

Radim Bařuvník

Forfest Put the Emphasis on the Individual Testimony of the Composer

Zdenka and Václav Vaculovi are the husband and wife team that has headed the Forfest's organisational committee since the festival's birth fourteen years ago. The future paths that might be taken not just by the Forfest but by contemporary music in general in the future are the subject of this interview. .

What do you see as the greatest success of this year's Forfest? And what didn't work so well, what caused you problems?

It would probably be impossible to imagine a festival of contemporary art without problems, Usually there are so many that we don't even want to talk about them...So I prefer to talk about the good sides, and the performance of Zemek's 2nd Symphony "the Passion" was you could say a satisfaction not just for the composer but for us as well. Of course, with such a monumental work, which in its uncut form represents ninety minutes of music for large orchestra, choir and soloists, you could hardly expect there to be no problems at all putting it on, but all the performers and listeners felt that it was a great idea, and that's no small achievement.

Forfest is characterised as a festival of contemporary art with a spiritual focus. But from a certain perspective any kind of artistic work is spiritual, if it springs up from the spirit of the author...How would you define spirituality in art and what are your criteria, from this point of view, for the choice of works for the festival?

You're right. Every creation arising from the spirit can be considered spiritual, but contemporary art is dominated by anything but the spirit. Of course we don't want to play at being referees who "unerringly" separate the wheat from the chaff. To put it a little frivolously, our activities might be better characterised by paraphrasing the famous voice crying in the wilderness "Prepare ye a way for an art that has not yet lost content and meaning". It is in this spirit that we praise and encourage every author who doesn't want to contribute to the general devastation of human values. But back to your question: naturally the problem has many different levels, and that is why we've started a colloquium, which every two years provides space for the opinions and visions of leading musicologists and art historians from this country and abroad. There is no answer to your question that would fit into one paragraph in a magazine...

Although the Forfest also involves visual art and poetry, it remains above all a music festival. Do you intend to carry on giving priority to the music element, or will you be trying to give the other fields of the arts a more balanced share in the event?

Today it's also a financial question, since a good exhibition, with good advertising, costs at least 2-300 000 crown. Also taking into account the well-known inflexibility of fine arts funds and the „caution“ of curators, it seems to us that the music festival model is really more feasible for the moment. Internationally speaking, the music world is linking up much faster, all kinds of things are discussed, and the position of the composer isn't determined by the incredible caste system that prevails in the art world especially in this country. On the other hand, in the history of art the linking-up of different disciplines has always been enriching for all of them, and that is a direction we want to move in....

At the colloquium there was talk of the spiritual element in non-classical music. What is your attitude to the possibility of extending the musical range of the Forfest and for example presenting alternative or jazz ensembles that have an accent on spirituality in their music?

Today the term "alternative" includes almost anything you can think of. It's an area in which you can find plenty of marvellous and inspired music, but also plenty of toothless music as well. Even so-called „relaxation music“, with its very obvious commercial subject, flirts with spirituality so how can one get one's bearings? Obviously the existing labels aren't much help here. We need to take a case-by-case approach. In the course of the years we've had groups here from the MCH Band to DAMA DAMA or AGON, and soloists like Iva Bittová and Jessicy Karraker from the USA. And for example we should like to invite Ensemble Jouissance fro, Australia, Aleph from France, the British Hilliard Ensemble the list would be a long one and there's no need to weary readers. We don't think this area of contemporary music can reproach us for ignoring it. As far as Jazz is concerned, that first needs some definition of terms. For example Emil Viklický's career leaves us wondering what jazz actually still is today. In principle of course we've nothing against jazz, but we want to prevent a certain commercialisation of the festival.

The prestige of the festival has been growing from year to year. Have you thought of prolonging it or expanding it to include other towns?

