

# Czech Science Foundation - Part C

## Project Description

Applicant: Mgr. Jan Špaček

Name of the Project: *Socialist Realism in Music of the Czech Lands 1945-1960*

### **a) Recapitulation of the present state of knowledge of the problematics**

The problems of socialist realism in music of the Czech Lands have so far been reflected only fragmentarily in the musicological literature of the last 20 years. Despite the fact that the Czech musicology of the time of communism was able to produce excellent results on a regular basis, its output in the field of research of socialist realism is inapplicable by today's standards as this used to be a highly political topic, warmly welcomed by the communist ideology and official propaganda, provided that its content resulted in an entirely positive appraisal of the style. From this point of view the pre-1990 Czechoslovak research of socialist realism can not be taken seriously.

After 1989 the research logically concentrated primarily on more independent names as Vycpálek, Kabeláč or Eben, and the socialist realism remains more or less ignored. The picture of socialist realism among both scholars and wide public now shrinks to a limited number of mass songs that acquired a bizarre popularity for their absurd texts and pompous music.

However, the variety of music composed under the influence of socialist realism is much wider and a remarkable number of compositions were created with the aim of fulfilling the requirements of both socialist realism and reasonable aesthetic approach. Much of this music deserves being printed and played, or at least known, but this proves to be a problem because of the lack of systematic monographical musicological effort.

When in 2001 Galerie Rudolfinum organized a rich art exhibition of Czechoslovak Socialist Realism, a strong critical acclaim was focused on realist works by otherwise modernist Czech painters. However, almost all the musical „related events“ consisted of works by the Soviet composers, especially Prokofiev and Shostakovich, a fact that was harshly criticised, for example, by the composer Marek Kopelent. The only exception, when Czech realist music was played, were two smaller choral works by Miroslav Barvík, proposed, rehearsed and conducted by the applicant of this project, with amateur musical forces.

If any music of socialist realism (in short called with use of the period terminology as „realistic music“) were ever to be played, a serious musicological interest has to be launched first, followed by a complex primary, critical and monographical research.

### **b) Description of the fundamentals of the grant project, its aims, solution, chronology and stages**

The problematics of the socialist realism is complex and would be worth a multi-volume monograph. However, as the research is at its beginnings, just a basic one-volume monograph will be written and published of some 200 to 300 book pages including illustrations and music examples, with the perspective of further research that would follow. Its aim is to provide a general complex introduction to the problematics that would at the same time be a musicological treatise and a useful historical reading for anyone interested. Despite the basic

primary source research that has to be made and subsequently made use of, a general edition of sources is not considered at this stage. The result will be a complex study embodying musical, historical, political, cultural and personal, if not psychological, aspect accompanied by notated music examples only where appropriate. During the first year of the project, the basic research of sources will be made. During the second year a complete draft of the text will be written, with research still in full progress. The third year will be dedicated to the final preparations for publication with occasional research supplements.

**c) Description of the proposed conceptual and methodological progress necessary for the solution of the grant project.**

The basic methodological rule will be an ideology-free approach. Today's general refusal of the cultural products of the 1950s and their authors is understandable and logical but this has to be overcome by the facts themselves. A critical treatment of the problematics will also be an important aspect of the work but it is unnecessary to provide too much interpretation and commentary where the facts are clear. Otherwise, the methods used in today's Czech musicology and historiography will be applied. For a more general approach to the politically delicate subject, the practice of the leading individual British and American scholars will be adapted, for example that of David Fanning, Gerard McBurney, Laurel E. Fay and Richard Taruskin. That means a high level of both critical approach and factual accuracy. Individual chapters will be dedicated to the most important composers and to the different stages of the chosen period of interest.

The years 1945-1960 were chosen as a highest point of the style in the Czech lands, beginning by the victory of the Red Army and the growing influence of Soviet culture and politics on Czechoslovak public life, and ending with a remarkable „Thaw“ in 1960, the year that is generally considered the end of the hard-line stalinism in Czechoslovakia (the popular term „thaw“ was originally taken from the title of a story by Ilya Ehrenburg, Оттепель).

Despite the period and geography stated by the theme, an appropriate attention will be paid to the history of the socialist realism and formalism in the Soviet Union, to the fate of the style after 1960 and other corresponding topics.

The area of interest was intentionally limited to just the Czech Lands as the situation in the Slovak part of the state differed in several aspects.

**d) Character of the expected result of the grant project**

The main result of the project is a concise but complex monograph on socialist realism in the Czech music between 1945 and 1960. This volume will belong to the sphere of historical and analytical musicology but will be useful for general study of the period's arts, culture and politics. At this stage the text will be written and published in Czech. The book will have some 200-300 book pages (at least 250 pages of the text, counted in the Czech norm, i.e. 1800 characters per page, including spaces; this roughly corresponds to some 10.000 words). The individual chapters of the book will in turn be dedicated to individual composers, problems, and to the individual years and events.

The secondary result of the project will be a launched database of facts, documents, records in period press, persons, institutions and events.

