



The Mánes building in the 1930s



THE CZECH INTERWAR AVANT-GARDE AS A REVOLUTION OF RETURN, CIVILISM, THE MICROTONAL SYSTEM AND THE ATONAL STYLE

The Czech interwar avant-garde represents one of the most striking and distinctive periods in Czech music. It is familiar to the international professional and semi-professional public largely thanks to the microtonal system developed by the composer and theorist Alois Hába. Its leading representative Bohuslav Martinů is among the most internationally renowned of Czech composers and his music is frequently performed both at home and abroad.

In Czech-speaking milieux the term “avant-garde” first appeared in the mid-19th century, i.e. at the period when the originally military expression came into political usage where it was used first in France and later in other areas of Europe to denote a primarily leftwing political grouping and later also artists in the forefront (“advance guard”) of progress. In the most famous Czech modern lexicon, *Otto's Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, the entry “avantgarda” dates to the 1930 edition, in which its author speaks of the artistic avant-garde as progressive art and states that “the avant-garde in literature, theatre and cinematography is an expression denoting an energetic, pioneering movement in a particular field of the arts [...] and so people write of avant-garde literature, painting, theatre and film.”

In Czech-speaking society, the term “avantgarda” related to artistic activity appears first at the end of the year 1920 with the formation of the socially and



The *Devětsil* Almanac cover by Karel Teige

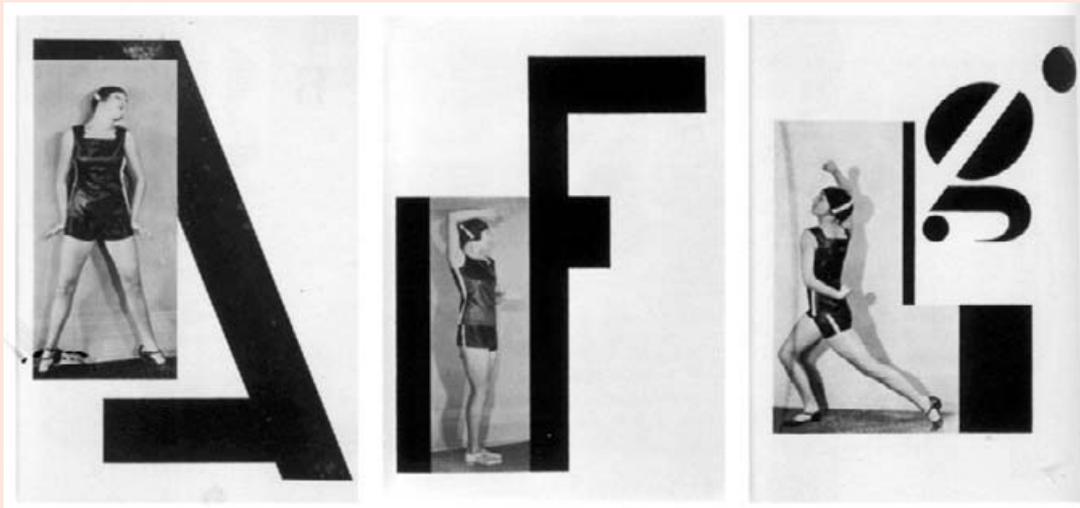
“avant-garde music” since the beginning of the 1930s. It was then the founder of musicology at the Masaryk University in Brno, Vladimír Helfert, for example, who employed the term in his respected writings.

The Czech Modern Movement, Social Expressionism and the Transition to the Avant-Garde

The protagonists of the Czech inter-war avant-garde are very closely linked to the Czech modern movement in music, which in its first generation included the composers Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) and Vítězslav Novák (1870–1949), and also Josef Suk (1874–1935), who like Novák had been a pupil of Antonín Dvořák, as well as Otakar Ostrčil (1879–1935), not only a composer but an enlightened promoter of avant-garde music in the years when he was head of the opera of the National Theatre in Prague.

