

# **On the Project of Czech Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions**

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## **Abstract**

The study recapitulates the results of activities of the Centre for Music Lexicography under the patronage of Institute of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, and especially its key project, the Czech Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions. Initial works started in 2000 and next year is the 20th anniversary.

## **Keywords**

musicology, music, lexicography, Czech, Brno

## 1

Upon publication of the *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí* (ČSHS, Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions, Prague 1963, 1965) the team of Brno music lexicographers began to consider seriously the possibility of its updated re-edition. It was in fact obvious that the glossary needs to be supplemented significantly, and more observations followed: several entries had to be corrected, expanded or improved, the music scene involved several new bodies worthy of lexicographical reflection and, as consequence of musico-historical research, several so far unreflected persons belonging to earlier epochs were discovered. The Section of Music Lexicography carried continuous research and documentation but this plan didn't materialize. Slovak partners, then mainly for personal reasons, did not show much interest in co-operation on preparation of any further „Czechoslovak music dictionary“, therefore it was decided to focus on the issues of the Czech lands only. Financial reasons prevented fulfilment of the idea in its original span. After an agreement with Supraphon publishing house the project of *Slovník české hudební kultury* (SČHK, Dictionary of Czech Music Culture) as an encyclopaedia containing solely factual entries and thus complementing at least the Czech part of the biographical ČSHS was finally launched. This factual lexicon was finally published in 1997 by Editio Supraphon Praha publishing house and welcomed by both home and foreign scholarly public as indeed an epoch-making product of Czech musicology of the second half of the 20th century.

## 2

In 2000 three members of staff of the Brno Institute of Musicology, namely Jiří Fukač, Petr Macek and Mikuláš Bek, decided to launch a project of a qualitatively new version of biographical music dictionary, this time dedicated exclusively to the music culture of the Czech lands as the home public, whether expert or not, missed an opus of this kind and have been requesting a new lexicographical elaboration of the given problems for long. Apart from scholarly purposes, the dictionary should also have been a useful application tool in diverse cultural activities, e.g. music education and popularization, art agencies' business, music in the media. Elaboration and publication was also a matter of prestige of Czech musicology: Frankly, Czech scholars in the field are obliged to keep a record of the sphere of bearers of their own music culture from time to time. A dictionary of the sort described above also represents the only way how to summarize the results of last four decades' research, i.e. since the completion of ČSHS, and to create a biographical *pendant* to the factual SČHK. No matter how moderate the knowledge of Czech among foreign musicologists remains, the scholars specializing in the problems of Czech music or rather the music culture of the Czech lands depend exactly on a factographically reliable and complex lexicographical elaboration of this field. The publication of the dic-

tionary will have a direct impact on the level of foreign scholarly texts dedicated to our home music culture and consequently also on the standards of presentation of Czech problems in foreign encyclopedias focused both universally and on music.

Because of the connection to ČSHS (Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions) it was decided that the new dictionary would carry the title *Czech Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions* (Český hudební slovník osob a institucí, ČHS). The word „Czech“ refers to the fact that persons and institutions recorded by the dictionary have some affinity to the territory and culture of the Czech lands.

All the past published Czech musico-lexicographical works dedicated to the problems of Czech music culture have naturally had the character of printed book. Also the most extensive foreign music encyclopedias were published the same way, usually in the course of several years in multiple volumes. The most prominent foreign music encyclopedias finally acquired the practice of realizing new editions with updated content after several years by the care of the same renowned (and economically strong) publishing house. However, such publishing bodies didn't exist in the former Czechoslovakia and for this very reason it wasn't possible to launch regular and timely re-editions of existing musico-lexicographical works. So, in the connection with the project of ČHS, a new question arose: What should be the form of the final published realization? Search for this ideal form brings one fundamental problem: as the extent of information that has to be embodied in new editions of a certain music dictionary rises by, so to say, geometric progression, the published encyclopedias become outdated more and more quickly. The responsible publishers react by shortening the intervals between updated re-editions which is very expensive. This practice could have been observed only by economically strongest publishing subjects, while the works in question are written and published in languages spoken all around the world and thus capable of proving successful on a big, often global book market. In the case of any Czech music encyclopedia only a relatively small market could have been counted on.