In fact this year we held the exhibition of works by Californian artists, Mind Trips, in the chateau in nearby Chropý, which is part of the Kroměříž Museum Complex. The local town hall was very forthcoming and so the collaboration was a pleasant experience and shows the possibility of further projects in future years. The participation of the Zlín Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic in the opening concert is a sign that future premiere concerts could be held in Zlín as well. Here we could also mention the rather curious offer we have received from Mr. Theodore Wiprud of New York, who suggests that his festival of spiritually orientated music, Beyond Words, could play host to some Forfest concerts in America. Generally it seems to be the case that anyone who thinks and plans in more than purely regional terms sooner or later has to start considering co-operation between more than one town or country. The possibilities could be fantastic - who wouldn't be interested in something like that? On the other hand, looking at several mega-projects in Western Europe based on the same principle, we've noticed that they often doesn't work. Ideas can be transmitted, but they can't be blown up like airbeds. Our primary concern is not the prestige of the event, but just putting across a diametrically different view of contemporary art. Large concerns are self-congratulatory and pay no attention to the quest whisper of the muses. In contrast, however, contemporary arts projects would immediately collapse if dependent only on local sources of support. It is quite clear that international link-up is essential and the direction of the future, and by the way it is already the only argument that all the funds, local authorities or ministries listen to everywhere in Europe. Practice has taught us how to economise, and we are beginning to have an inkling of how such a thing might work without the unnecessary bureaucratic ballast...

The problem of contemporary serious music is the very limited response it gets from the public. What in your view could music do to succeed against the competition of the lighter muses and given the media pressures?

One might have an interesting argument about what it is really is today that gets public response. And is the indifference of the broader public a problem for people who honour good art? If tens of thousands of fans come to a stadium to see a football or music star, then the television population of the country is interested for a few short minutes. And let us not be mistaken such phenomena have one interesting characteristic they are not linked up in time or space. After a week they don't interest anyone at all at home or abroad. But Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony flew round the whole world in an incredibly short time after it was written and every time it has been performed since then it has been a major event. What does it matter that it is for a supposedly negligible percent of the public? Genuine art is interesting even after centuries that is how the optimistic conclusion should sound more or less. We are well aware that the television programme planners are giving themselves headaches night and day over today's depressing reality. How can the chain of all possible dependences be broken? Does the consumerist majority really have the right to push the cultural minority to the margins of broadcasting time? And looked at from the point of view of decades maybe the minority of today is not such a minority, because what remains as generations pass is neither football nor pop music

Many world class composers and performers have been coming to the Forfest for more than a decade. In your view where is contemporary music moving today? In the last decade do you think there have been signs of any general trend, for example to a new wave of minimalism, regional inspirations of a return or tonality? Or has creation become an entirely individualised matter? Would you say that there is a more pronounced spiritual elements in contemporary serious music today than there was a decade ago?

Your questions, which are all very complicated, also contain a ready answer. Yes, although these returns testify to a tenacious search; 21st-century man urgently needs something, lacks something, and his hunger has the proverbial hundred heads. We are evidently the witnesses of a turning point, a period in which the borders of time, space, styles and genres are all breaking down. In the concept behind our festival it is the composer who has the key position. Emphasis on the entirely particular individual personality, truly authentic testimony free of media pressures and tendentious distortions necessarily reveals the spiritual "reverse face" of contemporary art. As far as your last question is concerned, one certainly can't ignore the enormous growth in spiritual themes. Of course, one can ask whether the interest wasn't in fact there before, and hasn't only come to light as a result of the more rapid communications of contemporary globalisation. But you will find hidden or open allusions to the spiritual practically everywhere. And so this hunger for something else will certainly grow...

Ivo Binder /Moravská galerie v Brn /
Passio
Múzeum moderného umenia rodiny Warhalovcov v Medzilaborciach

