

CZECH MUSIC CULTURE IN LONDON AND POST-1989 DEVELOPMENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AT THE TIME

Markéta Koutná

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci,
Filozofická Fakulta,
Katedra muzikologie
Czech Republic
E-mail: marketa.koutna@upol.cz

Abstract:

The study deals with Czech-London musical relations, particularly Czech music culture in London within the context of cultural, social and political change in 1989. An analysis of the opera, chamber music, and symphonic production of Czech music in London between 1984 and 1994 identifies how and whether the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution affected the firm position that Czech music culture had held in the capital of the United Kingdom.

Key words: Czech musical culture, London, emigration, composers, the Velvet Revolution, 1989

The musical relations between the Czechs and London represent an important current issue. As the capital of the United Kingdom, London naturally takes the lead within the British cultural scene. With its population, budget, and institutional capacities, it is one of the world's major social and cultural centres, and thanks to the high interest of London-based institutions in Czech music, it is also one of the world's top producers of Czech music. The current research examines how, if at all, the events of November 1989 influenced the position of Czech musical culture in London and the relationship between Czech and London musicians. I became interested in this issue while researching data for my dissertation on Czech musical culture in London.¹ Using the specific example of interpretations of Czech opera, chamber music and

¹ The study is a part of the student grant project IGA_FF_2015_024 Influence of the Velvet Revolution on Czech Musical Culture in London and all the data used in the study draw on the author's research for her dissertation Czech Musical Culture in London Between 1984 and 1994.

symphonic music, the present study aims at modelling a definition concerning how the events of 1989 affected Czech-London musical relations, and to what extent the political events helped channel the Czech musical culture to London. The study also follows the impact on other spheres of Czech musical culture in London, such as a reflection on the reception of Czech music or the activities of Czech associations, which themselves underwent a major change after 1989. The research period has been limited to the ten years from 1984 to 1994 in order to describe the development and potential changes in sufficient detail and to keep the text coherent. The years were selected with a purpose in mind, as they logically outline a comprehensive developmental decade between the Years of Czech Music, this being a term the Czech musical scene uses to refer to years ending in “4” which mark the anniversaries of a number of Czech composers.

A Historical Probe into Czech-London Musical Relations

It appears that Czech musical culture in all its forms was an integral part of the music life in London between the years 1984 and 1994. The chamber, symphonic and operatic works of both previous and contemporary Czech composers were played consistently with Czech artists, musicians, singers, conductors and ensembles, meeting with a warm reception. British music theorists and practitioners alike studied the varied aspects of Czech musical culture. Such a wide adoption of Czech musical culture in the British capital was facilitated by a synergy of several factors.

Czech music primarily owed its success on the London scene to a long-standing tradition, which can be said to begin in the second half of the 16th century. The Czech Lands and Great Britain began to build strong cultural relations at this time because Czech musicians, for various reasons, settled in London for shorter or longer periods of time. The first documented musician to arrive in London from the Czech Lands was the viola da gamba player and composer **Gottfried Finger** (1660-1730) in 1685. He was a native of Olomouc and he joined the royal band of King James II (1687). While in England, Finger mainly composed opera to English libretti (e.g. *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, London, 1696; *The Judgement of Paris*, London, 1701, or *The Death of Alexander*, London, 1703); but, he also wrote instrumental music.² In 1690, he published *Six Sonatas or Solos*, three for violin and three for flute, this being the very first collection of music for solo instruments and basso continuo ever printed in the UK.³ As a towering figure in London's music, here has been speculation that Finger could have been friends with Henry Purcell. When Purcell died in 1695, Finger composed an ode, *Weep ye Muses*, dedicated to his memory. Finger's successful career as a London-based freelance composer came to an end in 1701 when he left for Vienna.

Musical relations continued to develop in the 18th century as musicians from continental Europe sought to establish themselves in the British capital. Foreign musicians, attracted by the favourable financial conditions and wide audience represented by a large middle class, gradually gained complete dominance over English musical life.⁴ Czech artists in London were represented by composers such as **Franz Xaver**

² FUKAČ, Jiří. Anglie. In: FUKAČ, Jiří – VYSLOUŽIL, Jiří – MACEK, Petr (ed.). *Slovník české hudební kultury*. 1st ed. Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1997, p. 40. ISBN 80-705-8462-9.

