo markings for the outer movements. Brahms: Allegro non troppo and Allegro spirito, respectively; Dvořák: Allegro non tanto and Finale: Allegro con spirito – Presto, respectively.
Example 4.4: The opening of the finale of Dvořák's Symphony in D major, Op. 60 (mm. 1–8) (string section)  
Antonín Dvořák, Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7 (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 84.

Example 4.5: The opening of the finale of Brahms's Symphony No. 2 in D major (mm. 1–9) (string section)  

David Beveridge and A. Peter Brown agree, however, that it is especially with regard to formal design, rather than thematic construction that Dvořák channels Brahms in his Symphony. In comparison with his earlier sonata forms, Dvořák offers a clearer sense of closure at the end of the exposition of the first movement in his D-major Symphony. Within the recapitulation of the same movement, the principal theme appears in an abbreviated version, whereas the secondary theme is given a full statement. Likewise, in his D-major Symphony, Dvořák strives, perhaps more than in any of his earlier works in the genre, to achieve a strong sense of organicism across
the movements. To this end, Dvořák embeds into the principal theme of the finale subtle
references to the opening theme of the first movement.\footnote{All three of these formal similarities are discussed in David Beveridge, “Romantic Ideals in a Classical Frame: The Sonata Forms of Dvořák,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1980), 268–287 and A. Peter Brown, The Second Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Brahms, Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, and Selected Contemporaries, vol. 4 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 373–384.} All of these techniques can be heard in Brahms’s Second Symphony, prompting scholars to speculate that Dvořák looked to the work of his older Viennese contemporary before setting pen to paper in the summer of 1880. It is easy to see why scholars would make the comparison, since Dvořák wrote his work for the Vienna Philharmonic and Brahms’s Symphony had enjoyed remarkable success when it was performed by that orchestra only a few years earlier, in 1877.\footnote{One other reference in Dvořák’s work – not to Brahms’s Second Symphony, but to his First – warrants mention. The theme that appears at the start of the B section in Dvořák’s rondo-form second movement (m. 35 and following) is strongly akin to the horn theme that emerges in the slow introduction to the finale of Brahms’s Symphony No. 1 (m. 30 and following). Not only are the two melodies alike in contour, but both are heralded by an interruption, with an abrupt change of key.} The wider Czech audience was probably unable to pick up on these connections; after all, Brahms’s works were not performed at any of Prague’s major orchestral concerts in the 1870s and 80s.\footnote{Overall, Brahms’s orchestral works were performed rarely in Prague between 1860 and 1895; see Prague concert listings in Lébl and Ludová, “Pražské orchestrální koncerty v letech 1860–1895 [Prague Orchestral Concerts in the Years 1860–1895],” 127–136.} Critics, however, were likely familiar with the symphonies that Brahms had written to date, since they prided themselves on keeping pace with developments in the musical world. By 1881, these critics certainly knew about Dvořák’s contacts with Brahms – a composer, who was quickly developing a reputation of being the foremost symphonist of his time, no less – and it would have been natural for them to mention the composer in some way in their reviews. That they did not do so suggests that they may have wanted to emphasize Dvořák’s independence from Austro-German models.

In addition to deflecting attention away from Vienna, Dvořák’s Czech critics use their reviews to underscore the one aspect of the Symphony that was indisputably Czech: the Scherzo. The idea that the Scherzo was the most “Czech” movement in any given symphony by a
Bohemian composer was well established. It had been the Scherzo of Smetana’s “Triumphal” Symphony that had continued to be performed during the 1860s and 70s, even as the rest of the work faded into oblivion. Critics had also emphasized the “Czechness” of the Scherzo movements in the Dvořák symphonies that had previously been given in Prague. Premiered as a standalone movement in 1874, the Scherzo of Dvořák’s D-minor Symphony, now referred to as his Fourth, was considered to be Czech to its core – a piece, in which the composer “uses motives from Czech folk songs with masterful skill.”

Likewise, following the 1879 performance in Prague of Dvořák’s F-major Symphony, currently known as his Fifth, the Scherzo was called a “true Czech pearl” that “speaks to us in a completely Czech way,” while the Symphony’s other movements were thought to be foreign in their conception. This Czech criticism from the past set up the expectation that the Scherzo movement of Dvořák’s D-major Symphony was also going to be uniquely Czech.

The piece did not disappoint; in fact, the D-major bears the distinction of being the only Dvořák symphony explicitly to include a Furiant movement in place of the Scherzo. A Furiant

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163 V. J. Novotný, “Slovenský Koncert [Slavonic Concert],” Dalibor I, no. 10 (April 1, 1879): 77; “pravá česká perla;” “k nám úplně po česku hovoří.” According to Novotný, Dvořák composed the first movement “under a foreign influence” (“pod vlivem cizím”) and the second and final movements after having embarked on “a diligent study of the folk music of Ruthenia” (“pilné studium národní hudby maloruské”). A critic for Dalibor would later address the “foreign” elements in Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony as follows: “clear signs of foreign origin do not inhibit the master’s ability to envelope the whole with the indefinable loveliness and freshness that are characteristic of only his creations… The work’s success [in Prague] best deflected the various accusations made before this performance was carried out, such as the idea that Dvořák had become estranged from his previous direction and style…;” “zřejmá cizorodost ukáze těchto nevadí však mistrůvi, aby opříčně dovedl celek onou nevystižnou půvabností a svěžostí, která jen jeho tvorbu ještěm… Úspěch díla [v Praze] vytvářel nejlépe různé pochybnosti před provedením jeho prováděné jako by se byl Dvořák symfonii ‘Z nového světa’ dosavadnímu směru a rázu své hudby odcizil…” Frant. K. Hejda, “Česká hudba v roce 1894 [Czech Music in the Year 1894],” Dalibor 17, no. 1 (December 29, 1894): 4.
164 The inclusion of a Furiant movement seems to have been a clever strategic move on Dvořák’s part. The Furiant is given prominence in Dvořák’s Slavonic Dances, Op. 46, framing the work as the first and last numbers (Dvořák’s second set of Slavonic Dances, Op. 72 lacks a Furiant); thus, the Furiant in Dvořák’s Symphony could be interpreted as a subtle nod to the collection of dances that had helped to establish his international reputation. In his study from 1887 on the symphony as a genre, German musicologist Hermann Kretzschmar (1848–1924) makes an
is, by definition, a fast-paced dance in triple meter, with regular four-measure phrases; its most characteristic feature is the hemiola rhythm, which temporarily displaces the basic beat in the opening two measures. In a series of anecdotes written for Dalibor in 1911 – exactly thirty years after the Symphony’s Prague premiere – Novotný claims that the idea of composing a Furiant occurred to Dvořák after attending mass with his friend Alois Goebl (1841–1907) in Vysoká – a small town, where Dvořák would later purchase a summer home. Novotný tells a colourful tale, complete with dialogue, about how Dvořák was struggling with the Scherzo movement of his Symphony, whereupon Goebl invited him to a festive mass taking place in the town as part of a pilgrimage:

“Come,” urged Goebl, “you cannot keep your nose buried in the music for so long, and if [your work] is not going as well as you would like, a short break might be just what you need. Besides, a pilgrimage may provide the best material for a scherzo.” Finally Dvořák gave in... [Upon leaving the church after the mass was over, Dvořák declared] “I have it!” Turning in that moment toward Goebl, [he said] with a smile, “instead of the usual scherzo, I will include the national Czech dance furiant in my symphony. It has a dynamic rhythm, well-suited for the scherzo, and note well that it will be a novelty!” “You see,” said Goebl, smiling; “I told you that you would find material for your scherzo here.”

explicit connection between the Furiant movement of Dvořák’s D-major Symphony and the composer’s Slavonic Dances. In Kretzschmar’s words, “the markedly national movement in this Symphony (Op. 60) is the Scherzo. It scarcely distinguishes itself in form and character from this composer’s well-known and significant Slavonic Dances and should no doubt be assigned to this genre through its title ‘Furiant;’” “Der ausgesprochen nationale Satz in dessen D-dur Sinfonie (Op. 60) ist das Scherzo. Es unterscheidet sich in Form und Charakter kaum von den bekannten und bedeutenden ‘Slavischen Tänzen’ diese Componisten und soll wohl auch durch den überschriebenen Titel: ‘Furiant’ dieser Gattung zugewiesen werden;” Hermann Kretzschmar, Führer durch den Concertsaal (Leipzig: Liebeskind, 1887), 235.

165 Dvořák purchased the summer home in 1884, choosing Vysoká because his brother-in-law Count Václav Kounic had built a mansion there in 1878. It was probably in the summer of 1880 that Dvořák visited the town for the first time. Though Alois Goebl spent his life in the service of the Rohan family in Sychrov, he also took an interest in music and was an amateur singer. Born in the same year, Dvořák and Goebl remained friends throughout their lives, keeping up a regular correspondence. Goebl was godfather to Dvořák’s children and the composer’s youngest daughter Aloisie was allegedly named after him; Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents], vol. 8 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 2000), 370.

166 V. J. Novotný, “Pestré obrázky z Dvořáková života [Vivid pictures from the Life of Dvořák],” Dalibor 33, no. 29 (March 17, 1911): 206; “‘Jen pojďte’ domlouvá mu pan tajemník ‘pořád a pořád v tehdejších notech tak nesmíte vězí, a nejde-li vám vše podle vůle, nuž takové malé vyraženíčké přívede vás na jiné myšlenky. Ostatně taková pouť je pravé pro scherzo nejlepší látkou, že ne?’ Konečně Dvořák povolil... [Když Dvořák s panem tajemníkem vycházeli z kostela, Dvořák řiká] ‘Už to mám’ obrátil se v tom okamžiku se smichem na pana tajemníka – ‘místo obvyklého scherza napišu do symfonie národní český tanec furiant. Je to božský rhythmus pro scherzovou
Providing an account that is similar to Šourek’s, Novotný situates Dvořák not in cosmopolitan Vienna or even cosmopolitan Prague, but in the Bohemian countryside, and attempts to demonstrate that the composer was keenly attuned to his rural Czech roots when writing the Furiant movement of his Symphony.

Indeed, the Furiant had clear Czech associations during the late nineteenth century. No definition of the dance is given in the reviews for the D-major Symphony, but a telling description can be found in a critique from 1879 of Dvořák’s Czech Suite, which concludes with a Furiant; the critic writes: “the most successful number, which prominently surpasses all the others, is the closing ‘Furiant.’ Here the orchestra is all laughs and jokes ... The second part [of the piece] shows the Furiant spirit of the stubborn Czech skull – this purely Czech obstinacy.”

Writing in 1924, Nejedlý provides an even more nuanced definition of the Furiant, noting that the dance is meant to be taken as a parody, mocking the haughtiness, self-importance, and presumptuousness of a Czech farmer. Even so, the dance’s origins are not quite as simple as some of these critics would have their readers believe. The first notated Furiant – included in...
Rittersberg’s collection of folk songs from 1825 – actually sets a German text: “Furiant, furiant, furiant, du bist mein lieba Monn.” (Example 4.6)

Example 4.6: “Furiant, furiant, furiant, du bist mein lieba Monn”

The Furiant melody from the Rittersberg publication acquired a Czech text by 1844; however, even as late as 1863, in the entry for Rieger’s Encyclopedia (Riegrův Slovník Naučný), the Furiant – though defined as a Czech national dance – is still described as a type of piece that is well-known to both nationalities in Bohemia. A German text is provided in the entry, alongside the Czech one. Mirko Očadlík adds another layer to the story, when he suggests that the root of the word “Furiant” is neither German nor Czech, but French, coming from the expression “fou riant” (“laughing fool”) and originating at the time of the Napoleonic wars. Regardless of its usage in the early-nineteenth century, the Furiant had developed exclusively Czech connotations by the time Dvořák’s Symphony was premiered in 1881, especially after the dance’s appearance in what would become the quintessential Czech work: Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride* (Prodaná...
Nevěsta), first heard in 1866 and having risen to immense popularity by the early 1870s. With his D-major Symphony, Dvořák no doubt played a role in further consolidating these perceptions of the Furiant.

The significance of introducing a Czech dance into the Symphony was not lost on the critics, and the Furiant is highlighted in their reviews, usually being discussed ahead of the other movements. Several critics attest that the Furiant was a crowd favourite and had to be repeated at the Symphony’s premiere. As Novotný puts it in his review for Dalibor, “Czech character springs forth in the most apparent way from the third movement, the adorably worked-out Furiant… this number seized and fired up the abundant audience at once, inspiring thunderous expressions of praise, and it had to be repeated.” The third movement is also singled out by the reviewer for Pokrok, who states that “the outward result of the performance of Dvořák’s Symphony was very honourable; from each movement to the next, the interest of the audience increased, and the praise did not want to let up until the third movement was repeated and until the composer made two appearances on the podium.”

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171 N., “Z Koncertní Siné [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 83; “Nezjíveněji vytryskuje tento český ráz z třetí věty, z rozkošně pracovaného ‘furianta’… číslo to též rázem zachválilo a rozohnilo přečetně posluchačstvo k bouným projevům pochvaly, i muselo být opakováno.” Elsewhere Novotný considers the minuet/scherzo of a symphony to be the most important: “the original formal core of the symphony lies here in this movement, which usually can be found between the calm movement (‘andante’ or ‘adagio’) and the finale. Here, in the minuet, the secret of the symphonic form appears to us in its simple-minded naivety; though [this form] advanced to a high rank, it is not ashamed here of its low origins, taken from dance;” Czech original: “formelní původní jádro symfonie vězi právě zde v této větě, která pravidelnějí své místo mívá mezi klidnou větou (‘andante’ či ‘adagio’) a finale. Zde v ‘menuetu’ se nám objeví v prostoduché naivnosti tajemství celé té symfonické formy, která, až k vysoké již hodnosti postoupila, před se zde nestydě za svůj nízký původ, jejíž byla vzala z půdy taneční;” Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická báseň: nástin historického vývinu těchto forem [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms],” Dalibor I, no. 18 (May 2, 1873): 146.

172 -f-., “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: dnešní slovanský concert [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Today’s Slavonic Concert],” Pokrok 13, no. 74 (March 27, 1881): 6 (příloha); “Zevní výsledek provozování Dvořákovy symfonie byl velmi čestný; od věty k větě patrně vstoupal interes obecenstva, a pochvala nechtěla ani ustáti, dokud třetí věta nebyla opakována a k závěru skladatel sám dvakráte nezjevil se na podiu.”
Example 4.7: Opening of the third movement of Dvořák’s Symphony in D major (mm. 1–23)  
Even more than the third movement, it is the fourth that the reviewer for the newspaper *Národní Listy* characterizes as particularly Czech. Here, the critic detects references to “numerous folk songs,” which, in his view, are so “familiar” as to give the finale “an almost excessive rural nationalist character.” Novotný also hints at this idea, asserting that the finale as a whole lacks unity because it is too much of a “mosaic” of “trivial” motives. Though the critics do not identify any of these tunes or motives by name, their approach set the pattern for much of the subsequent Czech scholarship on the piece. Efforts to show that some of the Symphony’s principal themes were derived from Bohemian folk songs continued well into the twentieth century (Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Czech Folk Song</th>
<th>Movement of the Symphony</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Vosy, vosy, vosy, sršaní”</td>
<td>Third movement</td>
<td>Milan Kuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sedlák, sedlák, sedlák”</td>
<td>Third movement</td>
<td>Milan Kuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Já mám koně”</td>
<td>First movement</td>
<td>Antonín Sychra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ševcovská”</td>
<td>First movement</td>
<td>Antonín Sychra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Když jsem k vám choďoval”**</td>
<td>First movement</td>
<td>Antonín Sychra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Folk songs mentioned in the Czech literature in relation to Dvořák’s Symphony in D major

The context, in which the Symphony was premiered in Prague, was one that further encouraged critics to exaggerate the work’s “nationalist” features. First heard at the Slavonic

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174 N., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” *Dalibor* 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 83; “mosaikovitě se rospadá, postrádá jednotlivého proudu, mimo to vadi nám nemálo triviální ráz obou hlavních motivů.”

175 Antonín Sychra would take this idea the furthest, spotting possible allusions to four folk tunes and claiming that Dvořák sought to forge a connection to folk song traditions; Antonín Sychra, *Estetika Dvořákovy Symfonické Tvorby [The Aesthetics of Dvořák’s Symphonic Compositions]* (Prague: Statní Nakladatelství Krásné Literatury, Hudby, a Umění, 1959), 277. Antonín Sychra focuses on Dvořák’s last four symphonies in his book. It is mainly in his discussion of the D-major that he discusses issues of folk influence. To an extent, contemporary Czech critics tried looking for signs of folk tune inspiration in some of Dvořák’s other symphonies. In a review of the D-minor Symphony, Op. 70 for *Dalibor*, the critic claims that the “principal theme [of the Finale] bears a casual resemblance to the folk song ‘I am the Coachman;’” “základní theme vyznívá v nahodilou reminiscence národní písni ‘Já jsem forman;’” Strkr., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” *Dalibor* 7, no. 45 (December 7, 1885): 445. Though the critic’s name is unclear, the most likely candidate seems to be Karel Stecker (1861–1918).

176 This folk song (the title of which translates as “When I walked to your house”) is quite similar in its opening melodic contour to the Viennese *Groß-Vater Tanz*; Brodeck detects allusions to the latter dance in Dvořák’s Symphony; Brodeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 97.
concert of the Academic Readers’ Society at Žofín hall, the piece was part of an all-Slav programme.\textsuperscript{177} In use since 1830 and capable of seating an audience of four hundred, Žofín hall, though small by Viennese standards, remained the most spacious concert hall in Prague until the opening of Rudolfinum and played host to most of the city’s orchestral concerts.\textsuperscript{178} The Slavonic concert series itself was established in 1877, and performances were held annually for nineteen consecutive seasons. During the 1880s, these concerts became a meeting ground for the Czech intelligentsia and often gave occasion to national and political demonstrations.\textsuperscript{179} The Academic Readers’ Society, with which the concert series was initially affiliated, was even forced to disband in 1889 for its participation in “provocative” political manifestations.\textsuperscript{180} While the reviews of Dvořák’s Symphony do not suggest that the event was associated with any specific political activity, the composition was premiered before a sizeable audience and in an environment that was hospitable to overt displays of nationalism; this added fuel to Czech readings of the piece being published in the press.

**Appropriating Dvořák’s D-major Symphony: A Question of Genre**

In their attempts to claim Dvořák’s Symphony as a distinctly Czech composition, critics were inevitably forced to confront its genre. Appearing alongside the symphonic poems of Smetana (\textit{Richard III}) and Fibich (\textit{Vesna}) as well as Władysław Żełenski’s First Polonaise, Dvořák’s Symphony must have seemed rather anomalous on the 1881 concert programme. It has

\begin{footnotes}
\item[177] Unsigned, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: dnešní slovanský koncert [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Today’s Slavonic Concert],” \textit{Pokrok} 13, no. 72 (March 25, 1881): 3. Dvořák’s \textit{Hymnus} (see Chapter Two) was included on the programme of the previous year’s Slavonic Concert held on March 14, 1880.
\item[178] For the sake of comparison, Lébl and Ludvová make mention of the performing space for the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna – a space that had a capacity of seven hundred and was acquired by the society for use from 1831 to 1870; Lébl and Ludvová, “Pražské orchestrální koncerty v letech 1860–1895 [Prague Orchestral Concerts in the Years 1860–1895],” 105.
\item[179] \textit{Ibid.}, 113.
\item[180] Garver, 144.
\end{footnotes}
already been noted that, since the early 1870s, the leading critics in the Czech lands had upheld the symphonic poem as the most appropriate vehicle for expressing “Czechness” in the realm of instrumental music. Hostinský published a lengthy defence of program music in *Dalibor* in 1873. That same volume of *Dalibor* also featured the set of articles by Novotný cited above, outlining the history of the sonata, symphony, and symphonic poem. In both studies, the critics champion programmatic genres in the name of progress and modernity. Novotný, in particular, makes note of the nationalist direction that the symphonic poem was taking in more recent works like Fibich’s *Záboj, Slavoj, a Luděk* (*Záboj, Slavoj, and Luděk*) and the cycle *Má Vlast* (*My Country*) that Smetana had just started to write. Czech composers continued to add to this growing body of program music during the mid- to late 1870s. While Hostinský alludes to a certain sense of scepticism from Czech audiences toward the symphonic poem in 1873, the genre had become deeply entrenched in the musical culture of the Czech lands by 1881, and as a symphonist, Dvořák stood outside of this emerging tradition. Czech critics sought to take ownership of Dvořák nonetheless, while simultaneously explaining how it was that he had deviated from the course they had prescribed for Bohemian composers. For all of their dismissive remarks about the symphony, and the “German” connotations it seemed to carry, the genre actually proved to be very well suited for this kind of appropriation.

In order to reconcile Dvořák’s cultivation of the symphony with their nationalist project, Czech critics employ several strategies in their reviews of the D-major Symphony. They present the Symphony as proof of Dvořák’s ability to handle more complex forms than mere dance pieces and orchestral miniatures, thereby demonstrating that Czechs could boast remarkable

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achievements in so-called “serious” genres of music. Novotný takes this approach in his review, stating that

[Dvořák], at the point of the most beautiful flowering of his creative strength, gathered up all of his precious art, so that he might show the world that he is capable of ruling over stricter forms than those of dance. It was now time for Dvořák, having relinquished his tendency to expend his energy on miniatures, to venture toward grand works in expansive symphonic forms, and by doing this, [Dvořák] was able to add a new, everlasting sparkle to Czech musical art.183

In some of his other writings, Novotný disapproves of the symphony, even declaring on one occasion that “only a fool would continue to write in the old forms [of the symphony], when he has newer, more flexible ones at his disposal.”184 But he was willing to put all this aside in 1881 so that he might claim Dvořák’s work as a substantial acquisition for the Czechs. Echoing Novotný, the critic for the conservative newspaper Pokrok speaks of the symphony as the genre in which “orchestral music reaches its pinnacle”185 and asserts that because of the genre’s prestige, Dvořák’s new Symphony was met with considerable anticipation from Czech audiences.186

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183 N., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 83; “[Dvořák] v nejkrásnějším rozkvětu své tvůrčí síly sebral všechno své vzácné umění, aby světu dokázal, že umí též vládnouti formami přísnějšími, než jsou ony taneční. Byl již čas, že Dvořák zanechav všeho rozptylování sůl v drobnostech, odhodlal se k mohutnému rozmachu v širých formách symfonických a tak leskem novým, nepomíjícím přírodě hudební umění české. Jest to v pravdě dílo rázu eminentně českého, jak již Dvořák konsekventně bohdá vytrvá na půdě té, z niž mu obrovská plyne síla, jež strom jeho tvorení neustále krásnějšími plody zdobí.” Dance forms rank lower than the symphony in the hierarchy that Novotný sets up in his “Sonata, Symphony, Symphonic Poem.”

184 The following is a longer excerpt of Novotný’s statement: “it is a strange ‘testimony of poverty’ that one gives when he reaches for a form that is less perfect, out-dated, incapable of giving life [to a composition]. Such is the relationship between a symphony and symphonic poem. Only a fool would continue to write in the old forms, when he has newer, more flexible ones at his disposal;” “Podivné si dává ‘testimonium paupertatis’ onen, jenž sáhne po formě méně dokonale, zastaralé, života neschopné. Tentyž poměr panuje mezi ‘symfonii’ a ‘symfonickou básní.’ Blázen kdo komponuje v starých formách, když má novější, ohebnější po ruce;” Václav Juda Novotný, “Sonata a symfonie – symfonická básně: nástin historického vývinu těchto forem [Sonata, symphony, symphonic poem: an outline of the historical development of these forms],” Dalibor 1, no. 24 (June 13, 183): 196.

185 -f-, “Divadlo, literatura, věda, a umění: Slovanský concert [Theatre, Literature, Science, and Art: Today’s Slavonic Concert],” Pokrok 13, no. 74 (March 27, 1881): 6; “v této umělecké formě povznáší se hudba orchestrálně zajistě ke sve výši největší.”

186 Ibid., 6; “for this reason, the anticipation was considerable and felt by all, even though, judging from Dvořák’s other pieces related to the symphony (his suites and serenades), no one doubted about its complete success;” “napnutí bylo veliké a obecně, ačkoliv soudě dle skvělých úspěchů Dvořákových v jiných skladbách
The symphony had, indeed, long served as a marker of compositional maturity. As Mark Evan Bonds shows, it was universally regarded as “the most ambitious and challenging of all instrumental genres in the nineteenth century.” Brahms had waited until middle age to write his First Symphony, and following the premiere of his Fourth in 1886, Hanslick would aver that “the symphony… is the most inexorable touchstone and the supreme consecration of the instrumental composer.”

Dvořák’s engagement with it was, thus, taken as a matter of Czech pride. Perhaps as a manifestation of this pride and as a means of indicating the weightiness of the genre, the D-major would be referred to as Dvořák’s “great” Symphony in Dalibor for some time after its premiere, long after the provisional subtitle that Novotný had given it, “Czech Spring Symphony,” had fallen into disuse. Even if Czech critics believed that Czech energies would best be expended in other areas of instrumental composition, they took advantage of the symphony’s illustrious position when addressing Dvořák’s work.

Furthermore, by 1881, Czech readers did not have to be convinced of Dvořák’s skill in this area. He had no Czech “giant” marching ahead of him, and as early as 1873, absolute instrumental music had been described by the Czechs as Dvořák’s domain. In an article for Dalibor dated April 4, 1873, Novotný reflects on the recent performance of Dvořák’s orchestral composition Májová Noc (May Night) with the following words:

We can expect great things from Dvořák in the future, which can only be to the glory of the Czech name, not so much in the realm of dramatic art – since, [thus far], Dvořák lacks deeper aesthetic studies, defter treatment of the human voice, and finally, true expression in declamation that would befit the Czech language – but mainly in the field of instrumental music, as we can judge based on everything that we have heard from the composer so far. Instrumental music is his true home, for it is certainly not innate for everyone to think in such a pure orchestral manner, in such a lofty polyphonic style.\(^{190}\)

Novotný’s phrasing – “the field of instrumental music” – does not necessarily exclude programmatic genres. Luďevít Procházka (1837–1888) carves out a narrower niche for Dvořák; writing in Národní Listy within a few days of Novotný and commenting on the same orchestral piece, Procházka declares that “the extraordinary loveliness pouring forth in [Dvořák’s] instrumentation points especially to his true calling in the realm of absolute instrumental music.”\(^{191}\) David Beveridge marvels at the swiftness with which these critics seem to be willing to dismiss Dvořák’s vocal works, considering that no Dvořák opera had yet been performed in the Czech lands,\(^{192}\) and barely a month earlier, both men had borne witness to the tremendous success in Prague of Dvořák’s Hymnus.\(^{193}\) Perhaps even more surprising is the degree of confidence that the critics place in Dvořák’s instrumental works, which likewise had been given

\(^{190}\) x., “Zpávy z Prahy a z Venkova: Druhý koncert filharmonického spolku [New from Prague and Rural Areas: The second concert of the Philharmonic Society],” Dalibor I, no. 14 (April 4, 1873): 113; “Od Dvořáka smíme již pro budoucnost očekávat činy velké, jaké jen k oslavě sloužiti mohou jménu českému, ani ne tak na poli dramatického umění – scházíť zde (dosud) Dvořákoví hlubších esthetických studií a obratnějšího zacházení s hlasem lidským a konečně pravého výrazu při deklamací příměřeně duchu jazyka českého – nýbrž hlavně na poli hudby instrumentální, jak soudit můžeme dle všeho, co jsme dosud od skladatele našeho slyšeli. Hudba instrumentální jest jeho pravým domovem; neboť myslit tak čistě orkestrálně, v tak vzněšeném slohu polyfonním není věru každému popřáno.” (The emphasis is mine.) It is generally assumed in the scholarly literature that all articles signed with the pseudonym ‘x.’ were written by Ludevít Procházka (1837–1888) because one of Dvořák’s earliest biographers, Boleslav Kalenský, makes this attribution. However, Václav Juda Novotný unequivocally confirms authorship of one of the articles that was signed in this way; in an article from 1911 [V. J. Novotný, “Pestré obrázky z Dvořákovy života [Vivid Pictures from Dvořák’s Life],” Dalibor 33, no. 41 (June 2, 1911): 294], Novotný confesses that he wrote the review of Dvořák’s Hymnus [x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” Dalibor 1, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 87–89.] For this reason and other reasons (See Chapter Two), I take articles from the 1870s that are signed ‘x.’ to be by Novotný.

\(^{191}\) P., “Literatura a umění [Literature and Art],” Národní Listy 13, no. 98 (April 10, 1873): 2; “Půvabnost nevšední, která rozličně se nad instrumentaci jeho, poukazuje zejména k pravému jeho povolání v říši absolutní hudby instrumentální.” (The emphasis is mine.)

\(^{192}\) David Beveridge, “A Rare Meeting of Mind’s in Kvapil’s and Dvořák’s Rusalka (programme note),” Antonín Dvořák: Rusalka (Prague: Národní Divadlo, 2009), 75.

\(^{193}\) See Chapter Two for a fuller discussion of this choral work.
little exposure to that point. Though it would appear that critics drew these conclusions after a very limited sampling of Dvořák’s oeuvre, the composer’s alleged area of expertise was demarcated quite early in his career. His reputation would remain intact throughout his life, as is evident in the writing of Emanuel Chvála (1851–1924). In his contribution to the Dvořák omnibus from 1912, Chvála characterizes Dvořák as a symphonist at heart, even when working in other genres:

That Dvořák is, at the core of his talent, a symphonist, that his personality and way of working gravitate toward symphonic creation is a fact that is not denied by his old love for the opera, his abundant work in the realm of vocal music, nor in the least by his inclination at a ripe age toward programmatic music... The whole method of musical thought for Dvořák, when creating instrumental music, is symphonic.\(^{194}\)

The symphony’s lack of extra-musical associations further worked in the Czech critics’ favour when they reviewed Dvořák’s D-major Symphony, as it gave them the opportunity to fill in what the composer had left unspecified. Not only did this mean accentuating the Czechness of Dvořák’s Symphony, but also invoking the language of the favoured symphonic poem. Michael Beckerman considers the Sixth to be the “most absolute” of Dvořák’s symphonies – that is, “the least likely of [the composer’s] later symphonies to have a program lurking behind it.”\(^{195}\) Yet, perhaps more than any of Dvořák’s other works in the genre, this Symphony inspired poetic effusions from the pens of Czech critics. The reviewers for Dalibor and Národní Listy make

\(^{194}\) Emanuel Chvála, “Symfonické Skladby Dvořákovy [Dvořák’s Symphonic Works],” in Antonín Dvořák: Šborní stati o jeho díle a životě [Antonín Dvořák: A Collection of Essays about his Work and Life], ed. Boleslav Kalenský (Prague: Umělecká Beseda, 1912), 129; “Že Dvořák v podstatě svého nadání jest symfonikem, že svoji povahou i způsobem práce tihne ku tvorbě symfonické, jest faktum, které nepopře ani jeho stará láská k opět, ani jeho vydělaná práce v oboru skladby vokální, nejméně pak v zralém jeho věku vzniklá náklonnost k hudbě programní... Celý způsob hudebního myšlení při tvorbě instrumentalní jest u Dvořáka symfonický.” (The emphasis is mine.)

frequent mention of imagery from spring in their articles on the Symphony, even though no such extra-musical ideas are suggested in the score.¹⁹⁶ Once again it is Novotný who takes this the furthest, arguing that the difference between Dvořák’s Symphony, to which he applies the epithet “spring,” and Fibich’s symphonic poem entitled Spring (Vesna), which was premiered at the same concert, lies primarily in the number of movements; otherwise, to Novotný, the two works are similarly evocative.¹⁹⁷ In some respects, such comments were not new for Novotný, who had attempted in 1874 to argue that Dvořák’s Symphony in E-flat major had been misclassified and that it ought to be designated as a series of symphonic poems, rather than as a symphony.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ It would appear that this imagery was not chosen at whim, but ties into a tradition of Czech pastoral symphonies dating to Johann Stamitz (Sinfonia pastoralis, Op. 4, no. 2, 1758) and Jiří Ignác Linek (1725–1791/92, Sinfonia pastoralis, undated). Smaczny claims, however, that this tradition was rather short-lived; “while undoubtedly appealing, these early pastoral symphonies comprise an episode rather than the foundations of an identifiable Czech tradition;” Smaczny, “The Czech Symphony,” 223–224. This pastoral element has also been examined in relation to Brahms’s Second Symphony; see Reinhold Brinkmann, Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
¹⁹⁷ N., “Z Koncertní Síně [From the Concert Hall],” Dalibor 3, no. 11 (April 10, 1881): 84; “Fibich called his piece Spring; by doing this, he wanted to say that, in his work, he is expressing various moods, which fill and exhilarate the soul of the person, who, after an uncomfortable winter, steps out for the first time into the ever younger-growing nature. It is certainly an appropriate topic for a musical composition. I have already mentioned that Dvořák’s piece breathes forth the same spring-like, fresh mood; while Dvořák gave expression to the various moods of spring in four different, closed movements, Fibich painted all of these moods in one unified framework.” “Fibich nazval svou skladbu Vesnou; chtěl tím totiž řeči, že v práci své vyslovuje různé nálady, jež naplňují a opojují nítro člověka, jenž po trapné zimě poprvé vkrcoří v nově mládnoucí přírodu. Jest to zajisté předmět hudbě úplně přístudný. Ostatně zmínil jsem se již, že Dvořákova skladba dýše touže jarní, svěží náladou; kdežto však Dvořák různým náladem jarním dal výraz ve čtyřech různých, vždy o sobě zaokrouhlených větách, zobrazil Fibich všechny ty nálad v jednotném rámci.”
¹⁹⁸ “It was not just general attention, but rather unlimited admiration that this ingenious symphonic work [the E-flat major Symphony] earned for itself; [the work was written] by our Ant. Dvořák – a brave warrior in the field of the most modern music – who himself entitled the piece ‘symphony.’ With this nomenclature, he put the sharpest weapon into the hands of his critics; they say: ‘neither in its external nor in its internal construction is this [piece] in the form of the old symphony’ – and they are correct… The whole [piece] creates a purely aesthetic impression, an impression of a work that is complete [and] perfect; yet, it is not a symphony, though outwardly it preserves the [customary] structure, for the internal development in individual movements does not follow the rules of the old symphony, but is based on modern thematic work. The [whole situation] might be remedied quite easily: the composer ought to call his work ‘four-movement symphonic poem’ or ‘free orchestral fantasy;’ doing this is the best way to rid himself of criticism from the admirers of the golden old forms of the grey symphony!” “Nejen všobecnou pozornost některého obdiv získala to, že autorovým dílem je symfonie to není ani dle zevnějšího ani dle vnitřního uspořádání – a v tom mají rozhodně pravdu… Celek ten bude pak činit dojem čistě estetický, dojem práce celé, práce dokonalé; ‘symfonie’ to ale před nebude, vzdor tomu, že zevnější uspořádání čtyřvětě by bylo zachováno; neboť vnitřní propracování jednotlivých vět není u Dvořáka nikdy dle pravidel staré symfonie prováděno, nýbrž dle moderní práce thematické. Však i tu jest to pomoci velmi snadně:
References to Czech nature and the Czech people abound in Šourek’s discussion of
Dvořák’s D-major Symphony in his 1916 biography on Dvořák, cited earlier. In fact, Šourek’s
description of the piece is strongly akin in its language to critic Emanuel Chvála’s (1851–1924)
assessment of Smetana’s Má Vlast from 1880. In reference to this most well-known cycle of
symphonic poems by Smetana, Chvála writes: “as is evident from the titles, Smetana drew poetic
material for his symphonic poems from the soul of his nation; the glorious history of the Czechs,
the poetry of the Czech people, the desires of the nation and its hopes for the future inspired
Smetana to artistic creation.”¹⁹⁹ These same kinds of images surface time and time again in
Czech criticism on Dvořák’s Symphony. By applying the subtitle “Czech Spring Symphony” to
Dvořák’s work, Novotný, then, not only sought to give it a Czech program; the idea of giving it
any program at all had itself become Czech by that time. In spite of its deviation from established
generic norms in the Czech lands, critics took hold of Dvořák’s Symphony and molded it to their
purposes, capitalizing on the admiration that symphonies seemed to inspire in audiences,
Dvořák’s own reputation as a symphonist, and the fact that the genre does not strive to refer to
anything outside of itself.

Conclusion

Dvořák’s D-major Symphony came in the midst of strained relations between the Czechs
and Germans of Austria. After the Stremayr language ordinance, it became more crucial than
ever to define exactly what was German and what was Czech. Though the Vienna Philharmonic

¹⁹⁹ Emanuel Chvála, “Smetanovy skladby [Smetana’s pieces],” Dalibor 2, no. 29 (October 10, 1880): 226;
“Jak již ze zde uvedených jmen vysvítá, čerpal Smetana poetické látky pro své symfonické básně z duše svého
národa; slavné dějiny české, poesie českého lidu, tužby národa a jeho naděje do budoucnosti nadchnuly Smetanu k
uměleckému tvoření.”
had made it clear that Dvořák was to be counted as an outsider when they refused to perform his Symphony, the threat that Dvořák might eventually end up on the German side of this divide was still very real for many Czech critics. It had not been uncommon in the past for composers of Czech origin to immigrate to German-speaking Europe, and Hanslick and Brahms urged Dvořák at various points in his career to make the move to Vienna. As late as June 1882, Hanslick would attempt to persuade Dvořák to spend “one to two years at a distance from Prague,” asserting that Dvořák’s art would have a better chance of thriving in “a German environment.”\textsuperscript{200} What is more, Dvořák had recently come under fire on the pages of Dalibor, for allegedly giving priority to German audiences. To Novotný, it was only a matter of time before the Germans would start taking ownership of Dvořák. In order to “eliminate the danger that [Dvořák’s] pieces could be estranged from [Czech] repertoire,” as Novotný expresses it, Czech critics used their reviews of the D-major Symphony to claim Dvořák and prove to the public that his music was unequivocally Czech. They did this by concealing the Symphony’s Viennese connections and exaggerating its “Czech” elements, thereby justifying Dvořák’s cultivation of this “German” genre, even as his compatriots gravitated toward the symphonic poem.

Dvořák does not react to these reviews in any of his letters; however, he would have likely seen no inherent contradiction between the Symphony’s Czech and German narratives and may have even played a role in constructing them. In a letter dated March 13, 1881 – less than two weeks before the Prague premiere – Dvořák asks Richter to return the score and parts of the Symphony to him as soon as possible; he leads Richter to believe that these materials are needed for the Symphony’s publication in Berlin, when in fact they were required for the Prague

\textsuperscript{200} Kuna et al., \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]}, vol. 5, 388; June 11, 1882. See above for an excerpt from this letter.
performance. Just as Czech audiences were being kept in ignorance of the Symphony’s Viennese back story, so too were Dvořák’s acquaintances in Vienna unaware of Dvořák’s plan to have the work premiered in Prague. Becoming increasingly adept at cultivating multiple audiences, Dvořák dealt with the snub from the Viennese crowd by having his Symphony performed in a context where critics were bound to hear Czech, no matter how much German he spoke.

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201 Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 1, 244.
CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF DVOŘÁK’S CZECH RECEPTION:

MAPPING OUT THE INTERACTIONS AMONG CRITICS, AUDIENCES, AND THE COMPOSER

Introduction

The preceding chapters have been organized around genre, examining Dvořák’s reception in the Czech lands in the spheres of choral, operatic, and symphonic music. These case studies reveal that Dvořák’s treatment in the Czech press varied depending on the unique traditions of these genres and their differing status within Czech musical culture. A broader approach is now in order. Richard Taruskin observes that, all too often, historians fail to attribute historical events to people, thereby evading discussions of such issues as motives, values, choices, and responsibilities.1 This concluding chapter focuses squarely on the statements and actions of people and explores the kinds of roles that critics, audiences, and Dvořák himself played in his Czech reception. All three of these agents worked together in various ways to construct and consolidate Dvořák’s image in his homeland. That critics and audiences figure prominently in this is not surprising; reception history provides an antidote to production history, moving the attention away from composers and ensuring that they do not loom disproportionately large in the discussion.2 While a study of Dvořák’s reception in his native Bohemia does shed light on the various individuals who evaluated and promoted his works in the Czech lands, including performing organizations, conductors, institutions, and publishers as well as audiences and

1 Richard Taruskin, The Oxford History of Western Music, vol. 1, The Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvi; Taruskin cites the work of Howard Becker, who writes that “all artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people, through whose cooperation the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be;” Howard Becker, Art Worlds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 1.
2 Ibid., vol. 1, xv, xix.
critics, it also brings the focus back to Dvořák, illuminating his own efforts to secure the public’s favour.