Název výstavy Passio bude možná pro mnohé zavádí jící. Kdo však znají práci Václava Vaculoviěe a sledují ji delší dobu, ví dle, že osten bolesti, zranitelnost lidské existence a bytostné spoèinutí v Tom, skrze nì jž dostává tato bolest svůj smysl, provází jeho tvorbu již od samých počátkù. Celou svojí bytostí a veškerou svojí tvùrèí aktivitou řeší Václav Vaculoviè problémy tohoto okruhu. Af je to v hudebním projevu, který je druhým pólem jeho umì lecké aktivity, èi v životì samém, v nì mž prízmatem tohoto passio prožívá události intimity duše. V jeho pohledu však toto passio již v sobì implicitnì obsahuje své vlastní překonání - vzkříšení. Je to pojetí, které sdílí s tvùrcem výtvarnì i bytostnì odlišným - Františkem Bilkem. Aktéry tì chto duchovních událostí jsou postavy nejasných obrysù, vì tšinou jen naznaèené. Avšak v posledních pracích i tyto zcela ustupují nefigurativnímu dí ji. Stejnì jako v hudebním projevu užívá i v malbì velice stáidmì výrazových prostředků. Barevná škála jeho obrazù i grafik je omezena na dvì , tñí barvy, užitè v různých kombinacích a intenzitách. Hlavním formálnì výrazovým prostředkem je rukopis, zanechávající znatelné stopy štì tce, přecházející až k pastózní malbu se silným haptickým účinkem. Tento účinek je, zejména v poslední době zvyšován rozmì rným formátem obrazù. Zcela neprávem zůstává v pozadí Vaculovièovy tvorby poetná řada monotypù, motivicky èasto předcházejících rozmì rná plátna, nì kdy však opakující v koncentrování jší podobì jejich subtilní témata. Tvorba Václava Vaculovièe zůstává vždy vì rná autorovu vidì ní, není podíizena ani apriorním tezí, ani dobovým trendù. Zachovává si tím autentickou sdì lnost a stává se tak osobitým prínosem do diskusí o existenci a možnostech souèasnèého duchovního umì ní.

Ivo Binder /Moravian Gallery in Brno/
Passio
Museum of Modern Art of the Family of Warhol

The title of this exhibition „Passio“ may be misleading for many visitors. But for those who have known the work of Václav Vaculoviè fit is quite apparent Chat fit is the thorn of pain, vulnerability of human existence and the self-identification with „This“ which makes this pain meaningful. These have been his common subject-matters from the very beginning. Involving the whole of his creative personality Václav Vaculoviè deals with the above-given issues also in music which forms the other pole of his artistic activity. Also in his life itself through „passio“ he „lives“ the intimacy of the soul. But in his understanding this „passio“ implicitly includes in itself its over?coming - resurrection. It is a similar understanding which he shares with a very different artist F. Bilek. The performers of these spiritual events are persons of gloom which are uestly only outlined. But those characters are suppressed in favour of the non-personal expression in his last works. Both in munic and painting he uses very simple expressive means. The colour range of his pictures and graphics is limited to two or three colours which are used in different combinations and intensity. His main formal expressive means is the paint-brush passing even finto structural painting with a strong haptic effect. Recently this effect has been strenghtened by the considerable size of his pictures. Some aspects of the work of Václav Vaculoviè are quite unjustly suppressed. They are especially the monotypes, the motifs of which often pass finto large canvas and which sometimes repeat their subtle subject-matters in a more concen?trated form. The artistic creation of Vaculoviè always sticks to the author's vision. It has not been influenced either the pre-set theses, or contemporary tendencies. It preserves its authentic expression which in a specific way contributes to the contemporary spiritual art.

Bronislava Gabrielová /Moravská galerie v Brn /
Výtvarné meditace Václava Vaculovi e
/zkrácená verze/

Metoda Vaculovièovy tvorby koresponduje s tradicí symbolismu- použití symbolù a tvarových znakù s hlubším sdì lovacím posláním / vèetnì symboliky barev / podíizuje však snaze o svébytnost výtvarné skladby. Autor chce dosáhnout jednoty myšlenkového obsahu a výrazových prostředků, tedy souhra sdì lovací a formální stránky, souhry vedoucí k posílení výrazu adekvátního danému zámì ru. K tomuto cíli se Vaculoviè přibližuje zejména v obrazech s lapidárnì naznaèenou, výrazovì stylizovanou postavou, jejíž formová uzavřenost jí vtiskuje nový metafyzický smysl / Jsem v Tobì , Narození Pánì , Madona ad./ Rovnì ž nì které další tvaroslovné prvky mají sdì lovací poslání. Na strukturálním podkladì , z jehož zvrásnì ným povrchem kontrastují jemné lazurové přemalby, se uplatňuje široká škála barev, jejichž symbolická funkce dominuje nad optickými účinky. Tlumenì ladì né a sfumatem zmì kèené formace přispívají k zamýšlení, záživost žlutí, okru a rumì lky a blankytnì modré chce vyjadřovat radost, èistotu, lásku a volnost, protiklad temnì èervených záblesků a èerných vlnovek ztvárùje vì èný zápas dobra a zla...Barvy jsou tu i zdrojem svì tla, které intenzivnì vyznaùje z tušeného pozadí a umocňuje výrazovost malby a její duchovní obsah. Vaculoviè se nì kdy nevyhne jistè míře dekorativnosti, vì tšinou však smì ùje k barevnè a rukopisnè expresivitì , podíizené celkové atmosfére práce. Jeho plátna velkých rozmì rù jsou urèeny k prohlídce z blízka a na rozdíl od dobové expresivní syrovosti a drásavosti vedou diváka k intimnímu dialogu.