In the case of Leoš Janáček, we can also justifiably speak directly of a “social expressionism” with ideological links not just to the Czech literary modern movement but also to future avant-garde movements. In the words of the Czech musicologist and composer

artistically avant-garde group known as *Devětsil Arts Association*. Its members were first and foremost literati but later included composers (see below). In its manifesto, *Prague Monday*, of the 6th of December 1920, the founder artists did not define themselves as avant-garde but the main instigator of the *Devětsil*, and leading Czech critic and theorist, Karel Teige, used the word in a speech made at the Prague *Revolutionary Stage* on the 6th of February 1921. Czech musicology has employed the term



Karel Teige's illustrations for Vítězslav Nezval's book of poems *Abeceda [Alphabet]*

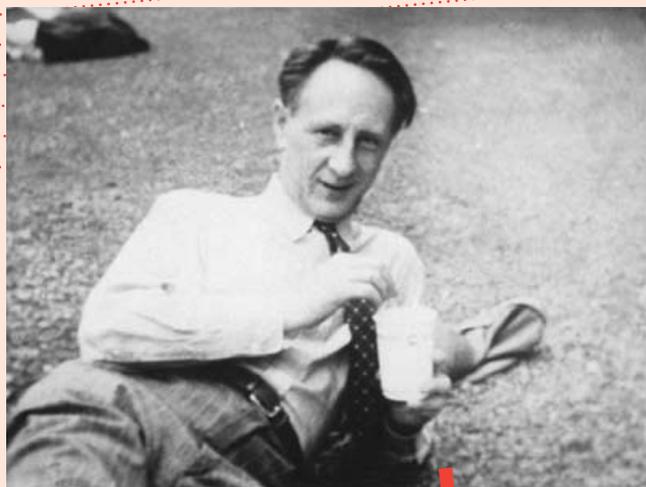
Miloš Štedroň, Janáček's "social and Slavonic expressionism" consists in the "exaggeration and acoustic compression of the expansive action". Janáček's vocal and vocal-instrumental work took on a social dimension through its partial orientation to folklore; the folk quality in his music consists not of mere citation of folk songs but of the highly individual transformation of the folk idiom leaving an "authentic core" of characteristic harmonic and melodic elements. In this way one of the unspoken but real and practiced programme-principles of the Czech interwar musical avant-garde was essentially fulfilled in his work. Janáček's music was played at the concerts of the *Přítomnost* [*The Present*] association and did so at a time when this group was already focused exclusively on avant-garde music (see below). Other expressions of the sympathy for Janáček felt by avant-garde movements included his honorary membership of The New Music Society of California (1925), where in 1927 he found himself at the side of e.g. Béla Bartók, Alois Hába, Arnold Schönberg, Darius Milhaud and the society's founder Henry Cowell. It is clear that Janáček attracted the attention of the avant-garde with works written after the First World War, for example the opera *Káťa Kabanová* (1921), and then particularly his chamber music (*String Quartets nos. 1 and 2* of 1923 and 1928, *Concertino*, 1925).

One very important factor for the emergence of the Czech avant-garde, especially in the institutional sense, was what was known as the Novák School. This consisted of the pupils of Vítězslav Novák and was a circle that provided the impetus for the founding of the *Society for Modern Music in Prague*. From 1927, when Alois Hába became head of this *Society*, it became an important formative centre of Czech music avant-garde.

The Character of the Czech Inter-War Avant-Garde in Four Words

The range of concerts organised in the interwar period, the activities of the composers' and music societies and critical feedback provided by the reactions of the specialist public offer a picture of a Czechoslovak inter-war musical life that was clearly responding to the new influences coming particularly from the German-speaking world and from France. Key works of most of the world avant-garde movements in music were performed and often even premiered in Czechoslovakia, and their influence was formative and enables us to gain a better understanding of the development and opinions of composers later considered

members of the Czech interwar musical avant-garde. Analysis and comparison of a representative sample of Czech pieces written in the inter-war period then enables us to describe the Czech inter-war music avant-garde using three headings: "civilism", "atonal music" and "the revolution of return". The fourth heading is the microtonal system of Alois Hába, which is also a specific original feature of the Czech inter-war avant-garde.



Bohuslav Martinů

The Revolution of Return

The term "revolution of return" was coined by Bohuslav Martinů and precisely sums up the character of the two more prominent movements of (not only) the Czech interwar musical avant-garde. These are neo-classicism as a reaction to romanticism and neo-folklore in the form of an analogous expression of the need to regain authenticity and rawness in the sense of rejecting beautification. In both cases these were movements of return that in the attempt to move forward looked backward and defined themselves in terms of opposition to sentimentalising subjectivism and then, more positively in terms of trust in the possibility of using the past as a point from which a new advance could be made in a different direction. The French composers' association *Les Six* with its principled neo-classicist orientation was very warmly received in the Czechoslovak Republic. This was particularly the case with the music of its members Arthur Honegger

and Darius Milhaud. Another strong influence was Igor Stravinsky, who was first hotly rejected by the professional public but then accepted and acclaimed with the same intensity. Last but not least, there was much discussion and awareness of the representative of the “new objectivity” Paul Hindemith, who in Czech circles was regarded as very similar in approach to composers identifying with neo-classicism.