**Constructing Dvořák’s Image: Critics as Mediators**

In defining the role of the critics, an appropriate starting point might be to consider the kinds of tasks that they perceived for themselves. Almost all of the critics examined in this study contributed at one time or other to *Dalibor* – the longest-running journal devoted exclusively to music in the Czech lands during the late nineteenth century. The journal’s earliest run from 1858 to 1865 is beyond the scope of this study, since Dvořák had not yet entered into the public sphere at that time.³ Dvořák is, however, discussed at length in the journal during both its second period of activity, from 1873 to 1875, and its third, from 1879 onward.⁴ Changes in the journal’s subtitle over the course of these periods suggest a broadening of focus, from Czech choral music to “all fields of musical art.”⁵ No clear goals are articulated in the 1873 editorial of *Dalibor*, written by editor Ludevík Procházka (1837–1888) and publisher Emanuel Starý (1843–1906); since the journal was established in that year primarily as an alternative to the competing Prague-based music journal *Hudební Listy*, the writers of the editorial emphasize only the need to break away from the faulty direction taken by the older publication, declaring that “it is not with

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³ The full title of the journal during its run from 1858 to 1865 was *Dalibor: hudební týdeník s měsíční notovou přílohou* [*Dalibor: musical weekly with a monthly sheet music supplement*].

⁴ Since two separate runs of *Dalibor* are referenced in this study, I use Romans numerals [I, II, III] when referring to the volumes of *Dalibor* during its first (1873 to 1875), and Arabic numerals [1, 2, 3] when referring to the later volumes of *Dalibor* (1879 onward). The actual journal was in existence until 1927, but this study focuses only on Dvořák’s reception during his life.

⁵ The journal’s full title from 1873 to 1875 was *Dalibor: časopis věnovaný zájmům světské i církevní hudby a zpěváckých spolů českoslov., zároveň pak organ ‘Matice hudební’ s četnými přílohami hudebními* [*Dalibor: a journal devoted to the interests of secular and sacred music and Czechoslov. choral societies as well as an agent of the ‘Hudební Mатice’ with numerous sheet music supplements*]. When it was re-established in 1879, the full title became *Dalibor: časopis pro všecky obory umění hudebního* [*Dalibor: a journal for all fields of musical art*], and this was shortened to *Dalibor: Hudební Listy* [*Dalibor: Musical Papers*] in 1887. (*Dalibor* was now free to use this subtitle, since the other music journal in the city, the similarly-named *Hudební Listy*, no longer existed).
promises, but with deeds that we wish to persuade readers that it will be our foremost care to ensure that we deserve [their] confidence and favour.⁶ A more specific role is outlined by the editorial staff in 1879, when the journal was re-established; by then, Hudební Listy had ceased publication, and these critics sought to focus more on their position with respect to the public, rather than engaging in polemics with their colleagues.⁷ “The ultimate purpose of this [journal] is to contribute, according to our abilities, to the spreading of a thorough music education to all levels of Czech-Slavic society;” this was the vision that editor Václav Juda Novotný (1849–1922) and publisher František Urbánek (1842–1919) articulated for Dalibor in 1879.⁸ They saw themselves as arbiters of musical taste in society and considered it to be their responsibility to inform and instruct Czech readers on a variety of musical matters. Although their main purpose was to educate, the critics writing for Dalibor – and, indeed, for other Czech periodicals – were not as objective as they believed themselves to be, as has already been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. In many cases, they used their articles to advance their own agendas and to construct an image of Dvořák in the Czech lands that best suited their purposes. Differences in opinion existed among Dvořák’s Czech critics, to be sure; nevertheless, generalities may be drawn with regard to the ways in which these critics introduced Dvořák to the Czech public, reinterpreted his foreign reviews for Czech readers, and lay claim to him when his “Czechness” seemed to be threatened.

⁶ Redakce [Editorial staff: Ludevít Procházka and Emanuel Starý], “Našim čtenářům [To our readers],” Dalibor 1, no. 1 (January 3, 1873): 1–2; “ne sliby ale skutky chceme přesvědčit naše čtenářstvo, že bude nejpřednější péči naši, abychom důvěru a přízeň… sobě zasloužili.”

⁷ Hudební Listy, edited by Emanuel J. Kittl, lasted from 1871 to 1875.

⁸ Václav Juda Novotný and František A. Urbánek, “Našim čtenářům [To our readers],” Dalibor 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1879): 2; “jediným účelem nákladného podniku jest, abychom dle sil svých přispěli k šíření důkladného vzdělání hudebního po všech vrstvách společnosti československé…” Though he seems to be blowing his own horn, critic Alois Ručka, writing some three decades later, continues to acknowledge the importance of the journal Dalibor in making music audiences more educated; Alois Ručka, “O nutnosti organisace inteligentního hudebnictva [The necessity of cultivating intelligent musicianship],” Dalibor 22, no. 2 (January 20, 1900): 9.
The journal *Dalibor* played a crucial part in Dvořák’s Prague debut. As noted in Chapter Two, though Dvořák’s name appeared in print as early as 1871, both the composer and his critics would come to look upon 1873 as the year in which he entered into the public eye. Many factors came together that year to make the performance of *Hymnus* a success; perhaps most fortuitous of all was the foundation of *Dalibor* in its earlier form, providing a medium through which music critics could shape public perceptions of Dvořák. Reviews were published in several newspapers and journals, but none were as enthusiastic as Novotný’s piece for *Dalibor*, and Dvořák’s foray onto the Czech stage might not have been so spectacular had it coincided with the publication’s hiatus from 1876 to 1878. Moreover, the journal had a very specific mandate; its editors sought to give exposure “in truth, [to] national music in the progressive direction of modern art.” With this goal in mind, and as a contrast to the rivalling *Hudební Listy* where Czech works had recently come under fire, critics writing for *Dalibor* were motivated to rave about Dvořák’s *Hymnus*. First impressions proved to be very important; later articles on Dvořák show that the favourable reception of *Hymnus* in 1873 was etched indelibly in the minds of Prague critics and that the piece was vital in establishing the image of Dvořák as a nationalist.

Another image of Dvořák was simultaneously taking shape in the writing of Czech critics. In articles from as early as 1873 and 1874, Novotný and Procházka identify instrumental music – specifically, *absolute* instrumental music (*absolutní hudba instrumentální*), in Procházka’s

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10 In their editorial for the 1873 volume of *Dalibor*, Ludevit Procházka and Emanuel Starý address the change in direction taken by *Hudební Listy* and offer this new journal in its stead. They adopt the motto of *Hudební Listy*, not as a show of solidarity with the older publication, but to emphasize just how much *Hudební Listy* had strayed from its former focus. The motto in the Czech original is: “v pravdě národní hudba na pokročilém stanovisku moderního umění;” Redakce [Editorial staff: Ludevit Procházka and Emanuel Starý], “Našim čtenářům [To our readers],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 1 (January 3, 1873): 1.
wording – as Dvořák’s domain. This notion persisted in the Czech press throughout the composer’s career. “It is a distinctive trait of [Dvořák’s] personality that he is the most free when working with the strictest forms of absolute music,” writes Emanuel Chvála (1851–1924) in 1879. Václav Vladimír Zelený (1858–1892) echoes this idea in his 1882 critique of Dvořák’s opera Dimitrij; though the review is complimentary for the most part, Zelený claims that Dvořák inches dangerously close to absolute music in his dramatic work. In a review of Dvořák’s symphonic poems from 1897, Josef Boleška (1868–1914) states once again that Dvořák’s strength lies in instrumental music, and like many of the composer’s Viennese critics, he questions Dvořák’s decision to deviate later in his career from the niche that he had carved
out for himself early on. Clearly, the notion that Dvořák had a natural affinity for non-programmatic instrumental genres, which was pervasive in several of Dvořák’s foreign reviews, had considerable critical support in the Czech lands as well.

Procházka’s and Novotný’s declarations in the early 1870s are puzzling, given that these critics seemed to praise Dvořák’s vocal works in the same breath. Both of these critics also showed an obvious predilection for the New German School and its attendant genres; portraying Dvořák, in that crucial debut year of 1873, as a progressive patriot on the one hand, and as an absolute-music composer on the other, would appear to be contradictory. These seemingly opposing images would end up being reconciled in Czech criticism on Dvořák of the 1880s. As Karen Painter points out, absolute genres like the symphony were appreciated by critics precisely for their malleability. When a piece lacked an obvious extra-musical association, critics could project their own ideas onto it, and this would turn out to be the case in the Czech press; as shown in Chapter Four, critics would later harness Dvořák’s instrumental works in service of their nationalist aims, by placing Czech labels on them. In any case, images of Dvořák that would eventually be taken for granted had deep roots and were discussed by Dvořák’s Czech critics long before the composer started to receive international attention.

In addition to introducing Dvořák to the Czech public, critics reinterpreted international reviews. The newspapers and journals of Prague acted as a filter through which foreign criticism

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on Dvořák was channeled. Critics were eager to republish favourable non-Czech articles. Their reasons for doing so were two-fold. Firstly, they used these foreign critiques to reinforce their own views of Dvořák. A statement made by Novotný in 1884 illustrates this: “among sacred compositions of the modern era, [Dvořák’s] Stabat Mater does not have its equal,” writes Novotný; “I have long been convinced of this; however, this opinion has far more weight, when voiced by a foreigner.” Being aware of his inclination to promote the work of his compatriots, Novotný attaches a greater degree of importance to the “less-partial” English reviews of Stabat Mater than to those published at home. Like many other Czech critics, he cites excerpts from the foreign press in order to corroborate his own impressions of Dvořák’s music. Positive foreign reviews on Dvořák served a second purpose: Czech critics reprinted these reviews in various periodicals so that they might encourage the public to give Dvořák more recognition in the Czech lands. One critic writing for Dalibor in 1879 is explicit about the impact that these reviews were meant to have on Czech readers:

We wish to make note of all of these [non-Czech reviews] so that our audience would find out how foreigners are able to appreciate true talent, even if, in many places in his homeland, [Dvořák] does not get the recognition he deserves – recognition that would be commensurate with his efforts. Dvořák’s pieces, now published in Berlin, are evaluated in English and German newspapers by the foremost music critics and they receive the most favourable reception.

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17 Novotný and Urbánek specify in their editorial for the 1879 volume of Dalibor that they will “make note of all that the foreign newspapers write about us;” “chceme zaznamenovat vše, co cizí listy o nás píší;” Václav Juda Novotný and František A. Urbánek, “Našim čtenářům [To our readers],” Dalibor 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1879): 2.

18 řík, “Druhá cesta mistra Dvořák do Anglie [Dvořák’s Second Trip to England],” Dalibor 6, no. 35 (September 21, 1884): 344; “není druhého díla z nové doby v oboru hudby posvátné, jež by se tomuto Stabat vyrovnalo! Byl jsem o pravdé té dávno přesvědčen – avšak více důrazu má toto mínění v ústech cizince.” (This sentence is cited in the article as a direct quotation from Novotný).


20 Unsigned, “Drobné zprávy [Brief News],” Dalibor 1, no. 32 (November 10, 1879): 256; “chceme veškeré tyto výjevy zaznamenati, aby obecenstvo naše poznalo, jak i cizina dovede oceniti pravý talent, třeba by tento ve vlastní domovině nedocházal na rozličných místech pravého uznání, jak toho dle snažení svého již dávno zasluhoval. V německých i anglických listech posuzují se skladby Dvořákovy nyní v Berlíně vydané od nejprvnějších kritiků hudebních a docházejí je průznivějšího přijetí.”
Less than two years before this article was printed, Otakar Hostinský (1847–1910) had also noted, in one of his reviews of *The Cunning Peasant*, that all too often Czech composers, including Dvořák, are left to fend for themselves and given insufficient support from their compatriots. Praise in the foreign press was supposed to shake the Czechs out of their complacency and foster in them a greater understanding of and appreciation for Dvořák’s music.

At the same time, negative reviews from beyond the Czech borders motivated critics in Prague to go on the defensive. In general, Czech critics were quick to stand up for Dvořák when they felt that he was being misrepresented or attacked, especially by the Germans in Austria. A prime example of this is the overwhelmingly sympathetic reaction in the Czech press to the disastrous showing of *The Cunning Peasant* at the Vienna Hofoper in 1885, as discussed in Chapter Three. Rather than passing over it in silence, Czech critics used this episode to demonstrate to their readers that Viennese audiences were prejudiced against the works of Czech composers. While many Czech critics questioned the appropriateness of *The Cunning Peasant* for that venue, they simultaneously ensured that the Viennese scandal did not reflect badly on Dvořák himself. Rather than harming Dvořák’s reputation in his homeland, the incident actually...

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21 “Did anyone from our ranks notice [Dvořák’s] struggle? Did anyone of our rich lend him a helping hand? We only know this, if Dvořák had not been awarded the Viennese state stipend based on his sent pieces, he would have had to starve. Let this finally be a message to our richer folk that Czech composers are not like the birds of the air, which the Holy Word describes as being left to the care of God alone;” “Všiml si zápasícího [Dvořáka] někdo z našinců, podal mu někdo z našich boháčů pomocné ruky? Víme jen tolik, že kdyby Dvořák nepožíval na základě zaslaných skladeb státního stipendia z Vídně, byl by musel zahynouti. Budiž to konečně pokynem bohatším našincům, že skladatelé čeští nejsou jako ptáci nebeští, jež sv. písmo odkazuje milému pánubohu na starost;” Otakar Hostinský, *Z Hudebních bojů let sedmdesátých a osmdesátých: Výbor z operních a koncertních kritik* [The Musical Battles of the 1870s and 80s: Reviews of Operas and Concerts] (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1986), 112; the original article appears in -y., “Literatura a umění: Česká Zpěvohra [Literature and Art: Czech Opera],” *Národní Listy* 18, no. 46 (February 19, 1878): 3.

22 This continued to be an issue even after Dvořák’s reputation was well established. Two decades later, in 1899, a favourable Dvořák review in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* prompted one critic to make the following remark in *Dalibor*: “it is about time that not only foreigners, but also the Czech public pay more heed and give dignified recognition to our artists;” “bylo by na čase, aby si nejen cizina ale také i česká veřejnost více všimla a důstojně oceňovala našich sil uměleckých;” Unsigned, “Různé Zprávy [Various News Items],” *Dalibor* 21, no. 17 (April 18, 1899): 131.
made Czech critics more anxious than before to tout the merits of his opera and restore it to its rightful place in the Czech repertory. Similar ideas are expressed in critic Vítězslav Nejedl’s report on a concert of Dvořák’s music in Berlin in March of 1900. Though deemed successful, this concert in Berlin gave Nejedl occasion to look back on former prejudices, not just in Austria, but in Germany as well:

[The present German critics] judge the works of the greatest living Czech composer musically and not politically. This is the greatest success with which we walk away from this March 2nd concert – a concert which will be written into the history of Czech music as a new chapter in its development. All of the German critiques written thus far have had national-political tendencies. Dvořák’s pieces suffered greatly because of the origins of the composer. Even his name, with that hated accent above the ‘r’ contributed to the prejudiced attitude of the German critics when they judged the works of Dvořák. The pieces suffered behind the name of the composer, even when their content demanded praise and recognition.23 Nejedl’s belief in the political neutrality of more recent German reviews aside, this excerpt is yet another example of the ways in which Czech critics sought to enlist the sympathy of their readers when faced with negative foreign press on Dvořák. Whether they were favourable or not, international reviews of Dvořák’s works were pondered and analyzed at great length by his critics at home.

Indeed, Czech critics – particularly those who were active during the late 1870s and 1880s – devoted much of their energy to discussing Dvořák’s reception abroad.24 When reflecting on the accomplishments of the Czechs over the course of the year 1880, one critic for Dalibor refers to

23 Vítězslav Nejedl, “Berlínské vítězství [Berlin Victory],” Dalibor 22, no. 10 (March 10, 1900): 73; allegedly Dvořák was being hailed in the Berlin press as the “Czech Beethoven;” “Posuzuji výtvory největšího z žijících českých skladatelů hudebně, nepoliticky. Jest to největší úspěch koncertu ze dne 2. března, který v dejinách české hudby vepsán bude mohutnou literou nového odstavce jejího vývoje. Všecky dosavadní německé kritiky byly kořeněny aromatem národně-politických tendencí. Těžce pykaly Dvořákovy skladby za původ svého mistra. I jeho jméno s tou nenáviděnou kličkou nad r přispívalo svým aequivalentem k oně předpojatosti kritiků německých, bylo-li kritisovatí dílo Dvořákovo. Za jméno autora trpěla skladba, i kdyby obsahově vynutila uznání a pochvalu.”

24 Whenever a work by Dvořák was performed abroad, the editors of Dalibor made note of it in their publication. In the 1880 volume of Dalibor, they provide a long list of all the foreign cities in which Dvořák’s Slavonic Dances and Slavonic Rhapsodies were performed; Unsigned, “Drobné Zprávy [Brief News],” Dalibor 2, no. 10 (April 1, 1880): 78.
Dvořák as “the tamer of proud foreign lands,” pointing specifically to the circulation of his chamber music in German-speaking Europe and the performance in 1879 of his Third *Slavonic Rhapsody* in Vienna.\(^\text{25}\) That Dvořák had, in recent times, managed to “subdue” or “tame” even the most hostile audiences filled these critics with a sense of pride, but this pride was inevitably accompanied by a certain uneasiness over the possibility of losing him. Suspecting that foreign audiences were becoming his priority, Czech critics sought to make it clear that Dvořák was “their” composer, using nationalist rhetoric and applying “Czech” labels to his music even when such descriptors were not the most fitting. Pieces that were meant to be understood as pan-Slavic, for instance, were often described as “Czech” in the periodicals of Prague. When Dvořák’s own thoughts on the subject of his *Slavonic Dances* had been solicited, he characterized his style generally as “Slavic” as compared to Smetana’s “Czech” music.\(^\text{26}\) Meanwhile, in an extensive article for the 1879 volume of *Dalibor*, Chvála is adamant in declaring that the *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46 are “purely Czech.”\(^\text{27}\) In the same journal, an anonymous critic writes as follows of Dvořák’s *Mazurka* for Violin and Piano, Op. 49:

> Something that is completely Czech dominates this piece, well known in the final bars of numerous Czech songs in 3/4 time, in which, through a descending sequence, a small motive is repeated three times before it comes to its final note... The piece itself is excellent, but it has been christened incorrectly: it is not Polish – not a Mazurka – but a truly Czech work for violin, written in the style of the composer’s *Slavonic Dances*.\(^\text{28}\)

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\(^\text{25}\) Unsigned, “Nástin hudebního života našeho v r. 1880 [A sketch of our musical life in the year 1880],” *Dalibor* 2, no. 36 (December 20, 1880): 282; “hrdé ciziny zkrotitel.”

\(^\text{26}\) According to composer and conductor Oskar Nedbal, Dvořák made the following statement: “You have all written so much about Smetana and myself and have tried to figure out what is the difference between us, but up until this point, no one has yet arrived at the truth. And it’s really simple: Smetana’s music is Czech, and mine is Slavic;” Oskar Nedbal, “Drobné vzpomínky na Dvořáka [Short memories of Dvořák],” *Hudební revue* 4 (1911): 482; translated and quoted in Michael Beckerman, “The Master’s Little Joke: Antonín Dvořák and the Mask of Nation,” in *Dvořák and his World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 146.

\(^\text{27}\) The term that Chvála uses in the Czech original is “ryze české;” Emanuel Chvála, “Antonína Dvořáka Slovanské Tance [Antonín Dvořák’s *Slavonic Dances*],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 1 (January 3, 1879): 6.

\(^\text{28}\) Ť, “Z koncertní síně: Hudební odbor ‘Umělecké Besedy’ [From the Concert Hall: Music division of the ‘Umělecká Beseda’],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 11 (April 10, 1879): 88; “Převládá v ní typus úplně český, známý ze závěrečných taktů nesčíslených písní českých v troj-čtvrtelném taktu, jež v sestupující sekvenci malý motiv pravidelně třikráte opakují, než zakončí v závěrečném tonu... Skladba sama o sobě jest výtečná, avšak špatně jest
In this instance, the critic is surprisingly specific in defining what he perceives to be “Czech” about Dvořák’s piece. In most cases, critics were certain that they heard “Czech,” but did not make reference to concrete musical elements to support their analyses.

The need to attach “Czech” descriptors to Dvořák’s compositions took on a greater degree of urgency in the fall of 1880, as outlined in Chapter Four. Having recently acquired a German publisher, Dvořák was reprimanded on the pages of Dalibor for targeting the German market with his published scores and neglecting the home crowd. Just as Czech critics had urged audiences to value Dvořák’s music more highly in the wake of his international success, so too did these critics communicate unequivocally to Dvořák that he should be writing first and foremost for the Czechs, even if certain sectors of the foreign public had begun to take an interest in his music. After this matter was resolved, critics seemed even more determined to emphasize just how “Czech” Dvořák’s pieces were. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Dvořák’s D-major Symphony – a work that aligns itself with the symphonic oeuvre of Brahms and Beethoven and was designed to appeal to audiences in Vienna. Yet, after its Prague premiere, it was subtitled “Czech Spring Symphony” in Dalibor, and critics seemed bent upon ignoring both its Austro-German models and its Viennese backstory. This example shows that the image of Dvořák as nationalist overshadowed discussions of other aspects of his music and Czech critics were anxious to set the record straight about where his loyalties lay.

In summary, critics played a pivotal role in determining how Dvořák was perceived in the Czech lands, both before his international breakthrough and after. They set about the task of acquainting the Czech public with Dvořák’s music and establishing images – even stereotypes – that persisted in later years in Czech criticism; they kept careful track of Dvořák’s non-Czech

pokřtěna: není to žádný polský typ, žádný mazurek, nýbrž poctivý český typ pro housle, psaný v známé formě Slovanských tanců téhož skladatelé. In much of the Czech criticism on Dvořák, the terms “Czech” and “Slavonic” are used interchangeably and sometimes they are confounded into one expression: “Czech-Slavonic.”
press, be it positive or negative, offering their own interpretations to Czech readers; and they used various means to show that Dvořák was ultimately to be counted as a “Czech” composer, no matter how active he was becoming beyond the Bohemian borders. Changes in Czech perspectives on Dvořák during the various phases of his career are indicated by the ways in which his name appeared in Dalibor. In his earliest Czech reviews, Dvořák is almost invariably referred to as a “young” composer, which gives emphasis to his future potential. Dvořák’s growing international reputation is signalled by a tone of respect in the journal, with the title “maestro” – and eventually “Dr. maestro” upon receipt of his honorary doctorates – added to his name. When critics felt they stood to lose Dvořák, they tended to use terms that denote ownership, like “our” Dvořák in their articles. More than mere educators, Czech critics acted as mediators between Dvořák and his public at home, ensuring that the composer was on good terms with his Czech audiences and vice versa.

**Constructing Dvořák’s Image: Audiences as Agents**

Czech critics relied on a receptive public to whom they could represent Dvořák. Dana Gooley draws attention to the centrality of audiences, particularly in the musical life of the nineteenth century, observing that the public replaced the patron as primary supporter of the arts at this time and thus needed to be courted both by the composer or performer and by the journalistic press. The precise role of audiences is notoriously difficult to define. Unlike critics, and sometimes composers, members of the audience did not have platforms from which they could make their opinions and tastes known. In much of their writing, Czech critics claim to be

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29 I would like to give credit to David Beveridge for bringing this to my attention.

speaking on behalf of the larger public – of which, they themselves were a part, after all – but the extent to which they could truly be attuned to the views of audiences is questionable.  

Moreover, “the [Czech] audience” (obecenstvo), referenced so often in reviews of Dvořák’s works, was by no means a monolithic entity. In many cases, the variety of opinions that surely existed among those who were in attendance at a given performance is insufficiently represented in these articles. Though fraught with difficulty, the issue of the public’s involvement in Dvořák’s reception must be addressed.

To some extent, popular assessments of Dvořák’s music in the Czech lands were undoubtedly moulded by critics. The Prague newspapers and journals in which reviews of Dvořák’s works appeared enjoyed broad readership. Acknowledged as the leading Czech-language newspaper of the late nineteenth century, with a circulation of over ten thousand, 

Národní Listy carried articles on Dvořák on a regular basis. Dalibor, which played a pivotal part in Dvořák’s Czech reception, seems to have had a respectable following as well; writing in 1879, Chvála claims that this journal acted as an aesthetic compass for all individuals interested in music:

It is necessary to point to […] the literary activities devoted to the musical arts. In this realm, the music journal Dalibor (edited by V. J. Novotný) has taken a leading role. The flourishing of Czech musical art requires sufficient support and dignified representation in literature; that [this journal is able to achieve this] is evident by the genuine affinity which the intelligent audience feels toward Dalibor.

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31 David Brodbeck warns against the tendency to assume that the views of critics are necessarily representative of the views of a broader public; David Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna: Language Ordinances, National Property, and the Rhetoric of Deutschtum,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 60, no. 1 (2007): 73.


33 Emanuel Chvála, “Česká Hudba [Czech Music],” Lumír 7, no. 12 (April 30, 1879): 192; “dlužno ještě poukázať […] na činnost literární hudebnímu umění věnovanou. Činnost tuto reprezentuje v první řadě hudební časopis Dalibor (redakcí V. J. Novotného); bylo vůbec již nutně zapotřebí, aby rozkvět hudebního umění českého v
Another critic refers to *Dalibor* as the “central musical publication […] for the Czech audience.” Though both of these comments come from contributors to the journal, who were doubtless eager to highlight the publication’s merits, it would appear that contemporary critical discourses on Dvořák were read. The quality of the writing was also quite consistent among these sources. Prominent critics in Prague usually contributed both to daily newspapers, meant for general readers, and to specialized journals, meant for those with some musical expertise, and this widened the scope of the critics’ reach. In an environment where the sheer number of periodicals being published had increased dramatically from the 1860s onward, Czech literacy rates were high toward the century’s end, and print culture was generally becoming a force to be reckoned with, the music critics of Prague were in a position to have an impact.

Members of the public, however, did not act merely as receptors to the critics’ ideas; on the contrary, audiences in Prague seemed to take an unusually active part in shaping critical perceptions of Dvořák. With discernible scorn, one critic for *Národní Listy* declares that “the Viennese audience […] swears by the newspapers.” The critic makes mention of this within the context of the *Cunning Peasant* scandal, implying that such a heavy reliance on the press gives

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34 “I believe that it is our responsibility, for the development of music in the Czech countryside, to give reports to the central musical publication, which, for the Czech audience, is *Dalibor*;” “mysliám, že jest povinností naší přispívati ku statistice rozvoje hudebního po českém venkově podáváním zpráv centrálnímu orgánu hudebnímu, jakým jest pro obecenstvo české *Dalibor*;” —o., “Listy z Venkova: Z Rakovníka [Reports from Rural Areas: From Rakovník],” *Dalibor* 2, no. 26 (September 10, 1880): 206. (The emphasis is mine.)

35 For example, Ludevít Procházka and Václav Juda Novotný wrote articles for *Národní Listy* on occasion; each in turn also served as editor of *Dalibor*.

36 Many newspapers were founded after the October Diploma of 1860, which granted the Czechs greater freedom than in previous decades.

37 Derek Sayer points out that the 1800s saw the growth of a public capable of reading in Czech; Sayer, 78.

rise to prejudice in audiences, preventing them from making judgments about musical works for themselves. Indeed, David Brodbeck observes that critics in fin-de-siècle Vienna tended to have an uncommonly high degree of sway over popular opinion.\(^{39}\) In some ways, the opposite seemed to be true of late nineteenth-century Prague, where critical assessments of musical works were largely predicated on audience response. In an article for *Dalibor* written in 1888, Karel Budík (1866–1915) complains about the strong impact that the general public appeared to have on reviewers in Prague. Budík cites a passage from the writing of František Pivoda (1824–1898) in order to give a sense of prevailing dynamics between audiences and critics: “the audience is awarded first place as far as musicality and artistic efforts are concerned,” states Pivoda; “the words [of the audience] are recognized as the weightiest, in terms of general impressions, and in accordance with [the audience’s] utterances, the critics write their analyses.”\(^{40}\) Echoing Pivoda, Budík notes that if a work is given hearty applause in Prague, it is automatically considered a success.

The issue of whether or not audience members were capable of making sophisticated musical judgments is also broached by critics. Budík considers both concert- and theatre-attendees in Prague to be insufficiently educated in music, and it is primarily for this reason that he disapproves of the apparent hold that the public had on critics.\(^{41}\) Concerns are frequently voiced in *Dalibor* over poor musical instruction in schools and a lack of interest in amateur music-making, particularly within choral societies; some critics detect a certain decline in

\(^{39}\) Brodbeck, “Dvořák’s Reception in Liberal Vienna,” 73.

\(^{40}\) Karel S. Budík, “Pražské obecenstvo a kritika [Prague audiences and criticism],” *Dalibor* 10, nos. 15–16 (March 31, 1888): 115; “Obecenstvu přísluší jakožto zdroji hudebnosti a všelikých uměleckých snah místo první; jeho slovo má uznáváti se za nejzávažnější vzhledem k dojmům celkovým; a v souhlase jeho výrokem nechat kritika vykonává rozbory…”

\(^{41}\) As evidence for his claim, Budík notes that one and the same performer was being hailed in one newspaper as virtuosic and in another as mediocre, concluding that “the audience did not wait [to see] what would be written in the papers… but rather greeted this questionable genius with abundant applause;” “obecenstvo však nečekalo, co noviny napíší… nýbrž hojným potleskem odměnilo tohoto pochybného výtečníka;” Karel S. Budík, “Pražské obecenstvo a kritika [Prague audiences and criticism],” *Dalibor* 10, nos. 15–16 (March 31, 1888): 115.
audience perspicacity, as a result. Other writers give Czech audiences more credit. Imagining a kind of reciprocal relationship between themselves and the wider public, Novotný and Urbánek solicit letters from the readers of Dalibor, so that the editorial staff of the journal might be made aware of all levels of musical activity in the Czech lands and be able to gather “statistics on musical taste.” In the editorial for the 1882 volume of Dalibor, Urbánek deems the Czechs to be a particularly discerning group. Urbánek writes: “[with this journal] we call out to a nation not only of music lovers, but a nation that is consecrated to music – those, who have been able to appreciate its enchantment [from the time that they were] in the cradle.” An anonymous critic for Dalibor is even more forthright, stating in 1884: “we often flatter ourselves and the world says of us that we are the most eminent musical nation.” Both writers allude to a deeply held view; that the Czechs considered themselves to be inherently musical was well known and embedded in the very title of the music journal for which these critics wrote. According to the popular legend, Dalibor – a brave knight from the turn of the sixteenth century – taught himself

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42 One has only to look at the first few issues of Dalibor in 1879 to see how pervasive these kinds of ideas are: G. Lašek, “Slovo o činnosti našich zpěváckých spolků venkovských [A few words on the activities of our choral societies in rural areas],” Dalibor 1, nos. 2 and 6 (January 10 and February 20, 1879): 11–12, 45–46; Jan Malát, “Čeho dbáti třeba, aby vyučování hudbě se dařilo [What must we do to teach musical successfully],” Dalibor 1, nos. 3–4 (January 20 and February 1, 1879): 19–21, 27–29; Pavel Řezný, “Dodatek k slovu o činnosti našich zpěváckých spolků venkovských [An addendum concerning the activities of choral societies in rural areas],” Dalibor 1, no. 4 (February 1, 1879): 29; František Pivoda, “Nová nauka zpěvu [New methods for teaching singing],” Dalibor 1, nos. 5–6 (February 10 and 20, 1879): 35–36, 43–45.

43 Václav Juda Novotný and František A. Urbánek, “Našim čtenářům [To our readers],” Dalibor 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1879): 2; “abychom měli jakousi statistiku hudebního vkusu…”

44 Unsigned editorial [František A. Urbánek], “Našim čtenářům: Všem ctitelům českého hudebního umění [To our readers: to all who honour Czech musical art],” Dalibor 4, no. 1 (January 1, 1882): 1; “My voláme k národu než hudbymilovnému, my voláme k národu hudbě posvěcenému, jemuž kouzlo jest vloženo v samu kolébkou.”

45 Urbánek makes this comment within the context of a report on Dvořák’s enthusiastic reception in England, arguing that, though Czechs see themselves as a “musical nation,” they could stand to learn a lot from “das Land ohne Musik;” “my si často namlouváme a celý svět to o nás říká, že jsme eminentně hudebním národem;” -ik, “Druhá cesta mistra Dvořáka do Anglie [Dvořák’s Second Trip to England],” Dalibor 6, no. 35 (September 21, 1884): 345.

46 The journal’s very first run dated from 1858 to 1865. By the time it started up again in 1873, Smetana’s opera Dalibor (1865–67) had given rise to intense critical debates and the title became all the more fitting, since the journal was re-established by Smetana’s staunchest defenders. However, the journal’s title, in fact, predates Smetana’s work, suggesting that its initial meaning derives from the legend rather than the opera.
to play the violin, while serving a prison sentence in the tower of Prague castle, his crime having been a willingness to give aid to the serfs on the estate of the oppressive lord Adam of Drahonice. Novelist Alois Jirásek (1851–1930) recounts the tale as follows in his 1894 book on Czech legends:

[Dalibor] had never before held a violin or bow in his hands, but now [while in his prison cell] he seldom put them down. He taught himself, and he played and played. His boredom left him, the hours passed more quickly, and his playing grew better, more artful, and more melodious. The jailer and guards would stand at his door and listen. Then some of the other castle employees and officials would come to hear the self-taught musician. As the word got around, even some townspeople would gather there... The number of listeners kept growing, until quite often there would be a crowd at the back gate of the castle and on the roads outside, stretching all the way to the vineyards on the slope down... The audience stood spellbound when they heard the tender and melancholy notes that came from the bare prison.47

This story became ingrained in the collective consciousness of the Czech people,48 and the expression “necessity taught Dalibor to play the violin” was in daily usage during the nineteenth century.49 Legends like these made some critics take the musical competence of Czech audiences for granted.50

Regardless of the skill levels that critics attributed to members of the Czech public, audiences loom large in Dvořák criticism from this time period. Descriptions of audience response are frequently included in reviews of Dvořák’s works, and audience approval is presented by many critics as tangible proof of a composition’s worth. Common observations that appear in reviews include “the applause was of long duration,” a certain part of the work “had to

48 As Tyrrell puts it, “Dalibor the violinist embodies one of the most potent of all Czech nationalist myths: the notion of the musicality of the Czechs and the achievements of their musicians;” John Tyrrell, Czech Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 162.
49 Czech original: “nouze naučila Dalibor housti;” it is similar in meaning to the expression: “necessity is the mother of invention.”
50 The notion is also reinforced to a large extent in the writings of Charles Burney, who referred to Prague as “the Conservatory of Europe.” Charles Burney, The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Provinces (London: T. Becket, 1775), 4.
be repeated,” or the composer was forced by the audience to “make an appearance on the stage.”

These kinds of ideas come across perhaps most clearly in Novotný’s laudatory review of *Hymnus* from 1873; Novotný expresses his elation with turns of phrases like: “[the work] captivated and ignited the whole audience” or “it has been a long time since I was so moved in my inner-most being by a piece of music as I was today and I undoubtedly shared this feeling with the general audience.” Such statements are considered to be exorbitant by František Pazdírek, who writes in *Hudební Listy* that Novotný “allowed himself to be carried away by the [muse] of Mr. Dvořák… into the Elysian Fields.” In later years, Novotný himself would concede that his earlier praise had been somewhat excessive – an “ode on *Hymnus*,” rather than a review of it, as he puts it in 1911. Both of these more sober reflections on *Hymnus* suggest that Novotný’s initial reaction to the piece was guided by an overwhelmingly enthusiastic audience.

Besides making mention of these outward displays of audience approval, Czech critics write with a concern as to how Dvořák’s music is perceived by the public. In several of their critiques, these writers discuss the comprehensibility of Dvořák’s works. When reviewing a concert featuring Dvořák’s *Bagatelles* and *Slavonic Dances*, one critic states: “we will not write much about the pieces themselves because from Dvořák’s works there blows a spirit that is so purely

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51 x., “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* 1, no. 11 (March 14, 1873): 88; “[*Hymnus*] roznítil, ba strhл veškeré obecnstvo v pravé nadšení;” “již dávno jsem nebyl tak do nejhlubšího nitra rozechvěn skladbou hudební jako tentokráte, i sdílel jsem bez rozpaků všeobecné to nadšení obecnstva.”


53 “It is more of a ‘hymnus’ [an ode] on *Hymnus* than a review, and I read these lines from so long ago with a smile, [knowing] that I was not wrong about Dvořák, but that I had a good hunch about him already in 1873;” Je to spíše hymnus na ‘Hymnus’ než kritika, a čtu ty dávné řádky s úsměvem, že jsem se v Dvořákově nezmýlil, nýbrž že jsem měl o něm dobrý čich již v roce 1873;” V. J. Novotný, “Pestré obrázky z Dvořákovy života [Vivid Pictures from Dvořák’s Life],” *Dalibor* 33, no. 41 (June 2, 1911): 294.
ours, a spirit that so pleasantly touches everyone.”54 Similar ideas are communicated by another critic, reporting on a performance of Dvořák’s “Sorrow” (“Žal”), which is part of the collection From a Bouquet of Slavonic Folksongs (Z kytice národních písní slovanských) for chorus and orchestra; the critic testifies that “the audience completely understood the mighty spirit of Dvořák’s national chorus.”55 In both cases, the reviewers imply that they need not go into detail because Dvořák’s work is instantly comprehensible to Czech audiences.56 The word “transparent” (průhledný) is likewise used countless times in Dalibor to describe Dvořák’s music.57 Though the exact meaning of this term is, at times, ironically opaque, it seems to connote accessibility in some contexts. Chvála uses the term to draw attention to Dvořák’s cultivation of a style that is readily familiar to Czech audiences; he points to Dvořák’s ability to

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54 J., “Listy z Venkova: Turnov [Reports from Rural Areas: Turnov],” Dalibor 1, no. 21 (July 20, 1879): 168; “O skladbách přednesených nebudem se šířiti, neboť vane ze skladeb Dvořákových vůbec duch tak ryze nás, duch tak příjemně každého se dotýkající.”

55 Unsigned, “Listy z Venkova [Reports from Rural Area],” Dalibor 1, no. 26 (September 10, 1879): 208; “obecenstvo… úplně porozumělo mocnému duchu národního zpěvu Dvořáka.”

56 In keeping with this notion of Dvořák’s music being comprehensible, a critic for Dalibor reprinted in Czech translation the following excerpt from a review of Dvořák’s Symphony in F major, Op. 76 (1885) that appeared in the Dresdner Zeitung: “[Dvořák’s] Symphony in F major (Op. 76, 1875), which was performed yesterday, is a very nice work, its foremost characteristics being its easy accessibility and lovely, graceful melodies; for it is not in Dvořák’s nature to speak in an incomprehensible language full of dry philosophical theories. To create music means, above all, to do so for others;” “včera provedl na symfonie v F dur jesť dílo velmi přívětivé, jehož jest hlavní ctností snadná přístupnost a milá graciosní melodika; nezáživné filosofické teorie nesrozumitelnou řečí vykládati není věcí Dvořákovou. Tvořiti hudbu především jiným hudbu;” Unsigned, “Různé Zprávy [Various News],” Dalibor II, nos. 14–15 (March 30, 1889): 116. (The emphasis is mine.)