It was the foreign experience of the last years, however, that proved that some musicological projects ceased counting on the form of traditional printed book as an optimum result. There were for instance dictionaries of „open time type“ where individual completed entries were printed and dispatched to subscribers, together with corrected or expanded versions of other (these printouts are clipped by a binder distributed by the corresponding publisher) so the dictionary could have been updated continuously. Other musicological projects, especially catalogues of sources, were then often made available in the form of regularly updated CD-ROMs and lately also on-line through the Internet. In the case of such an extensive work, that the planned ČHS with no doubt ought to be, the most promising form was the Internet on-line database that was tailored in co-operation with external specialists exactly to the needs of the project. This technical solution had crucial conceptual consequences for authors, editors as well as users. A unified web environment was created that enabled all necessary operations with text as well as administration of the whole project and publication of results to be performed. The advantage of this solution was the possibility of continuous update, publication, administration of preliminary works and editorial work. This system meant a remarkable

facilitation, increase in efficiency and decrease of costs of co-operation and co-ordination of the numerous team of authors and editors that is constituted by specialists from all around the country. All these could work on their texts from anywhere through the web application. It also brought high comfort to users in search for information.

The electronic form of the dictionary represented, in regard to the time of launching the project in 2001, undoubtedly a progressive solution. Apart from the text it also involved additional information: pictures, music examples, listening examples and other addenda. It provided unprecedented user comfort in the possibility of fulltext search, inaccessible in the printed form. The whole dictionary project was published on the Internet with free access on [www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz). Given its electronic form, the dictionary was an open project that can be corrected and expanded permanently. A number of decisions that in the case of printed book become fatal (e.g. completeness of the glossary) have in this case just a temporary character of pragmatic decision of what is actually possible in respect to expert (state of knowledge of the problem), personal and financial reasons. From the point of view of the Institute of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, it is a long-term project that represents its fundamental research priority in the horizon of several decades. So far it was sponsored by a number of grant projects of the Czech Science Foundation (Grantová agentura České republiky, GAČR) and by financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (Ministerstvo kultury, MKČR). Besides that the Institute of Musicology covers the project also by its own running and research costs („specific research“). The last part of the segment of entries is dedicated to the music institutions and is financially supported by GAČR.

So far the fund of some 9.000 entries has been elaborated and is now continuously expanding up to the estimated number of 16.000 entries. The capacity of text also grows by the necessity to continuously and systematically complement the existing entries (e.g. in case of elderly or deceased persons or defunct institutions by new findings and accumulated bibliography, in case of living persons or existing institutions by new recordable facts).

Considering the existing Czech musico-lexicographical traditions and conventions that are used in latest foreign musico-lexicographical production, four categories were introduced (A to D) that define the extent of entries, the character of their content and the way of elaboration (and de facto also the level of selectivity of information). In the case of persons that can be recognized as direct bearers of music activities (i.e. musicians and music organizers in the broadest sense) the categories were introduced as follows:

A. The entry gives an overall picture of life, music activities, works and their reception (i.e. the way the work of a certain person was further put into effect, how was the importance of a person understood and interpreted etc.); list of works (compositions, literary texts etc.) is in its entirety. The bibliography of scholarly texts on the given phenomenon brings all the relevant literature.

B. The entry applies all the abovementioned viewpoints but the treatises will be much shorter in comparison to the entries of the category A (maximum its half) and the list of works will partly be selective (omission of wholly marginal expressions). Bibliography will be limited to more important titles.

C. The entry reflecting abovementioned viewpoints will be shortened as much as

possible and the presentation of works will be limited to key expressions. Bibliography will also be limited to more important titles, especially those that represent a source of information not included in the entry.

D. The entry of small extent is limited in all abovementioned viewpoints to just basic data. This category will also include entries on persons whose biography and works can be portrayed only fragmentarily in the light of sources.

