

JIRI PAVLICA'S ORATORIO OF RECONCILIATION

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Among contemporary musicians, Jiří Pavlica (born on 1 December 1953) appears to be an altogether unique and rare personality, endowed both with skills of a music interpret (a singer, a music instrument player) and with those of a composer.

For the composing profession, he is very well equipped, possessing all the necessary theoretical and historical knowledge. His mastery of folklore music results from thorough field research (as in the case of L. Janáček) and from his life-long experience with performing this kind of music. Pavlica was inspired by its accessible pure sources and was able to penetrate into its very core. He is a superb singer (without the specific timbre of his voice, Hradišťan, his folk band, would be an altogether different music ensemble).

Owing to his perfect knowledge of all characteristic features of folk songs, Pavlica is able to compose new songs that cannot be distinguished from the original folk ones. (Such stylistic and inventive mastery of composition can be compared to a frequently cited example from classical music: Bedřich Smetana, the founder of Czech national music, composed an opera called *Hubička* (The Kiss), in which he included two lullabies. One is a folk song and the other, indistinguishable from the first one, was composed by himself.) Such similarity is not an aim in itself, though. The important thing is that it reflects the roots and sources exploited in Pavlica's work.

However, Pavlica is not limited to a single type of music only. His compositions range from those written according to the rules of old music to those undoubtedly contemporary. He is able to compose in various styles. Besides Hradišťan (a dulcimer folk band) and Talant (a music formation), he uses his capacity to compose especially in writing scenic and film music.

His music is naturally "playable". Instrumentalists recognize and appreciate the fact that in the process of its composition, the author utilized his own experience with playing music.

Nowadays, new music is being written by a number of composers of different ages and interests. Every single one of them dreams of becoming successful, but not all of them manage to achieve this. Success should be measured by response

of the general public: if one composes for a very limited audience of “experts”, the vast majority of people will reject the music as incomprehensible. This does not mean that we should favour the other extreme – simple primitive music that briefly shines out only to be forgotten for the sake of other very similar compositions. Pavlica’s music has its special charming atmosphere, which makes its audience to seek it again and again.

Needless to say, not all composers and theorists share the same view – each person has the right to feel music from his or her own perspective. Due to its vast genre and style range, different preferences can therefore be found even among the advocates of Pavlica music. However, all agree on one point: The music of Jiří Pavlica has made him famous beyond the borders of our country, in Europe, America, Asia, and even Africa, where one does not become acclaimed due to his friends or good contacts, but solely due the contents of his music, which must stand the competition of other international authors.

Pavlica himself characterizes his music as possessing “the three P’s”, three characteristic qualities that in Czech language begin with the letter “P”. In English, these could be translated as “Caress, Recognition and Message”. Thanks to them, some of his compositions have almost musicotherapeutic influence on the audience. (Similar capacity is attributed to some compositions by W. A. Mozart). Thus, listening to Pavlica’s music brings people deep emotional experience, purifying and strengthening. This is something that not all composers can do.

What is more, Pavlica is a very independent musician, who freely chooses the themes and literary texts he wants to set to music. He does not have to follow anyone – he works and creates by his own rules. He is one of those composers that “mature like good wine” (This is not to denigrate his early works – again, a parallel can be seen in the life of Leoš Janáček), and, undoubtedly, we can still expect him to come up with a number of valuable and “audience-friendly” pieces. To sum up, Jiří Pavlica is one of the most distinguished music composers of today.

ORATORIO OF RECONCILIATION

The word “oratorio” originally referred to a certain consecrated place, to a house of prayer. Only much later, around 1640, it was first used by P. della Valle as a term for a musical form in which a spiritual or secular text is set to

music. Since oratorios could earlier be performed solely in houses of prayer, the term is quite logical.

In Italy it had two different forms: Italian Oratorio Volgare, with texts in Italian, which originated from morning prayer and spiritual madrigal, and Latin Oratorio Latino, which originated from liturgical dialog. There was some mutual influence between the two, but on the whole, they developed on their own. The Latin Oratorio sought its themes in both Old and New Testament and its texts included blocks of poetry and/or prose. The plot was narrated by a so called *historicus*.