Bronislava Gabrielová /Moravian Gallery in Brno/
Creative meditations of Václav Vaculovi
/reduce version/

The method of Vaculovi e's creative work corresponds with the tradition of Symbolism, but he subordinates the use of symbols and shapes with a deeper level of communication / inclusive of the symbolism of colors/to the effort of his own creative composition. The author wants to achieve the unity of intellectual subject-matter and means of expression, that involves the combination of the communicative and the formal aspects, a combination leading to a strengthening of the expression adequate to the idea. Vaculovi is very near to this aim especially in his paintings with briefly expressively stylized figures, whose formal completion should give it new metaphysical meaning. Also some other expressive elements have communicative function. On the structural basis, the wrinkled surface of which contrast soft color layers, he uses a wide range of colors, the symbolic function of which dominates over optical effects. Softened down and airy formations contribute to ones being lost in thought, the brightness of the yellows, ochre, vermilion and azure blue want to express happiness, purity, love and freedom, the antithesis of dark red flashes and black twirls which show the everlasting fight of good and evil...The colors present here are also the source of light, which intensively radiates from the conjectural background and intensifies the expression of the painting and its spiritual subject. Vaculovi e does not always avoid a certain amount of decoration, but he tends to subordinate color expression to the general atmosphere of the work. His larger paintings should be seen at close quarters, and as opposed to the contemporary aggressiveness of expression, they leads the spectator to intimate dialogue.

Radim Bařuvník
Spiritual Art at the Forfest
CZECH MUSIC 4/2003

The fourteenth annual Forfest, a festival of contemporary art with a spiritual focus, took place in the week from the 21st to the 29th of June this year in Kroměříž.

As you might expect from the name, it's the town of Zlín that is the capital of the Zlín Region, but the region's cultural centre is without a doubt the town of Kroměříž. Unlike the regional capital, an insignificant village until the beginning of the twentieth century, the region's second largest town is an ancient centre that can boast a genius loci favourable to the spirit of art. Its superb Baroque architecture, above all the Archbishop's Chateau and adjoining Under-Chateau Garden, and the whole charming townscape are magnets for people with an artistic sensibility, and so it is no surprise to find that it is a lively centre of musical education (there are two conservatories in Kroměříž) and above all of all kinds of more or less formal arts activities. Among the most important is the Forfest Festival.

Forfest's subtitle is "An international festival of contemporary art with a spiritual focus". If we ask how far the festival lives up to the adjectives in its title, we would have to answer that it does so to a different extent in each case. The Forfest is indeed a truly international festival, and its reputation seems to be greater in Europe and overseas than in our republic. Every year many visitors come to the festival from all over the world and it is not unusual to find there are more guests from abroad than from the Czech Republic. This goes not just for the performers but for the composers who are featured in the programme. The share of home and foreign artists is practically the same at the Forfest. Although Forfest defines itself as a festival of contemporary arts in the broad sense it is in fact mainly a music event. This year the imposing exhibition of work by Californian artists called Mind Trips, which opened the festival, was the only presentation of visual art except for the exhibition of Milivoj Husák's Drawings from a Larger Cycle. Poetry was represented simply by two authorial readings by Marek Toman and Roman Szpuk, drama by a play called Days Nights performed by the Prague Miriam Theatre and contemporary film solely by Petr Baran's multimedia project Creation.

