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The New Hope of the Czech Minority: The Earliest Reception of Leoš Janáček and His Music (1872–1876)

Many years before he became recognised as the founder of the Czech-Moravian national opera (1894),¹ and long before the successful performance of *Jenufa* in Prague (1916) and Vienna (1918) strengthened his position in the canon of Czech music and established his lasting international reputation, Leoš Janáček presented himself as a composer, organist, church musician, music critic – and, first and foremost, as a choirmaster and conductor. Except for Vladimír Helfert,² earlier musicologists have been so anxious to comment on Janáček's later works and to tell the story about “the unrecognized genius”, that they have not paid much attention to the reception of his early activities.³ And, therefore, they have not realized that Janáček came to be the Janáček – the recognized genius – when he was barely thirty years old.

Brno's Czechs and their musical culture after 1860

Janáček entered into public musical life as an independent artist in 1872; this occurred in Brno, the capital of Moravia. Until 1880, Janáček's artistic activities took place almost exclusively in Brno and its immediate vicinity.⁴

While the battle over Bedřich Smetana was raging in Prague, and in nearby Vienna the proponents of the Wagnerian and the Brahmsian musical languages were contending with each other, Brno was spared such fighting, and it was left to dream its provincial dreams in peace. That may be how the situation appeared – and it really did seem that way – from the perspective of the two great cultural centres, but not from the perspective of Brno itself: Moravia's largest city was going through a musical struggle of its own.

From the beginning of the 1860s, the city's musical culture was becoming more deeply divided into Czech and German factions. The situation of the Czech minority in Brno was worse than that of the Germans from a demographic perspective as well as from social, political, and cultural standpoints. Brno's Czechs were also worse off in comparison with Prague's Czechs, who

¹ See esp. the following review of his second opera, *The Beginning of a Romance*: [Josef Merhaut], “Feuilleton”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 11. 2. 1894, p. 1.

² Vladimír Helfert, *Leoš Janáček: Obraz životního a uměleckého boje*. I. *V poutech tradice*, Brno 1939.

³ A remarkable, albeit much more theoretical perspective on this issue is offered by: Andrew Burgard, *Janáček's Musical Work and the Place of Moravia in the Modern Czech Nation, 1868–1908*, PhD dissertation, Department of Music, New York University, 2015, esp. pp. 18–87.

⁴ For the general overview of Janáček's artistic activities in the early 1870s, see esp. John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*. Volume 1 (1854–1914): *The Lonely Blackbird*, London 2006, pp. 44–123.

constituted the majority in their city. It was, however, in the strength of their national consciousness that Brno's Czechs were dominant over the Germans: German nationalism in Moravia came into being later than its Czech counterpart and as a defensive reaction.⁵ The 1870s in Brno were characterised by a growing nationalist movement. It was "marked by the assertion of the demands of Czech nationalists", which "had the aims of gaining equal status for the Czech language at schools and before the authorities, reforming election laws, and achieving recognition of the historical rights of the state by incorporating them into a constitution".⁶ After the impulses ushered in the 1860s, the Czech minority in Brno attempted to emancipate itself further, and it felt that musical culture might be the main arena in which it could slay the German Goliath. From 1873, Janáček stood at the forefront of this nationalistic cultural struggle, in which the Czechs did not emerge as definitive victors until after the sad events leading up to 1945.

In the early 1870s, however, the Czech element in Brno did not yet have enough people, material resources, and economic, political, social, or cultural capital; it lacked a strong cultural tradition and community, a theatre of its own, a large concert hall, and a conservatory. Qualitatively and quantitatively, Czech musical production and the criticism reflecting on it were behind. Unlike Prague or Vienna, unsightly Brno was then not a place where a new culture was blossoming against the background of high cultural traditions; the city's one-sided orientation towards industry and trade earned it the nickname "the Moravian Manchester".⁷

Czech culture in Brno was fundamentally influenced by the fact that the Czech National Revival in Moravia was different in character from that in Bohemia, and it occurred there later.⁸ In the 1880s, patriotic circles in Moravia were still maintaining some of the naivety and enthusiasm of the old days of the National Revival, and this stood out especially in comparison with the nationalist circles in Bohemia, and more than once it made an impression of enchanting freshness on an external observer.⁹ At the beginning of the 1870s, it was perhaps still true here that "patriotic social life created a substitute for the still nonexistent national social life; it was a sort of artificial

⁵ Milan Řepa, *Moravané Němci Rakušané: Vlasti moravských Němců v 19. století*, Praha 2014, pp. 174–175.

⁶ Jaromír Kubíček, *Dějiny žurnalistiky na Moravě. První století českých časopisů 1848–1948*, Brno 2013, p. 44.

⁷ Cf. Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁸ Cf. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, New York 2000, pp. 44–60.

⁹ Milan Řepa, *Moravané nebo Češi? Vývoj národního vědomí na Moravě v 19. století*, Brno 2001, p. 199.

microcosm, and the more artificial it was, the more it was characteristically Czech".¹⁰

At the time, the town's main Czech cultural institution, the 'Beseda brněnská' [Brno Forum], only had a male choir at its disposal, and its repertoire was limited to little choral compositions; at the beginning of the 1870s, it was mired in a deepening crisis. The Besední dům ([Meeting Hall], now the home of the Brno Philharmonic) stood in the centre of the city from 1873, serving as a mainstay of Czech cultural life – in fact earlier than the local 'Deutsches Haus, which was not opened until eighteen years later. So far, however, it was nothing more than a pillar: there was something for it to stand on, but there was not much for it to support. While German Brno – relying on its two strong institutions: its theatre and the Musikverein – could be compared with Vienna as far as music was concerned, hovering over Czech musical culture were the "pitfalls of amateurism".¹¹ Until 1881, Brno's Czechs did not have a theatre (the Germans had the Interimstheater from 1871, then the Stadttheater from 1882), and they therefore lacked an orchestra as well.

The main thing that was missing in the early 1870s was, of course, a "Moravian Smetana": a leading figure who would come to the forefront, a star who could be celebrated and could serve as a model worthy of imitation, an emblematic figure who would represent Czech-Moravian musical culture as a whole. Neither Pavel Křížkovský (1820–1885), nor Arnošt Förchtgot-Tovačovský (1825–1874), nor even Hynek Vojáček (1825–1916), the most popular Czech composers in Moravia, would become such a figure, and awareness of this wasted opportunity weighed especially heavily on the Czechs in Brno who were knowledgeable about the situation in the larger cultural centres and wanted Brno to become more like them.¹² There was no controversy over anyone like Smetana or Richard Wagner there, nor could there have been one, because the works by Křížkovský, Tovačovský, Vojáček, and other composers in Moravia were received not as indigenous works of art, but rather as eminently functional music for various occasions in the life of the Czech middle class. And although many people in Brno wished to believe in Křížkovský as a full-fledged Moravian equivalent of Smetana, Křížkovský himself does not seem to have believed this, and above all, at the beginning of the 1870s he did not wish such a role, nor could he have played it. To a considerable extent, especially in the 1880s, it was Antonín Dvořák who assumed this role, and it was through Janáček that Brno appropriated Dvořák as its own.

¹⁰ Vladimír Macura, *Známění zrodu a České sny*, Praha 2015, p. 135.

¹¹ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 182.

¹² Cf. Karel Sázavský, "Několik drobtů k životu a činnosti Janáčkově", in: *Hudební rozhledy* 1 (1924–25), p. 36.

There was also a lack of a great flagship work – a ‘Moravian’ or ‘Brno’ opera, symphony, symphonic poem etc. From 1863, it was Křížkovský’s cantata *Svatý Cyril a Metoděj* [Saints Cyril and Methodius] that served as an emblematic work, but its function and artistic quality were limited.¹³ The individual patriotic choruses by Křížkovský, Tovačovský, and others glorifying Moravia and drawing from the wellspring of Moravian folk songs published by František Sušil (in three editions, 1835, 1840, and 1860), supposedly finding unmediated contact with the souls of the Moravian people, functioned merely as a stopgap in spite of often achieving cult status and were incapable of representing Czech culture in Moravia in the long term.

Brno’s Czech intelligentsia felt itself to be connected with Czech musical culture in Prague and elsewhere in Bohemia, but at the same time, it was too removed from that culture to be able to identify with it without reservations and to accept its problems as their own or to replace its problems with their own. In Moravia, there was a shared consciousness of solidarity with Bohemian Czech musical culture, and at the same time, a clear feeling of having a different, individual identity. From the opposite perspective, i.e. from Prague’s point of view, this differentness appeared to be even greater, although in Prague as well, there was a predominant feeling that it would be inadvisable to exclude Moravia and Brno as its musical centre from Czech musical culture – in spite of Moravian culture’s peculiarity and backwardness. The collectively shared notion of the Czech nation as an “imagined community”¹⁴ was already stabilized quite well. Of course, this mostly rational, mutual attitude did not prevent many future highly irrational animosities, disdain felt by Prague’s residents towards provincial Brno, and inferiority complexes and grievances felt by people in Brno in relation to Prague.

The main Czech musical (vocal) societies in Brno at that time were Beseda brněnská and Svatopluk, along with Vesna and Zora. During Janáček’s early period, he collaborated with all of them. Janáček was also closely associated with two other key Czech cultural institutions, the newspaper *Moravská orlice* [Moravian Eagle], and the monastery in Old Brno during this period. To a considerable extent, Beseda brněnská, Svatopluk, *Moravská orlice*, and the Old Brno monastery represented a unified cultural circle with respect to their personnel, political ideology, and tastes.¹⁵ As far as interpersonal relationships are concerned, many important cultural figures in Brno at the time were active at two or more of the aforementioned institutions. This homoge-

¹³ Miloš Zapletal, “Rázu církevního a při tom provanuta duchem slovanským: recepcie Křížkovského cyrilometodějské kantáty”, in: *Acta historica Universitatis Silensianae Opaviensis* 12 (2019), pp. 51–68.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

¹⁵ Cf. Bohumil Zlámal, *Klášter králové na Starém Brně v cyrilometodějském ovzduší 19. století*, Brno 1937.

neity is understandable, given the paucity of Czech members of Brno's cultural elite. The Moravian Old Czech movement represented the basis of the political ideology of these institutions. With respect to taste, these institutions had in common a mostly conservative orientation in the realm of secular music (initially especially in the sense of adherence to an older type of production and repertoire connected to the National Revival) and a reformist, Cecilian orientation in sacred music. Such an orientation of tastes was, of course, contingent upon a practical knowledge of a particular kind of repertoire.¹⁶ In Janáček's early reception, the aforementioned four institutions served as a group of "taste carriers" [Geschmacksträger],¹⁷ i.e. a group within society that held a dominant standing for deciding in matters of taste in a given situation and a particular cultural milieu.