³ LOWERRE, Kathryn (ed.). *The Lively Arts of the London Stage, 1675–1725* (Performance in the Long Eighteenth Century: Studies in Theatre, Music, Dance). Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2014, p. 32. ISBN: 978-1-4094-5533-2.

⁴ England. In: RANDEL, Don Michael – APEL, Willi. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986, p. 287. ISBN 0674615255. PILKOVÁ, Zdeňka – VRKOČOVÁ,

Richter (1709-1789) and **Antonín Kammel** (1730-1784),⁵ who was also a violinist; they were to be found among the artistic circle surrounding Johann Christian Bach and Carl Friedrich Abeleman, the most important concert organizers of the day.⁶ London was also repeatedly visited by the travelling Czech horn virtuoso **Giovanni Punto** (1746-1803). The Czech foreign representation acquired a new member, the violist, bassist and composer **František Kotzwara** (1730–1791) in the 1770s, who travelled through Europe and played with various orchestras.⁷ Seeking refuge from the Parisian revolutionary unrest of 1789, the composer **Adalbert Gyrowetz** (1763-1850) made London his home for the next three years. The list of Czech musicians working in London in the 18th century concludes with the composer **Jan Ladislav Dussek** (1760–1800) and his sister, the singer-composer **Kateřina Veronika Anna Dusíková** (1769–1833).

The trend of Czechs arriving to working in London continued to be cemented during the 19th century thanks to the singers **Josef Theodor Krov** (1797–1859) and **Jan Ludevít Lukes** (1824–1906)⁸ and the violinists **Vilemína Nerudová** (1838–1911) and **František Ondříček** (1857–1922). Awareness of Czech music in England began to gain momentum with the introduction of works by **Antonín Dvořák** (1841–1904) from the 1880s onwards. The renown that the Czech composer and his work won in London greatly assisted the subsequent arrivals of Czech musical culture into London and throughout the United Kingdom. From this time on, Czech musical art became part of the English cultural scene.

Czech music culture was systematically supported and promoted in the 20th century by both English-speaking music theorists and propagandists, such as **Rosa Newmarch** (1857–1940) and subsequently **Graham Melville-Mason** (1933) and **Patrick Lambert** (1943), and by music practitioners and conductors **Henry Wood** (1869–1944) and **Charles Mackerras** (1925–2010). The Czech national musical heritage was also promoted by a host of Czechs active in London, led by conductors such as **Vilém Tauský** (1904–2004) and **Rafael Kubelík** (1914–1996). The above-mentioned activities were supported by the Dvořák Society as of 1974, which is based in the UK and is dedicated exclusively to Czech and Slovak music. The exiled composers **Karel Janovický** (1930) and **Antonín Tučapský** (1928–2014) have also tried their utmost to promote the music of the Czech nation, contributing not only with their creative but also their educational activities. Within the outlined horizon of 100 years, the symbolic time span between Dvořák's first visit to London (1884) and the decade 1984-1994, Czech musical culture acquired a stable position in the capital of the U.K., achieving the reputation of a renowned and attractive commodity, which it drew upon for the entire period concerned. This introduction should suffice in order to provide a context and outline a perfunctory view for Czech music culture in London.

Ludmila – JEŘÁBEK, Richard. Migrace. In. ed. FUKAČ, Jiří – VYSLOUŽIL, Jiří – MACEK, Petr. *Slovník české hudební kultury*. 1st ed. Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1997, pp. 551–554. ISBN 80-705-8462-9.

⁵ Kammel is mentioned as one of the London-based musical personages in the travel writings of Leopold Mozart dating to 1765. PILKOVÁ, Zdeňka. Kammel, Antonín. In. SADIE, Stanley. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Volume 13. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pp. 343-344. ISBN 0-333-60800-3.

⁶ ŠIMSOVÁ, Sylva. *Traces in the Sand: The Story of Anthony Kammel in 18th Century Britain*. Newcastle-under-Lyme: The Dvorak Society, 2014. ISBN 978-0-9562608-0-2; FREEMANOVÁ, Michaela. Antonín Kammel v Londýně. *Hudební věda*. 1994, Volume 31, No. 4, pp. 399–402.

⁷ KIDD, Ronald R. František Koczwara. In. SADIE, Stanley. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Volume 23. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan Publishers, 2001, pp. 715–716. ISBN 0-333-60800-3.