Later, the musical form of oratorio began to spread to other music centres, e. g. to France and Vienna. After 1700, German oratorio appeared in German Protestant churches, modelled after the Italian pattern. Biblical texts were re-written in a poetic form and supplemented by other poems and chorales – e. g. J. S. Bach (Christmas Oratorio). The most famous oratorios were composed by G. F. Handel (Messiah, 1742), J. Hayden (The Creation, 1798), W. A. Mozart, A. Saliery. The range of themes had also expanded to include some apocalyptic and historical motives, e. g. F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (Elijah, 1846), fairytale motives, e. g. R. Schumann (Paradise and the Peri, 1843). Another excellent oratorio composer, F. Liszt, first joined the vocal parts with orchestral ones, in the form similar to symphonic poem (Christ, 1872). The French oratorios – “mystere” and “drame sacre”, were, among others, composed by H. Berlioz (L'Enfance de Christ, 1854) or C. Gounod (Oratorio de Noel, 1881). The Czech oratorio developed under the Italian influence (J. D. Zelenka, J. Mysliveček). Saint Ludmila, an original Czech oratorio, was composed by A. Dvořák.

In the course of XXth century oratorio developed into a number of varieties, each author favouring a slightly different form of the genre: A. Honneger (Joan of Arc at the Stake, 1938), I. Stravinskij (Oedipus Rex, 1927). Oratorios have also been composed by some contemporary composers, e. g. P. Eben, S. Borodová (Mesiah) and V. Franz.

Oratorio of Reconciliation, Pavlica's latest modern classical music composition, had its world premiere on 1 January 2005 in the Salvator's Church in Prague, where it was performed as a part of the New Year ecumenical mass. The performance was simultaneously broadcast by the Czech TV. On this special occasion, the individual parts of the composition were followed by addresses of leaders and believers of various religious congregations of the Czech Republic.

About the oratorio, its author said the following:

„I believe that my music has the gift to appeal to people in a sort of universal language which crosses the borders of nationalities, various hierarchies and religious confessions. ... Today, the whole world is intolerant. Every one of us can do something to improve this condition, we all can begin now and with ourselves. What I did was that I composed an oratorio that will be performed in various languages. All those languages channel the biblical message, which, essentially, is a message of tolerance and love.“¹

As its title – Oratorio of Reconciliation – suggests, the composition is about reconciliation among different churches, different people, and, last but not least, about reconciliation with „the existence above us”.²

While composing the piece, its author consulted a number of experts on language and spirituality, as the area of various church services is a very specific one. As always, Pavlica has been very original. He is able to „absorb“ all features and rules of a certain type of music and then compose a piece of the same image, a new original composition which demonstrates all characteristic qualities of the given sort of music. The Psalm *Halelu El* is written in the tone line typical for old Jewish mode, whereas the part called *Pater Noster* follows the rules of Gregorian Choral, without directly copying it... The music is absolutely truthful and persuasive, while showing unique „brushwork“ of its author.³

The music reflects its author’s charisma – there is perfect internal integrity. In spite of being based on biblical texts, the oratorio has not been composed as liturgical music but rather as an independent original composition. It draws on historical Christian streams and stresses love as the highest quality of human existence.

¹ Ecumenical New Year celebration. The Czech TV, Prague, 1 January, 2005

² „Through this oratorio I want to remind people that unless they find peace and agreement, our existence on this planet is meaningless“. Adámková, J.: Povinností člověka je na sobě pracovat do posledního dechu života (It is everyone’s duty to work on themselves till the very last breath of their life). Talent magazine, December 2004

³ In Pater Noster I do not copy the Choral but rather follow its rules. In its Czech part I created a folk version of the Lord’s Prayer, as a contrast to the Latin part influenced by the Gregorian Choral. In Proglas I use free imagination, while in Slava Tebe I closely follow the eastern melody styles, especially the Greek liturgy. Adámková, J.: Povinností člověka je na sobě pracovat do posledního dechu života (It is everyone’s duty to work on him themselves till the very last breath of their life). Talent magazine, December 2004

The score of the oratorio has not been published yet. During the premiere, its author made some partial changes, deletions and additions and so the score will probably be finalized only after the oratorio is recorded by the Czech Radio, which has already filed an order. This means there is still chance of minor corrections. It was the same with Pavlica's previous compositions – no earlier but the studio-recorded versions were the final one.