Left to right:
Alois Hába, Pavel Haas, Iša Krejčí

Neo-Classicism and Constructivism

Neo-classicist approaches were embraced in particularly pure form by the *Mánes Music Group* of composers, and even included simple revival of the musical language of the 18th century, for example in works by the composer Iša Krejčí. The more usual form of Czechoslovak neo-classicism, however, involved its structural integration into a music that came to be called constructivism, which was akin in austerity and proclamative titles to civilism. For this music, the leading musicologist and founder of musicology at Masaryk University in Brno, Vladimír Helfert, used such apposite if subjective-sounding terms as “asentimental” or “atonal” or “mechanical” or “motoric” constructivism.

Prototypical for Czech constructivism were Pavel Bořkovec’s symphonic allegro *Start* (1929), Bořkovec’s song cycle *Stadium* (1929), his *Suite for Piano* (1930), *Wind Quintet* (1932) and his first *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1931). To these we should add a number of compositions by Bohuslav Martinů, and specifically his orchestral movements *Half-time* (1924) and *La Bagarre* (1926), the ballet *Kdo je na světě nejmocnější / Who is the Most Powerful in the World* (1923), the ballet *Vzpouř / The Revolt* (1925), the second and third *String Quartet* (1925, 1929)

and the *String Sextet* of 1932. Other composers temporarily inclining to constructivism included Pavel Haas, Karel Hába (the brother of Alois Hába) and the Iša Krejčí already mentioned. Later the term “constructivism” was also used pejoratively to mean music lacking in imagination and therefore merely “contrived”.

The inter-war symphonies of Erwin Schulhoff, for example no. 3 (1935) or no. 5 (1938) present

an interesting variant of Paul Hindemith’s intellectually kindred “revolution of return” in the spirit of “new objectivity”.

Neo-Folklore

Neo-folklore was not embraced as a major influence by avant-garde orientated composers in inter-war Czechoslovakia to any great extent and certainly never acquired the kind of atavistic urgency that it has in the case of Igor Stravinsky. The lyrical quality of Bohuslav Martinů’s cantata *Kytice / Bouquet* (1937) using the words of folk poems is illustrative in this respect, as is his sung ballet *Špalíček / The Chap Book* (1932). Other composers of the Czech musical avant-garde who took up folklore to a limited degree included Alois Hába (*Five Songs*, 1944, the opera *Mother*, 1929), Pavel Bořkovec (choral music *Folk Sayings*, 1936), and the director and composer Emil František Burian – largely because he wrote so much music for the stage.

Civilisms as Mechanical Rhythm, Sport and Jazz

As on the international scene, civilism in inter-war Czechoslovakia was expressed in two forms. On the one hand (as we have mentioned) as constructivism with the accent

on pregnant and motoric rhythm and sports themes declared in the titles of composition, and on the other as the fusion of art music and jazz. Sport had become part of the modern life of the new and above all emancipated world following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Like jazz entertainment, sport was not sentimental or nostalgic, but unaffected (unpretentious in the sense suggested by the word “civilism” in Czech), everyday and contemporary. And what is more it was dynamic, and so resonated not just with the character of the inter-war period, but also with other art avant-garde movements such as futurism. Bohuslav Martinů’s *Half-time* (1924) or Pavel Bořkovec’s symphonic allegro for large orchestra simply entitled *Start* (1929), are examples of how sport could be an inspiration when regarded in this way.