57 Novotný states in reference to the second version of The King and the Charcoal Burner, “[Dvořák] hid away for himself the large score of his opera and composed for the audience, a second time on the same text, new music in a transparent, light national style” (“[Dvořák] schoval obrovskou partituru opery své pro sebe a komponoval pro obecenstvo po druhé na tentýž tekst zcela novou hudbu v průhledném lehkém stylu národním”); X., “Česká Zpěvohra [Czech Opera],” Dalibor II, no. 49 (December 5, 1874): 390. Novotný writes that “the individual numbers [in The King and the Charcoal Burner] are so transparently constructed in a national style that they may become popular” (“jednotlivá čísla jsou tak průhledně stavena v stylu národním, že státi se mohou populárními”); N., “Zprávy z Prahy a z Venkova [New from Prague and Rural Areas],” Dalibor III, no. 1 (January 16, 1875): 20. One critic writes of Dvořák’s Psalm 149, “it is a piece that is very simple in its formal construction, more transparent and calmer in its conception than any other earlier piece by Dvořák” (“jest to skladba v celém sestrojení formálním velmi jednoduchá, průhlednější a klidnější, než kterakoli dřívější skladba Dvořáková”); y, “Z koncertní siné [From the concert hall],” Dalibor 1, no. 9 (March 20, 1879): 71. In reference to Dvořák’s String Quartet in E major, another critic notes “its simplicity [and] transparency in the selection of motives, their development, and in the formal arrangement of the whole” (“skladba ta [se vyznačuje] jednoduchostí, průhlednosti ve volbě motivů, jejich provedení, i ve formálním uspořádáním celku”); r., “Z koncertní siné: První hudební večer ‘Umělecké besedy’ [From the concert hall: The first musical evening of the ‘Umělecká beseda’],” Dalibor 2, no. 2 (January 10, 1880): 13. (The emphasis is mine.)
compose works that are “transparent in thought and natural in expression, such that one greets them with open arms when hearing them for the first time.”58 These notions of transparency and comprehensibility surface especially in reviews of The Cunning Peasant. Once again, it is Chvála who takes these ideas the furthest, asking, in reference to Dvořák’s operas of the early 1870s: “what was the point of an ingenious conception, or the ingenious work to the composer, if he did not give sufficient heed to ensure that the musical expression would be comprehensible (srozumytelný) to the wider audience?”59 In contrast to Dvořák’s previous works in the genre, Chvála highlights the accessible approach taken in The Cunning Peasant – an opera that the critic deems to have been written with a sensitivity to Czech audiences.

The atmosphere at venues also led critics to emphasize certain aspects of Dvořák’s work over others. Many of Dvořák’s compositions were performed in spaces that had a Czech nationalist bent, perhaps leading critics to accentuate the “Czechness” in Dvořák’s music. The Hlahol choral society sought to give performance opportunities to amateur singers, while fostering in them a sense of national pride.60 Overtly nationalist works were staples in Hlahol’s repertoire, in keeping with the society’s motto: “let the song reach the heart; let the heart reach the homeland.” There can be little wonder, then, that in this kind of environment – and set within the walls of the spacious New Town Theatre, which was likely to draw an eclectic crowd – Hymnus was understood as a deeply patriotic composition and Dvořák was identified as a fighter for the Czech cause. The Provisional Theatre too was a patriotic institution; as a precursor to the

58 Though Chvála focuses on Dvořák’s Slavonic Dances, Op. 46 in this review, he uses the term “transparent” in reference to Dvořák’s works in general; Emanuel Chvála, “Antonína Dvořáka Slovanské Tance [Antonín Dvořák’s Slavonic Dances],” Dalibor 1, no. 1 (January 3, 1879): 6; “myšlenkou tak průhledná a výrazem tak přirozená, že otevíráme jim nárůt svou hned při prvém setkání s nimi.”

59 Emanuel Chvála, “Opera: Šelma Sedlák [Opera: The Cunning Peasant],” Lumír 28, no. 4 (February 10, 1878): 64 (see Appendix 5 for a full English translation of this article); “Co byla platná geniální koncepce, co duchaplná práce skladatel, který nehleděl dosti k tomu, aby se v hudebním výrazu i širšimu obecenstvu stal srozumitelným?”

National Theatre, it unofficially held to the later Theatre’s motto: “the nation unto itself.”\textsuperscript{61} In fact, since the venue was in use during those crucial decades – the 1860s and 70s – when a distinctly Czech operatic repertory was being built, it was in some ways more instrumental than the National Theatre in shaping and consolidating public tastes.\textsuperscript{62} When premiered in this performing space, where audiences had witnessed productions of other works in the Czech comic opera tradition, \textit{The Cunning Peasant} was bound to be interpreted as Czech.

Performance locale appears to have had a particularly profound impact on the premiere of Dvořák’s Symphony in D major. Žofín Hall, where the work was first given, was a more high-brow venue than the other two theatres, and attendance at concerts was associated with a sense of prestige. In a detailed article on concert venues in Prague, Hostinský observes a superficiality among concert goers at Žofín Hall and places the space in contradistinction to Konvikt Hall, which in his view was likely to draw a more discerning – albeit narrower – circle of listeners.\textsuperscript{63} Another critic for \textit{Dalibor} reiterates some of Hostinský’s ideas and provides a telling portrait of concert life in Prague:

It is true that concerts in Prague are well-attended, sometimes very well-attended, especially when there is an artist from abroad, who has been praised by foreign newspapers – someone who just happens to come to Prague, plays a few pieces, and then hurries to continue his career elsewhere. To attend such a concert is dictated by fashion and this is determined by the wide circles of those who are interested in art... But a loyal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Though many Czech operas were premiered at this venue, occasional complaints were voiced about the repertoire. Before taking over as director in 1866, Smetana made it clear in his articles for \textit{Národní Listy} that he believed too much attention was being devoted to Italian opera there; see John Tyrrell, \textit{Czech Opera} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 35–38. Later on, it was thought that operettas had become too much of a focus. Novotný goes so far as to write in \textit{Dalibor} in 1881, “every lofty piece for the stage is a bit of a waste here; the taste of the audience has been ruined by operettas;” “u nás jest přec jen škoda každě ušlechtilější práce pro jeviště tou dobou; vkus obecenstva jest operetou pokažen;” X., “Zpěvohra [Opera],” \textit{Dalibor} 3, no. 8 (March 10, 1881): 62.
\item \textsuperscript{63} O. H., “Feuilleton: Koncerty u nás a jinde [Feuilleton: Concerts at home and elsewhere],” \textit{Dalibor} 1, no. 13 (May 1, 1879): 101–102; Konvikt Hall was a small concert space, affiliated with the Prague Organ School.
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audience of people who regularly attend good concerts of home-grown artists and societies because of the thing itself, because of art, there are few of those.”

Even though, according to these critics, audience members at Žofín Hall only took a passing interest in music, the organizers of the annual Slavonic concert of the Academic Readers’ society had no trouble filling seats. Other issues were at stake for those, to whom the repertoire being performed on the stage was beside the point. The Slavonic concerts provided a meeting ground for like-minded Czech patriots; these events were not to be missed by “elite society and Czech intelligentsia” and even played host to political demonstrations on occasion. Bruce Garver points out that the Academic Readers’ society itself had a large university student constituent, which aimed to politicize this cultural institution. Under Austrian law, patriotic organizations were not permitted to engage in politics, and the society was eventually forced to disband for violating this policy. The concept of the Slavonic concert outlived the society, and following the example of Prague, similar concert series were established in other cities; they served as alternatives to concerts given by institutions, like the Prague conservatory, which tended to cultivate an Austro-German repertory well into the 1880s. Although music critics had their own vested interest in portraying Dvořák’s D-major Symphony as a Czech composition, a politically-minded audience – one that was perhaps less concerned about how the piece channelled

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64 “Pravda sice, že koncerty pražské bývají dosti četně, někdy i velmi četně navštěvovány, zejména dostaví-li se nějaký umělec z ciziny, jenž vychválen novinami zahraničními, do Prahy jen tak mimochodem zavítá, zde své kusy odehraje a opět dále za svým povoláním spěchá. Navštívit takovýto koncert káže moda a dobrý ton, a to v nejšírších kruzích práti umění rozhoduje... Ale stálého obecenstva, jež pravidelně dobré koncerty domácích umělců a spolků k vůli umění navštěvuje, toho jest velice pořídku.” Db., “Naše hudební ústavy [Our musical institutions],” Dalibor 4, no. 8 (March 10, 1882): 57.


66 Garver writes that the Academic Readers’ Society was “the authorized social and cultural institution to which almost half of all Czech university students belonged;” Bruce M. Garver, The Young Czech Party, 1874–1901 and the Emergence of a Multi-Party System (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 144.

67 Garver, 110.
Beethoven than about how it might give prestige to a patriotic organization – might have led the critics to exaggerate their nationalist readings of this piece.

Given the pervasiveness of print culture in late nineteenth-century Prague, critical assessments of Dvořák were not likely to fall upon deaf ears. At the same time, audiences did much of the shaping and manipulating themselves; rather than blindly reading reviews of Dvořák’s music, they were vital agents, capable of swaying critics in certain directions. Audience response was crucial in determining whether a performance could be characterized as a triumph in the press; accessibility to the public was considered by critics to be an important consideration in assessments of Dvořák’s works; and the prevailing patriotic institutions at which Dvořák’s compositions were performed in Prague, as well as the politics of the day, made individuals view everything through “a scrim of romantic nationalism,” as Michael Beckerman so aptly expresses it, leading critics to devote an inordinate amount of attention to the “Czechest” of Dvořák’s music. Even though the opinions of audiences, made up of individuals with varying tastes and musical skills, can never truly be gauged, the public played a significant part in constructing Dvořák’s image.

Letting the Music “speak for itself”? Dvořák as Strategist

“I only write music and let it speak for itself;” such was Dvořák’s attitude, according to Josef Kovařík (1871–1951), the composer’s personal secretary in New York. Indeed, throughout his career, Dvořák seemed reluctant to share his views publicly. Unlike Smetana,

who was known for his controversial opinion pieces for *Národní Listy* in the early 1860s,\(^{70}\) and Fibich, who contributed to *Dalibor* regularly in the 1880s,\(^{71}\) Dvořák did not write a single article for the Czech press. Yet, Dvořák was not as passive as his alleged statement to Kovařík would imply. During his visits to England in the mid-1880s, Dvořák became particularly concerned about forging a certain kind of image for himself in the Czech lands. Not only did he take a keen interest in English reviews of his music while he was abroad, but he also sent many of these reviews to his wife Anna Dvořáková; critics Novotný, Chvála, and Zelený; and translator Josef Zubatý (1855–1931), with the request that they be reprinted in Czech translation in the newspapers and journals of Prague. The publications in which these articles were to appear, as mentioned by Dvořák in his letters, include *Dalibor*, a specialized music journal; *Národní Listy*, the main outlet of the Young Czech Party; and two Prague dailies that were owned by the Old Czechs: *Pokroč* and the German-language *Politis*. Collectively, these periodicals represent a large range of groups, co-existing in Prague during the 1880s, and this suggests that Dvořák was hoping for a wide readership. Far from taking a hands-off approach, Dvořák played an active role in determining exactly which aspects of his reception in England would be relayed to the Czech public.

In some of his early correspondence from England, Dvořák presents the idea of publishing translated English reviews in Czech newspapers as a matter of mere practicality. Writing to Novotný while on his first trip to England in 1884 – at a time when he was not yet confident about his English-language skills – Dvořák claims that these reprints in translation are his fastest

\(^{70}\) Smetana became especially involved in music criticism during the 1863/64 season, and his heated exchanges with František Pivoda are particularly well-documented in the scholarly literature; see, for instance, John Clapham, “The Smetana-Pivoda Controversy,” *Music & Letters* 52, no. 4 (1971): 353–364.

\(^{71}\) Upon Václav Juda Novotný’s resignation as editor of *Dalibor* in May of 1881, the incoming editor and publisher František Urbánek writes that he relies on the contributions of three individuals in particular: Otakar Hostinsky, Emanuel Chvála, and Zdeněk Fibich. Fibich is likewise listed among the journal’s contributors in the 1884 and 1885 volumes of the journal.
means of finding out what is being written about him in the London press: “as usual, I have received the Prague paper today” states Dvořák, “and in it, I have finally learned the content and meaning of the London critiques, for I am so busy that I do not have time to ask someone for a translation.” Soon, however, the reprinted English reviews became a conduit through which Dvořák could assure readers at home of his unwavering devotion to the Czech nation and his aim to bring international glory to the Czechs. In the same letter, Dvořák thanks Novotný for overseeing the Czech publication of these reviews, adding “I do not even have to tell you that it makes me very happy and I am overjoyed, when the good Czech people can find out about the triumphs of a Czech artist.”

Dvořák’s desire to be portrayed as a Czech nationalist in these reprinted English reviews largely dictated which portions were highlighted and which portions were downplayed or omitted altogether. For instance, when sending an article from the London Daily News to Zubatý in August of 1885, Dvořák gives specific directions with regard to the translation. The article reports on a rehearsal of Dvořák’s cantata The Spectre’s Bride (Svatební Košile) and ends with the following sentence in the English original: “at [the rehearsal’s] conclusion, Herr Dvorák [sic], whose English is not quite so fluent as that of Herr Richter, addressed in German a few words of hearty praise of the magnificent manner in which the orchestra had read his difficult music at sight.” Fearing that this sentence might incite criticism among the Czechs – that his speech in German might perhaps be construed as part of an effort to present himself to English

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72 Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 1 (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1987), 403; March 20, 1884: “Jako obyčejně, tak i dnes přišly Pražské listy... z nichž jsem se teprv obsah a smysl londýnských kritik vlastně dozvěděl nej jsem ustavičně zaměstnán, že ani k tomu nepřijdu, abych někoho požádál o přeložení.”

73 Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 1, 403; March 20, 1884: “Nepotřebuji Vám tedy ani říkat, že mě to velice těší a jak se z toho raduji, když tak ten dobrý český líd se dozví o triumfech českého umělce...”

audiences as a German composer – Dvořák writes to Zubatý, “please do not mention that I had to speak a few words in German because I do not know English yet... Perhaps you might write that I spoke in Turkish! You know how things are at home.”\textsuperscript{75} Dvořák’s quip demonstrates that he knew the Czech readers for whom these translations were intended. Having been censured in \textit{Dalibor} some five years earlier for allowing exclusively German titles and texts to be published on the scores of his vocal works,\textsuperscript{76} Dvořák was sensitive to his Czech audience and careful to avoid actions that might give rise to controversy.\textsuperscript{77}

Similarly, Dvořák was very particular about how his interview for the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette} was to appear in the Czech press.\textsuperscript{78} In a letter to Novotný penned in October of 1886, Dvořák writes, “I would like to draw attention especially to the last sentence [of the interview], where I said that all of Europe used to gaze at our nation with admiration and that a time of glory will hopefully come again; our nation may be small, but we can nevertheless show what we were, what we are, and what we will be!”\textsuperscript{79} Dvořák followed this up three days later with another letter, providing detailed instructions for the Czech version of the interview to translator Zubatý: “see to it that it gets reprinted above all in \textit{Národní Listy}; I think that it will make a good impression on the nation. Leave out the biographical details, but make sure that the last exchange is reproduced in

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\textsuperscript{75} Milan Kuna et al., \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]}, vol. 2 (Prague: Supraphon, 1988), 86; August 21, 1885: “Nezmiňujte se ale o tom, že jsem musel promluvit pár slov německy, poněvadž anglicky ještě neumím... Napište třebas, že jsem mluvil turecky! Víte jak to u nás chodí.”
\textsuperscript{76} See Chapter Four for a full discussion of these German titles and texts.
\textsuperscript{77} Zubatý complied with Dvořák’s request in his translation of the article for \textit{Dalibor}; no mention is made of the German address: “at the conclusion [of the rehearsal] Mr. Dvořák spoke several heartfelt words of praise, acknowledging the impeccable way in which the orchestra [members] sight-read their parts;” “k závěrku [zkoušky] proslavil pan Dvořák několik slov srdečného uznání výtečného spůsobu, jakým orchestr provedl z listu svojí úlohu;” Josef Zubatý, “Dvořák v Birminghamě [Dvořák in Birmingham],” \textit{Dalibor} 7, no. 32 (August 28, 1885): 316.
\textsuperscript{78} Unsigned, “From Butcher to Baton: An Interview with Herr Dvorák,” \textit{Pall Mall Gazette} (October 13, 1886): 415.
\textsuperscript{79} Kuna et al., \textit{Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]}, vol. 2, 184–185; October 15, 1886: “... zejména Vás upozorňuji na konečnou větu, kde jsem řekl, že kdysi celá Evropa hleděla na náš národ s obdivem a že snad zase pro nás opět nadejde doba slávy a že, ač malý národ, že přece dovedeme ukázat, co jsme byli a co jsme a budeme!”
\end{flushright}
full. The nation will rejoice."80 Aware of the kind of effect that Dvořák’s statement was supposed to have on Czech readers, Zubatý prefaced the translated quotation with a few sentences of his own, emphasizing Dvořák’s loyalty to his Czech roots, in spite of his international accolades. In Zubatý’s words,

All, who have had the privilege to meet him in person, will know about Dvořák’s sincere patriotism; last spring, [serving as a companion on one of Dvořák’s trips to England, I] had the opportunity nearly every day to become convinced of the fact that Dvořák is not any different in far-away England than here in Prague. Even so, we are filled with renewed joy when we see that, in his national pride, our master distinguishes himself from countless other artists, great or small; we see that our delight in his renown will never be marred by accusations of national indifference.81

There can be no reason to doubt the sincerity of Dvořák’s remarks about his homeland; however, his eagerness to have them reprinted in translation also indicates a certain consciousness of his “nationalist” reputation in the Czech press. As David Beveridge points out, “the outburst of nationalist sentiment at the close of this interview was intended for the Czech audience at home as much as for the British.”82

Although Dvořák was not always as direct as the above examples suggest, often leaving it up to the discretion of the Czech critics to determine which excerpts of the English reviews were

80 Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2, 188; October 18, 1886: “Dejte to zejména do Národ[ních] listů, myslím, že to v národě dobre bude působit. Životopisná data vynechte, ale zejména další rozmluvu ku konci článku dejte celou. Národ bude jášat.”
81 Josef Zubatý, “Páty pobyt mistra Antonína Dvořáka v Anglii [Antonín Dvořák’s Fifth Stay in England],” Dalibor 8, no. 41 (November 7, 1886): 403; “Známe sice všichni, komu bylo přáno setkati se s ním osobně, upřímně Dvořákovo vlastenectví, a pisatel těchto řádků měl loňského jara skoro každým dnem příležitost přesvědčiti se, že Dvořák v příčině té není jiným v daleké Anglii než u nás v Praze, ale přece vždy novou radostí nás naplňuje vidíme-li, že nikdy nebude nám kaliti slávu jména jeho výčitkou národního indifferentismu.” English original of the article: “With regard to music it is with the English as it is with the Slavs in politics – they are young, very young, but there is great hope for the future. Twenty years ago we Slavs were nothing; now we feel our national life once more awakening, and who knows but that the glorious times may come back when all Europe looked up to the powerful Czechs, the Slavs, the Bohemians, to whom I, too, belong, and to whom I am proud to belong.”
suitable for reprinting," he usually chose the articles that were to be sent home himself and rarely did so without commenting on them in the accompanying letters. Dvořák saw critic Joseph Bennett (1831–1911) of The Daily Telegraph as his staunchest defender in England and critic Francis Hüffer (1845–1889) of The Times as the least willing among the English to lend support to his cause. In a letter addressed to Chvála, dated October 26, 1886, Dvořák alludes to a difference of opinion with Hüffer at their first meeting and attributes the critic’s reserve to this incident: “I had a conversation with him [Hüffer] two years ago and we did not agree,” writes Dvořák; “I told him my honest opinion and ever since that time, his behaviour toward me is somewhat reserved and he takes every opportunity to stab at me.” In contrast, Dvořák was consistently pleased with Bennett’s reviews of his music, occasionally referring to him as the “English Hanslick” – a nickname that indicates both the critic’s willingness to promote Dvořák’s music abroad and his authority in the journalistic press. As expected, Dvořák tended to forward

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83 For instance, Dvořák lets the critics decide which excerpts from the reviews of the St. Ludmila (Svatá Ludmila) oratorio get reprinted in translation. In a letter to Zubatý dated October 18, 1886, Dvořák writes as follows: “Translate all of [the critiques and] give them to Novotný, so that he can adapt them as he sees fit. Perhaps he might write a feuilleton for his journal Hlas and then you – or he – can put those critiques that seem best to you into Politik or Národní Lísty. The best ones are probably those that were printed in the Daily News, Daily Telegraph, Saturday Times (especially), Daily Chronicle, Globe, Standard… Only be sure to give all of the newspapers the same critiques, perhaps two, three or more, but excerpted or however you would like;” “Přeložte je všecky jak jsou, dejte to Novotnému, ať to zpracuje jak sám bude chtít. Snad by mohl udělat fejeton pro svůj časopis Hlas a Vy pak dejte – neb on sám – do Politik a Národ[ní] Lístů kritiky, které budou nejlepší se Vám zdát. Nejlepší asi jsou Daily News, Daily Telegraph, Saturday Times (obzvlášť), Daily Chronic[l]e, Globe, Standard… Jenom tedy dejte všem novinám stejně kritiky, třeba ze dvou, třech a více, ale v krátkosti nebo jak myslíte.”

84 Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2, 196; October 26, 1886: “Měl jsem s ním před dvěma lety rozmluvu a tu jsme se spolu nepohdli, řekl jsem mu své upřímné mínění a od těch dob chová ke mně jaksi zdrženlivě a kde může, rád mě šťouchne.”

85 Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 2, 38 (letter to Novotný dated April, 24, 1885); Dvořák refers to Bennett as the “main representative of criticism [in England];” “hlavní reprezentant zdejší kritiky.” This view of Bennett is also expressed in the Czech press. Reporting on Dvořák’s first London trip, an anonymous critic in Dalibor writes: “thanks to criticism and English journalism, Dvořák is a popular individual today, and an individual who is a favourite not only in musical circles, but also in the eyes of the wider London audience. Especially favourable criticism on Dvořák was written by the critic Bennett, a diligent English soul, who, in his newspaper The Daily Telegraph, truthfully related Dvořák’s past full of obstacles and his significance for Czech national music;” “Dvořák jest dnes – díky kritice a žurnalistice anglické – osobnosti populární a osobou oblíbenou nejen v kruzech uměleckých ale i v nejširších londýnském obecnstvu. Zvláště sympatickým učinil Angličanům Dvořák kritik Benett [sic], poctivá to anglická duše, který v listě svém Daily Telegraphu prostě a věrně vyličil strastiálnou minulosť Dvořákovu a jeho význam pro
Bennett’s articles to his contacts in the Czech lands and avoided passing along Hüffer’s critiques.  

Once again, his image as a nationalist was the issue at stake in these choices, as is evident in a letter that the composer wrote to Novotný in April of 1885, following the London premiere of his Symphony in D minor, Op. 70. Of Bennett’s assessment, Dvořák writes, “as always [he] has understood my work completely.” Bennett repeatedly drew attention in his articles to the “nationalist” elements in Dvořák’s music, and his review of the D-minor Symphony is no exception. In Bennett’s view, every movement of the work bears the mark of its nation, and he even goes so far as to dub the piece “Slavonic” Symphony – a remark that the Czech critics were doubtless keen to reprint. While Dvořák approves of Bennett’s critique, he expresses a sense of frustration over Hüffer’s review: “four years ago, [Hüffer] declared my Sextet to be a masterpiece and original, and now he finds fault with my so-called Slavic originality. In short, this is complete nonsense and it is not worth discussing any further.” These words were provoked by Hüffer’s suggestion that Dvořák would have to “sink his nationality” before he could be considered a “great” composer and that, when these nationalist features are removed,
there is not enough substance left in their place. Hüffer’s comments on this are worth quoting in full:

In [Dvořák’s] earlier orchestral works, the *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, and even in parts of the first symphony, the popular songs and dances of his country played an important part, and gave, as it were, their typical cachet to his imaginings. We pointed out more than once that, charming though these reminiscences might be, they did not suffice to establish the reputation of a great composer, that to prove himself such Herr Dvorak [sic] would have to *sink his nationality* for a season and be his own individual self. In his D minor symphony he has certainly done the former. With the exception, perhaps, of some rhythmical idiosyncrasies in the scherzo, and again in the last movement, there is nothing that a German or an Englishman might not have written as well as a Slav. Unfortunately, however, the individuality here is not sufficiently strong to atone for the loss of national colour.91

Even Hüffer’s decision to address the composer as “Herr Dvorak” was likely to stir contentions; his critique of the D-minor Symphony was excluded from *Dalibor*. Clearly, Dvořák was determined to share with his Czech audiences those articles that portrayed him unequivocally as a Czech composer writing nationalist works and to suppress reviews that might contradict that image.

Czech critics assisted Dvořák in highlighting the positive aspects of his English reception. They frequently teased out the most enthusiastic parts of a given review and withheld any sections that were likely to cause offence, even when Dvořák did not ask them to do so.92 For example, Hüffer’s largely complimentary article on Dvořák’s *Stabat Mater* is reproduced almost in its entirety in *Dalibor*, but the paragraph in which Hüffer criticizes Dvořák’s “cavalier” approach to declamation is conspicuously absent, as is the critic’s assertion that the piece lacks the kind of passion that can be heard in the sacred works of Beethoven and Berlioz.93 Based on

91 Unsigned [Francis Hüffer], “Philharmonic Society,” *The Times* (April 24, 1885): 13. (The emphasis is mine.)
92 Often critics do not provide any indication of the omissions, and the Czech reprints of the English reviews read more like loose paraphrases of the original than literal translations.
93 Unsigned [Francis Hüffer], “Dvořák’s *Stabat Mater*,” *The Times* (March 15, 1884); Josef Zubatý, trans., “Hlas novin anglických o Antonínu Dvořákoví: *The Times* [English Newspaper Articles on Antonín Dvořák: The
the existing correspondence, it would appear that Dvořák did not have a hand in orchestrating these omissions. Likewise, Dvořák does not give any particular directions to Zubatý, when sending along the review of *The Spectre’s Bride* that was published in the London *Standard*.94 Zubatý, however, takes great liberties with his translation, only including the portions of the original review that report on the warm reaction of the audience95 and omitting the sentences that address the “repulsiveness” of the cantata’s storyline.96 These examples show that Dvořák’s contacts in Prague did much of the excerpting themselves, and they were important allies in presenting Dvořák to Czech readers in the best possible light. The foreign press – especially the long-standing and well-established English press – was manipulated in this way for home consumption. Though acting in concert with a network of critics, editors, and translators, it was ultimately Dvořák, who took the initiative and sought to micromanage his public image in the Czech lands from the distant shores of England.

94 Kuna et al., *Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents]*, vol. 2, 89–90; September 2, 1885.

95 The following part is included: “The production of Herr Dvorák’s [sic] cantata *The Spectre’s Bride* created quite a sensation, moving the Festival audience to a stronger declaration of approval than had yet been evinced. Never was applause more fairly earned by the executants, and never did a composer win a more richly merited triumph... Enthusiasm such as was bestowed upon *The Spectre’s Bride* has seldom been heard at Birmingham; and the composer, who conducted, received a greeting at the close that will still ring in his ears when he returns home to Prague;” “Provedení p. Dvořákovy kantáty *The Spectre’s Bride* vzbudilo pravou sensaci, povzbudivši obecenstvo festivalu k mocnějšímu projevu nadšení, než k jakému kdy před tím se dalo povzbudit. Ani jednou před tím nedostalo se účinkujícím hojnější žně potlesku, ani jednou nedobyl si skladatel triumfu zaslouženějšího... Enthusiasmu takového s jakým přijata byla Dvořáková skladba, žídařka byl Birmingham svědkem; a skladateli, jenž sám řídil, dostalo se po ukončení takového potlesku, že mu ještě bude zníti v uších, až se vrátí do Prahy.”

96 The following part is excluded: “The choice of such a lugubrious, repellant subject as the Bohemian version of the ancient fable, wherein the dead lover comes to claim his living bride, and forces her to journey with him to the place of his sepulture, appears to me to be oddly at variance with the ostensible purpose of a ‘Festival.’” Unsigned, “The Birmingham Music Festival,” *The Standard* no. 19071 (August 28, 1885): 3 and Josef Zubatý, “Mistr Dvořák v Birminghamě [Master Dvořák in Birmingham],” *Dalibor* 33, no. 7 (September 7, 1885): 324.
Such involvement with the Czech press was rare for Dvořák. He did not see it that positive German critiques were reprinted in Czech periodicals, nor did he send any of the highly favourable American reviews of his music back home for republication. Czech newspapers and journals were far more likely to have correspondents in German-speaking Europe, thereby eliminating the need for Dvořák to act as his own manager. Dvořák’s American sojourn during the 1890s, though of much longer duration than his earlier trips to England, did not receive nearly as much press coverage in the Czech lands; by then, Dvořák’s reputation was well-established at home, and he perhaps no longer felt the need to consolidate it in this latter case. Dvořák’s apparent efforts at self-promotion from England are, thus, quite exceptional, but not entirely uncharacteristic of him. After all, Dvořák read reviews of his music on a regular basis throughout his career and was not indifferent to the opinions of his critics, be they Czech or foreign. His extensive revisions to the opera *Dimitrij* were triggered in large part by Eduard Hanslick’s (1825–1904) assessment of the work, and Dvořák’s willingness to take advice from others was looked upon as a tremendous asset by many critics writing for *Dalibor*. He is praised several times on the pages of this journal for the “self-criticism” that he showed in undertaking a complete rewrite of his opera *The King and the Charcoal Burner* (*Král a Uhlíř*) for the benefit of performers and audiences at Prague’s Provisional Theatre.

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97 On the whole, articles published on Dvořák in German-speaking Europe were not as consistently favourable as his English reviews.

98 “The composer Antonín Dvořák has undertaken the task of setting to music all over again the libretto of the opera *The King and the Charcoal Burner*, putting aside his earlier work, the performance of which could not be realized on our stage because of its complexity. Such self-criticism and self-denial calls for unlimited praise and admiration. Let us hope that such characteristics would appear more often in our composers!” “Skladatel Antonín Dvořák odhodlal se, libreto ku zpěvohře *Král a Uhlíř* zcela znovu v hudbu uvést, odloživ zcela stranou dřívější svou práci, jejížto provedení jedině za přičinou přílišné její složitosti na našem jevišti nemohlo býti uskutečněno. Autokritika taková i sebezaprčení podobně vybízí k neobmezené chvále i obdivu. Kčž by se vlastnosti té skladatelům naším častěji dostávalo!” R., “Zprávy z Prahy a Venkova [News from Prague and Rural Areas],” *Dalibor* II, no. 17 (April 25, 1874): 134. (The emphasis is mine.)
reviews of his compositions, [Dvořák] was instinctively motivated by healthy doses of pragmatism and even opportunism.”

This aspect of Dvořák’s career has remained largely unexplored for two reasons. The first has to do with prevailing perceptions of Dvořák himself. The image of Dvořák as a naïve composer – one who was dependent on the generosity of others for his success – has become ingrained. His dread of making public appearances and speeches was well known to his acquaintances, and Czech critics often make mention of his humility in their reports on his triumphs abroad. Ironically, Dvořák’s humble and unenterprising nature is emphasized in one of the very articles that he sent home for reprinting. Seeking to provide some background information on the composer before proceeding to review his Stabat Mater, the critic for The Birmingham Post writes:

It would be superfluous on the present occasion... to enter into biographical details. It will suffice to remark that Dvořák is evidently as modest and retiring as he is gifted; and that, but for the friendly intervention of Johannes Brahms, who was quick to recognise a kindred genius in the work of the Czech composer, and spared no pains to drag him from his comparative obscurity, Anton Dvorak’s [sic] music might still have been a sealed book to the mass of music lovers among whom it has already created such a furore.
In particular, the phrasing that Brahms had “to drag him from his comparative obscurity” implies that Dvořák was somehow disinclined to enter into the public sphere and pitch his music to a wider audience.

The second reason why Dvořák’s role as strategist rarely comes to light is broader. Gooley explains that, while eighteenth-century composers were often shameless in their efforts to appease their aristocratic patrons, self-promotion was frowned upon during the nineteenth century, as it seemed to run counter to Romantic ideology. People liked to believe that composers’ successes were the spontaneous outcome of their talents alone, rather than the result of careful planning and calculated activity. If composers took too much of an active role, they ran the risk of being accused of opportunism. William Weber points out that musical opportunism – the ability to spot and take effective advantage of an opportunity – was essential for professional musicians during this time and simultaneously scorned by society at large. As Weber puts it, “the most basic act of the opportunist was self-display – indeed, self-promotion. On a certain plane, an aspiring musician had to make claims for him or herself in ways that went beyond conventional music-making... But self-promotion was often interpreted as going against social norms, either within the music profession or society itself.” Such thinking seems to have been just as pervasive among the Czechs during the nineteenth century as it was elsewhere; on occasion, Dalibor was used as a platform from which critics warned musicians of the dangers of becoming overly focused on material concerns. In an article from 1879 on art and education, for instance, Josef Srb Debrnov (1836–1904) detects a general lack of true appreciation for music in the Czech lands and attributes this, in part, to materially-minded musicians – ones, who

103 Gooley, 145–146.
“revel in their own glory and self-conceit,” rather than striving for “the ideal in art.”

As much as composers sought to give the impression that they paid little heed to these “material gains,” as Srb Debrnov describes them, they still had to contend with the day-to-day realities of survival. These matters were very real for Dvořák, who had a wife and six children to support. When negotiating his salary with New York Conservatory head Jeanette Thurber (1850–1946) in April of 1894, Dvořák signals both his need and his reluctance to behave in a mercenary fashion: “the necessities of life go hand in hand with Art” he writes, “and though I personally care very little for worldly things, I cannot see my wife and children in trouble.”

In keeping with these established social norms, Dvořák sought to assure the Czech public of the purity of his motives – that he was in fact doing everything solely for the purpose of putting the Czechs in the international spotlight. Behind the scenes, however, he was a shrewd businessman. Dvořák’s plea to Thurber is reminiscent of countless exchanges that he had with Fritz Simrock in the hope of arriving at a lucrative deal on the publication of his music. Dvořák proved to be savvy not only in his dealings abroad, with individuals like Thurber and Simrock, but also in his interactions with his compatriots. His letters from England written during the mid-1880s show that he understood the importance of forming connections with prominent Czech critics and promoters; cultivating and maintaining his personal image at home; using the Czech press – with its wide reach – to his advantage; and conforming to the concerns of his Czech audience. Even in some of his compositional choices, Dvořák showed himself to be something of

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105 “Many artists, instead of striving for the ideal in art, revel in their own glory and self-conceit... material gains are frequently their main goal;” “mnozí umělci, místo aby hleděli dospěti k idealu umění, více hoví své slávě a ješitnosti... výtěžek materiálny bývá často cílem hlavním;” J. S. Debrnov, “Umění a škola [Art and education],” Dalibor 1, no. 8 (March 10, 1879): 59.

106 Milan Kuna et al., Antonín Dvořák: Korespondence a Dokumenty [Antonín Dvořák: Correspondence and Documents], vol. 3 (Prague: Supraphon, 1989), 256; April 5, 1894. The contract that brought Dvořák to New York in 1892 has only recently been discovered by one of Jeannette Thurber’s great grandsons; see Michael Cooper, “The Deal that Brought Dvořák to New York,” The New York Times (August 23, 2013), http://nyti.ms/16WQLX4.
an entrepreneur. In a similar vein to the reviews published in Czech translation, Dvořák refashioned his *Hymnus* for British consumption, complete with an English dedication, aiming perhaps to make its message more universal. With a keen awareness of public tastes and critical expectations, Dvořák, in a sense, played the part of the “cunning peasant” in the work that secured his position on the Czech operatic stage, by tailoring it to the Prague theatre-going public. And, when it became apparent that the Viennese audience for which he had crafted his D-major Symphony was not likely to hear his piece, he surreptitiously brought about a Prague premiere of it – an event that was crucial in defining his place in the concert hall. Commercial and creative realms were closely intertwined in many areas of Dvořák’s career. Thus, Dvořák’s remark to Kovařík, suggesting that he was content simply to let the music “speak for itself,” does not tell the whole story.

**Conclusion**

Dvořák’s favourable reception in the Czech lands did not come by happenstance. It involved complicated relationships and interactions among critics, audiences, and Dvořák himself. Naturally, Czech critics were key players in this, shaping the views of the wider public and grooming Dvořák for success on the Czech stage. With a variety of newspapers and journals at their disposal, these critics acted as mediators between Dvořák and his Czech audience, while bringing their own biases to bear on discussions of his music. Audiences too were important agents in Dvořák’s Czech reception. In the politically charged climate of late nineteenth-century Bohemia, public response at performances of Dvořák’s works played a large role in determining which aspects of the music were emphasized and highlighted in reviews. Though critics sometimes failed to acknowledge the audiences’ agency – imagining them to be a monolithic
mass on behalf of which it was their task to speak – critical assessments of Dvořák’s music were guided and moulded in various ways by the public. In the end, much of the “speaking” was done by Dvořák himself. Remaining essentially silent in the public arena, Dvořák’s private actions, as revealed in some of his letters, show that he sometimes took a very active part in managing his own press and worked systematically toward fostering a “Czech” image in front of the home crowd. Even in his compositions, Dvořák was, on some level, a strategist, writing with an astute awareness of the tastes and opinions of Czech critics and the larger Czech public. Rather than letting the music “speak for itself,” Dvořák spoke for himself through his music. A study of the ways in which critics and audiences intersected with the composer provides a step toward an understanding of the multiple factors and agents at play in Dvořák’s nineteenth-century Czech reception.
The extraordinary concert of the Hlahol choral society (in the New Town Theatre on March 9) on the one hand, and the very promising conservatory concert in Žofín hall on the other hand – here we are invited to hear home-grown and foreign novelties in the realm of choral singing in the distinguished “grandiose concert” at the tireless hand of our excellent Bendl. Rare in its grandeur, [this concert] brings together in a unified whole such substantial and precious elements as are the choir members of the Hlahol society, a choir that is always enthusiastic about art, built from the finest singers here, and the sturdy orchestra of both land theatres. On the other hand, we are enticed by a highly alluring program, the highlight of which is the finest of all purely instrumental pieces of Beethoven, namely his Fifth Symphony (in C minor) and besides that, by the name of the famous violinist and foremost hero in the realm of technical perfection, Wilhelmi. Which [concert] does one prefer to attend? That was the question. Then it occurred to me that I had recently read in one of the local papers, which takes such care to bring attention to all art in our “wider” homeland, how lamentable things look in the sphere of our domestic art: “that we cannot boast about a significant success in any domain, except for a relatively meagre department of vocal compositions, which often do not reach the conception of even the most insignificant German composer” – and now I had decided [about where to go]. After all, choral pieces mostly written by our domestic composers are just what this “grandiose concert” of our Hlahol gives us; I can therefore during this appropriate opportunity decide for myself whether Mr. Pazdírek is right, when he places our artists below “even the most insignificant” German composer. We shall see!

The program of this concert was marked by impeccable organization, as well as the selection of precious novelties, which testify to the refined taste of the organizer; especially praiseworthy is the fact that significant and pithy works of artistic value in the highest sense of the word have emerged on the horizon. The first number on the program caused us to make contact once again with the Polish composer Lad. Želenský, who made a resounding name for himself over here, not only with his small-scale songs, which are altogether filled with a purely Slavonic spirit, but also with his symphony for large orchestra recently performed here, which has persuaded us that there stands before us a man who is thoroughly educated and, though leaning upon the antique period of Bach and Handel, he comes from the perspective of the Classical period. This novelty [of his] subtitled: “Eagles (Orlové) – large chorus for male voices and orchestra based on the words of Wasiliewski” provides new testimony that Želenský, having gone through the fire of a strict school, has up to this point not shaken off dry formalism and continues to dwell too much on clear-cut forms because of his schooling and pedantry. Only here and there, sporadically at the most, does artistic enthusiasm and freer, flightier invention become apparent – however it gets lost after a brief time in the sands of harmonic-modulatory plays with the consistently bright light of the orchestral accompaniment. The poem, which begins with the enthusiastic words “Hey, brother eagles fly further from the miserable wasteland of this world” gives us the right to expect an enthusiastic piece, one that can be born from such a jaunty free thought, which breaks the grievous chains, carried by the quick-witted flight of the eagle to heavenly heights –
meanwhile we were met with a piece that has – mildly put – an innocuous spirit. As I heard, it is one of his older pieces, which gives enough cause for one to forgive him for such a way of composing that reeks of the academy. I am convinced that in his later works, Želenský emancipated himself from the earlier, frozen soil and with prosperous benefit, he will be able to align himself with the spirit of the newest age. We can expect all the more brilliant results from this man in the future, if he is able to combine thorough pithiness of earlier times with the large spirit that is now breaking through a path toward the only truth and beauty. For we study the old masters, not so that we would write in the same style, but rather so that, based on them, we would create new works in keeping with the spirit of our time: he gets caught up in the old forms to such an extent that it is impossible, even with the best of intentions, to cast them off to the side; since he holds too closely to mere forms, the spirit of the past age disappears from under his arms, yet he is not connected to the spirit of our time. What will remain then? Dry form. Haydn was a big reformer in his day; he made a large step forward by teaching the orchestra to speak in his own orchestral language and he was the creator of new, beautiful forms. All musical artists must study his works, if they want truly to understand classical masters – but even so, our world today would look askew, if someone decided to compose in the manner of Haydn.