⁸ FUKAČ, Jiří. Anglie. In FUKAČ, Jiří – VYSLOUŽIL, Jiří – MACEK, Petr (ed.). *Slovník české hudební kultury*. 1st edition. Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1997, p. 40. ISBN 80-705-8462-9.

The Impact of the November Revolution and Czech Musical Culture in London after 1989

The Velvet Revolution in 1989 brought about a range of changes in the area of Czech-London musical relations. The fall of the Communist regime in former Czechoslovakia was a strong and emotional experience for many Czechs based in London. The wife of the exiled composer Karel Janovický, Sylva Šimsová, recalls the events of 24 November 1989, the day on which members of the Dvořák Society for Czech and Slovak Music learned during the annual dinner about the changes in Czechoslovakia: "I was in a hotel lobby with a friend when someone brought the news that the Communist government in Czechoslovakia had fallen. My friend was overwhelmed and had to sit down. We both – and all the other visitors – felt that this was a sudden, unexpected, and memorable moment."⁹ "This was the moment we had all been hoping for a long time but nobody actually believed it would come," said Karel Janovický.¹⁰ There were approximately 7,500 Czechoslovak citizens registered with the Czech Embassy in London, living permanently in the UK, in 1990.¹¹ After the revolution, a number of them considered returning to their now liberated homeland, but only a few actually decided to return. Having spent years in another country, which had become their new home, they found it difficult to begin all over again. Czechoslovakia had become a completely different country and many of those who returned, felt like strangers there.¹²

After November 1989, Czech emigrants living in London were now free to travel to their home country without having to fear arrest and interrogation. They quickly seized the opportunity and began to visit their relatives and friends in the country. "After the Velvet Revolution, I would go back to the Czech Republic almost every other month," said Jarmila Karasová.¹³ Those who wanted could join group tours to the country. The Czech Service of BBC World Service organized a tour for its employees to Czechoslovakia in January 1990.¹⁴ The Dvořák Society for Czech and Slovak Music also conducted several tours allowing fans of Czech culture and music to see the home country of those composers they had come to love.

The 1990s were marked by the establishment of new friendly connections between Czechoslovakia, soon to become the Czech Republic, and the U.K. along with efforts to shake Soviet influence and restore the country's position within Western Europe where the Czech Lands used to belong both culturally and historically.¹⁵ The extensive musical relations were important from a cultural perspective. The Czech Republic was consequently able to build upon the fact that the British were highly aware of both deceased Czech composers and contemporary artists.

⁹ Author's interview with Sylva Šimsová, London, 21 August 2014.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Karel Janovický, London, 21 August 2014.

¹¹ Author's interview with Nataša Newton, Prague, 13 October 2014.

¹² BILÍK, Petr. *České země a Československo ve 20. století* [online]. 1st edition. Olomouc, 2013, p. 135. ISBN 978-80-87535-76-9. Available at:file:///C:/Users/Mark%C3%A9ta/Downloads/Ceske+zeme+a+Ceskoslovensko+ve+20.+stoleti.pdf [2014-09-01].

¹³ Author's interview with Jarmila Karasová, London, 18 August 2014.

¹⁴ Information based on the author's interview with the head of the Czechoslovak Service of BBC World Service at the time, Karel Janovický, London, 21 August 2014.

¹⁵ BILÍK, Petr. *České země a Československo ve 20. století* [online]. 1st edition Olomouc, 2013, p. 131. ISBN 978-80-87535-76-9. Available at:file:///C:/Users/Mark%C3%A9ta/Downloads/Ceske+zeme+a+Ceskoslovensko+ve+20.+stoleti.pdf [2014-09-01].

While Czech music did not constitute the main stock of the repertoire of London music halls and theatres, in light of the size and global relevance of Czechoslovakia, Czech music did enjoy a significant and permanent standing. In the area of opera and symphonic music, it even competed with the predominant Italian, Russian and French cultures. Janáček's operas and Dvořák's symphonies both were leaders in their field. Dvořák's *Symphony no. 9 in E minor*, Op. 95, became the most played symphony ever in London's concert halls in 1986 and 1987, even overtaking Beethoven's symphonies.¹⁶

Czech music was particularly showcased in London through the works of its four leading composers; this mainly involved selections from Leos Janáček's operas, Antonín Dvořák's symphonies plus additional works by Bedřich Smetana and Bohuslav Martinů. London concert halls and opera houses strictly adhered to their programme concept and Czech music continued to form part of their repertoire after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. The most-performed composer remained Antonín Dvořák whose work continued to come out on top in popularity owing to the steadfast cult around his personality (Charts 1 and 2).