Jazz inspirations were attractive to composers for much the same reasons. Very little liturgical music was written in inter-war Czechoslovakia, but a vast amount of music was produced celebrating movement and dance. What is more, jazz became a welcome invigorating element and a means by which composers could ironically cock a snook at the music of the past with its heavy philosophical trappings. This avant-garde current was highly congenial to composers of the Czech inter-war avant-garde, as is apparent from both the quality and the number of jazz-inspired or even just jazz pieces that they wrote. For the Czech public the composer most closely associated with jazz at this period is Jaroslav Ježek (1906–1942), whose *Bugatti Step* (1931) has become a popular classic and can certainly compete honourably with the more famous *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) by the celebrated George Gershwin. Other composers strongly influenced by jazz – even if only for a short time – included Erwin Schulhoff, especially in his *Fünf études de jazz* (1926) for piano, and *Hot sonata* for alto saxophone and piano (1930). Schulhoff also wrote the very unusual jazz oratorio *HMS Royal Oak* (1930). Explicit jazz models or influences are obvious in the work of the composer and director František Burian (e.g. the opera *Bubu from Montparnasse*, 1927), and of course Bohuslav Martinů, whose ballet and suite *La revue de cuisine* (1928) perfectly conjures up the atmosphere of the time of its creation (1927), even simply in the title.

Erwin Schulhoff’s *Fünf Pitoresken*, especially the third, “dadaist” picturesque *In futurum* (1919) which consists just of rhythmically



Erwin Schulhoff and his “*In futurum*” (from *Fünf Pitoresken*, 1919)

III. In futurum.

Zeitmaß-zeitlos.

In tutto il canzone con espressione e sentimento ad libitum, sempre, sin al fine!

differentiated pauses and reflects Schulhoff’s experience with the work of Dadaist groups in Berlin and Dresden, belongs in this category of avant-garde musical production. Also worthy of mention are *Cocktails* (1927) composed by Emil František Burian on texts by the major Czech poet and founder of the *Group of Surrealists in the Czechoslovak Republic*, Vítězslav Nezval.



E. F. Buian

Atonal and Athematic Music, Reactions to the Second Viennese School

As in the wider world, for the Czech inter-war musical avant-garde too the key figure in moving beyond the limits of tonal music was Arnold Schönberg, and by extension the whole *Neue Wiener Schule*. The nature of the of Czech inter-war composers' response to this pioneering movements says much about the character of new music in the CSR in this period, and specifically its particular needs when it came to adoption of new trends in music. Schönberg's rigorous twelve-tone approach was alien to Czechoslovak composers in the great majority of cases, and this was also true of the hermetically compact and in Czechoslovakia virtually unknown music of Anton Webern. On the other hand, the lyricising and in many respects more conservative work of Alban Berg found a much warmer reception, as did Arnold Schönberg's free atonalism, which surprisingly enough was a declared source of inspiration for a number of composers influenced by neo-classicism or by extension constructivism. The almost negligible interest in Schönberg's dodecaphony and the freely atonal and later music of Anton Webern was paralleled by the almost complete lack of response to the work of the futurists, who were little known in the CSR and/or seemed too radical and so incompatible with the desire of most Czechoslovak inter-war composers to synthesise avant-garde influences and so exclude or tone down extremes. Futurism was the subject of some reflections and newspaper articles by Alois Hába, for example. We can also find a view illustrative of the period in a book by E.F. Burian, laconically entitled *Jazz*, where the author

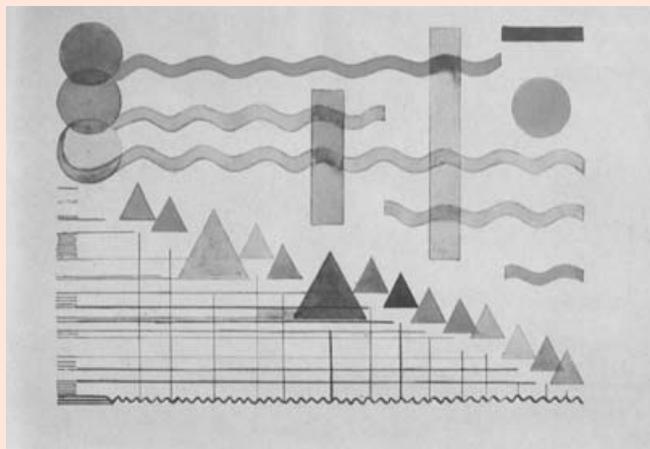
suggests that its “rumble and drums” makes jazz the musical analogy of all futurist activities.

The avant-garde movement represented by the *Neue Wiener Schule* was one of the starting points for the work of Miroslav Ponc, who belonged to the circle of composers around Alois Hába and even studied privately with Arnold Schönberg in the years 1927–32. In addition to atonal and microtonal music he experimented on the boundaries between music and visual art, especially as a member of the Berlin avant-garde Sturm group. The *Neue Wiener Schule* was likewise important for Viktor Ullmann, and episodically for other composers in the circle of Alois Hába, who may be regarded as the most prominent representative of athematic music and promoter of the atonal style.