The question of how far the Forfest programme presents genuinely spiritual art if one that I shall ask the reader's forgiveness for ducking. The theme is too subtle and subjective to write about usefully here. A whole range of the works at the festival were clearly inspired by spiritual or sacred subjects, but as far as those with less obvious spiritual content were concerned, I leave defence of their inclusion to the organisers of the Forfest, namely the Kroměříž Arts Initiative run by the husband and wife team Zdenka and Václav Vaculovi.

Forfest for Performers

Apart from meeting contemporary composers, Forfest festival-goers encountered a while range of brilliant performers, whether soloists or ensembles.

The Qvox male vocal quartet and its interpretation of Piros's Psalm 71 and Invocation has already been mentioned. They also sang In morte del eccellentissimo Monteverde by Miloš Štědroň and Three Madrigals by Jana Hanuš, and overall it seems that contemporary music is their special domain. While in contemporary music and in the Gregorian chant Salve Regina or the organ Primo tempore the quartet sounded very convincing, in the Renaissance pieces they adopted a tone very similar to that of the Janáček Male Choirs on their CD and so were a great deal less distinctive, while not actually disappointing.

On the subject of brilliant performers, we should certainly mention the British ensemble, The Fibonacci Sequence, which apart from presenting David Matthews Playing of Marsyas premiered the Brno composer Jaroslav Šestný's Fibonacci fantasias (without Titian), written specially for them and for their concert at the Forfest. In Šestný's timbre jeux d'esprit with their aliquot tones and in the virtuoso passages in Matthews' pieces the string quartet with oboist gave an unusually precise performance, perfectly mastered in terms of expression.

Visitors to two concerts on two successive days given by the cellist Werner Taube and the pianists Renata and Milan Bialos respectively had an opportunity to hear just how different the principles of contemporary music and approaches to its performance can be. While the German cellist performed very avant-garde pieces that placed huge demands on listeners, the father and daughter Bialas duo had chosen music with rather more immediate listener appeal. There need be no odious comparisons of skill, of course, since all the musicians concerned are truly excellent. On the other hand, Werner Tabe was wholly absorbed in his music and quite unconcerned as to whether the listeners were coping with it (and it should be added that for the most part they only started to get the idea when the Forfest organiser Zdenka Vaculovičová in her accompanying commentary started spontaneously to talk about the images that Taube's music conjured up in her mind), while the Bialas duo allowed clapping after every piece and for unknown reasons always kept back in the wings for a time while the audience had to wait. Pavel Blatný made a contribution to the latter concert not so much with his commentary, which he might have done better to have with him on paper, but much more with his Water Music using elements of his own arrangement of Erben ballads, which was in terms of invention and evocative mood were many times more impressive than the other pieces played. From the performance point of view the high point of the Forfest was probably the concert given by the young Spanish pianist Ricard Descalz. He played the Czech premieres of pieces by

Jesús Rueda, Sofia Gubaidulina and other composers with immense southern temperament and a virtuoso bravura that brought our the great colour of the music. It is only to be regretted that the American guitarist William Feasley, who gave a recital the night after Descalz, had not devoted more attention to getting on the same musical wavelength with Pavel Ciboch, his partner in several duets. Their lack of common rhythm was in places disturbingly obvious and rather undermined the impression not just of Feasley's solo play, but of the whole evening.

Forfest for Experiment

It is of course walking on thin ice to talk of any one element in the Forfest as experimental since from a certain point of view all contemporary music has a somewhat experimental character. Nonetheless, there was something interestingly experimental about a concert called Between the Years 1953 - 73, at which recordings of music written by Jan Hanuš, Roman Berger and Miroslav Kabeláč in the years mentioned were played in a Gothic church. Paradoxically, it turned out that while a recording of orchestral music was inadequate in such a setting, electro-acoustic music in this case Roman Berger's Epitaph for Nicholas Copernicus worked interestingly well, since by its nature it absorbs and can even be enriched by the sounds floating in from the street or the birds singing in the church tower. Another intriguing item was a recording of work by the composers association of HAMU students known as Konvergence, i.e. Tomáš Pálka, Roman Pallas and Ondřej Stochl, whose music was highly stimulating and provoked a lively discussion among those present. Again, there were very contradictory reactions to Morthon Feldman's Piano and String Quartet performed by the Corona Ensemble, in which the three students mentioned play: it is a piece that lasts for nearly an hour and a half using only one gradually varied motif and it is based on the denial of the perception of time. The last event from this kind of experimental barrel was the appearance of the Kojetín Industrial Philharmonic conducted by Petr Samlík and a presentation of his proposal for principles of industrial notation.