Only out of courtesy to the foreign composers do I begin [this review] by talking about their pieces, although, as far as internal worth is concerned, these stand far behind the remarkable works that were given to us by our home-grown artists in the victorious battle; I hope that I will be forgiven if I do not keep to the order of the programme and immediately switch to the last item, subtitled: Gallia – Lamentatio Jeremiae – for mixed chorus and orchestra by Carl Gounod, with which the beautiful picture came to a close before our very eyes in a dignified manner. I consider the pieces of Želenský and Gounod to be guests on the programme and it is polite always to give guests the right of way!

The impetus for Gounod’s piece came from the fall of his homeland, France, in 1870. An event that shook the whole world at its deepest foundation, the result of which was the degradation and humiliation of proud France, which had once shone with the most radiant brightness of power and glory – an event of such significant consequences must have hurt every loyal son of the homeland to an infinite degree. We have every right to expect Gounod to give voice to the immense pain of the sorrows that they had to experience to a large extent, being tortured to death at the hands of the blood-thirsty tyrants. Such a storm of emotional ripples had to rage in the patriotic bosom and what resignation and quiet despair [there must have been]! If we are to be honest, I confess that I was expecting something – more grandiose! Perhaps I heard too much praise for this piece before hearing it and that is why my demands reached an overly-high degree; however, perhaps Gounod’s strength is too meagre to express such large thoughts. It is certain that Jeremiah cried differently at the ruins of Jerusalem; so too did Hannibal at the ruins of Carthage than this carefree son of France, living in voluntary exile in the beautiful palaces of London. This piece was also performed with great success in London at Royal Albert Hall, and it was well-liked because Gounod wrote it more based on the tastes of the London audience, in the spirit of Handel’s oratorio with a Mendelssohn flavour, than according to the commands of his own heart. The miserable homeland is bleeding from a thousand wounds and Gounod composes a tame modern oratorio, which, by the way, will never stand up in comparison with the pithy, powerful works of the spirit of Handel or the softly-stringed spirit of Mendelssohn. It is well known that the two aforementioned masters are the elected sweethearts of the London musical
aristocracy, and we can say boldly that the whole musical life over there gets its sustenance from
the soil arranged by these masters; for this reason, we cannot be surprised that Gounod was able
to achieve such a great success with his *Gallia*.

The performance of both mentioned choruses, *Eagles* and *Gallia*, went over almost with no
errors under the excellent leadership of the director of Hlahol Mr. K. Bendl, the praise of whom
acquires greater weight when we take into consideration how hard it is for a conductor to
combine such multifarious elements into one beautiful, unified whole and to breath into this
colossal body a unanimous spirit, so that everything would hold together and the individual
elements would not stand out unnecessarily to the detriment of the overall togetherness. If we
further take into consideration that it was outright impossible at this time to have more frequent
rehearsals with the orchestra – as the conductor would no doubt have wished – we are at a loss to
know as to whom we should give the well-deserved crown for such a great victory: the powerful,
orchestral ensemble, consisting of players from both land theatres or the chorus of beautifully
skinned [females], or the vigorous male chorus or finally the firm baton and presence of mind of
the director?

The solo part of *Gallia* – the best number in the whole piece – was sung by Miss Kupkova in a
clear, nuanced voice, with an excellent understanding of the spirit of the composition. It is
advisable to remember that all credit for the performance of *Gallia* in our metropolis ought to be
given to Mr. Emanuel Kittl, who bought the work in Paris, out of his own initiative and
praiseworthy ardour.

The pieces by the foreign masters, of which I have just spoken, formed a kind of splendid frame
for the beautiful painting in the middle of the programme: the work of home-grown masters K.
Bendl and A. Dvořák.

Bendl gave us two pieces: *Song of the Fairies above the Waters* (*Zpěv vil nad vodami*) and *The
Calixtines* (*Kališníci*). The first of these compositions – *Song of the Fairies above the Waters* – a
scene for soprano solo and female chorus with orchestral accompaniment based on the text of Al.
Šmilovský is a cute work, for which the composer chose as his subject the amorous whirl of
water nymphs and magical fairies of the May night, when “love whispers around the meadows
and pine trees” and deciphered the task he had given himself to an even greater extent because he
composed in his most comfortable element. For it is well known that Bendl is our finest lyricist,
in whose breast there lies hidden a rich source of the most beautiful melodic shapes to ever stir
the surface of a gentle heart. “He is the living Mendelssohn,” whispered my friend, after the solo
sung by the “queen of fairies.” Nay – he is the living Bendl, who creates in the spirit of the time,
from his own superabundant bosom. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is indeed a masterful work,
written in the heavenly language of the water nymphs and trifling fairies; however, not everyone,
who wants to write something in this genre, has to borrow from Mendelssohn. I daresay that if I
wanted to analyze Bendl, I would say rather that the opening figuration of the violins in the song
“Queen of fairies” reminds me of *Die Meistersinger* (second act) – which, however, works only
in Bendl’s favour.

The only flaw of the piece is the slight diffuseness; a motive is repeated all too often, always
starting in the altos, followed by the sopranos, and as a result [of its many repetitions], it loses its
lustre. That there are no clear contrasts to give the work liveliness and freshness creates a somewhat monotonous impression; the same, overly-sweet wind keeps blowing, which is in some way also the fault of the poet, who gave too rich a stream of sweet words and few musically appropriate moments. For this reason, Bendl had to repeat himself.

When a text of more pithy content falls into Bendl’s hands, one with greater imagery – in short, a manlier text – the composer, with his deft hand, is able to smoothen out even the sharpest and roughest edges and to moderate them with the prevalence of the luscious character of his genius. This is just why Bendl’s second piece The Calixtines – a large spectacle for male chorus and orchestra on the words of Jindř. Böhm – excels far above the first in terms of internal worth. It is a beautiful work, written with enthusiasm, full of iron decisiveness, boasting throughout of pithy, happy invention. The Hussite chorale “Ye who are warriors of God” (“Kdož jste boží bojovníci”) is stated with the most brilliance and produces a captivating impression with its fanatic confession of faith. The performance of both choruses by Bendl was very diligent, [attaining to] a degree of perfection; in Song of the Fairies above the Waters, the beautiful impression was disrupted by the fact that the orchestra, with its strong stream of sound, completely covered the beautiful solo of the “queen of fairies” (Miss Kupkova), such that it could not be brought out, in spite of all of the effort. The choral parts were rigorous.

Finally, [the only piece, which] remains to be discussed, is one by a composer, who, though young, has a strong spirit that is highly distinguished: A. Dvořák. His Hymnus, composed on the words of Vítězslav Hálek’s poem Heirs of the White Mountain (Dědicové Bílé Hory) for mixed chorus with orchestral accompaniment ignited and captivated the whole audience, sparking true enthusiasm, and rightfully ought to be considered the most superb focal point of the whole programme. It is not merely an empty phrase, when I say that Dvořák wrote this composition “with the blood of his heart,” with patriotic enthusiasm and artistic fervour. I gladly admit that it has been a long time since I was so moved in my inner-most being by a piece of music as I was today and I undoubtedly shared this feeling with the general audience. This composition places great demands on the orchestra as well as the singers; if we take into consideration that rehearsals were minimal, we can offer some explanation for the awkward wavering of the orchestra, which might have been catastrophic, had the chorus been thrown off as well; [the singers] firmly continued to go forward and this time they carried the orchestra on their shoulders – whereas the customary relationship ought to be reversed. In spite of these discrepancies [among the performers], Dvořák’s remarkable work broke through to the surface and paved its path to the hearts of all. I hope that future performances of Hymnus will be governed by greater unity. For we can hope that Hlahol will fulfill our pious wish and will have a similar “grandiose concert” more often – at least once a year – since it will be of no small service to our domestic art. That it becomes a masterful work to be repeated is self-evident, for it is not possible to experience all of the beauties of a piece after one hearing only, even it were the most perfect performance. And Dvořák’s remarkable Hymnus is worthy of being repeated! The whole work is created as if from one fabric – everything moves forward in a continuous stream of truthful, expressive declamation, with lively orchestral colours in the forms of rich polyphony. It is [written in] the true hymn style: refined, grand, masculine thoughts, heroic, a portrait of a master that is worthy of the new era; in short: a spirit is blowing towards us, which engages itself in a beautiful whole with that of Hálek. “The word became flesh!” If we compare the patriotic fervour of Hymnus with the innocuous oratorio style of Gallia, the piece by Gounod blatantly
pales like a belated star before the rays of the sun, which shine advantageously from Dvořák’s Hymnus. Then some devious Mr. Pazdírek even dares to tell us publicly to our faces – and on top of that, in a Czech-language, specialized publication – that the pieces of our composers do not reach the conception of even the most insignificant German composer!” And for such wisdom the editors had to go all the way to Berlin! Perhaps they were in a deranged state, when they allowed such a pyramidal piece of wisdom to be printed below the line without blushing. Otherwise there is no way of excusing this and so, Pazdírek, kneel down and beg our masters for forgiveness.

Czech original:
Mimořádný koncert zpěv. spolku “Hlaholu” (v novoměstském divadle dne 9. března) na jedné a mnohoslibný koncert konservatoře v sále žofínském na druhé straně – zde znamenitý “monstrekoncert,” kde neúnavná ruka našeho výtečného Bendla ve svorný, onou mohutností nečasto vidaný celek poji tak výdatné a vzácné elementy jako jest sbor členův spolku “Hlaholu,” pro umění vždy nadšený sbor sestavený ze zdejší krásné pleti a k tomu co průvod statný orchestr obou divadel zemských, kde zvou nás domáci i zahraniční novinky z oboru zpěvu sborového. – Tam opět na druhé straně láká na nejvýš vábný program, na němž skví se ona nejznamenitější všech čistě instrumentálních skladeb velducha Beethovena totiž “pátá (c-mol) symfonie” a mimo to jméno slavného houlisty a prvního heroa v oboru technické dokonalosti Wilhelmiho. Kam spíše? To jest ta otázka. V tom mi však napadlo, že jsem v jednom zdejším čteném listě, jenž tak chvalnou péči vždy na jevo dává o zdar všeho umění na půdě naší “širší” vlasti, nedávno četl, jak bídně to vypadá na poli našeho domácího umění: “že totiž se honositi nemůžeme v žádném oboru značným nějakým úspěchem, vyjma dosti chudé oddělení vokálních skladeb, jichžto faktura, často nedosahuje ani koncepcí leckterého nepatrného skladatele německého” – a již jsem byl rozhodnut. Vždyť tento monstrekoncert našeho “Hlaholu” podává zde právě sborové sklady by po většině od našich domácích umělcův; mohu se tedy při vhodné té příležitosti přesvědčiti, zdali má pan Pazdírek pravdu, když stojí naše umělce pod “leckterého nepatrného” skladatele německého. Uvidíme!

Program koncertu tohoto se vyznačoval takutoplým uspořádáním, jakož i výborem vzácných novinek, což vůru svědčí o jemně vybroušeném vkusu pořadatelově; zvláště chvalyho jest, že se vynořila tentokráte na obzor této koncertní sezóny veskrze významná, jáderná díla ceny umělecké v nejvyšším toho slova smyslu. První číslo programu nás v opětnou styčnost uvedlo s polským skladatelem Lad. Želenským, jenž zvučné si u nás dobyl jména nejen drobnějšími písněmi, jež vesměs prooranuty jsou duchem ryze slovanským, nýbrž zvláště nedávno zde provozovanou symfonii pro veliký orchestr, jež nás o tom poučila, že stojí tu před námi muž důkladného vzdělání, jenž opírá se o antickou dobu Bacha a Haendela, stojí hlavně na stanovisku oboru přesně klassické. Novinka tato nadepsaná: “Orlové – velký sbor pro mužské hlasy a orchestr na slova Wasiliewského” podává nové o tom svědectví, že Želenský, prošed ohněm přísné školy, dosud jaksi nesetřásl ze sebe suchý ten formalismus, že dosud příliš úzkostlivě šetří onéch školou a pedanterií přístřížených forem. Jen zde onde na nejvýš sporádicky vytryskne na povrch pramen nadšení uměleckého a volnější, vzletulnější invence – však ztrácí se po krátkém běhu opět v písku harmonicko-modulatérních hříček při pravidelně jasném světle průvodu orchestrálního. Báseň, počínající nadšenými slovy: “Hej, bratři orlové, letem dále z těch pustin bídného světa” dává nám právo, abychom očekávali skladbu nadšenou,
jakou zrodití může tato bujará myšlenka volnosti, jež rozážejíc okovy mrzké se nese bystrým letem orla k nebetýcným výšinám – zatím jsme se potkali se skladbou ducha – měrně řečeno – velmi krotkého. Jak slyším, jest to jedna ze starších jeho skladeb, čímž dostatečně jest omluven onen katadrou páchnoucí spůsob komponování. Jsem přesvědčen, že v pozdějších svých pracích se Želenský, jak to jen možno, z dřívější zamrzlé půdy emancipovatí hledí a že s prospěchem zdárným se mu i na dále podaří spříznit se jak náleží s duchem nejnovější doby.

Ba můžeme očekávat výsledků tím skvělejších od tohoto muže pro budoucnost, jestli se mu podaří spojit úzkou jádrnost doby dřevnější s obrovským duchem, jenž v nynější době s klásti dráhu k jediné pravdě i krásě. Vždyť študujeme staré mistry ne proto, abychom snad komponovali v témže stylu jako oni, nýbrž proto, abychom na základě jich tvořili nová díla přiměřená duchu naší doby: oni se vžijou ve formy staré tak, že jim není možno i při vši nejlepší vůli je později odložiti; tím však že se drží příliš pouhých forem, mizí jim pod rukou duch doby tehdejší – s duchem však naší doby nejsou dosud spřízněni, jej dosud neznají, co jim tedy zbude? Suchá forma. Haydn byl svého času velkým reformatorem: on učinil obrovský ku předu krok, tím že naučil orkestr vlastní jeho orkestrální mluvě, že byl stvořitelem nových krásných forem. Jeho díla musí studovati každý umělec hudební, chce-li pochopiti řádně mistry klassické – a předc by se nynější svět podivně na to dival, kdyby nyní někomu napadlo, aby komponoval v manýře Haydnově.

Jenom z pouhé kurtoisie k zahraničním skladatelům to činím, že promlouvám v první řadě o skladbách jejich, ač tyto co do vnitřní ceny daleko stojí za výtečnými pracemi, jež nám u vítězném zápasu tentokráté naší domácí umělci podali; doufám těž, že mi tito odpustí, pakliže nemohu pořádně programní hned přejdu k číslu poslednímu, nadepsaného: "Gallia – lamentatio Jeremiae – pro smíšený sbor a orkestr od Karla Gounoda," čimž důstojně uzavřen byl krásný ten obraz, jejž vykouzil koncert tento před zrakoma naší slávy. Považuji skladby Želenského i Gounoda za hosty na programu tohoto koncertu – a hostem prý sluší vždy přednost dáti!

ducha Mendelssohnova. Jsouť – jak známo – oba jmenovaní mistři vyvolenými miláčky londýnské hudební aristokracie, ba směle můžeme říci, že veškerý tamnější hudební život svou potravu běže z půdy těmito mistry upravené, proto nesmíme se diviti, že Gounod svou “Gallií” tak skvělých výsledků v Londýně docílil.

Provedení obou zmíněných sborův: “Orlové” a “Gallia” bylo za výtečného vedení říditele “Hlaholu” p. K. Bendla téměř bezvadné, kterážto chvála tím více spadá na váhu, povážíme-li, jaká to nesnadná práce pro dirigenta, spojit tak různorodé živly v jeden krásný, nerozdílný celek a vdechnouti v kolosální to těleso jednosvorného ducha, aby v provedení vše přiléhálo a jednotlivé elementy nevystupovaly bez potřeby na povrch na ujmu celkového souladu. Povážíme-li dále, že přímo to bylo nemožné v této době odbývati ve spojení s orkestrem častější zkoušky – jak si toho zajisté pan dirigent přál – tu věru počínáme býti na rozpacích, komu bychom spíše přiřknoti záslužnou palmu tak skvělého vítězství: zdali mohutnému tělesu orkestrálnímu, sestavenému z obou zemských divadel či sboru krásné pleti, či statnému sboru mužskému, či konečně pevné takto vdechové? 


Zahraničních mistrův sklady, o nichž jsem nyní promluvil, tvořily jaksi skvostný rámec ku krásnému obru v středu programu umístěných sklade domácích mistrův K. Bendla a A. Dvořáka. 

Bendl nám podal dvě sklady a sice: “Zpěv vil nad vodami” a “Kališníci.” První z těchto komposic “Zpěv vil nad vodami” – scena pro soprán solo a ženský sbor s průvodem orkestru na slova Al. Šmilovského, jest rozkošná práce, ku které si zvolil skladatel za předmět líčení svého milostný rej rusalek a vil čarovné noci májové, kdy “lásku kol šepotá luh i bor” a rozluští úlohu sobě danou v míře tím skvělejší, poněvadž kompoval v živlu svém nejpříbuznější. Vždyť známo, že jest Bendl nejvýtečnějším naším lyrikem, v jehož prsou se skrývá bohatý zdroj nejkrásnějších melodických tvarů, jaké kdy jen čerchily hladinu srdečních něžných. “Toť živoucí Mendelssohn” šeptal mi do ucha přítel můj po solové písni “královny vil.” Nikoliv – jest to živoucí Bendl, jenž tvoří v duchu doby nejnovější z přebohatého nitravého nitravého. “Sen noci svatojanské” jest ovšem dílo místně, psané v rajskej mluvě rusalek a laškujících vil; však proto nemusí se každý již vypůjčovati od Mendelssohna, kdo chtět měsíceho nitravého, jelikož by to výsledkem svým nejnovějšího. Ať však jen uctíme Bendlovu citu.

Jednou vadou sklaby té se mi zdá být poněkudná rozvláčnost; opakujte se onen motiv, jímž vždy počínají alty a její pak soprany sledují, příliš často a tím ztrácí na svém lesku. Poněkud jednotvárně působí snad to, že zde ostřejší nevystupují nijaké kontrasty, jímž by se skladba větší živosti a svěžosti dodalo, ale že zde spíše vane neustále stejné, sladkosti přesycený dech, což jest ovšem poněkud též vinou básníka, jenž přišli bohatě rozli z básně své proud sladkých slov a málo podal hudebně vdečných momentův. Proto se Bendl musel opakovati.

Konečně nám zbývá promluviti o skladbě mladistvého sice, však silou ducha vysoce vynikajícího skladatele A. Dvořáka. “Hymnus” jeho komponovaný na slova z básně Vítězslava Hálka “Dědicové Bílé hory” pro smíšený sbor s průvodem orkestru rozňitil, ba strhl veškeré obecenstvo v pravé nadšení a právem se nazvati může nejvyrůstějším ohniskem celého programu. Není to věru pouhá fráze, paklíže vyslovím, že Dvořák psal skladbu tu “krví srdce svého” s vlasteneckým nadšením a užitečným zápasem. Přiznávám se milerád, že již dávno jsem nebyl tak do nejhlubšího nitra rozehnán skladbou udební jako tento skladatel, i s tím ješem bez rozpaků všeobecně to nadšení obecenstva. Skladba tato činí požadavky ohromné jak k orkestru tak k pěvcům; povážam-li, že se jí nejméně zkousk věnovalo, tu vysvětlíme sobě je ono trapné kolísání se orkestru, které mohlo snadno být osudným, kdyby byly sbory povolily; však tyto pevně kráčely ku předu a nesly na bedřech svých tento krát orkestr – kdežto by měl býti poměr ten spíše opačným. Vzdor těmto nesrovnalostem pronikla znamenitá práce Dvořáková před na povrch a prokřistila s ní dráhu k srdci všech. Při budoucí podrobné “hymně” doufám, že již dávno jsem nebyl tak do nejhlubšího nitra rozehnán skladbou udební jako tento skladatel, i s tím ješem bez rozpaků všeobecně to nadšení obecenstva. Skladba tato činí požadavky ohromné jak k orkestru tak k pěvcům; povážam-li, že se jí nejméně zkousk věnovalo, tu vysvětlíme sobě je ono trapné kolísání se orkestru, které mohlo snadno být osudným, kdyby byly sbory povolily; však tyto pevně kráčely ku předu a nesly na bedřech svých tento krát orkestr – kdežto by měl býti poměr ten spíše opačným. Vzdor těmto nesrovnalostem pronikla znamenitá práce Dvořáková před na povrch a prokřistila s ní dráhu k srdci všech. Při budoucí podrobné “hymně” doufám, že již dávno jsem nebyl tak do nejhlubšího nitra rozehnán skladbou udební jako tento skladatel, i s tím ješem bez rozpaků všeobecně to nadšení obecenstva. Skladba tato činí požadavky ohromné jak k orkestru tak k pěvcům; povážam-li, že se jí nejméně zkousk věnovalo, tu vysvětlíme sobě je ono trapné kolísání se orkestru, které mohlo snadno být osudným, kdyby byly sbory povolily; však tyto pevně kráčely ku předu a nesly na bedřech svých tento krát orkestr – kdežto by měl býti poměr ten spíše opačným. Vzdor těmto nesrovnalostem pronikla znamenitá práce Dvořáková před na povrch a prokřistila s ní dráhu k srdci všech. Při budoucí podrobné “hymně” doufám, že již dávno jsem nebyl tak do nejhlubšího nitra rozehnán skladbou udební jako tento skladatel, i s tím ješem bez rozpaků všeobecně to nadšení obecenstva. Skladba tato činí požadavky ohromné jak k orkestru tak k pěvcům; povážam-li, že se jí nejméně zkousk věnovalo, tu vysvětlíme sobě je ono trapné kolísání se orkestru, které mohlo snadno být osudným, kdyby byly sbory povolily; však tyto pevně kráčely ku předu a nesly na bedřech svých tento krát orkestr – kdežto by měl býti poměr ten spíše opačným.
The vocal and instrumental concert of Hlahol on Sunday March 9 in the New Town Theatre: at such an inopportune time, any other of our musical societies would hardly have been able to attract such a large audience into the remote and thus far not very welcoming spaces of the New Town Theatre; [yet this was done by] our male Hlahol, whose prosperous progress on its chosen artistic track deserves fair appraisal and to be taken seriously in all circles. The goal that they set out to reach at that time was no doubt not easy and required all their strength and extraordinary courage. As a reward Hlahol was able to achieve great success in all respects, with no small service to the nation. In our circumstances, it is rare for us to experience productions of such a grand tone; particularly the performance of larger-scale vocal pieces, which rely on a sizeable orchestral body, is usually met with insurmountable obstacles. Our Hlahol, however, at the helm of which stands a leader who is experienced, industrious, and highly honoured – our composer K. Bendl – is not scared off by any such obstacles and dares to embark on ever-higher and ever-nobler endeavours with strong faith in the eventual victory. Even the outward tone of the concert gave it a festive appearance. The large choir Hlahol was joined by a substantial female choir, the combination of which gave a strong impression and the orchestras of both land theatres together created an imposing whole. Before the performed pieces achieved considerable success, they also inspired the enthusiastic acclamation of the audience. If we first turn our attention to our home-grown composers, let us not do so out of prejudice, but with sincere confidence in our home-grown artistic production; we believe that they were not only the first fruits of an awakening talent, but the tasty, ripe fruits of composers who are our future.

The work of K. Bendl was represented with two pieces; the first, Song of the Fairies above the Waters (Zpěv vil nad vodami) – a scene for soprano solo and female chorus with orchestral accompaniment on words by A. Šmilovský – is of a decided lyrical tone according to the intentions of the poet; the second The Calixtines (Kališníci), a large work for male chorus with orch. accompaniment based on the words of Jindř. Böhm, places itself, with its dramatic flight, among the best works to have been written here in this genre. The thorough way in which the composer illustrated the prophetic words of the leader “Prokop” in the enthusiastic Hussite song “Ye who are Warriors of God” (“Kdož jste Boží bojovníci”), which creates the historical background of the whole piece, the fervour of the songs of the calixtines, and the clear musical declamation as well as great orchestral arrangement give this work lasting worth and the right not to fall away into oblivion. Both pieces were received with loud applause and the composer was thunderously called upon [to make an appearance].

The crown of victory was won by the grand piece, which arose from the most modern perspective: Antonín Dvořák’s Hymnus from Hálek’s poem Heirs of the White Mountain (Dědicové Bílé Hory). The wide polyphonic stream, powerfully carrying away the mind of the listener, the richness and strength of thought reveal in this piece the extraordinary creative genius, from which nothing is missing, except the ability to elevate oneself to a greater perfection of form. What Dvořák gives us here, draws from the depths of the soul; the whole tragedy of the horror-filled catastrophe and the heroic resolve for a new life is painted with appropriate, heart-wrenching sounds. In the vocal and orchestral parts, the composer shows the same [degree of] powerful expression and a masterful technical adeptness; from a practical point
of view, the only thing that could be objectionable is that the voice leading is often stern and hard. The impression that this piece left with the whole audience was enormous; with enthusiastic calls, the composer was called to the stage twice. The performance – particularly in the orchestral part – was less happy than in the preceding sections, and it would be appropriate if, at the earliest opportunity, this work by Dvořák were performed again, a work that will always be granted a very honourable spot in our repertoire; for what can remain in the mind of the listener from a work that is so complicated and rich after one hearing only?

Dr. Lad. Želenský’s chorus Eagles (Orlové) for male chorus with orchestral accompaniment was a very valuable novelty for us. The composer acquired such an honourable name here, based on his previous works, such that we look forward to each new piece with anticipation. Although it seems to us that he is especially worthy in the realm of instrumental music, and in the Slavic idiom he takes one of the foremost places, one cannot deny that even in the realm of vocal music he always seems to have a poetic intention and sincere expression. His piece performed at this time, though it distinguishes itself with many beautiful details, has a certain dependence of thought that does not allow for full, free development; the enthusiastic words of the poet expect a flightier musical expression and greater formal freedom. In his newest pieces, Želenský is beginning to emancipate himself from academic bonds to his great advantage, and we are sure that with time, the wings of his genius will soon be loosened.

The weight of the whole production rested on Gounod’s cantata Gallia, which Mr. Eman. Kittl was able to obtain for Hlahol during his last visit to Paris; although it left a grand impression, it did not live up to expectations. The pen of Gounod was not equal to such a noble poetic task, requiring the most intense expression of feeling. The words are taken from the Lamentations of Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem and their meaning is applied to the tragic fall of unhappy France; portraying such a poetic subject required awe-inspiring language, which Gounod did not find. He built the work in a classical framework, in the tradition of Handel’s oratorios, without elevating himself to the work’s original strength with grandeur of expression; he took a very operatic direction with a more abstract and less realistic approach, of which he is a true advocate, and in this way the work lacked the unity that is a requirement in any work of art. Of course, Gounod, being the composer that he is, was able to hit the nail on the head in several spots, especially managing in the solo sections to elevate himself to a more emotional and thorough expression of the poetic text; it is not necessary to add that the concluding orchestral illustration contains many noteworthy details. The solo part of this piece, as well as the part of the queen of fairies, was sung by Miss Kupková.

The excellent and grand success that this wonderful and certainly memorable production achieved should be for Hlahol not only a reward for their diligence and the effort that was required for the proper performance of works of such large proportions, but also a powerful encouragement to have at least one concert of this kind a year and to give our composers an opportunity to introduce their larger works to the public.
Czech original:
Vokální a instrumentální koncert “Hlaholu” v neděli dne 9. března t. r. v divadle novoměstském.

Sotva as jinému zdejšímu spolku hudebnímu bylo by se podařilo, v čase tak nepříznivém přilákat takové množství obecenstva do prostraných a dosud poněkud neobyčejnějších místností divadla novoměstského, jako junákům našemu “Hlaholu,” jehožto účinné postupování na vytknuté dráze umělecké všech kruzech náleží spravedlivého ocenění i vážnosti obecné. Úkol, jejž si tenkráte vytknul, byl zajisté nesnadný a vyžadoval napnutí veškerých sil i odvahy neobyčejnější. Odměnou se “Hlaholu” dostal v každém ohledu skvělý zdar a vlasteneckému i méně proukázána zlužba nemalá. V poměrech našich jen zřídka vyskytují se produkce rázu tak velkolepého, zejména pak provedení vokálních skladbě většího rozmezí, jež se opírají o velké téleso orkestrální, potkává se občasně překážkami nepřemožitelnými. Náš “Hlahol” však, v jehož čele stojí vůdce rovněž tak zkušený podnikavý, velectvený náš skladatel K. Bendl, překážkami nižšími se odstraňuje a odváhu se silnou důvěrou v konečné vítězství vždy ve všech obecenstvích i domácích nasí skladeb cíleně vytočených. Již zevnější ráz koncertu tohoto dodavalo mu jakési světostí naší zemské hudební. Mohutný sbor “Hlaholu” sloučiv se s vydatným sborem ženským, k němuž krásná naše pleť postavila silný kontinent a orkestry obou zemských divadel tvořily celek imposantní. Než by mohly provedené i tomu navzdory jíž se skladba vyvolala i nadšené aklamace obecenstva.


Palmu vítězství vyдобyla sobě velkolepá, na nejmodernějším stanovisku se nalezající skladba Antonína Dvořáka “Hymnus” z Hálkovy básně “Dědicové bílé hory.” Široký proud polyfonický, mocně sebou unášející mysli posluchače, bohatost i síla myšlenky objevují v skladbě té nevšedního genia tvůrčího, jemuž netreba, lež vybouřit se a povznést se také k dokonalé kráse formální. Co nám Dvořák tuto podává, čerpáno jest z nejhlubšího dech, celá ta tragičnost hrůzplné oně katastrofy i hrdinné se opět zobrazena v její slavě, srdcem zvuky. Jak ve vokální tak i v orkestrální části jeví skladatel stejnou mocnost výrazu i místnou obratnost technickou, z praktického stanoviska jedině dalo by se namítati, že vedení hlasů jest často příkré a tvrdé. Provedení – zejména v orkestrální části jeví skladatel stejnou mocnost výrazu i místnou obratnost technickou, z praktického stanoviska jedině dalo by se namítati, že vedení hlasů jest často příkré a tvrdé. Dojem, jaký skladba tato učinila na veškeré obecenstvo, byl ohromný, za nadšeného volání byl skladatel dvakrát vyloučen. Provedení – zejména v orkestrální části – bylo méně štastné, než v předchozích částech, i bylo by záhodné, aby při nejbližší příležitosti skladba Dvořáka, která v hudební naší literatuře povzdy zaujímají bude místo velmi čestné, opět provedena byla, neboť co ukvětí jeho v mysli posluchače z díla tak složitého bohatého po jediném pouze slyšení?
Dra. Lad. Želenského sbor “Orlové” pro mužské hlas s prův. orkestru byl pro nás novinkou velmi vzácnou. Požívat u nás skladatel tento z četných svých prací dřívějších jména tak čestného, že každé nové jeho skladbě hledíme s napnutostí vstříc. Ač se nám zdá, že jezmena provolán jest, v oboru instrumentální hudby na parnasi slovanském zaújmutí jedno z předních míst, tož nelze zneuznati, že i v oboru vokální hudby jeví vždy intenci poetickou a vřelou výraznost. Skladba jeho tenkráte provedena, ač vyniká mnohými krásnými detaily, kde vadi jakási vázanost myšlenky, která nedá proniknouti plnému, volnému rozvoji jejímu, nadšená slova básnika očekávati dají poněkud vzletnější výraz hudební a větší volnost formy. Želenský však v novějších svých skladbách k velkému prospěchu svému počíná se emancipovat s temných pout akademických, a jsme jisti, že postupem zcela přirozeným brzo uvolněny budou perutě jeho genia.


Výtečný, velkolepý úspěch, jakého docílila tato skvělá, v annálech “Hlaholu” zajisté památná produkc, máte býti “Hlaholu” nejen odměnou za nemalou pílí a namáhání, jež vynaložil musel na důstojné provedení děl rozměrů tak velikých, nýbrž i mocnou pobídku, aby aspoň každoročně jedním koncertem podobným nás potěšil a skladatelům našim příležitost poskytoval, by větší svá díla uváděti mohli na veřejnost.
Appendix 3:

The direction of the previous era, especially that of the classical masters, was thwarted by an ingenious revolutionary – the head of a new school, who does not pay heed to established forms, but breaks their chains and attempts to bring instrumental art on new paths. His name is Franz Liszt. His symphonic poems hold closely to the poetic works of the given program. The form of the sonata and symphony has been drowned.

It was with these words that I ended one of my private studies, dealing with the “classical forms of the sonata and symphony;” like the majority of young and old friends of musical art, I was surprised by the appearance of a remarkable man, with an extraordinary individuality – my eyes were blinded by the excessively bright rays of the rising sun on the horizons of musical life. Who would not be surprised? The whole world knew Liszt as an unbeatable virtuoso, the loftiest hero of piano playing; they revered him as the most remarkable performing artist, who matured on the piano to the highest levels of perfection, as Paganini did before him on the violin. His concert path was the most excellent triumph – the world praised him to the stars and when the acclaimed Liszt suddenly ended this excellent path of glory, no one even dreamed that anything more could be expected from this man than that which he already accomplished. For this reason, everyone was surprised by Liszt’s abrupt appearance on a new, even more honourable path – that is, on the path of the composer. The audience was taken aback the most by the circumstance that a similar case had never occurred in the lives of older masters. It is true that Mozart, “the miraculous child,” mesmerized in his day in the courtly circles of various potentates with his piano playing; however, it is well-known that soon after that he devoted himself tirelessly to activities as a composer, whereas Liszt’s artistic path is divided into two halves: in the first half, Liszt appears merely as a virtuoso; in the second, as a composer – this is certainly an example of something unheard-of, and for this reason, incomprehensible for most.

Even greater astonishment was caused by the fact that Liszt appeared as a composer in the field of instrumental music, in the sphere of the symphony. “What does that ingenious lunatic want? Does he not know that no mortal can go beyond Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony – does he want to be greater than Beethoven? In truth, what a futile calling!” It is undeniable truth that with Beethoven, instrumental music reached its peak – that with the Ninth, the last symphony was written – that is, the last symphony in the old style and form. What Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Berlioz wrote after Beethoven in this sphere is, on the whole, nothing new because all of it grew in the spirit of the previous era. Liszt, however, understood the lesson that the great master gave to all artists of future generations in the final movement of his last symphony; he placed himself on new soil and continued developing on the newly started path, naturally following the previous era. It is possible to observe palpably that Beethoven, in his symphonies, tried with all possible resources to make himself understood and clear; finally, he himself came to the opinion that it is not possible to express oneself clearly with only instrumental music, and for this reason, so that he would not fall short of the intended effect, he used poetry in the final movement of his last symphony. He added to the monumental whole at
the most decisive moment, where the strength and expression of the musical instruments no longer satisfied the large thoughts, a jubilant chorus of voices with the purest enthusiasm. Here, a certain idea with its poetic supremacy works its way to the surface, with ideal flight of artistic enthusiasm and the weight of the content as the final result. Where will the next natural development on this path lead us? If we want to move forward, we have to use the final result, which Beethoven reached, as our foundation and as the point of departure for all other creative work. As we see, this is the poetic word, the poetic motive. Thus – do not be alarmed! – “program music”…

With firm and certain conviction, it is possible to say that the works of Liszt are the ideal of our time in the field of instrumental music and that they represent considerable progress in comparison with the previous era. Based on the past, Liszt expanded the musical realm to such an extent as was required by the spirit of our time and by further progress, by adding new, refreshing elements to it. An excellent future in this realm is secure. Indeed, it is possible to come to this opinion only after conducting tireless research and listening diligently – then, everything in us will ripen, little by little, so that we will finally be able to align ourselves inwardly with this new world. The pieces written by the remarkable genius need to be studied and heard, before one can utter the oft-heard “anathema sit.” We will develop a clearer opinion on this, if we trace the historical evolution of the forms of instrumental music; this is why I have broached this important topic and I hope to prove, over the course of the next installments, that the path on which Liszt treads is the only one that can lead us, Lord willing, to redemptive results. [I also hope to show] that progress after Beethoven would not be possible in any other way and that, with every right, we can consider Liszt to be the saviour of independent musical art. I want to divide my discussion of this into four main sections. In the first, I will trace the development of instrumental forms from the beginning to Haydn, the creator of the symphony; in the second section, I will discuss the flowering of instrumental forms during the period of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; in the next section, I will point to the transitional period of tireless searching for new paths because it was clear to the remarkable artists of that time (Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Berlioz) that it is not possible to continue on the hitherto established artistic path; in the fourth and final section, I will grapple with Liszt alone and his theories…

Our nation is endowed with excellent strength of musical genius – this is a long and widely acknowledged truth. I do not wish to venture a hypothesis as to who is to be blamed for the fact that we have, in spite of this, never stood out in the battle with neighbouring nations – this would lead me too far astray [from the point at hand]. One thing is for sure: we must take most of the blame ourselves; it is certain that we caused much of this ourselves with our own lack of understanding: we were unable to keep pace with the spirit of the times. This complaint nearly does not apply to the most recent of times. Most of our indigenous artists have reached the opinion that we can only battle with our neighbours for victory, when we stand on the same level as them, having the same weapons and reaping the same benefits. It is illogical to shun beauty because it comes from foreign places; with a bold hand, we must reach for all of the best that the most recent times have given us in the field of musical art, so that we might adjust it to our own spirit – then can we look forward to a brighter future. Let us try to ignore all that is new for another ten years; I will bet that not even a rooster will bother to crow at us in the artistic realm. If, however, we march boldly with the spirit of the times, if we involve all of our strong artists,
and thank God there are many here at the moment, we can, in a short period of time, dominate and have no small of an impact in the artistic world. [Some might say] that we are a small nation? That is the smallest obstacle. The Netherlands was not a larger nation and during the Middle Ages they stood at the helm of all of Europe. It was from there that the most remarkable masters of musical arts came, and they were welcomed with the greatest glory in the courts of music-loving rulers. They were – as is well known – the founders of all music of the new era. Why should I go so far for examples? Does not every compatriot look with pride on the days of the great Žižka and Prokop, when all of Europe shook before our small nation? Let us work, in a similar fashion to our glorious predecessors, in the fields of art and science; a great number of courageous individuals are on hand – victory will not slip through our fingers.

The first one, who started to walk on this path of salvation and who is a composer of the new artistic direction leading to a new epoch in our art, is Bedřich Smetana. It is generally known that he achieved recognition for his comic operas and music dramas. He achieved no less recognition in the realm of instrumental music, by taking the stance of the new era – a stance that had been assumed by Liszt in his symphonic poems.

Next to Smetana, Dr. Mayer and Zdeňek Fibich have proven themselves in this musical genre. I will write, in the next installment, about the symphonic poems of these excellent three stars, who shine true beauty with full light on the sky of Czech art...

If we are tracking the development of Smetana’s activities, an image surfaces that is inadvertently similar to that which we painted earlier for Liszt. We see Smetana first on the virtuosic path as a pianist worthy of his master. Just like Liszt, Smetana crossed over to the more honourable camp of the composer and earned the most wonderful name for himself in this domain. Especially in the field of the “music drama,” Smetana is without a doubt next to Wagner the most remarkable genius of our time. Let me be understood correctly: I do not wish to confirm the short-sighted assumption made by the enemies of this master, who criticize him, without giving it a second thought, for “imitating Wagner and taking us in a foreign direction;” rather I am suggesting explicitly that Smetana is more than a mere “imitator” of Wagner, that he is a kindred relative of the aforementioned hero in the artistic domain and that, just as Wagner did in the German language, so too did Smetana draw out opera, or better put music drama, from a far richer source, from the spirit of the Czech language. This is the only natural path, from which we may attain the desirable goal: that is, “Czech opera.” That Smetana placed himself in a position that privileges language, that he had only this purely Czech direction in mind when constructing his grand creations, he serves as an example for all of our composers. That it happened to be a German, who was first to articulate this principle of the development of musical shapes, a principle that is the most natural and thus the most healthy, is that reason enough that we should not accept it as our own, in spite of the fact that it stands to save us?

I doubt very much that someone might be found from amongst our artists, who would in good conscience recommend as a model for our opera the long-condemned Italian sloppy work and the finely speculative direction of the French school. Therein our salvation does not lie! It would be nonsensical if we were to turn away from the path of progress, on which Wagner has embarked, because Wagner is German. Why do we translate Goethe, Schiller, Heine, etc.? Based on the
condemning theories of certain men, we should not take any interest in these greats, whose works are the property of the whole educated world.

Even in the realm of purely instrumental music, Smetana has given us exemplary works, which are a true expression of the new direction that Liszt brought to life with his symphonic poems. These works come from an earlier time when Smetana dwelt beyond the borders of our land; however, with their beautiful form, original ideas, clear internal development of sharply characteristic, yet unusually engaging, noble motives, they stand out remarkably, such that they might be classified along with the best works of Liszt. The harmonization and instrumentation are equally interesting in both masters; the choice of poetic material, on which the music is based, is equally sophisticated. In fact, if we compare the work of both masters, it always seems to me that Smetana surpasses Liszt with a more remarkable, specifically musical spirit, such that in every motive of his, next to its sharply characteristic nobility, there is a tunefulness that presents itself in the most perfect of musical forms...