A promising choirmaster

Janáček introduced himself publicly at a relatively young age. He was not yet twenty years old in October 1872, when Pavel Křížkovský chose him as his successor in the post of music director at the Old Brno church. At the time, the basilica in Old Brno was regarded alongside the cathedral as the site of the musical productions of the best quality in the context of Brno's Czech culture.¹⁸ We can understand even this very early event as a kind of an incidence of Janáček's reception, documenting indirectly how a living legend of Czech music appreciated Janáček's musical abilities when the latter was barely eighteen years old.

Janáček soon showed that the hopes placed on him were not in vain. Janáček's tenure at the basilica in Old Brno was far above average in terms of quality of performing and programming, and it tied in fully with Křížkovský's work. Under his leadership, the music at the Old Brno basilica became "the pride of all of Brno and one of the most important hotbeds of sacred music in the Czech lands". Even before he began working in the sphere of secular music, with which he would later be primarily associated, the young Janáček became well known – and beyond the city limits of Brno as well – as a superb church musician,¹⁹ conductor and organist, who was admired for his ability to improvise. Janáček focused on repertoire that satisfied the demands of the Cecilian Movement, which was spreading from Germany to the Czech lands at the time. In the Czech lands, the Cecilian Movement was mostly implemented in a 'Czechoslavic' variant known as Cyrillism, which was more tolerant towards the language of modern music.

¹⁶ Zofia Lissa, *Nowe szkice z estetyki muzycznej*, Kraków 1975, pp. 114–133.

¹⁷ Levin Ludwig Schücking, *Soziologie der literarischen Geschmacksbildung*, Bern 1961.

¹⁸ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 196.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 177–179.

In parallel with his activities as a church musician, however, Janáček soon began to earn a reputation in the field of secular music as well. His first secular employer was the choral society Svatopluk, which was regarded at the time as “the best choir in Brno”.²⁰ On 18 January 1873, when Janáček performed, probably as the piano accompanist,²¹ at a Svatopluk beseda (this Czech term is explained below) at the tavern ‘U bílého kříže’, the reviewer from the leading Czech newspaper in Moravia still did not regard it as necessary to mention Janáček in his review.²²

Just a month later, however, the situation had changed, when Janáček took over as the choirmaster of Svatopluk on 13 February 1873. This occurred – almost prophetically – the same year when the Besední dům [Beseda House] was opened in Brno, which was to become the chief centre of local Czech culture and the topographical focal point of Janáček’s overall reception in the 1870s and ’80s. The very choice of an eighteen-year-old graduate of a teachers’ institute to take the helm of what was artistically the strongest Czech musical (choral) society represents a noteworthy moment in the history of Janáček reception. Amongst the likely causes for this, we must give priority to the existence of an awareness of Janáček’s abilities as a choirmaster, which he had already demonstrated while leading music at the church in Old Brno.²³ As can be seen from period texts reacting to this event, Janáček’s work in the sphere of sacred music strongly influenced the reception of his activity in the secular sphere.²⁴ Half a year later, a report about the same event by a Brno correspondent also appeared in the most influential Czech (Prague-based) music journal *Dalibor*; this seems to have been written by Josef Illner (1839–1894), the first relatively important Czech music critic in Moravia, and the founder and long-time chairman of Svatopluk. He wrote the following:

Above all, I would inform you that a new era has arrived for the ‘Svatopluk’ tradesmen’s society with the hiring of a new choirmaster, the youthful Mr. Lev Janáček. This promising musician is one of Křížkovský’s most accomplished pupils, and he is now temporarily employed at the church in Old Brno. Not only in that capacity, but also as the choirmaster of ‘Svatopluk’ and as a composer, he is showing himself to be a worthy apprentice of his master. His considerable musical erudition, noteworthy talent as a composer in the most solid tradition, fervent love for his art, and steely diligence are our guarantee that certainly one day he will assume a place of honour among the outstanding musicians of our nation.²⁵

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

²² See [unknown], “Beseda řemeslnické jednoty ‘Svatopluk’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 21. 1. 1873, pp. 2–3.

²³ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 194.

²⁴ For example, the newspaper *Moravská orlice* mentioned the choice of Janáček in a brief report, in which Janáček was characterised as “the well-reputed music director at the church in Old Brno”. [unknown], “V sezení výboru ‘Svatopluk’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 16. 2. 1873, pp. 2–3.

²⁵ [Josef Illner], “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova”, in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 255.

This early, prescient text already establishes at least three constants, “Be-griffsfelder”,²⁶ that will appear repeatedly in the reception of Janáček until the end of the 1880s: (1) The arrival of Janáček at the helm of Svatopluk is heralded with unwavering certainty as the beginning of a new era (his arrival at the helm of the Beseda brněnská three years later will be announced very similarly); Janáček is arriving as the man destined to resurrect Czech culture in Brno. (2) “Fervent love for his art” and “steely diligence” are mentioned as Janáček’s characteristic qualities. (3) Janáček is regarded as Křížkovský’s best pupil – not just as a choirmaster, but also as a composer.

The mention of Janáček’s skills as a composer is quite surprising to us in view of the fact that up until that time Janáček had not composed anything that would be worth talking about from today’s perspective. In fact, as far as we know, by the time when the article in question was published, he had given public performances of just three of his little compositions. Which of Janáček’s scores could the reviewer in *Dalibor* have known, whether from hearing or reading them? The possibilities are the “echo song”²⁷ for tenor and piano *Když mě nechceš, což je víc?* [If You Don’t Want Me, So What?], 1871–1872?), the Mass JW X/1 (1872?, now lost), and an arrangement of Haydn’s imperial hymn “Gott erhalte den Kaiser!” for voice and organ (1872?). The dating of these three compositions is uncertain.²⁸ Then there are Janáček’s compositions that are known to have been written by July 1873: the men’s chorus *Orání* [Ploughing], the now lost men’s chorus *Ženich vnucený* [The Enforced Bridegroom] and the vocal-instrumental version of *Válečná* [War Song, JW IV/3]. The reviewer in *Dalibor* might have heard *Orání* and *Ženich vnucený*, because they were first performed in April 1873; theoretically, he could also have heard the vocal-instrumental version of *Válečná* premiered on 5 July 1873. As we can see, there are not many compositions that the Brno correspondent in *Dalibor* could have known, but in all probability, these were works corresponding to “the most solid tradition” of composition, meaning conservative works, whether in the sense of the traditions established by Křížkovský and Förchtgott-Tovačovský (in the case of the choruses) or the conventions of the Cecilian-Cyrrillian repertoire (in the case of the Mass).

Svatopluk, Janáček’s first secular employer, was founded in 1868, and at the time, it was Brno’s second leading musical (choral) society. The growing importance of Svatopluk after 1870 went hand in hand with the

²⁶ Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption: Beethoven 1970*, Mainz 1972, esp. pp. 40–41.

²⁷ “Ohlas” [=echo] is a 19th-century Czech word for a literary work (mostly a poem) which paraphrases or imitates a folklore model.

²⁸ The dates are quoted according to: *Janáček’s Works: A Catalogue of the Music and Writings of Leoš Janáček*, ed. Nigel Simeone, John Tyrrell and Alena Němcová, Oxford 1997.

deepening crisis at the Beseda brněnská. At first, Svatopluk had been basically the “tradesmen’s department” of the Beseda brněnská (which was an association for the higher-placed bourgeoisie), and the two institutions were interconnected by their personnel and ideology. Svatopluk belonged to the self-reliant, non-Marxist current of the working-class movement in Austria-Hungary. This society had closer ties to the Czech petite bourgeoisie than to the working class: the members of Svatopluk were mostly skilled tradesmen rather than factory workers. In addition, questions of nationality and governance played a much more important role in its politics and ideology than the issues of the proletariat. Svatopluk had very close ties to the Moravian Old Czech movement, combining a naïve revivalist patriotism and the ideas of Pan-Slavism with loyalty to the monarchy and Catholic socialism, accentuating the role of religion and education in the intellectual and material emancipation of the working class.²⁹ As was clearly signalled by the society’s name, Svatopluk had its cultural foundation in the so-called Cyrillo-Methodism,³⁰ a synthesis of Catholicism and Nationalism that was specific to Moravia and was the chief ideology of Czech nationalism in Moravia in the 1860s.³¹

Apart from entertainments and balls, the predominant type of production presented by Svatopluk at the time was called a ‘beseda’ [discussion, forum].³² These events, approaching the character of artistic productions (concerts), were also the predominant type of production presented by the Beseda brněnská. In the first half of the 1870s, a ‘beseda’ still tended to have the character of petite bourgeois nationalism, corresponding to the old revivalist type of programme of the kind that had been in decline in Prague since the mid-1860s. At the time when Janáček was hired, the mission of Svatopluk was not purely artistic, but primarily educational. Likewise, a beseda’s primary function, which it would present at first usually following a banquet, was not autonomously artistic, but revivalist (in terms of the Czech National Revival); the idea was “to use singing and music to maintain the solidarity of young bourgeois Czech society”.³³ The form of a beseda corresponded to its function: besides choral compositions, there were performances of solo songs or instrumental pieces, ‘declamations’ (recitations of poetry, excerpts of prose, or didactic texts), and ‘conversational music’, loosely organised entertainment as a background during the drinking of beer, and, of course, dancing. A Svatopluk entertainment or beseda would be attended mostly by a Czech public, and they tended to be strongly nationalist

²⁹ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., pp. 186–192.

³⁰ In the 9th century, Duke Svatopluk invited the missionaries Cyril and Methodius in order to evangelize the Great Moravian Slavs.