Multigenre Forfest

As has been pointed out, despite the proclaimed inter-disciplinary nature of the festival, the Forfest remains largely a music event. The most interesting item from the other arts fields was the exhibition Mind Trips. An exploration of inner space put together from the works of artists in Southern California by curator Louise Lewis. The exhibition title is taken over from New Age vocabulary and presents the intimate reactions of artists to the contemporary world, in which everything is subordinated to financial interests and media monopolies. This year film was represented by a multimedia project from the photographer and artist Petr Baran. Entitled Creation, it is inspired by the Book of Genesis and interestingly combines film shots with the electro-acoustic music of Rudolf Režek. The theatre performance of the Prague Miriam company, Days of Night the last months of St. Teresa of Lisieux, was included in the Forfest programme mainly thanks to the music of Martin Dohnal, in this case close to song-writing. The play itself slightly lacked dramatic development and conflict, since it dealt continually turned only on St. Teresa's expression of acceptance of death as the culmination of illness and her faith in the love of Christ.

Colloquium

As part of the festival there was also a week-long academic colloquium on the theme of Spritual Currents in Contemporary Art. Invited speakers presented different aspects of spirituality in contemporary music, art and theatre. It is a pity that much of the colloquium was not chaired or directed in any way, and so many questions were ignored or left hanging in the air. Probably the liveliest response was provoked by Libor Mathauser from the Rosa publishing house with her comments on the question of spirituality in non-classical music.

Spiritual Forfest

Having mentioned the colloquium let us return once more to the question of spirituality in art. Although many different opinions were voiced on the theme and all the works presented had something to do with it, no clear answer crystallised in response to the question of how that spirituality might be defined. Many sides of spirituality were presented, but it turned out that where spirituality is too obviously striven for and foregrounded, it may even disappear, while appearing in most powerful form in places where few would ever expect it. A composer can use a liturgical text and set it to music, but that doesn't make the resulting work spiritual unless the inspiration has been internalised and experienced. Conversely, it can be astonishing to discover the depths contained in a music that seems as if it must be a priori cold and void of feeling, for example the music created from computer generated and modified sounds, as demonstrated in the work of Rudolf Režek.

There is no alternative but to leave the identification of spirituality in art to the subjective feelings of each individual, since one person can perceive great spirituality where another finds it entirely lacking. We can adduce a thousand arguments for why we see or don't see spirituality in a work of art, but no one can guarantee that anyone else will share our feelings. This is because spirituality perhaps does not even reside in art or a work of art in itself. Spirituality is in the people who create it and receive it, and it is questionable whether it is at all possible to transmit knowledge of spirituality, to point at it and to define it without ambiguity.

Daniel Kessner
FORFEST IX - An Oasis In the Contemporary Music World
ComposerUSA, Winter 1998-99, Page 5

Forfest a contemporary music festival held this year June 21 to 28 in the small town of Kromeriz in the eastern Czech Republic, stands clearly outside the new music mainstream, both geographically and aesthetically. Kromeriz is located slightly east of Brno, not far from the Slovakian border. It is a good five hours from Prague by tram, and only slightly closer to Vienna. In terms of its relation to the "big names" of the contemporary music establishment, however, it is far more remote than that.

Forfest's stated goal is to present new music with a spiritual orientation, either explicit or implicit. While they have included a modest international component for several years now, the festival is dominated by Czech composers and performers, most of whom are unknown outside of their- homeland.