The first part *If I have not love* is based on the text of the 1 letter to Corinthians by Paul the Apostle. It is a prologue to the composition and it heralds its main ideas. [1]

The second part is called *Halelu El*. The text comes from Psalm 150 "Praise the Lord". It is the only Old Testament text included in the oratorio and it represents the roots of Christianity. It is sung in Hebrew and Czech. A detailed explanation of the psalm's contents can be found in one of the addressed by John Paul II.⁴ [2]

The third part, *Pater Noster*, is in Latin and Czech and it is meant as a musical image of the early Christian Church. [3] It includes a musical version of the Lord's Prayer, which definitely is one of the best and most persuasive parts of the whole oratorio. The instrumentation is performed in the „colle parte“ style typical for e. g. Baroque composers. The rhythm strictly follows the structure of the text. Most interesting are the frequent changes of time signatures (14/4, 13/4, 15/4, 12/4 ...), which, however are hardly heard and realized by the audience. The music flows smoothly and fluently. [4]

In his oratorio, Pavlica also included a part that he himself calls "local contribution" – he chose several ideas from *Proglas*, a text written in the days of Cyril and Method, IXth century Christian missionaries to our country. The lines are first sung in Old Church Slavonic language and then recited in Czech. [5]

The following part *Slava Tebje* is based on the Orthodox liturgy. Although the Orthodox Church is much more influential in the regions to the East of the Czech Republic, from the historical point of view, also this part is fully relevant. It is sung in Greek and so-called Church Slavonic language, which resembles Russian. [6]

Credo is predominantly based on a recitation and is devoted to Protestantism. Most of it is practically adopted from Pavlica's *Missa Brevis Pastoralis*.

⁴ Psalm 150: Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord, General audience, 26 February 2003.

Only the middle part is different – instead of soloist parts, recitation is employed. [7]

The final part is again based on the Apostle Paul's letter to Corinthians. Thus, the circle is completed. It begins and ends with the message of love, which is the best, loftiest and all-encompassing phenomenon of life. This message, common to all mankind, which, in fact, is the motto of the whole composition, concludes the whole oratorio. [8]

So large a music form needs a large performing body. The vocal part calls for a prominent quartet of soloists: a soprano, an alto, a tenor and a bass. It is necessary for all the voices to be on an approximately same quality level. Likewise, certain "connectivity" of the voices must be ensured.

The premiere performance also engaged of a pair of reciters – a man and a woman. Again, it is clear that even here it is important to consider not only the quality of their performance but also the timbres of their voices. As they recite texts in different languages, consultations with language experts seem necessary.

The orchestral parts need good professional musicians. They are demanding both with regards to technique and expression of playing, not mentioning the tuning and harmony of various instruments.

The Choir part is clearly meant for a large singing choir. To fully utilise the musical potential of the score, in which we find parts written for e. g. six male voices, the choir must consist of at least 80 singers. To further improve its sound and timbre possibilities, even a greater number of singers could be enrolled.

From all above mentioned facts it follows that Oratorio of Reconciliation is a composition demanding both in its extent and as for the number of interpreters necessary for its successful performance. Co-operation of several musical bodies seems therefore inevitable. Logically, also the organizational, technical and financial backing up of such a project is bound to be extremely demanding. This suggests that the composition will not be performed at common concerts but rather on special occasions – e. g. festivals or significant anniversaries.

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Score - example:

[1] I. *Kdybych lasku nemel...*

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The woodwind section includes Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Bass Clarinet (Bb Clar.), and Bassoon (Fag.). The percussion section includes Timpani (Timp.) and Cymbals (Camp.). The string section includes Violin I (VI. I.), Violin II (VI. II.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vcl.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The vocal soloists are Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The score begins with a *mf* dynamic marking. The vocal parts enter at measure 71 with the lyrics: "Kdy-bych mlu - vil ja - zy - ky li - dsky - mi i an - det - sky - mi, a - le la - sku bych nemel, a - le". The instrumental parts provide accompaniment, with the strings playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and the woodwinds playing melodic lines.