³¹ Řepa, *Moravané nebo Češi?*, op. cit., pp. 157–168.

³² [unknown], *“Svatopluk” 1868–1893*, Brno 1893.

³³ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 183.

in character, often enhanced by the choice of clothing (gentlemen would wear a 'čamara' – a long black coat favoured by Czech patriots – and women were dressed in the national colours: red and white). The remarkable combination of impoverished circumstances with proportionately heightened enthusiasm and quasi-sacral pathos were typical of a beseda of Brno's Czechs since the 1860s.³⁴

When Janáček took over leadership of Svatopluk, it seems to have been the best Czech musical (choral) society in Brno, but its quality was only relative, as a result of the crisis at the Beseda brněnská and the insufficient competitiveness and poor quality of the other societies. The Svatopluk beseda programmes consisted mostly of men's choruses by Ludevít Procházka, Hynek Vojáček, the Javůrek brothers, Alois Jelen, Arnošt Förchtgott-Tovačovský, and Karel Bendl. The music of Pavel Křížkovský was absent from the Svatopluk repertoire at the time, apparently because it was too difficult for the society's singers.³⁵ The reviews dating from the period just before Janáček's arrival often criticised the quality of the choir's performances but were appreciative of its nationalist efforts.

Janáček was not usually mentioned in the regular reports on the activities of Svatopluk carried by the newspaper *Moravská orlice*, the main Czech-language daily newspaper in Moravia, from the beginning of 1873.³⁶ *Moravská orlice* then reported on a concert of the choral society Moravan held on 16 March 1873, at which there was a performance of a men's chorus with the title *Válečná* accompanied by piano, trumpets, and three trombones.³⁷ It is uncertain whether this was Janáček's *Válečná* JW IV/3, which was composed that same year.³⁸ We also do not know why the review does not mention the composer of this work, while the other composers are identified.

Janáček's first documented appearance at the helm of Svatopluk took place on 27 April 1873 in the Sokol Hall of the Besední dům.³⁹ This was a special beseda held for the benefit of unemployed labourers. With respect to the type of programming, this was a beseda of the older, non-artistic kind, because it was not held in a concert venue, but instead on the premises of the Sokol Hall (which served as a gymnasium and a dining hall), and it consisted

³⁴ This is well documented by the following text dated 1863, a lofty ode to the "Orlice" [=Eagle], meaning both the newly founded newspaper *Moravská orlice* [Moravian Eagle] and the mythologised animal symbolising Moravia: "You surely were rejoicing above us on the 15th of February, when the singing of the great choir of the master Křížkovský [...] shook the inn in Klepáčov [a village near Brno], and our songs surely rose to the heights of Olympus, where you were once a servant of Father Perun the God of Thunder." [unknown], "Od Macochy", in: *Moravská orlice*, 22. 3. 1863, p. 3.

³⁵ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 193.

³⁶ Cf. esp. [unknown], "Zábava besedy 'Svatopluka'", in: *Moravská orlice*, 27. 2. 1873, p. 2.

³⁷ [unknown], "Pěveckou a deklamatorní zábavu", in: *Moravská orlice*, 16. 3. 1873, p. 3.

³⁸ Cf. *Janáček's Works*, op. cit., p. 120. Cf. also Jaroslav Vogel, *Leoš Janáček*, Praha 1997, pp. 100–101.

³⁹ "Svatopluk" 1868–1893, op. cit., p. 26; [unkn.], "Beseda", in: *Moravská orlice*, 20. 4. 1873, p. 2.

of declamations, a solo cello performance, and dancing.⁴⁰ There were relatively few participants at this beseda, but it was received enthusiastically by both the critics and the public. Two of Janáček's men's choruses were given their premieres at the event: *Orání*, a simple arrangement of a Moravian folk song, and *Ženich vnučený*, a setting of the text of a Serbian folk song. Janáček seems to have composed both works in 1873, the latter has not been preserved. One of the notices for the beseda states: "We are looking forward to [these] compositions by Mr. Lev Janáček".⁴¹ Velebín Urbánek (1853–1892), the brother of František Augustin Urbánek (who would later publish Janáček's music), was himself an important music publisher and organiser, and he wrote the following about the beseda in the newspaper *Moravská orlice*:

Whenever I have seen the singers from 'Svatopluk' perform, it has occurred to me: many are called, but few are singing. Yesterday, however, the 'Svatopluk' select choir sang choruses for us, by which they showed the benefits of having a painstaking conductor. – And that fully describes Mr. Janáček, who was the author of the two new choruses performed yesterday for the first time. Mr. Janáček [...] is a pupil of our local composer Křížkovský. There is something of Lohengrin about his chorus *Ženich vnučený* (a Serbian folk song), and this difficult chorus and the playful *Orání* [...] were performed with precision. *Orání* had to be repeated, and Mr. Janáček was called out for a bow!⁴²

After the singing of Karel Bendl's chorus *Důvěra v Boha* [Trust in God] for mixed choir, according to Urbánek:

The audience rejoiced and gave a generous ovation to the singers and especially to their new choirmaster, who is able to share his enthusiasm with the singers and thus to perform choruses that 'Svatopluk' would not have dared to attempt were it not for the artist Janáček. Overall, the performance of the programme made a very nice impression on us, and the public, which had at other times regarded the [musical] programme [at beseda events] as a necessary evil and which, especially in the case of the younger members of the public, would read through the order of the dances ten times in advance, enjoyed itself exceedingly, devoted its attention extraordinarily well to the performance, and was unsparing in its applause. We can congratulate 'Svatopluk' on this extraordinary beseda, and we sincerely hope that every future regular or special beseda will be such a success, and this will certainly be the result if Mr. Janáček continues to lead the good singers from 'Svatopluk'.⁴³

Urbánek's text is important because it is the first lengthier text documenting the reception of Janáček. Today's reader will surely be surprised by the assertion that Janáček's early chorus has "something of Lohengrin" about it.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 199.

⁴¹ [unknown], "Beseda Svatopluk", in: *Moravská orlice*, 26. 4. 1873, p. 3.

⁴² Veleb [=Velebín Urbánek], "Mimořádná beseda 'Svatopluku'", in: *Moravská orlice*, 29. 4. 1873, p. 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ On similar statements about Janáček's Wagnerianism, see esp. Miloš Zapletal, "On the Programmatic Character of Janáček's Suite Compositions from the 1870s", in: *Nineteenth-Century Programme Music: Creation, Negotiations, Reception*, ed. Jonathan Kregor, Turnhout 2018, pp.

Because *Ženich vnučený* has not been preserved,⁴⁵ it is hard to guess what its musical features were that could have led to this assertion, but we do know that in Czech musical journalism of the period, the term “Wagnerian” and its equivalents were used quite arbitrarily, basically to designate musical oddities of any kind.⁴⁶ *Ženich vnučený* therefore seems to have impressed Urbánek as something strange and new in comparison with the canonical choral works represented in Brno mainly by the music of Bendl, Tovačovský, and Křížkovský; perhaps one of the chorus’s features (chromaticism or unusual harmonies?) reminded him of Wagner’s music or of *Lohengrin* in particular, that being an opera he probably knew well. References to *Lohengrin* must have been comprehensible to music-loving readers in Brno of the period because playing excerpts from that opera was popular there at the time.⁴⁷

A Brno correspondent to the journal *Dalibor* (apparently Josef Illner, who is introduced above) also made brief mention of the beseda in question. This critic also paid special attention to Janáček’s contribution: “he attracted out attention to himself both because of the precise, polished performances of the choir and because of his performance of one of his own compositions based on a folk tune (a very nicely arranged Serbian song).”⁴⁸

Svatopluk had to wait several years to receive official permission to hold a ceremony for the consecration of the society’s banner.⁴⁹ A banner consecration served as an important revivalist-nationalist ritual, and it was also practised by a gymnastic organization Sokol and other societies; to give the reader a sense of its importance, it is worth mentioning that 12,000 people including 200 on horseback took part at the Brno Sokol banner consecration in 1871.⁵⁰ The years 1872 and 1873 saw heightened persecution of liberalistic and nationalistic tendencies. This ban, scarcely comprehensible today, resulted from the authorities’ concerns about the dangerous effects of the cultural energy that this ritual was capable of unleashing. It is therefore no wonder that even on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the choral society’s founding in 1873, Svatoopluk failed to obtain the necessary permit. In spite of this, on 5 July 1873 (not coincidentally, on the feast day of the ‘Moravian Apostles’, Saints Cyril and Methodius), the society held a ceremonial beseda at the Besední dům, at which they “unveiled’ [...] their beautiful new

359–378. Cf. John Tyrrell, “Tchaikovsky, Charpentier and the Formation of Janáček’s Mature Operatic Style”, in: *Czech Music Around 1900*, ed. Lenka Křupková, Jiří Kopecký, Hillsdale, NY, 2017, p. 167.

⁴⁵ *Janáček’s Works*, op. cit., p. 297.

⁴⁶ Marta Ottlová and Milan Pospíšil, “Zu den Motiven des tschechischen Wagnerianismus und Antiwagnerianismus”, in: *Oper heute: Ein Almanach der Musikbühne*, 9. Bd., ed. Horst Seeger, Berlin 1986, pp. 165–182.

⁴⁷ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., pp. 343–344.

⁴⁸ [unknown], “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova”, in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 255.

⁴⁹ Cf. e.g. [unknown], “Z Brna”, in: *Hudební listy* 3 (1872), p. 242.

⁵⁰ Kubíček, *Dějiny žurnalistiky na Moravě*, op. cit., p. 45.

banner". In many regards, this beseda was still non-artistic in character because it included the obligatory dancing at the conclusion,⁵¹ but it was the first Svatopluk performance given in the Courtyard of the Besední dům and not in the Sokol Hall, and this represented another important step away from the non-artistic, functionalist sphere.