The heart and soul of the festival is an organization known as The Artistic Initiative of Kromeriz, which I now know to be a single, extraordinary family. While I assume that specific decisions on invited composers, performers, and repertoire are made jointly, Václav Vaculovic, an accomplished painter-graphic artist is largely responsible for the international communications and publicity, while his wife Zdenka, a tremendously gifted and versatile musician, handles most of the daily musical matters, both aided by their son Peter. During the course of the festival, Václav's paintings and other graphic works were present adding a powerful dimension to the musical events, and he played horn (very well) in one of the chamber concerts. Young Peter performed in several concerts on violin and viola, made digital recordings of all the concerts, and played electric guitar in a rock band during one event. However, the musical star was Zdenka, who introduced each concert with a brief introductory speech, and excelled throughout the week as conductor, violinist, soprano, and composer.

Before describing the events of the festival, however, a few observations about the host city are essential to capturing the mood and spirit of Forfest. Outside of Prague and perhaps Brno, most of the Czech Republic's population lives in small towns. Kromeriz is an absolute jewel. A village of around 8000, its center displays architecture of the 16th through 20th centuries, and nearly every building is perfectly maintained, clean, and colorful. Concerts were given in five different venues: three churches, the Kromeriz Museum, and one outdoor setting. Invited composers and performers stayed at a nearby hotel, and enjoyed meals together at a restaurant next to the museum. Naturally, everything was within comfortable walking distance.

This ninth edition of Forfest included fourteen concert events during its eight days. Dolly and I had been invited to present a flute and piano recital toward the end of the week, and other commitments prevented us from hearing the entire festival. However, I will review highlights of the nine concerts we attended, and summarize the contents of the others. The festival opened with an exhibition of paintings related to the Psalms, followed by a performance by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir of Bohuslav Martnu's Field Mass.

The following afternoon's concert (the first event we were able to attend) featured Canticum Novum, a vocal instrumental ensemble also from Brno directed by composer-conductor František Fiala, and the Prague String Trio. Meditation on Kyrie eleison for string trio, by Prague composer Josef Rut, made an especially strong impression, as did Fiala's own setting of Psalm 42. The major work of that evening's concert was the impressive Symfonia da Requiem by Karel Simandl, of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad), at the western tip of the republic. It was treated to a wonderful performance by the Archbishop's Cappella of Kromeriz, conducted by Zdenka Vaculovic. The program also included Swiss composer Frank Martin's Sonata da chiesa, for viola d'amore and chamber orchestra, and a repeat performance of the aforementioned string trio by Josef Rut.

Wednesday afternoon's concert featured composers from Ostrava, to the north of Kromeriz. To me, the strongest works were by two young women composers. Teresie Martinová's Prière de consecration á la Reine de la paix was the most exploratory work of the program, a challenging and effective extended work for unaccompanied baritone voice, convincingly delivered by Petr Matuszek. Michaela Macurová also conducted a sparkling performance of her own Pater noster for a cappella choir. The program closed with Jan Grossman's Lovely Lava me. The evening concert was the first of three individual composer concerts, this one presenting works by Prague composer Petr Pokorný. The program consisted largely of vocal works, three engaging settings of texts by Josefa Kostohryze, and one based upon a poem by the composer himself.

The program of Thursday afternoon was, as expected, the most outrageous of the week -- a collection of works by student composers from the Brno Conservatory. Typical for its "genre," there were many short works in as many different styles, all together showing both excellent training and a healthy spirit. That evening, the second of the individual composer programs was

devoted to instrumental works of Pavel Zemek. Following excellent works for solo clarinet string trio, solo oboe, and string quartet, cellist Jiri Bárta gave a magnificent performance of Zemek's cycle consisting of Sonatas I, II, and III for unaccompanied cello. I found the second of the three particularly compelling.

Two superstars emerged from the Friday afternoon chamber concert, at least from my perspective. Oboist Kateřina Fůrstová played Benjamin Britten's Six Metamorphoses after Ovid, for solo oboe, better than I have ever heard them played -- recordings included. The most pleasant surprise, however, was that after she had already appeared so many times during the week as violinist and conductor, Zdena Vaculovic sang her own psalm setting for soprano and violin, accompanied by her son Peter. It was a beautiful piece, and very well performed.