The entries of the category A and sometimes also B involve mainly composers and musicologists. The creative output of music performers cannot be rendered in complex the way described above (possibly just the discography can be given in relative entirety), the same with the results of journalistic activity of music critics and with the products of instrument-makers. Entries concerning institutions are in accordance with the given categorization, especially in extent and character of more or less factual scope.

We have given up creating a perfect classification or typology of specified bearers of music culture, we rather try to set a range of professions and institutional types that have to be taken into consideration in the dictionary.

- Composers of musical works of „opus“ character (the product was written down in notation, not just improvised, so it is bibliographically recordable). Here the viewpoint of possible artificial or non-artificial nature of the product is secondary.

- Representatives of action in the field of popular, and as the case may be also folklore music (here the moment of „non-opus“ character prevails or decidedly dominates).

- Authors of texts set to music (librettists, poets, lyricists).

- Performing musicians, especially those that concentrate on sound realization of „opus“ works (however, a musician performing popular or folklore music belongs rather to the abovementioned type of representatives of these spheres).

- Organizers connected to the music theatre (except for performing musicians; so mainly dramaturgists, stage directors, scene designers etc.)

- Artists connected to the dance theatre and dancers.

- Music journalists, critics, musicologists and authors of any expert or popularizing texts on music.

- Music teachers.

- Organizers working in other intermediary contexts of music culture (organizers of musical life, representatives of agencies, sound masters etc.).

- Artists – non-musicians for whom music was a subject or inspiration (authors, visual artists et al.).

- Music ensembles, bodies and clubs.

- Ensembles of music theater and dance.

- Musicological institutions.

- Music periodicals.

- Institutions in the field of music industry (printers, publishers, recording companies etc.).

- Intermediary music institutions (of the kind of agencies).

- Producers of musical instruments (both individual and institutionalized).

It is clear that especially the persons sometimes permeate or combine these types (a composer can at the same time be a journalist, performer etc.). However, the accent is always placed on the key activity that also decides the inclusion of the entry to the corresponding category of extent and character.

The necessary condition of realization of the project was the interconnection of teaching at the Institute of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, with the scholarly tasks of the institute. The study curriculum of musicology was tailored to the needs of the project and a new study subject was introduced: Seminar of music lexicography.

In February 2006 the *Section of Music Lexicography* was renamed *Centre for Music Lexicography*. The expert and organizational head of the centre is Petr Macek, other experts involved are Petr Kalina, Karel Steinmetz, Šárka Zahrádková and Blanka Macková. Previously the expert team included Jiří Fukač, Mikuláš Bek, Ivan Poledňák, Simona Sedláčková, Jana Spáčilová, Martin Celhoffer and others, the secretary is Jitka Leflíková. The authors' team itself consists of the whole spectrum of Czech musicological community and comprises some 150 collaborators.

### 3

Apart from the elaborated project of ČHS, the team of the Brno Centre for Music Lexicography set up also other lexicographical tasks:

1) A web portal of Czech music lexicography was put into operation on [www.cesky-hudebnislovník.cz](http://www.cesky-hudebnislovník.cz). Its aim is to collect and present the most significant musico-lexicographical works created in the Czech lands in electronic form, namely:

a) The electronic version of the mentioned SČHK (editors Jiří Fukač, Jiří Vysloužil, Petr Macek) with fulltext search is prepared for set off once the legal problems of authorship are settled.

b) The *Allgemeines historisches Künstlerlexikon für Böhmen und zum Theil auch Mähren und Schlesien* by Jan Bohumír Dlabač (Prague 1815) will be made available in electronic form.

c) Preparations already started for publication of the electronic version of the manuscript *Slovník hudebních umělců slovanských* (Dictionary of Slavonic music artists) by Josef Srb Debrnov.

d) Preparations started to publish the digitized ČSHS (Prague 1963, 1965, editors Bohumír Štědroně, Gracian Černušák and Zdenko Nováček) with limited access rights, possibly also the *Pazdírkův hudební slovník naučný* (Pazdírek's Educative Music Dictionary).

## 4

The Centre for Music Lexicography, part of the Institute of Musicology, Masaryk University, follows the Brno musico-lexicographical tradition; this tradition is committing also for the present generation of music lexicographers.

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