Dvořák's works were followed in popularity by those of Leoš Janáček. Selected favourite pieces by Bedřich Smetana and Bohuslav Martinů, which had the shortest tradition in the U.K, were also performed. With minor exceptions, this preference was manifested both in the realm of symphonic (Chart 1) as well as chamber music (Chart 2).

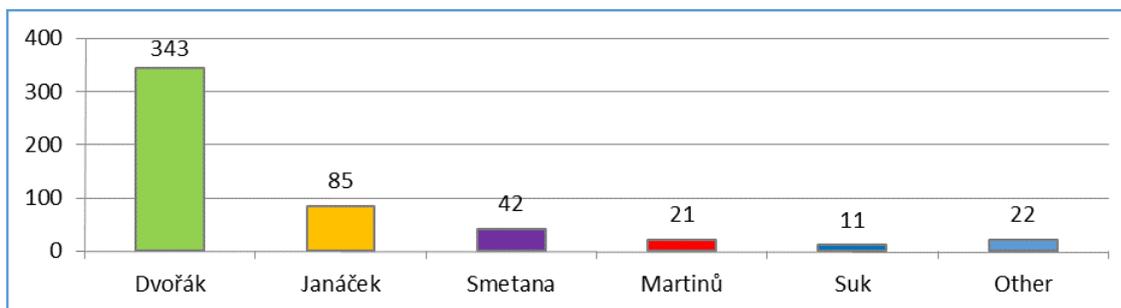


Chart 1: Total number of performances of symphonic works by composers in London, 1984 through 1994

While it was clearly Dvořák who dominated in terms of Czech symphonic music to the detriment of other composers, the situation seemed relatively balanced in the area of chamber music. Antonín Dvořák was also the most widely performed Czech composer with attention also centred on the works of Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů. In contrast, Smetana's chamber music was found less fascinating. Thanks to the activities of Josef Suk and the Suk Quartet and Suk Trio ensembles, in which the composer played the violin, Suk's chamber music was often heard throughout London's various concert halls. Unlike the symphonic repertoire, it was easier to promote chamber music in London with less famous composers such as Franz Xaver Richter, Franz Benda, Jan Václav Voříšek, Ervin Schulhoff, Viktor Kalabis, Petr Eben, Luboš Fišer and Štěpán Rak.

¹⁶ PODGORNÝ, Oleg. O české hudbě v BBC. In. *Hudební rozhledy: měsíčník pro hudební kritiku*, vol. XLXX, No. 2, 1989.

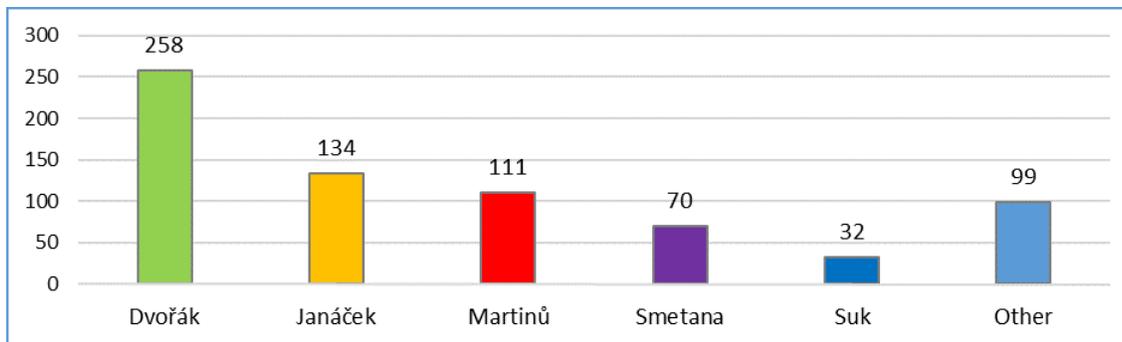


Chart 2: Total number of performances of chamber works by composers in London, 1984 through 1994