For the Czech folk in Brno undergoing emancipation, the beseda connected with the unveiling of Svatopluk's banner was an important, solemn event, although the undertaking was actually very simple, almost private in character. The participants included members of the public who had previously avoided Svatopluk events, including members of the Czech aristocracy in particular.⁵² The event had a strongly nationalist, quasi-religious character, and the tone of the reports about it in the Czech press corresponded to this: there was a hint of Moravian patriotism, but basically in the spirit of overall Czech nationalism.⁵³ There were repeated notices about the beseda in the Prague journals *Dalibor* and *Hudební listy* [Musical Leaves] and also in the left-wing Moravian weekly *Občan* [The Citizen], but Janáček was not mentioned in this context – unlike the successful violinist Václav Kopta and the singer Karel Čech.⁵⁴

The musical programme of the beseda began with Norbert Javůrek's popular hymnic chorus *Na Moravu* ([On Moravia], 1865), which was an extraordinary success, not surprisingly given the circumstances. A review from the newspaper *Moravská orlice*, which was also printed in the left-wing journal *Občan* and was apparently written by Josef Illner, states that "the society's young, gifted, and promising choirmaster Mr. Lev Janáček had rehearsed the chorus with special care". Besides Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's *Song of the Pilgrim*, there was also to have been a performance of the cantata *Saints Cyril and Methodius* at the beseda, "a magnificent work by our esteemed Father Křížkovský", but this did not take place.⁵⁵

For us, the matter of the greatest interest is the fact that Janáček's *Válečná* [War Song], composed that same year, received its premiere at this beseda.⁵⁶ The work, exhibiting the influence of Förchtgott-Tovačovský, was heard in the instrumental version for men's chorus, trumpet, three trombones and piano (JW IV/3), which is older and longer than the a cappella version.⁵⁷ As

⁵¹ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 199.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁵³ On the concept of "fatherland" in the culture of Czech National Revival, cf. Macura, *Znamení zrodu a České sny*, op. cit., pp. 157–171.

⁵⁴ See e.g. [unknown], "Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova", in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 143; [unknown], "Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova", in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 174; [no title], in: *Hudební listy* 4 (1873), p. 165; [unknown], "Sezení výboru řemesl. besedy Svatopluk", in: *Občan* 4 (1873), p. 3; [no title], in: *Hudební listy* 4 (1873), p. 184.

⁵⁵ r [=Josef Illner], "Beseda", in: *Moravská orlice*, 9. 7. 1873, pp. 2–3.

⁵⁶ Vogel, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵⁷ Jarmila Procházková, "New Discoveries about Janáček's Choruses from 1873 to 1876", in: *Hudební věda* 54 (2017), pp. 139–149.

Jarmila Procházková demonstrated in the cited study, the instrumental version of *Válečná* was performed at this beseda, but only with piano accompaniment because it was not desirable to have a military band participate at this event.⁵⁸ The reviewer for *Moravská orlice* wrote:

The third and final sung portion was a new chorus, especially composed for the celebration by Lev Janáček [...]. The whole composition exhibits a forceful, bellicose spirit as well the pious mind of one calling on God for help. The composition and its performance made a very good impression on the public. And it could not do otherwise. The composer Lev Janáček was called out for a bow, and the chorus had to be repeated.⁵⁹

The mention of a “forceful, bellicose spirit” and a “pious mind” (the pathos of which was in any case appropriate for the ceremonial event in question) apparently reflects not only the musical setting of *Válečná*, combining homophonic or unison passages with almost Baroque-like contrapuntal sections into a convincing, combative sounding whole, but also the nature of the text it was based on: patriotic poems written in 1870 – as proven recently by Procházková – by Josef Boleslav Pecka Strahovský, a working class poet of leftist orientation. The text of *Válečná* (but not Janáček’s music!) makes reference not only to the Hussite tradition, but also to *Hej, Slované* [Hey, Slavs], popular song that was a symbol of the pan-Slavic movement.⁶⁰ At the end, the reviewer writes with characteristic pathos: “In spite of all the barriers placed in the path of the ceremony, ‘Svatopluk’ unveiled its banner in a dignified manner, so as far as the produced portion was concerned, it can be said with pride: “This was the work of workers.”⁶¹

In the Prague journal *Dalibor*, an anonymous critic also mentioned the Svatopluk ceremonial beseda, writing that at this event, Janáček had attracted his attention “to an even greater degree”:

Under his direction, our association’s men’s choir sang ‘Na Moravu’ by Norbert Javůrek with precision and fire, the likes of which we have never before heard from them at such a performance. Janáček’s chorus ‘Válečná’ was received equally well, although there was perhaps something of a discrepancy between the musical form and the text. But I do not wish to discourage Mr. Janáček. Our sincere wish is that he might have every opportunity of growth through a well-rounded musical education and of fostering his talent as a composer; then he surely will not leave unfulfilled the bright hopes we rightfully place on him.⁶²

The reviewer’s minor complaint may refer to the sometimes complicated contrapuntal writing in *Válečná*, or to objective discrepancies and omissions

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 139–144.

⁵⁹ r [Josef Illner], “Beseda”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 9. 7. 1873, pp. 2–3.

⁶⁰ Procházková, “New Discoveries”, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–123.

⁶¹ r [Josef Illner], “Beseda”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 9. 7. 1873, pp. 2–3.

⁶² [unknown], “Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova”, in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 255.

in Janáček's musical setting of Strahovský's poem, which the composer managed to avoid when composing the a cappella version.⁶³

The liberal German newspaper *Mährischer Correspondent* published in Brno merely reported that "the police headquarters officially forbade the Czech society Svatopluk from holding a banner consecration ceremony in Brno",⁶⁴ and it did not make any reference to the actual ceremonial beseda. This is not surprising given the political orientation of the *Correspondent*: it definitely was not supportive of Czech nationalistic efforts. To conclude discussion of the ceremonial beseda, we would mention that the conservative Olomouc newspaper *Našinec* also referred to the event briefly, but Janáček's name was not mentioned.⁶⁵

Soon after taking the helm of Svatopluk, Janáček began making efforts towards reform in the direction of leading his society and Brno's Czech musical culture as a whole away from the late-revivalist status described above towards higher artistic goals. Above all, Janáček was trying to free Svatopluk's productions from non-artistic contexts and to move in the direction of more demanding repertoire of greater artistic merit, and he insisted on performance quality over quantity. At first, this got a positive critical reception.⁶⁶

Typical situations that put Svatopluk productions into non-artistic contexts were the society's excursions to places near Brno, at which its singing members would promenade through towns and villages, led by a wind band. Such excursions, which were also undertaken by other nationalist societies at the time (such as Sokol), served "the purpose of manifestations of patriotism".⁶⁷ The excursions were a manifestation of a new, "more combative conception of patriotism". This was directed "outwardly, moving from the 'quiet of studies' to public places".⁶⁸ The first Svatopluk excursion in which Janáček took part was on 10 August 1873.⁶⁹ Leading the procession were men bearing the choral society's newly consecrated banner; two young ladies then adorned it "with a beautiful wreath". After this ritual (that tempts one to resort to pseudo-Freudian interpretations), the procession arrived at the Czech village Žabovřesky, where it was welcomed by "mortar fire". The report about the excursion carried in the newspaper *Moravská orlice* praised Svatopluk for the "artistic presentation" (i.e. high-quality vocal performance), writing

⁶³ Procházková, "New Discoveries", op. cit., p. 149.

⁶⁴ "Wie die 'Mor. Orlice' von heute meldet, hat die Polizei-Direction die für den 5. Juli I. J. in Aussicht genomene Abhaltung des Fahnenweihe-Festes des czechischen Vereines 'Svatopluk' in Brünn behördlich untersagt." [unknown], "Fahnenweihe-Fest", in: *Mährischer Correspondent*, 20. 6. 1873, p. 2.

⁶⁵ [unknown], "Řemeslnická beseda 'Svatopluk'", in: *Našinec*, 11. 7. 1873, p. 4.

⁶⁶ See e.g. t, "Koncertní beseda 'Svatopluka'", in: *Moravská orlice*, 18. 3. 1874, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 197.

⁶⁸ Macura, *Znamení zrodu a České sny*, op. cit., p. 264.

⁶⁹ [unknown], "Výlet", in: *Moravská orlice*, 12. 7. 1873, p. 2.

that this was no surprise, because Janáček was conducting.⁷⁰ There was also a reference to the excursion to Žabovřesky by the Brno reporter for the journal *Dalibor* (apparently Illner): “On the excursion [...] a few easier choruses were sung very precisely and properly.”⁷¹ A second Svatopluk excursion took place that year on 21 September to Židenice, a different village near Brno; unfortunately, we have no other information about this excursion.

On 9 November 1873, a Svatopluk ‘concert beseda’ took place again at the courtyard of the Besední dům. This time – in spite of a raging cholera epidemic – an extraordinarily large public participated. The ‘concert beseda’ was a new, semi-concert type of programme that Janáček introduced during his tenure with Svatopluk; this primarily involved the elimination of dancing, declamatory, and other older entertainment interludes. Nonetheless, the programme of this beseda still included “poetry readings” and a playful “violin performance” not identified in more detail. The beseda included, among other things, the Czech version of the *Marseillaise* (in the notice, this politically controversial song was only identified, for safety’s sake, as “Song with Solo Voice Accompanied by Orchestra”)⁷² and choral works by Tovačovský and Jan B. Kittl. Of greatest importance to us, of course, is the fact that Janáček’s men’s chorus *Nestálost lásky* [Instability of Love, 1873] was premiered there.

Moravská orlice announced and promoted this “in many respects entertaining evening”. The notice did not mention Janáček, but it noted the change that he had achieved with Svatopluk, namely that under his leadership the association was “going down his well-chosen path to achieve his purpose”, that during the past two years “it is exhibiting activity that does nothing but honour to it and to its workforce”, and it predicted success for the whole event.⁷³ According to another notice that appeared in *Moravská orlice*, as the textual basis for *Nestálost lásky* Janáček had “again” chosen “a Serbian folk song” (sic!).⁷⁴ In a relatively detailed review of this concert beseda, the critic from *Moravská orlice* urged better attendance at Svatopluk productions, turning to labourers and tradesmen and appealing to their nationalist fervour. In his opinion, Svatopluk was definitely deserving of greater attention, because it was presenting “real entertainments worthy of all recognition”. According to the critic,

all of the choruses were performed with exceptional conscientiousness, and in more than one difficult transition, it seems that we had the pleasure of observing the vocal routine with which the Svatopluk choir has distinguished itself for a second time now at such an entertainment. There were no traces of the former mere singing through

⁷⁰ [unknown], “Výlet ‘Svatopluka’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 12. 8. 1873, p. 3.