The Microtonal System, Alois Hába and His School

Alois Hába (1893–1973) was undoubtedly one of the most significant and distinctive figures of the inter-war music avant-garde. He was active as a composer, teacher, organiser, promoter and theorist. He created and from 1921 used his own system of bichromatic and polychromatic composition, i.e. a system involving quarter-tones and third- up to twelfth-tones. This makes him the only Czech composer of the inter-war period to have been truly avant-garde in the conceptually pioneering as well as the creative sense; he published his conclusions on micro-interval and athematic music as well as employing them in his own music. He attracted many followers, thanks to whom we can speak of a Hába School in the latter half of the 20th century. From 1923 he taught a class in microtonal thematic and non-thematic composition at the Prague Conservatory and from 1946 to 1950 he lectured on microtonal composition at a specialised department of the Music Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. His pupils included the famous conductor and composer Karel Ančerl (1908–1973), and the important Czech composer Miloslav Kabeláč (1908–1979).

Alois Hába's most significant and distinctive pieces written using his microtonal system in the inter-war years include the quarter-tone opera *Matka / Mother* (1930), and the sixth-tone *Duo for Two Violins* (1937) and sixth-tone *Six Pieces for Harmonium* of 1937. Particularly worth of note among his works of the time outside the microtonal system is the *Nonet no. 1* in a twelve-tone system (but not “twelve-tone” in the sense of Arnold Schönberg's dodecaphony)



Miroslav Ponc's music graphics

from 1931, and *Nonet no. 2* in a seven-tone system (1932). One of his fundamental theoretical works is the study *Harmonické základy dvanáctitónového systému, tematické a nethematické hudební sloh / Harmonic Principles of the Twelve-Tone System, Thematic and Non-Thematic Musical Style*. (The reader will find a lengthy article on Alois Hába in CMQ 3/2005.)

The Environment and Institutions of the Czech Inter-War Musical Avant-Garde

An important role in forming and above all promoting the Czech inter-war musical avant-garde was played by music journals, especially *Rytmus: revue pro soudobou hudbu* [*Rhythm: a Review for Contemporary Music*], *Hudební revue* [*Music Review*], *Listy Hudební matice* [*Music Foundation News*] or *Dalibor: hudební listy* [*Dalibor: Music News*] and also the review *Hudební rozhledy* [*Musical Outlooks*], which still exists today and which was edited in the years 1924–1928 with the subtitle *Critical Paper for Czech Music Culture* by Vladimír Helfert.

Devětsil and Mánes

Several associations bringing artists together from different branches of the arts were founded in inter-war Czechoslovakia. Emerging in these associations was a common denominator proclaimed as the motive for their creation, i.e. identification with the “avant-garde” as such. The clearest example was the first such programmatically avant-garde society, the *Umělecký svaz Devětsil / Devětsil Arts Union* (1920). Its founder members were mainly writers, for example the novelist Vladislav Vančura, the poet and later Nobel prize-winner Jaroslav Seifert and the theorist, critic and major figure of Czech poetism Karel Teige. These were later joined by the composer, playwright and director Emil František Burian, the composers Iša Krejčí and Jaroslav Ježek and the music critic Josef Löwenbach. None of the latter developed their musical activities purely on the basis of *Devětsil* activities and principles, however, and they were soon founding other societies and organisations. At the beginning of the 1920s the Czech inter-war musical avant-garde was only just beginning to emerge.

The *Hudební skupina Mánesa / Mánes Music Group* came into existence in a similar way. Its name reveals its relationship to the Prague *Mánes Socie-*



*The Mánes Music Group in 1937
(left to right: František Bartoš,
Václav Holzknacht, Iša Krejčí,
Pavel Bořkovec, Jaroslav Ježek)*