**e) Documented co-operation of the applicant with foreign research institutions**

The applicant worked in 2001-2007 as a full time research assistant to professor John Tyrrell from the Cardiff University. The research comprised of complex source work concerning the

life and works of Leoš Janáček. A three-year part of this co-operation was funded by the British Academy. The result is the ample two-volume biography of Leoš Janáček of more than 2.000 pages altogether (see [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Janacek-Years-1854-1914-Lonely-Blackbird/dp/0571175384/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1303093899&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Janacek-Years-1854-1914-Lonely-Blackbird/dp/0571175384/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1303093899&sr=8-1) and

[http://www.amazon.co.uk/Janacek-Years-Life-1914-1928-Forests/dp/0571236677/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1303093899&sr=8-2](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Janacek-Years-Life-1914-1928-Forests/dp/0571236677/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1303093899&sr=8-2))

This fact is fully acknowledged in the „Acknowledgements“ chapter of both volumes and in a few cases can be traced on the internet, for example in the article in the periodical Czech Music here: [http://www.czech-music.net/archiv/CM%202-05/CM\\_2-05\\_tyrrell.pdf](http://www.czech-music.net/archiv/CM%202-05/CM_2-05_tyrrell.pdf)

Some smaller research assistance was also effected for professor Stanley Sadie and his book *Calling on a composer*; for more see the Acknowledgements chapter in the book (<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Calling-Composer-European-Houses-Museums/dp/0300107501>).

A brief co-operation with the Cardiff University and personally with Dr Karl Stapleton was effected by the applicant on his large-scale database project on the Prague musical life 1850-1881; see <http://prague.cardiff.ac.uk/about.jsp>

#### **f) Data on the awareness of the applicant and his home institution, technical equipment used and possible co-operations**

The applicant is fully qualified to fulfil the proposed project, despite his prima facie modest bibliography caused by the intense research work for foreign persons and institutions in the last 10 years. His main specialization so far has been on Soviet music, especially on the life and works of Dmitry Shostakovich who is the most frequent subject of his lectures, occasional studies and his latest doctoral dissertation, which is scheduled for defense in the autumn 2011. The applicant would like to extend his research territory from the Soviet Union also to the corresponding Czech situation and dedicate his post-Ph.D. research to the field better coverable by home source base. The applicant regularly travels to conferences and other research purposes to Great Britain, Russia and Ukraine. He has mastered the English, French and Russian scholarly literature. He is ready to co-operate with institutions in Russia that will help understand the problematics and will possibly produce some valuable sources. The main co-operator would be the Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture (Государственный центральный музей музыкальной культуры имени М. И. Глинки, [www.glinka.museum](http://www.glinka.museum)) in Moscow.

The Institute of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, where the applicant is based and employed, is fully equipped to fulfil the task and has so far successfully solved several other Czech Science Foundation projects. The institute is well equipped technically, there is a specialist library and other sources of information. It keeps numerous contacts with domestic and foreign musicological institutions, this collaboration can be used to solve both Czech and foreign-related questions and problems.

#### **g) Reasons for applicant's participation, his contribution**

The applicant is the only person involved in the project and is responsible for all the work effected.

#### **h) Selected bibliography of the problem**

Baethge, W.: *K teorii socialistického realismu* (Opus musicum 7, 1975, č. 6, s. 163 - 167)

- Bartlett, R., ed.: *Shostakovich in Context* (Oxford, 2000)
- Brown, M. H., ed.: *Russian and Soviet Music: Essays for Boris Schwarz* (Ann Arbor, 1984)
- Bek, J.: *Avantgarda. Ke genezi socialistického realismu v české hudbě* (Praha, 1984)
- Burjaneck, J.: *Úvod do teorie uměleckého realismu* (Praha, 1982)
- Дворниченко, Оксана: *Дмитрий Шостакович – Путешествие* (Москва, 2006)
- Furst, L. R., ed.: *Realism* (London, 1992)
- Гликман, Исаак (ed.): *Письма к другу: Дмитрий Шостакович – Исааку Гликману* (Москва, Санкт-Петербург, 1993)
- Gunther, H., ed.: *The Culture of the Stalin Period* (London, 1990)
- Jiránek, J.: *Socialistický realismus jako vůdčí ideově estetický princip naší současné hudební tvorby*. J. Jiránek - M. Ladmanová: *Hovory o intonaci* (Praha, 1980)
- Jůzl, M.: *Předpoklady socialistického realismu v hudbě* (Hudební rozhledy 31, 1978, č. 11, s. 502 - 506)
- Levine, G., ed.: *Aesthetics and Ideology* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1994)
- Scriven, M. and Tate, D., eds.: *European Socialist Realism* (London, 1988)
- Socialist Realism and Music* [Colloquia Musicologica Brunensia, 36 (2001)]. (Praha, 2004)
- Stanislav, J.: *Socialistický realismus a hudba* (Hudební rozhledy 1, 1948 - 1949, č. 4, s. 69 - 71)
- Taruskin, R.: *Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth: Interpreting Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony*, Shostakovich Studies, ed. D. Fanning (Cambridge, 1995), 17–56
- Taruskin, R.: *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Wilson, E.: *Shostakovich: a Life Remembered* (London, 1994)
- [N. B. For studies by the applicant, please see his bibliography]