[3] III. Pater noster

A *Tempo rubato* $\text{♩} = 100$

T. *mp*
 Pa-ter nos-ter, qui es in cae - lis Sancti-fi-cé - tur no-men tu - um A-dvé-si-at reg-num tu-um

Camp. *mp* *rit.*

T. *mp*
 Fi-at vo-lún-tas tu - a, si-cut in cae - lo, et in ter - ra

Cl. *p*

Camp. *rit.*

Vla. *p*

T. *mp*
 Pa-nem nos-trum quo-ti-di - á-num da no-bis hó - di - e Et di-mit-te no-bis dé-bi-ta nos-tra,

[4] *Otcenas (Our father)*

E *Tempo rubato* $\text{♩} = 142$

mf

S. O tče náš, jenž jsi na ne-be - sích. Po - svěť se jmé - no Tvé. Přijď krá - lov - ství Tvé.

A. O tče náš, jenž jsi na ne-be - sích. Po - svěť se jmé - no Tvé. Přijď krá - lov - ství Tvé. Ca

T. O tče náš, jenž jsi na ne-be - sích. Po - svěť se jmé - no Tvé. Přijď krá - lov - ství Tvé.

B. O tče náš, jenž jsi na ne-be - sích. Po - svěť se jmé - no Tvé. Přijď krá - lov - ství Tvé.

VI. I. *loco*
mp

VI. II. *loco*
mp

Vla. *loco*
mp

Vcl. *loco*
mp

123

S. Buď vů - le Tvá ja - ko v ne - bi tak i na ze - mi. Chléb náš ve - zde - jší dej nám dnes.

A. Buď vů - le Tvá ja - ko v ne - bi tak i na ze - mi. Chléb náš ve - zde - jší dej nám dnes.

T. Buď vů - le Tvá ja - ko v ne - bi tak i na ze - mi. Chléb náš ve - zde - jší dej nám dnes.

B. Buď vů - le Tvá ja - ko v ne - bi tak i na ze - mi. Chléb náš ve - zde - jší dej nám dnes.

VI. I. *loco*

VI. II. *loco*

Vla. *loco*

Vcl. *loco*

Cb. *loco*

[5] *IV. Proglas sventajego evangelija*

7

T.s. *mf*
sven-ta - je - go e - van - ge - li - ja Pro - glas pro - glas *mf* pro - glas je - st' e - van - ge - li - ja

B.s. *mf*
sven-ta - je - go e - van - ge - li - ja Pro - glas pro - glas *mf* pro - glas je - st' e - van - ge - li - ja

S. *mf*
Pro - glas pro - glas *mf* pro - glas je - st' e - van - ge - li - ja

A. *mf*
Pro - glas pro - glas *mf* pro - glas je - st' e - van - ge - li - ja

T. *mf*
Pro - glas pro - glas *mf* pro - glas je - st' e - van - ge - li - ja

B. *mf*
Pro - glas pro - glas *mf* pro - glas je - st' e - van - ge - li - ja
(bram)

Vcl. *p*

Ch. *p*

[6] V. Slava Tebje

Camp.
 T.s.
 S.
 A.
 T.
 B.

Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va, va.
 Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va, va.
 Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va, va.
 Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va Tě-bjě, Bó-že náš. Slá - va, va.

Dó - xa sí, o The-ós. i - món. Dó - xa sí, o The-ós. i - món.

Dó - xa sí, o The-ós. i - món.

S.s.
 T.s.
 S.
 A.
 T.
 B.

slá - va, Bó-že náš, Slá - va Tě-bjě, slá - va, Bó-že náš.
 slá - va, Bó-že náš, Slá - va Tě-bjě, slá - va, Bó-že náš.
 slá - va, Bó-že náš, Slá - va Tě-bjě, slá - va, Bó-že náš.
 slá - va, Bó-že náš, Slá - va Tě-bjě, slá - va, Bó-že náš.

[7] VI. Credo

51

Fl. *p* *mf*

Ob. *p* *mf*

Clar. *p* *mf*

Fag. *p* *mf*

S. *p* *mf*
Vě - řim vě - řim v jed-no-ho Bo - ha v Ot - ce Bo - ha vše-mo -

A. *p* *mf*
Vě - řim vě - řim v jed-no-ho Bo - ha v Ot - ce Bo - ha vše-mo -

T. *p* *mf*
Vě - řim vě - řim v jed-no-ho Bo - ha v Ot - ce Bo - ha vše-mo -

B. *p* *mf*
Vě - řim vě - řim v jed-no-ho Bo - ha v Ot - ce Bo - ha vše-mo -

52

VI. I. *mf*

VI. II. *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vcl. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