Pavel Bořkovec

ty of Fine Artists. This society held exhibitions and social and arts meetings in its own functionalist building (designed by the architect Otakar Novotný, and from 1932 it also hosted concerts of the new *Mánes* “music club”. The members of the MMG were the composers Iša Krejčí, Pavel Bořkovec, Jaroslav Ježek, the composer and musicologist František Bartoš and the pianist and music writer Václav Holzknacht. Holzknacht’s book *Hudební skupina Mánesa* cites an article by Walter Seidl printed in the newspaper *Prager Tagblatt*, which vividly describes the course of the opening of the exhibition *Poesie 1932* in *Mánes* on the 27th of October 1933. Seidl’s article was entitled *The Avant-Garde at Night*. He reports that, “a hypermodern celebration was held for the opening of the Surrealist exhibition *Poesie 1932* in the *Mánes* Building. After an introductory address by the world famous architect Prof. Gočár, the temperamental poet Vítězslav Nezval gave a speech of welcome. The audience then got to hear a radio broadcast of a *Capriccio*, written for the occasion by the composer Ježek [...]. With elegant wit, Holzknacht then performed *Les Trois Valses Distinguées du Précieux Dégouté*, whose author is the least serious joker among composers: Erik Satie”. The first experiment in *Mánes* was therefore – in Holzknacht’s words – “a success” (no irony intended).

The Mánes Music Group was first and foremost an avant-garde orientated to “return” with the emphasis on Neo-Classicism but also on the unaffected music of the “every day” and jazz. In 1937 the MMG lost the right to use the premises of the *Mánes* building and basically ceased to exist, merging (now without Jaroslav Ježek) into the *Přítomnost / Presence* association.

Přítomnost, an Association for Contemporary Music

The society's full name was *Přítomnost, sdružení pro soudobou hudbu / an Association for Contemporary Music*. The idea behind *Přítomnost* was to encourage both the writing of contemporary music and its performance by bringing together composers, who were supposed to create a core repertoire, with musicians who were supposed to perform it, and also music critics to provide feedback and the chance of popularisation. The association was formed in 1924 by the merger of several smaller societies. Avant-garde music, however, was only to come to the forefront of the association's activities with the arrival of Alois Hába in 1934. From that point on, important members were to include the outstanding Czech conductor Karel Ančerl, the composers Emil František Burian and Vladimír Polívka (1896–1948), the composer and theorist Karel Reiner (1910–1979), and Vít Nejedlý (1912–1940, son of the important Czech musicologist, historian and later politician in the communist dictatorship Zdeněk Nejedlý).

Tam Tam

In 1925–1926 a group of musicians, writers and theatre artists got together, mainly on the initiative of E.F. Burian, in an association known as *Tam Tam*. Those who explicitly joined the group included the composers Jaroslav Ježek, Erwin Schulhoff, and Jaroslav Svoboda, the librettist and writer Jiří Mařánek and the natural scientist and music journalist Ctibor Blatný, but its meetings were also attended by the poet Vítězslav Nezval, the director and translator Jindřich Honzl, the director and writer Jiří Frejka and others. The activities of the group were far from limited to music, and like Devětsil or Mánes, Tam Tam provided a platform and meeting place for people from different branches of the arts. In 1925–1926 the group published its own review or more precisely leaflet, *Tam Tam*.

The Society for Modern Music in Prague

The Spolek pro moderní hudbu v Praze / Society for Modern Music in Prague, sometimes also known as the *Moderní spolek / Modern Society*, substantially overlapped with and indeed represented what was known as the “Prague Modern” movement in music and was also partly the creation of composers of the Novák school (see above). The founding declaration of the *Society*, made clear that membership was not dependent on orientation to avant-garde music, and that on the contrary, in the words

of one of its organisers composer Emil Axman, the *Society* “opposed deviation to the left” and so “the chimeras of atonal music”. This all changed, however, when Alois Hába became vice-president in 1927. The Czech composers whose music was most often performed under the *Society*'s aegis subsequently included the representatives of avant-garde music Alois and Karel Hába, Pavel Bořkovec, Jaroslav Novotný (1886–1918), Erwin Schulhoff and Leoš Janáček, and among foreign composers the work of Arnold Schönberg, Darius Milhaud, Alban Berg or Paul Hindemith.

In 1923 the Society became part of the Czech section of the *International Society for Contemporary Music* (ISCM, 1922), whose programme of concerts played a very important role in encouraging new Czech music and familiarising Czech audiences with the work of major modern composers abroad. The national sections of the ISCM were run by local organisations and in the CSR, which was among the first member countries, these were from 1923 the *Society for Modern Music in Prague*, *The Club of Moravian Composers* and the German association, *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen* (1918).

Otakar Ostrčil was the president of the ISCM section and Alois Hába was one of its most active members. From 1933 the *Přítomnost* association also represented the ISCM. Its official periodical was the *Listy Hudební matice / Music Foundation Paper*, and from 1935 *Rytmus / Rhythm as well*.