⁷¹ [unknown], “Z Brna”, in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 402.

⁷² [unknown], “Beseda”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 4. 11. 1873, p. 2.

⁷³ [unknown], “Svatopluk”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 6. 11. 1873, p. 2.

⁷⁴ [unknown], “Svatopluk”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 19. 10. 1873, p. 4.

of compositions, either; everything was done with dignity worthy of a concert, and we would not be wrong to attribute this gratifying turn of events to the good direction that is clearly a matter of importance to the choirmaster Mr. Janáček.

According to the reviewer, the Svatopluk choir needed to expand. “Brno is already the sort of place that lacks all kinds of things; and what it has is sometimes of an almost tiresomely patriarchal character.” At the end of the column, the author returns to discussion of Janáček’s new composition *Nestálost lásky*:

First of all, we were surprised by the choice, really a compilation, of this folk song, which completely lacks an aesthetic motif. The second strophe is an unnecessary popular addition that is not appropriate to the poem as a whole, and it makes a satirical sneer out of the other pretty verses. We have not found this strophe in any collection of folk songs, and we think the composer could also do without it. As far as the composition is concerned, it is well thought out and effective in individual parts, until the composer forgot that what he had before him was a folk song, which calls for simplicity and warmth, and not what nearly amounts to an anatomical dissection of the music down to the smallest details, in which the national character disappears completely. The composer should take note of Křížkovský, Martinovský[,] Zvonař and others, and see where they put the main emphasis when composing based on folk songs. Sentimental sweetness is not always the right musical ‘expression’ capable of transforming a song into a new poem through music. The composer made a sincere attempt at this poetic transformation, and in the last strophe he even succeeded – but still, the overall meaning of the original poem was lost. Even so, our hopes are high for Mr. Lev Janáček’s future.⁷⁵

This is one of the few reports in *Moravská orlice* in which a composition by Janáček or any of his other activities is given a negative review, although even this text ends with an expression of the hopes placed in the young musician. Let us attempt to disentangle the reviewer’s arguments. The phrase “folk song compilation” may refer to the belief, which persisted until recently, that in *Nestálost lásky* Janáček had set to music a combination of two texts of folk songs from Moravian Slovakia, *Šohajku švarný na vraném koni* [Handsome Lad on a Black Horse] and *Ó, láska, láska, ty nejsi stálá* [O Love, O Love, You Are Inconstant], musically unifying the two texts with a variation of the melody of the first song.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, as Procházková has documented, the combining of the two songs was not random and inauthentic: in the context of the folklore of Moravian Slovakia, this was possible.⁷⁷ The reviewer from *Moravská orlice* describes the text of the second song as a “popular addition”, i.e. de facto a pseudo-folklore forgery. According to Procházková, the reviewer’s comment was justifiable to a certain extent, because it was true that at the time of the premiere of *Nestálost lásky*, any of the printed

⁷⁵ t, “Koncertní beseda”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 13. 11. 1873, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Cf. Antonín Tučapský, *Mužské sbory Leoše Janáčka a jejich interpretační tradice*, Praha 1971, pp. 13–15.

⁷⁷ Procházková, “New Discoveries”, op. cit., pp. 133, 177–178.

folk songs collections did not contain a song which combined both strophes in question.⁷⁸ This reviewer, too, was critical of the second strophe because “it makes a satirical sneer out of the other pretty verses”. Procházková also has a convincing explanation for this criticism: the strophe goes into the topic of sex in exchange for money, which was carried over from an authentic folklore source, but which was taboo from the viewpoint of contemporary bourgeois society.⁷⁹ It also seems quite surprising that the reviewer characterises the musical aspect of the composition as well “thought out” and “effective in individual parts”, while today, in comparison with Janáček’s later choral music, *Nestálost lásky* does not seem to be especially inventive.⁸⁰ The critic’s other complaints – excessive complexity, the “anatomical dissection of the music” of the folk song “down to the smallest details”, and the composition’s lack of fervour – are also now difficult to comprehend: after all, this is one of Janáček’s simpler choral compositions.⁸¹ The accusations of a lack of fervour, meaning a certain calculated, scholarly character, and of being overly analytical apparently reflect the ubiquitous triplet figures whereby, according to Trojan, Janáček may have been trying to capture the mood of flowing water.⁸² Not even these figurations, however, sound extremely provocative to modern listeners.⁸³ As examples of true folk character, meaning simplicity and fervour in the treatment of the original folk material, the reviewer mentions Pavel Křížkovský and other older folk song arrangers: Jan Pavel Martinovský (1808–1873) and Josef Leopold Zvonař (1824–1865). The review ends with an evaluation of the “poetic transformation” of the folk song in the last strophe, and it is critical in general of the “sentimental sweetness” for which Janáček completely “lost” the “meaning of the original poem”.

The Brno correspondent to the journal *Dalibor* (probably Illner) also wrote positively about this concert beseda and had favourable things to say about the change that Janáček’s arrival at the helm of Svatopluk had brought about at a time when Beseda brněnská was in a period of stagnation:

It was the first attempt for the society in question on the concert stage, and we are pleased to say it came off splendidly. The programme, not excellent, but very tastefully put together [...], again convinced us that the choirmaster Mr. Lev Janáček [...] is fully conscious of his goal and that he is taking vigorous steps to achieve it. The choruses performed under his leadership were surprising in general, and the beseda as a whole made the most favourable impression possible on the entire very large and select public. This is all the more commendable when we consider that the ‘Svatopluk’ choir consists almost exclusively of labourers. We would even venture to say that once two or three more strong singers join the tenor I and bass II sections [...], under

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁸⁰ Tučapský, *Mužské sbory Leoše Janáčka*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁸¹ Cf. the editor’s introduction in: *Leoš Janáček, Tři mužské sbory*, ed. Jan Trojan, Praha 1978, p. 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Cf. Tučapský, *Mužské sbory Leoše Janáčka*, op. cit., p. 15.

Janáček's leadership the choir will rise to the level of the most renowned choral societies.⁸⁴

Concerning *Nestálost lásky*, the reviewer writes that the author

once again presented himself as a composer and, in fact, in a [...] folk song, which did not overall meet with a good result. We would praise Mr. Janáček for following Křížkovský in the overall manner of musical arranging; but at the same time we would dissuade him from wanting to be original at all costs, and thereby falling into a manner that begins to be baroque. Otherwise, we wish to express our most sincere praise for this composition of his.⁸⁵

What led the reviewer from *Dalibor* to this warning seems to have been the same characteristics of Janáček's composition that the reviewer from *Moravská orlice* denounced much more harshly. The tastes of the two critics were quite similar, differing only in the degree of leniency. Both were seemingly provoked mainly by the ubiquitous triplet figurations, which made too much of a contrived, mannered, "baroque" impression on them. The critic from *Dalibor* noticed the similarity between Janáček's and Křížkovský's manner of composing,⁸⁶ but he warned the youthful adept of the composer's craft not to go too far in the stylisation of a folk song. He applied the same criteria for the arranging of a folk song as his colleague from *Moravská orlice*: the goal was fervour and simplicity of expression along with faithfulness to the tradition represented by Křížkovský and his peers of the same generation. On the other hand, the critic did not raise any objection to the combination of two texts into one; he appears not to have noticed it at all, so he regarded *Nestálost lásky* as a musical setting of a single, authentic folk song. As we can see, the Moravian critics of the 1870s for the most part exhibited traditional tastes and a conservative aesthetic attitude, with no desire for anything that would go far beyond the norms established by Křížkovský and other older arrangers of folk songs.

A review of the first Svatopluk 'concert beseda' also appeared in the left-wing weekly *Občan*; according to the article, "both the choruses conducted by Mr. Lev Janáček and the other parts of the programme engendered much praises. The audience was especially pleased with the folk song 'Nestálost lásky', so it had to be repeated."⁸⁷

After the success of the first concert beseda in November 1873, another event with a programme of this type took place on 14 March 1874 in the Great Hall of the Besední dům. This time, Janáček presented his new men's chorus *Osamělá bez těchy* [Forsaken, 1874] in its first version (JW IV/7),⁸⁸

⁸⁴ [Josef Illner], "Zprávy z Prahy a z venkova", in: *Dalibor* 1 (1873), p. 402.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Cf. Tučapský, *Mužské sbory Leoše Janáčka*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁸⁷ [unknown], [no title], *Občan* 4 (1873), p. 2; quoted in Procházková, "New Discoveries", op. cit., p. 146.

⁸⁸ Procházková, "New Discoveries", op. cit., p. 155.

and for the second time he performed the men's chorus *Orání*, which had been a success the year before. The announcement of the beseda in *Moravská orlice* mentioned Janáček's compositions, luring its readers – somewhat deceptively – to hear “two new choruses by the society's talented and zealous choirmaster, Mr. Lev Janáček”.⁸⁹ As far as the character of this beseda is concerned, it was still rather similar to the older, non-artistic productions, because it included a “violin solo”; it did, however, differ from the usual beseda because of the omission of the concluding dancing. This time, the beseda was attended by a large audience, certainly thanks to Josef Lev (1832–1898), a baritone singer, then a star at Prague's Provisional Theatre, who appeared at the event. Besides Janáček's choruses mentioned above, the programme included Křížkovský's cantata *Sts. Cyril and Methodius* in the version for voices, piano, and winds (the performance of which could not be realised at the beseda connected with the unveiling of the banner), Beethoven's Piano Trio Op. 1, No. 2,⁹⁰ and other works. Already the programming of Křížkovský's cantata was something new in the context Svatopluk's repertoire. According to a review that appeared in *Moravská orlice*, this concert beseda:

stood far above the ordinary sort of concerts that are given simply so that it cannot be said that nothing is being done. The programme of the beseda was carefully put together, and they took noteworthy consideration of the matter mainly so that what was performed was of outstanding – artistic – character. [...] The ‘Svatopluk’ choir performed the other numbers on the programme to the full satisfaction of the public, and in our opinion, the direction of the choirmaster Mr. Janáček was in every respect a guarantee of the choir's success. It should be mentioned that Mr. Janáček is quite adept as a composer of melodies for folk song, and his compositions, when he avoids long-windedness, stand out for their pleasingly colourfulness, as we would see fit to assert about his folk song ‘Orání’. Foremost among the choruses [...] on today's concert is the chorus by Pavel Křížkovský [...], with respect not to its performance, but to the grandeur of the work itself.⁹¹

Janáček's compositions, characterised as “melodies for folk songs” or even as “his folk songs”, are evaluated favourably – unlike the previous review in *Moravská orlice*. This time, Janáček avoided “long windedness” (apparently a reference to *Nestálost lásky*, which is, in fact, rather lengthy), and in addition, his choruses, and *Orání* in particular, are said to “stand out for their pleasing colourfulness”.⁹²

There was also a review of this beseda by a Brno correspondent to the journal *Dalibor*. Its success was said to have been exceeded by the success of the concert of the star violinist Otakar Ševčík (1852–1934) being presented by the Beseda brněnská at that time. Concerning Janáček's performance of the

⁸⁹ [unknown], “Koncertní beseda ‘Svatopluka’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 8. 3. 1874, p. 2.