The artistic legacy of Antonín Dvořák is one of the basic pillars of European cultural heritage. He wrote over two hundred pieces of different musical forms and lengths, ranging from small piano pieces to full-length opera and oratorio works with ample vocal and instrumental apparatus. A number of his pieces, however, appeared more often on London stages over the period concerned. Although Dvořák's orchestral and chamber works and songs were integral to London concert programmes, his operas did not win much favour. Instead, the limelight was focused on the operatic works of Leoš Janáček. Although certain interpreters tried to disrupt stereotypes concerning the staging of Martinů's music, as compared with Dvořák and Janáček, his music featured less frequently in the London concert programmes. Even so, his works were paradoxically played in England more often than in any other country, including the Czech Republic.¹⁷

It is not entirely clear why certain composers and works were favoured over others. In the case of the British, who tended to hold a conservative stance regarding Czech music, the history of staging of the particular piece in London could have played a role.¹⁸ The most popular were the works of Antonín Dvořák, which were introduced to the local audience as early as the end of the 19th century. The works also owed their popularity to the connection between the composers and the U.K. Dvořák and Janáček, who had visited the country, were more well-known than other authors. Another crucial element was the initiative of the promoters of Czech music, particularly the organizers and conductors, who relentlessly pushed the pieces into concert programmes. Once introduced, the works began to sound increasingly familiar and consequently more well-known.

Based on its long tradition and popularity, Czech music maintained a steady position in London despite all the political and social events. There were, of course, certain developments after 1989 largely thanks to the efforts of various personalities and supporters of Czech music. Opera was a prime example. Opera productions in London were provided by the Royal Opera House and the English National Opera. The latter maintained a friendlier approach to staging Czech operas from its very beginnings (Chart 3). The Royal Opera House grew significantly more interested in Czech opera in the 1990s, particularly the work of Leoš Janáček. This sudden demand was not actually sparked by the revolution in Czechoslovakia but by the arrival of a new opera director Nicholas Payne in 1993. Nicholas Payne acquainted himself with Czech opera when he was a child, as he states in an interview for the Opera Plus web portal: "The first Czech opera I saw as a thirteen-year-old child was *Jenůfa* in Covent Garden. I was so captivated by the opera that I asked my

¹⁷ FISCHER, Petr. Britští posluchači jsou fanoušky české vážné hudby. *BBC Czech: Speciály* [online]. 2004. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/indepth/story/2004/11/041122_omnibus_music.shtml [2014-09-04].

¹⁸ The approach of the British to music was testified to by Roger Scruton in his *The Aesthetics Of Music*. A distinct shift towards the traditional tonal system in combination with a preference for classical repertoire reflected the general attitude of British society towards the art of music. SCRUTON, Roger. *The Aesthetics of Music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 552 p. ISBN 9780198167273.

parents to buy me a recording for my birthday, and then I actually learnt it by heart, without understanding a word of Czech! My first encounter with the Czech opera thus materialized through Janáček. Soon there came another one, *The Bartered Bride*, which was yet another approach to writing opera. The greatest marvel then came in 1964 at the Edinburgh Festival, because it hosted the Czech National Theatre. I saw several operas such as *Káťa Kabanová*, *The Makropulos Case*, *Dalibor*, *Rusalka*, and *Vzkriesenie* by Ján Cikker." The programme of the Royal Opera House clearly reflected Payne's admiration for Czech operas.¹⁹

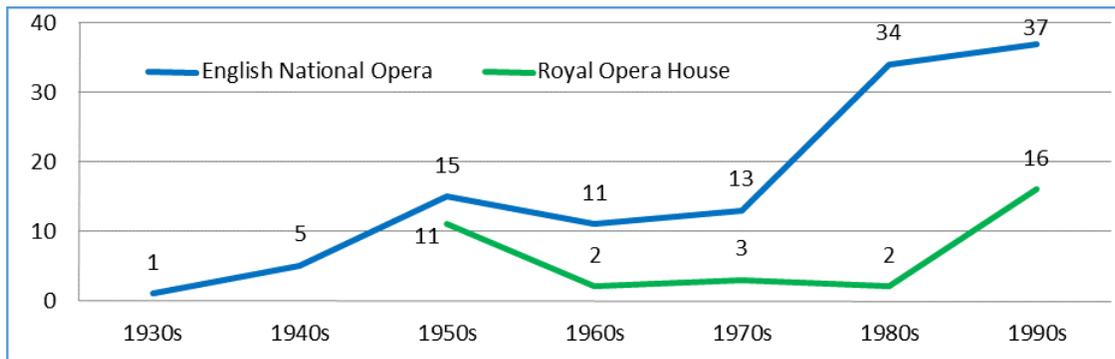


Chart 3: Total number of Czech opera performances in London by decades of the 20th century