Based on all of this, we see that, up until now, our composers drew most of their materials from foreign places, with the exception of Waldstein’s camp (Valdštýnův tábor). In most recent times, we observe a most conciliatory turn of events: these composers are starting to take diligent notice of Slavic legends, history, and literature, and are taking indigenous, rewarding material as the basis for their works. Smetana is composing a whole cycle of symphonic poems with the general title Country (Vlast) and with the subdivisions: “Říp,” “Vyšehrad,” “Vltava,” “Lipany,” “Bíla Hora,” etc., based on the most important events in our history, be they glorious or tragic.

Dr. Mayer has found two particularly rewarding materials for musical composition: “Mách’s May” (“Máchův máj”) and “Vlasta.”

It is with dignity that Zdeněk Fibich stands beside the two aforementioned masters; he has, in recent times, enriched the hitherto meagre number of our symphonic poems with three new works; [among them is] the so-called “orchestral fantasy,” which we heard during the past season and which testifies to his unusual talent – a talent that awakens in us great hope in his future endeavours in this field.

We were not disappointed, for two additional symphonic poems followed closely behind each other: Othello and his newest Záboj a Slavoj from the Královdvorský manuscript.

The form of the symphonic poem is the most natural and capable of having a successful life. Liszt proved this as did our masters after him in full measure. It can be prophesied quite easily that it is only this genre that has a great future, [standing] above all others in the domain of instrumental music.
Czech original:
Směru doby minulé, zvláště mistrův klasických postavil se na odpor geniální revolucionář, hlava nové školy, jenž ohledu nebera na dosavadní formu, všechna vízic jej pouká přešlává a snaží se umění instrumentální uvěstí na dráhy nové. Jest to Fr. Liszt. Jeho “symfoničké básně” drží se přísně dle návrhu poetického slova a daného programu. Forma sonaty a symfonie se utopila.

Těmito slovy jsem loňského roku zakončil jednu z privátních svých studií, pojednávající ‘o klasických formách sonaty a symfonie;’ byť jsem, jako dosud ještě valná část mladých i starých přátel umění hudebního poněkud překvapen netušeným tím zjevem muže znamenitého, individuality podivuhodné – oko mé bylo oslepeno příliš jasnými paprsky nově vycházejícího slunka na obzoru hudebního života. Kdož by nebyl překvapen? Veškerý svět znal Liszta co nejvznešenějšího heroa hry klavírní, velebil jej co nejznamenitějšího výkonného umělce, jenž dospěl na klavíru k nejkrajnějším mezím dokonalosti jako druhdy Paganiní na houslích. Koncertní jeho dráha se podobala nejskvělejšímu triumfu – svět jej vyňášel až ku hvězdám, a když velebený Liszt skvělou tuto dráhu vítězoslávy náhle ukončil, nikomu ani ve snu nenapadlo, ještě více od muže tohoto žádati, než co dosud vykonal. Proto byl každý tím více překvapen nenadálým se objevením Liszta na nové, čestnější dráze, totiž na dráze skladatelské. Nejvíce zarazila obecenstvo ona okolnost, že s úkazem podobným se nesetkalo již v životě starších mistrův. Ovšem že Mozart co ‘zázračné dítě’ vše pobláznil za onoho času v dvorních kruzích rozličných potentátů svou hrou na klavíru; však známo jest, že záhy již rozvíjejí vyhradně neúnavnou činnost skladatelskou, kdežto umělecká dráha Lisztova určitě se delší na dva oddíly: v prvním se nám jeví Liszta co pouhé virtuos, v druhém co skladatel – zajisté to úkaz dosud nevídaný, a proto většině nepochopitelný.

Mnohem větší úžas vzbudilo to, že Liszt vystoupil co skladatel na poli hudby instrumentální v oboru symfonickém. “Co chce ten geniální blázen? Což neví, že nelze žádnému smrtelníku přes devátou symfonii Beethovenovu dále jít – chce býti on větší Beethovena? Marné věru volání!” Pravda to nepopíratelná, že Beethovenem dosáhla hudba instrumentální svého vrcholu, že tedy ‘devátá’ napsána byla poslední symfonie; však poslední symfonie starého stylu, staré formy. Co napsal po Beethovenovi Šubert, Mendelssohn, Šuman, a Berlioz ve sféře této, není v celku nic nového poněvadž vše to vyrostlo na půdě ducha doby předcházející: Liszt však dobře porozuměv naučení, jaké dal největší ten mistr všech umělců budoucím pokolením ve finalní větě své poslední symfonie, postavil se na půdu novou a pokračoval konsekventně dle doby minulého vývinu přirozeného na dráze nově počaté. Patrně lze pozorovat, že Beethoven ve svých symfoních se snaží všemi možnými prostředky, aby se nám učinil pochopitelným a srozumitelným; konečně že sám přichází jako k onomu náledu, že nelze pouhé instrumentální hudební určitě a jasně se vysloviti, a proto aby se neminul obmýšleným účinkem, používá ve finalní větě poslední své symfonie slova básnického, připojuje k celku mohutnému v nejrozhodnějším okamžiku, tu kde síla i výraz nástrojů hudebních nevyhovují více myšlenkám obrovským – jásající sbor hlasů lidských v nejsvětějším nadšení. Zde se určitá myšlenka svou poetickou převahou prodere a na povrch vynoří spolu s ideálním letem uměleckého nadšení a tihou obsahu co konečný výsledek. Kam nás povede další přirozený vývin na dráze této? Chceme-li kráčeti ku předu, musíme konečný tento výsledek, k jakému Beethoven přišel, základem i východištěm všeho dalšího tvoření učiniti. A co jest konečný tento výsledek? Jak vidíme: slovo básnické, básnický motiv. Tedy – nelekejte se! – “hudba programní”…

První, jenž po této cestě spásy u nás kráčeti počal, jenž zakladatelem jest nového směru uměleckého a jímž nová počíná epocha v umění domácím, jest Bedřich Smetana. Všeobecně jest známo, jak nesmírných si získal zásahu o komickou operu i o české hudební drama. Nemenších
zásluh získal sobě též o instrumentální hudbu tím, že i zde postavil se na stanovisko doby nejnovější, jaké zaujal právě Liszt ve svých symfonických básních.

V tomto genru hudebním se vedle Smetany z našich umělců znamenitě osvědčili též dr. Mayer a Zdeňek Fibich. O symfonických básních tohoto skvělého trojhlaví, zářícího plným světlem právé krásy na obloze umění českého, promlouvím příště…

Stopujeme-li vývin činnosti Smetanovy, tu se nám bezděky vynoří podobný obraz, jaký jsme dříve nakreslili o Lisztovi. Též Smetanu vidíme z počátku na dráhu virtuozní co pianist u svého mistra zajisté důstojného. Jako Liszt přešel též Smetana později v čestnější tábor komponistův a dobyl si v době poslední nejsvětějšího jména v oboru tomto. Zejména na poli ‘hudebního dramatu’ jest nyní Smetana bez odporu vedle Wagnera nejznámějším geniem, jakým vykázati se může doba naše. Budíž mi dobře porozuměli: nechci snad potvrzovati krátkozrakou domněnku nepřátel mistra toho, kteří mu vtýkají bez dalšího rozmyslu “že prý napodobuje Wagnera, že přenáší k nám cizí směr” atd., nýbrž výslovně podotýkám, že Smetana jest něco více než pouhým “nápodobňovatelem” Wagnerovým, že jest stejnorožím, příbuzným onomu heroovi v oboru duchovního, že podobně jako Wagner z ducha německé řeči, tak Smetana vyvodil operu či lépe řečeno “hudební drama” z daleko bohatšího zdroje, z ducha české řeči. Tojedně je přirozená cesta, po níž dopracovat se můžeme cíle žádoucí, totiž: “české opery.” Smetana právě tím, že postavil se na stanovisko ducha řeči, že na zřeteli měl při svých velkolepých vytvorech jedině ryze český tento směr, jest vzorem pro všechny naše domácí komponisty. Že právě Němec byl první, jenž princip ten vývoje hudebních tvarů z řeči samé vyslovil, princip nejprávě není třeba, proto nemáme je snad přijmout za svůj vzor tomu, že jest spásný pro nás?

Pochybují velmi, že by se snad někdo mezi domácími umělci nalezl, jenž by s dobrým svědomím odporučovali chtěl co vzor pro naše opery dávno odsouzený šlendrián vlašské a rafinovaně špekulativní směr francouzské školy. Odtud nekyně nám spásy! Nesmyslným by to však bylo počínatím, kdybychom se od cesty pokroku, jakou Wagner nastoupil, odvráceli snad proto, že jest Wagner Němcem. Proč překládáme Goetheho, Šillera, Heineho atd.? Podle oné zatracovací teorie jižtých pánů neměli bychom o těch velikánech, jichž díla jsou majetkem veškerého vzdělaného světa, niceho věděti.

Než i v oboru čistě instrumentální hudby podal nám Smetana vzorné skladby, jež Liszt svými básněmi symfonickými v život uvedl. Skladby ty pocházejí sice z doby drželší, kde Smetana trval ještě za hranicemi vlasti naší, však překrásnou formou, originalitou myšlenek, přehledným vnitřním propracováním ostře charakteristických a při tom ušlechtilostí výrazu neobyčejně poutavých motivů tak znamenitě vyňíkají, že důstojně řaditi se mohou k nejlepším pracím Lisztovým. Spůsob harmonizace a instrumentace jest u obou mistrů stejně zajímavý, volba poetické látky k hudebnímu spracování stejně důmyslná, však i v tomto oboru mistrů, vždy mi připadá, že Smetana vyniká nad Liszta znamenitějším specificky hudebním duchem, že každý jeho motiv vedle ostré charakteristické ušlechtilejší, vřelejší dýše melodickosti na nejvýš dokonalé hudební formy…

Dle všeho vidíme, že brali si dosud skladatelé naší látku ponejvíce, vyjme-li Valdštýnův tábor – z luhů cizích. V nejnovější době nastal tu mnohem utěšenější obrat: skladatelé tito počínají si
pilně všimati bájí, dějin a literatury slovanské a beřou pro své práce z domácích luhův vděčné látky. Tak komponuje Smetana celý cyklus symfonických básní pod jménem všeobecným *Vlast* s pododdíly: „Říp,” „Vyšehrad,” „Vltava,” „Lipany,” „Bílá Hora,” atd., řídě se vůbec dle nejdůležitějších momentův naší slávy i neštěstí našeho.

Dr. Mayer vyhlídl si dvě zvlášť vděčné látky pro hudební spracování: *Máchův Mýa* a *Vlastu*.

Důstojně se k zmíněným dvěma mistrům naším staví po bok Zdeňek Fibich, jenž v poslední době obohatil posud ovšem skrovný počet našich symfónických básní třemi novými sice ‘orkestrální fantazií,’ kterou jsme v uplynulé seasoně slyšeli, a která svědectví nám zřejmě podávala o tomto neobyčejném talentu, jenž naděje velké v nás pro budoucí činnost na poli tom vzbuzoval.

Nesklamali jsme se; nebot' rychle po sobě následovaly dvě další symfonické básně: *Othello* a nejnověji *Záboj a Slavoj* z rukopisu královdvorského.

Forma básně symfonické jest nejpřirozenější a jest schopna zdárného života. To dokázal Liszt a po něm výteční mistři naší zajisté plnou měrou. *Ze* forma tato jediná má velkou budoucnost přede všemi ostatními v oboru hudby instrumentální, dá se velmi snadně prorokovat.
Dvořák’s *The Cunning Peasant* (Šelma Sedlák) earned the approval of the audience with one stroke. That the acceptance of the novelty was so great, one even might say enthusiastic, is a testimony to the effectiveness of Dvořák’s music, for one cannot attribute this [success] to the text. It is not possible to claim that the two-act comic libretto, written by J. O. Veselý, makes new progress on the path that was happily started by *The Bartered Bride* (Prodaná Nevěstí); it is more of a step back. The title *The Cunning Peasant* sounds almost ironic. The whole “cunningness” of the peasant Martin – who says of himself that he is a “calculating bird” and that “jokes come from every fibre of my being” – lies in the fact that instead of a ladder, on which the poor farmer Jeník comes to visit Martin’s daughter Bětuška, he places a barrel with a splintered plank beneath the window of her chamber. Jeník is supposed to fall into the barrel: “we will pull a terrible prank” says Martin to Václav, Jeník’s rich rival; “then we will both run out with sticks and beat the robber as much as we can.” If we add that even this one and only “clever trick” does not work out for Martin, because the victim turns out to be someone else, I gather that *The Cunning Peasant* is sufficiently delineated. If one wanted to write of the stupidity and crudeness of peasants, one would be able to bring such a story to the theatre; if one would want to enrich Czech art with a good play that would be a picture of national village life, one would have to go about it in a different way than in *The Cunning Peasant*. Other motives of the plot, the punishment of the disloyal count, are imitations of *The Marriage of Figaro*, with the difference that in *Figaro* the trustworthy relationship between the Countess and her maid Susanna is totally natural, whereas in Veselý’s story, we do not understand how the Countess can confide about the most delicate matters in the peasant girl, whom she has just met for the first time! The main representative of the comic element, the chamber servant Jean, is a well-known caricature from Viennese comedies, especially old ones. We must give credit to the librettist for being able, in some parts, to capture the tone of rural, national song, and in this way he did a great service to the composer. And yet, in other places not infrequently is [the librettist] carried away with an excessive attempt at [depicting] real life, leading to a harshness of expression, which dominated over the naïve gentleness, from the singing of our people, speaking to us so emotionally. And who would doubt that above all from this source, and not from the prose of everyday life, an artist has to take his cues, giving us the drama not through serious conflicts and contrasts acting powerfully or with sharp satire, but through light, idyllic village life, thus not the underside but the outside of our villagers? Even the nobility in *The Cunning Peasant* does not act in an overly refined manner...

We are spending so long on the opera text and gazing at it from a strict perspective for a very important reason. It is time-honoured truth, tied closely with the entire history of opera, that a bad text poses barriers and difficulties for the composer – ones that cannot be surmounted even by the best musician. In particular, it is necessary to look carefully at the value of the operatic text; for the musical side of our operatic production is so promising that Czech original librettos – of course, with certain honourable exceptions – create a sad foil to it. Our optimists claim that complaining about bad texts is a daily occurrence in all countries. This is undeniable, but we also cannot forget that a libretto that the French or Germans might call mediocre or even poor would be welcomed with sincere gladness by our composers, and the critics would consider our work to
be well done. There is a big demand [for librettos] and too small of a selection. I remember the words of Riehl: “It is not possible to deny that the modern musician, who is inclined to compose opera, as a rule has so much formal poetic technique, that he knows how to write adequate (leidliche) verses. Yet verses still don’t mean a good opera.” The characteristic that Riehl attributes to the majority of German composers (and this hardly without justification), we find unfortunately only in the minority of our librettists! And likewise, that which applies to the writing of good verse, applies doubly about the poetic handling and dramatic arrangement of the text, which require greater ability. In short: the dramatic element, represented first of all by the libretto, in the second place by the acting, is the trickiest part of our opera; I consider it to be not just my right, but also my duty to issue serious words, without timidity and flattery, to all those individuals in question, [urging them] to try harder.

The reviewer unfortunately does not know the earlier operas of Dvořák; comparing them to The Cunning Peasant and tracking [the composer’s] progress is thus impossible. If it is possible to compare Dvořák’s work in the realm of instrumental music with his operatic work – and to an extent this is not unjustified – so from The King and the Charcoal Burner (Král a Uhlíř) to The Cunning Peasant, he made the same kind of progress as from his first chamber works to his Serenade, Variations, and Slavonic Dances (Slovanské Tance), or if we want an example in the realm of vocal music: from his first songs to the Moravian Duets (Moravské Dvojzpěvy). We do not know what to value in Dvořák the most: his valuable, rich talent or his amazing productivity or his diligent artistic conscientiousness and authenticity, from which he was able to achieve such great results in a short time. Traces of such diligence and work, leading to constant perfecting of oneself, we find in the score of The Cunning Peasant – not embarrassing evidence of effort and struggle, but true sweet fruit of this labour. Dvořák is, of course, first of all a composer of instrumental music; it is not so much his perfect knowledge of performing resources, i.e. instruments, and his unlimited control of polyphony that give him precedence [in this area], but his whole artistic personality, the whole direction of his imagination certainly attests to the fact that the orchestra is his own servant; his whole musical thought is polyphonic, symphonic. The opera, of which we are speaking, is no exception: the grand orchestral stream speaks to us in fluent tongues, everywhere it is interesting, lively, vibrant, and fresh, never ordinary or banal, unclear or artificial. At all times, Dvořák gives life to the situation with broad lyrical forms with undeniable success; here is his inventiveness, noteworthy in terms of melody, harmony, instrumental colours; here we must lament that he did not have a better, more poetic libretto. In contrast to dramatic details, Dvořák’s musical imagination is less flexible; this applies especially to dramatic dialogue. It is appropriate to acknowledge the composer’s growing effort in favour of correct text setting, but that does not resolve everything: he breaks rules in several parts with regard to emphasis, i.e. the accent on a syllable in a word, giving life to the text, sometimes even meaning. In comic opera, it is precisely the emphasis that allows one to achieve very welcome results. The best libretto for Dvořák would be a serious one, with true poetry, perhaps even pathos, in which lyrical moments might give way to large ensembles (let us remember Dvořák’s Hymnus from Hálek’s Heirs of the White Mountain [Dědicové Bílé Hory]) – such a text would guarantee an even more beautiful success than can be detected in The Cunning Peasant. That Dvořák would hopefully overcome all difficulties [with such a libretto], I gather we do not have to doubt.
Apart from its own worth, *The Cunning Peasant* has a different importance for us: a special position in our musical dramatic literature. *The Bartered Bride* became the most popular opera here; indeed, the favour of audiences is constant and growing; we are all aware that master Smetana gave us a perfect model, completely national in character, and we know that similar models are yet to be found in other artistic areas. And Smetana has remained one of a kind in the realm of comic opera; there were only a few humble attempts to continue along on the path of *The Bartered Bride*, and there are fewer and fewer such attempts (Bendl’s *Pan Fran*); almost all composers worked in the area of the grand and serious, usually carried away by unhappy ideals without character or the glowing eclecticism of Meyerbeer and Gounod. It was pitiable when, just a year ago, Smetana complained that his *Bartered Bride* had reached acclaim with so many of our audiences and not with our composers; now he has true confirmation; a very talented representative of the younger generation of composers [Dvořák] barely set foot on Smetana’s path of comic opera [composition] and was able to achieve such a success. And those parts [of *The Cunning Peasant*] that are most similar to *The Bartered Bride* were the best liked (for instance, the duet between Jeník and Bětuška in the second act) and show best that Dvořák did not give up his own artistic personality and individuality. This example of Dvořák’s will not remain without a following, Lord willing; for it is only on this path – whereby a talented artistic group focuses around an excellent direction, given by an individual [Smetana] – that an artistic school can be created.

Czech original:

pochyboval o tom, že především z tohoto pramene, ne však z neutěšené prosy všedního života, musí bráti své barvy umělec, jenž nám nepodává drama buď vážnými konflikty a kontrasty mocně účinkující, buď ostrou satirou neúprosně bičující, nýbrž pouze rozmnárou vesnickou idylu, tudíž ne rub nýbrž líč povahy našich venkovanů? Ostatně ani šlechta nechová se v “Šelmě sedlákovi” příliš uhlazeně…

Že zde tak obširně jednáme o zpěvoherním textu a že naň hledíme se stanoviska poněkud přísnější, děje se z důvodu dosti závažných. Vždyť je to pravda, dávnou zkušeností, ba celými dějinami opery zpečetěná, že špatný text způsobuje skladateli překážky a obtíže, jež překonati nemůže ani sebe větší. Zejména pak u nás je zatøebí, aby se bedlivě přihlíželo k ceně textů operních; neboť hudební stránka naší zpěvoherní produkce jeví se celkem tak utěšeně, že česká původní libreta – ovšem s některými čestnými výminkami – tvoří k tomu velmi smutnou folii. Naší optimisté arcí tvrdí, že stěžování si na špatné texty u všech národů jest na denním pořádku. Nelze to upříti; ale nesmíme také zapomenouti, že leckteré libreto, jež Francouzi nebo Němci nazývají prostředním nebo i slabým, uvaliti by náši skladatelé s upřímnou radostí, nazvala by kritika naše prací zdařilou. Jeť příliš veliká poptávka a příliš malý výběr.

Vzpomínám si zde na slova Riehlova: “Nelze nikterak upříti, že moderní hudebník, jenž je spůsobilý ke komponování oper, z pravidla mívá tolik formální techniky básnické, že umí dělati obstojné (leidliche) verše. Avšak dobré verše ještě nejsou dobrou operou. Vlastnost, kterou zde přisuzuje Riehl většině německých skladatelů (a to sotva bez práva), nalezáme bohužel u menšiny našich libretistů! A totéž, co o psaní dobrých veršů, patrně platí dvojnásobně o básnickém pojmouti a dramatickém upravení textu, ktery představuje schopnost již značně vyšší. Zkrátka: právě proto, že vlastní dramatický živel, zastoupený v první řadě libretu, v druhé řadě pak herectvím, jest nejchoulostivější stránkou naší zpěvohry, má kritika nejen právo ale i povinnost, doháněti vážným slovem bez ostýchání všechny ty, na nichž záleží, k tužšímu napjetí všech sil.

Referent bohužel nezná dřívějších oper Dvořákových; porovnávat jí se “Šelmou Sedlákem” a konstatovat jakýsi pokrok, není mu tudiž možno. Smílí se však soudit ze Dvořákovy činnosti v oboru hudby instrumentální na jeho činnost operistickou – a do jisté míry to není neoprávněno – též od “Krále a Uhlíře” k “Šelmě sedlákovi” zajisté wykonal pokrok podobný tomu, kterým dospěl od svých prvních prací komorních ku své “serenádě,” ke “variacím” a ku “slovanským tancům,” anebo chcemeli mítí raději přiklad z oboru vokálního; od prvních písní svých až k “moravským dvojzpěvům.” Věru nevíme, čeho si více máme vážiti na Dvořákov: či jeho vzácného, bohatého nadání, či jeho úžasně plodnosti či jeho vzorné umělecké svědomitosti a opravdivosti, s nížto dovedl se za krátký čas propracovati k výsledkům tak znaménitým. Stopy takové píle a práce cílení k neustálému sebe zdokonalování nalézámi i v partituro “Šelmy sedláka” – ne snad trapné známky jakéhosi perného hmoždění se a usilování, nýbrž skutečné, sladké ovoce této přičinlivosti. Dvořák jest ovšem v přední řadě skladatelem instrumentálním; netoliko že ho dokonalá znalost uměleckých prostředků, t. j. nástrojů, a neobmezené ovládání polyfonie k tomu před jinými opravňuje, ale i celá jeho umělecká osobnost, celý směr jeho fantazie rozhodně tomu nasvědčuje, že jest orkestr jeho nejvlastnějším panstvím, celé jeho hudební myšlení je polyfonní, symfonické. Těchto zvláštností nezapírá ani opera, o niž zde mluvíme; mohutný proud orkestrální hovoří k nám sterými (sic) výmluvnými jazyky, všude je zajímavý, živý, pestrý a svěží, nikde všední nebo banální, nejasný nebo strojený. Povšechný ráz situace podává Dvořák v širší formě lyrické s nepopíratelným úspěchem; zde jest jeho
vynalézavost i co do melodických motivů i co do harmonických a instrumentáčních barev podivuhodná, zde však take nejvíce musíme toho litovat, že neměl lepšího poetičtějšího libreta. Naproti dramatickým podrobnostem arci je Dvořáková hudební fantazie méně povolná; zejmena platí to o dramatickém dialogu. Uznati sluiší skladatelovu rostoucí snahu po správném přednešení slova; ale tím není ještě vykonáno vše: pohřešujeme namnoze šetření důrazu, t. j. onoho přízvuku, jimž se ne slabíka ve slově, nýbrž slovo ve větě zvláštně vyznamenává a který tak řeči dodává živosti, ano někdy teprve i smyslu. V komické opř. právě pikantním důrazem lze docílit velmi vitaných účinků. Pro Dvořáka arci bylo by nejvýznamnějším libretto vážné, pravou poesií prodechtu, snad i pathetické, v němž na základě jednoduchého děje lyrické momenty široce se rozkládají, postkytující dosti místa větším ensemblí (vzpomeňme si na Dvořákův “Hymnus” z Hálkových “Dědiců Bílé Hory!”) – takový text by byl zhruba ještě krásnějších úspěchů, než jsou ty, jimiž se všim právem honosí “Šelma Sedlák.” Toho, že by pak Dvořák snad přetížil výkonné sily přílišnými nesnadostmi, nemusíme se tuším nyní již obávat.

“Šelma Sedlák” má i mimo svou vlastní cenu ještě jinou důležitost pro nás: zvláštní postavení v naší hudební literatuře dramatické. “Prodaná Nevěsta” stala se u nás nejpopulárnější zpěvohrou; ano přízně obecenstva ji neustále ještě přibývá; všichni jsme si toho vědomi, že nám mistr Smetana uštědřil dokonalý umělecky typ ryze národní, a víme také dobře, že podobný typ ve mnohém jiném oboru uměleckého dosud náleží mezi zbožná práci mezi zbožná práci. A přece zůstal Smetana v oboru komické opery takově osamotnělý; málo jen se dělo skromných pokusů, kráčet dále po dráze “Prodanou Nevěstou” zahájené, ano pokusů těch stále ubývalo a skladatelé skoro všechni pracovali v oboru velikém, vážném, obyčejně svádění jsoucí nešťastnými “ideály” bez charakterního, třeba sebe lesklejšího eklecticismu Meyerbeerovsko-Gounodovského na scestí velmi neutěšené. Bylo to věru tklivé, kdy Smetana v oboru komické opery ještě před rokem sobě stěžoval, že jeho “Prodaná Nevěsta” vydobil si uznání toliko našeho obecenstva, ne však našich skladatelů; nyní dánost je mu malé zadostučněné: výtečně nadaný representant mladší generace skladatelské, sotva že jednou nohou vkrčil na dráhu Smetanovy komické opery, již domohl se skvělého úspěchu. A právě to, že místa slohu “Prodané Nevěsty” nejpríbuznější nejvíce se líbila (jako na př. dvojzpěv Jeníka a Bětušky v druhém jednání), nejlépe dokazuje, že Dvořák tím nikterak nezadal své vlastní umělecké povaze a osobnosti. Tento příklad Dvořákův nezůstane bohdá bez následování; vždyť jenom touto cestou soustředěním se náš jiné skupení uměleckého kolem vynikající směr, určující individuality může se vytvořit umělecká škola!
Appendix 5:

Comic opera in two acts. Written by J. O. Veselý. Music composed by Antonín Dvořák. He, who still remembers the time when Antonín Dvořák introduced himself to our wider circles as a dramatic composer, indeed as a composer in general, with his opera The King and the Charcoal Burner (Král a Uhlíř), also knows that in spite of its great reception, the composer quickly came to the conclusion that his work cannot gain the kind of popularity over here that was achieved by other Czech pieces. Though the recognition back then was wide, there certainly was only a small few who really meant it from their hearts. The majority of the audience and performers looked for and found difficulties in the score by our standards, and [these were] insurmountable for the piece to be maintained as a permanent part of the repertoire; some found the work to be too hard to listen to, others too demanding to sing, and it happened that after several performances, the opera The King and the Charcoal Burner was placed into the archive for a long period of rest. The same fate awaited Dvořák’s second opera Vanda. What was the point of an ingenious conception, or the ingenious work to the composer, if he did not give sufficient heed to ensure that the musical expression would be comprehensible to the wider audience?

Conscientious self-criticism, the mighty influence of the operas of Smetana, familiarity with material from the life of the common people, but mainly the firm conviction that the direction, initiated by Smetana in the realm of national opera, leaning on Czech musical elements, is the right and for the sake of the future the only valid one – all of this led Dvořák in his new opera The Cunning Peasant (Šelma Sedlák) to get onto the track that Smetana set out for Czech musical art. With his new work, Dvořák proved beautifully that preserving the life principles of our national opera, as handed down by Smetana, does not infringe on the individuality of the artist and that the limits of the musical national precept are not so narrow, such that no one besides Smetana would be able to develop a different talent to the fullness of its power, at the expense of originality. It was not from the music of Smetana, but based on the example of Smetana that Dvořák drew from the rich resources of national musical elements for his new opera. Those aspects of his new work that seem to us to approach too intimately the method of thought and musical expression of Smetana will later certainly have, according to national progression, not only their own soul, but also their own face – we must not forget that The Cunning Peasant is a decisive and wonderful, but as of yet only first step taken by the composer in the field of national opera. In fact, we were surprised by the speed and accuracy with which Dvořák immersed himself in national musical life; this has awakened in us admiration for the diligence with which he now works; from the scarce examples of national music in the earlier operas of Dvořák, though they quite evidently showed an effort by the composer to approach the intentions of Smetana, it was impossible to predict the sudden and definite turn toward the style that we can see in the new work by Dvořák; we have here before us a work with a pure, national character. And how mightily can be seen in it the creative power of the composer, so rich with thoughts, such effortlessness and free musical expression, a work that took only a few weeks [to complete] – and this is certainly new proof of the extraordinary talent of Dvořák, giving us reason for bright hopes for the future. Beside Smetana, Dvořák is called more than anyone to give our national music a resounding name even beyond the borders of our nation, and that is why it is the responsibility of criticism not only to recognize the excellence of Dvořák’s
accomplishment, but also to draw attention to the conspicuous flaws, with which his newest work suffers. These flaws cannot be taken lightly, as they relate to the foremost principles of operatic music: drama, declamation, and musical characteristics. Original motives and their good development are sufficient in absolute musical forms, but not in dramatic music. [The latter] requires more: it requires constant contact between the music and the plot, coherent thoughts that correspond with the dramatic events, and complete compliance of the singing with the underlay of the text. Strictly limited arias, long duets with constantly repeated words, and especially the chaotic ensembles, in which five or more texts sound simultaneously and yet none are understood, should be used but rarely and with great care, giving way to easier operatic styles that accompany action – these cannot in any way disturb the progression of the story or grow to such dimensions as to relegate the important dramatic moments to the background. Besides several problems in this regard, Dvořák’s opera is insufficiently pregnant in its overall impression; at times, even neglected musical characteristics as well as occasional conspicuous inaccuracies in musical declamation [can be detected]. That our time has quite rightly made perfect musical expression the foremost principle of operatic music is evident in, among other foreign works, Smetana’s *The Kiss* (*Hubička*), and it would certainly be very prosperous for Dvořák’s piece, if in this regard he stuck more closely to his model.

We hope that abundant reprises of this novelty will give us the opportunity to mention some of the details of the interesting and thoughtful work of Dvořák. We only hint at [the idea] that we hope for more correct performances to the advantage of the work than were heard at its first and second performances.

Czech original:

Komická opera, ve dvou jednáních. Napsal J. O. Veselý. Hudbu složil Antonín Dvořák. Kdo se ještě pamatuje na onu dobu, kdy Antonín Dvořák svou operou “Král a Uhlíř” uvedl se co dramatický skladatel, ano co komponista vůbec v naše širší kruhy, ten také ví, že i přes skvělé přijetí, kterého se skladbě jeho dostalo, pře záhy již komponista musel nabyti přesvědčení, že dílo jeho u nás nemůže dosíci populárnosti jiných skladeb domácích. Byť i bývalo uznání tenkráte všeobecné, tož zajisté byl poměrně jen malý hlouček oněch, jimž šlo od srdece. Větší část obecenstva a účinkujících sil hledala a našla v partitúre obtíže pro naše poměry a trvalé udržení se skladby na repertoiru přímo nepřekonatelné; jedněm zdála se hudba příliš těžkou ku poslouchání, druhým obtížnou ku zpěvu, a tak stalo se, že po několička představeních opera “Král a Uhlíř” uložena do archivu ku dlouhému snad odpočinku. Stejný osud stihl druhou zpěvohru Dvořákovu “Vandu.” Co byla platna geniální koncepce, co duchaplná práce skladateli, který nehleděl dosti k tomu, aby se v hudebním výrazu i širším obecenstvu stal srozumitelným?

Svědomitá autokritika, mocný vliv oper Smetanových, nahodivší se látku ze života prostonárodního, hlavně ale nabyté pevné přesvědčení, že mistrem Smetanou pro národní operu vytknutý, o české hudební živly se opírající směr jest pravým a pro budoucnost jedině platným – to vše přimělo Dvořáka k tomu, aby v nově své operě “Šelma Sedlák” nastoupil dráhu, kterou tak zdárně Smetana českému hudebnímu umění byl proklestil. Dvořák novým svým dílem skvěle nám dokázal, že šetřením životních zásad naší národní opery, Smetanou podaných, nijak nemusí trpěti individualita umělce, a že meze hudebního principu národního dokonce nejsou tak úzké, aby vedle Smetany v nich nemohlo se vyvinouti talent jiný k plné mohutnosti, aniž by původnost
jeho v podstatě trpěla. Nikoliv z hudby Smetanovy, nýbrž podle příkladu mistra bezprostředně z bohatého zdroje národního živlu hudebního čerpal Dvořák pro svou novou operu. Nebot’ co ještě v novém díle jeho zdá se nám příliš intimně bližiti se spůsobu myšlínek a hudebního výrazu Smetanova, ponese zajisté přirozeným postupem již v přístihm díle nejen duši, ale i tvář vlastní – nesmímeť zapomenouti, že jest “Šelma Sedlák” rozhodným a skvělým sice, ale přec jen prvním krokem skladatelovým na poli národní opery. Vskutku, překvapila-li nás již rychlost a dokonalost, s kterou Dvořák vžil se v národní život hudební, tož vzbudila náš obdiv důslednost, s jakou sobě v něm počiná; neboť ze sporných úkazů národní hudby v dřívějších operách Dvořákových, byť i dosti projevily snahu skladatelovu přibližiti se intencí Smetanovým, nedalo se nikterak soudit na tak náhlný a rozhodný obrat k slohu, s jakým se v novém díle Dvořákově setkáváme; mámeť zde před sebou dílo povahy čisté, ryze národní. A jak mohutně jeví se v něm tvůrčí síla skladatelova, tak bohatá myšlénkami, tak vynikající nenuceností a bezprostředností hudebního výrazu, jest dílem jen několika neděl – tot’ zajisté nový důkaz neobyčejného talentu Dvořákovy, který opravdu jest v něm nadějným a přišedním v pokroku. Vedle Smetany jest Dvořák více než kdo jiný povolán, naší národní hudbě i za hranicemi naší vlasti zjednati jména zvučného, a právě proto jest tím světlejší povinností kritiky, nejen uznavat výtečnosti výkonů Dvořákových, ale i poukázati k vynikajícím vadám, jimiž trpí i nejnovější dílo jeho. A vady tyto nijak smíšně býti podečnovány, týkají se nejpřednějších zásad hudby operní, dramatičnosti, deklamace a hudební charakteristiky. Originální motivy a dobré jich zpracování dostačí sice v absolutně hudebních formách, nijak ale ještě v hudbě dramatické. Ta žádá více: žádá stálý kontakt mezi hudbou a dějem, vnitřní, dramatickému postupu odpovídající souvislost myšlének a úplný souhlas zpěvu s podloženým mu slovem. Přízně se omezujících aríí, dlouhodechých duet se stále opakujícími se slovy, hlavně ale oných chaotických ensemblů, v nichž z pěti a více rozličných, najednou pronesených slov ni jednomu nemožno rozuměti, mělo by se co ústupku lehčímu slohu opernímu činěného, jen vývinečné a s velkou reservou užívati – nijak ani nesmyť tyto svou rozvláčnosti ruší postup děje aneb nabyti rozměrů, jimiž důležité dramatické momenty ustupují v pozadí. Vedle leckterých poklesků v tomto ohledu jest v Dvořákově opeře dojmu celkového místy nedostí pregnantní, místy i zcela zanedbaná hudební charakteristika, jakož i obecně nápadná nepřesnost hudební deklamace na ujmou. Že právem naše doba učinila dokonalý výraz hudební nejpřednější zásadou operní hudby, toho důkazem jest nám vedle vynikajících děl cizích též Smetanova “Hubička,” a bylo by zajisté velice prospělo Dvořákově skladbě, kdyby se i v tomto ohledu přisněji byl přidržel svého vzoru.

Děkuje, že hojně reprise novinky podají nám příležitost zmíniti se o některých detailech zajímavé a duchaplné práce Dvořákovy. Podotýkáme jen ještě, že bychom si přáli ve prospěch díla správnějších provedení, nežli bylo první a druhé.
Appendix 6:

In recent days, Prague has been hit by a flood of concerts. Czech concert halls, meetings rooms for societies, etc. are overflowing with music, such that the poor music critic does not know where to go first so that he might listen to more or less enticing sounds; this much is understood: he has to be everywhere, or else he might be harshly criticized by the artists and audience. He must spend all day at concerts and all evening at the opera, tired and beaten down – broken, as it were, by the musical sounds, finding refuge in the quiet circle of his household – he must not even think about rest; where would that lead. He must now tie himself to the table and write about all that he saw and heard while on his prickly pilgrimage; he must relive every concert in spirit – each individual concert piece. In short, as you can see, it is an enviable profession. For this reason, if you have some humanly compassion, which I assume that you do, I beg that you would not expect of me, as I sit before such a heap of concert programs, a critique as rich in individual details as I would write, if I had a lighter load.

Out of all of these concerts, the Slavonic concert earns first place, as it was a true musical event. The concert was organized this year, as every year, by the Academic Readers’ Society, which should be honoured for acquainting the Prague audience with the works of the foremost Czech and Slavic composers. Of the novelties that were performed, each one is so significant that a concert review is not sufficient [to give them] full recognition. We give notice, right from the start, that we will save a detailed analysis of the individual novelties for a later time; an opportunity will arise to make them public. Today, we will write only of the general impression that these individual new works in our musical repertoire made on the listeners.

The concert opened with the longest number: the new four-movement Symphony in D major by Antonín Dvořák. It is not the first symphonic work [to be written] by our world-renowned countryman, at whose achievements we rightfully gaze with pride; during the first period of his voluminous creation, Dvořák wrote a great number of Classical-style symphonies, of which especially the F-major imprinted itself on our memory with its bold, ingenious conception; we value many parts [of the F-major Symphony] highly, perhaps more highly than many [parts] in the newest work of this splendidly prolific, tireless spirit. That this new Dvořák symphony is unusually distinguished above all other works of its kind in the present repertoire no one will deny, who knows that the composer, at the point of the most beautiful flowering of his creative strength, gathered up all of his precious art, so that he might show the world that he is capable of ruling over stricter forms than those of dance. It was now time for Dvořák, having relinquished his tendency to expend his energy on miniatures, to venture toward grand works in expansive symphonic forms, and by doing this, [Dvořák] was able to add a new, everlasting sparkle to Czech musical art. It is, in truth, a work with an eminently Czech character; consequently, we hope, God-willing, that Dvořák will persevere in this field, where his great strength lies, [and] that the tree of his creative work might be decorated with ever more beautiful fruits. Czech character springs forth in the most apparent way from the third movement, the adorably worked-out Furiant, which replaces the Scherzo movement typical of Beethoven symphonies; this number seized and fired up the abundant audience at once, inspiring thunderous expressions of praise, and it had to be repeated. The first movement moves nobly through exact Classical forms;
flowing forth in a beautiful current is the beautiful thematic work that seems to be inbred for Dvořák. Both of the main themes are distinguished by their nobility; the greatest mastery is displayed in the development section. The middle movement, a calm *Adagio*, breathes with true poetry and touches the soul the most. The last movement does not hold to the same high [standard] as those that preceded it; [written as] a mosaic, it falls apart, lacking unified flow. Apart from that, we are bothered by the trivial character of both main motives; even here, the instrumentation is remarkable, natural as in the other [movements]. The overall mood of this work is cheerful [and] sprightly; we would prefer to call this work “Czech Spring Symphony.”