Theatres

Theatres, where projects combining all the most progressive visual, literary and musical ideas could be staged, were natural meeting places for avant-gardes. In Prague the most important theatres and theatre companies in this context were the *Osvobozené divadlo / Liberated Theatre* (1925), the *Dada Theatre* (1927) and especially E.F. Burian's *D-34* company (1934), familiarly known as the “Dee” (the number in the title changed with the year, so in 1935 it became *D-35*, a year later *D-36* and so on). The ten-year collaboration of the composer Jaroslav Ježek and the avant-garde Liberated Theatre of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich from 1928 to 1938 is a well-known and model example. The composer and theorist Karel Reiner was also closely involved with the “Dee” theatre (*D-35 – D-38*). The Liberated Theatre and “Dee” were a specific inter-war avant-garde phenomenon and also classic representatives of Czech theatrical avant-garde.

The Czech Inter-War Musical Avant-Garde in a Nutshell in place of a Conclusion

We can date what is known as the “Czech inter-war musical avant-garde” from the beginning of the 1920s, and more precisely from 1924, when the *Přítomnost* association was formed and shortly after it *Tám Tam*, and composers and other music performers and specialists started to create an environment suited to the development of new directions. Geographically, the Czech interwar music avant-garde was basically the Prague avant-garde, which was influenced above all by trends from Vienna, Paris and Berlin,

The Czech inter-war musical avant-garde was not a centralised movement, like a school or one tight group. It had no unifying programme or manifesto and at the beginning no organisations comparable with those of the literary and visual art avant-garde.

The playwright, director and composer Emil František Burian, and the composers Iša Krejčí, Jaroslav Ježek, Pavel Haas or Pavel Bořkovec may definitely be considered leading representatives of the Czech inter-war musical avant-garde. All these composers meet the definition of avant-garde attitudes and activities, whether in terms of tendencies to return, civilism and/or interest in atonal or microtonal composition. Alois Hába and Bohuslav Martinů were the most prominent Czech avant-garde figures in music internationally, and their importance is not confined geographically or chronologically to the inter-war period. Alois Hába is worthy of attention not only as a composer, but as codifier of composition techniques in the microtonal system. The composer and pianist Erwin Schulhoff also had a European reputation well-beyond the confines of the CSR.

The Czech Inter-war Musical Avant-Garde in a List of Works

The following overview of composers, their activities and a choice of their works illustrates the content and direction of the Czech inter-war music avant-garde. While the latter had no explicit manifesto, a programme of a kind was de facto created and realised in

the work of the composers on the list. Naturally the list of works is limited to music composed in the inter-war period.

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959), became world famous, successes in France, the USA, promoter and populariser. He fulfilled the programme of the avant-garde most notable in the orchestral movements *Half-time* (1924) and *La bagarre* (1926), and then *Jazz Suite* for 11 instruments (1928), *Sextet* for flute, oboe, clarinet, two bassoons and piano (1929), and also in the *Double Concerto* for two string orchestras, piano and kettle drums (1938), in the ballet *La revue de cuisine* (1927) and in exemplary form in the operas *Julietta aneb snář / Julietta or Dream Book* (1937), *Les larmes du couteau* (1928), the radio opera *Hlas lesa / Voice of the Forest* (1935), and the sung ballet *Špalíček / The Chap Book* (1932).

Alois Hába (1893–1973), important composer, teacher and creator of microtonal systems. The central protagonist of the Czech inter-war musical avant-garde. *Nonet no. 1* in the twelve-tone system (1931), *Nonet no. 2* in the seven-tone system (1932), *String Quartet no. 2* (1920, quarter-tone) and no. 5 (1923, sixth-tone), chamber piece *Music* (1921, quarter-tone), piano *Suite* (1925, quarter-tone), *Duo for Two Violins and Six Pieces for Harmonium* (1937, sixth-tone), the choral *Vocal Suite* on interjections from folk poetry (1922, quarter-tone) the opera *Matka / Mother* (1929, quarter-tone) and others.