⁹⁰ –r, “Concert Svatopluk”, in: *Brünner Morgenpost*, 17. 3. 1874, p. 247.

⁹¹ †, “Koncertní beseda ‘Svatopluka’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 18. 3. 1874, p. 2.

⁹² Ibid.

Cyril and Methodius cantata, the author, like his colleague from *Moravská orlice*, stated that “because of the small number of singers, the result was not excellent, but in view of the difficulties of the composition, it was quite respectable, and this truly does credit both to the singers and to their choir-master Mr. Janáček.”⁹³ There was not, however, any mention of Janáček’s compositions.

A review of the beseda also appeared in the *Brünner Morgenpost*, a German governmental newspaper, according to which the concert offered “a selection of attractive pieces, mostly serious in content”. The concert left “a very favourable impression” on the reviewer and was deserving of the “public’s enthusiastic applause”. Janáček’s choruses are mentioned in the review in the conservative newspaper, but not by their titles.⁹⁴

Occurring at the same time in parallel was Janáček’s reception as a church musician. The music at the church in Old Brno, where Janáček was standing in for Křížkovský as choirmaster, attracted special attention at Easter. Janáček in particular drew attention to himself during Holy Week of 1874 (1 – 6 April),⁹⁵ when he performed music written by Palestrina, Křížkovský, and German and Czech Cecilian composers.

Moravská orlice ignored Janáček’s activities in the sphere of sacred music, but not completely. For example, during the Easter season of 1874 mentioned above, specifically on 3 April, Janáček led the choir of the Old Brno monastery during a mass in Bystrc, a village lying a few kilometres outside of Brno, for the installation of a new pastor there. *Moravská orlice* carried a story reporting that the mass was performed with precision by a choir under “the direction of the well-known composer and choirmaster Mr. Lev Janáček”. The reviewer wrote that “here, we once again recognised the difference between true singing of sacred music and what is ordinarily performed in churches”.⁹⁶ This was apparently a reference to Janáček’s involvement with the reform movement and efforts to implement Cyrillian reforms in practice.

The Brno correspondent to the journal *Cecilie* (the main Czech periodical for Catholic sacred music, which was promoting Cyrillian reforms) wrote a lengthy article about Janáček’s Easter performances; the author was probably Ferdinand Lehner (1837–1914), the editor-in-chief of the journal at the time and a leading figure of the Cecilian movement in the Czech Lands. The article begins with a lament over the poor quality of Brno’s musical culture, and especially of its church music, and over how slowly the reform of sacred music was progressing in Brno. Then the correspondent writes that during Holy Week, standing in for Křížkovský was “his pupil Mr. Lev Janáček, a

⁹³ [unknown], “Z Brna”, in: *Dalibor* 2 (1874), pp. 101–102.

⁹⁴ –r, “Concert Svatopluk”, in: *Brünner Morgenpost*, 17. 3. 1874, p. 247.

⁹⁵ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 178.

⁹⁶ [unknown], “Z Bystrce”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 12. 4. 1874, p. 2.

youthful musical force who gives rise to beautiful hopes". Concerning Janáček's actual work as a choirmaster, he adds: "Beautifully harmonised litanies and responsories [...] performed with precision are tremendously thrilling to the minds of the listeners. Here, the worship service and the singing merge in to a single, harmonious whole, and one can tell that they flow from a single source — the spirit of the Catholic Church."⁹⁷

Let us now return to the sphere of secular music. Again in 1874, Svatopluk took excursions. On 31 May and 19 July its members travelled to Židenice and Žabovřesky respectively, two villages they had already visited the year before. The Brno correspondent to *Dalibor*, apparently Illner, reported the following about the two excursions: "Each time, a few choruses were sung under the proven leadership of the choirmaster, Mr. Lev Janáček, whom the association in question will soon be losing, unfortunately."⁹⁸ This refers to Janáček's planned departure to Prague to study at the Organ School.

The last Svatopluk event at which Janáček participated before departing for his studies in Prague was an excursion to Šlapanice (a little town a few hours from Brno on foot) undertaken on 6 September 1874.⁹⁹ The programme of the excursion was as follows.¹⁰⁰ At ten in the morning, the Svatopluk "select choir" sang a "vocal mass" under Janáček's direction at the Šlapanice parish church. At one o'clock in the afternoon was the departure from Brno of the "other members of the association and participants in the excursion on a public procession to Šlapanice". Then at 3:30 p.m., a "garden entertainment" was held in Šlapanice in the hall of the Association of Tradesmen. At that event – besides declamations and choruses by Josef Vašák, Tovačovský and other composers –, Janáček's *Válečná* was heard for the first time in a performance of the newer a cappella version that had probably been arranged for the occasion¹⁰¹ (it should be recalled that the older version of the work was performed during the ceremony for the consecration of the Svatopluk banner in July 1873). At seven o'clock in the evening, there was a concert beseda on the premises of the Šlapanice Town Hall, followed by dancing. At the beseda, Janáček conducted choruses by Vašák and Křížkovský, and there were declamations and compositions for solo cello, but above all, three more of Janáček's 'songs for choir' were heard. Procházková has recently proven that the three choruses in question were *Láska opravdivá* [True Love], *Divím se milému* [I Wonder at My Dear], and *Vínek stonulý* [How Strange My Lover Is].¹⁰² All three compositions can be dated to the period before Janáček's departure to study in Prague in October 1874.¹⁰³ While *Láska opravdivá* and

⁹⁷ –r, "Z diecése Brněnské", in: *Cecilie* 1 (1874), pp. 46–47.

⁹⁸ [unknown], "Z Brna", in: *Dalibor* 2 (1874), p. 263.

⁹⁹ Cf. Procházková, "New Discoveries", op. cit., p. 147.

¹⁰⁰ [unknown], "Řemeslnická beseda 'Svatopluk'", in: *Moravská orlice*, 6. 9. 1874, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ Procházková, "New Discoveries", op. cit., pp. 139–149, 178.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 149–155, 178.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125, 155.

Vínek stonulý are musical settings of folk texts, the third chorus, *Divím se milému*, was composed to a lyrical text from the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁴

According to the review printed in *Dalibor*, the Svatopluk excursion “with respect to the musical results was an excellent [...] success [...], the performance of the choirs [...] was faultless and imbued with an endearing spring-like sprightliness that was obviously indicative of the excellent rapport prevailing between the choirmaster and the singers.” The reviewer added: “With Lev Janáček’s departure, ‘Svatopluk’ will suffer no small loss; we can boldly assert that he has elevated the choir he has been leading to a very noteworthy artistic level”.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, the author of the article did not evaluate even one of Janáček’s compositions. A very brief report about this excursion also appeared in the weekly *Občan*.¹⁰⁶

October 1874 was an important month for Janáček. He was appointed as an interim teacher at the Imperial and Royal Czech Teachers Training Institute in Brno, he was admitted as a student at the Prague Organ School, and he was elected as an honorary member of Svatopluk.¹⁰⁷ For Janáček, the temporary move to Prague represented one of the most important changes of his life. A Brno correspondent to *Dalibor*, apparently Josef Illner, made an attempt to clear the way through Prague’s musical jungle for Janáček when he wrote the following a few months before Janáček’s departure: “Mr. Janáček is going [...] to Prague in order to devote himself to the thorough study of music, and in particular, in order to learn composition.” In conclusion, he put in a word for Janáček: “Surely you will not deny him good advice and all possible support; I would then assure you that Mr. Lev Janáček shall be a worthy addition to the ranks of our [Czech] promising musicians.”¹⁰⁸ Naturally, the beginning of his studies in Prague meant a temporary interruption of Janáček’s activity with Svatopluk: he departed from his home association in September 1874, then he resumed cooperation with them in July 1875. Helfert has evaluated this pause as a period when Svatopluk sank back to its former, poor level of quality.¹⁰⁹ *Moravská orlice* wrote almost nothing about Svatopluk during the 1874/75 season, and this is evidence of its decline.

Of course, the reception of Janáček did not stagnate during this interim; it simply set out on new paths. At this time, Janáček became acquainted with Ferdinand Lehner, the aforementioned publisher of the journal *Cecilie*, which was the platform of the Cyrillian movement in print, and soon thereafter Janáček began contributing material to the journal. At the beginning of 1875, it was here that Janáček’s first scholarly article was published: *Pavel*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–128.

¹⁰⁵ D. J., “Z Brna”, in: *Dalibor* 2 (1874), pp. 358–359.

¹⁰⁶ [unknown], [no title], in: *Občan* 5 (1874), p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ See D. J., “Z Brna”, in: *Dalibor* 2 (1874), pp. 358–359.

¹⁰⁸ [unknown], “Z Brna”, in: *Dalibor* 2 (1874), p. 263.

¹⁰⁹ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., pp. 202–204.