Work and Solitude
Karel Kopečka's Critique of Václav Vaculović's Art Exhibition

We meet here with art that arises from solitude. Solitude is necessary for the birth of any work that draws strength from its weakness vulnerability. This work arises and performs in seclusion out the noisy public interest of "experts" with infallible senses of smell - and out of the interest of lobby specialists whose infallible sense of smell is near the earth. This work grows from solitude, which the anxiety of existence. and its questions from nobility face nothingness and reach the heart of the matter, where the heart is already identically linked with the fertile womb. Because the existence is always concerned with the growth and maturation of a vegetable, the little key grows and ripens by means of delicate vulnerability. Actually, we feel almost tangibly how this works -. which in a humble, way accepts the seriousness of existence - matures and--develops into a fruit, when we too of ten see only greenish unripe crab-apples This work was able to get rid of false existence. It knows that true reality is invisible. It was also able to refuse false spirituality, because it knows that reality is spiritual and you cannot grasp it by your own power, but you can come nearer by means of your love. In the text mentioned above, we can extract three words: anxiety, existence and love. They are the cornerstones of the whole work - and one crucial word connects these three words: the CROSS, which is presented as the mystery of faith. It is not "Christian art" because of its confession, but because of its mystery, its silence, and its calmness. Mystery, after all, is not what we do not know, but what we do not talk about. What the work does not mention is that it knows loneliness in these bitter moments, when nothing is owed get everything has been already been paid? Notice the figures in the paintings in. their huddle. It is the motion of anxiety, the motion back to the womb. And all at once, we realize the paradox, which is the paradox of Christianity - that the figures are crouching in a huddle, It may be the mystery of humbleness or already the rustle of Angels wings, that reminded us of the unbearable Lost Paradise on whose horizon we can find the Cross. And in this art The Cross is present - not as a visible symbol of faith ?- but as a secret sign of salvation, whose presence can be felt as a duration, in the space after the moment, when the figures in the paintings blessed themselves in a secret way but still with all nobility .For the Cross surviving in the space forms with its wings the space of these paintings. We can find what František Bílek used to call, "Dejection from The Body, The World and The Canopy of Heaven", Even the light means gravity here. We can feel it as the burden of light, which is weighing on us. Even the Annunciation, this mystery of Incarnation, is covered here with the Light. Everything which happiness in the inner life of these paintings is hidden with the cover of light. Everything which happiness in the inner life of these paintings is hidden with the cover of light. For light does not make visible, but creates the space of mystery, and light - like love - symbolizes a bond, Furthermore, love frees, thus it binds, The infinitude of Light makes the space infinite by means of definition. That is why there is no despotism and false freedom purposely depicted. That is why huddle of figures, which are, in fact , portraits and self-portraits are without faces, of the state of mind and soul. They are in order - that is, they are in liturgical order, where through the boundary of solitude and the utmost secrets of the whole communion, faith happiness If this art is by means of the mystery of the Cross from liturgical order, then it is necessary and eschatological, for only through the vision and suspicion of disasters in mans soul, the Earth's face is restored. Under these circumstances, the picture becomes, first of all, the "omen" in the New Testament sense of the word. It is the space, where it binds and unbinds and we wonder if the hand reaching into the space of the painting entitled "I cannot see you" is the hand hopelessly groping or the hand inviting or repudiating. Its motion remains unclear for us. We only suspect that it grows into the space of Light, for in the whole work there is only a realization of Light. And, according to John the Evangelist, the Light is inseparable from the life, truth and love. To "go to the light" means to abandon death, which we can see as the fruit of a crippled creature. The light is the guarantee of duration, because duration is the humility of elapsing time. And, because there is the relation between The Light and The Word, which can be called the mystery of the Word. For to picture means to express truly invisible. In the beginning was the Word, which was embodied...

And these paintings are paintings to the extent that they can be the space of the Word and the space of the Light. The space of the realization of Light, is the space of anxiety, and of existence, when we forever feel the mystery of the blessing from the Cross. The "nonsense" of the Cross will forever be the sense of human existence and the sense of art. For art can only go in the Way of the Cross-. Like everything in this world, even art must be nailed to the Cross-. For only art, to which the world is nailed and which is nailed to the world is meaningful /Ga 6,14 /. And the art, which is a bit unluckily , titled " Christian Art" can be divided into the art of believing only in God and The one that has always believed in God. Here we find the art, which has always believed in God

Marek Trizuljak
Mezinárodní malířské sympozium Šternberk

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