Erwin Schulhoff (1894–1942), European reputation, sought after pianist, personal contacts with Webern, Schönberg and his pupils, and with avant-garde artists and poets. The piano cycles *Fünf Pittoresken* (1919), the Dadaist *Fünf Burlesken* (1919), *Hot-Sonata* for alto saxophone and piano (1930), *Streichquartett no. 1, no. 2* (1924, 1925), *Double Concerto* for flute, piano and orchestra (1927), *Concerto* for string quintet and wind orchestra (1930), eight symphonies (1924–1942), oratorio *HMS Royal Oak* (1930), ballet *Die Mondsichtige* (1925, prem. 1931), opera *Plameny / Flames* (1929). Influential essay *Revolution and Music* (1922).

Pavel Bořkovec (1894–1972), one of the most interesting figures of the inter-war music avant-garde. Especially with the symphonic allegro *Start* (1929), the songs for chamber ensemble *Stadion / Stadium* (1929), *String Quartet no. 2* (1929), *Sonata for Solo Viola* (1931), the songs

Rozmarné písně / Humorous Songs (1932), *Seven Songs for Vítězslav Nezval* (1931), the orchestral *Partita* (1936), opera *Satyr* (1938), ballet *Krysař / Pied Piper* (1939).

Emil František Burian (1904–1969), leading and radical composer, theatre writer and director, publicist. The songs with jazz orchestra *Cocktails* on texts by V. Nezval (1927), *the String Quartets nos. 1 and 2* (1927, 1929), operas *Bubu from Montparnasse* (1927), *Maryša* (1940), the ballet *Autobus* (1927), songs from the 1920s *Chlupatý kaktus / The Hairy Cactus*, *Malá panna / The Little Girl* and a great deal of stage music.

Pavel Haas (1899–1944), *Wind Quintet* (1929), *Předehra pro rozhlas / Overture for Radio* (1931), a very unusual phenomenon for the period: the vocal-orchestral *Psalm 29* (1932), *String Quartet no. 2 From the Monkey Mountains* with the jazz group ad libitum (1925), opera *Šarlatán / The Charlatan* (1937), *Study for String Orchestra* (1943) and other pieces.

Jaroslav Ježek (1906–1942), piano *Etudes*, *Bagatelles* (1933), *String Quartet nos. 1 and 2* (1932, 1941), *Concerto for Piano* (1927), *Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra* (1933), ballet *Nerves* (1928), a great quantity of stage music, including the famous and now popular classic orchestral *Bugatti Step* (1931), co-operation with the theatre avant-garde (Osvobozené divadlo), film music (e.g. *Pudr a benzín / Powder and Petrol*, 1931; *Peníze nebo život / Your Money or Your Life*, 1932) and much else.

Iša Krejčí (1904–1968), *Divertimento – Cassation* for 4 wind instruments (1925), *Five Songs* on texts by V. Nezval (1926), the operas *Antigone* (1933) and *Pozdvižení v Efesu / Disturbance in Ephesus* (1943), the ballet *Small Ballet* on a libretto by V. Nezval (1927), *Malá smuteční hudba / Small Funeral Music* for alto and chamber ensemble (1936) and other pieces.

Miroslav Ponc (1902–1976), *Five Polydynamic Pieces* for clarinet, xylophone and string quartet (1923), *Tři veselé kresby / Three Merry Drawings* for wind quintet (1929), orchestral *Předehra ke starořecké tragédii / Prelude to an Ancient Greek Tragedy* (1931), ballet *Osudy / Fates* (1935) and other works. Ponc was also a member of the Berlin avant-garde group *Sturm*, where he created projects on the boundary of visual art and music, often based on “colour listening”.

Karel Reiner (1910–1979), piano cycles *5 Jazz Studies* (1930) and *Suite with Fantasia* (1932), orchestral *Suite* (1931), incidental music etc.

Viktor Ullmann (1898–1944), *Variations and Double Fugue on a Theme by A. Schönberg* for piano and orchestra (1929), *Sonata for Quarter-Tone Clarinet and Piano* (1937), opera *Peer Gynt* (1929) and other pieces.

Emil Hlobil (1901–1987), orchestral suite *Weekend* (1933), *String Quartet no. 2* (1926) and other pieces.

Karel Šrom (1904–1981), *Symphony no. 1* (1930), orchestral *Suite* (1934) and other pieces.

Also e.g. **Karel Hába** (1898–1972), **Fidelio Finke** (1891–1968), **Vladimír Polívka** (1896–1948), in some respects **Hans Krasa** (1899–1944), **Hans Walter Süskind** (1913–1980), **Karel Janeček** (1903–1974).



Miroslav Ponc

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