On the same artistically high level stands the second novelty: the symphonic poem *Spring* (*Vesna*) by Zdeněk Fibich. The two works, Dvořák’s and Fibich’s, come from opposite poles; the first is purely formal, the second derives its forms from poetic imaginings [and] holds to [the idea] of free creation, as prescribed by the progress of modern music. Dvořák stands conservatively in the realm of the four-movement symphony, as created in the era of the musical classicists. Fibich marches ahead, with those, who join together in a continuous current the main moments of the four-movement [structure], while definitely conveying the mood, in which they conceived their work, in the new genre, for which the term ‘symphonic poem’ has been accepted. In this modern direction, Fibich is a definite ally of master Smetana; that which binds all of them together is the Czech character of the melodic and rhythmic expression, which we admire in Smetana, Dvořák, and Fibich. The paths can be different, only if each one of our composers retains his individuality and brings into effect the character of the nation, from whence he came – then, Prague, the seat of our foremost composers, will gain the weightiness, the honour, which it currently fully deserves. – Even though Fibich’s symphonic poem moves in a different direction from Dvořák’s work, it is related to it, holding to purely Czech melodic and rhythmic shapes – it is in this that the talents of both lie; each [one’s] education [and] own opinions on musical structure leads to different results in the realization of their musical ideas. Fibich called his piece *Spring*; by doing this, he wanted to say that, in his work, he is expressing various moods, which fill and exhilarate the soul of the person, who, after an uncomfortable winter, steps out for the first time into the ever younger-growing nature. It is certainly an appropriate topic for a musical composition. I have already mentioned that Dvořák’s piece breathes forth the same spring-like, fresh mood; while Dvořák gave expression to the various moods of spring in four different, closed movements, Fibich painted all of these moods in one unified framework. As far as the details of the work are concerned, the pastoral section left the greatest impression; equally [impactful was] the main motive of the whole, the introductory section occurring before the appearance of the polka idea, which depicts the sprightly cheerfulness of rural life; [we wish to point to] the lofty polka idea itself as well as the contrapuntal construction, when both of the main motives – the pastoral and the polka – are joined together and the poetic arrangement of the conclusion. Though, in recent times, Fibich has been able to capture Czech character in several of his musical works better than before, we do not hesitate in admitting that in this piece the character comes out the most clearly and in the most mature form. *Spring* is his best work.

In terms of mood, the third number on the program, with its dark character, provides a contrast to the preceding, cheerful, spring-like pieces. The concert organizers ingratiated themselves to us in no small way by choosing for performance an older piece by master Smetana: his symphonic poem *Richard III*, which was heard, all in all, by the Prague audience only once many years ago, and back then, it could scarcely have gained the kind of understanding that it deserves.
In the manner of Liszt, Smetana characterizes, with bold colours, the awful villain from Shakespeare’s renowned tragedy. Years ago, I provided an analysis of this piece in Dalibor; I still consider this [assessment] to be correct and I dare to bring part of it to this [discussion] – appropriately, after a live performance. The composer does not hold slavishly to expounding the poem that he chose as the subject of his musical [work]; he does not tie himself to individual words, but rather gives musical life to a beautifully rounded whole – [an impression] that was awakened in him by that particular poem. Everything is accomplished with short, sharp, and characteristic strokes. Nowhere does one find tiring development and the forcible wringing out of one and the same musical idea, of which the old school is so fond; rather, with definite strokes, the composer indicates what he would like to tell us in the fluent frame of the free symphonic poem. In Richard, the opening measures are already greeted, so to speak, with the tears of painful sighs and the grim sorrow of the miserable victims that had encountered Richard’s executioner’s sword. Airy figures constantly appear in their foggy outlines, closing in tightly and unanimously, as if with one voice, casting irreversible judgment on the wretches, predicting in a threatening manner the unhappy fate of the future, with which their wretched lives will end. Richard pays no heed to these, but crushes all obstacles with his iron steps, and numerous terrifying criminals move on toward their undefinable goal. This is the impression that is created by the immediately-appearing motive of Richard in the poem. Particularly surprising is the ingenious idea that, for the accompaniment of Richard’s motive, which moves forward with grand steps, the composer used the aforementioned sighs of the murdered [people], which culminate in a threatening curse, while Richard’s motive in the lower register continues to be developed, without paying heed to earlier consequences. Both of these simultaneously-occurring contrasts appear in even a clearer light, when suddenly there emerges the enchantingly beautiful motive representing [that which is] good, right, and true, so that these might divert the aggressor from the path of evil; having been touched by more humane feelings, he stops for a moment. Yet, suddenly, as if he were angry at himself for his momentary weakness, he violently pushes this influx of noble feelings away and drives toward the highest goal – the crown. The whole orchestra peals out a majestic motive; Richard seizes the crown. His fortune does not last long. A more powerful enemy has justifiable claims to his crown – each side prepares for battle. Horrifying is the dream in the tent on the night before the battle. All of this is drawn with the truthful colours of successful instrumentation; the awful apparition disappears – the whole orchestra quickly strikes one chord – Richard has awoken from the realm of terrifying dreams. The battle begins. Richard’s motive tapers off, the soothing motive of good is heard in a triumphant outburst throughout the whole orchestra, and the sorrowful motives of Richard’s victims, with which the piece began, appear once again toward the end. However, they are changed, with an unusual rhythm and grand instrumentation, into motives of rejoicing: the souls of the dead have been satisfied; they have been avenged. What a beautiful form; how clearly and definitely was everything managed. How inflexible the form of the old symphonies appears to be in comparison with this new form!

The concert concluded with the orchestral Polonaise No. 1, from the Polish Dances by Vladislav Želenský, the foremost Polish composer of our time. Yet, after the preceding grand pieces of our masters, this piece, written in a lighter style, could not break forth to the same degree as [it would], if it were on a different concert program. In any case, the last number of a program, no matter what it is, usually falls victim to the audience, which has been tired out by music and is impatient. All of this does not have an impact on the true artistic worth of this work, which
distinguishes itself with its successful national Polish character and thorough work. This piece will be printed by publisher Urbánek under the title *Polish Dances*, of which the first is this Polonaise and the second a Mazurka. The large audience paid heed to all of the works with discernible attention and honoured them with enthusiastic praise. Composers Dvořák and Fibich thanked [them] in person; the conductor Mr. Adolf Čech, who deserves sincere recognition for conscientiously rehearsing the pieces with the orchestra, gave thanks on behalf of the other [composers] who were absent.

Czech original:
V těchto dnech stihla Prahu koncertní povodeň; český koncertní síně, spolkové místnosti a pod. jsou úplně hudbou zaplaveny, ubohý hudební referent neví si rady, kam by dříve měl jít naslouchati více méně lákavým zvukům, musí býti všude, toť se rozumí, jinak by jej zastihla krutá kletba umělcův i obecnstva, musí celé dny tráviti v koncertech, večery v operách, a když unaven a uštván, hudebními zvuky takřka rozbíti utíká se v klidný kruh své domácnosti, nesmí pomyslíti na odpočinek – kam pak by to vedlo; nyní jej teprvé čeká ta pravá rozkoš: musí se přiblížiti k stolku a psáti o všem co byl na oné trnité pouti viděl a slyšel, musí ještě jednou v duchu požíti každý koncert, každou jednotlivou piecu koncertní – zkrátka, jak vidíte, jest to povolání závidění hodné. Proto máte-li trochu lidského soucitu, jako že máte, prosím, abyste ode mne, sedícího dnes před tak ohromnou haldou koncertních programů, nežádali v tomto přehledu o jednotlivostech, tak obšírný soud, jak bych jej na jisto učinil při menším návalu.

Z celé té řady koncertů první místo přísluší Slovanskému koncertu, jenž byl skutečnou hudební událostí v těchto dnech; našemu Akademickému čtenářskému spolku co pořadateli koncertu toho jak každý rok i letos přísluší všecka čest, že seznamuje obecnstvo pražské s pracemi předních skladatelů českých i jinoslavských. Z novinek, jež tu provedeny byly, každá jest tak významnou, že nestačí k plnému ocenění rámec referátu koncertního; již z předu upozorňujeme, že si ponecháváme pro pozdější dobu slovo o jednotlivých těch novinkách v podrobných rozborech; beztoho příležitost k tomu se brzy naskytne jich uveřejněním. Pro dnešek zmiňujeme se jen o povšechném dojmu, jejž jednotlivé ty nové zjevy z naší literatury hudební na posluchačstvo učinily.

Koncert zahájen byl nejobjemnějším číslom, novou čtyřvětou symfonii do D-dur, od Antonína Dvořáka. Neňt to prvě symfonické dílo našeho po šířem světě proslaveného krajana, k jehož činům vším právem s hrdostí pohlížíme; napalšť Dvořák v prvnější periodě svého vulkanického tvoření již celou řadu v klassickém slohu držených symfoníí, z nichž hlavně ona do F-dur nejlépe se v paměť naši vtiskla tou smělou, geniální koncepcí, a z níž mnohé partie vysoce si ceníme, snad výše, než mnohé z nejnovější této práce baječně plodného, neunavného jeho ducha. Že nová tato symfonie Dvořáкова jest v celé současné literatuře hudební prací neobyčejně vynikající nad jiné zjevy toho druhu, pravdu tu nikdo nebufte popirati, kdož ví, že skladatel v nejkrásnějším rozkvětu své tvůrčí síly sebral všechno své vzácné umění, aby světu dokázal, že umí též vladnouti formami přísnějšími, než jsou ony taneční. Byl již čas, že Dvořák zanechav vše v rozptylování síl v drobnostech, odhodlal se k mohutnému rozmachu v širších formách symfonických a tak leskem novým, nepomíjejícím příjde hudební umění české. Jest to v pravdě dílo rázu eminentně českého, jak již Dvořák konsekventně bohdá vytrval na půdě té, z níž mu obrovská plyne síla, jež strom jeho tvoření neustále krásnějšími plody zdobi. Nejzjevnější
vytryskuje tento český ráz z třetí věty, z rozkošně pracovaného “furianta,” kterýž tu nastupuje formu scherzo Beethovenových symfonii; číslo to též rázem zachvátilo a rozohnilo přečetné posluchačstvo k bouřným projevům pochvaly, i musilo býtí opakováno. První věta vznešeně se pohybuje v přesných formách classických, říne se krásným proudem dokonalé práce thematické, která Dvořáková zdá se již býtí vrozenou, oba základní motivy vynikají ušlechtilostí, největší mistrovství jest složeno v provedení druhé části; střední věta klidné Adagio dýše pravou poesií a nejvíce duší dojímá. Poslední věta nedrží se na stejně výši s předcházejícími: mozaikovité se rozpadá, postrádá jednotného proudu, mimo to vadí nám nemálo trivialis ráz obou hlavních motivů; instrumentace jest však i v ní rovněž znamenitá, samorostlá, jako v ostatních. Celková nálada díla toho jest veselá, bujará; pojmenevaly bychom nejraději dílo to jarní českou symfonii.

Na stejně umělecké výši stojí druhá novinka, symfonická báseň “Vesna” od Zdeňka Fibicha. Obě práce, Dvořáková i Fibichova, z opačných vycházejí polů; prvá jest čistě formální, druha odvozuje své formy z určité představy poetické, přidržuje se volného tvoření, jež pokroku moderní hudby stanoví; Dvořák stojí konservativně na stanovisku čtyřvětí symfonie, jak doba klassikův hudebních jí vytvořila. Fibich jde s těmi, kteří v jednotním, nepřetříštěném proudu spojili hlavní momenty onoho čtyřvětí, a určitě vyslovují náladu, již platí u Smetany, Dvořáka i Fibicha. Cesty mohou být rozličné, jenom když zachovává s některým jednotlivcům svůj vlastní ráz. Jmenovitě obě hudební rituály jednotnímotivální, jimž přidržuje se svého názoru o stavbě hudební k různým jevům ve vyslovení nálad. když je pak za ustavení nálad největší dojem, co se jednotlivostí práce týče, největší dojem činily pastoreální část, znázorněná při spojení obou motivů, pastoreálního i polkového, i poetické upravení zákroku. Ač se Fibichovi poslední dobu lépe než kdy před tím podařilo podat v několika pracích hudební ráz český, přec neváháme přiznati, že v této skladbě ráz nejzjevněji vystupuje a v nejzralější formě. “Vesna” jest nejlepší jeho prací.

Co se nálady týče, tvořilo třetí číslo programu svým temnným rázem úplnou protiporu k předcházejícím veselým, jarním skladbám. Pořadatelé koncertu zavětěli se nám nemálo tím, že zvolili ku provedení starší skladbu mistra Smetany, symfonickou báseň “Richard III,” kterou
Smetana tu po způsobu Lisztově smělými barvami, karakterizuje děsnou povahu královského lotra z proslulé truchlory Shakespearovy. Před lety podal jsem již jednou v “Daliboru” rozbor skladby té; mám jej dosud za správný i dovoluji si jej částečně uvést na tomto vhodném místě bezprostředně po živém provedení. Skladatel nedrží se otrocké exposice básně, již za předmět svůj hudební, neváže se na slovo jednotlivé, nýbrž podává vždy krásně zaokrouhlený celek života hudebního, jejž vzbudila v něm ta která báseň. Vše je krátkými, ostrými a karakteristickými tahy provedeno, nikde nesetkáš se s unavujícím rozváděním a vyžidováním jedné a téže idey jak to starší škola miluje, nýbrž určitými črtami jest tu naznačeno, co nám komponista říci chtěl v ladném rámci volné básně symfonické. V “Richardu” jsou hned první takty, abych tak řekl, setkány se slzi bolných vzdechů a krutých žalob duší oněch ubohých obětí, jež vyhlídl sobě katanský Richardův meč. Vzdušné ty postavy v mlhových obrysech neustále se vynořují těsný uzavírajíce kruh a jednosvorně jako jedními ústy pronášejí neodvratný soud nad bídákem, věštíce mu co výhružné fatum nešťastnou budoucnost, bídné života skončení. Takový dojem činí náhle se vynořující motiv Richardův v basech. Zvláště překvapuje geniální ten nápad, že za průvod motivu Richardovu, jenž ku předu se dere mohutnými kroky, použil skladatel ony zmíněné vzdechy zavražděné, jež stupňují se k vyhružné kletbě, mezi tím co motiv Richardův současně v dolních polohách bezohledně s dřívejší konsekvací se dále vyvinuje. Oba ty souběžné kontury vystoupí ještě v ostřejším světle, když náhle ozve se tu v čarokrásném motifu princip dobra, princip práva a pravdy, aby odvrátil násilníka od cesty zločinné, a tento pohnut city lidstvějšími na okamžik se zaráží; však náhle, jakoby hněval se na slabosť okamžitou, potlačuje násilně každý nával citu šlechtnějšího a žene se za cílem nejvyšším – za korunou královskou: celým orkestrem zahláholí maje státní motiv, Richard stává se pánem koruny. Štěstí jeho netrvá dlouho. Mocnější odpůrce činí oprávněné nároky na korunu jeho – strany se hotoví k boji. Hrůzyplný jest sen ve stanu v onu noc před bojem. Vše kresleno jest pravdivými barvami zdárlé instrumentace; děsná zjevení mizí – celý orkestr uděří krátce jediný akord Richard se probudil z říše děsných snů. Počíná boj. Motiv Richardův klesne, onen lahodný motiv principu dobra zazní u vítězném hlaholu celým orkestrem a žalné motivy obětí Richardových, jimž skladba počíná, objevují se ku konci opět; však změněné zvláštním rytmem a mohutnou instrumentací v motivy jásavé: duším zavražděných se dostalo pomstěni. Jak krásná to forma, jak vše přehledně a určitě provedeno. Jak neohebnou se jeví býti proti této formě staré symfonie!

Appendix 7:

On Wednesday the 19th of this month, the sounds of our Czech music resounded for the first time at the court opera in Vienna. On the occasion of the birthday of the Austrian Empress, Dvořák’s comic opera The Cunning Peasant (Šelma Sedlák) was performed there for the first time. The success that this work earned was very honourable for our famous composer because the small part of the audience that retained the ability to make healthy aesthetic judgments about true beauty was very satisfied with the music. It is no coincidence that The Cunning Peasant was the opera by Dvořák to be performed; it was a pre-meditated plan from the side of the enemy.

The institution is also in possession of Dvořák’s Dimitrij – an opera that is much better in every respect, one that would have celebrated a grand triumph, and en route from Vienna, it would have mounted a victorious path across all of Europe. In order that this might be prevented, a comparatively weaker work was chosen; its unhappy libretto will always stand in the way of the overall impression.

Our readers probably know in part about how Dvořák’s opera fared in Vienna. The vast majority of the Viennese audience and critics lost themselves in the task of trying to destroy and humiliate this work just because it comes from the pen of a Czech. On the one hand, there was wild passion of the blind fanatics against all things Czech; on the other, there was jealousy on the part of the locals over the fact that Vienna is fading more and more to the background in comparison with the artistic production of Prague; both conspired against the premiere of a Czech work at the Viennese court opera, almost in the same way as members of the Jokey Club in Paris had rallied against Wagner’s Tannhäuser in their day.

Thus, Vienna executed Dvořák’s cute opera. It is admittedly true that the music of The Cunning Peasant is more lyrical than dramatic; that it is lacking powerful gradations and effective contrasts; that the plot is terribly simple – if not completely banal, then at least not original. However, a keen and well-intentioned performance would have been capable of hiding some of the flaws and presenting the strong points of the work, of which there are many more, in the best possible light. That this did not happen reflects badly on the directors of the court opera. Instead of entrusting the adorable singing roles to the best voices, of which there are many in the institution, the two most important roles (the Duke and Martin) were given to Mr. Horowitz and Mr. Mayerhofer, who are talented actors, but singers with very small voices. They were not able to do much as singers, and the parts themselves did not allow them to do much as actors. The direction of the opera should have been entrusted to the conductor with the greatest musical sensitivity, preferably to director Jahn, who is always able to compensate for a lack of effective contrast by softly nuancing individual phrases. Instead, the opera was given to conductor Hellmesberger Jr., who treats everything as if it were ballet music. Finally, the national character of the whole work, which also contributes to making it interesting, was carefully taken out of the plot of the opera, even if it could not be taken out of the original music. In the piano-vocal score published by Simrock, Upper Austria is specified as the setting; here in Vienna, no location was given on the programmes and the costumes were completely international. The result of it was that all of the characters became mere puppets, who played their parts in a stereotyped, almost
irritatingly caricatured, manner. That the Czech names Bětuška, Jeník, and Václav were replaced with Regina, Conrad, and Gottfried does not surprise anyone, as it is common. Yet, in his feuilleton for *Neue Freie Presse*, Hanslick, whose position against the Czechs cannot be doubted by anyone, dismisses attempts at localization. He writes as follows: “I think that the original names should have been used. *The Cunning Peasant* is a national Czech opera, a piece of Czech national life, and just as it is impossible to take away this character from Dvořák’s music, people should not attempt to rid the [work of its] external [Czech] elements and to transplant it into a different country. Which German translator would ever think to make the opera *Carmen* more popular by writing on its libretto: the plot takes place in Styria. Such attempts at acclimatization come from a completely crooked perspective. Overtly national pieces need to be performed with all of the characteristics of their land of origin, or not at all. In the field of the arts, we should not play the part of the sensitive or angry Germans in relation to the Czechs, as we do to Russian, Polish, and Hungarian artists. Is the piece good? Does it deserve to be performed over here? That seems to be the only justified question. If the answer is yes, the foreign work ought to retain all of its national originality, and the audience ought to bask in the originality of the Czech peasants without paying heed to all secondary political considerations!”

If only all of them were so impartial. Unfortunately, a large number of fanatical students herded themselves into the theatre so that they would be able to gather myrtle for the performance and whistle its funeral song. Those hooligans were so taken with the idea [of ruining the performance] that they were led out of the house by members of the police after their first attempt. The local critics were not much more benevolent; almost without exception, they poked fun at the Czech novelty, which was received quite coldly by the audience, but nevertheless did not completely fail. Only Hanslick wrote a fair criticism, from which we take the following excerpt:

“This Slavic character emerges without affectation, without artificiality, and is unforced; natural simplicity comes forth with such subtle, yet, in truth, such powerful enchantment, which is part of this composer’s talent. How rare is this dowry nowadays! Whether Dvořák will be loyal to it and persevere – after great success in Germany and England took him out of humble obscurity and made him famous – remains to be seen; in *The Cunning Peasant*, Dvořák is completely naïve. He takes up the [composer’s] pen with joy, and [earnestly] from his heart, he writes cheerful music for cheerful scenes, without particularly caring if one melody is distinguished [and] another sounds new. He does not limit himself as far as the development of interesting motives is concerned; and armed against every false pathos, he preserves the individuality of his style. On this medium level of cheerfulness, Dvořák’s music moves freely, without force, often very beautifully. Not all [parts] have the same worth; many scenes, especially funny ones, sound quite ordinary. In the expression of the comic – for [the purpose of] which music has only limited resources – Dvořák does not steer clear of stereotypes, happily repeating certain gestures from Mozart’s buffo idiom. After such second-rate sections, we are always pleasantly surprised by original ideas and soft characteristics. Dvořák’s musical gifts can be seen in a much better light in this opera than his particular dramatic talent! Among the elements that are missing are clear contrasts, effective distribution of light and dark, and dominating points of climax. Many of the sections that are charming in and of themselves are not very effective because they do not form enough of a contrast with other sections. Namely, at the end of the work, when everything is drawing to a close, [the drama] is stalled by long [passages of] music. No true musical
personality objects to the repetition of text, for it is necessary to complete the impression and fill out the musical forms. However, such excessive text repetition as in the first buffo duet, in Martin’s opening aria, in the final ensemble, etc. tests our patience too much. Nowhere do we find the good musician to be missing, but [we] often [are lacking] the pratical theatre composer. Is not the D minor movement of the ballet in the second act more of a symphonic scherzo than opera dance music? Dvořák is a skilful contrapuntalist and subtle harmonist; he does not write a learned art work, but his predilection for clever combinations and surprising modulations breaks forth everywhere. Already in the overture, one can notice folk-like, naive melodies developed artistically through contrapuntal work, and [one may] delight in the healthy, beautiful orchestral sounds. It is only the frequent repetitions of figures (the so-called Rosalien) that might be criticized in this overture as in many other instrumental works by Dvořák; further, in the whole opera, [we object to] the prominence of symmetrical rhythms always in two- or four-bar phrases. The inevitable result is monotony, which marred the overall impression that we take away from this work. However, [the impression] is all the more favourable when we remember the individual parts of the opera. How well-rounded and beautifully sonorous is the first quartet in B major, how sincere the female chorus “Kolik růží,” how celebratory the reception of the nobility. The tender aria of the Duke could hardly be sung by someone without a soothingly melodious voice; in Dresden, the baritone Buls aroused a storm of applause with it. An exemplary piece is the quartet “Tam v onom stinném loubí,” which becomes a trio through the addition of an alto voice. I would scarcely be able to name a trio in the new opera repertoire that could be compared with this one. Through tender [and] natural expression of painful feelings, Bětuška’s (Regina’s) small aria in the second act stands out, and still more beautiful, even if it is too developed, is the parting duet of both lovers in the second act. The May celebration, where singing and dance unite in national sounds, brings forth folk-like freshness. We could still continue enumerating the beautiful details, especially ones that are not noticeable on first hearing; however, even the longest list [of such beautiful details] would have to be finished off with the words “too bad” because the whole is lacking dramatic strength, and with this operatic experiment, the highly talented composer did not reach the same height that he has reached in other realms: in instrumental music.” End of quotation from Hanslick’s review.

I must add “too bad” that The Cunning Peasant suffered in Vienna! After two performances, this under-appreciated and unhappily performed opera was put away ad acta! If only it had been spared its two-day life. As if it was meant as a mockery, the journalists are now announcing that Nessler’s Der Trompeter von Säkkingen will be performed in a beautiful arrangement with twice as many performers; this piece is now being prepared for the court opera and it certainly has all of the flaws of Dvořák’s opera, without any of the qualities. However, Nessler is a German and Dvořák a Czech!

Maybe, next time, I will add some excerpts from journal articles that were written about the Czech peasant, who – cunningly – wanted to get to Vienna and remain Czech there. But first I have to ascertain if it is worth it…

It is truly a pity when a journalist must catch up on events that happened several months ago, and only the benevolent kindness of the reader – on which I rely – can make up for this inordinately long period [of waiting]. Firstly, I would still like to write a few words about the sad end to which Dvořák’s The Cunning Peasant came at the court opera over here so that I might show
how very diligently the critics of the largest journals over here fulfill their responsibilities. Every sensible person is certainly of the opinion that the one who endeavours to compare the translation or unusual interpretation [of a work] with its original, must actually know the original. The Viennese reviewers have rather a different perspective! No one can expect them to know the Czech language or to refrain from passing judgements over the libretto because of this. Most of these men assumed that the German text in Simrock’s piano-vocal score was a faithful translation of the Czech original and only considered the version of the text for the Vienna opera to be different from the original libretto. For example, the reviewer for the *Presse* wrote: “It was an inappropriate change on the part of the German, who arranged the text, that the Baron and Baroness from the Czech original were promoted to the status of Duke and Duchess.” It is a mystery, why one translator would change the original Duke to Baron and the other [would change it] to Count. The following was printed in the *Wiener allgemeine Zeitung*: “the original cunningly chooses as its setting Cmund in Upper Austria.” The smart man considers it to be cunning, without even noticing that Cmund in Lower Austria was changed to Cmund in Upper Austria, not to mention the fact that the plot of the original Czech text is set in Domažlice. The reviewer for the journal *Morgenpost* even dared to make the following reflection: “If Mr. Wesely” – the reviewer consistently avoids the orthography “Veselý” – “sets the story in Lower Austria and Dvořák sets the music in the Czech lands, the director ought to have taken his cues from the composer because it is easier to change the costumes than the music.” The critic of the *Deutsche Zeitung* writes that “the peasants sing as if they were Romeo and Juliet.” And we thought that *The Cunning Peasant* was written entirely in a national style. Or should we be proud that the way in which our people sing deserves to be compared to Romeo and Juliet? The reviewer for the *Morgenpost* was the most honest, placing in the midst of his dismissal of *The Cunning Peasant* a thinly-veiled commercial for his countrymen Goldmark and Brül, whose novelties have never been performed and are thus completely unknown, and of which he writes nonetheless that they “will certainly fare better.” Excellent too were the musings of the imported [critic] Mr. Dömpke in the *Wiener Allgem. Zeitung*, who ends his tirades about the fall of German opera with the words: “When will the saviour of this country come?” One is truly at a loss as to what he should marvel at more, the naïveté that causes him to mention the Czech [opera] *The Cunning Peasant* in connection with German opera or the ingratitude that he exhibits toward one of the greatest men of his nation, if he still calls out for a “saviour of German opera” after German music drama was raised to unprecedented heights by Richard Wagner. In addition to these, there are Viennese reviewers, who have inaccurate, unjustified, and mean opinions about *The Cunning Peasant* without even a kernel of praise for the value of Dvořák’s music. I will not include any excerpts from their writings.

Czech original:
Ve středu dne 19. t. m. zazněly poprvé v c. k. dvorní opeře vídeňské zvuky české naší hudby. U příležitosti narozenin J. V. císařovny rakouské provedena byla tamtéž toho dne poprvé Dvořáková komická opera „Šelma Sedlák.” Úspěch jakého dílo toho docílilo, byl pro slovutného našeho skladatele v principu velice čestný, neb ona malá část obecenstva, která zdravý estetický úsudek pro pravou krásu si zachovala, byla s hudbou jeho velice spokojena. Že od Dvořáka právě „Šelma Sedlák” ve vídeňské opeře poprvé se dával, není žádnou náhodou, nýbrž dobře vypočítaným plánem jistě nám nepřátelské strany. Dvořák má u ústavu teho zadaného také svého „Dimitrije,” operu to v každé příčině daleko dokonalejší, která by byla nesmírný slavila
triumf a nastoupila z Vídně vítěznou cestu po celé Evropě. Aby právě tomu se zabránilo, sáhlo se k práci poměrně mnohem slabší, u níž již samo nešťastné libretto vždy celkovému dojmu bude na závadu.

Jak se Dvořákovi opeče ve Vídni vedlo, znají čtenářové naši z části již z listů denních. Převeliká většina vídeňského obecenstva i kritiky tak dalece se zapomněla, že za úkol si vystavila dílo toto zničití a zostuditi, jen proto, že pochází z péra českého. Na jedné straně byla to šílená vášeň slepých fanatiků proti všemu českému, na druhé sžíravá závisť vzdělanějších, že Vídeň před uměleckou produktivitou Prahy vždy víc a více do pozadí ustupuje; oboji spikli se proti premiéře českého díla ve vídeňské dvorní opeře skoro tak jako svého času členové Yokey-klubu v Paříži proti Wagnerovou „Tannhäuserovu.”

Ano, kdyby všichni tak nestranně soudili. Však do divadla nahrnulo se množství fanoušků operních a masešek odstraněnou pohraničního sázení. Co na tom uličníkům těm záleželo, že odvedení byli hned při prvním pokusu policejními zřízení? O nic lépe nezachovali se ani zastupcové veřejného kritiky, kteří téměř bez výminky posměch ší roli z české novinky, která sice obecně dost chladně byla přijata, ale pře nekterak u něho neopradila. Jediný Hanslik napsal kritiku v pravdě věcnou, z níž ještě následující úryvky vyjímáme:

“Slovenský charakter hudby Dvořákovy vystupuje bez affektace, bez všeho umělkování a nenuceně: přirozená prostota sluje zdánlivě tak nepatrně, v pravdě však tak mocně kouzlo, které vží v talentu tohoto skladatele. Jak vzácně je za našich dnů takové věno! Bude-li mu Dvořák věrným a jestli i ono jemu se uchovalo, co velké úspěchy v Německu a Anglii jej ze skromného šera slavným učinily, jest otázka nerozhodnutá; v “Šelmu Sedlákovi” jest Dvořák ještě vcelou jiný. S radostí a od srdce chápe se péra, píše k veselým scénám veselou hudbu, nestaraje se příliš, zda jedna melodie zvlášť distinguovala, jiná zase nově zní. On neklade si žádných mezí, kde interesantní motiv k širokému rozvězení jej vybízí, nesnaží se nikde stupňovati hudbu nad vnitřní obsah osoby neb situaci a obrněn proti každému nepravému páthu, zachovává všude jednotu slohu. Na tomto prostředním nivelu veselosti jakož i něžnosti pohybuje se Dvořáková hudba zcela nenuceně, volně, často velmi půvabně. Není ovšem všechno ceny stejně; mnohé výjevy, zvláště veselé, znějí ponekud všechnou. Ve výrazu komickém – k němuž má hudba ovšem jen omezených prostorů jest Dvořák ponekud stereotypní a opakuje také různé obraty Mozartovských buffových úloh. Po takových partiích lacinou ovšem vynalezených překvapují nás ale vždy zase velmi mile originální nápady a jemně rysy. Dvořákovu hudební nadání jeví se v opěře této v mnohem přínávějším světle než jeho speciální talent dramatický! Scházejí se rozdílné kontrasty, účinek rozdělení světla a stínů a dominující body kulminace. Mnohá sama o sobě velice roztomila část zůstává bez předivného účinku, poněvadž se od svého okolí dost neodráží. Jmenovitě k závěru opery, kde všechno ku konci spěje, jest tento dlouhou hudbou nad míru zdržován. Žádná v pravdě hudební povaha nezavrhuje ve zpěvohře opakování slov, poněvadž jest nezbytné k vyznění dojmů i vyplnění hudebních forem. Však slovní opakování tak přílišně jako v prvém buffo-duettě, ve vstupní písni Martinově, posledním ensambli a j. hřeší příliš na naší trpělivosti. Dobrýho hudebníka nepohřešuji nikdy, ovšem ale často praktického divadelního skladatele. Zdaž není balletní D-moll věta v 2. jednání více scherzem v symfonii než zpěvoherní hudbou taneční. Dvořák jest obratný kontrapunktista a jemný harmonik; on nevychloubá se učenými kousky, však jeho náklonnost k důmyslné kombinace a překvapující modulaci prozrazuje se všude. Jíž v ouvertu pozorovat je možno šťastné spojení protonárodně naivistních melodii s umělecky provedenou prácí kontrapunktickou a radovat se možno ze zdravých, krásných orchestrálních zvuků. Jen příliš časté opakování téže figury (tak zvané rosalie) možno tuto ouvertu, jakož i některým jiným instrumentálním dílům Dvořákovým vytkat, dále velikou převahu dvoudílného rázu a přesně symmetrickou rhytmiku vždy 2 a 4 taktů. Nutným následkem toho jest monotonie, od níž nemůžeme si zachrániti celkový dojem, jejž o díle tomto domů si odnášíme. Tim přínávější jest však vzpomínka na jednotlivé části zpěvohry. Jak zaokrouhlené a krásnozvukové jest hned první kvartetto z H-dur, jak srdečný sbor děvčat “Kolik růží,” jak slavnostní přijetí pánovo. Něžná arií knížecí těžko jen postrádati může lahodného hlasu; v Drážďanech (dle zprávy L. Hartmannovy) vzbudil ji barytonista Bubs bouři potlesku. Kabinetní hudební kousek jest duetto: “Tam v onom stinném loubí,” jež je přístoupenim altového hlasu v tercetto rozšířuje. Nedovedl bych z novější operní literatury...
veselého genru uvěstí trojzpěv, který by se s tímto měřit mohl. Jemným, přirozeným výrazem
bolných citů vyniká malá arie Bětuščina (Reginina) a ještě více krásný, jenže příliš rozvedený
dvojzpěv při loučení se obou milenců v 2. jednání. Májová slavnost, v které zpívá a tanec v
národních zvucích se spojuje, zní s protonárodní živostí. Mohli bychom ještě ale dále
vypočítávat krásné jednotlivosti, zvláště takové, které při prvním poslechnutí ještě mizí, leč i
sebe delší výpočet ten musíme uzavřít slovem “bohužel,” poněvadž celku schází dramatická síla
a velenadaný skladatel tímto operním pokusem nevyšinul se až k oné výši, ku které na jiném
poli, v hudbě jen instrumentální, dospěl.” Až potud Hanslik.

I já musím ještě připojiti “bohužel,” že “Šelma Sedlák” ve Vídni dotrpěl! Po dvou představeních
byla tato zneznámaná a nešťastně provedená opera uložena ad acta! Kéž by se ji byl i ten
dvoudenní život ušetřil. Jako k posměchu o hlašují nyní zdejší žurnály, že skvostně vypraven a
dvojnásobně obsazen bude Nesslerův “Trubáč Säkkinsky,” který nyní pro dvorní operu se
připravuje a který má jistě všechny vady Dvořákovy zpěvohry, žádnou ale z její předností. Inu
ovšem Nessler je Němec a Dvořák Čech!

Možná, že podám přišťě ještě některé hlasy časopisecké o českém sedlákovi, který – šelma –
chtěl až do Vídně se dostati a tamtéž českým zůstati. Ale musím je dříve všechny prohlédnout,
stojí-li také za to…

Jest to vskutku politování hodný případ, když pero zpravodajovo doháněti má události již
několik měsíců staré, a jen dobrotvá laskavost čtenářova – na kterou i já spoléhati musím –
může nepoměr tento poněkud vysmatrati. První, o čem dnes zmíniti se chci, jest ještě několik slov
o smutném konci Dvořáka “Šelmy Sedláka” ve zdejší dvorní opeře, bych ukázal s jakou
svědomitostí a důkladností páni kritikové největších zdejších žurnálů své povinnosti plní. Každý
rozumný člověk jest zajisté toho náhledu, že ten, kdo srovnávati má překlad neb zvláštní
spracování s originálem, tento originál také znáti musí. U vídeňských pp. recensentů jest tomu
ale docela jinak! Vždyť přece nemůže od nich nikdo žádati, by snad také český jazyk znali aneb
pro tuto malíčkoť se svého úsudku o originálu libretta vzdali. Většině těchto pánů přihodil se
tedy ten lapsus, že německý text v Simrockově vydání klavírního výtahu za zcela věrný překlad
českého originálu měli a že tedy jen nově upravený text pro vídeňskou operu za spracování od
původního libretta poněkud odchylně vyhlašovali. Tak na př. psal referent “Presse:” “Niceméně
bylo to od německého upravovatele textu neprozřetelné, že barona a baronku českého originálu
do hraběcího stavu povýšil.” Vlastně ale jest to záhadou, proč jeden překladatel učinil z
původního libretta ponekud odchylně vyhlašovali. Tak na př. psal referent “Presse:” “Niceméně
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původního knížete barona a druhý zase hraběte. Ve “Wiener allgemeine Zeitung” stálo zase:
“Originál klade místo děje zůmyslně do Cmundu v Horních Rakousích.” Chytrý pán vidí tu tedy
zůmyslnost aniž pozoruje, že geografický, kotrmelcem překladatelovým změnění
dolnorakouský Cmund ve Cmund hornorakouský, nehledíc ani k tomu, že děj původního
českého textu jedná v Domažlicích.

Referent časopisu “Morgenpost” odvázil se dokonce k následující reflexi: “Jestliže p. Wesely –
referent vyhýbá se vůlle orthografií “Vesely” – “děj do Dolních Rakous, p. Dvořák ale hudbu do
Čech klade, měl režisér zajisté skládatel následovati, poněvadž kostýmy snadněji se měnit jí
než hudba.” Kritik listu “Deutsche Zeitung” shledal zase, že “sedlák i selka zpívají jako Romeo a
Julie.” A my dosud za to měli, že “Šelma Sedlák” psan jest zcela v slohu protonárodním. Či
máme snad tím hrdi být, že způsob, kterým lid nás péje, i za příměřený pro Romeo a Julii se
uznává? Nejupřímněji založil se vzpomenutý již referent čas. “Morgenpost,” který do prostřed
 tendency odsouzení ubohého “Šelmy Sedláka” vložil nemístnou reklamu pro své krajany
Goldmarka a Brüla, o jichž novinkách, které dosud nikde nebyly provedeny a tedy úplně jsou
neznámé, praví, že “lépe zajisté se osvědčí.” Znamení provedla se také úvaha z Královce
nezapomenutelnou zkušeností o úpadku německé opery končí slovy: “Kdy přijde spasitel této
země?” Člověk je tu opravdu v rozpáče, čemu více diviti se má, zda naivnosti, která ubohého
českého “Šelmu Sedláka” v souvislosti uvádí s německou operou, či nevděčnosti oproti jednomu
z největších mužů svého národa, když v době, kdy německé hudební drama, Richardem
Wagnerem k netušené dosud výši bylo povzeno, ještě po “spasiteli německé opery” se volá.
Za těchto vesměs nesprávných, nespravedlivých i zlomyslných náhledů vídeňských referentů o
“Šelmu Sedlákov” nemají pro nás ovšem ani jednotlivá ta zrnečka chvály pro hudbu
Dvořákovu nijaké vážné ceny. Z důvodu toho jich zde také ani neuvádím…
I started with these broad ideas so that I might hint briefly at the two ways in which it is appropriate to look at the great work of Dvořák. The following discussion will focus primarily on the role that Dvořák played in the development of our dramatic music during the last three decades, especially in relation to the progressive direction instituted by Smetana. I will thus be dealing mainly with the second of the two perspectives outlined. However, the first of these, which points to Dvořák’s unique artistic personality – a personality that enabled him to achieve international recognition and to exert a palpable influence on the younger generation of Czech composers – cannot be ignored altogether; indeed, keeping this in mind will help us on more than one occasion to understand the peculiar magic of Dvořák’s music, when discussing certain interesting and important phenomena in the history of our music.

Let us note right away that the chief characteristic of Dvořák’s music is its lively, fresh temperament, capable of adjusting to all moods, while always preserving its own distinct character. This spirit is an asset to Dvořák’s art – even in the most serious domains, such as symphonic and chamber music – in comparison with other contemporary composers; indeed, I do not hesitate to acknowledge that in this regard I give preference to Dvořák even over the greatest symphonist of Dvořák’s contemporaries: Brahms, who, next to Beethoven and Schubert, was the foremost model for our master, as is well known.

[Dvořák’s music not only has] a highly individual temperament, but also one that is Czech; it may be appropriate to see in him a true manifestation of a person/artist taken directly from our people. Outward influences include Smetana, through whom the Czechness of our music was deepened and sharply demarcated; as a secondary influence, we might cite Slavic music, which found ready and fertile soil in Dvořák’s simple, peasant soul.

When this personal and national character of Dvořák’s music came across not only in his instrumental compositions, but also in his operas, he attracted attention and general interest, such that discussions of other aspects of his dramatic creation faded into the background. In many cases, it was difficult to identify and even more difficult to articulate his true relationship to Smetana. Today the situation is more favourable; differences between the newest operas and the oldest ones urge one to forge comparisons, without giving heed to the commonalities of these operas. It is possible to trace a certain development in Dvořák’s operatic works from a modern, dramatic perspective; at the same time, I am encouraged to do so from the perspective of symphonic music, since, during the period between The Jacobin (Jakobín) and Kate and the Devil (Čert a Káča), Dvořák underwent a similar turning point [in the realm of orchestral music] as in the realm of opera.

