

Polka in the Work of the Czech Composer Bedřich Smetana

Abstract

The composer Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) is undoubtedly one of the most significant representatives of Czech music, although he is not as well known in the international context as, for example, A. Dvořák, L. Janáček, B. Martinů. He began to make his mark on musical development in the Czech territory in the mid-19th century as a concert pianist, composer and piano teacher. With his musical work, he was one of the most outstanding representatives of the Czech national school.

During the formative period of Czech national music (19th century), various manifestations of traditional folk culture played a significant role, which became sources of inspiration and symbols of national cultural identity for numerous composers. One of the most important sources of inspiration were, for example, Czech dances, usually of folk origin. In Bedřich Smetana's case, it was most often the polka, which he stylized in his piano compositions, but also in his operas, symphonic works etc. This paper, dealing with one of the inspirational areas of Smetana's work, is a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth. He was born on 2 March 1824 in Litomyšl in eastern Bohemia.