A similar trend was also observed, for example, in the BBC Radio 3 Service. In addition to its reputation, it was primarily the fans and connoisseurs of Czech music, Graham Melville-Mason and Patrick Lambert, who helped promote Czech music in the broadcasting of this British radio station specializing in classical music. Czech music and programmes dedicated to Czech music consequently featured much more frequently at BBC Radio 3 while these two were working at the radio. The music broadcast, which comprised about 80% of the BBC Radio 3 service in the 1980s and early 1990s, dedicated its music programmes to introducing composers and performers of all nationalities and all periods of music history.²⁰ The broadcast programme schedule naturally reflected both the length and richness of the musical traditions of individual nations and the actual demand. Czech music was one of those which had a great deal to offer. As Czech music and culture in general enjoyed great favour with the British audience, BBC Radio 3 strove to meet the demands of its listeners by frequently broadcasting music created by Czech composers. "I am happy to see that Czechoslovakian music is one of the most popular BBC programmes", said Graham Melville-Mason in an interview in 1989, adding: "there is hardly a day that you would not hear Czech music on the BBC."²¹ Patrick Lambert specialized primarily in the life and work of Bohuslav Martinů. On the 100th anniversary of Martinů's birth in 1990, Lambert produced a four-part radio programme about the composer called *A View from the Tower*, accompanied by *Concerto Grosso* and *Concerto for Two Pianos & Orchestra*.²² Graham Melville-Mason participated in the "backroom" operations of BBC Radio 3 in the 1980s and arranged contracts for visiting artists. He used his job to study Czech music and specifically to promote it with the

¹⁹ ČERNÁ, Michaela. Nicolas Payne: Bylo by pošetilé hrát pouze Tosku, Aidu nebo Carmen. *Opera +* [online]. Available at: <http://operaplus.cz/nicolas-payne-bylo-by-posetile-hrat-pouze-tosku-aidu-nebo-carmen/> [2014-08-18].

²⁰ MELVILLE-MASON, Graham. Česká hudba v BBC. In. *Hudební rozhledy*, Prague: Panorama, 1987, Vol. 15.

²¹ PODGORNÝ, Oleg. O české hudbě v BBC. In. *Hudební rozhledy*, Prague: Panorama, 1989, Vol. 17.

²² Lambert also developed, prepared, and broadcast additional radio programmes with Czech themes and music. He authored, for example, a series of programmes entitled *From the Heart of Europe*, broadcast in the autumn of 1985 as "a celebration of Czech music in all its diversity," and a series dedicated to Václav Talich and his recordings (July, August 1988). Interview with Patrick Lambert, Brno, Czech Republic, 29 November 2014.

radio station broadcasts. His analytical studies dated 1986 and 1987 were published in the Czech musical journal *Hudební rozhledy*.²³

The impact of the Velvet Revolution is primarily apparent in the realm of interpretation. Performances by Czech artists abroad were subject to a form of censorship up until 1989. Only selected representatives of Czech art were sent on trips abroad. Additionally, the content of their concerts was first checked by the relevant authorities and consisted almost entirely of Czech works, with a view to promoting the Czechoslovak state abroad. Paradoxically, this reflected positively in the sphere of the popularization of Czech composers whose work the Czech artists delivered to an international audience. The Velvet Revolution brought with it a change involving the abolition of restrictions and with performances no longer subject to any control. Czech musicians travelling abroad were now no longer restricted to interpreting the music of Czech composers and actually began to favour an international repertoire, as could be seen in the case of the Škampa Quartet. As the opportunities for Czech musicians to perform grew, the number of Czech works performed by Czech artists paradoxically decreased, and consequently the promotion of Czech music.