It is well known that whenever anyone writes about Dvořák, distinct periods of dramatic creation are identified. During his period of stormy fermentation during the 1860s and early 1870s,
Richard Wagner captured Dvořák’s imagination. The original version of *The King and the Charcoal Burner* (*Král a Uhlíř*, 1873), which was never performed, bears witness to this, as does *Vanda* (1876) to a certain extent. The influence of Smetana can be seen in the second version of *The King and the Charcoal Burner* (1874), which was almost entirely newly-composed and even more in *The Stubborn Lovers* (*Tvrdé Palice*), composed immediately after the former opera, but performed seven years later in 1881; this influence [of Smetana] then reached its peak in *The Cunning Peasant* (1878). It was after [this opera] that Dvořák reached a fundamental turning point, straying away both from Wagner and Smetana and turning toward the Meyerbeerian grand opera in his *Dimitrij* (1882); he applied similar principles to comic opera in his *The Jacobin* (1889) – a comic opera of an entirely different kind than his three earlier works in the genre. During a break that lasted several years, Dvořák attempted to revise *Dimitrij* in order to comply, at least to a certain extent, with the requirements of the modern dramatic style, and he clearly aligned himself with the style in 1899 in *Kate and the Devil*, staying true to it in *Rusalka* (1901) as well.

It cannot be denied that this picture of Dvořák’s activities corresponds to a true progression, at least from an outward, pragmatic perspective. We cannot stop there, however, if we want to carve out a place in the history of our music not only for Dvořák in general, but for each stage in his development. The act of lining up and categorizing Dvořák’s operas forces us to pose an interesting question. [We might ask] wherein Dvořák’s Wagnerism lay and wherein the influence of Smetana; [this question] becomes even more important for us, if we remember that the lively polemics of the 1870s made the meaning of these directions the subject of discussions and disagreements in the widest of circles. Furthermore we ask: how could Dvořák break free from these influences so quickly in his *Dimitrij*? And to be thorough, we must add: what caused Dvořák’s sudden shift during the 1890s, which was so surprising? And finally: how does the Wagnerism, with which Dvořák started his career as an opera composer thirty years ago, relate to that, which we call progress in the modern sense within his latest two operas? It is noteworthy that even when it comes to evaluating Dvořák – a composer, whose name conservative circles invoked as proof that we need not follow the example of Wagner and that Smetana’s efforts in the dramatic realm should be passed off as nothing more than a penitent return to “good” old operatic music – almost all of our discussions are dependent on an understanding of his relationship to Wagner on the one hand and Smetana on the other.

*The King and the Charcoal Burner* is unfamiliar to me in its original form. The excerpts that were made public in c. 1873, along with the overture, are insufficient for an evaluation of the whole work in terms of its dramatic content. Based on reports of the work’s fate at its rehearsal, which has become common knowledge, one thing is obvious (and both our musical situation at that time as well as Dvořák’s activities in the realm of instrumental music lend support to this). The composer of *The King and the Charcoal Burner* was not even a Wagnerian in the sense that Smetana was. The violist of the Provisional Theatre certainly knew Wagner’s older operas, perhaps even *Die Meistersinger*, when he was working on his score, but it was not granted to him that he should be able to penetrate the essence of Wagner’s ideas, the foremost of which is his revolutionary opinion on the relationship between text and music. For this reason, Smetana moved gently toward the ideal of the music drama with a sure step, clearly conscious of his end goal, whereas Dvořák, after fewer than ten years, found himself at a point that could not be less Wagnerian in his *Dimitrij*. Such a quick renunciation of principles once fully understood and
taken as one’s own would be highly unlikely and perhaps even impossible in such a serious and true artist as Dvořák always was. Clearly, the composer of *The King and the Charcoal Burner* had not embraced these principles. All that was written about Wagner over here in those days and what he could find out from the German literature did not leave its imprint on his aesthetic views, but only confirmed what his own musical instinct had been telling him all along: that Wagner is not a harmful evildoer in the realm of true art, as many of his antagonists had claimed, but rather a great composer, from whom one is able and would do well to learn. And this was enough to classify him among the Wagnerians at a time when the musical world was divided into two camps, standing sharply against each other, one of them denying Wagner all of his higher artistic qualities.

The great German reformer impacted Dvořák from the purely musical perspective of his works, and this was not only by means of the features with which he enriched music or at least placed it into the foreground, but rather through his polyphonic writing for the symphony orchestra. It is understandable that at that time when Dvořák, the born symphonist, was attempting the highest tasks in the realm of absolute music, Wagner’s opera orchestra was infinitely more intriguing to him than the orchestral accompaniments of many operas that were in the repertory – accompaniments that were often homophonic, conforming artistically [to the vocal parts]. In those days, our musical conservatives and reactionaries focused their attacks most readily on the lush polyphony, bold harmonies, and thick orchestration of modern music, which they called unclear, artificial, heavy, and even dull; we, then, commend the artistically serious efforts and determination of the composer of *The King and the Charcoal Burner*, who did not allow himself to be confused by such attacks and objections.

It was the abundant richness and particularly the polyphony of this score that became a stumbling block, when a performance of it was being prepared in the spring of 1874. In spite of the good intentions of the performers, such difficulties were encountered during rehearsals that Dvořák preferred to take his opera back, so that he might replace it within a few months with an almost entirely new composition based on the same text. There can be no doubt that during this period of storminess and fermentation of his talent, untamed by experience, the composer overshot in many places, and especially in the ensembles, he made such demands on the performers that these could not possibly be fulfilled. At the same time, I cannot help but ask whether everything that seemed unperformable to them back then would be considered so today. Let us not forget that this was before the first performance of *Libuše*, before *The Bride of Messina* (*Nevěsta Messinská*), before *Lohengrin* was brought to the National Theatre, and before the revival of *Dalibor*. Today various aspects of Dvořák’s score would be looked upon in a different light than back then, which is not to say that the decision to put away the first version of *The King and the Charcoal Burner* was unjustified. One thing is for sure: Dvořák dared to do something out of the ordinary in the realm of the purely musical, when he started writing operas.

The newly-composed opera *The King and the Charcoal*, premiered on November 24, 1874, conformed to practical, artistic demands in its more simple style. At the same time, the influence of Smetana is palpable. This [influence] came into the foreground even more clearly in *The Stubborn Lovers* and *The Cunning Peasant*. These three comic operas together form an independent group, representing a new phase in Dvořák’s dramatic creation. It was not to be any different with Smetana than it had been with Wagner. The creator of the Czech opera impacted
his younger colleague first and foremost from the purely musical perspective of his works. The core of Smetana’s efforts, which sought to uplift our dramatic music to the general artistic ideals of Wagner, remained secondary; however, in terms of melody and rhythm, the influence of the composer of *The Bartered Bride* (*Prodaná Nevěsta*) is undeniable, particularly in the folk-like, specifically Czech character of the music (in the case of *The Cunning Peasant*, it is possible to add *The Kiss* [as an influence]).

In terms of the relationship between music and text, [Dvořák’s works] do not go beyond the limits of older operas. Under our circumstances, it could be taken as gratifying progress that in the operas discussed here, there was a growing concern for declamation, which has more to do with the emphasis of the sentence than the correct sound of each word, such that the dramatic dialogue can come to life and climax. The domination of creative musical imagination over the weak content of the verses led to the repetition of words, even in cases when such a practice could not be justified either by comic effect or lyric intent. Yet, light conversation was aptly conveyed and there was a fresh comedic tone everywhere where the text demanded it. Drastic comedy remains consistently on the level of Dvořák’s noble music, but its dramatic impact often tempts actors to lean towards caricature, which lies on the border between comedy and the burlesque. Those who know the librettos of these three operas will understand this kind of criticism does not really apply to the composer, but rather to the position into which he was put by librettos of the kind just described.

During the period between *The Stubborn Lovers* and *The Cunning Peasant* came the tragic opera *Vanda*. It belongs in this time period, not only chronologically, but also in terms of direction. It is understandable that Smetana’s example did not have such an effect [on Dvořák] as [it had] in his operas where the plot was taken from the lives of peasants. After all, during the 1870s, when Smetana was talked of, attention was drawn almost exclusively to the success of his comic operas. Few people were thinking about *The Brandenburgers* (*Braniboři v Čechách*) and *Dalibor*, and the rare attempts to place them back into the repertoire failed. For this reason, when Dvořák was writing this work [*Vanda*], he found himself in the environment of Wagner’s older works, albeit with greater success than when writing the first version of *The King and the Charcoal Burner*. He was now more mature and experienced. *Vanda* has so many interesting and compelling traits and it is so important to an understanding of Dvořák’s development in the dramatic realm that its disappearance from the repertoire is unfortunate as is its omission from the so-called Dvořák cycle of 1901.

All that has been and will be said about the various influences that shaped Dvořák’s dramatic creation must always be supplemented with the acknowledgement that his musical profile was not overshadowed by them. He looked in various directions when seeking a path toward his dramatic successes; in some cases, he found the right footsteps to follow and in others, these footsteps disappeared, but one element for which he never had to search and could never lose was the individual character of his music, the rich ever-improving sound palette with which he was able to clothe even the poorest of texts. From a purely musical perspective, progress can be seen in each of Dvořák’s operas, regardless of changing stylistic principles. His development as an absolute musician was direct and consistent; the tasks that he set about as a dramatist were on many occasions dictated by outside factors, not the least of which was the difficulty and fortuitousness of acquiring librettos over here at that time.
The aforementioned musical progress could be seen even in a work that strayed the furthest from Dvořák’s first point of departure and his current position.

The impending opening of the National Theatre inspired Dvořák to new activity in the dramatic realm. The situation at that time was unusual. There was no overt opposition to Smetana; however, in circles, where *The Bartered Bride* had once been fully appreciated, but the ‘Wagnerian’ direction of his serious operas censured, such prejudices had not disappeared. On the contrary, the forthcoming performance of *Libuše*, which was already known for its progressive style, added fuel to the fire. The significance of *Libuše* and its undoubted influence on our future dramatic music could not be undone; for this reason, those circles could not do anything but wish that the ‘Wagnerism,’ which in *Libuše* had been allowed to penetrate into Czech art, might be counterbalanced by a work of great musical worth, aligning itself with the old traditions of grand opera, which stood the test of time from the Classicists to Meyerbeer and his followers. Such a work was to have, if not a specifically Czech character, then a Slavic one.

It was likely in this kind of atmosphere that the libretto of *Dimitrij* was created, with the intention that it should be offered to Dvořák, a composer who was without a doubt most qualified for such a task. That Dvořák accepted this offer and set to work with the greatest of ardour mainly had to do with the fact that Marie Červinková-Riegrová’s libretto was in its own way truly good and promising, especially in comparison with the librettos that Dvořák had hitherto used and Czech librettos in general in those days; at the same time, he certainly wanted to be ushered into the National Theatre with a new serious opera that would be rich both in terms of its music and scenery, and thus the text seemed to fit these demands. However, when the question of the style of the work came up, Dvořák found himself at a crossroads. Should he continue on the path inaugurated by *Vanda*, taking him – albeit in his own individual way – down a path toward the modern music drama, as Smetana had done and later Fibich? Or should he return to grand opera of the older, pre-Wagnerian kind? The decision in favour of the second direction was not necessarily a manifestation of his absolute-music inclination, but he was acting under the guidance of other influences.

If we open up Czech journals from the years 1873 to 1875, we can see that Dvořák’s mastery was acknowledged even then and that he was placed amid the ranks of our foremost composers. But all of this glory, all of the artistic successes of his works did not allow him the opportunity to devote himself fully and solely to his compositional activities. Only when Hanslick and Brahms became acquainted with him, when with their help he found a publisher and thus a way to the wider world did his dream start to come true. There can be no doubt that both of these men, with their intervention, performed a great service not only for Dvořák himself, but for Czech musical art in general. Another question altogether is whether the influence that their conservative principles exerted on Dvořák and a large part of our audience was in fact profitable. Today everyone acknowledges that in the dramatic realm Hanslick’s sharply anti-Wagnerian position was a welcome support for all those, who for whatever reason wanted to frustrate Smetana’s progressive efforts, applying to the declamatory style of opera on the one hand and to program music in the form of the symphonic poem on the other, such that it became a serious obstacle to the free development of our opera. However, twenty years ago, there were many, who, on the contrary, saw one saving grace to the spreading of Hanslick’s ideas, overthrowing all of our efforts. Dvořák, who had unlimited trust in Hanslick and was thus willing to see the progressive
tendencies of Wagner and Liszt as a threat to his own musical interests, got himself inadvertently, and in contradiction to the views he had held previously, into a position that gave strength and courage to the adversaries of Smetana’s efforts.

If Hanslick articulated, right after the premiere of *Dimitrij*, (which took place at the New Czech Theatre after the fire at the National Theatre, even though it had been staged to take place in the new building), that there are no signs of Wagner in it, the composer certainly took that as a compliment. And *Dimitrij* truly did stand in the realm of the historical grand opera with elaborate ensembles; the Tzar’s glorious entrance; choruses of Poles and Russians facing each other, according to the dramatic conflict and national characteristics of each group; a huge court celebration with dancing and drinking songs in coloratura; and not without grave stones and conspiracies. In a word, [the opera] was guided to this point by the libretto. As always Dvořák was sincere even here with his creation and provided the best product that he could, considering [his options]. It was just those graces of Dvořák’s music, coming out beautifully adorned, that ensured no small success for *Dimitrij*; the virtues of the music were acknowledged even by those who could not see the dramatic style as a step forward, but rather a move backward from the path that had been carved by the Czech opera *Libuše*. Not that there weren’t any effective dramatic moments at all; such effects were permitted, even encouraged by the old opera. Yet, in this score, there is a certain predominance given to the music over the drama, especially in the fact that the structure – the layout, rise, climax, and fall – is determined more by the interest of the music than by the course and arrangement of the plot; it is written entirely with the following tenet in mind: opera is music first and drama second.

Of all of the works in our operatic repertoire that had similar tendencies, nothing had such significance as *Dimitrij*. The more that this work had an effect with its undeniable musical worth, the more precariously it could set the precedent for future works, if our big symphonist were to continue consistently and heedlessly down this path. This did not happen. Though the next opera *The Jacobin*, based on the text of the same librettist, did not represent any kind of fundamental shift, its whole character led to a meticulous treatment of all of the details of its genre, which showed Dvořák’s art from a whole new perspective; in this way, *The Jacobin* served as a kind of foil to *Dimitrij* using different material, but not a continuation or culmination of his artistic tendencies toward grand opera. Dvořák’s outlook on the relationship between music and drama stayed essentially the same [in *The Jacobin*] as it had been in *Dimitrij*.

When looking at Dvořák’s operas chronologically, we find a ten-year gap after *The Jacobin*. It is, however, not a ten-year break for Dvořák in his dramatic works; on the contrary – though it may sound paradoxical – it was at this time that Dvořák did something, from which we must gather that he was prepared to change his opinions on dramatic music. He took a good look at *Dimitrij*, the result of which Emanuel Chvála called “bowing the knee to Wagner.”

How can we explain this surprising turn of events, which is nothing more and nothing less than admitting that the path undertaken with *Dimitrij* did not lead the composer to such a satisfactory, unequivocal goal as he had imagined? Among other things, he took care to give the declamatory style a more prominent place by replacing absolute melodies with declamation and by transporting several melodic and rhythmic motives from the stage to the orchestra. It is clear that such changes cannot transform an old school grand opera into music drama in the true modern
sense of the word. In order to do that, one would have to change the entire outline of the work, that is its libretto, and consequently start composing the whole work again. But who would advise one to do this? One cannot resist posing the question whether the time and effort that Dvořák devoted to the revision, sometimes very substantial revision, of his opera scores might not have been better spent on an entirely new work. No matter how one chooses to answer this question – the changes that he made to Dimitrij, presumably during his stay in America, were symptomatically valuable in the historical development of our dramatic music without reference to whether and to what extent the operas themselves benefited from this.

That it was in his operas, and not in his instrumental compositions, that Dvořák often found reason to embark upon new, sometimes multiple, adjustments and changes, testifies first and foremost to the fact that our master, as a born symphonist, had to find his true path in the realm of dramatic music only after much experimentation; in the realm of instrumental music, the natural development of his genius safely showed him the way. On the other hand, this serves as valuable proof of the earnestness and sincerity of Dvořák’s efforts – proof of self-denial worthy of a great artist.

An explanation for this surprising phenomenon, touched on by the question posed above, has to do with various moments in the musical life of the early 1890s, which an individual as perceptive as Dvořák could not avoid. Above all, I am probably not far from the truth, if I assume that a change in Viennese music criticism had an impact on this; the Viennese expressed a clear opinion on Czech music during the international music and theatre exhibition of 1892 and this opinion became widely known. Perhaps at that time, Dvořák was not aware that such a change might determine his creative work, but today his works declare that he saw it as a fait accompli and did not hesitate to accept its basic ramifications. The extent to which modern musical directions were gaining ground not just with the audience, but with the Viennese press caused Hanslick’s authority to decline – an authority that had once seemed to Dvořák to be untouchable; his statements had been taken as infallible by the large majority of the Czech audience for a number of years.

When the National Theatre performed The Bartered Bride, Dalibor, Dimitrij, and The Courtship of Pelop (Pelopovy námluvy) at the exhibition [in Vienna], it came as no small surprise for many compatriots that those elements that had stood in the way of Smetana’s works finding favour with Hanslick, closing the door to the performance of his operas in Vienna, had stopped being an obstacle; on the contrary, among the majority of Viennese critics, Smetana’s modern direction, that is to say, his ‘Wagnerism,’ was considered to be a forte. And it was, after all, Dalibor, rather than Libuše, that Vienna could compare to Wagner. Furthermore, Fibich’s melodrama was in many ways labelled as a continuation of Wagner’s efforts and for this reason the composer was given credit. Also Dimitrij was received without any prejudice and its purely musical worth as well as its national colour, if it can be heard, was given full recognition. If Dimitrij did not break through as flawlessly as Dalibor, the critiques clearly explained that this was because it sails in the currents of Meyerbeer’s historical grand opera and serves musical demands more than dramatic ones; in other words, it is not modern enough in the sense of post-Meyerbeer progress. The dreams of our conservatives, who put all of their hope into a return of the older form of opera, did not come true.
I do not think that the experiences gained at the Viennese exhibition inspired Dvořák to a direct and sudden fundamental shift. I know for sure that he was getting ready for this during the late 1880s. At that time, Dvořák, who had long known Wagner from the theatre, undertook a detailed study of the *Nibelungen*, and the music of *Siegfried* even cast a spell on him. I state explicitly: the music of *Siegfried*, for it was primarily Dvořák, the absolute music composer, who in all sincerity and honesty started to set himself free of the prejudices [he had held] toward the later works of Wagner, as soon as he penetrated their pure musical beauty. Such experiences could not help but shatter his hitherto present faith in the objections to Wagner held by Hanslick, Ehlert, and other accepted authorities. These impressions were enough. The musings that the Viennese events awakened in the master after time may have only been a culmination in the sense that, from the dramatic and theatrical perspective, the historical grand opera of the old kind had not proved to be self-saving. It was just a matter of time, before a change in opinion would materialize into an artistic deed. When to Dvořák’s European – mainly German and English – contacts, there was added a stay in America, in an honourable position amid the musical activity of the world, the ground was fertile enough for these new intentions. It was still while he was in America that Dvořák decided that he would partly rework *Dimitrij*, soon after his return he came forward with his symphonic poems based on Erben’s *Bouquet*, and in January 1899 he told me with discernible joy and enthusiasm about his new work – that he is writing an opera that will have only dramatic dialogue without conventional arias, duets, etc. just as in the works of Wagner. [The new work] was *Kate and the Devil*.

I mentioned Dvořák’s symphonic poems. It is not the task of this essay to look in detail at these works, but their significance in the master’s development must be noted, not as much, however, as his last two operas. By turning to program music, he did not suggest that his hitherto creations in the realm of instrumental music had not satisfied him – that he would wish to dispose of and replace the earlier direction he had taken with this newly-found direction. His pieces based on Erben’s ballads meant nothing more than that Dvořák had finally given up his basic aversion to the artistic content and form of the symphonic poem, which had long been cultivated over here by Smetana and Fibich, and that he saw fit to give them an equal position beside his absolute music compositions, both symphonic and chamber. Let us be glad that he took this stance. His whole artistic personality guarantees him complete success in the symphony and quartet, such that he can be ranked among the foremost masters of our time. This turn toward dramatic realms suggests a true denial of those principles, under the influence of which such works as *Dimitrij* and *The Jacobin* originated, and now these had to give way to different, often completely opposite, principles. And again, let us be glad that this happened. A long continuation on the path of *Dimitrij* and *The Jacobin* would only give strength to the tendencies in our operatic repertoire that run counter to the efforts of Smetana and Fibich, and though it does little good to think of the end result, such an intersection between progressive and conservative principles could not be advantageous to the further development of Czech opera. That this danger – I am not ashamed to use the word [“danger”] – did not happen, I give a lot of credit to our great master Dvořák himself. If I am allowed to judge as an observer, this last shift in Dvořák’s artistic intentions is more spontaneous than any other that came before it. At that time, more than foreign agents exerting their authoritative power over Dvořák or any other force, he himself evaluated the situation and without hesitation did that which his own musical sense had told him to do.
Let us remember what was stated at the outset [of this article]. The criticism of individual works fades into the background, giving way to a discussion of their role in the history of art. And this role is not that *Kate and the Devil* and *Rusalka* stand on the level of Smetana’s *Libuše* and Fibich’s *The Bride of Messina* in terms of dramatic content, through a perfect alignment between the poetic text and musical sound or that these works represent progress over the former two works – we cannot make such statements; rather [the role that these works played] becomes apparent only when they are compared with Dvořák’s preceding operas. Then we can see them as a return from the meandering paths of the French grand opera to the natural foundation of our dramatic music. Some might argue that it is only a personal act of the composer, when he corrects his former opinions and not an important occurrence in our opera in general. I acknowledge that a similar objection would be justified if we were dealing with any other composer; however, Dvořák became such an authority over here through his activities in the realm of absolute music and because of his contacts abroad, such that a poor conception of the relationship between drama and music, against which Smetana was battling since the 1860s, could not be viewed as an open-shut case, when the composer of *Dimitrij* was its defender. Now Hanslick’s views on opera are overturned even in the estimation of the widest circles by the event: even the one, upon whom they had depended the most, turned away from it.

In view of all of this, the secondary question that remains to be answered is whether Dvořák would be able to bring his progressive intentions to fruition. Such a result would depend, after all, on the nature of the libretto. In *Kate and the Devil*, [the librettist] gave the composer an opportunity to develop true dramatic dialogue only in the first act; *Rusalka*, with its predominantly lyrical expression, justified by the material, tends in a different direction than toward the character of a drama in grand style, though it is not without a positively tragic core. Since in both cases, the story is folk-inspired, and in *Rusalka*, the more successful of the two, it is poetically handled, these texts suited Dvořák’s unique individuality with regard to musical inspiration.

Now, after *Rusalka*, this is generally acknowledged; I may quote a few words from the report that I wrote on *The Cunning Peasant* (*Osvěta*, 1878 II, p. 748) based on what I had encountered at that time from the instrumental and vocal works of the master: “For Dvořák, the best libretto would be a serious one, with true poetry, perhaps even pathetic, in which in the midst of a simple plot, broadly-based lyrical moments would provide the opportunity for large ensembles (let us remember Dvořák’s *Hymnus: Heirs of the White Mountain* [Hymnus: *Dědicové Bílé Hory*]) – such a text would ensure even more beautiful success than that which *The Cunning Peasant* can boast.” It is not necessary to add that I had in mind a text not like that of *Dimitrij*, but rather in the style of the libretto of *Rusalka*.

I warned readers ahead of time that they will not find anything terribly new in this article in terms of the larger, fundamental points that I have striven to make. If, however, the picture that I have painted of the development of Dvořák as a dramatist aligns itself with that which was written about him during the last few years and at the time of his jubilee celebration [in 1901], then I will add only a few words of explanation as well as justification.

First of all, given that this book is attempting to point to Dvořák’s artistic personality from all perspectives, this chapter is indispensable, even if it in it there are proofs that Dvořák’s path as a
dramatic composer was not straight – [that it did not unfold] with the same kind of self-confident assurance and undeniable success [as his path] as a symphonist and composer of chamber music.

Apart from that, let me be allowed to say a few words on my own behalf. The way in which Dvořák’s dramatic compositions are looked upon generally today was how I saw them during the latter half of the 1870s, when I encountered Dvořák’s first operas. At that time, [my comments] were met with criticism; in the eyes of some, I had committed a great sin. It was no use to me that I spoke of Dvořák’s music to *The Cunning Peasant*, not only giving it full recognition, but also making clear that I liked it. All I needed to do was label Dvořák as an instrumental composer of the first ranks (and say some harsh words about the opera’s libretto, motivated by my deep convictions); the result was that I was swarmed with accusations from Dvořák’s friends – people [whose opinions] I valued. After a few years, though, even Hanslick wrote of Dvořák that he is first and foremost a symphonist and talented more musically than dramatically – this last [concession] he uttered just as *The Cunning Peasant* was being performed; from that moment on it stopped being a flaw even over here.

The situation is similar when we consider Dvořák’s relationship to conservative classicism on the one hand and modern progress on the other. Indeed, not long ago, many people were taken aback by my statement that Dvořák is “in his very essence a conservative artist, but he is too much of a musician to be insensitive to the musical beauty of other directions, and we surprise him in the realm of program music – a realm that used to be foreign to him.” Today everyone speaks of the unforeseeable surprise, the great commotion that Dvořák caused in the 1890s with his symphonic poems and *Kate and the Devil*. The speaker, who made a statement during Dvořák’s jubilee on the same occasion as I did, wrote a profile of Dvořák; he stated that even the most courageous musical prophet could scarcely have predicted this “surprising, unforeseeable, and completely inconceivable turn of events, like a classical Saul converted into a new Romantic Paul;” he added that “the musical world stands in amazement at this change in the master’s composition.”

Only in one sense was Dvořák always progressive, from his youngest days: he strove for his own personal progress, tirelessly perfecting his artistic work, even at the time when he was standing at the peak of his glory as a composer. When it comes to our master, there can be no talk of self-satisfaction that rests on its laurels, leading one to continue doing the same thing as that which had been crowned with success. In this respect, Dvořák reminds me of Verdi – a master who has an entirely different, one might even say opposite, musical personality, but is similar to Dvořák in his honourable efforts to refine and uplift his musical artistic works.

However, Dvořák, because of his entire personality, could not be progressive in the same sense as Smetana and Fibich, whose symphonic poems and declamatory singing paved their way over here at a time when such genres were met with serious objections – when they had to go against the tide, in full consciousness and with no small amount of self-denial. It is with good reason that we admire the tireless steadfastness, which they showed in the hard battle for their musical profession, education, and path as composers; we cannot look for such pugnacity in Dvořák – a pugnacity that sees its success in new ideas, which are still looking to be accepted by many and are even mercilessly criticized. As soon as [these ideas] gained such ground that one did not have to doubt whether they were justified, pugnacity of this kind was no longer necessary. During the
In the 1890s, one absurdity was silenced, if not disposed of completely; [this absurdity is] the idea held during Smetana’s time that declamatory singing is an orchestral composition with vocal accompaniment and in the best of circumstances leads to melodrama, or that programmatic music and the symphonic poem, by their very nature, transgress against the laws of musical beauty and the logic of human reason. For this reason, Dvořák’s new course in symphonic and dramatic music was not met with objections by [those who hold onto these] dismissive precepts.

I could not avoid pointing to the views that I held on Dvořák’s dramatic works years ago. I did not do so merely to defend and give priority to my own ideas; that would not only be petty, but also insufficiently resolute because in my day, I was not the only one to think in this way. I had to make some small room for this retrospective view, in order to draw attention with sufficient emphasis to something that seems to be very important for a full appreciation of all of Dvořák’s works.

During the 1860s and 70s, a public tradition developed over here, according to which a great composer could only be found backstage at the opera. On the one hand, this was caused by a naïveté that considered it to be the peak of our national glory when some Italian singer performed or when some Meyerbeer opera was being inducted into our repertoire. On the other hand, this was supported by the circumstance that our music first started to blossom in the dramatic realm. And this tradition remained in place for quite a long time. If it was said of someone that he is first and foremost an instrumental composer, an absolute musician, many would see in this if not a direct degradation of his artistic worth, then at least an attempt to relegate him to a less worthy field. In comparison with opera, our activity on the concert stage was so weak, in spite of all of Smetana’s well-known efforts to the contrary, such that the instrumental compositions of our masters could only find favour with a small number of people, who were part of the Czech musical intelligentsia. It was a great exception, when an instrumental composition was greeted with half the attention and achieved only part of the popularity in wider circles as any opera.

Czech original:
Předeslal jsem tyto všeobecné úvahy, abych alespoň nejstručnějšími slovy naznačil dvoje stanovisko, s něhož pohlížetí sluší na velké dílo Dvořákovo. Črty následující budou se arci týkat předešvším úvah, která Dvořákoví připadla v rozvoji dramatické hudby naší za posledních tří desetiletí, a to vzhledem zejména k onomu pokrokovému směru, Smetanou zahájenému. Převahou bude tudíž rozhodovatí druhé obou právě vytčených hledisk. Ale prvním z nich, tomu totiž, které ukazuje nám rázovitou uměleckou osobnost Dvořákovu, dobyvši si uznání v hudebním ruchu světovém a mocným vlivem patrně působící na mladší skladatelské pokolení české, nebudeme se moci vyhnouti nadobro; ba nejednou mohl by nám dobré posloužiti právě tento zřetel k osobitému kouzlu hudby Dvořákovy při výkladech některých zjevů v dějinách naší hudby, stejně zajímavých jako důležitých.

Hned zde budiž poznáno, že čelným znakem hudby Dvořákovy jest živý, svěží temperament, schopný přizpůsobiti se každé náladě a zachováti přece vždy vlastní povahu svou. Tato verva jest neposlední výhodou Dvořákovu umění i v nejvážnějším oboru hudebním, symfonickém a komorním, u porovnání s jinými skladateli souvěckými, ba neváhám ani dost málo přiznati se, že v této právě věci rozhodnou přednost dávám Dvořákově dokonce před
největším symfonikem s Dvořákem současným, totiž Brahmsem, o němž známo jest, že na poli instrumentálním vedla Beethovena a Schuberta byl předním vzorem mistra našeho.

V tomto osobním temperamentu zahrnut je ovšem také ráz český, pokud v něm spatřovati sluší bezprostřední projev člověka-umělec přímo z lide našeho výšlého. Vlivy pak odjinud pocházející, zejména vlivy Smetanovy, jimiž českost hudby naší byla umělecky prohloubena a ostře vyhraněna, v druhé řadě pak konečně i vlivy jinoslovanské, v prosté lidové duši Dvořákově nalézaly půdu připravenou a úrodnou.

Když tento osobní a Národní ráz hudby Dvořákovy pronikl nejen v instrumentálních jeho skladech, ale i v operách, tou měrou pootáčel pozornost a zájem obecný, že úvahy o jiných stránkách jeho tvoření dramatického ustupovaly do řady druhé. Bylo namnoze nesnadno poznati a ještě nesnadněji konstatovati zejména pravý poměr k Smetanovi. Dnes je situace příznívější, rozdíly mezi nejnějším jeho operami a nejstaršími vybízejí přímo k porovnání, bez ohledu na to všechno, co zpěvohry ty mají společného. Možno tedy stopovati jakýsi vývoj zpěvosborní skladby Dvořákovy přímo s hlediska moderně dramatického tím spíše, ano povzbuzení k takové úvaze přichází zároveň i s jinými stranami, z toho symfonického totiž, v němž v době asi mezi “Jakobinem” a “Čertem a Káčou” nastal podobný obrat u Dvořáka, jako na poli operním.

Jest známo, že, kdekoliv píše se o Dvořákově, rozeznávají se tato období v jeho tvoření dramatickém. V době bouřlivého vzniku v letech šedesátých a na začátku sedmdesátých opanoval fantastii Dvořákovu Richard Wagner, o čemž svědčila původně, r. 1873 vzniklá, ale nesvěřovovaná forma “Krále a uhlíře” a do jisté míry i “Vanda” r. 1876. Mezi tím však již r. 1874 v druhé úpravě skoro na veskrze nově komponovaného “Krále a uhlíře” a ještě více v “Tvrdých palicích” hned na to složených, ale teprve po sedmi letech v r. 1881 provedených, uplatňují se vlivy Smetanovy, které pak vrcholili v “Šelmě sedlákovi” r. 1878. Potom nastal zásadní obrat tím, že Dvořák od Wagnera i od Smetany se uchýlit k tradicím “velké opery” Meyerbeeroxovy ve svém “Dimitru” 1882; a podobné zásady applikoval v “Jakobíně” r. 1889 i na operu komickou – arcii komickou operu zcela jiného druhu, než byly jeho tři dosavadní. V přestávce několikaleté, která následovala, pokusil se Dvořák o novou úpravu “Dimitra,” aby požadavkům moderního slohu dramatického alespoň do jisté míry vyhověl, a r. 1899 “Čertem a Káčou” přiznal se zjevně k slohu tomu a setrval při něm i v “Rusalce” r. 1901.

Nelze upříti, že tento obraz činnosti Dvořákovy odpovídá celkem skutečnému postupu, alespoň po jeho zevnější, pragmatické stránce. Ale na tom nemůže přestati, chceme-li vykázati nejen Dvořákovu vůbec, ale i každému jednotlivému stupni jeho rozvoje pravé místo v dějinách naší hudby. Ostatně již samo seřazení a rozstřídění oper Dvořákových vnučuje nám leckterou zjistitelnou otázku. Zvědět, v čem spočíval onen pokrok ve smyslu moderního slohu dramatického alespoň do jisté míry vyhověl, a r. 1899 “Čertem a Káčou” přiznal se zjevně k slohu tomu a setrval při něm i v “Rusalce” r. 1901.
konservativní kdysi dovolávaly na důkaz, že netřeba nám následovati příkladu Wagnerova a že tudiž také snahy Smetanovy na poli dramatickém sluší opraviti kajícím návratem k staré “dobré” hudebně operační, všechno skoro uvažování zakládati se musí na správném poznání jeho poměru k Wagnerovi na jedné a k Smetanovi na druhé straně.

“Krále a uhříře” v původní jeho formě jsem nepoznal. Úryvky, které se kromě předehry dostaly na veřejnost, tuším r. 1873, nestačí na platné posouzení celého díla po stránce dramatické. Ale ze zpráv obecně známých o osudě, jenž dílo to potkal při zkouškách, plyne zcela jasně jedna věc, které ostatně neodporuje, ba i spíše přisvědčuje celá tehdejší hudební situace naše, a ovšem i současná Dvořáková činnost v oboru instrumentálním. Skladatel “Krále a uhříře” totiž nebyl ani dost málo wagneriánem v tom smyslu jako Smetana. Violista prozatímního divadla znal zajisté Wagnerovy starší opery, snad i “Meistersingry,” když na partituře své pracoval; ale vniknutí hloub do podstaty ideí Wagnerových, především tedy do jeho převratného názoru o poměru mezi básní a hudbou, nebylo mu dopřáno. Proto Smetana s jasným vědomím konečného cíle od zdánlivého kompromisu se starou operou pevným krokem spěl nenáhle k ideálu hudebního dramatu, kdežto Dvořák po necelém desíti letech ocenil se na stanovisku nic méně než wagnerovském ve svém “Dimitru” Tak rychle zřeknouti se zásad jednou plně pochopených a za své přítomých bylo by vůbec pravděpodobné a u tak vážného a opravdového umělce, jakým Dvořák vždy byl, snad dokonce nemožné. Patrně o takové zásady autorovi “Krále a uhříře” vlastně ani nešlo. Všechno to, co tenkráte u nás bylo psáno o Wagnerovi a co snad i z německé literatury mohl poznati, nezanechalo sice valných stop v jeho názorech estetických, ale ovšem utvrdilo ho v tom, co mu byl napověděl jeho zdravý instinct hudební: že Wagner není tím škůdcem všeho pravého umění, za kterého prohlašován byl od protivníků, nýbrž velkým skladatelem, od něhož možno a dlužno se učiti. A to ovšem v době, kdy hudební svět rozstupoval se na dva příčně proti sobě stojící tábory, z nichž jeden Wagnerovi upíral všechny vyšší kvality umělecké, stačilo úplně, aby někdo vřazen byl mezi “wagneriány.”

 Velký reformátor německý působil tedy na Dvořáka především jen čistě hudební stránku svého díla, a to nejen těmi drobnými rysy a prostředky, jimiž obohatil hudbu anebo jež alespoň do popředí postavil, nýbrž i důležité zásadní stránky technickou, totiž polyfonii orkestru symfonického. Je pochopitelné, že Dvořáko, jenž s takovou chutí a takovým zdarem již tenkráte pokoušel se o nejvyšší úkoly hudby absolutní, rozenému symfonikovi, byl operní orkestr Wagnerův nepoměrně bližší a sympatičtější než hudebně chudší, namnoze homofonní, vůbec umělecky podřízenější orkestrální průvod oper repertoirních. Uvážíme-li pak, že právě tenkráte útoky našich hudebních konservativců a reakcionářů nejraději měřily na bujnou polyfonii, smělou harmonii a synty orkestrací moderní hudby, kterou proto nazývali nejasnou, umělkovanou, hříznou a vůbec nezáživnou, oceníme zajisté nejlépe vážnou uměleckou snahu a odhodlanost autora “Krále a uhříře,” jenž se takovými útoky a námítkami másti nedal.

Pohříchu právě překypující bohatost a zejména polyfonie partitury této stala se kamenem úrazu, když na jaře 1874 mělo dojíti k provozování. Přese vši dobrou vůli výkonných sil vyskytly se při zkouškách takové obtíže, že Dvořák operu svou raději vzal zpět, aby jí během několika měsíců nahrál skoro navezkru rozvoj nové komponické téhož textu. Je potřeba pochybovat ani dost málo o tom, že skladatel v této době bouření a kvašení svého talentu, zkušenostmi dosud neskročeného, na mnoze přestřelil a zejména v ensemblech činil takové požadavky, jimiž opravdu nebylo možno vyhověti. Ale nemohu potlačit otázku, zdali všechno to, co tenkráte se zdálo musilo


Poměr hudby k slovu a charakteristika situační celkem vlastně nepřekročují mezi staré opery. V našich poměrech mohlo být zaznamenáno jako potěšitelný pokrok, že v operách, o nichž je zde řeč, jevi se rostoucí péče o deklamaci, která se arcí týká více jen správnějšího povzbuzení slovního, než důrazu větního, jímž teprve dramatický dialog se oživuje a přiostřuje. Převaha tvořivé fantasie hudební nad chuťovým obsahem komponovaných veršů zaváděla k opakování slov i tam, kde ani zamýšleným effektem komickým, ani překypující lyrikou nedalo se omluviti. Za to dobře vystižena byla lehká konversace a vůbec svěží veseloherní tón vůze, kde texty to dovolovaly. Drastická komika naproti tomu zůstává sice vždy na úrovni ušlechtilé hudby Dvořákovy, ale její, řekl bych dramaturgický účinek nezřídka svědčí vlastně skladateli, nýbrž nesčetnými rysy, které se nikdy nemohli při způsobení zpěvohry opomenout. Dvořákový komik je tak důležitá pro poznaní Dvořákově vývoje na poli dramatické, že jest želeti jejího mizení z repertoiru i jejího pominutí při t. zv. cyklu Dvořákově (ř. 1901).

V době mezi “Tvrédými palicemi” a “Šelmou sedláčkovou” povstala tragická opera “Vanda.” Patří do tohoto období nejen časem, nýbrž i směrem. Že při látce té příklad Smetanův nepůsobil tou nejen jako potěšitelný pokrok, že v operách, o nichž je zde řeč, jevi se rostoucí péče o deklamaci, která se arcí týká více jen správnějšího povzbuzení slovního, než důrazu větního, jímž teprve dramatický dialog se oživuje a přiostřuje. Převaha tvořivé fantasie hudební nad chuťovým obsahem komponovaných veršů zaváděla k opakování slov i tam, kde ani zamýšleným effektem komickým, ani překypující lyrikou nedalo se omluviti. Za to dobře vystižena byla lehká konversace a vůbec svěží veseloherní tón vůze, kde texty to dovolovaly. Drastická komika naproti tomu zůstává sice vždy na úrovni ušlechtilé hudby Dvořákovy, ale její, řekl bych dramaturgický účinek nezřídka svědčí vlastně skladateli, nýbrž nesčetnými rysy, které se nikdy nemohli při způsobení zpěvohry opomenout. Dvořákový komik je tak důležitá pro poznaní Dvořákově vývoje na poli dramatické, že jest želeti jejího mizení z repertoiru i jejího pominutí při t. zv. cyklu Dvořákově (ř. 1901).