Křížkovský a jeho činnost u opravě chrámové hudby [Pavel Křížkovský and his Activity in the Arranging of Church Music], thereby launching his activity as a music critic and publicist, then in 1875–1876 that activity was furthered mainly on the pages of *Cecilie* and *Moravská orlice*. In the article, Janáček takes conservative positions, endorsing Křížkovský as an eternal certainty, an example worthy of perpetual following, and a composer whose works, as an outgrowth of Moravian folk music, represent an obligatory model for all creation of “Slavonic”, i.e. Czech-Moravian art music.¹¹⁰

At Eastertide in 1875, Janáček was staying in Brno, and at the Old Brno church he prepared a musical programme with repertoire similar to the Easter programme from the previous year, and again the Old Brno church choir made a name for itself.¹¹¹ As in the previous year, *Moravská orlice* did not report on this religious event, so Janáček had to do so himself by writing a letter published in *Cecilie*, in which he unambiguously stated his support for the ideas of the Cecilian reform, although with certain reservations regarding its practise.¹¹²

Janáček completed his studies at the Prague Organ School on 24 July 1875. As part of the examination preceding his graduation, on 23 July he gave a public performance of his harmonically venturesome Chorale Fantasia for organ (JW VIII/4), which had he apparently composed that same year.¹¹³ In itself, this public examination would not have been all that noteworthy had it not been reviewed by a critic from the most important Czech political newspaper, *Národní listy* [The National Newspaper]. He wrote: “L. Janáček’s Chorale Fantasia, its long-windedness notwithstanding, is quite gripping both for its thematic interest and its contrapuntal arrangement, revealing noteworthy creative power, which we hope shall be developed to perfection”. According to the reviewer, Janáček also excelled as an organist (toccatas and fugues by J. S. Bach).¹¹⁴ This seems to have been the first time that *Národní listy* wrote about Janáček, and it would long remain the newspaper’s only mention of the composer.

In the summer of 1875, Janáček left Prague and began devoting himself fully to Brno’s musical life, taking over the position of music director for the church in Old Brno and for Svatopluk, and becoming the “soul of the whole life of Brno”.¹¹⁵ At the very beginning of August 1875, the journal *Cecilie* reported to its readers: “Lev Janáček, a pupil of Křížkovský, an assiduous producer of sacred music in the truest sense, and a person well known to the

¹¹⁰ Lev Janáček, “Pavel Křížkovský a jeho činnost u opravě chrámové hudby”, in: *Cecilie* 2 (1875), p. 1.

¹¹¹ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 178.

¹¹² L. J. [=Leoš Janáček], “Z diecése Brněnské”, in: *Cecilie* 2 (1875), pp. 38–39.

¹¹³ *Janáček’s Works*, op. cit., p. 120; Vogel, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., pp. 242–243.

¹¹⁴ [unknown], “Výroční zkoušky na ústavě pro vzdělání varhaníků a ředitelů kůru”, in: *Národní listy*, 29. 7. 1875, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., p. 203.

readers of ‘Cecilie’ from several in-depth articles [...], has returned to Brno. It is our firm hope that in him, sacred music will find a gifted composer.”¹¹⁶

Moreover, *Moravská orlice* reported that already on 28 July, Janáček had begun rehearsals with Svatopluk.¹¹⁷ The rehearsals were in preparation for an appearance by the choirs of Beseda brněnská, Svatopluk, Zora, and the church musicians from Old Brno at the Besední dům,¹¹⁸ which took place on 22 August 1875. The performance was given to raise money for Radhošť, a society that supported poor students from Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia at Prague’s institutions of higher learning. Janáček took the initiative with this “entertainment”, and in *Moravská orlice* he published a call for participants.¹¹⁹ There were also repeated notices about the benefit concert for Radhošť in the Prague periodicals *Národní listy*, *Dalibor*,¹²⁰ and *Hudební listy*, which expected that the entertainment would be of very good artistic quality, and they wrote – perhaps under the impression of the aforementioned public examination at the organ school – that “there was an addition of [...] Mr. Janáček from the conservatory, who soon became a popular instrumentalist”.¹²¹ This notice was the very first mention of Janáček, which appeared in *Hudební listy*, the second most important Czech music journal.

The benefit concert for Radhošť became a cultural event of unprecedented size, and it was received with enthusiasm by the public and critics alike. Its programming corresponded to that of a traditional beseda: a diverse combination of all kinds of genres of varying artistic quality.

Moravská orlice wrote enthusiastically about this “students’ entertainment” as being “one of the most successful entertainments given in Brno for the Czech public in terms of both the performance and the attendance”. The compositions had been “rehearsed with particular diligence and, as is generally known, skilfully led [...] by the promising composer Mr. Janáček”. The reviewer also reports that Alois Pražák, at the time the most important Czech politician in Moravia (the leader of the Moravian branch of the Old Czechs), sent the students’ entertainment greetings by telegraph.¹²²

The Brno correspondent to *Dalibor* also reported on the benefit concert for Radhošť. Janáček’s performance of Bendl’s chorus *Důvěra v Boha* was said to have been “truly excellent, although the work itself demands very attentive,

¹¹⁶ Lev Janáček, [no title], in: *Cecilie* 2 (1875), pp. 61–62.

¹¹⁷ [unknown], “Z výboru pro zařízení zábavy ve prospěch Radhoště”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 1. 8. 1875, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Cf. esp. H[ynek] Kašlák, *Janáček – dirigent*, Praha 1936, pp. 2–3.

¹¹⁹ L[eoš] Janáček, “Zkouška pěvecká ku koncertu”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 28. 7. 1875, p. 2.

¹²⁰ [unknown], “Studentská zábava v Brně”, in: *Národní listy*, 18. 8. 1875, p. 2; [unknown], “Studentská zábava v Brně”, in: *Dalibor* 3 (1875), p. 264.

¹²¹ F, “Z Brna”, in: *Hudební listy* 6 (1875), p. 102. Cf. [unknown], [no title], *Hudební listy* 6 (1875), p. 134.

¹²² [unknown], “Studentská zábava”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 24. 8. 1875, p. 2.

skilled singers; we would attribute a few slight lapses in ensemble to the circumstance that the conductor, Mr. Janáček, was also accompanying the choir himself at the piano, which seems to us rather precarious, especially for such a difficult work, and in fact this was not without consequences in some places for the entrances of individual voices.” The compositions by Norbert Javůrek and Křížkovský performed by the combined forces of the Beseda brněnská, Svatopluk, and Zora choirs under Janáček’s direction “were definitely the most successful portion of the programme, demonstrating what a choir led by an energetic and musically erudite conductor can achieve, especially when supported by the equal zeal of the singers; the intonation, ensemble, and diction were superb.”¹²³ There was also a report about the concert in the music journal *Hudební listy*:

Listening to the men’s choir was a special treat [...], it was led by the talented choir-master Mr. Janáček. He has a well accredited reputation as a choirmaster, so that everyone expects good results from a choir that he has rehearsed and is conducting, and we were not disappointed this time, either. The choirs [...] were outstanding for the accuracy as well as the grandeur of their performance [...]. One could see that we have sufficient forces among singers and conductors for us in Brno to be able to undertake large-scale vocal productions more often.¹²⁴

The importance of the entire event is documented by the number of influential periodicals that reported on it. Among them was *Našinec* [The Patriot], a regional conservative newspaper published in Olomouc. The event was said to have been a success:

Of the choral pieces, we most enjoyed hearing Křížkovský’s new work ‘Zahrada Boží’ [The Garden of God], which was sung by all of the men’s vocal associations [...] led by the youthful choirmaster Janáček; [...] Mr. Janáček’s careful preparations and the performance that came off correspondingly brought exceedingly great pleasure to both the public and the composer.¹²⁵

Soon after the benefit performance for Radhošť, on 1 September 1875, two of the more important Cyrillian reformers of sacred vocal music in Bohemia, Ferdinand Lehner and Josef Förster, made a visit to Doubravice nad Svitavou, a little town near Brno, accompanied by Janáček. *Moravská orlice* reported about this enthusiastically, expressing support for the reform efforts, and it called Janáček “the promising pupil of our Křížkovský”.¹²⁶

The reception of Janáček in 1875 concluded with two non-artistic events, at which musical performances served primarily for the manifestation of nationalism by Brno’s Czechs. The first was a ‘Merenda’ held on 25 September 1875 at the Besední dům and organized by Sokol. A ‘Merenda’ was a festive

¹²³ [unknown], “Z Brna”, in: *Dalibor* 3 (1875), pp. 338–339.

¹²⁴ [unknown], “Studentská zábava v Brně”, in: *Hudební listy* 6 (1875), p. 142.

¹²⁵ [unknown], “Zábava ‘Radhoště’”, in: *Našinec*, 25. 8. 1875, pp. 1–2.

¹²⁶ [unknown], “Opět o reformě posvátného zpěvu”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 10. 9. 1875, p. 2.

evening with a varied, naively patriotic programme containing choral numbers, poetry recitations along with dancing and entertainment. In the review in the *Moravská orlice*, we only read that the public turned out in meagre numbers and that a men's chorus that was not further identified was "performed with precision under Mr. Janáček's superb direction, for which he received plenty of deserved praise". The reviewer also wrote – and this is of the greatest interest to us – that among Brno's men's choral societies, there were "three in name only, but in reality only one".¹²⁷ By "one", the author certainly meant Svatopluk, because Beseda brněnská was then in a period of stagnation. A correspondent to *Dalibor* merely wrote that the members of Svatopluk "sang some easy choruses" there under Janáček's direction.¹²⁸

Another non-artistic but much more important event was the massive celebration that Janáček organised in honour of the memory of Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829), a philologist and a key figure of the Czech National Revival. It took place on the evening of 2 November 1875 at Dobrovský's grave in a cemetery in Old Brno. There was a performance of Křížkovský's chorus *Zahradá Boží*, which had enjoyed success at the aforementioned benefit performance for Radhošť. With a total of fifty-four singers, this was a relatively major undertaking (there had even been plans for a choir of two hundred voices) and in general a strong manifestation of national consciousness.¹²⁹ On 30 October, *Moravská orlice* carried Janáček's call for participants in the event,¹³⁰ and a report about the event appeared in the newspaper a few days later:

The performance itself was perfect and distinguished in the most tender parts, which can only be properly attributed to the great diligence of these amateurs. [...] It seems to us, then, that it would be unjust not to mention that Mr. L. Janáček deserves full recognition as being most responsible for this promising revival of our amateur vocalists, having spared no effort to achieve what is a truly superb result under the present circumstances.¹³¹

Especially in the context of this massive nationalist event, the final sentence of the passage is very important: "At the same time, we see this as a guarantee that the helpful enthusiasm of our very talented Mr. Janáček will succeed in filling our nation's local musical world with a new, permanent life."¹³²

On 23 January 1876, Svatopluk held a Carnival beseda with dancing at the Sokol Hall of the Besední dům, at which two of Janáček's men's choruses received their Brno premieres. The first was *Když mě nechceš, což je víc?*

¹²⁷ a, "Merenda 'Sokola' brněnského", in: *Moravská orlice*, 28. 9. 1875, p. 2.