From this point, Czech music in London was largely played by foreign orchestras, soloists, as well as by London-based institutions such as the Wigmore Hall and the Southbank Centre, which even organized festivals dedicated to Czech music culture in 1990 and 1993.²⁴ Czech music thus continued to draw considerable attention. To its detriment, however, foreign artists had a strong preference for well-known and popular pieces of music in their repertoire, which led to constant repetition of the most well-known works by Antonín Dvořák, Leoš Janáček's operas, selected works by Bedřich Smetana and Bohuslav Martinů. Although London institutions and artists, as well as other foreign artists performing in concerts in London showed an interest in Czech music, it was a stereotyped familiar repertoire. Non-Czech artists did not venture into rehearsing new, little-known pieces of music.

Rather than spreading an awareness of Czech music culture, the task of major Czech figures was in education, or better yet in efforts to expand the Czech repertoire which London knew with the works of other, less known composers. Czechs who took it upon themselves to promote Czech music culture in London included above all the conductors Libor Pešek and Jiří Bělohlávek, as well as musicians such as Josef Suk, who along with the ensembles in which he played (Suk Trio, Suk Quartet), sought to expand the Czech repertoire which London knew with the work of Josef Suk. Over the decade concerned, the primary challenge for Czech representatives was to import more Czech music into the British capital, call attention to new or as-yet-unknown composers by means of a richer repertoire, and raise awareness of their work among the local music community. This mission slowed down after the year 1989.

Czech artists performed in London on a regular basis several times a year after 1989, usually at the Wigmore Hall, a chamber music concert hall. The concerts were primarily given by chamber ensembles, trios, and quartets: the Panocha Quartet, Prague Quartet, Smetana Quartet, Doležal Quartet, Stamic Quartet, Suk Trio, Talich Quartet, Suk Quartet, Janáček Quartet, Martinů Quartet, Kocián Quartet, Guarneri Trio and Wihan Quartet. Škampa Quartet gained an extraordinary position at the Wigmore Hall.²⁵ The group was founded at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts in March of 1989. It performed regularly at the Wigmore

²³ MELVILLE-MASON, Graham. Česká hudba v BBC. In. *Hudební rozhledy*, Prague: Panorama, 1987, Vol. 15; PODGORNÝ, Oleg. O české hudbě v BBC. In. *Hudební rozhledy*, Prague: Panorama, 1989, Vol. 17.

²⁴ The Wigmore Hall held the Bohemian Festival from January to July 1990, while the Southbank Centre organized the Czech Festival in October 1993.

²⁵ About us: Škampa Quartet. *Škampovo kvarteto* [online]. Available at: <http://www.skampaquartet.cz/cs/o-nas.html> [2014-04-11].

Hall as of 1993 with its concerts receiving laudatory reviews in the British press.²⁶ Škampa Quartet became the very first resident quartet of the Wigmore Hall in its history at the initiative of the director of the institution at the time William Lyne in October 1994.²⁷ It played dozens of concerts on the local stage between 1994 and 1998.²⁸ In an interview with the magazine *Time Out*, members of the Škampa Quartet confessed that the post-1989 changes enabled them to play music which they chose themselves, for instance the previously forbidden Shostakovich.²⁹ Although the Škampa Quartet was repeatedly asked to play Dvořák and Janáček, it did not join in promoting the Czech musical culture all that much. As the members of the quartet themselves claim, the repertoire consisted mainly of renowned works by Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, etc.³⁰ Czech soloists who performed in London the most frequently were the violinist Josef Suk and the pianists Josef Hála, Ivan Moravec, Jan Panenka, Radoslav Kvapil and Martina Maixnerová. Other artists included the guitarist Vladimír Mikulka and the singer Dagmar Pecková. The British press watched closely the concerts at Wigmore Hall, including concerts by Czech artists, providing its readers with extensive reviews.³¹ Josef Suk and the Suk Trio, of which he was a member, particularly attracted media attention and enjoyed acclaim.³² The primary challenge for Czech representatives in London after 1989 was

²⁶ LOPPERT, Max. Weekend Music in London: New Quartet, Old Orchestra. In. *The Financial Times*. 21 September 1993; PETTITT, Stephen. Youthful Spirit. Skampa Quartet. In. *The Times*. 21 September 1993; GOODWIN, Noel. CHAMBER RECITALS: The Cleveland Bows Out, the Skampa Checks In: The Old Guard and the New. In. *The Times*. 30 November 1994.

²⁷ Classical Preview: The Skampa Quartet. In. *Time Out*. 23 November 1994.

²⁸ About us: Škampa Quartet. *Škampovo kvarteto* [online]. Available at: <http://www.skampaquartet.cz/cs/o-nas.html> [2014-04-11].