Cokoli dosud bylo a nadále ještě bude řečeno o rozličných vlivech, které a celé dramatické tvoření Dvořákovu působily, musí vždy doplňováno být uznáváním, že jeho hudební profil není jimi nikde zastíněn. Hledal cestu k úspěchům dramatických rozličnými směry, někdy dostával se na pravou stopu, někdy stopa ta mu zase mizela; ale co nikdy nemůžel hledat a nikdy nemohl
ztratití, byl osobitý ráz jeho hudby, bylo bohaté roucho zvukové, technicky stale se zdokonalující, jímž přidíval druhy i sebe chatrnější text. Pořadí oper Dvořákových znamená ve celku svém stálý pokrok se stanoviska ryze hudebního, nezávislý na měnících se zásadách slohových. Vývoj absolutního hudebníka byl přímý a důsledný, úkoly, jež sobě kládli dramatik, určovány byly namnoze poměry zvětrání, nelehde ani k obtížím a nahodilostem, s nimiž opatřováni si librett spojeno bývalo zejména u nás.

Zminěný pokrok hudební mohl být konstatován i při díle, které od prvního východiska Dvořáka a od nynějšího stanoviska jeho nejdále se odchýlilo. To je „Dimitrij.”

Blížící se otevření Národního divadla vybízelo Dvořáka k novému činu na poli dramatickém. Situaci tehdější byla zvláštní. Zjevného odporu proti Smetanovi sice již nebylo; nicméně v kruzech, které když plně uznávaly “Prodanou nevěstu,” ale zaújaty byly proti “wagnerovskému” směru jeho zpěvoher vázných, předsudek ten nejen že nezmizel, nýbrž nastávajícím provedením “Libuše” o jejímž pokrokovém slohu dávno již se vědělo, bylo ještě posílen. Význam “Libuše” a její nepochybný vliv na naší budoucí hudbu dramatickou nemohl být odčiněn; proto nezbývalo kruhům těm, než přáti si, aby “wagnerianismus,” který “Libuši” vnikatí mohl do umění českého, aspoň využít velká hodnota hudební, hlásící se k starým tradicím velké opery, od dob classicistických až do Meyerbeera a jeho následovatelů osvědčeným. Dílu tomu mělo se nad to dostati ne-li specificky českého, přece slovanského rázu.

Takové asi myšlenky vládly ovzduší, v němž vzniklo libretto „Dimitra” s úmyslem nabídnout ho Dvořákovi, jakožto skladateli k úloze takové bez odporu nejpovolanějšímu. „Vandou” nabídnutí ho přijal a s nejšíši horlivostí do práce se dal, arci mělo tu nejblíži příčinu, že kniha Marie Červinkové-Riegrové, porovnána s jeho dosavadními, ba s tehdějšími českými libretty vůbec, byla ve svém způsobu opravdu dobrá a mnohoslibná; zároveň však on sám zájisté toužil po tom, uvést se do Národního divadla novou vážnou operou, která by všestranně těžiti mohla z očekávaného bohatého aparátu hudebního a scenického, a vital tudíž text, jenž toto jeho touze přicházel vstříc. Ale při otázce, jakým slohem zamýšlené dílo provéstí by se mělo, octnul se Dvořák na rozcestí. Měl pokračovati na dráze „Vandou” nastoupené, bráti se – ovšem svým vlastním způsobem – dale za cílem moderního dramatu hudebního, jak činil Smetana a později Fibich? Nebo měl se vrátiti k velké opeře střihu staršího, předwagnerovského? Rozhodnutí ve smyslu alternativy druhé nevyvplynulo přímo a nutně z jeho povahy absolutně hudebnické, nýbrž bylo ji sugerováno vlivy jinými.

Rozevřeme-li české časopisy z let 1873 až 1875, shledáváme, že mistrovství Dvořáka již tenkráte bylo uznáváno, a že stavěn do první řady našich skladatelů. Ale všechna tato sláva, všechny umělecké úspěchy jeho děl neposkytovaly mu možnost věnovati se cele a výhradně činnosti skladatelově. Tehdejší miha česká pravda ohledně jeho vývoje a vývoje jeho skladatelského díla má však vyznačení, že má o jeho pozornost a jeho vývoj i v jeho díle hledatí. No všechna to, všechna to poskytlo mu příležitost k dalšímu vývoji v jeho skladatelské praxi.
hudbě v symfonické básni, tak že volnému rozvoji zejména naší zpěvohry stalo se namnoze překážkou dosti váznou, dnes uznává každý; ale před dvaceti lety byli mnozí, kteří naopak v šíření názorů Hanslickových, ony snahy potírajících, spatřovali jedinou její spásu. Dvořák, jenž tehdy k Hanslickovi měl neobmezenou důvěru a tudiž ochoten se stal vidět s ním v pokročilejších tendencích Wagnerových a Lisztových vážného ohrožení nejvlastnějších zájmů hudebních, dostal se tak bezděčně a proti dosavádním tradicím svým do postavení, z něhož odpúrci snah Smetanových, již ustupujících, pojednou čerpali novou sílu a odvahu.

Jestliže Hanslick hned po prvním představení “Dimitra” (jež do požáru Nár. divadla konalo se v Novém českém divadle, ale s veškerou úpravou pro nový dům určenou) konstatoval, že není v něm přímých ozvuků slohu Wagnerova spatřoval v tom zajisté i skladatel rozhodnou chválu. A skutečně stál “Dimitrij” úplně na půdě velké historické opery s rozsáhlými ensemble, se slavným vjezdem carovým, se sbory Poláků a Rusů proti sobě postavenými nejen dle dramatického konfliktu, nýbrž i dle národnostní charakteristiky, s hlučnou slavností dvorskou i s tanci a s nezbytnou píjáckou písní v koloraturu vyzivující, ne bez romantiky hrobky a spiknutí, slovem: na půdě, na kterou ho uvedlo libretto. Jako vždy i zde byl Dvořák opravdivý ve svém tvoření, poskytl v rámci tom, co nejlépeho. Byly to právě půvaby hudby Dvořákovy, zde v okázale nádherném roušce vystupující, jež zjednaly “Dimitru” nemalý úspěch; hudební přednosti uznávali ochotně i ti, kdo v slohu dramatickém nemohli nalézati krok ku předu, nýbrž spíše ústup z dráhy, na niž zpěvohrnu stál jeho větší nádech. Ne snad, že by v “Dimitru” nebylo působivých výjevů dramatických vůbec: vždyť effekty takové přispouštěla, ano i vyhledávala, někdy dokonce přepínala také stará opera. Avšak v partituře té jeví se zcela zřejmě nadvláda hudby nad dramatem hlavně tím, že o celkové stavbě, o rozvržení, stoupání, vrcholení a klesání dojmů rozhoduje nepoměrně, více zájmu hudební, než průběh a ústrojí děje, zcela dle známé zásady: opera jest především hudbou, potom teprve dramatem.

Cokoliv se v naší literatuře zpěvoherní před tím bylo hlásilo k tendencím podobným, nic nemělo ten význam jako “Dimitri.” Čím více dílo to působilo svou nepopíratelnou hodnotou hudební, tím povážlivější mohl se stát jeho příklad v budoucnosti, kdyby velký symfonik náš po cestě té byl pokračoval důsledně a bezohledně. Na to ovšem nedošlo. Následující opera, “Jakobín,” na slova téže librettistky komponovaná, neznámá sice pražádný obraz zásadní, ale celá povaha její vedla k pečlivé malbě genrových detailů, která umění Dvořákovu ukazovala opět s nový strany a tím “Jakobína” činila jakýmsi pendantem k “Dimitru” v látkovém oboru jiném, ne však pokračováním a stupňováním jeho uměleckých tendencí velkooperních. Dvořákovovo nazírání na poměr mezi hudbou a dramatem zůstalo v podstatě totiž jako v “Dimitru.”

V pořadí oper Dvořákových po “Jakobín” nalézáme mezeru desíti let. Ale není to desítiiletá přestávka v Dvořákově díle dramatickém, ba naopak – ač zní to na první pohled paradoxně – právě v této době Dvořák vykonával něco, z čehož souditi se musílo na připravující se, do hluboka jdoucí změnu v jeho názorech o hudbě dramatické. Podrobil totiž “Dimitra” důkladně prohlídice a opravě takové, že výsledek jejího býti Em. Chválou nazván “pokleknutím před Wagnerem.”

Čím vysvětlíme si překvapující tento zjev, jenž neznám víc ani a někdy než přiznání, že cesta “Dimitrem” nastoupená nedovedla skladatele k cíli tak uspokojivému, tak nepočínobnému jak si byl kdyži představoval? Hledel totiž mimo jiné slohu deklamatornímu zjednati větší podíl tím, že místy absolutní melodii v zpěvy nahradil deklamací a za to nejeden melodický a
rhytmický motiv, jejž by nerad byl pohřešoval, s jevišťem přeložil do orkestru. Jest na břehu, že přeměny takové a podobné nemohou z velké opery starší školy učiniti hudební drama v pravém moderním slova toho smyslu. K tomu bylo by třeba změnit důkladně i sám půdorys díla, t. j. libreto, a následkem toho komponovat je takovka celé znovu. Ale kdo by chtěl k tomu raditi?

Vždyť nelze ubrániti se otázce, zdali by čas a práce, které Dvořák během let obětoval na toliké změny, někdy velmi značné, ve svých parodikách operních, nebyly nám s větším průspěchem, kdyby je byl vynaložil na dílo docela nové. Necht' ostatně zodpoví se otázka ta jakkoliv – změnám, které provedl v „Dimitru,” tuším za svého pobytu v Americe, přikládám vážný symptomatický význam v historickém vývoji naší hudeby dramatické beze všeho ohledu na to, zdali a nakolik průspěhy opeře tá samotné.

Ze právě ve svých zpěvohrách, a ne v skladbách instrumentálních tak často shledával Dvořák příčinu k novým, někdy opětým úpravám a změnám, svědčí sice především o tom, že mistr náš, jako rozený symfonik, na poli dramatickém teprve různými pokusy vyhledávátcí musil pravou cestu, kterou mu v oboru instrumentálním bezpečně ukazoval přirozený vývoj jeho genia; s druhé strany však je to vzácný důkaz opravdivosti a upřímností uměleckého snažení Dvořáka, důkaz sebezapření velkého umělce hodný.

Vysvětlení pak onoho překvapujícího zjevu, kterého se dožaduje otázka shora položená, zahrnuje v sobě různé momenty za hudebního ruchu prvních let devadesátých, jejíž vlivům umělec tak vnímavý jako Dvořák ujíti nemohl. Především jiným neminu se asi s pravdou, předpokládám-li, že mocně v smyslu tom působila změna situace v hudební kritice vídeňské, která se během let připravovala, ale vůči hudební cílovému zázadní se projevila za mezinárodní výstavy hudební a divadlové r. 1892. Snad tenkráte nebyl si toho Dvořák ani vědom, že by změna ta mohla kdy určovati jeho tvoření; ale dnes díla jeho neodmluvně hlasají, že ji uznal jako fáct accompli neváhal přijmout i její důsledky zásadní. Tou měrou totiž, kterou moderní směry hudební nabývaly vrchu nejen v obecnstvu, ale i v tisku vídeňském, klesala autorita Hanslickova, ta autorita, která kdysi i Dvořákově byla se zdála nedotknutelnou, a jejíž výroky ve valné části českého obecnostra drahně let pokládány třižka za neomylné.

Když Národní divadlo na výstavním jevišti provedlo „Prodanou nevěstu,” „Dalibora,” „Dimitra,” a „Pelopovy námulvy,” ukázalo se k nemalému překvapení mnohých našinců, že to, co Smetanu po léta zbavovalo přízně Hanslickova a tím zpěvohrámu jeho cestu do Vidně uzavíralo, přestalo býtjí překážkou, ba většině vídeňských kritiků přímo pokládáno za přednost: jeho moderní směr, chceme-li tak říci, jeho „wagnerianismus.” A byl to přece jen „Dalibor,” nebyla to „Libuše,” co Vídeň mohla srovnávatí s Wagnerem. Dále pak melodrama Fibichův s mnohých stran označen jako pokračování ve snahách Wagnerových a právě proto skladatelí přičítán k velké záslužné. Také „Dimitrií” přijat byl beze všeho předpojetí a čistě hudební cena jeho rovněž tak jako národní zbarvení, pokud se v něm jevi, docházely plného uznání. Jestliže však „Dimitrií” přes to nepronikl tak dokonale jako „Dalibor,” v kritikách otevřeně bylo zdůvodňováno tím, že pluje v slovohých původcích historické opery Meyerbeerovské a požadavkům hudebního více slouži než dramaticky, jinými slovy: že není dost moderní ve smyslu pokroku pomeyerbeerovských. Sny našich konservativců, kteří všechny naděje své skládali v návrat k starší formě operní, nedosly tedy splnění.
Nemyslím, že zkušenosti na vídeňské výstavě nabyté Dvořákoví přímo a náhle vnuknuly onen zásadní obrat. Vím bezpečně, že zvolna připravoval se již od posledních let osmdesátych. Tehdy Dvořák, jenž Wagnera dávno znal z divadla, věnoval zevrubnější studium „Nibelungům,” a hudba k „Siegfriedu“ ho dokonce očarovala. Právěm výslovně: hudba k „Siegfriedu,” neboť byl to bez odporu v první řadě opět absolutní hudebník v Dvořákoví, jenž ve své naprosté opravdivosti a poctivosti začal se vymaňovati z předsudků proti pozdějším dílům Wagnerovým, jakmile vnikl do jejich ryze hudebních půvabů. Takové zkušenosti nemohly než oťásati dosavadní víru v náměty, které Wagnerovi se stanoviska hudebního činili Hanslick, Ehlera a jiné dosud na slovo brané autority. Na dojmech těch prozatím bylo dost. Úvahami, které v mistorvi časem vzbudily události vídeňské, mohly být jen doplněny a dovršeny v tom smyslu, že také po stránce dramatické a divadelní velká historická opera způsobu staršího neosvědčila se samospasitelnou. Bylo již jen otázkou času, kdy zvolna připravovaná změna názorů většinou se v umělecké skutek, a když k Dvořákovým stýkům evropským, hlavně německým a anglickým, přistoupil několikatý pobyt jeho v Americe, v čestném postavení uprostřed světového ruchu hudebního, byla půda pro kličící nové záměry zkypřena dostatečně. Ještě v Americe rozhodl se Dvořák, že přepracuje částečně „Dimitra,” brzo po svém návratu vystoupil se svými symfonickými básněmi dle Erbenovy „Kyčice” a v lednu 1899 vypravoval mi způsobem, jenž neklamně prozrazoval radost a nadšení z nové práce, že komponuje operu, která bude mít jen dramatický dialog beze všech konvencionálních arií, duett atd., zrovna prý tak, jako u Wagnera. Byl to „Čert a Káča.”

Zmínil jsem se o Dvořákových symfonických básnících. Blíže k ním přihlížet ani úkolem této statí, ale přece jen musím zde poznamenatí alespoň tolik, že význam jejího pro mistrův vývoj je sice v hlavní věci velmi podstatný, nikoli však docela týž, jako význam obou jeho posledních oper. Obrátil-li se k programní hudbě, nedal tím ani dost málo na jevo, že by ho dosavadní vlastní tvorba v oboru instrumentálním neuspokojovalo, že by tudíž nově zařazeným směrem odbyt a nahrazen byl směr dřívější. Ony skladby dle Erbenových ballad neznamenaly nic jiného, nežli že Dvořák vzdal se konečně zásadního odporu proti umělecké podstatě a formě symfonické básně, u nás od Smetany a Fibicha dávno již pěstované, a že uznal za dobré dopřáti jí rovnoprávného místa vedle svých skladb absolutně hudebních, symfonických a komorních. A buďme rádi, že zaujal stanovisko to. Celá jeho umělecká povaha zarůstala mu právě v symfonii a v kvartetu zdal tak dokonalý, že řídi ho k prvním mistrům naší doby. Obrat onen v oboru dramatickém však představuje nám skutečně zapření tehů zásad, za jejichž vlivu předcházející opery „Dimitrů” a „Jakobín” byly povstaly a nyní ustupují musily zásadám jiným, namnoze přímo opáčným. A zase buďme rádi, že se tak stalo. Neboť vytrvalé pokračování na dráze „Dimitra” a „Jakobína” bylo by v naší literaturě operní posiňovalo jen tendence přicházející se snaží Smetanovým a Fibichovým, a třeba ani dost málo nesluší pochybovat k konečnému výsledku, přece by takové nově střetnouti se zásad pokrokových s konzervativními nemohlo být na prospěch dalšímu vývoji české zpěvovéry. Že takové nebezpečí – bez ostychu volím toto slovo – minulo, kladu za velikou zásluhu mistrů Dvořákoví samotného. Pokud totiž smím souditi se svého hlediska pozorovatelů, tato poslední změna v uměleckých záměrech Dvořáčích je spontánní různým nátlakem, na sám postřehl situaci a bez rozpaků pokusil se o to, co mu nadpověděl vlastní cit hudební.
Připomeňme si, co bylo řečeno v úvodu. Kritika jednotlivých děł ustupuje zde úvaze o úkolu v dějinách umění jím vykázaném. A úkol ten nespočívá v tom, že by “Čert a Káča” a “Rusalka” svým slohem dramatickým, t. j. dokonalou shodou mezi slovem básnickým a zvukem hudebním stály na stanovisku Smetanovy “Libuše” a Fibichovy “Nevěsty messinské,” nebo dokonce značily pokrok nějaký nad tato díla – to nikterak nelze tvrditi – nýbrž jeví se jedině u porovnání s předcházejícími operami Dvořákovými jakožto blahodárný návrat z bludných cest velké opery francouzské ku přirozenému základu a východisku naší hudby dramatické. Někdo snad namítne mi, že je to pak čistě osobní, třeba zásadné, čin skladeť, opravili-li své někdejší názory, nikoliv závažnější událost pro zpěvohru naší vůbec. Připouštím, že by podobná námítka byla docela oprávněná vůči jinému těmi – ale Dvořák stal se svým působením v oborou hudby absolutní a svými styky zahraničními u nás takovou autoritou, že křivé pojímaní poměru mezi dramatem a hudbou, proti němuž již od let šedesátých zásadně bojoval Smetana, nesmělo by se pokládati za odporadě nadobor, pokud by se skladatel “Dimitra” zdáti mohl jeho ochránce. Dnes však Hanslickovské nazírání na zpěvohru vyvráceno je bohda i před soudem kruhů nejširších neúprosnou logikou událostí; odvrátil se od toho a ten, v nějž nejvíce bylo spoléháno.

Vzhledem k tomu ke všemu do druhé řady teprve náleží také otázka, zdali Dvořákovi bylo možno plně uskutečnit své pokrokové záměry. Vždyť výsledek takový závisel by zároveň na povaze libretta. “Čert a Káča” jen v prvním jednání poskytl skladatel příležitost k rozvinutí skutečného dramatického dialogu, “Rusalka” zase převahou lyrického výrazu, látkou ovšem odůvodněnou, tiše jinam než do ovdění dramatu velkého slohu, ačkoliv není bez jádra přímo tragického. Ostatně právě proto, že v obou případech běží o báchoru celkem lidově pojatou, v “Rusalce,” vůbec nepoměrně zdařilejší, nad to i poeticky provedenou, svědčily tyto texty nejvlastnější individualitě Dvořákově výborně co do inspirace hudební.

Dnes, po “Rusalce,” všobecně se to uznává; smírn snad citovatí několik slov, která jsem napsal do své zprávy o “Šelmě sedlákovi” (“Osvěta,” r. 1878, II.,str. 748) na základě tehdejších zkušeností z mistrových činosti v skladbě instrumentální a vokální: “Pro Dvořáka arcí bylo by nejrůznějiším libretto vážné, pravou poesií prodechtáno, nad snad i pathetické, v němž na základě jednoduchého děje lyrické momenty široko se zakládají, poskytující místa větším ensemblům (vzpomíne mi si na Dvořákův hymnus “Dědičům Bílé Hory”) – takový text by byl zároveň jsou krásnějších úspěchů než jsou ty, jimiž se vším právem honorí “Šelma sedlácen”.” Že jsem při tom neměl na mysli text “Dimitra” podobný, nýbrž spíše libretto na způsob “Rusalky,” ne třeba mi tuším vykládati.

Připravil jsem čtenáře již předem na to, že ve velkých, podstatných rýchlech této statě nenalezně moho nového. Jestliže však obraz vývoje Dvořáka jako dramatika shojuje se celkem s tím, co v posledních letech a ovšem i u příležitosti jubilea mistrova o věci té bylo psáno, nebude snad od místa, přidám-li zde několi slov na vysvětlení a zároveň na ospravedlnění toho.

Především v knize, která ukázači chce uměleckou osobnost Dvořákovu se všech stran, tato kapitola schází i nikterak nesmí, třeba by v ní obsažen důkaz, že dramatik v Dvořákoví nekráčel a nestoupal vždy tou přímo cestou, tato sebevědomou jistotou a s tím nepopřeným úspěchem, jako symfonik a skladatel komorní.
A podobně má se to i s Dvořákovým poměrem ke konzervativnímu classicismu na jedné a k modernímu pokoku na druhé straně. Ba, ještě nedávno zarazil mnohoho můj výrok, že Dvořák “podstatou svou je umělec konzervativní, ale je přišli hudebníkem, než aby nevycítil hudební půvaby také jiných směrů a tak překvapujeme ho druhy i na drahách hudby programní, která původně my byla cizí.” Dnes již vůše mluví se o netušeném překvapení, o velikém rozruchu, její v letech devadesátých způsobil Dvořák svými symfonickými básněmi i “Čertem a Káčou.” Slavnostní řečník, jenž při jubileu Dvořákově na tomto místě, kde učinil jsem onen výrok já, případnými rysy nakreslil profil Dvořákův, pravil, že sotva by byl i nejodvážnější hudební prorok předvídati mohl onen “zejve překvapující, poněvadž netušený a snad také naprosto předem vyloučený: jak klasický Šavel obrácen v novoromantického Pavla” i dodal pak, že “v úžasu sleduje hudební svět tento obrat v mistrovu skládání.”

Jen v jednom smyslu byl Dvořák, chceme-li tak říci, pokrokářem vždy, od svého prvního mládí: usiloval o vlastní svůj pokrok osobní, stálým, neúnavným zdokonalováním své umělecké práce, a to i v době, kdy stál na vrcholu slávy skladatelské. O samolibosti, která hoví si, zůstávajíc při tom, co zejména úspěchy bylo korunováno, u našeho mistra nemůže být ani řeč. V této věci připomíná mi Dvořák Verdiho – mistra co do vlastní hudební povahy arci jinorodého, ba namnoze přímo protichůdného, ale ve ctihodné snaze po tříbení a povznášení svého životního díla uměleckého s Dvořákem přibuzného. Za to pokrokářem ve smyslu Smetanové a Fibichové, kteří symfonické básní a zpěvu deklamatornímu razili u nás dráhu v dobách, kdy útvarům těm kladl se ještě tuhý odpor zásádní, kteří tudiž s plným vědomím a s nemalým sebezapřením pluli proti proudu, Dvořák dle celé své osobní povahy být ani nemohl. Obdivuji se zajisté právem oné houževnaté neústupnosti, kterou osvědčoval v tuhém zápasu s nepřízní osudu, na němž své hudebnické povolání v zájmu naučení a svou dráhu skladatelskou téměř vynutili s musil – ale bojovnosti takové, která úspěchy své exponuje ve slůvě nových ideí, platnosti teprve se domáhajících a proto na mnohých stranách i nemilosrdně kaceřených, v Dvořákově hledatí nesmíme. Jakmile však směr nabyl tolik půdy, že o zásadní oprávněnosti jeho přestalo se pochybovat, bojovnosti toho druhu nebylo již zapotřebí. V letech devadesátých alespoň umlčena, třeba snad ne nadobro vypleněna byla ona pošetilost, která za dob Smetanových mohla říci, že zpěv deklamatorní je skladbou orkestrální s průvodem hlasu lidského a v nejpříznivějších případě vede k melodramatu, nebo že hudba programní a symfonická báseň hned vlastní povahou svou hřeši nejen proti zákonům krásna
hudobního, nýbrž i proti vši logice zdravého rozumu. Proto nový kurs v Dvořákově hudbě symfonické a dramatické nenarazil na odpor ze zásady odmitavý.

Nemohl jsem se tomu vyhnouti, abych nepoukázal k stanovisku, které jsem vůči dramatické tvorbě Dvořákové zaujal před léty. Zajisté nečinil jsem toho pouze na obhájení jakési priority pro své názory: to by bylo nejen malicherné, ale i málo rozhodné, poněvadž svého času nesmýšlel jsem tak já jediný. Než musil jsem této malé retrospektivě dopřáti místa, ač chtěl-li jsem s patřičným důrazem upozorniti na věc, která zdá se mi být důležitou pro plné ocenění veškerého díla Dvořáкова.

V letech šedesátých a sedmdesátých vyvinula se v naší veřejnosti tradice, dle níž velký skladatel mohl být hledán jen za kulisami operního jeviště. Jednak sváděla k tomu tehdější naivnost, která i v pohostinských hrách proslulých zpěváků a zpěvaček vlašských nebo v uvedení některé opery Meyerbeerovy do repertoáru spatřovala vrchol slávy našeho národního ústavu zpěvoherního, jednak podporovala to i okolnost, že hudba naše nejprve, a to velice utěšeně začala rozvíjeti se právě na poli dramatickém. A tradice ta dosti dlouho zůstala v platnosti. Řeklo-li se tedy o někom, že je v první řadě skladatel instrumentální, hudební absolutní, přemnozi viděli v tom ne-li přímé degradování jeho hodnoty umělecké, tož alespoň pokus odkazovati ho do oboru méně cenného. Bylť tehdy náš ruch koncertní přeze všechny známé snahy Smetanovy u porovnání s operou tak slabý, že instrumentální skladby našich mistrů obraceti se mohly jen k nevelkému počtu hudební intelligence české. Byla to vzácná výjimka, když skladbě instrumentální dostávalo se třeba jen části oné pozornosti a populárnosti v kruzích neširších, již hravě nabývala kterákoliv opera.
Appendix 9:  

Music drama is the only shape that modern opera can take. It is not one of several possible directions. All opera can only be assessed from this perspective. An opera must only be a drama, never a concert. This is why even Rusalka succumbs to criticism from this perspective.

A music drama requires the music to conform completely to the spoken drama. Its architecture can, therefore, only be dramatic, not musical. Rusalka is not divided into dramatic scenes, but into musically-closed numbers, which is absolutely unallowable these days. Not even in the dialogue (Rusalka and the Witch in the first act) is there dramatic continuity; everything is segmented into brief lyrical shapes. Rusalka consists of a set of musical thoughts without dramatic coherence.

Music drama requires strict characteristics. Out of the individuals characterized in Rusalka – albeit in a very primitive fashion – it is only the water goblin [that is satisfactory]; the other characters are merely blurry, not musically flexible, and not dramatic. The main means of characterization is the Leitmotif, which is capable of conveying the most subtle psychological moments through its shape, placement, and alterations. Rusalka’s Leitmotif is too sentimental; rather than characterizing her, it can be found in every place that the composer thinks of Rusalka and it never changes (the same motive appears when she is happy and unhappy). It is from this that the Leitmotivic dryness of Rusalka comes – a work that is counted as a music drama out of a lack of understanding. The characteristics of the situation are no better. In the first act, during the dance of the forest fairies, dance music is played that would be more appropriate in its style as the dance of the devils in the second act of Kate and the Devil. In the third act, the forest fairies sing a normal couplet. Here Dvořák should have at least respected what was accomplished nearly 80 years earlier, when the 15-year-old Mendelssohn wrote his classic dance of the fairies for his Overture to a Midsummer Night’s Dream. The dance of the forest fairies in Rusalka is a rough transgression against the sense of art’s progress.

Music drama requires correct declamation. In the first place, we are dealing with declamation that is correct in terms of prosody. This is required for the dramatic qualities and the national characteristics of the drama. Incorrect declamation in singing makes [the text] unintelligible, which is a dire transgression against the balance between the music and the poetic words – a dire transgression against the essence of the music drama itself. The declamation in Rusalka is very bad. According to need, Dvořák places the emphasis on whichever syllable of the word [he pleases]; he shortens and elongates vowels based on his musical thought. The words “bilá moje lani” will long be the most horrid of its kind. (Dvořák makes the declamation the same on all three words, both with regard to rhythm and melody). The declamation of the music drama requires far more than correct prosody. Dvořák often misses even the accent of the sentence: on the words “pro všechen sluch lidský něma zůstaneš,” he erroneously accents “zůstaneš” instead of “něma”; for the words “povídej, mužičku, povídej,” the word “mužičku” is incorrectly emphasized through a cantabile, whereas the words “a plna lásky” is sung in dry recitative. Only the cook’s line “náš princ těžce stůně, převelice” are set nicely, but unfortunately it serves as a mirror, in which mistakes are reflected all the more clearly.
Music drama requires a national character, which is inextricably linked with the requirements of declamation. In this respect, *Rusalka* is very un-Czech and un-national. That Dvořák would respect our language is the least that we could ask of a national composer. Un-Czech declamation of words in an opera has to upset us to the same extent as if an actor in a play said “bílá” with a short “a” and “lání” with a long “a” (for concision, I continue with this example). *Rusalka* seems to be Czech with its folk songs. On this matter, we must quote the words of Smetana from 1864: “imitating the melodic and rhythmic aspects of our folk songs does not create a national style; at the very most, it is a weak imitation of the songs themselves, not to mention dramatic truth.” Smetana fought against folk songs and their so-called national character during his whole life; he suffered in this battle and this is his tragedy. And after his suffering, when he fought for the recognition of the true national style, relying on language and not folk songs, comes Dvořák’s *Rusalka* and places us back to where we were forty years ago. What more could you want, you dreamers of progress? Fibich, the true successor of Smetana, created for us in *The Bride of Messina* (*Nevěsta Messinská*) a work that all people, including Dvořák, can respect as a model of our national dramatic style – the realization of Smetana’s ideal, to which he was heading in the declamation of his *Libuše* and *The Secret* (*Tajemství*).

A folk song is dramatically unallowable in a drama; it does not bring forth the nationalization of the drama, and musically it compels one toward the trivial. The songs of the forester and the cook in the second act (particularly the end of the forester’s motive), the songs of the witch in the first act (“vytrhni se cupy, cupy”) and the couplet of the forest fairies in the third act are such trilogies of trivial folk songs that we can barely believe that Dvořák wrote them. Even worse is the sound of the Viennese waltz with the melody in the obligato cellos in the second verse of the witch’s curse or the heart-wrenching melody during the arrival of the prince and Rusalka in act two, which would have been appropriate for *Troubadour* or the similarly Italian *Andrea Crini*, rather than a Czech fairy tale. I am not even mentioning the dramatic truth, to use the words of Smetana. Without a sense of shame, Dvořák turns the water goblin’s monologue in the second act, which is the breaking point of the tragedy, into a folk song in two parts.

The music drama requires an overall characteristic based on the libretto. *Rusalka* is a fairy tale; the music of Dvořák is, however, not fairy-tale-like. So much sentimentality flows from its mournful motives in the woodwinds, such a lack of humour and life is mixed in, such that it creates the impression of a mournful history, rather than a Czech fairy tale, full of fantasy and lively humour. Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel* could have been Dvořák’s model of what we would expect of a fairy tale music drama.

*Rusalka* is not a music drama, just as Dvořák’s earlier operas are not. Since we cannot imagine a different shape to opera than music drama, *Rusalka* is in its overall intention an erroneous and bad work.

The music of *Rusalka* stands out in its instrumentation, but even that is absolute music. I will mention only the beautiful use of the strings between the two parts of Rusalka’s song to the moon, where everything glows with the silver of the moon and the surface of the water. Here we see Dvořák on his terrain, where he stands firmly. Related to his absolute music talent is the least pleasant side of *Rusalka* – its lack of originality. Dvořák is an artist, who is purely independent, original, and yet his *Rusalka* is not original. Dvořák studies operas for their music, but forgets
about the drama; he likes a certain idea and unconsciously incorporates it into the situation of his work. With *Rusalka*, Dvořák has shown the most that he does not have dramatic invention and that in his efforts for drama he holds to his source to the detriment of his originality. I cannot give examples here. Whole phrases from *Dalibor* (“máš-li mne ráda, zjev mi to”; “a letní noc to nepoví”; “do smrti třeba mne ulíbej”), from *The Dogheads* (*Psohlavci*) (Rusalka’s motive), from *Libuše* (“sám vyprávěl’s ty zvěstí neznámé”), from *Nibelungen* (in the first act, the water goblin’s motive), etc. etc. are recognizable even to the layman. Worse still is that even in the places where he does not take motives from a foreign score, the style of another work flows forth from his music (the whole end of the third act, except for the banal funeral music during Rusalka’s drowning, is written in the spirit of *Dalibor*). This detracts from any style in *Rusalka*. If we hear in the story the tragic *Dalibor* or the even the *Nibelungen*, the impression of the story is gone.

One example will clearly show the weakness and lack of originality of Dvořák’s dramatic invention. In Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, it is the children who go get the gingerbread, and that is why there is humorous waltz-like music; in *Rusalka*, it is the fairy who takes on human attributes and at the most tragic and critical moment, we hear a waltz! And this is just because Humperdinck includes one; otherwise, anyone with sense would not even think of it. This is the ultimate example of a lack of dramatic quality in *Rusalka*. Anyone who has not heard it will not even believe it and will accuse me of telling tales.

This is how *Rusalka* looks in the light of the music drama, and that is probably how history will evaluate her. This is sad for Dvořák – sadder still, the more that we value him. In the name of Dvořák’s true followers, we must take a stance against the offensive statements of our critics, declaring that *Rusalka* is Dvořák’s best work. In the name of Dvořák’s true followers, we have to ask the master most earnestly not to be taken off course by flattery, which leads him to paths that are fatal for him and to return to the domain where he reigns supreme in the world: chamber music. His symphonic poems and his operas will always take away from his great glory in history – a glory that he has ensured with his absolute music compositions. And this must hurt all of those, for whom art and the artist is of concern.

This is the fruit of our music criticism, which – after a beautiful flowering during the 70s and 80s – has sunk to the level of mere local reports on the theatre. You will not find anywhere such a love for the subject matter that it does not shy away from a stern word, if it is aware that it will have a profitable effect for art. Nobody warned Dvořák against the danger that threatens him, until a German critic had to come (Dr. Batka in *Bohemia*) and show our critics where Dvořák is headed. I turn now directly to our non-musical critics with these questions: 1. Doesn’t our criticism consider drama to be a necessary sign of modern opera? 2. Did it not fail to recognize the lack of drama in *Rusalka*? 3. Does it not consider it to be good to tell the truth to Dvořák and the audience? In the first case, it is too elitist/snobby; in the second, ignorant; and in the third, not honest or conscientious. I will leave it up to those who praise *Rusalka* to decide according to their will.
Czech original:
Hudební drama je jedině možný útvar moderní zpěvohry. Není to jeden z možných směrů. Každá zpěvohra dá se posuzovat jen s tohoto stanoviska. Zpěvohra smí být dnes jen dramatem, nikdy koncertem. Proto kritice s tohoto stanoviska podléhá i “Rusalka.”


zvanému národnímu jich rázu po celý svůj život, v boji tom nejvíce trpěl, toť jeho tragika. A po jeho utrpení, když u nás vybojoval uznání pro pravý sloh národní, opírající se o řeč a ne o národní píseň, přichází Dvořák s „Rusalkou“ a postaví se tam, kde jsme byli před 40 lety. Co chcete víc, vy blouzníkové o pokroku? Fibich, pravý nástupce Smetanův, postavit nám v „Nevěstě Messinské“ dílo, jež musí každý, tedy i Dvořák, respektovat jako vzor našeho národního slohu dramatického, jako uskutečnění ideálu Smetanova, jenž k němu spěl deklamací „Libuše“ a „Tajemství.“

Národní píseň je dramaticky v dramatu nepřípustná, k znárodnění dramatu nevede, hudebně pak velice svádí k triviálnosti. Písníčky hajného a kuchlíka v 2. jednání (zvláště zkončení „motivu“ hajného), písníčky Ježibabiny v 1. jednání (vytrhne se cupy, cupy) a kupelet lesních žínek ve 3. jednání je takový trojlistek triviálních národních písní, že ztěží věříme, že to napsal Dvořák. Ještě hůře zní vídeňský valčík s melodii v obligatním violoncello při druhé sloce zaklínání Ježibabině nebo srcdcerovou melodii při příchodu prince a Rusalky v 2. jednání, jež by se hodila snad do „Troubadoura“ nebo stejně italského „Andrea Crini,“ ne však do české pohádky. O dramatické pravdě, abych užil slov Smetanových, ani nemluvím. Dvořák bez ostýchu z nejdramatičtějšího vodníka monologu v 2. jednání, kde se celá tragika láme, učiní národní píseň o dvou slohách.

Hudební drama žádá celkovou karakteristiku dle nálad libreta. „Rusalka“ je pohárka, hudba Dvořáková není však pohádková. Tolik sentimentality vane z pláčevojego jejího motivu v dřevěných nástrojích, tak málo humoru a života je v to vmícháno, že činí dojem nějakého sentimentality, když komponuje i životným humorem. Humperdinckova „Perníková chaloupka“ mohla být Dvořákově vzorem, co žádáme od pohádkového hudebního dramatu.


Jeden příklad ukáže jasně slabost a neoriginelnost Dvořákovy invence dramatické. V Humperdinckově “Perníkové chaloupce” při čarování čarodějnice ozve se lahodná hudba valčíkového rytmu. Dvořák dle toho napsal k čarodějné Ježibabíně také valčík. Nyní povážme: v “Perníkové chaloupce” jsou to děti, jež jdou na perník, proto lašková valčíková hudba; v “Rusalce” je to vláha, jež běže na sebe lidství v nejtragičtějším tom okamžiku, v nejkritičtější chvíli zní – valčík! A to jen proto, že ho má Humperdinck, vždyť jinak by to nikomu, kdo má zdravý rozum, ani nemohlo napadnout. To je vzhled nedramatičnosti “Rusalky.” Kdo neslyšel, neuvěří tomu ani a bude mne podezřívat, že povídám “pohádku.”

Tak vypadá “Rusalka” ve světle hudebního dramatu, tak asi bude o ni soudit historie. Smutná to bilance pro Dvořáka, tím smutnější, čím více si ho vážíme. Ve jménu pravých ctitelů Dvořákových musíme se ozvat proti urážlivým výrokům naší kritiky, že “Rusalka” je nejlepší dílo Dvořáko. Ve jménu pravých ctitelů Dvořákových musíme mistra prosit co nejsnažněji, aby se nedal světlichochcím, jež ho vede na dráhy jemu v budoucnosti osudné a vrátil se tam, kde je dnes neomezeným pánem světa, k hudbě komorní. Jeho symfonické básně a jeho zpěvohry vždy budou Dvořákoví ujmout v historii na veliké slávě, již si pojistil svými výtory absolutně hudebními. A to musí bolet každého, komu umění a tím i umělec leží na srdci.

Toť ovoce naší nesvědomité hudební kritiky, jež po nádherném rozkvětu v letech sedmdesátých a osmdesátých klesla na úroveň pouhých lokálkářů o divadle. Nikde nenaleznete trochu lásky k věci, jež neboji se i příkrého slova, jež-li si vědoma, že bude míti pro umění blahodárný účinek. Nikdo nevaroval Dvořáka před nebezpečenstvím, jež mu hrozí, až musil přijít německý kritik (Dr. Batka v “Bohemii”) a ukázat naší kritice, kam Dvořák spěje. Obracím se nyní přímo k hudebním naší kritikum, dnes činným, s těmito otázkami: 1. nepokládá naše kritika dramatičnost za nutný znak moderní zpěvohry? 2. pokládá, ale nepoznala nedramatičnost “Rusalky”? 3. poznala, ale neuznala za dobré říci pravdu Dvořákoví i obecnosti? V prvním případě je šosácká, ve druhém nevědomá, v třetím nepoctivá a nesvědomitá. Pro co z toho který velebitel “Rusalky” se rozhodne, ponechávám mu na vůli.
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