¹²⁸ [unknown], "Z Brna", in: *Dalibor* 3 (1875), pp. 338–339.

¹²⁹ Cf. Helfert, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., pp. 204–205.

¹³⁰ Lev Janáček, [no title], in: *Moravská orlice*, 30. 10. 1875, p. 3.

¹³¹ [unknown], "Včera večer zpíváno bylo u hrobu Dobrovského", in: *Moravská orlice*, 3. 11. 1875, p. 2.

¹³² *Ibid.*

(1875?) to a text from *Ohlas písní českých* [Echo of Bohemian Songs, 1839] by František Ladislav Čelakovský, while the second was the technically simple but still effective *Láska opravdivá* (1874),¹³³ which had already been premiered in 1874 in Šlapanice. In the case of the former work, however, it is not certain whether the piece in question was the men's chorus or a song for tenor and piano.¹³⁴ Besides those two compositions, Janáček's *Orání* was also heard – for at least the third time – at this beseda. *Moravská orlice* carried repeated notices about the beseda,¹³⁵ writing that, among other things, the event “promises on the basis of the preparations being undertaken to be again one of the best Brno entertainments”.¹³⁶ Neither *Moravská orlice* nor any other periodical reviewed this beseda.

The story of the earliest reception of Janáček came to an end on 4 February 1876, when he was chosen to be the choirmaster of the Beseda brněnská. Although he continued to lead Svatopluk in parallel until October 1876, until 1888 the Beseda brněnská would be the main institution enabling Janáček to carry out his artistic struggle, which was largely triumphant. His taking over of leadership of the Beseda brněnská heralded the beginning not only of a very important stage in Janáček's life, but also of an important period for musical culture in Brno and for Czech culture in Moravia in general.¹³⁷

To conclude, we shall outline at least briefly the circumstances of this change. At the time, the Beseda brněnská was in a state of crisis, which reached its climax after 1873, and it then saw Svatopluk as serious competition. The former alliance between the Beseda brněnská and Svatopluk ended and instead turned into a rivalry, because Svatopluk became stronger after 1873 primarily for the very reason that Janáček had become its leader. The Beseda then succeeded in averting the crisis and the threat of competition by winning over Janáček as a guarantor of success and artistic advancement.

For Janáček, his engagement at the Beseda brněnská – which was financially better off than Svatopluk and enjoyed support from the wealthier bourgeoisie – meant the opportunity to realise fully his ambitions as an artist and reformer: to raise the standards of performance quality, to focus on larger-scale oratorios, cantatas, and orchestral works, and last but not least, to undertake a major reform of the Beseda brněnská's dramaturgy in a more mod-

¹³³ Procházková, “New Discoveries”, op. cit., p. 155.

¹³⁴ *Janáček's Works*, op. cit., p. 120; Vogel, *Leoš Janáček*, op. cit., pp. 153–154.

¹³⁵ See e.g. [unknown], “Zábava ‘Svatopluku’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 22. 1. 1876, p. 2.

¹³⁶ [unknown], “Masopustní beseda ‘Svatopluka’ brněnského”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 20. 1. 1876, p. 2. Cf. [unknown], [no title], in: *Občan* 7 (1876), pp. 2–3; [unknown], “Masopustní beseda brněnského spolku ‘Svatopluk’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 9. 1. 1876, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Moravská orlice*, unlike other Czech periodicals, made repeated references to the choosing of the new choirmaster, see e.g.: [unknown], “Ze zpěváckého spolku ‘Besedy’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 5. 2. 1876, p. 3; [unknown], “V sezení výboru pěveckého spolku ‘besedy brněnské’”, in: *Moravská orlice*, 11. 2. 1876, pp. 2–3.

ern direction, both in the sense of autochthonous artistic productions (getting away from the older amateur productions and entertainments), and in the sense of the performing of difficult modern repertoire. The main thing behind all of these goals was Janáček's desire to move the Czech musical culture of Brno and of the Beseda brněnská as its chief institution away from petit bourgeois standards and to raise it to such heights as would allow its comparison with centres of musical culture (Prague, Vienna, and the German culture of Brno) or, by extension, with their large choral societies (especially Brno's German Musikverein and Prague's Czech Hlahol).

Conclusion: the true successor to Křížkovský

From an overall point of view, during the earliest period of Janáček's public activities as an independent artist (from October 1872 to February 1876), all of his activities had been subjected to critical evaluation. Although these activities and their reception were taking place almost exclusively in Brno and its environs, through Brno correspondents to the journal *Dalibor*, there were also texts about Janáček circulating within the Czech musical community in Prague and Bohemia. Janáček's key activities were his engagement as choir-master of the association Svatopluk and his Cecilian-oriented work as choir-master and organist at the basilica in Old Brno.

Already by this time, Janáček had begun to attract attention for his work as a composer. There were performances of his men's choruses *Orání*, *Ženich vnučený*, *Válečná* JW IV/3, *Nestálost lásky*, *Osamělá bez těchy* JW IV/7, *Válečná* JW IV/2, *Láska opravdivá*, *Divím se milému*, *Vínek stonulý*, and *Když mě nechceš, což je víc?* as well as the Choral Fantasia, which Janáček performed in Prague. The compositions *Když mě nechceš, což je víc?*, *Láska opravdivá*, *Divím se milému*, and *Vínek stonulý* probably were not reviewed by critics. In general, Janáček's compositions got a favourable, sometimes even enthusiastic reception from the critics. *Nestálost lásky* caused the most uneasiness, while some minor objections were also raised against *Válečná*. Simpler, more conservative compositions were generally better received than more complex, original ones. As far as the public reception of Janáček's early works is concerned, *Orání* was the most popular, and therefore perhaps also the most frequently performed. The quickly ensuing repeat performances of *Ženich vnučený*, *Válečná*, and *Nestálost lásky* are likewise indirect evidence of their success with the public. Janáček was also already becoming well known as a music theorist and critic at the time in addition to his aforementioned activities.

During the period being studied, Janáček was participating – primarily as a choir-master – at important patriotic or nationalist events, such as the ceremonial unveiling of the Svatopluk banner (1873), a celebration in honour of Josef Dobrovský (1875), and an entertainment for the benefit of the Radhošť

students' society (1875). The last of these events generated the most press coverage, with references to Janáček in the Moravian periodicals *Moravská orlice* and *Našinec* as well as in the Prague periodicals *Národní listy*, *Dalibor*, and *Hudební listy*.

The most important periodical for the early reception of Janáček was *Moravská orlice*. During the period being studied, Janáček was written about in this newspaper as being a “new force” in the Czech musical life of Brno, as a “promising” musician, a “new type” of artist bringing a “new type” of production. From the start, there were references to the enormous improvement of the performances and of the overall quality of the Svatopluk productions under his leadership. Already at this time, *Moravská orlice* began promoting the key topic of Janáček's reception in the 1870s and '80s: the emphasising of the importance of Janáček's artistic activities for the Czech national emancipation. Choral societies, in general, played a crucial role in forming and strengthening of Czech national consciousness in the 19th century.¹³⁸ The fact that Janáček had greatly uplifted the Svatopluk society was viewed not as an achievement of autonomously artistic importance, but rather as of importance for the nation's emancipation. And it was with respect to this function that Janáček's performances as a conductor are evaluated: the quality of the individual performances is secondary; what was important was the degree to which they contributed to the cultural emancipation of the Czech people in Brno and Moravia.

The second most important periodical for the early reception of Janáček was the Prague journal *Dalibor*, the most important Czech music journal of the time. During this early period, the attitude of *Dalibor* towards Janáček was entirely positive. The *Brünnner Morgenpost*, an important conservative German periodical based in Brno, also wrote about Janáček, although still to a modest degree (the situation would change by the late 1870s). There were very enthusiastic reports about Janáček's church music activities in *Cecilie*, the main Czech journal for Catholic sacred music.

In view of Pavel Křížkovský's cult following in Brno at the time, it is important to mention that during the period in question, Janáček was represented as Křížkovský's pupil (as a choirmaster and reformer of sacred music) and a successor in the composing of Czech-Moravian art music in the manner begun by Křížkovský.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Karel Šima, Tomáš Kavka and Hana Zimmerhaklová, “By Means of Singing to the Heart, by Means of Heart to the Homeland: Choral Societies and the Nationalist Mobilization of Czechs in the Nineteenth Century”, in: *Choral Societies and Nationalism in Europe*, ed. Krisztina Lajosi and Andreas Stynen, Leiden 2015, pp. 187–205.

¹³⁹ There are striking similarities between the conceptualizations of young Janáček as Křížkovský's successor and the Beethovenian narrative “from Haydn's hands”, and their cultural-political functions; cf. Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803*, Berkeley 1995, pp. 83–114.

In Brno, Janáček enjoyed great favour from the critics and the public, at first almost entirely Czech, from his first attempts as a conductor, performer, and composer. The reception of all of his artistic activities was conditioned by their specific functions in the Czech bourgeoisie culture that was becoming emancipated in Brno in the early 1870s – a culture that was in many respects late revivalist (in terms of the National Revival), ideologically oriented by the Old Czech political movement and defined by a combination of Roman Catholicism, Moravian patriotism, and Czech nationalism.

Translated by Mark Newkirk