²⁹ Classical Preview: The Skampa Quartet. In. *Time Out*. 23 November 1994.

³⁰ “We’re not trying to specialise in anything, just providing the basic repertoire, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, etc. Of course we’re asked to play Dvořák and Janáček but we’re not consciously trying to develop any particular part of the repertoire.” Classical Preview: The Skampa Quartet. In. *Time Out*. 23 November 1994.

³¹ This is evident from reviews of the guest performance of Vladimír Mikulka: CLINTON George. Vladimír Mikulka. In. *Guitar International*. December 1984; HAYES, Malcolm. Vladimír Mikulka. In. *The Times*. 14 October 1985; CLEMENTS, Andrew. Vladimír Mikulka/Wigmore Hall. In. *The Financial Times*. 7 December 1987; COOPER, Colin. Vladimír Mikulka. In. *Guitar International*. January 1988; DUARTE, John. Vladimír Mikulka. In. *Guitar International*. February 1988; THOMAS, Paul. Vladimír Mikulka. In. *Guitar International*. January 1991.

³² SIDDONS, Llewelin. Suk (violin)/Hála (piano): Dvořák, Janáček, Brahms, Beethoven, Smetana. In. *The Strad*. August 1985; MORRISON, Richard. Concert: Suk/Hála. In. *The Times*. 9 January 1986; LOPPERT, Max. Josef Suk/Wigmore Hall. In. *The Financial Times*. 10 January 1986; HENDERSON, Robert. Josef Suk recital. In. *The Times*. 10 January 1986; WHITE, John Michael. Wigmore Hall: Josef Suk. In. *The Guardian*. 12 July 1986; LOPPERT, Max. Josef Suk/Wigmore Hall. In. *The Financial Times*. 6 June 1988; CANNING, Hugh. Wigmore Hall: Josef Suk. In. *The Guardian*. 8 June 1988; FINCH, Hilary. Suk Trio: Wigmore Hall. In. *The Times*. 1 February 1990; MURRAY, David. Suk Trio: Wigmore Hall. In. *The Financial Times*. 1 February 1990; NICE, David. Wigmore Hall: Josef Suk. In. *The Guardian*. 6 February 1990; FAIRMAN, Richard. Suk Trio: Wigmore Hall. In. *The Financial Times*. 6 February 1990; MURRAY, David. Suk Trio goes Bohemian. In. *The Financial Times*, 7 July 1990; DRIVER, Paul. Josef Suk: Wigmore Hall. In. *The Financial Times*. 2 May 1991.

to import more Czech music into the British capital, draw attention to new or as-yet-unknown composers by means of a richer repertoire, and raise an awareness of their work among the local music community.

A similar trend as in the case of the interpretation developed in the reception of Czech musical culture, namely in the interest shown by musicologists. While earlier musicologists studied prominent composers such as Antonín Dvořák and Leoš Janáček, scholarly focus began to slowly shift toward other leading personalities of Czech music culture in the 1990s, such as Emmy Destinn, Vilém Tauský, Rudolf Firkušný and many others.

The Velvet Revolution and its after-effects also changed the life of the Czech community in London. The Velehrad, Hlahol, and the Anglo-Czechoslovak Trust, aimed at strengthening bonds among Czechs living in the capital of the U.K., lost their primary purpose after the revolution. Czechs exiled to Britain were now free to travel back to their homeland, and these clubs consequently gradually stopped holding events designed to promote Czech culture, or simply closed down.

In conclusion, the political events of 1989 did not affect the position of Czech music in London in any major way, as might have been the case in other spheres of art. Czech musical culture maintained its position even after 1989. It was an essential component of the London music scene, prevailed in a competitive environment, and continued to maintain both a foothold in the programme of London institutions and the favour of local professionals and the public.

About the author:

Markéta Koutná (1987) graduated with a degree in musicology from the Faculty of Arts, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Her thesis was entitled *Musical Culture in Přerov between 1918 and 1939* (2012). Prior to entering a PhD programme at the same university in 2012, Markéta spent a semester at the JAMK University of Applied Sciences in Finland (2011). Her PhD thesis deals with Czech musical culture in London, specifically the second half of the 20th century. Markéta became a researcher in the project IGA_FF_2015_024 *Influence of the Velvet Revolution on the Czech Musical Culture in London* in 2015.